



## **Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape**

*Jenna Miscavige Hill , Lisa Pulitzer*

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Lisa Pulitzer

Jenna Miscavige was raised to obey. As niece of the Church of Scientology's leader David Miscavige, she grew up at the center of this controversial organization. At 21, she made a break, risking everything she'd ever known and loved to leave Scientology once and for all. Now she speaks out about her life, the Church, her escape, going deep inside a religion that, for decades, has been the subject of fierce debate and speculation worldwide.

Piercing the veil of secrecy that has shrouded the world of Scientology, this insider reveals unprecedented firsthand knowledge of the religion, its rituals and its mysterious leader—David Miscavige. From her prolonged separation from her parents as a small child to being indoctrinated to serve the Church, from her lack of personal freedoms to the organization's emphasis on celebrity recruitment, Jenna goes behind the scenes of Scientology's oppressive and alienating culture, detailing an environment rooted in control in which the most devoted followers often face the harshest punishments when out of line. Detailing some of the Church's notorious practices, she also describes a childhood of isolation and neglect—a childhood that, painful as it was, prepared her for a tough life in the Church's most devoted order, the Sea Org.

Despite this hardship, it's only when her family approaches dissolution and her world begins to unravel that she's finally able to see the patterns of stifling conformity and psychological control that have ruled her life. Faced with a heartbreaking choice, she mounts a courageous escape, but not before being put thru the ultimate test of family, faith and love. Captivating and disturbing, *Beyond Belief* is an exploration of the limits of religion and the lengths to which some went to break free.

## **Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape Details**

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## From Reader Review Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape for online ebook

### Alison says

This book was so boring! I admire the courage this young woman mustered up to not only leave the church, but also to publicly tell her story, considering all the threats and coercion sanctioned by her uncle. And if everything she says is true, she did a wonderful thing by exposing the human rights violations and child abuse hidden within the upper ranks of the church. But the prose style is so flat and straightforward, I don't know how or why I stayed with this book -- I guess I just really, really wanted that "harrowing escape" part. I will give the disclaimer that I read a lot of memoirs, and generally love that genre, and that this book is not a memoir. It's an autobiography. The huge difference is the lack of any kind of character development, scene setting, dialogue, suspense, etc. It's more like, "this happened, and then this happened, and then this happened." With all the crazy Scientology acronyms and the poor girl being shuffled back and forth to different bases, where she was watched over by different church members, I could barely (if at all) distinguish between the places and the people. The first half of the book, or even two thirds, felt like it could have been condensed by half. If you pick this up because you want to learn some of the inside scoop on Scientology, you might as well watch the South Park episode (mention of which, by the way, was one of the most interesting parts of this book)!

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Read more reviews, and dispatches from my Midwestern life, at [Welcome to Forgotonia](#).

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### David says

In the U.S., religion and the freedom to practice it is a kind of shibboleth — because we have enshrined the First Amendment, we are very reluctant to impose any sort of restrictions on religious practice, and even most people who don't care for a religion will be loathe to categorically state any particular religion is wrong, bad, or evil. The exceptions are generally either bigots or folks whose own religious beliefs are so exclusionary that by necessity they must regard all other faiths as antagonistic.

L. Ron Hubbard and his church have taken great advantage of this fact, running what can only be called a pyramid scheme organized like a police state but wearing the trappings of religion. Any objective study of Scientology, its history, and its methods will not allow a reasonable person to come away in doubt as to its nature. And yet we have to put up with Scientologists donning the First Amendment to shield themselves from criticism while engaging in the most despicable dirty tricks against their enemies (who are legion, especially in LRH's paranoid cosmology).

When I read another book about Scientology, *Inside Scientology: The Story of America's Most Secretive Religion*, by Janet Reitman, one of the things I wondered was how do they actually get people to believe this shit? And what makes people stay in such an abusive, irrational cult when they could walk away at any time?

That book gave two answers: first, the Internet has not been good for Scientology, which is why their members are generally forbidden to access it. Second: the remaining hardcore "faithful" are basically the children and grandchildren of Scientologists who grew up in the "church" and have never known anything else.

That is the perspective of Jenna Miscavige Hill, who is the niece of David Miscavige, current leader of [Scientology and heir to L. Ron Hubbard's empire](#). She was born and raised into Scientology, and even as the [PDF File: Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape...](#)

surrounding world seeped into her awareness, she was essentially kept in a Scientology bubble until her late teens. Given this, it becomes a little surprising that she rebelled as much as she did.

For anyone who's read other books about Scientology, there won't be much new information here, but Jenna Miscavige Hill gives an unrelentingly grim picture of the "church," without even meaning to, because while in her conclusions, following her escape, she makes it clear that she considers the church and its leaders to be abusive, lying, and unethical, everything she experienced along the way was "normal" for her, so perhaps the full horror of growing up in what amounted to a system of work camps supervised by snitches and political officers ready to take away even the smallest privileges and shut you in a room to be yelled at for hours at the slightest breach of rules, never completely registered with her. She learns, only after leaving the church, how "weird" other people find her upbringing.

For all that she had such an exceptional and scarring upbringing, Hill is personable and clearly a person of integrity (it was her unwillingness to throw friends and family under the bus on demand, which the Church of Scientology demands frequently, that consistently got her into trouble). The church very carefully tiptoes around the law, so most of their practices aren't *quite* illegal as long as their members voluntarily submit to it - which they do, because the deeper you become immersed in the church, the more it makes up your entire world, and support system, and life, and to be cast out and declared a "Suppressive Person" can leave many of the faithful with literally nowhere else to turn.

Against the background of Scientology, Hill's day to day life is actually pretty mundane, and many of her tribulations are just the normal ones of a slightly mouthy teenager feeling her oats. Even Scientology can't keep kids from being kids, nor can they keep star-crossed lovers apart. Well, actually they can, and do, but not always. They separated Hill from her first love, and almost turned her husband against her while they were still in the church and on the cusp of leaving, but eventually they did leave, still negotiating the church's insane and cumbersome rules so as not to be excluded from ever talking to their families again.

Scientology is strange, perverse, and frankly evil in its execution, an engine for extracting money from its followers and suppressing every independent thought. Like most religions, it comes with doctrines and an origin story and fine-sounding gospel about how to make the world a better place.

Needless to say, Hill and her husband find the discovery of Operation Clambake, and the infamous South Park episode on Scientology, to be eye-opening.

Hill is a bit too credulous in places, particularly when she praises anonymous for their act of hacking Scientology websites and taking them briefly offline. To her, this was a worldwide movement of activists standing up for her and other victims of the church, when of course anyone familiar with anonymous knows that while they might sometimes seize on a good cause for their shenanigans, they do everything for the lols. She's also frequently (in her retelling of her behavior) whiny and annoying, though given how young she was and what she was being put through, this is understandable.

Jenna Miscavige Hill is really a fairly unexceptional person who grew up in what to most of us is an extreme environment, and came out of it as normal as can be expected. Her memoir will fill you in on the details of Scientology's operations and what it's like to be a Scientologist, and should scare off anyone even remotely considering treating this cult as a legitimate religion or a place to find answers.

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## Diane Yannick says

Really tough for me to rate this book. Jenna Hill does an amazing job of describing her life as a kid born into the upper echelon of Scientology. I was amazed at some of the crap that occurred in the name of religion. Young children were separated and alienated from their parents. Children from age 5-12 were forced to write down their transgressions so that they could be checked out with an electropsychometer, a machine used to indicate "whether or not a person has been relieved from spiritual impediment of past experiences". They were systematically brainwashed to believe things such as the Thetan theory which is that we are all evolved from ancient aliens from the Galactic Confederacy Xenu. Their dictators brought billions of people to Earth and that's how it all began. To hell with Adam and Eve! At age 7 they were required to sign a billion year contract of servitude with the Church of Scientology.

For 60 years this religious cult has been recruiting members and keeping them hostage. Free thought continues to be suppressed using humiliating punishments. Money is sought using unscrupulous means. Jenna's courage to leave the cult and live a life with a family, is a testimony to her bravery and intelligence. That she now helps others who want to escape is proof of her compassion.

I do believe that if you read the book, you too will be informed and outraged. However, I want you to understand what you'll be undertaking. There were many, many pages that bored the pants off of me. The author's attention to detail was commendable and is what made the reader understand the relentless "education" the cult demanded. The day to day recounting of these routines was a lot like waiting for a kid who's out past curfew. I wanted to skim but I didn't because part of this book's value is its redundancy.

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## Michelle says

I am a bit ashamed to admit that I read this book, but I wanted to learn more about the insides of Scientology and needed a "lighthearted" summer book.

First of all, let me say that I simply could not get past Hill's atrocious writing. Her ideas moved rapidly from one place to another and left me confused. I often had to read passages aloud to my husband because I simply did not understand them or simply could not believe an editor would approve it being published! Towards the end of the book I could understand how people felt she was rude and spoiled.

The information about Scientology was interesting and bizarre, but I wish Hill would have taken a few more years to really organize her thoughts and to make her message more clear about what her book was about. Was it her memoir? An truth outing of the church? A way to get back at her parents?

And finally (and I was skeptical about this before I even got the book) you CANNOT say my "harrowing escape" when you were flown, safely, home on a plane, with your family knowing where you are, and without any fear for your safety. Prisoners who escape North Korea can say "harrowing escape," Hill certainly cannot.

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## Esil says

I listened to the audio of Beyond Belief. I could have been listening to some kind of scary fiction, but I was

hearing the author's story of her life growing up in the church of Scientology. I didn't know much about Scientology before starting other than it seems to attract a bunch of celebrities and it is based on the sci-fi thoughts of L. Ron Hubbard. Jenna Miscavige Hill is the niece of the leader who succeeded Hubbard. Her parents moved onto one of the church's bases when she was two years old. And she spent the next 18 years or so of her life living in a crazy world in which she was separated from her parents for years at a time, performed countless hours of child labour, was deprived of a true education and instead subjected to endless mindless sessions of what can only be described as brain washing, was severely punished for any attempts to rebel, and ultimately made her way out of the church to become an outspoken supporter of other former church members. The world she describes is indeed "beyond belief", but Jenna clearly has a strength of character that has allowed her to emerge with a strong sense of self and purpose, and to that extent at least the book is very positive. Don't read this book if you are looking for a shocking or scandalous narrative that reveals the secrets of various celebrities or church members. Rather, Hill's narrative is a slow methodical description of her life in the church and her escape. She describes what happened from her perspective as it was happening, without inserting information she now knows about what was really going on -- this comes more toward the end of the narrative. To me, this is what made it so powerful -- such an unconsciounable way to raise a child is described in a simple deadpan fashion -- slowly Jenna comes to realize that the world she understands as normal is small, insular and abusive, and that she doesn't have to be part of that world. The audio version was particularly good because the narrator's voice uses just the right tone to convey this world as seen through a child's eyes, then as a teenager and finally as a young adult.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I still haven't read Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief although I have seen the documentary based on it. Many of the names that come up in this memoir of growing up inside Scientology are the same, because the author is the niece of the current leader of the church. It should be noted that her grandparents, parents, husband, and siblings have all also left the church.

People who grow up in fundamentalist sects or cults are endlessly fascinating to me, perhaps because I can see part of my own religious upbringing in their experience, magnified 10-50%. Scientology borrows heavily from other religions and practices in ways that make sense at the beginning stages and serve to suck you in. The people running the organization have employed highly unethical practices to keep people in the membership, to hush people who leave, and to continue recruiting new members.

L. Ron Hubbard set out to create a religion after starting out as a science fiction author. Reading this book was like reading a surreal dystopia, a story I would not have believed could exist in our society. But it does!

The book can be a little hard to read at times but only because Scientology deliberately obfuscates normal human interaction by having terminology and abbreviations for everything. SP, MEST, CCM, Sea Org, auditors, clear, etc., etc. Jenna Miscavige Hill describes the methods used to teach young children these beliefs and they almost veer into torture and mind control territory.

I believe everyone can choose their own religion. I understand the pull of Scientology, particularly if you want to belong and you feel misunderstood by the outside world. They understand and take advantage of the concept of closing off and pulling into a community. So did every cult leader of any time ever. But when you are forced into a religion as a child, when you are not educated in a way that you have a choice, where your education consists more of religious teachings than a standard education, it veers into abuse. Most surprising in this book is the view of the family by the Church of Scientology - how divorces were forced if partners

were in different levels in the organization, how children were separated from their parents and often not allowed to contact them, how family members were forced to cut ties from anyone deemed an SP ("Suppressive Person.") While Jenna tells the specifics of her own experience, the reader can step back and see how much control the leaders of this organization have taken over the members of their religion

The end of her story is the most interesting to me - what they Church tried to get her to sign, the role Anonymous played in the Tom Cruise video and worldwide protests, and how she has become an anti-Scientology activist.

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## Catherine Howard says

(4.5 stars)

Having just finished Lawrence Wright's GOING CLEAR, I found BEYOND BELIEF to be as equally riveting as it was disturbing. The niece of Scientology head honcho (and Tom Cruise BFF) David Miscavige, Jenna Hill grew up in the Church which, as you'll learn in this book, is like a different planet compared to what "public Scientologists" (and celebrities are included in that) experience as The Church of Scientology.

The thing with BEYOND BELIEF is that it's Jenna's own words, own experience and own perspective, and so you can really see why she thought her life of incarceration and punishment and downright craziness, at times, was normal. This is the first time I've read a "I escaped from Scientology book" that has made me understand why they were there in the first place, or why they didn't escape earlier.

It isn't the first time though I've wondered why the authorities or Amnesty International hasn't got involved... The public face of the Church may be harmless enough, but after reading this I'm more convinced than ever that what goes on behind closed doors with the members who devote their life to it is the furthest thing from harmless. Winston in 1984 had it easy compared to this.

An absolutely riveting book, I wholeheartedly recommend it. But you WILL be disturbed. Well done to Jenna for having the courage to share her story.

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## aPriL does feral sometimes says

In the book 'Beyond Belief' Jenna Miscavige Hill describes in detail how the Scientology Church worked. Her descriptions of the church actually fits every line of the list on how to run a mind-control cult, using the proven indoctrination methods of authoritarian regimes, prisons, religious cults and military units the world over.

She discusses what happened to her in which she was made to accept the teaching of Scientology from early childhood to her adult life. The only thing benign about what Jenna describes in her book is her innocent acceptance of what she was suffering.

Like North Koreans, she had no idea of what the outside world was like, as she grew up being moved from Church compound to church compound. She almost never met 'Wogs' - people who were not Scientologists. Instead she was forced to back-breaking days of hard labor and continuous classroom study in mind-

numbing repetition of Hubbard's 'religious' Scientology writings. The design of her and the other children's lives, separated from their parents for years, struck me the same as descriptions of reeducation camps in Communist countries.

Scientology 'school' studies were of little use beyond learning how to read and write. The subjects studied were bizarre ritualistic instructions and memorizations - which seemed to me to be either entirely OCD verbal and physical rituals, or Arkham Asylum busy work.

In my lifetime, there have been so many cults - many many many cults. Thousands of people join them, giving up all of their worldly goods, giving up their children, disappearing in special compounds where they don't see their families or children for years, giving up their marriage exclusivity, constantly being moved about one step ahead of the authorities, working 16 hour days at hard labor and no pay, and studying 'little red books' which tend to run to hundreds of pages of bizarre gobblegook rantings about some sort of apocalypse (I've read a lot). Peculiar church or temple rituals involve secret sayings, chanted precious leader quotation memorizations, hand signs and membership costume clothing.

All cults do these things because it is the most effective way to destroy a person's sense of individuality. Group think is quickly imposed, as it is a powerful force on human minds. Insane punishments over trivial and inane missteps or normal behaviors is common, which are approved by the total membership. Parents of cults have been known to prostitute their 9-year-old daughters to the Messiah of their cult, considering it a great honor.

Ron Hubbard, the founding member of Scientology, said he was a full member of the Blackfoot Indian tribe of Montana. He said he was a nuclear physicist. He said he was severely disabled by his military service. All of this is untrue.

There are statements from witnesses, including from his own son, which noted that Hubbard was an extreme drug user. He loved in particular pills which cause delusions. He was also a popular science fiction author, with 19 of his books having been on the New York Times Bestseller list. I read many of his books as a teenager. I thought they were exciting books.

One of his exciting stories is as follows: Once upon a time, a space alien called Xenu killed millions of other aliens, called Thetans. Xenu then relocated the Thetan survivors to Earth. Xenu put the Thetans into DC-8's and flew them near Earth's volcanoes. The planes blew up. Today, souls of the Thetans are haunting humans.

At some point, Hubbard decided this invented story of his (he was a science fiction writer) was real, or maybe he saw a better way than writing novels to make a living when he noticed rich Westerners were piling into India to study New Age Buddhism/Hinduism with gurus in the 1970's. Mother Earth/Gaia/New Age/Groking books were 1970's bestsellers (particular by fellow science fiction writers Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein) and other brand new 1970's New Age religions were overwhelming Hollywood movie stars and American youth culture.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Age](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Age)

Communes were started by believers of New Age religions. College students all over the United States were meditating and medicating with LSD as required by various New Age Jewish/Buddhist mystical sects. The serial killer Charles Manson began a New Age cult.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_B...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_B...)

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manso...>

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_...)

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippie>

Quoted:

"Sutcliffe described the "typical" participant in the New Age milieu as being "a religious individualist, mixing and matching cultural resources in an animated spiritual quest". Susan Lee Brown noted that in the U.S., the movement was first embraced by the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964), "through which it was incubated and transmitted to other parts of American society". Heelas asserted that the movement was "strongly associated" with members of the middle and upper-middle classes of Western society. He added that within that broad demographic, the movement had nevertheless attracted a diverse clientele. He typified the typical New Ager as someone who was well-educated yet disenchanted with mainstream society, thus arguing that the movement catered to those who believe that modernity is in crisis. He suggested that the movement appealed to many former practitioners of the 1960s counter-culture because while they came to feel that they were unable to change society, they were nonetheless interested in changing the self. He believed that many individuals had been "culturally primed for what the New Age has to offer", with the New Age attracting "expressive" people who were already comfortable with the ideals and outlooks of the movement's self-spirituality focus. It could be particularly appealing because the New Age suited the needs of the individual, whereas traditional religious options that are available primarily catered for the needs of a community. He believed that although the adoption of New Age beliefs and practices by some fitted the model of religious conversion, others who adopted some of its practices could not easily be considered to have converted to the religion" ----from Wikipedia.

This was the cultural environment of American baby boomers in the 1970's, my culture too, and it is also the culture in which Hubbard was living. Maybe he believed in some of it, maybe he had a drug delusion, or maybe he made a drunken barfly bet with a friend that American people were so besotted with New Age mysticism and religion he could start one too by following well-established principles known by all organized religions.

So, Hubbard created Scientology to help people control the Thetan souls he believed (maybe not) that we all carry inside us from incarnation to incarnation, ruining our lives with inner chaos and misery. A clue to Hubbard's intentions and beliefs might be in that the Thetan story originally was revealed only after believers had spent thousands and thousands of dollars for seminars to learn self-controlling meditation methodologies and specially created Scientology religious practices. Members were rewarded eventually with being told inner-circle secrets, such as the Thetan invasion, known only to big-spending scientology members. Disillusioned ex-members have gone public, so, now we know, gentle readers. I think perhaps Scientology has moved away from its creation fiction, and it now concentrates on loyalty-creating methods such as sternly enforcing its rigid New Age religious practices, as told in 'Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape'.

I have my own encounter with Scientology to relate, gentle reader, before Tom Cruise, before Scientology was wealthy and a major corporation. I learned about Scientology before they made the Thetan origin story secret.

I was shopping in downtown Seattle with a girlfriend in the early 1970's. This very nice guy pulled us into an upstairs floor in a two-story commercial building which housed a pharmacy on the lower floor. The staircase to the upper floor was inside the pharmacy going up into the center of the building. I liked the wooden steps because they smelled nice of fresh cut wood - this all served to imprint the memory into my mind. But the entire situation was unusual, dear reader, so it wasn't only about the odd staircase.

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The building was named 'The Small Triangle' because of its wedged shape, squeezed into a corner of an

intersection in the middle of Seattle's major department store area at the time. Upstairs the peculiar organization which apparently had temporarily rented the upper floor had poster advertisements pasted all over on walls. On sandwich boards and the posters was the proclamation that we needed the book 'Dianetics' which they were giving away free if we listened to a presentation. I'm a book lover, so I sat down near a battered desk. There was a device sitting in the corner with a label on it that said E-Meter. I asked him what the machine was for. That is when he openly discussed the Thetans and their forces within us. The talk was about 15 minutes. I left with my free copy of Dianetics. It had a drawing of an exploding volcano on the cover. All of the posters on the walls had exploding volcanoes, too.

I think I was 19 years old. I read about half of the book. It really was very interesting, but I already had subscriptions to Cosmopolitan Magazine and Redbook, and it seemed full of the same Buddhist/Hindu/Hippie/New Age psychobabble I was reading in magazines and seeing in TV shows, like 'The Mod Squad' [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_M...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_M...) This WAS the 1970's, as I previously mentioned. I'd been reading thousands of counterculture New Age media adaptations in articles since I was 16 (and taking the quizzes about what kind of personality I was). Dianetics fit into the New Age mythology perfectly, common and everywhere in American culture.

As I left the building, a hippy-styled man on the street handed me a colored paper (purple) which invited me to attend meetings teaching the levels of understanding (?!?) reached through Dianetics. He asked me if I wanted to attend a meeting, but it cost money - I think \$25 a session. I was earning \$400 a month, so I said no.

It stuck in my mind because it was so weird. The room in which I was talked to took up the entire wedge of the building, and the floor had construction dust all over, with drywalled windowed walls, with little cheap tables set up and folding chairs, where there were several of us being individually introduced to Scientology. Although at no time was the word religion mentioned (instead, it was something like a 'dynamic exciting new psychology method which will unlock the fires of your inner potential', or something) I was reminded of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses by the way they all dressed exactly alike in white shirts and dark pants and short hair, except for the street man who was grabbing people. In the 1970's we wore tee-shirts, bell bottomed jeans, peasant dresses and had long shaggy hair and neck beads. The leftie middle-class were wearing Nehru jackets and sandals. No one wore white shirts and black pants except Mormons - and Scientologists.

Later, a Wienerschnitzel rented the same space, and I often went there for lunch with my girlfriends, telling them about the weird book giveaway I had experienced there. The upstairs had been completely decorated by Wienerschnitzel. Great food, by the way.

Five years later, I met a follower of 'The Way'. He was a very sweet married father of two babies. He told me 'The Way' changed his life. It was a Christian denomination. I saw the book 'Dianetics' in his living room and told him I had attended a Scientology recruitment center. He crossed himself and told me it was a satanic religion. Then he gave me a religious presentation trying to get me to go to a church meeting of 'The Way'. It was some sort of Korean church, but instead of Hubbard, they idolized a Korean messiah, who was THE man promised in the Second Coming. Actually, I couldn't make up my mind which was weirdest of the two theologies.

People believe anything if wrapped up in religious trappings and stylings.

Maybe you have heard of the following recent cults: Bhagwan Shree Rahneesh in Oregon, Children of God in California, Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda, Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, Order of the Solar Temple in Geneva, Branch Davidians in Texas, Heaven's Gate in California, the Manson Family in California, and the People's Temple which ended up in Guyana. I got this list from The How Stuff Works website here: <http://people.howstuffworks.com/cult.htm>

I was alive during all of the decades these religious churches were exposed and I remember the news stories everywhere. Yet, they keep on coming, and people keep on joining, despite the widely dispersed information of how they operate. Jenna Hill's book on coming of age within Scientology describes many of the same techniques and tactics, yet people still adore, defend and protect this church. Adult members STILL gladly abandon their children to distant isolated Scientology compounds.

I already know the book will be useless in discouraging 'believers', which is why the legal difficulty in closing these cults down. The enthralled members continue to join these religions and fight everyone who try to get them and their children to leave.

I recommend this book to interested readers.

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## **Mariah says**

I chose this book because a friend of mine on Goodreads read it and loved it. Also, I love learning about different religions, especially when people take religion to the extreme. Like in Jenna's situation. She was born into a extreme situation of Scientology.

Jenna Miscavige Hill is the niece of the Church of Scientology's leader David Miscavige. This gave her a different perspective and experience growing up then the other scientologist around her. THIS helped her in the beginning to get some special treatment, but later on made her punishments and watchful eyes more intense.

When I started reading this book the thought occurred to me about not knowing much about Scientology. This book explains why. There can be harsh punishment for those that speak out against Scientology and the religion tries to keep the public eye out of their private matters. That is why Jenna's words and book is so important. It has shine a light on a childhood that most people are unaware of that exists in the US.

Growing up Janna's family was forced to have prolonged separation from each other to serve the greater good of the Church. This is also why the environment was rooted in control. When breaking the rules or they assumed you broke the rules the members would face harsh punishments.

"Despite this hardship, it is only when her family approaches dissolution and her world begins to unravel that she is finally able to see the patterns of stifling conformity and psychological control that have ruled her life. Faced with a heartbreaking choice, she mounts a courageous escape, but not before being put through the ultimate test of family, faith, and love. At once captivating and disturbing, *Beyond Belief* is an eye-opening exploration of the limits of religion and the lengths to which one woman went to break free."

This book was phenomenal and the author was so personable. I am glad that she is standing up to the unfair treatment of her childhood and I suggest this book to everyone!

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## **Matt says**

In my time reading biographies (both this current run and in general), I have come across a number of subjects and themes. Many have been political in nature, while others tell of the life and times of a person whose name recognition makes them a household name. It seems my latest topic of interest is the personal struggle, which will surely open up avenues of angst and some painful revelations. This brought me to the

piece by Jenna Miscavige Hill, whose entire childhood was shaped by the Church of Scientology. Born into the Church and the third generation of familial followers, Jenna explains the background of the organisation and how her family played a key role at the grassroots level. The Church of Scientology is less that of a Christian sect than a spiritual hierarchy, believing that its members sign a billion year contract of devotion and whose Thetan (spirit) is able to move from body to body to complete this agreement. After its creation by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, the group grew in popularity in the late 1950s, with a strong naval foundation based on the fact that Hubbard developed it aboard a ship in international waters, to protect him from US officials. Jenna goes into great detail about the numerous paths and hierarchies within the Church, which includes a very strict program, less of spiritual enlightenment than education on linguistic minutiae supported by rote memorisation. Jenna talks at length about the struggle to meet the requirements to complete courses and not be shamed. The fact that her uncle, David Miscavige, was extremely high in the Scientology Executive and eventually guided the organisation after Hubbard's body drop (death) only added pressure to Jenna as she tried to follow the stringent courses. With parents who were high-up as well and living away from her, Jenna struggled without parental roles at these most formative years. Struggling to impress and remain on track, Jenna's studies forced her to think maturely at the age of ten, cramming information and sentiments that many university students would find daunting. Moving into adolescence and early adulthood, Jenna found herself questioning some of the basic tenets and decisions the Church held as central, the height of blasphemy that was regularly communicated to her. Exemplifying some of the extreme rigidity, Jenna Miscavige shows how she could not live the life she wanted, even while a number of high-profile individuals happily balanced Hollywood living with a personal journey within the Church of Scientology. An eye-opening book of struggle and tell-all that the curious reader should explore, which might better explain the Church's appeal to some of the great stars of the silver screen.

I was thoroughly intrigued by this biography/memoir for a number of reasons. Admittedly, I am always drawn to organisations that fail outside the norm, especially those who tend to be religious and vilified in the mainstream media (having gone so far as to take an undergraduate course in cults and religious extremism, many moons ago). Miscavige being a child while inside the Church of Scientology provides additional interest for me, giving what one might call a young person's flavour to the sentiments. She is blunt and open in her story, layered with the positions of hierarchy her family members play in the Church, as well as the elitist caste in which she found herself. Surely, no child can stand up and choose to leave of their own volition, which does explain some of her choices to study harder and participate without objection. What left me on the fence about the struggles and angst within this book was that there was no outward abuse and no blatant personal violations handed down. Additionally, purporting that it was a "harrowing struggle" and associating this struggle with the cute blonde girl on the cover is completely misleading, even listening to the narrative that she offered after leaving the Church. Miscavige's story is still one of powerlessness and childhood vulnerability, if only because she was required to remain so ensconced in the Church's rules, with no parents or family members willing to get her out. It was only after she became an adult that her challenges flourished into personal questions and eventually required her to wheedle out of the billion year commitment signed when she was a young child. A textbook case of hierarchy and layered commitment, the Church of Scientology has mastered the art of secrecy and holding its members to the highest and most rigid standards. I'll pass and leave the couch jumping to Tom!

Kudos, Madam Miscavige Hill for offering up much of your life and placing it under the microscope for all to see. Harrowing, perhaps not, but surely a strong determination to reclaim your life from a Church that would benefit with "no means no".

Love/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:  
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

## Karen says

I don't normally read memoirs of celebrities or other people who were made known by public media. I feel that a person's memoir shouldn't be read as an entertainment, but as something that one could learn a few life lessons from. But, I need to read the newest Scientology Book Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief for a group discussion, and figured that this newly published memoir written in a first person account by a previous Scientologist would be a great complement to help my understanding of the organization. I'm so glad I did.

However, as a Chinese American whose parents and Grandparents suffered during the Cultural Revolution and Communist reign in China, it absolutely broke my heart to realize that similar practices could happen right here, right now, in our free and democratic country. Many techniques Jenna and her peers had suffered since young was not news for people who recognize them: Uniform dress code, isolation from the public, chanting/singing, vague and fuzzy ideals/doctrines, lack of privacy, controlled and public punishment, peer evaluation/finger-pointing, controlled diet, forced labor/resulted fatigues, metacommunications, mass gatherings, child/physical/mental abuse, personal and public humiliation, impossible and long work to move up the rank.... I could go on and on and on. It's unbelievable what kind of practice could evolve from the misuse of the First Amendment. Reading this book invoked lots of anger in me that I didn't even realize I have.

Putting my own feelings aside. The book was wonderfully written. Jenna Miscavige is the niece of the leader of Scientology, Dave Miscavige. She was born into a Scientology family. Both sides of her grandparents were devoted Scientologists and her parents were leaders in the Sea Org (where the highest rank and most devoted Scientologists belong) with prominent and important jobs. She was raised a Scientologist since birth and was in a children's camp since a toddler until she voluntarily left the organization in her early 20's after her wedding and a fellow Scientologist. Her narrative voice was down to earth, even child-like...which drew me in right from the beginning. She was able to tell the story quite objectively, just like Jeanette Wall's The Glass Castle, with no self-pity or extreme anger. She laid out all the facts exactly as what they were with no up- or downplaying. Ultimately it's up to each reader to draw his/her own conclusion at the end.

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## El says

I will say up front that I view Scientology much the same way I view organized religion as a whole, which is offensive to many. That is okay. To each their own.

What makes Scientology so fascinating to me is that so many people are taken in by their beliefs and yet it is so separate from the rest of society. It seems most people are born into it, and indoctrinated from a very young age, so they don't know any better. I guess all religions are that way, really, but Scientology takes their beliefs and they really just do their own thing. Jenna Miscavige Hill describes this in great detail (repetitive detail, but detail nonetheless). She is, of course, the niece of current chairman and buddy to Tom Cruise, David Miscavige. He took over the helm after L. Ron Hubbard died, and keeps all the little members in line. Jenna didn't have a chance - her parents were Scientologists, most of her family were Scientologists, it's just a family cycle that Jenna was born into and before too long (no, seriously, like at a very young age) Jenna had signed a billion-year contract with the Sea Org, one of the orders of Scientology.

They have their churches, and ranches, and facilities, and some unconventional beliefs. It's these beliefs that make regular people like you and me (assuming you're not a Scientologist) think the organization is full of whack-jobs - you hear some of these things and wonder which flavor Kool-Aid they're all drinking. But most religions seem that way to people of different religions (or people of no religions at all - that's right, you all

look weird to me), right, so who are any of us to judge?

Jenna's story is more sad to me than anything. She led a sad and isolated childhood without even realizing until later that it had been a sad and isolated childhood. As she got older and started having thoughts of her own, she apparently became Public Enemy #1 in the Sea Org, regardless of her ties to David Miscavige. She began speaking up and speaking out, in her own way, and this made a lot of people incredibly nervous.

Spoiler alert!: Jenna does get out. I mean, it's right there in the subtitle.

But it wasn't quite the harrowing escape I was led to believe. Yes, she was dealt a shit hand, but so was my best friend throughout junior high who was raised as a Southern Baptist and couldn't read whatever popular fantasy books were making the rounds, and couldn't celebrate Halloween or even hand out candy or even come to the door to see me in my fucking clown costume that one year. She was also dealt a shit hand, so I have difficulty putting all my sympathy in Jenna's basket when it comes to bad upbringings in the name of religion.

And, again, the escape itself... okay, so there were dramatic moments. There was screaming and yelling and spitting and apparently Jenna kicking down some doors while she was trying to find her boyfriend. But by the time they did leave, it was (for lack of a better term) accepted by the organization. No one left under the cover of night, crawling across the grass, ducking search lights, eating bugs, holding their breath until Tom Cruise passed by. That's what I was expecting. That's not how it went, and really by the end most readers will agree with Sea Org that Jenna was sort of a pill.

This doesn't make me any less interested in Scientology. It seems to be more socially acceptable for us to talk a bunch of shit about Scientology because it's totally weird and recent and hasn't been around for hundreds of thousands of years like so many other religions. It isn't even fully accepted by many as *being* a religion. So people will continue to write about their "harrowing escapes" and we will continue to eat it up because it's a whole different world out there, right? It's fascinating. Just don't forget your own religion looks just as weird to others, and please do not pretend that your church has never done anything unconventional or inappropriate. Because that's not a conversation anyone wants to have.

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## Hannah says

### Rating Clarification: 4.5 Stars

Rating not based on the actual writing per se (it is clear from the often times non-focused and badly edited narrative that Jenna Miscavige Hill is not a professional writer), but on her story about growing up in the ~~wacked-out cult~~ religion of Scientology as the niece of current leader Dave Miscavige from age two until she finally ~~escaped~~ left around age 21.

Kudos to her for speaking up and speaking out. I wish her and her family well in her new life among the "Wogs".

## Mark says

This is an in-depth account of life inside Scientology from one so close to the 'top of the tree'. Jenna Miscavige Hill is the niece of David Miscavige, the current leader of the Church (I use the term lightly). Indeed David took over as leader when the founder - L. Ron. Hubbard died, or "dropped his body" as they term it meaning he has outlived its use and will surface one day in another (try not to giggle).

I know "dropping the body" sounds ridiculous but that is the sort of thing dealt with daily within the church. Hubbard never saw it as a church but more of a way of life, or really a continuance as he believed that we all have many passed lives and future lives - the idea behind having to sign a contract committing to Scientology for a billion years. The belief that only Scientologists are pure and the earth must be rid of the scourge that is the current human civilisation.

Jenna has a remarkably vivid memory of events from her early childhood in the Church through until the day she escaped and began protesting against them. Her life in the 'Sea Org' was one of complete dominance. Really this organisation stands for everything that is illegal in the outside world. Child labour, slavery, tax avoidance (legally they pay no tax as a church but they are only a church in name strictly for this purpose), stalking and harassment. At its core Scientology is just one massive pyramid selling scheme. People are seduced into the church by Scientologists that are given the roles to recruit. Once inside the idea is to 'climb the bridge' by achieving different levels - each level is like a Scientology course which comes with its own set of exorbitant fees. The more people involved the more tax free money sucked out of pockets.

The higher up the bridge you climb the more ridiculous Scientology becomes - let's not forget that the whole principle was started by L. Ron. Hubbard, a science fiction author. Each step you take you believe stranger things and become more committed however there is no 'learning' here it is merely brainwashing. Two of the biggest principles are divide and conquer and belief through fear.

Families are very rarely together once inside the church. In Jenna's case it was not uncommon to see her parents only once a year, her parents also separated from one another. One in California, the other Florida. They control who you can speak to (must be on the same level as yourself) and who you can date. As you progress you live in different buildings or even different states - never allowed to get comfortable with the same group of people for too long. DIVISION!!

You are not to inquire about higher levels or know anything of them, including reading about, asking others or even seeing posters. The belief that if you learn 'out of sequence' you can cause severe mental problems or even death - in actuality if you knew the bizarre stuff learned higher up when still a novice you would break out laughing and walk away. They need to develop your mind over time so that you are prepared to believe. If you break a rule you are then submitted to a 'sec check' where you are asked a bunch of harrowing questions until you break down and admit even if you did not do it. If you become angry you are accused of a 'withhold' meaning you have done something that you are not telling. Then the sec check will bring it out of you. Ironically in Jenna's case she found by lying and admitting to something untrue helped her to pass a sec check. If you do something particularly bad you are put on RPF - Rehabilitation project force. This is a form of isolation (not in the same building but elsewhere in the country) where you work to recover your true Scientology and correct your errors. An RPF can take years to complete. All of these things hang over every Scientologist every day. FEAR!!!

These are but a few things that Jenna talks about in this book. The biggest question it leaves open to me is why are they able to get away with this? Six year olds put to work, a massive pyramid sell, abusive and

harrassment, tax avoidance, forced separations, pay as little as \$25 a week - I cannot get my head around why this is not a target for law enforcement. This book outlines appalling behaviour and abuse from the outset - daily threats and yelling matches, working from 6:30am until midnight and beyond with a 15 minute meal break. Being forced to buy books worth \$80 when paid \$25 a week, kids flown from one side of the country to the other against their will and alone to start a new life in a different department. Housed in filthy accommodation with many people. Dressed in ridiculous uniforms exposing them to public ridicule.

And then when Jenna finally leaves, she is followed and harrassed. Photos are taken of her they try to break up her marriage through threatening family members of expulsion from the church.

This is truly an eye opening book. One that makes you ride along with Jenna and feel the frustration and torment. In parts it will make you angry while in others you will smile at the stupidity of this organisation. Their belief system is a joke but a very dangerous joke. These people are brainwashing kids and ruining their lives to serve the egotistical needs of a few. I fail to see why the parallels with the Nazi party in the 1930's and 40's are ignored.

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## **Arah-Lynda says**

Jenna was raised to obey.

She is the niece of the leader (David Miscavige) of The Church of Scientology. While still a toddler, Jenna's parents became members of The Sea Organization, the church's, elite, inner clergy. Such membership demanded all of their time and attention, leaving Jenna and her brother to be raised by other caretaker members of the Church, until their formal education at "the Ranch" began at the age of seven.

The clocks do not strike thirteen in Jenna's world and this is not some imaginary place, but people still call her mother Sir. I had to remind myself of these things as I read her indoctrination to a life that served the greater good of The Church.

A life of work, study, measure; audit, correct and control. Lather, rinse, repeat; Jenna's was a life of strictly imposed conformity, strange rituals, back breaking work, mind- numbing, repetitious training routines; with endless audits, peer evaluation, hunger, sleep deprivation and an active, obsessively enforced devotion to L. Ron Hubbard and his teachings.

*During our course period, we were now required to get a daily meter check, to be administered by a supervisor. The supervisor would use an LRH invention called an electro-psychometer, but everybody called it the E-Meter. The person being assessed held two soup cans. Then, a tiny electrical current was passed through the cans into his body as he was asked questions. The E-Meter had a needle, and after each question, the needle would fluctuate; those movements were then interpreted by the person operating the machine. By carefully watching the motions of the needle, the operator supposedly could figure out whether someone was telling the truth. The E-Meter was viewed as a tool that helped the auditing process.*

Jenna tells her story in a very down to earth, matter of fact, child like voice, that drew me in right away and was easy to understand despite all the Scientology speak that litters the narrative.

I read this three weeks and three books ago and I have still not succeeded in evicting Jenna's world from my mind. It is like an inner rage that cannot be quieted. I have sat down several times now in an attempt to purge this rage by writing this review, still it remains unquiet. Maybe that's because despite all the controversy over the real number, Scientology still has thousands of followers or perhaps because children are still being

raised on one version or another of The Church's "ranches" or could it be that this oppression that starts with a c and shares a u, but should never be considered a church; also enjoys public endorsement from some rather well known celebrities.

It is alive and well and thrives among us, in a free and democratic country. The quiet my mind seeks eludes me.

A final thought from the founder himself, L. Ron Hubbard, whose own death is shrouded in mystery and controversy.

**If you want to make a little money, write a book. If you want to make a lot of money, create a religion.**

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## **Grglstr says**

I've been interested in the high weirdness behind Scientology since first seeing the Dianetics advertisements in the '80s (Volcanoes! Mountain climbing!) and reading a copy from a yard sale (it reads like the mid-century pop-psych that it is). My curiosity was further piqued when I came across Operation Clambake in the late 90s ( xenu.net) and biographies of L. Ron Hubbard, such as Jon Atack's A Piece of Blue Sky and Russell Miller's Bare-faced Messiah. I became fascinated how Hubbard served the role of the black sheep from the golden age of science fiction. (For an extra bit of weirdness, try the Jack Parson biography "Sex and Rockets," which features tales of how Hubbard took part as the in Parson's sexual black magic ceremonies, began a yacht-buying company with Parsons and, ultimately, ran off with Parson's mistress--a future Mrs. Hubbard--and yacht. You don't see that pamphlet at Scientology headquarters, I'd bet.)

Anyway, I watched with armchair interest in all the developments of Scientology in the 2000s, from Lisa McPherson's tragically preventable death to Tom Cruise's couch-jumping to Anonymous's global protests, etc.

Jenna Miscavige Hill's tale is a small slice of what went on in behind the scenes in Scientology during the 90s-2000s, outside all the furniture hopping and Guy Fawkes masks. It is a tale of the power of brainwashing and groupthink, and the ability of Scientology to tear a family apart through coercion and control.

It is odd to read the memoirs of a young person barely into adulthood, yet Hill's struggles are enthralling. I wept a bit (on the train, which is awkward, I'm big white guy) about her youth, separated from her parents and forced to work on Scientology's desert ranch. I cringed along as she went through her awkward tweens and teens (forced to accept responsibilities as an adult in her church). And I rallied with her as she met her husband and, together, they stood their ground. She is a remarkable young woman, and I wish her and her family all the best.

This isn't an easy book to read. It is filled with all sorts of technical Scientology-speak, and you would think that Hill's co-author would have helped smooth it out.

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## **Rob says**

In a word, horrifying.

This was a rare nonfiction read for me, brought to my attention as an Amazon.com editor's pick. It pains me to tick the "nonfiction" box on my Goodreads shelf, and so acknowledge that this really happened to someone -- in fact, to a *lot* of someones. And it continues to happen to more of them, and most of them don't get out.

The basics: This is a memoir by Jenna Miscavige Hill, about her upbringing in the Church of Scientology and her escape from it. You may recognize the name Miscavige; it is also the surname of David Miscavige, the current head of Scientology. Hill is his niece. I imagine that by now anyone reading this book is aware of Scientology, but just in case: Scientology is nominally a religion, founded by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. It's drawn widespread criticism for its treatment of members and their associates, widespread derision for some of its claims, and has developed a reputation for litigious suppression of its critics. It also claims many prominent adherents, most famously Tom Cruise. I suspect that the Scientology experience for people like Cruise differs dramatically from the experience for the average member.

There are several important facts to keep in mind when reading this book. First, as Miscavige's niece, Hill is sheltered from the worst of what less connected members might have to endure. Second, as Miscavige's niece, she is inescapably a person of interest to the church, and an average member is likely subject to far less scrutiny and micromanagement. Third, Hill was a member of the "Sea Org," an organization inside the church, life within which is apparently rather different from so-called "public membership."

As for recommendation for or against reading it, I can't make one, as it will be dependent on your interest in the subject matter. For what it is I enjoyed it, if one can be said to enjoy something like this, and I think as first authorships go it's well-written, or else well-edited. For me it was a fascinating look inside the workings of a highly secretive organization with a reputation for comic book levels of villainy.

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## **Pouting Always says**

Jenna was raised with Scientology and stayed with the church until 2005. The writing was pretty good for a memoir and I really enjoyed reading it. I think a lot of people who didn't like it were people who expected something dramatic, which I guess the title doesn't help, but the whole point was to reveal what it was really like growing up in the church and the way they brain wash people basically into believing all those things. Jenna did a good job of showing her slow but steady disillusionment with the church and I learned a lot about that I didn't know, none of which is okay even if it's not the worst thing that's happened in a cult. I think it's really good that people speak out about these things because when you don't know any better it's so easy to get sucked into things like Scientology. The ending was a little flat for me but I think this is a really good memoir or autobiography about living with Scientology and the way it affects people's lives.

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## **Kelli says**

Scientology reminds me of Stalinism. What is described in this book is a terrifying combination of abuse, nonsensical rules, extreme control, brainwashing, punishment, hard labor, and isolation. Jenna deserves 5 million stars for being born into Scientology, raised on a compound surrounded by and submerged in

Scientology doctrine, and *somehow* getting both herself and her husband out, despite being the niece of the pack leader. This is an unbelievable show of bravery, strength, and what else...something there may not be a word for yet or I just don't know it...the ability to cut through everything you have ever been told and begin to question whether it is right, then upon determining that it is not right, having the tenacity to go up against the most formidable opponent. Unbelievable!

This audiobook, however, was in need of a better editor and a better ghost writer. It felt as though the narrator was reading a child's diary out loud, simple writing with too many details about room setups and furniture. The linear, step by step approach to daily life was repetitive, as were the acronyms and definitions throughout the book...certainly important to understand the story, but these did not require an explanation every time they appeared in the story. In more capable hands this could have been gripping, as the story is there but I felt it deserved sharper writing and more varied detail. Regardless of my opinion of the quality of the book, her life is thankfully now her own. I am impressed by her, that she is speaking out at all and that she is a constant source of support for others. I wish her nothing but peace, happiness, and freedom. 3 stars.

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## Krycek says

### THIS IS THE REVIEW!

I know you're wondering why I'm shouting at you. I thought it'd be a nice way to start the review after reading this:

*"Are you hungry?" Diane asked.*

*"No," I replied.*

*"Good," Diane said as she marked my answer on her worksheet. "Are you tired?" she asked next.*

*"No," I replied.*

*"Good." She marked this on her worksheet as well. These were the questions that started off every auditing session. "Is there any reason not to start this session?" she asked.*

*"We're doing a session?" I asked, a little surprised.*

*"Yeah, the one we just read about in the book."*

*"Oh, okay."*

*Diane repeated the question. "Is there any reason not to start the session?"*

*"I don't think so," I said.*

*"This is the session!" she said in an unusually loud voice and with a particularly intense stare.*

*The loud tone was exactly what she was supposed to do and how every Scientology session commenced.*

That's an example of an auditing session, sort of like Scientology's version of the Voight-Kampff test in *Bladerunner*, as related by author Jenna Miscavige Hill in her memoir *Beyond Belief*, or what I like to call *Growing Up In Crazyland*.

While this was not the most strange or frightening episode in the book, it was the first to make me realize that we were going through the looking glass here, into *Village of the Damned* territory.

I need to preface this by saying that I'm not judging anyone's metaphysical beliefs. I'm not the religious sort myself and find most religions somewhat screwy anyway, but that's just me. Those sorts of things are private matters, as far as I'm concerned. But the Church of Scientology is quick to label any sort of criticism

as bigotry. So, to be clear (no pun intended), I don't intend to criticize anyone's *beliefs*. But Hill makes a good point with the title of her book. Scientology goes *beyond* simple belief. The entire doctrinal and organizational structure is geared toward an environment in which mind-control and paranoia are pervasive. While Lawrence Wright's excellent *Going Clear* provides a fairly comprehensive and even-handed overview of the history of the Church of Scientology and its current state, Hill's story is a far more personal one. Here we get a sense of what it's like to be raised in such an environment in which every aspect of one's life is molded to the ideals of Scientology at the expense of everything else, including family and personal freedom.

Born into Scientology, Jenna Miscavige Hill, niece of Scientology's diminutive despot David Miscavige, whom she refers to as "Uncle Dave," signed the billion-year contract with the Sea Organization (or "Sea Org," the Church's "clerical" branch) when she was just a kid. The idea of a "billion-year contract" (literally, they mean a billion years!) is nuts enough, let alone having a kid sign a contract that is going to affect the rest of her life. Much of her story reads like a dystopian YA novel, and I'm not saying that as criticism. Hill spent her formative years in the Sea Org. Even the basic experiences of growing up, like basic education, time with family, and meeting boys, were under the control of the Church. Her upbringing was so far out of what most people consider normal that it hardly seems possible in this day and age, but Hill's story isn't a novel, and that makes it all the more disturbing.

Fortunately for Hill, there's a happy ending for her. She and her husband managed to escape the CoS (though not without great difficulty) and are now strong opponents of the Church. Based on the writing alone, which is clearly written and engrossing, even if it is not, perhaps, a literary triumph, I'd give *Beyond Belief* three stars. **But** I feel that the real value of the book lies in the fact that it brings attention to the Church of Scientology's abuses in a personal and accessible manner and gets an additional star for that.

I find it rather incredible that celebrity Scientologists, who are clearly not exposed to the darker side of Scientology, are not even willing to entertain accusations of the Church's abuses. With the efforts of internet-troublemakers Anonymous and the numerous high-profile defectors from the CoS, I think the public is getting a better idea of the CoS's abuses, but a lot still needs to be done. Jenna Miscavige Hill's *Beyond Belief* is an engaging testimony to the destructiveness of the Church and a brave voice for families rent asunder by its practices.

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