Lawrence Wright uncovers the inner workings of the Church of Scientology: its origins in the imagination of L. Ron Hubbard; its struggles to be legally acknowledged; its campaign to infiltrate the U.S. government; its vindictive treatment of critics; its wealth; and its efforts to prevail after the death of Hubbard.


About the Author: David Ignatius was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on May 26, 1950. He received a B.A. from Harvard University in 1963 and a diploma in economics from Kings College, Cambridge, England, in 1975. He has worked as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times Magazine, and the Washington Post, where he is an associate editor. In 1985, he received the Edward Weintal Prize for diplomatic reporting from the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. He is the author of several novels including Agents of Innocence, Siro, The Bank of Fear, A Firing Offense, Body of Lies, The Increment, and The Director. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. What was your biggest surprise in reading Going Clear?

2. Is Scientology a religion?

3. Obviously, there were many skeptics of R.L. Hubbard and Scientology. Why do you think Scientology was able to gain such a large following so quickly?

4. Do you think Hubbard was an effective or ineffective leader? How so?

5. In Scientology, does the pursuit of completing all OT Levels to become clear and participating in servitude, or RPF programs, if wavering from the "path" remind you of any other popular belief systems?

6. Does this make you skeptical of any other beliefs, even your own personal beliefs?

7. Scientology is strongly associated with celebrities and Hollywood fame. How does this make you feel about well known practicing celebrities like Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kristie Alley, Danny Masterson, Elizabeth Moss, Beck, and many others?

8. Why do you think the beliefs of Scientology and Hollywood mesh together, if they do at all?

9 Over the past few years, may people have come forward to share their struggle with leaving, or attempting to leave, the Church of Scientology. Changing faiths is common practice around the world. Why is Scientology particularly hard to leave?

10. Do you think that it's possible that Scientology and the “auditing technologies” have healing capabilities?
11. Does R. L. Hubbard remind of someone, living or deceased?

(Questions issued by publisher.)
But Wright’s book, “Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief,” makes clear that Scientology is like no church on Earth (or, in all probability, Venus or Mars either). The closest institutional parallel would be the Communist Party in its heyday: the ruthless struggles for power, the show trials and forced confessions (often false); the paranoia (often justified); the determination to control its members’ lives completely (the key difference, you will recall, between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, according to the onetime American ambassador to the United Nations J