

Written by James Randi

Saturday, 10 January 2009 12:00



SCIENTOLOGIST
Tommy Davis

On Thursday, January 8th, Tommy Davis, a spokesman for the Church of Scientology International [COS], appeared on the NBC Today show to respond to questions about the possible COS influence on actor John Travolta's actions re the recent tragic death of his 16-year-old son, Jett. NBC interviewer Ann Curry asked Davis whether the Church approved of the use of "medicine prescribed by a doctor," to which Davis answered:

Absolutely, Ann. When - whenever you're dealing with any kind of physical condition - I mean - this - this isn't the kind of thing that's - that's even an option, I mean, this is - this is, mandatory, ah, ah, you know - you have some sort of physical condition diagnosed by a medical doctor and that doctor is prescribing the medication, the person is going to take it, I mean, just - just, like anybody else would. Dealing with a physical condition, you're going to do that.

Please note that Davis used the specific expression "physical condition" in this answer, three times. He had evidently been coached to emphasize that the COS - following their founder L. Ron Hubbard's confusing view of how the universe works - accepts medical intervention in "physical" problems. As for whether they were equally willing to discuss psychological or emotional situations, Davis was prepared to waffle and dodge, and he did. Examine the following section of the transcript and decide for yourself. Asked by Ann what's meant by the Scientology expression "drug free," and whether it means not using substances like cocaine and marijuana, Davis answered:

Yeah, exactly. We're talking about street drugs there, or that kind of thing, in terms of drug abuse or drug addiction and - and you know, any sort of illicit or street drugs, that kind of thing, but, as far as medical drugs, as far as going to a doctor and being with any kind of physical condition or something that might be wrong with somebody, Scientologists go to doctors, for sure. It - it's, you know - it's a matter of Church policy, frankly, you know. If someone has some sort of physical condition and they're suffering in some way, uh, something's going on, they're going to go to a doctor and - and seek conventional medical help, and - and follow that course of treatment that - that any doctor would recommend.

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Ann then inquired:

What if it's a psychological condition or a neuro... neurological condition like autism? Does the Church recognize that?

Davis:

Well, I'm - you know, when - when you're talking about a medical condition you're talking about this, something that's physically wrong with somebody, and - and, and that kind of thing and the provenance of, of a medical doctor, it - I mean, that's really what we're talking about here, um - and, you know - and sometimes physical conditions involve the brain, or some sort of malfunctioning - you know - in that regard, and - and again that's absolutely the provenance of medicine, and - and Scientologists go to doctors for that.

Notice that Davis maneuvered around Ms. Curry's direct question, one that only required a "yes" or "no" response. He used 85 words to say *nothing*, and he wasn't pressed for a yes-or-no answer... Ann then asked:

Let me ask you one last question, because some people who have reported on the Church, and some who have left the Church, have said that according to Scientology, people with disabilities like autism are classified as - and I'm using a quote here - "degraded," that they're capable of curing themselves by working harder on the Church's teachings. Is that the position of Scientology?

The pressure was on. Davis answered, after a pause:

Absolutely not. I mean, that's completely false, and - and frankly... really what we're talking about here is - is, uh, this - this is a tragedy, I - I mean - no parent ever thinks they're going to lose their child, and - and I think if, if you have people, uh, coming out of the woodwork like that, ah, saying these kinds of things - I mean, I think that's pretty disgusting, and - and really what -

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what you said not true. I - I've never heard of any such thing, uh, and there's - there's nothing in or with Scientology that would ever look down on somebody in any way, shape, or form, um, we think, you know - I, I think that's, I mean, pretty gross, and I think it's a tragedy, and - ah, and it certainly doesn't sound like anything I've ever heard, I can tell you, it's absolutely, absolutely, not true.

In my opinion, Mr. Davis was floundering about trying to avoid answering. He turned his response into an appeal, reaching out for an understanding of this bizarre cult designed by a minor science-fiction writer - a cult that even he doesn't understand.

Nor do we...