What is the Meaning of Life?
Program 61
Jesus' Resurrection Broke the Death Barrier
by Ernest O'Neill

What is the meaning of life? Those of you who have listened to this program now for several months are probably fed up with me saying, "What is the meaning of life?" You probably wish I'd turn it off and try a different question. But it does seem so important, doesn't it?

Even though it's a little boring and perhaps a little irritating to keep repeating it, it is the basic question that most of us have who live on this earth. What is the point of this life? What is its purpose?

It's particularly relevant now because so many young and old people both in the States and here in Europe are committing suicide, simply because they can't make any sense of it. They're in the same position as old A.E. Housman, the English poet, when he wrote years ago,

"Yonder see the morning blink.
The sun is up and up must I,
To wash and dress and eat and drink,
And look at things and talk and think
And work and God knows why.
Oh, often have I washed and dressed
And what's to show for all my pain?
Let me lie abed and rest.
Ten thousand times I've done my best,
And all's to do again!"

It's amazing that so many of us feel as that man felt 50 to 60 to 70 years ago. That's why I start the broadcast so often with this miserable old question, "What is the meaning of life?" That's what's baffling and bewildering and depressing many of us. Many of us have great difficulty seeing any point in it at all.

It seems to be more and more a tale told by an idiot. So that's why I ask the question, "What is the meaning of life?" I remember my dad dying in Ireland about 26 years ago. He died on St. Patrick's Day, I remember, in March, in 1961. He died of hypertension.

Like most of us here, I couldn't conceive of life without him. But it's amazing, isn't it, how the mind's inability to conceive the magnitude of the last beat of a loved one's heart dulls the pain of that moment. I remember going to the nurse and telling her that I thought my father had just died, but would she make sure.

Then, of course, we began to experience what all of you have experienced probably -- the continued closeness that you tend to feel for the next few days after your dear one dies. It's just as if your dad or your mum, their spirit, continued for awhile around your home.

But then, especially after the burial, you feel that they've gone into an absolutely different realm and that death is a real separation from this present world. Now, that probably is the experience that highlights most clearly for all of us the question of what is the meaning of life - when, for somebody that we love, the life ceases.

We've made all kinds of attempts to crack the finality of that death experience, but all human attempts seem to have something of cheap fraud or inappropriate fake about them.

There are spiritualists and mediums that claim to be able to communicate with the dead.

But you always feel the communications have the static, lifeless quality of evil spirits imitating our dead relatives, or of some idyllic force, some power of magnetism in the mind that draws certain minds and ideas into the mind of the medium so that they can perceive what you're really thinking, or what memories you have of your loved one.

Somehow, there seems a deadness about the communications, not the real vitality of present expressions of living people. Of course, that's why you might remember in the Old Testament of the Bible, God condemned mediums and witches as being rebellious. You remember that there was one occasion when a witch at a place called Endor was struck with fear when God materialized Samuel instead of the evil spirit she was expecting to imitate him.

So this witch was calling up some prophet Samuel and all she expected was the usual old evil spirits imitating Samuel, or some kind of hypnotic mental experience. But God actually materialized the prophet Samuel in order to condemn her.

All of us feel, even though most of us have been drawn some time or other into spiritualism, we all feel there's a lifelessness about the communications. Indeed, there's a sense of some kind of fakery in the back of our minds. I understand that many loved ones who even listen to this program have dependence on spiritualism.

I certainly sympathize with you. But the fact is, of course, that it isn't real contact with the dead. It's contact with evil spirits that imitate the dead. Or, at other levels, it's just a very high level of psychic or mental power-of-positive thinking or magnetism so

that you draw other people's thoughts into yours so that they're actually able to read minds, or read the memories of people about their dear ones.

But spiritualism always leaves us with a feeling that, "No, we're not really breaking the barrier between life and death. We're just pretending to."

We've had recent books and TV programs in the States and probably in Europe, too, about people who've experienced that twilight zone between biological and clinical death where the heart has stopped beating, but the brain pulses have continued. They've described what death is like when they became conscious again.

But none of us believe they actually passed out of this life and are telling us what it is like beyond. We know their bodies remained warm, and whatever the technical definition or their emotional experience was, we don't really feel they have finally died, so that we can be sure what they saw was life after death.

So, even in those twilight, border experiences, we still don't feel we're finding out what the meaning of life is from someone who has actually passed through death and come back and told us all about it.

This is the reason, of course, we have the same skepticism about the various gurus and yogis, who can control their breathing so precisely that they can be buried for hours, even days, and pretend that they have risen from the dead. There's just no certainty in our minds that they were really dead.

Indeed, it's probably the difficulties involved in faking resurrection from death that has prevented the followers of Buddha and Zoroaster and Muhammad and all the other religious leaders

from ever claiming that their master had risen from the dead, because it's just not easy to fake a resurrection from the dead.

These facts, of course, make the one exception all the more striking. There is one religious leader that stands apart from Buddha and Muhammad and Zoroaster and Confucius and all the gurus and the latter-day prophets. His life is perfect, whereas theirs weren't. His miracles are greater than theirs. His teaching utterly transcends theirs.

But the fact that brought persecution to his followers was that he broke the death barrier. He was dead for three days, and then came alive again for forty. Then his body lifted off the earth and has never been found.

Of course, that's the life that we have begun to talk about recently on these broadcasts. We've asked the question, "What is the meaning of life?" Our answer has been, "We don't know and we really don't know anybody that has been outside the experience of this world who has any more information than an ordinary human being, except for one man.

This is the man we're talking about now, the only man that ever did rise from the dead. But the more amazing fact is this: it's an event that is absolutely unique in the life of the world, a man actually rising from the dead. It is the only example of any human being demonstrating such absolute control over death and life.

The more amazing thing is that this historical fact should have been subjected to such study, discussion, criticism and research. It is more established and certain than any other in the history of mankind. This is so much so that our very history is split by it into B.C.and A.D.

A brilliant skeptical Cambridge professor put it like this, "Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ." Let's talk a little more tomorrow about this resurrection, and whether it really took place or not.