WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 89
Free Will and Life With God
by Ernest O'Neill

We are talking on this program about the meaning of life. We've come to the point in our discussion where we are talking about the origin of our free wills and why the Creator of the universe gave us free wills in the first place, because it is incredible you are still able, despite all the deterministic forces that work upon you through society and through your own heredity and environment, it's incredible that you still have free will.

I mean, you can still turn this off. Now, don't turn it off. But you can still turn the knob and get rid of my miserable old voice here. You can still turn your car to the left or the right. You can stamp on the brakes. You can do what you want. There is a real sense in which whatever state you are in, you still have free will.

We've been talking about the origin and the reason for that free will. We've been sharing how the Creator of the universe revealed to His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, and to early servants, like that man Moses, that He made us because He wanted us to be His friends. This is why you exist. This is the real purpose of your life: so that you might get to know the originator of the universe and that you might come to know Him personally. That's it. That's it.

You may think you're here to make money, or you're here to survive, or you're here to fix pipes, or you're here to teach kids. No! You're here to get to know the one that made you because He actually wants you to be His friend. I know that sounds bewildering, and amazing, and incredible, but actually that's the truth. That's why He made you. That's why He made you like

Himself. You're actually in His image. That's why we are all so alike, because we all have the same capacities as He has.

Yet, you remember, we said that He did not make us like Himself inside, because that would be to make us incapable of love. If He made us unavoidably good, that is, so we couldn't do anything but be good and do anything but love Him, then, He'd have a bunch of robots and performing monkeys, but He wouldn't have free will agents who could love Him.

So, He made us with the same capacities He has (which was really necessary so we could be friends and have deep interaction with each other) but then, He let us choose whether we would get to know Him and would become like Him, or whether we would live independent of Him and become unlike Him. That was up to us what we did. It would have consequences later on, because really He is the only one who exists at the end of this world. But yet, He gave us that freedom.

You remember, we said He pictured it to mankind in his childhood way in the early centuries as the choice between two trees: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We've shared how the tree of life symbolizes, among other things, the kind of oneness that comes between you and the other person when you've been living with them for a long time. We've shared, you remember, how two friends tend to become more like each other.

They tend to take on each other's characteristics simply because they are with each other and they love each other and they're attracted to each other and they admire each other. So often, the son becomes like his father, because he respects him and admires him. So, it is with us and the Creator of the universe. His plan was we would begin to develop the world and to fill it according to His directions.

That is, we would begin to do what He guided us to do through the thoughts He injected into our minds, thoughts that we wanted to receive from Him. Not thoughts He forced upon us, but thoughts we received from Him because we wanted to know what He was thinking.

You know, if I asked you, "Would your wife like to see ‘Les Miserables'?" [the play] you could answer me, "Yes, she would, or she wouldn't", because you know her. You know the kinds of things she likes and the kinds of things she doesn't like.

If I asked you, "Would your wife really like to go to the next computer exhibition?" You could immediately answer yes or no because you know each other. You understand each other. You know the kind of things the other person is thinking. Indeed, you know it would be true that I could ask you all kinds of finer, more sensitive questions that would make greater discriminations and finer distinctions than that. And you could still answer me correctly, because you have gotten to know her.

This is what we mean when we talk about eating of the tree of life. The maker of the universe planned you would come into this world as a little baby, would come up, maybe, to that age of discretion, and come up through five, through seven through thirteen years old, and you'd begin to realize: "Well, of course, I was made by the Creator and He is my father and He loves me."

You'd begin to talk to Him, not as some kind of psychotic or neurotic, but just as an ordinary human being that knew he hadn't come here by chance plus time, and concluded that he had come here by the action of an intelligent being that was as personable as he, himself was. You would begin to think thoughts up to that being.

You didn't need to even talk to Him aloud, because He isn't physical, but you could think thoughts up to Him. He, as a result, would pass thoughts back down to you from His own mind and would indicate to you as He obviously indicated to people like Einstein, "Now, there's a theory of relativity here that will explain a lot of things that at the moment are inexplicable. Bit by bit, I'll lead somebody to go on beyond this theory, but if you listen to me, I'll give you hints as to what it is."

Actually, the truth is, all our poets, all our creative people know that the things that they create, they don't really create. They come to them. It's amazing. All of us are in the position of Einstein and of other creative people who say, "All ideas come from outside ourselves. We suddenly waken up and they are there." Actually, ordinary people like ourselves have some of that experience.

That's what we mean when we talk about the tree of life. The Maker of the universe wanted us to develop the world as a result of our friendship with Him and the ideas and thoughts He was giving us. That was the way to do it, of course, because He knows what is at the bottom of every mine. He knew what is at the center of every mountain. He knows the power in every river. He knows all about the protons and the neutrons. He knows the dangers of a Chernobyl and so He would have guided us so we could avoid those things.

You know we didn't do that. You remember the story of the Fall; it's called, the Fall in the Garden of Eden, the fall out of that relationship of closeness with the Creator. That occurred because, in fact, man chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you want to know what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is, it isn't about apples. Let's stop that silliness.

Anyway, an apple isn't mentioned in Genesis and the Creator of the universe isn't a kid, you know. He isn't some dumb-dumb that kind of kills us because we eat an apple. It isn't about apples and it isn't about sex. We all love "Oh, it's sexy, sexy", because we had to wear clothes. No, it's not. It's not that stupid stuff. We need to stop insulting the maker of the universe and insulting all the guys who wrote the Bible by saying that kind of stuff. No, it isn't. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is dead easy.

Instead of listening to God the way He intended us to, you remember, I gave the example. It's just a silly little example but the Creator's plan was that He would tell Adam what to do. Adam would say, "Lord, what do you want me to do today?" and He would say, "Well, it's morning. You need something fresh. Look at that orange tree. See...get an orange, squeeze it and you'll get some nice juice that will clear your palate." So, Adam would do that. That's the way the Creator wanted us to operate in closeness to Himself.

Now, instead of that, Adam decided, "Forget this, I don't need to depend on this Creator, this invisible being that feeds me ideas. I can see that this world is all that I need. All I have to do is note down the things He told me last time. I remember yesterday He told me to get an orange from the orange tree. O.K., that's a law of life. I must get an orange from the orange tree."

"I remember last spring He told me to dam up that river. Alright, that is a law of nature. I'd better dam up that river." We began to develop our own knowledge of good and evil. A whole set of precedents, business precedents, economic precedents, academic precedents, psychological precedents. We began to develop a whole series of laws that would enable us to develop the world on our own, independently of the Maker's direction.

That's part of what eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is. It's living this life by our own cleverness and by our own observations of what in the world will give us what we need. Let's talk a little more about some of the effects of that tomorrow.