WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 106
Why Do We Do Evil?
by Ernest O'Neill

We are talking about the meaning of life, and we are discussing at present the experiences which we have in our own life that fit in with the explanation of the reality of life that we have been discussing over these months. One of these experiences, of course, is known as the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. It can easily be illustrated if you think of some of the evenings you have experienced yourself.

You know the kind of thing. You are going home for supper or dinner or tea, either to a roommate or your partner or your family. You buy flowers or ice cream because you think "I really love them and I want to make them happy tonight." You get home. Nobody is there. You have a cup of coffee, turn on the TV. Your tummy rumbles. You nibble a potato chip. You have another cup of coffee. Your tummy rumbles again. Right alongside the good desire to make them happy there rises another feeling, "What on earth is keeping them?!"

They arrive home at nine-thirty. They forgot to tell you they were going shopping. But by that time you are a raving lunatic. You blast them with every error they have committed over the centuries. You end up telling them how they have utterly spoiled your evening. As you stalk off to bed, your eye catches the flowers or the ice cream with which you were going to give them a happy evening.

The details may vary, but all of us human beings find within us two strong urges that perpetually conflict with each other: an urge to do good, to be unselfish and to love others. Opposite to that, an urge to be bad, to be selfish, to love ourselves at the

expense of others. There seem to be in us not one person, but two. One is Dr. Jekyll, who wants to be kind and loving and giving. And the other is Mr. Hyde who wants to be cruel and hate and get for himself.

The world, of course, is filled with books and techniques that try to lessen the conflict, or modify it enough to live with it. There are all kinds of writers, both Christian and non-Christian, who try to show us how to strengthen the good side of our temperaments so that the bad side will be virtually eliminated. But "virtually" is the word.

Many of us have tried such tinkering and tampering and have discovered even the good side only holds down the bad side as long as it wants. But even the good side seems shot through with weakness and evil. The two sides of our personality seem inextricably mixed. They cannot be separated. It seems the only answer is to destroy them both so you are sure you've got rid of the evil. Then you start again.

What is the explanation of this paradox that at the very moment I want to do good, I actually do evil? At the moment I want to be patient, I am irritable. At the very moment you want to love, you hate. At the very moment we want to keep our tempers, we lose our tempers. At the very moment I want to be pure, I'm impure. Well, the truth is the generous urges within us, those desires to help another person and forget ourselves completely, those come from the influence of what is left of God's own heart inside us.

His plan was that we would live like Him and so He made us like Himself with many of the desires that He Himself has. He made us with a desire to love Him and to trust Him. That is what your conscience is always guiding you to, guiding you back to reality, back to the conviction that there is a God, there is somebody

who made this world. There is somebody that is looking after it and there is somebody that cares about you and there is somebody that gave you life and heart, and blood circulation and all the other things you have, because He loves you.

Your conscience is always clinging back to that and stretching towards that and saying, "That's so!" Our Creator Himself is extravagant in His generosity. Everywhere you look, you see it. Spring mornings, one bird, then two, whole hallelujah choruses and orchestras of birds chirping and singing. That is what you hear when you get up in the morning. Water? One lake? Two lakes? No, here, there, two thirds of the world's surface is covered with the stuff.

There's enough salt in the water so that we can deluge the French coast with oil and that mighty ocean keeps washing and washing until it is all cleaned up in a matter of 3 years. It is amazing ... the generosity of the love of this Creator who has covered hillsides with hordes and hordes of daffodils, not just with a few daffodils. Colors? The ocean bed is full of colors never seen by human eyes. That is the kind of generosity He has. That is the kind of generosity He has actually built into us.

That is the Dr. Jekyll part of us that keeps trying to get out. Our Maker is pure love. He made you unique. There is nobody like you in the whole world. He gave you unique abilities and sent you here to his earth to do certain work in it that would express His love and His life through you. As a result of your working close to Him like this, you would sense His love for you. That would be reward enough in itself.

But, as you fit it into His whole economic plan for this world, you would also find you had all the things you needed. You would go to bed each night content and at peace in the knowledge that your Maker loved you and was looking after you. Something of

the security and the significance and the happiness of this original plan survives in you from time to time and sends up the good outgoing and loving desires that you feel.

Years ago our forefathers rebelled against our Creator's plan and resolved that they would not be in a subordinate position, however intimate the father-child relationship was to be. They decided they would be god of their own lives and live by their own directions, choose their own jobs, get their own security and make their own happiness.

This resistance to the loving life-spirit of the Creator within them urged them not to depend on Him, but on the world itself. It urged them to live independent of their Maker, to be their own boss, to get things their own way, to assert and defend their own rights that they felt often rising within them. It is an attitude that has been bred into our whole race of mankind for generations, by this particular use of our free wills.

Of course, on top of this there developed a tragic flaw in the human personality. It was made by our Creator to work the same way as He does, from the inside out, receiving His life and love from His Spirit. All the security we needed from Him, all the significance and identity we needed, all the happiness. And then we would pour that out to others. But, suddenly, our personalities had to start operating the other way, from the outside in.

We rejected God and cut ourselves off from the source of life, so now we had to use the world and each other to get our security. But the other 5 billion people were trying to get the same things. So we had to beat them out for the food, shelter and clothing that they needed. We had to beat out a few hundred of them and persuade them to treat us as important and significant.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is to use our most intimate relationship not to give love, but to get it. To get happiness first and then give a little, if there's time left. Today the remains of the influence of God's image tries to get out to others through you and me in kindliness and love, but finds that all of this urging is frustrated and imprisoned by a personality that is enslaved to what it can get from the world of nature and the world of human beings.

The pure fresh water is available from God, but it cannot escape from the reservoir, because the pipeline now runs uphill and is constantly being filled with dirty drain water from the surrounding hills. The only answer is a complete destruction of this flawed personality and a completely new creation. That's part of the explanation of this Jekyll and Hyde personality that all of us share.

There is within us the memory of what we were made to be and there is inside us the remains of the nature of our Creator. There is within us a thing called conscience, a kind of gyrocompass that keeps urging us to live the way we were meant to.

All this is constantly being suppressed and oppressed and repressed and frustrated by the personality that we have developed, and that our forefathers and our grandfathers have developed over the years: a personality that depends not on the Creator for His love, but upon the world for its love. Let's talk a little more about that tomorrow.