WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 151
Our Personalities: Made in the Likeness of God
by Ernest O'Neill

We're discussing on this program each day what is the meaning of life. What is the meaning of your life? What's the purpose of it? Why are you here? Why are we all here? How did we come to be here? We've been talking especially about the various experiences that different ones of us have in order to solve that question. To many of us they are just bewildering.

Some of us feel that we have to find ourselves. We try things like transcendental meditation, where we try through controlling our thought patterns and our mental concentration to somehow transcend the limitations of this earth-bound existence. Yet, we don't seem to achieve any sense of meaning in our lives, however much we try these mental contortionist's tricks.

Some of us have tried Zen Buddhism or the Eastern religions and we have tried through annihilating our feelings or trying to make our psychic processes passive, to somehow get in touch with a deeper part of life or a deeper part of the universe. Others of us, of course, have tried the world of nature and have attempted to experience some of the oneness that they talk about in Hinduism, that sense of oneness with nature or with the spirit of the universe. Yet, we often find that we are having an experience that seems still partial to us. It seems not convincing.

Others of us have tried various forms of Christianity in church attendance and have discovered that they, too, are very frustrating and seem at times, too human, too connected with the ordinary, everyday world, too wrapped up with human relationships with other people rather than with a vertical

relationship between us and whatever the Spirit behind the universe is.

Most of us, whether we have come through university or not, are equally bewildered about these attempts that we've made to discover the meaning of life. We just don't know where to go. That's really what we have begun to try to find out in these discussions that we have each day on this program.

You may remember that a few days ago, we started to study the explanation of our personalities that is given in the early chapters of the Bible. There we saw, I think, some answers and possible explanations of the difficulties so many of us have with what we call religious experiences. There it is evident that God made us like Himself. He made us, as that verse in Genesis says, "In His image". He made us like Himself primarily so that we could have friendship with Him.

You will remember, we said you cannot have great friendship with your Yorkshire terrier because he not's so good at appreciating BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH, or discussing Chopin, or discussing Vincent Van Gogh. So, you're limited in the relationship you can have with a life that is lower than your own. You really, in order to have a full experience of friendship with someone, have to find someone who has the same capabilities and capacities as yourself. That is the Creator's purpose in making you.

You're not made just to be a bus conductor or just an orchestra conductor; you're not made to be just a secretary, or just to be a managing director. You're made to be the friend of your Creator, your Maker. He has planned a relationship with you that He can't have with anybody else. None of the rest of us will know Him just as you will know Him. He will not be able to show Himself to any of the rest of us in the same way He shows Himself to you.

You're actually unique! You're unique partly because you are made like Him in a way that nobody else is.

You remember we discussed what that meant. We looked back to the early verses in Genesis which described the whole creation in child-like terms because of course manhood at that point in history was in its childhood. He was able to understand these things in a child-like way. That's why the Creator talked about making us out of dust. You remember the Hebrew word is "aphar". He took the "aphar"(dust) from the "adama" (ground) and He made our bodies.

You and I don't need any persuasion to believe that our bodies are made of dust, because we can open a coffin years and years after our mums and dads are dead, and we can see that their bodies are beginning to crumble into dust. We even use those words, you remember, at a funeral. We say, "dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes". So, we don't need any persuasion to believe that when we see our loved ones dead, their body is there, but they long ago have left the body. The body is just a collection of earth in a certain form.

Then you remember the verses in Genesis, chapter two, go on to say, "...and God breathed into the man the breath of life". We said how the Hebrew word for breath, "ruach", which means wind or spirit, is the very essence of God Himself, His very Spirit, what makes God God. That is the spirit. He breathed into us His own spirit. That's what gives us life. That's why when you look at your dad or mum after they're dead, they just look as if it is not them at all. Their very life-spark seems to have disappeared from them, because it's God's life in us that gives us life.

If you say, "Well, what is Spirit?" Well, it's His very essence, the very essence of God. You could say a little, when you talked about the spirit of Churchill what spirit the man had, that you're

really talking about what makes Churchill Churchill. You're talking about that mixture of courage, and bravery, and valor, and determination and stubbornness and high-mindedness that made Churchill Churchill. It's the very essence of a person. It's what gives a person life.

Of course, with God, it's more than that. It's His very heart. It's what makes Him alive. It's what enlivens the whole universe. It's what gives beauty to the breakers on the Hawaiian beaches. It's what gives freshness to the spring breezes. It's the very spirit of God! God breathed into us His spirit. The next part of the verse says, "...and man became a living soul." The Hebrew word is "nephesh". But the Greek word for soul is the one which gives us the clue to what it is. The Greek word is "psuche", which in the Anglo-Saxon sound changes and becomes the word "psyche", which becomes psychology.

In other words, God took dust from the earth, made our bodies, breathed into us His own Spirit-life and then those two things together resulted in a third entity, a third level of life which is our psychological part: our minds, and emotions and our wills. That's what makes man uniquely man. He's not an angel, because that's just a spirit. He's not an animal, because that's just body. He is a human being, because He has a spirit, a soul, and a body.
What we have been saying is that many of us have been trying to find God through the exercise of our souls. That's why our so-called experiences of religion are so unsatisfactory. We try by manipulating the mind in transcendental meditation or in introspection to achieve some kind of knowledge of ourselves or knowledge of reality. All we get is a knowledge of ourselves.

While the body is the world-conscious part of us, through our senses, through our five senses, we perceive the world of things and circumstances and people, and our spirits are the God-

conscious part of us (the part of us that can be aware of God), the soul is the self-conscious part of us. So, all we do when we engage in any mental or emotional activity is engage in a relationship with ourselves. All we become conscious of is ourselves. We don't become conscious of God.

So, when we engage in transcendental meditation, or Zen Buddhism, or in self-negation (trying to negate any feelings), all we are doing is having a conversation with ourselves. We're not getting any deeper than that. That's why so many of us, even in Christianity, who get our satisfaction from the beauty of the Cathedral, or the beauty of the church, or the beauty of the liturgy, or the beauty of the Gregorian chants, that's why we, too, have an unsatisfactory experience of religion

We're engaged not in any sort of spiritual exercise at all. We are engaged simply in a soulish activity where we become more conscious of ourselves. Many of us who are younger try mysticism, which is primarily a pre-occupation with our own experience of God, and becomes equally unsatisfactory. It's simply looking in upon our own souls as we're trying to worship God at the same time. Let's talk a little more tomorrow about the frustrations of mysticism.