Program 222
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Why Can't We Trust God?
by Ernest O'Neill

Whether you live in the East or whether you live in the West you probably have the same kind of problem about the Meaning of Life. That is, even in the West, people are convinced that the universe had to be created by some intelligent mind. And that that mind was probably as personable as we persons are. So most people in the West, even though they may not be very religious, still believe there must be a God, somewhere. There must be an intelligent Mind somewhere. There must be a Supreme Being somewhere. Otherwise, I can't see how the order that is evident in the stars could exist. I don't see how the mathematical precision that is in the balance of the air pressure and nature itself could exist.

And strangely enough, if you live in the East, you feel the same way for different reasons. You just know through your own philosophy that there has to be a Great Spirit behind the universe. A Great Spirit that has made everything. But whether you live in the East or in the West you suffer the same kind of frustration. Because most of us have not much trouble in believing that there must be a Creator. And we know that if there is, then He obviously knows we're here. And if He knows we're here He certainly has some kind of wishes for us or purposes. Otherwise He wouldn't have bothered making the universe or making us and putting us on the earth.

And so, most of us conclude there must be something that we're meant to do here, while we're on earth. And of course most of us suffer the same frustration in trying to do that thing. We try to do what we think we're supposed to do and we find we can't. And most of us cry out, "the good that I would I cannot do and the evil

I hate, is the very thing I do." Because we feel we shouldn't worry about our money. We shouldn't worry about our food. We shouldn't be anxious about the future. And yet, we find we are.

We feel that we shouldn't take revenge on people who hurt us because the Creator will take care of things and will ensure that justice is done. And yet we find ourselves reacting in anger and resentment against anybody who hurts us.

We feel the same about loving people. We feel if there's a Creator who has loved us so much that He's given us all these flowers and all the fish of the sea and all the beauties of nature and given us our own bodies then we should be the same to other people. We should be kind to them. We should be loving to them. But we find we cannot.

So whether you live in the East or in the West, you find that you have the same things in common. You believe there's a God and yet you don't seem able to do the things that you think He wants you to do. And even in the West, where we try to persuade each other that you shouldn't feel guilty, we still feel guilty. We still feel that in some way we're falling short of what we ought to be. And many of us have tried to be what we ought to be. And we've tried to trust this God as our Father. We've tried to trust Him who obviously takes care of every little bird. We've tried to trust Him to take care of us.

And we've tried to relax when trouble comes along or when people threaten us or when our life is in danger. We've tried to trust Him. But we find that it's almost impossible to do it. We find that just when we're endeavoring to be peaceful and relaxed we feel anxiety stirring up inside us. We feel a worry beginning to work in our thoughts. We find ourselves beginning to wonder, yes, but what will happen tomorrow? What will happen next week? What will happen when I grow old? What will happen

when my children die? What will happen when I die? And we try to trust God. We try to have faith in Him. But we find we cannot.

And so we of course do the same kind of thing, whether we're in the East or in the West. In the East, we try to placate the spirits that we know about -- or that we suspect are round about our town or our village or our home. We sacrifice to evil spirits. We sacrifice to spirits -- familiar spirits. We sacrifice to demons. We burn incense. We burn food. We even burn money. Anything to try to bribe them to forgive us. Or to keep away from us. We try to drive them away from us. Drive away this evil that seems to be inside me. If our business is failing, we think that if we sacrifice to these spirits, then somehow they will bless us or they will take their curse off our business.

We're the same in the West. We just don't express it that way. But we often say to ourselves, what did I do to deserve this? If our children are not as good as we think they should be or if something terrible happens in our lives, we say, what did I do to deserve this? And we feel that somebody is trying to hurt us. And so we go to all kinds of lengths. Many of us just do good. We try to give more money to charity. Or we try to do something good for somebody, hoping that whatever is on the other side of the world will see us. Whoever the Creator is, maybe He'll see us and He'll be satisfied.

Often we try to make up for some of our bad deeds by doing good deeds. And so even though we don't burn incense, or we don't sacrifice to demons, yet we do try to do what we call good works. We try to give more to the United Fund. Or we try to give more to charity. Or we try to give more to the poor or to the homeless. Or we try to help somebody, hoping that if we add up the good things in our life and set them against the bad things in our life, the good things will outweigh the bad things.

And yet whether we're in the East or in the West, both of us have the same experience. We feel dissatisfied. We still feel at times, we're failing. We still feel at times we're not quite hitting it. We still feel we're not pleasing God. And the man of course who is the Son of God, who is more obviously the Son of God than anybody else in the universe -- the man Jesus of Nazareth -- who lived in the first century of our era and who died and then destroyed death and came back and lived according to what He taught, in such a way that He outstrips all other religious leaders by His ethical behavior that matches His ethical teaching -- this man said, "Look, my Father is the Creator of the universe. And the reason I have come to Earth is because my Father saw that you could not trust Him. You could not be what you wanted to be. You can't be that because for generations your forefathers have not trusted Him."

"For generations your forefathers have done what they wanted to do and they've bred that into you. And what you feel inside you that will not do what you think you should do is sin. And my Father knew that that would be in you. He foresaw that you would be like that."

"And before time existed, in eternity, in timelessness He put you inside me and He destroyed you and me together. And He remade you in me. So that when I rose from the dead, you rose with me. And you are new and whole and complete. And He has made you absolutely new. He has taken away all the perversion and all the twists in your nature. He has taken away all the skepticism in your mind, all the distrust in your heart and your emotions, all the rebellion in your will. He has taken away all of that. And He has remade you in my image, like me, so that you can trust Him."

This man, Jesus, explained this to one of His followers, called Paul, who was born in, brought up in Tarsus. And Paul put it this

way: it's in the Bible if you ever want to look it up. It's in a book called Galatians and chapter 2 and verse 20: He said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." And that's what happened to us, Jesus said. You and I were put into Him in timeless eternity beyond time and beyond space.

And you and I were destroyed in Him and we were made alive in Him again, but new and whole and complete, able to trust God -- free from that thing that was passed onto us through generation after generation. That thing called "sin". Free from that sin -- that tendency to distrust God. That tendency to insist on our own way and want our own rights. We were destroyed in Christ Jesus. And we were remade completely.

And the moment you begin to believe that, that moment you find a new attitude comes into you. A new spirit that enables you to trust God -- enables you to relax in Him and to rest in Him, even when you don't know where your next job is coming from. Or when you don't know where your next meal is coming from. He has changed you in His Son. And the moment you believe that, that moment a new attitude comes into you, that enables you to live differently. Let's talk more about this tomorrow.