What is the Meaning of Life?
Program 27
What is God Like?
by Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever received any communication from outer space? I can imagine you saying, "What kind of program is this that I've tuned into?" But you know, there's a lot of talk about this kind of thing. Not only old 3PO and R2-D2 [Star Wars characters], but all kinds of other funny creatures have burst upon our consciousness in recent years through the silver screen.

We've often talked humorously at times. At other times, we've talked rather mysteriously about communications from outer space. What I'm asking, of course, is have you ever received any communications from any being from beyond this world that would give you any reason for believing that there is a God, that there is a Creator?

That's the kind of question that has fascinated mankind down through the centuries. He has seen many reasons for believing that there should be a God and that there should be a Supreme Being. He has searched far and wide to find out if this Creator has ever tried to communicate with him. Down through the years, different men and women have indicated that they have had communications from outer space, and they have known what the Creator is like. They have come to understand His nature.

These communications have taken many forms. Here, for instance, is one of them. It's from Greek literature, Homer. He is the earliest Greek writer whose works are available to us.

In 900 B.C., he described the scene as God spoke in heaven. Here is what he says: "Zeus now addressed the immortals, 'What a lamentable thing it is that men should blame the gods and regard us as the source of their troubles when it is their own wickedness that brings them sufferings worse than any which destiny allots them.'"

Now, from this incident, we can believe that supreme being Zeus is expressing to his fellow gods resentment that us human beings blame them for our misfortunes. But, wait a minute. We can't take these words of Homer as a real account of the words of the Supreme Being behind the universe. They're just the product of Homer's imagination. You remember the Odyssey is simply a novel about the imaginary wanderings of Odysseus on his way home from the sack of Troy. What we're dealing with is myth -- imaginary stories built on a skeleton basis of real military history. So, we are reading here the words that Homer made up in his own imagination.

If we're getting anything about God at all, we're getting only Homer's subjective idea of what the Creator might say, but not even Homer claims to be giving us actual words spoken by the Supreme Being behind the universe. This is an important distinction to make in our search for words and communications of the Creator of the universe.

It's an important distinction, the difference between the myth made up by a man's imagination and the history of what actually happened in time-and-space. So, it is vital that at the very beginning of our search to find out if the Creator behind the universe has ever communicated to mankind, it's vital to establish that we're not looking for myths. We're not looking for imaginary conversations that poets like Homer created.

We're not looking for the product of a literary imagination. We need to distinguish clearly between myths like the Greek and Roman myths that were written by the great writers that we have all been taught to respect for their literary attainments down through the centuries. We need to distinguish clearly between their poetic and literary creations and imaginings and actual facts about the Supreme Being behind the universe.

Homer never claimed to be telling us what the Creator of the universe actually said. He was simply making up a story of what he thought might be going on in heaven. But he was not claiming to be able to tell us what was going on in heaven. So many of us glibly say, "Oh, well. There are all kinds of books that purport to tell us what the Creator of the universe has communicated to mankind."

Yes, but let's eliminate from that the mythological books, the books that do not claim to be anything other than literary imagination and creative stories built on a skeleton of facts. We need to make that clear distinction: that the Greek and Roman myths that so many of us read of in our school days have nothing to do with men who have claimed to actually hear from God. These authors were simply poets and they don't claim to be anything else but that.

In our search, therefore, for any verbal communication that the Creator has made to mankind, let us leave aside the purely literary imaginative creations of the Greek and Latin myths, and let us turn to some of the outstanding human beings who have been regarded by millions as religious leaders, men who claim to be able to tell us something about the reality behind the universe.

In other words, let us turn from purely literary creations, and let us turn to human beings that many of us have regarded as authorities --people who could tell us what the Creator of the universe is really like and who could tell us what He has said. One of these men lived about 500 B.C. and was regarded by millions as a trustworthy religious leader. The basis of his authority is in the heart of his own personal experience.

It is described in the following passages of the Buddhist scriptures:
"When the great seer had comprehended that where there is no ignorance whatever, there also the Karma formations are stopped, then he had achieved a correct knowledge of all there is to be known. He stood out in the world as a Buddha. He passed through the eight stages of transcendent insight and quickly reached their highest point. From the summit of the world downwards, he could detect no self anywhere. Like the fire when its fuel is burned up, he became tranquil. He had reached perfection and thought to himself, 'this is the authentic way on which in the past so many great seers, who also know all higher and all lower things, have traveled on to ultimate and real truth. I have obtained it.'"

This, of course, is the man known as Buddha. But can you see any mention of the Creator in these words? The truth is that there is none. The truth is that Buddha himself made little mention of God. Indeed, it is doubtful if he actually believed in a personal, objective Creator. He regarded God as more of a state to be achieved and experienced.

Actually, he stressed a method of transcendental meditation that helped people adjust psychologically and psychically to an imperfect world. This was his emphasis, rather than any claim to be able to tell us what the Creator was thinking. In other words, when we talk about Buddha, as someone who can tell us what the Creator has actually said to mankind, we are actually contradicting Buddha himself, because he himself never believed in that kind of a Creator.

Is there any other way, or any other evidence of what the Creator has communicated to us? Let's talk a little more about that tomorrow.