

Our Poor Alternative

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon highlights the importance of living a life of dependence on God, rather than a proud, independent trust in ourselves, in order to experience the superhuman life that Jesus Christ lived.

Scripture: Genesis 2:7, Proverbs 3:5, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Superhuman Life", "Spiritual Balance"

Description

Ernest O'Neill discusses the concept of superhuman life that Jesus of Nazareth exhibited and intended for all human beings. He explains how our proud, independent trust in ourselves has precluded us from tapping into this life, leading to a lack of balance in our minds, emotions, wills, and bodies. O'Neill highlights the dangerous consequences of living out of sync with final reality and the havoc we could wreak if we used the infinite power of superhuman life without the right attitude.

Transcript

You have known moments when you seemed to live above yourself, haven't you? We all certainly have read about moments like this that have occurred in other people's lives. In war time or at moments of unusual danger, ordinary men and women have surprised even themselves by showing courage, presence of mind or intense compassion that suggests the presence of a power of life within them that they do not usually tap. This is the superhuman life that the unique man, Jesus of Nazareth, exhibited so signally in the first century. Moreover, it is the life that he said was designed to be normal for us human beings. He explained that his Father, the creator of the world, planted this life of his own within us at the beginning but that we lost touch with it by our attitude. From that time on we have seen only symbolic, isolated instances of its power over death and human weakness -- at times in ourselves, at times in outstanding human beings like Moses or David or Peter.

What Attitude of Ours Precludes Superhuman Life?

The attitude in us that necessitated the Maker of the world withdrawing this super-life from us is simply a proud, independent trust in ourselves as if we were self-made. It is the opposite of reality. We are not self-made, we have no idea what happens to us after death, we cannot explain the origin of each heart-beat let alone the infinite spaces of the universe, but we live each day as if there is no one else either who knows these things. In other words, we are living a lie, following a way of life that is out of synch with final reality -- and therefore we are dangerous people who would wreak havoc in the universe if we used the infinite power of superhuman life.

The Dearth of Superhuman Life in our Wills

Just as the lack of this superhuman life has caused deterioration in our minds and our emotions, so its absence has had a disastrous effect on our wills. Our Maker's plan was for the will to act as commander over our minds and emotions, but as these capacities lost their balance and began to produce mistakes in judgement and excessive responses, so the will lost its position of leadership. The result is that most of us have wills that are weak because of lack of exercise or erratic because of impulsive use. This is due to the absence of any intuitive sense of the Maker's will for us so that we are left to use the mind to determine what we ought to do in given situations. The mind was never intended to fulfil this vital function and is itself strictly a neutral agent that gathers information and relates it to other information so that the will can effectively enforce its decisions. Similarly the emotions are meant to desire or feel in accordance with the thought-life of the mind so that they can provide the dynamic that the body needs for action.

Instead of this kind of master-servant relationship between the will and our minds and emotions, these two capacities operate independent of the will most of the time. This is why so many of us have such difficulty controlling our thought-life or our emotional life through exercise of the will. It also explains why many find their lives lacking clear direction and feel they are just drifting through life.

The Dearth of Superhuman Life in our Bodies

When you are embarrassed you blush. When you're nervous your mouth feels dry. When you're angry you clench your fists. Perhaps you don't do all these things, but you know some people who do some of them. That's because our emotions directly affect our bodies -- they affect the secretion of fluids, the tension of muscles, the circulation of the blood. In other words, emotional stress causes stress in the body. Emotional lack of ease causes disease in the body.

The lack of superhuman life flowing from within us has perverted the operation of our minds and emotions which in turn have caused increasingly complex malfunctions in our bodies. Not only do they lack the healthy, integrating dynamic of a balanced mental life, but they suffer strains and stresses that they were never meant to bear. So, through the centuries the human body has become weaker and weaker so that today it is a shadow of what it used to be. Indeed, many of us are now born with congenital weaknesses and deformities which make normal life almost impossible. The hereditary deformities that come through venereal diseases are only the most obvious examples of the deterioration that follows the inaction of supernatural life in us.

Thus the lack of superhuman life has weakened all the mental, emotional, volitional, and physical functions of our lives so that we are handicapped by errors in judgement, imbalance in our emotions, impotence in our wills, and weakness in our bodies. But this is the least of the damage! Let's look in the next article at the way we live life today because we lack superhuman life. This is by far the more serious consequence for you and me in our day-to-day lives.

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