

THE ETERNAL BUS RIDE

Transcript of a clip from the talk WHY ARE WE HERE ON THIS EARTH? by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

A Greyhound bus draws up just outside there on University Avenue. We all get into it and it goes down University Avenue onto Interstate 35 and out onto the freeway.

After we all get to know each other for 15 or 20 minutes, somebody says, "Now, where are we going?" And somebody else says, "Bring out the food, there's food back here. I'm hungry. Let's have lunch." And so we all get into lunch and have some food and then somebody says, "But what are we all doing in the bus here?" And somebody else says, "Look, let's have some songs and play some games." And so we all start singing and playing some games.

Then after three hours, a kind of neurosis sets in because we all begin to realize that nobody is answering the question. Everybody is pretending that we're having such a great time that it doesn't matter where we're going as long as we just keep doing it. Then imagine that situation three weeks later. Imagine the kind of uncertainty and insecurity that begins to spread among us all. Now, take it on 20 years. Some of us are not so happy as we once were, because some of us are getting sick. Some of us have died and been thrown off the bus and we don't know what happened to us. Others are having children and the children are beginning to ask the question, "But daddy why? Where are we going? Why are we here?" And everybody keeps saying, "Don't bother about that. Just keep singing. Keep laughing. Keep cleaning the windows of the bus."

Well, after a while, you'll do anything to get off that bus. You'll do anything to get out of such a meaningless situation. Some are crowding into one corner in order to protect themselves from another group in another corner. Some have too much food and some haven't enough food. Eventually one guy starts writing the only book that we're all interested in then, it's the only way to get off the bus, "How to Commit Suicide".

Do you know such a book has already been written? Really you can't blame a person doing it. Because we're on a space ship that is going far faster than any Greyhound bus would be able to go on an American freeway and we are spinning very fast through space. Loved ones, there has to be some reason why we're here. There has to be. It has to be a basic concern of education to find out why -- otherwise everything is meaningless. Who cares what the windows are made of or what the cushions on the seats are made of or how to live happily with each other? Who cares about that if nobody actually knows why we're here or where we're going or what we're going to end up as.

Of course, the problem in it we all know. The problem is we're all in the bus. Nobody's coming from outside to tell us why we're all here. The only people we know are the people on the bus. That's why that London musical was written, 'Stop the world, I want to get off'. We have a feeling if we could get off it or if we could get somebody onto it who wasn't on it at the beginning, he might be able to tell us what it's all about. He might be able to tell us why we're alive.

It's interesting. One guy comes along called Mohammad and he says, "I can tell you", but he's on the bus. What does he know? He never was off the bus. He came onto it like the rest of us. He was born on it. Another fellow called Buddha comes along and he says, "I'll tell you why we're here", but he was born on the bus. He doesn't know either and another fellow called Zoroaster comes along and he says, "I'll tell you why." The difficulty with them all is, they're all limited by the fact that they were born on the bus. They were never off it.

There's only one man that came onto the bus from beyond. There's only one man that has ever left the bus and come back to show us that he was able to come back and to leave it when he wanted. That was the man Jesus of Nazareth whose historicity we studied last Sunday. If you ask Him, "Why are we alive?" he'll begin like this. He'll say, "Well, first of all whatever is of flesh, whatever is born of flesh is flesh. You are born of flesh. You're born of the same kind of substance as your mother and father. I want to tell you this, you're not going to last any longer than they are. It doesn't matter what you do. The physical life that you have and the mental life and the emotional life that you have, it's only going to last about 70 or 80 years. It's not going to last any longer. It doesn't matter what you do to make that life better. That life is not going to go on more than 70 or 80 years."

Jesus would say that to us this morning, "Get this clear. The way you're moving at the moment is towards extinction. It's a temporal life that you have. That flesh life that you have is not going to last more than 70 or 80 years."

The strange thing that you and I face is we feel that's wrong. We feel it's not true. There's something in us that says, "No, I wasn't made to go out like a light after 70 years. I wasn't. There's something in me that I feel goes on. I feel it goes on." This book says God has put eternity into man's mind. There's something inside us, isn't there, that makes us rebel against the idea that we won't last more than 70 or 80 years.

Actually, we go to a funeral and it's a deceptive thing. We're absolutely convinced that that will never happen to us however close we get to it. There's something in us that makes us feel, "Yes, but the person is still alive." We're not made to just die and be nothing. We feel all that frustration and try to overcome it. The gold watch at the end of the 30 or 40 years seems to signify the end, but we feel it can't be the end. There must be something more.

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