

MAN SAYS— “IF I WERE GOD”

By Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

The letter lies before me, distinctly an amazing document.

You don't have to be a crystal gazer to know that the writer doesn't like God. In paragraph one he writes me: “Your god is made up of treachery, selfishness, and deceit. The only goodness he exhibited was when as Christ (whatever Christ may be) he fed the poor, raised one from the dead and prevented a single unfortunate girl from being stoned. But billions have suffered, including my mother and myself, and yet this god of yours sits indifferent to my suffering, doing nothing whatever for me.”

Then he throws the challenge in my face:

“Would you or I, just ordinary people, if we had your god's claimed powers, allow the present conditions of the world to exist? Would you permit the horrible things that now clutch at human hearts and throats?”

“Why Can't I Be God?”

To point with illustration, it seems to me, he strays slightly, from the subject of God. But evidently he doesn't think that he does, for he writes:

“In one month, during which time I had my ankle broken twice, there were thirty-five instances in which your god could have helped me, and he didn't. I had a bad, blundering nurse, who made things worse, and an indifferent doctor, who neglected me. I wasn't fed sufficiently. Once in my inability to walk, I had to roll along the floor to get what I needed—or die. Yet your god refused to lift a finger for me.”

Then came the climax of the letter:

“I wish—oh, how I wish—I were God! What a vastly better job I'd do of things than He does!”

Not Too Unusual

I should have tossed the letter aside after my brief personal reply, except for the fact that it is an echo of cries I have heard too often in the language and literature of recent years. I find so many lifting their voices in criticism of God. They don't like Him. They don't like what He has accomplished in the universe. And they dump all the ills and evils of the universe on the steps of His throne.

Most of all they are brazen in their conviction that, given a chance, they could do a much better job of things than God has done. They would frankly like to take over God's powers and opportunities.

Nothing else is written into history with bolder letters than the fact that men of all nations and ages have had a yen to play God. On many a sad occasion they put on what they thought were His robes and announced that they had taken over. Historians don't much like what they accomplished, these kings and emperors and men of genius who masqueraded as God. But history never seems to teach us anything. And today more than ever before men look with contempt on God's handling of His work and announce themselves as candidates to succeed Him.

“Man IS God”

These days the attitude is perhaps part of the popular philosophy that man actually is God. “My god is humanity,” a doctor wrote to me, in another letter that I have often quoted. And what he wrote was a thin echo of a thousand who have written at greater length and more skilfully.

If man is god, the headlines in the paper before me (I write this in June of the year of disgrace 1940) point to him as a god apparently bent on suicide. Given a godlike independence and the powers of developed science, man seems hell-bent on wrecking this earth, over which he has been given a large jurisdiction. And even those who don't pay much attention to God are forced to pay attention to the mess man is making of things for all of us.

Yet with all this human wreckage people like my correspondent keep looking disapprovingly beyond man toward God

Himself and snarl out their criticism. With a blend of discontent and pride, of human self-confidence and divine resentment, they curl their lips and cry: "Why can't I be God for just a few days? Believe me, I'd make this world a very different place from what God has made it!"

When Man Played God

I'm not going to make even a short sortie into the history of man's actual attempts to play God. These can be traced all the way back to the moment when a clever persuader convinced an up-to-that-moment-happy couple that it would be a glorious thing "to be as Gods." Adam and Eve, in thought as in body the parents of our race, thought that would be an excellent idea; and, like the Pandora of mythology, they opened the box that had been sealed by divinity against the possible ruin of their children.

The men who would be God play a pretty smelly part in our record. They are the kings and Pharaohs and emperors who demanded that bulls be sacrificed and incense be burned and backs be curved to their synthetic divinity. They are the men of wealth, who found that money made them omnipotent and the masters of human lives and labours. They are the men of genius, who thought it godlike to play with truth and woo emotions to the service of nymphs and satyrs.

We don't much like the men who have played God. In fact, if there is one incessant struggle that has marked the progress of mankind, it is our struggle to keep men from ever getting near-godlike powers. Sometimes we waged that struggle in a fight against tyrants. Sometimes we saw the people rising to fling aside an absolute monarch, who asserted the divine right of kings, and then to establish a democracy. We have watched the picket lines as the labourers united against the ruthless domination of men who thought their money made them absolute masters of the men who sweated for them.

The memory of capricious misrule by the deified monarchs of Egypt and Babylon is still red. With growing alarm we have seen the warship of Stalin and Hitler grow into a cult, seen these men join the powers and privileges of ancient absolute monarchs with rights over life and death that burgeoned in new idolatries. "Paris," screamed the leaflets that were dropped over that city by Nazi aviators, "will be spared for the glory of Adolph Hitler." The phrase sounds as if it had been taken out of a religious ritual.

Not Too Much Power

Indeed, if we have one conviction born of bitter trial and error, it is this: "You mustn't entrust to any man too much power." If you give a man political power, he tends to become a tyrant, a dictator, a capricious chess player with human destinies. If you give him financial power, he easily becomes the crushing exploiter of his fellows. Let a man grow too powerful, and he seems bent on establishing one of the thousand forms of human slavery, whether it be the slavery of the auction-block slave, the slavery of the anthill States, the slavery of women to the greedy lusts of the men upon whom they depend, the slavery of unorganised labour to uncontrolled capital. We know too well that excessive power makes possible vast cruelty, whimsical greed, and stupidity and lust, wars without reason and oppressions without end.

One Man Played God Well

The only Man Who ever claimed the unrestricted powers of God and yet did not make life hell for those around Him was the very man that my correspondent singled out for grudging approval. Christ Jesus claimed to be God, and His life was a lovely scenario written on the theme of love and generosity and sacrifice and the ultimate climax of selfless death. I am glad that my correspondent, who seems to find the invisible God an ungracious character, finds the visible God quite charming. I cannot fail to notice that my correspondent sees Him feeding the hungry, raising the dead, healing diseases, and defending the girl whose bad luck threw her upon the mercy of men. Only my correspondent has vastly underestimated the number and extent of Christ's kindnesses. A fuller reading of the Gospel record of the visible God will correct this very meagre estimate.

The rest of the men who have undertaken to play God have turned in pretty terrible performances. There was Nero a

filthy, rotten sort of god; and Nabuchodonosor, of Babylon, who climaxed his godliness by crawling on all fours like an ox in pasture; and Frankenstein, who imparted life to a monster that could hardly stand comparison with the creatures of God's authentic creation; and the ruthless capitalists, who have played with human lives through the magnified power of their money; and leaders of the people who have led them to ruin and to hell.

As I write these lines, I am wondering (and probably you are, too) what the two men who have been playing god for their nations and the nations around them mean to do further to add to the oppression and bloodshed and enslavement and starvation of their fellow-men.

What Did God Do Badly?

No; when man plays God, he gives at best a shabby and, at worst, a terrifying performance. Yet since there seems to be among men such widespread anxiety to assume the role of God, since so many men, like my correspondent, are persuaded that they could teach God how to handle His high office, since I have heard and read of so many who have wanted a "crack" at ruling the universe, it's only fair to God to check over His labours, to see what could rightly be expected of anyone who took over His pretty large assignment.

The first and most obvious job that God handled and that man would have to assume if man pushed himself on to God's throne is concerned with this rather elaborate and—even to the man who dislikes the Creator—pretty marvellous universe.

I wonder whether you and I could much improve on that job. What would you do, for instance, to better the stars and step up or correct their schedule through space. We haven't done so well with our space transportation systems as yet. Within the last few months we've heard about some nasty railroad wrecks. A 'plane or two has come tumbling earthward, a sickening skeleton of steel and flames.

Yet the stars, uncounted, incredible in majesty of form and intricacy of dance movement, go their serene and lovely way. No doubt about it, God has been a first-class star maker.

The mariner or the navigator of the clipper with absolute certainty charts his course by the stars that happen to mark the heavens above him. The watchmaker is proud if the combinations of tiny springs and wheels and balances even approaches in accuracy the matchless chronometers that are the swinging planets. The pull of gravity, just enough to keep the stars in place, not enough to send them into a confused celestial traffic jam, holds the stars together with chains far stronger than those of man's devising, chains less visible than the sigh of a baby.

The astronomer, who spends his life trying to analyse the composition of a single star; the mathematician, who covers pages with elaborate calculations that analyse the course of a lesser planet; the poet, who looks at the Milky Way or the glowing evening star and knows there are no words to contain them; the mystic, who peoples these faraway worlds with fairy people of his own imagining; the traffic manager, who wishes he could control a dozen trucks as unflinching as the million solar systems are managed—all these would confess that the man who took over the task of handling the universe (much less creating it) would have high precedent to follow and splendid executive ability to imitate.

Take the Sun....

Let's single out the sun, for instance. Just close enough to the earth to pull from the black soil the million life forms; just far enough away to give earth the delightful variety that runs from white satin poles to the lush richness of tropical jungles; near enough to keep men warm, far enough away to keep them from growing dull and languid; its rays penetrating enough for the growth of an orange, the bleaching of linen, or the acquiring of a suntan; not hot enough to reduce us to a sliver of crisp bacon.

It's not hard to understand why pagans have gone down on their knees to adore the life-giving sun or lifted white arms to the loveliness of the moon and flattered the multi-coloured stars with the names of their deities. The divine choreographer, who designed the dance of the timeless stars, was a master of pageantry. The divine mathematician, who plotted the schedules of the stars, is still the greatest mind, before whose manifestations we stand awe-struck.

If I had a chance to be God, I doubt very much that I could improve on any of this. Yet after all that is a pretty fair chunk, of achievement, a pretty large sector of the Creator's accomplishments. If you, however, are still convinced that as God you could improve on sun, moon, and stars, maybe you'd tell me how. I'd like to know—and so would the poets and scientists of all the ages.

Dear, Bountiful Earth

But why stop with the achievement which is the firmament? After all, we know the earth better as a dear, familiar mother, or, as Chesterton preferred to express it, as a charming and gracious sister. So, before we start criticising God too severely, let's remember that He turned out a first-rate job when He made the earth. The greatest of landscape painters does scarcely more than imprison in a square of canvas a small section of God's hills and forests and ever-changing oceans.

As I write these lines, the Pennsylvania train is carrying me through the splendid valleys that lie between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. They are so glorious I find it hard to keep my mind on the work in the typewriter before me. A variegated flow of glorious countryside rushes by my carriage window: green, warmly clear, friendly hills that rise above foamy streams; farms that alternate ploughed fields with vineyards and the bright beauty of springtime orchards; mountains so rich in minerals that men are endlessly digging up the coal and steel ore that make possible the train I ride; clay pits from which are fashioned bricks and china for the bride's wedding table; man-made canyons rendering unlimited supplies of building material; little green and blue lakes that furnish prosperous cities with cool, clear, refreshing water.

Just a moment ago we swung around the famous Horseshoe Curve outside Altoona; and, though I have seen it a score of times, I had to stop typing long enough to drink in the beauties that the gracious Creator has laid as surface drape over the rich resources stored away in the earth for the needs and luxuries of His children.

Man Makes Scars

Now, if I wanted to grow ironic, I could continue thus: What God made in these lovely valleys is incredibly beautiful; what man has done to them—well, that is often hideous beyond words. Let's forget for a moment the charming farmhouses and city parks, the luxurious comfort of my train and the speed of the autos whirling along the road and concentrate (as the enemies of God always do) merely on the things that seem to repel. I have seen, as I rode along, green luxuriant hills serving as background for the choking, sulphurous smile of smoke-black mills; I have seen the rivers turn a poisonous yellow from the dumpings of factories; I have noticed where the earth was gashed in great jagged wounds, and under the shadow of once beautiful shade trees I have observed rows of crazy, unpainted hovels, at the shabby doors of which sat listless children and men black with unprofitable labour.

Down that exquisite hillside careless human beings have poured a cataract of tin cans and the skeletons of exhausted motor-cars. My swift-moving train carries me sick at heart past monuments built to oppressive, soul-grinding toil, squalor holding poverty to its heart, wasted beauty destroyed by swift human greed. The background of glorious mountains broods sadly over cabins of inhuman, debasing want.

What conclusion could I draw except this? God has done a glorious job in the beauty of scenery, the richness of soil, the exhaustless buried treasures of earth; man has taken all this and made it terrifyingly ugly, torn it with greedy claws, poisoned the waters with filth, and used the very richness of the land and the hills to make his fellow men poor and miserable.

I had the sharp feeling that God could look upon His work and find it good. I was not so sure that man's survey of his work had any right to wake an echo of God's feelings.

This Beauty That is Earth

This valley through which I ride is only a small sector of God's munificent earth. Beauty? What is the greatest artist anyhow except a man struggling to reproduce a fragment of the beauty that God flung out in the essence of the universe?

The artist paints a portrait, and his lines do no more than follow the beautiful pattern which guided God when He made the first human countenance. He paints a landscape, and the frame is hardly more than a window through which we look rememberingly upon a portion of the earth that the painter found arrestingly charming.

That sculptor struggled to catch a little of the grace that actuates the limbs of the antelope, a hint of the power that ripples under the mane of a lion. The still-life painter suddenly realises that there is beauty in everything—in the rose obviously, but just as truly in the texture of the peach, the sheen of a cluster of grapes, the pattern of a cabbage, the inner surface of a clam-shell. The lacemaker turns to the snow crystal on the window to design lace fit for a bridal veil. The worker in mosaic endlessly repeats the casual design blueprinted by the Creator for the honeycomb.

God's Munificent Storehouse

As for the way in which God has stocked this world, not Admiral Byrd bound for the Antarctic, nor the stewards of a ship bound round the world, nor the quartermaster of a great army moving out to a stalemate war—not any of these ever did more than use a portion, of the exhaustless provisions which God has laid away for the needs of His children. As a provider, God needs no apologies.

Just think for a second of the endless varieties of food: food for the strong, for the invalid; foods meant to satiate the appetite of a man coming sweaty from the field; foods delicate enough for an infant. Think of the black loam repeating season after season the miracle of crops and harvests and fruit-laden trees and vines. Upon the plains wander the inexhaustible flocks and herds. The wild birds of the air yield eventually to the contented domesticity of the barnyard.

All the ingenuity of all the chefs of culinary history has not begun to exhaust the possibilities of God's larder. And once more we say in inevitable conclusion: "Even if I were God, I should find it hard to improve on all that."

The Wonder of Clothing

God's care for our proper clothing is another miracle of foresight—clothing ranging all the way from the shining thread of the silkworm to the great pelt of the leopard or the bear. Fluffy cotton bolls are glorified into the debutante's sport dress. The skin of the lowly mink wraps warm the queen. The hide of the cow protects the feet of marching men against the rocks. The skin of the chamois keeps warm milady's hands. Hidden away in temporary darkness are glittering objects waiting to adorn the hands and ears and throats of God's daughters.

No indulgent father taking his son to London and his daughter to Paris for their proper outfitting does other than give a faint and third-rate imitation of the way God has planned for the bright and warm and insulating clothing of His children.

Materials for Man's Laboratory

Even when we are most entranced by the wonders of modern chemistry, we have to admit that the chemist takes his materials right off the shelves of God's chemical laboratories. Modern genius creates none of the things it uses. In order to get its elements, it merely goes to the endless storehouse of God's mountains and air and deep pockets in the earth.

When from a combination of God's metals and chemicals man had finally hammered out light steel, he dropped wells into the earth and piped out the thick, smelly lakes hidden there, took out of the air a spark of God's lightning, and created modern speedy transportation. You can't fool even a love-blind girl by trying to pass off an artificial diamond for one dug from God's mines. The synthetic pearl is ashamed to appear beside the one taken out of the oyster.

Yet, as if to show us a challenging way, God took the elements of a diamond and in black, unpolished form prepared it to warm our bedrooms and help pull the fast train. Then at the end of the precision tool that same diamond makes possible the exactitude of modern scientific industry.

A Very Wise Father

TO anyone who gives the matter thought, God seems like a wise father who not only lavishly provides for the needs of His children—and for their luxuries, too—but, not wishing to spoil them by too easy a mode of life, puts before them a

challenge to their ingenuity and a premium for their labours and resourcefulness.

In and on this earth there is more than enough for all our needs and comforts.

The orchards bear more fruit than we can consume. Wheat waits in elevators for bakers who can't find pans enough to bake all the bread that could be made. We have not, as yet, skimmed the surfaces of our oil fields, or tapped our mountains for all the ore, or used completely the elements that drift through the air and lie dissolved in the sea. God is a lavish provider.

Yet for all these things God demands an expenditure of saving labour. The orchard must be pruned and tended; the wheat must be sown and harvested; the oil must be piped; the mines must be dug. But the labour hasn't been back-breaking. Water flows everywhere in abundance. Wheat for a regiment can be raised by a single man. Fruits grow wild, and berries drop from bushes so thick that they become positive nuisances. Cotton springs luxuriously, and once even tobacco grew wild.

Easy and Hard

But other things have been placed as a challenge to man's daring and ingenuity. For steel and aluminium and gold, for diamond and ruby and pearl, for the making of a streamliner or a printed page or an electric plant or a city's waterworks, man must dig and explore, call out his cleverness and powers of discovery and invention, exercise his high creative gift. In nature are all the materials needed for the making of a bottle of ink or a city of mills, a baby carriage or an automobile, a pair of synthetic stockings or an electric light. But, while it is easy to hollow out a cliff to make a cave-home, or strip a bear of his pelt to make a cape, God sees to it that the making of a printing press or the weaving of broad-cloth or the fashioning of a crown for king or molar demands the exercise of the brilliant powers God has implanted in His sons and daughters.

A tramp, a beachcomber, or a pioneer in some fertile frontier-land may live almost without effort. Yet the genius of the great chemist and the superlative organiser is taxed to its limit once they start to experiment with all the possibilities.

The earth is filled with so many resources that labour need never be back-breaking or soul-destroying. Fortunately the earth is not so lavish with its gifts or its yielding materials that we need grow lazy, sluggish, unimaginative, dull. The primitive man can find his food, house, and clothing within easy reach of a baited line, a club, a cave, a nearby forest. More complicated and cultured men can make their world as elaborate as they wish. Here again God has given man the necessary genius as well as the materials with which to work. So, while the early settler used the winding rivers as highways for his scooped-out-log canoe, his grandsons harness the river's swift fall to light a hospital, to give power to an electric razor, to run the wheels of industry, to project Mickey Mouse on a synthetic screen.

More Than Adequate

Once more I suggest that God's achievement of the earth has been very adequate. If I were suddenly given the power and permission to remake the earth, I'd think twice before I started. For I know that if things are made too easy for mankind men and women become selfish, inert, stupid. And I should hate to trade the beauty and grandeur of the hills for the ugliness of a heap of pig iron, however efficient. Those hills are wonderful, clad with the green trees we use for every purpose—from Christmas gaiety to the making of paper—made up of materials from which we build our highways and form our concrete, shaped in that line of perfect beauty which is the undulating curve, containing rich ores and perhaps untapped lakes of oil and water, and rimmed by the green and blue river that delights the poet, makes glad the small boy splashing in the cool shade, and turns the turbines in the city's power plant.

“God's Great Failure”

Let's give God credit for an excellent piece of work. I know I couldn't have done better. Can you honestly say you could?

I'm afraid my correspondent would brush all this aside. If he considers the wonder of the stars or life in an anthill, or in

contemplation passes from the heart of a rose to the hot inferno of the sun, he must grant some measure of excellence to God's work. God's failure, he would contend, is man. I should guess that my correspondent believes he, given the chance, could produce a better creature than man. For man is the mystery. Man is the one really disordered thing in the magnificent universe.

All other creatures? Well, the cow is a pretty reliable animal; it takes care of its important assignments with success and contentment. The dog is a highly trustworthy companion and guardian. Even the lion loose in his native jungle and undisturbed by marauding man has his good points. The bee is a model to be held up to the child in second grade. The beaver is a busy little body all ready to be set into a proverb.

But man? Oh, what a mess is man!

Thus speaketh that critic of God who suddenly turns out to be a critic of God only by indirection. The being who should be criticised is obviously man himself. Except, as my correspondent will hasten to remind me, that God made man and hence is responsible for his doings and misdoings.

Man's Not So Bad.

Before we go too far into that, we might give God credit for those things which He clearly gave man. Whatever man later does with them, God confers on him a body, a soul, instincts, powers, possibilities. And unless you are a confirmed pessimist, a Martin Luther finding in man only a hopelessly corrupt nature, or a pagan scientist seeing man merely as one of nature's tentative experiments probably ready to be chucked into the biological scrap heap, you will have to admit that basically man isn't a bad piece of construction.

I have no intention of putting the anatomist or physiologist out of a job by attempting to dissect the body of a man. I merely note that his eye still sets the standard for the lenses of the world and makes the most marvellous camera seem pretty inadequate. Long before the gyroscope was invented, man carried in his inner ear a gyroscope simple and compact and endowed with a marvellous power of balancing.

The pumping stations can still learn a lot from the action of man's heart. No means of locomotion thus far invented has the grace and charm of human legs; for we have yet to see a streamline train or automobile competing with Nijinski, Fred Astaire, Bill Robinson, or the members of the Ballet Russe. Hands may not be so strong as an electric magnet or a scoop shovel, but show me the magnet or the shovel that can play the piano, perform a major operation, or paint a portrait.

Taking it by and large, any sculptor or puppeteer or anatomist or biologist searching for the origins of human life has to admit that the body of man is wonderful and intricate and elaborate and amazing. If we human beings ever reach the point where, with the proper materials, we can make even a human toenail, we will have started a remote approach to patronising God, the artist-creator of human life.

That Marvellous Soul

I imagine that my good correspondent, who dislikes God, has brushed aside the human soul. But even he must admit that the thinking processes of the human animal are rather astounding. It takes quite a piece of human machinery (whatever you want to call the human being) to work out problems in higher mathematics, design the New York World's Fair, write "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," co-ordinate the varied sounds that make up a great symphony, formulate the Constitution of the United States, play expert contract bridge, direct a defending army, supervise a radio broadcast, make a charming proposal of marriage, discover a substitute for silk, train a racehorse to break track records, give one's life for one's country, discover the mechanics of the atom, love the infinite God.

If, in addition to all this, the soul really has the godlike powers that Christ and St. Paul declared it to have, man is a very startling creature. For if God really did give man immortality, if he has the capacity some day to know infinite truth and possess infinite beauty, if he is the son (and she the daughter) of the Infinite God, then startling is really a weak word to describe man.

Amazing Man

Yet precisely these powers does God claim to have given man, and millions of men are sure that He did. So, even in the case of man God hasn't done too bad a job.

Truth compels me to confess that I find man, as he comes from the hands of God, a great achievement. I marvel at the chemical laboratory that is his stomach. His amazing power of bringing other human beings into existence startles me. I delight in the restlessness that makes man an explorer, a scientist, a reformer, an artist, a dramatist, a mathematician, an organiser, a priest. I approve of a great many things he has done with the materials his Father gave him—built homes, painted great paintings, made a box of chocolates for a youngster, written a splendid book. Man has brought locomotion far from the first turning of a wheel to the development of this train on which I ride.

When one hundred men playing under the baton of a famous conductor pull heavenly sounds out of catgut and wood and brass and pipes that look like freshly-cut river reeds, I am proud of my fellows. I like to walk through a library and know that every book on the shelves is the preserved fruit of a human mind.

I am proud of these fellow human beings when the 'plane outstrips the swallow's flight or the racing car makes the hare stand still. The corridors of a great university seem sacred places, hallowed with genius, rich in lofty thinking. I stroke the bright sides of a telescope or stand reverently before a painting, enter quietly a laboratory or a theatre, read the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, "Hamlet," and "The Hound of Heaven," and I am glad that I am a man and not an angel.

Of Course We've Criminals

I could, I suppose, very easily spend my entire time looking at the criminals among us, whether the gangsters of the back streets or the gangsters who dominate international affairs. If I did that, my stomach would probably revolt against my species. So for the moment I shan't do that.

I'd rather remember and have you remember the many times when man is glorious and woman is lovely. Let's take him when he loves and is good to his parents, when she loves and leans above her first-born. We might stand by reverently and admire the beautiful love that inspires men to high poetry and lofty achievement. There's a man going out to die for a friend; there's another sharing his last dollar.

Often I find men brave. They attempt the impossible and make it come true. They carry through enterprises that demand self-denial and contempt for personal gain. They are often wonderfully generous with their songs, their purses, their lives.

They write beautiful books and build hospitable buildings; they brood over peace treaties and sing serenades under balconies; they join hands in friendship and brave pioneering and throw their bodies between their loved ones and danger. They have faith that moves mountains and hopes that no tidal wave of discouragement can quench. Their loves build nurseries and carve statues and give the lie to weariness and weakness.

Up to This

Yes; it is easy to like men and women if we concentrate on their undoubted virtues and for a moment blink at their sad stupidities and crimes. They are often, thanks be, the splendid sons and daughters of the God Who made and loves them.

Thus far, even when we consider man, we find that God has not done too badly. Up to this point I doubt that my correspondent could—and I am sure that I myself could not—hardly do a more adequate job. The story synopsis could run thus:

Into the glorious marvel that is the universe

The Creator sent the rich and beautiful earth

And in that stage-setting, that richly-stocked storehouse, that constantly reborn centre of life

He placed man, elaborate in endowment, complete in essential equipment, often splendid and noble and gentle and dear.

Even the criminal whose finger twitches upon a trigger is probably often gentle and kind. The sad and terrible “Dutch” Schultz died sobbing for his mother, manifesting a primitive love of which none of his racketeer associates thought him capable. Ruthless exploiters of human labour in the end grow mellow (or remorseful) and throw all their fortunes into great hospitals in the hope of correcting the diseases their own greed helped create.

If the time clock of a man’s life were to register his hours of crime and sin as against his hours of normal living and human virtue, might not the worst man’s record show to his credit a balance in actual time and deeds?

How Would You Handle Man?

But let’s take man, as my correspondent evidently wishes him to be taken, at his worst. How far can we blame God for the sins and cruelties, the savage, predatory lusts and relentless greeds that certainly seem common enough in the history of nations and the life story of man?

Or let us suppose once more that I am God. How would I handle man? Where would I as creator change the divine plan?

If I were or had been at the beginning God, I could, of course, have created men without the power or possibility of evil. I could at the dawn of life simply have stripped him of all liberty.

Not Free

The stars cannot sin. The great planet Saturn cannot of a sudden decide to make war on his satellites and force them to pay tribute to his racket. Mars cannot seduce Venus, nor can the moon suddenly go crashing off to blast the surfaces of the earth. The stars simply are not free.

Flowers are not free either, nor are the grains. Wheat cannot in angry resentment at the farmer determine to develop in its kernels a subtle poison that will slowly kill the family yet leave no trace for the district attorney to use as evidence. The oak tree cannot lie in wait for the forester and at the exactly correct minute crush him with its powerful limbs. The rosebush has no freedom to plot the extermination of the family that for generations has been cutting its roses with cruel scissors; It cannot obtain opium from the poppy, distill it into a deadly drug, and hold it within its leaves in expectation of the moment when the debutante daughter will sniff the buds and die in agony.

No. Some plants are poisonous; some plants are health-giving; some plants are quite neutral. But no plants are free to determine which they shall be, what they shall do. God and nature determine that for them. They have no choice of virtue or vice.

In the same safe way God gave no freedom to the animals. They are the slaves of their instincts. In moments of anthropomorphic sentimentalism (that is the equivalent of the phrase, “at those times when we treat animals as does Walt Disney in his cartoons”), we pin medals on dogs or blue ribbons on cows. But in our hearts we know that neither the dog nor the cow is free. More probably some man has used his own freedom to develop the dog’s courageous instincts or to improve the cow’s yield of butterfat.

The elephant doesn’t clip coupons for correspondence courses in how to develop its muscles. If the lion is brave, we know he did not first go through a psychological agony of crushing down his fears. The fox may be so tricky and treacherous that we kill him off in defence of our barnyard, but we lay no blame upon him for the instinct that makes him a thief.

Shall God Make Us Slaves?

Continuing the lead of the stars, the grains, and the animals, God could have made His human sons and daughters slaves. He could have created them with no power to be bad, and hence with no real power to be good. For, in order to be meritoriously good, one has to have power of choice. One must see clearly good and evil and choose the thing that is good. One must see the possibilities entailed in the sinful course and then must deliberately, like Christ in His great triple temptation, push away from it.

God did not want a race of slaves. To Him it would have seemed sharp indignity for His sons and daughters to be good as the ant is good because they could not help themselves, or docile as the lamb is docile, or obedient as the horse or the dog is obedient. His universe was already filled with the magnificent slave service of chemistry and physics. The seasons did their work for the earth under the wheel of monotonous necessity. In the seed of an apple or the grain of wheat was a force that compelled each of these to germinate and bloom. The planets swung in their courses on the guide-chains of unbreakable law.

It may be that God was tired of slave service. Certainly He made His angels and His human children free.

Would I Change This?

If I had been God, would I have made man differently, withheld freedom from him? Would I have preferred a human race of robots driven by Impulses and instincts to their labours and their loves? No doubt about it, had I preferred that, I should then have had a wonderfully orderly universe. Men would have moved with the charm and predictable regularity of the stars. They would have been as guiltless as the springtime, as laborious as bees around a queen bee, as fruitful of good as an orchard, as loyal as a setter. But they would have been slaves.

I doubt whether I should have wanted that had I been God. And I doubt whether my correspondent would find enjoyment in the thought of a world of puppets, of marionettes moving to the pull of invisible strings.

So, had I been God, I should probably have done as God did; I should have created my sons and daughters free. I should have given them adequate personal equipment, as God did; a plentiful, really lavish earth, as God did; the example of an ordered universe moving in peace and calm beauty, as God did.

I'd Want Them Free

But no more than God desired it should I have wanted to be served by a race of human slaves, who would have loved me because they had no alternative, served me because I forced their service, made their brothers and sisters happy because there was no way by which they could do otherwise, and cared for the earth under the compulsion of iron chains that bound them to the wheel.

I think I should have preferred to implant in their nature a clear law telling them what was right and what was wrong, pointing out the things that would make them permanently happy, and the other things that, though immediately delightful, would make them ultimately wretched.

If I had seen that they found the law in their hearts hard to read, I should probably have written that law more clearly for them—engraved it, for instance, on tables of stone. Then I should have sent them wise, experienced teachers to make things even more clear. If I had had a brilliant and attractive eldest Son, I should probably have, asked Him to go among them, show them in the charm of His own life how constructive and strong and beautiful a thing is goodness and warn them against the stupidity and horror of evil.

The Risk

But in making them free, I should have known I was taking a risk. For when you let a man choose between good and evil, you must realise that he is likely to pick evil. When you give men one road map to heaven and another to hell, you must foresee that some of the travellers will, incredibly and stupidly enough, set their feet or turn their steering wheel down the incline toward eternal ruin. It was the risk that God took. But if I had been in His place, what else could I have done?

For I would have wanted my children free, to choose the glorious reward of heaven. Stars and flowers and animals have no chance at that reward. That reward can be won only by the free sons and daughters of God. You cannot force a man to accept a salary; he can be a tramp if he wishes. You cannot oblige a woman to live in a mansion if she prefers to spend her days in a hovel in the slums. So God freely offers man the glorious reward of eternal life; but if, having made it, He leaves man free to accept or reject the offer, He runs the risk of man's refusal.

Abnormals

I'm not here going to go into a discussion of man's freedom. There are too many arguments to prove that he is free, and all the disgraceful attempts to strip man of his liberty have left those arguments untouched. Of course, there are abnormals among us, more often than not the sad fruits of human sinning. The fact that we call them abnormals indicates that we regard them as set aside from the sons and daughters whom God planned and originally created. These abnormals may not be free, or they may be only partly free. It is the lack or limitation of freedom in them that makes them inhuman, less than complete men and women.

The tragedy of humanity is not, however, in its defectives, sad as they seem to us. The tragedy is in the lives of normal men and women, who take the liberty God has given them and use it deliberately to thwart God's plans for a happy earth.

Mysterious Man

God made enough and more than enough for all. But this strong scoundrel decides to pile up more money than he can possibly use, so he corners necessities and crushes gold out of the broken bodies of his victims.

God made her heart for love, the dear, familiar love of a daughter for her parents, the strong, passionate love of a wife for her husband, the sublimely unselfish love of a mother for her children. But she determines to pervert that love, to lust, even if it means the rotting of bodies and the blind eyes of little babies.

God asked these two men to help Him make the world happy, lovelier still. But they filled the world with war, crushed in slavery the free sons and daughters of God, and made life hideous for all those whom they could bend to their own aggrandisement.

God gave him a brilliant mind and a skilful tongue, a pen that could picture noble emotions and inspire to high courage. But he used his brilliant mind to create smut, let treason to God and inducement to temptation drip from his tongue; and with his pen he tore at love, marriage, unselfishness, human dignity.

She had a silver voice that might have sung lullabies or wakened pure love in those who would reverently have listened. Instead she used her voice for songs that reeked of filth and sent men away from her with cut and seared souls.

Tragedies, all of them; but how can they conceivably be called tragedies of Gods making? They are simple, open-eyed betrayals of the Father's trust. They are the horrible treason to One Who has loved His children as only God can love men. They are in case after case man's cold-blooded rejection of any part in making God's world happy. They are flat, brutal refusals to help God make this earth a lovely place in which to live.

Too Far?

Can it be that God persists in trusting His sons and daughters too far? Does He have too high a confidence in their essential goodness, their appreciation of right and wrong, their desire for human happiness?

The Communist thinks this is the case. Where God turned over to His children the world with all its richness, the Communist leaders, playing God, think a man unfit to own a small farm, untrustworthy to the point where he can't be allowed to call a little store his own.

The Nazi, too, thinks this is the mistake God made. God places, so Catholic philosophers maintain, all political power in the hands of the people, who may dispose of it in any orderly, just government they choose. The Nazi finds men so unworthy that he beats them into nuts and bolts to hold together a militaristic State. He refuses them all right of judgment, except a nod when the leader speaks. He reduces the citizens to the status of ants in their hill, beavers in their dams, eggs in their crates.

I Prefer God's Way

Perhaps my correspondent thinks the Communist and Nazi wise and right. I prefer God's way. I am glad that He endowed me with freedom, dangerous though that freedom is. Perhaps no gift could be more delicate to handle than is the highly-explosive freedom. Yet without that I am a dog kicked about by instincts, a slave shackled to a workbench. And I

like to be the free man God made me.

So, if I were God, I'm afraid I should endow men with freedom, even if that made them free to upset my plans. Like God, I should give men a clear law in their hearts and a still clearer law that would come from me through teachers I would send them and through Christ, God's Son. I should expect them to use the eyes I gave them to read history's sad record of the effect of man's sinning and to shape their lives on the basis of that expensively purchased knowledge. I should ask them to see how happy the world becomes when the heroes and saints struggle with vision and courage for the triumph of Christ's beautiful plans.

And I am afraid that I should be startled and chagrined if, after all this, they used the equipment I gave them and the richness with which I filled the world to make themselves miserable and drag down their fellow men. And I should be utterly perplexed if they blamed their folly and madness and deliberate blindness on me.

They Do Just This

Yet this is precisely what men do. God does a magnificent job, and then His sons and daughters shake their fists in His face, use the freedom He gave them to crack up His plans for human happiness, and then, when they find themselves utterly wretched, yell that it's all His fault. They act like beasts and then whine at God, "Why didn't You force me to behave myself?" They kick Christianity—its insistence on brotherly love and universal brotherhood out of their senates and schools and factories and armies and public life, and then they taunt Christianity with not having saved them from their own rapacious, thunderingly stupid greed and love of war. They order Christ out of their lives; and then, when their lives crumble around them, they demand to know why He didn't save them in spite of themselves.

God tells us clearly that happiness lies in love and generous service, so the killer deliberately lays the knife at his enemy's throat, and the armies of the world start marching. God and history show us that only in pure love is happiness to be found; whereupon men and women grab the excitement of illicit passion, gripping their lusts and all the sickening consequences that they know must follow. Any child can tell you that only a generous human being is happy; so men turn misers and exploiters and thieves and sick-eyed criminals.

And after all that they turn to God, as does my correspondent, and blaze away at Him.

Yet if my correspondent were God, or if I were God, would he or I have done all this differently?

So Much More

Perhaps, had I been God, I should never have gone to the extremes to which God actually went. Would I have dreamed "of sharing my own life with my children and giving them a right to possess a happiness like my own for all eternity? Would I have risen to the sublime sacrifice of Calvary and the glorious imprisonment of my Son in the Eucharist and in the hearts of men? Would I have sent to them the Holy Ghost, the spirit of light, truth, and love—even if they had been willing to receive Him?

Or, knowing that the vast majority of the human race would, like my correspondent, flatly refuse my helps and benefits, would I have said, "Oh, what's the use!" and let them go their own pigheaded way? For, sadly enough, my correspondent is precisely the kind of person who refuses God's benefits and then, like a pampered child, whines, "Why don't you do something for me?" I wonder how long it is since he threw divine life, sanctifying grace, out of his soul. It would be interesting to know when last he felt the strength and divine vigour of Holy Communion, or when he called upon God in infallible prayer. I wonder, too, whether he ever received the Holy Spirit into his heart in Confirmation, and, if he did receive Him, how soon he drove the God of comfort out in angry distaste.

A father can hardly be blamed if his son starves himself in the midst of the comforts provided him, or if he uses his education to become a high-powered gangster. And I grow more and more puzzled when I see men flatly refusing to accept God's truth and God's proffered help and God's tremendous blessings, and then snap and bark and scream in anger because of what they will not let Him do for them.

If, after all of God's efforts, men still go on making other men unhappy by seeking revenge or lust or more wealth than

they can conceivably use, I'm afraid that, were I in God's place, I should wash my hands of them and let them go their wilfully stupid, deliberately blind ways.

My correspondent can be very grateful to God that He did not let me take His place. And, after reading my correspondent's letter, I can breathe a sigh of relief that he is still a mere man.

Let's Place the Blame

At any rate, the fault seems to lie, not with God at all, but with the free sons and daughters of God. We might, for example, take precisely the situation to which my correspondent refers as "the present condition of the world." Russia, with more land than she can possibly develop, readies out and tears off a chunk of Finland. Why? God has certainly forbidden theft and murder. History tells the terrible consequences of these crimes. But the Russian rulers not only decided that God was wrong but took the stand that He didn't even exist. Why blame God when the men who raped Finland were precisely the men who were defying God and making war on Him?

The nations of Europe are engaged in a gigantic game of murder and suicide. Hitler and his coterie have long ago shoved God out of the life of the Nazi Party and cordially reinstated Valhalla and the criminals who, in ancient Teutonic times, masqueraded as gods. The rulers of France granted God and His law no place in the public life of the land, banned Him from French schools, and took down the crucifix from the walls of French law courts. The memory of many an Irishman goes back not too many years to a time when the English were killing his forefathers for the crime of bringing Christ down into Ireland through the Mass, and crouching behind the hedgerows to teach the name of Jesus to little children.

What Course to Take

So I'm sure that God doesn't like the "present condition" of the world any better than does my correspondent or myself. He could adopt one of three plans to handle the situation:

First: He could destroy men's freedom of will, bring all people back to their senses, and force them with bent necks and shackled souls to do His will whether or not they want to do it. The nations, like the stars and the animals, would then serve God blindly and slavishly.

Second: He could leave men their liberty but wipe out of the various nations those who are causing the trouble. I rather imagine that my correspondent would follow this course. The names of those who have denied God's existence, who have made vicious war on His Church, who have taught their nations a new immorality that is really as old as paganism itself, and who have led the age into the hideous hell of mechanised war—these God would place on a list of the proscribed. And His wrathful but just hand would erase them before their crimes had time to develop.

God's Choice

Third: He could, still leaving men their liberty, take fatherly care of all those who, despite the persuasive folly or ruthless impulsion of the leaders, continue to love Him and follow His law. He could bring these safe even through the collapse of the world and the crumbling of civilisation, until they reached the glory and happiness of their eternal destiny. Those who have lived as His devoted sons and daughters will reap the happy consequences of their deliberate loyalty. The rest . . . well, for them there is always repentance, no matter how deep their crime.

Neither God nor my correspondent nor I would destroy men's freedom. As we watch the papers, we cannot but think that perhaps God is allowing men to wipe themselves from the earth. Perhaps He permits this horrible war simply because they insisted they wanted it and He foresees the obliteration of the men who hate Him and who make war on the happiness of their fellows.

But I believe that His course is—and I feel sure my course would be if I were God—the third. I believe God is letting men use their liberty even though it means self-destruction. I believe He continues to warn them in their secret consciences, in the clear lessons of history, in the laws which they cannot possibly escape; and through those warnings

they foresee the ultimate consequences of their crimes.

But I know that, all the while, He is protecting the souls of those who serve Him and love their fellow men; and even though their immediate ways through life are made painfully torturous by the greed and cruelty of the God-haters, they still find God all around them—on the altars of bomb-wrecked churches, in the constantly reborn face of nature, in the life that, uninterrupted by any exploding shell, flows in their deepest souls—and, waiting for them, holding out perfect happiness as their reward at the end of life's road.

God continues to do His part; let men be the fools and criminals they will. And if I were God, I should find it difficult to improve on His chosen course.

Blame Men, Not God

As for the adventures of my correspondent in the hospital, this seems to me clearest possible proof that it is man, not God, who causes the world's real unhappiness.

The broken ankle comes in the class of human sicknesses. Again we are faced with a wide subject, which has been adequately handled elsewhere, the problem of physical pain in the world. We haven't the space to do more than refer to it here. I discussed this question at length in "When Sorrow Comes." Father Owen Francis Dudley wrote magnificently on it in "Shadow on the Earth." Either of these I suggest to my correspondent if he cares to read a reasonable explanation of sickness and pain.

These obvious things, however, we can note in passing: Sickness unto death is merely the period of transition from life to life. In the experience of all of us sickness has frequently proved a strangely beautiful blessing. I know from my own experience that two illnesses proved the two greatest natural gifts that could be sent me by a wise Father, gifts that reshaped for good the whole course of my life.

High Purposes

Sickness and pain are merely the obverse of health and joy. I, a human being, know that I would be incapable of intense pleasure if I were not capable of feeling pain. The same nerves that react to joy react to suffering. The piano tuned to give forth great harmonies is incidentally capable of hideous discords. The very delicacy of my organism, its capacity for precise operation, make it, like an extraordinarily fine watch, likely to know breakdowns and defects.

Because of the existence of sickness, mothers grow more tender toward their children and thereby toward all the children of men. In moments of worry husbands find new love for their wives. Human sickness makes strong hands grow gentle, trains nurses and doctors to patient care where they might otherwise have been proud and cruel. Sickness is the immediate provocation of that charity that rises in the concrete manifestation of a hospital; the nursing sister, the Red Cross nurse, become lovely symbols of devotion to humanity. Sickness has a way of bringing proud human beings back from greed and vice to virtue and gentleness and God.

I realise this is all sketchy, but it is not precisely the point involved here. The point: is my correspondent right in berating God for what happened in the hospital?

Whose Fault?

"There were," he writes, "thirty-five instances in which your God could have helped me, and he didn't." Yes; and there were a million instances in which He did—in the food He created, the mattress whose materials He made soft, the impulse He gave to men to build a hospital, the power of healing that He placed in medicine and in the broken bones themselves, the sweet anodyne of sleep, the beauty of flowers in a sick man's room, the healing operations of nature.

"I had a bad, blundering nurse, who made things worse, and an indifferent doctor, who neglected me. I wasn't fed sufficiently. Once, in my inability to walk, I had to roll along the floor. . . . Yet your God refused to lift a finger for me."

Does it seem to you—as it certainly seems to me—that God is being blamed for something that man refused to do or did badly? It looks alarmingly plain to me that the ones who failed my correspondent were precisely his fellow men and

women. After God had given human beings the instinct to care for the sick, the simple means for curing a broken ankle, had added to the maternal instinct in woman the instinct to nurse, had given to the doctor not only the opportunity to learn through courses in medical school but the example of the divine physician, had filled the world with delicacies for the sick patient and food calculated to restore his full health, what happened?

Their Failure

Human beings failed. The nurse had her mind on herself and not on her patient, on some attractive, well man and not on the sick man, and she selfishly refused our correspondent the service she was trained to give. The doctor probably estimated my correspondent as “poor pay,” and with his eye on money and not on service he gave short shrift. I wonder whether that particular doctor may not have had his doubts about the existence of any god at all, whether he may not have regarded the patient as a contemptible animal, and whether he wouldn’t have laughed out loud had you suggested that he imitate the divine physician.

The earth is filled with food, but some form of human cruelty and selfishness kept that food from the patient’s lips. Though the medicine case was crammed with healing drugs, the patient, because of human callousness, had to roll along the floor to get help.

I should say that God did His part magnificently. The minute man entered the picture, things changed, and the patient was treated badly. Even there the essential gestures of man had been good: He had built the hospital; he had trained the doctor and prepared the nurse; he had built pharmacies in which to compound drugs and kitchens in which to cook food. He had followed God’s plan for human happiness quite far.

One Final Step

And then he had failed to take the one final step needed.

Man could have “played God” for the patient in the bed. He could have done glorious, god-like things for the man in bed. And the doctor and the nurse and the cook in the kitchen and the chemist in the pharmacy simply missed their big opportunity. They could have been like God, and they failed.

Precisely there is the tragedy and the mystery. Constantly in our lives God is gratifying our desire to be like Him; He gives us uncounted chances to “play God” in big ways and small, and we boot our opportunities and muff our big chances. In the case of my correspondent men could have stood in the place of God for him—fed him, comforted him, loved him, made him wonderfully happy, built up life within him. They could have been the ministers of God’s blessing in his regard; briefly, for him they stood in the place of the Father and the divine physician and the comforter—and with all those chances in their hands, they miserably failed.

Let’s Be Like God

Whenever I hear or read of anyone who has a strong desire to play God, I feel like shouting, “Well, why don’t *you*?” When someone boasts in my presence about what he would do or not do if he were God, it comes to me with a shock that he constantly has a chance to make good his boast and evidently is not aware of it. For, throughout our lives God is constantly asking us to substitute for Him and do for our fellow men the godlike things that will make life beautiful and rich and full.

Sometimes we answer this challenge rather well, and the happiness that follows for ourselves and others is glorious. Sometimes we fail miserably, disgracefully, and unhappiness ensues. On a thousand occasions mothers stand to their children in place of God. Isn’t the world a vastly happier place because they play that part so well? Many a fine physician plays God when he saves a life, brings back health to those who call upon him. I think that a cook in the kitchen plays God for those she feeds quite as much as a great lawyer plays God when he wins justice for a frightened client. I think the young man who protects a girl from sin and temptation plays God very beautifully and strongly, as does the young woman who adds to the beauty of the world the sweet fragrance of her own virtue.

Failures as God

Yet, given the chance to play God, we have a way of failing too, too frequently. We are appalled at human cruelty and thoughtlessness and sin in others. Then God gives us a chance to do His work for someone, and we refuse. Instead of making that mother happy, the son, who for long years has a godlike chance to give her joy, breaks her heart. That wife could create a home not too unlike a blissful mansion in heaven; she spoils it with gross selfishness a nagging tongue, ultimate infidelity. That man has so much wealth that he might easily imitate the generous God; he guards it as would a dog in a manger. That woman has an exquisite beauty that should inspire men to think of angels; she uses it to make them beasts.

I do think that, before we start telling God how to run His world, we might prove that we given a chance to stand briefly in the place of God, have done a first-class job with ourselves. If we have played beautifully in the little corner of the world that depends on us, we may have some right to aspire to higher responsibilities. I notice that people who really try to do a Christ-like job in the spot they occupy are usually too humble about their work to aspire to run the whole world, and usually so busy spreading happiness where they are that they haven't time to taunt God or even to think too much about His running of the universe.

Our Godlike Jobs

The father is like God in that he is a life-bearer, a food-provider, the centre of strength and unity in his family. Is he doing his work with a perfection that is a measurable approach to that of God the Father? A mother brooding over a cradle is a beautiful human substitute for God. I fancy she is so busy that she has little energy left to take over God's assignments. A teacher has the godlike task of bringing truth from God to his pupils and to channel beauty and the divine reality through himself. A good many modern teachers seem to be much more interested in questioning all truth, doubting God Himself, and dynamiting the beautiful things like virtue and love and marriage and the catholic State.

Why we human beings constantly find our chances for happiness resting in the hands of some fellow human, and at moments like that we hope and pray those human beings will act like God. There's the bride who knows that her happiness will depend upon the unselfish love and gentle strength of the man she has married. Or the young lawyer who entrusts his integrity and his whole career to the firm of attorneys he enters. There is the patron who, when he pays money at the box office, depends for his laughter and enjoyment and emotional stimulus on the producer whose play he has come to see or the musician who directs the orchestra he has come to hear. A sick person brings his body to his physician; a reader brings his mind trustfully to the author of the book. Children can make or break the happiness of their parents. A purchaser trustfully picks up goods from the counter, and the salesman has for the moment a chance to become like the provident and meticulously honest God. A citizen casts his vote for a candidate, conferring on him God-shared powers. Into the classroom walks the pupil, who looks trustingly to his teacher, as does the client to the judge on the bench, the widow to the banker in whose keeping she places her trust funds.

But certainly there is no need to continue the list. It is the plainest of facts that we are constantly standing in place of God for those who depend upon us. And our own happiness in a normal life depends a million times upon the godlike conduct of others.

Nihil obstat;
F. Moynihan,
Censor Deputatus.
Imprimatur.
✽ D. MANNIX,
Archiepiscopus Melbournensis.
20/11/1943
