

Heaven Is in Harlem

And a Rolls-Royce the "sweet chariot" of a little black God

by SUTHERLAND DENLINGER

"There are thousands of people who call me God — millions of them — there are millions of them who call me the Devil, but I produce God and shake the earth with it." — Father Divine, telling it to a judge.

IN THE EVENING of November 5, 1933, it had pleased the black God to descend from that "main branch" of "Heaven" which is at 20 West 115th Street, Manhattan, and appear, a short, stout, dignified figure with the wistful eyes of a setter dog, before some five thousand true believers gathered at the Rockland Palace, Harlem dance hall, to sing his praises.

He sat on the stage, surrounded by his angels — Faithful Mary and Satisfied Love, Wonderful Joy and Sweet Sleep, Good Dream and Bouquet, and all the rest of them — and his thick lips parted in a wide smile beneath his scraggly moustache, as he watched the folks stowing away his free chicken dinners in the balcony and the folks shouting "Peace, Father! It's wonderful!" on the main floor.

Father Divine heard the chanting ("He's God, He's God, He's God, He's God, He's God," to the tune of *Marching through Georgia*), and he heard the rhythmic thumping of the big bass drum and the hypnotic blare of the trombone and he witnessed the fervent enthusiasm of this comparatively small segment of his two million followers and he obviously found it good. He beamed, his almost bald pate bedewed with perspiration, and at first neither he nor his eager disciples noticed the swarthy, stocky white man, with the aggressive chin and the look of a sullen Napoleon, who had just then entered the hall.

In a way, the presence of this newcomer might have been interpreted as a triumph for the dusky God. For Fiorello H. LaGuardia, standing now in a side aisle, a bewildered look

upon his craggy features, was a reform candidate for Mayor of the City of New York, and there had been a time in the development of the Deity, not too far distant, when the activities of white unbelievers had been directed almost solely toward placing Father in a dungeon cell. Be that as it may, Mr. LaGuardia was able to spend some moments in uninterrupted contemplation of the scene before he was recognized and escorted, past the chicken eaters on the balcony, to a seat upon the tightly packed stage.

"Father I love you, I love you, I do. . . ." The band played it loud and hot, and the brown mass in the great auditorium swayed and sang. "Father, I surrender, Father I surrender all to you!"

Father Divine rose suddenly from his seat not far from the man who is now chief executive of the world's greatest city and broke into a well executed buck and wing. When he subsided, mopping his brow, a colored speaker enlarged upon the dancer's divinity. "Peace, Father!" roared the hall, "It's wonderful!"

Mr. LaGuardia sat, patiently. Eventually, amid frenzied applause, God himself took the microphone, to deliver in an odd, squeaky voice a message which (like many purporting to come from on high) was notable more for its ear-filling phrases than for intelligibility. Father took his time, a stenographer took notes, the five thousand sobbed and cheered. And, when at long last he was through and it was Mr. LaGuardia's turn, that worthy arose to make probably the strangest speech of his political career.

"Peace, Father Divine," cried the little Latin with the truculent chin, stretching out his arms in a gesture of benediction, "Peace be with you all!"

It was the right note. "Peace!" shouted the

eager congregation. "Peace, it's wonderful!"

"I say," continued Mr. LaGuardia, "I say, Father Divine, no matter what you want, I will support you [cheers]. I am going to clean up this city and I came here tonight to ask Father Divine's help and counsel. . . ."

Strong words, but they were no more successful in winning a political endorsement from the good Father than the honeyed syllables which fell a short time later from the lips of Tammany Candidate John Patrick O'Brien, a heavily jowled charmer who once endeared himself to an audience of Greeks by explaining that he quite understood Hellenic culture, having "translated Horace." No, as Father, interrupted on election eve while greeting a contingent of the faithful from the Pacific Coast, put it, "It's the principle, not the person." And so neither candidate got his support.

This attempt by rival political chieftains to obtain the blessings of Father, impressive enough though it was, constitutes only one of many indications that the little black lord of a Harlem heaven has become a force to be recognized.

GOD LIVED IN SAYVILLE

THE STORY of Father Divine is a story so fantastic that only the boldest and most imaginative of fiction writers could send anything like it clattering from his typewriter and still make it seem plausible. Disregard both the statements of the credulous and the cynical explanations of the heathen, and the mystery surrounding the source of his income alone is as absorbing as any problem ever tackled by the most resourceful of pulp-paper sleuths. Real-life detectives of one sort or another have often tried to get to the bottom of it, without success.

Father feeds thousands every day, without charge. Father maintains heavenly dormitories in which hundreds live on his bounty. Father travels in limousines and maintains a fleet of busses to take the faithful to meetings, and when Easter comes Father rides the skies in a big red airplane while Harlem's thousands, gazing ecstatically upward from the curbs, hail him as God. And when Father has to go to court, which happens occasionally, his roll of bills draws envious comment from the magistrate on the bench. Father says that the money comes from heaven, and, since he takes no collections and none of the cynic theories would

account for any sizeable portion of his expenses, it seems as good an explanation as any — for the moment.

The origins of Father, too, are shrouded in mystery. Worshipped today in scores of "branch Kingdoms" scattered all over the United States (he numbers many white people among his followers), most of those who shout his name know little or nothing about his beginnings. To these, there was simply a time when Father was not, and then suddenly he was — an ordinary, stout little darky, to those with an unseeing eye, wandering down Lenox Avenue in the late summer of the last year of the turbulent 'twenties.

About sixteen years ago, however, a still youngish negro with plenty of self-possession and an evangelical manner descended upon Sayville, Long Island, from the East New York section of Brooklyn. Rev. Major J. Divine had been a minister — no one ever knew whether or not he had been ordained — but his initial role in Sayville was as proprietor of a not-too-busy employment office.

Not long afterward, however, the man who was to be God must have received a celestial visitation. At any rate he reached into his pocket (having first, presumably, called upon Heaven) and paid cash for a large house in the center of Sayville's pleasant residential district. This became the House of Joy, the first of Father's many mansions. A few months, and Sayville became aware that something had happened. People, mostly colored but a number of them white, began flocking to the House of Joy to receive of the Father's grace. They came and they ate roast turkey and they stayed to sing and to shout.

It was the singing and the shouting that got Father into trouble. Irreligious residents complained that it was a nuisance, and the authorities finally set out, in a quiet way, at first, to see what it was all about. In 1930, Suffolk County District Attorney A. G. Blue borrowed a female investigator from New York City. She was to find out, Blue told her, where Divine got the funds to support his lavish philanthropies and his luxurious limousines; find out whether there was (as Sayville's Mother Grundy's whispered) anything immoral in the relationships existing between the brothers and sisters who sojourned in the House of Joy.

Posing as a young colored girl down on her

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luck and anxious for the temporal and spiritual consolations which she had heard the Father could extend, the investigator went to the Divine mansion. Cordially received, she reappeared two weeks later to report that she had discovered no evidence of wrongdoing. The Father, she found, was caring for fifteen destitute persons of his own race, clothing them and feeding them. He was married, and his wife, a buxom negress, was known as Mother Divine. A little group of disciples living in his home and addressed by such picturesque titles as Brother Peace or Sister Virtue, displayed exemplary standards of morality. As to the source of his income, Father answered all questions by biblical quotations having to do with ravens.

TROUBLE IN HEAVEN

OTHER INVESTIGATORS had no better luck, and it was not until 1931, by which time Father's cult had spread to New York City and other towns along the eastern seaboard, that the complaints of citizens long impatient over Heaven's uproar secured his indictment on charges of maintaining a public nuisance.

First (next to his followers) to rally to his defense were the village tradesmen. Father Divine for years had spent hundreds of dollars, sometimes thousands, each month for food and clothing. His trial attracted crowds to the courthouse at Mineola, and one after another of his disciples testified that he had "Christ within his body" and derived his financial support directly from heaven.

"Do you really believe," Supreme Court Justice Lewis J. Smith incredulously asked Helen Faust, his twenty-six-year-old white secretary (a former student at Boston University), "that Divine is God?"

"Yes," replied Miss Faust, emphatically, "I do."

Another white disciple who testified and who

remains to this day among those in the inner circle of the Kingdom was James Maynard Mathews, onetime student at Boston and Northwestern universities and Pace Institute.



Portrait by Karl S. Woerner

Father Divine.

"I believe," said Mathews, "that Father Divine is the perfected expression of God and I believe heaven sends him money direct."

Other witnesses swore that Divine had performed miracles of healing. Against them were arrayed the aroused householders of Sayville, one of whom said that empty whisky bottles had been hurled at him from Father's back porch. Others described their distaste for being kept awake by cries of "It's wonderful" and "Thanks, Father, for your wonderful healings." A policeman said the defendant had told him,

"Go away from here; can't you see I'm God?"

The jury found him guilty with a recommendation of leniency, and Father Divine languished for a few days in jail before being freed on \$1,000 bail. The probation officers, when he was finally arraigned for sentence, admitted that they had been able to find out little about his past. They said that they believed his right name was Joe Baker and that he had been born in Georgia and had deserted a wife and family in Alabama before coming north to march forward in the odor of sanctity with Mother Divine. To which the Father, given an opportunity to speak in his own defense, replied merely that his name was Divine, that he had been born fifty-two years before in Providence, Rhode Island, that he had "no education" but had been an evangelist in Boston and Baltimore. For the rest, his vagueness matched that of the officers appointed to investigate him.

The Court, after making a speech in which he declared that he believed Divine a bad influence, whose teachings disrupted homes and even affected the minds of his followers, sentenced him to a year in jail. Father at once took an appeal (his conviction eventually was reversed) and shook the dust of Sayville from his celestial number nines. It really marked the beginning of his rise to a more than local influence. Harlem, Bridgeport, Newark, Philadelphia, and other cities began to hear of his cult, nurtured in the meeting halls of a half score darkytowns on the eastern seaboard. Belief in the divinity of Major J. Divine spread rapidly to such distant fields as Colorado, the State of Washington, and that breeding ground of the screwy, Los Angeles.

PEACE REIGNS IN NEWARK

HIS CONVERTS, for the most part, are among the underprivileged and undereducated. His teachings, where they can be unscrambled from the rich rhetoric which surrounds them, appear to be an odd mélange of Christian Science, theosophy, and good old evangelical Baptist, to which he has added some sterling touches of his own quite aside from the tenet of his divinity.

The folk of the Kingdom are for the most part honest, hard-working persons (he teaches the dignity of labor) who believe implicitly in Father's ability to heal any mortal ailment. Should they die, it is merely because their faith

has, for a fatal moment, wavered. Rumors that many converts had signed over to Father life insurance which they believed they would no longer need, thanks to their newly won immortality, have never been substantiated.

Amusingly, in view of the Long Island district attorney's alarm over the Kingdom's possible immorality, the Father teaches that husbands and wives should have no marital relations — since children will be "born by the action of the spirit." Many an irate husband, in the years since Father sprang full-blown out of Sayville, has complained of his spouse's attitude toward him since she "done took up with that Kingdom." In Father Divine's world of "brethren and sisters" there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

Father managed to stay out of court for a while, following his trial in Mineola, but in the fall of 1933 he ran afoul the Newark, New Jersey, Court of Common Pleas. True, the affair did not involve any charges against him, but it did result in a formal investigation which was concerned (vainly, as usual) with the sources of his income.

Father had two Newark Kingdoms, as well as a sort of extension kingdom in the Oranges. In charge of one of the Newark organizations was a big negress called Faithful Mary, later to share honors with him in a New York City victory over the forces of (judicial) unrighteousness, and the other, the Temple, under the perhaps too enthusiastic leadership of "Bishop" J. F. Selkridge. Neighbors objected to the night-long hullabaloo kicked up by dusky seraphs in praise of their half-pint Lord; Selkridge was sent to jail for ninety days; and Judge Richard Hartshorne appointed a committee of three to investigate the Kingdom.

Hearings began on October 16, and early on the morning of that day the vicinity of the courthouse looked like something out of the deep South. Fully five hundred disciples clustered on the steps, most of them negroes, although there was the usual scattering of whites, and in the alleys roundabout were autos of every type and vintage bearing plates of Canada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Delaware, New York, and Washington. "Peace," murmured the placid people among themselves. "Peace, it's wonderful."

One group of forty had come by bus from

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Seattle, under the leadership of a gentleman who rejoiced in the Heepish name of Ross Humble. Each had paid fifty dollars for transportation and food — they were on the road for eleven days — but since their arrival in the East they had all been “provided for.” Their spokesman was Mrs. Nellie O. Hays, of Port Orchard, Washington:

Q — Who pays your expenses here?

A — Peace. It's wonderful. Father Divine provides it.

Q — What does he provide it from? Who pays for it?

A — Peace. I can't bear record to that. He provides it.

Q — Are you well provided for?

A — Every meal is a banquet, and we lie on the softest of beds. Peace. It's wonderful.

Mrs. Hays was asked about miracles. She obliged. “We were miraculously saved from disaster on our trip. Once we went into the ditch in Kansas: a watermelon wagon turned out in front of us. We never felt a bump. If it had been any other time, we would have all been killed. Peace. It's wonderful.”

“Any other miracles?” asked the committee.

Mrs. Hays beamed. “I can bear record to this,” she said. “All my life I suffered from indigestion and now I eat like a horse. It's wonderful.”

Having listened to insurance agents who testified that the belief of the disciples that they would be taken care of once they had joined the Kingdom was not very good for business, the committee conscientiously interviewed the good Father himself. They asked him if he were God.

He paused a moment, replied: “I teach that God has the right to manifest himself through any person or anything he may choose,” he said. “If my followers believe that I am God and in so doing they are led to reform their lives and experience joy and happiness, why should I prevent them from so doing?”

Many disciples testified to that “joy and happiness,” and there was more talk of miracles.

Said one woman: “In regard to medical care, I have heard Father say, ‘If you haven't faith enough in God, get a doctor.’ Physical ailments are caused by poisonous thoughts. Disharmony in my home has been corrected, and that proves Father is God.”

The committee's report found that the

Kingdom had worked some harm, some good. It cited the testimony of social workers and police officers regarding the improved moral outlook of those who had “gone to Father” but deplored the likelihood that certain cultists might have turned their insurance over to the Kingdom and that the disciples generally “did not concern themselves realistically with the realities of life-protection against old age.” Judge Hartshorne took no action beyond releasing the report to the public and quoting Lincoln to the effect that you can “fool some of the people some of the time,” etc.

In 1934, Father Divine's detractors — many of them, you may be sure, were envious clerics of his own race — found a new theory to account for his apparently unlimited supplies of cash. On August 12 of that year, onlookers at a huge peace parade staged in New York City under Communist auspices were startled to see some thousands of colored marchers bearing banners which announced that “Father Divine is God.”

“We may disagree with them to some extent, of course,” explained a smiling veteran of the Red front, “but we are glad to have their assistance.”

That, in the upshot, was just about what it amounted to. “No,” said Father Divine in response to a direct inquiry, “I never got any money from Moscow. It's the other way around, in fact. I don't altogether agree with them, but I've helped them, some.”

THE KINGDOM FLOURISHES

BY THE LATE autumn of 1934, Father Divine had come a long way from the heavenly mansions in Sayville. It was beginning to keep him busy just “swinging around” the fifteen branch heavens in the metropolitan district alone. He had an increasing number of white followers throughout the country, too, and the main branch of God's Kingdom just off the Avenue resembled the headquarters of the Abyssinian high command.

The five-story building at 20 West 115th Street, in that no man's land which lies between black Harlem and the habitat of the mestizo Spanish peoples, has a somewhat ecclesiastical air, due largely to its Gothic trimmings. At every hour, from morning until the morrow's dawn, there are always disciples at the door to greet every arrival with a hearty

cry, "Peace, Brother, it's wonderful! Peace!"

Enter the vestibule and you can hear, above the clamor of the disciples who are just "standing around," the din of the diners in the basement. The luscious odor of corned beef and cabbage or fried chicken is wafted upward, together with an industrious rattle of tableware and the chant of the singers of hymns, sometimes muffled as though their mouths were very full. "I can't give you anything but love, Father," sing the hungry ones, in fervent parody of the song made famous by the not at all religious Blackbirds.

On the main floor is an auditorium; above the auditorium are dormitories (as the Kingdom grows, Father simply reaches into his pocket and rents another brownstone-front "annex"); and on the topmost floor are the Divine offices. Climbing, one hears the temporal click of a busy typewriter, and one's eyes light upon signs painted on canvas and hung against the walls to the greater glory of the Father.

"Peace," reads one, "Father Divine is the light of the world. The tree of life is blooming, blooming for one and all. Father Divine, I thank you, Father."

And another: "Father Divine has brought peace to the Nation. He is God. If you keep his sayings you will never see death."

"Every language, tongue, and nation must bow," screams a sign. "Father Divine is God, His Blood has Paid It," shouts a banner propped into an angle of the wall. And, ambiguously; "Peace! I am that I am and Who Can Hinder Me? The Lord is My Shepherd and I Shall Not Want I Mean Father Divine!"

Father is not an easy person to interview. He is articulate enough; his decidedly rambling orations fill whole pages in the negro papers of Harlem (they are always carried in full); but he usually has an aversion to the direct question. Asked once how tall he was, he thought a moment before replying: "I've never been measured, because I don't bear record, but I feel that I am five feet two."

Always, of course, there is the inevitable question about the source of his income, and always his answer is of the sort which a skeptic might term evasive. "The spirit of the consciousness of the principle of God is the source of all supply," he explains. "It will satisfy every desire. I have the keys to the treasures

of the earth. I have all the money I need."

DIVINE CURRENCY

THERE IS no question about that. Not long ago representatives of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children took a fifteen-year-old white girl and four negro children from an apartment house in West 126th Street maintained as a dormitory annex to Father's Kingdom. The agents of the society acted because the establishment did not have the boarding-house license required by the Board of Health. The children did not want to go. They cried for "Mother," who presently appeared in the black and buxom person of Faithful Mary.

Faithful Mary, aided by a lawyer for Father Divine, then away on a visit to his flock in Bridgeport, conducted the agents on a tour of inspection. She explained to them, with no little pride, her gold teeth flashing in the half light of the tiny bedrooms, that she paid \$1,700 a month rent for similar boarding houses conducted for the Kingdom's poor, meeting her bills two months in advance. "I trust to God Almighty for the money," she said. "I always get it."

"For nine years," she continued, "until two years ago, I was a street bum. But sympathy is in me now. Then I was dying of consumption. They wheeled me before Father Divine — he is God. I had been arrested in everything from the first to the seventh precincts in Jersey. I had a hemorrhage in one lung before I met the Father. I was a whisky fiend. I was birth-marked — yes, sure — with whisky. I didn't have a cent. Then I was cured by Father Divine. If God could heal me, if God could make me stop the drinking, I can trust Him for the rest of my life. I can trust in God Almighty for the money."

When God Almighty returned from Bridgeport, he appeared with his female disciple before Magistrate Burke in Harlem Court on the charge of operating a boarding house without a license. His arrival at court that afternoon was dramatic. Father and Faithful Mary and their attorney drove up in a plum-colored Rolls-Royce, to find the court entrance blocked by more than a thousand of the true believers, who had been standing for upwards of an hour in the pouring rain, cheerfully singing a hymn, "Praised be his holy name, Father Divine."

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Mary and the Father were greeted with a great shout and sheltered beneath a single huge umbrella (of bright purple). They tried to force their way to the door. "Peace," pleaded the Father, but in vain — the crowd still pressed forward. Mounted police finally forced the throng back, and master and disciple stood at last before the bar of justice.

Magistrate Burke heard the testimony of the Children's Society agents and the plea of counsel for the defendants that they had not realized the necessity for a license; and he held the pair for Special Sessions. He fixed bail at \$250 each, and Father reached trustingly into that pants pocket and came up with a wad big enough to choke an agnostic. Magistrate Burke blinked, got up off the bench, peered at the money with which the little evangelist was fumbling.

"Let me see that," he said, "I see so few of them lately." Father Divine passed a \$500 bill up to him. Magistrate Burke regarded it enigmatically.

"And now," said the Magistrate, finally, "what have you got in the other hand?"

Father passed up another \$500 bill, and still there remained a thick, green flowering of divine, or Divine, currency in his small, sturdy brown hands.

"Bail," remarked the Court, a trace of envy in his voice, "is amended to \$500 cash, apiece. You may as well put up the money, as long as you have it."

Father blinked his eyes pleasantly enough, and he put up the money and walked with Faithful Mary through the rain to the limousine, which bore them in state to the Kingdom and the applause of the waiting angels.

SAVED!

A FEW WEEKS later, hundreds of shouting negroes who had made the long journey to the Criminal Courts building, far downtown, exulted when the Father's lawyer (the same Arthur J. Madison who had defended him in Mineola years before) secured a postponement. "He's won, He's won, He's won, He's won, He's won," they chanted, leaping about in an African ecstasy utterly unlike the drabber demonstrations of emotion to which that aged and tear-stained structure is accustomed. They followed him down the corridors, ignoring the remonstrances of attendants. One woman

reached forward to kiss his coattails, shrieking the while: "There goes my savior!"

Out into Centre Street marched the little God, pursued by his devotees. This time his Rolls was a pale blue, and the faithful crowded about it, clamoring. "He's God," said a white man in laborer's clothing to his companion. "He's God." And then, behind cupped hands: "Nobody really knows what it all is, but He's God!"

A stalwart negro was more belligerent: "It's a good thing He won," he yelled, "or there wouldn't have been no courthouse. No sir, there wouldn't have been no courthouse at all!"

For the most part, however, the disciples were of gentler mold, stretching their hands out toward the Father, making the peculiar twiddling motion with their finger tips which is the unfailing mark of the cult.

But this premature celebration wasn't a patch on that which took place before the Criminal Courts Building on April 16, when three judges of the Court of Special Sessions who had just declared Father not guilty of the charges brought against him by the Children's Society stood at the windows with their attendants and watched pandemonium in the broad and dingy street outside.

The crowd had been gathering since before dawn, and when the diminutive colored deity emerged from his ordeal victorious it went absolutely wild. Negroes and whites danced in the streets, strove to touch the sides of Divine's gaudy limousine as it rolled through the press.

Testimony of the prosecution witnesses — children who had been sheltered in the home for which Faithful Mary had failed to secure a license — was typical of that given by Father's followers in all his brushes with mundane law. Here is George Deik, nine, a negro lad:

Q [by Justice Caldwell] — Truth or lie, which is right?

A — Truth.

Q — And what would happen if you told a lie?

A — Father Divine would punish me if I told a lie after swearing to tell the truth.

Q [by Deputy Assistant Prosecutor MacDonald]

— Do you believe in God, George?

A — Yes.

Q — Who is God?

A — Father Divine.

Father returned in triumph to the Kingdom to wrestle with his mail. It was no mean job even for deity made flesh. For the Kingdom

was growing steadily and not always without protest from the heathen.

In Ivywild, suburb of Colorado Springs, only the determination of Sheriff Sam Deal and his deputies had prevented a crowd of irate suburbanites from attacking a newly established branch of heaven, the membership of which is fifty per cent white. In Los Angeles, attention had been called to the cult by the divorce suit filed by the wife of a chiropractor who charged that her husband had become cold to her since enrolling beneath the celestial banner of Father. More usually this type of case involved the protests of husbands embittered because, they charge, their wives have refused them conjugal relations after becoming converted to the cult. Rival negro pastors quickly took advantage of this phase of the Kingdom's influence (it recurs continually in the courts of domestic relations), and one recently announced that he had "frankly advised" a wife who leaned toward the Kingdom to return to her husband. "I told her to go back to the flesh," he said.

From Manhasset, Long Island, came the threat of Rev. Dr. Roscoe H. Walker, negro pastor of the Community Baptist Church, to "lead a hundred twenty-five thousand negroes to Harlem and tear apart Mr. Divine's heaven there, brick by brick." Dr. Walker alleged that Father "has a heaven just off Fifth Avenue, in the sixties, which is for whites only."

GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

NEVERTHELESS, Father continues to prosper and heaven to expand. John Green, haled into Domestic Relations Court by his wife, declared he was devoted to Father "ten million per cent." Some time ago a bus loaded with negroes was involved in a minor accident. The driver, without a license, was haled to a police station. His passengers accompanied him. All wore buttons proclaiming them members of "heaven on earth," and they filled the station house with crooning melody.

"Who owns this car?" asked the hard-boiled desk lieutenant.

The ebony-faced driver, his legs encased in riding boots below smart whipcord breeches, regarded him gravely: "It belongs to God, Policeman," he replied.

The passengers crooned reverently, and the lieutenant put his hand to his forehead in a

gesture of bewilderment. "Where's your license?" he demanded, finally.

"It's at the Kingdom, Officer," said the driver. The lieutenant gave up. Someone was dispatched to the Kingdom, returned with the license, and bus and passengers departed.

Principals of night schools in Harlem and in Brooklyn were startled a little while ago by a tremendous influx of students who came into their offices, their faces alight, and murmured, "Peace be with you." It developed that Father, interlarding one of his polysyllabic discourses with a practical interlude, had suggested that it would please divinity if more of the disciples went to school. They've had to put on extra instructors in Harlem.

And so the work of the Kingdom continues and spreads, and the mystery of Father, glorified realization of the imagined deity in *The Green Pastures*, remains unsolved. The pocket filled directly from heaven apparently produces more money than ever before, despite depression, and the tiny Divine's influence has never been so great. Indeed, it is believed that anger over official interference with Faithful Mary's celestial homes was one of the causes underlying Harlem's recent riot.

The two latest theories regarding Father's income (and like the others they can neither be proved nor disproved) are, one, that he was left a fortune by some unknown admirer and, two, that his activities are being supported by some anonymous white philanthropist. The second is at least intriguing — certainly a fascinating way to spend a few million! One doubts, however, if the imagination of any American multimillionaire would be equal to it.

And what of the future? Has the heaven whose God is in Harlem reached its greatest glory on earth, must it face the inevitable decline of secular institutions?

Father Divine's airplane rolled up to the hangar apron at Roosevelt Field after a swing around the Kingdoms in the East. A throng of disciples greeted their God with uplifted hands. Colonel Robert Lorraine, World War veteran, strolled over to the little evangelist.

"Well, Reverend," said the Colonel, "How close to Heaven did you get?"

"I carry it with me," replied the black man. "By 2525 there will be a vanishing city carrying ten million of my followers."

That's your answer!

Which Way for the Labor Unions?

A Debate

I—Organized Labor Protects All

by WILLIAM GREEN

LABOR FINDS itself again in 1936 confronted with a sharp debate within its own ranks, but before I reply to the invitation of the Editor of THE FORUM, to define the position of the organization for which I have the honor to speak, may I remind those who are courteous enough to consider what I have to say that the American Federation of Labor has always taken the position it now holds—that it stands primarily to protect the rights of every laboring man in the United States, whether he belongs to a union or not.

The accomplishments of the Federation are too well known and recognized to require repetition here. It has been said, and I think it is undisputed, that no other organization in history has accomplished concretely what we have accomplished for the laboring man, while the benefits we have brought to our own members have inevitably spread out and have been shared by workers who did not bear their share of the burden of the organization.

At all times, as now, we are guided primarily by the determination to be sure our principles are right. We have always fought for principle. We are fighting for principle today. If power comes to us, as it has in the past and as it must in the future, that is a secondary consideration. We have never sought power directly, and for that reason we have always kept out of politics. It is our belief that if we seek power directly, ignoring the basic principles on which our strength is built, whatever may be the heights of power which we may attain, it

will be inevitable that we will lose in the end not only the temporary power but also the advantages for which we have fought so successfully through our history of fifty-five years.

Now, before I continue with what some persons have tried to present as an opposition to the important and powerful miners' union but which is actually nothing of the kind, permit me to remind my readers that all of my manual labor was as a miner. I am the son of a miner and for twenty years I labored in the coal mines of Ohio. For years I was a subofficer of a subdistrict of the United Mine Workers of Ohio. Later I was President of the United Mine Workers of Ohio. Then I became Secretary-Treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America. Today I hold my union card as a member of the United Mine Workers of America. Who, then, can justly say that I am antagonistic to the interests of miners or of the miners' union?

However, I am also President of the American Federation of Labor, which is made up of 110 component parts, and am required by my obligation and the laws of the Federation to execute organization policies adopted at conventions of the American Federation of Labor.

In the present debate within the Federation, all of these 110 international unions, with the exception of 8, are willing to be governed by the decisions arrived at by a majority vote in the conventions and to carry out the organization policies adopted at conventions. Among these is one providing for the application of

