

"BLESSINGS FLOWING FREE" : THE FATHER DIVINE
PEACE MISSION MOVEMENT IN HARLEM, NEW YORK
CITY, 1932-1941. IN TWO VOLUMES

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VOLUME ONE.

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ABSTRACT

This movement was based on the teachings of a black preacher of obscure origins, known as Father Divine, who claimed to be God come to establish a millennium of racial harmony, prosperity, peace and immortality. He attracted a large following in the nineteen thirties that reached a peak in 1935 and 1936 and thereafter declined through disaffection, schism and prosecution.

Most of Divine's followers were in the ghettos of the North-eastern seaboard of the United States, especially in New York City, which was his headquarters. There were also groups on the West Coast and in other countries. The followers were mainly middle aged women: poor, migrant blacks and middle class, educated whites. Through dedication to self-denial and faith in the principles of the American Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, the Movement promised not only the revitalisation of the ghettos but the resolution, through moral re-birth, of the inequalities and conflicts of industrialised society.

Precipitated by the Depression and encouraged by the New Deal, the Movement was an attempt to adapt the values of the black rural past to the transformation of urban society. Within a wider Protestant sectarian tradition, its millennialism was the confluence of a black sectarianism, with its origins in slavery, and the doctrines of esoteric white sects that sought to reconcile faith with science.

Emboldened by its success in regulating and exploiting a depressed ghetto economy, it launched its own political initiative - the Righteous Government campaign. But its teachings proved both inadequate and inappropriate in pressure group politics. In

consequence, in the later 'thirties, it abandoned its early radicalism and concentrated on the acquisition of property. Father Divine's flight to Philadelphia in 1941, to evade payment of a judgement against him, ended the Movement's dynamic period. Thereafter, it declined and ossified.

NOTE

The punctuation and syntax of the reports in the Peace Mission press, especially those of Father Divine's speeches, are deliberately idiosyncratic. Therefore, for the most part, the use of 'sic' has been foregone in the quotation of these reports.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

In the early nineteen-fifties, Sara Harris and Harriet Crittenden unobtrusively joined a community of Father Divine's followers in Philadelphia, then - as now - the headquarters of the Father Divine Peace Mission. After a period of participation, diligent enquiry and observation, Harris wrote an account of the Peace Mission which was published in 1953 as Father Divine: holy husband.¹ Her subterfuge and her decision to write a history and analysis of a movement that, in its adherents' eyes, transcended history and the ways of men - being nothing less than the kingdom of heaven on earth - angered and disgusted the followers. Her study became, to them, "The Forbidden Book."²

Sara Harris described a movement whose adherents had voluntarily renounced their relatives, former friends and past lives in favour of a community that was governed by a number of strict disciplines, including celibacy; that rejected notions of race and class; that believed that through obedience to its moral precepts its adherents would be granted immortality; and that preached a creed of universal brotherhood, abundance and self-reliance. It was a wealthy group, composed mainly of elderly blacks and middle-class whites of different ages; with multi-million dollar investments that were co-operatively owned and run. Within its highly disciplined world, there was a rigid hierarchy of status, at the apex of which was an elderly, domineering black man, whom his followers called "God" - Father Divine.

The appeal of the Movement to the white followers, Harris believed, was that it offered a haven for those who could not find a place in the outside society - eccentrics and psychotics - even,

simply, spinsters, who found that they could wear their badge of virginity with pride within the Movement.³ But to explain Father Divine's appeal to his black followers, she had to consider the Peace Mission as it was twenty years earlier at the time of its growth - the Depression - and in the place of its growth - Harlem, New York City.

Two books about the Father Divine Peace Mission appeared in the 'thirties. John Hoshor's God in a Rolls Royce: the rise of Father Divine - madman, menace or messiah, published in 1936, was a sensational, even flippant account, the stuff of many contemporary press reports of the Movement;⁴ but R.A. Parker's Incredible messiah: the deification of Father Divine, published a year later, was a more sober study. Parker described a movement that believed it was practising the exact life and teachings of Jesus Christ; that firmly believed that Father Divine was the messiah bringing about the kingdom of heaven on earth; that accepted a host of evangelical disciplines as necessary to "re-birth"; and that was attracting both a national and an international following.⁵ Parker noted the number of white followers within its ranks. But for Parker, conscious that Father Divine was drawing the bulk of his followers from poor blacks in Depression Harlem, Father Divine's rise to fame was at one with the "messianic dramas of the past". He was another of those "Heaven-sent prophets, saviours, messengers of God and theomaniacs [who] always emerge when the cravings for deliverance become strong enough in the subconscious of oppressed minorities."⁶

Both Harris and Parker wrote for a popular audience but their observations and conclusions are a fair summary of academic studies of the Peace Mission which are more limited in scope. Both Harris and Parker believed that Father Divine's black followers had joined

the Peace Mission because they suffered from extreme social, economic and psychological deprivation. Harris repeated the horrendous, personal 'life histories' given to her by black followers who had joined the Peace Mission in the 'thirties: 'histories' in which destitution, crime and prostitution figured prominently.⁷ Parker had only to look at the statistics of Harlem housing and unemployment and the failings of municipal government to demonstrate, to his satisfaction, the bases of Father Divine's appeal.⁸

Harris and Parker argued that the Peace Mission offered to deprived and oppressed people not only lodging, but also security and status: the comforts denied them by American society. The Peace Mission was a refuge from outside pressures and pains: the extremity of its beliefs was a reflection of the extremity of its situation. They added to this interpretation a judgement. To be sure, the Peace Mission was a protest against a society that denied the followers human dignity. But it was a fantasy world of make-believe values.⁹

Yet, as Neil J. Smelser recognised, when he used the Peace Mission Movement as an example of a "value-orientated" movement in his Theory of collective behaviour, movements like the Peace Mission, which attempt to build entirely new social systems, tend to arise at times when the conventional social 'reality' is in question. In a synthesis of the scholarship of both secular revolutionary movements and millennialism, he suggested that the tenets of such "value-orientated" movements are attempts by the movement's followers to explain and resolve deep contradictions in the fabric of society which the followers not only perceive in an objective fashion but realise through their own inchoate but painful experience. The apparently 'fantastic' elements in these beliefs are the result of the followers' attempt to re-order an intractable 'reality' in the

light of their particular values and history. The 'fantasy' of the "value-orientated" movement may be expressed in a withdrawal from the rest of society; as a revolutionary assault upon it; or in a number of less dramatic ways; but its purpose is always to re-make society.¹⁰ The Peace Mission Movement ought not to be regarded, then, as an aberrant, make-believe world but one which was impelled by social conflict; shaped to resolve that conflict; and informed by the history and perceptions of its followers: and this was as true for the white followers as for the black.

Smelser has also drawn attention to the dynamic quality of the "value-orientated" movement. Such a movement, he suggested, is likely, especially at the time of its growth, to experience a number of changes, largely governed by how successful it is in resolving the social conflicts and contradictions that gave it birth, and the way that the political authorities and agencies of social control react to it. The movement may change direction as some tactics fail and others are more successful; growth in the membership of the movement and changes in its prosperity may affect the manner of its organisation and lay the bases for internal disruptions; new leadership may emerge as a result of both internal and external developments. The degree of success of other strategies for dealing with the same problems may also affect the movement's course.¹¹

To some extent, Parker and Harris examined the Peace Mission as a movement with a history. They traced its messianic antecedents in the American South; its growth from a small group of close disciples to a large, scattered movement; its conflicts with the courts and government officials; and its internal disputes. That there was a dynamic period in the Peace Mission's history was implicitly accepted by Sara Harris when she looked back from the vantage point of the stable, ritualised and withdrawn Peace Mission Movement of

the 'fifties to Depression Harlem for much of her description of the Movement's tenets and behaviour.

But by insisting that the Peace Mission was an irrational reaction from society rather than a struggle to regulate it, both Parker and Harris obscured not only its place in time but its internal development. They treated it as ideologically stable, indeed, monolithic.

In contrast, then, to previous studies of the Peace Mission and generally in accord with Smelser's suggestions, this thesis seeks to examine the Peace Mission as an attempt not to escape but to change the social situation in which the followers found themselves. It examines the Movement's period of growth in the Depression, in the particular context of Harlem, New York City; it looks at the social and economic circumstances that gave rise to the Peace Mission; and it considers the concerns that guided the followers' attempts to change those circumstances.

Of course, as Parker and Harris recognized, the Peace Mission was a product of racial, social and economic inequalities that were deeply embedded in American life and which the Peace Mission sought to change through moral re-birth. Indeed, it was the gap between the promise and the reality of the American Dream that probably concerned the white followers, many of whom had already sought drastic spiritual solutions in other religious sects and cults. But to understand what guided the black followers toward such a solution demands a window into the lives and thought of the believers that is hard to open.

Three-quarters of Father Divine's followers in Depression Harlem were black; predominantly women and largely middle-aged. Although little is known about them individually, an analysis of their race, age and sex may provide a key to their consciousness,

for it reveals them as a particular part of the generation that shared the experience of migration from the rural South to the urban North in the period during and after World War I.

Historians and students of black American urbanisation have yet scarcely explored the possible areas of strain and tension experienced by immigrants to the cities of the North and South in the twentieth century. The social history of black Americans in the South after Emancipation is, as yet, barely touched and studies of the migration have concentrated on the structural causes of the mass population movements to the North with comparatively little emphasis on the aspirations and reactions of the migrants themselves. Students of the city ghettos have discussed the respective importance of white racism and black self-segregation in their formation, and extensive attention has been accorded to inter-racial friction and to the role of the black middle-class as the self-seeking "architects of the institutional ghetto"; but the reactions of more plebian migrants have been neglected.¹²

The orthodox view, until recently, has been that the migration and ghetto deprivation led to considerable social disorganisation in the black community, and especially in the black family. Patrick Renshaw illustrated the emphasis of many ghetto historians when he wrote, "in facing poverty and prejudice the black community also had to bear the burden of marked family instability which became a dominant characteristic of Negro urban life." In the orthodox view, the inhabitants of the ghetto have been portrayed as powerless victims; prevented by economic weakness, internal divisions, family dislocation and the lack of an effective middle class from fighting against poverty and discrimination.¹³

Lately, revisionist historians have begun to come to grips with these assumptions. Herbert G. Gutman has devoted an entire

volume to an effort to demolish the belief that the black family was, from the time of slavery, inherently disorganised and unstable. Yet even this study fails to illuminate the crucial area. For, relying heavily on cold statistics, devoting the mass of his work to slavery and its immediate aftermath, and largely treating the family as if it were inoculated against the contamination of any social or economic development, Gutman has replaced an old orthodoxy by a new one: of the infinitely adaptable and resilient family.¹⁴ The question remains: what were the implications of urbanisation for the migrants themselves, their perceptions of themselves and others, and their patterns of behaviour?

Another recent study, Lawrence W. Levine's Black culture and black consciousness,¹⁵ while introducing new evidence from black folk tales, music and song, also largely ignores the question. He, like Gutman, is concerned to refute the pathological stereotype of black American life and, accordingly, tends to stress continuities of folk expression; its cohesiveness; its inventiveness and its role in sustaining a healthy black community. He sees black culture and consciousness in terms of slavery and freedom; in terms of the demise of the sacred world of the black slaves and the rise, in freedom, of secular song and cultural values. He gives brief attention to migration and greater attention to the impact of literacy and the mass media on black consciousness; but again, his is a study that is relatively insensitive to the impact of social and economic change on black culture. It is, perhaps, a significant reflection of this that he makes no attempt to widen his discussion of folk consciousness to account for the changing character of black American social movements. Indeed, his continual insistence on the strength and resilience of the folk consciousness as the expression of a unique black identity tends to obscure the tensions and strains

that the black community suffered and that the black folk-tale and song express so well.

These two studies indicate that it may well have become almost unfashionable to deal with the painful side of black experience; but unless the revisionist historians can demonstrate the capacity of blacks to draw on the strengths of their experience to resist and transform their social and economic plight, then their arguments against orthodoxy fall short. Nor can this capacity to resist be shown without acknowledging the human cost: the anxieties, confusions conflicts, even failings within the black community.

Strangely enough, it is E. Franklin Frazier, whose work has lately been the target of the opprobrium of some revisionist scholars for his stress on the disorganising factors in ghetto life in his pioneering Negro family in the United States, who has most to say about the possible contending moralities, the changes in the quality of life, the alteration in the balances of freedom and restraint between the rural world and that of the city.¹⁶

Although the controversy over the disorganisation of the urban black community is largely beyond its scope, this thesis tries, while giving weight to the familiar statistics of ghetto deprivation, and given the paucity of historical evidence, to discover the nature of the values and aspirations that the followers of Father Divine brought to Harlem; their perception of ghetto life; and the manner in which they and other groups sought to overcome the disabilities of the ghetto. In doing so, it seeks to discover both the strengths and weaknesses of the Peace Mission's perceptions and prescriptions.

Considering the Peace Mission as an effort to change society through a religiously-inspired moral re-birth also raises a question about the nature of black religion.

For many years, the study of black American religion has been

preoccupied with the complex ambiguities of the relationship between black piety and the social, political and economic oppression of the race. Scholars have sought constantly to assess how far religion held the potential to change and improve black life. For many years, the view prevailed that black religion was essentially compensatory. It was acknowledged that black worship was distinctive, and that black church life was an expression of institutional independence offering blacks opportunities to provide their own leadership and accrue the personal status and prestige denied them in other aspects of their lives. But on the matter of belief, it was held, black religion followed the lines of white piety and offered no fundamental challenge to the secular status of its adherents. The main argument of the orthodox view was that the black church preached a religion of acquiescence that actively discouraged blacks from seeking redress for the deprivations of this world; extending to them, instead, the promise of a heavenly reward.¹⁷

Again, this orthodoxy has been recently challenged by revisionist historians and by a new generation of scholars in search of an interpretation of the past that fits better with the recent era of black militance. Not only have the revisionists emphasised an undeniable protest strain in black religion; but they argue, directly contrary to earlier studies, that black religion was, in essence, directed to earthly change in the status of its congregations.

The most sophisticated expression of this argument has been offered by Eugene D. Genovese in his provocative study of slave religion in Roll, Jordan, roll: the world the slaves made. He argues that there is abundant evidence that the slaves found in their religion a promise of deliverance from slavery and not only a means of organising themselves together to resist the degradation of bondage, but also the basis of a world view that enabled them to

both resist white oppression and yet seek reconciliation with whites. He describes the slave religion as a "protonationalism", the ideological foundation of black America.¹⁸

Genovese admits, however, to areas in which orthodoxy is difficult to overturn. For without any significant expressions of slave millennialism - an absence Genovese explains by the overpowering dominance of the slave system - there is no evidence that blacks ever actively sought to re-shape the social order. Indeed, Genovese admits that the great handicap that the black preacher inherited from slavery was an endemic resistance to any activist tendencies on the grounds that, given the balance of power between black and white, the effort would be suicidal.¹⁹

Further, if Genovese's view of slave religion is accepted, there is the difficulty of establishing a continuity with the independent black churches that absorbed the slave congregations after Emancipation. Lawrence W. Levine, who argues that the spirituals show a religion devoted to community solidarity and liberation from bondage, accepts that the new religious music that emerged on the urbanisation of blacks - gospel - was essentially other-worldly.²⁰

Joseph R. Washington Jnr. is one scholar who has, nonetheless, argued in favour of a continuous liberationist motive in black religion. He has argued that black religion is distinguished from white religion by what he calls its "ethnic ethic": its intent to keep alive, advance and realize the "will of black folk to power in American life." This distinctive black thrust, he argues, began with the clash of black and white in the white churches of ante-bellum America; took root in the independent black churches, was frustrated there by institutional problems of growth and competition; and re-appeared in the urban black Holiness and Pentecostal sects; only to be diffused in exhausting millennialism, holiness,

perfectionism, fundamentalism, prophecy, confession and faith-healing - theological patterns that, he argues, were learnt from whites. The "ethnic ethic", however, received its most potent revitalisation in the black urban cults, among them the Father Divine Peace Mission. To Washington, the cult reveals the greatest press toward power: "the cults seek the power that is freedom from material, economic, moral and political want" in their own name and in the name of all black people. The task of the cult prophet, Washington holds, is to provide food, shelter and goods; and to promote unity, self-sufficiency, pride and secular advancement. Their failure has been, as Washington sees it, their ultimate betrayal of the fundamental purpose of black religion - to lead blacks out as a people to seek real change and power by the re-ordering of society.²¹

There are many problems in Washington's work, not the least of which is that much of the evidence that he musters and his discussion of it tends to cast doubt on the validity of his main contention. The history of black religious life that he records, in fact, emphasises that blacks followed a heritage of Christian fundamentalism shared with whites, with impulses, at moments of stress, toward extreme Christian perfectionism or a racially-orientated religious nationalism, with neither one nor the other permanently dominant or hermetically sealed from other influences. Moreover, in castigating the emotional religious practices of black worshippers as white pollutions, he derides precisely those aspects of black religion that those other proponents of the liberation thesis, Genovese and Levine, single out as being most distinctive to blacks.

Yet in the expositions of these scholars support can be found for another approach that accepts the Christian doctrine as taught by the black church as being, in the main, little different from

white non-conformity, but recognises a strain toward millennialism. The origins of the millennial impulse are apparent in the slave religion that Genovese describes, with its emphasis on ecstatic worship and charismatic leadership; it remains latent in the folk religion of the rural South after Emancipation; presses out and flourishes on the disruption of the world of the rural South both in the inter-racial Holiness and Pentecostal sects and the racially nationalistic sects that Washington describes; and resurges again, in the North, in movements like the inter-racial Peace Mission Movement and the virulently chauvinistic Nation of Islam.

Washington criticises the Peace Mission for failing to fulfil the heritage of black religion toward real change in the real world. Yet, as this thesis seeks to show, the Peace Mission - with its inter-racialism, its black messiah, its dedication to the immediate salvation of all irrespective of race - fulfils a more complex, dynamic millennial impulse which is persistent, but not dominant, in black religion.

To trace the roots of the Peace Mission's millennialism is, then, to weave between the orthodox and the revisionists. It is difficult to posit that black religion was always geared toward deliverance when, in truth, the millennial impulse is only vital at times of economic and social stress, in challenge to the established black church. And yet, if the sects and cults flourished on the disruption of black religion, their beliefs and practices were heavily indebted to the faith and forms of worship preserved in the black folk church since slavery.

Still, Father Divine never saw himself as the fulfilment of any exclusively black religious tradition. He claimed a far wider purpose. He had come, he said, to bring all people to their rightful inheritance. He had come, indeed, to restore America to its

first principles - to drive out injustice and corruption and re-dedicate it to what he believed was the intent of the American Constitution and Declaration of Independence: a righteous nation pledged to brotherhood, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He was, in short, an American Messiah, and the Peace Mission was saturated with this millennial Americanism: the belief that the cause of the Movement and the salvation of the world were bound up with the redemption of the American nation. The kingdom of heaven on earth was nothing less than the triumph of the redeemed America, under Father Divine's leadership. He took "God Save America" as his sacred cause.

That the Peace Mission should find in Americanism such a potent millennial inspiration is by no means unique within the American experience. The study of the pursuit of the millennium in America is a sadly neglected one, and such a study is, of course, far beyond the scope of this work. But the Peace Mission can be seen, nonetheless, as but one of a number of millennial groups, from the seventeenth century to the present, that tied salvation to the realisation of the American Dream. It has much in common with the nineteenth century evangelical belief, embodied in the perfectionist movement, that the Holy Spirit had given a special task to America "to convert and civilize the globe, to purge the earth of all its evils and to usher in Christ's reign on earth."²²

There is another link, too. The revivalistic religion of the nineteenth century nurtured an impulse toward social reform and gave birth to the Social Gospel movement in America in which the secular political order was harnessed to God's purpose.²³ Similarly, Father Divine came to believe that it was possible to redeem America through the democratic political process. While the Peace Mission placed its main emphasis on the spread of the Movement by individual

conversion, Father Divine and his believers - flushed with the success of the burgeoning Movement - believed that its principles should also be enshrined in law and government. The kingdom of heaven on earth could be hastened by ballot and law; by the politicians and legislators under the authoritative leadership of God, Father Divine.

In America, the era of the Depression and the New Deal saw, with the world-wide economic crisis and the rise of totalitarianism in Europe and Asia, anxiety and speculation as to whether democracy and free enterprise could, and even should, survive. There was a general recognition that change was needed, that a more humane society must be built, though opinions differed radically over the extent and nature of such change.²⁴ The Peace Mission Movement, in its insistence that only by drastic change in the laws and economic organisation of the country could America hope to be true to the ideals of its founders, was a part of this greater ferment.

The 'thirties was also a vital period for black Americans in particular. Without entering into the argument over the extent that black Americans benefited from the New Deal²⁵ or, on a local level, from the reform administration of Mayor La Guardia in New York City, it is clear that in their greater penetration of political life and their greater participation in the labour movement as well as the benefits they, as the rest of the population, gained from social welfare legislation, the changes that accompanied the New Deal were of major importance to black Americans.

The Depression, the radical unrest that grew out of it and the promise of reform in the New Deal also precipitated unprecedented grass-roots protest movements in black America that focused on the campaigns to free the Scottsboro boys; for anti-lynching legislation; and against discrimination in employment. To all these developments

the Peace Mission had an attitude: sometimes critical, sometimes favourable. But above all, the Peace Mission claimed to have the complete answer: the solution that would deal with all the problems towards which these efforts at reform were directed.

This thesis attempts to assess the claims of the Peace Mission to a universal solution by examining the nature of its political activity; its attitude toward the New Deal; and its relationship with trade unionism and the black protest movements of the 'thirties. From this examination there emerges the picture of a movement pulled many ways: toward the total solutions of revolution but away from the violence that would accompany it; toward the rational politics of voting and lobbying but still relying on conversion and the supernatural powers of God to accomplish change; toward the need to impose notions of justice and equity on the economic world but shying away from the organisation of labour power to enforce these notions.

In part, these contradictions reflect the different experiences and views of those who made up the Movement: the mass of politically naive black followers and the minority of more sophisticated and educated black and white believers who organised the "Righteous Government" campaign. But, beyond that, there can be detected the same confusion of motives and aspirations that characterised the behaviour of European popular movements at the time of industrialisation. On the one hand, a looking forward to the party political, pressure group and trade union organisation of a modern, democratic, industrialised society; but, on the other hand, a resistance to the competitive, materialistic ethos of that society, in favour of an organic world of duty and obligation based on a rigid morality: an idealisation of the rural community that the black followers had left behind them.²⁶

This extraordinary, contradictory attempt to impose a universal

solution on America marked the Movement at its most dynamic and outward-looking. Yet it also marked the Movement's limits. The Peace Mission could not provide the political and economic leadership that Harlem demanded, let alone America. Meanwhile its growing wealth (a testimony to the efficacy of its economic organisation) and the resistance of the civil and legal authorities exacerbated conflicts and rivalries both within and outside the Peace Mission.

This study charts, then, not only the Peace Mission's pretensions to the redemption of society but the frustration of these pretensions; its retreat from evangelism into wealthy stability; the beginnings of that smaller, affluent, introspective world that Harris penetrated in the nineteen 'fifties.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE: "A LIVE WIRE": FROM SAYVILLE TO HARLEM

On June 9 1932, the New York Amsterdam News, Harlem's popular black-owned weekly newspaper, rushed an "Extra" on to the streets. The front page headline declared:

"JUDGE WHO SENT DIVINE TO JAIL DIES SUDDENLY."

With this news, Reverend M.J. Divine, a black cult leader, who until recently, had lived seventy miles away in the quiet resort of Sayville, Long Island, became a household word in Black Manhattan. Divine, who claimed to be God come to earth, appeared to have fulfilled his threat to exact divine retribution against Supreme Court Justice Lewis J. Smith, who, four days before, had denounced Divine as a "menace to society", and imposed upon him the maximum penalty for disturbing the peace in Sayville.

For ten years Divine had lived uneventfully in Sayville.¹ In October 1919, styling himself "Major M.J. Devine", he had purchased an unpretentious, two-storey frame house, 72 Macon Street, in a quiet neighbourhood of retired tradespeople. The real estate agents, faced with a poor property market, had been prepared to welcome "colored buyers". Divine began to operate an employment agency from his home, and supplied Sayville families and the country homes of upstate New Yorkers with domestic servants. He advertised in the Suffolk County News, and visited each prospective employer promising to give his personal attention to their particular needs. He refused to charge fees for his services, and quickly gained a reputation for honesty and reliability.

From the first his business had an unconventional side: for he sheltered in his household the fluctuating number of domestics either awaiting placement or already employed in local homes; and these people, numbering perhaps thirty or forty by the mid-'twenties,²

accepted Divine as their spiritual advisor. Some of these friends and worshippers had come with him to Sayville from his previous home in Brooklyn (N.Y.) and others had joined in ones and twos afterwards. His followers called him "Father", and in return for his spiritual guidance, shelter and help in finding jobs, they gave their earnings to support the household and lived together in comfort and spiritual harmony.

People in Sayville were curious about the beliefs and activities of the group. It was rumoured that Divine had some kind of occult power and that he was taking in the poor and destitute, and providing them with food and clothing. But his fair dealing and courteous manner was acknowledged, and local shopkeepers defended him as a good cash customer. So the strange household at 72 Macon Street was left in peace. By 1926, Divine's reputation as an unusual spiritual leader had interested a few educated white people. These had already sought salvation in other sects and movements outside the major denominations. Keen to understand Divine's message, they joined the Macon Street community, and accepted him as their guide and protector.

The group remained small and tightly knit until the late 'twenties. Then Divine began to publicise his employment services in the Manhattan, Brooklyn and Bronx districts of New York City, advertising Sunday as a day of regular open hospitality at his Sayville home. Intrigued by the advertisements, a stream of black city folk began to visit 72 Macon Street. Many were surprised and delighted by the abundance of Divine's hospitality and charmed by the group and its leader. Dinner was prepared for the guests, who were astonished to find a banquet table the like of which they had seen before only in the houses of rich, white employers. The "silver-ware, plateware, china, linen and table service were matched and uniform in style and design" and everyone was invited to "eat as

much as he desired." At one banquet the menu included: chicken, ham and beef stew, corn, mashed potatoes, rice, hominy, beans, peas, sliced tomatoes, cole slaw, lettuce, spinach, icecream, "two enormous cakes, oval shaped and as large in diameter as automobile tires, but higher", pies and a whole cheese.³ Divine presided with calm assurance, blessing and passing each dish, speaking informally and encouraging the group to join in song and testimony.

The publicity was a success; and by 1929 over ninety people, mainly black women, were regularly visiting him. In 1930 he took the name "Father Divine" and intimated to his followers that he was the messiah come to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. He told them that they could be "re-born" into this kingdom. "Bear no record of the old Adam!" he said, urging them to abandon their families, identities and worldly possessions to give themselves wholeheartedly to him.

To Sayville the group remained a mystery; and when a black woman, Fanny Richardson, went to Alexander G. Blue, the District Attorney of Suffolk County (N.Y.) in August 1930, and spoke of her "escape" from Divine's household, Blue decided to investigate. The woman said that she had joined the household with her husband in August 1928. They found work and, after six months, on Father Divine's advice, ceased to regard one another as husband and wife. The woman said that first she gave her wages to Father Divine, and then agreed to work, without pay, in the kitchens at 72 Macon Street. She spiced her story with innuendo, claiming that Divine had urged her and three other women to have sexual relations with him, promising them increased holiness. She became anxious and dissatisfied, and fled from Macon Street to see her husband at his workplace in Oakdale (N.Y.) He advised her to tell her troubles to Father Divine. Divine, she claimed, agreed to give her the price of a train ticket

to California. But when he failed to keep this pledge, Fanny Richardson decided to appeal to the District Attorney to help her recover the wages she had lost since joining the group.

Blue hired two black women through a Harlem employment agency and, unknown to each other, he told them to join the Macon Street community for a month to investigate its activities. Their reports were unequivocal. Both said they were treated with utmost consideration and kindness and described an atmosphere of religious exhaltation, sincerity and austere sexual chastity. They explained that the followers gave their money voluntarily and generously, vying with one another for Father Divine's approval. The District Attorney concluded that there was no case for legal action against Divine.

By 1931 Father Divine had one hundred and fifty firm converts. He bought a house next door to accommodate his black women followers, and leased another house across the street for his white followers.⁴ Now that his following was growing, and he could not house all his supporters in Sayville, Divine encouraged those in New York City and in service upstate to regard his home as their meeting place on rest days and holidays. Much to the distress of other residents, the neighbourhood was disturbed by curious visitors to Divine's house and parties of weekend pilgrims. In New York City 'bus companies took advantage of Divine's reputation to send hawkers on to Harlem street corners each Sunday soliciting passengers to Sayville for a fare of \$1.50 return.⁵ 'Buses and cars choked Macon Street. Emma Schwaner of 75 Macon Street protested: "He didn't even have conveniences for these people. It was more like a public park, but he had no conveniences for them... They had to use the neighbors', ask the neighbors to use their toilets, and wanting to get water."⁶

Convinced that something must be done to stop the commotion,

several individuals tried to confine Divine's activities. One Sayville businessman offered to give Father Divine a church and house nearer New York City in return for his Sayville property, but the offer was politely refused. Money was posted to Divine in the hope that he would accept it and lay himself open to prosecution for using the mails to defraud. But the money was returned to the sender with an enigmatic note, "God will provide." The local Board of Supervisors, responding to a succession of complaints from residents, passed an ordinance limiting parking to thirty minutes in Macon Street. Father Divine retaliated by converting all the grounds around his house into free parking space.⁷ Finally, in May 1931, the police arrested Father Divine on a charge of maintaining a public nuisance. A substantial bail of one thousand five hundred dollars was set.

For the first time the New York City press began to take a quizzical interest in the Sayville affair. Always alert for interesting 'race news' the New York Age, Harlem's oldest black-owned weekly newspaper, reported the incident with the eye-catching banner: "NEGRO MESSIAH IN SAYVILLE HAULED INTO COURT". Despite the headline, the reporter was not particularly concerned with Divine's spiritual pretensions. Schooled in the extravagant claims of Harlem's esoteric cults and street preachers, the journalist found Divine's assertion that he could heal the sick and grant everlasting life unremarkable. Indeed, since 1926, the flamboyant Elder Warren K. Robinson had led a "Never Die" cult in Harlem in which his followers accepted sexual segregation and surrendered all their worldly goods to him in return for a guarantee of eternal life.⁸ More interesting to the New York Age's reporter was the unusual wealth of Divine's group, and the fact that he had been living, relatively undisturbed, in a white neighbourhood for twelve years. The report noted incredulously:

"Tradesmen have nothing but good to say of him. He buys lavishly - an entire quarter of beef at a time, and turkeys, chickens and ducks by the half dozen or dozen - and pays cash for everything."⁹

Undeterred by the May incident, Father Divine continued to proselytize and, as the summer heat tempted more people out of New York City, five or six 'buses arrived at Macon Street each day. Annoyed that commercial companies were exploiting his reputation, Father Divine chartered his own 'buses to provide a free service linking Sayville with New York City. According to a convert, between four hundred and eight hundred visitors came each day.¹⁰ Some stayed to join Father Divine around the banquet table in the evening. The feasting and praise continued late into the night.

The neighbours tolerated these meetings until November 1931. Then, on the evening of November 17, tired of the followers' frenzied shrieking and shouting, they called the police. A patrol van was sent to warn the household to be quiet, but when the noise continued and more complaints were received, the Assistant District Attorney, Joseph Arata, took charge. Telling the Fire Department to be ready with hoses, Arata led a force of state troopers, deputy sheriffs and policemen to Macon Street, and arrested Father Divine and eighty of his followers on charges of disorderly conduct. At two o'clock in the morning, Charles Duryea, the Justice of the Peace, convened a court. Some followers readily admitted their guilt, but indignantly protested that they were only "singing the praises of God." Duryea fined them five dollars. Thirty-two followers elected to stand trial and Duryea, discovering that Divine was still on bail for the May incident, refused to release Divine until Peninah, known among the believers as "Mother Divine", paid an additional bail bond of one thousand five hundred dollars.¹¹

More than one thousand people crowded the courthouse on

November 20 to hear the followers' trials. Three white converts: Eugene Del Mar, who described himself as an author, lecturer, lawyer and student of spiritualism; Annie Mawe, a teacher from New York City; and Helen Faust, a secretary living at 72 Macon Street, attempted to defend the followers. But Duryea found twenty-six of the defendants guilty of disorderly conduct and, once again, imposed five dollar fines.¹²

Four days later more than six hundred people attended a meeting at the local high school to devise ways and means to rid Sayville of Father Divine. Despite some protests, about forty followers were allowed in, although only the white followers were sufficiently bold and articulate to offer some defence before such a hostile audience. As it was, only Eugene Del Mar and J. Maynard Matthews were allowed to speak. Matthews, a white graduate of Boston University, who had given up his automobile agency to become Father Divine's executive secretary, adopting the name "Brother John Lamb,"¹³ said that Divine would agree to leave Sayville if the majority of residents decided this in a ballot.

The meeting was heated. The Chairman, C.M. Rogers, declared that a poll would be costly and impossible to organise, and, after a two-hour debate, the meeting appointed a committee of seventy-five to devise another course of action. At the end of the discussion, the meeting passed a resolution declaring: "It is to the best interests of this community that Devine takes steps to plant his cult where it can prosper unhampered by the limits of a residential section."¹⁴

Divine's arrest and the citizens' meeting brought journalists from New York City's white and black press to Sayville. The New York Times reported impartially on arrests, trials and local reaction, but treated the curious household rather light-heartedly. The New York Age sent another reporter to 72 Macon Street. He expected to find a

peculiar cult with "weird actions, chants or incantations to the spirits, etc.," but, instead, he met "a well, healthy and contented group of people of both the white and colored races." He watched them serve a "wholesome, substantial" meal to "all comers regardless of race, creed or color," and was amazed that there was no collection. "It was a sight to be remembered," he wrote, "a setting of peace, harmony and contentment." Discovering that they believed God to be in each person, he added: "It is a fact that the students of Rev. Divine feel he has shown them the truth and some unknown light and hold him symbolic of 'God' today, which some of them called him in my presence."¹⁵

The reporter stayed overnight with Divine on November 24 and, that evening, the committee of seventy-five met with Father Divine's representatives: Eugene Del Mar and two lawyers, Millard J. Bloomer and Arthur M. Madison. The committee presented an ultimatum. They said that they had no complaint against Divine personally, but they objected to the noise and disruption he caused. They insisted that he must leave Suffolk County by the beginning of next year and, until he moved, limit the number of visitors at his house to twelve and close his meetings at nine o'clock at night. The New York Age's reporter felt that the ultimatum was motivated by race-prejudice, and abridged Father Divine's civil rights. Father Divine, he protested, was being forced to move because his integrated following "stirred resentment" among whites who also feared the beginning of a 'Harlem colony' in Sayville.¹⁶

On December 4, the extent of local feeling against Father Divine was acknowledged when Father Divine's lawyers succeeded in obtaining a transfer of his trial on the public nuisance charge to the Supreme Court of Nassau County (N.Y.).

Meanwhile, Father Divine was faced with the immediate problem

of finding new premises outside Suffolk County where he could continue his activities without restriction. There was one obvious place to go. Most of his recent converts were city people, and the press interest in him suggested that New York might be more tolerant. There was little time for careful consideration. His lawyer, Arthur M. Madison, urged him to leave Sayville as soon as possible, and he trusted Madison's advice. Madison was a skilled and experienced lawyer. After graduating from university, Madison had worked as a post office clerk and studied law at night school. He had been a founder member of the Harlem Lawyers Association, and served as its first president for four years until joining Father Divine as a convert in 1930.¹⁷

An offer of temporary shelter decided Father Divine and with Peninah, and his other close supporters, he left Sayville and took refuge in the home of a Mr. Calloway on Harlem's 135th Street.¹⁸

Anxious to stay with Divine, other followers travelled to New York City. Homeless, they crowded into the business premises of a sympathiser, Ellee J. Lovelace, at 455 Lenox Avenue. Lovelace, an employment agent, had become interested in Father Divine in 1930, when he had supplied the two women hired by District Attorney Blue to investigate the group. Fascinated by the women's reports, Lovelace had visited Sayville and, feeling rejuvenated by the meetings he attended, he had become a personal friend of Father Divine. But his offices were scarcely suitable for the followers, and temporary accommodation was found for them in several local halls: St. Luke's Church hall, Rush Memorial Church hall, and the Rockland Palace ballroom.

Father Divine's city followers, delighted by the news that he might settle there, quickly organised meetings to rally public interest. On December 20, Father Divine made his first public

appearance in New York at the Rockland Palace ballroom. Harlemites clamoured for admission and a glimpse of this new messiah. Five thousand people were there two hours before Father Divine appeared, and singing and testimony heightened the excitement. The Amsterdam News remarked: "Not since the days when Marcus Garvey, self-styled President of Africa, was at its [sic] gaudiest best has Harlem witnessed so spontaneous a mass demonstration and such religious fervor as has greeted the appearance of Rev. Major J. Divine."¹⁹

He was an oddly unimpressive figure - short and square in stature, dark-skinned, bald and in his forties - but impeccably dressed. His speech was one of outraged innocence as he appealed for sympathy in his exile:

"... I ask you as I ask the people of Suffolk County and all over the country: Do you hate me? Would you imprison me? Would you kill this body for bringing you the truth, health, happiness, shelter, food, consolation, joy, prosperity? I ask you - would you? Could you?"

He urged his audience to have faith in him:

"... I am a free gift to mankind. Of the plenty and abundance I have I give to you freely ... I take from you nothing. I take your sorrows and give you joys. I take your sickness and give you health. I take your poverty and give you peace and prosperity, for I am the spirit of success and health ... I have limitless blessings to bestow upon mankind, spiritual, mental, material and social." ²⁰

After this hectic arrival in the city Father Divine began to expand his following there. He leased a tenement at 67 West 130th Street to serve as his headquarters; and in March 1932 he led between two and three thousand followers in an ostentatious "Glory to the Lord Peace Parade" through Harlem. Beginning at 135th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, the parade wound up Edgecombe Avenue to the fringe of the black district at 145th Street. Crossing to Seventh Avenue, it went the length of Harlem's principal thoroughfare to

"Spanish Harlem" at 114th Street. Then, across to shabby Lenox Avenue, which bustled with cheap shops and street markets, and northwards on the Avenue to 135th Street. The parade ended at Rush Memorial A.M.E. Church in the heart of the black community. Rickety taxicabs draped in black and scarlet carried Father's older followers to the church, where six hundred marchers sat down to an Easter dinner. Father Divine led the rest of the crowd, which was milling outside, across to St. Mark's parish hall for impromptu celebrations.²¹

As his defence counsel in the pending court action, Father Divine hired James C. Thomas Jr., a former Assistant United States Attorney, and reputedly one of the wealthiest blacks in Harlem.²² Thomas had telegraphed Divine with an offer of help in the previous November. He believed that Father Divine's treatment in Sayville represented an abridgement of his rights of property and freedom of worship that was, "the concern of every Negro, man, woman and child in the United States for if it is permitted to go unnoticed and unchallenged, who can say that tomorrow these and other Constitutional rights and privileges will not be denied to each of us."²³

Thomas applied for dismissal of the charges against Father Divine. But the trial was set for May 24 1932, and Father Divine was remanded in custody. The Bill of Particulars against him stated:

"... Defendant claimed to be the messiah returned to earth; conducted so-called religious services, at which ... colored and white people did congregate in large numbers; and did then and there exhort people in loud tones of voice and did then and there assist those present in shouting and singing in loud tones, annoying neighbors in the vicinity of the defendant's place.

And did then and there permit and encourage large numbers of people on foot and in autos to gather around the place; and did encourage said singing, shouting, exhorting and stamping to continue past midnight, keeping them awake at all hours of the night and morning." ²⁴

Although the public nuisance charge was a minor one, Father Divine refused to co-operate in court. He would not supply any details of his life or teachings; and it was these aspects of the cult and its leader that interested the prosecution far more than the noise that the worshippers had made at 72 Macon Street. A score of witnesses testified that there had been no undue disturbance at the house. But the Judge and the jury were intrigued by defence witnesses who admitted that they believed Divine was God. J. Maynard Matthews told the court, "I believe that the same as everyone who has God in them, Divine is the perfect expression of God."²⁵

In charging the jury on the following day, Justice Lewis J. Smith tempered his annoyance with Divine's attitude, and tried to clarify the nature of the charge to the jury. He urged it to remember that the "form of religious worship" was not under consideration, but, he added, "one cannot use religion as a cloak for the commission of crime ... There may be those who believe this defendant is God. There is undoubtedly many who do not believe he is God, and those ... are entitled to have their rights protected the same as those who believe he is God."²⁶ The jury decided that Father Divine was guilty, but recommended a lenient sentence. Smith told Divine that before he decided how best to deal with him, Divine must co-operate in providing full details of his life and activities. But when a probation officer was sent to the prison to collect his statement, Divine insisted that he "bore no record" of either the past or worldly affairs. In a final effort, the Judge committed Divine for psychiatric tests, but he was judged sane and returned for sentencing.

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recommendation, and exasperated by Divine's obstinacy, Smith imposed the maximum sentence: one year in prison and a five hundred dollars fine. To the stunned courtroom, he justified his decision in a lengthy address. Relying on the unsubstantiated information given by the prosecution, Smith said that Divine's true name was George Baker; and that he came from one of the Southern states, possibly the sea islands off the coast of Georgia. He was neither an ordained minister nor "married to the woman he calls his wife, that they call 'Mother Divine'" and, in fact, had another, lawful, wife and children whom he did not acknowledge. Smith maintained that Divine was masquerading as a messiah in order to relieve his misguided disciples of their property and income. Adding that he believed Divine had deceived his own lawyer, Smith concluded, "I have information that this man is not a moral man but immoral. I believe that he is not a useful member of society but a menace to society." Father Divine was removed to the Suffolk County jail at Riverhead.²⁷

The followers were outraged. Father Divine had told them that retribution would fall on the enemies of God, and they warned, "Don't touch a live wire!" In Harlem, Judge Smith's decision confirmed suspicions that Father Divine was being racially persecuted. The editor of the Amsterdam News, William M. Kelley, under the headline, "A 'Colored' Sentence", wrote:

"... The principal charge against him seems to have been his color, and Mr. Justice Smith is not deceiving us about it. The man was not on trial for unlawfully taking the wages of people or inducing them to transfer their property to him; neither was he on trial on charges of immoral conduct. Therefore, unsupported information to that effect, no matter what Justice Smith may think about it, should have no weight against him. If Mr. Justice Smith is so sure Divine is guilty of all these crimes, why not put him on

trial for them? Prosecute and persecution are different." 28

The paper's cartoonist, William C. Chase, underlined the point in a large sketch entitled, "Why the Big Lock, Too?" He depicted Divine held in a pair of stocks, his feet fastened by a small lock labelled, "PUBLIC NUISANCE CHARGE"; but his head and hands fettered by a massive one, "RACE PREJUDICE."²⁹

Interest might have faded in Harlem but for Judge Smith's sudden death. To Father Divine's followers it was an unmistakable sign. So strong was their feeling that Divine had exacted his revenge on Judge Smith that editor William M. Kelley felt he ought to make the position of the Amsterdam News clear: "While we rejoice when one such is removed from an office where racial prejudice is so detrimental to us," he wrote, "we do not credit Major Divine with having had anything to do with Mr. Justice Smith's death."³⁰ Yet the followers' faith in Divine's innocence and omnipotence was apparently vindicated on June 23, when Justice B.J. Humphrey agreed that improper insinuations had been made by the prosecutor in the examination of witnesses during the trial; and allowed Father Divine's release from jail on a five thousand dollar bail, pending the hearing of his appeal. Seven months later, his conviction was quashed when the appeal court held that "prejudice was excited in the minds of the jurors by comments, rulings and questions in the court."³¹

In the week after his release, there was a series of mammoth victory celebrations. On June 25 followers began gathering at dawn outside the Rockland Palace and, by nine o'clock, when the doors opened, there was a clapping, elated crowd waiting in the street. Seven thousand people attended the celebration which lasted until midnight.³² Two days later, a thousand black people rejoiced at the Chester Dance Palace in the Bronx district of the city. "From 11 a.m. to midnight," a reporter from the New York Herald Tribune

wrote, "the devotees shouted, stamped, rolled on the floor in fits of hysteria and sang jazz anthems in the most rich and robust of harmonies." Other meetings followed in Orange (N.J.) and at the Rush Memorial Church in Harlem.³³

Father Divine's following continued to increase. He approached George W. Harris, editor of the ailing Harlem weekly, the New York News, and guaranteed an immediate rise in circulation if the paper carried "fair and unbiased" accounts of his work. Harris agreed to print Father Divine's messages. All through the summer, Father Divine held two meetings a week in Harlem, at the Rockland Palace and at the Laurel Gardens, 77 East 116th Street, drawing capacity audiences. He equipped himself with cars; travelled around with a large personal staff;³⁴ and, as the city sweltered in the August heat, he arranged a special excursion for his followers up the Hudson River to Newburgh.

Four thousand people, described by one journalist, "as happy and as carefree as though they were actually on their way to that place of milk and honey," boarded the steamer in New York City, accompanied by reporters and four Fox Movietone cameramen. All day, "these thousands shouted and sang, pausing at times to eat fried chicken sandwiches, or open a can of salmon, or to dip complacently into a pail of red beans and rice, or to munch contentedly from a loaf of bread ... But there was not a quarrel on the boat - not a cross word spoken for which an apology was not immediately forthcoming." The reason for their jubilation was simple, for, they explained: "Was not the good 'Father' aboard, and did not he pass among his people just as any mortal might do, and did he not speak to some of them and touch their hands? It was more than wonderful - it was marvellous!"³⁵

Father Divine accepted invitations to visit other cities. In

October 1932, hundreds of cars and dozens of 'buses lined Philadelphia's Preston Street and Haverford Avenue district, as blacks pressed into the Bethel Church to see Father Divine and Peninah. He was greeted with shouts of, "God is here!" As he paused in his speech, "hundreds of hands shot into the air while hundreds of voices cried simultaneously, 'It's wonderful!'"³⁶

He held several successful rallies at the Armory in East Orange (N.J.) and his converts there leased the old Brighton Theater for a meeting place. Local complaints forced them to move. They leased another building in neighbouring Orange (N.J.) but, again, there were complaints, and the police arrested four followers on charges of disorderly conduct, closed the building and banned further meetings. Driven out of Orange, Father Divine turned to Newark (N.J.) appearing regularly at meetings, held in old premises at Green and Union Streets, in a poor and dilapidated part of the city.³⁷

It was here that Father Divine gained one of his most important black converts: Viola Wilson, who subsequently became known in the Peace Mission as "Faithful Mary", and was to be second in status and popularity only to Father himself.

Viola Wilson was born in Georgia in the eighteen-nineties as Mary Rozier, the daughter of a "Hard Shell" Baptist preacher, one of a family of sixteen children. At the age of fourteen she ran away from home, and took a succession of farm labouring and domestic jobs. She gave away the child of her first, unhappy, common-law marriage, after trying to bring him up single-handed; and then, in 1920, after the death of her second husband, she joined the wartime migration northwards, settling in Newark. Here, Viola ran a business selling medicines to cure rheumatism, made to a recipe revealed to her in a dream. When this venture collapsed she took work in domestic service. She made another common-law marriage with a man named Wilson, and

changed her name to Viola Wilson. She drank heavily, repeatedly lost her jobs, and, by 1928, she remembered, she was a "hopeless vagabond".

She was committed to Newark City Hospital for psychiatric tests. The hospital staff traced a sister in Buffalo (N.Y.) and asked her to come to Newark to help Viola. Together, the two sisters opened a cut-price grocery store, and became regular members of a "sanctified" church. Dedicating herself to helping others, Viola gave all her profits to the poor and gained a reputation as a "sanctified person". People even asked her for lucky numbers to use for gambling. All seemed well. Yet, soon after her sister returned to Buffalo, Viola abandoned the church, renewed her drinking, and associated with her old, "fast crowd": "Once more I became a vagabond of the streets. I could not keep a room anywhere, for my disposition was such that no one could stand me. I sank to the lowest depths of degradation. What the end would be I did not know."³⁸

She was a street derelict, well known to the police, ravaged by alcoholism and tuberculosis, when Father Divine found her in August 1932 and took her into his care. He gave her food, shelter and clothing, helped her overcome her alcoholism, and recover her health and self-respect. She returned to her childhood name, and, in her loyalty to her new protector, became "Faithful Mary". She became his leading follower in Newark, supervising the building at Green and Union streets which served as a hostel and meeting place for the local disciples.³⁹

Faithful Mary also became Father Divine's most impressive publicist. She gave sensational descriptions of her experiences where ever she appeared, dramatically boosting Father Divine's reputation as a miracle worker and a healer. "FATHER lifted me from sin and shame," she said, "when nothing else would help, He lifted

me." For nine years, she explained she was a slave to the "drinking fiend."

"I did not know half the time where I was or what I was doing," she said; and because of her drinking, "doctors said the inside lining of my stomach was eaten out." She suffered from diabetes, heart trouble and tuberculosis. "The heart trouble was so bad," she insisted, "you could see the heart go up and down and sometimes it would stop right still." She weighed scarcely seven stone.

Then came the day of her reclamation: "I was lying in a pool room and could not tell the last time I had even had a bath, lice were creeping on me and the clothes I had on were stiff with blood from so many haemorrhages I had had; the nails were so long that the dirt had grown into the fingers. The whisky had taken such an effect that the hair had fallen off the head - I looked just like something wild." That day, Father took her in and blessed her. As she stood before her audiences, a stout vigorous woman, smartly dressed and with her hair tucked into a neat, lace cap, few could doubt her amazing recovery and her strength of purpose. Since that day in Newark, she said, "I have been blessed abundantly up to this day. When the Blessings are flowing so freely I cannot count them all."⁴⁰

Under the impact of her leadership, Father Divine's following rapidly expanded in Newark. John F. Selkridge opened a new "Kingdom Extension" in an abandoned, four-storey factory building at 10 School Street; and Faithful Mary moved to supervise another new extension housed in an old, three-storey cigar factory building at 51 Bedford Street.

Fresh complaints were made against the followers. Three men told the police that Father Divine and Selkridge had induced their wives to leave them to join the group; and people living near the "Union Temple" complained that the followers were noisy and disorderly.

Raking up a disused 1898 New Jersey statute forbidding the impersonation of Jesus Christ, the Newark Police Department opened an investigation; and the city authorities considered banning the group. Throughout the summer of 1933, Divine's lawyers sought a compromise and, on their advice, Father Divine finally agreed to co-operate in an official investigation.

A committee of three prominent citizens responsible to Judge Richard A. Hartshorn opened a series of public hearings in September 1933. Forty-four witnesses gave testimony, and two committee members made separate inspections of the cult's premises in Newark. They interviewed Father Divine in New York, and visited buildings occupied by the followers in Harlem. Finally, on November 5, they attended one of Father Divine's meetings at the Rockland Palace, where they heard two of New York's candidates for Mayor, Fusion-Republican Fiorello La Guardia and Tammany Democrat J.P. O'Brien, appeal to the five thousand people in the audience for their votes in the approaching election.⁴¹

Several followers appeared before the committee to describe the reformation in their lives since joining Father Divine. Faithful Mary recounted her release from a life of degradation and destitution, and two other women related similar, impressive conversions.

Mary Sellers said that before she joined the group in August 1932, "I used to be a drunkard, gambler ... I had shot a man and he is now walking around the streets. I had to have stuff or tobacco - I used tobacco in every form." Hearing about Father Divine through a drinking partner, she became a convert; "'Father' Divine supports me now. He blesses me with everything I need. I get food at the 'Kingdom' and there is money in my pocket book that was not there the night before. He also blesses me by giving me work to do ... I have happiness and peace I did not have before."⁴²

Another woman told the committee that she had operated a brothel and gambling house in Newark before she met Father Divine: "Sometimes I would be on the floor drunk and my husband drunk on the bed and no-good people lying around." But now, she claimed, "'Father' Divine brought me out of sin and shame. I do not drink liquor, tell any lies, nor run any bad houses."⁴³

The followers' extraordinary testimony was supported by the evidence of Police Captain John Brady. He confirmed that Father Divine apparently had a "restraining effect" on a group which "has been regarded as a very undesirable and, in some cases, a lawless element." Similarly, a social worker repeated to the committee the remark of a grocer concerning one of the followers, "I will trust her - she belongs to the Kingdom and she would not beat anyone out of a dime."⁴⁴

Other witnesses were critical of the group's effect on social welfare in Newark. Dr. Robert H. Sellars, of the Urological Clinic of Newark Health Department, testified that some of his patients had abandoned their treatment for venereal disease since joining Father Divine, believing that their physical ailments could be cured by faith in God. Walter I. Suter, the manager of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Newark, complained that Father Divine's followers had withdrawn their insurance policies, insisting that their messiah could guarantee them eternal life, health and security.⁴⁵ The committee also learnt that some of the followers had left their families to join the group, while others joined as a family and then renounced their usual marital and parental relationships. All the followers accepted a rigorous sexual taboo. Alfred Mittman, who had assumed the name "Brother Kingstone" testified: "since we found this truth, 'Sister' Betty (wife) and myself have had no marital relationships; we have no flesh affection. You have no desire to do worldly

things when you live an evangelical life."⁴⁶

The committee members submitted a long and thorough report on December 12 1933. They noted that Father Divine denied breaking the 1898 statute; and quoted him as saying that he was only "teaching a principle" based on "Christ consciousness - a faith in the ever presence of God." But, the committee argued, the followers accepted him as their messiah and, in turn, Father Divine welcomed their undivided devotion: "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 doing so?"⁴⁷

The committee accepted that Father Divine had exercised "a restraining effect upon persons of former criminal and morally loose character"; had fostered their spiritual well-being; and had inspired them to work together to provide cheap shelter and food for many poor people. But they felt that the followers were gravely deluded; and that the practice of their religion not only disturbed the peace, but also encouraged "certain social, biological and economic fallacies" which had "serious social implications." Their beliefs promoted domestic discord and family disintegration; threatened the followers' health by undermining their confidence in medical science; and deterred them from making provision for their old age in the false expectation of perpetual life, health and comfort. The committee warned that the group would ultimately increase social dependency, and, if it continued its rapid expansion, add to the "financial burden of the community."⁴⁸

The committee suggested that the followers were attracted by Father Divine's promise of practical help, and the status and security of direct contact with a loving and powerful God. The committee believed that Father Divine appealed directly to the needs of black migrants from the rural South who had been defeated in their attempts

to adjust to the alien patterns of life in the urban North. Many of these migrants, the committee noted, had been denied work, and had been forced to live in squalid, segregated housing. The black church had failed to reach them, and they had been left friendless in their new home. Impoverished, helpless and bewildered, they sought the warmth, protection and salvation of Father Divine, freely accepting him as their messiah.⁴⁹

After considering the report, Judge Hartshorn stated that he would make the facts public, and leave further action in the hands of the District Attorney. The followers closed the Bedford Street extension, which had been criticized in the report as a "fire hazard" and "crowded and unsanitary ... unfit for the permanent housing of human beings." Faithful Mary left to join Father Divine in Harlem.⁵⁰

Newark remained an important centre of the Movement. The extension at 10 School Street, which was placed under Faithful Mary's supervision in January 1935, flourished. It housed the offices of the New Day, a journal launched by the followers in May 1936, and several small businesses run by the converts: a hat shop, a hand laundry, a painting and decorating business, even a garage and workshop.⁵¹ In 1937 the disciples moved to larger premises in a former factory on the corner of Avenue C and Astor Avenue. The basement was turned into a dining room and kitchens. The ground floor became an auditorium, with a separate private suite for Father Divine's use; and the first floor was converted into dormitories and recreation rooms. The followers left this building before the end of the 'thirties but, by then, there were five extensions in Newark in Mulberry, Norfolk and Broome streets.⁵²

Father Divine won followers elsewhere in New Jersey,⁵³ and the Movement rapidly expanded along the North-eastern seaboard. By the

mid-'thirties Father Divine could claim converts in upstate New York, as well as New York City⁵⁴ and the major cities of Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts.⁵⁵

News of Father Divine spread into the American mid-West and South-western states, and small, scattered groups of followers opened extensions in the larger towns and cities.⁵⁶ Father Divine made little progress, however, in the Border and Southern states. By the end of 1937 he could only claim one group in Enterprise (Ala.); two in Savannah (Ga.); two in Miami (Fla.); one in Baltimore, (Md.); one in Belhaven (N.C.); and two in Richmond (Va.). In most of these cities, the followers were forced to operate surreptitiously from their homes, and the Movement had no influence on the bulk of the black population living in the rural areas. In March 1939, a Miami follower, Al Harwith wrote to Father Divine to describe what had happened when he and another believer, John Mills, had attempted to proselytise in the churches and sell copies of the New Day on the streets of Miami. They were arrested and abused by the police. "Everybody in the [police] station expressed their cutting opinions about us," Harwith reported, "the cop who made my finger prints said 'you ought to be hung. You will never get out of here' and many other things. John kept silent, so one of the cops said, 'if you don't want to talk, I will beat you up' John answered a few of their bad questions." They were fined twenty-five dollars each, and considered that they had escaped lightly. "I thank you, Holy Father, for taking us out of the hands of the Klans," Harwith wrote, "most of the Miami police belong to the Klan Order."⁵⁷

Father Divine attributed the South's poverty to its condition of "ignorance and gross darkness", its people having been taught only "prejudice [and] segregation"; and there were times when it seemed that he might proselytise there and seek to change it. But he never

did; and the difficulties he would have met were amply demonstrated by the problems experienced by a party of white and black followers who visited Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama in 1940. The group had agreed to "stand as one at Jerusalem, that is travel together, work together, walk together and eat together, we would not let any person or thing separate us." Consequently, they reported, "we did have many difficult things to encounter in the State of Texas."⁵⁸

Outside the North-east, the Movement's greatest expansion occurred on the West coast. In the North-east the majority of Father Divine's followers were black, and the Movement flourished in the poor, ghetto areas of the major cities. But on the West coast, most of his followers were white, middle class religious enthusiasts who had learnt of Father Divine through correspondence and visits to the East. In late 1931, for instance, two men who had stayed at Sayville arrived in Seattle (Wash.) with a letter written by Eugene Del Mar, explaining his acceptance of Father Divine. The letter was read and discussed at a Truth Center in the city. In it Del Mar described how, after thirty years' study of spiritualism, "I now recognise in Father Divine one whose love, charity, sympathy and other spiritual attributes are manifested to an extreme degree in a transparent purity of life; and to whose wisdom and understanding of spiritual truth I bow my head with reverence." He explained how Father Divine's followers accepted him as their messiah; and how his teachings liberated the believers from death, and brought "peace of mind and health of body, together with all of the other beautiful possibilities of life."⁵⁹

In California, the conversion of an ex-Christian Scientist who took the "re-born" name, A. Honaëel Meriditas, was responsible for the cult's growth in and around Los Angeles. Believing that Father

Divine's teachings were the perfect expression of "the positive instead of evil" he launched a weekly paper, the Spoken Word: the positive magazine, in Los Angeles in October 1934, devoted to Father Divine's teachings and messages which were sent to him from New York City.⁶⁰

By the end of 1934 the Movement was firmly rooted in California and Washington.⁶¹ In imitation of Father Divine's practice, the followers held regular banquet meetings in their homes; and some converts, learning that Father Divine worked among the poor and out-cast, opened extensions in the slums and working class districts of their cities. In Seattle, Mary Thomas began her extension in the city's notorious 'Skid Row'. In San Francisco, the followers opened a mission in 1936 in a small, two-storey brick building at 821 Pacific Avenue, in the heart of the docks 'Barbary Coast' district, and welcomed blacks, whites and Chinese. In Modesto (Cal.) the disciples worked among the migrant labourers - Mexican, Filipinos, Southern blacks and Armenians, in the San Joaquin valley.⁶²

In response to invitations to visit California, Father Divine sent Faithful Mary as his "Personal Representative" at the end of 1934, and when she appeared at banquet meetings in the state, her sensational testimony gave extra impetus to the cult's growth.⁶³ A 'bus service was organised to link the West coast followers with Father Divine's headquarters in New York City. In May 1936, thirty-six delegates from various parts of the West coast travelled across the continent, stopping en route at extensions in Denver and Chicago, to see Father Divine. The New Day described their arrival: "Their feelings and their reactions cannot be recorded here. Suffice it to say that they have the conscious conviction that they looked upon the Body of God Almighty and have so declared. We Thank You, Father dear, for Your Love."⁶⁴

Father Divine also gained an international following. In 1934 he claimed disciples in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada. More extensions followed in Montreal, Victoria and Winnipeg; although, by the end of the decade, his Canadian following was confined to Vancouver and Montreal. In Australia, modest missions were opened in Melbourne and Sydney, and Fergus Brown, a Sydney disciple, carried Father Divine's message to the Queensland lead and silver mines. The Australian followers published a small magazine, Harmony, with Father Divine's teachings; and in 1937 two Melbourne disciples visited Father Divine in Harlem.⁶⁵ Walter Clenow Lanyon, who had lived in Sayville with the followers, launched a group in London in 1930; while in Switzerland, Father Divine attracted an active following. The Swiss followers were conspicuous at the World Congress for Peace held in Zurich in September 1936; they published their own German language edition of the Spoken Word; and, by 1938, operated fourteen extensions in several major towns and cities.⁶⁶ From 1937, extensions were also reported in the British West Indies⁶⁷ and the Canal Zone, Panama.

The size of Father Divine's following can only be estimated. The Hartshorn Committee was unable to assess the cult's strength in 1933, and membership lists were never compiled by the followers as they believed they were living in the kingdom of heaven on earth. In their enthusiasm, they almost certainly exaggerated the extent of Father Divine's following. Indeed, in 1936, when Father Divine launched his programme of international "Righteous Government" they readily accepted his claim to an international allegiance of twenty million people.⁶⁸ Sara Harris, in her study of the Peace Mission, suggested that half a million adherents was a more realistic estimate.⁶⁹ Even this is probably too high a figure.

The United States was, indisputably, the centre of the Movement. Yet estimates of the cult's size here were equally varied. Judging

from the Movement's published lists of Father Divine's "connections", the cult expanded unevenly and chaotically. There was no accurate list of the number of groups in the country, and the character of the groups recorded in the Peace Mission press varied enormously. Some were no more than mailing addresses, or clusters of followers meeting in private homes. Others were large, busy missions providing food, help and accommodation for numerous followers and visitors.⁷⁰ The confusion among the contemporary observers of the cult was well illustrated by two estimates of the size of Father Divine's national following made in 1937. Time magazine suggested that Father Divine had fifty thousand adherents in the country, while one of his biographers, R.A. Parker, gave credence to a suggestion that Father Divine had one hundred thousand converts in California alone.⁷¹

Even the estimates of the cult's strength in Harlem, which was the largest, single concentration of followers in the country, varied wildly. Oakley Johnson, writing in the American Communist Party's newspaper, the Daily Worker, in 1935 placed Father Divine's Harlem support at between ten and twenty thousand people. But observers of New York City's political scene calculated that the Movement could only control between one and two thousand votes in 1936, and probably had twice that number of firm adherents.⁷² Father Divine's Harlem parades and public meetings, which drew sympathisers, visitors and followers from other parts of the country, only served to compound the confusion.

Yet a certain pattern did emerge from the estimates of attendance at these parades and meetings. Apparently, Father Divine's Harlem following swelled rapidly in the first half of the decade, reached a peak in 1935-1936, then declined and stabilized in the late 'thirties. It is possible that he had a Harlem following of two or three thousand in 1932-1933, expanding to between five and ten thousand in the mid-

'thirties, and then dropping to three or four thousand converts by 1938-1939.⁷³

The pattern of growth is also repeated in the published lists of Father Divine's "connections", which provide a crude index of the scale and spread of the cult in the United States. From a scattered base of small groups and individual followers in the early 'thirties, the cult seemed to enter a period of dramatic growth in the mid-'thirties. By the end of the decade, representation was lost in some states, and any increase in the number of extensions was confined to the North-east, especially New York State, and the principal cities of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.⁷⁴

In April 1940 twelve thousand followers, according to the Peace Mission press, gathered in New York City for a national convention - swelling perhaps by three or four times the number of Father Divine's Harlem adherents.⁷⁵ If this can be used as a crude indication of the size of Father Divine's national following during the 'thirties then, Father Divine possibly led six to twelve thousand followers in the early 'thirties; between fifteen and forty thousand followers at the peak of his renown in 1935-1936; and about twelve thousand at the end of the decade. His international following was probably no more than half his national support. On this estimate, Father Divine possibly had a total world-wide following of sixty thousand at the height of his influence.

Yet it was Harlem, where Father Divine made his first impression on a large black audience as a racial martyr and a messiah, that became the famous centre of this cult. Father Divine chose it as his headquarters following the Sayville incident, and in December 1933 he opened his "Personal Headquarters" in a large building in "Spanish Harlem" at 20 West 115th Street.⁷⁶ His followers opened scores of Peace Mission extensions and shops in the community,⁷⁷ and by the

mid-'thirties Harlem was the acknowledged hub of the Movement. The Peace Mission press was virtually devoted to news of the Movement's activities here, and, by 1937, all its journals were published in New York City.⁷⁸

In turn, the Peace Mission had an impact on the popular life of Harlem. The black press regarded Father Divine as a constant source of lively news and, after 1932, articles on the Movement appeared regularly in the Amsterdam News. Press opinion was broadly favourable. While most of the journalists treated Father Divine's claims to divinity with amused scepticism, few criticised the work that he began in Harlem. In mid-1932 the New York Interstate Tattler the glossy weekly magazine of New York City's black socialites, expressed a viewpoint that persisted in the black press for much of the decade:

"... Major Divine may be a fakir. His cult may just be another racket. We do not know, nor would we venture an opinion on the matter. We do know that he has fed the hungry, lodged the homeless and aided the sick. Those are facts that even his enemies will not dispute. Also we know that he preaches a doctrine of divine love that cannot be attacked." ⁷⁹

Controversy rocked the Movement in Harlem during the 'thirties. But the followers remained a conspicuous part of the ghetto. Their phrases and greetings: "Peace", "It's truly wonderful", became absorbed into its popular humour.⁸⁰ Father Divine became such a potent symbol of success and prosperity that people wrote to him asking for "lucky numbers" to use in the city's illegal lottery.⁸¹

Father Divine's flair, and the scale of his activities in the nation's largest and most famous black community, intrigued people throughout the country. Newsreel camera teams came to Harlem to film him,⁸² and the cult was the subject of innumerable articles in national newspapers and journals. Businessmen approached him to promote their products.⁸³ Scores of visitors, including public figures, were drawn to the Movement's meetings. The Quaker Fellowship

of Reconciliation included a visit to Father Divine's as part of their "African Pageantry" trip to promote inter-racial understanding. Their programme read:

"6:00 p.m. - EAT AT FATHER DIVINE'S PEACE MISSION (15¢)
20 West 115th St. If you eat you have a seat. Several of our student groups have eaten there - said wonderful experience - bounteous and good clean food. But the place is packed.

6:30 -- FATHER DIVINE'S SERVICE - we expect to meet Father Divine personally (1) Delicious banquets are served - food clothing and shelter in abundance for all who need (2) while feasting many of the members, in ecstasy, dance sing and shout. Many religions and most of our Evangelical denominations Quaker Shaker, Methodist began this way. Spiritual experience: he has transformed their lives. (3) His followers teach that he is God.

7:30 - LEAVE FOR :

8:00 - AFRICAN peoples 'As I know them' by one who has lived in Africa and has had a large experience with African people. Questions answered ... " 84

Harlem was the nerve centre of the cult in a more fundamental way. Father Divine brought with him from Sayville a philosophy of prosperity, health and eternal life based on direct communion with God, as well as a lifestyle for his converts characterised by sexual abstinence, separation from the past, "evangelical" behaviour, collective living and the communal surrender of goods. This was deeply appealing to some New York City blacks, struggling with Depression poverty and hopelessness. Responding to their needs and aspirations, Father Divine now reshaped and expanded his activities, and elaborated his own messianic claims. Here, he developed his cult far beyond the nature of the small community of believers in Sayville. He provided organisation and an all-inclusive way of life for his new converts, in a form that was often both radical and innovatory. It was Harlem that provided the base for the vital

development of the cult.

Like Marcus Garvey, who, a decade before, had created his Universal Negro Improvement Association, a black movement of comparable size and influence in Harlem, Father Divine was a charismatic popular leader. Each man, in turn, reflected the popular consciousness of Harlem. Only Father Divine could mount parades in Harlem in the depths of the Depression that recalled the splendour and style of Garvey's movement in the relatively prosperous 'twenties.

In Easter 1934, the Peace Mission held a brilliant, sinuous parade through Harlem. Bands mounted on trucks and a motorcade with cars bearing licence plates from twenty-three states, led fifteen thousand marchers up Edgecombe Avenue to 145th Street, swung east and then paraded down Seventh Avenue to 115th Street. Trombones and saxophones provided a swelling rhythm for the marchers, who struck up songs set to popular melodies, "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Father" and "Some Day, Sweetheart" which became, "For Father Divine." Everywhere there were banners and signs proclaiming, "Joy," "Father", "Peace", "God" and "Life". At 115th Street, the marchers - viewed by thousands gathered on the pavements en route - turned into Lenox Avenue and then strode up to the Rockland Palace at 115th Street and Eighth Avenue for a meeting. A red monoplane, carrying Father Divine and his personal staff, soared in great circles over the swaying ranks, and a low flying autogiro trailed, in crimson, the message: "Peace to the World - Father Divine's Peace Mission." As the red monoplane dipped over the city, the marchers stopped, looked up, waved and cheered: "He is God, he is God, he is God!"⁸⁵

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Except where otherwise noted, the following description of Father Divine's time in Sayville and his trial before Judge Smith is taken from Harris, op.cit., 24-46; and Parker, op.cit., 3-33.
2. Hoshor, op.cit., 38.
3. This description is from an affidavit made by Verinda Brown, a former follower. In 1937 she sued Father Divine for the recovery of money which she claimed to have given him for safe keeping.
See below: Chapter Ten, p. 676-677 and Chapter Eleven, p. 746-747.

The affidavit is quoted in Judge McCook's decision on the case and is found in Mary Rozier, 'God', he's just a natural man, New York, 1937, 48.

4. St. Clair McKelway and A.J. Liebling, Who is this king of glory? New Yorker 12, June 20 1936, 31. If McKelway and Liebling are correct about the houses, such racial segregation is notable in view of the Movement's later refusal to recognize racial distinctions - indeed, its determined inter-racialism.
5. Hoshor, op.cit., 49.
6. Parker, op.cit., 16.
7. Hoshor, op.cit., 53.
8. In the late 'twenties, Elder Warren K. Robinson's 'Black Jews' were to be found not only in New York City but also in Chicago (Ill.), Abescon (N.J.), Philadelphia (Pa.), Detroit (Mich.) and Indianapolis (Ind.). Elder Robinson had his headquarters in a plush apartment house on St. Nicholas Avenue in Harlem.

Although he imposed strict sexual abstinence on his followers, he himself was arrested and imprisoned on charges of sexual immorality. He threatened to destroy the world and claimed credit for the Stock Market crash of 1929. His cult quickly disintegrated after his death in June 1931. He failed to fulfil the expectations of his elders that he would rise again in sixty days. New York Amsterdam News August 19 1931; New York Post April 28 1937; Ira De A. Reid, Let us prey, Opportunity IV (45), September 1926, 277; and Howard M. Brotz, Black Jews of Harlem, New York, 1964, 11.
9. New York Age May 16 1931.
10. An open letter from a leading white follower, Eugene Del Mar, to spiritualist groups on the West coast of the United States describing Father Divine's work at this time: dated November 23 1931. It was reproduced in New Day, September 15 1956.

11. New York Times November 17 1931.
12. Ibid. November 21 1931. According to Burnham, Del Mar's name appeared several times in Who's Who during the 'thirties. He was described as a successful businessman, lawyer, stock-broker and author of several religious books. Burnham, op.cit., 55.
13. New York Times May 26 1932; and Harris, op.cit., 26.
14. New York Times November 22 1931; and Parker, op.cit., 19.
15. New York Age December 5 1931.
16. Ibid.
17. There is biographical information on Madison in New York Age May 8 1937; Lassalle Best, History of the Harlem Lawyers Association, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, Negroes of New York, New York, 1938-1942, microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library); and Parker, op.cit., 61.
18. Father Divine's interview with Mr. Berryman, New Day 3 (6), February 9 1939.
19. New York Amsterdam News December 23 1931.
20. Ibid.; and Parker, op.cit., 20-21.
21. New York Amsterdam News March 23 and March 30 1932; New York World Telegram March 28 1932.
22. James C. Thomas Jnr. was the son of New York City's most successful black businessman. His father was an undertaker and realtor, who at his death in 1922, was believed to be the wealthiest black in Harlem. Wilbur Young, James C. Thomas, May 11 1939 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 1, Schomburg Collection.)
23. Thomas wanted an injunction to restrain the residents of Sayville from interfering with the worshippers, but he was forestalled by Father Divine's decision to leave the town. New York Age December 5 1931; New York Times November 29 1931; and Parker, op.cit., 18.
24. Harris, op.cit., 38.
25. New York Times May 26 1932; Harris, op.cit., 38-44; and Parker, op.cit., 22.
26. New York Times May 26 1932.
27. Ibid. May 26 and June 5 1932; and Parker, op.cit., 23-24.
28. New York Amsterdam News June 8 1932.
29. Ibid.

30. Ibid. June 9 and June 15 1932.
31. New York Times June 25 1932 and January 10 1933. Immediately after the successful appeal, Divine broke off his association with Attorney Thomas, claiming that, although Thomas had offered his services free, the lawyer had deducted a large fee from money given to him by Divine for safe keeping. Hoshor, op.cit., 93-94.
32. Parker, op.cit., 32.
33. New York Herald Tribune June 28 1932.
34. Parker, op.cit., 60-61.
35. New York Amsterdam News August 31 1932.
36. Philadelphia Tribune October 13 1932.
37. Parker, op.cit., 62-64.
38. This biography of Faithful Mary is taken from her own account in Rozier, op.cit., 3-9.
39. There are accounts of Faithful Mary's reclamation in the Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; Harris, op.cit., 74-76; Claude McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, New York, 1940, 55-57; and Parker, op.cit., 62. There is no corroboration, however, for Harris's assertion that Faithful Mary was a prostitute before joining Father Divine.
40. This version of the testimony is in the New Day 1 (8), July 9 1936. There are descriptions of the attractiveness of Faithful Mary's sincerity in Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936; Spoken Word 1 (3), November 3 1934; McKay, op.cit., 56-57; and Parker, op.cit., 141.
41. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; Hoshor, op.cit., 257-261; and Parker, op.cit., 63-74. There is a description of the meeting at which La Guardia and O'Brien appeared in New York Times November 6 1933. The three members of the committee were: Edgar S. Bamberger, Arthur W. Hardy and the Chief Probation Officer of Essex County (N.J.), Joseph P. Murphy.
42. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; and Hoshor, op.cit., 262.
43. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; and Hoshor, op.cit., 263.
44. Ibid., 268-269.
45. Ibid., 261 and 266.
46. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933.

47. Ibid.; New York Times December 13 1933; and Parker, op.cit., 74-76. Bamberger declined to sign the report because he said he had been unable to attend many of the committee's meetings. Hoshor, op.cit., 271.
48. Ibid., 270-271; and Parker, op.cit., 76-77.
49. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933.
50. Ibid.; Spoken Word 1 (15), January 26 1935; Hoshor, op.cit., 271-2; and Parker, op.cit., 77.
51. New Day 1 (2), May 28 1936; 1 (6), June 25 1936; and 1 (9), July 16 1936; and Spoken Word 1 (15), January 26 1935.
52. New Day 1 (31), October 21 1937; and 5 (2), January 9 1941.
53. By 1934 there were extensions in New Brunswick, Jersey City, Roselle and Montclair; which persisted throughout the decade with little change. Other extensions later opened in Pleasantville, Elizabeth, Asbury Park, Rahway, Westfield, Plainfield and Long Branch. New Day 1 (31), October 21 1937; and 5 (2), January 9 1941; and Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934. Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion of the extent of the Movement is based on the lists of contacts and extensions provided by these three issues of the Peace Mission press.
54. By 1934 there were extensions in Jamaica and Brooklyn, New York City; and others opened elsewhere in the state in the middle of the decade - at Buffalo, White Plains, Oyster Bay, Huntington, New Rochelle, Bayside and Inwood. Ibid.
55. There were four extensions in Philadelphia in 1937 and six in 1941. There was one in Pittsburgh in the mid'thirties. There were extensions at Bridgeport and Milford in Connecticut; and two in Boston, Massachusetts. Ibid.
56. In Ohio there were extensions, at one time or another, in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Springfield and Dayton. In Illinois, there were extensions in Springfield and East St. Louis. Chicago had three extensions in the middle of the decade but only one by 1941. There were groups of followers in St. Paul and Minneapolis (Minn.); St. Louis (Mi.); Monroe (Wis.); Omaha (Neb.); Gary (Ind.), and in Topeka and Wichita (Ka.). In the South-western states the following was small: there were extensions in Colorado Springs and Denver in Colorado; and one in Phoenix, Arizona. Ibid.
- The first extension in Colorado Springs was attacked by angry crowds, who stoned the building and lit fires in the street. This reception was probably characteristic of the attitude of many whites in this area. New York Herald Tribune April 7 1935; Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935; and Hoshor, op.cit., 117-119.
57. New York Times July 2 1939; Guion Griffis Johnson and Guy B. Johnson, Father Divine Peace Mission: scope of movement (In Johnson and Johnson, Church and the race problem in the United States, a research memorandum, Carnegie-Myrdal

- study, Appendix C. 1940, Schomburg Collection, 5); and Parker, op.cit., 151. Harwith's letter was published in the New Day 3 (10), March 9 1939.
58. New York Amsterdam News March 5 1938; New Day 2 (18), May 5 1938; Sepia Socialite July 20 1940 In Father Divine Scrapbook Vol. 2, Schomburg Collection; and Spoken Word 1 (25), April 6 1935.
 59. New Day September 15 1956; and Burnham, op.cit., 54-57.
 60. Spoken Word 1 (1), October 20 1934; World Herald 1 (22), April 15 1937; and Parker, op.cit., 139-141.
 61. In 1934 there were three extensions in Los Angeles; one of which, at 1196 East 51st Street, housed the followers' children. Elsewhere in California, there were extensions in Oakland, Santa Cruz, Long Beach, Ojai, Baldwin Park and Santa Monica. In Washington, there were adherents in Seattle, Bellingham and Tacoma. Parker, op.cit., 139 and 147.
 62. The first Seattle extension was forced to close after whites complained of inter-racial mixing there. But there were four extensions in the city by 1941. Ibid., 145-147.
 63. Spoken Word 1 (3), November 3 1934; and Parker, op.cit., 141. Soon after Faithful Mary's tour, the Father Divine Peace Mission of the Air began regular broadcasts on Station KFAC in Los Angeles. Ibid., 142.
 64. New Day 1 (2), May 28 1936; and Parker, op.cit., 143. 'Buses brought West coast pilgrims from Seattle to New York: New York Times July 16, July 18 and July 21 1936. At the end of 1937 there were fifteen extensions in California, including four in San Francisco, three in Oakland and two in Los Angeles. By 1941 the San Francisco and Los Angeles followings were still flourishing but only one Oakland extension remained. New Day 1 (31), October 21 1937; and 5 (2), January 9 1941.
 65. World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937; and Parker, op.cit., 152.
 66. Julia Hildreth Dodds was in charge of the London group in 1936. Ibid., 153-154.
 67. In Barbados the meetings had to be protected by the police. New Day 2 (23), June 9 1938.
 68. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933; New York Times January 11 1936; and Henry Lee Moon, Thank you, Father so sweet, New Republic LXXVIII, September 16 1936, 147.
 69. Harris, op.cit., 59.
 70. The lists of extensions usually carried cautionary notes; e.g. New Day 5 (2), January 9 1941. Distinctions were drawn between "Kingdoms", "Extensions" and "Connections". The Spoken Word urged those extensions whose "Activities ... constitute what is known as a 'Kingdom'" to send in the details. Spoken Word 1

- (4), November 10 1934. What precisely the distinctions were or how an extension qualified to be known as a "Kingdom" is impossible to say. The requirements for each category were never set out.
71. Time 29, May 3 1937, 61; and Parker, op.cit., 146.
 72. Daily Worker April 9 1935; and New York Times October 28 1936 and November 8 1936.
 73. These figures are based on an analysis of attendances at twenty-seven meetings, excursions and parades as reported by the Peace Mission and New York City press between 1932 and 1940. They agree with the circulation figures claimed by the Peace Mission press: Spoken Word 2 (76), August 18 1936 claimed a readership of ten thousand. The figures are a little higher than the most conservative assessment of Father's Harlem following: four thousand in 1936 in McKelway and Liebling. Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 30. In an introduction to Faithful Mary's book about Father Divine, New York Amsterdam News journalist, John L. Clarke, put Divine's following at five thousand. Rozier, op.cit., ix-xii.
 74. Comparison of the lists in New Day 1 (31), October 21 1937; and 5 (2), January 9 1941; and Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934. See also Burnham's comparison of the extension lists for 1938 and 1942, Burnham, op.cit., Appendices B and C, 148-154.
 75. New York Times April 13 1940; and New Day 4 (17), April 25 1940.
 76. New York World Telegram December 19 1933.
 77. B.R. Leach, History of the work of Father Divine n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and Claude McKay. There goes God! The story of Father Divine and his angels, Nation CXL (3631), February 6 1935, 152.
 78. Spoken Word moved from Los Angeles to New York City in August 1935 and Meriditas remained as editor. Spoken Word 1 (42), August 3 1935. New Day moved from Newark to New York City in November 1937. New Day 1 (33), November 4 1937. World Herald began publication in New York City in November 1936. World Herald 1 (2), November 26 1936.
 79. Interstate Tattler June 30 1932. For similar statements see: New York Age June 26 1939; and New York Amsterdam News February 24 1932, August 13 1938 and July 29 1939.
 80. Father Divine was one of the staple ingredients of Harlem's most popular comedy act - Pigmeat Markham at the Apollo Theatre. Abram Hill, Comedian Pigmeat Markham and the Apollo, March 4 1940 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection). The Peace Mission Movement has also figured in fictional recreations of Harlem life in the 'thirties. Louise Meriwether, Daddy was a number runner, New York, 1971, 87-88. As late as 1964

John Hendrik Clarke included a short story of his own about the Peace Mission Movement in his compilation of his essays on Harlem life. John Hendrik Clarke, Revolt of the angels, (In Clarke, ed., Harlem: a community in transition, New York, 1964, 117-122).

81. New Day 4 (47), November 21 1940; and 4 (49), December 5 1940.
82. The best known of these newsreel teams was the March of Time unit. Father Divine's deal, March of Time, no. 8, 4th year (1938), part 2 was devoted entirely to the Peace Mission Movement. New World metropolis, March of Time, no. 5, 5th year (1939), devoted part of the Harlem coverage to Father Divine.
83. In 1938 the Parmalee Rose Company of W. 45th Street wanted Father Divine to be associated with it in the marketing of a patent remedy; taking advantage of his "great influence and high reputation among the 'so and so' [black] people." Father Divine rejected the offer because he did not "represent any special group of people as a race, color or creed" and because "MY followers do not use medicines." New Day 2 (50), December 15 1938. Later the New Day did accept advertisements for such remedies but added the rider that they were for "those who are readers of the New Day but who are not yet true followers of Father Divine." New Day 3 (46), November 16 1939; and 4 (25), June 13 1940.
84. Handout, African pageantry trip, February 17 1937. In Harlem Scrapbooks vol. 4, Schomburg Collection. These trips were arranged by Clarence V. Howell, a white teacher at Columbia University, who was the director of Reconciliation Trips Inc., an off-shoot of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Howell was a regular visitor to the Peace Mission and defended Divine against detractors in the press. However, in 1940, Father Divine, convinced that many of those who came with Howell were sightseers rather than serious students, ended the relationship. Clarence V. Howell, letter to Christian Century 53, October 7 1936, 1331-1333; New Day 2 (24), June 16 1938; 4 (7), February 15 1940; and 4 (13), March 28 1940; and Spoken Word 1 (16), February 1 1935; 1 (29), May 4 1935; and 1 (35), June 15 1935.
85. New York Times April 2 1934; McKay, There goes God! op.cit., 151; and Hoshor, op.cit., 141-143.

CHAPTER TWO: POVERTY AND PLENTY

New York City had been, as Reverend John H. Johnson of Harlem's St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church wrote, a black "frontier town", vivid and raw, full of people "looking for a new start in life" since the nineteenth century.¹ By 1900, over sixty thousand blacks lived in New York City. There were black sections in the Bronx and Brooklyn, but most blacks clustered in settlements in downtown Manhattan, alongside the ethnic enclaves of European immigrants who had made their first homes in the central city, close to where they had disembarked.²

Two major waves of black immigration, a shock wave from 1916-1918, and then, after a lull, an influx from 1921-1930, boosted the city's black population to 327,706 in 1930. Drawn from the Southern states and the Caribbean, the migrants overwhelmed the older downtown settlements, and Manhattan blacks joined their Jewish and Italian American neighbours there in moving north of Central Park to Harlem.³

Harlem, flanked by Morningside Heights and the Harlem River, had been marsh and meadows until transformed into a wealthy suburb in the late eighteen-eighties. Following a building boom and a real estate slump, it was opened to less exclusive New Yorkers in the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1925 the eastern section of Harlem beyond Park Avenue was known as "Little Italy". To the west, sustained by informal segregation that made it hard for blacks to live elsewhere in Manhattan, the district accommodated by 1930 over one hundred and sixty-four thousand people, the bulk of Manhattan's black population. Most of New York's black institutions - the churches, clubs, fraternal orders, press, the branches of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) and

Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.), the social service agencies, including the city office of the National Urban League (N.U.L.) - had moved uptown to Harlem by the end of the nineteen-twenties.⁴

By then black migrants were drawn to New York City as much by Harlem's image as a "Race Capital" as by the prospect of work and social mobility. Its growth into the largest, homogeneous black community in the United States, sited in a residential district within a city famed for its sophistication, exhilarated black newcomers.⁵ James Weldon Johnson, writer, diplomat and the executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) wrote in 1930:

"Here we have Harlem - not merely a colony or a community or a settlement - not at all a 'quarter' or a slum or a fringe - but a black city, located in the heart of white Manhattan, and containing more Negroes to the square mile than any other spot on earth. It strikes the uninformed observer as a phenomenon, a miracle straight out of the skies." ⁶

Black writers, artists and intellectuals came to Harlem convinced that it was the place where their creative talents could flower and provide America with the permanent proof of racial progress. Black business and professional people saw in such a large, compact community their chance for personal success.⁷ The atmosphere of excitement and confidence was contagious. Harlem revelled in its image as a colourful, exciting black metropolis. White people came uptown to enjoy Harlem's night life, and to many - white and black alike - Harlem in the 'twenties was a "symbol of the Jazz Age":⁸

"Money appeared to flow in and out of everyone's pockets as easily as laughter from their lips. Everywhere there seemed to be gaiety, good feeling, and the impromptu sounds of jazz bands ... Hundreds of honkey-tonks prospered. Dull red or blue lights glowed from the windows of countless

apartments, where silhouetted figures, rocked and rolled to mellow music." 9

Only a few questioned the optimism of that era. In January 1928 James H. Hubert, executive director of New York City branch of the National Urban League, warned: "In recent years we have heard much of the bright side of Harlem. We boast of our fine church edifices, our fraternal organisations, our large and increasing number of public school teachers, our splendid physicians ... but we must not lose sight of the other side." For despite these signs of progress, Hubert maintained that 85% of Harlem families earned less than a living wage; the majority of families paid from one third to one half of their income on rent; and 65% of black mothers had to go out to work to supplement the family income. For all Harlem's institutions, it lacked organized and responsible leadership. "No group in New York evidences so little interest in its problem cases as the Negro," he argued. "We dance, play Bridge sing and pray and leave the rest to Providence."¹⁰

The elegance of Harlem's architecture was deceptive. Admittedly, in physical appearance, the housing in Harlem was superior to the tenement slums of the Lower East Side and the West Side of Manhattan. Few of the buildings were over sixty years old, and although three-quarters had been built before the 1901 Tenement House Law, which enforced minimum fire and health standards in construction, Harlem's housing had been built for a wealthy clientele. The houses were well-spaced and designed with modern facilities.¹¹ As a result, only six per cent of the occupied family quarters in black Harlem in 1934 lacked central heating; only seven per cent were without hot water; only four per cent were without a private bath or shower; and only three per cent were without a private indoor toilet.¹² But the pattern of use had already turned Harlem into a slum.

During the teen's and 'twenties landlords had responded to the influx of blacks into the district by converting their properties into multiple apartment blocks and rooming houses. By the late 'twenties Harlem was the most congested district in Manhattan; the sheer weight of population overwhelming the housing and hastening its deterioration.¹³

Some select pockets persisted. The houses west of Seventh Avenue on the side streets were "substantial looking, several stories high, with steps and areas kept clean and sometimes with shrubs growing on either side of the steps."¹⁴ The houses on 139th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, designed by Stanford White, and called the "finest group of Negro residences in the country" in the 'twenties, were still known as "Striver's Row" twenty years later in recognition of their occupants' attempt to maintain appearances.¹⁵

It was said, in 1934, that the people who wanted the best accommodation in the district moved "west of Lenox Avenue, then west of Seventh Avenue, then west of Eighth."¹⁶ In North-west Harlem, in the area bounded by Amsterdam Avenue in the east, Eighth Avenue in the west, 134th Street in the south and 159th Street in the north, there were fewer "old law" tenements and rooming houses than in Central and East Harlem. Here Harlem's wealthier families tried to set high standards of social respectability and comfortable living. Three per cent of the black families living in this area in 1934 were owner-occupiers - a larger percentage than in any other part of Harlem - and most of the buildings were equipped with modern facilities.¹⁷ Indeed, west of Eighth Avenue and north of 141st Street on St. Nicholas, Convent and Edgecombe Avenues was the most recent refuge of Harlem's black bourgeoisie, "Sugar Hill": the "swankiest apartment houses with canopies and uniformed

doormen" - first opened to blacks in 1929.¹⁸

The black bourgeoisie paid dearly for their fine houses. In 1934 there were fewer apartments in this quarter renting for between thirty and fifty dollars a month than in other areas of Harlem; and a greater number costing over fifty dollars a month.¹⁹ Nevertheless, those who sought the best accommodation available in Harlem pressed into this section, and even took in lodgers to help pay the rent.²⁰ By 1935 there was serious overcrowding in the twenty-one blocks bounded by St. Nicholas and Eighth Avenues, 139th Street and 155th Street. Seventeen blocks each held more than three hundred people per acre. Although there were isolated blocks in Central and East Harlem that held more people to the acre, neither district could match the sustained congestion in Harlem's most respectable area.²¹

The cost of this housing, however, was beyond the reach of most Harlem families. They found their shelter in the older, dilapidated parts of the community; where the housing had been allowed to physically deteriorate. Once blacks entered the area, some landlords made no attempt to invest their profits in routine property maintenance, knowing that blacks were not free to live wherever they wished in Manhattan. The City-Wide Citizens Committee's subcommittee on Harlem housing in 1942 described this type of landlord as a "special type of operator" skilled in the exploitation of black tenanted real estate, and primarily concerned to reap "higher-than-normal returns." The high cost of mortgage repayments deterred other landlords from losing more of their profits in repair costs, and many found it hard to borrow money for property renovation.²² Equally, the tenants were powerless to insist on improvements; for their complaints to Harlem's absentee landlords were diffused through a chain of housing agents and rent collectors. Often it was difficult to discover who, in fact, owned the

buildings.²³ General maintenance was usually left in the hands of poorly paid, unskilled and over-worked janitors. As a result, halls were dingy and cluttered; broken pipes were left to rot; broken dumb waiters were boarded up; and rooms became infested with vermin.²⁴ Moreover, the city's housing inspectors were lax in reporting building and sanitary code violations, and in pressing prosecutions against the landlords. Sydney Maslen, secretary of the housing committee of New York City's Charity Organisation Society, said that he had found families "who actually had to keep a dead rat on hand as evidence to the inspectors that there were rats in the building." The inspectors, he insisted, were not prepared to believe the tenants without proof.²⁵

Even here shelter was expensive. Rents, pushed artificially high by the confines of the ghetto, had doubled in Harlem during the 'twenties. By 1927 Harlemites paid more for their accommodation than white families in similar housing in other parts of the city. The average rent paid by black tenants was \$41.77 a month.²⁶ By 1934, only 26% of the occupied family quarters in Central Harlem cost less than thirty dollars a month, and 59% ranged between thirty and fifty dollars a month.²⁷ The problem of high rents was compounded by the low income level of most Harlem families. Rent constituted the main burden on family income; and, even in the 'twenties families had "bunched up" in apartments too small for their needs or, rented larger apartments knowing that they would have to take in lodgers to help pay the rent. For these humbler Harlem families, high rents and overcrowding exacerbated the problems caused by the dilapidation of the buildings.²⁸

The facade of prosperity was shattered, anyway, by the Depression that followed the Wall Street crash of 1929. By the autumn of 1930, when Harlem's leading citizens met to co-ordinate

the provision of emergency relief in the community, twenty-eight to thirty thousand blacks, about 10% of the city's black population, were already jobless.²⁹ Soup kitchens opened at the Salvation Army hostel and the Beacon Light Mission. Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop, curate of Harlem's elite St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, recognized the alarming dimensions of the recession, for "it is not only the laboring man and people who are ordinarily poor who are out of work, but also people who have had well-paying jobs and have lived with a large measure of respectability."³⁰ These better-placed blacks, as James H. Hubert observed, gave up their homes, "pawned their clothes" and "sold their furniture" to survive by the "barest thread" rather than submit to the indignity of seeking help from the charities and emergency relief committees.³¹ But few Harlemites had such resources. At best, some families held savings or insurance policies, but these were scarcely adequate. One man, a Mr. Jenks, who lost his job in May 1929, cashed his substantial savings to support his family while he searched for work. Although the family moved to cheaper lodgings in a basement, and forfeited their radio and furniture to pay back rent, their money was exhausted when Mr. Jenks approached the New York Urban League for help in the winter of 1930.³²

The weather that first winter only accentuated the wretchedness in Harlem. The lines of "poorly clad Negroes" grew longer outside the city's free employment bureaus.³³ Men and women scuffled in the gutters for cardboard boxes and paper to burn once their gas and electricity supplies were cut off.³⁴ Others packed the "early bird" matinees at the cheap movie houses for warmth and shelter.³⁵

The economic crisis intensified all the difficulties surrounding the search for decent housing in Harlem. By early 1931, as unskilled and semi-skilled work in the city contracted, and as some

employers fired blacks in order to give their jobs to white workers, pushing up the toll of black unemployment,³⁶ the rent burden became intolerable for many Harlemites. Families fell into arrears, with little hope of repaying their debts. The New York Urban League's investigator found a characteristic case when he visited the "R. family". Eddie, aged 23, had been laid off in June 1930, and his sister Margaret had lost her job in a hat factory when it closed in the following September. The four children that they supported were still at school. The rent, sixty-five dollars a month, was four months in arrears, and the family were threatened with eviction.³⁷

Landlords had little compassion for the plight of their tenants. As it was impossible to recover rent arrears they swiftly evicted their defaulting tenants. The sight of evicted families sitting despondently amid their belongings on the sidewalks of Harlem became commonplace. In early 1931, the newly appointed black deputy clerk of New York City's Tenth Municipal Court, Cornelius A. Hughes, was appalled by the number of landlords petitioning for dispossession because they had "failed to wheedle from poor and unemployed tenants the excessive rents that are being charged them."³⁸

Those who were dispossessed searched desperately for cheap accommodation. Some 'doubled up' in apartments with friends or relatives. The New York Urban League's investigator found one family that had actually eked out the winter of 1930-1931 in one room of a cold water flat, dependent on the generosity of neighbours for their support. Two of their seven children had been "given away" and the rest were lodged with friends during the day to keep warm. The family "invariably slept with their clothes on as there was little or no bedding. Newspapers were frequently placed over the children at night."³⁹

Families shifted from house to house; pressed by eviction, and

constantly in search of somewhere they could afford or a place that was slightly better than their present home. In Central Harlem in 1934 55% of the families had lived in their apartments less than two years; and 41% of the families had lived there less than one year.⁴⁰

Inevitably, the cheapest accommodation was concentrated in the most derelict "old law" tenements. Families tried to avoid the worst accommodation if they could; in Central Harlem in 1934 13% of the family quarters were left vacant. In some blocks the percentage of vacant apartments was even higher, reflecting the obsolescence of the buildings. In the area bounded by Eighth Avenue in the west, Lenox Avenue in the east, 134th Street in the south and 138th Street in the north, 20% of the family quarters were vacant.⁴¹ The shortage of decent accommodation was also aggravated by the number of houses deliberately left to rot and boarded up by the landlords.⁴² The existence of vacant and condemned family quarters in Central Harlem guaranteed overcrowding in the occupied apartments.

But some families were forced to accept the cheapest accommodation they could find and tolerate pitiful living conditions. The poorest families were reduced to living below street-level in cellar "apartments" formerly used to store coal. Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the young assistant pastor of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, wrote:

"Families 'live' in these basements, most of which have not even been remodelled into the semblance of a flat; floors of cracked concrete, walls of white-washed rock, slits for windows, no toilet except the tin can in the corner with a sheet hanging over it, no running water in some, no partitions ... no furniture - sleeping on springs or slats, sitting and eating on boxes, children without shoes." ⁴³

A black journalist who visited one of the worst of these basements on 126th Street in the spring of 1934 found it sheltering seven

impoverished families; and the insanitary and "primitive" way in which these and other subterranean dwellers were forced to live caused him to fear an epidemic when the warmer weather arrived.⁴⁴ In some apartment houses the landlords offered basement accommodation as part of the meagre wage they paid to their janitors.⁴⁵

Other Harlemites were forced to move eastwards in search of cheap shelter in the most dilapidated part of the community.⁴⁶ East of Seventh Avenue, as far as black residence stretched, and between 120th Street in the south and 145th Street in the north, there was an area of housing that, according to community studies conducted in the 'thirties, was especially ripe for demolition.⁴⁷ Blacks moved into an area already being abandoned by whites as unfit for habitation. In this old and rotting district occupied houses were side by side with ones that were derelict and condemned. Investigators in 1933 found one row of empty houses east of Lenox Avenue that were "in the most abominable condition": doors and windows were broken, floors and ceilings sagged, and the fixtures in the hall toilets had been ripped out by vandals.⁴⁸ By 1934 East Harlem contained the largest number of condemned and vacant family quarters north of 119th Street.⁴⁹

The occupied family quarters were scarcely better. In one building, investigators found that the tenants had been without hot and cold water, heating and lighting for two months, and "an inspection of bath tubs, sinks and toilets disclosed a nauseating accumulation of garbage, excreta etc., and in this atmosphere there were sick children."⁵⁰ Half of the families in East Harlem in 1934 paid under thirty dollars a month for their apartments, but almost as many paid between thirty and sixty dollars a month.⁵¹

Many blocks were overcrowded. Although the family population in East Harlem declined between 1930 and 1934 as white families left the

area; the number of vacant and condemned buildings in the district created congestion in the occupied blocks. In addition, over a third of the occupied buildings in East Harlem were cheap rooming houses. So although, overall, the area had less people per acre than the respectable black district in North-west Harlem, it generally contained more people per room.⁵²

Here, even more than in Central Harlem, people moved from one apartment to another in search of better living conditions at a price they could afford. In 1934 59% of the families had lived in their apartments less than two years; and 44% had lived in their homes less than one year.⁵³

The whole East Harlem community gave the impression of decline and poverty. The block on 130th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues, once known as the "Block Beautiful" because of its neat lawns and trees, was unkempt - but at least kept its reputation for sobriety.⁵⁴ But 133rd Street, from Seventh Avenue across to Fifth Avenue, known affectionately as "Beale Street", after its riotous predecessor in Memphis was notorious. Here there were second-hand stores, brothels and drinking joints; and, among the walk-up apartments, Adam Clayton Powell Jnr. found "hovels" where "one hall toilet serves a floor of four apartments for as many as twenty-five people, no private bathrooms or public bath tubs."⁵⁵ Though many of the houses in the district advertised their rooms "for respectable people only" there were thought to be brothels on most streets. Everywhere the district was "congested with children and loiterers" and, in the afternoons, "the garbage cans, with the contents still uncollected" could be seen in front on the stoops.⁵⁶

If Harlem's "Sugar Hill" felt the shock of the Depression badly, it was in East Harlem that the worst results of the crisis were evident. In the winter of 1930-1931 the principal of Public

School 89 at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue launched a school relief fund. But instead of raising money, his letters to the parents prompted desperate pleas for aid. Within fifteen days, sixty-nine letters were returned asking for help, and over one hundred and sixty-six families appealed for money from the fund. In the margin of one of the school's circulars was written: "Please help me for I am poor. I have got four children and not able to work." Another woman wrote: "Dear Teacher - I am sorrow [sic] I am not able to give, for I am poor myself. I got 2 children to take care of and I am not working and I ain't got no money if I don't get some shoes for my children they got to stay home cause I have not got enough money to buy them food to eat or payment. I am behind in my rent now and I don't know where I can get something for me and my children." A widow caring for three orphaned grandsons appealed, "this very moment that I am writing I have no coal to make a fire and with 3 months rent due, clothes that my boys are wearing is what they had before I lost my husband in August."⁵⁷

There was harrowing evidence of unemployment and poverty throughout Harlem as social service agencies and charities were inundated with requests for aid. The organisation of relief was chaotic, not only in Harlem but in all parts of the city. During the bleak days of 1930-1931 there was no centralised system of relief in New York City. A confusion of ad hoc and official committees tried to alleviate the distress. Funds were channelled through the city's four principal family agencies and the Salvation Army; and in 1930 the city administration launched the Mayor's Official Committee on Relief and Unemployment to help needy people not reached by the existing agencies and charities. It appealed for donations; and police precincts throughout the city were made responsible for the distribution of food, coal and clothing.

Private charity accepted the challenge of trying to find work for the unemployed. Two of the city's oldest philanthropic societies, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and the Charity Organisation Society formed the Emergency Employment Committee, headed by banker Stephen Prosser, to collect contributions to fund work relief. The Prosser Committee established an Emergency Work Bureau to take charge of the selection of employees and their allocation to projects.⁵⁸

In Harlem, the Co-operating Committee on Relief and Unemployment was created in November 1930 to co-ordinate the relief activities of local charities and churches, the Harlem Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and the National Urban League; and to channel Prosser Committee funds into the district. Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop served as its first chairman.⁵⁹

Bishop appealed to anyone who had work to offer to come forward and contact the committee, and he asked all the local agencies to keep him informed of their activities. Black people still in work were asked to donate one per cent of their income to the committee's relief fund; special fund-raising meetings were held; and, each Sunday, volunteers trudged around Harlem's churches appealing for money.⁶⁰

However, the provision of relief remained sporadic and inadequate. The police at the 123rd Street and 135th Street stations were asked by the Mayor's Committee to make a list of the unemployed and needy in their precincts. The police reported that the canvass was proceeding with "great difficulty", so great was the distress they encountered. In November, 1930 the Mayor's Committee sent bulk quantities of food uptown for the police to distribute at random to impoverished families. At the distribution centre at Public School 136 almost a thousand people received

packages containing potatoes, onions, macaroni, eggs, bread and coffee. In the following month the police gave away fifteen hundred pounds of fish donated to the poor by a chain store owner, L. Oppenheimer. The police accepted clothes for distribution, and dispensed funds from the Mayor's Committee to pay rent and emergency medical bills.⁶¹ But the scale of this help was small. During December 1930 the Mayor's Committee paid the room rent for only eleven destitute people in Harlem, and stayed eviction notices for one hundred and fifty-two Harlem families. By the end of the month, the Committee admitted that it could no longer resist pressure from landlords to end the stay on evictions.⁶² One woman wrote anxiously to the principal of her son's school:

"Dear Principal: - I would like to know if I can't get food from the precinct. I have registered there, still I can't get anything and we don't have even a piece of bread in the house to eat. I went to the Mayor's Committee on Lafayette Street. They said they would send someone to investigate until yet no one has been here. And the landlord threatens to put me out, what shall I do?"⁶³

The city's principal family agencies were overwhelmed. It was impossible to help all who applied. By January 1931 over twenty-three thousand families were under the care of the city's welfare agencies; of these two thousand five hundred families were black. The increase in applications for aid in November 1930 was 75% over November 1929 for the city as a whole. There was a 300% increase in applications from black families.⁶⁴

One woman, the mother of six children, appealed to the New York Charity Organisation Society for help. The family was three months behind with the rent, threatened with eviction, and had only "the few pennies that my two boys have managed to earn by shining shoes." The Society gave her a food voucher and a card to guarantee her husband work through any employment agency. But the voucher bought

scarcely enough food to give the family "a decent meal" and the job card proved useless.⁶⁵

The scale of distress jolted the consciences of Harlem's black bourgeoisie. Anna Arnold, the membership secretary of the 137th Street Y.W.C.A., admitted that the Depression made the staff of the Harlem branch suddenly and acutely aware that "we had been dealing in services for people who could afford to pay." Except for their occasional visits to local churches and civic organisations the Harlem Y.W.C.A. had made "limited contact with the masses of people." Now, as widespread poverty afflicted the ghetto, "our agency and others like it discovered the rest of the community."⁶⁶

The previous isolation and social exclusiveness of Harlem's more elite societies and organisations left them ill-equipped to cope with the crisis. "Most of us had no experience with need at this elemental level," wrote Anna Arnold. "and everything looked like an extreme emergency." Sent by the Y.W.C.A. to visit the homes of the poor to assess the payment of emergency relief, Anna Arnold found herself "making decisions on the basis of the number of children immediately in need of milk."⁶⁷

The Y.W.C.A. arranged "15¢ special" dinners for school children; and with funds provided by an anonymous donor, bought apples to give to girls to sell on the streets. Harlem's political, social and fraternal clubs held whist drives, dances and rummage sales to raise money for the Harlem Co-operating Committee and to pay for their own distributions of food, clothing and toys. As their gesture, the Polly Perts Club, the Silver Cross Club and the Harlem's Mothers Club all arranged turkey dinners to bring some Thanksgiving Day cheer to needy families.⁶⁸

The church, Harlem's most important institution and the one with most contact with the black poor, tried to provide some

emergency aid.⁶⁹ The Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem's largest congregation, led the way. In November 1930 it opened its community house as sleeping space for the homeless; and married men, on application at the church, were given three days work a week at five dollars a day. An unemployment relief fund was launched and members of the church were asked to pledge financial support. But by the end of November the number of applications for help exceeded the church's provision. Over three hundred men and women applied for work in one week alone and the church could only place forty-seven people in temporary cleaning jobs.⁷⁰ This convinced the pastor, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Snr., that regular and substantial help for the poor was imperative. In December 1930 he announced that he would give one thousand dollars of his salary to begin a church food kitchen, and from the pulpit he asked his congregation to contribute their share. "In feeding men," he urged, "one feeds Jesus." Inviting them to remember that "Jesus paid as much attention to the feeding of men's stomachs as to the feeding of men's souls" Powell Snr. added, "too often the church is slow in realizing this. Men need sympathy and prayer, but these alone will not feed and clothe them."⁷¹

Powell Snr. extended his challenge to his fellow pastors in Harlem and, in a syndicated article appearing in twenty-five newspapers in Christmas week 1930, he insisted that if the churches did not respond to the tragedy of mass black unemployment throughout the nation, "they ought to shut up and close up.":

"The churches and lodges have gotten a large part of the colored peoples money during the last sixty years, for the sake of God whose names our acts have often blasphemed, and for the sake of our starving brothers and sisters, whom we have often robbed under the guise of religion, friendship, love, truth and charity, let us restore unto them this winter at least enough of that money to keep them from starving and freezing." ⁷²

His attempt to mobilise the churches, and especially the Baptists, brought instead "the longest, bitterest and most disappointing of all the fights of my life." The Baptist Ministers Conference of Baltimore (Md.) accused him of enjoying a life of luxury from his church; while the New Jersey Baptist Conference criticised his lack of discretion and his ignorance of economics. In Harlem, two important Baptist churches with large congregations, Mount Olivet Baptist and Metropolitan Baptist, refused to co-operate in the emergency relief effort.⁷³ But Powell's congregation at the Abyssinian Baptist supported him; and in one sermon appeal he raised cash and pledges of \$2,500 for the church's relief programme. Powell Snr. then placed Adam Clayton Powell Jnr. in charge of the scheme, and with fifty helpers and additional funds from the Prosser Committee, Powell Jnr. began "the largest relief bureau ever set up by colored people." By February 1931 their records showed that thirty-six thousand people had approached the church for aid. Twelve thousand items of clothing had been distributed and free meals had been provided twice daily for over fourteen thousand people. Sixteen thousand dollars had been paid in wages to the unemployed who had been put to work. Throughout 1931, the church's employment agency found part-time jobs for an average of one hundred people a week. Others were sent to clean houses, wash windows and do odd jobs for members of the church who could pay wages of fifty cents an hour.⁷⁴

Powell Snr. was not totally at odds with his fellow Baptist ministers in Harlem in his relief work. Reverend George E. Sims, the founder and pastor of the Union Baptist Church, shared Powell's vision. His church, with its congregation of five thousand people in 1930, was a stronghold of 'old time' religion - its services were noisy and exuberant - but, like Powell Snr., Sims had always

pictured Jesus as a preacher of social justice; a carpenter, who took off his apron to work among the people. Sims believed that he was following the practice of the early church when he asked his congregation to help the poor.⁷⁵ The Union Baptist provided food, clothing and money for more than one hundred people each week during the winter of 1930-31. The church also provided work for twenty people each week, paying their wages with funds supplied by the Prosser Committee.⁷⁶

Powell's concern was also shared by the pastors of most of Harlem's principal Protestant churches. The "Cathedral of Negro Methodism", St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church, served regular free meals and distributed clothing throughout that winter. From its pulpit, pastor John W. Robinson told his congregation that to know Christ they must work with social and community agencies towards the improvement of ordinary people's lives.⁷⁷ Reverend William Lloyd Imes, the pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church, agreed that Christianity was futile unless it gave the "urge to do social work." Under his guidance St. James provided free meals and offered lodgings to the homeless. At elegant St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, breakfasts were served to school children sent by the principals of two neighbourhood schools, P.S. 89 and P.S. 119. Free meals were also available at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The influential, long-established Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church tried to organize a larger programme. Guided by Reverend J.W. Brown, the church served meals and distributed clothing, and its social worker, Louise E. Cargo, trained a group of unemployed young women to make and sell cookies, candy, popcorn, dresses and quilts at the church's community house.⁷⁸ In the spring of 1931 the National Urban League reported that Harlem's churches were "laboring diligently to provide work,

food and clothing." By June 1931 sixteen churches were feeding the hungry in Harlem, and five more were co-operating in some way to the relief efforts.⁷⁹

The work was mainly in the hands of Harlem's established churches. Few storefront churches, the places of worship for many poor Harlemites,⁸⁰ attempted to provide mutual aid for their congregations. Small and financially insecure, the storefronts were also the centres of fundamentalist religion, and only a handful of preachers believed that their work should include social assistance.⁸¹ Reverend C. Gordon Wolcott, the founder and pastor of the Little Church Around the Corner at 2050 Seventh Avenue, was one such exception. At the church he fed the poor twice weekly; distributed food and clothing, and tried to find work for his church members.⁸² While Reverend J.A. Davis, the pastor of Christ's Mission of the Industrial Church at 304-306 West 126th Street, tried to sustain an ingenious, co-operative relief project of his own.⁸³

Davis criticised Harlem's churches for failing to tackle the fundamental economic ills of the community. Temporary relief was vital; but it did not overcome the problem of finding work and shelter. Davis noticed how these two problems interlaced. Unemployment brought hardship for the jobless, but it also aggravated the financial difficulties of families who had unemployed men and women as lodgers. So, he established a church auxiliary called the Furnished Room Owners Relief Union (F.R.O.R.U.). The Union surveyed those with rooms to let to lodgers - gracing them with the title "room owners" - and promised to supply them with paying lodgers at realistic rents. To ensure that the lodgers paid their rent, the Union offered to help them find work. Both the "room owners" and the lodgers were required to join the Union and pay dues in return for this service. Reverend Davis compiled a register of unemployed

members in need of work and asked employers to contact him for help. He held regular meetings for the jobless on "how you can best get employment that meets your needs"; and acted as an intermediary for members in their dealings with relief agencies.⁸⁴

As jobs were hard to find, Davis began several business ventures to provide work and wages for the lodgers. He invested in bulk quantities of household necessities - including coal, linen and bed coverings - and employed his Union members as street sellers. He also approached Martin J. Healey, the Tammany Hall Democratic district leader of Harlem's Nineteenth Assembly District, to secure jobs for them.⁸⁵

But the Union failed. Davis found it virtually impossible to keep his lodger members in regular work, and the "room owners" were often "neglectful, thoughtless, and unappreciative of the services rendered by this valuable organisation." A Union official found one "room owner" who had not attended meetings or paid her dues although "she had received through the earnest efforts of this organisation, more than \$200 in service by furnishing her with first-class lodgers for her vacant rooms." The F.R.O.R.U. ceased reporting its work in October 1931.⁸⁶

The need for more than charity was also apparent to Harlem's social service agencies. In the spring of 1932 the 137th Street Y.W.C.A. opened a Trade School, under the direction of Emma Shields Penn, to give black women extra training to help them retain their traditional jobs at a time of extreme competition. The School offered courses in housework, dressmaking and "beauty culture" - the world of black women's hairdressing that had enjoyed a boom in the nineteen-twenties as a profession offering independence and status to the ambitious, self-respecting women of the race. In anticipation of economic recovery, the School also offered courses in office

work, although Emma Shields Penn admitted that, even in the 'twenties, only two per cent of black working women had been employed in clerical jobs.⁸⁷

The 135th Street Y.M.C.A. opened a free employment agency. But its employment secretary, W.D. Simmons, sadly reported: "There are very few calls for employees of any kind. Some days we will receive only one or two calls for workers and these do nothing to alleviate the condition of many men who come to us daily asking for work. There are a dozen or more men for every available position."⁸⁸

Employment was also the special concern of the New York City branch of the Urban League. It entered the Depression with a philosophy forged in more optimistic days. Founded in 1911, the National Urban League had worked to smooth black adjustment to city life by improving the industrial status and standard of living of the black worker. The League believed that if it could enlarge black job opportunity, the worker could seize the chance for self-development, provide comfortably for his family; and prove to the white world that "he had met the demands of the civilization of which he had become a part."⁸⁹

This approach, which concentrated on the acquisition of skills and middle-class standards of respectability, was inappropriate in the economic crisis that befell blacks in every urban centre in the nation. The League was now faced with the challenge of mass unemployment; and, in New York City, the local branch sought for ways to cope with the basic problem of survival without, it hoped, sacrificing its dedication to racial uplift through self-development.

In November 1930, its executive secretary, James H. Hubert, called a meeting of prominent businessmen, ministers, social workers and professional men to fashion an emergency programme.

Hubert announced that the League would try to provide work by hiring the unemployed to clean apartment house halls, cellars and fire escapes, and to do odd-jobs in the community. He appealed to all housewives and property owners in Harlem to co-operate in creating jobs. The League expanded its emergency work payroll; added extra staff to its industrial department; and opened a machine workshop to employ women to make clothes for the unemployed. Although the League's industrial secretary, Samuel A. Allen, was worried that Harlem's relief organisations were neglecting the plight of single, unemployed men and women, he recognized the need to give jobs to those with families. In December 1930 the League hired its first thirty women for the machine shop. They were all heads of families and received four dollars a day for three days work each week. But, on the whole, the League tried to find jobs in much the same way as it had done in the past - through its contacts with white industrialists and philanthropists downtown. Between December 1930 and March 1931 the League arranged temporary work for two thousand people. At the same time, it was obliged to deal with pressing, daily problems. Its relief and family bureau dispensed emergency help: it found shelter for evicted families; provided 'bus fare for people looking for work and gave families the cash to redeem their clothing from pawnshops.⁹⁰

But the League was uneasy with the community's attempts to alleviate distress and with its own new role. It feared the demoralising effect of long-term charity on blacks. "Time and again," Hubert wrote, "have Negroes begged for work and scorned charity, but charity is what they are getting ... The dole is rapidly becoming the accepted policy of relieving distress among Negroes and just as rapidly being accepted by them without protest. In such an extremity ... there is no alternative. It is charity or

starvation."⁹¹

Moreover, the League was worried for the future of black adjustment in the city as even well-educated blacks fell on hard times. The Depression wiped out the limited progress that blacks had made in securing better jobs in the 'twenties; and the League was shaken to learn that of forty men applying for work as window-washers that winter, sixteen were college-educated. Faced with the loss of jobs in the city, the League had little choice but to channel educated blacks into unskilled and service work. Aware, too, that blacks were scrambling for even the most menial jobs, the League, like the Y.W.C.A., began occupational training classes in the hope that this would help black applicants secure and retain these. Admonished to be smart and efficient, all the men in the League's training class for janitors and building superintendents came dressed in three-piece suits.⁹²

As the private welfare agencies and social service organisations struggled to cope, the municipal authorities came under increasing pressure to assume responsibility for the destitute. Bowing to this pressure, Mayor J.J. Walker, in May 1931, opened a city relief programme, entrusting the administration of home and work relief to a Commissioner of Public Welfare. Within a few months, the state assumed responsibility to help the cities and counties cope with the crisis. In September 1931 the New York State Legislature passed the Wicks Emergency Relief Act which empowered the city to disburse the first major official relief payments from public funds. Under this Act, the city established an Emergency Work Bureau and a Home Relief Bureau, and the Welfare Commissioner, Frank J. Taylor, laid down the cardinal principles of relief administration. Home relief would be provided in the form of payments for food, shelter, fuel, clothing, electricity, medicine and medical attendance; and it would be

available to all people resident in the state for at least two years. "New York City," he announced, "will see that sufficient relief is given to prevent physical suffering and to maintain minimum living standards."⁹³

But the Democratic 'Tammany Hall' administration attempted to finance the relief programme through long-term loans rather than by levying extra taxes. As a result, the provision of both home and work relief was inadequate. Payments for rent were made only if a family was threatened with eviction; there were no regular provisions for clothing and fuel; medical funds were given haphazardly; and the rent and food allowances were issued in the form of a voucher which had to be exchanged with the landlord or storekeeper. Applicants for work relief were helped more on the basis of political influence than need.⁹⁴

The inadequacy of these provisions made the relief efforts of charities and private citizens still essential. In April 1931 the faltering Prosser Committee was succeeded by a new money raising committee under the chairmanship of Harvey Gibson, the Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee. This was administered by the Welfare Council of New York and partly funded by the city's Board of Estimate. It co-ordinated fund raising efforts in the city, and disbursed funds for home and work relief through its own bureaus.⁹⁵ In Harlem, the local Unemployment Relief Committee was reconstituted as a branch of the Gibson Committee under the chairmanship of Reverend William Lloyd Imes. That winter, James H. Hubert appealed to "men of all ranks" within the community to "roll up their sleeves" and support the Gibson Committee in a fresh public relief effort.⁹⁶

According to a directory of welfare and charitable agencies,
Telling You Where To Go For What You Want In and Around Harlem

published by the New York Urban League, there were three city home relief bureaus at local schools and a Gibson committee bureau at West 127th Street dealing with immediate relief in January 1932.⁹⁷ But, members of the Harlem Emergency Unemployment Committee were dissatisfied with this provision and its administration. In particular, they objected to the appointment of a white woman, Miss Adeline A. Buffington, as director of the Gibson Committee's Bureau in Harlem. It was alleged that she had said that there were no blacks capable to serve as her assistants; and she was blamed for the lack of an Emergency Work Bureau placement centre in Harlem. Her critics claimed that she had advised the Emergency Work Bureau against opening a Harlem office; a decision that forced blacks to travel downtown to register for city work relief.⁹⁸ Furthermore, members of the Harlem Committee were distressed by the refusal of both the city bureaus and the Gibson Committee to hire black social work supervisors. Because of this, they felt, there was a lack of proper investigation into needy cases; a tendency to slight blacks who were seeking relief; and a general ignorance of Harlem's needs. At a special service for Harlem's social workers Reverend Imes called upon them to "stand up for their rights, demand relief for the needy and keep their self-respect."⁹⁹

Poverty was now widespread. A survey of a group of Harlem families in 1932 revealed that their income had dropped 43.6% since 1929. In 1929 less than a quarter of the group had earned below \$1,200 a year; but by 1932 sixty per cent of the group earned less than this. In the same period, the cost of living index for New York City had dropped only seventeen percent.¹⁰⁰

Families continued to slip through the relief net. In December 1932, the Liberator, weekly paper of the left-wing League of Struggle for Negro Rights, recorded the experiences of one of these families:

Estelle and Norman Smith and their children. Estelle and Norman had come to New York City from Baltimore, (Md.) in the late nineteen-twenties. Norman was a painter and cabinet maker by trade; but in New York City he could find work only as a furnaceman-porter. Then, in April 1930, he fell ill and lost his job. Their troubles began. For the next two years the family survived on Norman's meagre wages from a series of casual jobs, and on interim payments of relief. They were shuffled back and forth between the official city agencies and the Charity Organisation Society. The most effective help the family received came in the winter of 1931 when the city's Work Relief Bureau found Norman a three-day a week job. But he was laid off again in the following spring; and he resorted to the streets, shining shoes for a few nickels, to raise money for food. The family was evicted seven times during these two years. In October 1932, Estelle was admitted to hospital for the birth of their fourth child. She had lived on "cabbage and beans" during her pregnancy, and lacked the strength to recover. In the month following the childbirth she died, aged twenty-seven. The Home Relief Bureau could only advise Norman to take the children to his sister's in the South and start a fresh life there.¹⁰¹

For many Harlemites, seeking help was humiliating and frustrating. "Into my study one morning," wrote Adam Clayton Powell Jnr., "came a Mr. Cecil Austin, address withheld, carrying a paper cup filled with slop, hunks of rotten veal mixed with soggy cabbage, the mixture still hot from the food kitchen and yet it was vilely sour." The food came from the Salvation Army depot at the Armory in Harlem, where hundreds lined each day for a free meal. Austin demanded, "How can we eat this mess, and only one meal a day to keep us alive?" I couldn't answer."¹⁰²

The private charity that supplemented official relief funds

was soon exhausted. In May 1932 the Harlem Emergency Unemployment Committee raised only \$86.90 as Harlem's contribution to the city-wide relief fund. It was the smallest amount collected by any group in the city. The fund-raising committee, headed by Fred R. Moore, editor of the New York Age, concentrated its efforts in Central and West Harlem. It received most of its donations from the area bounded by Seventh Avenue in the east, Eighth Avenue in the west, 132nd and 133rd Street; and from the block housing the Dunbar Apartments - a model housing project built with Rockefeller philanthropy and opened to middle class blacks in the late 'twenties. Fred R. Moore decided that it was not worth canvassing the thirty blocks east of Seventh Avenue.¹⁰³ As the winter of 1932 approached, William M. Kelley remarked in the Amsterdam News that once more "those who have will be called upon to share with those who have not." But, he observed, "no longer is it a question of the rich sharing with the poor, for the rich nowadays are few."¹⁰⁴

Harlem's churches found it impossible to sustain their welfare work. During the 'twenties they had enjoyed a boom. Church membership had expanded; a myriad of auxiliaries, clubs and societies had flourished; and, acting on the belief that the physical facilities of the church must match its growth in membership, congregations had heavily invested in property improvement. Even before the Depression, Harlem's principal churches had been spending a major part of their income to repay the debts they had contracted. When the boon ended in 1929, and church receipts dropped precipitously, they were faced with a total debt of two million dollars.¹⁰⁵

The efforts of Harlem's welfare-minded pastors were therefore quickly curtailed by the financial instability of their churches. To hold off their creditors, the churches were forced to axe their spending. Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop, who succeeded his father

to the pulpit of St. Philip's, was obliged to cut the church's annual operating costs from seventy-three thousand dollars to twelve thousand dollars, and eliminate all the church's relief work after 1933.¹⁰⁶ The sympathetic Reverend John W. Robinson, recognizing that he could not continue his community work at St. Mark's, saddled with a debt of \$275,000, handed the church to a more conservative pastor, Lorenzo H. King. Robinson then opened his own Christ's Community Church in a storefront on Seventh Avenue, and became prominent in the campaign to improve schools in Harlem. King concentrated on restoring the church's financial stability. He acted as a spokesman for the grievances of the community, but he never attempted to use the church as a centre for social work.¹⁰⁷ The Abyssinian Baptist Church, thanks to the assiduous fund raising work of Reverend Powell Snr., was the only large church to enter the 'thirties relatively free of debt. But even this church, faced with dwindling income, soon reduced its emergency provision, and only handled three thousand relief cases during 1932-1933.¹⁰⁸

By 1933 most of the emergency work of the churches had collapsed. A handful of pastors - notably Reverend Powell Snr., Reverend Imes, and Reverend John H. Johnson of the young St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church - still worked to create socially progressive urban churches. But even these men realized that, from now on, their role would be to provide mainly counselling and referral services for the poor; and to act as community spokesmen, on social and economic matters.

In 1933 official agencies assumed the burden of relief in New York City. That year the Fusion Republican Party headed by Fiorello La Guardia ousted the Tammany administration in New York City, and promised a reform of the relief system.¹⁰⁹ Then, with national unemployment statistics touching fifteen million, the

federal government led by the newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a federal emergency relief programme. The federal system helped finance public relief efforts by providing one dollar for every three dollars provided by the state and municipality. In New York City, the Home Relief Bureau was created as the sole office dealing with applications for official relief. Home relief was now extended to single men; and the budget was augmented with provision for regular payments for rent and fuel. In the spring of 1934 the Home Relief Bureau began paying its food allowances in the form of a negotiable cheque rather than a voucher.¹¹⁰

Despite this improvement, the relief system was still inadequate and inflexible. An investigation made in early 1935 revealed that the increase in public expenditure for relief had not kept pace with the increase in the number of families applying for aid throughout the city. As a result, the average expenditure on relief per family had dropped from \$51.36 a month in 1932 to \$42.15 by 1935. The report criticised the city's inflexible use of a budget system in which payments were based on the number of members in each family. Private charities used a similar system, the investigator noted, but only as a flexible guideline to each family's particular needs. The report criticised the inadequacy of the official relief allowances. For a family of five the standard food allowance was only eight cents per person per meal, and no revisions had been made to compensate for an eleven per cent rise in retail food prices in the city between 1933 and 1935. Rent allowances were described as inadequate for half of the families living on relief in the poorest areas of the city; clothing had been given only on an emergency basis, though the private agencies made regular clothing allowances of five hundred dollars a year for a family of five; and the distribution of coal had been inefficient. The report noted that the

city ought to make regular provision for the supply of ice in the summer; and, like the private agencies, budget for payments to cover cleaning and household supplies, carfare, moving expenses and recreation for relief families. The report claimed that while the city's five principal private charities paid allowances ranging around twenty dollars a week for a Manhattan family of five, the Home Relief Bureau paid just over twelve dollars.¹¹¹

Some improvements followed the report. The Home Relief Bureau began paying its rent allowances in the form of a negotiable cheque in May 1935 and, six months later, extended the practice to coal payments. By 1936 the family on home relief generally made their purchases in the same fashion as the employed worker. Provision was made to pay for ice and household supplies, and extra allowances arranged for food. Eventually, in May 1937, the city increased its rent allowances by twenty per cent to meet rising rent costs.¹¹²

If the system was poor for the city as a whole it was desperately inadequate in Harlem. Before 1937 the Home Relief Bureau's maximum rent allowance was twenty-five dollars a month. But Langdon Post, New York City's Tenement House Commissioner, admitted in 1935 that Harlem tenants were faced with rentals ranging from thirty to fifty dollars a month for the type of accommodation that cost under twenty dollars on the Lower East Side.¹¹³ A survey of one block in East Harlem, between Fifth and Madison Avenues, 132nd Street and 133rd Street, made for the New York City Housing Authority in 1934, revealed that half of the one hundred and twenty-seven families paid over half of their income in rent. The housing was poor, and fifty-eight per cent of the families living there were dependent on relief. Among the relief families, none paid less than 30% of their income on rent; and over half paid from 50% to 70% of their income on this item alone. In a block of "new law" housing between Seventh

and Lenox Avenues, 137th and 138th Streets, 60% of the 374 families living there paid more than half of their income on rent. Thirty-seven of the sixty-two relief families paid over 70% of their income for their accommodation.¹¹⁴

The meagre relief food allowance was pitiful in Harlem where food cost more than in other parts of the city. A comparative survey of retail food prices made in 1942 by the N.A.A.C.P. found that the prices of essential commodities were usually 6% higher in Harlem than in similar independent retail stores in the Lower East Side, the Chelsea - "Hell's Kitchen" district, Greenwich Village and the Greenpoint district of Brooklyn. Although the chain stores sold cheaper food in Harlem, the N.A.A.C.P. reported that the chains "literally exploit in Harlem to a greater extent than [the] independent stores" as the differential between the prices in the Harlem branches and those in the other districts exceeded 6%.¹¹⁵

Harlem shoppers not only paid more for their food but they were often cheated and given poor quality produce. It was alleged that both the store-keepers and the street market vendors used a variety of techniques to cheat the customer: they changed the dials on their scales; manipulated the hand on the dial to register a false weight; and put pressure or weights on to the scales with the goods. Merchants were said to "add an extra 10¢ on carrying over the tens" on grocery bills; and butchers were accused of pricing cheap cuts as prime quality meat. There was a widespread belief that Harlem was used as a dumping ground for food that was unsaleable elsewhere. A correspondent in the Amsterdam News protested: "Harlem families are offered, at prices 5 to 10 cents higher than in other neighborhoods, meats that are green and moldy with cold storage decay. Dry commodities, such as peas, sugar, cornmeal, flour, beans etc., are dirty and wormy; perhaps years old. Bread, rolls and cakes are

unprotected. Misleading advertisement has become an art, and short weights are common."¹¹⁶

These grievances heightened the problem of trying to live on the relief allowances. Moreover, the full entitlement of relief was often given grudgingly; and the administration was hamstrung with technicalities and delays. Inevitably, a sense of distrust grew in Harlem; the suspicion and fear of injustice. There was a significantly higher percentage of complaints about the administration of relief from the Harlem district than any other section of the city. The colour of many of the relief officials was an added factor in this distrust. White administrators controlled the means of existence for many black families; and, although after local agitation, the Home Relief Bureau sharply increased its number of black personnel in 1934-1935, the colour of the majority of the home investigators only increased the indignity felt by black clients when they had to open all their personal affairs to scrutiny.¹¹⁷

The Mayor's Commission appointed to investigate conditions in Harlem in 1935 found no evidence of discrimination in the average home relief expenditure per case in black precincts compared to other sections of the city. But it did note that the standard rates of relief failed to meet the expenses only the black destitute suffered; and it also criticised the lack of humanity shown in the administration of payments. Its report noted:

"too little sympathetic understanding has been shown towards the difficulties which these people, only slightly acquainted with the complexities of urban existence, have had to encounter. It is not only inexcusable but cruel to force a widow and her three children to subsist for months on a fortnightly allowance of two small cans of milk and two cans of beans because it is suspected that she has a balance from her husband's meager death benefit, which was almost entirely confiscated by the undertaker." 118

The administration of work relief in New York City in the latter

part of the decade, though it did not silence charges of discrimination, did, however, go some way toward providing a fair share of work to the black unemployed. The W.P.A. began badly. In 1935 blacks comprised only 8% of those on work relief.¹¹⁹ But with the appointment of Victor Ridder as head of the city W.P.A. that year, there was a change in policy. Ridder appointed an advisory committee on black unemployment headed by Reverend John H. Johnson and, two years later, when Ridder was succeeded by Colonel Somervill, the percentage of blacks on W.P.A. rolls had risen to 12%. For those working on relief projects, however, employment was insecure and the pay so poor that some families had to supplement it by home relief.¹²⁰

Nor could the W.P.A., because of insufficient funding, hope to employ all the eligible unemployed, black or white. In 1935, twenty-four thousand black families - almost half the families in the community - were dependent on home relief for their survival. In Manhattan, as a whole, only twenty-two per cent of families were dependent on home relief.¹²¹

Once official agencies assumed the responsibility for relief, Harlem's struggling private social service organisations gratefully reduced their own emergency provision. Throughout 1933 an average of a thousand people had approached the New York Urban League each day for help; and the number had reached virtually two thousand a day in November 1933. At both national and local levels the League was near financial collapse; and in New York City members of the local executive were anxious to return to their usual work and to "undertake only those tasks which other agencies cannot be induced to do."¹²² So, with the extension of official relief in the city, the New York Urban League restricted itself to supplying information and advice on the procedures to obtain official relief, instead of giving its own emergency aid. However, distributions of clothing,

Christmas food baskets and federal food tickets continued and the League gave small loans to families in acute need.¹²³

The branch also reorganized its standard services. It continued to provide convalescence and recreational facilities, expanded its visiting housekeeper service and extended its selection of adult education classes. But, throughout the mid and late-'thirties, it concentrated its efforts on trying to halt the deterioration of job opportunities for blacks in New York City. Convinced that there was little hope for the unskilled black worker in the city,¹²⁴ the League placed its hopes on preparing the younger generation for skilled and white collar jobs. It sought to encourage and advise black high-school and college students; and its Industrial Department tried to open skilled and white collar positions for them in the city's stores, public utilities, 'bus lines, auto assembly works, bakeries, dairies and the city agencies administering relief.¹²⁵ But very few jobs were found. Furthermore, the League soon discovered that most of those applying for work at its placement bureau were, in fact, unskilled and poorly educated. Most of the school leavers applying for help had little preparation or training for white collar jobs; while among the older applicants, the majority were domestics and labourers, "unfit for work and unemployable." Of the four thousand men and women registered for work in 1938 the League was only able to place under four hundred. By then, the League's executives despaired for the "vast army of young men and young women, unemployed, adrift, lolling about street corners, no place to go, nothing to do."¹²⁶ The League workers listened, advised and gave practical help where they could. When there was nothing else, they gave "encouragement" to "destitute and desperate applicants who had just about reached the end of the rope." All too often, it was all they could do.¹²⁷

Harlem's Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. also cut their emergency relief work once official agencies assumed the burden of relief. Although the officers of the Y.M.C.A. claimed to recognize their responsibility to "the community as a whole" and sought to "inspire the youth of the community to higher goals; to express the just economic and social demands of the people; and to serve as a cultural center for the development of their artistic talents", the Y.M.C.A., in fact, offered Harlemites little more than its usual social and recreational facilities and programme of adult education classes after the mid-thirties. The Y.W.C.A. was more energetic. Although it ended direct relief work, it continued to run a series of liberal studies and vocational training courses at its Trade School. But, like the Urban League, the Y.W.C.A. concentrated on youth and the attainment of skills and qualifications, and had less to offer the majority of adult Harlemites.¹²⁸

Yet, just when private relief efforts were contracting to leave many blacks dependent either on official relief or on their own wits and resources, Father Divine entered Harlem. Those who trailed after his Easter parades were astonished to find meeting halls with tables "heaped with turkey and cold meats of all kinds; with cakes and Easter eggs and pickles and relish." Women in white uniforms with "Peace" and "Father" sewn in maroon on their lapels, waited on those who jostled in to eat. News spread that Father Divine fed the unemployed free of charge; and each day bounteous meals were prepared for all comers at the Peace Mission's extensions in Harlem.¹²⁹ The editor of the Spoken Word described the scene at Father Divine's headquarters at 20 West 115th Street:

"We see long lines of men filing into the Assembly Hall where they take seats, and presently are addressed by one who is telling of the blessings received since contacting FATHER DIVINE, [and they] are given an opportunity to hear the glorious message of salvation

which FATHER DIVINE is giving to the world. They are unemployed. After a little while they go downstairs to the Banquet Hall, where free of charge they are fed the same fare that is given to all ... In a sort of human chain, the plates, heaped up, are passed by hand to the long lines at the table. Here and there one rises, filled with gratitude, to thank FATHER DIVINE ... But strangely, most of them sit silently. They are through shortly and file out to make room for others to take their places ..." 130

For those who could afford to pay for their meals, Peace Mission restaurants, opened by the followers throughout Harlem, served wholesome food for as little as ten and fifteen cents a plate. A good cut of beef or chicken with two vegetables cost ten cents, and, for an extra five cents, dessert and coffee were available. The patrons were expected to observe the customs of the followers - to use the greeting "Peace", and not to smoke or use bad language - but these provisions were easily accepted. "Even in little matters such as asking for water," the Peace Mission's correspondent wrote, "they conform to the custom of the Kingdom by saying, 'THANK YOU FATHER,' for the water, bread etc.."131

The restaurants were busy day and night. Men and women, told to "scram you bum" by other restaurant owners, were welcome here. Used by the followers as well as by outsiders, the restaurants were often gay and congenial places, reflecting the infectious high spirits of the disciples. Strangers were enticed to join in the songs of the "singing waiters" as they moved from table to table with the plates.¹³²

The Peace Mission also offered cheap accommodation to followers and outsiders alike. Father Divine's followers leased apartment houses, private houses, furnished rooms, and meeting halls with accommodation on the upper floors. Rooms were converted to provide clean, if spartan, sex-segregated dormitories; and for one or two dollars a week anyone could rent a bed without obligation to join

the Movement.¹³³ In 1936, St. Clair McKelway and A.J. Liebling, writing in the New Yorker magazine, estimated that the Peace Mission in Harlem sheltered at least fifteen hundred people.¹³⁴

The principal extensions were also open to the public until ten o'clock at night. Throughout the day people moved in and out; resting in the halls and dining rooms; sheltering from the street; staying to watch a meeting or to talk to the followers. If nothing else, the followers' contagious good humour and informality provided an antidote to the drab realities of Depression Harlem. No one was pressed to become a follower, pay money or offer explanations of themselves and their misfortunes.¹³⁵

Of course, some who took refuge in the extensions did join the Movement. The Spoken Word told the story of one "lonely little figure" who came, clutching a suitcase, to the extension supervised by Faithful Mary on West 126th Street in 1934. The followers fed her, "but no further plans were made for her." She said that she had been evicted in 1932 and now slept in the subways by night and sat in the Peace Mission by day. Finally, when the followers were decorating the extension for Christmas, "the Spirit struck Faithful and made her put her arms around the sister and they both jumped and shouted." The woman was taken upstairs, "given a nice hot bath, her hair washed and combed, and new clothes were put on from head to foot and those old clothes were put in the furnace and burned." Renamed "Sister Patience" by the followers, she "no longer looks like that sad, downhearted person; but every day she is blooming forth like a flower in this Wonderful Vibration of Love, Joy, Peace and Happiness."¹³⁶

Father Divine claimed, in 1934, that he was feeding twenty-five thousand people free of charge in Harlem. Elaine Goldberg, a social worker in Harlem during the 'thirties, acknowledged that he

provided "an inestimable service" to Harlem's unemployed between 1933 and 1937. Furthermore, she said, "he did it with a genuine goodness that I, as a social worker, could hardly help but admire."¹³⁷

But Father Divine always insisted that his mission went beyond the provision of emergency relief. "While they are unfortunate to be out of work, and out of money," he said, "naturally, I will give them something to eat and a place to sleep." But he added, "I AM not endorsing this act of charity as being the Fundamental." In his speeches he told the crowds that he had come to guide them "out of the ruts, out of the murks and mires of human slothfulness and impracticality" and into a state of perfect happiness and material abundance.¹³⁸ "After a while we will not have so many breadlines," he promised, for he was "sowing the seeds of optimism in the consciousness of the children of men, that you might produce this seed and bring it to fruition." He told them that "limitations, lacks and wants," were simply a state of mind, and that once "you visualize the Abundance of the Fullness you also produce them."¹³⁹

Although human affairs appeared to be balanced on a precipice, Father Divine said that he held the key to limitless security and comfort. Through him everything was possible, for "that which you can imagine, GOD can bring into materialization," just as "GOD firstly brought into outer expression ... the Earth when it was invisible." His apparently unlimited wealth, and the exuberant good health and satisfaction of his followers seemed to justify his claims. With blithe assurance, Father Divine welcomed people to follow him, telling them, with a smile, "I don't know what 'hard times' means."¹⁴⁰

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. John H. Johnson, Place of adventure: essays and sermons, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1955, 8-9.
2. Oscar Handlin, Newcomers: Negroes and Puerto Ricans in a changing metropolis, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959, 46-48, 81; Walter Laidlaw ed., Population of the City of New York, New York, 1932, 263; Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem: the making of a ghetto: Negro New York 1890-1930, New York, 1968, 3-34; Mary White Ovington, Half a man: the status of the Negro in New York, New York, 1911, 32-51; and Seth M. Scheiner, Negro mecca: a history of the Negro in New York City 1865-1920, New York, 1965, 15-19, 23.
3. Handlin, op.cit., 48-50, 81-82; Laidlaw ed., op.cit., 263; Osofsky, op.cit., 88-89, 128-131; and Scheiner, op.cit., 20-22.
4. Osofsky, op.cit., 71-123, 130.
5. This aspect of Harlem's attractiveness, which was taken for granted at the time, is now hard to document. It was a staple of popular journalism, both white and black; and an assumption common to all the poets and novelists of the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes describes his feelings on arriving in Harlem in his autobiography, Big sea, London, 1940, 66. The hero of Claude McKay's Home to Harlem, New York, 1928, 15, makes similar observations: "The deep-dyed color, the thickness, the closeness of it. The noises of Harlem ... Oh! the contagious fever of Harlem." Again, the heroine of Wallace Thurman's The blacker the berry, New York, 1929, 106-7, comments on how much livelier Seventh Avenue was than "Central Avenue, the dingy main street of the Black Belt of Los Angeles." Clyde Vernon Kiser, who made a study of a group of Southern Sea Island migrants to New York City in the late 'twenties, noted that Harlem had been well publicised as a particular destination and had drawn migrants as much by its promise of city life as by its employment opportunities. Clyde Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to city: a study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and other urban centers, New York, 1932, 167. Malcolm X remembered hearing about Harlem and Marcus Garvey from his father in Lansing, Michigan, in the 'thirties, long before he went there himself, attracted by stories of the high life he had heard of from musicians. Autobiography of Malcolm X, London, 1966, 145-146.
6. James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan, New York, 1930, 3-4. Osofsky, op.cit., 128, has underemphasised the high hopes of Harlem that blacks continued to hold until the Depression. He has stressed, instead, the attributes of an "emerging slum".
7. The major statements of this optimism are Alain Locke, New Negro (In Alain Locke, ed., New Negro: an interpretation, New York, 1925, 3-25); and James Weldon Johnson, Harlem, the culture capital (In Ibid., 301-311). There are similar statements in James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan, 260-284. Nathan Irving Huggins', Harlem Renaissance, New York, 1971, is a sympathetic but critical appraisal of the cultural and sociological assumptions of this period; Osofsky, op.cit., is much more antagonistic.

8. Hughes, op.cit., 169-188; and Osofsky, op.cit., 184-187.
9. Roi Ottley and William J. Weatherby, eds., Negro in New York: an informal social history, New York, 1967, 146.
10. James H. Hubert, Dark cellar, West Indian American 1 (4), January 1928, 4. See also Osofsky, op.cit., 127-149.
11. James Ford, Slums and housing: with special reference to New York City, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936, 317, 320, 324.
12. These figures are based on an analysis of seventeen census tracts between 118th and 155th Streets, Amsterdam Avenue and the Harlem River. Each of these tracts had a majority population of non-white families in 1934. They were tracts 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 220, 221, 224, 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 232, 234, 235 and 236. New York City Housing Authority, Real property inventory, New York, 1934, tables 11A/B, 13A/B, 14A/B and 15A/B.
13. This congestion alarmed every student of Harlem social conditions in the 'twenties and 'thirties. For representative views: Citizens' Housing Council of New York, Harlem housing, New York, 1939, 3-4, 10; Ford, op.cit., 324, 329; New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, Negro in Harlem: a report on the social and economic conditions responsible for the outbreak of March 19 1935, New York, 1935, typescript in Municipal Archives and Record Center, New York, 53; and a summary in Osofsky, op.cit., 135-141.
14. Daily Gleaner (Kingston, Jamaica) August 28 1934. Clipping In Harlem Scrapbooks vol. 2, Schomburg Collection.
15. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 23-24; and Osofsky, op.cit., 120.
16. New York Age June 2 1934.
17. This description of North-west Harlem is based on an analysis of the statistics in the 1934 Real property inventory for tracts 221, 227, 231 and 235.

In North-west Harlem 67% of the structures were old-law housing; in Central Harlem, 86%; and in East Harlem, 85%. In North-west Harlem 21% of the structures not occupied by families were lodging houses; in Central Harlem, 45%; and in East Harlem, 38%. In Central Harlem and East Harlem only 1% of occupied family housing was owner-occupied. In North-west Harlem, 6% of occupied quarters were without central heating; in Central Harlem, 3%; and in East Harlem, 13%. For quarters without hot water the figures were: 1%, 11% and 4%; for quarters without a tub or shower, 3%, 4% and 5%; and for quarters without a private indoor toilet: 3%, 2% and 5%.

The difference is even more apparent in the figures for vacant quarters: 11% of family housing was vacant in North-west Harlem; 13% in Central Harlem; and 17% in East Harlem. For these quarters the figures read: no central heating - 21%, 26% and 29%; no hot water - 6%, 9% and 16%; no tub or shower - 1%, 10% and 10%; and no private indoor toilets - 1%, 8% and 7%. New York City Housing Authority, op.cit.,

tables 11A/B, 13A/B, 14A/B and 15A/B.

Most Harlem housing studies for the 'thirties call attention to these differences in condition according to area. Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., 3-4, 10; Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem community study, New York, 1937, typescript in Schomburg Collection, 26; and Mayor's Committee on City Planning, East Harlem community study, New York, 1937, typescript in Schomburg Collection, 22.

18. There are descriptions of Sugar Hill in John Hendrik Clarke, Harlem, September 24 1940 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 4, Schomburg Collection); Abram Hill, Sugar Hill, September 17 1940 (In Ibid); and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 25-28.
19. A comparison of figures drawn from the Real property inventory of 1934. In North-west Harlem 40% of occupied quarters rented between thirty and fifty dollars a month compared to 59% in Central Harlem and 46% in East Harlem. 32% rented above fifty dollars a month; compared to 15% in Central Harlem and 6% in East Harlem. New York City Housing Authority, op.cit., tables 11A/B, 13A/B, 14A/B and 15A/B.

Black tenants claimed that landlords invariably increased the rent when there was a change from white to black tenancy in this section. Landlords justified the increases on the grounds that there was a scarcity of housing for blacks and so the market would bear higher rentals. Testimonies of Donelan J. Phillips (President of the Consolidated Tenants League), Daniel W. Lave (manager of 445 W. 153 Street) and D.B. Luckey (Secretary of the agents for 350 Manhattan Avenue) (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings - vols. 6-9 Manhattan, New York, 1937, 1260-1261, 1341-1343, 1344-1350).
20. Committee on land utilization, New York City Building Congress, Harlem family income survey, New York, 1935, 2; and testimony of Morris Hubbard (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, op.cit., 1316).
21. Map of population density of blocks in West Harlem, dated January 1935 in Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., between leaves 5 and 6.
22. City-wide Citizen's Committee on Harlem, Report of the sub-committee on housing, New York, 1942, typescript in Schomburg Collection, 2-3.
23. Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem community study, 26.
24. Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., 19; New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Report to the Legislature of the State of New York, New York, 1938, 79; and Osofsky, op.cit., 140-141.
25. Testimony of Sydney Maslen (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population,

Public hearings, 1572).

Langdon Post, Commissioner of the New York City Tenement House Department, told the New York State Temporary Commission that his budget and staff were too small to deal with more than the most outstanding violations. He submitted a report on the Harlem area to the Commission which showed that, of 3,590 old law tenements visited by his inspectors, 3,417 had violations, at the rate of about six per building; making 19,517 violations altogether. Ibid., 1329-1330.

26. Osofsky, op.cit., 136.
27. These figures are based on an analysis of the statistics in the Real property inventory of 1934 for census tracts 220, 224, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234 and 236: the area bounded by Eighth and Lenox Avenues, 118th Street and 159th Street, New York City Housing Authority, op.cit., tables 13A/B and 15A/B. In 1932, in a study of 1,014 tenement families, Carey Batchelor found that his sample of Harlem families paid, on an average, \$9.50 per room per month, compared to \$6.67 per room per month paid by whites in similar accommodation. In 1938 New York City's Vacancy and rent survey revealed that the median rent of vacant apartments in Harlem, which was \$30, was \$12 more than that for Manhattan as a whole. Only 46.2% of vacant apartments in Harlem rented for under thirty dollars: 81% of Manhattan vacancies rented for less than that. Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., 12-13.
28. Osofsky, op.cit., 135-141.
29. Harry R. Grodetsky, Depression and New York Negroes, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection.)
30. New York Amsterdam News October 29 and November 19 1930.
31. James H. Hubert, Harlem faces unemployment, Opportunity IX (2), February 1931, 45.
32. Ibid., 43.
33. Kiser, op.cit., 31.
34. Ottley and Weatherby, op.cit., 265-266.
35. Kiser, op.cit., 31.
36. T. Arnold Hill and Ira De A. Reid, Unemployment among Negroes, New York, 1930, 2-4; and National Urban League, How unemployment affects Negroes, New York, 1931, 15-16.
37. James H. Hubert, Harlem faces unemployment, op.cit., 43.
38. Fraternal Review X (2), February 1931, 2.
39. James H. Hubert, Harlem faces unemployment, op.cit., 43.
40. Based on an analysis of statistics in New York City Housing Authority, op.cit., tables 13A/B and 15A/B.

41. Ibid.
42. Committee on land utilization, New York City Building Congress. op.cit., 12-13.
43. New York Post March 28 1935.
44. New York Age March 10 1934.
45. New York Post March 28 1935; and Ottley and Weatherby, eds., op.cit., 266. The Building Service Employees Union reported that of nine thousand Harlem janitors, seven thousand lived in basements. Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., 19.
46. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 61. The city's Committee on land utilization argued in 1935 that Harlemites had a choice; either to rent modern sanitary apartments on the west side and take in lodgers; or to settle for the old-law tenements on the east side. Committee on land utilization, New York City Building Congress, op.cit., 2.
47. Citizen's Housing Council of New York, op.cit., 5-6, 18-19; Mayor's Committee on City Planning, East Harlem community study, 21-24; and Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem community study, 28-31.
48. New York Age June 2 1934.
49. The figures are from an analysis of the Real property inventory of 1934 for census tracts 206, 208, 210, 212 and 214: the area bounded by 126th Street in the south, Lenox Avenue on the west and Park Avenue and the Harlem River on the north-east. 17% of the family quarters in this area were vacant, compared to 13% in Central Harlem and 11% in West Harlem. In a particularly blighted area, west of Fifth Avenue above 135th Street, 45% of the family quarters were vacant. Although 63% of the vacant family quarters could be rented for under thirty dollars a month, they were concentrated in the oldest housing: 29% were without a private bath or shower; and 7% were without a private toilet. New York City Housing Authority, op.cit., tables 13A/B and 15A/B.
50. New York Age June 2 1934.
51. New York City Housing Authority, op.cit., tables 13A and 15A.
52. The family population of East Harlem declined 7% between 1930 and 1934. 38% of the residential structures in the non-riverside tracts in this area were lodging houses. 23% of occupied family quarters had more than one person per room; in Central Harlem it was 21%; and in Sugar Hill, 20%. Ibid., tables 11A/B, 13A/B, 14A/B and 15A/B.
53. Ibid., tables 13A and 15A.
54. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 24-25.

55. New York Post March 28 1935; and John Hendrik Clarke, Harlem, September 24 1940 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 4, Schomburg Collection).
56. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 56.
57. A copy of one of the letters and the notes for a newspaper article are in New York - economic conditions, Vertical file, Schomburg Collection; and the article itself in Liberator February 21 1931.

P.S. 89 was described by the Mayor's Commission in 1935 as being in the worst condition of any Harlem elementary school. It was built in 1889 and stood at the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue. It was ill-equipped and overcrowded and was forced to run two sessions a day. Within the immediate area, reported the Mayor's Commission, there were "18 beer gardens, six liquor saloons, four moving pictures, and two hotels alleged to be disreputable, besides one solid block of rooming houses known to be the center of vice and hide-outs of vendors of narcotics and other criminals." It drew its pupils from the very poorest areas of black Harlem and "If one attempts to enter the building, one must be careful to step between or walk around unemployed men seated on the steps of the entrance." New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 68-69.

58. Sadie Hall, Public relief development, October 26 1939. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection); and Barbara M. Blumberg, Works Progress Administration in New York City: a case study of the New Deal in action. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1974, 4-5.
59. New York Amsterdam News October 29, November 12 and November 19, 1930.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid. October 29, November 12, November 19 and December 3 1930; Negro World November 29 1930; and Hall, Public relief development (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection).
62. New York Admsterdam News December 31 1930.
63. Liberator February 21 1931.
64. Black families were 10.5% of the families receiving assistance from the welfare agencies in New York City in January 1931 and only 3.5% of the total family population of the city. James H. Hubert, Harlem faces unemployment, op.cit., 44; and National Urban League, How unemployment affects Negroes, 13 and 15.
65. Liberator July 18 1931.
66. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, The trumpet sounds: a memoir of Negro leadership, New York, 1964, 41 and 55.

67. Ibid., 57.
68. New York Amsterdam News December 3 1930.
69. There is a discussion of the response of Harlem's principal Protestant churches to the Depression in William Welty, Black shepherds: a study of the leading Negro clergymen in New York City, 1900-1940, unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1969, 183-300.
70. New York Amsterdam News November 19 and December 3 1930. In December, the Abyssinian Baptist reported that it had so many applications for work that "we are forced to eliminate all men excepting those who have families or dependents." Church Magnet 1 (1), December 14 1930.
71. New York Amsterdam News December 3 1930.
72. Ibid. December 17 1930. Powell reprints the full text of this letter in his autobiography. Adam Clayton Powell Snr., Against the tide, New York, 1938, 228-230.
73. Powell Snr., was still smarting from the onslaught eight years later. Ibid., 220-222, 232-245.
74. Interstate Tattler February 6 1931; Church Magnet 1 (3), February 1931; Powell Snr., op.cit., 196-199; and Welty, op.cit., 285.
75. Ibid., 62-65.
76. Church Magnet 1 (3), February 1931.
77. New York Amsterdam News October 22 and December 3 1930; Church Magnet 1 (1), December 14 1930. There is some biographical information on Robinson in Welty, op.cit., 168-170.
78. New York Amsterdam News December 3, December 10 and December 17 1930; Church Magnet 1 (1), December 14 1930; and Welty, op.cit., 285.
79. National Urban League, How unemployment affects Negroes, 16. In addition to those already mentioned, the following churches were among those that helped in the relief effort: Beulah Wesleyan M.E.; Emmanuel A.M.E.; Rush Memorial A.M.E. Zion; and St. Ambrose P.E. Church Magnet 1 (3), February 1931; Dunbar News June 3 1931 (In Churches-U.S.A., Vertical file, Schomburg Collection); and Welty, op.cit., 285-286.
80. It is impossible to know how many people the storefronts attracted. There are no reliable statistics and many people who attended the storefronts also went to established churches. For a full discussion see below: Chapter Six, p. 371 - 374. Even estimates of the number of storefronts in Harlem vary wildly. The study published by the Greater New York Federation of Churches in 1930 mentions a figure of 122. Ellen Tarry in 1938 thought that there were over 500. Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro churches of Manhattan, New York, 1930, 22; and Ellen Tarry, Storefront churches,

September 15 1938 (In Works Progress Administration, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).

81. E. Franklin Frazier attributed the appeal of storefront sermons to the traditional ideas of "old-time religion": heaven and hell and the sins of the flesh. Frazier, Negro church in America, 54. But see below, Chapter Six, p. 371-374.
82. This was a regular part of his ministry by the time he opened a second storefront in August 1937. Eye 1 (1), August 7 1937.
83. According to Davis in 1931, this "non-sectarian" church had been founded in 1920. Negro World May 23 1931.
84. Ibid., May 23, May 30, June 6, June 20, August 1, August 8 and October 31 1931. There may have been an increase in the number of furnished rooms to let at this time as people tried to make up for a loss of income by taking in lodgers. Through 1930 and 1931, the Amsterdam News regularly carried two pages of advertisements of furnished rooms to let. New York Amsterdam News January 8 and October 29 1930; and July 29 1931.
85. Negro World May 23, May 30, June 6, June 20 and July 11 1931. The F.R.O.R.U. formed a political club in June 1931 to support the Tammany Democrats in the 17th and 19th Assembly Districts. It was free with its praise for Tammany. "We are made to feel," an F.R.O.R.U. representative wrote, "that prosperity and harmony is existing in the rank and file of the great Tammany leader, Hon. Chief Curry." Ibid., June 6, July 18, August 8 and September 12 1931.
86. Ibid. August 1 and October 31 1931. But three years later, Davis, then sixty-five years old, was still running the F.R.O.R.U. He was also in charge of a church mission, a garage and a "political school". By then, he had become Manhattan area organiser for Senator Huey Long's Share the wealth clubs. Apparently Long had accredited Davis without realising that Davis was black. New York World Telegram December 10 1934.
87. New York Amsterdam News November 2 1932; and Arnold-Hedgeman, op.cit., 50 and 58. The Y.W.C.A. had provided a programme of vocational training since 1914, when it had first had its own premises in Harlem on West 137th Street. But it was only in 1932 that a full scale trade school was possible, when, through the generosity of a private donor, a building was erected to act as premises for the school. Bain, W.137 branch Y.W.C.A., n.d.; and Cartwright, W.137 branch Y.W.C.A., n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection).
88. New York Amsterdam News October 29 1930.
89. There are two histories of the National Urban League: Guichard Parris and Lester Brooks, Blacks in the city: a history of the National Urban League, Boston, 1971; and Nancy J. Weiss, The National Urban League 1910-1940, New York, 1974. This statement of its aims is taken from Eugene K. Jones, Twenty years after: a record of the accomplishments of the National Urban League during 1929,

- New York, 1930, 3-4; and National Urban League, The National Urban League comes of age: action on interracial frontiers: annual report, 1930, New York, 1931, 7.
90. New York Amsterdam News November 5, November 19, December 3 and December 10 1930. T. Arnold Hill and Ira De A. Reid, Unemployment among Negroes, 9-10; James H. Hubert, An adventure in economic and race adjustment: annual report of the New York Urban League, 1934, New York, 1935, 7; and National Urban League, The National Urban League comes of age, 27.
 91. National Urban League, Unemployment status of Negroes, New York, 1931, 9.
 92. New York Amsterdam News November 19 1930; and Weiss, op.cit., 253-4.
 93. Hall, Public relief development, (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection); and Blumberg, op.cit., 16-17.
 94. Ibid., 15-16; and Charles Garrett, La Guardia years: machine reform politics in New York City, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1961, 190.
 95. Hall, Public relief development, (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection); and Blumberg, op.cit., 6-10.
 96. New York Amsterdam News October 7, October 14 and October 21 1931.
 97. New York Urban League, Telling you where to go for what you want in and around Harlem: a directory of welfare and relief agencies, New York, 1932.
 98. A protest meeting was called at the Harlem Association of Trade and Commerce at the end of November. It was addressed by, among others, William C. Andrews Jnr., the executive secretary of the newly formed New York City branch of the N.A.A.C.P.; and Reverend William Lloyd Imes. Earlier in the same month, Imes had threatened to resign as chairman of the Harlem committee unless Harvey D. Gibson stopped the practice of the city committee in forcing all black women, regardless of where they lived in New York, to register for relief in either Harlem or San Juan Hill, Manhattan's two centres of black population. New York Amsterdam News November 18, December 2 and December 9 1931.
 99. Ibid. December 9 and December 16 1931. The Urban League, which had been responsible for encouraging the training of black social workers, was particularly concerned to see that they were fully employed. T. Arnold Hill, the League's Industrial Secretary, blamed the charities for previously failing to employ black case workers; and so depriving them of the experience necessary for supervisory posts. In fact, apart from the executive posts, the Harlem bureaus came to be staffed largely by blacks: and, when the city's Emergency

Work Bureau announced that it was laying off five black case workers who had been working in white areas and intended to put them to work in Harlem, there was some anxiety that a Jim Crow relief administration was developing. Ibid. January 20 and January 27 1932; T. Arnold Hill, Who is to blame, Opportunity X (1), January 1932, 22; and National Urban League, Unemployment status of Negroes, 5-6, 33.

100. Clyde Vernon Kiser, Diminishing family income in Harlem: a possible cause of the Harlem riot, Opportunity XIII (6), June 1935, 171-3. A comparison of two surveys of New York tenement families, one taken in 1928 and the other in 1932, revealed a drop of 33% in the median family income during those four years. The families were drawn from six tenement areas of New York City, including Harlem. The median income of the Harlem families in 1932 was lower than that of any other area: at \$828 a year. Indeed, the median income for all these working class families, \$1049 a year, (excluding families unemployed or totally dependent on charity) was still greater than the median income of \$1019 which Kiser calculated for his Harlem group which included all social classes. A survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1937 showed that the median income of white wage earning families in the city was \$1721 a year; the median income for black wage earning families was \$1266 a year. Taking into account relief families, less than half of the white families had incomes of less than \$1814; while half of all black families had incomes less than \$837 a year. Sidney Axelrad, Tenements and tenants: a study of 1,014 tenement families, members of the League of Mother's Clubs, showing income rent and housing conditions, New York, 1933; and New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Report to the Legislature of the State of New York, 18.
101. Liberator December 15 1932.
102. New York Post March 29 1935.
103. New York Amsterdam News May 4 1932.
104. Ibid. November 30 1932. In the city as a whole the contributions of private citizens and charities played a smaller part in the relief efforts of 1932 and 1933 than they did in those of 1930 and 1931. The proportion of private relief funds declined from 33% in 1930 and 35% in 1931 to 16% in 1932 and 11% in 1933. Report of Mayor La Guardia's Committee on Unemployment Relief, New York, 1935, a typescript in the New York Public Library, 11.
105. Welty op.cit., 205-8.
106. Ibid., 268-269.
107. Ibid., 168-170, 207, 272-278.
108. Ibid., 286.
109. Arthur Mann, La Guardia comes to power, Philadelphia, 1965, passim.

110. Blumberg, op.cit., 26-32; and Garrett, op.cit., 189-191.
111. Report of Mayor La Guardia's Committee on Unemployment Relief, passim.
112. Garrett, op.cit. 190-191.
113. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 57; and Report of Mayor La Guardia's Committee on Unemployment Relief, 15-17. The rent allowance was calculated on a sliding scale according to the type of accommodation: in 1937 it ran from \$11 for an unheated apartment without a private toilet to \$17.50 for families of five people or more living in improved buildings. In individual cases, where it was thought necessary and where an investigator believed there was no alternative cheaper housing in the area, an excess rent allowance could be paid. Gladys La Fetra, testifying before the State Temporary Commission on behalf of the Emergency Relief Bureau, said that Harlem's district officer had not requested a higher schedule of rent allowances for Harlem as a whole. Testimony of Gladys La Fetra (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1351-1352).
114. Committee on land utilization, New York City Building Congress, op.cit., 21-22, 28-29. It is difficult to know how some of these families survived on relief income alone. Many supplemented it with lodger's payments and part-time earnings. If this was discovered by the Home Relief Bureau's investigators, however, their relief payment might be cut; although a sympathetic social worker might turn a blind eye. Jessie Congdon, a tenant on West 126th Street, testified to the New York State Temporary Commission that she had an allowance of \$16.50 towards a rent of \$22.50 a month for one room. So she had to subsidise the rent from her other relief payments of \$18.50 a month. When she told her investigator of the difficulty, the investigator refused to believe that relief was her only source of income - "I cannot believe that you sit here and starve." Another instance brought before the Temporary Commission was that of Mrs. Okenzo who received the maximum allowance of \$25 towards a rent of \$42 a month. When it was discovered that she was renting a room to a shoeshine boy for \$3 a month, the HRB cut her rent allowance to \$19.

Other people claimed in their testimonies that the inadequacy of the rent allowance caused some tenants to resort to illegal means of raising money. Morris Hubbard of West 141th Street maintained, "They expect us to run rooming houses, they expect us to sell whisky, give parties and run houses of prostitution ... The landlords know these conditions in Harlem. They encourage us to break the law." Testimonies of Jessie Congdon, Charles T. Romney and Morris Rubbard (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1316-1318, 1362-1363, 1368-1369); and Report of Mayor La Guardia's Committee on Unemployment Relief, 15-17, 22-23.

115. Although this was a frequent complaint of shoppers in the 'thirties, this was the first full survey. It was conducted by members of the Women's Auxiliary of the New York branch of the N.A.A.C.P. and members of the Consolidated Housewives League, which was formed in 1940 to combat food racketeering in Harlem. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Food costs more in Harlem, New York, [1942], [pamphlet], 4-7.
116. Complaints about Harlem stores and pushcart markets were frequent. There are instances in New York Amsterdam News May 7, October 29 and November 5 1930; March 14 and August 15 1936; March 12, March 19, March 26 and April 2 1938; November 11 1939; and October 5, October 12, November 2, November 9, November 16, November 23 and November 30 1940. See also National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, op.cit., 8-10.
117. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 37-42, 45. The most difficult question to resolve is how many blacks, who were otherwise eligible for relief, were denied it because of technicalities. Private agencies sometimes accepted blacks who had been denied relief by the Home Relief Bureau because they did not have proof of two years residence in New York City. Ibid., 47.
118. Ibid., 44-47.
119. The Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem reported instances of discrimination on Public Works Administration and Works Progress Administration projects that included: downgrading of black workers; assignment of least desirable work; segregation of work locations; and the operation of black "quotas." Public Works Administration projects were contracted out to private companies and here, despite state law and federal regulations that discouraged discrimination, the influence of the exclusionist and discriminatory Building Trades Unions effectively prevented the employment of blacks in skilled positions. Blumberg, op.cit., 136; New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 47-50; New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Report to the Legislature of the State of New York, 38-40; Raymond Wolters, Negroes and the Great Depression: the problem of economic recovery, Westport, Connecticut, 193-203.
120. Blumberg, op.cit., 136-141, 561-562, 569-571; New York City Mayor's Commission on conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 46; and Wolters, op.cit., 203-208.
121. E. Franklin Frazier's figures for September 1935 were 24,239 black families on the relief rolls in Harlem, about 43.2% of the total number of black families there. Ibid., 36. Mayor La Guardia's %Committee on Unemployment Relief reported that 101,984 families were receiving relief in Manhattan in February 1935. According to the 1930 census there were 468,956 families in Manhattan in that year. Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce, Fifteenth census of the United States, 1930, Population, Volume 6:

- Families, Washington D.C., 1933, Table 63, 56; and Report of Mayor La Guardia's Committee on Unemployment Relief, 7. See also Blumberg, op.cit., 136.
122. Hubert, An adventure in economic and race adjustment, 7 and 10 ; Weiss, op.cit., 242-247.
123. The need was still great. The Urban League distributed 90,051 food orders in 1934 and 37,521 in the six months from January to July 1937. But, in the following year, dependent on gifts from local firms and philanthropists for maintaining its emergency aid programme, it gave only in small amounts and infrequently. In that year, of the 6,652 people who approached the New York Urban League for help in one way or another 1,986, 30%, were referred to the official relief agencies. Hubert, An adventure in economic and race adjustment, 7; New York Urban League, Annual report, 1935, New York, [1936?] 6-7; New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1937, New York, [1938?] 11 and 20; and New York Urban League, Annual report, 1938, New York, [1939?] no pagination.
124. In 1934, the New York Urban League so despaired of the position of the unskilled black worker in the city that it advised destitute families to move back to the South. It arranged transportation and suggested suitable destinations. James H. Hubert wrote in glowing terms of his visit to several families relocated on Southern farms with the League's help: "one, who had just sold his cotton crop ... showed me a check for over a thousand dollars. The transformation of this and other families seemed nothing less than miraculous." The scheme was not mentioned in the League's reports of its activities thereafter: but in 1937 the League spoke of its intention to restrict the services of its Industrial Department to those applicants with training, skill and experience; gradually eliminating all casual and unskilled labour. Hubert, An adventure in economic and race adjustment, 8-9; and New York Urban League, Annual report, 1937, 23.
125. This work began in earnest in 1935 and continued until the end of the decade. New York Urban League, Annual report, 1935, 4; New York Urban League, Annual report, 1937, 22-25; New York Urban League, Annual report 1938; and New York Urban League, Annual report, 1940, New York, [1941?] 8-9. The policy of the local League was in line with the National Urban League's "Vocational Opportunities Program". Weiss, op.cit., 254-265.
126. New York Urban League, Annual report, 1937, 8-10; and New York Urban League, Annual report, 1938. The national "Vocational Opportunities Program" had, according to Weiss, as little success. Weiss, op.cit., 262-265.
127. New York Urban League, Annual report, 1938; and New York Urban League, Annual report, 1940, 1.

128. Snelson, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., dated June 15 1938; Bain, Harlem branch, Y.M.C.A., n.d.; Bain, W.137 branch Y.W.C.A., n.d.; and Curtwright, W.137 branch Y.W.C.A., n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection.)
129. New York Times April 2 1934; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 49.
130. Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934.
131. New Day 2 (11), March 17 1938; and 2 (17), April 28 1938; Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 38.
132. New York Amsterdam News May 1 1937; and New Day 2 (11), March 17 1938.
133. Harris, op.cit., 56; and McKay, There goes God, op.cit., 152.
134. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 23.
135. Edwin T. Bueher, Harlem's god, Christian century 52, December 11 1935, 1592; and Myrtle Evangeline Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1: sociological notes on Harlem social life, unpublished thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration, City College, New York, 1936, typescript in Schomburg Collection, 201.
136. Spoken Word 1 (2), January 5 1935.
137. Ibid. 1 (4), November 10 1934; and Harris, op.cit., 54.
138. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934.
139. New York World Telegram December 19 1933; and New Day 1 (7), July 2 1936.
140. Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BELIEVERS

Father Divine brought to Harlem a complete explanation for the state of the world, and a claim that he could teach his followers "WISDOM transcending all human understanding." He offered to give them release from all their troubles: "Rest from your lacks, wants and limitations. Rest from your sickness and diseases. Rest from your oppressions and depressions ... Rest from your segregation and your discrimination."¹ Through him, he said, they could attain everlasting life and health, success, wealth, happiness, harmony, peace and the universal brotherhood of man.

His message was based on an old heresy, drawn from the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "Know ye that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." This belief held that God existed in each individual, and that divine perfection was possible for all who lived as vessels of the Holy Spirit, temples of the "living God". Father Divine told his audiences that God existed in each one of them - if they would only recognize it - and that this gave them the power to reach a perfect state: the personification of God on earth.²

Since the Fall, Father Divine explained, humanity had suppressed the wellsprings of the indwelling God. Individuals and nations had indulged in profane passions and worldly ambitions, and paid the penalty for defiling the "temple" in failure, suffering, conflict, poverty, sickness and death. Although Christ had come to earth to show mankind the way back to a state of grace, he had been rejected, and human affairs had careered destructively onwards. People had sought salvation in religions that promised to save men's souls. But, Father Divine said, "men have sought to REDEEM your souls long

enough. They have not thought much on the REDEMPTION of the body ... but this was the Mystery for which I came ... to REDEEM your Bodies from misery and sorrows, from woe and every other undesirable condition, that you might have the VICTORY." He promised that if people reconsecrated themselves to their inner divinity, and accepted him as their guide, they might return to the Garden of Eden, and "have a right to the Tree of Life, that they might take and eat and live forever." This would usher in "the real KINGDOM OF HEAVEN on the earth plane, for which you have prayed."³

He warned that the path was hard. If his followers wanted an end to their troubles they had to obey his teachings. Vigilance, he insisted, was vital for those suffering the greatest misery, the "downtrodden, the underprivileged, and the non-privileged":

"They are the ones who must choose GOD ... they are the ones who must call some aid beyond the power of man to control or to deliver them ... but they must do so by concentrating all their energy, ambition, desire and emotions in one direction, even as the Jews were required to do." ⁴

Father Divine taught his followers that they could return to a state of divine perfection only by personal transformation. Just as Christ told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" so the followers had to be "born out of their old Adamic state of consciousness, out of the mortal expression completely."⁵ This cleansing and rebirth, Father Divine instructed, could not be achieved simply by studying or learning his messages. It required deep spiritual surrender and rigorous practical action. To achieve purification they had to strip away all the cloying layers of past and present associations and patterns of thought that lashed them to mortality, and confined and damaged their life experience, self-estimation and vision of divine perfectability. "When you are as a leaf in the wind," he said, "I can use you."⁶ Then, to release the power of God, the followers had to adopt a new life-way by "putting on the CHRIST

characteristics, the CHRIST Nature in its entirety." Success and fulfilment were certain once they had brought themselves into line with the "Sample and Example" of JESUS.⁷ He assured them:

"You will have the VICTORY over depressions; VICTORY over ignorance; VICTORY over lacks, wants and limitations; VICTORY over adverse and undesirable conditions, for GOD IN HIMSELF, by NATURE, IS VICTORIOUS, therefore, you should be the Expressors of GOD as you co-operate with HIM." 8

Father Divine laid down strict guidelines for his followers. He told them to eliminate from their lives all the indulgences that had wasted their bodies and minds and trapped them in the "mortal version." Only through austere self-denial could they get "away from themselves and their desires" to concentrate on divine perfection.⁹ Tobacco and alcohol were forbidden in the Peace Mission,¹⁰ and the followers were told to abandon "profane language" and slang expressions from the "underworld and show business." The use of such words, he warned, "will ... carry within our mentality and in our Temples, the germs of those immoral and immodest persons."¹¹ Sexual relationships were banned. "You are only the Perfect Personification [of God]," Father Divine taught, "by a complete cancellation of self, and by magnifying the CHRIST, the Perfect Picture, and by dispelling your mortal versions completely." It was imperative to reject all the powerful "human tendencies, fancies and pleasures" to follow the example of Jesus, "the first born of among many brethren, producing the Virginity of Mary and the Holiness of the Almighty."¹² Within the Peace Mission the followers were expected to be celibate, just as Christ himself had been, and they were not allowed close association with the opposite sex.

Father Divine ruled:

"to live an Evangelical Life these in the likeness of female [and male] will not so much as ride in an automobile correspondingly together, as couples. They will not walk correspondingly together, as

couples nor have any special communication, for such is in violation to My Spiritual Rule and Regulation."¹³

He told his followers to put aside all the sins, jealousies, deceits and dishonesty of lives ruled by human emotions, ambitions and frailties. As a vital stage in this process he encouraged them to confess the errors and evils of their past lives publicly. "An open confession is good for the soul," Father Divine said. Afterwards, "your heart, your mind and your conscience can be clear, for you have made an open confession before GOD and before man."¹⁴ But, he warned, it was not enough to recognize the mistakes of the past. His followers had to make amends for their past conduct whenever possible. "I cannot stress the significance of righting your wrongs too vividly," he said, and instructed his followers to return or pay for any article, however small, that they had stolen during their lives, and to surrender to the police and face their punishment for any serious act of vice or crime.¹⁵

This break with the past also involved a change in the followers' treatment of other people. To express the Christ-life, Father Divine insisted, they had to abandon greed, selfishness, thoughtlessness and personal hatreds. They must offer all their skills and abilities to the service of others without question or resentment. Only by being generous, kind, courteous and co-operative in every aspect of their personal behaviour could they express the selfless love, humility and sacrifice of Jesus.¹⁶

These new criteria also extended to the matter of personal appearance. Before he came, Father Divine argued, the false had sway among the people. "The majority of them," he said, "have been 'makeup' from start to finish ... false hair, false teeth, everything false about them." They had judged beauty on man's distorted standards. "There are those," he said, "who have beautiful skin, according to the flesh, who would attempt to change their personal

appearance for a selfish purpose to express falsity." But, he promised, from now on his followers would be judged not by their appearance but by the quality of their lives. "CHRIST came to bring about Righteousness, Truth and Justice," he explained, "and to give you an accurate weight." He told his followers to abandon hair-dressing and the use of cosmetics to concentrate on developing their inner beauty.¹⁷

But Father Divine insisted that self-denial and earnest self-improvement were not enough to guarantee salvation. His followers had to scour from their thinking and daily life everything associated with their worldly past. "Put off the old man with all his deeds," he said, "EVERYTHING you had before you knew ME - things that are animate or inanimate - will cause you to be identified with your infirmities." He warned, "if you even have a hat or a pair of shoes you had before you knew ME, these things are identifiable."¹⁸ Most important, the followers had to separate from their families and reject them in favour of a new life within the Movement. He said that this would not be easy; and he asked his prospective converts to "sit down first and count the cost." But their families were pressing reminders of their human lives, and tied them so strongly that they could never rise above their limitations and hardships. He reminded them how the Disciples had left their families and homes to follow Jesus, and he said:

"If you believe in true Evangelism, you will find the very words of Jesus Himself were that you should wear the world as a loose garment; not only so; but it is plainly written, 'Except you forsake your wife and your children, your mother and your father, your houses and your lands, and all you have, you cannot be My Disciple.'"

"You must deny them" he said, "if you are anticipating inheriting Life Eternal."¹⁹

Father Divine added that it was equally important to reject all

the preconceptions about their race and colour that had previously shaped their ideas of their status or capabilities. God, he said, sanctioned only one division in the human family - the division of male and female. Men had used the propaganda of race to crush the brotherhood of man, and to demean and oppress certain groups. He told his black followers, "there is no such a nation or a race of people as 'Colored'. There is no such a race of people as 'Negro' as you may call them."²⁰ Over the ages, he said, black people had lost sight of their divinity. They had accepted the lie of race and collaborated in their own oppression:

"You have visualized the negative. Visualized yourselves in poverty, lacks, wants and limitations, visualized yourselves as the preys to the prejudiced minds of our present civilization, to be segregated, as the expressors of segregation. You have visualized those detestable tendencies and you have imposed them upon yourself." 21

But, he said, "I AM stressing daily the significance of the Recognition of the POSITIVE and the ig-nor-ance, in other words, the significance of ignoring the negative, by causing the POSITIVE to become to be a Living Factor." Their potential for success and happiness was unlimited once they rejected the false concepts of race and recognized their place in the universal brotherhood of man.²² Accordingly, all words designating race and colour were banned in the Peace Mission, and the followers were told to resist the recognition of race as well as every form of racial discrimination and segregation. Father Divine warned that it would be hard to eradicate engrained assumptions, but, by will-power, everything was possible:

"You may have a tendency to segregate ... according to your preconceived and prenatal prejudices. Go to the extreme reverse of that against your personal feelings, against your personal fancies, against your personal pleasures. When you go to the extreme reverse ... you will overcome prejudice, and prejudice will have to get out of your system." 23

Father Divine promised that they would be rewarded not only in their own lives, but also by knowing that they were showing the world the way to everlasting peace and harmony. Once people recognized their true brotherhood, the root cause of conflict, hatred, oppression and war would be eradicated forever. He equated this recognition of brotherhood with the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth and a return to man's perfect state before the fall of Adam. He was dispelling all consciousness of "races, creeds and colors," just as "I am dispelling and eradicating from your conscious mentality that mystical imaginary Heaven." In the new world order, he said, "there will be, like at creation, just one race, just one tongue, just one people."²⁴

As a symbol of their break with the attitudes and ways of the outside world and their commitment to this new "evangelical life", Father Divine asked his followers to take a new "heavenly" name symbolic of their transformation. "When Peter was converted," he said, "he should no longer be called Simon as he was in the beginning, but Peter. Why? Because he was a new creature ... This will be a reality with everybody that passes from death to life ... from mortality to immortality."²⁵ A new name was especially important, he said, for those followers cursed with "slave names". On Emancipation, some of the ex-slaves had adopted the surname of former owners as their own. But, Father Divine argued, "under those old, vulgar names, under those old cursed names, you have been burdened for years and years." Such names deprived them of their divinity by chaining them to the slave experience and to the idea that they were weak, vulnerable and inferior. "I came to give you REAL NAMES," he said, and "real Emancipation."²⁶

Father Divine added that once his followers abandoned the past and recovered faith in their inner power they had only to act in the

supreme confidence of their divinity to conquer the hurdles of poverty and death. In human affairs, he said, people were poor because they lacked trust in their own capacity and relied on others to support them. He gave his followers some everyday examples. People who bought goods on the instalment plan and deferred their payments to the future, were plagued by insecurity and anxiety, for their income was constantly mortgaged to pay their debts.²⁷ Similarly, the acceptance of welfare trapped people in a circle of demoralising dependency: "Every time an individual goes soliciting or begging," he explained, "he is sowing the seeds of poverty for himself, and eventually he will reap the fruit of the same, for he is denying the reality of Abundance within his domain."²⁸ He told them to consider the example of the Indian reservation where the people survived on welfare and where, as a result, there was "not any advancement in the morale and in the economic conditions, in the social living of the Indians."²⁹ But once people realized that they were at one with God, the "source of all supply", then security and prosperity would follow.

So he instructed his followers to start afresh in the confidence of their divinity. He told them to refund all the money that they had received from charities and the relief agencies, and to never again resort to welfare. His true followers would settle their debts, pay cash for all their purchases and "owe to no man."³⁰ They would make themselves responsible for their own future by cancelling any insurance policies and pensions that they held. For by putting away money for a time when they might be in need, they were admitting human weaknesses and encouraging their own downfall.³¹ Finally, Father Divine told them to abandon gambling, good luck charms and other attempts to win the favour of the fates. They did not need to trust to luck; they were in control of their own destiny and

salvation.³²

Likewise, his followers had no need for drugs or medical care. Sickness and death were caused by man's indulgence in worldly sins and his disregard for the divine "laws of life" that were as immutable as the principles governing electricity or chemical reactions. As long as his followers obeyed these tenets of "evangelical life", and lived in the consciousness of their divinity, they were certain of perfect health and immortality.³³

Father Divine's conception was synthesised in a credo, the "Divine Law", which was published in the New Day, part of which read:

"No person, thing or condition has power to make me or keep me weak, or ignorant, or poor, or unhappy. I am the lawmaker of my own life. I am the builder of my own conditions. I am the way to all that I desire. I hold no one responsible for my own condition except myself. Therefore today, and from today on, I will blame no-one, not even myself, but will build for Health, Wealth, and Joy by Practising there is one Presence and Power The Good Almighty, Omnipresent and Eternal. I renounced the past and all its negative influences. By my active use of Divine Power within me, I will overcome all my personal resistance, weakness and self-pity. I live this day for my own freedom, for the glory of God and I depend upon God and God only for my life and my living." 34

Father Divine's teachings and the stringent taboos and practical rules of the Peace Mission Movement baffled many contemporary journalists. His dictates for the pursuit of the "evangelical life" went beyond the usual tenets of fundamentalist religion. What was more, he required a complete allegiance from his devotees, not just the casual fellowship of a church congregation.

Many commentators were at a loss to explain his appeal.

Henry Lee Moon, writing in New Republic, suggested that Father Divine's followers were lured more by the abundance of his banquet table and by his extraordinary serenity - at a time of poverty, confusion and insecurity - than by the "audacity of his theological claims." His followers were the "economically disadvantaged", the "socially outcast" and the "spiritually starved".³⁵ His fellow-journalist, Roi Ottley, also assumed that Father Divine was attracting his followers from the most impoverished, naive and demoralised sections of the black community. He described them as the "slum shocked", the "troubled and rudderless thousands" who clung to the wild schemes of any spectacular leader who promised them escape from the realities of their pitiful existence.³⁶

Less sympathetic journalists, amazed by the ecstatic devotion surrounding Father Divine as well as by his apparent hold over the minds and actions of his followers, were convinced that the Movement was simply a refuge for the ignorant, gullible and pathologically disturbed. Frank S. Mead, writing in Christian Century described the followers as "stupefied fanatics".³⁷ The fact that Father Divine's black followers were predominantly middle-aged women only confirmed the prejudices of such critics. Adam Clayton Powell Jnr., writing in his "Soapbox" column in the Amsterdam News labelled them "ignorant, fanatical women": "women who in those years of change, 40 to 50 years old, are bewildered and truly a lost generation. They are dwellers on the fringes of life."³⁸

Furthermore, few journalists could offer any explanation why socially accomplished and prosperous white men and women should wish to join the Movement and submit to its disciplines. There was a striking air of disbelief in press reports of the defence of Father Divine made by well-educated whites at Father Divine's trial before

Judge Smith. This feeling was made explicit by Davis Lee in the Negro World. Commenting on the remarks made by one of Father Divine's white secretaries, a graduate of Boston University, he exclaimed: "Not during my twenty-eight years of experience have I heard of anything more ridiculous. Can you imagine a college graduate telling a court that he or she believed this ignorant panhandler to be a God?"³⁹

Two New York City psychologists, Doctors Zuleika Yarrell and Laretta Bender believed, on the basis of a study of eighteen followers receiving psychiatric treatment at Bellevue Hospital (N.Y.), that the Peace Mission was a refuge for "manic depressives" whose behaviour was "characteristic of the primitive Negro."⁴⁰ But such simplistic psychiatric and racial diagnoses were generally shunned by other contemporary psychologists and sociologists who preferred sociological explanations of Father Divine's appeal.

Social psychologists Hadley Cantril and Muzafer Sherif found that personality traits within the Movement followed normal distribution curves. They held, too, that the racial characteristic of the cult was irrelevant. Their interpretation of the Movement's appeal was shared by other academics. Cantril and Sherif described the Peace Mission as an escape from an oppressive reality; a "microcosm" with its own standards and norms where "bewildered" and "hopeless" people found order with a leader who "literally provides them what they have always craved: food, shelter, peace and security." Because the Movement provided a complete way of life and rigorous codes of behaviour, they argued, it attracted not only the poor but those prosperous 'joiners' of groups who were constantly in search of ways to bring meaning to their lives: "complexity, confusion, hopelessness and purposelessness are changed into simple understanding, peace, happiness and a faith in the abstract principles embodied in Father." The Peace Mission drew those, black

and white, who were anxious for status and self-respect: society's outsiders.⁴¹

Little is known about the past of the men and women who joined Father Divine. Intimate information on the background of the followers was never compiled in the Movement. A follower's name, age, race, place of origin, family history, occupations and affiliations were all part of the trappings of "mortal existence" that were shed on entering the Movement. After conversion, mention of the past was avoided, for the penalty of "mortal recognition" was a reversion to the limitations and suffering of that old life. The past was only acknowledged during confession, and in the restitution of stolen goods and the payment of debts.⁴²

But from what is known of the followers' background it is clear that Cantril and Sherif's analysis of the Peace Mission's appeal was broadly accurate. Father Divine did attract people who were, in one way or another, alienated from society. Some were victims of social and economic forces which they did not understand and over which they had no control. Others, who suffered less but perceived more, were confused and upset by the gulf between society's professed morality and its actual operation. Yet that is not the whole story. For there were many men and women who were equally estranged from society but who would have never dreamt of joining the Peace Mission Movement or submitting to its disciplines. The followers were attracted not only by the prospect of food and shelter and by the simplicity and comprehensiveness of Father Divine's teachings. They were drawn also because he reaffirmed values that the followers held dear and, more important, because he sought to put these ideals into practice.

The white followers were mainly truth seekers: people who had moved from one religious group to another in search of spiritual understanding. They came to Father Divine as part of this quest to

understand the secret of the universe and the puzzle of man's destiny. Many acknowledged that they had previously been members of a variety of religious sects - particularly Christian Science, New Thought and the Rosicrucians. Among them were even former members of the Theosophists and Anthroposophists - sects that taught an esoteric philosophy based on eastern mysticism.⁴³ All these white followers were attuned to spiritualism and religious discipline. All of them had been preoccupied with the possibility of man's divinity, and the possibility of controlling health and wealth through retraining their minds to realize unity with God. Indeed, there was much in Father Divine's teaching that was reminiscent of the other sects the white followers had known. Christian Science taught that man was created in God's image and only needed to recognize and develop this knowledge to experience universal good. Father Divine's philosophy of the positive was a familiar idea to anyone acquainted with New Thought, which held that people could manipulate their own physical and material well-being through confidence in their power to tap the "universal source of supply."⁴⁴

Father Divine drew his white followers from a group of religious enthusiasts who already believed that life could be transformed by the knowledge and use of certain absolute, divine laws. But they were people who were dissatisfied with their present religious affiliations and were in search of a more embracing and convincing spiritual solution.

For some of these white men and women Father Divine's practical work in feeding, clothing, housing and apparently healing the people who came to him was sufficient proof that he understood the basic laws of life and wealth. Joyous Energy explained that she had been "meditating many times over 'the allness of God' which I had learned in Christian Science," when she first heard of Father Divine.

"I said, 'well it will unfold'," and began to attend Peace Mission meetings convinced that Father Divine was just another, if very, fascinating, evangelist. She had been going to the meetings for some time "before He did reveal Himself to me. I had never in all my life seen any man do as FATHER has done or is doing. It is Wonderful."⁴⁵ Deeply impressed by all they saw, these white followers gladly accepted the taboos and lifeway of the Movement because they believed Father Divine could guarantee their individual salvation. A Californian follower, Mrs. E.T. Heyer, explained:

"Why would any person want to go down into the grave if there was a law which by understanding and complying with its rules we could experience eternal life? That to me has been the main attraction. Just to be at one with GOD, and let all superstition be displaced with spiritual understanding, bringing our thinking into harmony with GOD'S law. FATHER DIVINE is the embodiment of that law." 46

But, for other white followers - perhaps the majority in this period of the Movement's history - Father Divine's teachings and the tenets of "evangelical life" gave them a new perspective on their quest for salvation. Their former sects had offered them explanations of man's place in the divine order, and taught them how to achieve individual perfection. But they had offered them no way of changing the course of human affairs. Father Divine, however, linked individual salvation to the state of society, and promised his followers a new social order based on peace, love, brotherhood and social justice. It was this that had special attraction to many of the white men and women who joined the Movement. A. Honaael Meriditas's editorials and choice of articles in the Spoken Word, for instance, revealed an anxiety for the state of society that formed a vital part of his commitment to Father Divine. The existence of inequality, prejudice, suffering and war convinced him that human affairs had reached an extremity, and that it was time to return to primary moral standards. He believed that the

revitalization of the ideas of peace, love, co-operation, service and universal brotherhood advocated by Father Divine provided mankind with the only solution.⁴⁷ Eugene Del Mar shared his view. He described how Father Divine's life and teachings "illuminated my understanding beyond anything I have heretofore experienced"; and said that the regimen of the "evangelical life" offered "a striking contrast to the average life of humanity and its practicality may not be understood by the vast majority of mankind."⁴⁸ The Peace Mission Movement offered them, and other socially concerned whites, the chance to commit themselves to an egalitarian, pacifist and communal lifeway, and to show others the beauty and potential of a social order based on these ideals. They joined Father Divine because his teachings combined the spiritual wisdom they sought with the possibility of a new society.

Father Divine's black followers shared different personal, social and economic experiences to those of the white believers. It is certain that most of the black followers were migrants to the city. In 1930 over seventy-five per cent of New York City's black population had been born outside New York State;⁴⁹ and the age of Father's followers - mainly forty to fifty years old - placed them in the migrant generation that came to the city following the First World War.⁵⁰ Although the city attracted many migrants from the Caribbean islands, its black population came overwhelmingly from the upper seaboard states of the American South - principally Virginia and the Carolinas; and in smaller, but still substantial, numbers from Georgia and Florida. Some of Father Divine's black followers were known to be West Indians; but the majority undoubtedly came from the American South.⁵¹

Occasionally, items published in the Peace Mission press testified to the Southern background of individual followers.

Letters were printed showing the payment of debts incurred there. Miss Thunda Therretta, for example, sent forty dollars to Dr. E.G. Howe of Hartesville (S.C.) to pay a medical bill owed since 1919, while Simon Peter sent twenty-four dollars to Mrs. P. Fleetwood of Waverly (Va.) to settle the rent he had owed since 1926.⁵² Some letters were from followers who had travelled North by "freight hopping" on trains and wished to pay their legitimate fares. The Pennsylvania Railroad Traffic Department acknowledged: "Received from Henry Bligen \$27.98 ... to cover one second-class one way ticket from Savannah, Georgia to New York, N.Y. during 1923." Another letter related the story of a follower who had posed as the wife of a Grand Central Station 'Red Cap' during the 'twenties to obtain cheap rail travel to visit friends and relatives in Augusta (Ga.) and Saratoga Springs (Fla).⁵³

Father's followers were people who shared the experience of migration, and all the hopes and ambitions of that era. They came to New York City in search of personal freedom, and the chance for economic and social mobility. They believed that in the city anyone - regardless of their education or background - had the chance to improve their condition in life.⁵⁴

They came North, moreover, in the period when Harlem was revelling in its image as a 'Race Capital': "Mecca for the sight-seer, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious, and the talented of the entire Negro world."⁵⁵ To the migrants the growth of Harlem and the other large, urban black communities in the North suggested a race awakening; a more assertive role for blacks in the future. Here, they believed, they could be free of the humiliations and confines of their colour, and have prospects they could never hope for in the South.⁵⁶

Few who lived through the 'twenties era in Harlem were untouched

by the positive self-image and the faith in individual improvement that saturated the black community. It reached its high point in the spectacular success of the Garvey movement, for Garvey traded on the optimism of the era, and quickened the new race consciousness of the migrant. He told Harlemites to abandon their traditional fatalistic resignation to their place in the world. Blacks, he said, were a good and inherently noble race, and their universal redemption could be achieved by the restoration of race pride, the unity of all people of African descent, and the creation of a national homeland. Garvey urged them to harness race pride to support black commercial and industrial enterprise. Once blacks learnt to use their true strength, he said, they could overwhelm all oppression and win their just inheritance.⁵⁷

At first, the problems of finding decent accommodation and a secure livelihood in the city seemed to the migrants just the transitional problems of adjustment. They believed in their capacity to succeed, and assumed that their fortunes would naturally improve as Harlem emerged as a mature black metropolis. But the migrants soon learnt that their race restricted them to the expensive and deteriorating accommodation of the ghetto. Their lack of skills and education, as well as racial discrimination, confined them to the poorly paid unskilled and service jobs of the city. Black men worked chiefly as longshoremen, porters, elevator operators, janitors, teamsters, waiters and general labourers; women found that they were still only able to find work in their traditional field of domestic service or, occasionally, as machine operatives in the city's garment and laundry industries.⁵⁸

Father Divine's followers shared this humble background. Their letters to the Peace Mission press, describing the return of stolen goods, documented the petty thefts of women and men once employed in

domestic and unskilled jobs. Rachel Beatty wrote to Harry Goldman of the Bronx (N.Y.) to confess that she had stolen "some small articles, such as handkerchiefs, socks, a house dress and some inexpensive cuff links" when she was employed as his cleaner. Another follower admitted that "not a day passed but what I'd steal something" from the hotel where she worked as a chambermaid."⁵⁹

These migrants found that instead of economic mobility and self-improvement, financial insecurity was a permanent part of city life. Many fell into debt as they failed to make ends meet on inadequate incomes. From the long lists of debt settlements published in the Peace Mission press it was apparent that debt was an important and direct burden on the lives of those who joined Father Divine. Many debts dated back into the 'twenties and involved the basic expenses of everyday life in the city - rent, gas and electricity, fuel, telephone and medical bills, debts for clothing and household furnishings.⁶⁰

In the letters to the Peace Mission press chronicling the payment of debts there were many references to rent arrears for apartments with Harlem addresses. The followers paid twenty dollars and more to settle these rent bills, and occasionally the payments were much larger. Wonderful Love paid seventy-five dollars to settle three months rent owed on an apartment at 233 West 115th Street; Sunbeam Tranquility paid the Elhous Realty Company of New York one hundred and forty-seven dollars for rent outstanding over the period from 1928 to 1932.⁶¹ It was apparent that sickness similarly placed a heavy burden on the follower's limited resources before they joined the Movement. Miss Willing Heart (Eleanor Fauset) paid Harlem Hospital seventy-two dollars for two periods of hospital treatment; and another follower sent one hundred and twenty-nine dollars to the City's Bellevue Hospital for forty-three days treatment.⁶² In the

Peace Mission press, these payments were flanked by letters describing the settlement of scores of smaller bills for basic necessities ranging from ten to thirty dollars in value: like the ten dollar electricity bill paid by Miss Blessed Dawn, or the fifteen dollar telephone bill settled by Miss Contented Mind with the New York Telephone Company.⁶³

From the evidence of the debt payments it is apparent that Father Divine's followers, like so many Harlemites, had also resorted to hire purchase in order to buy the personal and household goods that they cherished; only to find themselves unable to meet the repayments.⁶⁴

More credit business was done in Harlem by the early 'thirties than in any other section of the city; and not only did the pressure of repayment cause problems for the purchaser but the whole system of instalment buying was fraught with traps for the hard-pressed consumer. "In all the world," wrote A. Cornelius Hughes the editor of the journal Fraternal Review, "there is no place where what is known as the Gyp Store operated to the extent that it is in the Black Belt of Harlem [sic] ... We assure you that there are but few stores in Harlem that sell on the instalment plan that don't look upon you as legitimate prey for swindling."⁶⁵ The calendar of Harlem's municipal court was overcrowded with the cases of people who had defaulted on their hire purchase contracts; and local leaders repeatedly denounced Harlem's instalment "sharks" who took advantage of their customers' need and lack of legal knowledge to overcharge, and to bind them to agreements that gave them no protection against the store in the event of complaints about the merchandise or default in repayment. In 1936 it was estimated that Harlemites lost between fifty and seventy-five thousand dollars to "shyster" dealers and freelance salesmen.⁶⁶

Radio and furniture dealers were reputed to be the worst credit "sharks". Lawyer Sydney Christian said that it was common for radio salesmen to make "all kinds of promises" to the customer that actually formed no part of the written sales contract. He said that radio shops provided a repair service only as long as a substantial balance of payment was outstanding. But no service was given during the last four or five months of the contract, and, if any complaint arose during this time the store issued a writ of seizure and repossessed the radio on the pretext of default. Sometimes, he claimed, the legal process was evaded and "strongarm methods of entering and seizing the instrument" were used. This was a tactic mainly used against women customers: "I have known a case where a woman, returning from taking her baby to the Park, has found the door of her apartment broken open, and the instrument seized." The radios were reconditioned and sold again.⁶⁷

The practice of the furniture dealers was equally notorious. The editor of the Amsterdam News described the "furniture racket" as one of the "outstanding evils" of Harlem. Customers, attracted into the store by misleading advertisements, were subjected to high pressure sales talk and encouraged to buy something more expensive than they had intended - even though prices in Harlem were often double or treble those charged for similar goods in other parts of the city. The stores treated their customers with leniency until the real cost of the furniture was recovered. But then their tactics changed; as soon as their clients missed two or three payments, the stores made ruthless use of their right of repossession which formed a standard part of every hire purchase contract. Often it was only when customers fell into arrears that they discovered that their contracts gave the stores legal power to annex their property or earnings as well in payment. Some families were stripped of all their

household belongings to settle their hire purchase debts.⁶⁸

Furniture stores, it was said, also made widespread use of a device known as the "Blanket Contract" to encourage customers to add extra purchases to their original contract. This was used by unscrupulous dealers as a way to "dump" shoddy goods on the customer, which the store would refuse to accept back without repossessing all the other items on the contract.⁶⁹ It was also common for dealers to supply their customers with different and inferior furniture to the goods purchased in the store. The customer was usually advised by the store's adjuster to continue regular payments until "the right furniture comes in from the factory." But often the replacement never came, and the moment the customer withheld payment, the store seized the furniture and cancelled the contract. The goods were put back on sale. "The only thing that may give this reconditioned furniture away to the unsuspecting new buyer," wrote Reverend John J. Johnson, "is that it may abound with those little crawling cousins that keep us awake at night."⁷⁰

Experiences like these convinced many Harlemites that they were as vulnerable to exploitation and as financially insecure in the city as they were in the South.⁷¹ Their indebtedness underlined this point, for debt was part of the cycle of penury and subordination that they sought to escape by leaving the South. It carried the memory of generations of Southern black families whose struggles for respect and independence were defeated by their poverty and powerlessness; their income mortgaged to the landlord and storekeeper in return for the bare necessities. Life was scarcely better in the cities.⁷²

The unemployment and penury that came with the Depression was the final blow to the dreams of this generation. Father Divine's followers were among the men and women forced to turn to charity

and welfare for their survival during the 'thirties; and obliged to submit to the indignities of relief investigation. One woman follower explained:

"The investigators they were all like detectives, Father, acting like I had committed a crime. They acted as if I didn't even birth myself two children, as if I had killed my husband perhaps or had him in hiding some place, when he had runned off with a cat of a gal. I had to tell them more about my life, more than if I was on trial before the judge, and I never did keep no daily record of my life.

Dear Father, the investigators searched my icebox and examined the toilet. Father I felt stripped of all my clothes and standing naked before them investigators ... and oh, Father, I was ashamed of my life. Father, it is an awful feeling that to be sick and tired of your life. To feel that when you are down and out you are nothing better than a criminal." 73

Another follower, Daddy Gray, expressed his feelings in a poem to President Roosevelt. He had not only lost his job but he had seen his welfare allowance cut from \$34 a month in 1931 to \$28 in 1935. Asking Roosevelt to supply him with work so that he could shun welfare in accordance with Father Divine's teachings, the elderly Daddy Gray wrote bitterly:

" Civilisation era 1.

In savage tribes where skulls are thick,
And primal passions rage;
They have a system sure and quick,
To cure the blight of age,
For when a native's youth has fled,
And years have sapped his vim,
They simply knock him in the head,
And put an end to him.

 Civilisation era 2.

But some in this enlightened age,
Are built of sterner stuff;
And so they look with righteous rage
On codes so harsh and rough;
For when a man grows old and gray
And weak and short of breath
They simply take his job and grant away,
And let him starve to death." 74

With the Depression, too, Harlem's mystique as a burgeoning black metropolis disintegrated. It was now painfully clear that

blacks were still judged and confined by their colour; and that the people who controlled their lives - the employers, landlords and storekeepers - were white. Harlem was little more than a segregated and impoverished slum. Just as race controlled their lives in the South, so it crushed and limited them in Harlem as well.⁷⁵

Father Divine brought to Harlem a philosophy that matched the situation. He told the people who crowded into his banquet meetings truths that were now plain from their own experience - that debt, credit and welfare were the chains that bound them to poverty and dependency; and that race was nothing more than a cruel weapon of oppression that confined and degraded them. Yet salvation lay within their grasp through a return to first principles - faith in themselves and the goal of human brotherhood. This was a message that appealed to some of Harlem's impoverished black migrants. It offered them the chance to escape the hardships and disappointments of their city experience by inviting them to reject the aspects of their lives that they now found difficult and dissatisfying - their race, their low economic status and lack of prestige. At the same time it revived and affirmed the migrants' faith in two traditional beliefs - the essential value of the brotherhood of man; and the power of self-reliance and self-direction in helping them to overcome their difficulties. Father Divine promised that he could make his followers "honest, competent and true." He reinvigorated the yearning for improvement and self-respect that had first encouraged the migrant to seek a new life in the city, and he promised that they were - as they had once believed - masters of their own destiny: "If a person thinks he can do anything, he can do it. He can develop according to the dictates of his own conscience or his own endeavors; if he is persistent in his ambition he can go as far as he BELIEVES he can go."⁷⁶

The satisfaction that Father Divine's followers found in this solution was evident in the eagerness with which they sought to abandon their racial consciousness, and the enthusiasm with which they paid their debts and spurned welfare. Followers who were dependent on relief when they joined the Movement were encouraged to write to their welfare investigators to explain that they had, "gone to heaven."⁷⁷ The converts lived on the bounty of the Movement until they found work. Then they were expected to refund every dollar and cent of their past obligations from their own, small earnings - a duty that often required determined saving and personal sacrifice. Angel Light, for instance, owed the New York City Emergency Relief Bureau two hundred and twenty-eight dollars in relief payments, and Kind Heart True owed the same authority one hundred and seventy-five dollars.⁷⁸ Father Divine enforced his ruling rigidly. The followers were not permitted to join the Peace Mission's parades or excursions if it involved them in any expense as long as they owed debts. Father Divine announced, "I will not endorse the act or the custom of pleasuring, and joyriding, spending money unnecessarily when one owe another a just and honest debt." But he added that the follower who was "FREE from bills and obligations" was a "wonderful outstanding figure to stress your past and present experience to others, that they might copy after the Fashion."⁷⁹

The Peace Mission press sustained the impression of an immense campaign of payment. Every payment, however small, was considered worthy of inclusion, and both the New Day and the Spoken Word contained regular features giving details of the settlements, as well as the acknowledgements from grateful members of the public. The World Herald printed a special tightly packed page under the banner "Righteousness Marches On!" which claimed to record "but

a small part taken from the thousands of letters that continue to come daily from all over the world" from "business and professional firms and individuals who have been blessed through the Righteous teaching of FATHER DIVINE."⁸⁰ These letters boosted the followers morale and self-respect. Landlord Frederick J. Feuerbach, who wrote to commend the action of one follower who had settled a five year old debt, recognized: "It is the only instance in our business career when a tenant who owed rent returned and paid his debt."⁸¹ Through these settlements the followers regained confidence in their own capacities, put the difficulties of the past behind them, and had the satisfaction of rising above their poverty through their own efforts.

Father Divine appealed to the consciousness of the black migrant. But the world of the Peace Mission was not attractive to all Harlem's migrants. While many black city folk shared the followers' urge for status and independence, and even applauded the way the followers paid their debts and put into practice the brotherhood of man, they could not accept the religious world view that saturated the Peace Mission nor the other disciplines of the "evangelical life". This was a lifeway that had special selective appeal: older black women migrants formed the bulk of Father Divine's Harlem following.

Claude McKay had one explanation why middle-aged black women should flock to the Movement in Harlem. He argued that Father Divine attracted those women who, alone and unhappy, turned to the Peace Mission as a last refuge. They were not deterred by Father Divine's dictates that the believers must reject their families and be celibate for, McKay argued, these women had little to lose. "The plain truth is," he wrote, "that most of the angels went to live there because their homes were already broken up. There are plenty

of broken homes in Harlem and even Father Divine's numerous Kingdoms could not accommodate all the lonely hearts."⁸²

Certainly, conversion was essentially an individual act. It was unusual for couples or families to join the Movement, and from the scant evidence of the testimonies it seems that the followers were people who came to the Peace Mission on solitary quests for material help or personal guidance. Occasionally, a follower was introduced to the Movement through a friend or relative. But, more often, the followers acted alone and on their own initiative. Miss Jonathan Matthews first went to an extension in search of free food; Miss H.L. One went to Sayville "sick, no home, and no money and also a child in my arms."⁸³ But whether the converts were the lonely and desperate casualties of broken homes is harder to judge.

The nature of the black family in Harlem and other Northern ghettos has become a matter of controversy; and there have been disagreements over the extent of any disorganisation in family life among blacks in the urban North.

When E. Franklin Frazier examined black family life and published his findings in the nineteen-thirties, he found, like Claude McKay, many "lonely hearts" in the cities. He argued that urbanisation had strained black family ties. Because of their poverty, the families of black migrants had been obliged to seek homes in deteriorated slum areas from which institutional life was almost absent. They had been also freed from the controlling force of public opinion and the institutions - especially the church - that had supported and had tried to regulate black family life in the rural South.⁸⁴

Frazier believed that the amorality of city life had promoted a casual attitude to sexual relationships, and he held that these new city freedoms had encouraged black men to abnegate their family

responsibilities. He found that, statistically, desertion by fathers and husbands was more frequent among blacks than in the families of other racial groups in the city. He drew a picture of family disorganisation, and of the collapse of the community of interest and bonds of sympathy that had sustained family life in rural communities. He wrote of "fathers on leave" in the "city of destruction."⁸⁵

For some time, Frazier's contentions were accepted without criticism. But sociologists and anthropologists have begun to question them⁸⁶ and, most recently, Herbert G. Gutman rejected them in his own study of the black family.

Relying on federal manuscript censuses of black households in both rural and urban areas of the South in 1880 and 1900, and on state manuscript censuses of black households in areas of New York City in 1905 and 1925, Gutman found that there were, indeed, changes in the shape of the typical Afro-American household between 1880 and 1925, particularly following the migration of rural blacks to the North during and after the First World War. This typical household which, in the rural South of 1880, consisted of a simple nuclear family, was amplified in the urban North to shelter lodgers, single relatives and, often, the families of relatives. But, Gutman maintained, contrary to Frazier, that this did not mean a significant increase in the number of women whose husbands had deserted them and who were left to bring up a family alone. A father, he held, was present in seven out of every ten black families.⁸⁷

Gutman's research, inspired by his zeal to counter the derogatory and, at time, racist contention that blacks were unable to sustain conventional family life either before or after Emancipation, has provided an antidote to the over-statement of Frazier's case by some of his followers, and has also drawn attention to the role in

family life of relatives and friends beyond the conventional circle of two parents and children. But Gutman has not refuted Frazier's statistics;⁸⁸ nor has he probed the roles and responsibilities of members within the black household; nor can he say whether the support of relatives and friends was sufficient to cushion the migrant family against poverty and the problems of adjustment to the city.⁸⁹ Gutman has chosen to emphasise the structure of the "typical" black household as revealed by official censuses; Frazier, for all the overstatement of his case, did attempt to explore areas of stress.

So, the substance of family life in Harlem is still elusive and it is difficult to assess the accuracy of McKay's contention from published surveys of family statistics. One figure quoted by Gutman is, however, suggestive. While emphasising that the families with women at their heads were exceptional in New York City in 1925, Gutman notes that eighty per cent of these 2,063 families were headed by women at least thirty years old, and fifty-three per cent were headed by women at least forty years old. Furthermore, the number of children in all these families was small.⁹⁰ Such statistics hint that there may have been a group of middle-aged women, during the Depression, with neither a spouse nor a large family to bind them to the outside society. Whether these women were, in fact, destined to join the Peace Mission is impossible to say without substantial biographical information about the converts.

How the Depression, itself, affected black family stability is also unclear. Obviously, the economic crisis and the generally marginal economic status of blacks in New York City must have exerted severe pressure on black households. The statistics on the cases of black family desertion handled by New York City's social service agencies, which Frazier quoted, seem to bear this out. In 1928-1929, at the onset of the Depression, forty-four per cent of the one

hundred and one desertion cases handled by the agencies were new; and by 1930-1931, over sixty-seven per cent of the two hundred and thirty cases were new. Half of the deserted women were aged between thirty and forty years old - part of the age group that joined Father Divine.⁹¹ For this group of women, certainly, family life had failed and there was clearly a lack of informal kin and community networks strong enough to provide an alternative source of help to institutional aid.⁹² The lives of some of the women who joined Father Divine seem to testify to this same lack of informal support and assistance at times of hardship.

Miss Jonathan Matthews, for instance, was attracted to the Peace Mission because it offered the practical assistance and emotional warmth of a tightly-knit community at a time when help was not available in customary ways. When her husband died at the beginning of the Depression, Miss Matthews was left with the support of her aged parents. She tried to cope; taking a variety of meagre cleaning jobs to pay for her food and rent. But her troubles reached a head in 1933 when she injured her foot in an accident at work. Desperate and overwhelmed by her responsibilities she decided to join the Peace Mission. She took her parents with her into the Movement and found them accommodation in another extension where they were "off her hands under the loving wing of Father Divine."⁹³

For Miss Matthews, the Peace Mission offered the chance to jettison the hardships of her previous life. For a few dollars she could obtain room and board in the company of fellow followers. She could relinquish her dependents to the care and responsibility of other followers and forget all the anxieties of her past struggles. Miss Matthews was not a migrant; she was born and raised in Harlem. But she was isolated and in difficulty because her parents' generation had apparently failed to create and sustain informal

networks of family and friends strong enough to help her cope with her problems.

Miss Matthews, and others like her, whose informal supports had entirely broken down were, however, probably not typical of Father Divine's followers. But that there was a broader group of women converts who, finding friends and spouses woefully inadequate in times of need, still fit into McKay's group of "lonely hearts", is clear from the vitriolic comments that some women converts made about the men they had known.

"I used to spit blood," said one woman, "I spit blood from the t.b. Nobody want to have me around. My so-called husband don't want nothin' to do with me. 'Go on away'. He turned me outen the house." By contrast, Father Divine provided her with help and sanctuary. "You put your spirit in me, God, You healed me" she testified, "you got no man in you, God!"⁹⁴ Another woman, a black woman in her forties, said that she had no remorse about leaving her husband. "I don't miss him none," she said, "he wasn't nothing but a worry all the time":

"... When we left Florida with our white folks, I had to do most everything, then when I got sick, he acted like he was mad 'cause I had to stop working ... Men don't mean you no good in this world, and the sooner you find that out the better off you are. Put your trust in God, and he will give you something, or else he removes it from your consciousness." 95

Admittedly, such scant evidence is no more than suggestive. But the women's remarks betray a tension in marital and sexual relationships in the city and a hostility towards men for their failings and irresponsibility that are masked by statistics on the structure of the black family.⁹⁶ It is Frazier, not Gutman, who has most to say in these cases.

Still, it is impossible to know how many of Father Divine's women followers were the "lonely hearts": victims of economic

pressure and social disorganisation. Furthermore, such an explanation does not take into account the behaviour of a group of followers who came from families that would appear to be, from both Frazier's and Gutman's standpoints, model conventional families. The havoc caused by these conversions was reflected in the cases of family desertion brought before the New York City Domestic Relations Court in the 'thirties.

Some of the cases revealed the extraordinary power of Father Divine's appeal. Mrs. Theodore Jones, for example, decided - after thirty years of marriage to a man who held a secure job and a responsible position in their local Baptist church to leave him in obedience to Father Divine.⁹⁷ Madeleine Green, the forty-one year old wife of a post-office clerk and the mother of seven children, finally abandoned her family after failing to find a compromise between her home life and her attraction to the Movement. She had asked her children to call her "Sister", and had tried to teach them Father Divine's phrases instead of the family prayers learnt at the Bethel A.M.E. Church. Although the Domestic Relations Court traced her eventually to an extension at West 117th Street in Harlem she steadfastly refused to recognize her family or return to them. She told the court: "I have no more children. The life I lead is one of sacrifice. All belongs to God now ... All and every man is my brother in the evangelical life ... I see the light, I am out of darkness."⁹⁸

It was cases like these that caused Jacob Panken, a judge in the New York Domestic Relations Court to accuse Father Divine of "undermining the family." Rather than providing a refuge for women from "broken homes" and unsatisfactory relationships, Panken believed that Father Divine precipitated family disintegration. "He has caused mothers to abandon their children, husbands to abandon their

wives, wives to abandon their husbands," Panken insisted.⁹⁹

Again, it is impossible to know, with any certainty, why women like Mrs. Jones and Madeleine Green abandoned apparently stable marriages to join Father Divine. But the testimonies that converts gave at the Movement's banquet meetings offer an insight into how converts viewed their former lives before joining the Peace Mission and the sort of pressures they felt themselves to be under in the outside society.

The overwhelming majority of the convert's testimonies spoke of the followers' former lives and, at first sight, appear to be autobiographical. But, when several testimonies are considered together, it is clear that they follow a distinct pattern. Typically, the converts told of a life of physical and moral degeneracy until they came to Father Divine, who healed them of both the sickness of the body and the sickness of the spirit. Faithful Mary's celebrated chronicle of pain, sin and salvation was a classic example of the type of testimony.

Obviously, not all the followers could have led the lives of infirmity and debauchery that they described so vividly. The uniformity of the testimonies suggests that either all the followers adopted the same stylised way to symbolise their conversion, or that particular followers were encouraged to testify because their conversions offered the most dramatic exemplification of Father Divine's power. Either way, the testimonies were a commentary on the followers' perception of life and social relationships beyond the Peace Mission's walls.

That the followers should testify was significant in itself. The conversion testimony was, traditionally, a central part of "getting religion" in the rural South. There, too, it took a distinct ritualistic form.¹⁰⁰ The Peace Mission's testimonies

served basically the same purpose as the testimonies in the rural Southern church: they demonstrated the convert's rejection of sin and the devil, and a reaching out, instead, for God. But the testimonies offered by the followers were substantially different from those of the 'folk' church.

The Southern black conversion testimony was typically a narrative of a vision experienced by the convert. In the vision the damnation that awaited the sinner was represented in the conventional European Christian image of the devil and hell; while the triumph of faith was expressed in the image of Jesus.

The conversion experience was a dramatisation of the sinner being "re-born" into Christ and salvation. It was often preceded by a warning from a voice - "You got to die and can't live!" After a period of prayer and contrition, perhaps accompanied by a sickness visited on the convert by God, the convert was granted a vision trance. The convert would be struck down as if dead - "My jaws were locked and my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth" - and, in the vision, the convert's soul would hang, perilously, above hell and be shown the devil and the tormented souls below. Then, in answer to the convert's pleas for mercy, Christ would carry the soul to heaven, there to meet God and see its name written in the Book of Life. Christ would then send the soul back to its earthly body, with an injunction to bear witness to God's grace.¹⁰¹

In contrast, the followers' conversion testimonies did not deal with visions. They purported to describe real experiences in the convert's life. Rather than describing the horrors of hell that were in store for the sinner, they depicted what the followers felt to be the evils of the city: drinking, dancing, gambling, profligate behaviour and sexual licence. Instead of renouncing the abstract - the devil and the pit - they spoke of renouncing a hell on earth.

Again and again, followers stood up, pleading to be heard as they poured out vivid descriptions of erratic, self-destructive and profligate lives. They insisted that they were hell-bent on gambling, drinking, dancing and sexual affairs until they reached a crisis point of debilitation and found their comfort and salvation with Father Divine. One woman testified: "I played the numbers and I danced in the cabarets. Forgive me, Father, I ran around at night with the meanest men I could find. I drank my fill, Father! I was sin all the time. I took sick and almost died. Then I came to you. It's Wonderful! ... I rip all the blackness from my soul."¹⁰²

Another woman, Miss E.I. May, confessed that she allowed her home to be used as "a nightclub of the lowest type" frequented by "smokers, drinkers, adulterers, liars, thieves and all other detestable characters" where "every kind of vice and crime was committed" until Father helped her change her "thinking and living." Now her home at 108 West 109th Street was a Peace Mission extension, "a Light House for the weary souls seeking rest."¹⁰³

Many followers confessed to erratic sexual relationships and adultery. One woman in her late thirties confessed "I used to live with one man, then another"; another admitted that she "cheated" on her husband for five years; yet another woman said that when she was evicted she "went to live with my meat man." She added, "everybody around me was doing the same thing, so I didn't think it was wrong. But Father showed me the light and I turned my back upon them ways, and I don't ever sin no more. It's truly Wonderful; thank you, Father."¹⁰⁴

At one banquet meeting a woman stood up to thank Father Divine "for picking me up when I was in the streets and had no place to sleep." She said that when she found Father she was "cast out and forsaken, and in misery, suffering from syphilis in the last stage." Many nights, she told, she "stayed in the subway, when all

doors were closed against me. Many a night, with snow and ice on the ground I was walking the streets." She was in this condition, she said, "from being a prostitute on the streets, picking up this man and that man, making easy money to keep from working." But, she rejoiced, "Father Divine picked me up and put His Mind and Spirit in me and caused me to walk in His Statutes, and I'm healed and I am so glad."¹⁰⁵

These accounts of life in the "City of Destruction" are surprisingly reminiscent of Frazier's description of the social disorganisation of ghetto life. There is no doubt that Harlem did have more than its fair share of vice and crime. The black settlements of New York City had always been known as 'red light' districts. It was not, of course, a situation confined to black districts, but was one shared by most communities of poor people. Marginal employment and unemployment caused some people to look to illegal means of making a living and the communities did not have enough political influence to ensure proper policing. Indeed, the police tacitly encouraged this concentration of the underworld; for it kept vice and crime out of the sight of the middle-class and enabled the police to keep an eye on it. This concentration, in its turn, meant that such communities suffered an influx of outsiders, whose only interest was to exploit this freedom from constraint.¹⁰⁶

But it would be wrong to assume that the conversion testimonies were accurate accounts of the followers' lives before joining Father Divine. There is no reason to believe that the majority of the followers were prostitutes or thieves before conversion. It was rather that they felt themselves to be on a slippery slope; in a situation in which any weakness, any human frailty, might pitch them into a debasement from which they might never recover.

As migrants, they came to Harlem from a rural world strongly

influenced by fundamentalist moral values. The Southern black 'folk' church had traditionally provided a moral code for life which elevated diligence, thrift, hard work and honesty into virtues, and frowned upon the secular diversions of drinking, dancing and gambling. This fundamentalism also placed a value on self-discipline and chastity.¹⁰⁷ As a symbol of the rural church's censorship of sexual licence and worldly self-indulgence, men and women sat apart at some church services.¹⁰⁸

The "churching" of backsliders appears to have been a common practice in the rural church. The registers of slaves enrolled as members of white churches record excommunications for such misdemeanours as: immorality, intemperance, theft, uncleanness, abuse of the Sabbath and lying. The white evangelists were especially concerned about the preservation of the family and the sanctity of marriage among the slaves and the majority of the excommunication offences concerned sexual immorality.¹⁰⁹ There is every reason to believe that this concern with preserving a moral order was retained by the independent black churches on Emancipation. There are religious folk song sermons which castigate intemperance, backbiting, hypocrisy, vanity, promiscuity and gambling:

"Well God don't like it, no, no!
God don't like it, no, no!
God don't like it, no, no!
It's a-scandalous and a shame!" 110

From black folk tales it would also appear that it was the women who were the guardians of the moral order and the men who were thought to be most vulnerable to temptation.¹¹¹

In practice, it is true, the values of the rural church could not control all personal relationships in the community. There was generous leeway given to human frailties and fallibilities. Nonetheless, the virtues of the moral code were not in doubt.¹¹² Migration, however, disrupted the moral certainties of this rural

world. There was no generally accepted code to live by in Harlem and migrants quickly learnt that a life lived according to the old virtues brought few rewards, either in terms of social approval or personal advancement. Here there were no clear standards of conduct and no yardstick against which to measure one's own actions.¹¹³

For many migrants, the city must have been exhilarating and liberating at first. But, within the ghetto, respectable people were forced to live cheek by howl with the underworld. Despite informal attempts by the community to confine the underworld to particular areas of Harlem,¹¹⁴ people had to endure seeing their relatives, friends and acquaintances fall prey to the pimps and pushers. James Baldwin, who grew up in Harlem in the 'thirties, remembered his own vivid fear, at the age of fourteen, that he, too, might become a victim of "the Avenue":

"For the wages of sin were visible everywhere, in the wine-stained and urine-splashed hallway, in the clanging ambulance-bell, in every scar on the faces of the pimps and their whores, in every helpless, newborn baby being brought into this danger, in every knife and pistol fight on the Avenue." 115

How much more must life in the city have worried some of those who came as migrants - especially the older women, since women had been the custodians of the fundamentalist moral values in the South. How much more must these women, in looking back over their lives from the vantage-point of Depression Harlem, have begun to question the use that they and others had made of their city freedoms and to feel the loss of the moral codes that had guided their world view in the past.

For those who had taken a full part in the high life of 'twenties Harlem, and for those who had scrimped and saved to keep a growing family clothed and fed (and for some who had tried to do both) the city, the ghetto, with its pimps and hustlers, prostitutes and

thieves, was now a monster, threatening them at every turn. Everywhere, they saw evidence of promiscuity, family cruelty and social collapse. It was this sense of malaise, this acute alienation that made them turn to Father Divine.

When they listened to Father Divine's banquet messages, they found that he explained their troubles and the crisis in society in the same moral terms. He told them that mankind was suffering because people had desecrated their inner spirituality; they had allowed themselves to fall into sin; and had become slaves to their basest human passions. He told them to test his words from the evidence of their own experience; to recognize how they had wasted their bodies with self-indulgence and had warped their spirits with their deceits, dishonesty, jealousy, hatred, immorality and selfishness. He invited them to confess their sins, abandon the past and seek salvation through moral rebirth.

Celibacy was a necessary part of this rebirth. While Father Divine cited the Biblical precedent for celibacy he also, more powerfully, illustrated the need for celibacy by asking his followers to consider the plight of children in the sinful world. Children, he said, were doomed to lives of vice, crime and despair as long as they grew up in a society in which moral standards meant nothing and where the people, degraded by sin, lived in poverty and dependency. In these circumstances, he argued, parenthood was itself a sin; for parents were no more than "breeders of crime, and of vice of every kind." His followers, he said, must "stop becoming to be so-called fathers and mothers to be offered up to the slayers at the point of machine guns." They must show the world, instead, the way of Jesus; and social reformation would come hand in hand with "moral betterment."¹¹⁶

Father Divine's followers had only to look at the behaviour

of Harlem's rebellious children to see the validity of his teachings. Like others of their generation, they were taken aback by the petty crimes, vandalism and gang fights of Harlem's adolescents. They were shocked to see a generation that was seemingly indifferent to authority and beyond the control of either their parents or the community.¹¹⁷ It was easy to find a starkly moralistic explanation for Harlem's juvenile delinquency. For here was a generation of youngsters, born and bred in the urban ghetto; a group that was vulnerable, in its most impressionable years, to all the sins, temptations and vices of the city. In the youngsters' rebellion against authority, the followers perceived the full and terrible effect of the city on the next generation. Celibacy and moral reformation were appropriate answers for a group of men and women who were now acutely ill at ease with life in the city. Indeed, the followers felt the urgent need not only to save themselves but to purge the city and make safe the future.

Father Divine offered them a crusade. He asked that the followers become "fishers of men" in Harlem. It was their duty, he said, not only to be celibate but to "clean up the community of all vice and crime by teaching the people something better and giving them something that will be and really is, for the sustenance of the body, for the spirit and the mind." He led the way. He left his car unlocked on the street as a bait for the lawless and he encouraged the followers to supervise their neighbourhoods and so curb crime.¹¹⁸

The followers accepted the commission gladly and responded with an enthusiasm that amounted, at times, to vigilantism. A cashier at a Peace restaurant telephoned the police when she suspected that two of the customers had passed counterfeit notes to pay for their meals. Waiters at another restaurant detained a man and took him to the

police when they suspected that the coat he was carrying was stolen. A brother, returning home late at night from a Peace Mission meeting, went to investigate the noise of shattering glass on 125th Street: "He turned just in time to see a man breaking into a show window. He immediately seized the man single-handed and took him to the station house on 123rd Street, where he was booked, and the Follower later appeared against him in court."¹¹⁹

In response to police appeals, the followers set out to curb juvenile fire-alarm hoaxers and to stop children playing the dangerous game of "hitch-hiking" on the back of moving buses.¹²⁰ In one of his reports to the police, detailing the followers' work, John Lamb claimed that they had stopped eight hundred children from "hitch-hiking" in one month alone. An "Army of more than ten thousand," Lamb wrote, had gone forth to "still further eliminate hitch-hiking, traffic violations, false fire alarms, and especially the hold-ups, robberies and crimes that are so prevalent in some sections."

The followers attempted, by their personal action, to impose on individuals, and especially children, the type of moral discipline, control and sense of civic responsibility that they felt to be so lacking in city life. No-one was exempt from their vigilance. In 1937 Audrey Kommer, a black follower of 145 West 135th Street, was arrested and prosecuted on the complaint of a fellow believer for stealing forty-five dollars from Heavenly Light at 20 West 115th Street. Such conduct was not to be tolerated.¹²¹ Indeed, absolute honesty was expected within the Movement. Myrtle Pollard noted, in amazement, how followers blithely left their handbags on their chairs during a Peace Mission boat trip up the Hudson River. Lost and found articles of the most trivial kind were advertised in the Peace Mission press; the "Found" list always the longer of the two.¹²² There was even a ritual element to the followers repayment

of debts and return of stolen goods, too, for there were many instances in which the debt was small or the stolen item unimportant. Mr. Wallace, a Canadian follower, for instance, returned a towel to the Great Northern Railway that he had stolen in 1911; Miss Peace Happiness paid \$1.98 to the Sheffield Farms Company which she had owed since 1924.¹²³

These were solutions that Father Divine's middle-aged black women followers, in particular, immediately welcomed and understood. Material security, inner peace and the salvation of society were possible through a return to absolute standards and a religiously-guided morality. In Father Divine's tenets of the "evangelical life" they recognized many of the familiar values of the 'folk' church - the condemnation of drinking, gambling, self-indulgence, popular entertainment, smoking, cosmetics and "profane" language; also the elevation of self-discipline, sexual restraint, hard work, obedience, thrift, honesty and selfless co-operation. The Peace Mission restored, too, the importance of confession as a means to renounce the sins of the past. It was easy for these women to believe that they could gain the "victory over trials and tribulations" through this discipline, as it invoked in the city the security and satisfactions of the Southern moral tradition. Joining Father Divine was seen as a positive return to good and wholesome ways and a guarantee of a better future. The abandonment of family and friends was taken as a necessary sacrifice to gain the superior reward of purification and salvation.

So strong was their trust in the righteousness of Father Divine's rulings that these women could not be deterred by emotive appeals to the sanctity of marriage or to the virtues of family life. Father Divine confirmed their own perceptions about the nature of family life in the city. He told them that there was little value placed

on the obligations of marriage and family life in Harlem. Most marriages, he assured them, were already null and void in God's eyes; and he denounced the hypocrisy of relatives who tried to stop his followers from leaving home to join him in the work of salvation:

"Men will forsake mothers and fathers, friends, relatives and kin to indulge in selfishness, vice and crime of every kind. When these things are done, there is not so much said about it, but when perchance it happens to be one who will make such sacrifices for RIGHTEOUSNESS sake, for CHRIST'S SAKE, in the fulfilment of the Scripture, ... those who are called relatives will be the first ones to rise in opposition ... I AM here to tell you it is detrimental. Then I say, 'Wear the world as a loose garment' according to the Scripture and fulfil it from every angle." 124

Thus, irrespective of their own family backgrounds, the followers and Father Divine shared Frazier's view of the evils and dangers of the city. Whether they were objectively correct is in dispute. But it is ironic that both Father Divine and Frazier, whose own puritan streak was strong, should be taken to task for assaults on the black family when both men, in their own ways, sought its regeneration.

It was their strong moral sense that also enabled the followers to accept Father Divine's ultimate promise: his offer of eternal health in return for a life lived according to his "evangelical" standards.

The possibility of perpetual health held special meaning for blacks, as sickness and death posed special burdens for them. Black life expectancy was below that of their white contemporaries and health statistics revealed a higher incidence of infant mortality and serious illness among blacks than whites. Tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, syphilis, pellegra and nephritis took the heaviest toll: illnesses in which poverty, lack of sanitation, medical ignorance

and poor medical care were crucial factors.¹²⁵ The health figures for the predominantly black Central Harlem Health District between 1929-1933 were typical. It had the highest annual death rate from tuberculosis for the whole of New York City; only the health districts covering the Lower West Side and the Lower East Side approached it. Moreover, it had the highest rate of infant and maternal mortality and the highest incidence of venereal disease among all the city's thirty health districts.¹²⁶

Black peoples' experience at the hands of the medical profession had never been one, either, to instil confidence and respect in modern medicine. In the Southern states, medical care for black people was usually expensive, second-rate, racially segregated and hard to find. Racial segregation and discrimination restricted black access to hospital care in the region. A Medical Association survey in Mississippi in 1938 found that a 2.4 per thousand whites had access to hospital beds compared to 0.7 per thousand blacks; while in the Carolinas, three times as many whites as blacks had access to hospital beds.¹²⁷ Southern blacks attempted to meet their needs by opening their own small hospitals, but these were often short of equipment and properly trained staff. A survey of one hundred and twenty hospitals, both black and white-managed, treating black patients in the South in 1928, found only sixteen that met the American Association's "A" standard, while fifty-four were in the "C" and "D" grades.¹²⁸

Medical facilities were more accessible to blacks in the North, but medical care was still expensive, often inadequate, and hamstrung with informal segregation and discrimination, in both the case of black patients and the training of black professional staff.¹²⁹ In the Central Harlem Health District, the main hospital serving blacks in the 'thirties was the notorious municipal hospital, Harlem

Hospital.¹³⁰

Known locally as the "Butcher's Shop", Harlem Hospital was the centre of a storm of criticism and controversy through the nineteen-thirties. It was attacked on both administrative and clinical grounds. Critics insisted that the hospital was in the hands of a clique of white administrators, who, with the compliance of a small number of hand-picked blacks, controlled the appointments network to discriminate against black doctors and nurses.¹³¹ Professional morale was low, and the hospital was seriously understaffed and carelessly supervised. The equipment was said to be inadequate and often out of order; and standards of hygiene were dangerously low. It was alleged that the wards were constantly overcrowded. Patients were discharged before their treatment was complete to free the bed for a new patient, while cots and couches were fitted into the corridors. An investigator found patients sat in chairs and lying on stretchers for lack of bed space. Patients complained of hasty medical treatment and hostility from the ambulance and admissions staff.¹³² Sick people - a woman in labour, a baby with pneumonia, a musician suffering from peritonitis - were turned away with, sometimes, fatal results. In 1936, outraged Harlemites picketed the hospital, carrying tiny, white coffins, after an epidemic in the maternity ward had killed nineteen babies.¹³³ "Poor facilities, a tendency to ignore complaints rather than correct them, and an overworked staff, directed by unsympathetic heads;" wrote a journalist in the Amsterdam News, "have united to keep Harlem people suspicious and afraid of the institution."¹³⁴

The poor quality of municipal medical care, the expense of private treatment and a lack of knowledge of medicine and confidence in its practitioners meant that many blacks in Harlem depended on folk remedies and faith for cures.

Self-medication had always been part of Southern life. While some of the nostrums used by blacks reflected genuine countrylore about roots and herbs, some were clinically useless and relied more on faith than on the nature of the ingredients to restore the patient's health. Black folk doctors and herbalists practised across the South, especially in the sawmill camps and turpentine stills, where their clients were the poor and lowly, black and white.¹³⁵

The black migrants naturally brought their folk remedies with them to Harlem. In their new environment, they continued to place their faith in a hotch-potch of folk cures, proprietary medicines, faith-healers and street sellers who were derided as "quacks" by members of Harlem's small medical fraternity. There were several well-stocked stores in the community which dealt exclusively in roots, herbs and potions guaranteed to cure all ailments. The American Indian Trading Post at 2135 Seventh Avenue boasted, for instance: "We can supply any herb, root, bark, seed or flower under the sun." Even a pharmacist like William Weiner of Lenox Avenue learnt herbal lore from his customers and stocked his shop accordingly. He told a journalist in 1933, "I've got more herbs and roots in my store now than I've got regular medicine." His stock included such herbs as "leaf of life", "sweetcup", "busy powder", "strongback root", "spirit weed", "soup sap leaf" and "priest's bark". Unscrupulous druggists, however, were said to exploit their customer's gullibility by selling talcum powder as a special herbal cure.¹³⁶

Most of Harlem's folk "doctors" sold their advice and their cures from street-corner pitches. "In flowing language, designed to impress the ignorant and gullible," wrote a sceptic in the Interstate Tattler, "these quacks loudly proclaim the efficiency of their cure-all preparations, invariably reaching a climax in the declaration

that 'this little bottle costing only fifty cents is positively guaranteed to make you hale and hearty in two weeks. It will save you the cost of a two hundred dollar operation.'" Cures, often "less potent than salt and water," this journalist wrote, were offered for tuberculosis, heart, stomach and kidney complaints, tapeworms, gallstones and appendicitis.¹³⁷

Ignorance of medicine made the task of combating the spread of disease in Harlem particularly hard. Many poor people had no idea that diseases like tuberculosis and syphilis could be treated at all; and few mothers, it was said, knew which foods were best to keep their children in good health.¹³⁸ The scale of the problem led a voluntary group of Harlem doctors and concerned individuals to form the Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee which, in cooperation with the city's Board of Health, set out to combat this lack of knowledge.

When it began its work in 1922, the Committee was mainly concerned to halt the rising death rate from tuberculosis. But fifteen years later, by the time it moved into the Harlem Health Center, it had broadened its education campaign to include diphtheria immunisation, smallpox vaccination, cancer, infant and maternal health, and nutrition.¹³⁹ The Central Harlem Health Center, opened by the Department of Health, took over many services formerly operated on a voluntary basis by the Committee. It provided a tuberculosis clinic and X-ray room, a maternity clinic, dental clinic, an eye clinic, a venereal diseases clinic and a child health service.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, despite an increase in educational campaigns in the nineteen-thirties, including police round-ups of folk doctors,¹⁴¹ and an increase in the clinical facilities in Harlem,¹⁴² ignorance, folk wisdom and magic were still powerful elements in Harlem life.

It was reported that some parents refused to have their children vaccinated because they believed that 'conjure-bags' worn around the children's necks, would protect them from disease.¹⁴³

Conjure had a considerable following in Harlem. Its practice, which was developed from an amalgamation of European and African folk beliefs, had been a significant part of life in the rural South both during slavery and afterwards.¹⁴⁴ It was distinct from folk medicine since it was concerned with the invocation and manipulation of magical power rather than the application of medical remedies. But, since the power of magic extended to healing, and since conjure employed many of the roots and herbs used in folk-medicine, the distinction was never precise - practitioners of conjure were often known as "root doctors."¹⁴⁵

The men and women who were believed to have power in conjure were, characteristically, people of considerable personal presence: but, even in the South, they supported their charisma by claims to special knowledge, ancestry or status. In Harlem they claimed to be Africans, "Hindus" or "Red Indians"; they were "Princesses" or "Princes"; they were "Professors" or "Doctors"; and there were still some who followed the rural practice of claiming preferment by God and called themselves "Reverend" or "Bishop."¹⁴⁶

They usually conducted business from small store-front tabernacles and often combined the traditional lore of conjure with more esoteric modern religions: like spiritualism. They called themselves "numerologists", "chiropractic philosophers", "Oraculists", "Spiritual mediums", "Accultists", "Metaphysicists" or "Spiritualists". They might tell fortunes, 'communicate' with dead relatives, interpret dreams, prescribe ways of ensuring success in love or business, provide protection from enemies, find lucky numbers, or heal the sick - indeed, anything that was within the

power of magic to accomplish. Their paraphernalia included: roots, oils, powders, potions, ointments, medals, crucifixes, pictures of the Madonna and saints, candles, incense, regalia and dream books - any accoutrement or ritual that seemed to contain or evoke power.¹⁴⁷

They advertised their skills and wares in local newspapers and even contributed columns on "numerology." So strong was the hold of the "occultists, spiritualists and herb doctors, faith healers and druggists" that one local newspaper even gave them credence in the news columns. When the Negro World set out to check the claims of one herbal doctor, S. Brown, the paper found that several people were ready to vouch for his cures. A Mr. Isaac Ward of 262 West 129th Street said that Brown's medicine had relieved him of eight months paid caused by inflammatory rheumatism. Another man insisted that his nephew had received relief from an itch that he had suffered for nine years.¹⁴⁸

Conjure thrived on sensation and theatricality.¹⁴⁹ But its success was not due entirely to the ignorance and gullibility of its clientele. Rather, like folk medicine, it provided a familiar and accessible form of reassurance in a world that was often cold and uncaring. The main concern of the "cunning" men and women of Harlem was the same as that of their forbears in Europe and Africa - psychotherapy. Whether consciously or not, and for a fee, these men and women provided their clients with a solace and support in times of stress that they could not find anywhere else.¹⁵⁰ Those who went to the conjuror for healing made an implied criticism of the way in which doctors had treated them. This was the point made by one of the characters in Anne Petry's novel, The Street, after her visit to "Prophet David", the root doctor:

"The satisfaction she felt was from the quiet way he had listened to her, giving her all of his attention. No one had ever done that before. The doctors she saw from time to time in the clinic were brusque, hurried and

impatient. Even while they asked questions - is the pain here, is it often, do your shoes fit - their minds weren't really on her as a person. They were looking at her feet, but not as though they belonged to her and were therefore different, individual, because they were hers. All they saw were a pair of feet with swollen painful bunions on them - nigger feet. The words were in the expressions in their faces. Even with the coloured doctors she felt humble, apologetic." 151

But conjure was not the only way for people to find solace and healing. Many of the older migrants in the black community held a sacred perception of sickness and health.

Within black fundamentalism, as in evangelical Protestantism in general, there was a tendency to see divine punishment in sickness and misfortune. The Bible recorded times when plague and death were sent to punish the vain-glorious and sinful. Such knowledge encouraged the believer to feel that sickness and death were linked to sin and encouraged the devout individual, suffering from ill-health, to search his or her conscience for the moral defect that had provoked God's retribution.¹⁵² Health flowed from a life lived in harmony with God. Indeed, a revival of faith was thought to be accompanied by the restoration of physical health; and healing was an expected part of a fundamentalist evangelist's work.¹⁵³

The association between sin and sickness was marked in the host of small black Pentecostal churches that arose among black rural migrants in the late nineteenth century in the towns and cities of the South and, later, in the urban areas of the North and West. Healing was believed to be one of the "gifts of the Spirit" that accompanied "complete sanctification" - the total release from sin. In 'thirties Harlem, Mother Rosa A. Horne of the Pentecostal Temple of All Nations on Lenox Avenue, was reputed to be a healer of immense power. She claimed that her faith had cured her of tuberculosis; and, at her church, crutches and discarded articles of

affliction lay piled around the walls by "saints" who believed themselves healed. Her counterparts, if in most cases, less spectacular, were to be found in other large cities where black migrants settled.¹⁵⁴

According to the same belief, the state of society or the fortunes of a people could be similarly affected by their relationship with God. Harmony with God brought 'social' healing - prosperity and progress; but a fall from grace brought the 'ills' of poverty, despair and crisis.

Most of the black "sanctified" sects did not make such an explicit connection between society's ills and their fall from grace. But Father Divine explained both individual health and social well-being in exactly those terms; and in the followers he found an audience attuned to moral interpretations of life and deterred by fear, ignorance and experience from rational, clinical interpretations of life's troubles.

From the testimonies of the followers at the banquet table it is clear that they shared Father Divine's perceptions. They equated sickness and social distress with their own, and society's, deviation from fundamental moral principles. They saw the acceptance of Father Divine and the tenets of the "evangelical life" as the path of liberation from their difficulties and their "sin sickness"; and as their guarantee of perpetual health and security.¹⁵⁵

Extraordinary claims were made for Father Divine's healing powers. Spokesmen for the Movement said that the followers' need for medical attention had been reduced by ninety per cent, and that sixty per cent had been cured of major illnesses. Refusing to make a Christmas donation to the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association when asked to support the charity's work, Brother Carnegie Pullen wrote to its President extolling Father Divine's

powers as a healer. "The Followers of FATHER DIVINE do not have and cannot have tuberculosis or any other disease," he wrote. Father Divine had healed "more than ten thousand to my personal knowledge," including "hundreds of cases of sugar diabetes, heart trouble, syphilis, blindness, broken backs, etc."¹⁵⁶

The conviction of Father Divine's power was constantly reinforced in the followers' testimonies. "When I found the body of Father Divine in 1931," said Bombay Frank, "I was full of aches and pains. HE has healed my sin-sick soul and now I am young again and free of all pains. Even my hair is turning from gray to black."¹⁵⁷ Other testimonies were more dramatic. "I had a deep pain in the top of my head," declared one woman, "I went to the doctor but he didn't do no good. The pain spread all over, and I suffered and walked the floor. The drugstore was no good, and the herb woman gave me up, and I thought I surely die now ... My mouth was as dry as snuff, and the pain don't let up. Then I come to you and the pain ain't no more. Peace! It's Wonderful!"¹⁵⁸ Another follower credited Father Divine with healing her of a "leaking heart":

"My condition was so bad that I had to sleep propped up in bed. I was swollen so that a part of the body burst and water was running out of the limb. I took no doctor's medicine. I only confessed my sins openly, one by one, and returned a living room suite which I had stolen. Then FATHER healed me" 159

Extending this belief, Father Divine's followers found it possible to accept his ultimate promise. Certain that they were renouncing all the sins of their past lives, it was possible to believe that once they had fulfilled all the difficult and demanding tenets of "evangelical life", then they would gain not only health but eternal life - the supreme triumph over their human frailties and sufferings. At a banquet meeting in June 1936, there was a testimony given which the New Day hailed as "greater than that of Lazarus whom

JESUS brought forth from the grave." Brother H.B. Smith claimed that he had "passed on to the 'Unknown' as far as man's reckoning goes." But he was not dead, but "sleepeth". As the New Day journalist explained:

"Because of the individual firmly believing in the PERSONIFICATION of the BODY of GOD, this substantiated belief and conviction was deep-rooted in his subconscious and when he lost consciousness ... the belief was so firm ... that his contact with GOD FATHER DIVINE remained substantiated and unshaken." 160

Father Divine sang at the banquet table:

"Once you were blind, but now you can see
For I have brought your sight to thee,
When you believed ME, then you received it,
For I have brought you the VICTORY ...

Over old death, Hallelujah,
Over old death, Hallelujah,
Over old death, Hallelujah,
When you believed ME, then you received it
For I have brought you the VICTORY.

Once you were in poverty, now you are prosperous
For I have brought prosperity to you,
When you believed ME, then you received it,
For I have brought you the VICTORY.

Praise the Lord, Hallelujah,
Praise the Lord, Hallelujah,
Praise the Lord, Hallelujah,
When you believed ME, then you received it,
For I have brought you the VICTORY ..."

[Extract] 161

The Peace Mission Movement offered its followers, white and black, a complete explanation of the crisis ravaging society and a way to free themselves from the intense uncertainties and hardships

of the times. Father Divine offered the believers control over their human condition.

For the white followers the attraction was essentially personal and spiritual. They found in the values of the Movement and the separate social world of the Peace Mission, the spiritual insight, practical proof and direct involvement that they failed to find in their previous religious affiliations.

For the black followers the appeal was more complex. The tenets of the "evangelical life" allowed them to reject all the aspects of their lives that they now found difficult and demoralising - their race, their poverty, their personal relationships and the lifeway of the city. Father Divine provided them with a set of incentives and a warm, supportive environment within which their shaken pride and capabilities could be restored. To people unable to see any secular political or economic solution to their situation, Father Divine provided an answer.

But it was not just the pressures of their objective conditions that drew black people to the Peace Mission. The Movement had a selective appeal to a particular group within the black community - Harlem's middle-aged black women migrants. They turned to Father Divine because his teachings coincided with their own perception of their plight. The Movement re-affirmed virtues and a way of life that they valued from the past: their faith in the brotherhood of man, the importance of self-reliance, the value of puritan morality and the help and companionship of collective life. The tenets of "evangelical" life restored the moral and religious world-view that the women understood. Their conversion and allegiance was not the act of deluded fanatics, but a creative response of a particular group of black people who drew strength from their traditional beliefs to find ways to cope with their new situation.

White or black, Father Divine's followers were supremely confident that they had transcended all the limitations of their past lives. The "heavenly names" that they adopted were symbolic of their sense of change. Some followers chose Biblical names like Blessed Virgin, Holy Hannah, Faithful Martha, Noah Moses, Jonah Whale, Apostle Paul and Mary Magdalene Love - sometimes indifferent to the usual male and female associations of the names. Others created names that blended expressions of delight, faith and intention like Glorious Illumination, Darling Heart, Joy Praise, Humility Consolation, Seeking Knowledge, Quiet Devotion and Great Love.

A poem published in the Peace Mission press captured the followers' sense of happiness and new assurance. Called "A Song of Greed and Love" it read:

"Back in the world where you used to live,
Reckless beyond all need,
In came the banker, sleek and suave,
Singing his song of greed:

'Sign, sign on the dotted line.
Sign! Sign! Sign!
Here is money to pay your debts,
Friend you had better sign.'

Interest on interest kept you broke,
Still there was more to pay,
Again came the banker, contract in hand
Singing the same old way:

'Sign, sign on the dotted line.
Sign! Sign! Sign!
You owe us money you cannot pay,
This mortgage you must sign.'

Mortgage foreclosure took your all,
Want and sickness soon came.
Death stood grinning beside your bed,
Singing the same old tune:

'Sign, sign on the dotted line.
Sign! Sign! Sign!
This is a debt that all must pay,
Verily you shall sign.'

Then FATHER stretched out HIS ARMS of LOVE,
Lifting you out of strife,
Healing your body, cleansing your soul,
Giving you endless life.

Sign, sign on the dotted line.
Sign! Sign! Sign!
No more debt, or death, or woe,
We've signed up with FATHER DIVINE.

THANK YOU, FATHER!

K.L.P." 162

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 3

1. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937; and 1 (20), April 1 1937. In other speeches, in similar phrases, he characterised this release as not only "rest" but healing, freedom, victory and redemption. New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936; and World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937; and 1 (22), April 15 1937.
2. New York Age December 15 1931; New Day 3 (13), March 30 1939; Spoken Word 2 (39), April 11 1936; and World Herald 1 (30), June 10 1937. See also below, Chapter Six, p. 398-401.
3. New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936; Spoken Word 2 (16), August 18 1936; and World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937; and 1 (25), May 6 1937.
4. New Day 2 (33), August 18 1938.
5. Ibid. 1 (7), July 2 1936.
6. Parker, op.cit., 164. On one occasion, Father Divine expressed the beginnings of this conversion as a recognition of "the allness of GOD and the nothingness of yourself as a man." New Day 2 (33), August 18 1938.
7. Ibid. 1 (7), July 2 1936; and 2 (33), August 18 1938; and Spoken Word 2 (87), September 26 1936.
8. World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
9. Spoken Word 2 (29), March 7 1936.
10. New York Times April 27 1937; and World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
11. Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936.
12. New Day 2 (33), August 18 1938; and World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937.
13. Ibid. A sign in one of the Peace Mission extensions read : "Peace to the World. These are they that follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth. These are they that are not defiled with women. These are redeemed from among men for they are virgins. Among the first fruits unto God as the Lamb." Apart from the first phrase this is a rough transcription of Revelations 14:4, which describes the chosen of God on the Day of Judgement. Boston Globe September 27 1936.

Some commentators believed that Father Divine insisted on celibacy because he was anxious of the scandal that might arise from sexual relationships in an inter-racial Movement. Harris, op.cit., 92; Hoshor, op.cit., 116; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 71. There is no evidence to support this suggestion. The very fact that it was an inter-racial Movement meant that the Peace Mission worked clandestinely in the South and suffered assault and ostracism in other places. Nor did the sex taboo prevent sexual scandals about the Movement. The reasons that Father Divine gave for his sexual ban were various:

- sexual relationships diverted the followers' attention and affection from him; the sexual act was, in itself, self-indulgent and base and was a source of fear and shame; and, as a result of sexual union, children were brought into a world of poverty, crime and disease. New Day 1 (36), November 25 1937; 2 (33), August 18 1938; and 3 (5), February 2 1939; Spoken Word 2 (29), March 7 1936; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 204-205.
14. New Day 1 (28), September 30 1937; and 3 (35), August 31 1939. One of Father Divine's songs which he sang at the opening of his banquet speeches was:
- "An open confession is good for the soul,
Good for the soul, good for the soul,
An open confession is good for the soul,
The half has never yet been told."
- McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 42.
15. Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936; and 2 (80), September 1 1936; and World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937. There is an instance of a man testifying that he surrendered to the police on Father Divine's advice in McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 40-41.
16. A follower explained that living the "evangelical life" meant living as an angel: in purity, peace, love and kindness. Spoken Word 1 (6), November 24 1934; and Johnson and Johnson, Father Divine Peace Mission: an example of cult belief (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit.), 326. The standard of personal behaviour that the followers respected is expressed in a poem, aptly titled Beauty of Spirit:
- "Beautiful faces are those that wear,
The light of a pleasant spirit there;
It matters little if dark or fair.
- Beautiful hands are those that do
Deeds that are noble, good and true;
Busy with them the long day through."
- New Day 1 (25), September 9 1937.
17. Ibid. 1 (20), August 5 1937; and Johnson and Johnson, Father Divine Peace Mission: an example of cult belief (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit.), 326.
18. Spoken Word 2 (87), September 26 1936.
19. World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937; and Parker, op.cit., 163-164.
20. Spoken Word 2 (50), May 19 1936; and Harris, op.cit., 118.
21. Parker, op.cit., 249. Father Divine spoke of the self-hatred that would arise if blacks accepted a derogatory view of themselves: "That prejudice that was within," he said, "was not so harmful externally as it was detrimental to you and your immediate family ... Prejudice ... turns on its own flesh and blood ... and causes your own flesh and blood to

hate you and even hate those who look like you, of your respective lineage and of your respective nationality." New Day 3 (46), November 16 1939.

22. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
23. New Day 2 (45), November 10 1938. The taboo on "segregated words" applied to the guest speakers who came to the Peace Mission. The chairleaders of Mission discussion forums were advised to warn guests that they should not use racial designations. Speakers who did not heed the warnings were liable to be sternly reprimanded by Father Divine, if he was present, or booed by the audience. The Peace Mission press declined to report the speeches of visitors who insisted on making racial references. Ibid. 3 (8), February 23 1939; and 4 (48), November 28 1940; and World Herald 1 (3), December 3 1936. Father Divine warned, "Such [segregated] words are robbers ... as GOD is omnipresent so will His Expressions be, His Characteristics, His Ways and His Plans, for GOD alone shall have DOMINION and GOD alone shall REIGN." New Day 1 (5), June 18 1936.
24. New York Times August 9 1938; and Spoken Word 1 (44), August 17 1935.
25. New York Amsterdam News January 11 1936; and New Day 3 (30), July 27 1939.
26. Ibid. 1 (31), October 21 1937. Not all the followers adopted "heavenly names" but there does not seem to have been any criticism of those who did not change their names. The decision to adopt a reborn name appears to have been left to "individual volition."
27. World Herald 1 (20), April 1 1937.
28. Hoshor, op.cit., 227.
29. New Day 2 (31), August 4 1938. Father Divine demanded, "Give ME and My idealists a chance, not charity. What we want is to have a chance to earn a livelihood. We want to be self-supporting, self-respecting and law-making and law-abiding citizens."
30. Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936; 2 (80), September 1 1936; and World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937; and 1 (20), April 1 1937.
31. Spoken Word 2 (45), May 2 1936; World Herald 1 (20), April 1 1937; and Parker, op.cit., 162. Father Divine argued that taking out insurance policies could only be "for the purpose of getting afflicted or sick ... for the purpose of drawing money without paying for it." Freedom from sickness was possible for all those who lived an "evangelical life" and so those who took out insurance must be "willing to mutilate your physical bodies for the sake of the Dollar." He warned such people, "He who defiles the Temple of God, him shall GOD destroy." Spoken Word 2 (39), April 11 1936.

32. When a company making "Real Lucky 4 Leaf Clovers" sought to advertise in the New Day their copy was politely returned and B.M. Love at the New Day Publishing Company explained, "Competence and skill, perseverance and will, to us, are the four leaves of luck's clover ... we are taught to give real service for an honest living, to live righteously, soberly and honestly, to pay our honest debts, to fear GOD and harmonize with HIM ... and by doing all these in accordance with HIS will, we are unified with an everlasting supply and need no charm of luck." New Day 4 (33), August 15 1940.
33. Spoken Word 1 (12), January 15 1935. Father Divine claimed that "whatsoever kind of affliction, sickness and disease you have been afflicted with, sin and selfishness and selfish tendencies were the cause of your condition." World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937.
34. New Day 1 (19), July 29 1937.
35. Moon, Thank you, Father so sweet, op.cit., 147.
36. Roi Ottley, New World a 'coming: inside black America, Boston, 1943, 82-83.
37. Frank S. Mead, God in Harlem. Christian Century 53, August 26 1936, 1135. This account of a banquet meeting, which includes descriptions of followers dancing with "wild African abandon" and wearing "a sickly, jungle grin," is patronising and, at times, patently racist in tone.
38. New York Amsterdam News June 6 1936.
39. Negro World June 18 1932.
40. New York Times May 17 1935.
41. Hadley Cantril and Muzafer Sherif, Kingdom of Father Divine (In Hart M. Nelsen, Raytha L. Yokley and Anne K. Nelsen eds. Black church in America, 1971, 175-193) 188-191. Reprinted from Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 33, 147-167. Similar, but not identical views, are expressed in Arthur Huff Fauset, Black gods of the metropolis, Negro religious cults of the urban north, Philadelphia, 1944, summarised 107-110; Johnson and Johnson, Father Divine Peace Mission, background of Movement (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit., Appendix C), 1-4; and J. Raymond Jones, Comparative study of religious cult behavior among Negroes with special reference to emotional group conditioning factors, Washington, D.C., 1939, 43-44. These studies are more conscious of the religious form of the Movement and are less schematic and comprehensive than Cantril and Sherif's work. But they also emphasise that the Movement was a reaction to the pressures of poverty and discrimination and an attempt to find security and status.
42. New Day 1 (7), July 2 1936; and Spoken Word 2 (87), September 26 1936.

43. Clarence Howell once took a rough poll of the followers' previous religious affiliations. He found that the largest proportion, "especially of white people, had been New Thought people, Theosophists, Anthrosophists, Rosicrucians, Christian Scientists etc.," Howell, op.cit., 1333. According to McKelway and Liebling, John Lamb had tried Christian Science before joining Father Divine. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 20 1936, 28. There were, of course, white followers from more orthodox Christian backgrounds: Malcolm Lovell, the descendant of an abolitionist, had been a Quaker before following Father Divine. New York Times November 27 1939. Myrtle Pollard met an ex-Roman Catholic among the followers on a Father Divine pleasure cruise. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 259-260.
44. Harris, op.cit., 223; and Bryan Wilson, Religious sects, London, 1970, 259-260.
45. New Day 1 (29), October 7 1937. Marion Bennett, who described herself as a "truth seeker and metaphysician," came to see Father Divine because "you are the One, the only One who does things that others talk about doing." Ibid. 3 (13), March 30 1939.
46. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
47. The articles and editorials in the Spoken Word discussed a number of controversial topics from a radical viewpoint, among them: party politics; the New Deal; Communism and the Soviet Union; pacifism; feminism; trade unions and economic co-operation; the nationalisation of industry; Nazism and Fascism; international affairs; the League of Nations and lynching. For a full discussion of the Movement's politics see Chapters Seven and Eight.
48. New Day September 15 1956.
49. Laidlaw, ed., op.cit., 263.
50. In 1930, the New York City black population, being predominantly migrant in origin, had a disproportionate number of men and women who were young and middle-aged. 47.3% of New York City's black men and 45.4% of New York City's black women were between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four in 1930; compared to 31.6% of both the female and male native white population; and 36.3% of the total male population of the city and 35.4% of the total female population of the city. Ibid., 301. See also: Olivia P. Frost, An analysis of the characteristics of the population in Central Harlem, New York, 1946, 2-3; and Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem community study, 15. It is not possible, from published figures, to ascertain the proportion of Harlem's middle-aged population that was migrant. But, if, as a rough indication, the children, who are least likely to be migrants, are excluded from consideration then the migrant percentage increases accordingly: if all children under five are excluded, 82% of the remaining population would be migrant; if all children under ten were excluded, 90% of the remaining population would be migrant; and if all children under the age of fifteen were

excluded, 96% of the remaining population would be migrant. These figures are, of course, only a very rough guide, as there were migrant families that included children. But, given the predominance of single people and childless couples in migrant populations, it is a fair assumption that a great proportion of middle-aged Harlemites would have been migrants. Louise Venable Kennedy, Negro peasant turns cityward, effects of recent migrations to Northern centers, New York, 1930, 135-136; and Laidlaw ed., op.cit., 301.

51. In 1930 there were 54,754 foreign-born blacks, mostly from the Caribbean, in New York City. These were 22% of the total black immigrant population. Of the rest, 42% came from Virginia and the Carolinas; and 11% from Georgia and Florida. The residue hailed mainly from other Southern states. Osofsky, op.cit., 128-129.
52. New Day 2 (13), March 31 1938; and 2 (19), May 12 1938.
53. Ibid. 2 (27), July 27 1938; and Spoken Word 2 (87), September 26 1936.
54. Many studies have drawn attention to the structural causes of black migration to the cities in the nineteen-tens and 'twenties: the declining demand for agricultural labour in the South and the increasing demand for industrial labour, especially in the North. These factors are touched on further in Chapter Six, below, p. 364-365. See also: Kennedy, op.cit., 43-47. But an emphasis on these factors obscures the way in which migrants saw these developments as creating opportunities for them. The migrants, though generally poor and unskilled, were usually drawn not from the most demoralised of Southern blacks but from the most ambitious. They were predominantly young people who were discontented with their prospects in the South. Certainly the migration developed the character of a mass movement inconsistent with the suggestion that it was merely a response to change in the economic structure. Frazier, Negro family, 291-292; Kennedy, op.cit., 22-26 and 128; and Karl E. and Alma F. Taeuber, Negroes in cities: residential segregation and neighborhood change, Chicago, 1965, 126-127. The Taeubers point out that there is, as yet, no satisfactory study of what is probably the most important black social development in the twentieth century. The latest work is Florette Henri, Black migration, movement North, 1900-1920, New York, 1975, which although it includes no new research on the process of migration itself, agrees with the conclusions drawn above, 49-59.
55. James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan, 3.
56. Contemporary black observers were almost unanimous in seeing the migrations as a flight from racial proscription. Social scientists, on the other hand, have emphasised the general economic changes that made the migration possible. They have pointed out that there was a black movement into Southern as well as Northern cities; and they have drawn attention to a similar movement of Southern whites to Northern cities. They have chosen to see the migration as, above all, a search for economic rather than racial opportunity: Kennedy, op.cit.,

52-57. Although black migration was obviously not a direct response to Southern racial violence and it is probably true, as Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake have suggested, that the migrants were ambivalent about residential integration, mixing socially with whites and intermarriage; nevertheless it is clear that the migrants demanded the educational and social amenities that were denied them in the rural South and sought economic and social mobility. Nor does it appear that the migrants, coming from a society saturated in racial ideology, perceived the fine distinctions of the social scientists between economic and racial motives. Certainly, the migrations caused an unprecedented upsurge in racial consciousness in the Northern cities. Ralph Bunche, Conceptions and ideologies of the Negro problem, a research memorandum, Carnegie-Myrdal Study, 1940, Schomburg Collection, 130-131; St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, Black metropolis: a study of Negro life in a northern city, New York, 1946, 99-139; Frazier, Negro family, 291-292 and 295-298; and Kennedy, op.cit., 49-50. There was a dramatic instance of black self-assertiveness in the violent resistance to the Chicago riots of 1919: William H. Tuttle, Race riot: Chicago in the red summer of 1919, New York, 1970, 213-216, 221-226. See also Henri, op.cit., passim; Levine, op.cit., 261-267; and David Gordon Nielson, Black ethos: northern urban Negro life and thought, 1890-1930, Westport, Connecticut, 1977, passim., esp. 95-121.

57. Some writers have seen the Universal Negro Improvement Association as "a compensatory escape for Negroes to whom the urban promised land had turned out to be a hopeless ghetto." August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From plantation to ghetto: an interpretive history of American Negroes, rev.ed., London, 1970, 226-229. See also E. David Cronon, Black Moses: the story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Madison, Wisconsin, 1955, passim, esp. 21-38. While it would be absurd to deny the frustration that many blacks must have experienced in the urban North and, perhaps, that such frustration played a part in the Garvey movement; nevertheless, the ambition and hope that fuelled such frustration should not be over-looked. The U.N.I.A., with its grandiose economic and political schemes, was extraordinarily assertive and confident for a movement born, supposedly, of hopelessness. Two recent studies, although lacking any social analysis of the U.N.I.A., do, at least, draw attention to its militance: Tony Martin, Race first: the ideological and organisational struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Westport, Connecticut, 1976; and Theodore G. Vincent Black power and the Garvey movement, San Francisco, 1971. See especially Appendix 1, Declaration of rights of the Negro people of the world, 257-265.
58. A precis of the employment situation is to be found in Osofsky, op.cit., 136-137. There is an extensive discussion below, Chapter Five, p.247-259. In 1936 the Mayor's Commission suggested that the Harlem riot of March 19 1935, in which there were attacks on white-owned businesses in Harlem and on the police, was caused by an "emotional tension" which had arisen because of the gap between the aspirations of Harlemites and the economic and social conditions of their lives. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 11-12 and 16-17.

59. Spoken Word 2 (77), August 22 1936; and Hoshor, op.cit., 131. Most of the items that the followers reported they had stolen had been taken from places where they had worked.
60. Out of one page of fifty-two repayments in which sums of money were reported in the World Herald, thirty were for sums of \$20 and over. On the same page, of twenty-eight repayments where the nature of the debt was clear, twenty-four were for everyday expenses and, of these, six were for rent arrears. World Herald 1 (2), November 26 1936.
- Of sixty-five debt repayments which reported when the debt had been incurred: twenty-five had been incurred in the 'thirties and twenty-four in the 'twenties. Of ninety-one debts whose places of origin were given, fifteen had been incurred in the South and fifty-six in either Newark (N.J.) or New York City. Both these samples are subjective: being merely the sum of instances noted from the Peace Mission press. The debt repayments which appeared there were, presumably, already selected for the interest they might provide, and, indeed, were often printed again and again if they took the editor's fancy. There was no attempt made to collate and analyse all the debt repayments that were reported.
61. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937; and 1 (29), October 7 1937. Most of the rent arrears in the sample dated from the early 'thirties but some dated from the previous decade and a few went back to the South. The repayment of rent arrears was the second largest category of debt repayments in the sample. But see above, footnote 60.
62. Ibid. 1 (23), August 26 1937; and 3 (10), March 9 1939. Again, some of these bills had been incurred in the South.
63. Spoken Word 2 (75), August 15 1936.
64. The settling of hire purchase debts was the largest category of debt repayments in the sample: of eighty-seven repayments for which the cause was reported, twenty-four were to settle hire-purchase agreements. There were twenty-three repayments of rent arrears. The remaining forty repayments were: private debts, 11; medical bills, 9; railway fares, 8; public utility bills, 8; business debts, 3; and organisation dues, 1. But see above, footnote 60.
65. Baltimore Afro-American March 3 1934; and Fraternal Review XI (3), March 3 1932.
66. Baltimore Afro-American March 7 1936. The unethical practices of some furniture dealers were given much publicity in the black press when Harlem Assemblyman, Robert W. Justice, put forward an amendment to a personal property bill in the New York Legislature in 1936 to give greater protection to the credit customer. The amendment, supported by the Harlem Lawyers Association, was not passed. New York Amsterdam News March 28 1936.
67. Ibid. October 7 1931.

68. Baltimore Afro-American March 7 1936; and New York Amsterdam News March 28 1936. See also: New York Age February 6 1932; and New York Amsterdam News September 14 and September 21 1932.
69. Ibid. September 14 1932.
70. James H. Johnson, Harlem, the war and other addresses, New York, 1942, 64-67. This is from a sermon delivered in 1934 as part of Harlem's "Don't buy where you can't work" boycott of local white-owned stores that refused to hire black salespeople. See below, Chapter Nine, p. 591-593.
71. The National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders, set up by President Lyndon Johnson to investigate the causes of the ghetto riots of that time, found that the exploitative ways of some ghetto merchants were just as they had been thirty years before. This is a problem shared by all the poor, both black and white, and stems, on the one hand from their vulnerability - their lack of purchasing power and education; and, on the other hand, from the high costs incurred by the merchant in selling high priced goods to the poor which the merchant may seek to recoup, at least through higher prices and often through unscrupulous practices. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, New York, 1968, 174-277; see also William K. Tabb, Political economy of the black ghetto, New York, 1970, 37-40.
72. For the role of debt in the life of a Southern tenant and sharecropper, see C.S. Johnson, E.R. Embree and W.W. Alexander, Collapse of the cotton tenancy, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1935, passim.; and Arthur F. Raper and Ira De A. Reid, Sharecroppers all, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1941, passim.

In a recent revisionist study of the black position in the American economy between 1865 and 1914, Robert Higgs challenges the bald assertion that landlords and storekeepers, in sharecropping contracts and the granting of credit, either discriminated against blacks or reduced their tenants to peonage. He argues that the scarcity of agricultural labour and its freedom of mobility militated against such developments. He does not at any point disturb the main argument, however, - that black sharecroppers were, in the nature of their relationship with the landlord and merchant, condemned to dependency and subsistence farming that yielded them little possibility of improvement. Robert Higgs, Competition and coercion: blacks in the American economy 1865-1914, London, 1977, 45-59, 64-75.

To this generation of ghetto dwellers, the South remained the main reference point in its perception of social and economic conditions and race relations in the North. They had hoped for better things and were disappointed. As Claude Brown wrote, somewhat ironically, "Before the soreness of the cotton fields had left Mama's back, her knees were getting sore from scrubbing 'Goldberg's' floor. Nevertheless, she was better off; she had gone from the fire into the frying pan." Claude Brown, Manchild in the promised land, London, 1965, 7-8; see also: New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 2.

73. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 65.
74. Spoken Word 2 (55), June 6 1936. Daddy Gray died before he could find work. See below, Chapter Four, p.
75. This, of course, is the burden of most studies of ghetto conditions from that time to this: but expressed most eloquently by Richard Wright, Native son, New York, 1940; Ralph Ellison, Invisible man, New York, 1952; and James Baldwin's autobiographical essays: Fire next time, London, 1963; Nobody knows my name, London, 1964; and Notes of a native son, London, 1964.
76. Spoken Word 2 (29), March 7 1936.
77. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1., 238.
78. New Day 1 (29), October 7 1937; and 2 (27), July 7 1938. Of the ten welfare repayments recorded from the Peace Mission press, five were for sums of over fifty dollars and four for sums of over a hundred dollars. Again, obviously, no statistical significance can be attached to these figures.
79. World Herald 1 (20), April 1 1937.
80. Ibid. 1 (2), November 26 1936.
81. Hoshor, op.cit., 227. Other commendations came from landlord's agent, Lester E. Tomback, of New York City; and C.J. Darby of Bolingbroke, Georgia. Tomback received \$34 in payment of rent arrears from Mrs. Sincere Sweet and C.J. Darby wrote, "Eighteen years ago he [Samuel Goodwin, a follower] left me and said he would pay me. FATHER has cleaned him up. He came and paid me up. Thank GOD for such a man." New Day 1 (7), July 2 1936; and 1 (33), November 4 1937.
82. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 66-67.
83. New Day 4 (14), April 4 1940; and Harris, op.cit., 62.
84. Frazier, Negro family, 291-324. Frazier discussed the black ghettos in Harlem, New York City and the South Side, Chicago, in terms of "concentric zones" spreading out from the centre of the community. He demonstrated that where living conditions were best - at the periphery of the community - the indices of population characteristics showed a higher educational and occupational status and a greater family stability. Ibid., 301-324.
85. Ibid., 325-342.
86. Some sociologists, notably Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan in Beyond the melting pot: the Negroes, Puerto-Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963, extended Frazier's thesis, which was concerned only with migrant blacks, to include all poor ghetto blacks, even the second generation. In turn, a number of anthropologists reacting against the then fashionable "culture of poverty" school of thought, rejected the picture of widespread social, and especially family, breakdown among the

ghetto poor. Frazier's reliance on statistics supplied by the police and welfare agencies was criticised. These sources, the critics argued, are insensitive to unconventional patterns of social organisation and show only deviance from a middle-class norm. See, for instance, Charles A. Valentine, Culture and poverty: critique and counter-proposals, Chicago, 1968, 21-24. The critics favoured, instead, the notion that networks of relatives and peer-groups helped cushion the black poor against the pressures of urban life rather than the conventional nuclear family, which, they admitted, remained weak in the ghetto. A representative work is Norman E. Whitten and John F. Szwed eds., Afro-American anthropology: contemporary perspectives, New York, 1970, especially 23-53, 203-11.

87. Gutman, op.cit., 432-456.

88. The arguments of both Frazier and Gutman rely on statistical evidence. Often, the evidence itself is the same. But Gutman focuses on the situation of the majority, while Frazier stresses what he considers to be a significant minority. For instance, Gutman states that a father was present in seven out of ten black families in New York City in 1925; and Frazier notes that in the large Northern cities "from 10 to 30 per cent of the Negro families have female heads." But Frazier's argument diverges when he explores why this proportion of families with women at their head was "higher than the proportion among either the native whites or the foreign-born whites." Frazier, Negro family, 327; and Gutman, op.cit., 454.

According to Reynolds Farley's study of male absent households as reported in the federal Censuses from 1910-1940, the proportion of black married women who lived apart from their husbands increased from 5% in 1910 to 11% in 1940 and, in both years, was higher in the North than the South and higher in the urban South than the rural South. Reynolds Farley, Growth of the black population, Chicago, 1970, 145-157.

89. Gutman admits these limitations. Gutman, op.cit., 433.

90. Ibid., Appendix A., 516.

91. Frazier, Negro family, 334-335.

92. It seems that some Harlem women had asked welfare organisations to find other homes for their children. Testimony of Jane Judge, of the Charity Organisation Society (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1379).

93. Harris, op.cit., 62-66.

94. Ibid., 11.

95. Cantril and Sherif, op.cit., 187. Another testimony which reveals a strong antipathy to men is reported in McKay, Harlem Negro metropolis, 42:

"Father has set me free from the domination of man. Oh, I don't want any man. What is a man and who is a man? There is no telling nowadays in the midst of the masquerade. A man he dresses

himself up and struts along the street and imagines he is hot to kill. But what is this thing we have been calling a man? Can you answer me? Can you tell me, eh? In reality he is no better than a piece of bad meat, which the butcher throws away because it is no good for eating."

96. Some anthropologists who have studied ghetto life styles have drawn attention to the widely held ghetto belief that it is in the nature of men to exploit sexual relationships. They have also shown that the aspirations of both men and women for honest and loving partnerships are often balked by the economic circumstances of ghetto life. Roger D. Abrahams, Positively black, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970, 109-128; and Elliot Liebow, Tally's corner, Washington D.C.: a study of Negro streetcorner men, London, 1967, 103-150.
97. New York Amsterdam News February 7 1934.
98. New York Times July 18 1935 and July 20 1935.
99. New York Sun May 3 1935.
100. Conversion was, in the earliest contact of the slaves with Christianity, an adult experience. It would also seem to have been a solitary one, experienced only after prayer and vigil. Later, with the establishment of black denominations in the post-bellum South and the institution of regular revivals, it came to be an expected part of "getting religion" for black adolescents. It then usually took place amid the congregation at the "mourners' bench". For examples of earlier conversions: Ellen Gibson Wilson, Loyal blacks, New York, 1976, 12-14, 124-125; and Clifton H. Johnson ed., God struck me dead, Philadelphia, 1969, passim. For the later pattern, see Hortense Powdermaker, After freedom: a cultural study in the deep South, New York, 1939, 260-269.
101. This "typical" pattern is abstracted from Clifton H. Johnson, ed., op.cit. It allowed, however, for generous improvisation. Claims have been made for the singularity of the black American folk conversion vision and for the survival in them of an African religious sensibility. Their content is apparently derived from a number of sources, including devotional pictures of Jesus and God, but mostly from Revelations and the 23rd Psalm. Their pattern was established as early as the First Great Awakening and is clearly attributable to white evangelism and white conversion testimonies: John Wesley's Journals record their British prototypes. However, there are elements in black conversion testimonies that are distinctive: the importance of the vigil, for instance, and the manner in which Jesus (although not God) is given a vital personality. Most important of all, perhaps, is the development of the conversion experience as a set form, although capable of improvisation, which was required of anyone seeking entry into the ranks of the "re-born": its establishment as a church ritual, in fact; a position it never achieved in white Nonconformity. N. Curnock ed., Journal of Rev. John Wesley, London, 1938,

- vol. iii, 374, 423 and 521 and vol. iv, 335 and 340; Wilson, Loyal blacks, 12-14, 124-125; Levine op.cit., 35-37; and Milton C. Sernett, Black religion and American evangelism: white Protestants, plantation missions and the flowering of Negro Christianity 1787-1865, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1975, 84-85.
102. New York World Telegram March 14 1933.
103. Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935.
104. Hoshor, op.cit., 106 and 131.
105. Spoken Word 1 (1), October 20 1934.
106. Osofsky, op.cit., 14, 146-149; Ovington, op.cit., 84-86; Myrtle Evangeline Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2: Negro business and economic community, unpublished master's thesis, College of the City of New York, 1937, 371-378; Scheiner, op.cit., 113-117; and Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago: the making of a Negro ghetto, 1890-1920, Chicago, 1967, 24-25, 192.
107. Frazier, Negro church, 33; and C.S. Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt: Negro youth in the rural South, Washington, D.C., 1941, 136.
108. This separation was by no means uniform practice but it appears frequently enough to be significant. Clifton H. Johnson, ed., op.cit., 3; Powdermaker, op.cit., 236; and Bruce A. Rosenberg, Art of the American folk preacher, New York, 1970, 12.
109. Sernett, op.cit., 71-72.
110. Harold Courlander, Treasury of Afro-American folklore, New York, 1976, 337-340. See also Gutman, op.cit., 70-75, 286-287.
111. J. Mason Brewer, Word on the Brazos: Negro preacher tales from the Brazos Bottoms of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1953, 12-34.
112. Frazier, Negro church, 34; Frazier, Negro family, 119-120; and C.S. Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt, 136. The importance of the fundamentalist morality is attested to in a form of black folk tale called the "preacher tale". The fact that an entire body of folk comedy has chosen the preacher as its target, just as the European folk tradition singled out the priest and the parson, indicates his importance in the community. Furthermore, just as in the European tradition, these folk tales puncture the sanctity of the preacher with barbs about his greed, promiscuity and hypocrisy. This satire, however, was not a criticism of the values he purported to uphold but rather a recognition that, as it was expressed in one preacher tale, "de word tell us dat de man ain't be baan what kin live 'bove sin." Brewer, op.cit., 12-23; Courlander, op.cit., 454-465; and Richard M. Dorson, American Negro folk-tales, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1967, 363-372.

113. Frazier, Negro family, 297; and Leroi Jones, Blues people, New York, 1963, 105-108. To be sure, the "preacher tale" persisted in the city: but its significance changed. Its frame of reference remained rural and the stealing, fornicating preacher became a stock type of reviled "country-boy". The urban folk tradition generally celebrates the traits and activities for which it condemns the preacher: cunning, hard drinking and sexual prowess. But the preacher is condemned for his pretence to morality: his clinging to values that no longer have a meaning. Abrahams, op.cit., 99-106.
114. E. Franklin Frazier has drawn attention to the informal "zoning" of Harlem residence at this time. The central zones sheltered the "red light" district, while families tended to congregate in the outer zones. Frazier, Negro family, 314-315. Certain streets in Harlem were well-known as the particular haunts of pushers and pimps and could thus, to an extent, be avoided. See, for instance, Meriwether, op.cit., 15.
115. Baldwin, Fire next time, 31; see also: Claude Brown, op.cit.; Meriwether, op.cit.; and Ann Petry, The Street, London, 1947, passim.
116. New Day 1 (36), November 25 1937. The injunction to celibacy seems drastic to a modern generation familiar with effective methods of birth control. However, studies among blacks during the Depression indicate that only about ten per cent of the adult population had a rudimentary knowledge of birth control and that the most common methods were douching and periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse. Father Divine's concern about the prospects of children at this time seems to have been reflected in the behaviour of the wider population. During the Depression the marriage rate among blacks was atypically low. Farley, op.cit., 136, 141, 194-198.
117. Concern about juvenile delinquency in Harlem reached paranoic proportions in New York City at the close of the nineteen-thirties. See, for instance, New York Times November 7, November 28 and December 6 1941. See also: City-Wide Citizens Committee on Harlem, Story of the City-Wide Citizens Committee on Harlem, New York, 1943, [unpublished typescript in Schomburg Collection], 3-4; and Dominic J. Capecci Jnr., Harlem riot of 1943, Philadelphia, 1977, 9-10, 40-41, 124-125. Most of Harlem's delinquency, however, did not concern, as the metropolitan papers suggested, robbery with violence. Many children were arrested for hitching rides on trolleys, riding the subways without a ticket, or selling newspapers and shining shoes on the street. New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 95-97.
118. Spoken Word 1 (25), April 6 1935.
119. New Day 4 (39), September 26 1940.
120. Ibid. 2 (14), April 17 1938; 3 (1), January 5 1939; and 3 (5), February 2 1939; and World Herald 1 (33), April 15 1937.

121. New York Times April 15 1937 and May 4 1937; and New Day 3 (5), February 2 1939. The police maintained a liaison with the Peace Mission Movement and frequently addressed banquet meetings on subjects like road safety. The police claimed that the Peace Mission was one of the few groups in Harlem who were not suspicious of the Police Department's motives. Charges of police discrimination and brutality against blacks were commonplace in Harlem; but Father Divine claimed to have brought a "harmonious condition between the Police Department and the civilians." New York World Telegram March 28 1941; New Day 1 (5), June 18 1936; 1 (30), October 14 1937; 1 (40), December 23 1937; 2 (18), May 5 1938; 3 (1), January 5 1939; 3 (5), February 2 1939; and 3 (23), June 8 1939; and World Herald 1 (22), April 15 1937.

122. Harris, op.cit., 127; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 239-240 and 250. A "Found" Column in the New Day 1 (8), July 9 1936 listed:

"\$10 found on 115th Street on the first of the week. \$1 found 20 W. 115th Street June 24th. \$5 found at I R T Subway, change booth No. 2, Atlantic Avenue, Bklyn. \$1 found 107 Wycott Street, May 16th ... a number of coats, a bundle with dresses, brothers' underwear including a bundle of lollypops in package (definite identification). Aprons, leather brown coat, umbrellas, buttons with Father Divine's picture lost and found some time ago. 2 small purses etc., etc., gloves."

123. World Herald 1 (2), November 26 1936. See also: New York Times October 13 1936; Spoken Word 2 (75), August 15 1936; and 2 (78), August 25 1936; and World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937. Sincere letters accompanied the settlements. Mary Bee told Major General Frank Parker, Commissioner General of the Army post at Fort Hamilton, New York, that she "was asking your forgiveness" for the goods she had stolen: "I was using the name of Artimichia Brown. I am no longer that old body ... This new body and mind intends to make good for every wrong that old body did." Spoken Word 2 (45), May 2 1936.

124. World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937. Father Divine said, two years later, that he had always supported marriage as an institution:

"I have often said, when you find someone who you can love implicitly with all sincerity and be conscientious in your endeavors and truthful and be faithful to your prospective companion ... then you have found your right one."

But such matches were few and far between. Many people were faithless and "became to be ... in the likeness of some other woman's husband or some other man's wife." Other marriages were based on "extortion and defraudery": "maybe you wanted to get the man for his money or maybe you wanted to get the woman for her money, or have her service that she might be

- your servant." Such marriages had no validity in the eyes of man or God. New Day 3 (33), August 17 1939.
125. These conditions were the commonplace observations of a number of reports into Harlem and the health of its black population. See, for instance, New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 81-2; and New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Report to the Legislature, 85.
 126. Mayor's Committee on City Planning, West Harlem community study, 14. Conditions were similar in the East Harlem Health District, which had a 40% black population in 1939. East Harlem District Health Committee, Health, social and economic conditions in Health Area 20, East Harlem Health District, New York, 1942, vii-xi, 18-28.
 127. E. Franklin Frazier, Negro in the United States, London, 1957, 586-587; and Henri, op.cit., 34-36.
 128. E.H.L. Corwin and Gertrude E. Sturges, Opportunities for the medical education of Negroes, New York, 1936, 3-7.
 129. Ibid., 1-13, 191-220; Frazier, Negro in the United States, 589-90; New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 84; Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 46-47, 74-80; and Gerald A. Spencer, Medical symphony: a study of the contribution of the Negro to medical progress in New York, New York, 1947, passim.
 130. The three voluntary hospitals in the Central Harlem Health District admitted neither black patients nor black staff. Some small black private hospitals were but shortlived: and overtures by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to fund a black voluntary hospital were rebuffed by some black physicians, notably the influential Dr. Louis T. Wright, as likely to result in a Jim-Crow hospital. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 49-57; and Spencer, op.cit., 54-62.
 131. The full story of Harlem Hospital cannot be unravelled in a footnote. It was the first municipal hospital in the United States to open its doors to black staff and interns. But this was achieved only after considerable pressure from the black community and the intervention of Tammany Democrat Mayors Hylan and Walker. It was also at the cost of acrimony between some white physicians and surgeons and their black colleagues; and acrimony between sections of the black medical fraternity. There were no less than four investigations of the administration of Harlem Hospital in a little over ten years and the final reorganisation of 1930 caused reverberation throughout the following decade. Dr. Louis T. Wright, the first black physician to be admitted to Harlem Hospital, was made secretary of the Medical Board. This led to a large number of black appointments which caused resentment among older black physicians, since Wright favoured the graduates of Northern, predominantly white, medical schools over the graduates of the all-black Southern colleges, Howard and Meharry. Because of the inaccessibility of other colleges, three-quarters of all black physicians graduated from Howard and Meharry: but

- Wright justified his policy on the grounds that Northern graduates were better qualified and that it was important that black physicians should prove themselves as good as, and perhaps better, than their white colleagues. Corwin and Sturges, op.cit., 23-32, 72-94; Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 57-60; and Spencer, op.cit. 34-43.
132. An N.A.A.C.P. investigatory commission found all these deficiencies and more in 1932. Little appeared to have been done to rectify them by the time the Mayor's Commission held its hearings three years later. Corwin and Sturges, op.cit., passim; New York City Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 86-89; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 61-63.
 133. New York Amsterdam News May 10 1933; February 29 1936; October 17 1936; October 24 1936 and December 12 1936.
 134. Ibid. October 17 1936.
 135. Genovese, op.cit., 224-229; Zora Neale Hurston, Mules and men, London, 1936, 340-344; Levine, op.cit., 64-66; and Newbell Miles Puckett, Folk beliefs of the Southern Negro, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1926, 358-388.
 136. New York Amsterdam News August 28 1937; Negro World February 7 1931; and New York World Telegram February 4 1933 and February 18 1937.
 137. Interstate Tattler June 23 1932.
 138. Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee, Twenty years of community health work, outline of the history of the Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association, 1922-1942, New York, 1942, 14, 22; and Henri, op.cit., 36.
 139. Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee, op.cit., passim.
 140. New York Times October 3 1937; and Harry Robinson, Welfare problems of Harlem's Negroes, August 24 1939 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection).
 141. Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee, op.cit., 16-18, describes popular health education programmes. There was a well publicised drive against quacks in Harlem in the summer of 1932. New York Amsterdam News June 22 1932; and Interstate Tattler June 23 1932.
 142. The Central Harlem Health Center established neighbourhood clinics. Harlem Hospital expanded its bed capacity and ambulance service. In 1936 a 'Women's Pavilion' opened at the hospital with over three hundred and fifty beds. Harry Robinson, Welfare problems of Harlem's Negroes, August 24 1939 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 5, Schomburg Collection).

143. New York World Telegram February 11 1937.
144. Genovese, op.cit., 216-224; Hurston, op.cit., 229-304; Levine, op.cit., 67-74; and Puckett, op.cit., 167-385.
145. This is a distinction drawn by Hurston, op.cit., 340; and Puckett, op.cit., 385. Another name for conjure was "working roots". Claude Brown, op.cit., 41-43. When used in conjure, herbs and potions might be good for many things. An advertisement for incense powder claimed that it could be "successful in money matters, games of chance, love, business etc.," Negro World January 21 1931.
146. New York Amsterdam News June 22 1932 and October 26 1932; Interstate Tattler February 27 1925 and June 23 1932; and Negro World January 4 1930 and December 12 1931. There has been no extended study of the practice of conjure in the Southern or Northern cities, excepting, of course, New Orleans.
147. Hurston, op.cit., 336-339; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 73-81.
148. The Negro World, which was insecure financially, relied heavily on advertisements from faith healers, herb doctors and practitioners of conjure. Negro World February 7 1931 and May 16 1931. Cabir Vanandi's numerology column ran in the Negro World from November 28 1931 to February 6 1932. He was among those arrested in the police swoop on quacks in 1932. New York Amsterdam News June 22 1932. The Negro World did, however, print opinions that were vehemently opposed to conjure. Davis Lee wrote of "hoodoos": "If the practice is genuine, or there is such a thing, why don't they use their powers to eradicate lynching, Jim Crowism, and other evils that threaten our very existence? No, they are liars, crooks and cheats and cater to ignorance only." Ibid. March 19 1932.
149. Conjure even merged with stage conjuring. "Black Herman" mixed the career of professional magician with the roles of spiritualist, faith healer, fortune teller, herbalist and folk doctor. When he died in 1934, he was well-known to black theatre audiences in the North and South. New York Age April 22 1934; and Chicago Defender April 21 1934.
150. For the role of "cunning wisdom" see Keith Thomas, Religion and the decline of magic, London, 1971, 212-252.
151. Petry, op.cit., 92-102. In this description can be detected the same element as Frantz Fanon describes as intervening between the patient and the doctor in a colonial situation: the belief that the patient is entrusting himself to someone who despises him. It may have been this persistent distrust and suspicion of whites that contributed most strongly to Harlem's attitude toward Harlem Hospital. Frantz Fanon, A dying colonialism, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1970, 105-106.
152. A discussion of this belief as it appeared in sixteenth and seventeenth century England in Thomas, op.cit., 78-89. For instances of "sin-sickness" as part of the black convert's

trial of faith before conversion, see Clifton H. Johnson ed., op.cit., 22, 61-62, 75, 94 and 150. Newman I. White quotes a hymn, about an influenza epidemic that struck America after the First World War, called "That Influenza Train" - "a terrible disease that must come from God/For the doctors couldn't say." Sinners were exhorted to get on the "gospel train" before the other train should overtake them. Newman I. White, American Negro folk songs, Boston, Massachusetts, 1928 [facsimile edition, Hartboro, Pennsylvania, 1965], 424-6. Richard Wright wrote in his autobiography that his grandmother, who was a Seventh Day Adventist, believed that his mother's illness was a punishment for Richard's sins. Richard Wright, Black boy, London, 1970, 114-115.

153. Clifton H. Johnson ed., op.cit., 60 and 150. Puckett heard this verse sung by an old woman at a revival meeting in the South: "I know Jesus am a medicine man/I know Jesus kin understan'/I know Jesus am a bottle uv gold/Hit takes jes' one bottle to cure a sin-sick soul." Puckett, op.cit., 567. The image recurs in a sign outside a Harlem storefront church in the 'twenties:

"We Believe That All Manner of Disease
Can be Cured
by the power of GOD divine
Jesus is the Doctor
Services on Sunday"

Reid, Let us prey, op.cit., 275.

154. See below, Chapter Six, p. 377, 379-381.
155. Thomas, op.cit., 252.
156. Brother Pullen claimed that "medical records, X-ray proofs and stenographic records of testimonies are accessible to you or anyone else who has a true scientific attitude to Life." Spoken Word 1 (12), January 5 1935; and Parker, op.cit., 160-161.
157. Ibid., 166-167.
158. New York World Telegram December 19 1933.
159. Spoken Word 1 (13), January 12 1935. Similar testimonies of horrific, and often unspecified or mysterious, illnesses and Father's miraculous powers of healing are to be found throughout the Peace Mission press. As the followers sang,

Father is the doctor,
Father is the doctor,
Father is the doctor,
Bless his holy name.

Father is the doctor,
Father is the doctor,
Father is the doctor,
He'll cure us of anything.

Harris, op.cit., 110.

160. New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936.
161. Spoken Word 2 (25), February 22 1936.
162. World Herald 1 (23), April 22 1937.

CHAPTER FOUR : "HERE YOU ARE AND THERE I AM" : LIFE WITHIN
THE PEACE MISSION MOVEMENT

As Father Divine's following grew in New York City during the early 'thirties, the Peace Mission took shape as a distinctive community. Converts left their homes and families to pursue the "evangelical life" with other followers in a variety of new Peace Mission households. Small boarding houses were opened by some followers, offering accommodation to fellow converts. Other individuals or groups of followers rented larger premises to serve as "Kingdom Extensions", where converts and visitors could eat, lodge, learn about Father Divine's teachings and join the followers in their worship. Clustering together in characteristically poor housing, in shabby and impoverished black sections of the city, the followers soon gave particular areas the appearance of Peace Mission neighbourhoods.

The growth of this community took place with little apparent control or direction from Father Divine. Although the leading "Kingdom Extensions" were under his "Personal Jurisdiction" he made apparently little attempt, at this time, to plan the development of the Movement. The communal homes, small boarding houses, and even the main extensions were usually the results of the believers' initiative. With the exception of the leading extensions, which remained at the same addresses for several years, there was also a considerable turnover in the properties used by the followers. The followers shifted from one place to another, in attempts to make a variety of rented accommodation serve their particular needs. The social structure of the Movement was essentially a spontaneous and informal development. None of the various groups were formally linked together.

Many forms of allegiance to the Peace Mission and its ideals

were possible. Hundreds of visitors and prospective followers came to the Movement's meetings, and some people probably made only emergency use of the Movement's facilities. Even among those who did renounce conventional society for the "kingdom of heaven" there was every shade of commitment from the tentative newcomer to the most loyal disciple. In this burgeoning movement, the Peace Mission's banquet meetings acted as a focus. Here followers came to eat, socialise and celebrate their salvation. It was at such meetings, which were symbolic of the unity of the followers in Father Divine and which recreated the warmth and familiarity of traditional forms of black worship, that Father Divine presented himself to the followers not only as a reassuring comforter, but as a messiah with a modern message: a man of knowledge and authority in the ways of an alien and demanding world. In his speeches, he pressed home his teachings on the "evangelical life"; introduced new ideas and activities for the followers' acceptance; gave advice to individual believers and passed judgement on their conduct. It was at the banquet meetings that Father Divine drew the Peace Mission together, established his presence and demonstrated his authority.

The believers had much to gain from the Peace Mission. It offered them warmth and companionship; it offered them a discipline through which they might regain the best of the past that they had lost, resist the demoralising pressures of the present and reach out for the promise of a better future. But there were limits to the Peace Mission's effectiveness as a community. It offered little to the children of the followers who were forced, nonetheless, to live under its rule. There were also serious disadvantages for the older members when they sought to pursue the "evangelical life". These disadvantages partly stemmed from the intensity of the commitment that Father Divine expected and partly from the impossible demands

that the "evangelical life" made on men and women who could, after all, never be more than human.

Consequently, there was always conflict and doubt among the believers; and for those who failed to adjust to the Movement or became disillusioned, the path back to the old life was long and painful. The apostate was isolated and plunged into self-doubt. Having broken all outside ties and placed all her faith in the Movement, she became more and more frightened and lonely as her doubts deepened. She lived in shame and in fear of Father Divine's retribution: afraid but dependent. This was the other, hidden, aspect of those joyous and unifying banquet meetings.

The new appearance of the Movement in Harlem was a difference of scale rather than essence from that in Sayville. The 'family' circle, which served as the basis of the group in Sayville, remained at the heart of the expanding Movement. Obeying Father Divine's injunction to cast off the ideas and relationships of a sin-soaked past, the believers abandoned their families and friends for the fellowship of the Movement. They formed themselves into a myriad of new, small 'family' groups of their own. Some followers rented apartments and lived together, in single sex groups, as "Sisters" and "Brothers." Others leased private houses and rented the rooms to fellow followers on the same basis. Some of these houses were simply dormitories; others were boarding houses and provided meals for those living there. The advertisements in the Peace Mission press suggested the variety of these arrangements. Seth Noah advised that there was "Room and Space for Brothers" at 107 West 126th Street; and Miss Patience Waite offered "7 large Private Rooms, Unfurnished, Steam Heat, Electric Light, Gas, Hot Water, \$15 a week" for rent at 29 West 114th Street. Another

advertisement invited male followers to inspect the "PEACE BROTHERS HOME" which was "conveniently located" in a "pleasant environment" on West 118th Street between Fifth and Lenox Avenues. The followers were free to choose their own accommodation and move at will.¹

Within their 'families' the followers pursued well-ordered lives of work, rest and worship. They lived frugally and dressed in neat, conventional styles: freshly pressed suits for the men and colourful frocks for the women. About their daily affairs, they lived like many other hard-working and staunchly respectable folk.² Yet theirs was no ordinary family life. Few of the converts who joined in the 'thirties had direct access to Father Divine. The 'family' group was their main point of entry into the believers' world. New converts entered into the routine of the group in which they lived and relied on the co-operation and example of the other believers to help them adjust to the disciplines of the "evangelical life." How swiftly and smoothly the newcomers adjusted must have depended on the enthusiasm of the convert and the moral support, advice and companionship of their fellow-believers. Yet, at all times, this 'family' world insulated them from conventional society and fostered in them a vivid sense of personal change and uniqueness. Within the 'family' the believers were at one in their love for Father Divine. They enjoyed new names and shared a special vocabulary. Past relationships were replaced by the companionship of sisterhood or brotherhood. Obedience to the tenets of the "evangelical life" required that the believers tried to treat each other with kindness, honesty and consideration in a spirit of fellowship and mutual responsibility.

This lifestyle was all the more enveloping because it was self-regulating. Father Divine made no attempt to police the affairs of these groups and such formal authority was, to a large extent,

unnecessary. This was a way of life that the followers wanted for themselves. They saw their particular community of believers as their own household and, following the tenets of the Movement, observed their own discipline.

Although 'Peace' households could spring up in any block or apartment house, the followers tended to cluster into the rooms and apartments of the blocks around the Movement's principal boarding houses and large "Kingdom Extensions." These major premises were under Father Divine's "Personal Jurisdiction" and some included dining rooms and auditoriums as well as dormitories.³

These buildings served a dual purpose in the life of the Movement. Firstly, there were social centres for all the separate groups of believers. The followers came here to talk, eat and participate in the activities of the Movement as a whole. Secondly, these buildings provided the Movement's main point of contact with the outside society. Observers came here to learn about the life and ideals of the followers; and people in need of food and emergency shelter used these premises as their temporary refuge. As these buildings were centres of activity, Father Divine's most committed disciples often preferred to live here rather than with a small 'family' group. In this way, the building served as their home, their church, their club and, usually, their workplace too, as they gave their labour and skills to run the building on the Movement's behalf.

Father Divine's own "Kingdom Headquarters" at 20 West 115th Street was the nucleus of this Peace Mission community. This was where he lived surrounded by an entourage of men and women who were known as "Father's angels." These were his personal aides, mainly people who had been with him since before 1930, plus a handful of recent converts of proven allegiance and ability. The "angels"

helped Father Divine deal with outsiders and keep abreast of clerical tasks. This inner group, Father's own 'family', included a coterie of secretaries headed by John Lamb; Father's legal adviser, Arthur M. Madison; and Peninah (Mother Divine).⁴

20 West 115th Street, the first important building opened in Father Divine's name, was acquired in December 1933. The acquisition of new extensions kept pace with the growth of the Movement so that, by mid-1935, nineteen main extensions were under his "Personal Jurisdiction" in Manhattan.⁵ As far as it can be judged, this expansion was not orchestrated personally by Father Divine. Individuals or groups of believers probably chose the premises themselves with the believers' needs in mind. It is probable that a variety of buildings were opened as extensions, found unsuitable, and subsequently abandoned. It was only those extensions with some degree of permanency that were listed as premises under Father Divine's "Personal Jurisdiction." The use of this description, moreover, may imply a greater degree of organised control than there actually was. The buildings so listed were certainly 'associated' in that they were used by the followers in a Movement in which Father Divine was the acknowledged head. But there is little evidence to suggest that they were either collectively administered or that Father Divine took, at this time, an active role in their finances or supervision.⁶

As most of Father Divine's followers were black, the main extensions were situated in ghetto areas. But the believers did not restrict themselves to Harlem. Two of the main extensions were downtown in older areas of black settlement. The extension at 308 West 53rd Street was on the fringe of the "Tenderloin". Another was located in the neighbouring San Juan district, in an old church building on West 63rd Street, which had been used by the Union

Baptist church before its move to Harlem in 1926.⁷ These two extensions were used by followers who lived or worked in the downtown area of the city. A Peace Mission journalist wrote:

"On Saturday nights when activities throughout the various Kingdoms are not quite as extensive as on other nights, the 63rd Street extension has become sort of a rendezvous. Something resembling an intimate 'family fellowship' has resulted from the habit of many from the downtown area dropping into the 63rd Street location on Saturday nights to satisfy both their spiritual and material appetites. Eating their meal in Banquet Style, an informal meeting and songfest is held." 8

The other Peace Mission buildings in Manhattan were located in Harlem. One, opened as an extension in July 1934, was housed in an elegant and well-maintained property on "Striver's Row", among the "beautiful homes" of Harlem's elite. The ground floor of the house was turned into a restaurant, where the followers served fifteen cent meals each day from ten o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon, leaving the Row redolent with "odors more familiar to less aristocratic sections of Harlem such as the odors of spare rib stew and frying pork chops." Noisy singing accompanied the evening meals, and the street was choked with the followers' cars and Peace Mission buses.⁹

The Peace Mission's arrival was not welcomed here. The other residents had always sought to preserve the "quiet and cleanliness" of the Row. The block association asked its members to sweep their doorsteps before the street cleaners arrived; to stack their garbage at the back of the buildings; and to refrain from the common habit of leaving milk bottles and paper bundles on window sills. Father Divine's followers threatened to destroy the carefully cultivated "homey atmosphere" of the Row. Mrs. William Pickens, wife of the field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) protested that, "shouting and singing draw crowds, and everybody knows that a crowd makes a place public

and common and lowers the tone of a residential block." It was not, she insisted, that "we are better or a group apart from any other group. We are simply trying to prove to the world that a group of Negroes can keep up a model residential block. Property is bound to depreciate with all this hys and cry, and some of us, like my family, have every cent we have invested in these walls."¹⁰ Despite pressure from their neighbours, Father Divine's followers refused to leave. But, in deference to the dignity of the block, they agreed to be quiet and orderly. In 1940 Claude McKay wrote that the extension was a "very decorous place. No heavy stomping or cacophonous shouting is heard there. And daily it dispenses ten cent meals to many respectable Negroes in need."¹¹

Premises like this were rare in Harlem and there was little interest, at this time, in acquiring other select properties for the Movement's use. Father Divine said that he had come to redeem the poor and oppressed. Thus, it was entirely appropriate that the other large boarding houses and extensions were opened in run-down, often impoverished neighbourhoods, among the very people he sought to save.

Destitute "Spanish Harlem" sheltered Father Divine's headquarters. During the nineteen-twenties, the area between Lenox and Madison Avenues from 110th Street in the south to 116th Street in the north had undergone a rapid change as Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans, Filipino and Cuban immigrants deserted their original settlement around West 14th Street to move there. They joined the small Spanish-speaking colony of native born Spaniards, Central and South Americans already settled around West 115th Street and overwhelmed the existing Jewish community. By 1930 Spanish-speaking newcomers were concentrated in this tight pocket of Lower Harlem.¹² Blocks of mixed Spanish and black occupancy spilled northwards as far as

119th Street and westwards to Eighth Avenue. The area had a distinct character. The streets were filled with Spanish voices and music. Shops advertised their wares in Spanish; and in the summer, folding tables were brought out onto the sidewalks where the men played cards under the gaze of street loungers.¹³

The block housing the Peace Mission's headquarters testified to finer days. An abandoned synagogue stood close to the extension, and the "Kingdom" itself had once been a fraternity building. Now the block was dingy and overcrowded. Grim "old law" tenements, five and six stories high, lined both sides of the street, and most of the people living there were poor and unemployed.¹⁴ Yet the block gave the impression of noisy vitality. A. Honaael Meriditas wrote:

"As we turn into 115th Street, it is a veritable bedlam of extraneous sounds. Taxicabs career crazily through the streets, barely missing some boys playing in the gutter. We never knew so many people could live in one block! and all of them, it appears are in the street. It is a cross section and indescribable mixture of life in the so-called poorer districts." 15

In the middle of the road the children played baseball, jumping rope, "Hi-Li", snap the whip, and dancing games of every variety. Ice-cream carts, soda carts and candy sellers added to the noise and bustle during the summer and, now and then, a merry-go-round on a horse-drawn wagon drew up to the kerb. On the corner with Fifth Avenue a Pentecostal church held services in Spanish, while farther along the block stood another Pentecostal church formed by opening the first floor rooms of a row of houses. Services here, too, were in Spanish and the singing was "full of spirit with good instrumental accompaniment." Further on was a Gospel Mission.¹⁶

Meriditas wrote of 115th Street:

"Here, in this meek and lowly way is FATHER DIVINE doing his work of reclaiming and elevating humanity. It is among these seeming unfortunates, amid this

apparent squalor and confusion, that He has seen fit to concentrate His activities." 17

Some of the adolescents in the neighbourhood resented the Peace Mission's entry; and they showed their antagonism in more aggressive ways than the disgruntled residents of "Striver's Row". In February 1934 Father Divine wrote to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to complain that the followers at 20 West 115th Street were subjected to "continuous annoyance". Gangs of young men and women, he alleged, disrupted their meetings, "fight and break glasses and throw things around." On several occasions, he wrote indignantly, "they have broken the glass in the door and torn down fixtures, and even attacked several of the attendants, including some of the feminine co-workers attempting to do them bodily harm." He appealed for police protection against the "hoodlums". But the trouble apparently died down and the followers eventually gained acceptance in the neighbourhood.¹⁸

20 West 115th Street, itself, was a neat, comparatively modern, four storey brick building. The doors were always open and outside hung a small sign: "FATHER DIVINE'S PEACE MISSION AND ACTIVITIES - All Races, Creeds and Colors - Welcome". Deep down below street level there was a large kitchen and a dining room dominated by a huge U-shaped banqueting table. At the head of the table stood an elaborately decorated chair, embroidered with the word "GOD", with a microphone standing beside it. Not only were chairs set around the table, but small rows of chairs were squeezed within the arms of the 'U' facing Father's 'throne'. Stairs from the street and the banquet hall led to a large room on the first floor which bustled with people throughout the day. Here people came to rest awhile on the wooden benches, and to improvise and lead in song. Over the door of the room hung a sign: "Fear not, little flock, for Father has given us the Kingdom", and around the walls slogans painted on canvas read:

"The Tree of Life is Blooming, Blooming for One and All"; "Father Divine is the Light of the World"; "Father Divine Has Brought Peace to the Nation. He is God. If You Keep His Sayings You Will Never See Death". There were offices and dormitories on the next floor, and the top floor was reserved for Father Divine. His suite and private offices were reached through a long series of antechambers and corridors. Canaries in cages filled the passages with song and two huge imitation doves on pedestals marked "Love" and "Peace" stood beside Father Divine's desk. In his main office there was a battery of tape recorders and microphones to record and broadcast his messages around the building and to nearby shops and lodgings.¹⁹

115th Street was important as the nucleus of the Peace Mission community, but West 126th Street between Lenox and Seventh Avenues was equally distinctive as a Peace Mission street. After Faithful Mary came to New York City she rented a set of buildings vacated by white business there. By the end of 1934 followers were living in several four-storey brownstones on this block leased in her name. Each house sheltered about fifty followers and three of the buildings had spacious dining rooms. In January 1935 Faithful Mary rented the largest building on the block, the "Turkish Bath House", and this became the headquarters of the "Faithful Mary Extension."²⁰

Once a magnificent building, much of its splendour had faded through age and lack of repair. A number of imitation marble stairways, to what McKelway and Liebling described as the "labyrinthine upper structure", were roped off because they were decayed and crumbling. People going to the dormitories on the upper floors were forced to use the front flight of steps on one floor, a side flight on the other, and a back flight on the next. Plumbers refused to undertake any major repairs because the pipes were so eaten away with rust that there was danger of an imminent collapse of the

plumbing system. The building was damp and some of the walls were covered with mould. On the ground floor a large hall was used for banquet meetings, and in the best part of the building an apartment was reserved for Father Divine's use. An empty swimming pool in the basement served as a "subterranean backyard" for drying clothes.²¹

Between 1935-1936 the number of buildings under Father Divine's jurisdiction in Manhattan rose from nineteen to twenty-five. Most of the new properties were in dilapidated parts of Harlem, and West 126th Street and West 115th Street retained their character as Peace Mission neighbourhoods. Faithful Mary rented two more houses on her block,²² and in "Spanish Harlem" followers crowded into shops and lodgings around Father's headquarters. Indeed, a journalist who went in search of 20 West 115th Street in December 1935 said that he could have found it without a street number, for, with every block, "Peace" signs increased. At night, window signs lit with small bulbs gleamed the "Full Gospel" into the street below: "FATHER DIVINE IS GOD", "FATHER DIVINE IS GOD", "FATHER DIVINE IS GOD".²³

It was at the extensions that the followers, scattered in their countless groups in a variety of living quarters, came together for their meetings. There were no formal services or scripture readings in the Peace Mission Movement. Such conventions were considered irrelevant by Father Divine's followers as they believed that they were living in the kingdom of heaven on earth. Instead, they met to praise Father Divine and to celebrate their salvation.²⁴

The pattern of these meetings had been set in Sayville. Father Divine had joined the followers at the communal meal table and, after dining, he had invited them to "relax" their "conscious mentalities" and confess their sins. Confession and praise had continued for several hours in a mood of mounting ecstasy.²⁵

The growth of the Movement made it impossible for Father Divine

to eat with all his followers. But he told them to observe the practice of the communal meal. This, he said, was an expression of his love flowing out to all mankind. That they ate together and praised him was sufficient: they did not need to see him in person. So, during the weekdays at least, Father's followers were content to eat and celebrate together, either in their own homes or among a larger group at their local extension. Wherever the followers gathered, a place was always laid for Father at the head of the table. As a follower wrote:

"In countless homes throughout the Nation, and in other Lands from the Arctic circle to the Southern Seas, the great Banquet Table of FATHER DIVINE is Spread. From the lowliest bungalow to the loftiest palace, it is the same. The small Family Table has been extended to a larger one, for it is copied after the famous Table in Sayville, where with the Holy Hands FATHER broke the Bread of Life to HIS ever-increasing Household." 26

The followers were not the only ones to observe the fellowship of the meal table. Church suppers, as an expression of spiritual unity, were a regular part of black church life in both the urban North and the rural South. Even the followers' practice of reserving a place for Father Divine at every meal table was not unique. It recalled days when the poor, black, rural minister relied on the hospitality of his church sisters for his main meals; a custom that was retained in the humble black storefront churches of the Northern cities. Church families prepared the place of honour at their table for their minister should he arrive, unannounced, for Sunday dinner.²⁷

But the followers' style of communion transcended both fellowship and hospitality and held special symbolic meaning for them. Jesus had sat at the table with those closest to Him and He had told the Disciples to eat and drink in His Name after His death. When the time came for Him to set up His kingdom of heaven on earth, He

would first appear to His followers when they sat down to eat. Writing of the Movement's banquet meals, a journalist in the Peace Mission press explained:

"When the Disciples asked CHRIST in the BODY called JESUS what would be one of the signs of His Second Coming, He Said - I will gird Myself, and sit down and serve you'. In those days, it was around the Banquet Table that they recognized their LORD ... Today it is the same. When the True Believers unify themselves at the Banquet Table, there is FATHER in the midst to make Himself known to them." 28

Many followers made the pilgrimage to 20 West 115th Street to sit and eat with Father Divine himself. Each night, hundreds of converts congregated at his "Kingdom Headquarters" in order to see him. There were no set times for these meetings, but as most of Father Divine's followers were working people, the gatherings rarely began before eight or nine o'clock at night. People would come in off the street and join the other followers inside the building. Without any formal opening to the meeting, someone would start to testify. Steadily, others would come forward to confess or thank Father Divine for all their present joys and blessings. There was no strict order to the proceedings and the followers were free to express themselves "as the Spirit dictated".²⁹ In the lull between each testimony, the followers would join in handclapping, foot-patting and swaying song. Begun by one follower, the song would be rapidly taken up by others around the room until the sound swelled out into the street. The singing at 20 West 115th Street so thrilled a follower in a nearby building one evening that he wrote this impression of the sound's effect:

" 'I know YOU're GOD
I know YOU're GOD
Deep in my heart, I know YOU're GOD,
I know, I know YOU're GOD'

The song rolled in through the open window on the air of the midsummer night. The air was filled with it ... High, strong, beautiful treble; vibrating

altos; soaring tenors; deep, deep smooth bass. Then it seemed that people looking and leaning out of their windows caught up the song. Not only the air, but the sky was full of it. Peal upon peal, the great new anthem rang out ... People travel to Mecca, to Rome, to Jerusalem to be thrilled by the ecstasies of religious fervor. But right here is the world's greatest cathedral, the world's highest spot of the highest worship." 30

There could be as many as thirty or forty songs in an evening. Sometimes a small band supported the singing. But the musical accompaniment was often limited for the followers were free to offer whatever musical talents they possessed and their efforts were graciously accepted.³¹ Most of the songs were basic melodies with simple lyrics that were soon learnt. Verses were repeated, perhaps as many as a hundred times, as one believer after another took up the song as the melody waned. The ebb and flow of praise continued until the singing was interrupted by a follower coming forward to testify:

"Father, I surrender,
Father, I surrender,
Father, I surrender,
I surrender ALL to thee." 32

Usually the words and music were improvised. But some songs were familiar paens of love and praise. The best compositions were recorded in the Peace Mission press and circulated around the Movement. The followers sang humbly of their salvation:

"I don't know why, I don't know why,
I don't know why, you love me so,
You put your arms around me and you took me in." 33

Gently, they reminded each other of the ways that they were told to "contact Father" and "live evangelically":

"Keep your mind stayed on Father!
Keep your mind stayed on Father!
Keep your mind stayed on Father!
All the way!
If you don't you will lose Him!
If you don't you will lose Him!
If you don't you will lose Him!
And go astray!" 34

Other song were adaptations of popular ballads and blues songs.

The followers substituted the "negative" words of the popular songs with praise of Father Divine.³⁵

A journalist, Edward T. Bueher, who visited one of these meetings, was riveted by the "strains of rhythmic, delirious singing" which he heard as he approached 20 West 115th Street. It was a sound, he wrote, "which I had almost forgotten but which was strangely reminiscent of Negro revivals and outdoor 'baptizings' which I had attended in the deep South when I was a boy."³⁶ In their manner of composition and style of performance the followers' songs did, indeed, follow traditional black folk forms. The improvisation, the re-working of a reservoir of standard phrases, the group participation and the scope for individual expression in a collective setting, were all characteristic features of black song, especially in worship.³⁷

The believers' use of a band to support their singing and their enthusiasm for song "conversions" also mirrored the innovations of "gospel music" as it developed in the small, black "sanctified" churches at the turn of the century. The worshippers in these churches reached out to the rhythms of the secular black world around them and brought the sounds and instruments of ragtime, blues and jazz into the church. They did so for good reasons. Popular songs, in their preoccupation with human emotions and sexual relationships and their association with night clubs and dance halls, were the songs of the profane world. The blues, with its stress on the troubles, ambiguities and frailty of personal relationships, and its faith in self rather than faith in God, were regarded as the ultimate in profanity: truly the "devil's music". The gospel singers refused to let the devil keep the best rhythms. They struck out against the profane world by appropriating its music, "sanctifying" it and making it their own.³⁸ Father Divine's followers did the same. "We enjoy singing the converted 'blues'," Father Divine said,

"for we convert them from falsehood to Truth. We enjoy changing the wrong into right; turning darkness into light; changing vice and crime into RIGHTEOUSNESS, TRUTH and JUSTICE; the 'other place' into Heaven."³⁹

There were other continuities, too, between the Peace Mission's pattern of worship and the services of both the rural black church and the "sanctified" churches. In each setting, the meetings were warm and easy, as if God was among the worshippers as a close friend. Although, in the churches, the minister was central to the worship, directing and driving the congregation, the ritual permitted the same blend of individual expression and group participation as that within the Peace Mission. Ecstasy was seen as proof of contact with the Spirit and the worshippers testified and drew together in swaying, foot-patting and song.⁴⁰

Indeed, the Peace Mission's pattern of praise harked back further to the descriptions of slave camp meetings a hundred years earlier. It was the combination of improvised song, testimony, dance and ecstasy that was distinctive. An amalgam of the forms of the Methodist and Baptist enthusiasm of the Second Great Awakening and the pattern of expression of worship from the slaves' African past, this praise was shaped by white evangelists and by white and black converts in the nineteenth century to become characteristic of black worship in both the rural, 'folk' church and the storefront churches and sects of black migrants in the cities.⁴¹

The Peace Mission's pattern of praise was thus part of a tradition of black worship. Its association of praise and banqueting, in fact, recalled specifically the "love feast" or "experience meeting" of the Southern, rural church where a congregation would gather for a meal to celebrate and relate their conversion experiences.⁴²

Yet the followers imbued old forms of worship with new meanings. From the testimonies, the followers reminded each other of the changes that Father Divine had made in their lives. The songs inflamed their sense of love and obligation to him and served to instill and invigorate his teachings. As they joined together, they felt their distinctiveness as a community of believers. The meetings were joyful affirmations of their new life. While the praise session continued, the kitchen staff prepared the supper, ready for the arrival of Father Divine himself.

Father Divine generally delayed his appearance until ten or eleven o'clock at night when the hall was full. His arrival then sent a shock wave of excitement around the extension. As one follower described the scene: "There was truly a great shout descending and ascending from HEAVEN when FATHER arrived, and from the appearance of the crowd which gathered in FATHER'S Offices, it looked as though the major part of the Assembly had left the auditorium to behold the KING."⁴³ Followers reached out to touch his clothing, and some, pressed to the extreme of excitement, fainted in the crush. Father Divine shepherded the followers into the banquet room, took his seat at the head of the table and invited them to join him. Then he blessed and passed each dish, apparently oblivious of the tumult of adoration surrounding him. When the meal was over, Father Divine wiped his hands and mouth with his napkin and rose. There was tense silence, fierce clapping, and then silence as he smiled, raised his hand and greeted the disciples:

"Peace, everyone: Good health, goodwill and a good appetite with good manners, good behavior, all success and all prosperity; good morning, good afternoon, good evening, good night and good morning again! Here we all are and there I AM, there I sit and here you stand, in the Unity of Spirit, of Mind, of Aim and of Purpose." ⁴⁴

His speeches were hypnotic. Journalist Carl Warren described

them as "manna to the devout but mostly double-talk to unbelievers,"⁴⁵ while Claude McKay said that they consisted of "strange phrases, an endless jumble of words steeped in metaphysical metaphor and spiritual allusion mixed in with practical advice on daily living."⁴⁶ Father Divine's voice was soft and high-pitched, and he spoke not with the force of the fundamentalist preacher, but with the easy inflection of the urbane politician. His sonorous tone and his use of words set up a rhythm as he spoke. Each word was dogmatic and carefully articulated; and words were piled one upon another in long, weighty sentences. He never used a short word where he might use a long one and he would build bigger words by adding more syllables.⁴⁷

The followers swayed and sighed as he spoke, calling out in response and interrupting him with chants and bursts of song. As their excitement increased, some rushed forward to testify, collapsing afterwards in exhaustion, while others flung themselves into wild dancing and spinning. "FATHER delivered a Masterful Address," wrote a follower, "which was punctuated with Spiritual Dynamite, and at various intervals, an explosion would take place in someone's heart, and a great Spiritual Eruption was seen or heard."⁴⁸ Father Divine paused to accept a confession or acknowledge the calls and scattered applause, and then resumed in the same confident, easy tone.

He spoke, without notes and apparently without preparation, for as long as an hour, interspersing his remarks with his own improvised songs and dances, and calls to the audience: "Aren't you glad?"; "Can you see the Mystery?"; "That is the Mystery!"; "It is truly Wonderful!" A stenographer recorded his words and the microphones amplified his "modulated syllables" around the extension and to nearby Peace Mission shops and lodgings.

Father Divine's rolling style, with his use of set formulas

inviting calls from the audience, his bursts of song to pace his message and stimulate his audience, and even his dances, harked back to traditional forms of black folk preaching. In the traditional chanted sermon, prose and song played a similarly important part and aided the congregation in anticipating ideas and phrases. Repetition of set phrases kept up a rhythm and induced an emotional response from the audience. Like Father Divine's speeches, these sermons lacked a strong narrative structure and included frequent digressions from the central theme.⁴⁹ Father Divine said of his own speech:

"Rhythmically, I speak to you, that you might understand me more distinctly, and I stress it vividly, for it is tasteful to the mind when I speak in rhythm, when I speak in prose, when I speak in psalms, when I speak in hymns, when I speak in songs and when I speak in praise. Aren't you glad?"⁵⁰

Descriptions of his dance - a spontaneous swaying, shuffling and tapping - recall a nineteenth century account of a black preacher in New Orleans who, clapping his hands and raising his voice, danced as a group of worshippers performed a "ring shout".⁵¹

The total effect of Father Divine's speech was to urge the followers into a state of ecstasy that was traditionally acknowledged as a mark of religious sanctification or possession by the Spirit. As Father Divine said, approvingly, of his followers' exultant worship:

"That is the way people were converted in olden times when they forgot about themselves and said, 'Here, LORD, I give myself to thee, it is all that I can do' ... they were converted because they were willing to LET GO and GET GOD completely." ⁵²

He encouraged the believers to give full rein to their emotions. They should not, he said, abruptly stop singing when someone rose to testify, "like you are shutting a faucet off or something when the pipes are burst and flooding the place". Instead they should "sing according to the SPIRIT and let the SPIRIT control the songs."⁵³ He

delighted in the followers' ecstatic, repetitive chanting:

"how often the different individuals come forth with a composition by inspiration and apparently they get to the place where they cannot stop reiterating it ... They continue to say it and continue to say it until their very bodies vibrate, and then they continue to say it over and over again until it ignites those with whom they come into contact."

Such singing, Father Divine said, was special indeed:

"Why? Because they are driving the nail aright as you did in the beginning of your educational career. Whatsoever you studied and that which you apparently learned, it came through reiteration and by a constant reiteration until it was stamped in your memory, until it was impossible for you to forget it."

So it was with their praise.⁵⁴

Thus, Father Divine deliberately invoked traditional patterns of preaching and worship to unite and thrill the followers. Nevertheless, the tenor of these meetings and the style of his speeches went far beyond the concerns of traditional worship. Father Divine and his followers were gathered together to celebrate the existence of the kingdom of heaven on earth rather than to "hold out" for some other-worldly future salvation. "MY Followers," Father Divine said, "do not feel like doing anything but singing and praising MY Name." For the prophecies had been fulfilled and they had "got home where GOD is in reality in consciousness ... all their night has been turned into bright noon day since their sins are taken away!"⁵⁵ Father Divine also differentiated himself from the sweating, gesticulating preacher of that 'old-time' religion. Dressed in a smart suit and with a manner of cultivated sophistication, he sat at the head of the banquet table as a modern messiah in communion with the redeemed.

His songs set the theme:

"You are in another Day, Praise GOD,
You are in another Day, Praise GOD,
Be happy all your way,
My Gentle Voice obey.

You are in another Day, Praise GOD,
You are in another Day, Praise GOD,
Oh, shout the Victory!" 56

In more assertive mood, he sang:

"I come! I come! I come! I come!
To bring you the MESSAGE
That I do know,
You should come one; come all;
Come all in one.

The LORD has come; the LORD has come,
Oh! Glory to His Name.
The LORD has come; the LORD has come,
Oh! Glory to His Name." 57

In bursts of song, he instructed his followers in the obligations and rewards of obedience to his teachings. They should "wear the world as a loose garment"; "make your mental and spiritual contact"; "deny yourself and follow Me."⁵⁸ He promised:

"If you wait on the LORD, he shall renew your strength,
He shall renew your strength;
He shall renew your strength;
You shall no longer be weak.

You shall rise up on wings like eagles,
He shall renew your strength;
He shall renew your strength;
You shall rise up on wings like eagles,
You shall no longer be weak." 59

He insisted:

"I AM your JOY, your LIFE, your HEALTH and your LOVE
I AM the Light and I AM the Life,
JOY and PEACE, your LIFE and your LOVE
I AM the LIGHT of your soul." 60

The content and purpose of Father Divine's banquet speeches also differed markedly from the sermons of a conventional church preacher. His speeches or "messages", as he preferred to call them, assumed that the kingdom of heaven on earth had come already for the members of the Peace Mission Movement. Accordingly, he rarely used Biblical texts. When he did make Biblical allusions, these were drawn mainly from the New Testament and used to demonstrate how the

Movement followed the exact life and teachings of Jesus Christ. More often, his speeches were reworkings of the basic ideas and teachings of the Movement; pronouncements on his mission to mankind.

His choice of vocabulary was, vitally, part of this way that Father Divine presented himself to the followers. By his complicated combinations of words and phrases, Father Divine sought to present his teachings as a new and irrefutable wisdom. He generally avoided the apocalyptic imagery of the Old Testament and his Biblical references were blended with an extraordinary range of colloquialisms; homely images from the land; and a spicing of technical and scientific references.

He spoke, for instance, of "digging wells" to reach the inner soul; of "blasting through" the rocks of past sin by confession.⁶¹ He compared his mission with the harvest of "true cotton":

"You will send your employees out in the fields to pick cotton. If they pick the bolls, the leaves and the old blossoms - the very thing you once called cotton, you will chase them from the field, will you not? If they put the leaves, the stalks and the blossoms and the bolls all in the cotton ... they are putting trash in the cotton. It is known as TRASH then, for the cotton has truly come! All of your religions with your human information as Education ... brought you ON, - and those things kept you UNTIL I CAME! THE COTTON HAS TRULY COME! THE REAL THING IS AT HAND!"⁶²

Alternatively, he described his impact upon the minds of his followers in terms of electrical currents, magnetism and radio waves. The followers were invited to "dial in" and to tune their spiritual receivers to his transmitter.⁶³ He even spoke of their conversion as a physiological process:

"I AM preaching HIM in you, in your body, in your physical structure, causing every atom, every fibre and every cell and every vein to be filled with HIM that you might be partakers of the Reality of the INFINITE, and Repersonifiers and Materialisers of the same."⁶⁴

Three ex-converts described how Father Divine's use of language

had impressed them. Verinda and Thomas Brown said that they had loved Father Divine's phrasemaking, especially the Biblical sound of Father Divine's words. Faithful Mary wrote how she had been "fooled into thinking him 'God'" by the "beautiful words he could utter - the apparent manifestation of perfection of the power within."⁶⁵

His use of language proved to the followers not only his command of religious teachings but his familiarity with the rural way of life as well as the exciting, modern technology of the city. In their eyes, it revealed him as both a man of plain experience and a leader of true spirituality and twentieth century knowledge and wisdom. The followers were encouraged to feel part of a progressive and practical Movement; under the care and guidance of a messiah in touch with the modern world. They sang:

"FATHER'S on the microphone,
His Loving Voice we hear,
Just calling us to dial in,
And all HIS blessings share,
For we are FATHER'S radios,
Made only to express
HIS Love, Joy, Peace, Prosperity
HIS Truth and Righteousness." ⁶⁶

The banquet meetings served other, more immediate, purposes. Father Divine used the banquet meetings to impress upon the believers the style of behaviour and the quality of allegiance that he expected from them. The seating arrangements at the banquet table provided the first lesson. Father Divine reserved the seats beside him at the table for his personal staff and closest followers. In this way, he graced his most trusted disciples and presented them as an example to the other believers.⁶⁷ Then, in his speeches and in the conversation that followed, Father Divine dealt with questions of faith and conduct within the Movement.

He used the banquet meetings as a chance to advise the followers on minor matter of conduct. On one occasion, for instance, he told

the followers how to deal with visitors. "You should be hospitable," he said, "you should know how to meet the general public and how to treat everybody courteously according to the understanding in which they are living, for once upon a time you did not know what you consider to be the TRUTH now."⁶⁸

Other comments were more important for the internal stability of the Movement. Some followers used the banquet meetings to bring personal queries and complaints to Father Divine's attention. At one meeting "Miss D" asked Father if it was right for her to wear slacks in the Peace Mission as some of the believers had complained of her doing so.⁶⁹ Father Divine replied with a homily about two men who had gone to a metaphysical centre to be cured of knots on their shoulders. The first, Father said, who had two knots, accepted the customs and regulations of the centre and was cured. But the second, who had only one knot, rejected the customs of the centre and ultimately left "with a knot on both shoulders." When "Miss D" persisted, saying that some of the followers were "over-modest" and "over-conventional", Father Divine replied firmly that "super-modestyism" allayed outside criticism of the Movement and helped to advance its work: "we mean to lift up the PERFECTION of every desirable expression and exemplify it and manifest it to humanity." He quoted the Bible's admonition to self-criticism, "take the beam out of your own eye ...", to the critical "Miss D".⁷⁰

So "Miss D" was rebuked and a petty disagreement among the believers was settled. Father Divine took the occasion, moreover, to urge the followers to stay alert to all breaches of his teachings within the Movement. He asked, "how can one be a Joint Heir with the CHRIST if they deviate from HIM?" If the followers suspected anyone of disobedience then they should expose that individual. "If you are one with your MAKER, your CREATOR, if you recognized HIM, in reality",

Father Divine said, "you would gladly and willingly tell HIM, especially if it was stressful."⁷¹

Yet he did not rely on loyal followers alone to detect faults in others. He used the banquet meetings to pass judgements of his own. He criticised followers who chose to testify early in the evening before there were many gathered to hear the confessions; and he denounced the scramble for the seats near him around the banquet table.⁷² He told them, too, that they should not feel at liberty to "go around from room to room and from bed to bed and relax." They should keep to their own sleeping quarters, and if they wished to talk or meet in groups then they should use the other rooms in the building: "the auditorium is public ... The schoolroom is public ... you have your reception hall as though it was a parlor for you to entertain, without interfering in other places where you are not concerned."⁷³ Such consideration, he explained, was necessary for the peace and order of the Movement. As he said:

"Every home must have its rules and system; and every member of the family must respect the rules and regulations of that home, and every member of that family must be disciplined, or else the home is not a well-managed home, neither is it a real home where fellowship, love and order are expressed, but on the contrary, it is a place of disorder and confusion and void of the elements of home." ⁷⁴

Father Divine warned the followers about more fundamental shortcomings, too: about lack of self-discipline and dedication to the tenets of the "evangelical life." He said: "I have seen and you have seen different individuals among us, who had drifted idlesomely by joking." By gossiping and by "talking mortally minded and deviating from the Fundamental by refusing to keep your mind stayed on the Principle", he added, these followers were "severing themselves from MY Personal Presence ... You are not My Real Followers."⁷⁵ He had little patience, either, for those who did not pull their weight in the Movement: "I Say, what have you done for ME? What

have you done for any other individual, especially in the way of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven?" The Peace Mission, he said, was not a convenience for the self-centred. "If you say you love ME," he challenged, "prove it."⁷⁶

The banquet meetings were, in fact, high points in the followers' display of love and admiration for Father Divine. At all times, of course, he basked in their adoration. Even his departures from 20 West 115th Street caused excited flurries of activity around the extension as followers hurried to catch a glimpse of him. Some formed a guard of honour down the street, others crowded at the traffic lights on the corner of Lenox Avenue for, as one disciple explained, "the chances are that HIS car will have to stop a minute there ... and this gives everyone who can find a place the opportunity for a close look at HIS face - and perhaps a direct smile."⁷⁷ In the setting of the banquet meetings, this constant personal adoration of Father Divine became overtly sensual. The followers took undisguised pleasure in his appearance, words and gestures. "He's so sweet", "Ain't he sweet" they cried fondly, and sang:

"Just to look at you,
I wish I was in heaven ten thousand years,
Just to look at you.

Just to see you smile that beautiful smile,
I wish I was in heaven ten thousand years,
Just to see you smile that beautiful smile.

Just to see you tap your feet, your beautiful feet,
I wish I was in heaven ten thousand years,
Just to see you tap your beautiful feet." ⁷⁸

Some observers were shocked by the glazed looks of adoration on the followers' faces. Steady chants of "I love you", "I love you", "I love you" were broken by bursts of sensuous dancing. Such "naked manifestations of love," wrote Myrtle Pollard, "almost took my breath [away]". But these outpourings were fully acceptable within the believers' world. Father Divine applauded and encouraged it. This, he said, was the "right use" of their emotions. "You

must have an outlet for your emotions," he claimed, "you must have an outlet for your enthusiasm." There was nothing salacious in their dancing and self-expression. It was man who had corrupted these forms and brought them "down through the world into the underworld and into vice and crime for selfish purposes."⁸⁰ So he urged them to sing, dance and chant until their bodies began to "vibrate" and they "ignited" others in the room.⁸¹

The social rules of the Movement encouraged the followers to sublimate their sexual and emotional energies in love and devotion of Father Divine. He asked them to look upon him as their complete satisfaction: "I AM the Husband of the ones who are consecrated to the Service of GOD; men and women, regardless to what or who you are, if you are of ME, and I AM who you say I AM; I AM everything to you. I AM your Mother. I AM your Father. I AM your Sister. I AM your Brother. I AM your Sons and I AM your Daughters. I AM your friends and I AM your kin."⁸² The followers sang:

"He is so Sweet and Fascinating,
He is so Loving and Kind -
He is our Father and Mother,
Our All and All -
Our Lover and Redeemer,
Sweet FATHER DIVINE." ⁸³

The greatest display of love and surrender came from Father Divine's personal secretaries and from the "angels" who held positions of trust. The Spoken Word recorded this snatch of conversation between Father Divine and two of his leading Kingston (N.Y.) followers when he visited the upstate extension in the summer of 1936:

"Angel Satisfied Love remarks: 'Oh, it's so Wonderful ... we know you are with us all the time, but the BODY ...'
FATHER: 'What do you care about the BODY?'
Peace Dove comments: 'Father, You are looking so fine!'
FATHER: 'It is Wonderful!'" ⁸⁴

Such exchanges, of course, did not pass without comment from

others in the Movement. Positions of trust were jealously guarded and stiffly fought for, and any impropriety was quickly exposed by disgruntled "angels". Within a few days of the Spoken Word's report, in fact, an "angel" started a controversy by accusing several believers with idol worship of "Father's Body". As the row spread, one of the accused appeared at 20 West 115th Street to counter the charges. She claimed that her critic had been stirring trouble in the Movement and "had been asking other angels if they did not wish to travel." But, as far as she was concerned, she would not "walk around the corner," for all the beauty, art, nature and pleasures in the universe when she had the "Supreme GIFT of all Creation, the BODY OF GOD to behold and recognize." To the tune of 'Beautiful Isle of Somewhere' she sang:

"Oh! how I love GOD'S BODY
Beautiful BODY of Sunset GOLD!
Beautiful BODY of FATHER DIVINE,
Savior of All Mankind."

and the "true believers" joined in the chorus:

"BODY! BODY! Beautiful, Pure, Holy BODY!
BODY OF GOD, Beloved FATHER of Mine,
Savior of All Mankind."

Father Divine declared that his body was the outward form of God's spirit. To worship him was to praise God.⁸⁵

Many outsiders found it hard to believe that Father Divine's followers could absorb such explanations uncritically; and they doubted that the followers could observe the sexual taboos of the Movement without difficulty or deceit. There were allegations, too, that Father Divine was neither strict enough in regulating his followers' sexual conduct nor firm enough in controlling his own. The most damaging of these charges was levelled by Faithful Mary when she left the Movement in 1937. She claimed, in her exposé of the Peace Mission, that the Movement was not only a haven for lesbians with their "perverted and degenerate ways" who were

"forever fighting over each other and making accusations of infidelity", but that Father Divine sexually exploited his women devotees. "Up in the chambers of 'Divine' at night with the lights low," she wrote, "'Divine' can be seen, going through strange movements, while upon the floor lay several 'angels' moving their bodies in sensuous spasmodic jerks, disrobing themselves and some completely nude."⁸⁶

Certainly, there were slips, indiscretions and confusions in this emotional hot-house. Some couples who joined the Movement found it hard to forget their past relationships; and from time to time, Father Divine found it necessary to sharply reprimand the followers: "men and women or angels of the Kingdom in the likeness of the opposite sexes should not be standing or sitting in dark places together! My Spirit knows everything you say and everything you do!"⁸⁷ But there was no evidence of widespread breeches of the sexual taboo, either lesbian or heterosexual; and even Faithful Mary acknowledged that the "majority" of the followers lived "evangelical" lives.⁸⁸ Within the normal life of the Movement there were enough socially approved ways of emotional satisfaction to please many followers. They could lose themselves in their love for their fellow-believers, in their worship of Father Divine and in the exhaltation of their new "virginity."⁸⁹ Indeed, some Harlemites were sufficiently convinced of the rigour of the Movement's sexual discipline to accuse Father Divine of promoting "race suicide" through the enforced celibacy of his disciples.⁹⁰

There was no corroboration, either, for Faithful Mary's lurid allegations against Father Divine. Such an attack was to be expected from an embittered ex-convert. If there had been any substance to her charges, then there most certainly would have been a furore of complaint within the Movement; for the believers were ever watchful and jealous of each other's favour with Father Divine.

But only his familiarity with Peninah, 'Mother Divine', prompted grumblings among the believers; and it was an index of the high regard with which the sex taboo was held that Father Divine felt obliged to explain himself to his converts.

Peninah, a tall, stout, fine-looking black woman in her sixties, had been with Father Divine since the nineteen-tens.⁹¹ Father Divine assured the followers that their companionship was perfectly modest: "Mother said just a few weeks ago, up until now, she has never seen anything in THIS TABERNACLE but GOD ... She has not known ME as a man; but I appear to be in mortal consciousness a man." They travelled, sat and ate together, he said, as a model of the perfect relationship between the sexes: "GOD through HIS Condescension, is a Sample and an Example for all the modest and moral of humanity."⁹² If such a statement did not convince everyone, it apparently satisfied most of the followers.

The followers accepted celibacy as necessary to the "evangelical life". As they told those who accused Father Divine of promoting "race suicide", the responsibility for perpetuating the race was not theirs. They were about a "greater work" than "self-indulgence." Instead of bringing more children into a sin-soaked world, they would serve as beacons to guide mankind toward salvation.⁹³

So strong was their sense of mission, in fact, that even the children brought into the Peace Mission were obliged to play a part in the salvation of society. As adult converts, Father's followers believed that they were tainted by their experience in the outside society. But they trusted that the children were relatively free from these sins and receptive to new ideas. Brought up within the Peace Mission, strictly supervised and exposed to the ideas of the "evangelical life", the adults believed that the Peace children could become perfect exemplars of Father Divine's teachings. They would

demonstrate, by their lives, that they were not doomed to futures of vice, crime and poverty like so many of their peers who knew nothing of Father Divine. "These temples," said one enthusiastic follower, "will shortly set the example for the whole world."⁹⁴ The children of the Peace Mission were given their own special responsibility as banner-bearers for Father Divine.

The number of children in the Movement was probably small. There were no contemporary estimates, although some observers recorded seeing children in the extensions and in the Movement's parades and excursions. In 1935, a small, black horse drawing a wagon loaded with children and hay took part in Father Divine's Easter parade through Harlem. The wagon bore the sign: "The Kingdom has truly come. You must be as a little child to enter it." In the following year, nearly two hundred "little brothers and sisters" marched in the Movement's ranks to downtown Manhattan from Harlem.⁹⁵

In preparation for their future role, the children led closely regulated and sequestered lives. Many lived in sex-segregated "Children's extensions" where, according to Arthur M. Madison, their "little minds were free from the conversations of grown ups."⁹⁶ The natural parents were expected to contribute, if they could, towards the cost of the child's room and board, but other parental responsibilities were assumed by a group of children's "guardians."⁹⁷ Spokesmen for the Movement claimed that the children received every possible attention. "In New York City, at 160 West 126th Street, where Faithful Mary presides," wrote A. Honaael Meriditas, "... an entire floor of good size, containing dozens of beds, is given over to the little ones. Watchful sisters, delegated for the purpose, maintain constant supervision and loving care over them. And a happier 'freer' group of children could not be imagined anywhere."⁹⁸ In the late nineteen-thirties when the Movement acquired farm property

in upstate New York, most of the young children were transferred to children's farms in rural Ulster County. Miss Sweet Inspiration, a cook at the Hope Farm extension for two years, said that the "very best that money could buy" was obtained for the children in "unlimited abundance." They were given milk three or four times a day; the "freshest of choice vegetables" from the farm's gardens; fruit from the orchards; "fresh caught fish from the best trout streams"; and eggs and meat from prize poultry. She said that the children's living quarters were "the best" and equipped with "every modern convenience." A waitress-governess ate with the children in their own dining room, and a trained matron supervised their daily life. She added that there was even a car available to take the children to school in wet weather.⁹⁹ The followers believed that the children received far better care and comforts than they could ever expect in the outside society, and Claude McKay, writing in 1940, said that they did seem "better cared for than a good many of the children of Harlem who are sent to dime-a-day nurseries or who roam the streets by day while their parents are at work."¹⁰⁰ Father Divine drew a broader conclusion. In a banquet speech in 1937 he said:

"If your children, and your children's children would have had such an environment as this and these, - clean and respectable places to live in, where they could be self-respecting and self-supporting - they would not have been criminals today, and we would not have an underworld as we have it to combat with, in our cities, and in our state, and in our country." 101

Private and public agencies, however, were not so enthusiastic. New York City's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (S.P.C.C.) did all in its power to have the children's extensions closed. In March 1935, its officers removed three young girls from Faithful Mary's extension at 144 West 126th Street and took Faithful

Mary and Father Divine to court on a charge of neglecting the children and operating a children's boarding house without a permit. Faithful Mary was forbidden by the New York City Board of Health from operating the extension as a "children's boarding house" because the accommodation and "environment" were not considered "satisfactory for the care of children" nor sufficiently sanitary to meet the Board's licensing rules. Nonetheless, in court, the S.P.C.C. failed to prove its case and the extension continued to operate much as before.¹⁰²

In the following year, the state authorities refused a Peace Mission application to open a children's boarding home in Saugerities, in upstate New York because the state investigating committee chaired by State Welfare Board President, Victor F. Ridder had received no assurance of the continuous operation of the home; no definite programme of child care; and only vague details about the home's financial arrangements.¹⁰³ But the state welfare authorities were never consistent in their attitude toward the Movement. When a number of the believers' children were brought before the Children's Court for acts of petty delinquency, the state authorities were only too pleased to return the children to the care of one or both parents within the Peace Mission. There was even one child who was found a foster father within the Movement through the state's foster home programme. When Father Divine learnt, however, that the state refused to contribute toward the child's upkeep because the Peace Mission was not licensed to care for children, he refused to accept the child; angered by what he viewed to be the state's hypocrisy toward the Movement.¹⁰⁴

The ambiguity in the state welfare authorities' attitude was a reflection of the ambiguity inherent in the Peace Mission's approach to its children. While it was hard for social workers to prove

mistreatment, it was obvious that the Peace Mission's children were unwitting standard bearers for Father Divine. The Peace Mission was an adult world. The older followers joined out of choice. They relinquished the outside society and accepted Father Divine's authority, in their desire to begin a new life. Within the world of the believers, many followers found independence and self-respect. But in their enthusiasm to turn the children into model followers, the adults denied them the element of choice and self-discovery that was the essence of their own allegiance to the Movement. To outsiders, like members of the S.P.C.C., the followers' decision must have seemed scarcely better than a plan to indoctrinate a group of impressionable youngsters. For the followers, their approach meant that their child care foundered between enforcement of the Movement's stringent rules of conduct and a desire to let the child, like the adult followers, exercise his or her "highest intuition" and "personal volition."

The followers, of course, saw no element of authoritarianism in their actions. They remained certain that obedience to Father Divine's way gave "all round development" and encouraged the "originality of the child, as well as the poise and confidence in the presence of a multitude."¹⁰⁵ The children were expected to observe all the disciplines imposed upon the adults in the Movement. They were drilled in the virtues of honesty, obedience, self-discipline, co-operation, "how to be meek and humble" and "how to be punctual". Some attended local schools and the 'guardians' were asked to watch the children's progress; guard against the influence of "negative" ideas in the schoolroom and in the children's text books; and to stress upon the pupils Father Divine's wish for "perfection in all things". The 'guardians' regarded a mark of sixty-five per cent as a minimum scholastic achievement, and they

screened the child's performance in non-vocational and non-academic subjects just as strictly. Children who received a "B" or "C" grade in department, for example, were watched and disciplined. Each child was expected to spend an hour and a half daily in home study. The boys and girls were also channelled towards instructive and practical hobbies, "with a view to qualifying them for more advanced educational work." The girls were taught knitting, crochet and sewing, while the boys were given mechanical hobbies ranging from aeroplane design to model making. As soon as the children were old enough, they were required to take remunerative work or vocational training in a career of their choice.¹⁰⁶

Their leisure time was equally well-regulated. The followers said that the children received "the very best type of amusement and recreation." This usually consisted of the types of social activity sanctioned within the Movement - recitals, excursions, discussions, song and music, and their own praise meetings.¹⁰⁷ Although the children were taught to direct all their love and thanks to Father Divine, he was rather a distant figure in their world. They had no conversion experience to celebrate and the process of socialization was tentative and gradual, as this description of a piano recital given by a group aged between eight and sixteen revealed:

"a few of the small children are ... not conscious of FATHER, as shown by their sitting down to play without saying anything, while FATHER'S CHILDREN all said, 'Peace, Father, I Thank You To Express through me' - thus giving GOD the glory. But we know that FATHER has many ways of drawing us to HIM." 108

Adult believers vetted the toys that the children were allowed to have. Toy pistols and toy submachine guns were banned in the Movement for, as a follower explained, they helped the child "visualise a gang war" and there were enough children "playing at this type of warfare" in the streets of Harlem already.¹⁰⁹ Father's

children were destined to show humanity a better way, rather than join in its evils.

This could be a punitive regime. There seems little doubt that the 'guardians' occasionally used harsh measures and corporal punishment to discipline the children as, more than once, Father Divine was obliged to warn that violence was not to be tolerated within the Movement. "Try to treat nor control them with brutality," he told the 'guardians', "but with kindness, and by so doing you will reproduce in them a spirit of kindness and courage and the spirit to do better."¹¹⁰ On another occasion, Father Divine said: "I do not want to hear of any mistreatment of any children or any living creature! Even the animals in the animal Kingdom, they must not be mistreated". Violence and cruelty were expressions of their old, sinful life and he advised:

"... if you are at a place in person where you are ... tested, tempted and tried by your old mortal, pre-natal characteristics from your cursed and slave-ic holding ancestors to be brutal and cruel to children or even animals; FAST that 'other fellow' out of you, for he came from whence I Said he did." 111

On the whole, however, it appears that the children were surrounded by attentive helpers who were committed to fostering their development and educational progress. The youngsters emerged with self-confidence and social skills that helped them to move at ease among the adult followers.

Some of these children became second-generation followers and even testified at the banquet meetings in the style of adult converts. In 1940, for instance, a nineteen year old girl, who had lived in the Peace Mission since the age of twelve, related a series of early childhood experiences just as chilling and stylised as those of the middle-aged converts. She said that before joining the Movement she had lived with relatives who had involved her in their

'sin-soaked' lives. She claimed that her aunt had committed adultery regularly; that her uncle had tried to seduce her; and that she had witnessed terrifying family fights in which her uncle had battered her aunt: "When I entered, [the room] there she was saturated in blood. Her ear was split in half. The walls, floor and furniture were stained with blood. He had beaten her with a rolling pin and on the mantel was a sharp razor he had planned to kill her with." These relatives, she added, had also operated a liquor still and often held raucous "rent parties" at which "I remained up until three, four or five in the morning. Sometimes I sold refreshments, entertained, played cards and checked coats." But Father Divine, she testified, "has taught me to conserve my energy. He has taught me to direct it in positive thinking and positive acting. He has also taught me to be respectable and modest. Oh, I am so happy now! I can't stop praising Him for the miraculous change He has made in me."¹¹²

But this was an incongruous and restricted life for others brought into the Movement. Its social life and internal discipline held special value principally for the adult converts who found in it a way of coping with the life and pressures of the city. While the adults believed that they were part of a dynamic and progressive movement, the Peace Mission rested, nonetheless, on traditional values and ways of life. Inevitably, the position of the Peace Mission children highlighted the true quality of this community. Most of the children had none of the experiences that guided their parents' commitment to Father Divine. As they grew up, went outside the Peace Mission to go to school and to find work, some found the outside society more attractive than their life within the Peace Mission.

The tension was glimpsed in the occasional rebellion of

adolescent followers. A classic case reached the attention of the New York Domestic Relations Court in 1935, when fourteen year old Hattie Isaacs ran away from the Peace Mission and lived on her own for eight days and nights until she was taken to a social worker for help. In court, a probation officer explained that the child's 'foster' home within the Movement, where she had lived for three years, was pleasant and adequate, but the child had been discontented. Hattie's mother, Rebecca Isaacs, told the court that she was prepared to support the child as long as Hattie co-operated with the Movement. "If the child obey me as God teaches me and I teach her and keep to these rules and laws according to God's teachings," she said, "then I would go to the last limit of my length that he allows me to go. Father Divine is God Almighty to me, whether he is or not to you, and this I'm willing to do my part." But, she added, if Hattie refused to comply, "I don't care to have anything to do with her." The probation officer explained that there were few alternatives open for the support of the child. Hattie's father was living on home relief; her mother's married sister was also a Father Divine follower; and the only other relative was a young woman already left with the support of her illegitimate baby. The exasperated judge, Jacob Panken, tried to make Father Divine instruct Rebecca Isaacs to leave the Movement and rejoin her husband to provide a home for Hattie. But Father Divine refused and Panken committed the mother for sanity tests and ordered reports on the mental and physical health of the child before deciding on her future. Hattie was a casualty of her mother's chosen way of life.¹¹³

The children were casualties of the adults' way of life in other ways too. Their right to receive medical care and surgery was sometimes jeopardised. New York State law compelled the parent or guardian of a sick child under the age of sixteen to accept a physician's

diagnosis and the treatment he prescribed. But, for many years, the adult believers refused to allow the children to be vaccinated;¹¹⁴ and some even denied their youngsters urgent medical attention certain that Father Divine would heal the child. In 1935, New York's S.P.C.C. took a follower, Mary Ransom, to court in order to obtain an order permitting doctors to operate on her three year old son. In the following year, a similar case arose in New Jersey in which the Children's Aid and Protective Society intervened to secure an order allowing a doctor to set the broken arm of another Peace Mission child.¹¹⁵

Here, in the matter of health care, the followers' children were at their most vulnerable. Yet, this was also a problem that beset all the members of the Peace Mission, old as well as young, and represented one of the greatest weaknesses of the Peace Mission as a social world. For Father Divine's converts made such a vivid connection in their minds between sin and sickness that they were prepared to believe his promise that faith in him would guarantee them health and life. They were encouraged to see sickness and death as signs of an individual's lack of faith and deviation from the precepts of the "evangelical life".¹¹⁶ The consequences of such belief, however, were often ~~ser~~ious; and always distressing and damaging to the health and well-being of the believers.

The followers were troubled, of course, by their fair share of sickness and disease. Followers fell ill, suffered countless common ailments ranging from poor eyesight to bad teeth, and even died in the Movement. But because the concept of individual responsibility was so rigid, there was, inevitably, little compassion for the sick and dying within the Movement. The sick were ostracised. Even when Mother Divine fell ill in the mid-'thirties with heart and kidney disease, Father Divine discouraged any

demonstration of sympathy or help. She was suffering, he insisted, because she had allowed herself "to drift back to some old cursed flesh that was called her daddy," and when those "old thoughts come back, why, she was identified by the infirmities and iniquities and afflictions and diseases of the old alleged ancestors; their iniquities were imposed upon her."¹¹⁷

The dead were also abandoned by the followers. In 1935, a seventy-five year old follower, Tessie Bowman, died in Sayville. Father Divine refused to accept responsibility for her, and eventually she was given a pauper's burial by the county welfare authorities. In the following year, another follower, Charles Jenkins, died of a lung haemorrhage in hospital, and no-one claimed his body.¹¹⁸ That year, too, Daddy Gray, a colourful and popular follower, who had been born a slave in North Carolina, died in the home of a friend in Harlem. According to the Amsterdam News, his fellow believers were so shocked by his death that they waited by the corpse expecting to witness his return to life. But Father Divine announced that Daddy Gray had drawn destruction down upon himself for continuing to accept welfare payments and the followers abandoned the corpse.¹¹⁹ Faithful Mary said, in 1937, that two hundred followers had died within the Movement to her knowledge and that, on each occasion, a set procedure was observed. The leading disciples notified Father Divine, closed the "room of death", and kept all the other followers in their rooms until the police arrived to collect the corpse. Then the life of the extension resumed as usual.¹²⁰

This meant that whenever a follower fell ill, the individual was left to cope with both the complaint and the sense of guilt alone. There was no clear way to find a cure. The followers accepted that they needed urgent spiritual help, but they could not expect direct encouragement from Father Divine. His role as a

caring, personal God did not extend to sick visits or concern for the suffering. The sick were left to scour from their minds the signs of "slothfulness", "desires" and backsliding which were believed to be the cause of their ill-health.¹²¹

Theoretically, the followers were permitted to seek medical help if they lacked "sufficient faith" to overcome their illnesses. "The teaching of FATHER DIVINE is not one of coercion," wrote a spokesman for the Movement in the Spoken Word, "FATHER DIVINE does not exercise any personal control or jurisdiction over HIS followers but permits them to 'move according to their volunteer volition'".¹²² But Father Divine inflamed the followers' fear and suspicion of doctors. He denied the power of medical science to save life and heal, and he warned that doctors only patched up the body and left the root cause of sickness untouched. He railed against state laws that imposed compulsory medical care for children and he announced that if doctors claimed statutory authority, then they must legally guarantee their cures and the life and happiness of their patients. He charged:

"Whole families have died by operations. Whole families have been forced to have physicians and still they died, after the physicians and hospitals had taken all their money. It is truly Wonderful!" 123

In a movement of middle-aged followers, the need for medical care must have been considerable. Yet, this attack exploited the black followers' deepest doubts about medical attention. Already inclined to blame themselves for their sickness, Father Divine's arguments confirmed the followers' prejudices about medicine. They turned to doctors only as a last resort. On some occasions, their avoidance had disastrous effect. In 1937 a ceiling at 20 West 115th Street fell on follower Mary Battle. She was left for two weeks without any medical help. Finally, she was taken to New York

City's Bellevue Hospital, where she died of a fractured skull.¹²⁴

The suspicion that the followers were suffering unnecessarily and that Father Divine sought only to buttress his authority over his converts, alarmed many outsiders. In 1939, a local storefront pastor, Reverend J. Joshua, felt compelled to write to Father Divine begging him to take compassion on the "diseased suffering." He wrote:

"They looked to you and served you as their God, by which sayings your joy has been made all and your flesh exalted. Now wouldn't it be reasonable to God, to give the children some practical consideration? I do think so. You have got to where you wanted, that was your mind and desire, now that you are satisfied, I feel that those who have promoted the cause, at least to make it appear something large in the sight of the public should be cared for."

Joshua conceded that perhaps Father Divine was not aware of the plight of the sick followers but added, "none other dare approach you with this, but I see them daily, have talked with some of them, and believe me, it's abominable in the sight of God." He said that he did not expect Father Divine to visit the sick, but he urged: "your word is enough to appoint somebody, and means to care for them, who of your flock are suffering."¹²⁵

Father Divine was outraged by Joshua's appeal. He replied that sickness was the curse of unbelievers and that none of his true followers fell ill. Then, rounding on Joshua as a preacher, Father Divine demanded: "if you call yourself Reverend ... why is it you do not come and get Salvation that you might be redeemed from the curse under which you are laboring, for as far as I AM concerned, I did not have to get where I AM." He warned that if Joshua did not "take cognizance of this message and lay off" he would suffer the penalty for "speaking against the HOLY GHOST, GOD, the Creator and Savior of Men." To reinforce his claim, Father Divine ended:

"The Mouth of God has declared it that you might observe the Truth concerning the Mystery and be as I AM ... for this leaves ME Well, Healthy, Joyful, Peaceful, Lively, Loving, Successful, Prosperous and Happy in Spirit, Body and Mind and in every organ, muscle, sinew, joint, limb, vein and bone and even in every atom, fibre and cell of MY Bodily Form." 126

Nonetheless, Father Divine made two concessions on the matter of medical care at the end of the 'thirties. In 1938 he told the followers that doctors were obliged to guarantee cures only if the law made medical care compulsory, as did New York State law for children under the age of sixteen. Otherwise, "if you call on a physician, why, the physician should do his best," he said, "but he is not obliged ... to guarantee the cure because you called on him." Two years later, Father Divine made a more important announcement. He told the followers that they should see a doctor if their illness lasted more than three days: three days being the period between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.¹²⁷

Despite these concessions, Father Divine's teaching on sickness and health remained basically the same and highlighted perhaps the most important difficulty of the social world of the Peace Mission. For the most part, Father Divine invoked the traditional beliefs and values of his adult converts as a reservoir from which they drew strength. He helped them to make positive and creative use of their past, and from this they gained material comfort, spiritual satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. But just as the communal, disciplined life of the Movement brought advantages, so it imposed strong pressures to conform and, in matters of health care, inflamed old fears and prejudices that were damaging to the welfare of the believers.

Hadley Cantril and Muzafer Sherif, in their study of the Movement, believed that there may have been many in the Movement who

fell sick, became uncertain and insecure, but were afraid to leave because the pressures to conform were so strong and the prospect of life outside the Movement so hard to contemplate.

They described the dilemma of one follower who stayed in the Movement for several years although his teeth were aching, his eyes were bad, and he was constantly constipated. They related the agony of another "brother", Blessed Life, who became increasingly ill at ease in the Movement. "Father no longer paid attention to him," Cantril and Sherif wrote, "he grew skeptical. Sores developed on his legs. He was not able to speak to his wife when they met at the meetings ... He was lonesome and desperately unhappy". Still he stayed in the Movement; and it was not until his bed-mate died of tuberculosis and his wife secretly contacted him, that he determined to leave and begin a fresh life. Even then, the difficulties of these men and women continued. Happy Star told Cantril and Sherif that it took her eighteen months to adjust to life outside the Movement. She felt tempted into all the excesses previously tabooed by the Peace Mission and lived in fear of Father Divine's retribution.¹²⁸

Thus, it is impossible to accept uncritically the glowing accounts of life within the Movement made by well-adapted and committed believers. The Movement survived successfully because it did meet many converts' needs. They conformed to Father Divine's teachings because he offered them values and a way of life that they wanted for themselves. Within their daily routine, the followers enjoyed some independence. But it was a way of life that had significance for the adult converts rather than for the children within the Movement; and even for the adults, there were limits to the efficacy of the values by which they lived. Father Divine was a jealous god: he would brook no rivals in his followers' affections.

Nor for a man who spoke so much of love and who was surrounded by so much devotion, did he show any compassion for those who failed, often through no fault of their own, to live up to the expectations of the Movement. Like many another father who knew best for his children, he could be vain and hard. Like many another loving family, the Peace Mission Movement could be suffocating and cruel.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. New Day 2 (5), February 13 1938; 2 (22), June 2 1938; and 2 (29), July 21 1938. See also advertisements in Ibid. 2 (6), February 10 1938; and 2 (34), August 25 1938. Miss Flying Determination of the "Victory Inn" in 115th Street offered "spaces for out-of-town visitors." Ibid. 2 (7), February 17 1938. See also Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 201.
2. New York Daily News August 5 1939; and McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 22. Former alderman Lambert Fairchild, in a letter to the New York Herald Tribune, wrote of the followers: "This flock is clean, orderly and well behaved, only once have I heard a harsh word uttered in one of their crowded meetings." New York Herald Tribune June 27 1939.
3. In 1934 the Spoken Word listed fifteen extensions which were under Father Divine's "Personal Jurisdiction" in Manhattan. According to a letter from the Movement addressed to Dr. Max Herzog of New York City's Department of Health, nine of these had kitchens and dining rooms. Three of them also had large auditoriums. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934; and 1 (35), June 15 1935; McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 22-24; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 202.
4. Arthur Madison was almost constantly with Father Divine until Madison left New York in 1937, but he did not live at 20 West 115th Street. He had his own home and office. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory, op.cit., June 27 1936, 22.
5. New York World Telegram December 19 1933; and Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934; 1 (15), January 26 1935; and 1 (35), June 15 1935.
6. See below Chapter Five, p. 294-295 for a discussion of the management of the extensions. See below, Chapter Ten, p. 683-684 for Father Divine's intervention in the financial affairs of the Movement and its repercussions.
7. Ibid. 1 (35), June 15 1935; and Leach, History of the work of Father Divine, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
8. Spoken Word 1 (9), December 15 1934.
9. New York Amsterdam News July 21 1934.
10. Ibid.
11. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 24.
12. Gardner Jones, Pilgrimage to freedom, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection) 42; Handlin, op.cit., 94; and Osofsky, op.cit., 130. The large immigration of Puerto Ricans between

1920 and 1930 was due to the poverty of Puerto Rica and the demand for unskilled labour in the industrial cities of the U.S.A. As American citizens, Puerto Ricans were not subject to an immigration quota. By 1930, 45,000 lived in New York City. Handlin, op.cit., 50-51; and Osofsky, op.cit., 130.

13. E. Dale, Description of Lower Harlem, September 17 1940 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 4, Schomburg Collection); McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 29; and Ottley, op.cit., 50-51.
14. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937.
15. Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934.
16. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937.
17. Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934.
18. Reprinted in New Day 1 (33), November 4 1937.
19. This description of 20 West 115th Street is from: New York Herald Tribune April 16 1935; New York World Telegram December 19 1933; Leach, History of the work of Father Divine, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); Bueher, Harlem's god, op.cit., 1592; Sutherland Denlinger, Heaven is in Harlem, Forum 95, April 1936, 212; Hoshor, op.cit., 126; and Parker, op.cit., 108-114. According to McKelway and Liebling, the building was leased to the Peace Mission by the Union Square Savings Bank and the lease was held by a follower, Mrs. Lena Brinson. She had formerly been a fried chicken saleswoman on Harlem streets. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 22 and 26.
20. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934; 1 (11), December 29 1934; and 1 (15), January 26 1935; and McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 23.
21. Ibid.
22. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 202. In June 1936, McKelway and Liebling confirmed that the Faithful Mary extension was a block of seven buildings. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 23.
23. Bueher, Harlem's god, op.cit., 1590.
24. Brother Paul Christian, who lectured to the unemployed on behalf of Father Divine at 115th Street, said he wasn't preaching, for "preaching days are out"; instead, he was "celebrating Father Divine." Spoken Word 1 (14), January 19 1935.
25. Parker, op.cit., 7-8.
26. New Day 1 (39), December 16 1937; and 4 (34), August 22 1940; and Parker, op.cit., 13-14.

27. William Shack, A taste of soul, New Society 37 (719), July 15 1976, 127.
28. New Day 1 (39), December 16 1937; see also Parker, op.cit., 124.
29. Most contemporary observers appreciated the importance of the banquet table and there are numerous descriptions of the meetings that were addressed by Father Divine. The following description of a typical meeting is taken, in the main, from: New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937; Bueher, Harlem's god, op.cit., 1590-1593; Cantril and Sherif, Kingdom of Father Divine (In Nelsen et al., op.cit.) 175-178; McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27, 1936, 22; Guy B. Johnson, Notes on behavior at a religious service at Father Divine Peace Mission Movement, September 1939 (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit., vol. 3, Appendix D 1-10); Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 215-217; McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 39-44; and Parker, op.cit., 111-131.
30. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937.
31. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 253. There were, however, limits to Father's gracious acceptance of the musicians' talents. For, in 1937, it was decided at a Righteous Government Board meeting that the band lacked tone and timing; and, since Father Divine stressed perfection in all things, the musicians must have lessons and would not be allowed to play in public until they had reached a certain standard. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
32. New York Times November 6 1933, and Parker, op.cit., 234.
33. McKay, There goes God, op.cit., 152.
34. Parker, op.cit., 118.
35. Spoken Word 2 (32), March 17 1936.
36. Bueher, Harlem's god, op.cit., 1590.
37. Levine, op.cit., 25-30; and White, op.cit., 41-57.
38. Levine, op.cit., 174-189.
39. Spoken Word 2 (32), March 17 1936. In general, however, the followers did not use blues tunes in their praise sessions. The most common melodies were more generally popular: for instance:

"I've got rhythm, Divine rhythm,
I'm running for eternal life.
I've got rhythm, Divine rhythm,
Father Divine has freed me from all strife."

Other songs were set to the tunes of "Alice blue gown" and "Casey Jones." World Herald 1 (23), April 23 1937; Hoshor, op.cit., 127; and Parker, op.cit., 32. Kenneth Burnham found, from his observation of the Peace Mission in the 'forties and 'fifties, that most of the songs and music

were apparently original. He also found that the greatest number of songs had themes expressing love for Father Divine; a smaller group were expressions of thanks for release from insecurity, and a third, even fewer in number, were concerned with "social justice" and the reiteration of the aims of the Peace Mission. Burnham, op.cit., 198.

40. Henry H. Mitchell, Black preaching, Philadelphia and New York, 1970, 43-51. There are descriptions of such rural services in Hylan Lewis, Blackways of Kent: religion and salvation, (In Nelsen et al., op.cit., 100-117, reprinted from Hylan Lewis, Blackways of Kent, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1955, 129-154) 103-105, 107, 111-112; Powdermaker, op.cit., 236-241; Puckett, op.cit., 532-534; and White, op.cit., 37-40.
41. Genovese, op.cit., 237-242; Mitchell, op.cit., 43-51; and Rosenburg, op.cit., passim.
42. "Experience meetings" and "love feasts" seem to have varied in character. James Weldon Johnson regularly attended Methodist "love feasts" in his youth in Jacksonville (Fla.) He remembered them because of the practice of exchanging pieces of bread which were then eaten. A practice which was symbolic of brotherly love but which Johnson, who was a fastidious youth, thought decidedly insanitary. He was not fond of the "experience meetings" either for it was at these that he was expected to testify: to "Rise, Brother and be a witness for the Lord". James Weldon Johnson, Along this way, New York, 1933, 29-30. Other descriptions seem to suggest that the particular elements which Johnson ascribed to each of these meetings became intermingled. Hylan Lewis describes an all-night prayer meeting that included prayer, singing, testimony and necessary refreshment. Lewis, Blackways of Kent, (In Nelsen et al., op.cit.) 110. Henry Williamson attended a similar event in the South in his youth where the church women brought along food which was eaten after the service. Henry Williamson, Hustler! Garden City, New York, 1965, 15-16. Zora Neale Hurston believed that the distinction between "love feasts" and "experience meetings" was that the Methodists favoured the first name and that the Baptists favoured the second: the central part of each was testimony and song. Hurston, op.cit., 305. James Weldon Johnson, himself, used the terms interchangeably to refer to a meeting at which testimony and song form the main part, in his Book of American Negro spirituals, New York, 1925, 22. The association of food and worship is to be found in the religious songs of the folk church:

"I'se gwine eat at the welcome table,
I'se gwine eat at the welcome table,
Some of these days, God knows."

White, op.cit., 120.

43. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
44. This was a standard Divine opening quoted, in this case, from New York Times August 14 1938.

45. New York Daily News August 5 1939.
46. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 36.
47. Marcus H. Boulaware, Oratory of Negro leaders, 1900-1968, Westport, Connecticut, 1969, 207; and Parker, op.cit., 190-193. The deliberate complexity of Father Divine's sentences and his use of polysyllabic words were in contrast to the simplicity of the 'folk' preacher as described in Rosenberg, op.cit., 101.
48. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
49. Rosenberg, op.cit., passim. The description of Father Divine's speech as "sonorous" recalls descriptions of antebellum black preaching. Mitchell, op.cit., 72.
50. New York Daily News August 5 1939.
51. John Storm Roberts, Black music of two worlds, London, 1973, 162-164.
52. New Day 3 (17), April 27 1939. See also Mitchell, op.cit., 44-46.
53. New Day 4 (8), February 22 1940. See also Levine, op.cit., 183-189.
54. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937. The process of "contagion" described here is commented upon by Mitchell, op.cit., 109-111.
55. New Day 3 (33), August 17 1939.
56. Spoken Word 1 (46), August 31 1935.
57. World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
58. Ibid. 1 (25), May 6 1937; and 1 (37), July 29 1937.
59. Ibid. 1 (28), May 27 1937.
60. Ibid. 1 (25), May 6 1937.
61. New Day 3 (6), February 9 1939.
62. Ibid. 2 (15), April 14 1938.
63. Father Divine said that his followers would be infected with his spirit even when he was absent from them "by being spiritually charged with the magnetic current of God's infiniteness." New York Times October 21 1936. He told his followers, "You have been ignited with the high-tension wire and the distributor is distributing harmoniously, causing every spark plug to fire." Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 217-218. On another occasion, he assured them, "I have harnessed your consciences as Franklin harnessed electricity and it is for you to use your emotions as Edison handled the electricity of Franklin." New York Sun July 3 1935.

64. Spoken Word 2 (84), September 15 1936.
65. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 20 1936, 24; and Rozier, op.cit., 19.
66. World Herald 1 (25), May 6 1937.
67. Father Divine remarked at one banquet, "In these auditoriums, and especially in this dining room, there are only a very limited few reserved seats. Through My Condescension, I reserve a few seats up near this way, for the immediate staff ... the secretaries in part, and a few of the chauffeurs and representatives, with a part of the legal staff." New Day 1 (3), August 13 1936. When Myrtle Pollard attended a banquet on a Divine boat trip, Mother Divine sat on Father Divine's right and Faithful Mary on his left. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 251. Cantril and Sherif described the people sitting near Father Divine, "several well-dressed Negroes and one white", as "more self-possessed, more patient, more intelligently alert than the rest." Cantril and Sherif, Kingdom of Father Divine (In Nelsen et al., op.cit.) 177. The seats nearest Father Divine were dearly sought after by followers as a mark of his favour and were the object of rivalries and the cause of disaffection among the believers. See chapter Ten, p. 680.
68. New Day 3 (4), January 26 1939.
69. Sometimes Father's advice to the followers took the form of a question and answer session following his banquet speech as in this instance, Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936.
70. Ibid. Self-criticism was a mark of the followers' behaviour. Father Divine who was, of course, above criticism, used this injunction as a means of silencing malcontents within the Movement, but the followers seem to have more often adhered to the spirit of the original parable. A poem on this theme stresses tolerance rather than conformity:
- "Then let us all, When we commence
To slander friend or foe,
Think of the harm one word may do
To those we little know;
Remember curses sometimes, like
our chickens, roost at home.
Don't speak of other's faults until
We have none of our own."
- New Day 3 (45), November 9 1939.
71. To her credit, Miss D. told Father Divine, "If I come and tell something on someone, it makes me feel mean and small." Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936.
72. New Day 1 (28), September 30 1937.
73. Ibid. 2 (5), February 3 1938.
74. Ibid. 2 (24), June 16 1938.

75. Ibid. 3 (6), February 9 1939.
76. Ibid. 1 (28), September 30 1937. Father Divine's admonitions to the followers on personal conduct were reinforced by editorial comments in the Peace Mission press. The cover of one edition of the New Day bore this piece of advice:
- "This will bring you true happiness.
1. Say nothing you would not like God to hear.
 2. Do nothing you would not like God to see.
 3. Write nothing you would not like God to read.
 4. Go no place you would not like God to find you.
 5. Read no book of which you would not like God to say 'Show it to me'.
 6. Never spend your time in a way that you would not like God to ask 'What Are You Doing Now?'
- Never associate with dangerous company; never share their immoral or profane language."
- New Day 1 (11), July 30 1936.
77. Ibid. 1 (24), September 2 1937.
78. Harris, op.cit., 10.
79. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 253.
80. New Day 1 (20), August 5 1937; and Spoken Word 2 (1), October 19 1935.
81. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937; and Harris, op.cit., 106-107. Harris and an earlier observer of the banquet meetings, Guy B. Johnson, believed that the women followers experienced orgasms in their worship of Father Divine. Ibid.; and Johnson, Notes on behavior at a religious service at Father Divine Peace Mission, September 1939 (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit., vol. 3, Appendix D) 8-9.
82. New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938.
83. World Herald 1 (30), June 10 1937. Myrtle Pollard said that she was puzzled, at first, by the followers' description of Father Divine as "sweet". But after she joined a Divine boat trip she found the description more than apt: "after seeing the unbounded energy that He expended, the general familiarity with them, which He displayed, the tricks He played on them; and His infectious smile and mannerisms, I concluded that He was rather sweet." Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 252.
84. Spoken Word 2 (76), August 18 1936.
85. Ibid. 2 (85), September 19 1936.
86. Rozier, op.cit., 23-26. The accusation that Father Divine took sexual advantage of his women followers was common to the reports of those who left the Movement from the time of Fanny Richardson in 1930 to Ruth Boas in the 'sixties. William L. Banks, Black church in the U.S.: its origin, growth, contributions and outlook, Chicago 1972, 60; and

Parker op.cit., 10-11. See also Chapter Ten below: p. 668 and 675. Lincoln Scotland, in a poem in the Interstate Tattler wrote caustically of Father Divine's sex taboos:

"'All flesh is vile' - his pious platform proclaim,
But his 'better half' is a high-spirited dame."

Interstate Tattler, March 3 1932.

87. New Day 4 (9), February 29 1940.
88. Rozier op.cit., 25-26. There is evidence, however, of a child being born within the Movement to a teacher follower Melchizedek-Matthew (Mary C. Williams). She was dismissed from her post at Harlem's P.S.90 because she had concealed her pregnancy from the school authorities and improperly received sick-pay for a month's leave of absence while she was giving birth. Miss Matthew declared that the child was "sent by God", but there is no way of knowing whether it was conceived before she joined the Movement or afterwards. New York Times November 15 1935.
89. Even John Hoshor, who wrote a sensationalised account of the Peace Mission Movement, God in a Rolls Royce, accepted that no accusations of impropriety among the followers had ever been substantiated. Hoshor, op.cit., 101 and 108. One possibility that has received little consideration is that many of the middle-aged followers may, because of the menopause and the psychological adjustments associated with it, have become less interested in emotional and sexual relationships and more committed to the quest for spiritual enlightenment. This is, perhaps, to take a Jungian rather than a Freudian view of the Movement's sex taboo. Anthony Storr, Jung, London, 1973, 80-93.
90. An instance of this is cited in Crusader New Agency August 12 1933.
91. Sara Harris said that Father Divine had met Peninah in Georgia and came North with her. They bought the house in Sayville as a married couple. Peninah, herself, told a reporter that she had met Father Divine in Baltimore, Maryland, when he was a 'Nazarene' or Holiness preacher. New York Post April 22 1937; and Harris, op.cit. 21-23.
92. New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938.
93. Spoken Word 2 (29), March 7 1936.
94. World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
95. New York Herald Tribune April 22 1935; Spoken Word 1 (29), May 4 1935; and 2 (84) September 15 1936. The problem of assessing the number of youngsters in the Movement is compounded by the custom of calling older followers "Father's children" too.
96. New York Sun March 8 1935.

97. Harris, op.cit., 134. An advertisement in the New Day 2 (34), August 25 1938 read, "Children's Extensions for children and Guardians. Board and laundry \$2.50 a week in FATHER'S Mind and Spirit. 13 W. 131st. Street." In the case of Hattie Isaacs, it was revealed in the Domestic Relations Court that Rebecca Isaacs, her mother, paid \$2 for Hattie's board and lodging in the children's extension in 1935. Spoken Word 1 (26), April 13 1936. There is a discussion of this case below. It appears, however, from Father Divine's remarks, that parents often took an active part in the guardianship of their children. Certainly, if this had not been so, New York State authorities would have been empowered to close the extensions, as the Peace Mission was not licensed to run a children's boarding home. New Day 3 (6), February 9 1939. Myrtle Pollard believed that some children still lived with their parents in an almost conventional family situation except, of course, that they were expected to live as brothers and sisters rather than parents and children. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 201; and also Harris, op.cit., 134.
98. Spoken Word 1 (6), November 24 1934.
99. New Day 4 (23), June 6 1940. In 1938 the New York State Board of Education upheld the decision of a Kingston (N.Y.) judge in denying the Peace Mission children the right to use their "heavenly names" in the classroom. It was considered too disruptive. New York Sun July 20 1938.
100. New Day 4 (18), May 2 1940; New York Sun March 8 1935; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 67. Pollard shared McKay's view. She thought that "the set-up of the relation of parents, guardians etc. to children resembles very much the Big and Little Brother and Sister movements so popular in Harlem at this time. They are trying to instil in these children discipline, trustfulness, obedience, honesty and usefulness. Outings, educational and musical programs are given for their pleasure." Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 225-226.
101. New Day 1 (36), November 25 1937.
102. New York Age March 30 1935; New York Herald Tribune March 16 and April 16 1935; New York Times March 6, March 8, March 19, and April 16 1935. This case seems to have hinged on the definition of a 'children's boarding home'. As the children's parents were involved in the running of the extension, it was not strictly a 'boarding home'. The prosecution's case collapsed, too, when George Delp, a black ten-year old who boarded at the extension and was the prosecution's chief witness, testified that he was well treated by Faithful Mary and that Father Divine visited regularly. Ibid.
103. New York Times November 18 and December 16 1936; and New York World Telegram November 16 1936. Ridder and a party of State Welfare Board workers visited the Peace Mission in Harlem to observe its affairs in late 1936 and again in February 1937. World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
104. New Day 3 (6), February 9 1939.

105. World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937; and 1 (22), April 15 1937.
106. New Day 2 (1), January 6 1938; Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935; and World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937; and 1 (22), April 15 1937.
107. New Day 2 (20), May 19 1938; Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935; and World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
108. Ibid. 1 (2), November 26 1936.
109. Spoken Word 2 (7), November 30 1935.
110. New Day 3 (46), November 16 1939.
111. Ibid. 4 (13), March 28 1940.
112. Ibid. 4 (19), May 9 1940.
113. New York Sun May 3 1935; New York Times March 2 1935; and Spoken Word 1 (26), April 13 1935. Justice Jacob Panken dealt with several cases involving Father Divine's followers and their children in the Domestic Relations Court. His attitude in the case of Hattie Isaacs was undoubtedly shaped by cases he had heard concerning children who had been abandoned - rather than taken into the Peace Mission - by followers on conversion. When, in 1940, he heard the case of Roy Ferris, a fifteen year old boy whose parents had been converted and left him living in a filthy, unheated room without guidance or supervision, Panken described Father Divine as a "menace to the community". New York Times February 11 1940. Father Divine accused Panken of prejudice: of being one "who thinks he hates everybody who he does not think looks like himself, although he claims to be a Socialist." New Day 3 (6), February 9 1939.

After several brushes with the courts, the Movement became so sensitive on the issue of abandoned and delinquent children that Father Divine made clear that, despite his rulings on forsaking all family affections, parents must arrange to support and supervise their children until they came of age. John Lamb, anxious to counter the charge that the Movement was provoking delinquency, wrote a lengthy, open letter in which he said that if any of the followers' children were undisciplined it was because they came from families that, before conversion, were "those of the underworld in this community" - men and women who drank, gambled, sold drugs or ran brothels. Ibid. 4 (18), May 2 1940. While this bears the character of the conversion testimony of believers rather than an accurate description of their past it is, perhaps, fair to note conditions outside the Peace Mission. For the delinquent children of followers were but a small proportion of the delinquent children of Harlem. These, too, were caught up in a generation conflict: caught between the old world of their Southern parents and the new life of the urban ghetto. See Brown, op.cit., passim.; and Williamson, op.cit., passim.

114. New Day 1 (28), September 30 1937. Father Divine urged followers to write to local schools in protest when Peace Mission children were included in a vaccination programme. Compulsory vaccination, he held, violated the American Constitution's guarantee of freedom of religious belief.
115. New York Amsterdam News February 2 1935; and New York Times November 29 1936. Another case in which the S.P.C.C. intervened is interesting as it reveals that some followers were not so imprudent as to rely on faith alone. In 1937 Morning Star, the daughter of two white followers, Crystal Star and Golden Star, died of tuberculosis in Harlem Hospital. The father, Crystal Star, was subsequently charged, by the S.P.C.C., with failing to provide proper medical care. But the charges were dismissed when both parents testified that a doctor had treated Morning Star during her illness. New York Times May 4, May 16 and May 19 1937.
116. Father Divine said, "where there is an expression of sickness, diseases, disappointments and failures, lacks and wants and limitations, sin is the foundation of it. The time cometh when it will be a shame and a disgrace, which is to say, a dishonor to be sick." Spoken Word 2 (76), August 18 1936.
117. New Day 3 (11), March 16 1939. Mother Divine was admitted to hospital in 1937. Faithful Mary, when she broke with Father Divine later that year, said that he was "very nasty to his wife" and had originally sent Mother Divine to a charity ward in Kingston Hospital. Mother Divine, herself, did not lose faith in this trying time. She told a reporter: "Death is the last sin that we must overcome. Father says it is a sin to be overcome and it is the last one for us to conquer. Some of us cannot always do it. Some of us don't have faith enough, but I have faith in my heart." New York Post April 22 and April 28 1937; New York Times April 23 and April 25 1937; and Parker, op.cit., 93-94. Mother Divine did, in fact, survive this illness and died eight years later of cancer. Harris, op.cit., 189. For Faithful Mary's intervention to help Mother Divine, see below, Chapter Ten, p. 689.
118. Ibid., 109-110.
119. Baltimore Afro-American June 13 1936; New York Amsterdam News June 6 1936; and Spoken Word 2 (55), June 6 1936. Daddy Gray, who had achieved local fame by appearing in King Vidor's film, "Hallelujah", in 1929 did not undergo a pauper's burial. A woman remembered a kindness that he had once done her and she paid for the undertaker, funeral and burial plot. New York Age June 13 1936.
120. Faithful Mary said, "The sad part is that many people die in the 'Kingdom' and their relatives do not know anything about it." Rozier, op.cit., 106.
121. Spoken Word 2 (39), April 11 1936.
122. New Day 1 (41), December 30 1937; and Spoken Word 1 (18), February 16 1935.

123. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
124. New York Amsterdam News March 27 1937.
125. New Day 3 (37), September 14 1939.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid. 2 (8), February 24 1938; and 4 (11), March 14 1940.
128. Cantril and Sherif, Kingdom of Father Divine (In Nelsen et al., op.cit.,) 186-187.

CHAPTER FIVE: "PRACTICAL AND PROFITABLE": THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEACE MISSION.

To those who watched the growth of the Peace Mission in Harlem perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Movement was its success in giving confidence and material comfort to its members. Although Father Divine's followers had no symbol of affluence and extravagance to match his private 'plane and chauffeur-driven limousine,¹ they enjoyed a security denied to most Harlemites. At a time when many were struggling to survive on welfare or on their meagre earnings, the followers settled their debts, paid cash for all their purchases and shunned welfare. In Father Divine's words, they were "self-respecting [and] self-supporting."²

It was obvious that the Movement did not operate on conventional lines. Outsiders and converts alike said that there were neither subscriptions nor regular collections within the Movement.³ Miss Esther James said that her request to join the believers was granted without "money or price"; and Miss Flying Determination, Father Divine's pilot, recalled: "when I came into this Movement, to my surprise, I did not have to pay out a penny in dues. I didn't know I was going to find the 'land flowing with milk and honey' right on this earth."⁴ Father Divine insisted that he owned nothing of his own in the Peace Mission and received no wages for his work. He was, he said, a "free gift" to all mankind; and the Movement did not "depend on the methods and the ways and the means and customs and fashions of the world" for its success.⁵

Legends flourished that Father Divine possessed powers to produce money. The Amsterdam News reported that "admirers of the preacher" claimed that on one occasion Father Divine was arrested and thoroughly searched: "when his captors made sure he had no money on his person they informed him that he was being held in \$1000 bail. Father

Divine immediately reached in his pocket and produced a new \$1000 note."⁶ Students of the Movement argued, however, that Father Divine's luxurious life-style and the followers' lives of modest comfort were made possible by practical organisation rather than miracles. They suggested that the Peace Mission was a co-operative movement, in which the followers pooled their labour and their earnings to support one another. "The secret lies," wrote journalist Carl Warren, "in the social pattern of the Father Divine organisation - a new version of the old, old type of share-the-work and pool-the-profits communalism."⁷

Descriptions of the group in Sayville suggest that Father Divine and the followers lived together on a co-operative basis from the early nineteen-twenties.⁸ They chose this way of life as a matter of faith. Father Divine taught the followers to reject the selfish materialism of their past lives for a new way of life based on care and concern for others. Kindness, generosity, service and honesty were the precepts which guided the followers' conduct. Those who visited 72 Macon Street were impressed by the way everyone helped each other and by the harmony of the household. The followers accepted co-operation as the essence of "evangelical" behaviour, and their voluntary separation from their past reinforced their sense of responsibility to the group.

The followers were prosperous in Sayville. Although the finances of the household are essentially a matter of speculation, it seems that the followers were never at a loss for money, and that co-operation made the best use of what they had. As their guide and protector, Father Divine helped most of the followers to find jobs. A handful of believers agreed to stay at Macon Street to cook, clean, and provide for those that worked. It is probable that earnings and labour were pooled and that this sharing helped to keep their living

expenses low. At least until the late nineteen-twenties the converts lived together under one roof and by bulk, cash purchases of food economised on their household bills.⁹ Father Divine's ban on tobacco, alcohol, cosmetics and gambling complemented a thrifty lifestyle.¹⁰

Some of those who joined the group in Sayville came with savings, insurance policies and considerable personal possessions. As expressions of their past lives rotten with selfishness, materialism and worldliness, these assets had to be relinquished. Verinda Brown, a convert who later left the Movement, said that she was not allowed to take a "heavenly name" until she had made a complete and voluntary surrender of all her worldly possessions.¹¹

Some converts offered their money and property to Father Divine in appreciation of the change that he had brought in their lives. Miss Esther James wanted to give him over six hundred dollars as well as her house in the Bronx; and a follower who met Father Divine in Sayville in 1930 offered him a thousand dollars and "all the money that I made and could make" in return for "what HE has done for me."

Father Divine refused these offers, saying that he could not accept personal gifts. As the follower who offered him a thousand dollars recalled: "HE told me that HE did not want my money. HE said: 'Give me your heart and live the life.'" Miss Esther James decided to give her money to the poor.¹² But most followers were encouraged by Father Divine to use their savings, cashed insurances and personal goods for the group's benefit.

He was ready to take the converts' money and possessions on the Movement's behalf rather than his own. Verinda Brown claimed that Father Divine invited her to entrust her money to his "Heavenly Treasure", and that she gave him over seven hundred dollars from her savings for this purpose.¹³ But, generally, Father Divine did not need to take such obvious steps to persuade his followers to surrender

their resources for the group's benefit.

There were constant and subtle pressures on the believers to remind them of their obligations to the Peace Mission. Father Divine spoke frequently of the need to abandon selfish greed in order to gain the victory of the "evangelical life " and he rewarded those most diligent in their obedience with seats beside him at the banquet table. It was when Verinda Brown found herself placed at the bottom of the table that she was impelled to make a final surrender of all her property to Father Divine for the Movement's use. She felt rebuked for withholding wealth for her own benefit. At that time, she did not feel that Father Divine was exploiting or manipulating her for her money. She was aware only of her own failure to be true to the "evangelical" discipline, and her renunciation was a voluntary one.

The followers learnt that virtue lay in giving, whether the gift was large or small. Thus Verinda Brown not only relinquished savings and possessions that were worth several thousand dollars but she found pleasure in small acts of generosity. She sent flowers to the Sayville home. In an accompanying note to Father Divine she wrote: "your Spirit within is sending flowers for dining room."¹⁴ So it must have been with many other dedicated disciples.

Father Divine shared the comforts of this divine family. Although he refused money and gifts offered directly for his personal use, he was, of course, willing to live on the bounty of the followers. He was prepared to use money and gifts as long as they were left anonymously for him. Through this device he could and did say, without fear of contradiction, that he owned nothing of his own and demanded nothing from his converts for himself.¹⁵ He was the group's leader and, to all intents and purposes, the director of its affairs. Yet there were no records or accounts to implicate him in

its finances or, indeed, to make him liable for income tax.¹⁶

It is impossible to estimate how much money was available to the group in Sayville or how much Father Divine handled, either from anonymous gifts or the funds entrusted to his "Heavenly Treasure". Certainly, the group was wealthy enough to finance the open hospitality at Macon Street that played such a part in expanding Father Divine's following. It was able to meet the expense of legal action against the group in Sayville and to finance the rallies and banquets that accompanied Father Divine's entry into New York City in the early 'thirties.

Wealthy, individual converts subsidised the group's expansion. Miss E.I. May, for instance, turned her house at 108 West 129th Street in New York City, into a Peace Mission extension;¹⁷ and another follower claimed to have put three hundred dollars of her savings into the operation of a Newark extension.¹⁸

But the Movement's shift to Harlem in the early 'thirties posed financial problems. In Sayville, the believers had money and goods to contribute to the household and there was regular work to support everyone. But, in Harlem, Father Divine drew his following from people whose possessions were few and whose savings were already exhausted by the Depression. Even in prosperous times, they commanded little earning power; and it was those with least status and earning power - Harlem's middle-aged women - that became the bulk of his followers. Yet Father Divine was able to show these converts how to support themselves despite their economic handicaps, and through them he was able to make the Peace Mission Movement ostensibly prosperous at a time of severe economic distress.

Ever since the nineteen-tens blacks had been relegated to the menial and poorly paid work of the metropolis. In 1910 blacks formed 3.6% of Manhattan's adult working population. By 1920 this figure had swelled to 6.5%, and by 1930 blacks provided 14.1% of the district's work force.¹⁹ Yet, in each decade, the same pattern emerged. Blacks were under-represented in manufacturing and mechanical work, trade, public service, clerical work and the professions; and over-represented in domestic and personal service, and work in the transportation of goods and people in the city.

In 1910 the majority of black men in New York City worked in domestic and personal service jobs, particularly as elevator tenders, janitors, porters, servants and waiters. Some were recorded in the census under the heading "transportation" as chauffeurs, draymen, teamsters, expressmen, longshoremen and stevedores; and there were some listed, also, in industry, mainly as general labourers.²⁰

Domestic work and personal service remained the principal source of employment for black men in Manhattan throughout the next decade. In 1920, over seventeen thousand black men, 41% of the black male work force in Manhattan, still relied on this work, although domestic and personal service involved only 13% of the total Manhattan male workforce.²¹ Blacks lagged behind as white workers moved into industrial occupations. In 1920 only 20% of the black male workforce in Manhattan was employed in mechanical and manufacturing jobs, compared to 36% of the total male workforce.²² New York City had none of the specialized industries on the scale of the stockyards; iron and steel mills; automobile, textile and chemical plants of other cities where the black migrants found work during and after the First World War.²³ In Manhattan, they found it harder than white men to find industrial jobs and, generally, they entered industry on the lowest paid, unskilled rungs. Denied promotion, lacking in training

and neglected by trade unions that were either hostile to blacks or indifferent to the needs of unskilled workers, these black men remained concentrated in the heavy, insecure and poorly paid jobs of industry.²⁴ Apart from domestic work, blacks were heavily represented only in transportation and, particularly, longshorework - which was dominated by black and foreign-born white labour in 1920.²⁵

During the nineteen-twenties the black workforce in Manhattan almost doubled, from over seventy-two thousand to more than one hundred and forty thousand, due to the influx of black migrants mainly of working age. This rapid expansion was accompanied by the migration of whites out of Manhattan to other boroughs, so that Manhattan's total working population actually declined 10%.²⁶

Some of the black arrivals found work in Manhattan's manufacturing and mechanical industries. The black male industrial work force in Manhattan doubled during the nineteen-twenties. Yet its distribution was little changed. Only 22% of the total black male workforce held industrial jobs by 1930, while 40% still worked in domestic and personal service. In that year, black men provided just over a quarter of Manhattan's male domestic and personal service workers, although blacks were only 12% of the borough's total male workforce.²⁷

A socio-economic survey for 1930 showed the black male workers' lack of job mobility. They were still concentrated in the unskilled and semi-skilled work of the city. 76% of black working men in New York City in that year were classed as unskilled and semi-skilled, compared to 29% of native-born white working men and 43% of foreign-born white working men. Only 18% of black men were skilled workers or clerks, compared to 52% among native-born male white workers and 36% of foreign-born male white workers in New York City.²⁸

So, in 1930, black men in Manhattan were to be found working

mainly as labourers in industry and on the docks; or in various capacities as servants, either in private households or as elevator operators, janitors, porters (especially on the railroads) and waiters.²⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that a study of over two thousand working class black families in New York in 1928 showed that nearly 90% received less than \$30.25 a week, seventy cents less than the average minimum cost of living for a family of an industrial worker in New York as estimated by the National Industrial Conference Board.³⁰

Because of the lack of job opportunities for black men in New York City, black women had taken a greater role in providing for themselves and their families than white women. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, black women had been over 40% of Manhattan's black workforce, although women workers generally formed only 30% of the borough's total workforce. Over 50% of black women of working age went out to work, compared to between 30% and 40% of adult white women in Manhattan.³¹

In 1911 Mary White Ovington noticed the difference in the working lives of black and white women in New York City. Whereas the white woman usually left work to become a housewife and mother once she married, the black woman worked from the age of sixteen until late middle-age. In youth the black woman worked to support herself; and as an older woman she worked to supplement her husband's wages or to care for herself after separation or widowhood.³² This pattern had not changed by 1930. Whereas the percentage of working women in each age group after the age of twenty-five steadily fell in the total female population in Manhattan; the proportion of black women workers in the black female population remained consistently high through every age group. At the age of twenty-five, 55% of the borough's adult female population worked; by the age of sixty-five only 23%

still worked. But for Manhattan's black women the percentage at work in each age group from twenty-five to fifty-four years remained above 60%. Even among black women aged between fifty-five and sixty-four almost 50% were still at work in 1930.³³ The contribution of the black woman was also reflected in the marital and family statistics. Whereas only one-fifth of married women in Manhattan went out to work in 1930, over half of black married women worked. Married workers were 23% of Manhattan's total female workforce in that year, but 46% of the black female workforce.³⁴ Again, whereas 22% of married women with families in Manhattan went out to work in 1930, 47% of black "homemakers" worked.³⁵ Consistently, black women played a significant part in supporting themselves and their families.³⁶

At the time of Ovington's comment, there was little choice of work for the black woman. Factories and shops usually refused to hire them, and they were virtually confined to jobs in domestic and personal service. Among the eighteen thousand black women workers in Manhattan in 1910, over ten thousand were servants; over three thousand were home laundresses; and a further five hundred and more were waitresses. Usually the hours of labour in these jobs were long and the wages were low. For the domestic working for a private family the working day generally began at seven in the morning and lasted until dinner was cleared away at half past eight or nine o'clock at night. Perhaps a skilled cook could earn fifty dollars a month in 1910, but for most black women domestics the wages ranged between sixteen and thirty dollars a month according to the grade of work.³⁷

It was not only the hours and wages of domestic work that made it a lowly occupation. The work lacked security and dignity because the domestics, dispersed into hundreds of private households, had no organized voice or collective bargaining power. Job standards were dictated by the employer, and varied from household

to household. The only protection that a domestic had was that she was usually hired to do a particular type of work - ranging from the cook at the top of the scale to the general houseworker at the bottom. But even with this convention, domestic and personal service was not an occupation in which the worker did specific tasks, within specific hours of work and under stated conditions. Furthermore, the domestic always remained socially subordinate to her employer.³⁸ In the case of the black domestic, employment in white households added a racial dimension to this relationship of servant and mistress.

The only significant alternative employment for the black woman worker was as a seamstress or dressmaker. There were fifteen hundred black women among the twenty-four thousand women dressmakers and seamstresses in Manhattan in 1910.³⁹ However, the mechanisation of the clothing industry during the nineteen-tens made these handworkers obsolete, and though the number of black women seamstresses and dressmakers increased to more than two thousand in 1920, this was in a swiftly dying craft which, in that year, employed only six thousand women.⁴⁰

Domestic and service work remained the main field of black women's work. In 1920 it involved over twenty-one thousand black women, 70% of the total number of black working women in Manhattan. Over fourteen thousand black women were servants; and over two and a half thousand were home laundresses.⁴¹

Although mechanisation had undermined dressmaking and seamstress work as a real alternative, it did create other job opportunities for black working women in the late nineteen-tens, particularly in the clothing industries and power laundries. Seizing the chance to escape domestic service and perhaps find better pay and regular hours of work, some black women moved into industrial work. By 1920 24% of Manhattan's black working women were in industrial jobs.⁴²

But, in industry, black women found themselves concentrated in the menial and poorly paid unskilled jobs. Throughout the 'twenties they were hired in the garment industry mainly as all-round helpers, cleaners and examiners. It was not until the late 'twenties that some women moved up to jobs as pressers, finishers and trimmers; and not until the early 'thirties that black women reached the ranks of the machinists.⁴³ It was alleged that in the higher grades of work, black women received less pay than white workers for the same job. In early 1931, a journalist writing in the Liberator claimed that there was a difference of between twenty and thirty dollars a month in the wages paid to black and white pressers. In some cases, it was said, white pressers hired blacks to assist them and paid them a share of their own earnings.⁴⁴ Long hours of labour and poor working conditions were common throughout the clothing industry; and despite a brief effort in 1930 to bring black women into the garment unions, they were largely unorganised in the early 'thirties when Father Divine entered Harlem.⁴⁵ Piece work in this industry, however, did allow some workers to earn more than the average wage for factory work. In November 1931, the average factory wage for black workers in New York City ranged from seven to twelve dollars a week. In the garment industry, rapid workers could earn from twelve to twenty dollars a week on piece work rates.⁴⁶

The black women who turned to jobs in the city's power laundries in the 'tens and 'twenties entered an industry in which the work was hard and unhealthy, with long hours of labour and low pay. Overtime rates were seldom paid, and few laundry owners provided facilities where their workers could rest or relax. Laundry workers were often obliged to stand all day and even eat their lunch in work-rooms swilling with water from the machines. Black women worked principally as hand ironers, paid by the pound of laundry finished;

and as washers, pullers, hangers and mangleworkers who dealt with the hot, heavy, washing and wringing processes. A smaller number of black women worked as pressing machine operatives and as shirt folders. Throughout the 'twenties the industry employed many women on a part-time basis, and drew on a wide range of nationalities for its workforce, foiling a few weak efforts at labour organisation. There was, therefore, nothing to check the drastic decline in wages and job standards that began once the Depression forced the laundries into ruthless competition for trade. By 1932, black women were receiving as little as fifteen to nineteen cents an hour; compelled either to accept this or to face dismissal.⁴⁷

By 1930, other changes were affecting the situation of the black woman worker in Manhattan. The migrations of the nineteen-twenties had increased the number of black working women in Manhattan by 88% between 1920 and 1930. There was a small rise in the number of black women employed in industry during the decade. But most of the black women migrants turned to domestic work. In fact, the number of black women domestic workers increased 108% between 1920 and 1930.⁴⁸

This meant that domestic work increased in importance as a field of employment for black women. By 1930 it involved 76% of black women workers, an increase of 6% since 1920. At the same time, black women assumed a larger share of the total female domestic workforce in Manhattan. In 1920 they were 20% of the borough's female domestic workers; by 1930 they were 35% of the total workforce.⁴⁹

Black women were increasingly reliant on domestic work at precisely the time when the domestic work market fell into severe straits. The crisis was partly due to a sudden contraction in the supply of jobs. For, following the 1929 economic crash, the traditional employers of domestic labour coped with their shrinking household budgets by cutting back on their staff. Domestic unem-

ployment actually preceded the recession in other occupations, and nationally there was four times more unemployment in domestic work than in any other job category.⁵⁰ Employers reduced the size of their staff; took to employing domestics on a part-time basis; and even "looked to their own" by replacing black with white domestics.⁵¹

The loss of jobs was accompanied by an increase in the number of women turning to domestic work as a means of livelihood. In January 1932, Carita Owens Roane, the supervisor of the Harlem branch of the New York State Employment Service, noted that "in the women's division we find professional, clerical and factory workers applying for domestic work because of the scarcity of work in all fields." Because of the shortage of work for black women in other occupations, 80% of the bureau's placements were in domestic work. 60% of the women placed were usually domestics; 15% were factory workers; 15% were laundry or hotel workers; and the remainder were black women who had held clerical or professional jobs.⁵² And it was not only the women from other occupations that swelled the domestic labour pool. Traditionally, black women had looked upon housework as an emergency source of money in difficult times. As men lost their jobs and found it hard to obtain any regular work, the money that women could earn by domestic work assumed greater importance. So, an extra group of women went out in search of work to pay for basic necessities. They swelled the numbers of black women in competition for fewer domestic jobs.⁵³

Employers took advantage of the labour surplus to cut the wages paid for domestic work. An unpublished survey conducted by the New York State Department of Labor revealed that between 1930 and May 1932 wage rates for domestic work dropped 25%. This left the average monthly wage for domestics at between thirty and thirty-five dollars for the remainder of the decade.⁵⁴ The New York Urban

League found, for example, that the average weekly wage among the six hundred and nine women that it had helped to place in domestic jobs between 1933 and 1936 was only \$8.52.⁵⁵

The drop in wages was accompanied by the collapse of the fragile framework of convention that had provided some measure of protection for the domestic worker. Employers began to disregard the accepted grades of domestic work and expected their employees to assume wider duties. This change particularly affected women who held the better quality domestic jobs as part of a staff of servants in wealthy households. Here, employers economized by trimming the number of staff while still expecting the style of service to which they were accustomed. One woman who held a residential job with a wealthy family complained of "hour upon hour of family drudgery":

"... one or two women must carry on where once a staff of servants performed the household duties... The cook must do all three services of cook, pantry and kitchen maid as the butler must remain (English style) in the dining room to anticipate the wishes of madam ... a lady's personal maid must be parlor maid all day and then be ready to serve madam as personal maid until midnight. The chambermaid is scrubmaid and laundress." ⁵⁶

In less exclusive households, the decline in standards for full-time workers mainly took the form of extra work and longer hours for less pay. For example, in some households domestics were asked to do the laundry which, until then, had been sent to outside firms.⁵⁷ Long hours were commonplace. The Y.W.C.A., which prided itself as having among its members the 'better type' of employer, was shocked to discover during the 'thirties that over 60% of the houseworkers employed by its membership worked at least ten hours a day.⁵⁸ The complaints of many domestics told the same story. As one woman said: "Why, the horse goes in at six o'clock but we, we never get done until madam's ready to let us go. As long as they can find a stitch of work ... they make us work right on."⁵⁹ Furthermore, a domestic's

dependence on any full-time or part-time work that she could find made her more vulnerable to the abuses common to domestic work. Women complained that their wages were paid irregularly; that old clothes and goods were given in lieu of wages; that vacations and rest periods were reduced; and that the meals and accommodation provided for "sleep-in" staff were poor. Added to this, some employers made deductions for breakages; and some required their domestics to undergo a medical examination at their own expense as a condition of employment.⁶⁰

For those without jobs, the search for work was wretched. The New York State Employment Service operated a free public employment exchange in Harlem; and both the Urban League and the Y.W.C.A. ran their own bureaus. But the State Employment Service was not widely used by housewife employers, and the social service organisations preferred to cater to the higher grade domestic worker.⁶¹ The W.P.A. Housekeeping project did provide work for some displaced domestics. It employed about two thousand black women to act as cooks, maids and baby-sitters for the city's ill, aged and temporarily incapacitated. The women were given a week's training and then worked in the households of clients referred to the W.P.A. by the city's social agencies. But this work, at the relatively high pay of seventy dollars a month, was available to but a few of the unemployed women.⁶² Most women were obliged to rely on the services of commercial employment agencies.

There was a large number of small commercial agencies in Harlem which supplied black domestics to New York households. Usually these agencies charged the worker a fee for their services in advance, on the assumption that this was a levy from their first wage. As the agencies were inundated with more domestics than they could place in jobs, some resorted to sharp practice in their attempt to stay in

business. They levied fees on their clients and then maintained a pretence of finding them suitable work. A survey of the domestic labour situation made by the New York City Department of Investigation in 1939, noted some of the common abuses. After "paying their last dollars in fees", the survey claimed, women were "all too often" despatched to posts that did not exist; and when they tried to recover their fees, the agents kept them "coming and going" until they abandoned the attempt. Some agencies sent women to temporary positions with the assurance that they were permanent; and others consigned workers to jobs with the promise of wages higher than those that were actually paid.⁶³ Indeed, the competition for business between the agencies depressed wages, for the agents touted for prospective employers by offering cheap domestic labour. In 1933 a housekeeper described an agency circular that offered to supply cut-price domestic labour; and, in the following year, a delegation from the left-wing League of Struggle for Negro Rights visited Grant's Employment Service on 133rd Street to protest at advertisements which offered employers black domestics at \$2.50 a day for twelve hours' work.⁶⁴ Agencies frequently offered their services free of charge to employers, and included their expenses and charges in the fee paid by the worker.⁶⁵

As regular work became hard to find, many domestics turned to day hire as a way to earn money. The drop in wages for domestic work brought a new category of employer on to the city's domestic job market - lower middle class housewives who could afford the luxury of a day-worker at Depression prices. Wages were rarely more than twenty or twenty-five cents an hour for this type of work. Because of the long delays, charges and malpractices of the commercial agencies, day-workers usually went out in search of their own work. Some resorted to the streets; offering themselves for hire in the

infamous domestic "slave markets" of the city.⁶⁶

Every morning two or three hundred black women - and sometimes men, too - set out on the subway from Harlem to the suburbs of the Bronx and Brooklyn. There they congregated at specific street corners to wait for offers of work from local housewives. Belle Taub, a reporter for the Liberator⁶⁷ described the scene:

"Propped up against store walls at street corners they stood. The women will occasionally rest weary bodies on old discarded grocery boxes. In their hands they hold a brown paper bag. In that bag is their promise of comfort for the day - a dry piece of bread for lunch, also a few torn bits of workclothes. The men carry their pails and cleaning rags and often they will turn their pails and use them as chairs, while waiting for a possible employer to come along and offer the beggarly wage of seven and one half cents for cleaning a window." 68

There they waited: some found work, many did not. Journalist Carl Offord, who visited the Bronx "slave markets", reported that men tried to jibe the younger women with the promise of an "easy dollar"; while the older women had to hide their grey hair "as most employers take the young ones." To add to the humiliation of the domestics, the employers haggled over the wages. Offord described a typical exchange:

"'You girls want to work?' She singles out the youngest, the strongest looking: 'How much do you work for?' The worker states her price. The housewife exclaims, 'Twenty five cents an hour!' and turns away ... She knows that by twelve o'clock, they will be anxious to work for fifteen cents; and if she can put her hands on one that came up on her last nickel she can get her to work for ten cents." 69

Those who found work were expected to do any chore that the employer set. Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke writing in Crisis said that these domestics were given "hours of multifarious household drudgeries." Under rigid watch "she [the domestic] is permitted to scrub floors ... to hang precariously from window sills, cleaning window after window, or to strain and sweat over steaming tubs of heavy blankets, spreads and furniture covers."⁷⁰ One day-worker

said:

"... most of us must do laundry work, we cook, we walk the dog and nurse the baby. Many girls work so late that they have to take a taxi home, and they make only \$1.50 a day. Thinking of paying out a whole day's [wages] in order to get home, after slaving all day. That means working for nothing doesn't it?" 71

The domestics complained that the "slave market" housewives resorted to numerous ploys to rob them of their wages: deductions were made for meals, breakages and "unsatisfactory work"; sometimes house clocks were set back an hour to cheat the worker.⁷² Yet the overcrowded labour market and the need for work at any price kept the "slave markets" alive.⁷³

This was the scale of need that Father Divine confronted. He drew his following from people who were poor and vulnerable; from people who had never commanded much status or earning power in the city marketplace. It seemed vain to promise them prosperity and security at a time of Depression, when they had never enjoyed economic independence in more prosperous days. Yet Father Divine impressed upon his audiences the possibility of radical change. He said that he could make them "practical and profitable"; and he assured them that their present situation presented no barrier to success. "We can do anything we wish to do financially, intellectually, socially and otherwise, without any means of foundation... With no background whatsoever," he said. All that he asked was that they should trust him totally. "When you relax - let go completely and trust in God wholeheartedly," he promised, "the source of your supply will be limitless."⁷⁴

Father Divine preached the philosophy of the "evangelical life" as the way for his followers to overcome their difficulties. They were suffering, he said, because they had drifted away from the truth of their own divinity. They had accepted poverty and failure;

and they had allowed themselves to become dependent on others for their survival. He gave the followers an insight into their lives. He explained their poverty in terms of their outlook on life and their sense of self. He insisted that the remedy lay in their own hands. Success and prosperity were possible once people recognized their power to shape their own future and called on all their inner resources. He upheld the power of self-assertion and self-reliance.

Furthermore, he taught that poverty was linked to man's rejection of the truth of human brotherhood. Instead of treating each other with dignity and equity, people had given way to selfishness and injustice. The weapons of race and class had been used to oppress the weak. But poverty and oppression would be eradicated once people worked together in brotherhood and treated each other with justice and respect.

This philosophy was immediately relevant to the needs of Father Divine's new converts. Dependence, discrimination and exploitation were at the heart of their economic insecurity. Father Divine's teachings encouraged them to have faith in themselves; to work together; and to establish and demand equity and dignity in their working lives. He made the pursuit of honest, self-respecting and self-supporting work into an article of faith and he used the collective life and discipline of the Movement to support this quest.

It was Father Divine's unbending rule that the followers must find an honest means of livelihood. "If you have a profession, if you have a trade, if you have a gift or calling, if it is worthwhile, if it is of any account," he said, "USE IT!"⁷⁵ But he did not abandon

them to the open market. Instead he tried to eliminate some of the hardships and indignities surrounding their search for work. He forbade the followers to seek jobs through commercial agencies that charged the worker and not the employer for their services. Such agencies he said, contributed to the "oppression of those who are as the hireling and the fatherless, the poor and the needy, the laboring class of people." They exacted money from those who "did not have bread to eat, neither a place to sleep" while the "millionaire" employers went free. He invited the followers to trust in him instead. "I will get you good positions if you are competent," he promised, "if you have good references I will get you POSITIONS, FREE OF CHARGE."⁷⁶

In Sayville Father Divine had approached employers personally in his capacity as an employment agent. In Harlem he did not attempt to solicit jobs for each follower or visit prospective employers.⁷⁷

Instead he encouraged the followers to organize a free service within the Peace Mission for the benefit of both employers and believers. In 1935 the followers launched the Vocational Guidance Department under the supervision of Brother Carnegie Pullen.⁷⁸ Pullen compiled a register of unemployed followers, and grouped them into several sub-divisions, each with team leaders, according to their interests and usual occupations - professional, industrial, clerical or domestic.⁷⁹ Brother J. Clarence Vaughan and Brother Maxwell Forteau, for instance, supervised a building trades group from an office at 1 West 117th Street. Vaughan was a specialist in the installation of heating systems, and the group included carpenters, plumbers, electricians, repairers and unskilled general labourers.⁸⁰ Regular columns of "Situations Wanted" advertisements were placed in the Peace Mission press; often with a central 'phone number for

employers to ring. This is an extract from one classified column which appeared in the World Herald, November 26 1936:

" SITUATIONS WANTED

FAMILY IRONER, 11 years experience, silks and fine linen. City reference. Call Miss Olive Branch. HARlem 7-2408.

COOK, first class, fancy, in or out of city. Local references. \$80.00 per month. Holy Hannah. HARlem 7-2408.

HOUSE CLEANING by the day. Thoroughly experienced. City references. Miss Righteousness Justice. 50c per hour. HA 7-2408.

COOK, first class. Competent, reliable. In or out of city. Reference. \$60.00 per month. Miss Sincere Heart. HARlem 7-2408.

GENERAL HOUSEWORK in or out of city. Light washing. \$50.00 per month. City references. Miss Elisha Willing. HARlem 7-2408." 81

When an employer contacted the Peace Mission in search of advice or labour, Pullen referred the enquiry to the particular division within the Department. According to Pullen, the companionship among the followers helped to make this service efficient: "the constant fellowship, co-operation and working together inside and outside of the Kingdom causes all to become well-acquainted with the talents and qualifications of each other and when a call is made for a certain type of worker, the person best qualified for that position is well known."⁸²

This arrangement provided the followers with a free service, tailored to their needs, which they organised and operated themselves.⁸³ Father Divine confined himself to writing an occasional "letter of introduction" for the benefit of particular followers seeking work.⁸⁴

The followers accepted, without question, the need to find a means of livelihood. It meant more to them than mere survival. Work was vital to their self respect, for they shared Father Divine's view on the virtues of self-reliance. Honest labour and the effort

put into supporting oneself held value in themselves.

The followers' attitude to work was expressed in a poem called "WORK: A SONG OF TRUIMPH" which was published in the Spoken Word in February 1936. In the second stanza, the writer described the invigorating and uplifting qualities of work:

"Work!
Thank GOD for the pride of it,
For the beautiful conquering tide of it,
Sweeping the life in its furious flood,
Thrilling the arteries, cleansing the blood,
Mastering stupor and dull despair,
Moving the dreamer to do and dare,
Oh, what is so good as the summons deep
Raising the torpid soul from sleep?"

In the fourth stanza, the writer celebrated the part work played in fulfilling God's plan for mankind:

"Work!
Thank GOD for the swing of it,
For the clamoring, hammering ring of it
Passions of labor daily hurled
On the mighty anvils of the world -
Oh, what is so fierce as the flame of it,
And what is so huge as the aim of it,
Thundering on through death and doubt,
Calling the Plan of the Maker out;
Work, the Titan; Work, the Friend;
Shaping the Earth to a Glorious End:
Draining the swamps and blasting the hills;
Doing whatever the Spirit Wills
Rendering a continent apart
To answer the dream of a master heart,
Thank GOD for a world where none may shirk
Thank GOD for the splendor of work." 85

Perhaps few of the followers ever shared the extremes of this writer's vision, but the poem captured, nonetheless, the belief in the virtues of work and self-reliance so pervasive in the Movement.

Ironically, the followers' faith in self reliance was, in one important respect, an obstacle to employment. Because they refused to accept home relief welfare payments, the followers were ineligible for jobs on work relief projects. They were thus excluded from the only new and substantial field of employment created during the Depression.

The denial of work relief was a source of real frustration for the followers. They found it hard to understand and accept the exclusion. In March 1935, one follower described how he had visited the city's relief headquarters in an attempt to obtain work. Pointing to the snow in the street he had asked the officials to employ him to clear the roads if nothing else; but they had told him that he could have home relief but not work, remarking that "he must be one of Father Divine's followers."⁸⁶

Father Divine believed that the official regulations unjustly penalized the self-reliant. He saw work and "charity" as antithetical; and he appealed to the relief authorities to exempt his followers from the obligation to join the home relief rolls in order to qualify for jobs. In May 1935 Arthur M. Madison explained the Peace Mission's case in a letter to Oswald Knauth, director of the New York City Emergency Relief Bureau: "The followers of FATHER DIVINE deny themselves the right to home relief and all forms of charity and because of that you DENY THEM THE RIGHT TO WORK RELIEF JOBS. Is this fair? ... We demand the right of every citizen, regardless of race, color or creed to a job and an honest means of earning a livelihood."⁸⁷ When this appeal failed, Father Divine wrote personally to Victor F. Ridder, head of the W.P.A. in New York City with the case of one of his followers, Brother Joy Rejoice (Mr. Lemmon), who was unemployed and bound over by the courts to support the family that he had left on joining the Movement. Father Divine urged Ridder to consider his followers' dilemma for "they do not desire to go on the Welfare for it is in violation to their religious views they have taken, in the way of producing Honesty, and Competence in their lives."⁸⁸ When Ridder proved unable to help, Father Divine petitioned Senator Royal S. Copeland, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, and Harry Hopkins, head of the Federal Emergency Relief

Administration, to repeal the clause in the regulations prohibiting work relief to those outside the home relief rolls.⁸⁹ Hopkins' administrative assistant, Alfred E. Smith, replied that though they hoped that work relief would supersede home relief as the way to economic recovery, funds were not available to provide jobs for all the unemployed. All he could offer the Peace Mission was the hope that the existing programme would stimulate private industry to open jobs where the followers might find work.⁹⁰ The irony remained: the followers were denied the right to work because of their insistence on self reliance.⁹¹

Still, Father Divine urged his unemployed followers not to despair, but to use their time constructively to gain extra training and education. The followers were invited to pool any knowledge or expertise they possessed for the benefit of the other believers. Practical classes were held, for instance, in the "domestic arts" in which a number of women followers demonstrated skills that ranged from dressmaking to commercial candy-making. Members of the building trades group offered apprenticeships to any young followers willing to learn a trade; while the Vocational Guidance Department was extended to help followers study and qualify for better jobs. A clerical and commercial study group within the Department investigated job openings, requirements and training facilities for the believers; and a Civil Service study group helped a handful of followers through the training and procedures for entry into the Civil Service. A "Divine class" in journalism was launched; and a number of followers enrolled on a business studies course downtown.⁹²

Father Divine encouraged his followers to aim high; to overcome their own limitations by education and effort, and to reject the job limitations that others tried to impose upon them because of their race. Distinction, he said, was not the exclusive preserve of

one group; and he gave them the example of George Washington Carver who "rising up above every opposition, over and above all of the prejudices and segregation and discrimination in the South [was] proving his genius and proving to the world conclusively qualification is not bound to nationality, races, creeds, nor colors."⁹³ But Father Divine cautioned the followers that a sense of priorities was still important. "Do not give up your jobs and your positions and use going to school as an alibi to rob you of your life's sustenance," he said, "but use going to school and any information you might seek as an expression of an advancement you are making, an improvement you are making."⁹⁴

For those who found work, Father Divine laid down guidelines on the standards that they should expect as a matter of justice from their employers. At the end of 1934 he established the principle of a minimum weekly "living wage" for all followers in work outside the Movement:

"You should not work for less than ten dollars at the least. Why should you demand it? It is because you are honest - because you do not desire to be as you have been. You do not desire to be a thief again. You do not desire to leave your old bills unpaid. You do not desire to get means in a dishonest way, as you have been doing." ⁹⁵

He warned his followers not to work for commission, but to seek a fair, weekly wage that justly paid the individual for the effort put into a job irrespective of sales success. When Mr. J. Randolph, the manufacturer of Randolph Baking Powder approached the Peace Mission in search of two hundred "serious minded salesmen", Father Divine insisted that his followers should settle for a fair, agreed salary:

"... if some outside business like Mr. Randolph wants you and wants you to work on commission saying you could earn \$20 a week, why, just let him pay you the fifteen dollars." ⁹⁶

He was especially vigilant about the rates his followers should

expect for domestic work. It is likely that, in the mid-'thirties, when wages were at rock-bottom, Father Divine advised the followers to charge about fifty cents an hour for casual housework; and either ten to fifteen dollars a week or forty-five to fifty dollars a month for full-time work.⁹⁷

He was also adamant about working conditions. He told his domestic workers, in particular, to insist upon fair hours of labour and agreed rest periods with their employers:

"Owing to the over-rush for the occupation it has been that lots of them have cut you down and tried to get you to work every day all day and not get any day off ... Many times you go to places and you give in to that extent ... and cause themselves [sic.] to be enslaved in a manner of speaking." 98

As an additional insurance against mistreatment, he encouraged his domestic workers to find out from their employers "exactly what they want and what they expect" so that the worker's responsibilities were clearly defined at all times; and the employer knew, too, what the domestic expected in the job.⁹⁹

The followers were encouraged by Father Divine to make a stand against unfair and humiliating practices. It was unfair, he said, for employers to make deductions for accidental damage from the wages of their employees.¹⁰⁰ It was humiliating, he insisted, to force domestics to undergo medical examinations, at their own expense, as a condition of employment:

"There is a common phrase quite often used in America 'It is as fair for the goose as it is for the gander'. I say, 'It is as fair for the employer as it is for the employee' ... Because a person has money, it does not say that person cannot have disease ... Now let the employers have physical examinations, and we will have a sanitary condition worth representing in this advanced civilization." 101

With this concern for dignity at work Father Divine also prohibited his followers from accepting gifts, tips and bonuses. These irregular forms of payment, he explained, undermined wage

standards and compromised the status and the independence of the worker. They undermined the worker's self-respect, too, for the worker was tempted into "trying to get something for nothing" and eventually set the quality of his or her service by the generosity of the employer or client:

"I have known waiters who would not treat their customers right. They would get very rude and give bum service just because they did not tip them as they thought they should tip them."

If the worker was worthy enough to be offered a present or bonus, Father Divine argued, then the worker was justified in asking for an increase in wages instead.¹⁰²

Father Divine believed that these guide lines would transform economic affairs. Workers would find new prosperity and security once their employers began to act with justice and respect for them. Both would benefit from escaping a mutually destructive economic relationship characterised by exploitation and manipulation. By following his advice, he said, both the worker and the employer would be liberated.¹⁰³

Still, he reminded the followers that an equitable adjustment of economic relationships depended as much on the worker as on the employer. The followers could only expect fair treatment by showing a sense of responsibility in their own conduct at work. He urged the followers to strive for high standards; to be honest, polite, reliable, diligent and co-operative in their work. "You are as good as anybody you work for is good, and don't let anyone tell you no," Father Divine taught. "Do what is right on the job and get what is right in return."¹⁰⁴

It is difficult to measure how successful Father Divine's efforts were in helping the followers to find dignified and remunerative work. There are no estimates of the number of followers employed during the nineteen-thirties, and contemporary students of

the Movement neglected the details of the ordinary working lives of the believers.

To some extent, the followers restricted their access to jobs by following Father Divine's advice. Although his teachings on the use of commercial employment agencies did not constitute a total ban, he clearly preferred the followers to rely on the Movement's job-finding service instead. This was, by no means, comprehensive. Moreover, Father Divine's rulings on wage and working conditions obliged the followers to be selective in their choice of employers; and probably deterred some potential employers from contacting the Peace Mission. It eliminated, for instance, those city housewives who were in search of cheap, domestic labour; and also those business or industrial employers who welcomed diligent, co-operative workers, but felt under no compunction to negotiate special conditions of employment with the followers when labour was cheap and plentiful elsewhere. Of course, the followers' obedience to Father Divine's ruling on welfare excluded them from W.P.A. projects.

There are indications that some followers, at least, could not afford to heed Father Divine's advice on wage rates and working conditions.¹⁰⁵ Yet he drew to the Movement people who placed a premium on self-respecting labour. He was able to help these men and women avoid the worst features of the search for work during the Depression and separate them from the employers who had traditionally despised and exploited their labour. In his attempt to impose standards of dignity and equity, he encouraged the followers to expect and seek something better in their working lives. He boosted their own aspirations and inspired them to look for jobs where their labour would be appreciated and fairly rewarded.

Indeed, Father Divine's teachings encouraged one follower to make a stand for her rights at work that actually exceeded his idea

of the correct, equitable relationship between the worker and the employer. This follower rose during a banquet meeting to tell Father Divine how she had forced her employer to refund money deducted from her wages for a breakage at work. Proud and pleased by her success, she was shocked when Father Divine reprimanded her for using "coercion" instead of negotiation. She protested that she was only following his teaching on accidental damage, but Father Divine cried, "amid great shouts", "now I say be mindful of how you try to correct GOD!"¹⁰⁶

The work standards that Father Divine set and the respect that he encouraged between his followers and their employers can be seen, as well, as a blow to a traditional set of assumptions about the relationship between black and white. Sylvanus A. Hart, an official in the New York State Department of Licences, appreciated this when he wrote to commend Father Divine for his taboo on tips, begging, soliciting and stealing. "I once heard a well-known Senator from one of the Southern states," Hart wrote, "in referring to the darker citizens of the United States declare that the n... [Negro] was a race of tip-takers and would always be such." In Hart's view, Father Divine was challenging this racist stereotype.¹⁰⁷

The challenge was even more apparent in Father Divine's advice to his black domestic workers. In the South, as Hortense Powdermaker reported, "whites simply assume that their yard boys will lie and their cooks take food home with them, and that neither is cause for discharging a servant. Instead, the mistress will talk indulgently or regretfully about how they always steal and never tell the truth. Such evidence is regarded as proof that the Negro is unstable, incompetent to fend for himself and actually better off under white domination." Such behaviour accepted, and almost encouraged, by the white mistress buttressed race relations and was a constant drain

on black self-respect. It was to these problems that Father Divine addressed himself when he told his followers that they should seek a fair wage "because you do not wish to be as you have been. You do not desire to be a thief again."¹⁰⁸

Thus, Father Divine not only encouraged his followers to seek fair and dignified treatment at work, but he also challenged traditional racist stereotypes that devalued the economic relationship between black worker and white employer. There is evidence, too, that the Movement managed to attract a class of appreciative employers, particularly in the field of domestic work.

In domestic service, more than any other type of employment, a personal relationship existed between the worker and the employer, and the quality of a domestic's personality and performance was important. Even in the Depression, there were still some employers who were prepared to pay well for the chance to enjoy reliable, high-class domestic service. It was a paradox of the domestic labour market that there could be a shortage of experienced and top-grade workers even as the marginal, unskilled labour supply grew. In New York City, society women complained that it was difficult to find the "right kind" of servants.¹⁰⁹

Apparently, the followers' beliefs and approach to work equipped some of them with the precise code of conduct that these employers sought. Employers said that their workers were diligent, honest and obedient without being subservient. They were loyal and responsible. Carnegie Pullen claimed, in 1936, that some of the followers had gained such a "high and widespread reputation for absolute honesty, integrity, competence and reliability ... [that] many employers specify that they will employ only followers of FATHER DIVINE."¹¹⁰

Letters of commendation from employers testified to the work

attitudes of these followers, and the quality of their relationship with the employers. Mrs. Gusta Elliot of 2455 Grand Avenue, Brooklyn (N.Y.) wrote to Father Divine in praise of Miss Willing Heart:

"It sure is a blessing to know that when your girl leaves at night that nothing is taken that does not belong to her. And to know and feel one is around that is pleasing and willing at your call to do things the way you want them done without any grumbling. It certainly gives one a sense of happiness in their presence." 111

Ethel M. Albertson wrote in appreciation of another follower:

"Mr. Albertson and I would like to tell YOU of the devoted service that we have had from one of YOUR most faithful and loyal followers, Harriet Roper. She has been with us several years and will, I hope, be with us many more. She has indeed brought peace and love into our home in her care and thoughtfulness towards our children and attention to her duties and as she attributes all her duties and doings as YOUR work, we feel that YOU should know of her splendid service." 112

These followers had no difficulty in conforming to Father Divine's rules. They were diligent and co-operative at work because this dovetailed with their own faith in the virtues of self-respecting, honest labour; and they worked at wages and conditions better than those many other domestics enjoyed. But this type of work was not available to many of Father Divine's followers. The number of such jobs was limited, and even if many of the women followers were domestics, certainly not all were top-class workers. Not all the followers, either, made such a smooth adjustment to the outside society when they were lucky enough to find work.

Difficulties arose because of the differences between the outside world and the values and lifestyle within the Movement. The followers went out to work in a world where Father Divine was not accepted as God, and where there were divisions of race, creed and class. Father Divine asked that the followers should not only do their job well, but remain true to his teachings. Some followers

were able to cope quite happily with the discrepancies between the worlds of the Peace Mission and work, "visualize Father" and perform efficiently. But others were less successful.

Some followers irritated their employers with their self-righteousness and their talk of Father Divine. The Peace Mission press reported a meeting called within the Movement to discuss the problem "in regard to some of the children who are not able to hold jobs on account of various things which annoyed employers, such as singing loudly while at work, preaching, going into the Spirit, arrogance ...". The meeting decided on the need for a "class of instruction" to smooth out the abrasive features of their behaviour at work. It was felt that it was only a "matter of education, the angels in question needing enlightenment along these lines."¹¹³

But even the simplest expression of belief aroused antipathy in some workplaces, and apparently made some of the followers open to victimisation. In December 1935 the Peace Mission press reported the plight of one follower who had lost her job in the Public Works Administration:

"It was said that she had been ordered not to mention the name of FATHER DIVINE and not to say, 'I Thank You, FATHER' at her work, that she was subject to much persecution from the forelady, and that the forelady told untruths about her to the Superior, who eventually discharged her without credentials, thus preventing her working in any other Department." ¹¹⁴

In 1940 a domestic told her fellow followers how she had lost her job after insisting on using the greeting "Peace" when answering her employer's telephone. Father Divine assured the woman that it was better to leave the job than compromise one's faith. Employers who failed to deal justly with his followers, he warned, would "pass out of the body" in punishment.¹¹⁶

Thus, there were always followers who, because of their allegiance to Father Divine, could not find jobs or could not cope

with a working life outside the Movement. Their best efforts to support themselves were foiled by their faith. For this group of believers, however, there was still another means of livelihood that met with Father Divine's approval. With his encouragement, many of the believers turned to self-employed business enterprise as another means of livelihood.

For many years, business had been viewed, by some New York City blacks, as both the acme of self-reliance and as a real alternative to poor employment prospects. It was during the late nineteen-tens and 'twenties, as Harlem grew into a large and compact black community, that this interest in business had flowered. Members of the black bourgeoisie led the way, hoping to use commercial success in the ghetto as their springboard for entry into the wider commercial world. Some opened retail shops in competition with established white firms in the area. Others began service businesses for blacks in fields that white business disdained¹¹⁷ - as printers, publishers, undertakers, movers, barbers and as the proprietors of cheap hotels and boarding houses.¹¹⁸

The poorer migrants who came to Harlem in this period had also been alive to the possibility of business success. Finding little future in the types of work open to them in the city, some had tried their hand at business instead. They began small service enterprises, which depended more on their skills and talents than on capital or business training. Some opened barber shops; and others bought hand-carts to run removal businesses from street corners.¹¹⁹ Women migrants turned to individual enterprise with special vigour. Southerners opened scores of tiny lunch rooms, often in their own

homes, offering Southern-style home cooking.¹²⁰ Young women enrolled in Harlem's schools of "Beauty Culture", attracted by the chance to train as beauticians and eventually open their own shops. "Beauty Culture", which catered to the vogue in hair-straightening among black women, was advanced as a career for the energetic, independent and ambitious.¹²¹

A few fortunes were made.¹²² But, on the whole, black business failed. In retail business, blacks were unable to capture the Harlem market place from white business interests. Most of Harlem's black-owned stores barely earned the wages of management for their owners; and the lion's share of the district's trade, at the end of the 'twenties, was still held by the branches of large white-owned department stores, and by a variety of smaller, white-owned family businesses.¹²³ The black retailer was the victim of discrimination in business finance, training and market leverage that no amount of individual effort and flair could overcome.

Few of the black retail businesses that opened during the nineteen-twenties were financed securely. Until the opening of the short-lived Dunbar National Bank in 1928, backed by John D. Rockefeller, to provide blacks with reasonably priced capital,¹²⁴ blacks were forced to rely upon discriminatory white finance companies. As a result, black business walked a tightrope of limited surplus capital, short-term mortgages, expensive insurance and high interest rates.¹²⁵ Black operating costs were automatically higher than those of their white competitors.

Then, since every point of contact with the larger business world was dominated by whites, the black merchant was at a greater disadvantage than the small, white storekeeper in Harlem, who used the bonds of religion, family and nationality to secure small, competitive concessions, especially in wholesale buying.¹²⁶

Moreover, most black businessmen were forced to trust to their own business acumen. Although there were a handful of vocational courses open to blacks in New York City, the most important means of business training - responsible employment in reputable white firms - was closed to almost all.¹²⁷ Businesses failed through their owners' inexperience and lack of business training. The black merchant was also a victim of the black business mystique. He was often tempted to use his profits not on better stock or equipment, but on conspicuous consumption or projects that befitted his position as a leading figure in the black community.¹²⁸

Even in the field of service business, where blacks were freed from the pressures of white competition, profits were small. The weakness of these enterprises was their vulnerability to overcrowding in a sequestered market place. The enthusiasm for business was so strong that it had attracted more people than the market could support at a comfortable living.

By 1930, for instance, there were at least two hundred and fifty barbershops in Harlem, and nearly two thousand individual barbers competing for trade at drastically reduced prices.¹²⁹ In the printing trade, the arrival of West Indian printers caused an expansion in the number of print shops in Harlem; and though the larger firms retained control of the contracts provided by black community institutions, the increase led to a "bedlam of price [cuts] and underbidding" which lowered the quality of the printers' work and threatened their security.¹³⁰

Even the once dynamic "Beauty Culture" business was in straits by the end of the 'twenties, serving only the black community, and with its own training schools graduating several hundred beauticians each year, "Beauty Culture" was quickly swamped with more operators than it could support. The shops fought to survive by cut-throat

competition; and the shops themselves competed against hundreds of home-operators, many of whom were trained in the schools of "Beauty Culture". By the 'thirties, a business that had once been heralded as the way to security and status for self-respecting black women, was plagued by price-cutting, insecurity, long hours and a complete absence of standards.¹³¹

It was testimony to the persistence of the business mystique in Harlem and the lack of job opportunities in the city, that blacks continued to trust their fortunes to business enterprise during the 'thirties. In fact, the number of small black-owned businesses may have increased during the first half of the decade, as blacks tried to support themselves rather than submit to the humiliation believed to surround unemployment and the acceptance of welfare.

The Depression-born businesses had a special quality of their own. Cigar and candy stores were opened by blacks "who had saved a few dollars for the inevitable rainy day."¹³² Hand laundries sprang up with names suggestive of their Depression origin - the "New Sympathetic Laundry", "New Deal Laundry", "Reasonable Laundry"; while small groceries carried popular titles such as "Doc's Economy Grocery", "Neighborhood Dairy", "People's Grocery" and "Economy Stores" in an attempt to attract local support.¹³³ Many began shakily and quickly folded. The Vanguard, a classified directory of black business in New York and New Jersey, mirrored this extraordinary flux and turnover. Its establishment in 1932 suggests that there was a trend towards business enterprise; but its entries showed the short life of most of its contributors - ranging across the board from cleaning, pressing and dyeing shops, to bakers, barbers, express firms, groceries, laundries, shoe repair shops, sign makers, undertakers and realtors. Since only those businesses willing to pay fees were listed in this directory, the trend of

rapid business change was possibly far greater.¹³⁴

Some Harlemites tried to support themselves by enterprises too humble to reach the official business statistics. From apartments and basements, women made and sold bread, pies and home-cooked specialities.¹³⁵ A large number of tiny 'sacred shops' opened, dealing in roots and herbs and the paraphernalia of the occult.¹³⁶ Shoe-shine boys set up stands at busy intersections, working "just as long as there are people passing on the street" shining shoes for ten cents, and, perhaps, "a nickel tip, maybe a dime" just to make an "honest living."¹³⁷

Other blacks turned to street-selling as a means of survival. William M. Kelly, editor of the Amsterdam News, noted in 1931 that the jobless were turning to "small uncomplicated personal business ventures requiring a small outlay of money, a lot of determination and plenty of time."¹³⁸ Individuals in mobile, brightly painted cook shacks sold seasonal food from the curbs, in competition with vendors who walked the streets with baskets on their arms selling delicacies to passers by.¹³⁹ Blacks even entered street businesses previously dominated by other ethnic groups in Harlem. In rivalry with Italian ice-dealers, blacks turned their basements into ice-stores ready for the summer street trade.¹⁴⁰ Most striking of all, blacks took over Harlem's fruit and vegetable pushcart markets which, until the Depression, had been the preserve of Jewish, Greek and, particularly, Italian pushcarters. By 1930 a group of ten black pushcarters was the largest single factor in the Fifth Avenue market; and by 1932 blacks had taken it over completely.¹⁴¹

But these Depression-born enterprises were no more than means of survival for the poor. Harlem's business leadership recognized that new business ideas were needed if black business was to prosper. The individualism of the 'twenties was a failure. The 'twenties

dreams of grandeur were false.

The fortunes of Marcus Garvey - that most ambitious entrepreneur of all - were virtually a testament to the dashed hopes of the 'twenties. Garvey planned to turn Harlem into a black commercial and industrial metropolis; the centre of a network linking members of the race in Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. Thousands of dollars were invested in the U.N.I.A's Black Star Line. But unable to find resourceful business leadership within the ranks of the U.N.I.A., Garvey fell prey to unscrupulous white entrepreneurs, and he depleted the Association's money on unsound and badly administered ventures. The U.N.I.A's vision of a racial economy with its own finance, raw materials, products, transportation and markets disintegrated through lack of practical business knowledge and realistic leadership within the Association.¹⁴²

In the late 'twenties, Ulysses S. Poston, a leading Garveyite, argued that the U.N.I.A's commercial and industrial programme might have succeeded if the business ventures had been kept apart from the fraternal and propaganda activities of the Association, and if there had been a co-operative rather than a corporative organisation. As the U.N.I.A's Minister of Industries in the early 'twenties, overseeing the affairs of the Negro Factories Corporation, Poston had encouraged the handful of "Universal" stores and restaurants in Harlem to organise co-operative ordering. The lack of business experience and the juggling of funds for the benefit of the Association as a whole stymied these ventures and convinced Poston of the importance of co-operation. A well-organised, separate, co-operative business programme, he came to believe, would have used the ideas, experience, labour and money of all the U.N.I.A's membership and would have ensured that the administration never fell into incompetent hands. Funds would not have been frittered away.

Reviewing Harlem's pernicious economic weakness Poston argued in 1927:

"It would be a vast waste of time and money to continue as we have in a small, weak, individual way in an attempt to improve the economic status of a community like Harlem in highly developed New York. Co-operatives, militant and efficiently organised are the order of the day." 143

Other black businessmen were also attracted to the idea of economic co-operation in many forms;¹⁴⁴ and in 1929 it was tried as a way to help Harlem's retail merchants overcome their difficulties. In that year, a New York City branch of the Colored Merchants Association (C.M.A.) was formed to make available to its affiliates the benefit of bulk wholesale buying, joint advertising and pooled business ideas. In this way the C.M.A. stores hoped to attract customers away from white business by fair competition on the basis of "SERVICE, QUALITY and PRICE".¹⁴⁵ But the group collapsed in 1933, beset by internal controversy and financial mismanagement. Its sternest critic, George S. Schuyler, of New York's National News, claimed that the C.M.A. had merely acted as a middleman between the retailers and the wholesalers, and had passed on none of the discounts or advice that individual grocers had expected.¹⁴⁶

At the same time, some of Harlem's service businesses tried to organise to fix standards of service and prices. They wanted to stabilise the market and to stop the cut-throat competition which was driving them out of business. In 1928, eighteen black-owned printing firms formed the Harlem Printers Alliance;¹⁴⁷ and two years later, two hundred and fifty barber shop owners met at the invitation of the New York Urban League to form a branch of the Master Barbers of America. In this way, the barbers hoped to regulate the business and to fight the shops which offered hair-cuts for as little as fifteen and twenty-five cents. But the branch was defunct by the

mid-nineteen thirties,¹⁴⁸ and it was not until the late 'thirties that its example was followed by Harlem's leading beauty culturists.¹⁴⁹

The prospects looked slim, therefore, for followers who looked to business as a means of livelihood; and, like others who turned to business during the Depression, Father Divine's followers had little capital or experience. Sometimes, the skills that they did possess were of no use to them as was witnessed by the case of Peaceful Praise. Before she met Father Divine in 1932 she had been a beautician and official agent in Newark of Annie M. Malone's Chicago-based Poro School of Beauty Culture. Father Divine's ban on the use of cosmetics and his denunciation of "false appearances" caused her to abandon her career. In a letter to Annie M. Malone in May 1936, settling the balance due on an order of supplies made in March 1933, she explained:

"Not only did I resign from your college, but I also discontinued the use of any and all beauty preparations, cosmetics and the straightening of hair, refraining too from giving any such treatment to myself or practising it on others. It is true. I was, at that time, well pleased with Poro but when I learned the Truth, 'the Truth has set me free' indeed." 150

A few followers did have talents that they were able to exploit. Jude S. Love, for instance, advertised "Piano Playing the Short Way", while Miss Peace Grace offered "Classes in Voice and Musicianship 30 lessons for \$7.50."¹⁵¹ Other followers turned to a variety of ventures which demanded hard work and initiative. One of Father Divine's first acts of encouragement was to provide a few male followers with portable shoe-shine stands decorated with the word "Peace".¹⁵²

Some believers began pushcarting and peddling. By 1936 there were twenty "Peace" pushcarts in Harlem, each displaying signs of their allegiance: "Peace Father Vegetables" or "Peace Father Clams and Oysters".¹⁵³ Various followers sold seasonal food on the streets. In 1934 a journalist writing for the Spoken Word described an icecream vendor whom he had seen on West 115th Street one summer's day:

"He is apparently one of FATHER DIVINE'S followers for he wears a Peace button ... He has a block of ice, some sort of metal shaver, and with this he scrapes the shavings into a cup, pours on the various colored syrups which he has in bottles and there is your ice! These are sold for the trifling sum of three cents." 154

Other followers were just as enterprising. In a premises at 211 East 99th Street Brother Zachariah James made bars of soap which he hawked from door to door with the vegetables that he usually sold. Unable to cope with the work alone he appealed for help from other followers.¹⁵⁵

Converts set themselves up as barbers; and by 1936 there were ten "Peace" barber shops in Harlem.¹⁵⁶ Women followers opened small cleaning and pressing enterprises. There were said to be ten Peace cleaning and pressing shops in Harlem by 1936,¹⁵⁷ and there may have been more as advertisements in the Peace Mission press suggest that followers ran hand laundries from their own homes. Lola Green, for example, advertised her "Peace Laundry" offering "Expert Service" and "Special Attention Given to Followers of FATHER from out of CITY" from Apartment 1-A, 17 West 115th Street.¹⁵⁸

Reports and advertisements in the Peace Mission press revealed that the followers also joined together to open many small stores. There were a number of "Peace" food stores in Harlem. In 1935 Faithful Mary launched a Father Divine Peace Food Market at 364 Lenox Avenue with a fanfare of publicity. A sign outside the shop proclaimed that this was where "Everybody Can Buy Groceries and Meats at a Low Rate", and in the Spoken Word a correspondent rejoiced: "Harlem will now be able to get its meats, fish, fowl, vegetables of the finest and best quality, at the lowest prices; not only in that section but the entire community."¹⁵⁹ By 1936 there were at least six Peace grocery stores in Harlem, and advertisements continued to appear for a handful of food stores throughout the late 'thirties,

like Hosanna Praise's Peace Fish and Chicken Market at 2090 Madison Avenue, and the Peace Sweet Shop and Delicatessen at 32 West 115th Street which offered, in 1938, "first class selected foods at FATHER'S prices. MORE VARIETIES THAN EVER SERVED before."¹⁶⁰

There were numerous tailoring and clothing shops. One shop at 1424 Fifth Avenue supervised by Sincere Love and Peace Dove advertised "dresses made to order" as well as an "exclusive line in millinery."¹⁶¹ In the late 'thirties the followers expanded their sales stock. In 1937, for instance, John Baptist opened a Peace Thrift Shop at 232 West 124th Street which he said was, "the first of its kind in Peace Enterprises." The stock included "suits, coats, dresses, hats, shoes, shirts, ties, evening wear and furniture." Several "sales sisters" had been secured to "serve the customers with finest courtesy".¹⁶² In the following year, another group of believers announced the grand opening of a "Peace Modesty Shoppe" which sold "Ladies, Gents and Children's Clothing at Reasonable Prices in FATHER'S Mind and Spirit."¹⁶³

From one store at 2163 Eighth Avenue Brother Guss Jones combined tailoring with a shoe repair service. In October 1937 he offered to "brothers in FATHER'S Mind and Spirit" a chance to cooperate in either of these ventures. "The business is run entirely in the interests of all," he wrote, "to serve rather than to be served being our motto. The machines are at the disposal of any who desire to take advantage of the opportunity in an evangelical way."¹⁶⁴ There was a Peace Pest Control Service at 227 West 123rd Street which offered, "Exterminating in all its branches. Rid your homes of flies, roaches, bed bugs and all other insects" at "evangelical prices"; and a Peace Tire Shop at 18 West 144th Street.¹⁶⁵ In a basement at 2539 Eighth Avenue Brother Blessed Thomas ran a Peace Electric and Radio Shop. Blessed Thomas, who had "studied this

type of work for eleven years", also served as a driver for the Peace Coal Company which operated from the premises above the workshop.¹⁶⁶

The Peace restaurants were the best known of all the Peace Mission's businesses. There were twenty-five in Harlem by 1937.¹⁶⁷ To the followers, these dining rooms were the "Supreme Good Places to eat in": symbols of the Kingdom:

"People from any walk of life, any clime or country can understand the message of Good-will, spoken in the language of delicious food, served in the atmosphere of happiness; where the undesirable and petty annoyances that compose man's routine of living are barred. The indulgence in intoxicating liquors, smoking and profanity is left on the outside, as the threshold that divides the worldly atmosphere from the atmosphere DIVINE is eagerly crossed."

Here, the "high and the low, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the hard boiled laborer and the timid soul, the Sunday School teacher and the dance hall fan" could enjoy the "Genuine Harmony of Heaven" while being served by "ANGELS OF GOD, who enact the Universal Language of PEACE and LOVE in their courteous service."¹⁶⁸ The restaurants, serving home-cooked meals for as little as ten and fifteen cents, were well patronized by day and evening. Advertisements in the Peace Mission press invited people to "Dine in Peace", to "Eat and Enjoy your food in the Presence of GOD" or simply to sample "Delicious Home Cooked Meals."¹⁶⁹

Most of the followers' businesses were small-scale affairs.¹⁷⁰ It seems from advertisements and reports in the Peace Mission press that the restaurants, food stores, dressmaking and clothing shops were the most numerous Peace businesses.¹⁷¹ These were the types of business most suited to the domestic skills of Father Divine's women followers.

Compared to similar small black businesses in Harlem, however, the Movement's retail and service enterprises were remarkably

successful. Part of their strength lay in the business ability of individual followers. With Father Divine's encouragement these followers discovered their talent for organisation. Miss Priscilla Paul's dressmaking shop was one instance. Unable to find work, Miss Paul turned her hand to dressmaking. Beginning in February 1934 with seventy-five cents and some cloth remnants, she made a few small articles which she sold for two dollars and used the money to buy more material. In this way she steadily expanded her business. She recruited several other women who were skilled in dressmaking and, by June 1935, the Miss Paul Dress Shop at 34 West 115th Street kept four operators, a book-keeper, a cutter and a presser in full-time work. According to the Spoken Word the shop, decorated in orchid and green, included a spacious fitting room and a kitchenette for staff meals. "The matter of good taste cannot be over-emphasised in every detail from the clothes on display to the store itself," the reporter enthused, "all is in ideal harmony of the spirit." Miss Paul's gay and exuberant dress styles became a fashion in the Movement, and in the five months ending June 1935, the shop claimed a business turnover of two thousand dollars.¹⁷²

While there were businessmen and women in Harlem quite as enterprising and energetic as these followers, the believers' group outlook gave their businesses a distinctive character and an added vitality. While the followers turned to business as a means of individual livelihood, they never lost sight of their loyalty to the Movement as a whole. Thus they wanted their ventures to be show-pieces of the Movement; to be worthy of Father Divine. Whether they began humble pushcarting enterprises or larger shops, their businesses were, first and foremost, "Peace businesses."

The followers came to share an interest in the success of all the Movement's enterprises; a desire to pool their plans and

experience for the benefit of all. They were full of ingenious ideas. In 1935, for instance, Sister Esther Job suggested that just as the "Kingdoms" were spiritual centres, so the followers could establish "industrial centers" where they could run businesses as diverse as "jelly and mayonnaise manufacturing, dressmaking, shoe repairing, tailoring, laundry, baking, weaving, art work and design and not forgetting a Peace luncheonette where shoppers could be served."¹⁷³

This group approach extended to the way that the followers ran their businesses. The businesses began in a variety of ways. Some believers employed other followers to help them cope with the work on a fairly conventional employer-employee basis. Other groups of believers worked together in less orthodox ways. At the Peace Mission garages on 144th Street, for instance, the followers cooperated in a very informal fashion. No business records were kept; no-one took special responsibilities; and no-one received more than the necessities of life in return. At the Peace Mission Restaurant on Eighth Avenue, by contrast, the nine women followers shared both the work and the responsibility and their business operated in a more consciously communal way.¹⁷⁴ Whichever style of organisation was chosen, it always expressed the followers' loyalty to each other and to the Movement as a whole.

What began in an informal way, moreover, came to be basic to the organisation and success of the Peace businesses after 1936, when Father Divine was obliged to take a more active part in their affairs in order to protect the Movement from legal pressure.

His intervention followed a brush with the New York State Department of Labor. According to new state labour laws, employers were obliged to take out workingmen's compensation insurance for the protection of their employees. Insurance was, of course, anti-

thetical to the teachings of the "evangelical life" and, at first, Father Divine advised his followers in business to defy the law. When, for instance, one of his followers "and her bondsman", operating "a small industry" locally, told Father Divine that the Labor Department authorities had told them that they must either take out compensation insurance or "sign up as partners" in order to obtain licences, Father Divine had not insisted on the partnership arrangement but had told them, rather, to "BREAK the LAW."¹⁷⁵

But when, in May 1936, the State Labor Department prosecuted several believers for failing to carry workmen's compensation insurance for the protection of their believer-employees, Father Divine withdrew from confrontation. Aided by his legal advisor, Arthur M. Madison, he drafted a "Peace Mission Discipline" to protect the followers from prosecution while allowing them to run their businesses true to their "evangelical" principles. The "Discipline" defined the followers' businesses as extensions of the normal life of the Movement. Each business, it averred, operated on the basis of co-operative "joint tenancy" rather than on the basis of employer and employee:

- "1. Each place of business, extension or connection is under the control of the representatives engaged in their activity.
2. Those serving as co-workers, do so gratis, it being understood that such co-workers are not employees but are Joint Tenants with the individual or individuals who lease such places."

Although Madison claimed that "this manner of co-operative activity is now and has always been carried out by the Followers of FATHER DIVINE", and that the Discipline was not "intended as an evasion of any law", it was obviously an emergency response to the pressure of prosecution. Up until this point no one way of business organisation had been formally laid down within the Movement. The Discipline became, nonetheless, the basis of Madison's defence case

in court: a defence that largely succeeded, as the prosecution found it hard to prove that the believers' business dealings strictly operated on an employer-employee basis.¹⁷⁶

This marked, too, the beginning of a more organised approach to the followers' businesses within the Peace Mission. In June 1936, a "Divine Chamber of Commerce" was launched under the chairmanship of Arthur M. Madison. At its inaugural meeting, Madison said that the object of the Peace Mission Movement in business was to sell goods and services for the lowest price possible and to bring labour and capital together. The New Day reporter added: "it was pointed out by Mr. Madison that henceforth all Peace Mission enterprises must be conducted on the basis of 'partners' or as 'joint tenants.'".¹⁷⁷

Father Divine also began to lay down guidelines on the "evangelical" standards that he expected the followers to observe in all the enterprises bearing the Movement's name. He rejected the individualism and the search for private profit that had motivated black business ventures in Harlem. He told his followers that they should not go into business with the sole aim of making money. They should go into business, instead, to serve and benefit others. By helping others and by bringing new standards of justice into economic affairs, they would gain their own reward in material success and self-respect. "I will prove to the world conclusively," he said, "I Myself, nor MY real Representatives or Followers are not seeking pennies, cents and dollars." They were not interested in "profiteering and racketeering," he insisted, "but to the reverse of such an expression. I have LIFTED up a Standard for all humanity in the way of RIGHTEOUSNESS, TRUTH and JUSTICE."¹⁷⁸

Father Divine told the followers that they should take as their goal the comfort and pleasure of others by selling goods and services of high quality for as cheaply as possible. In business, he said,

the followers must "give more for the money than anyone else". He gave them a simple dictum: "we should not go into business to see how much we should get out of it; but let us go into business to see how little we can get out of it ... and still prosper and carry your work on."¹⁷⁹ He explained what he meant by the term "joint tenancy": "Each are joint tenants or joint owners. All are supposed to work together as one man and all are supposed to be governed by the spirit of righteousness, truth and justice."¹⁸⁰

The unity of faith among the believers and the encouragement given to them to regard their businesses as models of the Movement's economic ideas paid dividends for the believers. It drew them together to examine business possibilities. At one group meeting of the Divine Chamber of Commerce, for instance, the followers considered the types of venture that they could begin with "very small amounts of capital", and they discussed the value of a Peace Mission market or a wholesale distributing centre.¹⁸¹ This collective approach made use of the ideas of the more imaginative believers; and it protected the Movement's businesses from errors of judgement by advising inexperienced and, perhaps, over-enthusiastic followers. It helped overcome the problem of isolation and the lack of training that plagued the small, independent, black businessman in Harlem.

The unity of faith also contributed to the main strength of the Peace businesses: namely, their ability to compete successfully for the trade of the general public in Harlem on the basis of low prices, high quality goods and polite, efficient service.

Father Divine kept a close watch over his followers' businesses and was quick with criticism and advice on matters of price, quality and service. At a banquet meeting in August 1936, for instance, he spoke irritably about followers who "endeavor or attempt to do completely to the contrary of what I have stressed." In this case,

a number of believers, failing to understand his teaching on prices, had gone to him for advice on how much to charge particular customers. "I have often responded," he said, " [by saying] 'What have I charged you for what I have done for you?'" They should simply take his example as their guideline in business matters. At all times, he said, his followers must put the needs of others first and "be willing to lose rather than gain" in any business transaction:¹⁸²

Repeatedly, he warned the followers against overcharging their customers; and eventually he set a guideline for the cost of meals in Peace Mission restaurants:

"These thoughts should be stamped in your memory once and forever. I have declared it, not only in this country, but in Europe, Asia, Africa, Germany and Australasia. My true followers will not charge more than fifteen (15) cents a meal."

Even if the believer was running a small lunchroom in an apartment the same rule applied:

"You would not break MY rules and regulations, you would come under the jurisdiction of same for the purpose of receiving MY Blessings, and working in perfect harmony with ME." 183

Value was just as important. To press his point, Father Divine took copies of the Sears and Roebuck Company mail order sales catalogue into one of the Peace dress shops and told the customers not to buy unless they were satisfied that the Movement matched the bargains in the catalogue. He recalled:

"... some as sales ladies and as merchants did say, 'Yes, but some of those dresses and some of those things that are advertised in the special sales catalogues are not the best quality', and I said, 'well, compete with them according to the quality and class of merchandise.'" 184

Father Divine also demanded high standards of courtesy in the Peace businesses. He reminded those who were working in the restaurants:

"You will serve the people - the customers with

whatsoever they wish, if you have it on the Menu ... if they do not care for what you have you have no right to be offended with them. You have a right to treat everybody with courtesy and respect if you desire to be respected." 185

With such constant supervision, Father Divine turned low prices, high quality goods and service into matters of obedience and faith within the Movement.

In the coal business, the followers found an opportunity to operate successfully on the basis of low price. In the mid-nineteen-thirties, when coal was retailing in Harlem at twelve dollars a ton, it was possible to buy fuel for only eight dollars a ton by paying cash on delivery. By organising bulk cash orders, the followers were able to supply themselves cheaply and sell to the public at below the usual market price. By 1936, three Peace Coal Company lorries transported coal, bought at the pit-head for four dollars a ton, from Pennsylvania for re-sale in Harlem at seven dollars and fifty cents a ton. A cashier at a Peace restaurant took orders from customers and the followers made door to door deliveries.¹⁸⁶

But most of the Peace businesses were in fields where competition was fierce and where profits were usually small. Here it was more difficult to offer quality goods and services without sacrificing low prices and placing the business at a competitive disadvantage. This was where the followers' faith served them so well. It enabled them to pare their operating expenses to the minimum so that they could afford to excel their rivals in quality and service without raising their prices.

Because the followers saw their businesses as an extension of their commitment to Father Divine, they were ready to sacrifice long hours of labour in pursuit of his "Wonderful and beneficent business policy."¹⁸⁷ Although they were free to work "as they pleased", the followers gave hours of attention to their enterprises. As one

convert explained: "many give more than eight hours of service to the Movement and find more joy of expression and often do two or three times as much in the great service of the Kingdom because they love doing it, than they do at a job for which they receive a salary." Their only concern, according to this believer, was how far their "facilities, talents and wealth [could] be of more service to FATHER or in other words, mankind."¹⁸⁸ Few businesses, even small family enterprises, could count upon this amount of selfless, devoted labour.

Furthermore, the followers took little from their businesses in the form of payment for their work. There was little need for large sums of money within the Movement. The taboos and the social organisation of the Peace Mission ensured that the followers led simple lives. Their only need was for enough money from their undertakings to settle their past debts and pay their living expenses. They had no wish to amass personal wealth and possessions as marks of social standing. Thus, their businesses benefited in two ways. There were no heavy expenses in the form of salaries; and because the followers were freed from the pressures that tempted the minor black businessmen in Harlem to seek the symbols of bourgeois respectability, there was no drain on profits. The followers were more likely to reinvest their capital in small business improvements.¹⁸⁹

In addition, the Peace businesses enjoyed some minor competitive advantages over their rivals in specific operating expenses. Since the tenets of the "evangelical life" outlawed insurance and credit, none of the Peace businesses had to absorb the high cost of insurance or interest charges. By paying cash for all their goods, the followers secured price concessions from the wholesalers which they passed on to the customer in lower prices. Then, because their customers, in turn, paid cash for all their purchases, the Peace

Mission's trade did not rest heavily and precariously on credit sales.

In short, the Peace businesses prospered because the followers' ethics and their "strong bond of oneness - a bond of Peace, Brotherhood and unselfish co-operation" enabled them to avoid many of the disabilities of black business in Harlem and to compete for custom on the basis of price, quality and service.¹⁹⁰

Certainly, the followers' policies won them the praise of Harlem's hard-pressed consumers. The Peace restaurants served substantial meals at prices that the poor could afford and, in 1940, the Movement's dress shops drew this letter of appreciation from customer Lavinia Cumberbach:

"Just a small letter of appreciation and gratitude for what you are doing for us in this community... in regard to the economy dress shops, especially. I have been patronizing the one on 120th Street between 8th and St. Nicholas, and Sister Victory Love is as obliging as ever, also others I have come in contact with. My income being of such slender means, the service rendered by your people enables me to meet my demands. More power to you, dear Father, and again I say many thanks for what you are doing." 191

Indeed, the Movement acquired such a reputation for bargain quality that some pushcarters, who were not believers, painted Father Divine's slogans on their carts and carried his picture to exploit his name.¹⁹²

Even in the service businesses, the followers drastically undercut their rivals for price and quality. Peace shoeshine men charged only three cents a shine and refused tips; while Peace barbers charged just ten cents for a hair cut and five cents for a shave.¹⁹³ The Peace hand laundries were also a match for the small Chinese laundries that traditionally dominated local trade.¹⁹⁴

In 1936, Myrtle Pollard wrote: "'Divine prices' have played an extremely important part in the reduction of general prices in

Harlem.¹⁹⁵ Certainly, the Spoken Word was pleased to report that when a new extension opened on West 106th Street "a Tailoring Establishment a few doors away came forward desiring to co-operate with FATHER and to work at reasonable prices. This tailor will be abundantly blessed as he acted wisely."¹⁹⁶ Such incidents as this convinced the believers that they were succeeding in their aim to put the needs of the people before the pursuit of selfish wealth. It is doubtful that their business rivals viewed the sharp edge of competition so enthusiastically.

The followers rarely risked more ambitious business ventures. Even their largest enterprises, the Peace Mission extensions, did not demand either special business expertise or large amounts of capital. Apparently, each building was leased by a follower or a group of followers, and a number of "co-workers" undertook responsibility for its routine management. The extension was expected to meet its operating costs from the income from room and board.¹⁹⁷ In fact, all the extensions were run as conventional boarding houses and Father Divine insisted that those who paid rent should not be obliged to do "chamberwork":

"You have no right to make your bed or do anything of that sort. Those who are in charge should see to it that they have enough co-workers to take care of such." 198

As each extension managed its own affairs, the price of accommodation could vary from one to another. A survey made by the Amsterdam News in 1939 revealed that the four hundred women living at the extension on 115th Street and Fifth Avenue paid \$1.50 each for their weekly rent. At the 123rd Street extension, the charge was \$2.60 a week, while at the annexe on 117th Street the cost was only one dollar a week. The standard "Divine prices" were charged for meals.¹⁹⁹

Buildings that did not pay their way were closed; but usually

the large number of boarders in each ensured their success, and ways were found to make it possible to keep particular properties open. At Faithful Mary's extension on West 126th Street, for instance, each of the six brownstone lodging houses sheltered fifty people paying up to two dollars a week rent. Since the building cost only seventy-five dollars a month to rent, the brownstones subsidised the cost of the Turkish Bath House which, at a rent of three hundred dollars a month, did not pay its way.²⁰⁰

In some extensions, rooms were let to followers for business premises. In 1934 there was a bakery, a barbershop and a tailoring business in the basement of one of the West 126th Street extensions.²⁰¹ In this way, the followers made maximum use of their buildings. At the same time, through organisation, they cut their costs to a minimum. The co-workers not only gave their time and skills to the successful running of the buildings, but they also made use of the cut-price goods and services provided by the other Peace businesses. Cheap fuel could be bought from the Peace Coal Company and general maintenance work was provided by members of the Movement's building trades group.²⁰² Women followers made the furnishings for the dormitories. At one extension on West 126th Street, for instance, "six or seven sisters make four or five quilts a day for the hundreds of beds in the different extensions... four or five hundred yards of cloth are sometimes purchased from which sheets and pillowcases are made."²⁰³ As far as possible, the followers looked after the extensions themselves. When they were obliged to go outside the Movement for food and materials, they bought in bulk for cash and at a discount.²⁰⁴

Those who watched the growth of the Peace Mission's businesses in Harlem during the early and mid-'thirties, could be excused for thinking that the Movement was one large, co-operative organisation

under Father Divine's control. But the Movement was never an economic co-operative in a conventional sense. At this time, there was no centralised planning within the Movement, nor any bulk purchasing or joint marketing policies for the entire organisation. As far as it can be judged, each Peace business was a financially autonomous unit; and the followers in each unit took their own decisions and were responsible for their own actions. They were under no obligation to give their money to other members of the Movement or to any central fund.²⁰⁵

Naturally, the profits from each business varied considerably. While the restaurants and extensions flourished,²⁰⁶ other Peace businesses like pushcarting, shoe-shining, hand laundries and barbershops remained marginal. Sometimes, richer followers advanced cash to the poorer believers to help them buy goods and equipment; and Father Divine, himself, provided shoeshine stands and a coal truck.²⁰⁷ But, for the most part, there was no attempt made, at this time, to collect and re-distribute the Movement's wealth.

Father Divine had good reason for keeping each business in independent ownership. First, he explained, if one business failed, no other enterprise would be liable for its debts. Secondly, "there have been too many enterprises started by different organisations, fraternities, societies and other organisations, uniting themselves together and all getting together putting in a lump sum of money, or so much, and some go away with the money and others be the losers."²⁰⁸

The followers, themselves, had little interest in the formal study of the theories of economic co-operation. Forums were devoted to the subject now and then; and occasionally articles appeared in the Peace Mission press. In 1937, the New Day announced its

intention to carry features on "co-operative commercial and industrial enterprises needed; their methods of finance and management, including news of the co-operative movement in general." But it did not fulfil this commission;²⁰⁹ and the followers' essentially naive approach was illustrated by the conclusion drawn by a group of believers that the "best outward form of real co-operation" would be working together in large Peace businesses.²¹⁰

Even the followers' style of co-operation varied from business to business despite Father Divine's ruling on "joint tenancy." The followers who took to shoe-shining, for example, complied with Father Divine's teachings by banding together to form shoe-shine co-operatives. In late 1938, for instance, ten shoe-shine stands formed the Peace Shoe Shining Parlors Cooperative, which advertised its services in the New Day.²¹¹ By contrast, at Faithful Mary's extension on West 126th Street, the groups of "co-workers" in the different boarding houses were willing to allow Faithful Mary to direct their affairs, and administer the various buildings as a collective.²¹²

The different ways of working together were reflected, too, in disagreements about the distribution of profits within each Peace enterprise. In 1938, a group of followers brought a disagreement to Father Divine for him to settle. One side held that Father's ruling on "joint tenancy" meant that each follower working in a Peace business was entitled to an equal share of the profits. The other side held, however, that individuals should be paid in accordance with the amount of work and the degree of responsibility shouldered. Father Divine decided in favour of differential payments:

"It is understood [that] every man should be rewarded according as his works may be. There

are some positions in every enterprise that are actually worth more than some others, and those who fill such positions that would warrant more pay for their service they should have it."

To do otherwise, he explained, would be to reward the lazy and incompetent as much as those who were diligent, thereby "encouraging deterioration and the expression of disintegration."²¹³

Thus, the Movement was never an economic co-operative in the accepted sense. The followers did co-operate in business, but it was a co-operation that stemmed from faith rather than from commitment to formal economic theories. It was their acceptance of Father Divine's teachings on hard work, fair dealing and selflessness that gave them a practical way to run each business. Without rigid guidelines on organisation, it was possible for the followers to interpret Father Divine's teachings in different ways. But they all recognized a loyalty to the group and the need to work in accordance with the spirit of the "evangelical life."

It was this same group loyalty and faith that, in the last analysis, guaranteed the followers their measure of prosperity and security throughout the 'thirties. By helping each other and by accepting Father Divine's advice and encouragement, the followers were able to find means of livelihood, either in jobs or in their own businesses. Then, they cocooned themselves from the high cost of living in the outside society by relying on each other. Within the Movement, it was possible to find cut-price accommodation; cheap food, fuel, clothes, and a variety of personal services. Thus, even the Peace pushcarter or domestic worker could live comfortably within the Movement by taking advantage of the low prices and facilities of the various Peace enterprises.

Father Divine was well aware of the advantages of this form of organisation despite its apparent haphazard nature. In an interview

with the Baltimore Afro-American, in reply to charges that he was racketeering. Father Divine itemised the "tangible, practical service" that he offered his followers. He supplied, he said "everything that life demands from 40 to 60% less than the retail prices."²¹⁴

He knew, as well, that the success of this arrangement depended on each follower's contribution, obedience and loyalty. He asked his followers to prove their love to him in practical deeds as well as emotional enthusiasm. When the behaviour of some of his secretaries aroused jealousy in the Movement, he asked these most dedicated disciples to divert some of their love for him into practical service:

"If you would be true and would be a real servant of God, and if you knew God in reality, if you would or could by your professional trade [sic] earn Ten Thousand Dollars a day, you could serve GOD just as well out there ... and could be just as profitable and practical a servant as if though you were under MY PERSONAL JURISDICTION supposedly serving." 215

He became very angry, as well, with followers who failed to pay promptly for their food and lodgings within the Peace Mission. In a characteristic outburst in September 1937 he said:

"How can you dare to rob GOD directly or indirectly by refusing to pay your small rent bills ... Anybody who will not pay \$2 or \$3 for their rent bill, it is plain, as I can tell them, they are not trying to let GOD and let go, for MY Version is: 'YOU PAY AS YOU GO AND OWE NO MAN.' That is why I cut the cost of living from fifty, yea, sixty and even seventy five per cent and more, for the benefit of you having a chance to let go and LET GOD." 216

There was more at stake here than mere accountancy matters. Father Divine was concerned, first and foremost, with the sense of self-respect and independence that came from financial security and freedom from debt.²¹⁷ He was even prepared "to be the loser", by allowing followers to live on the bounty of the Movement, provided that they settled their just debts,²¹⁸ To accumulate new bills within the Movement would be to put to naught his hopes to turn

the believers into "self-respecting, self-supporting, law-abiding and law-making citizens."²¹⁹

To Ralph O. Gothard, the founder of the Harlem Consumer and Craftsman's Guild, the Movement's economic achievement was impressive. Since 1936 he had tried to promote the idea of a modern, co-operative, industrial enterprise in Harlem, employing local people, supported by their patronage and manufacturing quality goods under a "Harlem made" label. Gothard believed that this was the only way left to take people off relief, restore their self-respect, ensure prosperity, and check the dissipation of talent and resources in the black community.²²⁰ Visiting the Peace Mission in 1940, Gothard acknowledged that the Peace Mission had already broken new ground. He told the followers at a banquet meeting:

"I have lived in this community for about twenty-three years, and I must confess I have never seen any movement of any kind that has the vitality and is doing what the movement ... here is doing, to prove that we can help ourselves ... You have demonstrated that we can do anything that we want to do ... I want to pay a compliment to YOU. I say that because I am interested in the co-operative movement, and I have seen YOUR demonstration of what co-operation will do and what people who are interested in themselves can do along co-operative lines." ²²¹

Gothard was a lone figure in the Harlem business community in feeling that the Movement's economic achievements held lessons for Harlem. Few businessmen ever attempted to copy after Father Divine's fashion. In truth, his ideas could not be applied, en bloc, outside the Peace Mission, for they relied on faith and group loyalty for their success rather than rational economic planning.

There can be little doubt, however, that the Movement's style of organisation was a success for the believers. Through Father Divine's help and encouragement, they found work and a measure of economic security. His emphasis on equity and justice in economic

life helped them renounce exploitation and seek personal dignity and fair treatment. While they worked together and accepted Father Divine's authority, they also found room for self-direction and personal initiative. Whether they went out to work or turned to business, they were, once more, responsible for their own future and newly aware of their worth and right to respect.

Viewed from this perspective Father Divine's position within the Movement becomes clearer. At least until the mid 'thirties his was an advisory role. Although all the followers' actions were a testimony to his influence, he did not control the finances of the group or its routine operations directly. Money remained principally in the followers' hands, and despite the size of the organisation and Father Divine's singular importance, funds were not depleted in executive salaries or administrative expenses. Father Divine lived at 20 West 115th Street on the bounty of the followers much as he had lived in Sayville. His luxuries were not paid for from the dues or subscriptions of followers, but were apparently supplied from the anonymous gifts of individual believers. His luxury was, therefore, a measure of the followers' satisfaction; for they had found in the Movement a way to overcome their poverty, disabilities and demoralisation to become, indeed, "practical and profitable."

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE.

1. The limousine and private 'plane may have been more symbols than evidence of affluence for A.J. Liebling and St. Clair McKelway claimed that Father Divine's Rolls Royce was an old model which he had bought for only \$150 cash in 1933; and he flew in an old Ryan monoplane, "of the type Lindbergh used on his first transatlantic flight ", which could have been bought for about \$700. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 28.
2. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
3. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 46-47.
4. New Day 4 (14), April 4 1940; and World Herald 1 (25), May 6 1937.
5. New York Amsterdam News December 23 1931; and Parker, op.cit., 221.
6. New York Amsterdam News February 24 1932.
7. New York Daily News August 4 1939. Most observers of the Peace Mission agreed with Warren on the broad principles of the Movement's economic organisation. Ollie Stewart, in New York Times October 1 1939, said: "Father Divine has linked production, distribution and consumption." See also: New York Amsterdam News August 6 1938; Johnson and Johnson, God in business (In Johnson and Johnson, op.cit., Appendix C, Father Divine Peace Mission) 9-10; Leach, History of the work of Father Divine, n.d. [1936?] (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 33. Another Harlem journalist, Henry Lee Moon, reported two fanciful and contradictory speculations about the origins of the Peace Mission's prosperity: first, that "Moscow gold" was behind it all; and secondly, that capitalists were financing Father Divine to divert the masses from revolutionary activity. Moon, Thank you Father so sweet, op.cit., 150.
8. There is an extensive account of the organisation of the Peace Mission in Sayville and before in McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 13 1936, 26, 28, 32, 34; and June 20 1936, 22-26, 28, 31-32.
9. Ibid.
10. Father Divine, himself, stressed that this ban had its economic reasons: "There are thousands of people who spend thousands and thousands of dollars, the universe over, through self indulgence in these unnecessary habits." New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938.
11. From Verinda Brown's affidavit in her case against Father Divine in which she sought to recover property she said that she had entrusted to him. It is quoted in Judge McCook's decision in the case in Rozier, op.cit., 49. For a discussion of this case see below Chapters Ten and Eleven p. 676-677, 740, 746-747.

Also McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 20 1936, 25.

12. New Day 4 (14), April 4 1940; and World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937. These testimonials, like that of Miss Flying Determination quoted above, footnote 4, were made in response to Verinda Brown's attempt to regain the money she claimed to have entrusted to Father Divine. See below Chapters Ten and Eleven, p. 676-677, 740, 746-747. It is likely, nonetheless, that they are true. Father Divine scrupulously avoided accepting gifts offered to him personally. He also returned any money sent to him through the mails and enclosed an enigmatic note: "God will provide". McKelway and Liebling suggest, probably correctly, that in this way he sought to avoid prosecution under federal law for using the mails to defraud. Marcus Garvey had been convicted under this law and subsequently deported. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 20 1936, 31.
13. Ibid., 25. Verinda Brown seems to have accepted that Father Divine's "Heavenly Treasure" was intended to benefit the Peace Mission as a whole rather than Father Divine himself. Part of her grounds for suing for the return of her contributions was that: "The moneys she deposited with him were used for purposes other than the benefit of the depositor [Verinda Brown] ...; moreover, the wants of his 'angels and children' ... were not supplied." Further, she claimed that Father Divine had assured her that "all his angels and children who lived up to his teachings shall become members of the Mission and as such are entitled to share in the abundance of everything which he would supply from his Heavenly Treasure." Rozier, op.cit., 50. The origin of the phrase "Heavenly Treasure" is to be found in the New Testament: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Matthew 6: 19-20.
14. McKelway and Liebling include an account of the money and gifts in kind which Verinda and her husband Thomas surrendered to Father Divine and the Peace Mission. It mentioned their salaries for the period of their discipleship, fifteen suits of clothes, \$700 in savings and seven lots of property in Florida. The estimated total value was \$5,660. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory; op.cit., June 20 1936, 23 and 25; and Rozier, op.cit., 51.
15. In an affidavit rebutting Verinda Brown's claims against him, Father Divine wrote: "The ten million followers of mine [sic] and believers have given me their lives and all they had possessed, [but this] does not mean they gave it to Me as a person... When they say they have given Me anything or all they have, they are not speaking of giving Me anything personally, for they could tell the world at large I do not need it as a person." Further, he maintained that he had always given his "professional service as Gratis to all and refused to receive anything from anyone as a donation, remuneration or contribution for same unless I could give

something material, tangible and practical for such as I might receive." Of Verinda Brown, herself, he said: "Anyone, who desired it who say they gave Me money might have remained in the home until now, without compensation, remuneration or pay for any of the services they might have received." In other words, he implied that Verinda Brown's money had not been paid to him but, through him, to the Peace Mission as a whole. Rozier, op.cit., 52.

16. In his judgement in Verinda Brown's case against Father Divine, Judge McCook ruled that it was not necessary for such records or accounts to exist, nor for the Peace Mission to be legally incorporated for Father Divine to be liable for money entrusted to him by his followers. It was apparent that Father Divine directed the Peace Mission, which was, in law, a voluntary association and, as such, "not beyond the bounds of the law." Father Divine's claims to have received nothing "as a person" were described by Judge McCook as mere "nomenclature or circumlocution." Ibid., 54-56.
17. Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935.
18. Baltimore Afro-American December 30 1933.
19. These figures are based on an analysis of the data in Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce, Thirteenth census of the United States, 1910, Population, vol. 4, Washington D.C., 1914, table viii, 575-6; Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce, Fourteenth census of the United States, 1920, Population, vol. 4, Washington D.C., 1923, table 2, 1170-1173; and Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce, Fifteenth census of the United States, 1930, Population, vol. 4, Washington D.C., 1933, table 6, 1111.
20. Bureau of the Census ..., Thirteenth census ..., Population vol. 4, table viii, 575-6. It is not possible to express the numbers employed in these categories as percentages of the whole number employed since the data given by the census is for selected occupations only. The category "longshoremen and stevedores" is also misleading, as there is no evidence that blacks either owned or operated the stevedoring concerns that contracted to provide the longshore labour to load and unload the ships on the docks. Lester Rubin, Negro in the longshore industry, Philadelphia, 1974, 5.
21. There were 17,035 black men in domestic work and personal service in 1920 out of a total black male workforce of 41,551; of Manhattan's 773,448 working men, only 97,594 were employed in such work. Thus, while black men were 5.4% of the total male workforce in Manhattan, they formed 17.5% of those in domestic work and personal service. Bureau of the Census ..., Fourteenth census ..., Population vol. 4, table 2, 1170-1173.
22. There were 8,548 black men in manufacturing occupations in 1920 out of a total black male workforce of 41,551; of Manhattan's 773,448 working men, 280,553 were employed in manufacturing. Thus, while black men were 5.4% of the total

male workforce in Manhattan, they were but 3% of those in manufacturing work. Ibid.

23. In Chicago, for instance, where they found employment in the packing houses and stockyards, 36% of black male workers were employed in manufacturing; and in Detroit, where blacks were employed in chemical, iron and steel and auto plants, 70.1% of black workingmen were employed in industry. Kennedy, op.cit., 74-80.
24. The restriction of black men to the semi-skilled and unskilled industrial work was, of course, general to all the Northern cities affected by the migration. Henri, op.cit., 169-170; Kennedy, op.cit., 80-84; and Scheiner, op.cit., 52-53.
25. In 1920, in Manhattan, 8,267 black men were engaged in occupations which fell under the heading of transportation: 19.9% of the black male workforce of 41,551. 3,876 of these men were longshoremen and they formed 9.3% of the black male workforce. Foreign-born longshoremen, who were 58.5% of all longshoremen were, nevertheless, but 2.5% of all foreign-born men at work in Manhattan in 1920. Bureau of the Census ..., Fourteenth census ..., Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1170-1173. According to a study by E. Franklin Frazier, quoted in C. S. Johnson, Negro in American civilization, New York, 1930, 53, longshorework was the largest single category of work for black men in the city as a whole. It was also seasonal and badly paid. 30% of the black men employed worked only six months, 65% worked six months or less, and 30% were employed for eight months or more. 70% earned less than \$900 yearly; or just over \$19 a week, in 1920. According to Rubin, longshorework was characteristically heavy and unskilled. Rubin, op.cit., 3-12.
26. In 1920, the total black workforce was 72,143; in 1930 it was 140,464: an increase of 95%. In 1920 the total working population of Manhattan was 1,115,966; in 1930 it was 995,034: a decline of 11%. Bureau of the Census ..., Fourteenth census ..., Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1170-1173; and Bureau of the Census ..., Fifteenth census ..., Population, vol. 4, table 12, 1141-1142.
27. The black male industrial workforce in Manhattan in 1920 was 8,548; in 1930 it was 18,110, an increase of 112%. In 1930 the total black male working population in Manhattan was 81,812. The black workingmen in manufacturing and mechanical occupations were 22.1% of this total; and those in domestic service were 32,603 or 39.8% of this total. The total number of men in domestic work and personal service in Manhattan in 1930 was 121,670, an increase of 25% on the 1920 figure. The number of black men in this group, however, increased 95% between 1920 and 1930. In 1920 black men had been 17.4% of the men in domestic and personal service in Manhattan; in 1930 they were 27%. The total number of men in Manhattan working in 1930 was 675,135. A comparison of the distribution of the total male workforce and the black male workforce shows that, in 1930, as in 1920, blacks were still under-represented in manufacturing, trade, public service, the professions and clerical work and still over-represented in domestic work and

- personal service and transportation. Bureau of the Census... Fourteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1170-1173; and Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 12, 1141-1142.
28. 57.8% of black workingmen were classed as unskilled in 1930 and 18.7% as semi-skilled, 9.1% were skilled men or foremen and 9.4% were clerks. It was as managers and proprietors of business that blacks were especially badly represented: only 1.7% of the black male workforce fell into this category compared to 11.2% among native-born white workers and 16.5% among foreign-born white workers. 3.2% of black workingmen were professionals compared to 7.7% of native whites and 4.2% foreign-born whites. Alba M. Edwards, Socio-economic grouping of the gainful workers of the United States, 1930, Washington D.C., 1938, Appendix.
29. Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 12, 1141-1142.
30. C.S. Johnson, Negro in American civilization, 60. In his study of St. Helena Islanders in New York City, Clyde Vernon Kiser discovered that the unskilled labourers among them earned, on average, about \$20 a week. The skilled men, who were excluded from the unions, could earn only half as much again. Kiser, op.cit., 199.
31. Bureau of the Census..., Thirteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table viii, 575-576; Bureau of the Census... Fourteenth census... Population, vol. 4, 367 and table 2, 1170-1173; and Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census of the United States... Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1084 and table 6, 1111. These figures are for women over ten years of age. In 1930, 58.3% of black women over that age were employed, compared to 35.8% of foreign-born white women and 37.8% native-born white women. Black women were 42% of the black workforce whereas women were only 32% of the Manhattan workforce as a whole. Ibid.
32. Ovington, op.cit., 138-143.
33. These figures are based on analysis of Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 5, table 20, 243-245 and table 21, 254-255.
34. These figures are based on an analysis of Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 15, 1162. If a comparison is made with native white population and with those of foreign birth, the difference is even more striking: of native-born white women in Manhattan, 16.4% of those who were married worked; of foreign-born married women, 13.8% worked; but of married black women, 51% worked.
35. These figures are based on an analysis of Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 6, table 14, 925.
36. Black women probably played a much larger part in the workforce of New York City than their counterparts in other

Northern cities. New York City, which was atypical of Northern cities, because of its lack of industrial opportunities for black men, attracted a larger number of women. Mary White Ovington commented as early as 1911 that "like the foreigner, the youth of the Negro race comes first to the city to seek a livelihood... But unlike the foreigner, the Negro women find larger opportunity and come in greater numbers than the men." This situation was more like that of the large Southern and Border cities, such as Washington D.C., Atlanta, Baltimore and New Orleans. Ovington, op.cit., 146-147. In 1930 Manhattan had the largest percentage of black women working of any city over one hundred thousand population, except Miami, Florida. Bureau of the Census..., Fifteenth census... Population, vol. 5, table 16, 108.

37. Bureau of the Census... Thirteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table viii, 576; and Ovington, op.cit., 149-152.
38. Gladys Palmer, Report on Negroes in domestic service (In Paul H. Norgen, Negro labor and its problems: a research memorandum, Carnegie - Myrdal study, vol. 2, part 2, 1940, Schomburg Collection) 231; and Benson Ellis, Socio-economic study of the female domestic worker in private homes with special reference to New York City, New York, 1939, 4, 28-41.
39. Bureau of the Census..., Thirteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table viii, 576.
40. Bureau of the Census..., Fourteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1172-1173; and Charles Lionel Franklin, Negro labor unionists of New York. Problems and conditions amongst Negroes in the labor unions in Manhattan with special reference to the N.R.A. and post N.R.A. situations, New York, 1936, 46.
41. Bureau of the Census..., Fourteenth census... Population, vol. 4, table 2, 1172-1173.
42. This was not strictly so - since the 2,081 dressmakers who were not in factories were included in this category. But of the 7,486 black women in this category, 1,974 worked in clothing factories. Ibid.
43. Edith Kline, Garment union comes to the Negro worker, Opportunity, XII (4), April 1934, 108; and Franklin, op.cit., 201.
44. This contention was part of the campaign platform of the Communist-led opposition within the needle trades unions in the early 'thirties. It should, therefore, be treated with caution. Liberator February 21 1931. The charges were repeated in Negro Liberator January 15 1935 and February 1 1935.
45. Before the N.R.A. codes, the needle trades workers generally were unorganised. In 1933, of ninety thousand dress shop

- workers, only twenty thousand were on union rolls. Unorganised black workers received the following wages: finishers \$10 - \$15 for a fifty to fifty-five hour week; pressers \$18 a week for similar hours; and machine operators, about \$15 - \$20 for those same hours. New York Amsterdam News March 18 1939; and Kline, op.cit., 107-109.
46. Carita Owens Roane, Negro relief work in New York City, Crisis 39 (1), January 1932, 451.
 47. Liberator October 20 1932; Jane Filley and Therese Mitchell, Consider the laundry workers, New York, 1937, passim; and Franklin, op.cit., 208-210.
 48. In 1920, there were 30,592 black working women in Manhattan; in 1930 there were 58,552. In 1920 there were 21,433 in domestic work and personal service; and in 1930, 44,551. Between 1920 and 1930 the number of black women in manufacturing rose from 7,486 to 10,054: an increase of 34%. Bureau of the Census..., Fourteenth Census..., Population, vol. 4, table 12, 367; and table 2, 1172-1173; and Bureau of the Census... Fifteenth census..., Population, vol. 4, table 12, 1143-1144.
 49. Ibid. That black women played a larger part in the domestic workforce of the borough may be because of the emigration of numbers of white foreign-born workers to other boroughs. But the increased proportion of black working women who were employed in domestic work and personal service shows that many of the black immigrants of the 'twenties looked to this as their main means of livelihood. In 1920, 24.4% of the black female Manhattan workforce was in manufacturing; 2% in professional work; 1.2% in clerical work; and 70.1% in domestic work. In 1930 there was 17.2% in manufacturing; 3.7% in professional work; 1.7% in clerical work; and 76.1% in domestic.
 50. Ellis, op.cit., 7.
 51. Ibid., 5; and Palmer, Report on Negroes in domestic service (In Norgen, op.cit., Schomburg Collection) 181.
 52. Roane, op.cit., 451. One of the problems of organising black garment workers into trade unions was the alacrity with which they fell back on domestic work when facing unemployment in the needle trades. They were not inclined to persevere in the trade: Ira De A Reid, Negro membership in American labor unions, New York, 1930, [Reprint, New York, 1969] 72-73.
 53. Even before the Depression, married women were a much larger proportion of black domestics than of white domestics. The number of domestics was also swollen by women who could not obtain relief because they could not prove their length of residence in New York City. This was particular problem among domestic workers because they moved from job to job so often. Palmer, Report on Negroes in domestic service (In Norgen, op.cit., Schomburg Collection) 165; and Ellis, op.cit., 15-16.

54. Ibid., 25-26.
55. Theodore Poston, Domestic workers in New York City, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection). Poston also quotes from a survey of Harlem domestics which charted a fall in the average weekly wage from \$17.38 in 1929 to \$14.41 in 1931. This indicates that wages halved between 1929 and 1936.
56. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 6-7. At a meeting called in 1939, under the auspices of the N.A.A.C.P. to organise a Harlem branch of the Domestic Workers Union, several workers remarked on the erosion of job boundaries. A butler said that men "ought to buttle only, and not drive a car and wax floors without extra pay. It's not fair to other workers." Sunday Worker May 3 1939.
57. Ellis, op.cit., 1.
58. Ibid., 23-24.
59. Sunday Worker May 3 1939. These complaints of long hours were supported by at least one sympathetic employer. In a letter to the New York World Telegram March 23 1935, Dorothy Dunbar Bromley wrote: "The most conscientious women still treat their servants as peons when it comes to hours, if not wages. When guests are late for dinner and a maid doesn't finish with the pots and pans before 11 or 12, we think that it is all in a day's work. She is not supposed to have a private life."
60. Ellis, op.cit., 27-30.
61. Ibid., 11-12; and testimony of Miss Iona Laurence, representative of the Domestic Workers Union (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1681).
62. Blumberg, op.cit., 298-301.
63. Ellis, op.cit., 16-21. There were other, more nefarious, practices. One was the referral of young women to brothels and speakeasies; and another was the importation of women from other states, especially the South, on the promise of a well-paid position in the city. Paul Moss, the city's Commissioner of Licences, described this latter practice as "a system of domestic slavery", and added, "after working a few weeks or just long enough to reimburse their employers for their fares which they have advanced, the girls find themselves without a position or funds. Unable to find employment, they are compelled to seek public relief or have the alternative of following the line of least resistance." New York Amsterdam News February 26 and May 7 1938; and testimony of Malcolm Martin, president of the Brooklyn branch of the National Negro Congress (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1672-1673).
64. Harlem Liberator September 16 1933 and April 21 1934.

65. Ellis, op.cit., 11, 17-18.
66. Ibid., 13-14. First apparent in 1933, the "slave markets" became a matter of public concern, locally and nationally, by the end of the decade. Although mainly to be found in the Bronx, there were also street corner domestic labour markets in Brooklyn and on Coney Island. In 1939, Benson Ellis put the total number at about thirty. Similar markets flourished in other large cities; some, according to Ottley, had their origins in the nineteenth century. L.D. Reddick, Anti-semitism among Negroes, Negro Quarterly 1 (2), Summer 1942, 115-117; Ellis, op.cit., 13; and Ottley, op.cit., 126-127.
67. The Communist Party was the first organisation to draw attention to the "slave markets" and to work for their elimination by the organisation of a domestic workers union. Throughout 1933, 1934 and 1935, the Liberator carried eye-witness accounts of the markets and interviews with the domestic workers who sought employment there. Harlem Liberator September 16 and October 14 1933; March 31 and April 21 1934; and Negro Liberator June 15 and July 1 1935. See also Crusader News Agency August 24 1935.
68. Negro Liberator June 15 1935.
69. Carl Offord, Slave markets in the Bronx, Nation June 29 1940, 780. Offord was particularly concerned with the way in which he believed the "slave markets" contributed to anti-semitism among blacks in Harlem. Most of the housewives who hired domestics in the Bronx were Jewish: and street corner agitators in Harlem were said to refer to the "slave markets" in order to whip up feeling against Jewish store-owners in Harlem who refused to hire blacks. Offord used this theme in his novel about Harlem life in the 'thirties: White face, New York, 1943. There is a description of a visit to a "slave market", 65-71.
70. Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke, Bronx slave market, Crisis 42 (11), November 1935, 330. Cook continued to expose the slave markets for the remainder of the decade; see also New York Amsterdam News October 16 1937; July 9 1938; and May 27 1939.
71. Sunday Worker May 3 1939.
72. These practices are mentioned by Marvel Cooke and Carl Offord: New York Amsterdam News July 9 1938; and Offord, Bronx slave markets, op.cit., 780.
73. Many individuals and groups sought an end to the outdoor markets. New York Amsterdam News campaigned for this in the late 'thirties; a Bronx Committee for Improvement of Domestic Employees was started by prominent citizens there with the aim of sheltering the domestic workers in bad weather and educating Bronx housewives to pay higher wages; and, most important of all, the Domestic Workers Union, established by the Building Service Employees Union in 1934, sought to establish a union hiring hall; to enforce a standard contract of work and a minimum wage. The D.W.U. also campaigned for

the state to eliminate licenced employment agencies and to include domestic workers in the legislation covering workingmen's compensation insurance, minimum wages, maximum hours, unemployment and old age insurance. But although Mayor La Guardia did put a roof over the "slave markets" in 1941 the basic problem remained unsolved. For the fate of the Domestic Workers Union, see below, Chapter Nine p. 623-624. New York Amsterdam News October 1 and December 26 1936; March 6, August 14 and October 16 1937; February 26, May 7, July 2 and July 9 1938; May 27 1939; and April 20 1940; Offord, Bronx slave markets, op.cit., 780-781; and testimony of Miss Iona Laurence, representative of the Domestic Workers Union (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1677-1681).

74. Parker, op.cit., 221.
75. New Day 2 (51), December 22 1938.
76. These statements were quoted as part of the "ECONOMIC" section of the Righteous Government Platform. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
77. He did, however, take over the operation of a commercial employment agency - the 'Busy Bee' Employment Agency - in early 1935. It was through this that he learnt of the refusal of prospective employers to pay fees to the agencies. Spoken Word 1 (31), May 18 1935; and World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
78. The Vocational Guidance Department was part of the organisation of the Righteous Government Department: see below, Chapter Seven
Pullen gave a report of the Committee's work quoted in Spoken Word 2 (18), January 28 1936.
79. Ibid. 1 (46), August 31 1935; 2 (5), November 16 1935; and 2 (18), January 28 1936. The compilation of personal records was unusual in the Movement and this was the only reference to them. The records do not seem to be extant.
80. Spoken Word 2 (19), February 1 1936. The operation of the Vocational Guidance Department is unclear from the Peace Mission press. Nor is it certain how long it existed. However, it was reported in 1938 that Maxwell Forteau supervised, with a Mr. Manuel, a co-operative Mechanics Bureau from an address on East 109th Street. New Day 2 (8), February 24 1938.
81. World Herald 1 (2), November 26 1936.
82. Spoken Word 2 (18), January 28 1936.
83. It appears from some of Father Divine's statements that followers also tried to set up more orthodox employment agencies but were refused the necessary licences by the New York State Commission. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937. A "Free Employment Service" remained a part of the Peace Mission's work to the end of the decade. New Day 3 (17), April 27 1939; 3 (25), June 22 1939; 3 (41) October 12 1939;

- and 3 (44), November 2 1939: all carried advertisements for this service, which was free to both employer and employee. The advertisements claimed that the Peace Mission could obtain positions for and supply mechanics, chauffeurs, stenographers, office help, maids, butlers, governesses, graduate nurses, "practical /presumably unqualified/ nurses", companions, caterers, social secretaries, tutors and other professionals.
84. Two such letters, which were written by Father Divine to Mayor La Guardia in early 1934, recommended followers to city appointments almost as an afterthought. One letter was mainly concerned with the failure of the City Sanitation Department to clean the streets in Harlem, the other with assaults by gangs of youths on the 115th Street extension. They were reprinted three years later in the New Day to demonstrate what little notice La Guardia had taken of Father Divine. New Day 1 (33), November 4 1937. See also: Spoken Word 1 (18), February 16 1935; and McKay, There goes God! op.cit., 152.
85. Spoken Word 2 (27), February 29 1936.
86. From a banquet meeting testimony: Ibid. 1 (27), April 20 1935.
87. Madison also reminded Knauth that: "There has been little enough work relief granted in Harlem as public mass meetings, published articles and community protests have revealed." Ibid. 1 (30), May 11 1935.
88. Ibid. 2 (22), February 11 1936.
89. Ibid. 2 (23), February 15 1936; and 2 (27), February 29 1936. One of the resolutions adopted at the Peace Mission's Righteous Government Convention on January 11 1936 was for a change in the law, so as to ensure constructive employment at good wages for all the unemployed. Ibid. 2 (22), February 11 1936. Senator Copeland replied favourably to Father Divine's letter, saying that he, too, would do all in his power to alter the law. Ibid. 2 (23), February 15 1936.
90. Ibid. 2 (36), March 31 1936. City Alderman Lambert Fairchild, who took a friendly interest in the Peace Mission, was also asked to use his influence to secure followers relief work. He said that this was beyond his power. For some of his other connections with the Movement see below, Chapter Seven p. 484-485. . Ibid. 1 (50), September 28 1935.
91. W.P.A. officials were, themselves, unhappy about restricting eligibility for work relief to those on home relief because it undermined one of the reasons for instituting work relief - to preserve a person's morale. Workers on the projects also protested. Blumberg, op.cit., 50, 60-62.
92. Spoken Word 2 (5), November 16 1935; 2 (8), December 7 1935; and 2 (18), January 28 1936. The followers were critical of the administration of the Civil Service in New York City in the mid-'thirties because of its discrimination against blacks in both appointments and promotions and its use as a tool of

political patronage. The Vocational Guidance classes on the Civil Service discussed these "perversions" and a clause in the Righteous Government Platform called for the "immediate abandonment of the Political patronage system and appointment of all Civil Service employees strictly according to their qualifications and service and their standing on the list, without regard to party, race, creed or color, and without the intervention of Political Leaders." Ibid. 2 (18), January 28 1936; and World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937. Most of the students in the Divine class on journalism probably found work, subsequently, in the Peace Mission press offices. Carnegie Pullen said that it was his hope to train a staff of newswriters "whose duty will be to prepare information for press-releases, and these articles will contain and bear nothing more or less than the absolute TRUTH." Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935.

93. New Day 4 (34), August 22 1940.

94. Ibid. 4 (28), July 11 1940.

95. Spoken Word 1 (18), February 16 1935; and Parker op.cit., 229-230.

96. New Day 2 (7), February 17 1938; 2 (8), February 24 1938; and 2 (9), March 3 1938.

97. These figures are inferred from Father Divine's statements above and the advertisements in the World Herald 1 (2), November 26 1936, above. Of course, these are minimum figures. As is clear from the World Herald, skilled workers, like cooks, could command more. In 1939 the New Day advertised work for full-time domestics at \$15-25 a week; for day workers at 40¢-50¢ an hour plus carfare; and for window-washers at 15¢-25¢ an hour. New Day 3 (17), April 27 1939. If these figures are correct, then Father Divine was asking for more than the market rate. Indeed, officials from the New York State Employment Service told him that his minimum wage ruling meant that their bureau in Queens, alone, had to ignore three or four hundred jobs a week where the employer was not prepared to pay that much. Ibid. 3 (40), October 12 1939. Neither were his rates much below those sought by the Domestic Workers Union. The Union demanded 50¢ an hour for part-time work and a Brooklyn union demanded the same rate for part-time work and \$10 a week for general home workers. The only way in which the Peace Mission fell behind the unions was in countenancing window-washing. Not only was the work dangerous and badly paid, even by the standards of domestic work, but also employers often expected workers to do much more than wash windows. New York Amsterdam News October 16 1937 and May 27 1939; Wesley Curtwright, Domestic Workers Union, Brooklyn, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 3, Schomburg Collection); and Ellis, op.cit., 16.

98. The employers who obtained domestic workers through the Peace Mission were, according to Father Divine, expected to grant their employees "at least two part days off each week"

or one whole day. Similar provisions were included in the proposals for a voluntary agreement between employer and employee drawn up by the National Committee on Household Employment: an enlightened body of employers organised by the Y.W.C.A. New Day 2 (49), December 8 1938; and Ellis, op.cit., 43 and 98-99.

99. Both the Domestic Workers Union and the National Committee on Household Employment stressed the need for both employer and employee to know their respective duties and obligations. Copies of the model contract that they drew up for this purpose are reprinted Ibid. 101 and 98-99 respectively. There is no instance of Father Divine insisting on a written contract of employment.
100. New Day 3 (15), April 13 1939.
101. Ibid. 2 (8), February 24 1938. This reaction to the employers' demand for compulsory medical examinations for domestic workers was common to most workers. They rightly regarded it as insulting and demeaning. Ellis, op.cit., 53-55.
102. New Day 2 (48), December 1 1938; and Harris, op.cit., 129-130.
103. Spoken Word 2 (80), September 1 1936.
104. Harris, op.cit., 129. According to Myrtle Pollard, Father Divine taught that if a follower wasted or took five minutes from an employer's time, this was dishonest; just as it was dishonest if an employer took that much time if she had not contracted for it. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 241-242.
105. When one follower toured commercial employment agencies seeking outside advertisers for the New Day, two that she visited said that they placed Father Divine's followers. There were "five sisters" waiting in the office of the Wells Employment Agency on 125th Street and they stayed on even after the owner refused to take out adverts in the New Day. Another sign that followers continued to use exploitative employment agencies was that Father Divine had to remind them that they had no need to use the agencies. New Day 2 (38), September 22 1938; and 3 (15), April 13 1939. When Marvel Cooke visited the Bronx "slave markets" in 1939 she was told by one woman seeking work that "Father Divine's people ... really spoil it for us when they come up here. I've known them to work for as little as ten cents an hour." When Iona Laurence of the Domestic Workers Union spoke at one of the Peace Mission's banquets in 1938, she concluded, as if it was still a matter needing emphasis by Father Divine: "This is what we are asking for, when all of these children go out to work, that they will not take less than fifty cents an hour." New York Amsterdam News May 27 1939; and New Day 2 (13), March 31 1938.
106. Ibid. 3 (15), April 13 1939.
107. Ibid. 3(44), November 2 1939.

108. Ibid. 2 (16), April 21 1938; Parker op.cit., 229-230; and Powdermaker, op.cit., 39.
109. New York Listener-News December 23 1939 interpreted the complaint of the society women as an example of prejudice against black domestic workers. Benson Ellis, however, said that it was more a matter of the mistresses always wanting the best of service without being prepared to pay enough to secure the highest quality of servant. Ellis, op.cit., 47-51.
110. Spoken Word 2 (18), January 28 1936.
111. Ibid. 2 (37), April 4 1936.
112. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937. There were other similar commendations New Day 1 (31), October 21, 1937; and 2 (9), March 3 1938. See also McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 66.
113. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
114. Spoken Word 2 (8), December 7 1935.
115. New Day 4 (11), March 14 1940.
116. Spoken Word 2 (80), September 1 1936.
117. There is no adequate treatment of the short-lived aspirations of the black businessmen of Harlem. Much of the information and some of the conclusions in the following are taken from Works Progress Administration in New York City, Negro in New York City - economic history of the Negroes of New York, microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, passim. Their hopes were expressed by the business and professional organisations which they founded in the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties: Harlem Stock Exchange (1920); Harlem Association of Trade and Commerce (1921); Harlem Economic Association (1924); Harlem Businessmen's Club (1927); Harlem Business and Professional Men's Forum (1932) and Harlem Business and Professional Association (1933). These organisations were dominated by businessmen, many of them retail merchants, who were competing with white businessmen for trade in the Harlem market place. They were all concerned to convince blacks, in the words of the Harlem Businessmen's Club in 1932, "to buy WHENEVER POSSIBLE from our stores." In the heady days of 1925, the Harlem Economic Association's journal Mouthpiece, noting that "there are 200,000 of us, in a little space one half of a square mile in the heart of the greatest commercial city of the world", looked forward to the time when Harlem might be "the greatest Negro city in the world." New York Amsterdam News March 30 1932; Mouthpiece 4 (2), February 1925, Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 124-135 and 433-434; and Ottley and Weatherby, op.cit., 230.
118. These ventures had been the mainstay of New York City's black business in downtown Manhattan. Undertakers were among the elite of black society. New York Age January 21 1933; Osofsky, op.cit., 32 and 96-97; Ovington, op.cit., 106-112;

- and Scheiner, op.cit., 78.
119. Negro in business and industry, May 5 1941; and William Stevenson, Negro barbers in New York City, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 11-12.
120. St. Louis Argus August 16 1929, clipping In Harlem Scrapbooks, vol. 3, Schomburg Collection. The more prosperous placed advertisements in the local press. "Carpenter's lunch room" on West 145th Street offered "Southern home cooking. Excellent service. Open 8 a.m. - 10 p.m." Club World 1 (1), July 1929. The number of women who were busy in this way caused the New York Age to remark that "in future years it will be the colored women who will be the captains of industry in Harlem." New York Age April 4 1925.
121. The pioneer of "Beauty Culture" in New York City was Madame C.J. Crawford, who opened a hairdressing business downtown on West 59th Street in 1908. But the business assumed real importance with the arrival of Madame C.J. Walker in 1913. This former laundress from St. Louis had developed a hair straightening process known as the "Walker System" and manufactured a range of hair products to go with it. Her name became a household word; and her success encouraged imitators. Anna Turbo Malone brought her "Poro System of Beauty Culture" from Chicago to Harlem and, in 1929, Madame Sara Spencer introduced the "Apex Beauty System" to Harlem. Negro in business and industry, May 5 1941; and Wesley Curtwright, Negro beauty parlors in New York, 1936; (In Works Progress Administration New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection). There were, of course, other smaller systems, but those with any pretensions at all established 'schools' to train new beauticians. The "Apex System" had its own journal, Apex News, which depicted its founder, Madame Sara Spencer, as a woman with the vision, determination and ideals of Booker T. Washington. The Apex News challenged its readers to seize the opportunities the Apex schools offered: "Are you capable of making enough money whereby you can soon become financially independent - OR - are you a 'wage slave' who works hard making others rich and happy?" Apex News 1 (4), March 1929.
122. At her death in 1918, Madame C.J. Walker left an estate valued at nearly a million dollars. Lillian Harris, known as "Pigfoot Mary" because she began her business career in New York hawking hog maws and chitterlings on street corners, died in 1929 in California, a very rich woman. Wesley Curtwright, Negro beauty parlors in New York, 1936. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and Osofsky, op.cit., 33.
123. In 1936, the Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem estimated that there were 1,928 black-owned businesses in upper Manhattan. These comprised but a fifth of the total number. Over a third of these black businesses provided personal services and under a fifth catered to primary

consumer needs. By contrast, a third of white-owned businesses were basic: bakeries, butchers, groceries, coal and ice firms, clothing, furniture and household goods stores. New York City Mayor's commission on Conditions in Harlem, op.cit., 22-23. Only one black-owned business had corporation status in 1930. This was the Belstrat Laundry, founded in 1921. It employed sixty staff in 1930; represented an investment of one hundred thousand dollars; and had a turnover in 1929 of one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. The average sales turnover of the black-owned retail stores in New York City in that year was \$8,497. Pittsburg Courier October 4 1930; Wilbur Young and Simon Williamson, Belstrat Laundry Corporation, July 18 1939 (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and Bureau of the Census ..., Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932: retail business, Washington D.C., 1934, Ch. XVII, table 13,29.

124. The Dunbar National Bank was part of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Apartments, a model housing project in Harlem, financed by Rockefeller. His interest in the project was not entirely philanthropic and when many of the residents failed to keep up their mortgages because of the Depression, he foreclosed on them. In 1937, only ten years after the Apartments were built, he sold them to a group of real estate brokers. The bank closed in 1928. Osofsky, op.cit., 155-158.
125. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 309-314; and Tabb, op.cit., 44.
126. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 12-13; and Tabb, op.cit., 42-44.
127. The exceptions prove the rule: Harlem's pioneer florist, S.W. Burleigh, owed his success to twenty-one years with a white-owned flower shop in Brooklyn. The most exclusive black-owned millinery shop in Harlem was modelled after the downtown millinery shops in which the owner had worked. New York Age April 4 1925; and Clarence Gittens, A survey of the most outstanding millinery establishment in Harlem, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
128. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 325-326.
129. Negro World May 10 1930.
130. Pittsburgh Courier August 4 1928; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 225-228.
131. The major problem in Harlem was the practice of "booth-renting". This was a system where shop-owners did not employ beauticians but rather let out space to them in their shops. The system arose because of the large number of graduates leaving the beauty shops in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties and it enabled the beauty shop owners to avoid the payment of workingmen's compensation, unemployment insurance and minimum wages. All the shop owner needed to obtain was a permit from the New York City Department of

Health which was granted where certain minimum standards of hygiene were observed. About three-quarters of Harlem shops operated in this way and, although skilled beauticians said that they could make more money by renting a booth, the system was plagued by such insecurity that many preferred to work at home where they need pay no rent and were freed of even the minimum requirements of the Department of Health. Even the beauty shop owners, vigorous defenders of the booth-renting system, recognized that more and more women were operating in the home and leaving the booths empty. Their solution, of course, was to eliminate the home businesses on health risk grounds and preserve booth-renting. An average weekly wage for a beauty culturist was calculated to be \$16 in 1938 and for this she might work over sixty hours a week. New York Amsterdam News June 11 1938; testimony of Lena Dukes, of the Consolidated Beauty Shop Owners Association (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1601-1604); and Leroy W. Jeffries, Decay of the beauty parlor industry in Harlem, Opportunity xvi (2), February 1938, 49-51, 60.

132. Lassalle Best, Negro cigar and candy stores in New York, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
133. These names are taken from the entries in Vanguard, a New York and New Jersey black business directory, published irregularly from 1932-1941.
134. Four issues of the directory were examined: Ibid. 2(2), 1934; 4 (1), November 1935; 7 (1), November 1938; and 9 (1), November 1940. The entries for all types of business fell in the latter issues, but few of those listed in 1934 were to be found in 1940.
135. Journalist Ted Poston claimed that the appearance of fried fish and potato stands, popularly known as "whale stations", on the main Avenues and the opening of cheap restaurants in apartment house basements, actually improved the quality of Harlem eating and lowered its cost during the Depression. The "whale stations" offered their food for 15 ¢ a time, while the "subway lunchrooms" offered complete meals, "ALL ONE CAN EAT ... IF YOU AIN'T GOT ENOUGH, ORDER MORE", for between 25 ¢ and 40 ¢. New York Amsterdam News November 4 1931.
136. Ibid. August 28 1937; Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 281; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 75.
137. New York Amsterdam News October 23 1937.
138. Ibid. November 18 1931. Kelly was not the only one to notice and encourage this development. Alfred Hendricks wrote a regular column in the Negro World, called "Business to suit you", in 1932, which was entirely concerned with exhortation and advice to peddlars and would-be peddlars. Negro World March 12, March 19, April 16, April 30, July 26 and August 12 1932. See also Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 292-293.
139. New York Amsterdam News July 10 1937; and New York Times June 16 1935.

140. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 2, 290; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 92.
141. The pushcart markets had been a feature of Harlem life for many years. The first market was set up in Harlem in 1913 on Lenox Avenue and markets appeared on Eighth and Fifth Avenues later. Until the late 'twenties, black pushcarters were rarely seen: the markets were dominated by Jewish, Greek and, especially, Italian vendors. With the Depression, however, the black pushcarters would no longer be turned away. By 1937, they held the majority of the pitches on Lenox, Eighth and Fifth Avenues. New York Amsterdam News November 5 1930 and July 10 1937; Pittsburgh Courier December 31 1932; Pollard Harlem as is, vol. 2, 282, 287-289; and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 92.
142. This is the assessment of E. David Cronon. Cronon, op.cit., esp. 73-102. According to Tony Martin, the Black Star Line and the subsequent Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company lost funds to the sum of \$1.25 millions. In addition to Garvey's lack of business experience and the "general incompetence and sloppiness" surrounding the steamship lines' operations, Martin attributes the failure to the "persistent and malicious attacks" on Garvey and the project by leading black newspapers and white governments, and the "graft, thievery and sabotage" of many of the employees of the Line. Martin, op.cit., 152-167.
143. Pittsburgh Courier October 15 1927; and Martin, op.cit., 34-35. In a report on the state of business in August 1922, the Negro Factories Corporation claimed three grocery stores, two restaurants, a printing plant and a "Universal Mart of Industry" - housing a variety of enterprises including a Universal Steam and Electric Laundry, a men's and a women's manufacturing department - in Harlem. Ibid.
144. W.E.B. Du Bois encouraged the formation of the Negro Co-operative Guild in 1918 by writing a series of articles and editorials in Crisis on consumer co-operation. Several co-operative stores were founded by the Guild but the project failed because, according to DuBois, the preliminary work had not been done carefully and the consumers and managers of the stores had not been properly educated. W.E.B. DuBois, Dusk of Dawn: an essay toward an autobiography of a race concept, New York, 1940, 280-281. Later James Weldon Johnson saw co-operation as the way forward for blacks in business because "the prospects for the individual businessman of any group are today far from being bright." James Weldon Johnson, Negro Americans, what now? New York, 1934, 80. It was for this reason that co-operation was part of the platform of the Harlem Economic Association in 1924. It urged black retailers to form purchasing co-operatives to buy goods at discount rates. Pollard Harlem as is, vol. 2, 433-434. To the Harlem Businessmen's Club co-operation meant keeping money circulating among blacks whenever possible: black consumers buying from black retailers; black retailers buying from black wholesalers. New York Amsterdam News March 30 1932.

145. The C.M.A. was launched by the National Negro Business League. It was incorporated as a voluntary chain of black grocers in 1931. In March 1931, there were twenty-five groceries affiliated to the New York branch of the C.M.A. The stores were enthusiastically supported by the local black press even though the C.M.A. made no overt appeals for black custom on the basis of race loyalty. Indeed, some of the directors of the national board were white. In 1930 there were C.M.A. stores in Selma and Montgomery (Ala.); Dallas (Tex.); Winston Salem (N.C.); Norfolk and Hampton (Va.); Tulsa (Okla.); Chicago and New York City. New York Amsterdam News February 24 1932; Interstate Tattler May 12 1932; and Negro World November 28 and December 19 1931; and May 14 1932.
146. The C.M.A. was also criticised by the Advance, the journal of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. The Advance and the National News alleged that salesmen were selling stock in the national C.M.A. by false pretences. They claimed that the salesmen were implying that stockholders would become part-owners of the stores affiliated to the C.M.A. which were, in fact, independently owned. The C.M.A., itself, owned only one store in Jamaica, Long Island. When George Schuyler visited some of the affiliated grocers in New York, he found that they had not yet received any discount through trading with the C.M.A. He believed that the C.M.A. was merely acting as a broker between retailers and wholesalers and was not capable of generating any significant discount for its members or profits for its shareholders. National News May 5, May 12 and May 19 1932.
147. Pittsburgh Courier August 4 1928. There is no subsequent mention of this organisation, so there is no knowing if it survived the Depression.
148. Negro World May 10 1930. It was only when the journeymen barbers, employees of the master barbers, were organised by the C.I.O. in 1937, that the master barbers were forced to band together again. Frank Crosswaith, organiser for the Negro Labor Committee, see below, Chapter Nine, p. 631. was appointed to arbitrate between the two groups over wages and hours. He urged them to co-operate to control cut-price competition and to resist the influx of white-owned cut-price shops. New York Amsterdam News October 23 and October 30 1937; and July 16, August 20, October 15, October 29 and November 19 1938.
149. It was the prospect of State intervention to enforce beauty shop owners to take out workingmen's compensation insurance and to comply with the minimum wage law that precipitated the organisation of the owners. Only the largest concerns, like the Madame C.J. Walker Co., supported the enforcement of State regulations as a means of organising the trade - as they already operated shops on a salary and commission basis. In July 1938 the New York State Legislature passed a bill regulating hours and wages in the beauty culture industry. Beauty shop owners were not allowed to employ women for more than forty-eight hours a week, nor for more than six days a week. Neither were employees to work before 7 a.m. or after 10 p.m. A minimum wage of \$16.50 a week was prescribed. The

minimum wage board also ruled that booth-renters should be treated as employees unless they could prove otherwise. Simultaneously, the Department of Health acted to close unlicensed home operators. In their struggle to preserve the booth-renting system, Harlem beauticians had much support. Among others, T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League, feared that if the booth-renters were displaced it would have a disastrous effect on the Harlem economy; destroy the only respectable form of self-employment for black women; and swell the numbers seeking work at the "slave markets". New York Age December 5 and December 19 1936; and May 28 1938; New York Amsterdam News August 15, October 3 and November 28 1936; October 30 and December 4 1937; April 2, April 21, June 11, June 18 and July 2 1938; and May 27 and July 1 1939; testimonies of T. Arnold Hill of the Urban League, and Lena Dukes of the Consolidated Beauty Shop Owners Association (In New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Public hearings, 1598-1604); and Woman Worker 18 (3), May 1938; and 18 (4), July 1938.

150. Spoken Word 2 (54), June 2 1936.
151. New Day 1 (22), August 19 1937; and 1 (39), December 16 1937.
152. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 25.
153. New York Sun April 24 1937; and New York World Telegram September 10 1936.
154. Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934.
155. New Day 2 (9), March 3 1938.
156. New York World Telegram September 10 1936; and Leach, History of the work of Father Divine n.d. [1936?] (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
157. New York World Telegram September 10 1936.
158. New Day 1 (30), October 14 1937. Other advertisements appeared Ibid. 2 (6), February 10 1938; 2 (22), June 2 1938; 2 (32), August 11 1938; 3 (25), June 22 1939; and 4 (20), May 16 1940.
159. Spoken Word 1 (17), February 9 1935. This store was looted in the March 19 riot of 1935, and the remaining stock was moved to other premises. New York Herald Tribune March 16 and March 21 1935.
160. New York World Telegram September 10 1936; and New Day 1 (11), March 17 1938; and 3 (36), September 7 1939.
161. Ibid. 1 (39), December 16 1937.
162. Ibid. 1 (34), November 11 1937.
163. Ibid. 2 (9), March 3 1938. There are numerous other references

- in the New Day to clothing and millinery shops.
164. Ibid. 1 (29), October 7 1937.
 165. Ibid. 2 (13), March 31 1938; and 2 (50), December 15 1938.
 166. New York Times April 23 1937; and New Day 1 (36) November 25 1937.
 167. New York Sun April 24 1937.
 168. New Day 2 (17), April 28 1938.
 169. All advertisements from Ibid. 2 (5), February 3 1938.
 170. There were, of course, many other businesses in addition to those already mentioned. There were trucking and removal businesses, Peace garages and even a Peace Jewellers Co-operative. Ibid. 3 (25), June 22 1939; and 3 (32), August 10 1939; and World Herald 1 (37), July 29 1937. But none of the Peace businesses involved more than a handful of people. There was only one significant manufacturing enterprise: a "pocket-book factory" in Newark. New Day 1 (40), December 23 1937; and 3 (25), June 22 1939; and Spoken Word 1 (34), June 8 1935.
 171. Of just over a hundred Peace businesses in Manhattan, noted from the Peace Mission press, twenty-nine were restaurants; fifteen were food stores; and sixteen were dressmaking and clothing shops. This is, of course, only an indication of the number and nature of the Peace businesses.
 172. Spoken Word 1 (37), June 29 1935; and Parker op.cit., 165-166. Pollard remarked that many people without experience or education in business had found success in Peace Mission enterprises. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1 ,231.
 173. Spoken Word 1 (28), April 27 1935.
 174. These details emerged in cases brought before the courts by the New York State Department of Labor in a prosecution involving the followers' failure to observe workingmen's compensation insurance laws. New York Times May 19, May 22, June 5 and June 12, 1936. See below Chapter Nine, p. 628-630.
 175. Father Divine said: "We will have what we want to have just the same, if we have to get it just the same as the bootleggers and moonshiners do ... If they do not allow us to have licenses by the Law without taking out insurances, we will run our industries without the Law ... they just as well know we will not take out insurance compensations." This exchange is quoted in the Righteous Government Platform. World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
 176. New York Times May 19, May 22, June 5 and June 12 1936; and Spoken Word 2 (45), May 2 1936.
 177. New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936.

178. Spoken Word 2 (79), August 29 1936.
179. New Day 2 (32), August 11 1938. See also Ibid. 2 (17), April 28 1938.
180. Parker op.cit., 229. See also New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936; and Spoken Word 2 (45), May 2 1936.
181. New Day 1 (38), December 9 1937.
182. Ibid. 1 (15), August 27 1936.
183. Father Divine assured the followers that charging the lowest possible price would make them "SUCCESSFUL and PROSPEROUS". He called this the "Mystery of Mr. Henry Ford" and he told the believers: "Henry Ford is the one of whom at one time sold the cheapest car on the market, and yet he became one of the richest men as far as men could discern." Spoken Word 2 (76), August 18 1936; and 2 (83), September 12 1936.
184. New Day 2 (9), March 3 1938.
185. Ibid. 1 (30), October 14 1937. Father Divine also gave advice on cooking vegetables. He warned, "cabbage should not be cooked until all the substance is cooked out." In the same speech he advised laundresses not to wash "table napkins, linens and handkerchiefs and other articles with flannels that will get the linens linty." Ibid. 4 (36), September 5 1940. Father Divine said that his followers "should be the expressors of the BEST - the BEST in business, the BEST in profession, labor or trade, the BEST in all expressions of life." Ibid. 2 (3), January 20 1938. See also Ibid. 4 (34), August 22 1940.
186. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 26; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 233.
187. The New Day commented in 1937: "All who use the word 'Peace' in connection with their firm name or business advertising are expected to comply in all particulars with the policy as proclaimed in the Platform [of the Righteous Government campaign - see Chapters Seven and Eight below] of adhering to the announced low prices ... Paying cash for all goods, and selling goods or services for cash, at as low a price as possible, is a part of FATHER'S program of bringing down the cost of living for all of HIS followers in all parts of the world." New Day 1 (28), September 30 1937.
188. Spoken Word 1 (47), September 7 1935. This attitude to work led the Movement into difficulties regarding its failure to observe certain New York State laws for the regulation of labour. The manager of a Peace Mission restaurant was brought before the Mercantile Inspection Bureau for failing to post the hours of work of his employees. New York Times June 2 and June 4 1935. See below, Chapter Nine, p. 627-628.
189. Father Divine, himself, said of the success of the enterprises: "The middleman has been eliminated, and many other unnecessary

- expenses have been eliminated, and for this cause they can be successful enough to meet their obligations, and by living economically and evangelically, why, naturally, there are many things they refrain from using and spending their money for. Hence they can use their money in a constructive and in an unselfish way." New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938.
190. Ibid. 1 (28), September 30 1937.
191. Ibid. 4 (47), November 21 1940.
192. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 233. Sergeant Louis Rieger who visited the Peace Mission to give safety talks on behalf of the Police Department said that the police could always recognize the imposters: "'You know we get that one once in a while as we go along Eighth Avenue in a radio car: 'Peace Sergeant'. There is a hoodlum with a pushcart. You know the brothers don't do that. They don't have to advertise that they are followers of FATHER'S: their actions bespeak themselves. I step down from the radio car, and I say, 'I give you about two minutes to get on the East Side with that pushcart, or it will be in pieces, not "PEACE".' Believe me, he picks up and moves." New Day 4 (5), February 1 1940.
193. New Day 2 (5), February 3 1938; and Leach, History of the work of Father Divine, n.d. [1936?] (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
194. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 91-92.
195. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 232.
196. Spoken Word 1 (42), August 3 1935.
197. Harris, op.cit., 55; and Rozier, op.cit., 96. McKelway and Liebling believed that each extension was directly under the control of Father Divine, who inspected the premises and appointed a follower to supervise it and pay the rent. This may have been the case with the extensions directly under his Personal Jurisdiction. But Faithful Mary's account makes it clear that this procedure was not always the rule. See also below, Chapter Ten, p. 675 McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory; op.cit., June 27 1936, 24.
198. New Day 1 (30), October 14 1937.
199. New York Amsterdam News January 7 1939.
200. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 24.
201. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934.
202. In an interview with Jack Glenn of the March of time film company in August 1938 Glenn asked Father Divine if the

- followers provided free services and products to each other. Father Divine replied: "'Well, not necessarily. They sell at a very reasonable price, beneath the price that merchandise is sold elsewhere for.'" New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938.
203. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934; and Rozier, op.cit., 81.
204. Faithful Mary, for instance, paid a total of \$15,000 cash for meat supplied to the extensions under her control in six months in 1935. Spoken Word 1 (50), September 28 1935.
205. This is deduced from Faithful Mary's account of her management of Peace Mission businesses and Father Divine's few remarks on the manner of the organisation. New Day 2 (29), July 21 1938; and 2 (35), September 1 1938; Spoken Word 1 (45), August 24 1935; and Rozier, op.cit., 96. Faithful Mary claimed that Father Divine demanded that a proportion of the profit of each of the enterprises be given to him. It is obvious that, at all times, gifts were made. However, there is reason to believe that Father Divine did not demand or organise these payments until 1935 or 1936. See below, Chapter Ten, p. 683-684.
206. Faithful Mary claimed that the profits from the extensions under her control ranged from three hundred to seven hundred dollars a week. New York Times June 2 1937.
207. Ibid. May 22 1936. The co-workers at the Peace Mission garages on West 144th Street, in their evidence in court in the workingmen's compensation insurance case, said that their rent was paid by whoever decided to pay it; and that the amount they charged for garaging vehicles depended on how much the owners could afford to pay. Affluent followers, they added, paid for consignments of petrol and no payments were ever made to Father Divine from their business, nor anyone else in the Movement. Ibid. June 5 1936.
208. Spoken Word 1 (45), August 24 1935.
209. New Day 1 (32), October 28 1937. Discussions on consumer co-operatives; and articles on co-operation in Sweden and economic co-operation among the Shakers appeared in: Ibid. 1 (28), September 30 1937; 1 (31), October 21 1937; 2 (17), April 28 1938; and 2 (47), November 24 1938; Spoken Word 2 (4), November 9 1935; and 2 (5), November 16 1935; and World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.
210. New Day 2 (17), April 28 1938.
211. Ibid. 2 (5), February 3 1938; 2 (22), June 2 1938; 2 (48), December 1 1938; 3 (3), January 19 1939; and 3 (25), June 11 1939.
212. Spoken Word 1 (4), November 10 1934; and 1 (11), December 29 1934; McKelway and Liebling Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 24; and Rozier, op.cit., 96.

213. New Day 2 (8), February 24 1938. This did not close the matter, however, as some followers still believed in the equal distribution of profits. In writing, just a few months later, about the opening of a new Peace restaurant a follower held: "the evangelical part of this co-operation is that each individual becomes a joint tenant as soon as he or she enters the business and receives equal share; thus taking as much in the business as if it was his own." Ibid. 2 (22), June 2 1938. Father Divine offered one or two more pieces of advice about earnings in Peace businesses. In early 1938 he said: "if you are going into business and can compete with any other dealer and yet earn enough to give your co-workers as much as they can earn in salary ... Why, then you must give them as much as they can earn on a salary, if not, the work profiteth nothing to them." Concerned, perhaps, that some followers were not earning enough from their enterprises he declared, a year later, that each co-worker should be guaranteed at least \$10 a week. Ibid. 2 (9), March 3 1938; and 3 (23), June 8 1939.
214. Baltimore Afro-American June 15 1935. In 1937 Father Divine claimed that he had made it possible for his followers to live on \$5 a week. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937.
215. Spoken Word 2 (85), September 19 1936.
216. New Day 1 (24), September 2 1937.
217. Father Divine suggested that the economic organisation of the Movement was designed especially to help the followers to settle their past debts: "it gives you a chance to have the means to pay them because of my cutting the cost of living for you at least fifty per cent." Spoken Word 2 (80), September 1 1936.
218. Father Divine said: "At times when you pay up all of your old bills you have to go no doubt, in some of our connections and receive co-operation in help, one way or another." Provided that this was for a purpose that was "Just and Right and Good", he said, it was a "Blessing" to both the giver and the recipient. Ibid.
219. New Day 2 (16), April 21 1938.
220. New York Amsterdam News May 22 1937 and March 9 1940. Handbills advertising the Guild's activities can be found In Harlem Scrapbooks, vol. 4, 5 and 7. Schomburg Collection.
221. New Day 4 (2), January 11 1940.

CHAPTER 6: "A PRACTICAL GOD IN A BODILY FORM": THE MESSIAH
AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON EARTH.

From the early days of the Movement in Sayville, the followers were encouraged to feel that they were part of a social and spiritual experiment. As the Movement grew, Father Divine's claims became more explicit. He said that he was "not especially representing that which is termed Religion" and he fired broadsides against the established church and the conventional practice of the Christian faith. With very few exceptions, he said, the members and preachers in the Christian church "have gone back instead of going on ... They have not made the slightest advances from orthodoxy." In their revivals and prayer meetings, "teaching and preaching or claiming to be saving the souls of men", they were leading people to believe that God was "sitting up some place in a mystical heaven in a big box seat; with a Physical Body, looking down on the Creatures of Earth." This, he protested, was a hollow mockery of the "exact life and teachings of Jesus Christ", for Jesus had promised to redeem the bodies as well as the souls of men; to free them from misery, sorrow, poverty and oppression and create the kingdom of heaven on earth.¹ By depriving mankind of this truth, the church had collaborated in the schemes of wicked men to "keep God away from the Earth Plane":

"They have striven to keep you in the superstitious idea of God being somewhere in a mysterious Heaven decillions of decillions of miles away ... they think that by such a version they themselves in prejudices, can have their sway."

Religion had been used to "keep you in poverty ... to bind you in slavery." But, Father Divine declared:

"I have come to let you know and to let them know God is as much in the Flesh and on the material shall Rule and have Dominion over and in the affairs of men, the same as they supposed Him to be in Heaven."

"We are not studying about a God in the sky," he said, "we are talking about a God here and now."²

Heaven, Father Divine taught, was a "State of Consciousness wherein all men can arise to"³; the culmination of living in harmony with the God within. It was this realisation of "GOD'S ACTUAL PRESENCE" that was destined to change the life of the believer, revolutionize society by transforming all its members and finally bring the kingdom of heaven on earth to pass. As yet, only the followers knew the truth. But, Father Divine promised, the truth would soon spread "like a contagion"⁴ to others:

"The very spirit of this Peace Mission Movement shall envelop the world; no longer to be looked upon merely as an expression of Religion but it shall reach into all parts of the field of life, wheresoever man is found ... and give you VICTORY over every difficulty and over all adverse and undesirable conditions." ⁵

"The dispensation in which we are now living is a dispensation of a NEW ERA," Father Divine said, "... This is ANNO DOMINI FATHER DIVINE ... this is as much a change from the dispensation in which you have been living as the dispensation A.D. [was from] ... the dispensation B.C!"⁶

The message of the "indwelling God" was a peculiarly democratic heresy. It held that the kingdom of heaven on earth was possible because each person had a potential for divine perfection. According to Father Divine, divinity was open to all who lived as vessels of the Holy Spirit: "temples" of the "Living God". He said:

"There is one principle of mathematics, but everyone who can and will develop the principle of mathematics ... will be qualified to use mathematics accurately and expertly ... so it is with the mystery of GOD'S PRESENCE." ⁷

Nevertheless, as the bearer of this truth, Father Divine claimed a special status as a "sample and example" to mankind: the model

of perfection and the repository of divine wisdom and power. Asked, in 1937, to explain his role within the Peace Mission, Father Divine said that he had the same authority as Mohammed, Christ and Buddha had exercised in their own time.⁸ But he claimed further that his teachings synthesised and superseded those of his illustrious predecessors. He said:

"I AM as a Little Honey Bee drawing the substance from every flower, even though they be sweet or sour ... and I will make out of it, the sweetest of the sweetest, which is the KINGDOM of GOD on EARTH where all have so long been seeking." 9

He never relinquished or even modified this claim to supreme authority. In 1939 he told journalist R.S. Bird that while divine perfection was attainable by anyone who lived the "Christ-life", he knew of "no competitors in the Universal Mind Substance where I AM."¹⁰

In several court encounters during the 'thirties, Father Divine was rather more reticent in his claims to divinity. Asked by Judge Jacob Panken in the New York Domestic Relations Court in 1935 whether or not he thought himself to be God, Father Divine replied: "I preach God dwells in every man" and added:

"I say there are thousands of people call me God - millions of them, and there are millions of them who call me the devil, and I don't say I am God and I don't say I am the devil, but I produce God and shake the earth with it." 11

Two years later, at a Peace Mission banquet meeting, he said that he did not even presume to call himself 'Father Divine': "I call Myself, only Rev. M.J. Divine, better known as FATHER DIVINE."¹² But, in actual fact, he did everything possible to encourage the followers to believe in his divinity. A reporter who visited the Movement in Sayville before Father Divine's move to Harlem, noticed how the followers spoke of him as "symbolic of God" and even called him "God" without fear of rebuke or ridicule.¹³ Father Divine's

songs and speeches at the banquet table, in the intimate company of his converts, left little doubt that he presented himself to them as their messiah, God incarnate. On one occasion, he told the believers that he was not afraid of any man separating him from the love of his followers, for the love of men and women toward each other was but "a reflection of the reality of the marriage of the LAMB ... a MARRIAGE in SPIRIT and in MIND, where you are UNITED TOGETHER with your GOD."¹⁴ Speaking, on another occasion, of how he automatically triumphed over opposition, he said:

"I shall let the inhabitants of the Earth know, GOD rules, and GOD deals in the affairs of men, and none can hinder him ... At the Name of JESUS CHRIST, of whom you say I AM, every knee must bow and every tongue must confess, GOD has actually come and has been manifested in the flesh." ¹⁵

He told his followers to "hear the Voice of GOD" for he was dispelling all the old ideas of heaven "handed down to them through and by their ancestors, through orthodoxy, through the Misconception of the Truth":

"I am bringing from that imaginary concept of things the LIVING REALITY - I am making it REAL, TANGIBLE and PRACTICAL, and I shall universally establish it." ¹⁶

In 1939, in a scathing reference to reporters who ridiculed him as the "Harlem Messiah", Father Divine retorted: "I do not deny being the Messiah! To the extreme reverse, that is something I verify! Aren't you glad!" ¹⁷

Father Divine not only called himself God but he laid claim to all the attributes of divinity. He was, he said, perfect: "Well, Healthy, Joyful, Peaceful, Lively, Loving, Successful, Prosperous and Happy in Spirit, Body and Mind and in every organ, muscle, sinew, joint, limb, vein and bone and even in every atom, fibre and cell of MY Bodily Form."¹⁸ He was omnipotent. His powers extended not only

over the human condition - over life, health and prosperity - but also over the elements. Referring to the good weather that usually accompanied his parades, he said, "for the past six years, yea seven, in all MY Outdoor demonstrations, you can see plainly or recall, the Cosmic Forces of Nature, they worked in perfect HARMONY with ME."¹⁹ His influence was universal. He came, he said, to free all mankind and to bring "all races, creeds and colors" to their just inheritance. "I came to unify all humanity," he said. "They all need ME: every nation, every tongue and every people, all the different nationalities and all the five races collectively. MY Power is restoring Unity where there is Division".²⁰ He was omniscient and omnipresent. "Your prayers are answered without literary correspondence," he told his followers, "it is not necessary for me to go by feet. I am in your workshop. I am in your cook kitchen. I am even in your bedroom at night. I don't need to go there by feet." They could contact him at all times by thought. "I am here and I am there and I am everywhere," he said, "I am like the radio voice. Dial in and you shall always find me."²¹

Father Divine saw himself as the fulfilment of both the Old and New Testament prophecies. In a letter to the Baltimore Afro-American in June 1935 he described himself as the "fulfiller of the Scripture according to Second Psalms, also according to Isaiah 42 : 8 to 16, but especially verse 13 and 14:" "the LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once."²² Father Divine used this language of Old Testament righteous vengeance against his critics and enemies. Divine retribution, he warned, would befall all who tried to stop his work. Judge Smith, he

reminded them, had suffered death for his opposition;²³ others would be punished by the "cosmic forces of disaster." When white residents of Newport (R.I.) opposed the followers' entry into the area in 1939, Father Divine asked menacingly:

"Do they want a tornado with a ball of fire going through, consuming houses as a bombshell? Do they want the flu and other contagions such as man has not heard of? Do they want the bathing beaches to be contagionised with all sorts of filthiness of contagious and incurable disease germs? ... or do they want GOD on Earth in a BODY that is bringing peace out of confusion, joy and happiness?"²⁴

Repeatedly, he warned that he would not tolerate slander or criticism. "Mankind had better not attempt to interfere with ME," he said, "for MY Spirit is the thing that works where no man can hinder." In the idiom of the gangster he warned his critics to "LAY OFF" or accept the consequences: "You will be PUT on the spot!"²⁵ Similarly, he warned the followers that if any of them ever denied that he was God then they, too, would be "PUT on the spot physically." They would fall victim to the sins and diseases which they had suffered before their conversion.²⁶

This claim of awesome judgement and retributive vengeance was familiar to anyone versed in the prophecies of the Old Testament and the apocalyptic message of Revelation.²⁷ That the followers accepted this image was shown in the poems, drawings and photographs contributed to the Peace Mission press in which Father Divine was depicted at the reins of the horses of the Apocalypse or astride a white horse.²⁸ For, as the Revelation of St. John the Divine had prophesied: "I saw Heaven opened, and beheld a white horse: and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."²⁹

But Father Divine usually held this image in reserve. He preferred to be regarded as the kind and caring messiah, come to free

people from their poverty and oppression and "all undesirable conditions." From the Old Testament he selected the story of Moses and the Children of Israel to show that just as God's promise of the Land of Canaan, "the place that flows with milk and honey, the place in which they would have the ABUNDANCE of the FULLNESS", was fulfilled in ancient times, so peace and prosperity was open to all who now followed him.³⁰ From the New Testament, he took the image of the gentle Jesus: the personal God, loving and wise, the Lamb who had come to redeem men from the sins of the world. "I came," Father Divine said, "to kindle that flame of a Savior's Love in the cold, stony hearts of men, that they might see and know God is not a God far off, but God is a God at hand ... That was the Mission of CHRIST and the Purpose for which He came. MY Followers will go with ME all the way."³¹

To those who mocked him as the "Harlem Messiah" Father Divine quoted the parable of the man who had invited people from the streets and alleys to share his banquet meal when his friends and acquaintances refused to come. Like this man, Father Divine said, he had turned to the poor and despised; for they were the ones in greatest need and most open to the truth.³² There was reason, too, for his race. "Why is it," Father Divine asked, "that God comes in the most insignificant, the most illiterate, the most downtrodden among the children of men? He comes among them that He might lift them and bring down the loftiness of the mighty, the self-exalted."³³ He was the Black Christ, the symbol of suffering mankind, and, as such, the guarantor of man's redemption. "Peace everyone!" he told a public rally, "I Said MY Condescension to come to the Earth Plane was to come in the likeness of them, for it is written, 'The least among you the same shall be great.'"³⁴

He found in the black experience, moreover, the perfect

dramatisation of his idea of the suffering but conquering redeemer. In "GOD's BODY in which I AM now Living," he said, he had suffered death at the hands of thirty-two lynch mobs. Yet he was living among his followers as proof of his power to overcome death and the extremes of human oppression. With this knowledge, he said, they, too, could overcome all their difficulties and limitations: "When you stand before bayonets and guns, when you stand before everything that may come and praise GOD wholeheartedly, and to refuse to fret and murmur; refuse to tremble; but stand in the Liberty upon the Promises I have given, you can relax your conscious mentality then and there, and know GOD will take care of you."³⁵

He made clear to his followers that now God had come to earth, the new order foreseen in the Revelation of St. John the Divine was established. He told them:

"So long as you allow CHRIST to rule in your affairs, in your business, profession, labor or trade, in your domestic relation and everything else, I may say, there and then the Kingdom has come."

Paraphrasing St. John's revelation of the "New Jerusalem"

Father Divine said:

"I shall cause the nations of the earth to love one another even as they love themselves, and when this is accomplished, there shall be no more division, there shall be no more strife; ... no more sickness, there shall be no more sorrow; there shall be no more death; for the TABERNACLE of GOD is with Men, and He shall dwell with them." 36

Father Divine pictured himself as the fulfilment of the ancient Biblical promises of deliverance to the poor and oppressed. But there was yet another side to his image as well; for he presented himself also as a modern messiah: as a man who was familiar with the contemporary world and impatient with the old fashioned and traditional. While he used the title "Reverend" M.J. Divine, he was at pains to disassociate himself from the image of the church minister or evangelist. Instead of religious robes he chose smart,

hand-made suits.³⁷ With his chauffeur-driven limousine and his private aeroplane, he assumed the style of the business executive - wealthy, sophisticated and at ease in a world of commerce, science and technology.

In his dealings with his followers he preferred the urbane manner of the public figure to the fire and brimstone rhetoric of the 'old-time' preacher and the 'old-time' religion. He used images from science and technology in his speeches to complement his homely references to the land and everyday life. He referred to his headquarters at 20 West 115th Street as his "office" and surrounded himself with trained secretaries and modern office equipment worthy of an ace businessman. He taped his speeches, and used the public address system set up in his office to communicate with his followers in nearby extensions. He granted "interviews" to visitors, sent a prodigious amount of correspondence, and followed an exacting office routine with the help of his personal staff. He called his informal discussions with his secretaries "office talk", and never used the terms "sermon" or "preaching" to describe his public speeches.³⁸

Everything was done within the Peace Mission, moreover, to counter the suggestion that it was a religious movement. There were no Bibles, no altars or sacred buildings, no formal religious services.³⁹ Father Divine wanted it known that he offered more than the Church or conventional religion; he offered a way of life appropriate to the needs and interests of the modern world.

In turn, his followers were devoted to him as their redeemer. They wore lapel buttons with his picture, and in every Peace Mission building photographs and banners proclaimed his name.⁴⁰ In one extension, the rows of neat beds in the dormitories were covered with quilts embroidered with the mottoes "Peace" and "A.D.F.D." -

Anno Domini Father Divine.⁴¹ Even the names of the Movement's publications expressed the followers' acceptance of Father Divine's mission. The Spoken Word⁴² was joined in November 1936 by the World Herald;⁴³ and in July 1937 the New Day replaced them as the sole organ of the Movement. Launched and staffed by groups of enthusiastic believers, the papers did much to complement and dramatise Father Divine's teachings and enhance his messianic mystique. They carried the complete texts of Father Divine's "peerless Messages" and reports of the Movement's meetings and activities. Often the texts of Father Divine's speeches were prefaced by short paeans of praise and explanations of the significance of his teachings for mankind. For the staff of the New Day, for instance, the "gay little message" given by Father Divine during a meeting in 1937 was witness to the "delightful sense of humor of our SAVIOR" and further proof of the bankruptcy of "pre-conceived orthodox versions of men concerning GOD".

"Fanciful imaginations have always pictured GOD as a grim bewhiskered monarch sitting upon a throne of gold, which is supported only by thin air or clouds (depending upon atmospheric conditions) and with furrowed brow dolefully shaking HIS Head at the iniquities of man and sternly dealing out justice to the dear departed."

How absurd this seemed to those "who have found the Only True and Living God in a real, tangible BODY on the Earth Plane, walking and talking as a 'natural man' with HIS Children whom HE tenderly guides and teaches the way to Salvation."⁴⁴ The editor of the Spoken Word advised, "no greater fallacy or myth ever existed than to assume that GOD ever left the earth ... May we repeat to the anxious seekers watching and scanning the heavens for the reappearance of Christ, ... 'you will discover HIM to be FATHER DIVINE.'"⁴⁵

Each paper carried articles on economics, politics, sociology,

history, pacifism, psychology, science and religion to demonstrate the way "GOD deals in the affairs of men."⁴⁶ All the paper adopted the convention of placing "A.D.F.D." after the date; and referred to Father Divine in capital letters. As an affirmation of his divinity made flesh, the papers capitalised his use of the words "I AM". Spare column space was devoted to epigrams celebrating the New Day;⁴⁷ while, in June 1936, one edition of the New Day replaced its usual cover photograph of Father Divine with the statement: "GOD is not a GOD far off, but GOD is a GOD at Hand. Thy KINGDOM has come. THY Will be done in Earth as it is in HEAVEN."⁴⁸

Indeed, the Peace Mission press gave credence to the most fabulous beliefs within the Movement. Without a hint of scepticism, a writer in the Spoken Word stated that Father Divine's movements were unknown to all of his followers: "FATHER DIVINE does nothing according to the usual pattern or after the manner of men, and thus his intentions and movements remain a mystery, apparently."⁴⁹ While the editor of the World Herald, thrilled by the sound of the followers' singing drifting through his office window, believed that he had found a "scientific" explanation for Father Divine's control over the weather during the Movement's outdoor rallies: "If the joyful noise they were making could change the chemical action of an editor's brain," he noted, "what effect would the massed ecstasy of ten thousand human spirits, thrilled with DIVINE rapture, have on the atmosphere for miles around and far up into the sky."⁵⁰

The followers firmly believed that the Movement was the embodiment of the kingdom of God on earth. They dubbed Father Divine's headquarters at 20 West 115th Street the "Headquarters Kingdom" and they called their own extensions "heavens". Loyal followers were graced with the description "angel"⁵¹ and New York City, the acknowledged centre of the Movement, was re-named the "New

Although both Father Divine and his followers thus believed that Father Divine was God, "in the Fatherhood degree", come to fulfil Christ's promises; and that the Peace Mission Movement represented the long-awaited kingdom of heaven on earth, their vision of the millennium obviously differed radically from that set forth in the prophecies of Isaiah and the Revelation of St. John that the Peace Mission Movement claimed to fulfil. Father Divine and the followers did believe that they were enjoying the promised "new heaven" and "new earth", where there would be no more poverty, no more conflict, no more suffering and no more death. They also believed themselves to be the Chosen of God; those who had kept his commandments and were admitted, therefore, to the "holy city". Yet, beyond this fundamental identity, there was very little resemblance between the Peace Mission's millennium and that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Strictly speaking, the millennial tradition based on Jewish apocalyptic literature and, more particularly on the Revelation of St. John promises that the messiah will appear as a warrior, vanquish the devil and hold him prisoner. Then the messiah will build the kingdom of heaven on earth and reign in person for a thousand years. The 'saints' who have been steadfast in their religion will be raised from the dead to serve as His royal priesthood. At the end of this period, Satan will be let loose again for a short while before he is finally destroyed. The victory will be followed by a general resurrection of the dead; the Last Judgement and the final redemption.⁵³

The Peace Mission's millennium differed from the traditional one in three striking ways. The most important was the Peace Mission's sensitivity to racial oppression. An outstanding characteristic of the Peace Mission's "New Jerusalem" was its revulsion for racial distinctions. So great was the followers' awareness of black suffering and faithfulness that only a black Christ would suffice to vindicate their faith and demonstrate the triumph of God's salvation. But the Biblical messiah was, in a symbolic purity that took no account of the followers' perceptions, "as white as snow."⁵⁴

Secondly, there could be little Biblical precedent for those aspects of the Peace Mission Movement which were more concerned with survival and status in the modern world. There was little scriptural sanction for some of the tenets of the "evangelical life" or aspects of the Peace Mission's economic organisation - such as Father Divine's rulings on minimum wage rates or hire purchase. Nor could either St. John or Isaiah have anticipated Father Divine's communication with his followers by 'supernatural' radio waves.

The third divergence was Father Divine's indifference to apocalyptic solutions and his assertion that the kingdom had already come. Despite his avowed control over the "Cosmic Forces" and his threat of retribution against those who opposed him, he made no threat as Revelation would have it, to cast the "fearful and unbelieving" into the "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."⁵⁵ Neither Satan, Hell, the resurrection of the dead, nor the Last Judgement figured in his millennium. What need was there for another Hell, with its fiery overlord, Satan, when, as Father Divine said, life on earth was itself a hell? The world's sinners, moreover, would not be cast into damnation, but the kingdom of heaven on earth would be achieved by love and peace; by the remorseless spread of Father Divine's word. Orthodox damnation was replaced by the

perfectionist purge of sin in the minds and the hearts of each individual. The convert would scour away lust, pride, envy, hatred, avarice, deceit, intolerance and selfishness to gain salvation. What was more, this transformation was already underway. The kingdom of God was unfolding with the first generation of believers. Advent had come already; it was only a matter of time before the triumph of the kingdom was complete.

Of course, anthropologists, historians and sociologists have recognized that a movement need not be literal in its adherence to the Judaeo-Christian tradition to be accepted as "millennial". Indeed, in a desire to find an embracing definition for a variety of salvationist religious movements, both within the outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition, they have taken the term "millennium" in a liberal rather than a literal sense. In fact, the net has been thrown so widely now that problems of definition have arisen. Norman Cohn accepts as "millennial" all those movements and sects which picture salvation as:

- "(a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity;
- (b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven;
- (c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly;
- (d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself.
- (e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, and with the help of, supernatural agencies." 56

But even this definition, which has been generally accepted, is inadequate. It is appropriate to revolutionary millennial movements such as Cohn described in medieval and early modern Europe.

But in its emphasis on imminence, it excludes movements, like the Peace Mission, which see the fulfilment of the kingdom of heaven on earth as an inevitable but slow, piecemeal process. Sylvia Thrupp, conscious of the enormous variety of salvationist movements in Europe, America and the Third World, has suggested a wider definition. She has suggested that any movement can be considered to be "millennial" that is obsessed with the conception of a perfect age to come or a perfect land to be made available.⁵⁷

Viewed in this broad perspective, aspects of the Peace Mission that seem extraordinary can be seen to have their parallels in other millennial sects and movements arising at different times and in different countries and cultural settings. If Yonina Talmon's survey of millennial movements is considered,⁵⁸ the Peace Mission's pre-occupation with racial suffering and racial redemption finds parallels, for instance, among North American Indian and Third World sects and movements. Prophets have arisen among oppressed racial and ethnic groups promising a salvation in which they, the despised, become the elect. Similarly, the Peace Mission's 'modern' quality - its appropriation of the language, symbols and technology of the rational modern world to serve in the pursuit of the kingdom of heaven on earth - finds parallels in the movements arising among native peoples caught in a culture clash with an impinging, more powerful modern society. In many instances, aspects of the modern culture have been appropriated to serve the needs of redemption - as in the Melanesian cargo cults.

The Peace Mission is similar to other millennial movements, too, in the conditions that fostered its development. Talmon found that, by and large, millennialism is the religion of the deprived: particularly the lower social and economic classes and subject minorities. Talmon found that millennialism usually arises

in conditions of severe and protracted suffering: the multiple deprivation that arises from the combined effect of poverty, low status and powerlessness. Because they are at the bottom of the ladder, Talmon noted, these people are attracted to the myth of the elect and to the fantasy of a reversal of fortunes.

But this condition alone is not sufficient to launch a millennial movement. Some disturbance of the equilibrium of a society is necessary to make such a drastic solution seem both possible and necessary. Thus a millennial movement is generated by strains in society which both raise the expectations of the deprived and yet frustrate them.

Such a situation arises, Talmon noted, in periods of transition: in primitive societies mainly during the intermediate stages of modernization; and in modern societies among people who have undergone simultaneously the experiences of migration and urbanisation. Hopes of social and economic advancement are generated: yet, at the same time, people experience not only an inevitable frustration of their ambitions, but also an acute sense of disorientation as old systems of values and patterns of behaviour break down. In all studies of millennialism, Talmon wrote, the "estrangement and loneliness that result from the breakdown of kinship and local groupings are a major theme."⁵⁹

The recourse to millennialism is born of the desire to establish a coherent system of values, a new cultural identity and a fresh sense of dignity and self-respect. Nor is this anxiety about the state of society and the need to find a coherent solution limited to the poor and disadvantaged. Often, in a highly stratified society, middle-class men and women can perceive and be victims of social strain and conflict: especially in their perception of the distinction between a society's professed ideals and their

realisation.

Further, the millennial impulse is commonly precipitated by crisis-plague, fire, drought, war or economic depression - any extraordinary happening that strengthens the conviction that the world is being shaken by powerful forces beyond man's control and that change is afoot.

It does not require a long exegesis to realise the application of Talmon's observations to the rise of the Peace Mission. But, as Talmon pointed out, the character of a millennial movement is also conditioned by the prevalent religious beliefs and the latent millennial myths of the particular society in which it arises. Thus, the Peace Mission must also be seen in its immediate, American, context.

Father Divine, himself, sidestepped all attempts to trace the development of his ideas. He said that he was ageless and "bore no record" of his past. Asked by two newsmen to explain the origin of his convictions he said:

"I might ask the materialists ... if they can fathom out the span of Heaven in its infiniteness, and measure out the grains of sand on the seashore. If they can, it may be possible for them to tell concerning the Mystery of the Presence of GOD!"

Human concepts, Father Divine implied, were too feeble to comprehend the "allness of God."⁶⁰ Similarly, he told a group of students from Shaw University (N.C.) that, as far as he was concerned, the Peace Mission had no existence in time:

"According to MY Version, we believe Life is Eternal - has always been and always will be, and from MY Angle of expression, I forbid Myself to bear any record of mortality's version ... it is written, 'GOD is without the beginning of days and without the end of Life' and those who have lost themselves in the CHRIST, why, the records of them will be lost with them." 61

Yet, Father Divine, of course, was far from being the first

person in the United States to claim supernatural authority or to promise a perfect age to come.

The study of the pursuit of the millennium in the United States is a neglected one. It is, as yet, impossible to explore the roots of the American millennial dreams; the parallels, or even the continuities of thought and intention, recruitment and experience between the various groups. Not only did the continent experience a culture clash between the indigenous tribes and the new settlers, but it also acted as a haven for many Europeans who brought with them the traditions of sectarian religious thought that had flowered into millennial movements in the 'Old World'. The idea of the 'New World' itself - America as the 'Promised Land' - which was shared by many migrants, was suffused with millennial hope; a hope that was surely reinforced as the frontier expanded westward, lands were settled and a new nation emerged. Here, too, evangelical revivalism was prominent.⁶²

Indeed, Bryan R. Wilson believes that, in contrast to the millennial movements of Europe and the Third World, American Protestant sectarians have been characterised by an exaggerated patriotism rather than class consciousness. Noting that the millennial military overtones of Europe were missing in America, he suggests that, in America, "millennial hopes had more to do with the destiny of the American people who had a self-conscious sense of themselves as engaged in a great pilgrimage than with class struggle."⁶³

This is not to say that American millennial movements had no interest in the redistribution of wealth. Indeed, in their attempts to make the millennial prophecy the basis of community life, many millennialists pursued an "apostolic life" characterised by

communal ownership of goods as well as celibacy and austere self-discipline.⁶⁴ But related to this belief in American progress, George Shepperson has drawn attention to those groups that have held "post-millennial" rather than "pre-millennial beliefs": those that see the attainment of the millennium as a slow process of improvement rather than a drastic apocalyptic change.⁶⁵

It is possible that the idea of American progress may have been an ideological support to Father Divine's special claims to be the millennial messiah. Bryan R. Wilson notes that "messiahs" who appear in the Third World rarely promise the establishment of the millennium, for they quite obviously cannot perform the supernatural feats of social transformation which are necessary. They prove their divine power, typically, by miracles of physical healing.⁶⁶

Certainly, Father Divine claimed to heal the body; but he also claimed to heal social and economic ills, transform the nation and save all mankind. It is possible that his followers' belief in American opportunity and progress made such claims credible: for, where there is faith in progress, a messiah might indeed promise, without loss of credibility, that the millennial movement could - through its own perfect example - secure the gradual, but inevitable establishment of God's reign on earth.⁶⁷

Such was the climate of millennialism in America that encouraged a messiah like Father Divine to appear. Nor was he alone. One hundred and fifty years earlier, "Mother" Ann Lee, the Shaker messiah, had led a movement and established a "Millennial Church" that, in many respects, was a precursor of the Father Divine Peace Mission.

The illiterate daughter of a Manchester blacksmith, Ann Lee emigrated to America from England with a small group of devotees in 1774. She had previously belonged to a small circle of religious

enthusiasts who, strongly influenced by French and English prophetic traditions, bore witness to the imminent fall of the Anti-Christ and the Second Coming. But, receiving a warning in a revelation that she would have to seek refuge from persecution in America, she emigrated, confident that she had been given a "divine promise" that the work of God would greatly increase and the "Millennial Church" would be established there.

Her small group settled in the woods at Watervliet (N.Y.) and a religious revival in the neighbourhood of New Lebanon in 1780 brought the first dramatic increase in Shaker converts. For two years before her death in 1784, Ann Lee worked as an itinerant preacher and acquired a reputation as a faith-healer. After her death the Shakers continued to increase in numbers and, flourishing on the fringes of the nineteenth century revivals, the Shaker Church gained a permanent place in American religion.

Ann Lee believed that Jesus Christ had become incarnate in her and she was acknowledged by her devotees as "Mother in Christ" and called "Mother Ann". Like Father Divine, she said that the kingdom of heaven on earth had come for those who wished to accept it. Like Father Divine, the tense expectation of the Apocalypse was replaced by a more transcendental perception of heaven on earth. Heaven, for the Shakers, was a state of consciousness and a state of being. The Resurrection was to occur in the heart and mind of each individual; and the purge of the inner soul and the pursuit of the perfected life was, they believed, the way of salvation. The spread of the kingdom of heaven on earth was equated with the acceptance and spread of Shakerism.

In the practical working out of their beliefs, moreover, the Shakers prefigured many of the practices of the Peace Mission Movement. They gathered into 'families' in which they followed

a rigidly moral life, dominated by Mother Ann's code of hard work, thrift, cleanliness and austerity. Great stress was laid upon the confession of sins before admission, in order to break with the old life and cleanse the Temple in which the Holy Spirit was henceforth to dwell. Celibacy was a cardinal condition of membership. Mother Ann said that sexual lust was the evil of all evils and that no soul could follow Christian regeneration while living "in the flesh" and in "acts of generation". All ties were broken with the converts' natural families and their past friends; the Shaker converts opted instead for strictly sex-segregated lives in 'families' of the redeemed.

Theirs was a communal way of life; and the shared meal table served as the symbol of their unity. In their desire to express perfect love and brotherhood they were guided toward a collective economic organisation. Individual wealth was made over to the community as an irrevocable gift, and Shaker members were expected to give freely of their labour, goods and talents for the benefit of the group. Their commitment to universal brotherhood also required that the divisions of race, colour and sex should have no place in their communities and that they should be pacifist. Formal religious worship was rejected by the Shakers and, at least in the early periods of their growth, there was little interest in doctrinal texts. They expressed their conversion in ecstatic, exhausting praise sessions.⁶⁸

The continuities of belief and practice between the Shakers and the Peace Mission are self-evident. In their concept of the kingdom of heaven on earth; in their version of the perfected life; in the practical affairs of their 'families'; and the charismatic quality of their leadership the two movements are remarkably alike. Indeed, the Shakers were one of the few groups that Father Divine

acknowledged as understanding the truth of God's message to mankind.⁶⁹

The similarities reveal Father Divine as part of a deep-rooted millennial tradition; and yet, this does not account for all the particular qualities of the Peace Mission's millennialism or Father Divine's projection of himself as the messiah. The Peace Mission was far from being a carbon copy of the early Shaker Church; some notable differences of idea and style divided them.

There was a fearful quality to Shaker belief that was absent in the Peace Mission. The condemnation of human love and the indignation over the 'life of the flesh' was especially harsh in Shaker belief and Ann Lee's call to confession and conversion was grimly doom-laden. An insistent theme of her teaching was "darkness" and she liked to relate a revelation that she had experienced in which all the dead - including her own friends and relatives from the past - paraded before her; all doomed to everlasting darkness and obscurity. She played on the guilt of postulents and allowed corporal punishment to be used to strengthen the resolve of wavering converts. Persistent warnings and summons to repent drove individuals to confession - made directly and privately to the Shaker "elders" as the church became more organized.⁷⁰

The same rigour appeared in the Shaker attitude toward ecstatic worship. In the earliest period of Shaker history, their praise sessions were highly exuberant and their dance frenzied and individualistic. But as soon as the Shakers began to consolidate in the late eighteenth century, the spontaneity began to be regarded as "promiscuous", and, in an attempt to control what were seen as mortifying convulsions and emotional excesses, a "voluntary dance" was set out as a ritually acceptable alternative.⁷¹

How different was the joyful, sensual, collective exuberance

that characterised the Peace Mission's banquet meetings. Ecstatic worship was unequivocally accepted here as a gift of the Spirit. Similarly, confession was not treated as an awful, lonely, guilty experience. If anything, it was a triumphant occasion - virtually a theatrical act in which the convert shared his or her experience with fellow converts and elaborated, even exaggerated, the sins of the past to emphasise the supreme heights of salvation. If Mother Ann's teaching and style of leadership was dominated by "darkness"; Father Divine's was one of light and joy. It was a difference that derived from the tradition of ecstatic worship among blacks that went back to the black church in slavery. It is also to the black church, obviously, that one must look for that other special feature of the Peace Mission - the acceptance of the idea of a black God.

But it is not only the black experience which separates Mother Ann Lee from Father Divine. For there were none of the 'modern' elements, characteristic of the Peace Mission, in the Shaker Church. These arose only with the impact of a literate, scientific urban culture upon a rural world of 'folk' wisdom and religious faith. So, it is to the Protestant tradition as it emerged among blacks in America and to the break up of the black Southern rural culture and church on urban migration that one must look for the basis of the doctrines and patterns of worship that made Father Divine's millennialism unique.

Christianity came to the slaves largely through the agency of itinerant, Non-conformist preachers who evangelised to black and white alike in the slave states during the revivalist fervour of

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Baptist preachers were the most influential. They used everyday language in their sermons, enlisted blacks as preachers and assistants and encouraged a display of ecstasy as proof of the convert's faith. By the mid-nineteenth century most slaves who professed Christianity were Baptist and a significant minority were Methodist.⁷²

The preachers taught that man was inherently sinful but that God was forgiving: if man battled against sin on earth he would be rewarded with a life in paradise after death. God was an all-powerful, ever-present protector, who could be contacted directly for help and consolation when times were hard. He was familiar and accessible; He understood man's difficulties; He rewarded his strivings and He was compassionate and just. But it was for man to make his own life on earth and for God to be his final judge.⁷³

Until recently, it was largely agreed that the slaves accepted this doctrine virtually unchanged. But, recently, Lawrence W. Levine and Eugene D. Genovese have argued that the slaves, in making Christianity their own, departed from the Christian message of the evangelists and invested it with private meanings, some of them deriving from their African background and others pertaining to their present bondage.

According to Levine, the slaves, like their African forebears, drew no line between the sacred and the secular. Theirs was a sacred world view - not in the sense that they rejected the present world, but that they imbued life on earth with all the elements of the divine. Their religion, therefore, was inextricably bound up with their African past, their status as slaves and their hopes for the future.

The Spirituals, Levine says, capture the essence of slave consciousness and reveal their main assumptions. The most

persistent image in the Spirituals, he contends, is that of the slaves as God's Chosen People. Not only did the slaves believe that they were chosen by God, Levine argues, but there is evidence that they believed that, on the Day of Judgement, scores would be settled and those who had oppressed them on earth would be denied salvation.

The slaves' concept of salvation, Levine says, was so vivid and immediate that a thin dividing line was all that stood between their present suffering and future redemption. So confident were they of this salvation, Levine writes, that they spent little time singing of the horrors of Hell or damnation. Their religious songs were devoid of feelings of depravity and unworthiness. They were, instead, imbued with a sense of change, transcendence, ultimate justice and personal worth - confidence that contemporary power relationships were not immutable; confidence in the possibilities of instantaneous change through Christ; confidence in the rewards of persistence and confidence in justice and the prospect of the future.

According to Levine, the slaves selected for their songs those parts of the Bible that were especially pertinent to their situation in bondage, stressing those Biblical heroes who were all delivered in this world: Joshua, Daniel, David, Jonah, Moses and Noah. The sacred world of the slaves, Levine argues, "was able to fuse the precedents of the past, the conditions of the present, and the promise of the future into one connected reality." While slave religion had no political dimension, it was dominated by the idea of deliverance from the slave's this-worldly state.⁷⁴

Eugene D. Genovese, in Roll, Jordan Roll, pursues the same idea. He acknowledges, at some length, the rarity of prophets and the virtual absence of a prophetic tradition directed to this-worldly change among the slaves. He argues, contrary to Levine, that the idea of blacks as the Chosen People was not potent enough among the

slaves to feed millennialism and that slavery was too stable a society to sustain such a movement. But he is reluctant to leave the question there. He makes out a case for slave religion as a form of proto-nationalism that was quasi-millennial in character. While slave religion was not concerned with revolutionary defiance, in the political sense, he argues, it was shaped by and pertinent to the situation of blacks as slaves.

Like Levine, Genovese argues that the slaves chose Biblical heroes who were relevant to their own trials in bondage. He claims moreover, that the slaves forged a faith that was geared to survival, dignity, self-respect and group solidarity: to their this-worldly needs. Their concept of "sin", he argues, was not the orthodox one, but one that was more concerned with survival in bondage - "sin" referred principally to those offences against one's fellow slaves that deprived them of the power to transcend the assaults of oppression. Equally, their idea of "heaven", he claims, was not simply the orthodox Christian one. At any particular moment, it could mean any of several things depending on the slaves' situation and aspirations: it could refer to Africa; to a life beyond this life; to anywhere where the slaves could be free; and to an undefined state in which the slaves could love one another without fear. Black religion in slavery, Genovese argues, was a religion of spiritual resistance to earthly oppression that accepted the limits of the politically possible.⁷⁵

In some respects, Genovese and Levine are undoubtedly correct. The slaves did take the gospel as preached to them by the evangelists and shaped it to fit their needs. They did relate the Christian message to their position in bondage and looked to God for justice, release and recognition. In the Spirituals they sang of life's troubles and discouragements, "O Brethren / my way / my

way's cloudy / my way". They also sang that God could be relied on for comfort and they drew on the Bible for reassurance: "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel? / He delivered Daniel f'om de lion's den / Jonah f'om de belly of de whale an' de Hebrew Chillun f'om de fiery furnace / an' why not every man". They found in the Gospel a great source of strength and a promise of being loved and protected.⁷⁶

The slaves made Christianity their own in several special ways too. Using the yardstick of common humanity and the Christian gospel, blacks judged the hypocrisy and behaviour of the whites around them. They criticised the preaching organised for them by the masters which was sometimes motivated more by a desire to keep the slaves in their place rather than offer them the freedom of the gospel. They asserted their right to worship God as they sought fit; and despite white attempts to control religion among the slaves, Christianity flourished among them in informal and independent "hush arbor" communions of converts.⁷⁷

They placed their trust in their own spiritual contact with God and they took as their preachers men, who, with scarcely more than a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible, claimed, instead, the "gift of the Spirit". Personal charisma and a belief in their contact with God gave these untrained preachers considerable spiritual authority among the slaves. In fact, as the slaves' interest in Christianity deepened and flourished, some came to believe that their religion was more active and heart-felt than the dry faith of those white preachers who, conducting services for the slaves under the master's surveillance, all too often belaboured texts on the slaves' Christian duty to their masters to be patient, submissive and obedient. To the slaves, religion was meaningless that spoke only of obedience. "Dat ole white preaching wasn't nothing," said one ex-slave, "de white preachers used to talk wid their tongues widdout sayin'

nothin'. But Jesus tol' us slaves to talk wid our hearts."⁷⁸

Ecstatic worship was the visible sign of God's presence: and its joyous spontaneity and collective sensitivity, deriving, perhaps, from African patterns of worship, were in marked contrast to the individualistic, frantic, seizures of white worshippers, caught up in revivalist fervour, who were often frankly admiring, even envious of black worship. An ex-slave spoke of his youth on a "god-fearing plantation" where black worship was encouraged:

"God saw our need and came to us. I used to wonder what made people shout, but now I don't. There is a joy on the inside and it wells up so strong that we can't keep still. It is fire in the bones. Anytime that fire touches a man, he will jump." ⁷⁹

With such a pride in their separateness and spirituality, it was possible for the suffering slaves to come close to claiming for themselves a special relationship with God. Exaggerating the value Non-conformist religion placed on patience and forbearance, some held that they were closer to God because of the extreme burden of oppression that they carried in His name.⁸⁰

Yet to say that the slaves' Christianity was exclusively pre-occupied with their status as slaves is to slight much of their faith and to be blind to much of the evidence. This was but an aspect of their faith. There is much evidence, not the least of it in the Spirituals that, in the main, the slaves held orthodox, Christian beliefs.

The Spirituals were far more than a compendium of Biblical heroes whose struggles symbolised the slaves' earthly status. Harold Courlander has described them as a folk version of the Bible. The slaves made dramatic use of all the main events and personages of both the Old and New Testaments so that Adam and Eve provided inspiration for the songmakers as well as those more 'relevant'

heroes - Moses, Daniel and the Children of Israel. Courlander found, too, that the Spirituals included a large number of quite orthodox Christian concepts of faith, love and humility.⁸¹

The slaves' accounts of their conversion experiences, despite the evidence of African influence, also dramatically demonstrate the quality of their belief. Like their white Methodist and Baptist brethren, the slaves were preoccupied with sin in the conventional sense of the word. To be properly converted, they felt that they must experience a dramatic conviction of that sin and be "born again." Slaves told how they were seized by the Spirit, "struck dead", received God's promise of forgiveness through the intercession of Jesus and were raised to a new life.⁸²

Nor was their view of heaven quite as Genovese would have us believe. Heaven was, quite definitely, an other-worldly resting place, reached by the faithful, through the grace of God, after death. Status on earth as a slave did not give an automatic right of admission. Heaven was reserved for those who had renounced sin and looked to their souls during their life on earth. The Spirituals advised the converts to turn their backs on sin and, "Mind our brother how you walk de cross / Yo' foot might slip - an' yo' soul get-a lost." Then, at death, when the faithful laid down their "heavy loads", they might slip on their "robes" and "starry crowns" at "home" in heaven. They might sit down beside the "Lamb", Lord Jesus, reunited with loved ones gone before.⁸³

Such a heaven was subversive of the white master's claims to authority in that it promised a place where the slaves would be judged on their merits rather than their race or status.⁸⁴ But it was, nevertheless, a place which most slaves, like other Christians, expected to see only after death.

The Christianity of the slaves thus deflated any pretensions

that they may have had that their spirituality and suffering gave them special favour with God. By their own choosing, admission to heaven was still conditional on the renunciation of sin. Rest, reward and liberation were still deferred - usually to death, certainly to God's own time. Thus, while blacks invested their faith with private meanings, claimed a superior spirituality, developed a distinctive form of worship, accepted charismatic authority and gained a faith that helped them to survive and resist demoralisation, theirs was a faith that was not inherently or characteristically militant or liberating. It provided no coherent philosophy of deliverance from earthly suffering. It was still, to use an unfashionable word, essentially "other-worldly". It took the initiative to change their earthly status out of the hands of the slaves and into the hands of God.

It is probable that many blacks were fully aware of the limits of their faith as a means of liberation from bondage. Such is the suggestion of the black "praying-tree" folk tales. One of them takes its theme from the contradiction between the slaves' appeal to God for deliverance and the cynical realisation that such release would come only in death.

Efan is depicted at the "praying-tree", praying for deliverance from his cruel life on earth. His prayers are overheard and reported to "Old Marster". The next night "Old Marster" climbs up in the "praying-tree" and, pretending to be God, tells Efan to return the following night to be taken up into heaven:

"Next night at eight sharp Efan was there. Old Marster is hid up in his tree, and he's letting down a rope with a loop in it. 'Efan, I'm here to carry you to heaven tonight. Just stick your head in the loop'. Efan puts his head in, and Old Marster begins to draw the rope up. And Efan starts to choke. 'Wait, Lord, you're choking me. Let me down.'"

"Old Marster" loosens the rope and Efan runs home. Hiding in his cabin Efan tells his wife "if the Lord comes and ax for me, tell him I ain't in."⁸⁵

The point of the tale is clear: no-one should be so foolish as to seek God's help in a situation over which He has no control. What use is deliverance from earthly torments if it means, perforce, release from earthly pleasures as well?

There was also the mocking refrain which accompanied folk-song verses celebrating the illicit joys of this life - like chicken stealing.

"Shout, you mourners, an' you shall be free,
Shout, you mourners, an' you shall be free,
When de good Lawd set you free." 86

The inference being that "de good Lawd" might be some time about delivering.

Thus, while Genovese and Levine are right to explore the ways in which the slaves adapted Christianity to meet their needs, the fact cannot be ignored that whatever hopes the slaves invested in it, it was bound to fail them in their most vital need - earthly deliverance. As a faith, it offered them no more promise of deliverance than that promised to all Christians.

It was only when the stable social and economic relations that characterised the rural South began to break up on migration and urbanisation, that a religion that was explicitly concerned with deliverance on this earth, as distinct from psychic survival and group cohesion, was truly possible. Certainly, black millennialism was rooted in the slave church - for it elaborated the theme of black spirituality and flourished in congregations that preserved and revitalised the practices of ecstatic worship and charismatic leadership. Nonetheless, black millennialism, when it did emerge, significantly and vehemently disassociated itself from the mainstream

of black religion - critical of it as a religion of accommodation.

Such an understanding of the quality of slave religion helps explain the black church's accommodatory stance after Emancipation. Blacks created an institutional church for themselves after slavery, but they did not create a new religion. They built on the beliefs and practices that were laid in slavery.

With Emancipation, the appeal and success of Non-conformity among the slaves was apparent as scores of small black Baptist and Methodist churches sprang up across the old Slave States. A number of independent black church organisations had been established during the slave era by Free blacks in answer to the segregation and discrimination that they faced within the nation's leading denominations. Now, with freedom, a formal black church organisation rapidly developed. The new rural congregations of the ex-slaves affiliated with the independent black denominations of their choice; and the "invisible institution" of the slaves merged with the institutional church of the Free blacks.⁸⁷

There was a division between the two traditions, however. Out of the church tradition of the Free blacks came the interest in a trained ministry and a wish to model the organisation and ritual of the black church on white denominational lines - a tradition that persisted in the more elite black churches of all denominations. While out of the "invisible institution" of the slaves came the lower-class 'folk' church of the rural South, that retained and strengthened the patterns of worship and belief forged by the slaves.⁸⁸

Although, in this 'folk' church, blacks took Baptist and Methodist denominational affiliations, the denominational lines

between them were blurred by common patterns of worship from the slave past.⁸⁹ The ecstatic fervour of the "hush arbors" became the form of praise among the ex-slaves and many of their descendants. The 'folk' church also retained its faith in charismatic leadership. With trained ministers few and far between, the believers gave their loyalty and respect to preachers who, as in slavery, claimed their authority direct from God. The sense of black religious independence and distinctiveness, born in slavery, was enhanced, too, by the reality of racial separation in worship after Emancipation and by the commanding role the church came to play in black life.

In rural areas, the church became the focus for social activity and community participation as well as the place for religious devotion.⁹⁰ The poverty of most rural settlements meant that the church could only survive as an institution through the sustained efforts of local church-goers. The provision of church buildings, alone, after Emancipation, called for enormous resourcefulness and community self-help. When James Weldon Johnson went to teach in a rural school in Georgia in 1893, he found that the school was held in the church that the congregation had built themselves. It was, he wrote:

"a rough, unpainted, board structure ... a rectangular building with sashless windows and without any attempt at architectural effect, except for a small belfry that straddled the roof at the front end, and in which there was no bell ... Within it was as crude as without. A shed at the back formed a niche for the pulpit. In front of the pulpit was a table used principally when collections were taken ... The seats were benches, originally of rough boards, but now worn smooth and shiny by long rubbing. There was no organ or place for a choir. Nor was there a choir: the singing was all congregational." 91

Congregations were obliged to pool their resources in order to support their pastors. The Brazos "preachers tales" tell of "poun'

paa'ties" where all the church members gave a pound of food each month to feed their minister. There were annual anniversary meetings, too, "so de membuhship kin help de pastuh 'long wid his duds as well as his grub."⁹²

Social and religious life merged. The regular services, group baptisms and special "speaking meetings" - where church-goers related their conversion experiences - brought together people who were scattered in small settlements around the countryside. Church dinners, following the services, became occasions for friendly contact and the exchange of news and views. Church picnics, concerts and Sunday School entertainments were laid on by the clubs and auxiliaries that grew up around the church. The church also assumed mutual aid functions, as the membership joined together to tackle the financial hardships caused by family sickness and death. In these ways, blacks looked to the church for social life, personal involvement, spiritual satisfaction, status and practical help: it served a wide range of secular as well as sacred needs.⁹³

Yet the black 'folk' church was seldom used as the place to articulate grievances and organise action to change the social and economic situation of the members. Indeed, even when preachers did speak out, as Benjamin Mays noted, local whites were apt to force their expulsion. Commonly, Mays wrote, gifts of money or perhaps land to build a church would ensure that the local black preachers "could be relied upon to convey to their Negro congregations the advice of the leading whites of the community."⁹⁴

At best, the church provided blacks, as E. Franklin Frazier noted, with a "refuge in a hostile white world."⁹⁵ Often, it counselled them against taking action for the wrongs and injustices that they suffered. Benjamin Mays wrote that, as a child, he heard the pastor of his home church plead with members of his congregation

not to try to avenge the wrongs that they suffered, but to take their burdens to the Lord in prayer:

"Especially did he do so when the racial situation was tense or when Negroes went to him for advice concerning some wrong inflicted upon them by their oppressors. During these troublesome days, the drowning of Pharoah and his host in the Red Sea, the deliverance of Daniel from the Lion's Den, and the protection given the Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace were all depicted in dramatic fashion to show that God in due time would take things in hand."

The idea had such telling effect, Mays wrote, that it kept the blacks in his community "submissive, humble and obedient. It enabled them to keep going."⁹⁶

The spiritual concerns of the black 'folk' church, moreover, were those of the slave church. Member and preacher alike remained preoccupied with the problems of sin and individual spiritual salvation. Black 'folk' religion remained a religion of the 'mourner's bench'. Throughout the "preachers tales" and conversion testimonies, culled from an older generation of black country people in the twentieth century but representing a store house of folk belief handed down over the generations, there is the image of a religion vividly concerned for man's frailty and the transitory nature of life on earth. "You know," went one "preachers tale", "de Word tell us dat de man ain't been bawn what kin live 'bove sin."

"Good Religion" consisted of the desire to confess one's sins and, by "right living", square accounts with the Lord and save one's soul from damnation. "Heabun was allus upmos' in de min's of de true chile of Gawd," one "preachers tale" explained. "Dat's what meck 'em walk wid Gawd evuh day de Lawd sen', 'caze dey wanna be in dat numbah when de Saints goes marchin' in."⁹⁷

Baptist and Methodist preacher alike dwelt on the prospect of heaven and how to reach it. It was explicitly, and often literally, pictured as an otherworldly refuge, gained after death; the reward

of all who lived a sinless life on earth. Hortense Powdermaker, in her study of the self-sustaining folk world of blacks in "Cottonville" (Miss.) in the nineteen-thirties, recorded several typical sermons expressive, in her opinion, of a long tradition of black belief. In one black Baptist church she heard the preacher speak, in fervent and dramatic cadences, of the sins of life and the glories of heaven, that could only be gained through repentance and God's mercy. At another church, the preacher implored each and everyone to do his duty to God if they sought to reach heaven with its golden streets, its pearly gates and its sweet singing angels. A Methodist minister dwelt eloquently on the opposing forces of God and the devil within each individual, reminding the congregation that the present life was but a preparation for the next; a glorious life eternal for those who lived in God's grace on earth.⁹⁸

"Good Religion" embraced all the cardinal virtues of Christianity - patience, forbearance, honesty, love, tolerance and a renunciation of secular temptations. "Good Religion", another "preachers tale" noted sagely, "ain't allus the bestest thing 'mongst de livin' but hit sho hopes out a pow'rful lots gitting into de Promus Land."⁹⁹

There were still distinctively black qualities to this belief. The faith of this 'folk' church still asserted the spiritual superiority of blacks as compared to whites. Black believers felt that for all their faults, ignorance and low status as a race, God would "stan' up to 'em and show 'em de way" because their "haa'ts was right".¹⁰⁰ Indeed, blacks extended this belief into a conviction that the Day of Judgement would see a reckoning of racial as well as individual rewards. Hortense Powdermaker recorded a sermon in "Cottonville" in which a black preacher extemporised on the respective heavenly rewards of a rich (white) woman and her pious (black) cook: God gave the rich woman an old shanty in heaven,

while the cook received a "big house very much like the one in which her former mistress used to live."¹⁰¹

But even if blacks reversed the social position of black and white in their version of paradise, this form of retribution never threatened the status quo. On the contrary it was, in the immediate situation, at least, accommodatory, since such ideas provided blacks with a way to channel resentments and discontents that they dared not release in open aggression or protest.¹⁰² Moreover, when they called upon God to give them justice and recognition, their tone was supplicatory rather than assertive. For was not God, as the white evangelists had taught them, in the image of a white man?

Some black conversion testimonies were quite explicit about the signs laid down for "figurin' out de rail convert" in the dreams and visions that were considered to be a necessary part of "getting religion". When a believer was "seekin' the Savior," one testimony advised, "if'n you dream of a black man you ain't rail converted; you haf to go back and dream again till you see a li'l white man somewhar in yo' travels." Another testimony described this vision of a woman convert:

"Ah wuz tu'k by a strand uv my hair an' shuk over hell, an' all the hair broke and Ah wuz about to fall in hell. Ah looked down and there Ah see'd a black man, and Ah know'd dat wuz de debul, and Ah said, 'Lawd, hab mussy!' And jes' as dat-ah black man wuz tryin' ter ketch me on his pitchfork, Ah see'd a littl' w'ite man and Ah know'd dat wuz Jesus and Ah sed, 'Sabe me, Lawd!' and dat li'l w'ite man tu'k and kicked dat black man in de haid and he fell back in hell and dat w'ite man tu'k me in His arms and Ah knows Ah's got de 'ligion." 103

Although such a vivid association of blackness with the devil and whiteness with God was not found in all conversion visions it was difficult for black worshippers to truly claim that God was partial or under any obligation to care for them particularly when

he was not depicted in their image.¹⁰⁴ This was the point made by another "praying tree" tale. In a version of the familiar tale in which the slave, praying for freedom, is tricked by someone pretending to be God, the trickster is, in this case, black. The praying slave cries out: "Ah decla' Gawd, Ah didn't know Yuh wuz black. Ah thought Yuh wuz a white man. If Yuh is black, Ah's gwine make Yuh gib us ouah freedom."¹⁰⁵

The 'folk' church preserved and strengthened the distinctive features of slave religion; elaborated the idea of black spirituality and extended religion's influence in social life. But, in the last analysis, it remained indifferent to the need for change in the social and economic status of its members and retained the belief that God was white and that He must be implored, rather than be expected, to intervene in worldly affairs. It was only when the stability of the rural South was disrupted at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century that this isolation of religion from secular status began to be challenged. It was challenged by a number of black sects that combined a heightened sense of themselves as the church of the poor with a fervent belief in the possibility that their members could achieve divine perfection while still on earth. Migration was ~~the~~ agent of disruption for the rural South and its folkways.

In the late nineteenth century, in an attempt to escape the stranglehold of sharecropping and worn-out land, some blacks began moving to the newly developed agricultural areas of Florida, parts of Georgia and Alabama, the Yazoo-Mississippi delta, Arkansas and Texas, hoping to raise themselves to the status of cash-renters or even farm owners. Other blacks, seeking to escape the social

conformity of rural life as well as debt penury, moved to the towns and cities of the South or became itinerant workers moving around the lumber camps and turpentine farms. Between 1900 and 1910 the black population of Atlanta (Ga.) rose 45% while the black population of Birmingham (Ala.) rose 215%.¹⁰⁶

As early as 1890 there was a discernible shift of blacks toward the Northern cities. This movement gathered force during the years before the First World War, but during the war and the nineteen-twenties this movement achieved the proportions and excitement of an exodus. Between 1910 and 1930 over one million blacks left the South, heading principally for the large metropolitan centres of the North. By 1930 60% of the Northern black population lived in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, Detroit and Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁷

This influx into the towns and cities of the South and the metropolitan centres of the North and North-east changed race relations in these cities. There was an increase in racial violence against blacks in the urban areas of the South and a spate of city segregation ordinances were passed to control the newcomers. In the North, through informal rather than formal segregation, black ghetto neighbourhoods were created. The incursion of black workers aroused the fears and suspicions of the urban, white working-class and when the end of the First World War brought competition for jobs and housing as white soldiers returned from combat, these fears and antagonisms spilled out in violence against the new black city dwellers. Race riots swept through twenty cities across the nation in the summer of 1919.¹⁰⁸

The violence was the outcome of the instability injected into race relations by the mass migrations and the circumstances of the war.¹⁰⁹ The whites, in 1919, sought to re-establish the racial order of the pre-war years. But the violence turned from pogrom to

race riot as the blacks fought back - sometimes fiercely; in almost all cases, with more than token resistance. This assertiveness, strongest in the Northern cities, became the hallmark of what contemporaries came to call the "New Negro".¹¹⁰

But issues were rarely so clear cut for the new migrant to the city. The white rioters in 1919 believed that blacks were pushing beyond the boundaries of the racial order, and the level of black retaliation confirmed that the migrants were ready to defend freedoms newly won and their right to fulfil their aspirations. Yet, in day to day affairs, migrants were less certain about how to behave and what to expect.

Coming from a rural South where racial etiquette was well-defined both in law and in custom and where blacks knew the limits of their freedom, they found themselves in the city - particularly in the North - in a far more fluid and potentially hazardous situation. In the North, blacks were free to come and go as they pleased; to sit where they liked on public transport; to eat and shop where they pleased and to escape a vast category of restrictions that held them in subordination in the South. They were not obliged to defer to whites or to observe all the petty rituals of Southern race relations. And yet - the colour line was still there. In some cases, like in residential segregation, it was all too obvious: in other cases, it was more subtle - the shops where black customers were humiliated and cheated; and corporations where it was impossible for blacks to hold other than menial jobs. To a migrant generation, coached in the ways of caution and deference but seeking the promise of equality, this was a devastating area of ambiguity. It led to a feeling, as Ralph Ellison saw it, that blacks had no stable, recognised place in American society.¹¹¹

The established black families in the cities were acutely aware of the newcomers. Many of the "Old Settlers" despised and rejected the migrants, embarrassed by their poverty, rough dress, speech and country ways; fearful that their arrival would seriously undermine the future of inter-racial adjustment. It was not only that they feared whites would blame all blacks for the ineptness and ignorance of the newcomers; but they also feared that the migrants - in their anxiety about race relations - would fall back on the Southern-style patterns of racial servility that the "Old Settlers" had deliberately avoided and gratefully escaped. The established black leadership issued urgent advice to the newcomers. Robert S. Abbott, editor of the Chicago Defender urged the newcomers to "strictly observe the laws, city ordinances and customs" and submitted a list of twenty-six "don'ts" as a guide to their conduct in public.¹¹²

There were other problems faced by the black migrants. Whether they went to the cities of the North or the South, the rural migrants found themselves in places of a size and complexity for which their previous lives left them unprepared. It was not merely the size of the city; it was the pace of life; the variety of people; the range of lifestyles, occupations, wealth and acquisitions that even the blacks held. There was adjusting to a way of work that was regulated by the time clock rather than by the land, weather and seasons. There was the surprise, and to some, shock, of settling in ghetto neighbourhoods often infamous for their clubs and night life, their vice and rackets. These were experiences met without the support and security of past social relationships. The cities were impersonal, life far more anonymous. The circle of friends and neighbours that had been part of the rural community was splintered and the migrant no longer had a secure and defined social status in an intimate world. The migrants found themselves amid a far less

conformist and far more secular society; a setting which was at once exciting, and yet, disconcerting too.

Many, of course, soon sought ways to build new circles of friends and acquaintances in the cities. In the North, clubs proliferated, drawing together migrants from the same Southern States.¹¹³ Other blacks sought out the black churches. Church membership rolls rapidly expanded and some churches were so over-taxed that they had to hold double services.¹¹⁴ Not only was there need for more church institutions to cope with the demand but, especially in the Northern cities, the migrants soon discovered that the existing black urban churches were unlike the small, congenial places to which they were accustomed.

The church in the Northern cities, as in the rural South, was still the leading community institution among blacks. It ministered not only to their religious needs but it also organised clubs and societies; educational and cultural events; and supplied relief to the orphaned and the aged. But these churches, in contrast to their Southern, rural counterparts, were more explicitly secular and their pastors held considerably more power as community spokesmen. The well-established churches were characteristically large, prosperous, sedate and status-conscious. The black elite generally restricted itself to the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist denominations and looked with disfavour upon the ecstatic worship of the black 'folk' church, which was still, to an extent, retained by the Baptists.¹¹⁵

The black church community in Manhattan, New York, before the mass migrations typified the religious preferences of its "Old Settler" generation. Religious life was dominated by eight Protestant churches, six of which had memberships of over a thousand and four of which could trace their origins back to the early

nineteenth century. Most favoured formal patterns of worship and sought to develop as prestigious institutional churches.¹¹⁶

The gulf between this type of religious life and the more intimate, informal and 'heart-felt' religion of the rural 'folk' church was such that it caused problems long before the First World War brought thousands of black newcomers to the cities. In New York City, for instance, earlier waves of black migrants, settling in downtown Manhattan, caused dissension in a number of churches as they sought to make city worship more akin to the Southern-style celebration they had left behind.

At Mount Olivet Baptist Church, for instance, during the pastorate of Reverend M.W. Gilbert, from 1904-1910, the congregation was divided by the pressure of a group of new migrant members who called for a more 'heart-felt' religion. Reverend Gilbert frowned on religious fervour and expelled all those who opposed him.¹¹⁷ The Abyssinian Baptist Church, one of the oldest black churches in Manhattan, suffered a similar schism precipitated by the arrival of the rural migrants. In 1907, its pastor, Charles S. Morris, decided to make a special appeal to the migrants' religious preferences. But the move was resisted by the older church members, the "divine aristocrats" with their "high lace collars kept correctly stiff with whale bones, their black rustling taffetta and cloth-top, high-buttoned shoes." It took a minister of the stature of Adam Clayton Powell Snr., who assumed the pastorate in 1908, to heal the split. He accommodated both the migrants' desire for an active, 'heart-felt' religion and the older members' desire for dignity and respectability by building a prestigious, institutional church which was, nevertheless, informed by warm emotionalism.¹¹⁸

Powell firmly believed in the importance of emotional expression in worship. In the stirring sermon, fervent prayer and lusty

hallelujah, he wrote, blacks could release their tensions and emerge with "more poise and a saner intention". He found in black emotionalism, moreover, a great gift. Blacks expressed, as no other Christian community could, he felt, the supreme attributes of love, meekness and sympathy. They expressed superior spirituality in the face of oppression. "The one who loves," he wrote, "is always superior to the one who hates." Thus, Powell brought to the Abyssinian Baptist Church the attributes of the 'folk' church - ecstatic worship and a faith in black spirituality.¹¹⁹

Powell believed, too, in the need for the church to crusade against what he perceived to be the vulgarities and vices of the city. He began a crusade to purge the prostitutes, gamblers and drinkers from the neighbourhood of the church. "Under the constant gospel bombardment," he wrote later, "the neighborhood began to crack. Pimps, prostitutes, keepers of dives and gambling dens were drawn to the meetings, confessed conversion and were baptized." Some remained loyal church-members, Powell recorded, but the majority "went back to wallowing in the mire because there was nowhere else to go." Powell then directed his crusade against his women parishioners who, 'corrupted' by the 'sins' of the city, smoked, drank and held raucous parties. He brought not only the sharp-edged sword of traditional religion to bear on those around him, but a newcomer's distaste for the secular life, vice and crime of the city itself.¹²⁰

Powell's attempt to provide a more informal, demonstrative, preacher-oriented religion in the city that was able to embrace the migrant's faith and viewpoint was special in its day. Ten and fifteen years later, New York City's other principal churches were no better prepared to cope with change. They were unable to accommodate the needs of the thousands of rural migrants that came North in the

First World War era. So it was elsewhere in the North; and the North, undoubtedly, repeated the experience of the black churches in Southern cities which received earlier waves of migrants.¹²¹

In the towns and cities of both regions, new black churches arose¹²² as newcomers sought a form of worship appropriate to their needs. Some of these new churches, of course, were organised by officials of the main denominations. But many were set up by the migrants themselves. They joined migrant black ministers who were shunned by the existing urban churches and they gathered around untrained lay preachers who, with the spiritual assurance so characteristic of Southern 'folk' religion, set up on their own in black districts and began to preach.

Such initiatives had long been part of black 'folk' religion. The Baptist and Methodist denominations encouraged lay participation; and since the black 'folk' preacher's authority rested mainly on his claim to have 'received the Spirit' it had been possible for members of the congregation to assert rival claims to spiritual leadership. Since the Baptist denomination also gave its church members the freedom to begin new churches without the need for formal approval, it had been possible for unusual and gifted charismatic men to lead off groups of dissatisfied believers to begin new churches of their own. Thus, in the towns and cities, the migrants simply acted in this tradition to found a host of new congregations better suited to their needs than the existing churches.¹²³

In Detroit, for example, a pastor told an investigator that he had begun his church after meeting many Southern migrants who wanted to worship in the old style. Since he had been a pastor for forty years in the South, he felt obliged to meet their request. Another deacon told the investigator a similar story. He said that he had felt out of place praying aloud in the large and

sophisticated black churches of Detroit. So he organised a church of his own, where he could feel at home.¹²⁴

Many of these new churches began in basements, private homes and abandoned stores or from street-corner preaching. The migrant preachers and their early followers had no money for church buildings and their main concern was that services should start immediately. These "storefront" churches began as neighbourhood affairs, drawing support from those living in nearby apartments and blocks. In time, the most talented preachers, who were able to build up their congregations and raise funds, acquired church properties and gained respectability as regular church leaders.¹²⁵

Bishop R.C. Lawson, for instance, a migrant from New Iberia (Lou.) began his own denomination on the streets of Harlem in 1919. He called himself the "only real Apostolic-Holy Ghost Bible Preacher" and decried the "white man's style" of religion in the black city churches, which, he said, turned away from the literal teachings of Jesus Christ. So he began to preach the "Full Gospel" to the "thugs, vicious men and debauched men and women" around 133rd Street east of Lenox Avenue. From the streets he drew a following of fifty people and he set up church in the home of one of his adherents on East 131st Street. He preached day and night, concerned, like Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Snr. before him, that the street habitues of the city were "fast drifting to a life of eternal darkness". He quickly built up his congregation to two hundred people and then acquired two houses on West 133rd Street that served as the parent church of his denomination. By 1930 this Refuge Church of Christ ranked as one of Harlem's principal churches, with nine hundred members; and the denomination boasted forty branches across the country.¹²⁶

But most of the churches that began in this way remained shabby,

poor and evanescent, announcing their existence to passers by through crudely painted signboards hanging outside. The Paradise Baptist Church at 258 West 135th Street in Harlem, for instance, was no more than a room with a row of chairs facing a platform at one end. On the platform, a piano - decorated with a clock and a vase of faded artificial flowers - stood beside a makeshift altar. Around the walls hung placards reading: "What would my church be like if all members were like me?" The service was warm and simple. The congregation of twenty-nine listened to the message of a visiting storefront preacher, encouraging him with greetings, "we're listening", "preach the Gospel", "we like good preaching," "go ahead, we're with you." After the sermon, the congregation's own pastor called on the deacons to take the collection. Two baskets were placed before the pulpit; one for the church and one for the visiting speaker. As the congregation sang, clapped and tapped, individuals took their money in a hop-skip walk to the pulpit.¹²⁷ In all these churches, the turnover of members was high, as the migrants moved from one to another in search of spiritual satisfaction.¹²⁸

Respected church leaders and black community spokesmen were usually quick to criticise these storefront congregations. Some objected to the crude fundamentalism of their "cottonfield preachers" and their noisy, boisterous services. Others feared that the storefront preachers were charlatans who preyed on the ignorance of their adherents in order to relieve them of their money; preachers, who, according to Ira De A. Reid, held services when they felt "disposed mentally and indisposed financially."¹²⁹

Some were more cautious in their estimation. The Greater New York Federation of Churches in its report on the Negro churches of Manhattan in 1930 acknowledged that while forty-eight thousand blacks

worshipped in conventional churches and halls, perhaps fifteen thousand and attended the one hundred and twenty-two "residence and storefront" churches. The Federation concluded that at least some of these storefronts were organised out of "honesty of purpose" to fill "real Christian needs."¹³⁰

The storefronts did fill a vacuum in black religious life in both the Northern and Southern cities. They were the centres of worship for many poor and lower-class blacks who sought reassurance in the intimacy, warmth and spiritual excitement of traditional black 'folk' belief. They provided a congenial place to meet people, relax, reaffirm traditional moral virtues and to worship in the active, satisfying style of the rural past.¹³¹ The "storefronts" were open when the larger institutional churches were closed for services¹³² and they offered their adherents easy and direct comfort and spiritual release.

But, for some migrants, black 'folk' religion no longer offered sufficient reassurance of God's protection against the pressures of urban life. Even the Baptist "storefronts" could not give them the experience of God's presence and comfort in sufficient intensity. They found this help, instead, in a group of sects known collectively as "sanctified" sects. These groups rejected the belief that man was condemned to sin during his life on earth. They offered their communicants instead, the reality of "sanctification": the cleansing of sin and the attainment of holy perfection in everyday life.

The idea of "sanctification" was not new, nor exclusive to blacks. John Wesley had paid special attention to the concept and "Holiness" groups had first grown up in America within white, urban

East coast Methodist circles in the eighteen-thirties. Horrified by the growing formality and 'worldliness' of urban Methodism the 'Holiness' adherents had sought to recapture the vital piety of the early revivals. In the years after the Civil War, these adherents had formed national, state and local evangelical associations which had sponsored camp meetings and numerous periodicals. With their claim that Christian perfection was available to all and easy to obtain, and with their emphasis on ecstatic worship, the evangelists had made rapid strides. Their support came from Baptists as well as Methodists and, by the eighteen-eighties, independent Holiness churches had come into being, gaining their greatest support among the rural migrants who went in search of a new life in the towns and cities of America, during the late nineteenth century.¹³³

As taught by the nineteenth century evangelists, Christian perfection or "entire sanctification", as it was known, was immediately possible because the Scriptures promised deliverance from sin to all believers. Christian perfection, the Holiness spokesmen believed, need only take as long as it took the Christian seeker to meet divine conditions. These conditions were simple and straightforward. Following conversion, the seeker was urged to surrender all 'worldly sins' - not only the sins of the flesh, but the sins of the spirit - pride, anger, envy, ambition and slander. Then, "entire sanctification" would fill the heart of the seeker in an experience of the "second blessing".¹³⁴

Doctrine was not elaborate and ritual minimal. In their worship, discipline was left to the Spirit and the vital emphasis was on 'getting the glory down' from heaven to the members of the congregation. With the "second blessing", the sanctified, newly liberated from their sins, were expected to lead circumspect lives that showed forth their saved condition.¹³⁵

The first black Holiness groups perhaps owed their existence to the excitement generated by local, white revivals in the late nineteenth century.¹³⁶ The United Holy Church, for instance, grew out of a revival at Method (N.C.) in 1886. As the revival enthusiasm spread into other North Carolina towns, two black Holiness organisations were set up: the United Holiness Convention and the Big Kahara Holiness Association. Some believers in North Carolina accepted Holiness but retained their present denominational connections. These were known as the "in church" people and their meetings were called "holy convocations". But criticism from their own churches forced these adherents out into one of the independent Holiness bodies. A meeting of all the groups was held in 1900 in Durham (N.C.) and a denomination was formed which, in 1916, adopted the name United Holy Church of America.¹³⁷

Elsewhere, Holiness beliefs spread among blacks in ways reminiscent of the manner in which new churches arose in black 'folk' religion. Popular leaders emerged who claimed that they had received divine inspiration to lead the people out of the old denominations into a new, universal church.

C.P. Jones, an ex-Baptist preacher from Selma (Ala.) said that he had received his inspiration after fasting and praying for a new faith which would make him "one of wisdom's true sons and like Abraham, 'a friend of God'." In 1894, he began his Church of Holiness (U.S.A.). The same claim to divine inspiration was made by Ethel M. Christian, the co-founder with her husband, of the Church of the Living God, Christian Workers for Fellowship of Wrightsville (Ark.). "In 1889," she said, "strange revelations began to unfold to me concerning the Bible and I denounced the sectarian religion and left the Baptist Church and have since preached an unadulterated doctrine." In fact, both C.P. Jones and Ethel M. and the Reverend

William Christian were members of a group of Holiness revivalists active in the Mississippi Valley area who only gradually withdrew from the Baptist denomination. The most active of these revivalists, C.H. Mason, founded the Church of God in Christ at Lexington (Miss.) in 1895. C.P. Jones was originally affiliated with Mason's church but broke from it in 1907 when Mason embraced the Pentecostal doctrine.¹³⁸

These black Holiness sects cared little for social activities or mutual aid work. They sheared off the secular, prosaic interests of the established black church. They exaggerated, instead, charismatic leadership and ecstatic worship and, like their white counterparts, concentrated on achieving a consummate union with God and on purifying themselves through disciplined conduct.

No sooner had blacks received the message of Holiness, however, than they were instrumental in taking it a step further. Ever since slavery blacks had interpreted ecstatic worship as a visible sign of God's presence. With their readiness to accept charismatic leadership and a deep trust in black spirituality they were soon ready to embrace the idea that sanctification carried with it the promise of the 'gifts of the Spirit' as described by Paul in I. Corinthians: speaking in tongues, prophecy, the working of miracles and healing.

The charismata were first displayed during the heightened excitement of Holiness revival meetings. Then, in 1900, the formal suggestion that speaking in tongues was a 'special gift' was made by Charles F. Parham of Bethel College, Topeka. The charismata were subsequently displayed at other revival meetings at Houston and Los Angeles at which W.J. Seymour, a black Holiness preacher and Parham's associate, taught openly that 'Spirit baptism' should be confirmed by speaking in tongues. Many healings were claimed at these meetings.¹³⁹

These "Pentecostal" beliefs quickly swept through the existing black Holiness churches and almost totally absorbed them. C.H. Mason's Church of God in Christ was just one such Holiness church to embrace Pentecostalism.¹⁴⁰ New, strictly Pentecostal, groups also came into existence; the idea carried by itinerant preachers into scores of small towns and cities across the South during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Pentecostalism was the culmination of Holiness belief; an innovation that drew on the special relationship with God forged in black 'folk' religion since slavery. The charismata offered an immediate demonstration of sanctification by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the emphasis on charismatic manifestations led some Pentecostals into adventist speculations. Some felt that the messages in tongues were a sign of the "latter rain", mentioned in the Book of Joel and James, that was a portent of Christ's Second Coming. Some explicitly adventist groups arose among blacks during the twentieth century; and in other Pentecostal sects, adventist ideas were used to press upon the believers the urgency of salvation and the need to experience the full blessing of the Spirit before the end of the Present Dispensation.¹⁴¹

The catalogue of rules the Pentecostal sects accepted embraced the Holiness disciplines; and some sects added new injunctions. These new rules were principally directed against divorce and adultery; reflecting these believers' acute preoccupation with the state of family life and moral discipline in the urban environment.¹⁴²

The spread of a belief in sanctification among blacks, accompanied the urbanisation of the rural poor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and made a lasting impact. In the South, in 1930, Hortense Powdermaker found one of the seven hundred branches of C.H. Mason's Church of God in Christ alongside five other churches in "Cottonville". There was little denominational rivalry among the

five churches - two Baptist, one African Methodist Episcopal, one Methodist Episcopal and one known as the "Christians". But the sanctified sect held itself aloof and took seriously its taboos against snuff, tobacco, alcohol and lying. The sect had no regular church building, but held its services in an old frame public meeting hall. While the other churches drew their membership from across the social spectrum, the Church of God in Christ recruited its "saints" entirely from the lower middle-class, the poor and uneducated. Services were ecstatic and the "saints" believed that their sanctification gave them the power to heal. "Jesus is in me", "Jesus is in me" they shouted as they swayed and testified at their meetings.¹⁴³

Small, sanctified churches also grew up among black migrants settling in Northern and Mid-Western cities at the turn of the century, and a decade and more later they proved just as attractive to the rural migrants of the World War One era. There were about twenty sanctified churches in the area where the poorest migrants lived in Chicago's black ghetto in 1930; and there were perhaps thirty congregations in Harlem by the late 'twenties.¹⁴⁴

In the North, with so many migrants concentrated in the ghettos, some sanctified sects gained an unprecedented number of adherents. The successful sects were distinguished from the host of smaller sanctified groups not by differences in belief, but by the charisma and dynamism of their leaders. Some of the most important of these leaders were, in fact, women. Although women formed the majority of members in most of the Methodist and Baptist churches and organised most of the churches' activity, the conventional denominations denied them a role as either preachers or elders. It was only in the sanctified sects, where the main qualifications for leadership were divine inspiration and a gift for healing, that women were able

to use their talents to the greatest effect.¹⁴⁵

In Chicago, for instance, Elder Lucy Smith, the founder of the Langley Street All Nations Pentecostal Church, began her career by "giving advice to folks in my neighborhood". This made her realise, she said, "how much a good talking does to many people" and she soon attracted a large following among lower-class black women.¹⁴⁶ In Philadelphia, the Mount Sinai Holy Church of America Inc. was founded by another woman, Bishop Ida Robinson. She came from Georgia and claimed her authority direct from God. Membership in her church was open to all who professed conversion; and believers were required to renounce smoking, alcohol, lying, fornication, adultery, cosmetics, hair straightening, backbiting and popular entertainments. After a rigorous period of "testing" the convert awaited the gift of sanctification which was usually in the form of an ecstatic experience, complete with speaking in tongues. Services blended testifying, singing, preaching, frequent collections and displays of charismata. All the leading "saints" accepted the possibility of spiritual healing and, once committed to this belief, they were bound, by faith, to reject both medicines and doctors.¹⁴⁷

The Northern sanctified sects grew as the Depression deepened during the nineteen-thirties. They attracted people, women in particular, away from the black Baptist and Methodist churches. These women, like those who joined Father Divine, had a heightened sense of failure and sin which was expressed in a preoccupation with sickness. They were intent on purging themselves of sin and thus conquering sickness and demoralisation. The Baptists and Methodists could provide neither a demanding enough self-discipline nor a sufficient assurance of salvation for these uncertain people. "If you want to see my folks on a Sunday night," complained one Chicago pastor in the nineteen-thirties, "go to Elder Lucy Smith's."¹⁴⁸

In Harlem, Mother Rosa A. Horn drew similarly large crowds to her Pentecostal Faith Church throughout the Depression. Born in South Carolina in 1882, Mother Horn had been a Methodist until a visit to Atlanta (Ga.) brought her into contact with a group of "Fire Baptised" believers. She was converted and believed that her faith had cured her of tuberculosis. She felt that she had been instructed by God to carry His Word to others and so she moved to Illinois and then Indiana, where she was ordained into the Pentecostal Church. She claimed the gift of healing; moved to Brooklyn (N.Y.) in 1926 and began revivals in Harlem in 1930. Her "Temple of All Nations" in a hall above stores at 392-400 Lenox Avenue provided seating for fifteen hundred people, but, with the aid of broadcasting she usually drew crowds of three thousand by the mid-'thirties.¹⁴⁹ The daily services were noisy and exuberant. Like Father Divine, Mother Horn encouraged free expression. "We want sincerity," she said, "we want you to let go ... and cut loose" and her adherents sang, clapped, prayed, testified and ran freely among the crowds in ecstasy.¹⁵⁰ Harlem's "Mother of the Blues", "Madame Sister Rainey", was one of Mother Horn's assistants and, as an example of a life turned away from 'worldly ways', "Ma" Rainey sang at the meetings - not blues, but songs "in praise of the Lord."¹⁵¹

Sanctification selected and turned to new ends ideas that had always been part of the evangelical tradition and black 'folk' religion in particular: the overwhelming importance of sin; the need for redemption through surrender to Christ; the significance of conversion and "heart-felt" faith; and the need for a stringent code of personal morality. Like conventional black 'folk' religion the sanctified generally looked to a deliverance in heaven after death. But they made the step of claiming for their poor, neglected, uncertain and powerless adherents a living sainthood that defied

and surpassed the powers of the rich and worldly. They attributed the sense of malaise that they felt in the city to their lack of harmony with the Holy Spirit and they re-consecrated themselves to the virtues of frugality, industry and humility; shunning tobacco, alcohol, cosmetics and gambling. This sacrifice and discipline, they believed, would guarantee them the "second blessing", free them from the yoke of sin and worldliness and give them a special place in God's favour. Indeed, so potent was sanctification that some of the earliest groups, believing that all people were equal who had achieved sanctification, actually shunned racial distinctions. Black evangelists preached to whites and vice versa, and some churches were initially inter-racial.

Christ's Sanctified Church (Colored) for instance, arose from the preaching of white Holiness evangelists among the members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of West Lake (Lou.) in 1903 and was integrated until the black members withdrew in 1904. One Pentecostal sect, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, which was founded in 1914, remained inter-racial for ten years until the white members withdrew to form the Pentecostal Church Incorporated.¹⁵² There were white worshippers, too, among the followers of Ida Robinson and Mother Horn.¹⁵³

One or two of the principal sanctified sects, notably those led by Mother Horn and Elder Solomon Michaux also used their authority to launch social welfare schemes and programmes of economic co-operation during the nineteen-thirties.¹⁵⁴ But these projects derived from the size and prestige of the sects rather than from their beliefs. For the most part, the sanctified sects did not attempt to annex God to the social, economic and racial elevation of their members. They chose, rather, the assurance that they were liberated from sin and certain of God's favour.

But another group of sects, with their roots in sanctification and appealing to the same social group, did attempt to annex God to the social, economic and racial elevation of their members. This group moved beyond the ideas of the sanctified churches to make an explicitly racial claim to God's favour and to link this more closely to the matter of earthly deliverance.

It would be wrong to suggest that the idea of God's racial partiality was widely accepted among blacks. It appeared on the fringes of the sanctified sects; it arose as an element in African emigrationist enthusiasm in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and it found expression in black nationalism in the Northern ghettos. But exactly how widespread it was is impossible to say.¹⁵⁵

Sanctification, and Pentecostalism in particular, foreshadowed the development of this idea. Although sanctification drew no racial boundaries and accepted that whites had just as much access to Christian perfection as blacks, the idea of black spirituality implicit in black religion encouraged them to believe that they had more immediate access to the grace of God. It was blacks, after all, who assumed the right to lead others to an understanding of the "gifts of the Spirit" in Pentecostalism.

It was the same belief, in exaggerated form, that led a number of black sects to interpret Biblical genealogy on racial lines and to claim, on this evidence, that blacks had been singled out by God as a people of supreme importance and special destiny.

The Church of the Living God, Christian Workers for Fellowship, founded in Wrightsville (Ark.) in 1889 adopted a catechism which asserted by Biblical allusion that Christ and all the principal Biblical figures were black: the descendants of Ham:

"Q: Was Jesus a member of the black race?
A: Yes. Matt.I.
Q: How do you know?
A: Because He was in the line of Abraham and David the King.
Q: Is this assertion sufficient proof that Christ came of the black generation?
A: Yes.
Q: Why?
A: Because David said that he became like a bottle in the smoke. Ps. 119 : 83.
Q: What color was Job?
A: He was black. Job 30 : 30.
Q: What color was Jeremiah?
A: He said he was black. Jer. 8 : 21. "156

With this claim blacks broke away from the white God of conventional black religion and re-made God in their own image. As long as God was assumed to be white, His colour served as a rebuke of their own. But the belief that the major figures of the Bible were black was an assurance of God's special interest in his black children's life on earth. For the Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.), it gave new force to Christ's message that God's Kingdom would be one of peace and human brotherhood. Indeed, the sect's catechism emphasised the racial implications of this brotherhood in Christ. It said:

"Q: Should we make differences in people because they are black?
A: No: Jer. 13 : 23.
Q: Why?
A: Because it is as natural to be black as the leopard to be spotted. Jer. 13 : 23. " 157

Some sects extended the idea of Biblical blacks still further to claim that blacks were actually the original Jews: the Chosen People of God. According to "Prophet" William S. Crowdy, a cook on the Santa Fe Railroad and founder of the Church of God and Saints of Christ (Black Jews) in Portsmouth (Va.), blacks were the true descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Tracing Biblical genealogy, Crowdy held that the original Jews were black but had lost their

colour through intermixing with whites. He believed it was vital for blacks to recognize their ancestry and, accordingly, he added Jewish rituals to the sanctified practices of the sect. The "saints" accepted circumcision and adopted the Jewish calendar and observance of the Sabbath. Confident that they were God's Chosen People these "Black Jews" bought one thousand acres of land in Nansemond County, Virginia and founded "Belleville" - a model community of 'saints on earth.' They tilled the land in common and received shares of basic goods from a central commissary. They began a number of small industries too, and built homes for the aged and the orphaned. Their faith became the basis for a total change in their lives.¹⁵⁸

The belief that blacks had a special relationship with God appeared sporadically elsewhere across the South. In 1889, for instance, a man (described as white or near white) appeared in the countryside south of Savannah, Georgia. He claimed to be Christ come to usher in the New Jerusalem in forty days' time. Blacks deserted the sawmills, turpentine stills and cotton fields to join the "Wilderness Worshipers". They gathered to pray in the millennium and abandoned their worldly goods to live in common. When both the "messiah" and his successor (a local attorney hired to defend him but converted to his message) were incarcerated in an asylum, leadership of the Worshipers was assumed by a black fieldworker, Shadrach Walthour. He took as his title "King Solomon", after one of the Biblical figures believed to be black in the race genealogies, and then announced that blacks were the Chosen of God:

"Where will the children of the Wilderness go when they die?' he asked, beginning a sort of catechism.

'To Heaven!' his subjects cried in one voice.

'What do the mockers turn to?'

'To 'gators, then to cooters, then to snakes, then to dogs, then to birds, then to fish, and then they come back to the people without color!'" 159

The enthusiasm for African emigration that swept through and disrupted impoverished black communities across the rural South from the eighteen-nineties to the nineteen-tens provided yet another stimulus for the development of Chosen People beliefs. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the most ardent advocates of African emigration, held that a black exodus to Africa was part of God's grand design for the race. In 1895, he shocked many of his fellow leading black churchmen by declaring his belief that God was black. Turner had come to this belief from an academic point of view, convinced that there was no hope for the dignity and progress of any race that "did not believe they looked like God."¹⁶⁰ Yet the idea struck a responsive chord among lower-class blacks caught up in "Africa fever". Africa had special religious associations for blacks. The "Ethiopia" of the Bible was recognised as referring to the people of African descent both ancient and modern, and the passage in Psalm 68: "and Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" was often regarded as a promise of ultimate racial redemption.¹⁶¹ With the excitement of African emigration and with Africa pictured as a land of promise, blacks assumed that God was directing their deliverance into an African Canaan.

The religious fervour of one party of emigrants stranded in New York City in 1892 was noted by a reporter from the New York Sun. As the party waited for help to arrive, an older member of the group sustained their morale by assuring them that God would see them safely over to the promised land:

"' Keep a trustin.' I can't give you no bettuh advice dan dat, brudders and sisters ... We is de Lord's Chillen of Israel of de nineteenth century; dere ain't no doubt at all about dat ... If we can't get to Liberia any oder way, de Lord he'll jest open up a parf through the 'Lantic Ocean jes' as he did for dem oder Chillen through the Red Sea.'" 162

More than twenty years later the same ideas were still in currency. When "Chief" Alfred Charles Sam appeared among the blacks of Okfuskee County (Okla.) in 1913, claiming to be a Gold Coast chief and selling stock in a mercantile and migration corporation, he was widely accepted as a "man sent by God" to deliver blacks to an African Canaan.¹⁶³ A journalist noted the religious atmosphere on board the boat taking the first party to the Gold Coast in 1914. No smoking or drinking was allowed, and the migrants rose at three each morning for prayer. On each Thursday they fasted in sympathy with those prospective migrants left behind in tent camps in Weleetka and Galveston. A Baptist preacher on board conducted the services. He explained that as soon as they reached Africa he would start a new church; it would be called, in sanctified style, the Church of God. Back in the camp at Weleetka, nightly revivals were held, and when five hundred migrants moved out to join the boat at Galveston (Tex.), two glee clubs sang in farewell:

"Old Noah once he built de ark,
Dar's one more ribber for to cross
He patched it up wid hick'ry bark
Dar's one more ribber for to cross." 164

During this period of change and expectation two other black sanctified sects similarly linked their beliefs with Ethiopia. The House of God, the Holy Church of the Living God, The Pillar and Ground of Truth, House of Prayer for All People, organised by Bishop R.A.R. Johnson in Washington in 1914, "traced its origin to Abyssinia." Among the "twenty four principles" which were revealed to Bishop Johnson by the "inspiration of God" were the eligibility of women for the ministry, the equality of races in the church and the possibility of entire sanctification. Father E.D. Smith, the founder of Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, left the country in 1920 and "went to Addis Abbaba, Absenia, Africa, and never returned."¹⁶⁵

This web of proto-millennial ideas, which abandoned the white God of traditional 'folk' religion and reinterpreted the Biblical stories of deliverance exclusively in black terms remained, for the most part, on the fringes of black religion in the South, flourishing in highly idiosyncratic and incoherent ways. Yet the theme persisted that a special relationship existed between God and the race and that this was a guarantee of some form of earthly deliverance.¹⁶⁶ There was to be, too, a significant resurgence of these ideas with the mass migrations of blacks to the Northern cities in the twentieth century.

Evidence of this came with the publication of a number of popular books and cheap pamphlets which revived the belief that God, Jesus and the leading figures of the Bible were black. W.L. Hunter's, Jesus Christ had Negro blood in his veins: the wonder of the twentieth century, published in Brooklyn (N.Y.) had gone through nine editions by 1913. Tracing Biblical genealogy back to Ham, Hunter set out to prove that the Canaanites were black and that, through intermarriage, black blood had entered the veins of all the kings and prophets of the tribe of Judah "even to the veins of Jesus Christ, the greatest of all the kings."¹⁶⁷ In Chicago, writer and public speaker, Elder James Webb, popularised similar ideas. In a fifteen page, twenty-five cent pamphlet, A Black man will be the coming universal king proven by Biblical history, published in 1919, Webb argued that Jesus Christ was "a black man with woolly hair."¹⁶⁸ The same argument was sustained in pamphlets, newspaper articles and public speeches by Joel A. Rogers, the tireless writer and advocate of "race history" whose studies provided the material for a generation of black nationalist publicists.¹⁶⁹ The claims were still in currency in 1949 when Ross D. Brown, a Chicago street speaker during the nineteen-tens and later founder of the Truth Seekers Temple in that city, published his Afro American world almanac. In a section headed "A

lesson in black" Brown listed:

"BLACK - Black was the color of the angels of the early Ethiopians.

BLACK - Ethiopians painted their devils white.

BLACK - Madonna was the mother of Jesus Christ...

BLACK - Was the color of Jesus Christ, if he was an original Jew...

BLACK - People are black, because they are sun-soaked, and not Cain cursed." 170

The writers' religious commitments were different, but each used the Biblical blacks idea as the basis of their demand for a radical change in the status of blacks in everyday life. Each saw this knowledge as a powerful blow to the claims of white supremacists.

Ross D. Brown wrote:

"I wonder if the man who advocates white supremacy knows that ADAM was not white, NOAH was not white, JESUS CHRIST was not white, MARTHA was not white, DAVID was not white, PAUL was not white, SOLOMON was not white." 171

For W.L. Hunter, the evidence of the Scriptures convinced him that, as far back as Abraham, black and white people had intermixed. This intermixing, moreover, had been fully tolerated. The black apostles, Simon and Lucius, had preached to whites and there had been "no tumult over it"; a person's land of origin had been more important than his or her race. Everyone had recognized that "there was only one race that Jesus came to save and that was the human race."

In Hunter's opinion, the Bible proved that "colorphobia" was a modern phenomenon and, he advised, "when every man's hand seems to be against us, trying to crush us and sink us into oblivion" the Bible was always there to prove that "the negro has been honored by the greatest men on earth and by his God."¹⁷²

On the strength of these beliefs, each writer demanded respect and equality for blacks and the creation of a new society guided by the spirit of decency, progress and human brotherhood. Hunter and Webb went the furthest to prophecy God's hand in the salvation of

the race and the creation of a new order. "Whoever God blesses," Hunter wrote, "no man or nation can curse."¹⁷³ Elder Webb promised that a Black Messiah would be the agent of change:

"All races will get a square deal. His ruling will be safer than Democracy. For there will be no discrimination and segregation under His Dominion. It will simply be everlasting peace on earth and goodwill toward all men. Acts 17 : 26,27."

The black race, Webb wrote, "will have the greatest hope for Him" because of the oppression that the race suffered. But salvation was not for black people alone:

"I thank God, Jesus, will lead all of his children (regardless of blood) to the same spiritual table and the same drink, the water of life. (Rev. 17 : 17)."¹⁷⁴

These writers were engaged in the same search for a new era of peace and brotherhood that began with the 'folk' church and was revitalised in the sanctified sects. Embodied in the claim of black ancestry for Biblical figures was the belief that blacks were a special people in the eyes of God and that they would - in one way or another - not only gain deliverance from their trials but be the instrument of God's greater redemption. This belief always carried nationalistic implications - as was evident in its appearance in African emigration enthusiasm - but it was not until the pressures and experiences of urban ghetto life began to undercut the adequacy of the black folk culture for some migrant blacks, that it became the basis for a more virulent chauvinism.

Beginning about 1915 a number of small groups of lower-class migrants styling themselves "Black Jews" appeared in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New York City and other smaller North-eastern centres.¹⁷⁵ These sects were distinguished from their fore-runners not only by their explicitly millennial outlook and their exclusive racial

solutions, but also by their greater sensitivity to social and economic questions and the vehemence with which they rejected the folk culture of the rural South.

They began, it would seem, as sanctified churches. This is suggested not only by the names of their churches - the Church of God and the Congregation of the Living God - but by certain of their beliefs and practices.¹⁷⁶ Their most abiding link with the sanctified churches was their emphasis on the evangelical disciplines, particularly those concerned with the pressures of urban life - the abjuration of movie-going, gambling, profanity and dressing in a sexually provocative fashion. They also shared the emphasis of the sanctified churches on a disciplined and orderly family life and a hostility to the ghetto underworld.¹⁷⁷ Yet they had moved far away from their sanctified origins. They used the idea of the Biblical blacks to elaborate a spurious Judaic ancestry and a promise of deliverance particular to blacks alone.

"Prophet" F.S. Cherry, the leader of the Philadelphia group, was characteristic among the Black Jews. A self-educated man from the deep South, he had travelled widely as a seaman, a labourer and a railroad worker. He claimed that God had guided him to Philadelphia to found the Church of God (Black Jews) and, like others before him, he believed that Christ, Jacob and the Children of Israel were black. But he took the belief further to claim that blacks were, in fact, the original inhabitants of the earth - truly the Chosen of God.

Cherry had a complete explanation for the race's present state. Years ago, he said, blacks had sinned against God and had fallen into depravity. As God's punishment they had been doomed to enslavement and oppression at the hands of whites. All this, Cherry said, was explained in the Bible; and just as the Bible told the

story of the race's bondage and decline so it also foretold black liberation. In A.D. 2000, Cherry claimed, a Black Christ would come to restore the "Black Jews" to their original high places.¹⁷⁸ The other sects had different interpretations but basically the same beliefs.

Fleming Aytes, the author of the Teaching Black Jew, published in New York in 1927, listed the sins that had brought God's wrath down upon blacks: idolatry, adultery, lechery, lust after wealth and suspicion of God's appointed leaders. "The whole land of Israel," he wrote, "became as low as the devil, and the women became as low as dogs."¹⁷⁹ Among the Commandment Keepers, Congregation of the Living God, in Harlem, there was a remarkable preoccupation with disease, physical and mental, which was connected with the race's time in bondage and sin.¹⁸⁰

In affirmation of their original high status as the Chosen of God, the Black Jews renounced everything associated with the race's time of bondage to whites. Christianity, itself, was repudiated as the religion of the white oppressor. Christianity, Rabbi Matthew of Harlem's Commandment Keepers taught, had been used to deprive blacks of the knowledge of their exalted past and had given them "a false hope and conception of something, somewhere, where no man has ever gone and returned to tell the tale." Judaism was their true faith: the faith of God's Chosen People. "It was with Israel that God made the covenant," said Rabbi Matthew, "and it is Israel who will be resurrected when the messiah comes."¹⁸¹

Blacks were called upon to abandon everything which demeaned them and led them into an acceptance of inferiority. The Black Jews rejected the name "Negro" as a slave name imposed by whites to deprive the race of the knowledge that they were "the Children of Kings, whose history dates back to the Kingdom of Cush, and out

of whom ancient Israel was taken";¹⁸² and in affirmation of their divine status, the Black Jews rejected all derogatory names and everything popularly known as "Negro behavior": including the use of dialect, street language, exaggerated gesture, meekness, and religious excitability. There must be no "niggeritions" Rabbi Matthew taught. He told the members of his congregation that in order to receive the respect due to them, they should insist on being called Ethiopian, African or even Afro-American.¹⁸³

The Black Jews found in the Jews, moreover, not only a Biblical ancestry that made them the Chosen of God, but also a modern example of racial self-sufficiency. Even as they resented the trading of Jewish merchants in black neighbourhoods, they envied the apparent ability of the white Jews in commerce and their facility of racial co-operation. As Rabbi Matthew explained:

"... the philosophy of the Jew is to acquire wealth and to command respect. It is this religion ... which impels a Jew to walk several miles from the Bronx to the Battery to spend a dollar with another Jew ... the sooner the black man is imbued with this philosophy, the sooner will come the race's forward movement." 184

Equally, the Black Jews denigrated the race's predilection for reliance on faith - not only faith in the 'false' Christian God, but faith in the powers of folk medicine and conjure. Fleming Aytes listed among the idols that trapped blacks in sin, the idols of "good luck" and "bad luck". The latter, he said, had led blacks to "dread doing things that are perfectly harmless to them", and the search for the favour of the fates had led them to seek out "iron and roots, and animals' feet, and snakes and insects and hair and money and graveyard dirt."¹⁸⁵

The only faith the race should have, the Black Jews averred, was faith in their racial ancestry as the Chosen of God; faith in

each other; and faith in the supreme power of "knowledge". It was not "trust in God" that had preserved the "three Hebrew boys" in the fiery furnace, Rabbi Matthew said, but a special "oil of life" with which they had anointed themselves. "Do you think Daniel cried, 'Lawdy Jesus, save me' when he was thrown into the lions?" Rabbi Matthew asked his congregation.¹⁸⁶ The Black Jews elaborated, instead, an esoteric catalogue of true "knowledge" as the handbook for the race in its modern bondage.

The emphasis of these sects was on self-reliance and esoteric knowledge. Like the street speakers, they concocted a race ancestry from Biblical lore and the pseudo-history of Africa which, until then, had been largely the property of educated black spokesmen.¹⁸⁷ With a respect for learning common to people with little education, they replaced faith with an impressive but meaningless theological "science".¹⁸⁸

The Black Jews rejected not only the profane world of the city but also the world of black folk culture and the sacred perception that accompanied it. They no longer found Christianity, with its emphasis on meekness and altruism, its self-abnegation, appropriate in a society which they perceived to be desperately vicious and selfish. They no longer found black folk culture, with what they felt to be its tolerance of racial oppression, its outlook of powerless supplication, an appropriate answer to the race's modern bondage. They forged, instead - out of the Holiness disciplines; a spurious history of blacks; elaborate rituals; and esoteric 'science' - a religion concerned with racial redemption in the harsh world of the city. A religion that had no place in it for the techniques of survival from the past and no place, either, for reconciliation with whites.

The millennium was for the "Ethiopians at home and abroad and for the so-called Negroes of slave experience and for them alone," Rabbi

Matthew taught.¹⁸⁹ Fleming Aytes pictured the delights of the new era when whites would be swept away and blacks would be redeemed from their sins. Sickness, death, poverty and oppression would be replaced by a millennium of health, rest, peace and wealth for the newly sanctified Elect:

"The Messiah does take all the works of the flesh away from them, and He does not leave anything in their bodies which causes grief and sorrows, by making them sick and doing evil things to them. Therefore they will be always happy, and their life will be unto them like lovely music and a continual beautiful dream." 190

This was a religion of the self-educated in the ghetto. Its antagonism to the black folk culture, its idiosyncratic form and its antipathy to whites were the outcome of impatience with the subordinate position of blacks in urban society and a determination to cultivate patterns of behaviour and thought that were appropriate to the competitive metropolis and the new learning with which, as migrants, they came into contact.

It seems to have had but a limited appeal to the black migrant population who were reluctant to abandon their traditional patterns of worship. But another movement, whose origins were connected to those of the Black Jews and which elaborated the religion of race further, was eventually, to capture a large following among the ghetto-bred sons and daughters of the migrants. This was a movement that dispensed with the Bible totally in its search for deliverance; identified not with the Jews of the Old Testament, but with Islam; and took, as its name, Moorish Science.

The Moorish Science Temple of America was founded in Newark (N.J.) in 1913 by Timothy Drew, an expressman born in North Carolina in 1886. Drew had come into contact with some form of Oriental philosophy and from this, and his own version of African 'race history', he concluded that there were two divinely ordained races

in the world - the European and the Asiatic.¹⁹¹ He decided that blacks were, in fact, Asiatics who had been stripped of their Arabic names and the knowledge of their ancestry by their European oppressors. By calling them "Negro", "black", "Ethiopian" and "Colored", Drew argued, the Europeans had robbed the race of its power, authority, God, and every worthwhile possession. Salvation was possible on earth, he believed, once the race rediscovered its national origins and true religion: Islam.

Drew began his activities in Newark by haranguing groups of blacks on street corners, basements and empty lots. He established his first "temple", and assumed the name Noble Drew Ali, claiming that he was a prophet sent by Allah to bring the truth to the dark people of America. His teachings were published in a slim volume known as the Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple.¹⁹² From Newark the movement spread to Pittsburgh and Detroit. Then, in 1925, he opened a new "temple" on the South Side of Chicago. Other "temples" followed in Kansas City (Kan.); Lansing (Mich.); Youngstown (Ohio); and Charleston (S.C.).¹⁹³

He had come, Noble Drew Ali said, to "uplift the nation" and to lead the Moorish Americans to a new society of "love, truth, peace, freedom and justice". In his blend of Old Testament prophecy, race history and Oriental philosophy there was no need for the apocalyptic destruction of whites. The new era, Drew believed, would come once each race - Asiatic and European - recognised its own religion and ancestry. The two races would be compatible but separate in salvation. In order to bring the Moorish Americans to a correct understanding of this law, Drew insisted that they should worship in Islamic style, renounce cosmetics, hair straightening, secular entertainments, smoking, alcohol and sexual impropriety as well as all names for the race other than "Moorish American."¹⁹⁴

The Moorish Science Temple was clearly a development of the Black Jewish impulse toward self-reliance and racial redemption. It shared the same origins¹⁹⁵ and relied on the same disciplines. But its movement further away from reliance on the Bible as a source of "race history" showed the greater influence of secular "race history". Like the Black Jews, the Moorish Science Temple relied less on faith than on "knowledge" of ancestry and secret rituals. But it continued to emphasise the puritan discipline and the value of a respectable and ordered family life.

In the 'twenties, the Moorish Science Temple was rocked by schisms. Its following in Harlem was small. Of greatest significance was the establishment in 1934, in Detroit, of the Nation of Islam by W.D. Fard who, from the evidence of his teachings, had been greatly influenced by the Moorish Americans. It was this sect's virulent and puritanical religion of race that was to win the allegiance of many ghetto-bred young people, twenty years later.¹⁹⁶

In all these searches for supernatural help, ranging from the sanctified sects to the various forms of race religion, there was a common thread. In each, the initiative was taken by men and women attempting to cope with major changes in their lives and expectations. The growth of the sects came at times when the stable social order was under pressure and when individuals were faced with new hopes as well as difficult choices and problems. The sects drew their followers from broadly the same social class - the poor and uneducated: from those most vulnerable at times of change and most accustomed to looking toward sacred rather than secular sources for help in their lives. Each group was prepared to accept a universal religious explanation for their situation and a spiritual solution to their problems.

Despite the secular emphases of the Black Jews and the Moorish

Science Temple, these were still consciously religious quests. The adherents grouped themselves into congregations with preachers and ministers. Yet there was one other offshoot of sanctification which finally dispensed with religion as an organised activity divorced from the daily life of the believer. This was the idea of the "indwelling God". There was no need for buildings, ritual costume or special religious dignitaries according to this belief, for each individual had the potential to achieve perfection. The kingdom of heaven on earth was simply a matter of will and self discipline.

Since the idea of the "indwelling God" was a belief carried by an unknown number of itinerant black preachers, it is hard to trace its spread and appeal with any accuracy. There are only snatches of information to document its existence and persistence. But there is some evidence to suggest that the idea was brought to New York City during the nineteen-tens, and popularised on the streets by travelling preachers during the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties.

The credit for introducing the idea to blacks in New York City was claimed by one Reverend John A. Hickerson who came to the city in 1912. Once a clergyman in Alexandria (Va.) Hickerson had left the conventional black church while still in the South and had "dabbled" in Pentecostalism. He said that he had first learnt of the "indwelling God" in Baltimore (Md.) from Samuel Morris, an itinerant lay preacher from Allegheny (Pa.). Morris based his ideas on the passage in 3rd Corinthians: "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God and that the Temple of God dwelleth in you." Hickerson stayed at Morris's mission for four years and then moved to New York City where he opened a storefront church, "The Church of the Living God", on 41st Street in the "Tenderloin" district. In this church he taught his

own combination of Baptist fundamentalism and the "idea of Daniel 2 : 44" - that the "Kingdom of God must be set up on earth to stand forever."¹⁹⁷ Among his congregation was a travelling peddler cum street preacher, Joe Worlds, popularly known as "Steamboat Bill". "Steamboat" taught on the streets that "God was in the people" and, after being ordained by Hickerson, travelled around the South and West before returning to Harlem to preach.¹⁹⁸ According to Hickerson, "Steamboat Bill" was just one of a number of men known as "Eternal Life Fathers" who preached on Harlem's sidewalks during the nineteen-twenties. There was "Father Jehovah", "Father Obey Hailey" and "Gideon" who all promised everlasting life to those who recognized and lived by the spirit of the "indwelling God".¹⁹⁹

Then, in the late nineteen-twenties, Elder Clayborn Martin, the "Barefoot Prophet" brought his own version of man's divinity to Harlem. Born in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Clayborn Martin had lived for most of his life in the South, working as an itinerant Baptist missionary. He moved North, probably during the wartime migrations, and became an elder in a sanctified church, "The Church of God, Pillar, Ground of Truth, House of Prayer for All People, Holy and Sanctified" in Newark (N.J.). Then, in 1919, he said, he was made a prophet by God and told to go barefoot and preach on the streets. In his seventies when he came to Harlem, the "Barefoot Prophet" was an impressive figure. Dressed in long, flowing robes, he walked the streets of Harlem, summer and winter, stopping people to check if they were "alright with God." He was well-known and respected in the poolrooms and saloons where he went to preach and he was a familiar sight on Seventh Avenue's "Lafayette Corner", where he paused each day to pray. "Barefoot and bareheaded, looking for all the world like an Old Testament patriarch," wrote a journalist, "stands one who needs no soapbox, for his gray mane

towers above those who gather around him."²⁰⁰

With quick, dramatic gesture and a host of folk and Biblical allusions, the Barefoot Prophet told his audiences the truth of their divinity. "Every man is the dwelling place of the Almighty," he explained. "He is not in the buildings we call the churches today" but within each one of them:

"O Lord, thou God of the living and not of the dead, thou God who art in each one of us and in all creation, look now on these people, who are unknowing and misguided. O Lord, look not on them in wrath ... but with compassion Lord. Lord, they been fooled. Lord, they don't know. They been robbed, Lord, an' cheated, an' deceived, an' the truth has been kept from them by wicked men." 201

He urged all the "wandering children" to recognize the truth and cut themselves off from the sins of the world:

"Our world is like a Fox, brethren, like a fox that catches his foot in the trap of the Devil. Fox knows, brethren, that if he strays long enough in the Devil's trap, the Devil will kill him with a long stick. So the Fox gnaws off his foot, and leaves the foot for the Devil and goes home on three legs and praises God he's getting home at all. Now, brethren, you see what I mean. We get sin and we get sinners, and better than the sinners should lead us into the Devil's traps we must cut them off. Sin ain't no part of God, my brethren, but we righteous are part of God Himself. We got to save all we can, and let the rest go." 202

Each evening, the "Barefoot Prophet" received callers in a room at 217 West 134th Street where he offered confession and prayer for spiritual illnesses and annointment with oils in the name of God for physical ailments. "I will make you Ruler over the Nations. I will lift up my people and exalt myself through you," he would begin, "you are the temples. Everyman is the dwelling place of the Almighty." This knowledge, he promised, would bring them peace, contentment and freedom from fear.²⁰³ It would also heal, he said, the "division of the Divine body" caused by race prejudice. "Brothers," the "Barefoot Prophet" said to a group of white reporters, "I make you welcome in

the name of God who is in us and about us. If I didn't love you as well as I do my own race, the brethren of my own color, I should be guilty of the sin of division, of breaking God's harmony and peace."²⁰⁴

It was said that small children followed the "Barefoot Prophet" in order to touch his robe for good luck; that worried parents would seek his advice about their wayward children; that hustlers and numbers runners treated him with respect and "unsmilingly accepted his benediction." When he died in 1937, hundreds of people in Harlem gave dimes and nickels to pay for his burial and fifteen thousand paid their respects at the funeral in Harlem's Metropolitan Baptist Church.²⁰⁵

The "Barefoot Prophet's" popularity, the tradition of street preaching and the host of religious sects suggests that in New York City, and in other Northern and Western cities, blacks had access to a wide range of unconventional religious beliefs and practices during the nineteen-tens and 'twenties. All these groups and individuals were in search of help and protection and God's support for a change in their racial status. The Christianity of the conventional black church, both 'folk' and formal, was under attack as inadequate, even detrimental to black security and self-respect. The Garvey movement, which drew mass black support for its programme of race redemption during the late 'teens and 'twenties, briefly provided a focus for many of these spiritual quests.

Garvey was a Catholic by faith and a stalwart defender of Christianity. He wrote in the Negro World:

"Let us not deny the existence of God; let us not deny the divinity of Christ. We have much more to do than to travel in that dangerous direction; because if there is a God and He is responsible for life and for creation and for the existence

of all things, we would be taking a dangerous chance and running a great risk in denying Him." 206

But he attacked the use of Christianity as a tool in the hands of whites to secure the subjugation of blacks, and he made an appeal to the principles of early Christianity in order to call the race to seek its own salvation.

God, Garvey taught, created all men equal and gave all mankind the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This "greatest of all moral ethical truths," he said, had been "torn to pieces like all good things" over the centuries. In the hands of the white race, Christianity had been used as a weapon against blacks both in Africa and the Americas. Blacks had been told that they were inferior and that their subjugation was the will of God to be patiently endured. But the time had come, Garvey said, to clear away these "old myths":²⁰⁷

"Men and women, God made us as his perfect creation. He made no mistake when he made us black with kinky hair. It was Divine Purpose for us to live in our natural habitat - the tropical zones of the earth. Forget the white man's banter that He made us in the night and forgot to paint us white."

That blacks were enslaved and brought to America was not part of any Divine Plan, he said, but "just a natural process of the strong enslaving the weak." Now was the time for blacks to repudiate the "thinking of the Master Race" and to secure their own salvation.²⁰⁸ God, he warned, would not do this work for them. But He had given them the intellect and ability to achieve everything that they wanted on earth. Blacks must recognize their power and responsibility as God's perfect creations and seek their own redemption by courage and forthright action:

"Remember that you are men, that God created you lords of this creation. Lift up yourselves, men; take yourselves out of the mire, and hitch your

hopes to the stars ... Let no man pull you down,
let no man destroy your ambition, because man is
but your companion, your equal; man is your
brother; he is not your lord; he is not your
sovereign master." 209

Garvey called on his chaplain-general, an Episcopalian minister, Reverend G. Alexander McGuire, to found a new black man's church to counter the hypocrisy and propaganda of white Christianity and lead the race to redemption. On September 28 1921, in a ceremony conducted by dignitaries of the Greek Orthodox Church, McGuire was ordained a bishop and consecrated as the head of the new African Orthodox Church.²¹⁰

From the first, McGuire made religion serve the need for racial self-respect. Although he held that God was a spiritual being rather than a person, McGuire argued that people pictured God in a human form in their prayers. "In my mind," he said, "I had the picture of a white God. Now came the picture of a black God." Garvey urged blacks to cast God "in our own image - black" and he found in Christ's crucifixion a lynch-image of the age-old suffering of blacks:

"White men the Savior did crucify
For eyes not blue but blood of Negro tie." 211

By the time of the Fourth International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in 1924, leading members of the U.N.I.A. were openly calling on blacks to worship a Black Christ. During the opening parade through the streets of Harlem, U.N.I.A. members marched under the portrait of a black Madonna and Child. Among the subjects outlined for consideration at the convention were:

- "(1) The Deification of Jesus as a Black Man of Sorrows.
- (2) The Canonization of the Virgin Mary as a Negress.
- (3) The idealization of God as a Holy Spirit without physical form, but a Creature of... resemblance of the Black race. "

At the convention session on August 5 1924, Bishop McGuire caused a stir among white reporters by calling on blacks to name the day when they would tear down and burn all images of the white God in their homes and replace them with paintings of the Black Madonna and Christ child.²¹²

The African Orthodox Church, with its high church blend of Roman Catholic and Episcopalian ritual and liturgy, never attracted the formal allegiance of the mass of Garveyites.²¹³ There were also those who were bitterly anti-clerical in their attitudes.²¹⁴ But the U.N.I.A. was suffused, nonetheless, by a fervent religious sensibility. Prayers and hymns were a standard part of all the U.N.I.A.'s regular meetings and a popular religious enthusiasm flourished which accommodated a wide range of beliefs.

The association of race and religion stimulated within the U.N.I.A. many of the Biblical Blacks and Chosen People themes usually confined to the small sects. Garveyites studied historical texts in order to prove, to their own satisfaction, that Christ came from a tribe with swarthy skins and tightly curled hair. Others compared themselves to the Children of Israel. "We are somewhat like the Hebrews," Bishop McGuire taught, "like them we have left our native land and have no place to go."²¹⁵ Garvey was cast in the image of a Black Moses; a prophet sent by God to deliver the race from bondage. The idea received a certain encouragement from Garvey himself. He drew up a set of "meaningful hymns" based on the themes of Daniel in the lion's den and the Children of Israel in the Wilderness, for use at U.N.I.A. meetings. "When sung," wrote Amy Jacques-Garvey, the words impressed on the minds of the listeners and singers the intents and purposes of the organisation."²¹⁶ Garvey also used the Biblical reference to Ethiopia in his rhetorical appeals to the race:

"At this moment methinks I see Ethiopia stretching forth her hands unto God and methinks I see the angel of God taking up the standard of the Red, the Black and the Green, and saying, 'Men of the Negro race, Men of Ethiopia, follow me!' It falls to our lot to tear off the shackles that bind Mother Africa." 217

Indeed, the U.N.I.A. so captured the preoccupations of the race-orientated religious sects that large numbers of Black Jews joined the U.N.I.A. Six hundred Black Jews marched in a special contingent in the 1922 Convention parade, and Rabbi Arnold Ford, the leader of Harlem's Beth B'Nai Abraham Black Jews became musical director of Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the Garvey movement in New York City, and brought most of his congregation with him into the U.N.I.A.²¹⁸

The U.N.I.A.'s militancy, its glorification of blackness, its elevation of Africa as the source of civilization and its spirit of mission articulated much of what the Black Jews were seeking, and Rabbi Ford urged Garvey to adopt Judaism as the black man's religion. But Garvey rejected this counsel. Garvey hoped for an ultimate reconciliation between the races based on the acceptance of each race's rights, freedoms and achievements. Peace, love and brotherhood were his ultimate aims. "We demand of all men to do unto us as we would do unto them, in the name of justice," the Declaration of Rights of the Negro People of the World stated, "and we cheerfully accord to all men all the rights we claim herein for ourselves." On every letterhead was printed the motto: "He created of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth."²¹⁹

With this approach, the U.N.I.A. avoided the limited, apocalyptic vision of the Black Jews and accommodated a much broader spectrum of religious beliefs. Indeed, there were some for whom Garveyism became a supreme truth in itself. This outlook was encouraged, perhaps, by a decision on religion reached during the 1924 Convention. In a debate the U.N.I.A. delegates decided against

adopting Christianity as the official religion of the U.N.I.A. in deference to the black members of other world religions. As Amy Jacques-Garvey explained, they trusted that:

"... by establishing the Temple of God in each heart, and letting our every word and action be motivated from that Source, we could reach a state of inner serenity so as to enable us to establish on earth the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man - a belief which is the basis of all recognised religions."

Garveyites were invited to join the African Orthodox Church, but everyone was reminded to respect the belief that "God is everywhere, not just in the churches on Sunday." This vision was expressed in the U.N.I.A.'s motto: "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!"²²⁰

For Reverend R.R. Porter, a regular contributor to the Negro World during the 'thirties, the matter was plain: religion and politics fused in the ideas of the U.N.I.A. "To me," he wrote:

"true Garveyism is a religion, which is sane, practical, inspiring and satisfying; it is of God, hence a devout Garveyite cannot deny the existence of God, but sees God in you, I and the world. He knows God because he is part of God, and is assisting in the making of the Kingdom of God on earth. He respects all religious beliefs, yet he holds fast to what he believes is best - Garveyism. He regards the rights of others and obeys the laws of the land where he resides, being mindful of the fact that once he is true to himself, others, and his religion - through the right understanding of the One God, One Aim, One Destiny - he, too, shall enjoy life, and live abundantly in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and that Africa shall once more become the land of the Good, Strong and Wise." 221

Similarly, Reverend J.A. Hickerson, the advocate of the idea of the "indwelling God", sublimated his beliefs in Garveyism. There was no contradiction in this. Garvey's message that blacks were God's creations; that redemption came through self-assertion; and that there was an inner, universal truth, matched Hickerson's understanding of the "indwelling God." In fact, Hickerson began to claim that the idea of "God in man" was an Ethiopian belief passed to him by "direct

heritage" from his "Ethiopian" mother. He adopted flowing silk robes and a turban and claimed credit for teaching Rabbi Arnold Ford "all he knew" about Hebrew.²²² Even after Garvey's deportation Hickerson, known by his prophet-names of "St. John the Vine" and "Hon. St. Bishop Divine", was a regular speaker at New York City's Liberty Hall. The basis of his talks was that "there was no God in the skies and no heaven to go to. One God, one Aim and one Destiny was embodied in our leader, and God moved him on the scene."²²³

Addressing the Garvey Club in New York City in April 1931 Hickerson told them that Garvey's absence "is like that of Christ. John 14 : 12 says 'For he dwells in you and shall be in you'". He added:

"We call God Life that permeates us. We are no longer looking up to the skies for our God. Corinthians says, 'You are the temple of the Living God'. Unity as a race is essential to our progress. We have been deceived, kidnapped, and brought from the shores of Africa, given names that do not belong to us ... We fell from that state of happiness which was our lot, and the time has come for us to return to our own, under the leadership of the Hon. Marcus Garvey and learn to honor each other as in the days of old." 224

All this variety of belief, from the African Orthodox Church to the millennialism of Hickerson, was contained within the broad sweep of the U.N.I.A's ideas. But Garvey, for all his sense of mission, and love of power, refused the mantle of the messiah and denied that any man, other than Jesus Christ, could come to earth as God. He insisted:

"To believe any man is God outside the One True and Living God after one has been an adherent of real Christianity, is so blasphemous as to suggest nothing but a terrible penalty for such a person." 225

As late as 1937, when a woman calling herself "Queen Esther, the Bride of Christ" wrote to Garvey to tell him that the "Lord Jesus Christ has now ascended to the throne of Glory [and] ... all

representatives of the gospel of Christ are now called to the Battle of Armageddon", he published her letter with the postscript, "I am not able to see visions other than those based upon the practical side of life, although a Christian and a firm believer in the Godhead, so I may not be able to appreciate as much as you desire the sacredness of your information." He added that he had decided to publish her letter mainly for fear of offending God by dismissing it. "I am loathe," he wrote, "to act in disobedience to the spirit." Such faith was a strong antidote to any messianic pretensions.²²⁶

With Garvey's arrest and exile the movement, according to S.A. Haynes, disintegrated into a "vicious network of private clubs and societies" where the principles of the U.N.I.A. were "subordinated to new 'isms', creeds, cults and mysticism." The type of groups that the Garveyites entered was an indication of the beliefs accommodated within the U.N.I.A. Some ex-Garveyites joined the Moorish Americans, whose vision of a society of peace and brotherhood based on equality and the separate development of each race, matched the aspirations of the U.N.I.A. Others joined "various African movements" which kept alive the dream of race redemption in Africa. Former Garveyites also joined the nascent Nation of Islam whose apocalyptic ideas of white destruction and black redemption matched those of the Black Jews. Ex-Garveyites also sought personal salvation in the larger, urban sanctified sects; and some joined Father Divine.²²⁷

It is hard to know if Father Divine was ever associated with the Garvey movement or any of the black sects. Details of his life before he settled in Sayville are little more than hearsay and conjecture and it is impossible to claim, with any accuracy, the

events and ideas that influenced him. There is some circumstantial evidence to suggest that he was associated with the advocates of the "indwelling God". Reverend J.A. Hickerson said, in 1932, that he knew Father Divine in Baltimore, as 'George Baker', a hedgecutter. In fact, Hickerson claimed that during the four years that he stayed in the city as a disciple of Samuel Morris, he lived in Baker's house and taught Baker all he knew about the "indwelling God."²²⁸ The claim must remain open to question as Father Divine never acknowledged Hickerson. But if there is little to connect Father Divine directly with the other religious quests, there is much in the concerns and preoccupations of the Peace Mission to suggest that he belongs within the broad tradition of black folk sectarianism.

The story of the sects and the Garvey movement confirm that for many years some lower-class blacks had searched for a special relationship with God in order to help them cope in times of change. They had resorted to a religious world view to explain and to adjust to the situation in which they found themselves. They had accepted charismatic leaders and used the two most pressing aspects of their lives - their poverty and their race - to annex God to their side.

The Peace Mission attracted people with the same religious world-view and dealt with the same concerns - the demand for protection from want, rejection and injustice. The solution that Father Divine offered - unity with God through the "evangelical life" - was similar to the concern for perfectibility shared by most of the groups on the fringes of black religious life. Again and again, these sectarians decided that their salvation lay in re-dedication to a new, holy life-way. Taboos were vital to this effort and, like the followers of Father Divine, believers renounced the "sins of the flesh" and secular pleasures as obstacles in their path to holiness. Indeed, there was a striking continuity in the taboos against

tobacco, alcohol, gambling, sex, fashions and cosmetics accepted by the sanctified sects and the Peace Mission. The Peace Mission's stress on celibacy and its rejection of conventional family life continued the tradition of criticism of family instability and lack of moral discipline that arose among the urban sects. There was continuity, too, in the concept of salvation. All the sectarians hoped for wealth, peace, freedom, justice and security. Even if the millennium was deferred, all of them expected, like Father Divine's followers, healing and release from anxiety as living proof that God was with them. The Peace Mission continued, too, the egalitarianism toward women advocated by the sanctified sects. Indeed, it was no accident that one of Father Divine's leading followers, Faithful Mary, acknowledged that she had first learnt about her inner power from a sanctified sect in Newark (N.J.)²²⁹

Furthermore, the belief in black spirituality in oppression shared by many black sanctified sects and the race genealogists of the 'race orientated' sects paved the way for acceptance of the idea of a Black Messiah. The U.N.I.A. lent the idea of a Black Christ an added vitality. Indeed, Father Divine bridged the gap that had developed between the sects over the question of race. For he used the image of the Black God and emphasised, like the 'race-orientated' sects the need for self-assertion and the rejection of demeaning "slave names" and race prejudice. But he turned away from the retributive idea that salvation was for blacks alone and he refused to abandon traditional forms of black worship or to rely on a spurious race history. Instead, he reaffirmed the Christian faith in brotherly love and human equality that had been the dominant hope from the early sanctified sects to the Garvey movement.

This far, Father Divine drew on and blended a common heritage of ideas and preoccupations from black religious life. But these

were not, by themselves, adequate to meet all the demands of deliverance in a modern world. Like the Black Jews and the Moorish Americans, Father Divine found in the literate, scientific, urban culture of the twentieth century new influences and new ideas appropriate to deliverance from a modern bondage. In particular, he was deeply impressed by the work of three white writers publishing during the mid and late 'twenties: Baird T. Spalding, author of Life and teachings of the Masters of the Far East; Robert Collier, advocate of New Thought, popular authority on salesmanship and advertising, and the author of a seven volume series known as the Life Magnet; and Bruce Barton, author of several popular texts on Christianity and the Bible including: The man nobody knows; What can a man believe and The Book nobody knows. These writers provided him with a version of "modern" religion and pseudo-science to match the "secret knowledge" of the Black Jewish and Islamic sects.

The Life and teachings of the Masters of the Far East published in two volumes in San Francisco in 1924, purported to record the experiences of a party of researchers, including the author, on their visit to the "Great Masters of the Himalayas" in 1894. It was, of course, a thinly disguised fiction written to advance Spalding's own religious ideas.

In the narrative, the travellers meet a guru, Emil, who supplies them with unlimited quantities of food, clothing and money; demonstrates his command over nature; disappears and rematerialises; claims power over sickness and death; and demonstrates his skill at telepathy. The connection with Father Divine becomes clear when Emil tells the astonished travellers the source of his power.

Emil reveals that his power stems from his unity with the

"Universal Mind Substance": the God within him. He asserts that all men, regardless of their caste and creed, are inherently perfect. It is only their failure to recognize and use their divinity that causes them to suffer sin, sickness, want and death. But once the "Holy Spirit fills the consciousness," Emil promises, "the sense delusions of sin, sickness, poverty and death become no more." Heaven, Emil teaches, is a "perfect state of consciousness." He explains:

"When we can come to the one place and know we are all one, one man, know we are all of God's body ... then we are in and of God's Kingdom, heaven here on earth now."

The power of love, Emil adds, is the force that liberates the individual and gives them access to the source of "all supply". Purge the "outer" self entirely, Emil says, and let "the actual, the I AM Speak and Work and let the great Love of God come forth."²³⁰ Here were ideas which, stripped of their exoticism, mirrored Father Divine's concept of the "indwelling God" and spoke of the possibility of individual salvation on earth.

Robert Collier's the Life magnet followed similar themes. The first volume in the series, published in 1928 as the Secret of gold, set out Collier's preoccupation. "Lack," he wrote, "is the greatest evil that mankind has to contend with." "People were suffering although the Earth was abundant and many of the prophecies in the Scriptures, Collier recalled, promised that man would ultimately "possess the earth" and "tears and sorrows shall be unknown." From his own reading of the Bible as well as the "Wisdom and Mysticism of the Far East", Collier believed that he had found the answer to this dilemma; the key to perpetual life, abundance and happiness.

The secret, he said, lay in the "spirit within". "Far under our layers of consciousness", he wrote, "is a power that far transcends the power of any conscious mind." Some called it the

"Holy Spirit", others described it as the "subconscious mind." In his opinion, this force was divine, as God was the creator of all life, and His Spirit animated every atom and particle of the universe. All people possessed this inner power. All they needed was to learn how to use it to tap the good things of life. There was no doubt, in Collier's mind, that this was a force for good - was not God the great companion, the kindly, indulgent, joy-loving father who wanted to "give us the Kingdom?" The way to salvation was simply a matter of self-discipline and faith. First, Collier said, it was necessary to relax the "conscious mentality" in order to contact the Spirit within. Next, it was necessary to charge the "mental magnet" by concentrating all one's desires and ambitions in the "positive" direction. Finally, it was vital to "let go": to eliminate all doubts, fears, limitations and discouragements and to place trust, instead, in God as the "source of all supply." Everything was possible to those who asked.²³¹

It is easy to find in Spalding and Collier's books many of the expressions and images used repeatedly in the Peace Mission Movement. Father Divine and the followers spoke regularly of the "inner urge"; of God as the "source of all supply"; heaven as a "state of consciousness"; and the need to "relax the conscious mentality" and focus one's efforts in a "positive" direction. Collier's images from the world of science and technology - especially his talk of radio receivers, magnets, electrical forces, atoms and particles - matched Father Divine's own use of modern terms; while the mystic Emil's description of his power to raise and lower his body "vibrations" in order to appear and disappear perhaps shaped Father Divine's delight in claiming control over time, space and the "Cosmic Forces" as well as his stress on the importance of "vibrating" with the "Spirit within."

What was more striking was that these writers dealt with the same issues that absorbed Father Divine: how to achieve wealth, health and security; as well as the idea that perfection was available to all people because of their natural divinity. Decked in modern pseudo-scientific language and published as popular texts, these books perhaps gave Father Divine the confidence to feel that his own ideas, rooted in the black 'folk' tradition, had a vitality and relevance as a serious, modern truth. Furthermore, both Collier and Spalding suggested that the kingdom of heaven on earth was immediately possible and practical. No further delay was necessary.

Later, in the nineteen-thirties, Father Divine acknowledged his debt to these writers. He said that, throughout the late 'twenties he had sought to "hide MYSELF in Unity, to hide MYSELF in Collier's writings, to hide MYSELF in the Life and Teachings of the Far East."²³²

Certainly, it is apparent that in Sayville, Father Divine had experimented with a number of ideas in his search for a formula and a role for himself which would be appropriate to the demands and needs of modern society. It was, perhaps, this search that explains Father Divine's other preoccupation - his special interest in Bruce Barton's writings. For though Barton's books were theologically conventional, he tried to present Christ in a new way and show how His message applied to twentieth century needs and problems. Indeed, Barton portrayed Jesus as a man as much at home in the modern world as his own era: an influential, energetic man, sincere and skilful, alive to the demands of each situation. He was, in Barton's eyes, the "founder of modern business" with the qualities of an executive who knew how to "advertise" his mission. He was also the "sociable man" who loved good food, company and conversation, who welcomed ordinary folk to his table; who had no patience with false righteousness and pretence. Above all, he was a practical man who expected

others to judge him as much by his deeds as by his words.²³³ This, surely, was the role that Father Divine assumed with his followers in the late 'twenties: that of the modern leader, the loving and wise counsellor and the practical man. Already, in Sayville, he had rejected the jaded image of the minister and opted for a style of leadership that was relevant to modern society.

Furthermore, even in Sayville, Father Divine had begun to redefine Collier and Spalding's ideas. These two writers saw salvation on earth only in terms of individual success. Father Divine, by contrast, offered the concept of the "indwelling God" as a means to transform society. He proposed that the tenets of "evangelical life" should redefine the whole of social, economic and political relationships. The change he advocated was collective and communal rather than private and individual. Indeed, it was precisely because he offered more than his white religious mentors that he drew and kept the allegiance of the white truth-seekers who came to the group in Sayville. Drawing on both black 'folk' sectarianism and white religious thinking, Father Divine imposed his own pattern and added his own contribution to these ideas. When the Depression finally made his preoccupations with health, wealth and justice the key issues facing society, he was ready to offer himself as the messiah. "As the negative advanced," he said later in the 'thirties, "I could keep MYSELF hid no longer, hence I released MY Photograph to the press and I released Messages. Oh, it is something to consider! 'He who humbleth himself shall be exalted; and He who exalteth himself shall be abased.'"²³⁴

Most national and local religious leaders, both black and white, ignored Father Divine's claim to be the messiah. Few felt

the need to give the idea any serious public consideration believing, perhaps, that the improbability of the assertion spoke for itself. But a handful for whom Christ's second coming was a vivid article of faith felt obliged to comment on the legitimacy of Father Divine's spiritual claims.

The Jehovah's Witnesses at 124 Columbus Heights in New York City declared that the time had not yet come to set up the kingdom of God on earth. In their opinion, Father Divine was "just a man" and they refused to have anything to do with him.²³⁵ This view was shared by Mother Rosa Horn and by Reverend Walter H. Brooks, pastor of the 19th Street Baptist Church in Washington D.C., an eighty-three year old ex-slave who visited New York City in the 'thirties. He said that it was arrant nonsense to believe that Father Divine was God and he warned:

"The Bible says 'many false leaders shall come among you' and Father Divine will have his day like all the others and then disappear. It doesn't mean a thing, except to show how easily some people can be swept away." 236

Reverend R.C. Lawson of Harlem's Refuge Church of Christ felt, however, that there was no room for complacency. In his eyes, Father Divine represented a threat to both the spiritual and social well-being of Harlem. Addressing the regular meeting of the Harlem Ministers Conference in January 1932, Lawson noted that people had been drawn to the Peace Mission by Father Divine's display of magical power and his claims to divinity. They had been impressed by his provision of free food. While Lawson commended Father Divine's charity to the poor and needy, he warned that this disguised Father Divine's real danger. In his view, Father Divine encouraged people to "expect something for nothing" and taught damaging ideas on celibacy and immortality. This, he believed, threatened the well-

being of the entire community, "as it breeds parasites and makes fawns and puppets of men and women who otherwise by their own initiative would remain self-reliant, self-respecting and self-supporting." He feared that Father Divine represented the cunning and ominous presence of the Anti-Christ:

"The Anti-Christ is the acid test to prove men and women in their loyalty to God and Truth in this day and generation. It is precisely this purpose Divine effectually serves in his claims and his teachings." 237

The suggestion that Father Divine was aiding the forces of darkness led Reverend J.A. Hickerson, the advocate of the "indwelling God", to take up the pen on Father Divine's behalf. In February 1932 he wrote to the New York Interstate Tattler to insist that Lawson was wrong. For Hickerson, it was a question of fundamental theological beliefs. He felt that Father Divine was offering the same doctrine that he and other "Eternal Life Fathers" had brought to the streets of Harlem. This revealed Father Divine, in Hickerson's eyes, as a standard bearer of the true Gospel and fulfiller of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Hickerson wrote:

"Now Bishop Lawson preaches Pentecost to his people, but he does not appear to know that Pentecost means to sell out every idea of the world and get his people together and set up His Kingdom on Earth, which is God's." 238

This letter prompted Lawson to marshall the weight of fundamentalist theology to contest Hickerson's claims. Appealing to the authority of the Scriptures Lawson wrote that Christ's second coming would be on Mount Olivet not in Harlem, that Christ would descend in clouds "in like manner as you have seen HIM go into the heavens", and that a series of dramatic changes would occur. Christ would resurrect the dead; receive his saints into glory; bind Satan and cast him into a bottomless pit; and bring peace between the nations and the universal brotherhood of man. "The work Christ shall do at His

Coming," Lawson charged, "Divine is not doing today." What had Father Divine done, he asked, to stop the bloodshed between China and Japan; to end England's exploitation of India; and to prevent lynching and oppression of blacks in the United States? Why were his followers still working and dying? The answer was, Lawson declared, because Father Divine was only posing as divine. "He is not doing it, he cannot do it, and will not do it," Lawson said, "because he is not Christ." As for Hickerson's "Eternal Life Fathers", Lawson had only scorn for their claims. Two, he said had already died - one he had been obliged to bury after the "gods" abandoned him. All these men and Father Divine, Lawson said, were the "false Christs" that the Bible warned them to expect. The penalty for following them would be grave, he warned, for the Scriptures said that God would punish the unbelievers with troubles, sorrows, insanity and death. His retribution would be fearful and remorseless.²³⁹

But Hickerson was equal to the argument. The Scriptures, he replied, were clear to all who were prepared to accept the truth: heaven was here on earth because God walked with all men. Lawson, he added caustically, "does not act as though he knows the Bible. Mr. Lawson thinks that we will have to catch Jesus and bite a piece out of him because Jesus said, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink HIS blood ye have no life in you.'" As for death, he said, "we who declare this truth know that some will fall and not rise (Job 7 : 9). This does not shake those who are chosen." He quoted the Bible, too, to defend Father Divine's sexual taboos. Did not Jesus teach, Hickerson said, that in the Kingdom people should "neither marry nor give in marriage!?" Surely then, he argued, the taboos were right; for the followers were truly the "children of the rising day and not of the old descending order." He compared Father Divine's persecution with the treatment of Christ at the hands of the

Jews:

"We know there are spiritual racketeers trying to shoot down the light bearers by their words. But nothing moves us. God is here to stay in mankind, and heaven, the tabernacle, is here to stay." 240

The debate was a measure of the gulf that existed between traditional black 'folk' religion and the beliefs of the Peace Mission as understood by Reverend Hickerson. Indeed, it was only those, like Hickerson, who had moved away from conventional beliefs who were prepared to entertain the possibility that Father Divine was God.

Reverend Richard M. Bolden was one of these people. In June 1932 he visited Father Divine in jail at Riverhead (N.Y.). Once the pastor of New York's prestigious Mother Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bolden had received a "revelation" to found a new sect based on "Emmanuelism", in which the believers committed themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was this, presumably, that provided him with common ground with Father Divine.²⁴¹ Another sympathiser was the Right Reverend Bishop Evans of the Apostolic Church of Christ. "FATHER DIVINE," he declared, is the first to bring the Fundamental truth to us and put it into practice." He added:

"The religions, with their worn out doctrines, are crumbling to the ground; soon they will be no more. I have no words to express my thanks to FATHER for this movement. Stand your ground; you are on the right road to eternal emancipation." 242

But these were lone voices among the church men.

One or two of Harlem's more progressive church leaders were prepared to wield the accusation of the Anti-Christ in polemics against Father Divine. In August 1934, Looking Forward a new magazine written by black church leaders to discuss social, political, economic and religious issues "as they affect the progress of the Negro race and the advancement of humanity", set out to destroy the idea that

Father Divine was God. "To say that Father Divine is God," the editors wrote, "is blasphemy. Those souls who are victims to this cult are deluded by the spirit of anti-Christ which is already in the world."²⁴³ But most of the more urbane and influential religious leaders preferred to regard Father Divine as "a phenomenon in a world which tries to delude itself into a coma of unbelief," and attributed his success to the extremes of human suffering and social maladjustment.²⁴⁴

More than a few were drawn to visit the Peace Mission from sheer curiosity and their judgements varied from the openly hostile to the sympathetic. This range of reaction was expressed within the covers of one magazine Christian Century: a Journal of Religion, a liberal religious magazine, the journal of the Federal Council of Churches in America, published in Chicago. In 1935 reporter Edward T. Bueher went in search of the Peace Mission at 20 West 115th Street. In the following year, Frank S. Mead paid another visit to the Peace Mission. While Bueher held that the followers - "victims of economic and cultural exploitation" - were being further exploited by Father Divine, his was a sympathetic and compassionate account. Mead's, by contrast, was both acutely critical and a derogatory account of Father Divine and the followers.²⁴⁵

With the safety of distance, white religious observers were generally favourable to the Movement. Dr. Clarence V. Howell from the Quaker Fellowship of Reconciliation regularly brought parties of students and ministers to attend Peace Mission meetings during the early and mid-'thirties. He argued that the Movement drew on evangelical ideas as well as Oriental religious philosophy, and praised the followers for their diligent efforts at self-improvement.²⁴⁶ Similarly, Reverend Paul Shroeder from Salem Church, Rochester, who came in a party of distinguished church and community

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leaders, acknowledged that it was "amazing what you have accomplished." He added:

"You have in the most remarkable way done what a great many of us have believed in and tried to do. I want to salute you in the interests of human brotherhood. Thank you for taking me into your fellowship tonight. I shall always, always treasure this as one of the high moments of my life." 247

But Harlem's leading pastors were less indulgent. By November 1932 not a single important church was available for Father Divine's use in Harlem,²⁴⁸ and several of the most respected church leaders were deeply worried that Father Divine's success had important implications for leadership in the black community.

Adam Clayton Powell Jnr. was one of Father Divine's bitterest critics. He denounced Father Divine as a "phony" and a "colossal farce".²⁴⁹ Powell understood, perhaps better than most, the basis of Father Divine's appeal and the threat that he posed. Since the nineteen-tens the Abyssinian Baptist Church had built its own success on a skilful use of 'folk' religion. Behind his anger and resentment lay, perhaps, a fear that Father Divine could usurp some of the power the Abyssinian Baptist had gathered as the advocate for and leader of the common people of Harlem.

Reverend William Lloyd Imes had a different, but equally personal position at stake. As one of the leading advocates of the "social gospel" Imes believed that Father Divine's success testified to the appalling failure of the church to help people cope in the Depression. He used Father Divine, throughout the 'thirties, as his example of the danger of "sensation seekers" who stepped into the vacuum left by the black church. "You and I," he told the twenty-fifth annual Ministers Conference meeting at the Hampton Institute in 1938, "have a gospel that is powerful enough to outlast any of their subterfuges. Let us dare to use it."²⁵⁰

Only John H. Johnson, the kindly and tolerant pastor of St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church had words of praise for the Movement. Visiting the Peace Mission to thank the followers for their five hundred dollar donation toward the cost of rebuilding his church, razed by fire, Johnson said:

"I am happy to see the results in your lives of your faithful allegiance to your great leader FATHER DIVINE the strength of your life, because here I can see Children of GOD, and I want to express my deep appreciation for the spirit of co-operation which I have noticed." 251

The followers' generosity toward their friends was matched by their hostility toward their church critics. Over a thousand followers crowded into a meeting in February 1932 to protest Reverend Lawson's attack on Father Divine and police from five precincts were called to control the crowd of a thousand left outside. The followers were anxious for respect and they desperately wanted the church to recognize Father Divine's authority. Their disappointment was only sharpened by Father Divine's reception at the hands of the elders of the Abyssinian Baptist Church who refused to admit Father Divine through the main church door for a public meeting. Father Divine and the followers went back to the Peace Mission and held their own meeting, but their pride was bruised and Father Divine swore that he would "close every church door" of congregations which refused to accept his message.²⁵²

For a while, the followers comforted themselves with the thought that Christ had not been recognized when He first came to earth, and they deceived themselves with the belief that the opposition of the church was based on a misunderstanding. A writer in the Spoken Word declared:

"FATHER DIVINE is not exposing to ridicule and endeavouring to tear down the structure of the church. He is only insisting that they do the work for which they came into existence ... He stands ready, according to His Statement to cooperate with and endorse all organisations

and groups who will cooperate and work in harmony with the Principle which He is advocating."

But they found themselves constantly open to ridicule for their faith in Father Divine's divinity.²⁵³

In July 1935 Marcus Garvey added his voice to the critics; damning Father Divine for blasphemy and suggesting that he was a tool in the hands of scheming whites. When the U.N.I.A. met in convention in Toronto one year later, the delegates denounced Father Divine's claims as "worse than paganism and heathenism and idolatry."

The convention resolutions asserted that Father Divine's precepts, "constitute the stigma of the grossest ignorance and backwardness on the part of any people in the civilization of the 20th century." The Peace Mission was upsetting the "mental equilibrium ... of heretofore normal minded persons "for the purpose of persuading them to surrender their property and possessions to Father Divine. This was a "colossal racket" originated by the "coterie of white men and women" in the Peace Mission "for the purpose of destroying religiously, morally, socially, politically and financially, the character and standing of the Negro race in the United States of America." The imposition of celibacy on the followers was "a gross attempt at race suicide"; and the Movement's charitable works would cease "as soon as J.M. Divine and his collaborators have accumulated all that is possible." The convention even implied that "Father Divine is being subsidized by such persons and Organizations who desire the complete corruption and ultimate extermination of the race."²⁵⁴

Father Divine invited his critics to put their claims to the test. "If you X-ray MY actions as physicians X-ray their patients," he said, "you will see that I work not only in words but more in deeds."²⁵⁵ The measure of "true religion", he said, was its

"practicality": its capacity to transform everyday life. He offered the followers' lives as testament to his powers. He had, he said, made the kingdom of heaven on earth into a "Living Reality."²⁵⁶ Surely it was "more justifiable and more scientific and more intelligent," he argued, to worship the one who was "walking in the Statutes of CHRIST and living and expressing GOD in Words and Deeds and in Actions" rather than to bow down before "dead statues which are only sculptured out of cement and stone."²⁵⁷

The followers agreed. White and black, they accepted his divinity because he had worked a practical change in their lives which seemed beyond the power of ordinary human beings to achieve. They credited him with giving them security, health, happiness, self-respect and work at a time when their problems seemed insurmountable. He had created within the Peace Mission a society in which the scars of race and class antagonism had been healed and peace, love and co-operation were the bases of human relationships. They tried to explain their acceptance of Father Divine's divinity not in elaborate theological terms but in simple, practical examples.

"MY God came and gave me a hundred mile trip for one dollar and meals for ten and fifteen cents," one believer said, "What has your GOD done for you?"²⁵⁸ Carnegie Pullen listed the benefits that the Peace Mission gave the followers "MORE THAN ANY OTHER MOVEMENT":

"FATHER DIVINE FEEDS the unemployed and the down and out and asks no questions. HE heals the lame, the blind, the incurable, the maniac. HE converts and transforms criminals, sets prisoners and shut-ins free who recognize and call on HIM and live even as HE the CHRIST does.

HE gives revelations of the literal and true meaning of the sayings of the Gospels and calls upon all Seekers and Christians to copy even the example of Jesus as the proper fulfilment of

the Philosophy of CHRIST.
Besides this HE gives HIS Followers Jobs."²⁵⁹

The same point was made by follower C.D. Austin, an ex-Garveyite, who wrote to Marcus Garvey to answer his criticisms. "We no doubt," Austin told Garvey, "have done our best [through the U.N.I.A.]." But, he said, "our best was mere talk and confusion, nothing practical in deeds and actions; but since FATHER DIVINE came, HE has put HIS SPIRIT in us and causes us to be walking in HIS STATUTES."

Did Garvey not say, Austin added, "that GOD is supposed to be looking like us?" In the person and work of Father Divine, "everything you told us has come true." Not only did Father Divine heal the sick, raise the dead, feed the hungry and shelter the homeless - "more than you or any other 'man' could ever offer" - but he was able to do these things because he was establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth:

"You see, Mr. Garvey, in you and I lies nothing but matter, which fades away like a flower, but in FATHER DIVINE dwelleth all the fullness of the GODHEAD BODILY. HE neither fades nor wanes, but of HIS increase and Power, and of HIS KINGDOM, there shall be no end. This TRUTH is so dynamic, so convincing and far-reaching that it is sweeping aside every barrier, overcoming all seeming opposition and drawing all humanity unto itself, melting us down in the melting pot of LOVE and rising together as 'one man at Jerusalem' out of races, creeds, colours, denominations, nationalism, theories, and doctrines, recognizing only that sacred duty, 'THE BROTHERHOOD of MAN - and the FATHERHOOD of GOD.'"

"FATHER DIVINE has lifted me out of all lacks and wants," Austin added simply, "this you could not do or any other man although your intentions and desires are good and your ideals are still high."²⁶⁰

A poem in the Peace Mission press synthesised the followers' attitudes:

"GIVE me a GOD Who'll live as one with me,
Ride the subways; work, eat and drink don't you see,
One whose infinite love will drawn Him down to the tenements,
- The slums, where oppressed common masses must live and call
home.

Give me a GOD Who'll give me perfect health,
Then give me work, through which to express Himself,
Give me a GOD Who'll set me free
From an Adamic Mind to Christ's Purity.
Give me a GOD Who'll teach me the Way
By living Himself as my Sample
In deeds and actions, each day.

Give me a GOD Who'll live in a Body,
Appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh
That I might see HIM, feel HIM,
Watch, know and love HIM;
For a practical GOD in a Bodily Form
Is the only one who can prove
HE's 'the Best' ... " 261

The millennialism of the Peace Mission Movement and Father Divine's claims to be God come to earth, thus drew together the strands of a diffuse, marginal tradition in black 'folk' sectarianism and a search for God as it appeared among white religious enthusiasts in the twentieth century.

The Peace Mission arose in criticism of the conventional practice of the Christian faith. For Father Divine and his followers, Christianity, as it was then understood and pursued, was, at best, inadequate and, at worst, detrimental to people's need for a radical change in their daily lives. To them, it was a religion that spoke only of 'otherworldly' release and submission before injustice. In particular, the Peace Mission was a criticism of Christianity as practiced among blacks in America. As Father Divine told his black followers, religion had been used to keep them in poverty; to bind them in slavery.

Yet, the Peace Mission's millennialism had its roots within the black religious tradition. Slave religion contained the idea of black spirituality; an idea that was retained in the black 'folk' church after slavery and preserved in congregations that continued and revitalised belief in ecstatic worship and charismatic leadership -

although these themes were only parts of a faith that, for many years, continued to wait on the conventional deliverance of life after death.

It was only when migration and urbanisation disrupted the stable world and folk consciousness of rural blacks that these ideas assumed increasing importance. They were taken up by men and women who were urgently in need of the promise of God's concern to help them cope with the changes in their lives and expectations. The thrusts towards Holiness and Pentecostalism and the special hopes that God had particular plans for the race were all born of this need.

As life in the urban ghettos stripped away more and more of the older folk consciousness and brought new pressures and influences, small groups of black migrants took the drastic step of repudiating Christianity utterly. They found their hope of deliverance in Judaism or Islam, backed up by a pot-pourri of esoteric "knowledge" and pseudo-science culled from the self-appointed 'theoreticians' in the ghetto. Still others took a more individualistic course in line with the tradition of charismatic leadership in black religion: as "Eternal Life Fathers" with their message of the "indwelling God".

Temporarily, the Garvey movement subsumed these various strivings. Father Divine, later, brought them together again, extended them and built a movement that actually achieved the radical change in the earthly status of its adherents that had been at the heart of the various quests for God's deliverance before.

Father Divine chose a salvation of peace, inter-racial brotherhood and equality that went back to the original Christian message received by blacks. At the same time, he owed a debt to the sects that had pursued harsher, racial solutions, just as he, like them, revealed an enormous ability to absorb and adapt to the ideas, experiences and influences of the contemporary situation. Just as the 'racial sects' found a new inspiration in their contact with

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SIX.

1. Spoken Word 1 (12), January 5 1935; and 1 (18), February 16 1935; New Day 1 (4), June 11 1936; and 3 (47), November 23 1939; and Hoshor, op.cit., 233-234.
2. Ibid. The New Day believed that the idea of the "mythological heaven" had been "completely dispelled and eradicated from the consciousness of the ... followers of FATHER DIVINE." One follower contributed a poem in the New Day which confirms this claim:

"While people go blindly to church to hear about
Heaven above
We go up to the House of the Lord, to learn more
about HIS Love ...
While religion has kept them bound, and politics
kept them oppressed
Our freedom we have found, since CHRIST is manifest.
While they live in the darkness of night, preparing
for the skies,
We are walking in the Light, for we are living in
Paradise."

New Day 1 (10), July 23 1936; and 2 (29), July 21 1938.
See also Burnham, op.cit., 68-71.
3. McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 27 1936, 22. Father Divine told his followers, on another occasion: "the Kingdom does not merely mean here, at a place that is called FATHER DIVINE'S PEACE MISSION. It is a state of consciousness, it is a place in consciousness where GOD alone reigns ... when this is established in the hearts and lives of the children of men then and only then shall have the kingdom come ..." New Day 2 (2), January 13 1938.
4. World Herald 1 (20), April 1 1937.
5. Hoshor, op.cit., 233-234. The theme of the redemptive quality of "GOD'S ACTUAL PRESENCE" was a recurring one in the first months of 1937: "Oh it is a privilege to live in the Land of the Living and to recognize GOD'S ACTUAL PRESENCE, with Victory over every adverse and undesirable condition," said Father Divine, "the Spirit of MY Presence and the Presence of MY Spirit shall go forth conquering and to conquer continually, until every nation, language, tongue, and all peoples shall bow at the recognition of GOD'S PRESENCE." World Herald 1 (20), April 1 1937. See also Ibid. 1 (10), January 21 1937; 1 (14), February 18 1937; 1 (21), April 8 1937; and 1 (28), May 27 1937.
6. New Day 4 (34), August 22 1940. "Even though you may not be conscious of it," said Father Divine, "you are in a New Day, the old day has passed away. The time that has been, will not be again for the hour has truly come. GOD has Glorified HIS Son and is bringing into the world of material things the unfoldment of HIS ACTUAL PRESENCE among MEN. By this all mankind shall eventually realize you ARE in a New Day." World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937.

7. New Day 1 (37), December 2 1937.
8. New York Times May 13 1937.
9. Spoken Word 2 (27), February 29 1936.
10. New York Times July 2 1939.
11. Spoken Word 1 (26), April 13 1935.
12. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937.
13. New York Age December 5 1931.
14. New Day 3 (35), August 31 1939.
15. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937.
16. New Day 2 (15), April 14 1938.
17. Ibid. 3 (29), July 20 1929.
18. Ibid. 3 (37), September 14 1939. This was a constant refrain of his speeches and letters.
19. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937. See also Harris, op.cit., 148. Father Divine warned that his power over the elements augered badly for his opponents: "The Cosmic Forces of Nature ... work in harmony with ME, but remember, to the extreme opposite do the Cosmic Forces of Nature work in conflict with those that are in the extreme opposite to ME." Hoshor, op.cit., 121.
20. McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 46. See also McKay, There goes God! op.cit., 153.
21. Ibid. 151; and Hoshor, op.cit., 190. See also New York Daily News August 5 1939; New York Times October 21 1936; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 219.
22. Spoken Word 1 (36), June 22 1935. In a letter replying to criticism in Looking Forward, a magazine of progressive church opinion, Father Divine repeated his reference to Isaiah 42. He also proclaimed himself the fulfilment of the prophecy that: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and when Shiloh come the gathering of the people shall be unto him." This is Genesis 49 : 10. Looking Forward 2 (4), September 1935.
23. Father Divine later claimed as victims, a local street agitator, Sufi Abdul Hamid, who died in a 'plane crash, and Marcus Garvey. New Day 4 (25), June 25 1940.
24. New York Daily News August 5 1939. When a great storm struck and razed a barn near an extension in upstate New York, the followers saw it, somewhat illogically, as a sign: "The children looked at each other in awe ... and knew that when

- Father says he has come to wipe out segregation and prejudice he means it. He has told us these things draw to themselves their own destruction, even from the Cosmic forces of Nature." When a fire-engine was prevented from reaching the blaze by a lorry which blocked the road, this, too, was seen as an act of Providence: "'Such fires are unquenchable!' said a sister." Spoken Word 2 (80), September 1 1936.
25. New Day 3 (37), September 14 1939; Spoken Word 2 (86), September 22 1936; and World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937.
26. Spoken Word 2 (86), September 22 1936.
27. The theme of God's judgement in natural disasters was also familiar through the "religious disaster song", a form of folk song that was current among blacks from about 1900 to the middle of the present century. These songs, performed by itinerants and often circulated on printed sheets, revealed the hand of God to be responsible for events like the sinking of the Titanic and the South Carolina cyclone of 1893. As Charles Haffer Jnr. wrote of a gale in Louisiana: "God he is in the wind storm and rain/ And everybody ought to mind." Levine, op.cit., 171-174. Such disaster songs were composed well into the twentieth century. When a hurricane swept Florida in 1928 the Red Cross reported a disaster song that was sung at black services in the refugee colony:
- "On the sixteenth day of September,
In the year of hundred twenty eight,
God started to ride early,
And He rode till very late.
- Chorus: "In the storm, oh, in the storm,
Lord, somebody got drowned,
Got **drowned**, Lord,
In the storm!
- He rode out on the ocean,
Chained the lightning to His wheel,
Stepped on the land at West Palm Beach,
And the wicked hearts did yield."
- There were eight more verses. Monroe N. Work ed.,
Negro year book, 1937-1938, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1938, 483.
28. New Day 2 (32), August 11 1938; and 3 (46), November 16 1939; World Herald 1 (25), May 6 1937; and Burnham, op.cit., 74.
29. Revelation 19 : 11.
30. Spoken Word 2 (5), November 16 1935. He spoke of the Exodus on other occasions and likened himself to Moses: "I thought of how GOD made a way for MOSES, GOD opened up the Red Sea and caused the Children to pass through safely. The same spirit is working today - Streams and Rivers, and Oceans have no barrier for ME." World Herald 1 (10), January 21 1937. See also Spoken Word 2 (31), March 14 1936.
31. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 217-218.

32. New Day 2 (33), August 18 1938.
33. Harris, op.cit., 10. See also Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 212. Father Divine saw himself as breaking down the barriers of class and status and bringing about "the exhaltation of the least and the levelling of all":
- "Once upon a time it was a disgrace for the wealthy to participate or associate with the poor class of people and different races ... but through My Condescension ... the great conversion and the great lifting are actually lifting the races from every angle expressible and bringing each and everybody on a common level. The scripture is also fulfilled."
- New Day 1 (10), July 23 1936.
34. Spoken Word 2 (50), May 19 1936.
35. New Day 1 (6), June 25 1936. When Myrtle Pollard noticed that Father Divine had three scars on his head, a follower volunteered the information that they were received in the course of the thirty-two riots he had seen in South, suffered in the name of righteousness, justice and truth. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 254.
36. New Day 2 (6), February 10 1938. Revelation 21 : 3-4 reads: "And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God/ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."
37. Father Divine said of his manner of dress: "I do not wear garbs and robes and a whole lot of foolishness, to appear to men as though I AM GOD and still be a man. I would rather appear, as far as physical appearance is concerned, the same as any other man and still be GOD, than to be beguiled firstly with the 'beguilation' of Eve MYSELF, to try and make someone else think I AM GOD by My Physical Appearance." New Day 2 (35), September 1 1938, quoted in Burnham, op.cit., 75-76.
38. Father Divine's urbane manner is captured perfectly in the newsreel, March of Time which showed him at work in his office, broadcasting to his followers and addressing a meeting. March of Time no. 8, 4th year (1938), pt. 2.
39. Father Divine said: "Bibles and Hymn Books are closed as far as we are concerned. The things that have been written, have been re-revealed, therefore, GOD will speak in His Temples, and need not look in books and Bibles and Hymn Books for information ... You do not see any manuscript around here ... for it is written: 'You are Living Epistles,

- seen and read of, by men.' Now isn't that wonderful!" He was apparently unconscious of the irony of his words. Spoken Word 2 (25), February 22 1940.
40. Ibid. 2 (86), September 22 1936; New York Daily News August 5 1939; Leach, History of the work of Father Divine, n.d., /1936?/ (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); McKay, There goes God! op.cit., 152; and Parker, op.cit., 110-111, 114.
 41. March of Time no. 8, 4th year (1938), pt. 2.
 42. On the mast-head of the Spoken Word was the quote: "And God said! Let there be Light and There was Light - and God saw the Light that it was Good. And the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word was made Flesh." This is a compilation of phrases from Genesis 1 : 3-4 and St. John 1 : 4 and 14. It is obviously intended to show Father Divine as the messiah and the fulfilment of both the Old and the New Testament. Spoken Word 1 (1), October 30 1934.
 43. The motto of the World Herald was "Righteousness, Justice and Truth Shall Conquer the Earth." World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937.
 44. New Day 1 (37), December 2 1937.
 45. Spoken Word 1 (9), December 15 1934.
 46. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937; and the policy statement in New Day 1 (22), October 28 1937.
 47. Two such epigrams appeared in New Day 1 (12), August 6 1936: "We are in another Day. Praise God We are in another Day" and "The Spirit came Down from Above to Fill our Hearts with Perfect Love."
 48. Ibid. 1 (6), June 25 1936. Another cover displayed the legend: "This is The New Jerusalem". Ibid. 1 (19), July 29 1937.
 49. Spoken Word 1 (2), October 27 1934.
 50. World Herald 1 (30), June 10 1937.
 51. These usages are all found in McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 32-72, passim.
 52. The World Herald, in declaring its place of publication, printed "N.Y. ('New Jerusalem')." For instance, World Herald 1 (14), February 18 1937. "New Jerusalem" is the name given to the "City of God" after the day of judgement. Revelation 3 : 12 and 21 : 2.
 53. Yonina Talmon, Millenarian movements (In David Potter and Philip Sarre, eds., Dimensions in society, London, 1974, 424-441) 424. /Reprinted from Archives Européenes de sociologie VII (159), 1966, 181-200/.

54. Revelation 1 : 14.
55. Ibid. 21 : 18.
56. Norman Cohn, Pursuit of the millennium, London, 1970, 13.
57. Sylvia Thrupp ed., Millennial dreams in action : essays in comparative study, The Hague, 1962, 12.
58. Talmon, Millenarian movements (In Potter and Sarre eds., op.cit.) passim.
59. Talmon, Millenarian movements (In Ibid.) 427.
60. New Day 2 (34), August 25 1938.
61. Ibid. 2 (2), January 13 1938.
62. George Shepperson, Comparative study of millenarian movements (In Thrupp, op.cit., 44-52) 50-51; and David E. Smith, Millenarian scholarship in America, American Quarterly 17, 1965, 535-549.
63. Bryan R. Wilson, op.cit., 96.
64. V.F. Calverton, Where angels dared to tread, Indianapolis, 1941, passim.
65. Shepperson, Comparative study of millenarian movements (In Thrupp, op.cit., 44-52) 44-45, 50-51. Shepperson's short-hand distinction between pre-millennial and post-millennial movements, that the first is "pessimistic" and the second "optimistic" in their attitude to the state of society is, perhaps, misleading, since it has been known for the disappointment of a pre-millennial prophecy to lead to a period of post-millennialism. Characteristics of these movements in quasi-political terms are also fraught with difficulty. Shepperson, for instance, calls pre-millennial movements "revolutionary", while David E. Smith calls them "conservative". Smith, Millenarian scholarship in America, op.cit., 539; and Shepperson, Comparative study of millenarian movements (In Thrupp, op.cit.) 45.
66. Bryan R. Wilson, Magic and the millennium, London, 1973, 174-176.
67. Father Divine is neither a pre- or a post- millennialist. He is rather, as Shepperson describes the Shakers, an "intra-millennialist." Shepperson, Comparative study of millenarian movements (In Thrupp, op.cit.) 48.
68. Calverton, op.cit., 97-110; and Henri Desroche, American Shakers : from neo-Christianity to pre-socialism, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1971, passim.
69. New Day 3 (11), March 16 1939.

70. Desroche, op.cit., 145-147.
71. Ibid., 117-120.
72. Frazier, Negro church, 6-9; Genovese, op.cit., 233-235; Washington Jnr., Black sects and cults, 39-43; Sernett, op.cit., passim; and Carter G. Woodson, History of the Negro church, Washington D.C., 1945, 24-28. There was some proselytising of slaves during the First Great Awakening. See Ellen Gibson Wilson, op.cit., 8-14.
73. Sernett, op.cit., 59-81. Sernett argues that although white plantation preaching was inevitably overlaid by exhortations to duty, obedience and discipline among the slaves, the gospel that they received was essentially the same as that brought to whites.
74. Levine, op.cit., 31-55.
75. Genovese, op.cit., 234-284.
76. James Weldon Johnson ed., Book of American Negro Spirituals, especially 92-93, 148-151; and Benjamin E. Mays, Negro's God as reflected in his literature, New York, 1968, 19-23. [First published Boston, 1938].
77. Genovese, op.cit., 207-209, 236-238, 240-241, and 251-252; Levine, op.cit., 40-47; and Sernett, op.cit., 87-89, 101-105.
78. Genovese, op.cit., 207-209, 213-214; Levine, op.cit., 44-50; and Sernett, op.cit., 93-99.
79. Clifton H. Johnson ed., op.cit., 74. See also: Genovese, op.cit., 214-215, 236-241; and Levine op.cit., 28-30, 37-43.
80. Sernett, op.cit., 107-108.
81. Courlander, op.cit., 303-335. The meaning of the Spirituals has always been a question of dispute. Few commentators have denied their uniqueness. But, for Newman I. White, for instance, this was a uniqueness of musical composition and performance deriving from African music. The words of the Spirituals, he said, derived almost entirely from white camp-meeting songs. It was unlikely, therefore, that they had any meaning to the slaves other than the purely religious. Milton Sernett has pointed out that white evangelists to the slaves favoured simple and dramatic Biblical episodes to exemplifying God's Word: precisely the kind of events celebrated in the Spirituals. Levine and Genovese have argued that the manner of composition and performance of the Spirituals made them entirely unique both in music and in text: they were the confluence of African traditions, the Christian message and the psychic needs of the slaves. Yet, for those favouring a liberationist interpretation of the Spirituals, there are few that give heart. It is then more a case of special pleading. Levine, op.cit., 19-55; Sernett, op.cit., 65-67, 105-108; and White, op.cit., 11-57.
82. Clifton H. Johnson ed., op.cit., passim; and Sernett, op.cit., 84-85. The conversion testimonies are an encapsulation of

Christian belief on sin, the intercession of Christ, the forgiveness of God and the promise of re-birth.

83. James Weldon Johnson, ed., Book of American Negro Spirituals, especially 71-75, 78-79, 98-99, 100-103, 118-119, 134-135 and 160-161.
84. Genovese, op.cit., 251-252.
85. Dorson, op.cit., 144-145. The "praying-tree" tales explore the ramifications of the "deliverance" strain in black religion. In another tale, the slave prays to God to "kill all the white folks and leave all the niggers." His master, who overhears the slave, disguises himself with a sheet and beats him. "Oh Lord," cries out the slave, "Don't you know a white man from a nigger?" Ibid. Surprisingly, Levine does not discuss the "praying-tree" tales.
86. Dorothy Scarborough, On the trail of Negro folk songs, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1925, 164, 171-172, 194, 197, 225, 234-235; and White, op.cit., 130-134.
87. Frazier, Negro church, 20-29; and Sernett, op.cit., 110-161. Sernett notes how the freedmen deserted the churches of their former masters, so that after 1870, only eight thousand blacks remained in the white Methodist churches that had claimed more than two hundred thousand ten years earlier. Ibid., 164.
88. Frazier, Negro church, 29-30. Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne campaigned successfully to raise the standard of education of the clergy within the African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1840 to 1860. He sought to replace the Spirituals and spontaneous sung worship by a choir, hymns and an ordered service. His attitude to the style of worship among the black slaves can be appreciated from his dismissal of the Spirituals as "cornfield ditties" and the ring-shout as "heathenish". The movement toward an educated ministry began, after the Civil War, among the Baptists and there proceeded more slowly. By 1926, however, only 38% of urban black ministers, of all denominations, (as compared to 80% white) and 17% rural black ministers (as compared to 47% white) were college or seminary trained. Levine, op.cit., 162-168; Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, Negro's church, New York, 1933, 40, 138-139; and Sernett, op.cit., 139-141.
89. In rural "Cottonville" Hortense Powdermaker found little denominational feeling among Methodists and Baptists; each attended the worship of the other. There was little difference, either, in the form of worship and the type of sermon preached. Powdermaker, op.cit., 233, 236-241.
90. Frazier, Negro church, 34-44.
91. James Weldon Johnson, Along this way, 109-110. See also Brewer, op.cit., 26-28; and Vernon Lane Wharton, Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890, New York, 1965, 258.

92. Brewer, op.cit., 17 and 74-77.
93. Lewis, Blackways of Kent (In Nelsen et al. eds., op.cit., 110-117) 109-113; and Powdermaker, op.cit., 276-284.
94. Mays and Nicholson, Negro's church, 7-8. See also Brewer, op.cit., 62.
95. Frazier, Negro church, 44-46.
96. Mays, Negro's God as reflected in his literature, 26.
97. Brewer, op.cit., 30, 32, 100.
98. Powdermaker, op.cit., 236-242.
99. Brewer, op.cit., 72.
100. Ibid., 47.
101. Powdermaker, op.cit., 243. See also Brewer, op.cit., 87. There are examples of similar beliefs in Genovese, op.cit., 265-266 and Levine, op.cit., 34-35.
102. Hortense Powdermaker, Channeling of Negro aggression by the cultural process. American Journal of Sociology 48, May 1943, 750-764.
103. Puckett, op.cit., 540-542.
104. Surprisingly Levine does not mention this belief in God's whiteness. He does, however, mention slave conversion testimonies which told of how the converts had visions of heaven and met Christ or God. In picturing Christ "with His hair parted in the center," the slaves seem to have been following conventional nineteenth century representations of Jesus. Levine, op.cit., 36-37. Unless there was an identification of God with whiteness the frequent, subsequent attempts to assert his blackness appear ludicrous. Of course, in the Spirituals, Christ is referred to not only as "King Jesus" but also "Massa Jesus". Genovese, op.cit., 273.
105. Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., Book of Negro folklore, New York, 1959, 71.
106. Frazier, Negro family, 271-273; Frazier, Negro in the United States, 188-192; Henri, op.cit., 50-51; and Kennedy, op.cit., 29-30.
107. Henri, op.cit., 49-80.
108. Ibid., 91-92; 262-268; 310-325.
109. Allen D. Grimshaw, Factors contributing to colour violence in the United States and Britain, Race 3 (2), May 1962, 4.
110. Henri, op.cit., 318-320; and Tuttle, op.cit., passim.
111. Ralph Ellison, Harlem is nowhere (In Ralph Ellison, Shadow and act, London, 1967, 294); and Henri, op.cit., 180.

112. Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, They seek a city, New York, 1945, 40-42; Henri, op.cit., 91-92, 96-97; Osofsky, op.cit., 43-45; and Spear, op.cit., 168-169.
113. Frazier, Negro family, 291-298; Tuttle, op.cit., 93-97; and Osofsky, op.cit., 31-32.
114. Kennedy, op.cit., 202-204.
115. Frazier, Negro church, 52; Kennedy, op.cit., 204-205; Mays and Nicholson, op.cit., 113-117; and Scheiner, op.cit., 90-91. Of Harlem churches in the nineteen-twenties, Welty writes, "more and more the quality of a church and a minister was assessed in terms of ornate furnishings, yearly receipts and return on invested capital." Welty, op.cit., 205-207.
- In the 1926 Census on churches in the United States, according to G.G. and G.B. Johnson, the average membership of urban black churches was reported at 220, while that of the rural black churches was reported at 91. The average value of the urban churches was \$16,279 and the rural churches \$2,115. Johnson and Johnson, op.cit., 260-263. The class stratification of black denominations was a commonplace in Northern (and Western) cities. It was noted by W.E.B. Du Bois in Philadelphia as early as 1896: "At St. Thomas' [Protestant Episcopal] one looks for the well-to-do Philadelphians ...; at Central Presbyterian one sees the older, simpler set of respectable Philadelphians ...; at Bethel [African Methodist Episcopal] may be seen the best of the great laboring class ...; at Union Baptist one may look for the Virginia servant girls." Forty years later, Vattel Daniel, in a study of forty black churches in Chicago's Southside, found that the churches: "Not only ... enable the communicants to express their religious life, but they also enhance the morale of members of a subordinate racial class, and through differentiation in ritual, minister to various classes within the Negro population." Vattel Elbert Daniel, Ritual and stratification in Chicago Negro churches, American Sociological Review 7, June 1942, 352; and W.E.B. Du Bois, Philadelphia Negro : a social study, New York, 1967, [First published Philadelphia, 1899] 203-204. See also Daniel M. Katzman, Before the ghetto : black Detroit in the nineteenth century, Chicago, 1973, 135-147; and Spear, op.cit., 91-97, 177-179.
116. Welty, op.cit., 11-46.
117. Ibid., 57-58.
118. Ibid., 18.
119. Powell Snr., op.cit., 279-81.
120. Ibid., 49-52, 56-58.
121. It is difficult to say anything with certainty about black churches in the urban South since there has been no significant research. But see H.N. Rabinowitz, Race relations in the urban south 1865-1900, New York, 1978, 205-208.

122. In a survey of ten cities, five in the North and five in the South, for the years 1916-1926, Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson found that, in the Northern cities, the number of black Baptist churches had risen from 127 to 139 and the number of African Methodist Episcopal churches from 37 to 83. There was a smaller rise in the Southern cities where there were already many churches: the black Baptist churches rose from 278 to 304 and the A.M.E. churches from 68 in 1916 to 81 in 1926. Mays and Nicholson, op.cit., 97.
123. Greater New York Federation of Churches, op.cit., 22; and Mays and Nicholson, op.cit., 34-35.
124. Ibid., 98.
125. Wilfred R. Bain, Storefront churches, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); Reid, Let us prey! op.cit., 274-278; Seth M. Scheiner, Negro church and the Northern city 1890 - 1930 (In William G. Shade and Roy C. Herrenkohl, eds. Seven on Black, reflections of the Negro experience in America, New York, 1969, 95-116) 100-102; and Frazier, Negro church, 52-54. Common misapprehensions about the storefront churches are that they were predominantly places of Holiness or Pentecostal worship and that their pastors had neither the ambition nor organisational ability to build a substantial following. See, for instance, Osofsky, op.cit., 144-145; and Spear, op.cit., 174-175.
126. New York Amsterdam News March 25 1939; Osofsky, op.cit., 145-146; and Welty, op.cit., 159. Osofsky describes Lawson as an "exception" among storefront preachers. Two of Harlem's three largest Baptist churches had also been the work of such exceptional men: Reverend Sims of the Union Baptist Church and Reverend William Brown of the Metropolitan Baptist Church. Ibid., 63 and 135. For instances in Chicago, see Spear, op.cit., 178.
127. Paradise Baptist Church, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection). James Weldon Johnson noted that the practice of taking the collection to a table beneath the pulpit was common in Southern rural churches at the turn of the century. James Weldon Johnson, Along this way, 110. It is also mentioned as a commonplace in New York black churches at that time by Mary White Ovington. Ovington, op.cit., 117.
128. Reid, Let us prey, op.cit., 274.
129. Ibid., 274; Osofsky, op.cit., 144-145; and Scheiner, Harlem, Negro mecca, 90-91. For similar reactions in Detroit, see Katzman, op.cit., 146-147.
130. Greater New York Federation of Churches, op.cit., 22. A similar conclusion was reached by Mays and Nicholson, op.cit., 98-99, 115.
131. Ira E. Harrison, Storefront church as a revitalization movement. (In Nelsen et al. eds., op.cit., 240-244).

132. Storefront churchgoers were thus free to attend both a large institutional church and the more intimate storefront. Miles Mark Fisher, Organized religion and the cults, Crisis 44 (1), January 1937, 9.
133. Charles Edwin Jones, Perfectionist persuasion : the holiness movement and American Methodism 1867-1936, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1974, passim; and Wilson, Religious sects, 54-64.
134. Charles Edwin Jones, op.cit., 5-6, 84-88.
135. Wilson, Religious sects, 57 and 64.
136. The origins of black Holiness churches are, as yet, uncertain: it is not clear whether they arose from evangelisation by white Holiness adherents; were a parallel but independent development within the black community, or a combination of the two. Obviously, the ecstatic worship of the 'folk' church shows tendencies toward sanctification. There is a tantalizing reference in the Atlanta University study, Negro church, to the efforts of an ante-bellum black preacher in southern Virginia to quell the heresy of a "famous fanatical Negro preacher named Campbell, who advocated noise and 'the spirit' against the Bible." W.E.B. Du Bois, ed., Negro church, Atlanta, 1903, 37. The following discussion, however, is taken from James Maynard Shopshire, Socio-historical characterization of the black pentecostal movement in America, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975, 42-51; and Elmer T. Clark, Small sects in America, New York, 1949, 116-121, 128-130.
137. Ibid., 118-119.
138. Shopshire, op.cit., 43-48; and Clark, op.cit., 120-121, 128-129.
139. For a discussion of Pentecostalism see Walter J. Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, London, 1972, passim; and Shopshire, op.cit., passim. See also Bryan Wilson, Religious sects, 66-78.
140. Shopshire, op.cit., 48, 60-63; and Clark, op.cit., 119.
141. Ibid., 117-118; and Wilson, Religious sects, 69.
142. Clark, op.cit., 118; and Hollenweger, op.cit., 404-406.
143. Powdermaker, op.cit., 233-235, 253-256.
144. For Chicago, see Spear, op.cit., 175. The Harlem estimate is based on an analysis of church names in a list of churches in New York World January 9 1927; see also Bain, Storefront churches, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection).
145. Fisher, Organized religion and the cults, op.cit., 10; and Wilson, Religious sects, 59-60.
146. There are descriptions of Elder Lucy's life and church in Cayton and Drake, op.cit., 644-645; Spear, op.cit., 176; and Washington, Black sects and cults, 67.

147. Fauset, op.cit., 13-21.
148. Fisher, Organized religion and the cults, op.cit., 9.
149. New York Amsterdam News October 13 1934 and October 31 1936; and Abram Hill, Elder Horn, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 1, Schomburg Collection).
150. Eye-witness accounts of services at Mother Horn's church in J. Raymond Jones, op.cit., 113-116; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 184-186.
151. Ibid., 186.
152. Clark, op.cit., 117-118, 130. Washington Jnr. glosses over the interracial origins of these churches. Washington Jnr., Black sects and cults, 65. But Shopshire, op.cit., 64-69, 107, recognises them.
153. J. Raymond Jones, op.cit., 113-116; and Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 184-186.
154. Mother Horn established the "Gleaners Aid Home" to care for the jobless and the destitute. She also served free meals to the unemployed. New York Amsterdam News October 13 1934. Elder Solomon Michaux, whose Church of God was in Washington D.C. was the most energetic and imaginative of the sanctified preachers. He was born in Newport News (Va.), entered the ministry in 1917 and set up his church in Washington D.C. in 1928. He regularly preached on the radio; kept four apartment houses to accommodate evicted members of his congregation; ran a free employment bureau; and gave free meals to the unemployed. He was reputed to have the ear of President Roosevelt and was active on behalf of the Democrats. His most ambitious, but unrealised, project was to establish a "National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America". This was to include a Memorial Park at Jamestown (Va.) and a number of five acre plots of farming land which would be operated co-operatively. Eventually, it was to become, in Michaux's words, an "intra-government", taxing blacks in order to build up a black co-operative economy. New York Amsterdam News September 29 1934; New York Times September 9 1934 and October 21 1968; Elder Solomon Michaux, A project to immortalise the Negro gets underway, National Review 20 (1), January 1939, 8, 13; and Elder Solomon Michaux, Program of National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America for setting up an intra-government to relieve the economic condition of the colored race in America, [Washington D.C.?], [1941?], passim. [Typescript in Vertical File on Elder Michaux in Schomburg Collection.]
155. S.P. Fullinwider has detected a similar trend among black intellectuals and spokesmen at this time. It should be said, however, that the undercurrent of belief that he has revealed, although significant, can hardly be regarded as central to black thought, nor can be said to constitute a "racial Christianity" in the sense that he suggests. S.P. Fullinwider, Mind and mood of Black America : twentieth century thought,

- Homewood, Illinois, 1969, 1-71. Compare August Meier, Negro thought in America 1880-1915 : racial ideologies in the age of Booker T. Washington, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1963.
156. Clark, op.cit., 120-121.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid., 151-153. There was also a tendency toward Chosen People beliefs among white Pentecostals. C.T. Parham believed that the Anglo-Saxons were the lost tribes of Israel. Hollenweger, op.cit., 22-23.
159. Parker, op.cit., 80-85. Interestingly, the "white man or mulatto" who claimed to be Jesus Christ, bore, according to Parker's description, a striking resemblance to the Jesus of traditional black conversion testimony, at least in the way he wore his hair: "Long locks of light sandy color were parted in the middle and fell in curls about his shoulders." Ibid., 81.
160. Bishop Henry M. Turner, God is a Negro (In John H. Bracey Jr., August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, eds. Black nationalism in America, New York, 1970, 154-155); and Edwin S. Redkey, Black exodus : Black nationalist and back-to-Africa movements, 1890-1910, London, 1969, 23-46.
161. Harold R. Isaacs, New world of Negro Americans, London, 1964, 149. It is not difficult to find examples of this usage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though applications of the Scriptures differ widely: see, for instance, Henry Highland Garnet describes the greatness of Africa (In Bracey et al. eds., op.cit., 115-120) 120; Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism, London, 1970, 286; and Adam Clayton Powell Snr., Colored man's contribution to Christianity and when it will be made, /pamphlet/, New York, 1919, 2-3.
162. Redkey, op.cit., 106-107; Unfortunately, despite the prominence of black churchmen in the leadership of the emigration movement, Redkey pays little attention to the role of religion in the movement. George Shepperson and other scholars have remarked on the role played by black American missionaries in the development of millennial ideas of racial redemption on the African continent. See George Shepperson, Ethiopianism and African nationalism, Phylon XIV (1), 1953, 9-19; and Shepperson, Nyasaland and the millennium (In Thrupp, ed., op.cit., 144-159) 154.
163. William E. Bittle and Gilbert Geis, Longest way home, Detroit, 1964, 1-20, 165-166.
164. Ibid., 103, 148-152; and see also a description of a stock sale at which there was preaching, song and testimony; and at which Chief Sam "likened himself to a Moses which had come to deliver people from their travail." Ibid., 80.
165. Clark, op.cit., 129.
166. It is strange that, as in slavery, these ideas were never

mobilised in a frontal assault on the social system - although it would seem that all the necessary ideological components of religious revolt were present. Indeed, it is interesting to note that when the Belleville Black Jews evangelised in South Africa, although there was no significant change of doctrine made by the African church, the upshot was a revolutionary movement whose prophet maintained that God had promised him, in a vision, that all the whites would be destroyed. Wilson, Magic and the millennium, 61-63.

167. W.L. Hunter, Jesus Christ had Negro blood in his veins: the wonder of the twentieth century, New York, 1913, passim. Apart from the works mentioned below, speculation about the racial identity of Biblical figures was a standard part of black historical writing at the end of the nineteenth century, although only the most extreme interpretations claimed that Christ himself was black. Meier, op.cit., 51-53, 260-261. Another instance of the claim that Jesus Christ was black is in Arthur A. Anderson: Prophetic liberator of the coloured race demands an indemnity for a separate territory in the United States (In Bracey, Meier and Rudwick, eds., op.cit., 177-187) 178.
168. James Morris Webb, A Black man will be the coming universal King. Proven by biblical history, Chicago, 1919, passim. Webb's pamphlet includes a copy of a letter from Bishop Henry M. Turner expressing agreement with Webb's contention that Solomon and Jesus were black.
169. See, for instance, Joel A. Rogers, Suppression of Negro history, Crisis 47 (5), May 1940, 136; and Joel A. Rogers, 100 amazing facts about the Negro with complete proof, New York, 1970, 6-9, 27-32. An associate of Rogers', John G. Jackson, an avowed rationalist, while arguing against the likelihood of an historic Christ, pushed the race religion thesis further. He argued that Africa was the cradle of all the world's major religions and all the Gods, thus, originally black. See for instance, John G. Jackson, Pagan origins of the Christ myth, New York, 1941, passim. Both of these men were self-educated and both, but especially Rogers, seem to have drawn on the nationalist strain in black religion as well as the nineteenth century black middle-class idea of the "Ethiopian" contribution to civilisation.
170. Ross D. Brown, Afro-American world almanac, Chicago, [1949?], 45-47.
171. Ibid., 51.
172. Hunter, op.cit., 5-8, 14-17.
173. Ibid., 41. Indeed, Hunter claimed that the very survival of blacks through slavery and the severest persecution was, like the suffering Jews before them, evidence of God's partiality. Moreover, a day of justice would come: "This same Jesus to whom Ham was related in the flesh will remember us, and the Lord God is and will be found on the side of right, and right will prevail just as certain as the heavens stand today, and all that is wrong must and will go down. There is no such

thing as the separation of sin from punishment for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, said the Master, and whatsoever a nation soweth is equally true." Ibid., 30.

174. Webb, op.cit., 3-4, 13.
175. Brotz, op.cit., 9. The Washington D.C. group belonged to the Belleville church - the Church of God and Saints in Christ. One of their services is described in J. Raymond Jones, op.cit., 100-104. There were several seemingly related, Black Jewish sects in Harlem in the nineteen-twenties. The two most important were Rabbi Wentworth A. Matthew's Commandment Keepers, Congregation of the Living God and Arnold J. Ford's Beth B'nai Abraham congregation. New York Amsterdam News December 23 1925; New York Sun January 29 1929; and New York Amsterdam News September 24 1930.
176. All of the Black Jews accepted Jesus as a prophet. Fleming Aytes, author of Teaching Black Jew even accepted him as the messiah and said that it was thus blasphemous to worship in the manner of the Old Testament. Fleming Aytes, Teaching Black Jew, New York, 1927, 204.
177. Ibid., 234-235, 243-250; Brotz, op.cit., 41-44; and Fauset, op.cit., 37-38, 40, 73-75.
178. Ibid., 32-40.
179. Aytes, op.cit., 17-66. This is an amazing work arranged in five "books" with short verses. There is no other information about the author save that he was a preacher, born in Richmond (Va.) in 1884. The language of the work is reminiscent of the King James Bible. The repetition of phrases and the strong rhythm of the work suggests that Aytes was more experienced in the spoken word than in the written.
180. Brotz, op.cit., 27-34. The sect's "kosher" rules seem, like the personal conduct disciplines of the Pentecostal churches (and the "evangelical life" disciplines of the Peace Mission), to be intended to preserve adherents from both sickness and sin.
181. This is from an address to the Ethiopian World Federation, a Harlem fund-raising group dedicated to the support of the exiled Haile Selassie, in 1940. Voice of Ethiopia April 30 1940; see also Brotz, op.cit., 22-25.

Rabbi Wentworth A. Matthew's background is unclear. He claimed to have been born in Africa, some reports say Nigeria, others Sierra Leone; and to have been the son of a Falasha father and a Christian mother. His mother took him to the West Indies on his father's death and he came to New York in 1913. However, rival Black Jewish leaders in New York said that, like most of his congregation, he had been born in the West Indies. The Falashas are people living in Ethiopia who practice a form of Judaism. Their religion is ancient and traditional but achieved a great deal of publicity in the United States in the nineteen-twenties when white Jews formed

- an organisation to give them aid. This fitted in neatly with speculations about the original Jews being black and thus many Harlem Black Jews claimed a Falasha background. New York Amsterdam News December 20 1933 and September 19 1936; Odette Harper, Black Jews of Harlem, July 5 1939 and S. Michelson, Black Jews and their synagogues in New York, n.d. (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); Brotz, op.cit., 47-49; and Ottley, New World a'coming, 143-145.
182. Voice of Ethiopia April 30 1940. Rabbi Matthew believed that the name 'Negro' was foretold by Jeremiah when he heard "Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." (Jeremiah 31 : 17) - meaning, explained Rabbi Matthew, "that they are enslaved and called by a new name ('Negro')." Ibid. March 23 and June 1 1940. Fleming Aytes saw the name 'Negro' as a fulfilment of God's word that the Jews "should become an astonishment, a proverb and a by-word" among the nations. Aytes, op.cit., 255.
183. Brotz, op.cit., 26, 32, 34-35; and Ottley, op.cit., 145. Prophet Cherry told his followers to avoid excessive emotion in worship and his Church of God frowned on 'speaking in tongues'. He retained, however, all the Holiness disciplines save that of refraining from alcohol. Fauset, op.cit., 33-34 and 39-40.
184. Baltimore Afro-American February 8 1936; for Church of God and Saints of Christ in Washington, see J. Raymond Jones, op.cit., 100-104; and for Prophet Cherry in Philadelphia, see Fauset, op.cit., 90.
185. Aytes, op.cit., 234-235, 243-250.
186. Brotz, op.cit., 31-32 and 34.
187. See the reprint of Rabbi Matthew's Anthropology of the Ethiopian Hebrews ... in Ibid., 19-22.
188. Rabbi Matthew taught "The Cabbalistic Science of the House of Israel" and awarded his own degrees to proficient students. This "science" included instructions on how to contact the "four cardinal angels" who have power at particular times of the day and night. Ibid., 32-34. Prophet Cherry taught that there were three heavens: one on earth, one in the trees and one in the skies. Fauset, op.cit., 35. The Black Jewish preacher in Jones' description of a service among the Washington D.C. Black Jews, opens, not as traditionally with a Biblical text, but with the parsing of a sentence. J. Raymond Jones, op.cit., 100.
189. This was in fulfilment of Daniel 7 : 27: "And the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Voice of Ethiopia June 22 1940. Matthew saw the hand of God in the European war: he saw the white nations destroying each other and expected the imminent deliverance of blacks. Subsequently, the millennium was put back to the year 2,000 A.D. When an

atomic war would end the present world.

190. Aytes, op.cit., 67-204.
191. Fauset, op.cit., 41. It is probable that the Black Jewish sects and the Islamic sects are related. Often the names that they used were similar. Black Jews in Brooklyn (N.Y.) called their place of worship a "Moorish Zionist Temple", and an Islamic sect with which Drew was associated in Newark was called the "Canaanite Temple." The Islamic element should be regarded as an urban sophistication, since it shows influences outside the teachings of the Christian Bible on which the Southern sects were completely reliant. S. Michelson, Black Jews and their synagogues in New York (In Works Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 2, Schomburg Collection); and National Review 1 (1), September 1923.
192. Fauset, op.cit., 42, 46. The "Holy Koran" was, in fact, a mixture of the Christian Bible, the Koran and the teachings of Marcus Garvey. Bontemps and Conroy, op.cit., 175.
193. Ibid., 175.
194. Fauset, op.cit., 42, 47-51.
195. Fauset noted that although they were avowedly Moslem, the Moorish Americans made a special point of claiming that Jesus was black. He also notes that one of their hymns was "Give me that old-time religion" changed to "Moslem's that old-time religion." Ibid., 47-49.
196. E.U. Essien-Udom, Black nationalism : the rise of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966, 45-47.
197. Interstate Tattler February 18 1932; and McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory; op.cit., June 13 1936, 21-26.
198. Before becoming a preacher, Joe Worlds was said to have been a professional dancer and a peddler of hog maws. Columbia Records were said to have recorded sermons by him. He died, aged seventy-one, in 1936. New York Amsterdam News July 4 1936.
199. Interstate Tattler February 18 1932.
200. New York Amsterdam News July 8 1931; New York Post July 20 1937; New York Sun May 27 1929; New York Times July 20 1937; Abram Hill, Barefoot Prophet, n.d. (In World Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 1, Schomburg Collection); and McKay, Harlem, Negro metropolis, 82. The church with which he was associated in Newark may be the same as the House of God, the Holy Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Grounds of Truth, House of Prayer for All People, founded in 1914 in Washington D.C. by R.A.R. Johnson. See Clark, op.cit., 129.
201. New York Sun May 27 1929.
202. Abram Harris, Barefoot Prophet, n.d. (In Works Progress

- Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 1, Schomburg Collection).
203. Ibid.
204. New York Sun May 27 1929.
205. New York Post July 20 1937; Abram Harris, Barefoot Prophet, n.d. and Theodore Poston, Barefoot Prophet dies, n.d. (In Work Progress Administration in New York City, op.cit., microfilm reel 1, Schomburg Collection).
206. Negro World January 18 1930.
207. Ibid.; Garvey, op.cit., 29-30; and Vincent, op.cit., Appendix 1, 259. See also Martin, op.cit., 71.
208. Garvey, op.cit., 29.
209. Ibid., 128-129. See also similar sentiments in Black Man 2 (8), December 1937, 8, 11-12; and Martin, op.cit., 71.
210. Cronon, op.cit., 178; Martin, op.cit., 71-73; and Vincent, op.cit., 121, 134-136.
211. Cronon, op.cit., 178-181; Martin, op.cit., 72; and Vincent, op.cit., 136. Both McGuire and Garvey were convinced that blacks ought to turn from worship of God as a white man to God as a black man. McGuire said that "the western Negro was the only Negro in the world who accepted the white man's characterization of the devil as being black." Cronon, op.cit., 180. Garvey wrote, in 1935: "Our religion teaches us that all that is good is white, and all that is bad is black, and without question, we accept it as being true. So we think the devil is like us and God is like the other fellow." Black Man 2 (11), December 1935, 17.
212. Cronon, op.cit., 179; Garvey, op.cit., 139-142; and Vincent, op.cit., 125.
213. Cronon, op.cit., 182; and Vincent, op.cit., 136.
214. Ibid., 41, 134. Always present in the U.N.I.A., anti-clericalism and an antipathy to Christianity became most marked during the U.N.I.A's decline.
215. Vincent, op.cit., 134-135. Articles in the Negro World in the early 'thirties demonstrate the speculation about race and Biblical history that must have been common throughout the U.N.I.A's history. From May to November 1931, there were a number of articles written by J. Jackson Tilford entitled, Will Colored races rule the world? Negro World May 9, June 27, October 31 and November 14 1931. J. Milton Batson, in a series of articles on race history in 1930, argued that black people or "Ethiopians", had once ruled the civilized world, but had been cast down by God for ignoring his commandments. They could take comfort, however, from the Biblical promise that "Ethiopia shall soon

- stretch out her hand unto God." Ibid. August 9 and September 27 1930. In 1931, John G. Jackson contributed his speculations on Was Jesus Christ black? Ibid. April 25 1931.
216. Garvey, op.cit., 31-32, 47; and Martin, op.cit., 68-69. There are frequent references in the Negro World to Garvey as a Moses sent by God. As the Reverend C.P. Green told a meeting of New York's Garvey Club in 1930: "Whether we believe it or not, Garvey is a messenger from God to the Sons and Daughters of Ethiopia." Negro World March 8 1930.
217. Cronon, op.cit., 183-184; and Martin, op.cit., 77.
218. Vincent, op.cit., 135.
219. Brotz, op.cit., 11; Garvey, op.cit., 48; and Vincent, op.cit., 135 and 264. The theme of love and reconciliation is a frequent one in Garvey's speeches and hymns: see, for instance, Garvey, op.cit., 21, 54, 286 and 289.
220. Ibid., 140-141.
221. Ibid., 201-202. Reverend Porter believed that Christianity was a revolutionary religion. He urged blacks to respect themselves and their race; to recognise their inner divinity; and to fight, with confidence, for their rightful place in the world. As the Garvey movement in New York disintegrated, he announced various schemes of his own to attract disillusioned Garveyites. See Kontakt and Universal Kontakt, the news-sheets of his organisations from 1932-1934. In Schomburg Collection.
222. New York Amsterdam News November 23 1932.
223. Negro World February 28 and March 28 1931.
224. Ibid. April 4 1931.
225. Black Man 1 (3), July 1935. Garvey, of course, was not above messianic rhetoric. Cronon, op.cit., 136-137 and Martin, op.cit., 68. Nor did his reluctance to assume the mantle of the messiah prevent his followers from bestowing it. In 1931 New York's Tiger Division of the U.N.I.A. "canonized" Garvey's portrait: Negro World January 24 1931. George Rudé notes that French Revolutionary heroes were similarly honoured. Rudé, op.cit., 233.
226. Queen Esther, of Port Limon, Costa Rica, believed that: "The reign of Christ has begun, and every nation must be under their vine and fig tree ... Africa for the Africans, Palestine for the Jews. This is the Word of God. Let brotherly love continue. I am the bride of Christ and I am now sitting with him on his throne." Black Man 2 (7), August 1937.
227. Negro World April 15 1933.
228. For the most credible and detailed description of Father

- Divine's life see McKelway and Liebling, Who is this king of glory? op.cit., June 13 1936, passim.
229. Rozier, op.cit., 8.
230. Baird T. Spalding, Life and teachings of the masters of the Far East, San Francisco, 1924, passim. especially 1, 6-7, 35-37, 40, 44-45, 60-66.
231. Robert Collier, Life magnet, New York, 1928, passim.
232. New Day 2 (15), April 14 1938.
233. Bruce Barton, Man nobody knows : a discovery of the real Jesus, Indianapolis, 1924, passim.
234. New Day 2 (15), April 14 1938.
235. Ibid. 4 (31), August 1 1940.
236. New York Herald Tribune April 23 1935; and New Day 4 (31), August 1 1940.
237. Interstate Tattler January 28 1932.
238. Ibid. February 18 1932.
239. Ibid. February 25 1932.
240. Ibid. March 10 1932.
241. Parker, op.cit., 26. Reverend Bolden was born in Maryland in 1878 and was assigned to Mother Zion in 1909. In 1914 he left to form the Emmanuel A.M.E. in Harlem. The church did not attract many adherents but Bolden was active in New York City politics. He was twice an unsuccessful candidate for the State Assembly. He was an extremely conservative man. He died in 1940. Welty, op.cit., 112-116. There are indications that Father Divine had once been a Methodist. It is possible that he may have once been a member of Bolden's congregation. In 1939 the Peace Mission was visited by Reverend L.S. Franklin Miller who wanted Father Divine's photograph and a message for inclusion in "Who's Who in the A.M.E. church." New Day 3 (48), November 30 1939.
242. Bishop Evans was, presumably, a storefront preacher ... Ibid. 2 (24), June 16 1938.
243. Looking Forward 1 (6), August 1934.
244. Reverend John T. Gillard, Ye gods and little fishes, Shield, April 1937. Clipping In Vertical File Father Divine in Schomburg Collection.
245. Bueher, Harlem's god, op.cit., 1590-1593; and Mead, God in Harlem, op.cit., 1133-1135.
246. Howell's letter, op.cit., 1332-1333. For Howell, see above, Chapter 1, footnote 84, p. 56.

247. World Herald 1 (21), April 8 1937.
248. Hoshor, op.cit., 96.
249. New York Amsterdam News June 6 1936.
250. William Lloyd Imes, Black pastures : an American pilgrimage in two centuries, Nashville, Tennessee, 1957, 85-86. See also Harlem Liberator July 8 1933.
251. New Day 4 (18), May 2 1940. Father Divine and Reverend Johnson were drawn together by the New York City Police Department. Johnson was a police chaplain and his interest in Father Divine was increased by the Peace Mission's co-operation with the police. New Day 4 (17), April 25 1940. The contrasting attitudes of Reverend Imes and Reverend Johnson are interesting. Both were pastors of prestigious, restrained and dignified churches and both were progressive black spokesmen, interested in political, social and economic questions. But they differed absolutely in their opinion of Father Divine. The roots of this difference can, perhaps, be perceived in their receptions of Green pastures, a Broadway production purporting to portray the relationship of God and man through the Southern black folk idiom. Imes rejected the play outright. He believed that it was an attempt "to poke fun at all religion, and at Black Religion in particular." Johnson, however, welcomed it as "not only a good play, [but]... a great one" in which "the poetry, the humor and the charm" of the "Negro idiom" were well employed. Those who rejected the play out of hand, Johnson said, were like those blacks who rejected the Spirituals - "unimaginative and snobbish" - men who sought to "stifle or ignore" the black folk tradition. Perhaps it was Johnson's lively appreciation of this tradition that enabled him to accept Father Divine. Imes, op.cit., v - vi; and John H. Johnson, Harlem, a place of adventure, 42-45.
252. New York Amsterdam News February 3 1932; and Spoken Word 1 (11), December 29 1934; and 1 (15), January 26 1935.
253. "It is the poor practice of the Principle of Christianity in the churches which FATHER DIVINE is decrying and NOT the Fundamental Principle." Ibid.
254. Black Man 1 (3), July 1935; and 2 (3), September - October 1936.
255. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 261.
256. New Day 2 (15), April 14 1938.
257. Pollard, Harlem as is, vol. 1, 221.
258. New Day 1 (26), September 16 1937.
259. Spoken Word 2 (18), January 28 1936.
260. Black Man 2 (3), September - October 1936. See also Bobbie Sweet's letter to Marcus Garvey, dated September 6 1935, in New Day 4 (21), May 23 1940.

261. New Day 2 (17), April 28 1938.