

# What Is the New Negro?

(From Christian Recorder)

**EVERY** now and then we hear some one talk about "The New Negro."

Undoubtedly there is a "New Negro"—in the making, if not in actuality. What is he? Rather let us ask first what was the old Negro? The old Negro was a slave, dependent upon the white people for his food and his thinking. Because he was a slave and dependent for his food and his thinking, his occupations and his education were limited to the white man's whim.

When Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he made possible a New Negro—a free Negro. But freedom was not entirely new to the Negro, as there were in 1860 some half million free Negroes.

To our way of thinking the New Negro, if there is such, is a free Negro, dependent upon himself for his food and thinking—a Negro who has the ideal of a spiritually and economically independent group working in harmony with and being a part of the larger American group, who has thrown off the slave spirit.

The New Negro is possessed of a new spirit.

As Bishop Ransom said in his recent speech here the thing which oppresses the Negro is the spirit of slavery in the Negro and not the white people. And what the Negro needs is a new spirit of freedom, of manhood, of independence. Now getting a diploma from some university does not necessarily give one a new spirit. We know many converted Negroes who have been so puffed up by a diploma that they think they are better than all other Negroes, and their chief grievance seems to be that the white people won't accept them as social equals. They don't care a rap about the race, and are sorry they are identified with it. Nearly every large community has a few of these. Their spirit is the same old spirit of slavery where the housemaid thought she was better than all other Negroes and displaced them and where the mulatto concubine's only regret was that she was not white.

Again there are Negroes who seek to impress white people to get donations from them for the great work of "uplift" they are accomplishing among their "down-trodden race." And every move they make is to keep in the good graces of and on the payroll of some rich white people. These parasites are not "new Negroes." They are a new edition of the old time slave Negro. The New Negro is a Negro who believes in himself as a child of God, a brother to all men and who is striving as best he can to realize that brotherhood by doing his part—he has been born again, and no longer has the spirit of slavery.

1st. He believes in self-support. He supports his family; and helps to build a foundation for racial self-support. To do this, he believes it is not only necessary to talk "race pride" but to act it. Hence he buys from a Negro grocer wherever he can; he goes to a Negro church; he puts his money in a Negro bank; he has insurance in a Negro insurance company; he acts race pride. Now this Negro may not be an "A. B." from Yale or Princeton or Columbia, but he is new. And only by his kind will the Negro ever come to self-support and such a place in the sun. Talk won't do the work.

2. The New Negro is a pioneer for his people. The old Negro looks for sure support. He has the spirit of the slave. He may boast of his high education, but he is not taking any chances of making a living. That's the "old" slave Negro. But the new Negro launches out into business. (He may fail and the "old" Negro may laugh at him.) The

charity of white people.

The New Negro has a new spirit, not necessarily a diploma, a white collar, a salary from charity organization—he believes in God and himself and his future and is hard at work.

New Negro encourages the pioneer in other lines. He is willing to "take a chance" to build for the future. The splendid businesses we have, built up largely by quiet determined pioneers, were built by "New Negroes." We like to think of John Merrick of North Carolina as a "New Negro." Mr. Merrick would have resented the term. For the "educated" Negroes who are doing nothing had appropriated it. But while Merrick had little education, he had the new spirit. He was a pioneer. He saw the possibilities of the future; he was willing to take the risk. He did so. He succeeded, and the wonderful North Carolina Mutual is the result. He was supported by New Negroes, some of them "educated," most of them uneducated, but all of them born of new spirit.

3. The New Negro thinks straight. Because he is born of the new spirit of freedom, he is determined to have freedom in all its phases. He is willing to bear all its responsibilities. He wants all of its privileges. He refuses to believe he is different from or inferior to any other of God's children. But he is not raising too big a row about it. He is like a little brother of ten, who knows he is potentially equal to his brother of 15 but he can't whip him. But he also knows that if he studies hard, works and develops himself, the time will come when he will be actually equal to the older brother in every respect. But he will not secure that equality by talk, but work.

The New Negro believes in God. He may be gradually changing his theology. It is perhaps wise that he should. But he believes in God. A hundred years ago a New Negro walked out of St. George's Church, Philadelphia, and preferred to worship in an old blacksmith shop which was bought by black people than in a fine house for which he did not pay. He believed that self-support is of God. A hundred years have passed and the influence of Richard Allen still persists. He did not yield one inch. He believed that God was the father of all and all are equal. His children. This meant equality in privilege and equality in responsibility. And this church has attracted more "new" Negroes than any church supported from the