

# ABSTRACT

## HENRY H. PROCTOR: FIRST BLACK PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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This paper is an historical examination of the contributions made by the Rev. Dr. Henry H. Proctor, the first African American pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Georgia from 1894 to 1920. The study emphasizes Dr. Proctor's multifaceted career as pastor of First Congregational Church. First Congregational Church, with Henry H. Proctor as its pastor, sought to overcome the recognizable environmental influences and pressures which the evening years of the nineteenth century had brought upon blacks and whites in Atlanta. His institutional church was a direct result of Atlanta's changing role in the New South. His church permeated the life of the city as no other church in Atlanta at this time.

Attention is given to his role as a model for black leadership for his church and its surrounding community. The major focus, however, is on his major achievements as a missionary to the South, community builder in Atlanta, and church administrator. His flexibility on racial and educational issues; impressive oratory; energetic advocacy of civil rights; discreet negotiations demeanor; and charismatic appeals to African Americans and whites; his sensitivities to the social, spiritual, and cultural needs of African Americans in Atlanta won him a considerable following within the city of Atlanta and the world as well. His successes are analyzed in relation to his impact on the Atlanta community and African Americans throughout the nation. The effects of his growing power within the Congregational Church bring to light some interesting parallels between his mission to the South and his missionary work throughout the nation. This paper suggests that Proctor played a central role in sustaining the efforts of the institutional church in Atlanta. His church became the cornerstone of social and spiritual development for African Americans in Atlanta. His legacy spanned some twenty-five years and embraced a philosophy that was geared to solving the great racial problems in the South.