Henry Hugh Proctor: the Atlanta years, 1894-1920

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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

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HENRY HUGH PROCTOR: THE ATLANTA YEARS, 1894-1920

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This study is an historical examination of the contributions made by 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, as community developer, church administrator, church builder, army chaplain, civil rights activist, educator, and author of religious publications. Preliminary chapters examine Proctor's early life and development in the backwoods of Tennessee, his early education, and his conversion to the ministry. Separate chapters are devoted to his contributions, within a hostile
southern society, as an instrument cultivating harmony between the races in Atlanta. Attention is given to his role as a model for Black leadership for his church and its surrounding community. The 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 study 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.
HENRY HUGH PROCTOR:
THE ATLANTA YEARS, 1894-1920

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ARTS IN HUMANITIES

BY
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CHAPTER 1
COMING OF AGE IN TENNESSEE

Determining the impact of any one individual on historical events is a difficult task. Nevertheless, the work of Henry H. Proctor as pastor of the First Congregational Church during the years of 1894-1920 suggests that he may have had a significant impact on the development of the African American community in Atlanta, Georgia. Working with the community through the congregational church, he became a leader in the cultural, social and spiritual self-development of the African American. Community leadership among African Americans then, as well as now, often was developed through the work in churches. Traditionally, throughout the country, the Black church has been a powerful force in the development of the intellectual, social, and cultural lives of African Americans.

The black experience with Christianity pre-dates the entrenchment of slavery in the United States. As early as 1693, there is evidence of a black religious cooperative in Massachusetts which was also a mutual benefit association. The birth of the independent black church, however, was nearly a century later. It came forth in the ideological climate of economic and political independence fostered by
Baptist and Methodist revivalism during the Great Awakening of the 18th century. The origin of the independent black church was urban, and it was the black urban freedmen who directly experienced the contradictions between the idealistic values of the United States' constitution and the real status of African American people in American society and American churches. The ideological climate provided the basis of legitimacy for the freedmen's claims to economic and political security and religious integrity. Their organizational initiatives began the tradition of independent black churches as instruments to realize political, economic, and social power for black people.1

The black church furnished intellectual stimulation, religious education, and, most of all, it provided a structured social life in which blacks could give expression to their deepest feelings and, at the same time, achieve status. The church was the first community or public organization that blacks actually owned and completely controlled. It is possibly still the most thoroughly owned and controlled public institution of the race. To a status-starved people the independent African American church symbolized the rise of the first free African American institution which in many respects was legitimized before the African American family.2

Black preachers have traditionally become leaders within the black community because of their talents and
abilities to govern men. Very often they are self-made men. The pioneer minister of the early churches was not only responsible for the spiritual needs of his congregation, but was also a primary force in promoting its material welfare. By working with abolitionist societies, by helping to sponsor the Underground Railroad, and by directing a number of forums for the voicing of black protest sentiment, the black minister managed to establish his church as the focal point of every significant movement designed to improve the political and social status of his congregation.3

In an effort to bring congruency to a rapidly growing urban population and to effectively adapt to the pulse of the cities as blacks arrived from the rural communities of the South, the institutional churches developed. The ministers of these churches believed that the first responsibility of the church was to provide a ministry of social service. A few large urban congregations, such as R. C. Ransom’s Institutional AME Church in Chicago, Henry H. Proctor’s Congregational Church in Atlanta, and the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Adam Clayton Powell Sr., in New York, became, in effect, social welfare agencies serving a broad spectrum of the needs of the burgeoning urban populations.4

Several scholars have attempted to show the influence of the black church on the lives of African Americans.
There have even been studies made on the history of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta. No extended study, however, has been done on Dr. Henry Hugh Proctor, the first black pastor of Atlanta's First Congregational Church. The works of his institutional church between 1894 and 1920 need further investigation especially as they represent his efforts within a hostile society to cultivate harmony between the races in Atlanta. Beginning with a small church community of one hundred, Dr. Proctor's membership increased to a thousand members by the first decade of the twentieth century. His church became one of the cornerstones and an embodiment of divine-human community building for blacks in Atlanta. His legacy in Atlanta, spanning some twenty-five years, exemplified a commitment to leadership which played an active role in the search for interracial cooperation throughout the country.

Henry Proctor was born, the son of former slaves, on December 8, 1868 on a small farm on the outskirts of Fayetteville, Tennessee. This was the same year W.E.B. Du Bois was born and five years after President Abraham Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all slaves held in bondage by the rebelling states to be "forever free."

Proctor's family resided in a small cabin which stood recessed from the main road. Surrounding this small cabin lay deep gullies cut by the violent flow of water which
cascaded from the distant and soaring blue hills of Tennessee. Those hills reflected the setting of a long line of Proctors, ancestors whose roots were firmly entrenched in the slaveholding South. His father, Richard Proctor, was born a slave in South Carolina, and his mother, Hannah Murray Proctor, began her life as a slave in Mississippi. They met in Alabama and, before the Civil War, had produced a family of four children, two boys and two girls. Henry, born after the Civil War, was the youngest child. His timely birth was significant to the Proctor clan because he had escaped the grip which slavery held on many blacks born earlier in the South. Henry Proctor was born free.

Richard and Hannah Proctor lived the life of small farmers who, after the Civil War, began to exercise their new found freedom. Like most blacks of this era, the Proctors seemed to be always in a state of perpetual motion, always searching and hoping for a suitable place to feed and raise their five children. Moving was a typical pattern for newly freed slaves according to Booker T. Washington. He explained that slaves immediately after freedom usually chose two new options: "changing their names and leaving the vicinity of their old plantations." Like most black families after the war the Proctors gave in to the natural desire to do things and go places that had been impossible for them before. They decided to take time to test the unstable boundaries of their new condition and
moved very cautiously, always carefully testing the parameters of their freedom.

Shortly after the Civil War, and the emancipation that followed, the Proctors decided to move to Tennessee. Moving this time was a result of the Proctors' desire to be close to a town where their children might receive an education, something of which the two of them had been deprived. Moreover, Tennessee offered a place of refuge and tranquility for many blacks. A large proportion of the state was professedly loyal to the Union cause, and in most places federal laws remained in force. The services of benevolent societies were also offered before the end of the war for the education of blacks.

The Proctors' two-room cabin sat in the midst of a deep forest of beech trees. As a boy, young Proctor's earliest memories were of their double cabin among the beech trees. Both the cabin and the surrounding forest seemed enchanted and tranquil to Henry. Here in the forest young Proctor embraced nature and life with a respect and compassion that enhanced his early boyhood.

There in the forest I played alone, and was happy all the day long, until my brothers and sisters returned from the field. Saturday was a memorable day, when my sisters would do the baking for the Sabbath. How well I remember the cookies they made in the shape of animals, and hid away until Sunday! Sabbath was the day when company came, and I recall how I stood at the door of the cabin and wistfully watched the preachers tell stories and eat the last piece of fried chicken.
During these formative years, deep impressions were forged into the consciousness and character of young Proctor. His experiences during these years molded this boy from the backwoods into the man he would later become. These impressions were often results of his early experiences of awe of the natural world. He remembered a time when he walked in the fields with his father, and both, being overcome by a storm, were forced to find shelter in an old unused house. Lying there beside his father, with the thunder and the roar of the wind in his ears and the flash of the lightening, he became, he said, aware of a power greater than he and his father. He later believed that nature had given him his theatre and that God had supplied the direction for his life’s journey.

As early as he could remember, Proctor felt his life was influenced by Christian teachings. His parents were devout Christians, and seldom did any meal go without the traditional blessing of thanks to the Lord. Family worship was an integral part of Proctor’s young life; the family attended church services "three times on the Sabbath: morning, noon, and night." He remembered how irksome these continuous services were, but he claimed that later he realized they had supplied some of the greatest experiences in his life.

Proctor’s parents, because of their social and religious responsibilities, were unable to watch over young
Henry during the daytime hours. Most of the time he was left alone in the forest where he played, using his curiosity and imagination to amuse himself all day. His mother often snatched a few moments for his care in the early morning hours before her work began, and at night after her day's work was done. His duties at the age of eight included going to the mill, minding the cow, hoeing the cotton, husking the corn, and cutting the grass.

Nevertheless, there was time for sport, for hunting, fishing, skating and swimming. According to Proctor his early lifestyle produced delight and healthy growth:

The corn-field was my gymnasium, the river my bath-tub, and the awe-inspiring sky of stars my moving picture. I had plain food, plenty of sleep, and an abundance of fresh air—things for which I have ever been grateful.11

Without question, Proctor viewed his early life in the backwoods of Tennessee as days of joy. Interspersed with the joy, however, were days of fear. He also recalled the stories that were told around the fire about ghosts, stories which at that time many people believed. These tales stirred such fear inside him that he was afraid to go to the back of the room to go to bed. He also remembered listening to the startling tales about the Ku Klux Klan [KKK]. He explained how the Klan was organized just a few miles from his birthplace, in a small town known as Pulaski. As he grew older and wiser, he realized that
ghosts were only illusions, but the KKK remained a grim fact of life.12

However, in spite of these unfavorable circumstances, there always seemed time to forge the bond between father and son. The first deep and memorable moments of young Proctor's life were made in the company of his father. His father would often walk with him through the fields engaging in father and son chats. Their shared experiences with nature: storms, droughts, harvests not only seemed to bond them to each other but to a sense of a power greater than themselves.13

Besides religion, education was also a major concern for blacks after the Civil War and most were determined to attain in some way enough education to enable them to read books, particularly the Bible, to write letters to loved ones, and to read the daily newspapers. It was not by any means peculiar to find the very young and the very old both enthusiastic about becoming literate.14

Many times the same schoolhouse was used to teach both the young and old. Arrangements were usually made for students to be separated according to age groups, but there were times when both young and old together shared the same classroom. Blacks felt that education was essential to the exercising of their new found freedoms. They believed that education lifted the veil of ignorance from their eyes and
helped to erase the stigma of slavery from their human dignity. One of the teachers from the American Missionary Association when writing to some of the contributing churches who supported the work of the freedmen schools told of her surprise at the educational dedication of these former slaves:

From all the accounts of Freedmen’s schools which I had heard and read previous to coming here, I expected to find them anxious to learn but after all, I confess I was unprepared for the amount of zeal manifested by most of them for an education. I can say as one did of old, ‘The half had not been told me.’ I am surprised each day by some new proof of their anxiety to learn.

Nearly all ages, colors, conditions and capacities are represented in my school. Ages ranging from five to sixty-five; Colors from jet-black with tight curling hair to pale brunette with waving brown hair.

Some, a few of them could read quite readily in a second reader and many more knew the alphabet and were trying patiently to spell out short easy words, while by far the greater number could not distinguish a letter.

Education had been denied to blacks as slaves. As freedmen, they made it one of their first priorities. Henry belonged to the first generation of blacks who enjoyed educational opportunities as a right rather than a privilege. He viewed going to school as a convenient escape from the farm and daily chores. Accompanying his brothers and sisters to school allowed him the freedom to explore new territory. At that time, he failed to realize that the opportunities he took for
granted were for his ancestors, former slaves, the sweet privilege denied them for hundreds of years.17

Henry’s lack of appreciation for these privileges was remedied by his mother. She made him reexamine his complaints about going to school. She helped define for him the dramatic historical significance of an entire race going to school for the first time.18

Proctor’s first school days came at a place called Clifton, five miles from their Tennessee home. His description of this building indicated that it was typical of the schools of that era.

The school was a log cabin by the roadside on the outskirts of a little town called Boon’s Hill. It was well ventilated; one could throw a cat between the logs, and never touch a hair. It was admirably suited for the study of astronomy; for one could look up through the roof and see the glory of God reflected in the heavens. The benches were made of rails, with standards for legs. They were innocent of backs, and desks were unknown. The method used was antiquated, with little attraction for the youthful mind.19

It was in an institution such as this that Henry Proctor began his education. He learned the rudiments of reading and writing despite these unfavorable circumstances.

It was also near this school that Henry practiced the art of public speaking at the foot of a large tree near the church. It was common to end school for the year with a closing exhibition featuring many of the students on the program. His first speech created within him a great
appetite for the undivided attention of the crowd. His elocution and poise would open many doors for him later in his life.

This same school was also used for religious services which allowed young Proctor the opportunity of hearing his first sermon.

I shall never forget the weird impressions made upon my mind by the lugubrious tone of the minister, as he described the coming judgement, which I supposed was just at hand. I could not understand how everyone seemed so unconcerned after what the minister had said. I took him literally and seriously, but alas!20

On the Sabbath people usually gathered for these meetings, meetings which often included the preaching of a sermon by the minister followed by a social gathering. This social and spiritual convention allowed people from far and near the opportunity to come together in fellowship. Sometimes the number of people attending the preaching was minimal; however, the greater part of a community often took advantage of the occasion for social purposes. People from all walks of life attended these meetings; many used these congregations as a time to share in gossip, to get married, to be baptized, or just to seek companionship.

Among those who gathered for social purposes were two young brothers named Kelsoe. It was not strange during these times for people to be known by just one name. In many instances these singular names were carried down from
slavery when the slaves inherited the name of their masters. There were also several occasions when the master gave the slave only one name, making it easier for the owner to remember—a practice which also stripped the slaves of any paternal connection of their own.

The Kelsoe brothers commanded the attention of many members of the congregation because of their abilities to read and write letters for those who could not. For this reason they distinguished themselves from the others and people gathered about them in large numbers. As they performed the special services requested of them, whether they were reading or writing, they evoked wonder in their audience. Henry remembered how he envied these boys, and wished he were one of them. As they completed their gratuitous deeds and rode out of sight, they appeared to young Proctor to carry away with them the interest and desires of all who had gathered. The vision of these men and their impact on the people who surrounded them impressed Proctor and reminded him of his simple life as a humble boy in the country backwoods. He fed his imagination with the vision of the Kelsoe boys and began to become quite dissatisfied with his lot. Although the early years of young Proctor's life were filled with emotional fuel that stirred his imagination, these years were also full of hard work.
Nevertheless, life was rich with diverse experiences for Henry. At the age of twelve, he accompanied his father on a twelve mile journey that drastically changed his life. Prior to this journey, living in the backwoods, he had received no opportunity to explore territory outside of the immediate vicinity of his home. The impressions of that journey to the city created a thrill within him that he never forgot. For a boy whose life was centered on his family and the forest, the opportunity to see the city for the first time aroused strong curiosity. The city appeared as a labyrinth of streets, vehicles and a multitude of people, creating a dynamic new vision of life for this country boy. Proctor felt that this initial vision of the small city of Fayetteville, with its two thousand inhabitants, generated in him a restlessness and a dissatisfaction with his life. Seeing the city for the first time stirred in him a passion which he had always felt for the crowd.

Shortly after this visit, the Proctors moved to Fayetteville. In the South as a whole, by 1900, almost seventy-six percent of the African American farmers were sharecroppers or tenants. The state of Tennessee represented a small portion of the African American who were unable to own workable farmland or even the houses in which they lived. As a rule, African American farmers not only worked the land they did not own, but also worked it
with plows and mules they did not own. A large proportion of landlords in Tennessee in 1880 used the wage system. The typical wage was $8.00 to $12.00 monthly. Daily wages were usually fifty cents with board or seventy-five cents without board. Because of economic exploitation, African Americans typically at this time moved from one Southern rural locality to another.

The Proctor's decision to move typified that of many African-Americans who at the time reached out for values in life denied them in slavery. Most important was the thirst for an education. The Proctors assumed that the city offered better and more innovative educational opportunities. Moreover, the idea that their children would be exposed to better opportunities than they themselves had enjoyed seemed to spur many black parents to abandon the backwoods and migrate to the cities. Many of these blacks had spent their lives in the service of others and were now ready to spend the remaining portions of their lives working for their children. The children of Richard and Hannah Proctor would not be denied the opportunity to acquire the education that had been denied the parents.

In the urban South the educational facilities were a vast improvement over those of the country schools. Two factors in this new school environment impressed Henry. The school term extended over a nine-month period, instead of the three months allocated in the country schools; and
the teachers were better trained to instruct their students. Proctor completed the common school curriculum in the city public school and because of his outstanding progress eventually was awarded the opportunity, at about fourteen, of becoming the principal of the same school he had once attended. This opportunity allowed Proctor to teach the children of his former classmates. But before his appointment to the position of principal of the common school, Proctor was first required to complete a short apprenticeship. The apprenticeship involved one year of teaching school in the country districts where teachers were sorely needed.26

Henry Proctor's teaching experiences mirrored those of many of the dedicated teachers who came South after the war to instruct the freedmen. At that time there was only a small cadre of black missionary teachers who constituted the first wave of African American teachers migrating into the South. Their numbers, however, continued to increase and by World War I, they comprised practically the entire teaching force at all levels. The development of teachers was one of the major accomplishments of African American education during that period. It appears that more of the graduates of the industrial schools and land grant colleges became teachers as opposed to entering trades or farming.27

Another of those teachers was W.E.B. DuBois who shared an enriching experience that was shared by all those who
ventured into the backwoods of the South to spread education. For Proctor, as well as DuBois and others, this was also a spiritual journey. There was a reciprocity of giving. They brought their gifts to the those in need, and they received inspiration from these people of the South, who had never before seen the inside of a school. DuBois as well as other teachers of the time touched the lives of the downtrodden of mankind ranging from barefooted dwellers on dirt floors, with patched rags for clothes, to rough, hardworking farmers.28

Accommodations for these country teachers were primitive. In fact, Proctor remembered places he stayed where "very frequently one would be disturbed in the night by the scarlet ramblers; they seemed all the more carnivorous in those rooms kept especially for company, and they seemed to enjoy strange flesh."29 Yet the custom of boarding from house to house while teaching gave each individual a sense of family, that extended family, which had been all but destroyed by slavery. The teachers touched the soul of a new generation of African-Americans. Proctor was one of those who grew from the experiences.

DuBois was another who recognized his experiences in the rural South as a journey into another world, a community which characterized the race problem at its nadir. He stood witness to poverty, ignorance, the ugly drudgery of country life in its simplest form:
There was among us but a half-awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth or wedding; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages; and, above all, from the sight of the veil that hung between us and opportunity.30

Henry Proctor's first teaching position was at a little school "out of Pea Ridge, where he taught for the sum of twenty-five dollars per month."31 Proctor never forgot the experience of teaching in the country schools. This opportunity not only allowed him the chance to forge new and intimate relationships with the families with whom he boarded, but also it gave him the satisfaction of knowing that his effort assisted his people at a critical juncture. He helped blacks who came under his instruction conquer their ignorance, thereby allowing them hope for the future.

At this time, Proctor also experienced an awakening of his spiritual consciousness in the form of his conversion to Christianity. From his earliest recollections, he recalled the frequency with which his family attended church services. However, he always felt in the dark, alone and confused about the true nature of a good Christian. He often anxiously awaited the day that he too would be touched by the hand of the Holy Spirit. Always, he sat in the front row of the church to await the day of his conversion. As his enthusiasm began to fade, his prayers were one day finally answered in one of those
country churches. He sensed a transformation, and, thus, began a new phase of his life. The impact of this new spirituality, he suggested, was more than he had anticipated. He, at once, felt himself embracing new sensitivities. As he sat there in his pew, he suddenly became more open to his surroundings and rediscovered all of their natural beauty. He recalled that at that moment, he found himself literally in love with everyone, including nature and God.32

This new spirituality awakened in Proctor a larger sense of possibility for his life. He claimed that new dreams, new visions opened up because of his conversion. One of these dreams was to further his education at the best institution possible. At first, Central Tennessee College at Nashville seemed to be that institution. However, while attending Central, he learned of a school considered by many to be a much better college, Fisk University. Fisk was said to offer a more diverse and complete education than any other black college at that time. Because he felt his original vision demanded that he always seek the best possible education for himself, Proctor made preparations to transfer to Fisk the next fall. He made plans to save the money he would make from teaching in the summer and use it to finance his new arrangements. However, he received his first great disappointment in life when the bank in which he deposited
his savings met with financial failure. Undaunted by this calamity, Henry headed for Flsk University anyway with only the twenty-five dollars he had saved from his last month's teaching salary.33

Proctor discovered at Fisk a vastly different world opening before his eyes. He had come with his meager funds not knowing what reception to expect, and much to his surprise, he was received quite cordially. In the tradition of the school, he joined a cadre of students like himself who were given the chance to educate their minds in exchange for their labor. Being no stranger to hard work, Proctor felt at home with this new arrangement. His duties at the college included everything from digging ditches to preaching at Sunday school. As time progressed, though, Proctor discovered that his toll alone was inadequate to cover his total financial fees at Fisk. It was then that he learned his education was also being funded by generous contributions from friends from the North, who gave their time and money to the education of blacks in the South. This generosity affected Proctor's sense of appreciation for the vision of selected people:

Just after the Civil War a wonderful thing took place in our land. Far-seeing men realized that if the newly emancipated people were to become real American citizens, the battle of bullets must be followed by the battle of books, the era of destruction by that of construction. Accordingly, forts were turned into school sites, and officers jumped from their saddles to become schoolmasters. . . . and, in the spirit of the Samaritan, crusaders
set the millions of freedmen on the road toward reading, reasoning, and righteousness.34

As a gesture of gratitude, Proctor was allowed to personally acknowledge the contributions of these friends from the North by addressing them at the church in Vermont whence the donations for his education had come.35

Proctor's days at Fisk were dramatically different from his other student experiences. He felt that Fisk was one of the best equipped institutions in the South. Its academic programs, its students, and, above all, the leadership of the faculty allowed the institution to mold the mind and spirits of the "talented tenth" of the black race.36

The faculty at Fisk played a central role in Proctor's overall development and success. Two of these faculty members, Helen C. Morgan and Anna Cahill, both white women, stood out in his memory. "Helen Morgan, who came from Oberlin, was the first woman in America to have been a professor in a coeducational institution,"37 and Anna Cahill, later Mrs. Henry S. Bennett, "was known for her travel through the North seeking funds for worthy students. Through her efforts many young men and women were able to stay in school and complete their education."38

Proctor felt that Fisk had some other distinct advantages over other institutions; "one of them was the social fellowship with the best young minds of the race. Another attraction was the emphasis placed on music
The fame of the Fisk Jubilee Singers was known throughout the world, and the school's interpretation of black music making was unique. Its Mozart society had become respected for its classical renditions, singing works like The Messiah, the Elijah, and Mozart's Twelfth Mass. DuBois remembered how the famed Jubilee Singers once hid in a Brooklyn organ loft, "lest pious Congregationalists see their Black faces before they heard their heavenly voices." Despite the racial efforts to dampen their success, the Jubilee Singers were responsible for bringing back to Fisk enough money to build Jubilee Hall.

Fisk seemed to attract promising students from all parts of the country. Among the young minds attending Fisk was W.E.B. DuBois, known by most as a brilliant student whose career after Fisk was of interest to all who had known him. DuBois and Proctor had sparred several times on the debating team at Fisk and each had earned the respect of the other. Young black women were also attracted to Fisk in search of a sound education. One woman, Anna Murray, whom Proctor remembered vividly was later to become Mrs. Booker T. Washington. She also had taught in the country school districts during the summer months. Her spirit and dedication "inspired everyone who came in contact with her."
Of the many people Proctor encountered during his days at Fisk, none had the impact upon his life as did Professor Henry S. Bennett and President Erastus M. Cravath. Professor Bennett was the university preacher, and his sermons created for Proctor the vision of pursuing a career in the ministry. Bennett's sermons and consultations, Proctor insisted, laid the foundation for his desire to preach the gospel. It was from him that Proctor received his first lessons in theology and elocution. Because of his envisioned mission, the study of elocution was important for Proctor. African American ministers knew their constituents were largely the unschooled masses for whom the spoken word was the major means of education. Molefi Asante, in his study of the interplay of African traditions in America, further explained the significance of the oral tradition during this period:

Unable to read or write English and forbidden by law (in most states) to learn, the African in America early cultivated the natural fascination with the word, and demonstrated a singular appreciation for the subtleties, pleasures, and potentials of the spoken word . . . . Thus, in part because of strict anti-literacy laws during slavery, vocal communion became, for a much greater proportion of blacks than whites, the fundamental medium of communication . . . . Black gospel preachers and blues singers share in the same experiential spontaneity when they rely on vocal creativity to transform the audience.43

Professor Bennett was the dominating spiritual force at Fisk, and he embodied the moral tone of the university. He was responsible for and influential in organizing the
Congregational Church at Fisk and in spreading its influence throughout the South.44

Proctor claimed that President Cravath, Fisk’s first President and Secretary of the American Missionary Association [AMA], was a white man who had more influence over his life than anyone else. Not only did he dominate the institution, but he exemplified the true spirit of Fisk for nearly a quarter of a century. Because Proctor assisted the President with many of the chores around the school, he became more closely allied with this great educator than most other students. President Cravath became for Proctor the symbol of a real Christian statesman, ahead of all the other acquaintances of Proctor in poise, dignity and nobility.45

In summarizing his days at Fisk, Proctor wrote:

The formative days of my life were those spent at Fisk. The very place seems sacred to me. Every corner of the campus seems crammed with God, and every bush aflame with divinity. It was here that I experienced my call to the Christian ministry.46

This call set the direction for the remainder of his life.

It was also at Fisk that Proctor persuaded Adeline Davis, a graduate of the school and later a teacher at the institution, to become his wife. He considered her the embodiment of his dreams and was grateful, he said, for having discovered her at Fisk. Proctor described her as a dedicated mother and companion.47
by her son during World War I suggested that there was a
tight bond between her and her children.48

After being graduated from Fisk, Proctor sought a new
and different atmosphere; he chose Yale University Divinity
School to continue his education because, he insisted:

... In the first place, it [Yale] is in New
England, the most benevolent community in the
world, and the fountainhead of most that is good in
our civic, educational, and religious life. And
with all respects to Harvard, Yale is its [the
country's] greatest institution.49

That his mentor, President Cravath, was a Yale
graduate certainly influenced Proctor's decision. In
Cravath, Proctor saw all of the qualities he admired and
sought to emulate. Cravath was one of the founders of
Fisk. He was in the vanguard of missionaries who had
travelled the length and breadth of Georgia. Together,
they had visited the larger plantations in hopes of
developing with the proprietors and the freedmen a new
"Open Door" policy for the education of blacks. Their plan
was to include an educational center in Atlanta structured
specifically for the total education of blacks, a school
which would incorporate humanities as well as trade skills
into the curriculum.

The plan began to take shape in May 1867. A
non-denominational church began with seven members based on
the assumption that religious training was an important
element in educating the African American. That church
became familiarly known as Storrs Chapel, which was identified closely with the Storrs School. The Storrs Chapel was used for the religious services of the church. It was from this church chapel that plans began to develop the First Congregational Church in Atlanta. The work done by Ware, Superintendent of Freedmen schools for Atlanta and Principal at Storrs School, was so successful that it was generally recognized as one of the best of the schools supported by the AMA for African Americans. Pupils seemed to excel not only in the basic skills, but also showed promise in music and at rhetoricals. Each year the school staged an exhibit which was open to the white and black communities.50

The Storrs School represented the foundation upon which the rudiments of education became available to African Americans. Because of the vision of men like Ayer, a veteran missionary of the A.M.A., Ware, and others within the AMA, Georgia became a seat for higher education for African Americans. From those efforts, Atlanta University was born.51

Like Cravath, Proctor had lofty ambitions, and these demanded that he attend Yale. This choice was also motivated by his desire to be near New York City where he and several friends often ventured for special occasions. One of the most interesting occasions occurred on an
evening in Cooper Institute. The main speaker was Frederick Douglass.

I had never seen the great leader of my race before. It was, therefore, with very great interest that I looked forward to the evening when, for the first time, I should hear the great Negro orator. His voice was like an organ, and he knew how to play on all its keys, and when aroused he shook his tawney mane like a lion. It was an event in my life to have heard this man, who more than any other man turned the sentiment of the nation in favor of the emancipation of the slave.52

On arrival at Yale, his reception there was as cordial as the one he had received at Fisk. Although far removed from the South, Proctor still felt within this new community a sense of compassion and concern for his personal well being. Only four black students attended the divinity school along with Proctor during his four years at Yale, but he felt no color or caste restrictions. These four students came together and formed a quartet to sing Negro spirituals in the surrounding churches.53

It was a place that holds a fascination no other part of our country has. Its greatest charm at the time was that it was the chief home of the people of whom I was a part, and I longed to go back and help them. It was, therefore, with peculiar pleasure that I turned my face toward the South when I had finished my study at Yale. I went from New England to the South, to put into practice some of the things I had been nurturing in my heart all my lifetime.54

Proctor was ordained into the Congregational ministry and became involved in the mission of the American Missionary Association in 1894. He followed the path of other Yale graduates before him and accepted an invitation
to serve as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He returned to the South endowed with the confidence and spirit to trumpet the cause of blacks in a region that resisted change and threatened to return African Americans to a condition resembling their former enslavement.55
NOTES


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26 Proctor, *Between Black and White*, p. 16.


31 Proctor, *Between Black and White*, p. 16.

32 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

33 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

34 Ibid., pp. 27-28.

35 Ibid., p. 27.

36 Ibid., p. 28. The talented tenth of the Black race is defined as those members which constitute the Black intelligentsia, the successful business and professional men who through their knowledge of modern culture could guide the African American into higher civilization.

37 Ibid., p. 31.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., p. 28.
40 Ibid.
42 Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 30.
44 Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 33.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 34
47 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
48 Letters written by Adeline Proctor to her son, Proctor Papers, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, La.
49 Proctor, Between Black and White, pp. 39-40.
50 Minutes of First Congregational Church, Book One, 1867-1882, pp. 60-72.
51 "History of First Congregational Church of Atlanta," 1987, First Congregational Church records, Atlanta, Ga., p. 2.
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54 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
55 Ibid.
CHAPTER II
THE CALL TO ATLANTA

Atlanta during the last decade of the nineteenth century was an industrialized boom town, producing fuels, ores, and raw materials. The control and development, however, of those new resources generally lay in the hands of Eastern bankers and industrialists. As the gateway city of the New South, Atlanta was the financial, commercial, educational, cultural, industrial and transportation center of the region. As an urban center on the move, Atlanta by 1907 had a population of 154,800 residents. This marked a five-fold increase between 1880 and 1910. The white populace expanded five times beyond its 1880 number of 21,000 to 102,900 while the African American population tripled from 16,300 to 51,900. By 1910 African Americans were one-third of Atlanta’s 155,000 people. This population explosion was one of the remarkable social forces of the age. Not only did it pose employment problems, it exacerbated African American and white relations. The problem of available space, which before the war had been a problem of the cities, became a problem of the entire South. People bumped into each other more often, and what was true of individuals was true of races. Both African Americans and whites crowded into the new
Southern city from various parts of Georgia seeking employment and services. Schools were overcrowded. Sanitation was poor, with most of the waste materials being dumped into the neighborhoods of African Americans. The city was often the culprit for dumping rubbish into the neighborhoods of African Americans attempting to level off and fill in some of the enormous potholes in the streets which hampered transportation. Working class whites lived in similar squalor in the often overcrowded tenements of the industrial, railroad, and textile districts. Occupational and residential life was unstable as both racial groups moved constantly within the city limits. The establishment of textile factories in the Carolinas and Georgia was part of a large pattern of economic diversification. This diverse reorganization network included the expansion of railroads, the development of coal and iron mines, a lumber industry, and the establishment of cottonseed oil, furniture, and paper manufacturing based on Southern resources. Agriculture continued to dominate the Southern economy, but the new industries had a significant impact on a growing number of local communities. They attracted some Northern capital, though much of it was local. There was more than enough labor, African American as well as white, to meet the demands of field and factory.
While Atlanta's Chamber of Commerce boasted about how it rivaled New York and Chicago as a modern metropolis, its working classes were in constant motion. The new opportunities were numerous, and African Americans as well as whites attempted to take advantage of them. But, for the most part African Americans in the Southern towns experienced great difficulty in securing some of the benefits of the new economic activity. The few attractive jobs available to them were offered by the Cigarmaker's International Union and the United Mine Workers. African American women, however, were able to find jobs in domestic and personal service jobs which caused an increase in women's employment potential and their importance to the family household as breadwinners. Discrimination in employment practices for African American males was largely responsible for an increase in the number of women moving to the cities. The Southern urban African American found it difficult to render his customary personal services to city dwellers. White encroachment on the African American's practical monopoly of various skilled trades and also in such service occupations as barbers, cooks and caterers were found being displaced by palatial hotels which frequently did not hire African Americans. Everywhere there was sentiment against hiring African Americans in jobs that had even the least semblance of respectability. The South continued to draw the
traditional line between white men's jobs and jobs for African Americans. By 1906, a shortage occurred among those menial service jobs within the city. The crisis caused the Atlanta Constitution to demand that "since Negro laborers, particularly cooks and yard men were so scarce, every idle Negro should be arrested and put to work. . . . Negroes should be made to work six days a week." 

By 1900, most cities passed laws that segregated residential areas. Legal segregation forced African Americans to live in slum areas, where homes were not well-kept, streets were not paved, and unsanitary conditions existed. These squalid living conditions contributed in a large part to major health problems for African Americans. These ghettos created high mortality rates due to tuberculosis and pneumonia, and infant deaths which can be seen as a direct cause of the surrounding environmental conditions.

African Americans faced political problems in Atlanta during the waning years of the nineteenth century. Despite
continued intimidation, violence and chicanery, brought on largely by an increase in lynchings, Jim Crow legislation, and other practices of discrimination, the African American electorate had remained a political factor in the South after 1877. As a matter of fact, white Populist leaders in the 1890s realized that they must have the vote of the African American or at least be able to neutralize it. The Progressive Movement in the South, which arose during the late nineteenth century, and whose goals were to "purify American life" through social, economic, and political reforms called for the disfranchisement of African Americans. Progressive white women, who were upset at the idea that African American men were given the right to vote through the Fourteenth Amendment before women were allowed to vote, similarly advocated the disfranchisement of African Americans. They, along with Southern Democrats, wanted to "purify" politics by removing African American politicians from office and those white politicians who bought the votes of African Americans.

White Populist leaders, on the other hand, hoped that recognition of a common economic interest would overcome antagonism toward color, and so they appealed for African American and white political unity and moved to bring the African American man into the party. Where this proved unfeasible, they endorsed "fusion" with the minority Republicans. Fusion had triumphed in some Southern states,
creating the false illusion that economic self-interest would prevail over hatred of color, and a new day in African American and white relations would dawn.

African Americans faced problems not only in the cities, but in the rural areas as well. Those African Americans who lived in small towns, especially in the South, were often threatened by whites who wanted either "to keep them in their place" or to force them out of town. Most small towns turned to violence to assist in controlling African Americans. Lynching became an increasingly common occurrence in the United States prior to the 1900s. Walter White, a native Atlantan who gained attention after being appointed field secretary of the NAACP in 1918, investigated lynchings. His mulatto skin tone allowed him to cross racial lines. He reported that between the years 1890 and 1900, 1,780 lynchings took place. Most of these lynchings occurred in the South after African Americans had been accused, often unfairly of rape, murder, or theft. In 1890 Georgia led all states except Texas, with a record of eighteen African American lynchings. In 1892 Georgia passed its "Jim Crow" laws which provided for separate and inferior accommodations in public transportation, amusement and accommodations. From 1899 on, outbreaks of racial violence increased all over the South. In Georgia the practice became not only common but it was apparently sanctioned by a large part of the
white population. Most whites attempted to justify their behavior as a deterrent to criminal behavior on the part of African Americans.10

It was to this kind of South that Henry Proctor came as the first African American pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta. He saw the problematic situations in Atlanta as challenges of the New South. He sought to put into practice some of the skills and attitudes he had been nurturing all his life. He was to use his leadership capabilities, his intellectual acumen, and his devotion to religion in helping to find solutions for the problems of race relations and race advancement in the South as he began his work at the First Church.

This church was organized one year before I was born. Its first ministers came from New England and were graduates of Yale. They organized the Storrs School, the first school in Georgia for colored people, and in this school the church was born. This church in turn became the mother of Atlanta University.11

On the day of his graduation from Yale Divinity School, Proctor was congratulated by Professor George B. Stevens, an authority on the New Testament and one of his mentors, for the outstanding work he had done there, and Stevens assured Proctor that he was now "prepared to fill any pulpit in the country."12 Being uncommitted to any specific church, Proctor undoubtedly found several opportunities quite attractive to him. The churches of New Haven, where he had spent time while at Yale were
considered as well as the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, which at that time was considered one of the best black Congregational Churches in New England, and was pastored by the Reverend A. P. Miller, a fellow alumnus of Fisk. With these very attractive opportunities available to him, Proctor did not need to choose the South where African Americans were threatened by a hostile white community. But his heart was in the Southland, and he was happy to respond immediately upon his graduation to the call of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta where he thought it would be a privilege to serve this central city of the New South.

Henry Proctor, in many respects, could be considered a champion for the dispossessed, a member of those who journeyed South to join the "Peace Corps" of the American Missionary Association (AMA). He felt that he had left the South to become trained and educated, and that it was his duty to go back into the South and assist his people. Proctor would use that small church, composed of one hundred members, as a vehicle for change in Atlanta.

After the Civil War a vast collection of missionary teachers had gone into the South, bringing books instead of guns, and bent on improving the status of African Americans. These missionary teachers at times risked their lives to be a part of the enlightenment of African Americans. Incidents of house burnings and teacher
beatings were often recorded during this period. Many of the teachers were ostracized by a large percentage of the white community and heralded as "nigger teachers." Whatever their fate, they were always in isolation. Nevertheless, many of these "teacher-preachers" remained.

Proctor was very much aware of the great need for teachers in the South. Having close connections with the American Missionary Association, he believed that the advancement of the newly freed slaves lay in "the religious element in their character, and this element must be cultivated in a school under thoroughly religious influence." Because of the large percentage of African Americans within the city, Proctor believed that they were bound in time to play a major role in the civic and social life of Atlanta. In order to play a major role, however, Proctor thought that they would need expert training; therefore, he decided to go to Atlanta to give these descendants of slaves whatever assistance he could.

After receiving the invitation to become minister at the First Congregational Church, Proctor was determined to take full advantage of the opportunity made available by this offer. It offered him the possibility of becoming not only a preacher but also a teacher in the beautiful but troubled capital city of the New South. Immediately after his graduation, Proctor made the journey from New England
to the New South "to put into practice some of the things that had been nurturing in my heart all my life."18

Proctor romanticized Atlanta, fully appreciating its natural beauty which seemed for him unprecedented anywhere else in the South. In describing the city he noted:

In the sense that Paris is France, London, England, and New York, America, so is Atlanta the South. Atlanta is a unique city sitting on more hills than ancient Rome. It is too near the stars for a flood, being a thousand feet above the level of the sea. It has one of the most ideal climates of any city in the United States. It is the commercial center of the Southeast. There she sits like a goddess, with one hand on the coffers of the East and the other on the products of the South. Every great business house in the country has a sub-office in Atlanta, so that the city has more skyscrapers than any other city of its size in the world. And I have sometimes said that Atlanta is the biggest city of its size in America!"19

As capital city of the New South, it exemplified a city on the move. Atlanta was considered the bed-rock of African American education with more colleges for African Americans than any other city in the world. Atlanta University stood there on its red hills, founded by the Congregationalists, as a symbol of the fruitful work of former Congregational ministers in the education of the freedmen. Other religious organizations had also been busy in Atlanta creating educational institutions for the newly freed slaves: Atlanta Baptist College, later becoming Morehouse College, a school for young men; Spelman Seminary, a Baptist school for women; Clark College, founded by the Methodists; Gammon Theological Seminary, a
theological school endowed by the Methodists and Morris Brown College, founded by the African Methodists.20

First Congregational Church had its roots deeply interwoven with the works of the American Missionary Association. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, three young white men, sitting in a Yale University dormitory room, pledged their life's work to the education of former slaves. They joined the American Missionary Association forces. Two of these young men, Edmund Asa Ware, later the founder of Atlanta University, and Erastus M. Cravath, later the founder of Fisk University, chose to come along to the far South with the Reverend Cyrus W. Francis, an American Missionary Association spokesperson. They traveled the length and breadth of Georgia, visiting the larger plantations and planning with the proprietors and the freedmen, for the new "Open Door," an educational center in Atlanta.21 The church was considered a vital link to the black consciousness of the urban church. It significantly made its impact on the overall development of the African American community not only in Atlanta but also throughout the South. In the rural South, church communities represented the widest social orientation and the largest social groups in which the African American found an identification. Since most African Americans were seen as
outsiders in the American community, it was the church that enlisted their deepest loyalties.22

Missionaries from the American Missionary Association recruited students from the rural sections of Georgia. They also canvassed neighborhoods in search of homes where students could be boarded. Sometimes students were accompanied by their parents and the parents themselves needed boarding. Because missionary teachers became victims of racist attitudes in Atlanta, native whites were unwilling to allow their homes to be used for living quarters by white missionary teachers in Negro schools. The Northern school teachers often became special objects of ostracism. In some places they could find board only at exorbitant rates, and often they had to lodge with African Americans whether they liked it or not. However, a large number of the teachers were native white Georgians. Such teachers usually came from the lower class whites in the rural sections. Rather than starve they taught; salaries of $25 to $50 a month were better than nothing at all.23 While some of the more moderate in the white population approved more or less of African Americans being educated, they deeply resented the "Yankees" who came to teach the former slaves.24 Therefore, a teachers' home was needed to provide not only living accommodations for these teachers but also offices and classrooms vitally necessary for the education of African Americans. To achieve this
end successfully, a building at the corner of Houston and Calhoun Streets (now Piedmont Ave. in northeast Atlanta), was purchased, and occupied in January, 1866.25

Soon the newly emancipated slaves from every section of Georgia were establishing their first urban homes in Atlanta, where the American Missionary Association had been instrumental in establishing the first primary and elementary school for freedmen and their children. The first school for African American children in the city was founded by two former slaves, James Tate and Gradison B. Daniels. James Tate was an example to former slaves that it was possible for African Americans to acquire financial security through the virtues of thrift, business acumen, and in some instances, aid from white friends. With such aid, Tate operated a grocery business, and in 1890 had accumulated an estate valued at seven thousand dollars. He was the oldest African American merchant in the city, having started in 1866 and served as an inspiration in the field.26 He and Daniels conducted a school for freedmen in an old church on Jenkins Street, the original home of the present Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

At about the same time, the black members of the white First Baptist Church had withdrawn their membership and had organized Friendship Baptist Church under the pastorate of "Father" Frank Quarles. The separation of the African American churchmen from the white organizations, however,
was not necessarily a declaration of war. Most African Americans regarded this schism as the right step toward doing for themselves what others had hitherto done for them, and some whites agreed. Friendship had purchased land between Cain and Luckie Streets in downtown Atlanta to build its new church. Frederick Ayer, Secretary of the AMA, purchased an old box car, discarded because it was unfit for freight, for $310. It was moved to Atlanta from Chattanooga by the AMA. Since Ayer had a building and Friendship had land, an agreement was reached between Ayer and Quarles, whereby Ayer would set up a school house for the black children of Atlanta on a portion of the same ground designated for a church edifice for Friendship Baptist Church. Under these makeshift arrangements, formal educational work for African Americans began in Atlanta. This mutual partnership fused a strong bond between Friendship Baptist Church and what was later to become Atlanta University. In 1867 Edmund Asa Ware, a white man, was appointed by the AMA as its new superintendent of schools for Atlanta. Ware was the son of a middle class New England family and like Proctor a graduate of Yale. To him more than to any other man must go the credit for the founding of higher education for African Americans in Georgia. Ware arrived in Atlanta and joined Cravath in establishing plans for a new school house, continuing the project already started by Ayer.
During that period an appeal for financial aid resulted in a $1000 contribution from the Reverend Henry M. Storrs, pastor of the First Orthodox Congregational Church of Cincinnati, Ohio, a contribution which enabled the Atlanta project to construct a chapel which provided space for church services and Sunday School. The new building was named Storrs School in recognition of the financial assistance rendered by the Storrs Congregational Church of Cincinnati.29

The Storrs School, with Ware as principal, became a social service center for the ever-growing community. Later used by First Congregational Church, the school’s chapel became a focal point for community fellowship in Atlanta. But the worship services were conducted by the white New England missionaries, leaving the African American community hungry for a church of their own, one that would be sensitive to the individual needs of the community. Since its inception in 1867 blacks joined the white congregation constituting the Church of Christ. For seventeen years, the racially mixed congregation was served by white pastors. By 1894, however, the congregation had become nearly all black and they were now ready to take control of their own spiritual destiny.30

The desire by African Americans to create their own religious institutions was part of a movement initiated by Richard Allen long before the Civil War. Born of slave
parents, Allen believed that African Americans should not necessarily be obliged to follow the fortunes of the white community, that the African American community had to be organized to deal responsibly with its own problems as long as prejudice and the lack of compassion refused to erase the color line. He also believed that an independent church, which made every aspect of life its open forum for black self determination, was the most widely accepted and the most effective instrument with which to pursue the twin goals of "holiness and civil freedom." 31

Many African Americans were of the opinion that their ministers should address and have an intimate relationship with issues confronting members of the congregation in their day-to-day life experiences. Issues such as housing, employment and education, problems that plagued African Americans, should be the pillars of their ministry. The African American church, they insisted, should also be the foundation for African American power and self determination, virtues that white ministers would have difficulty translating to the predominantly African American congregation.

Not only did the policies of the church in those early years reflect the notions of the predominantly white congregation, but it was also obvious in the church's architectural design. The first church building for First Congregational Church was erected during the ministry of
its white minister, Reverend S. S. Ashley. The doors of this structure were opened for services on November 18, 1877. The American Missionary Association largely financed the construction. The Congregation's supplement was only two thousand dollars. Besides supplying financial support for this new structure, the American Missionary Association supplied the church with a total of eight missionaries who served as pastors in the church from 1867-1894. These men, recommended by the AMA, had studied in the leading preparatory and divinity schools of New England and worked in close cooperation with the Storrs School.

It was not uncommon for only a limited number of African American Congregationalists ministers to be available during this time. One reason for the low numbers of ministers was the requirement of the Church that educational training be placed above being "called" to preach. That requirement forced members of this faith to spend many laborious hours preparing sermons that they read to their members on Sunday. Congregational faiths usually required their ministers to know Latin or Greek or both. Since many African Americans had few opportunities to attend college, few were able to meet the qualifications. Proctor was one of the select few African American ministers who could meet these requirements.
According to Kathleen Redding Adams, whose family were members of First Congregational Church and who herself served as church historian during Proctor's tenure and is presently still a member of the church, the reception Proctor was given upon his arrival to First Congregational Church was filled with a spirit of enthusiasm from African Americans and courteous curiosity from whites. The membership in the church during the early days prior to Proctor's pastorate was composed of people who had moved from North Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Those members were mostly white. The African American membership began growing with the pastorate of Asa Ware in 1867. Among those African Americans were descendants of slaves and also the children of mixed relationships whose mulatto offspring were sent to the Storr's School because of their special training and work skills. In fact, according to Ms. Adams, much of the congregation consisted of people from the Storr's School. As a result of the close association and historical relationship between First Congregational Church and Atlanta University, a very large proportion of its members were afforded the opportunity to receive an education. Because of that opportunity, the membership in First Congregational Church was considered "a step above" other congregations and it was dubbed an elitist church.34 "A local joke has it that no one could join the First
Congregational Church unless their skin was as light as the lightest faces in the stained glass windows.\textsuperscript{35}

In contrast to cities like Augusta and Savannah, with their Black ante-bellum free aristocracies, the early elite in Atlanta came mostly from the mulatto house-servant group, who were in most cases favored by whites with whom they maintained close relationships. These were Blacks who because of their light skin were afforded advantages not offered to field hands, and, consequently, were sometimes more able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.\textsuperscript{36}

Life for the mulatto aristocracy of old Atlanta (circa 1890-1919) centered primarily on the respectable First Congregational Church, the selective Atlanta University, and perhaps half a dozen exclusive social clubs. Many of the elite had themselves been educated at Atlanta University (or its normal and secondary school) and ordinarily sent their children there to be prepared for teaching and other white collar occupations. With but few exceptions all of these families lived in the then fashionable Auburn Avenue section of Northeast Atlanta.\textsuperscript{37} Many of the families who now live on the West Side of the city still refer nostalgically to "family homesteads across town."\textsuperscript{38}

Proctor's first campaign was directed toward expanding the church congregation beyond its original membership by attempting to harness the surrounding African American
community under the spiritual guidance of First Congregational Church. Many in the church expected that competition from other African American denominations might frustrate any hopes of expanding membership. They also were concerned about the hostility from whites who disliked the idea of separate African American churches or schools for fear of losing control of these institutions. Proctor, however, found that recruiting membership for his church was easier than anyone anticipated. Proctor was optimistic from the beginning because he was a firm believer that African Americans were interested in their own education and self-fulfillment. By 1894 the congregation, having become nearly all Black, called upon Henry Proctor to establish a new and revived leadership for First Congregational Church.

Because Atlanta's "conservative" white population seemed to resist change and social betterment for African Americans, Proctor realized that there were many challenges ahead of him. One such example of resistance was the opposition of the white community to the existence of Atlanta University. At that time, most whites resented any opportunity for African Americans to be a part of higher education; consequently, there was an unsuccessful attempt by the city fathers to abolish the college through a city ordinance designed to cut up the campus and run Mitchell Street through the boy's dormitory.39
Proctor’s early efforts toward community development and racial solidarity, under the auspices of the First Congregational Church which served as a vehicle for change, can be viewed as part of the spiritual and cultural zeitgeist embracing African American communities not only in Atlanta, but throughout the country. The majority of the African American community regarded Proctor’s plans as part of a larger complex of ideas and strategies which involved self-help, race pride, and group solidarity. African Americans viewed those virtues as tactical instruments in the struggle for ultimate citizenship rights and a better defined racial identity. Like most leadership figures within the African American communities of the period, both religious and secular, Proctor believed that racial organization and interracial cooperation were the means of illustrating that demands made by African Americans for equality were justly deserved. He viewed efforts made by blacks to improve their own lot as a signal to white society that blacks had, indeed, earned their rights to constitutional guarantees.

Many of the leading 19th century intellectuals affirmed that point of view. One individual who dominated the period and is best known for his accommodationist approach to African American betterment was Booker T. Washington who represented what many considered the conservative wing of the movement for racial advancement. Prominent among those
with conflicting strategies and agendas was Alexander Crummell, Rector of St. Luke's Church in Washington, D.C. Crummell's social philosophy centered itself on the oppressive realities of color caste and its dual effect upon the African American's sense of self. Crummell believed that caste led whites to believe in their natural superiority, and, as a consequence, it led African Americans to the "paralyzing belief in their own inferiority." Crummell reasoned that the painful effects of this sense of inferiority manifested themselves in denial, inability of organization to combat the oppression, materialism, lack of spirit and aspiration and a general feeling of helplessness. Always espousing the interest of the group above all claims of the individual, Crummell believed that if African Americans practiced the virtues of discipline, responsibility, economy and organization, which he described as the fruits of character, this combination would generate group progress and racial consciousness. Both Crummell and Washington, like Proctor, were imbued with a sense of commitment and service to the oppressed individuals of the race. They belonged to the African American leadership vanguard which represented within its ranks diverse strategies but a common purpose. Each member sought in their own individual ways to strengthen that tradition of service among African Americans. They shared a faith in the ability of truth to impact events and
circumstances and, consequently, were optimistic about the future for African Americans.

In Atlanta, social work among African Americans was community based. African American communities had always initiated their own social programs for reform. One of the first pioneers of such reform was a former slave, Carrie Steele, who was employed as a laborer at the Atlanta Union Depot. Her work brought her in daily contact with the sufferings of her people, especially half-clad and homeless children wandering about the city streets. Grieved by what she saw, Steele managed to obtain funds from both races to erect a brick building three stories high for an orphanage which would accommodate fifty children. In 1890, the building was named the Carrie Steele Orphanage. A project of much wider scope was that of the Neighborhood Union which was organized in 1908 by a group of women under the leadership of Mrs. John Hope, the wife of the president of Morehouse College and later of Atlanta University. Initially the group consisted of a small cadre of women interested in providing day-care centers for children of the West Fair community.43

The group later evolved into the founding group of the Neighborhood Union, which was considered by many as the first female social welfare agency for Blacks in Atlanta. The group, under the leadership of Mrs. Hope, became an instrumental agency which provided medical, recreational,
educational, and civic services in Atlanta's African American communities. Starting with a house-by-house survey to determine the needs and grievances of black residents of Atlanta's West End, the organization quickly established a health clinic which also served as a community center, combining educational, social, and political activities. The Union was child-oriented, providing vocational classes for children and a boys' club and girls' club. Union leaders were active lobbyists who frequently appeared before the city council to denounce inadequate or non-existent public facilities in black areas. The group also went to the school board, requesting more black schools and higher pay for teachers. By 1911 the Neighborhood Union covered five black sections, and four years later expanded its services to the entire city. The group's success became so renowned and well known for its effectiveness, and, thus, became a model for efforts at community development being used by early nations like Haiti and Cape Verde. The group's activities in creating recreational facilities for African American children in various areas of the city was geared toward curbing juvenile delinquency as well as toward educating African American parents on the importance of recreational activity for youths.

Another effort toward community based social service programs grew directly out of the Atlanta University
Conferences, which influenced the work done by the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association started by Gertrude Ware in 1905. Those conferences were designed by Atlanta University in 1896, under the direction of W.E.B. DuBois, professor of sociology and editor of the publications, to determine the factors responsible for the retardation of the African American in a progressive society. They were also designed to make suggestions which African Americans could, hopefully, use to overcome the social, political, and economic barriers being raised against them. Combining academic excellence with a sense of social responsibility the conferences monitored what progress African Americans were making in spite of the handicaps they possessed and to bring about a workable solution on the local level. The studies had a broad impact and inspired more connections between African American colleges and the community.

According to DuBois, "between 1896 and 1920 there was no study of the race problem in America which did not depend in some degree upon the investigations made at Atlanta University; often they were widely quoted and commended." In 1909, in another journal of Atlanta University, *Studies of Social Betterment*, articles suggested that more institutional and reformatory work was needed in the African American communities, with the help of trained social workers.
Henry Proctor sought immediately to expand these existing community based projects and to use First Congregational Church as the instrument for the perpetuation of a broader based community service program. His tenure as pastor of First Congregational Church was viewed by church members as a symbol of a new era. Having come to Atlanta after being educated in the North, he seemed, to them, to manifest the prowess to conquer the evils of racism as well as the brutal caste system that had besieged them. Proctor was a member of the cadre of "college bred" African Americans who by precept and by example began to perform a great service in lifting the social, intellectual and economic tone of the African American people. Such men as John Hope, Kelly Miller, Alexander Crummell, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington and others strove earnestly for stimulating the development of the African Americans. African American businessmen also played their part in easing the economic burden of African Americans by establishing successful insurance companies and banks.

Churches throughout the city of Atlanta were involved in a changing of the guard of church leadership, and church ideologies were incorporating the concept of social betterment. Beginning in 1862 the African American congregation of Friendship Baptist Church separated itself from the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, which had a white
majority. With a membership of only twenty-five persons, the church grew rapidly under the leadership of the Reverend Frank Quarles, to over fifteen hundred members during the twenty years of his pastorate and it became involved in not only the religious life of Atlanta but also in the civil, educational, and political life as well.47 Three schools and several other congregations began in Atlanta as a direct result of their close ties with Friendship Baptist Church.

Across the country a growing number of educated African Americans, including R.C. Ransom's Institutional AME Church in Chicago and the Abyssinian Baptist Church of the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., began concentrating their efforts on solving the more immediate concerns of the community. They began to demand a change in management that would enable them to have more influence in the church, and insisted upon changes in forms of worship that were more in keeping with their improved level of intellectual awareness. Frequently, these progressives withdrew from Baptist and Methodist denominations and joined Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Catholic churches, some of which seemed to have a more flexible attitude toward the reforms upon which the progressives insisted. These more enlightened members demanded that the church serve as an agency for the improvement of the social and moral conditions among
African Americans. Very often these churches became social welfare agencies serving a broad spectrum of the needs of the burgeoning urban populations. The growth of the institutional churches and its broad and creative programs effectively adapted to the pulse of the cities and became responsible for the spawning of other educational, cultural, and spiritual institutions within the African American community.

Henry Proctor's attitudes and directions reflected the sociological scholarship of the day. Congregationalism, he felt, would appeal to a growing number of African Americans because of its principles of independence, equality and fellowship. For Proctor, these qualities were vital to the search for a true religion to assist African Americans in their self-realization. He was fully prepared by training and philosophy to continue and enlarge that trend of institutional church building.

Proctor continued the reform efforts of previous ministers of First Congregational Church. He discovered that the efforts of his predecessors were in line with the efforts of other African American churches throughout the city. The First Congregational Church had since its beginning dedicated itself to the total development of African Americans. The church was also involved in various community development programs. Its missions and health centers had been established in three districts of the
city. As early as 1873 these missions and health centers were engaged in conducting social services to the surrounding community. One health center was located on Houston Street near the church, another location was in South Atlanta. The church also participated in the founding of the Carrie Steele-Pitts Nursing Home and also the Avery Home for Working Girls.50

In the absence of community services for African Americans the Church filled in the gap. As early as 1875 First Church also provided a gymnasium for youth recreation because segregated YWCA and YMCA excluded African Americans. It also provided an employment bureau, a working girl’s home, and day nurseries, all of which aided in the race’s economic development.51

The church also sponsored various religious based services classified as "Afternoon Sunday Schools." These mission schools were: The Betsy Woods Mission located near downtown Atlanta at 123 Cain Street; The Decatur Street Mission at the corner of Decatur and Butler Streets; The Irwin Street Mission at the corner of Irwin and Hogue Streets; The Carrie Steele-Pitts Orphanage; and the Prison Mission for inmates of the federal prison at Fulton County Tower and the Fulton County Jail. These missions held prayer services on Sunday evenings called vespers.52 Not only did the Church conduct missions but it also sponsored an annual Vacation Bible School and a weekly pastor's
column printed in the Atlanta Daily World. The Church later replaced the newspaper column for a thirty-minute radio broadcast of the morning service on a local Radio Station.

These beneficial social service societies organized by First Church were only part of the larger movement being sponsored by black churches throughout the black community. The Wheat Street Baptist Church, organized the Rising Star and the Sisters of Love; while the Bethel (African Methodist Episcopal) church organized the Daughters of Bethel. The community efforts of Big Bethel Church can also be seen in its support programs for the spiritual, as well as programs offered for the social, cultural, educational, and economic opportunities of African Americans. The church's basement was the facility which housed the institution which would later become Morris Brown College. The church also housed the first Black bank, Citizens Trust Bank; in addition, it was influential with its employment agency and the beginnings of what became a realty company. These organizations were instrumental in developing beneficial societies which later gave life to independent insurance agencies.

First Church was instrumental in establishing an atmosphere where thrift and character were instilled in its members, resulting in a large number of them owning their own homes. The Church also inspired a sense of industry
and literacy among its members. With the cooperation of Dr. George W. Henderson, professor at Straight University, New Orleans, La., the Congregational Churches organized the National Convention of Congregational Workers which served to bring young people together in fellowship from all parts of the country. This organization, organized before the Atlanta Riot of 1906 became an instrumental part of the reconciliation process among Atlanta's youth. Their vision for addressing racial conflicts incorporated the belief in an equitable solution of the race problem sponsored by Congregationalism and its teachings. The organization appealed for fair play in the public press, justice in the court system, and equality in the ballot box.55

The pastors of Friendship Baptist Church were also committed to educational, social, and cultural programs designed for the total emancipation and rehabilitation of the race. Under the leadership of the Reverend E. R. Carter the church took part in the cause of prohibition in the city, thereby preaching temperance to its congregation. In 1895 the church organized the General Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention which sponsored racial cooperation and friendly exchanges in church affairs. The church Sunday School, its Bandos Industrial Mission in Africa, and the Lott Carey Mission, also the children's organizations within the church such as the Rose Bud and the Dorcus Club exemplify the work of the
Friendship Baptist Church and its influence within the African American and the world community. 56

Henry Proctor became a motivating force toward the total development of Atlanta's black and white communities. Proctor used his church as a vehicle for bringing positive change to the African American community and hoped that a religious spirit would become a common thread that would bring the white and black communities together for a better Atlanta. He believed that spiritual power was more constructive than the destructive powers of violence and racial bigotry. Nonetheless, these appeals, Proctor realized were being made in the midst of a solid wall of racial hatred which discouraged blacks and limited their freedoms.

Proctor knew that both the white and black races in the South were religious. He claimed that blacks were the most religious people in the world, in fact, he insisted that they had a "genius for religion." Their sentimental religious spirit he hoped could become a welding force bringing a new day to Atlanta. Igniting a new spirit of hope and cooperation between all of Atlanta's citizens. Proctor's efforts toward interracial cooperation in Atlanta Proctor claimed, may have been the chief contribution of First Church during his entire pastorate. 56
NOTES


10Ibid., Atlanta Constitution, July 10, 17, October 9, 1886; August 24, November 30, 1889.


12Proctor, Between Black & White, p.93.

13Ibid., p. 45.


16Testimony of William Jennings before the Committee on Affairs in the Insurrectionary States, November 7, 1871.


18Ibid.


20Proctor, *Between Black and White*, p. 92


29Ibid.

30Minutes of First Congregational Church, Book One, 1867-1883. pp. 57-60.


32"History of First Congregational Church: Homecoming 1988, 121st Anniversary" (pamphlet given to the congregation), Sept. 25, 1988.


36Meier and Lewis, "History of the Negro Upper Class in Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1958", p.130. "Historical Facts of First Congregational Church."

37Ibid.

38Ibid.
39 Interview with Ms. Kathleen R. Adams, Church Historian, First Congregational Church, Atlanta, Georgia, November 25, 1988.


41 Gayraud S. Wilmore Black Religion and Black Radicalism, pp. 113-115.

42 Ibid.


45 Rouse, p. 28.

46 Ibid.


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Proctor Papers, Box 2 Declarations adopted by the National Convention of Congregational Workers Among the Colored People, Atlanta, Ga., September 19-23, 1903.


CHAPTER III
THE ATLANTA RACE RIOT OF 1906

The third meeting of The National Convention of Congregational Workers Among Colored People was held in Memphis, Tennessee on the weekend of November 21-23, 1906. It was while attending this convention that the news broke about the Atlanta Race Riot. The news of the Atlanta race riot deeply concerned Henry H. Proctor, as the newspapers which he read contained the most distressing news of conditions back home. Proctor recalled his deep concern for his children and his church congregation. With his and his wife’s absence, the children had been left in the care of a friend. He hastened home to find his children safe and unharmed but conditions within the city turbulent, with the races divided into two hostile camps. Proctor feared that the violence and hatred that had erupted between the two races would jeopardize his future ambitions for his church congregation which had included plans for interracial cooperation. He was relieved to hear that no members of his church were killed or injured; however, he extended his sympathies to the many others who had suffered losses. As a result he sought to assist anyone he could, extending his concerns far beyond his church community.

Long before the riot, Proctor’s benevolent spirit and pluralistic philosophy defined his efforts at improving race relations in Atlanta. In 1895 he had stood among the
dignitaries who escorted Booker T. Washington through the streets of Atlanta on his way to national acclaim as a spokesman for the African American. In addition, Proctor was active in the boycotts which spread across the South at the turn of the century trumpeting the cause against segregation on public transportation and racism in city services. As pastor of First Congregational Church he advocated self-help, economic and character development to his church congregation. A telephone call he received after the riot from Charles T. Hopkins, a white lawyer working toward racial reconciliation in the city, became symbolic of the birth of a new era in interracial cooperation in Atlanta and the nation. Proctor’s leadership abilities and his efforts toward interracial relations brought him and his church national acclaim.

On the twenty-second day of September, 1906, however, there was no national acclaim. On that day the world was focused on Atlanta because the city had exploded into a race riot, a riot which seemed to threaten the remarkable developments taking place in the city at the turn of the century. As the capital city of the New South, Atlanta had begun to rival New York and Chicago as models of the modern metropolis. City fathers glorified the city’s economic prosperity and urban development. Like its symbol the phoenix, Atlanta had risen from the ashes left by the Civil War years and was well on its way toward recovery. Atlanta
had begun to take the shape of a thriving city. Rebuilding itself around the railroad industry and textile manufacturing, the city had quickly become the leading urban center in the South. Atlanta's economic prosperity could be measured by an inventory of its bank clearings which skyrocketed from ninety million in 1900 to two hundred and twenty-two million in 1906. The city's urban development was reflected in its inner city streets which were well paved and well lighted, its dependable streetcar service, and its skyscrapers, which stood comparable with the best in the North. Indeed, Atlanta was often described as the most progressive city in the South.3

Nonetheless, despite its image as the capital city of the New South, Atlanta also wore the banner of a "Jim Crow" city. Bars and restaurants were open to only one race, and barber shops were required to designate whether they served "colored" or white customers. Jim Crow trains were quickly becoming law, with Atlanta refusing blacks permission to enter and leave by the front door of the terminal.

The city council passed an ordinance in 1903 prohibiting Negro colleges from playing football games in Brisbane Park; Negro prisoners rode to the stockade in separate vehicles; and Negro witnesses swore on Jim Crow Bibles in Atlanta courts.4

The zeitgeist in Atlanta was fashioned by the reform movement known as the Progressive Era. This era was characterized by a growing spirit of reform where American citizens across the country began the formation of a myriad
of groups and organizations targeted toward the reform of American society along social, economic and political lines. By the turn of the century, the Progressive Era was at full steam and reflected the changing attitudes of the nation toward its own political policies and toward its feelings for the African American population.

While sexual, economic and racial issues were of concern in some parts of Progressive America, in Georgia Progressivism was colored "lily-white."

African Americans witnessed their systematic exclusion from all plans for reform, and Progressive politicians put forth legal and extra-legal efforts to assure the abolition of all liberties granted to African Americans after the Civil War. Throughout the state, African Americans were denied city services, whether the municipal government was corrupt or honest, reformist or reactionary. White Atlantans, arguing that African Americans corrupted the political process, endorsed their disenfranchisement as a method of cleaning up the government. They campaigned hard for the implementation of compulsory education bills in Atlanta to force white children to attend school. This strategy sought to dilute the increasing numbers of educated African Americans who threatened the existence of continued white supremacy. Proponents of the bill argued for its necessity on the grounds that more African American than white children were attending school on a voluntary basis.
and the city's newspaper, The Atlanta Journal, told its readers that the declining African American illiteracy rate proved the need for a compulsory statute to get white children into school.6

African Americans were advancing themselves in education because of a prejudiced system that tended to work in reverse and was responsible for the detriment of school-age white boys and girls. Because prejudice prevented blacks from working in cotton mills, child labor laws were sought to wrestle school-age whites out of the factories. In opposition to the regulation of child labor laws, mill owners, who were influential in the Georgia Senate, appeared before a legislative committee in 1900 and helped defeat child labor measures. "The Coca-Cola king," Asa Griggs Candler, expressed the sentiments of opponents when he told a convention of reformers that: "The most beautiful sight that we see is the child at labor; as early as he may get at labor the more beautiful, the more useful does his life get to be."7 By 1911 Georgia was the only state permitting white children under twelve to labor in factories or to work a sixty-six hour week.8

Progressive politicians in Atlanta very much resembled the Populists of the previous decades. Both Populists and Progressives sought the fusion of voters through deals and appeals to special interest groups and individuals. The Populists had appealed to farmers and African Americans to
unite themselves into a political coalition to gain political strength; those two groups had tentatively become the vanguard of Populist reform. The Progressives, on the other hand, were composed essentially of urban and middle-class white men with the leadership usually in the hands of professional white businessmen, who very often manipulated the poor whites to increase their political power. Both movements either sanctioned or became catalysts for violent and revolutionary tactics as politicians used any means necessary to acquire votes.

More interested in improving their own comfortable existence than in uplifting the masses, the progressive leadership in Atlanta sought an alignment with white conservatives and the new special interest groups who connected themselves to large investors from the North. Progressives across the state were endowed with a racist conservative propensity that often translated any type of reform into an aggrandizement of white self-interests. The Progressive Era in Atlanta was conservative, racist and elitist.9

Throughout the state African Americans were routinely denied basic city services and were often viewed with suspicion, race hatred and jealousy. They were most often the victims of exclusion or outright attack. The proportion of lynch law victims took a toll on the lives of African Americans. The proportion of the lynchings taking
place in the South increased from about 82% of the total lynchings in the country in the earlier decade to about 92% in the period 1900-1909. Georgians lynched more African Americans between 1900 and 1920 than they had in the previous two decades. At the same time, the proportion of lynching victims who were white decreased from 32.2% in the earlier decade to 11.4% in the latter. Lynching had become an increasingly Southern and racial phenomenon.10

In the countryside, white animosity toward blacks often culminated in lynchings. Between 1882 and 1923 Georgia led the nation with 505 recorded lynchings. In almost every other state this practice hit a peak between 1880 and 1900 and remained steady or declined thereafter; however, Georgians lynched more Blacks between 1900 and 1920 than they had in the previous twenty years.11

Many white Southerners defended lynching as a deterrent to rape, and most assumed that the vast majority of lynch victims were rapists. Both assumptions were incorrect. An NAACP study showed that of 2,522 blacks lynched nationally between 1889 and 1918 fewer than 30% were charged with attacks on women and only 19% of these were specifically accused of rape.12

Progressives in Atlanta believed that the removal of African Americans as voters would vanquish corrupt election practices, guaranteeing white men total control of the selection of their leaders. The practice of buying votes in general elections was widespread in the urban South.

Often on the night before an election bribable Negro men were rounded up and herded into makeshift
cattle pens near the polling booths. Political henchmen would build fires, hire brass bands, and furnish an abundant supply of liquor for the blacks. The next morning wardheelers would rouse them and march them to the polls, there to vote early - and sometimes often - for the white statesman who had provided the election-eve entertainment and slipped them a dollar or two for performing their civic duty.13

Progressives assured their constituency that those who were responsible for the disgraced nature of Southern politics would be removed, and no longer would an African American be strategically placed within the political arena, allowing him to serve as arbiter between white political factions. Progressives guaranteed that once again white men would be able to divide themselves into two independent parties without the need to appeal to African American voters. Disfranchisement, they believed, would force African Americans to abandon any false hopes of equality, compelling them to find their place in mainstream American society. For the white progressive, such a political move meant the improvement of race relations.14

Atlanta progressives pushed prohibition so that liquor would be unavailable as a means of buying votes. Liquor sales were also thought of in association with the rape of white women. "It was the deliberate determination of the stronger race to forego its own personal liberty on this [liquor] for the protection of the weaker race from the crimes that are caused by drunkenness," wrote Alexander J. McKelway, a leading white progressive.15 But Henry Proctor reminded progressive politicians that in the previous
Prohibition election held in Atlanta, the only precinct to vote dry had a majority of African American voters. Proctor joined other civic leaders and politicians in a move seeking to close any African American or white business which sold liquor. Before the 1906 election, Georgians voted in favor of liquor sales in large urban centers. Under Georgia’s local option law, 125 of the 145 counties had adopted Prohibition. A law adopted in 1904 made it more difficult to end liquor sales in the remaining wet counties. Liquor had not been a large factor in the 1906 campaign because both major candidates, Hoke Smith and Clark Howell, opposed statewide prohibition. However both white politicians, along with the white ministry, believed that liquor brought out the worst in African American males and was often the cause of them assaulting white women.

The Progressive Era became a major vehicle for the color line, for the perpetuation of white supremacy and white solidarity, with its main target being African American subordination and intimidation. This new wave of racism tended to reflect a mounting tide of national sentiment aimed against the advancement of African Americans. For the African American in Atlanta, the Progressive Era only meant further proscriptions. Segregation by local ordinance in residential areas and public places, exclusion from parks, schools, libraries,
and continued denial of basic city services were the rules for every government.18

Within that context of continuous usurpation of the political and social rights of African Americans, racial tensions exploded into the Atlanta Riot of 1906. Various scholars have offered their suggestions about the contributing factors behind that explosion. Following the riot at an address before the student body of Hampton University on June 14, 1907, Proctor addressed that same issue. Although he had been away from the city on the actual weekend the riot erupted, Proctor, like many other leading Atlantans, sensed the tension growing within the city limits before the riot occurred. Several problematic areas, he felt, formed the root causes of the final explosion of tensions. He insisted that the color line in Atlanta was one of the most significant catalysts of the riot. That color line in Atlanta, he suggested, was representative of one of the strongest color lines in the world,

extending from the top of her famous skyscrapers down through the cars, churches, and schools, clear out to the silent city of the dead. The explanation of this strong color line is found in the ascendency of the new rich man, the influx of Northern adventures in search of wealth, and the unusual progress of the colored race.19

The color line in Atlanta was touted as a color line, capable of compromise and flexibility. The Atlanta riot unmasked a color wall uncompromising and inflexible.
In agreement with other scholars who attempted to explain the outburst of hostilities, Proctor claimed yellow journalism as another factor contributing to the riot.

Atlanta is the journalistic center of the South, and there is an intense rivalry between the afternoon papers, each trying to outdo the other in sensationalism. The liveliest wire in Southern journalism is the race question, and the paper that can magnify the most exciting phases of that question is apt to have a large clientele.20

On the afternoon of the riot, the afternoon papers began to print extras chronicling and magnifying the number of assaults that had been perpetrated by African American men upon white women. Matters were amplified as newspapers used extreme and graphic measures to attract readers. Some made emphatic calls and pleaded that the white men protect the dignity of the white women. The crowds began to gather on Decatur St. spurred on by a passion toward protecting white women, and guided by agitators and alcohol, the community was easily thrown into a panic of excitement. As a result a mob was formed from the Saturday night crowds that weekly migrated to the downtown part of the city. From the stories and editorials chronicling the events in Atlanta before the riot, Proctor sensed the impending storm developing and attempted to sound a warning to local officials.

Only a week before the riot I had spoken before the city council, saying that unless they closed up the dives of the city, blood would run in the streets. In response to my plea, the city council passed an ordinance closing the dives, but it was too late; the poison was in the blood. Through
misrepresentation in the press false rumors were started, and on Saturday night the crowds that poured in from the surrounding towns for a frolic were stampeded into the bloody riot that followed and upset the city for a week.21

Proctor believed that the final cause of the riot lay in the agitation of politics. He noted that the city had been host to an eighteen-month gubernatorial campaign whose chief issue was the disenfranchisement of African Americans. Both of the two leading candidates, Howell and Smith, were residents of Atlanta and it seemed that the one who attacked the rights of African Americans the most won mass appeal. Thus, for the entire eighteen-month long campaign Atlanta was the center of racial agitation, an agitation that extended throughout the state.22

Another fundamental contributor to the tense atmosphere in Atlanta at this time was the city’s economic climate. At the turn of the century the nation was struck by high levels of unemployment for both African American and white workers. In Georgia many whites from the mountain areas and rural Georgia counties migrated to the city in search of jobs. They discovered to their chagrin that many rural African Americans were also congregating in the city and were competing for the same jobs. This influx of African American migrants into the city along with whites from outside the city limits intensified the problems of urban race relations. These two groups shared a common poverty, a lack of education, and a mutual distrust of each other.
Each came to the city hoping for good jobs, decent housing, and education for their children. Coupled with the heavy wave of migrants, Atlanta was also experiencing a population explosion that the city was ill prepared to accommodate. The city of Atlanta found itself with more people than jobs and housing, conditions which accelerated prevailing negative racial attitudes.

Housing patterns for African Americans in Atlanta began in the center of the city, where there was less racial resistance. When immigrants attempted to relocate to the east and later to the west, their efforts met strong white resistance. As a result, the heaviest concentration of African American populations lay in Summerhill, the first African American settlement in the city; South Atlanta, the first location of Clark College and Gammon Theological Seminary and one of the locations of the riot; Shermantown, Pittsburg, Jenningstown, and Brownsville (also a scene of the riot). These African American "urban clusters" were in close proximity to the central business district or the downtown area. These clusters existed with poor sanitation, bad streets and debris, often serving as centers for prostitution, bootlegging, gambling dens, saloons, pawnshops, and cheap eateries. Located in the heart of the African American community, these centers attracted all types of people looking for a good time. First Congregational Church was also located in this
community, and Proctor often lamented on the number of his race that he watched walk past his church heading for the saloon, dives, and other unwholesome activities.

Although a majority of African Americans resided in those segregated communities, there were instances where some also purchased homes east of downtown. Some of the middle-class lived on the same streets with whites. Despite the variety of housing patterns existing in Atlanta at the turn of the century, Atlanta in 1900 was still more segregated than older communities like Savannah or Augusta.

Pressures to keep African Americans in their defined section grew with the continuing flow of immigrants seeking better housing for their families. Politicians responding to growing racial attitudes developed Atlanta as the first Georgia city to attempt residential segregation by law. The Atlanta segregation ordinance of 1913, established white and African American neighborhoods and stated that "an occupant of a house in a mixed block could legally object to a person of another color moving in next door."25

This rivalry for economic and social survival, intensified by the economic conditions, released enough anger, suspicion, fear and envy between the races that these passions ignited into the racial violence that became a symbol of the riot.

Race animosity as has been seen, had also been intensified through a long and bitter political campaign
which used the disenfranchisement of African Americans as one of the chief campaign issues. The city had been the focal point of an eighteen month gubernatorial campaign between two leading candidates, Hoke Smith and Clark Howell. Candidate Smith, former Secretary of the Interior under Grover Cleveland, centered his campaign on the total reform of Georgia politics. Not only did he call for regulation of railroads and the abolition of the convict lease system, but he also was persuaded by former Populist Tom Watson along with Tom Hardwick, a conservative Democrat who feared Populist doctrines and who was named chairman of the Democratic state convention of 1906, to accept an election law geared to disfranchise African Americans. In the past Smith had been known to harbor conservative virtues and stand out against Populism, and, at the same time, to have compassion for the rights of African Americans, but he had become a victim of the changing attitudes taking place nationally toward the African American. As a result, by 1906 not only were disfranchisement and white supremacy cornerstones of his campaign, but Watson's support of Hoke Smith became an issue itself. These two oddly matched teammates, on a former member secretary of the Interior in Grover Cleveland's cabinet and the leader of the populist party, pulled together to carry Georgia closer toward progressivism. Watson was to abandon Smith in 1908 to
assist in the campaign for Governor of a conservative, Joseph M. Brown.

Clark Howell, the other leading candidate and editor of the Atlanta Constitution, represented the conservative Democratic faction and opposed disenfranchisement because he believed the measure ineffective and would possibly disenfranchise illiterate whites while allowing educated African Americans to vote. Howell attacked a Smith provision that permitted a man to qualify to vote by interpreting a section of the state constitution. Howell feared that such a provision might inspire more African Americans to go to school, ultimately increasing their numbers at the polls at the expense of illiterate whites.

Smith, being the more radical in his campaign strategy often aroused the passions of his supporters by making vicious statements against African Americans.

A typical Smith speech would blame the Negro for the state’s ills, promising that removal of blacks from politics would not only eliminate Negro officeholders, but also curb the black man’s desire for an ‘intermingling’ of the races, protect white womanhood, and improve race relations."

Smith predicted violence if whites were unable to achieve these ends through legal action. Referring to a North Carolina riot which ended only after twenty-five African Americans had lost their lives, he said, "we can handle them as they did in Wilmington, where the woods were black with their hanging carcasses." Smith challenged
cheering audiences with "Shall it be ballots now or bullets later?" 29

Hoke Smith won the primary in a landslide victory that was viewed as a triumph for progressive reform. His wide-ranging program of reform included support for the "grandfather clause" and the abolition of the convict-lease system. The full scope of reform legislation passed during the Smith administration was unprecedented in the political history of Georgia. This 1906 election was also significant because Smith’s overwhelming victory set the tone and contributed to racial polarization in the state. Shortly after the election mobs attacked and killed African Americans in the streets of Atlanta, culminating the year-and-a-half during which Smith had stirred up racial antagonisms. 30

Two other gubernatorial candidates, Charles Daniels, the crusading young editor of the Atlanta News, and John Temple Graves, the aristocratic editor of the Atlanta Georgian, began a campaign for segregated trailers on streetcars to avoid contact between the races. The president of the Atlanta Transit Company abolished the smoking sections located in the rear of the cars and provided for rigid seating patterns and arrangements for the exclusive use of the front door by white passengers. 31 Candidates also directed their campaign against the presence of a large number of African American vagrants and
drunks loitering in the city streets. The presence of these individuals, it was alleged caused white women to fear to walk the streets alone. Still believing that they controlled the labor and employment practices of African Americans, whites demanded better and more stringent vagrancy laws. Laws regulating vagrancy, labor contracts and labor recruiting, along with the practice of annual contracts and long-term jail sentences for violators, assisted the pool of available rural African Americans needed to operate the state’s peonage and debt servitude operations.32 Graves and Daniels attempted to use these issues to appeal to voters. Since they agreed with the move for African American disfranchisement, they directed their strategy toward exposing the racial fears that whites had of African Americans. Each candidate did his best to benefit from the numerous alleged assaults being publicized extensively and sensationaly in the local newspapers. They anticipated that these stories, when read by whites, would stir up hatred and racial animosities which would translate themselves into the endorsement of their respective campaigns.

The campaign ended in August but racial tensions were kept alive as three evening newspapers continued to use the campaign as a catalyst for the sale of more papers. The Atlanta Evening News, Georgian, and Journal began competing with each other by featuring stories of alleged rape, and
they continued to feature this sort of "yellow journalism", citing in graphic details how African American men were systematically assaulting white women.

Adding to the already inflammatory situation existing within the city, a racist play, The Klansman which glorified white supremacy was allowed to be viewed by local audiences in Atlanta. The viewing of this production on stage and later on film served to heighten racial antagonisms compounding the newspaper sensationalism which kept the flames of race hatred burning.

"On July 30, 1906, one month before the riot, an Atlanta mob lynched an African American male falsely accused of rape. The city newspapers sympathized with the mob, with editor Charles Daniels of the Evening News formally congratulating the mob for having given the white community general satisfaction." The lynchers had been receiving public support from their political allies and many other white Georgians. Moreover, their attitudes were reflected in the national racist attitudes toward African Americans which had begun to proliferate across the country. Most whites stressed the fact that African Americans were not adapting themselves to the new era and that as laborers their stock was deteriorating.

Originally the labor of African Americans constituted the primary work force of the New South. Men like Atlanta's Henry W. Grady in 1886 embraced them as members
of the New South team. However, by 1889 he declared African American laborers as obsolete. After 1890 African American Southerners were considered more a liability than an asset. They were viewed as unreliable and unprofitable. Because of their history as slaves, African Americans were considered technologically backward by many white Atlantans in leadership positions. The New South, according to the Atlanta Constitution, needed to "cut the Negro down in the scale by competition the survival of the fittest." Sentiments were understandably stronger in the South as various extremists groups who had previously attacked the franchise for African Americans now sought an attack on African Americans themselves. Whites began to fear that the growing numbers of educated African Americans would advance them beyond poor whites in the job market. This talented generation of African Americans represented a new image for the African American in the South. These first descendants of slaves with their appetite for education increased the fears and insecurities of whites. Whites in Northern cities also joined the national trend and acknowledged that African American laborers in the South were less industrious, less thrifty, less trustworthy, and less self-controlled than African Americans of previous generations.35

With the use of sensational reporting of stories to attract readers, the Atlanta press served as a constant
reminder of African American violence and lawlessness for so long that the individual citizen was totally overwhelmed by it and, in many respects, lost any reasonable perspective. Walter White, a native Atlantan, had read the inflammatory headlines in the Atlanta News and Atlanta Constitution so often that these headlines began to seem like standard news. He remembered how the alleged rapes and other crimes usually consisted of "eight-column streamers instead of the usual two or four-column ones."36

"The word genocide did not exist in 1906, but the conditions which made general slaughter a real possibility were present before, during, and after the Atlanta Riot."37

On that fateful Saturday evening in 1906 at approximately five o'clock, the Decatur Street area was engaged in business as usual. As was generally the case on a weekend, both races gathered together in the nearest saloon to celebrate the week's end. However, beneath the uninhibited atmosphere of a Saturday night out on the town, Decatur Street and the city of Atlanta, became steeped in racial tensions. A newsboy carrying the Evening News came out selling his newspaper whose headline heralded new attacks on white women. Another newsboy soon followed selling the Atlanta Journal, also announcing and sensationalizing multiple attacks on white women by African American men. Although these attacks were not based upon
solid evidence, Atlantans panicked when the news headlines graphically outlined the mounting assaults allegedly upon white women. As the papers sensationalized the second, third, and fourth assaults against white women in one day, the people of Atlanta reacted, sending a Decatur Street crowd into action.

In 1906 the alleged number of assaults in Atlanta had risen to almost epidemic proportions. Citizens clamored for drastic measures through tougher legislation or the implementation of new ways to evade the law and punish the sex offenders. The courts had allowed assault and rape convictions to stand when no physical contact had taken place. African Americans in Atlanta in 1906 were beginning to come to the realization that they had little chance to explain, if by accident or ignorance they happened to become too familiar or become accused of assaulting a white woman or offending a white man. This feeling of hopelessness among African Americans translated itself into a condition of terror where African Americans felt they were unjustifiably persecuted for any incidents which involved African American men and white women. John Temple Graves in 1906 stated:

The mere suggestion of the slightest familiarity of a black and filthy Negro with a refined and genteel Caucasian girl stirs the blood to fever heat, but the monstrous and unspeakable horror of a more serious and brutal assault makes the blood to complete frenzy. In effect the statutes, the courts, the editors, public opinion in all classes handed to the white woman, who
wished to use it, the death warrant for any black man.38

After absorbing the headlines an angry crowd of white men assembled, asking each other; "What are we going to do about it? Something must be done!"39 By nine o’ clock Saturday evening, November 22, 1906, the crowd had turned into a mob with groups of white men joined by a group of rough, half-drunk boys between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. Most of the mob consisted of whites from the lower classes; however, there were indications that the mob also contained a few professional men, store owners, and college students.40

The mayor of the city, James Woodward, appeared on the scene and attempted to disperse the crown before things got out of hand, but the mob paid him little attention. Between nine-thirty and eleven o’ clock thousands of whites bought arms wherever they could. One store owner was reported to have sold $16,000 worth of firearms, selling to both African Americans and whites.41

Generally sympathetic to the rioters, the Atlanta police did little to quiet the disturbance. A few policeman rescued a few African Americans, yet most feared any kind of relationship with Atlanta police. African Americans realized that if they were arrested by police, their fate would be totally in the hands of the police officers themselves, which usually meant conviction and a trip to the city’s stockade, the chain gang, or the dreaded
convict lease camp. Just a few weeks before the riot during what was considered a routine investigation, two fear-ridden African American men had leaped from a third-floor saloon window to avoid detention by the police. The fear of detention was deeply grounded in the number of convicts who accidentally died in detention. For those unfortunate African Americans who became victims of the convict lease system a possible ten year term could very well be translated into a death sentence.

Despite pleas from mayor Woodward and the police force the riotous crowd swelled into a violent mob of some 10,000 whites, many armed, who split up into groups with some headed for the saloons frequented by blacks located in and around Decatur and Edgewood Street. The killing and beating of African Americans occurred mainly in the business district of the city. A.F. Herndon, a prominent African American barber whose shop was in the heart of town on Peachtree Street, was visited by the mob. Two barbers working in the shop at the time the mob entered offered no resistance. One of the barbers raised his hands to signal his submission to the intruders but the only response he got was a brick thrown by one of the rioters which struck the barber in the face. The mob eventually murdered both barbers, beating them to death, and then dragged their mutilated bodies to the Henry Grady monument, where they offered their bodies to the crowd.42 Whenever African
Americans were spotted, the mob chased them with sticks, clubs, and guns through the streets, while shouting "Kill Them!", "Shoot Them!", "Lynch Them!" "Down with Negroes who attack and assault our women!"43

The mob swarmed the city streets in search of African Americans who were seeking refuge in alleyways or downtown shops, attacking people as they left movie theatres or when they were leaving their jobs. Well dressed whites were seen cheering the activities of the mob from the sidewalks. Driving all blacks from downtown streets, the rioters turned their attention to streetcar stops to await unsuspecting victims coming through downtown on public transportation. During the early stages of the riot, the mob had allowed African American women to escape unharmed. But by eleven o'clock the blood thirsty mob greeted every trolley car with shouts of anticipation dragging both men and women from trolley cars. The riot had been underway for two hours before the transit company stopped sending cars into the area, but by this time twelve cars had been attacked.44

Because the circumstances at the time did not seem to warrant any military action Governor Joseph M. Terrell refused to declare martial law and delayed calling out the state militia until shortly before midnight on Saturday. The governor was notified by the Atlanta Constitution that a race riot had erupted within the city on Saturday night.
Immediately he held a news conference with several public officials to discuss what actions would be taken. According to the Atlanta Constitution "The governor...has no authority of his own to call out the troops for riot duty, until the request for such a call has first come from the sheriff, a judge, or some other recognized civil authority."45 The Atlanta Constitution, stated that the fire alarm was sounded by Sheriff Nelms at approximately 12:30 a.m. Sunday morning, at the request of the mayor. The request for troops was made by Judge A.E. Calhoun of the city court in Atlanta.46 Troops reported to the scene only to report that the worst part of the riot was over.

Nine Atlanta military companies, seven from the Fifth Regiment, the Governor’s Horse Guard and the Governor’s Light Artillery, patrolled the streets of downtown Atlanta. Eight outside company troops arrived in Atlanta Sunday night, which brought the total to seventeen companies and six hundred state troopers. Governor Terrell had ordered the state troops to patrol the Atlanta area, especially the outskirts of the city.47

Most African Americans by this time had made their way out of the central city by one way or another. Walter White recalled how he and his father, riding toward Five Points, viewed an undertaker’s coach with three African Americans in the rear of the vehicle clinging to the sides of the carriage. The white man who drove the carriage
forced his way through the mob and was able to bring his passengers to safety despite the rioters savage attempts to get at the passengers in the rear of the carriage.  

The rioters, in search of more victims, threatened to invade outlying African American communities. A few small bands headed for "Darktown", located near the downtown vicinity, only to find that African American communities were, by this time, armed and waiting for the rioters to approach their neighborhoods. The readiness of the community caused the mob to hesitate. One source noted that the resistance displayed by these African American residents "prevented a second bloodbath." With the presence of the state militia and the downpour of heavy rains, the rioters began to disperse. As word of the riot spread into the surrounding communities, African Americans began to organize themselves for both defensive and retaliatory actions. Neighborhood groups began to position themselves strategically on houses as snipers. Nine men occupied a rooftop overlooking a major trolley car line on the edge of the inner city, and with sniper fire they stopped traffic for nearly an hour before retreating.

Sunday morning in Atlanta was quiet with local newspapers giving reports about the previous night's incidents. The number of dead and wounded seemed to vary from sixteen to twenty, depending on what newspaper was read, with over one hundred blacks wounded. One source
estimated that at least twenty-five African Americans died and about one hundred thirty were seriously wounded.51 The newspapers revealed that an accurate count of the dead was difficult because many of the bodies of victims were buried immediately after being found. Grady Memorial Hospital reported that its emergency ward treated over three hundred wounded people. Walter White recalled a particularly grim scene: "Like skulls on a cannibal's hut, the hats and caps of the victims of the mob the night before had been hung on the iron hooks of the telephone pole. No one could tell whether each represented a dead Negro. But we knew that some of those who had worn the hats would never again wear any."52

African American leaders continued Sunday morning organizing the various communities to defend themselves if the rioters returned. On Monday the middle-class neighborhood of Brownsville in south Atlanta, which during the riot had served as a safe haven to community members, became the focus of attention. Brownsville was the home of Clark College and Gammon Theological Seminary. Gammon's president J. W. E. Bowen requested troops to protect the colleges. Many of the residents of Brownsville were artisans and owners of attractive, well-developed homes. The Brownsville community emerged during this time as a "city of refuge," a status particularly noticable during the activities which surrounded the Atlanta Riot of 1906.53
Monday evening the riot was revived when state troops, county police, and white vigilantes marched into Brownsville after being informed that the blacks located in the outer city limits were holding a meeting to discuss strategies of self-defense. Refusing to forfeit their weapons, they began to retaliate by firing their guns at the police force. The outcome of the incident left one police officer dead and three wounded. At least four African Americans were killed and the leader of the police force, James Heard, was shot and died instantly. After the incident, almost three hundred blacks were arrested, which included some students from Gammon Theological Seminary and Clark College. Three blacks were arrested for the murder of police officer Heard, although only one was eventually charged with the crime.

The Voice of the Negro summed up the bitterness over Brownsville, commenting that after the real riot was over, "then came the militia, the defenders of society, and disarmed the Negroes whom the mob had feared to attack." The Atlanta Journal expressed the gratitude of whites to the militia and urged the troops to keep up the good work of disarming the African American community, making the city safe so that citizens could retire to a night of peace and quiet. The Brownsville incident marked the last major incident of the riot. The riot, its murders and beatings, paralyzed the entire city for three days, and the
repercussions of it were felt long afterwards in the business section of downtown Atlanta. With African American employees fearing to return to work unprotected, many downtown business establishments suffered from lack of sufficient personnel.

The Atlanta riot not only threatened the economic vitality of the city, but it also endangered the credibility of the city as one of the few Southern cities with good race relations. The destructive impact of the riot was not only isolated to the African American communities alone but also impacted the entire population of the city. Because Atlanta was a city on the move economically, many civic leaders desired to restore peace quickly so that racial antagonisms would not stifle future economic growth. White businessmen were especially concerned about the image of the city because they feared Northern investors would cease to invest their money in the New South’s commercial center. To prevent further negative publicity, to ameliorate conditions between the two races, and to save the respectability of the city, several of Atlanta’s influential entrepreneurs organized investigative and biracial committees in hopes of resolving and reconstructing the city’s racial atmosphere to prevent forever any other racial problems from endangering the racial harmony in the city. For several months they diligently engaged in public apologetics and interracial
communications targeted toward a better understanding between the races.58

Business interests in the city were at a standstill for nearly a week following the riot, as the city stood almost paralyzed. Not only were factories and railroads crippled but all city services came to a halt as hundreds of African Americans who worked service jobs remained in the safety of their homes. There were also fears of another riotous outbreak during the Christmas holidays.59

The banking industry likewise felt the crunch on its bank clearings, and the state fair, then just opening, had dismal hopes for success. In previous years the gate receipts at the state fair had shown a sizeable profit largely due to the attendance of the African American community, but many blacks were afraid to attend. As a result the fair suffered a significant loss. The loss of white investors in the Atlanta 1910 Exposition seemed to be a result of the riot.60 What the city of Atlanta did in responding to the need for racial reconciliation was watched very closely by investors and other concerned citizens throughout the nation.61

The response from white citizens concerning the riot reflected the ambivalence overshadowing the city after the riot. Many viewed the riot and its impact on the city as one of the most tragic displays of violent racial attitudes ever to take place. Their concerns and contempt were
directed at the small criminal element of the city's population that they identified as being responsible for the circumstances surrounding the riot. Their indictments targeted the ignorant African American vagrant and the uneducated whites as the cancer threatening the elite of the entire city. Whites automatically designated black people not at work as vagrants, and the concept of a property holding or leisure class among blacks hardly penetrated the southern imagination. These black and white underclasses held each other in contempt and in some way responsible for the other's condition. They encountered each other in the dives and saloons of Decatur and Peters streets where liquor, prostitution, and squalid living conditions created volatile racial situations. Living in social poverty and limited by illiteracy, they somehow attempted to purge themselves from these bitter realities of life with drugs, alcohol, and a propensity for racial violence.

Some whites claimed that the riot had served to clear the air, teaching African Americans a lesson and reminding them of their place. What seemed to be the universal sentiment among most whites in Atlanta was that, although the riot threatened to disgrace the city, it, nevertheless, resulted in calming the "bumptiousness" of blacks. Many rioters sympathized with this strategy and thought of themselves as agents of reform within their respective
communities. Many credited the mob with making blacks more humble and at the same time humiliating the progressive blacks in the process. Mayor Woodward issued a signed statement commenting on the mob violence. He stated that: "as long as Negroes committed the crime which served as an occasion for the riots just so long will they be unceremoniously dealt with."64

Although the riot seemed to bring out the worst elements in Atlanta's character, it also spurred into action the strong, good and honest individuals of both races who together and individually sought ways to reconcile the differences between them and initiate a process of reconciliation and reconstruction that would heal the wounds created by the riot. Biracial groups consisting of businessmen with white and black clergymen along with city administrators and other influential citizens, all blended their efforts after the riot to begin the job of rehabilitation and reconciliation. The citizens of Atlanta realized that it was too late to prevent the violence that had already occurred, but they took stock in measures toward any other such violent racial confrontations. The diverse group of individuals reflected the diverse nature of Atlanta's citizenry, but, more importantly, they were a symbol of the concern by both black and white communities for a resolution to the threat
of racial violence and a commitment toward more interracial cooperation.

Although legal actions were taken by the Grand Jury of Fulton County which resulted in numerous arrests, several organizations were formed to respond to the consequences of the riot. Three organizations which proved to be constructive in attacking the racial problems were: The Committee of Ten, The Atlanta Civic League; and the Christian League. The Committee of Ten was led by attorney Charles T. Hopkins who in cooperation with the Unity Club believed that a lack of understanding between the races was the major cause of the riot. Hopkins believed that the best way to propose solutions to prevent another racial disturbance was to hear the grievances of the African American community. To facilitate these concerns ten men, each from both races, came together to design a common sense approach geared toward mutual enlightenment and a better understanding between the two races. This meeting broke new ground for Atlanta and for the South. This was the first important occasion in the South upon which an attempt was made for a biracial committee for the purpose of creating a better racial atmosphere. The Atlanta Civic League grew from these early meetings and biracial discussions with its efforts and encouragements also geared to the amelioration of race relations in the city. Upon their recommendations all the saloons of the city were
closed and remained closed for almost ten days; strict measures against social disorder were also taken. Mr. Hopkins encouraged the Reverend Henry H. Proctor to form the Colored Co-operative Civic League to work in conjunction with the Atlantic Civic League. Proctor was able to enlist 1500 of the city’s most prominent African American citizens as members. The Christian League was organized by ex-Governor Northern which sought to use religion to ameliorate race relations. The League attacked mob violence and lynching by using the powerful speeches of Southern ministers as an influential voice against lawlessness and injustice toward between blacks and whites.

The African American community reacted to the riot with anger and fear. The riot left an unsettling posture within the community because many of the victims of the riot were people who owned respectable and profitable enterprises. African American newspapers, community organizations and civic leaders all voiced their concern about conditions between the races. Many African Americans began to believe that they could no longer feel safe in Atlanta causing hundreds to migrate to other cities. It had been estimated that because of the riot approximately one thousand to as many as five thousand African Americans left Atlanta because of the race riot. Henry H. Proctor viewed the circumstances created by the riot as a major force which could be used to weld African American
communities into a cohesive force and allow them to begin to construct their own socioeconmic foundations. He encouraged African Americans to remain in the city and earn the respect of the white establishment. Using First Congregational Church as a vehicle for change, Henry Proctor began his program of racial harmony by bringing the two races together with the hope of creating a sense of community and racial respectability within both races in the city. Proctor was convinced that only through both races working together could race relations improve. His ambitions, ideas and social programs would not only be realized, but they would thrust his name into the international arena for the positive impact of his accomplishments.

2 Proctor, p. 96.


12 Dittmer, p. 95.


18Dittmer, pp. 108-110.


20Ibid.

21Proctor, Between Black & White, p. 97.


24Rouse, pp. 59-61.


26Ibid., pp. 97-98.


28Dittmer, p. 98.

29Atlanta Journal, Aug. 20, 1905.

31 Dittmer, pp. 100-101.
32 Crowe, pp. 245-247.
33 Ibid., p. 246.
34 Ibid.
36 Crowe, p. 52.
40 Crowe, p. 253.
42 Dittmer, p. 124.
43 Ibid.
44 The Atlanta Journal, Sept. 23, 1906; Gibson, p. 1457.
45 Crowe, pp. 152-154.
48 Crowe, p. 159; The Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 24, 1906.
49 The Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 23, 1906.
50 The Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 24, 1906.
51 White, p. 10.
52 Dittmer, p. 127.

54Dittmer, p. 129.

55White, p. 10.

56Dittmer, p. 128.


60Editorial, Atlanta Independent (Oct. 6, 1906).


63John Temple Graves, "The Tragedy of Atlanta; From The Point of View of Whites," Reprint from World Today (Nov., 1906); Baker, pp. 14-19.


CHAPTER IV

PROCTOR'S INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH AFTER THE ATLANTA RIOT

But alas! 'tis all in vain, for she
hates with bitter hate
These poor blacks who aye remind her
Of her greed for wealth and power,
Of her base consuming lust:
Noble striving but the more her wrath
inflames

Carrie W. Clifford
"Atlanta's Shame"

The Atlanta Riot of 1906 awakened within the black community a new sense of racial consciousness and dramatically illustrated the need for racial solidarity. It demonstrated to all African Americans in Atlanta the dangers which threatened the economic, social, and political fabric of their lives. For many African Americans, the riot defined the oppressors and helped create within black communities the foundations for a movement toward self-help and racial betterment. Confronted with the harsh realities brought upon them by the riot, they responded in defense of their dignity.
Blacks realized that if relief were coming to their respective communities after the riot, it would have to come from their own deliberate actions. African Americans looked for guidance to the strong and progressive members of their own race. They looked for guidance and justice in their traditional institutions and their cadre of leaders. One of the older institutions embracing a philosophy of racial solidarity and self-help was the church.2

Acting upon their frightened impulses many families sought a way to escape the terror and in some way to protect their lives. Others stood paralyzed and confused by the turn of events, their faith shaken, many not knowing exactly which way to turn. Many families elected to leave the city immediately and permanently, as others chose to leave the city temporarily while waiting for things to calm down. The sense of terror and hopelessness seemed to be expressed largely in the neighborhoods where prosperous citizens resided, some who had migrated to the city from the rural areas to educate their children and to enjoy a better standard of living. The consequences of the riot alarmed these individuals, causing some to feel they must leave the city for good.3

An official riot investigation report revealed that at least twenty-five families migrated to another city because of the unsafe conditions existing after the riot. The Brownsville community, outside the city limits where a
large community of industrious black citizens lived, witnessed a considerable migration, but blacks also left the city proper in large numbers. It had been estimated that approximately one to as many as five thousand African Americans left Atlanta immediately following the disturbance. Many families needed legal assistance to bail out friends and relatives who had been arrested during the riot. Needing cash, many families sold or mortgaged their homes. Medical bills, funeral expenses, and a myriad of other sacrifices that were made, were for many too much of a financial burden. As a result many left and sought out new lives in other cities.

The number of blacks who had lost their lives as a result of the riot served for many as a symbol of the hopelessness and despair of their being black and ambitious in a city of the New South. Their arduous successes, usually measured in the advancements made in education and small business, were met with a wave of white demands for a hardening of racial restrictions and the color caste system which also signaled more instances of racial intimidation and violence.

Henry Proctor and First Congregational Church became a source of strength, order and direction for Atlanta's black community. Proctor, as well as other black leaders in Atlanta, had realized that their community's, survival within this hostile environment was at stake. They also
realized that the future relationship between the black and white races stood at a crossroads. Race relations in Atlanta faced some crucial challenges that Proctor felt could be settled only by the two races cooperating with each other. The active role that Proctor played in Atlanta after the riot and before gave him an acute awareness of the needs of the African American community. Since his church was located in the heart of the black community, he often witnessed blacks by-passing his church on their way to the saloons, dives, and other deplorable business establishments whose clientele were often responsible for the high instances of crime that permeated the area. His efforts with the city administration, helping to restore order and peace in the city after the riot, and the work that he had done in establishing the Atlanta Inter-Racial Commission gave Proctor the respect and credibility he needed to instigate positive change between the races in Atlanta. The Inter-Racial Commission consisted of two committees of twenty-five each of ministers and laymen from both races who acted as agents for improving race relations. Each committee met separately and then came together to jointly construct plans for creating better relations between the races. Proctor believed that Decatur Street was a place where his people were socially and spiritually denigrated. He knew that he must create a better alternative for blacks, a space where they would not
be humiliated by the practices of discrimination and would not be tempted by the vices and destructive nature of the bar-rooms of the area.

One significant fact that immediately came to Proctor's attention was that his church was often times "locked and barred and dark, while the dive was wide open, illuminated, and attractive."5 In an effort to meet the needs of his people, he inaugurated a program that would compete with the attractiveness of the dives. Proctor knew that he would need a program that would be of service to blacks and which, he hoped, would lure the people away from the dives and into his church. His vision for a new kind of ministry was revealed in his efforts to construct in Atlanta an "institutional church" which would embrace traditional values and behaviors and, at the same time, serve the total needs of the community. John W. McConnel, in his Dictionary of Sociology, describes an "institutional church" as a Protestant church which renders non-traditional worship services to persons living within the immediate vicinity of the church. Such a church renders services to its members and the people of the neighborhood. Because of its extensive services, it often becomes a non-sectarian community center.6

Joining in the efforts of the national church organization to foster cultural appreciation, First Church sponsored an annual Music Festival, which presented the
best black artists from around the country and gave blacks the opportunity, which otherwise was not available in Atlanta's segregated facilities, to enjoy musical concerts presented by musicians of their own race. These musical concerts were instrumental in building race pride, giving black musicians an opportunity to present their talents to appreciative audiences. The concerts also enhanced the musical awareness and appreciation for black musical talent.7

Because of the complex nature of the problems facing the African American community, there was no one solution that would prove tenable for all situations or leadership strategies. However, blacks seemed to bond together in their newly found consciousness and their contempt for the present conditions. As a result, black leaders, both conservative and radical, displayed a unity of purpose and an ability to cooperate with each other for the amelioration of racial conditions in Atlanta. Proctor sought to harness that black solidarity and unleash it as a powerful force against racism, black denial, and Atlanta's Jim Crow restrictions.8

African American women also were part of the vanguard for improved conditions within black communities and for community solidarity. Spurred by the efforts of Lugenia Burns Hope, wife of John Hope, President of Morehouse College black women organized their efforts and initiated a
Neighborhood Union on July 8, 1908. The objectives of the Union were stated as: the "moral, social, intellectual, and religious uplift of the community and the neighborhood in which the organization or its branches may be established." Stressing the welfare of the children as essential to the future of the African Americans, the Union intended to serve the needs of the black community until those services could be replaced by a more permanent agency.

Dr. John W. E. Bowen, President of Gammon Theological Seminary, who suffered minor injuries during the riot and who had also witnessed the beatings and killing of innocent blacks in the Brownsville area, viewed the conditions provoking the riot as a product of the actions of a small group of individuals who plagued the African American community. These individuals, because of the presence of drugs, prostitution, and other unlawful activity, were considered dangerous and capable of all sorts of criminal activity. Dr. Bowen hoped for a way to rid the community of this criminal element. With these individuals removed, he believed, the African American communities could begin to heal themselves and earn the respect of others. He offered a list of solutions that he considered essential for uplifting the African American. Looking toward the possible prevention of future riots, his solutions involved
actions by the citizens of the community, the religious institutions and the state and local governments.

Bowen also felt the construction of better homes and educating parents to take the responsibility for the proper home training of their children would help prevent "dangerous characters" from destroying the integrity of black communities. He also believed that the church and the ministry should not only be available for religious fulfillment but for counseling, which he thought would give a person "a sounder judgement, a cooler head and a purer outlook on life." He proposed that the state, and the city, in particular, should appoint African American policemen to patrol in black neighborhoods. Finally he petitioned that blacks be allowed to sit on juries to try criminals of their own race.

In addition to Dr. Bowen, other influential African Americans voiced concern and gave advice to black Atlantans during their time of crisis. Booker T. Washington, President of Tuskegee Institute, considered by many to be the most powerful and influential black man of his time, visited Atlanta immediately after the riot. Very much aware of the possible dangers involved in his coming to the city so soon after the disturbance, Washington nevertheless felt compelled to offer his services in bringing peace to the city. In a statement to the black press Washington urged:
I would especially urge the colored people in Atlanta and elsewhere to exercise self control, and not make the fatal mistake of attempting to retaliate, but to rely upon the efforts of the proper authorities to bring order and security out of confusion. If they do this they will have the sympathy of good people the world over.12

Washington also voiced his contempt for the element of the race that he thought was responsible for the aggravated circumstances which contributed to the riot. He advised members of the Negro Business League, community leaders and church officials to pursue a more positive involvement in the communities. He hoped that through an increased participation on the part of black leadership within their communities, racial conditions would improve and the quality of life improve as well. He encouraged blacks to cultivate within themselves a spirit of racial pride for things already accomplished in the face of such adversity. He also stressed the importance of the best of both races uniting for better race relations.13 After returning from his two day stay in Atlanta, Washington was pleased to hear that leaders from both races had decided to form an interracial cooperation committee, the Colored Cooperative League, where grievances could be heard and discussed and solutions explored.14

The black press was also instrumental in circulating the views expressed by several other prominent African Americans both North and South. All of the newspapers condemned the riot and its participants and demanded that
Justice should be done with speed to the guilty parties. Some encouraged African Americans to stand up and fight for their rights. The Washington Bee reported that William Monroe Trotter, the radical and outspoken editor of the Boston Guardian who also was president of the New England Suffrage League, declared that the real significance of the Atlanta Riot was the disclosure that the South had taken measures to disfranchise African Americans. Trotter declared that this was a warning to the nation that disfranchisement would bring destruction. The only way the nation could be saved from this self destruction, he insisted, was to reenfranchise African Americans.

This diversity of opinion and unity of purpose which permeated the African American philosophy in matters concerned with their improved condition allowed both men and women the opportunity to transcend individual ideological differences and work together for the elimination of racial injustice and to begin building their own socioeconomic community network. Henry Proctor agreed that there should be some kind of agitation; without it he viewed the chances of launching a successful campaign against white racism as futile. However, he noted that this should be constructive agitation, not for the purpose of irritating whites, but for making the demands of the African American known in the larger society. He felt that black leaders needed to orchestrate and address racial
problems with their own people and that white leaders needed to address those same problems with their people. The previous tendency of whites to address blacks about racial issues, he felt, was counterproductive and that a new mode of communication was needed. Proctor felt that this kind of communication and enlightenment would move the reconciliation process along much faster with more positive results.15

Proctor began creating this community network with the formation of a Colored Cooperative League, which originally followed the suggestion of Atlanta attorney Charles Hopkins, to work in conjunction with the Atlanta Civic League, which had an all white membership. Proctor was able to enroll fifteen hundred of the city's most prominent black citizens in support of the vision that their working along with whites would encourage a better understanding between the leaders of both races, resulting in racial cooperation.16 This alliance between black and white leaders accomplished the release of the sixty black men arrested in South Atlanta. Through the League an agreement was made with the newspapers, especially the Atlanta News, to avoid publishing any more sensational news. A spirit of racial cooperation was also witnessed by the other actions taken and considerations made. These included saloons being closed at four o'clock on Christmas Eve; efforts to employ a lawyer to defend innocent and indigent blacks in
the city police courts; a changed attitude toward blacks by the courts was imperative; the acquittal of an innocent black man accused of criminal assault on a white woman, and the bringing of the right perpetrator to an arrest and conviction.17

Some members of the black community viewed the opportunity created by the biracial League as a way to voice their grievances to interested whites. Still others within the African American community viewed Proctor's efforts at interracial cooperation as a defection from the racial solidarity of the race.18 Benjamin Davis, editor of the Independent, suggested that the League be utilized as a method to appeal to whites for fair treatment on streetcars and elevators, as well as the hiring of African American policemen to patrol black neighborhoods and the appointing of attorneys to defend blacks in the courts. W. E. B. DuBois, whose suspicions about Southern whites always caused him to keep his distance from them, was particularly skeptical of "white moderates." Nevertheless, after the riot, he did initially participate in the interracial meetings and for a short time worked along with Proctor, his former classmate at Fisk, for the good of the cause. However, he later dismissed the movement as "gotten up primarily for advertising purposes."19

Despite his accomplishments within the Colored Cooperative League Proctor remained convinced that religion
and the power of the Christian spirit would bring racial harmony and a new dawn to Atlanta. He also believed that such a spirit must have enough breadth to encompass all elements of society. Both radical and conservative elements, both white and black, he insisted, must work together for the common advancement of all.20 Just as he had worked together with DuBois and Washington bringing both "wings of the race" together for the common cause, he believed he must work the same magic among the radical and conservative elements of whites. Proctor sought to direct his Institutional Church programs toward making that vision a reality in Atlanta.

Describing his Institutional Church as "a church which serves all without regard to denominational or racial affiliation,"21 Proctor reasoned that his church would satisfy the social, religious and political needs of all citizens in Atlanta with enough latitude in its services to answer the needs of the entire black community. His efforts also focused on facilitating a new spiritually based healing process for both black and white Atlantans to eradicate the polarization created as a result of the riot. Proctor appealed to the Christian ideals and morals of all Atlantans, hoping that through these religious virtues, peace and goodwill would triumph.22 He hoped that this religious spirit would bring comfort to the masses and soften racial prejudices. Proctor thought that religion
was surely the basis of mutual helpfulness and racial cooperation. His vision was to make religion something other than a ritual and spiritual connection. "Religion," he stated, "is regarded as something to be sought rather than transmitted." He believed that "worshippers entered the portals of the church in search of not only a system of religious doctrine to adhere to and to pass on to their children, but also in search of an answer to the complicated problems of the era." He viewed religion as the greatest instrument for enlightening, inspiring and uplifting the masses of black people.

Proctor brought to the ministry of First Church a vitality and a genius for innovative programs that soon marked his church as one of the most progressive centers of Christian social action in the nation. His dynamic programs for the improvement of race relations in Atlanta rested on the cooperation of the best elements of both races and a commitment to what he termed his "Ten Points Toward Better Race Relations":

1. From the time of the Revolutionary War to the World War, the history of America has been cooperation between white and black.

2. Every time one white has done a wrong to a black, there has been another white trying to set that wrong right.

3. The man who today stands as the ideal American (Abraham Lincoln), gave his life for the freedom of the black.

4. The genius of America is for Democracy, and in the end this land must be for all.

5. Cooperation is the law of life, and it is better for White and Black to cooperate than to antagonize each other.

6. The one eternal lesson for White and Black to learn is how better to love one another; for they are both in the same ship.

7. Black and White must have more faith in each other; for suspicion is destructive and faith is creative.

8. Since Massachusetts has gone Democratic and Texas Republican is it not high time for the Black to divide his ballot between the great parties.
9. In view of the new day should not the youth of both races forget the battles of their fathers and fight out constructively the problems of the new day.

10. Since three fourths of mankind is colored . . . . does not the future belong to the American Negro if he is true to himself.26

Proctor's "Ten Points" served as blueprints for peace and for interracial co-operation which he hoped would become the foundation and very cornerstones of his movement for a better Atlanta. Proctor’s commitment to the education and enlightenment of the youth and their participation in working out the problems of the age were also an integral part of his message. He viewed these "Ten Points" as essential guidelines for the development of a more pragmatic type of religious institution that would help blacks cope with and overcome the pressing social, economic, and spiritual problems of everyday life in Atlanta. He believed that the condition of blacks demanded such a church for their full development. He proclaimed that the mission of the church was: "to teach the gospel of the ministry to the mind; to preach the ministry to the soul; and to heal the ministry through the body."27

Proctor's works were given national recognition for their effectiveness in bringing about law, order and racial harmony to Atlanta after the riot. In 1914, eight years after the riot, Bruce Barton, the author of the Boston Globe, gave national attention to the role of Proctor and First Congregational Church by calling it "The Church That
Saved a City." Barton described Proctor's ministry during the crucial days following the riot:

After two or three days the terror died on the street, but it raged still in the hearts of the people. . . . between those two days there moved in and out through Atlanta the great towering figure of Henry H. Proctor, pastor of the First Congregational Church . . . out of the havoc of the riot this monument to the courage and manhood of a people, his voice rose still but by no means small, following the earthquake and the fire. . . . For a whole day I traveled back and forth in its city and up and down in it. . . . I do not know where else there is a church that seems so thoroughly to have permeated the life of the city--its own particular city--as has this First Congregational Church in Atlanta . . . continuing to save the city.28

But Proctor devoted all his time and energy at this juncture to the task of persuading the people that this was not the proper time to abandon the city. He challenged them to transform these uncertain times into a more positive, constructive force. He assured them that the times called for a special kind of individual commitment, that individuals must search within themselves to allow their spirit and courage to take control and with their creative force go about the task of rebuilding and reconstructing their city. Proctor realized that among those who suffered the most from the consequences of the riot were those who had owned businesses, property, and were striving to become very respected members in their communities. Bruce Barton, editor of the Boston Globe, reported the language which Proctor used to console his people during this trying time:
Now's our chance to show them the stuff we're made of. We are real men, not grown up children as they want us to believe. Let's begin by erecting a church as has never been erected by colored men before, an institutional church embodying all that is modern and approved in church work. Let that be the answer to the riot; let's begin now.29

Proctor's language and the challenge he made to the black communities in Atlanta resulted in a wide range of members of the African American community, at that time numbering over 51,000, finding within themselves a new source of strength and desire to bring to life the dream of one of their pastors. They were also equally determined to prove to the white community in Atlanta the "stuff they were made of." Proctor reasoned that an institutional church would embody all that was the most contemporary yet approved in church work. This new ministry should be the black community's response to the riot; and it should begin immediately. The African Americans in Atlanta must, he felt, seize the moment and make the best of it.30 As a result some who had left the city returned when they heard what the black community was doing there. Ben Davis, the editor of the Atlanta Independent, agreed and supported Proctor's philosophy on how best to deal with the individuals who were exiting the city and as a consequence of his support published an editorial to that effect. He assured blacks that they must not become so alarmed with the present situation and flee from the city, but, instead he convinced them that this type of mob violence was not at
all peculiar to the city of Atlanta. He promised them that: "Mob violence [would] occur in the course of human events wherever there are racial differences." 31

Proctor’s proposal for the solution to the race problem in Atlanta remained largely dependent upon what blacks were able to do for themselves. Prerequisite to this were race pride and a renewed focus on efforts toward self-help and racial solidarity. Proctor was convinced that there was no better way to cultivate this quality than for them to inaugurate a new church building that would become a symbol embodying the true spirit of their cultural renaissance. He believed that both black and white would realize that the Congregational type of church presented the ideal by which blacks in the South could solve their own problems. Congregational ministers had throughout their history represented their commitment toward the total enlightenment of blacks and Proctor saw himself as the custodian of that rich tradition. He looked to the works being done between the better elements of both races in the city as indicative of the renewed spirit of racial cooperation and a determination on the part of the members of the African American community to dignify themselves.

In the midst of the tension and struggles by blacks after the riot Proctor attempted to create a new sense of identity, race pride, and self-reliance. His reconstruction program seemed to him a revelation, a
message from God, that the present church structure and the memories that it held were inadequate for the fulfillment of his dreams. Proctor's dreams centered on the building of a new religious community in Atlanta not only for African Americans but for all Atlantans. He reasoned that the riot had been a cleansing force for the Atlanta community which dictated that a new beginning should emerge with the reconstruction and improvement of conditions for African Americans and a better relationship between the races.

Proctor realized that improvements to the old church structure would have to be made to accommodate his institutional programs and that the dedication and expense would be enormous, possibly more than his church congregation could raise independently. But he was certain that the opportunity and the rewards in building a new church structure would be well worth overcoming any obstacles. He would have to put into practice everything he had learned from his days at Fisk and at Yale to raise the people's devotion to the cause and to raise the money needed to make his new vision a reality. Proctor knew that the building of a new church by the members of the congregation would become a revelation in their lives that they could cherish all of their days. He hoped that the project had a good chance for success with financial assistance from his church congregation, friends from other
churches, and whites from within and outside the city who were sensitive to his cause. He also believed that building a new church would present a golden opportunity for the people of Atlanta, both black and white, to rally around one significant cause which would become a symbol expressing their devotion to humanity and their solid Christian spirit.32

Turning first to the members of his congregation, Proctor discovered that the enthusiasm he had for the new church project was not shared by all of his members. Many thought that the church rebuilding project was too grandiose and virtually impossible to accomplish. Some even thought he was going mad. However, slowly, individual pledges began to trickle into the new church fund. There was one pledge of two hundred and fifty dollars from a classmate of Booker T. Washington’s, and another for five hundred dollars from a woman of the congregation. These individual pledges seemed to get the ball rolling, and immediately they were imitated with pledges of ten thousand dollars from the entire congregation as its contribution to the building of the new church. Dr. Moses Amos, the first African American druggist in Georgia, donated at the opening ceremonies the memorial pulpit, which was still in use in 1950.33 Alonzo Herndon, founder of Atlanta Life Insurance Co. and supporter of the church, as well as the entire Herndon family, were also valuable contributors to
the church and its programs. As a leading trustee, Alonzo Herndon, and later his son Norris, served as church treasurer, and charitable benefactor to church programs and financial concerns. His support for the efforts of Reverend Proctor became well known throughout the Atlanta community.

Proctor then turned his attention to African Americans of the community assuring them that this would be a community church and would be available to assist all citizens of the city. His appeals were well received and a very favorable response came from the surrounding community, a gift of twenty-five hundred dollars. Proctor was beginning to visualize the effectiveness of his efforts at bonding together the community behind a single and just cause. He rewarded the community's efforts and dedication to the cause by stating that as a result of its favorable response and the genuine interest it was taking in the project, it would share and enjoy a unique kinship with the church congregation. Proctor made the same appeal to the white community, asking it to contribute also twenty-five hundred dollars. Proctor stated that "after a week of personal canvassing I came back with five thousand dollars in cold, hard cash." His appeals for contributions to his new church fund were also greatly enhanced by the assistance of the Atlanta press, specifically the Atlanta Constitution and the Georgia Bible, which gave Proctor's
endeavors a broader audience by providing him much needed publicity. They even expanded their coverage by printing excerpts of his weekly sermons.36

Proctor then turned to the people and the church congregations of the North who he hoped would be sympathetic to his efforts and would see their contributions going to a worthy cause, for creating better race relations in a troubled South, while, at the same time, helping to solve the problem of racism that was national in scope. His relations with people of the North were somewhat cordial because he had often spoken at homes, churches and offices in Northern cities during his days at Yale and also when he campaigned with Booker T. Washington on his Northern trips seeking financial assistance for his various causes. He had entertained the Ogdens, a wealthy family with an interest in his work, and their associates in Atlanta. Robert C. Ogden, an executive with department stores in Philadelphia and New York, and his distinguished party represented potential donors for Proctor and his institutional church. He had been a good friend and counselor to Booker T. Washington and trustee at Hampton Institute.37

Proctor had in 1906 addressed the National Council of Congregational Churches in Cleveland, Ohio. Proctor was grateful for the interest and commitment to the church project he received from Dr. Charles H. Richards of the
Congregational Church Building Society, who was not only instrumental in introducing Proctor to many persons interested in his project, but who also gave a generous contribution to his church work from his own society. He even dignified the new church by delivering the sermon at its dedication. Dr. Charles Richards also wrote a letter of recommendation to his friends and associates in the North describing Proctor's valuable works and the support of his organization to the success of these works:

September 27, 1907

I cordially commend the Rev. H. H. Proctor, pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Ga. Dr. Proctor is well known by reason of his writings and his addresses North and South. His large church, containing many of the most influential colored people in Atlanta, has outgrown its building, and under the wise and able leadership of the pastor they are building a new house of worship. Dr. Proctor's work will be more than doubled, and his influence among both white and colored people will be greatly increased. The Board of Trustees of the Congregational Church Building Society regard this movement as of such great importance that, waiving its usual rule, it has authorized Dr. Proctor to visit some of our churches and generous-hearted friends in various cities in the North as its representative, and tell them of his plans. He goes with our hearty endorsement.

Proctor's experiences during his Northern campaign were profitable and rewarding because he found a host of interested persons willing to open their doors and pocketbooks for the works of his institutional church. His most generous contributor was Ralph Miner, educator and philanthropist of New Haven, Connecticut, who had for some
time contributed to the education of black youth. Miner had also given a new Ford automobile to the church to be used by the pastor and his wife. In tribute to the generosity of Ralph Miner, after his death, Proctor named the institutional facilities of the church after him, calling it the Ralph Miner Institute. In reference to the contributions made by Ralph Miner and his wife the church historian, Kathleen R. Adams, made these remarks:

Dr. Proctor went north and found friends to aid. Ralph J. Miner of New Haven, Connecticut, and his wife, became the most substantial donors during his lifetime. By his will the department received $1100.00 yearly. The church supplied many volunteers to assist the two paid workers. Miss Nellie Watts, a social worker, of the membership, was paid by the Phelps-Stokes Fund, N. Y. Rev. Fletcher Bryant was financed by The Social Service Commission of Congregational Churches of the United States. The Cooking School and the Working Girls' Home paid the teacher and the matron respectively.

The Ralph Miner Institute and its financial assistance provided a solid foundation from which was launched various social service functions. The Church was able to operate an employment bureau which successfully assisted new arrivals to the city. It also gave classroom instruction to both white and black citizens of Atlanta who requested its services. Business classes were conducted at the request of Mrs. Proctor, the pastor's wife, who was able to receive funding from the Remington Typewriter company in Atlanta which also agreed to furnish the needed typewriters for her students at the Church. Mrs. Proctor conducted business
classes in typing and shorthand. The church also operated a kindergarten, a playground and secretarial services for illiterate soldiers at Camp Gordon in Augusta during World War I. In conjunction with the services at Camp Gordon, Mrs. Kathleen Adams stated that "on Saturdays two young ladies from the church would go to Camp Gordon where they served as secretaries for illiterate soldiers stationed there." Those women also operated a postal service at the camp. In addition to all these services Proctor's compassion for all individuals in the community was seen in the public water fountain he installed in front of his church. 42

Proctor’s Northern fund raising campaign was successful largely because of the assistance of a good friend, Booker T. Washington, whom Proctor had met after his graduation from Yale Divinity School. Washington had invited Proctor to accompany him on his lecture circuit as a symbol of the "new colored leadership" which Washington intended to present to the large audiences of Northern philanthropists and others sympathetic to his cause. 43 Washington had been initiated into the methods of fundraising by General Samuel Armstrong, his mentor at Hampton. In very much the same way that Armstrong had advised Washington in the ways of fundraising, so had Washington taken Proctor on his first real campaign that introduced him to the rudiments of raising money for his
institutional church. The relationship between Proctor and Washington had been more intimate at the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta in 1895, where Washington delivered the speech that made him famous throughout the country. Washington became a periodic visitor and speaker at First Church and often spoke to large audiences in the city auditorium. Proctor's good relationship with Washington became an invaluable asset as Washington not only introduced him to the rudiments of fundraising but also put him in touch with a very influential circle of friends and philanthropists who would considerably help his cause.

Speaking of the financial resources created for him by Washington, Proctor stated:

It was through him that the Ogden Party came to our church one Sunday on their way to Tuskegee, and made our church the center of the city for the day. This gave me an introduction to some of the leading people in the North, and greatly helped me in securing funds for my larger work. Mr. Washington was also generous in giving me the names of influential people, and he presented me once before the Twentieth Century Club of Boston. I found his name a key North and South. I once called upon Mr. Carnegie in New York to give a portion to my organ fund, and he asked me who I had to recommend me, and I told him I had letters from Ex-President Roosevelt, President Taft, Senator Smith, and Booker T. Washington. He said that if I had the recommendation of Mr. Washington I did not need the others, and I got my request.

Recommendations from Booker T. Washington seemed to be worth their weight in gold. The eloquent simplicity of Washington's letters coupled with the enormous strength of his personality seemed enough to empty the pockets of
Northern philanthropists. The following letter dated September 19, 1907 from Booker T. Washington spoke to the established reputation of Henry H. Proctor:

This is to say that I have known Dr. H. H. Proctor of the First Congregational Church of Atlanta for about fifteen Years. The work he has done in Atlanta as a public spirited citizen, as minister, and as leader of his people has commended him to the confidence and good will of the general public in a way that is true of but few citizens of Atlanta. He is interested at this time in building an Institutional Church and I beg to commend him to those with whom he will be brought in contact as deserving of encouragement and support. The enterprise itself, it strikes me, is one greatly needed in that city where so many of the Negro people live and Atlanta is a city of importance and a church of this kind planted in Atlanta will be suggestive for other cities in the South. As I observe it, what the Colored people need is a practical side to their Christian life. This church is designed to meet that point.

Another letter of recommendation was written by Edward T. Ware, President, of Atlanta University, dated October 3, 1907:

This is to introduce my friend, the Rev. H. H. Proctor, D. D., pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Ga. Dr. Proctor is planning extension work for his church which promises to be of inestimable value to the Negro youth of this city and anything that you may do to help him, I shall count a personal favor.

One surprising letter which is exemplary of the widespread support Proctor received across racial lines was written by Hoke Smith, Governor of Georgia, on October 5, 1907:
Dr. H. H. Proctor seeks to enlarge his church building by adding space for institutional work. His own people have contributed liberally; a number of white men here have contributed. Dr. Proctor enjoys the confidence of all who know him. I believe his proposed work deserves support and hope he will succeed in raising the money needed.

The favorable reactions from Atlanta's citizens, both black and white, and from friends across the country, were responsible for the successful renovations of First Church, which began a new legacy under the leadership of Henry H. Proctor, and his concepts of an institutional church. The church became a symbol of a community forging its energies and resources together with the goal directed toward the amelioration of the black community and of racial conditions during a period of transition for the entire city. Proctor's institutional church sought to overcome the recognizable environmental influences and pressures which were facing the African American community at the turn of the century. The institutional church, therefore, became a factor in Atlanta's changing role in what some historians and other scholars would call the capital city of the New South. This spirit of cooperation between blacks and whites, radical and conservative, may, perhaps, be the chief contribution made by First Church and by the Reverend Henry H. Proctor to the city of Atlanta.

The new church building was formally opened on January 22, 1909 with a series of services of dedication "to God and the service of mankind." Speaking of the new church
which he termed, at times, an "industrial temple," Proctor described the structure after three years of growth as:

... a basement, containing Sunday school facilities, a library which contained 3,000 volumes, the only public library for colored in the city and a reading room, a gymnasium for the recreational and physical development of the youth, a model kitchen where girls are instructed in domestic science, a sewing room, where plain and fancy sewing is taught, a kindergarten where the children are instructed in the early stages of their character, a shower, and a reading room where any woman of the race may rest and read. ... On the main floor is an auditorium with a seating capacity of one thousand open for any good thing designed for the betterment of the race. Here are also the office of the church and the study of the pastor. On the third floor are a gallery. By the church stood the parsonage, next to which was the home for colored working girls. This was the first home in the world opened by any church for colored girls. This was the best equipped church plant for colored people anywhere in the world, and is conservatively estimated to be worth $250,000.48

Because of the significant part he played in securing valuable funds for the building of the new church it was only fitting that Booker T. Washington would turn the first piece of earth on the new building. Mrs. Kathleen R. Adams captured that moment, at the ground breaking ceremony when Washington gave birth to a new church life for First Church, in a poem written by her especially for the occasion. Her poem was entitled "Ground Breaking":

The Audience was grave, tense. As Washington stepped down, the gold shovel to raise - It thudded the ground, his foot pushed it in a heave of the shoulder and the first dirt was turned. A twist of the wrist and a New Church was born. Lusty and strong like an infant's first cry - The parishioners broke forth in their most loved song:
"The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ, Her Lord." 49

Washington was also instrumental in securing about one half the cost of the new church organ as a gift from Andrew Carnegie. One month after the opening ceremonies, February 15, 1909, a concert by William Bush, recognized as the "greatest living colored organist," was held in honor of the new church and its pastor. 50

The concert was only the beginning of a new cultural epoch begun in Atlanta fostered by First Church. Proctor's passion for music coupled with black citizens' denial of accessibility to the musical talent of the age encouraged him to direct his institutional works at solving this problem. He was especially motivated when it was brought to his attention that several of the women in his congregation were willing to masquerade as maids in order for them to hear the performances of the Metropolitan Opera Company, which made annual visits to Atlanta with concerts extending an entire week. 51

Proctor viewed music as one of the great socializing forces and he sought to share the cultural influences of music with his congregation. He pondered long and hard on the best possible way to provide for his people the music that they wanted so desperately to hear. He demanded that the girls of the Avery Home have a piano for their use. His church choir became regarded as "one of the best in all the city" having not only a professional director,
Professor P. M. Thompson, but also incorporating a professional organist, Miss Nellie Askew, and a cornetist, E. T. Jenkins.52

Proctor witnessed the growing number of people in the South who made yearly journeys to Atlanta in order to enjoy the opportunity to hear the performances of the great Metropolitan Opera. Because blacks were not allowed admission to the Opera performances, he wanted desperately to introduce that level of talent to the black community and have the musicians perform for their own personal enjoyment. In 1910 he discovered a way to realize his dream and bring the best musical talent of the race to Atlanta, a dream consistent with his initial goal of developing all facets of the individuals within his congregation.

Proctor knew that annual music festivals were an opportunity to present black musicians to Atlanta's African American community and that they could at the same time instill more racial pride within his people. He also saw this opportunity as a way to assist struggling black artists, many of whom were barred from participating in the activities of the symphony orchestras and opera companies. Activities sponsored by the church extended to the entire black community without regard to religious denomination. All proceeds derived from these annual music festivals were directed entirely to support the institutional work of the
The first Annual Music Festival was held on August 10, 1910, at the Municipal Auditorium Armory which at that time was considered the largest auditorium in the South. This initial effort was almost assured to be a great success because of the appearance of Harry T. Burleigh of New York as a special guest along with the world renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers. A local chorus of one-hundred voices also sang under the direction of Mr. Arthur Grant.

The presence of Harry Burleigh, because of his renowned reputation, was significant to the overall success of the first annual music festival. He came to Atlanta with enormous credentials in the United States and in Europe. Not only was he an accomplished baritone, he also was the first black to achieve national distinction as a composer, arranger, and concert singer. Burleigh was determined to capture the true spirit of the Negro folk song in the music he composed, and it was an arrangement of spirituals for the solo voice that allowed him to make a unique contribution to the history of American music and African American folk music as well. After Burleigh, many concert singers developed the tradition of closing their recitals with a group of Negro Spirituals; integrated with other arranged folksongs.

Proctor's passion for Negro Spirituals was cultivated during his days at Yale Divinity School where he and four other students formed a quartet to sing black melodies.
The group was well received in the local community churches, and once had the occasion of furnishing the music at the Divinity commencement exercises. In fact his days at Yale were financed by the money earned by his vocal quartet. Proctor's interest in the Negro Spirituals went far beyond just the singing of the melodies. He sought to translate their theological significance as an art form. His graduating thesis at Yale was on the theology of the songs of the slaves of the South. His thesis statement involved the interpretation of these songs. He attempted to sustain his theory that the slaves built their songs on a real theological system. Proctor thought that these songs formed what he called "the true American music" a musical form free from malice and revenge, songs that form the very cornerstones of Christianity, conceptions of God, and all things spiritual. These vocal utterances of a people deprived and in bondage gave Proctor a new insight into the souls of his people. "These songs came from the heart, and they go to the heart. They have the very tone of the gospel in them. They breathe the odor of spiritual sacrifice."55

Proctor believed that the appreciation for and a total understanding of the folk music of the African American could inspire a common bond between all humankind and greatly assist in the solution to the race problem in America. Because music permeates every aspect of black life
making music and life inseparable for black people, the
lives of blacks, he thought, were harmoniously integrated
with their religion and their music. The spirituals were
thought to reveal the black man’s noble strivings, his
Christian virtues of humility, and a sentimental spirit for
goodwill and redemption, valuable qualities which black
people contributed to Christianity and Christian living.56

These annual concerts were held until the beginning of
World War I when they were discontinued because of the war
and its impact on the Atlanta community. However, they
were instrumental in spreading the works of Proctor’s
institutional church program and in bringing peoples of all
races together in harmony. Proctor always placed a
"Festival Prayer" in the front of the programs, which often
reflected his commitment toward interracial cooperation:

Here may racial animosities be buried and the
spirit of brotherhood enthroned; here may
individual differences be forgotten and the spirit
of friendship revived; here may estrangements be
ended and enduring friendships begun.57

The Fourth Annual Music Festival held on July 3-4,
1913, deserves mention because it was held in commemoration
of the fiftieth anniversary of the emancipation of blacks
in America. Members of the community referred to this
program as the "Jubilee Festival" and, to commemorate the
occasion, the festival hosted some of the great black
musical geniuses of the age, including such performers as
Madame Anita Patti Brown of Chicago, Roland Hayes, tenor of
Curryville, Ga.; Clarence Cameron White, violinist of Boston; and, Professor John W. Work and The Fisk Jubilee Singers. Guest artists from Atlanta included: Irene Bowen, pianist; Emma Mae Walker, pianist; the Fifth Regiment Orchestra; and two choruses of one-hundred voices each. Special mention was given to the career and contributions of Roland Hayes because he was a native of Curryville, Georgia in Gordon County, and born to former slaves in 1887. He was one of the first black singers to get worldwide recognition in classical music, the first African American to perform with a symphony orchestra and the first to bring old Negro spirituals to the state. His career transcended racial barriers, musical genres and spanned several continents. Hayes was very interested in preserving the Negro folk songs. He once said to an interviewer:

If, as I truly believe, there is purpose and plan in my life, it is this: that I shall have my share in rediscovering the qualities we have almost let slip away from us; and that we shall make our special contribution--only a humble one perhaps, but our very own--to human experience.

Roland Hayes appeared again for the Sixth Annual Music Festival, held on August 6, 1915, which also featured Rachael Walker, a soprano from Cleveland, Ohio returning to the United States from extensive appearances in Europe, Alice Lacour, a Jubilee Singer, Kemper Harreld, instructor of music at Morehouse College and another local artist, Muriel M. Proctor, the daughter of Dr. Proctor.
Proctor's music festivals were important instruments of his institutional ministry. Not only was he successful in bringing in the best musical talents from across the country, but also he was successful in attracting audiences of both races to hear the performances. Despite the fact that the seating arrangements in the auditorium were segregated, with blacks sitting to the left side, Proctor understood and attempted to exploit the power of the church and music to convert the spirit and soften the bitterness between the races, making smooth the rough edges of racism, and bringing a great force to bear on racial antipathies. Proctor hoped that the musicians and their songs would somehow become a spiritual force that could be translated into a sanctuary for positive works. "Just as David charmed Saul with his music and drove away his madness, even so the African may charm the Saxon with his songs and assuage racial asperities." Proctor's church works attracted national attention as visitors began coming from all parts of the country to witness the works of the institutional church in the heart of the New South. Among the most noteworthy of all visitors to First Church were two men who would hold the highest office in the land and reside at the White House. The first was William Howard Taft, who travelled throughout the South before his inauguration in 1908. Taft was steered to the Church by members of his party because they
described it as one of the city's major attractions. He and Proctor stood on the steps of the church as the choir sang "Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveler" a selection that became customary to sing for special guests. Taft was impressed with the facilities, and as a result of his visit, the reputation of the church increased immensely. Later, in January of 1909 Taft wrote Proctor a letter concerning his visit. He told Proctor:

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of January 18th., and to say that I was very much pleased to be able to visit the First Congregational Church during my recent trip to Atlanta. It will serve as an instrument of great good in your community, and I wish for it all the prosperity possible.

Theodore Roosevelt was another honored guest who came to the Church. Proctor remembered the first question asked by Roosevelt. "Mr. Proctor, what is an institutional church?" Proctor responded by taking Roosevelt on a tour of the Church, stopping intermittingly to allow him to view parts of the building and ask questions. They went to the game room of the church, named in Roosevelt's honor. The President was quite pleased to see a picture of himself, above which was poised a big stick. They proceeded to the main auditorium, where Roosevelt made an address to a large audience.

Because of the visiting dignitaries, positive response to the works of the institutional church in Atlanta, the name of First Church and its pastor became synonymous
throughout the country with good, positive, and progressive programs that brought communities together for their own mutual benefit. As a result, churches across the country began to imitate its programs. Proctor viewed this as one of the sincerest forms of flattery ever bestowed upon his church. He knew that the current condition of black people in America demanded that they inaugurate institutional churches for their own total development.64

Proctor received a firm vote of confidence from the citizens of Atlanta upon the completion of his new institutional church. In tribute to the good works being done by his church, and after the completion of the new church building in January, 1909, they donated a thousand dollars toward a round-trip passage, at any time, to the Holy Land for Dr. Proctor. This gracious gift was also an effort by the congregation and citizens of Atlanta to further enlighten their pastor and at the same time share in a traditional spiritual journey to the Holy Land. This gesture humbled and surprised Proctor but his humility was transformed to hostility when he encountered racism when he tried to secure a ticket with a touring party for his trip. What really shocked Proctor was that this experience with racism was not coming from the heart of the South but from the cities of Boston and New York.65

Proctor departed from New York harbor on March 11, 1911, and was pleased to find that the whites he
encountered on board seemed to have left their prejudices behind them. He found no indication of a color line existing anywhere aboard. In fact, he found quite the contrary, that his color was an attraction instead of a detraction. He was heartily received wherever he went.

In route to the Holy Land Proctor had the opportunity to visit the continent of Africa, which became a great inspiration for him as he navigated the Nile River and viewed the pyramids at Gizeh. His letter to the congregation in Atlanta revealed his excitement for the new learning experience, the reeducation he was receiving concerning the origins of his people.

In one letter from Egypt, Proctor described the increased racial consciousness he experienced at the Egyptian Museum. Amid the relics of antiquity, Proctor became fully conscious of the presence of a mighty civilization that excelled in agriculture, science, art, law and religion. He discovered that black people had played a significant role in the making of this great and ancient civilization. This new discovery of truth was clearly revealed as Proctor viewed the physical features of individuals whose faces he saw on the monuments. These faces were the faces of black people, which gave him a new sense of racial pride and dignity. Proctor viewed the bust of Tarhaka, one of the Biblical kings, who was a black man. He looked upon the walls of the pyramids and saw white,
brown, and black kings of Egypt. The sphinx also bore the
deeper characteristics of a black person. Even the great
statue of Rameses II, the grandson of the Pharaoh before
whom Moses pleaded, was of black ancestry. Proctor
explained his experience in a letter to his congregation:

Since my visit further explorations confirm the
fact that black men and women took a leading part
in the making of ancient Egypt, the mother of
modern civilization. Coming up from Africa, I got
a new pride in my race that I have never
forgotten.

His visit to the Holy Land was equally inspiring as he
passed the city of Mary and Joseph with its vast array of
carpenter shops, some which resembled those where Jesus
must have worked. Another high point of the journey was
Proctor's invitation to be a special guest of the American
Syrian Protestant College, where he got the opportunity to
address the students from the local Y M C A.

Proctor's experience in learning ended the summer of
1911 with his return home on the Mauretania. Glad to be
back home, Proctor recalled that he felt a certain kinship
toward America and became sentimental when he saw the
Statue of Liberty. He was proud to be an American, despite
the nation's faults.

In March, 1919, Proctor journeyed once again across
the Atlantic, but this journey had a different calling. He
was requested, by General John Pershing, after the war, to
tavel to France to help sustain the morale of the soldiers
left behind to bury with distinction American soldiers who
had fallen in battle. Proctor’s task involved his traveling to France, to serve as a spiritual advisor to those black soldiers who were given this most unpleasant detail.

The city of Atlanta and the congregation at First Church were both deeply concerned at the outbreak of World War I, and wanted to volunteer their services toward the war effort. Atlanta was the center for the gathering of the Southeastern quota of draftees, and the war spirit permeated the city. Proctor ministered on Sundays to a church packed with concerned citizens, some of whom had sons and relatives who had been drafted or had enlisted in the war. Proctor, himself, volunteered his services as chaplain, but he was too old to serve. However, over fifty young boys from First Church did serve in the war, including Proctor’s son, Henry Proctor, Jr. who was a member of the cadre of talented and educated young men trained as officers at the segregated facility at Des Moines, Iowa.

Although many African Americans in Atlanta resisted participation in the war effort because of the injustices suffered by segregation, First Church played a vital role in perpetuating the patriotic spirit of the War throughout its congregation.68 Many viewed the war as an opportunity for African Americans to prove their national loyalty. Both whites and blacks in Georgia showed their loyalty on
registration day. Although a large number of whites registered for the draft, almost 75% of those registered claimed some sort of exemption. Of the total number of blacks registering, only seventy claimed any kind of exemption. Draft statistics for the state of Georgia reflected “statewide discrimination, as a forty percent black population supplied over half of the state’s conscripts.”

Black officer candidates were trained at a separate facility at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. There young black men represented institutions of higher learning such as Fisk, Howard and Atlanta universities. One thousand to twelve hundred young men answered the call to arms with the proper credentials to become officers and of that total seventy-seven young black cadets were from Georgia, the largest quota of any state in the Union, and Henry Proctor was honored as chairman of the selection committee and First Church as the location for the examinations. Of the number from Georgia, forty came from Atlanta, and of that number First Church furnished twelve recruits. First Church held a special service in honor of these young men on the night before they departed the city. On the afternoon of their departure they were given an automobile parade through the heart of town.

For three months Proctor served his country and his people. As a role model for African American soldiers
serving in World War I, he gave valued counsel and spiritual leadership, thereby helping soldiers in Paris to overcome their circumstances. Proctor’s unit, which was designed for the difficult task at hand, consisted of Professor J. E. Blanton of South Carolina, who served as a singer and Helen Hagan of New Haven, Connecticut, as pianist. Blanton led and sang along with the men while Miss Hagen played the piano. Proctor spoke to large crowds, some as large as three thousand, who came to hear his sermons. All together Proctor estimated that he had ministered to over one hundred thousand men, in all sorts of weather and under all kinds of circumstances. Each service lasted about an hour, and Proctor advised the soldiers of what they must do on their return home. He told them to "train your brain, save your money, make friends, get a wife, and join the church."72

After his experience overseas, Proctor remembered:

I have rarely spoken since that time in any part of America that I have not had some young veteran come up to me and tell me that he heard me in France; and in many cases, told me of the points he followed. I do not know any part of my education that was more valuable than that."73

The ministry of Henry H. Proctor and the First Congregational Church played a vital role in the reconstruction and rebuilding of Atlanta’s black community after the Race Riot of 1906. The works of the institutional church permeated every phase of black social and cultural development and stand as testimonies to the
impact that religion has played upon the daily experiences of African Americans. Proctor's commitment toward the total development of blacks in Atlanta and his zeal to bring the two races together brought honor to himself, to his church, to his race, and to the city of Atlanta.
NOTES


9Rouse, Lugenia Hope, p. 66; "Report of the Minutes of meeting of the Neighborhood Union Collection," Folder


15Proctor, Between Black and White, pp. 177-179.


17Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 97.


19Bruce Barton, "The Church That Saved a City" Boston Globe, September 1914, pp. 3-5.

20Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 108.


22Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 180.

23Ibid.

25 Henry H. Proctor Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University in New Orleans, La. (The Ten Points were found on a single sheet in the Proctor Papers. It is suggested by the author that these ten points were part of a rough outline for Proctor to implement into his overall church program).


28 Ibid., p. 137.

29 Proctor Papers, Box 3, p. 12.


34 Proctor, *Between Black and White*, p. 119.

35 Ibid.


37 Proctor Papers, Dedication Exercises Program, First Congregational Church, Sunday, 14 February 1909; Proctor, *Between Black and White*, p. 121.


40 McEwen, p. 135.

42 Murphy to Booker T. Washington, February 3, 1900; Booker T. Washington Papers (container 182), the Reverend Edgar Gardner Murphy, an Episcopal clergyman in Montgomery, Ala., decided that men of good will; good background should settle race and suffrage questions in an atmosphere of philosophical calm.; Louis Harlan, Booker T. Washington The Making of a Black Leader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 293.

43 Proctor, Between Black and White, pp. 100-101.

44 Booker T. Washington to Proctor, 19 September 1907, Proctor Papers.

45 Edward T. Ware to Henry H. Proctor, 3 October 1907, Proctor Papers.

46 Hoke Smith, Governor of Georgia, to Henry H. Proctor, 5 October 1907, Proctor Papers.


48 Kathleen Redding Adams, "Ground-Breaking," May 1908, Proctor Papers. Although the poem is dated May 1908 the actual dedication was not until Sunday, February 14, 1909.


50 Altona Trent Johns, pp. 24-32.

51 Ibid.


56Program from Georgia Music Festival, August 16, 1910.

57Fourth Annual Music Festival Program.

58Southern, Music of Black America, pp. 420-421.

59Ms. C. Adams, interview by author, audiotaped, November 1988, Atlanta, Ga.; John Rayford, interview by author, 28 February 1990, Atlanta, Ga.

60Proctor, "Billy Sunday in a New Role: A Peacemaker Between the Races in the South," The Congregationalist, 10 December 1914, Atlanta, Georgia.


63Proctor, Between Black and White, pp. 110-112.

64Ibid., pp. 110-111.

65Ibid., pp. 142-153.

66Henry H. Proctor to First Congregational Church, Proctor Papers, p. 148.

67Proctor Papers, pp. 152-53.

68"A Colored Church and the Colors", Proctor Papers at the Amistad Collection (A picture at the bottom of the article shows The Georgia Men in Training at Des Moines).

69Proctor Papers, Box 2, p. 24.

70Dittmer, Black Georgia, pp. 196-197.

71Ibid.


73Ibid.
CHAPTER V
THE OTHER PART OF THE DREAM: A CONCLUSION

This examination into the life and works of Henry H. Proctor has revealed him as a catalyst of a new direction for African American religious communities. He directed the First Congregational Church toward a fuller sensitivity to the individual spiritual needs of African Americans, and, more significantly, committed the church to address the needs of the surrounding community as well. During his quarter of a century ministry at First Congregational Church he became what some members of his congregation called a sociological factor. He was an agent for positive change which had a significant impact on the histories of First Congregational Church, African Americans' community development, and racial and interracial cooperation. Proctor used a practical approach toward religion and saw Congregationalism as a tool more suitable than most orthodox religions for the total self-development of African Americans, a development that attended to more than just his parishioners' spiritual needs.

Proctor represented a long tradition of Congregational ministers who were also members of the American Missionary Association and who had traveled the length and breadth of the South in the spirit of Christianity to educate,
spiritually enlighten and improve the life of the downtrodden of Southern society. Symbolizing a new emerging cadre of educated African Americans, he embraced a self-help, self-reliance approach to racial advancement. Proctor's institutional ministry in Atlanta reflected his vision for the total development of his race. His practical approach to religion represented a sensitivity to the many needs of the youth, the poor, and the uneducated. He fostered various social service programs whose goals and aspirations reflected his commitment to racial equality, community reconstruction and interracial cooperation. Proctor can be viewed as an "ethnic broker" who worked diligently to place African Americans in control of their own destiny. As the first African American pastor of First Church, Proctor used his institutional programs as a bridge between the church, family and community. By expanding existing church programs and adopting new ones sensitive to the developmental needs of African Americans, he institutionalized these reforms as cornerstones of a new dimension in church ministry.

Proctor made his mark in Atlanta after the race riot of 1906. Following the riot he was largely responsible for establishing a new spirit of understanding and interracial cooperation in Atlanta. Immediately after the riot his reconstruction program began with erecting a new building for First Congregational Church at a cost of $60,000, with
institutional features which were considered pioneering efforts at that time. The new church structure was equipped with a gymnasium, playground, a clubroom, a dormitory for housing working girls, an employment bureau, and many other facilities intended for the holistic development of the African American community. The estimated worth of the church with its institutional features was well over $250,000. Much of the money was contributed by prominent white citizens of both North and South. Proctor was also successful in harnessing the financial support from local businessmen and members of the surrounding African American community. He pledged that his church and all of its facilities would be open to all citizens and all religious denominations in Atlanta.

Proctor's social programs sought to improve the total life experiences of the African American community. They significantly decreased illiteracy among church members, and, phenomenally, trimmed by a half the death-rate among African Americans in his congregation. His emphasis of enlightenment was largely responsible for educating his church community on personal hygiene, in the church and at the Gate City Free Kindergarten, and the proper disposal of waste materials, which he saw as leading causes of infant mortality among African Americans living in the city.

Despite the significant progress and success that Proctor had with raising funds for the new church, a small
number of his congregation became suspicious of his close relationship with the white community, especially his acceptance of large monetary contributions. Many felt that these contributions might compromise Proctor's position with his church and with the African American community. In fact, some even accused him of disloyalty to his race. When the accusations could not be verified the charges were ignored.5

Proctor was more than just a preacher; he was also a teacher. He saw religion as a powerful mediator that could be used as a vehicle for positive social and racial change. He reasoned that both races could find common ground by adhering to Christian virtues which recognized the spiritual connection of all humankind. Proctor viewed his call to the ministry at First Church as the fulfillment of his lifelong dream to assist in the uplifting of his people.

He accepted the challenges of being black and well educated in the South, an education which aligned him with the new emerging black intellectual aristocracy in Atlanta. Some members of that growing black middle class centered themselves in First Church, with its close ties to Atlanta University. Proctor's experiences at Fisk University and at Yale Divinity School were valuable resources which gave him diverse cultural and racial exposure, a focused sense
of purpose and flexibility which opened doors for him in both white and black communities.

Proctor’s conservative politics and his support for his friend Booker T. Washington’s conciliatory philosophy mirrored that of most African Americans and the majority of black clergymen at the opening years of the twentieth century. There existed, however, within the black clerical leadership vanguard a broad range of tactical strategies which were symbolic of the diversity and flexibility of the movement to achieve racial betterment. While some leaders, like Proctor and Washington, believed in conciliation as a solution to the black dilemma in America, others like Henry McNeal Turner believed in Black Nationalism as a means of gaining racial respectability. Turner represented a more radical wing of the movement toward racial consciousness and self-help. A member of the American Colonization Society and Bishop of the A.M.E. Church in Georgia, Turner used his newspapers, the *Voice of Missions* and the *Georgia Baptist* to trumpet the cause against lynching and racism. He constantly leveled indictments against the racist nature of White America and against the hopelessness of African Americans receiving racial equality in the white man’s world.

Although he favored colonization of blacks to Africa Turner remained committed to the role of the church as a vehicle for positive change in the black community.
Whereas Turner can be classified as being committed to the concept of Black Nationalism, Proctor can be viewed as a cultural pluralist - one who held to the idea that all groups have, as ethnic entities, something distinctive to contribute to the totality of American culture and should, therefore, be accorded full participation in American democracy. Although opposed to colonization in Africa, Proctor shared an interest with DuBois and John Hope of exploring the possibility of establishing an "all-Negro community on the Georgia coast." His amicable relations with Washington, Turner and DuBois gave definition to his ministry, fueled his efforts toward race pride and self-help strategies and influenced his vision for better race relations. Proctor saw the value in using both conservative and radical elements within the African American agenda to bring about the total process of change.

Believing that African Americans should be responsible for bringing about the solutions to their own problems, Proctor embraced both the radical and conservative wings of the race by using his church as the welding force for positive change. For a quarter of a century, Proctor distinguished himself and his church with his institutional community programs. He challenged vice and injustice and municipal reforms by openly supporting the liberal movement for Prohibition. He protested against the unfair treatment of African Americans on public transportation and strongly
advocated sweeping the streets clean of prostitution and drugs. Sensitive to the need to protect young African American women from the vices of everyday life, he created day-care centers, kindergartens and working girls' homes as part of his institutional ministry. During Proctor's tenure at First Church, no state or local supported social programs existed for African Americans; thus, his involvement with social programs through the auspices of the church represented the only institutional attention to the needs of his people. Those programs, activities, and teachings were characteristic of his hopeful philosophy of life, his resolute belief in the healing powers of religion to ease the tensions and fears between the two races, and the constructive nature of congregationalism, with its practical approach to religion. Proctor viewed African Americans as having what he called a "genius for religion." The spiritual nature of African Americans and their devotion to religion, he thought, could be harnessed and used for their own racial and social development.

His role as a social reformer and equal rights activist represented the beginning of a new era for not only the church and the African American community but also for the city of Atlanta. A son of former slaves, Proctor rose from humble beginnings and became what many consider one of the most prolific, civic-minded African American clerics of his time. The impact that he made as a
Congregational minister, a pioneer in the movement toward interracial cooperation, a community activist, and a social reformer will probably reserve a place for him in the history of First Congregational Church in Atlanta and Congregationalism throughout the world. Many of his peers and also members of his congregation claimed that Proctor used his dedication to institutional programs, his enlightening words and many times just his pleasant personality to lift humanity to higher levels of consciousness and to govern racial relations.9

Nevertheless, there were those who characterized First Congregational Church and its pastor Henry H. Proctor as part of a small group of upper class, elitist, urban blacks, who because of their light-skin enjoyed high prestige in the white community. One of those individuals, Ben Davis, used his newspaper, The Independent, to attack what he interpreted as an elitist attitude among members of First Church and Proctor himself. In his editorial columns he railed against what he perceived as a mulatto aristocracy led by the likes of the Collector of Internal Revenue, Henry L. Rucker, and Congregationalist minister, Henry Proctor. Accusing the two of "having exclusive mulattoes in their society and for their associates," Davis charged that Proctor's church preferred mulatto members.10 Proctor chose to ignore the accusations. Many people,
nevertheless, still claimed that his church was and is now made up of an elitist congregation.11

Coming to Atlanta straight from college, Proctor broke with the traditional mold of elderly white men as Congregational ministers at First Church. His youthful appearance, his creative energy, and his commitment to community development was said to have given his ministry an added vitality that became an attractive feature to young, intelligent and progressive African Americans in Atlanta. Many hoped that the grace and goodwill he rendered to all he came in contact with in the past would be reflected in the future of racial relations in the world. From a small church membership of only one hundred members, the congregation of First Church grew to over one thousand members under Proctor’s leadership. Through Proctor’s determined leadership, the church also became a self-supporting entity, free from financial dependence on the American Missionary Association.

On October 8, 1919 Henry H. Proctor addressed his congregation at First Church. The subject of his message was his resignation as pastor. Proctor stated that his resignation had nothing to do with living conditions in the South or his finances. He also suggested that the work of the church had not reached its zenith. His resignation, he said, was his need to answer a call higher than his present charge: “Now another voice is calling, another vision is
waiting, another task must be performed. Man has spoken; now God must be heard."12 His decision rested on what he reasoned as an opportunity to complete the dream of his life by "making a contribution to two churches of my race, one in the South and the other in the North."13 He also stated that his treatment in the Gate City of the South could not have been better.

Proctor viewed the migration of large numbers of African Americans to the North as another significant reason for him to follow his people there. He reasoned that he must go there to assist them in their resettlement in their new home. Proctor believed that these Northern cities were in need of religious instruction just as he had viewed the city of Atlanta upon his graduation from Yale.14 Whether there were other motives for his resignation is unclear. However, no major conflicts were found in Proctor’s or the church’s official papers or letters.

The notice of Proctor’s resignation was not immediately accepted by members of the congregation, who petitioned Proctor to rescind it. Evidently, however, Proctor had thought the matter through and had made up his mind to answer the call of the Nazarene Church in Brooklyn, New York. In tribute to his successful twenty five years of service, letters were addressed to him from a broad range of Atlanta’s citizens:

I believe that your influence in this community has been splendid, and I regret that your people
are to be deprived of your leadership. You not only enjoy the respect and confidence of the people of your own race, but those of my race with whom you have come in contact.

---Hugh M. Dorsey, Governor of the state of Georgia 15

I learn with great regret that your pastor, Dr. H. H. Proctor, is contemplating leaving Atlanta. You should not permit this. I have had a close acquaintance with Dr. Proctor and his work for several years. I know some thing of his effectiveness and influence in the community. It has all been valuable, constructive and helpful.

---James L. Key, Mayor of Atlanta 16

I have come to regard Dr. H. H. Proctor as one of "Atlanta's Institutions" and will be very sorry to see him leave Atlanta. I have known of much good work he has done, not only in Christian uplift and charitable work, but in the equally great work of peace between the races.

---James L. Mayson, City Attorney 17

With a full sense of the importance of your work in the past, and of the increased demand for calm and courageous leadership at this time, we feel impelled to express the hope that you may be led to remain in Atlanta. The spirit of cooperation between the races here in our city, which has prompted the organization of our forces for mutual helpfulness, if directed alright, we believe will go far toward bringing about a better and brighter day; but it depends largely upon sane and conservative leadership, and we trust that in reaching your decision you will give very serious consideration to this thought.

---John J. Eagan, Chairman, Committee On Church Co-Operation 18

These letters confirm that many influential people believed that Henry H. Proctor had a significant impact on the citizens of Atlanta during his twenty-five year ministry.

Proctor reasoned that through his institutional church works and through various community based programs and activities, a better way of life could be achieved for his
people. He dedicated his life's work to fulfill that vision. As a trusted counsellor, community and spiritual leader, and political activist, he energized a broad-based church program devoted to the betterment of social and racial relations throughout the world. The history of First Congregational Church would be incomplete without remembering the works of Henry H. Proctor.

Proctor believed that he understood the power of love as a gift that the African American gave to Christianity. It was that gift of love and devotion to Christian virtues that he hoped would bring a new kingdom of interracial cooperation. He believed that devotion to the church was a common thread in the cultures of both races. He reasoned that the true spirit of love could serve as a conciliatory force which could lead to the redemption and spiritual connection of all.

Proctor, through his church ministry, also attempted to bring definition, determination and race pride to African Americans and their communities. His life was dedicated to achieving through the church and through community activities a better way of life for all people. His positive impact on the African American community became symbolic of what DuBois considered the commitment or the mission of the "talented tenth." These individuals, through their social and intellectual acumen, shared an obligation to guide African Americans into a higher
existence. To achieve these goals for his people he
dedicated his life to building relationships between all
people. Proctor was a man with a vision, a dreamer who
dreamed of a world where religious conviction would dictate
and define social and racial behaviors. He was a unique
force - a man for all seasons who strove to make the world
a better place for all people.
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4 Ibid.


7 Clark Howell, Editor of The Atlanta Constitution to the City Editor, The Eagle, Brooklyn, New York. January 1, 1920.

8 The First Congregational Church of Atlanta to the Nazarene Congregational Church, Brooklyn, New York (Proctor Papers, December 30, 1919).


10 Interview with Kathleen R. Adams, November 6, 1988, Atlanta, Georgia.


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