



The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition

By Andre E. Johnson

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The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition, by Andre E. Johnson, is a study of the prophetic rhetoric of nineteenth century African Methodist Episcopal Church bishop Henry McNeal Turner. By locating Turner within the African American prophetic tradition, Johnson examines how Bishop Turner adopted a prophetic persona. As one of America's earliest black activists and social reformers, Bishop Turner made an indelible mark in American history and left behind an enduring social influence through his speeches, writings, and prophetic addresses. This text offers a definition of prophetic rhetoric and examines the existing genres of prophetic discourse, suggesting that there are other types of prophetic rhetorics, especially within the African American prophetic tradition. In examining these modes of discourses from 1866-1895, this study further examines how Turner's rhetoric shifted over time. It examines how Turner found a voice to articulate not only his views and positions, but also in the prophetic tradition, the views of people he claimed to represent. *The Forgotten Prophet* is a significant contribution to the study of Bishop Turner and the African American prophetic tradition.

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The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition
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- Rank: #2025748 in Books
- Published on: 2014-06-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.07" h x .42" w x 6.10" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 136 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Andre Johnson's study of the speeches of Henry McNeal Turner, from his optimistic Emancipation Day Address in 1866, to sober reflections on the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation in 1913, is an important step in recovering the story of African-Americans in the South during Reconstruction. Framing Turner's powerful words as examples of prophetic rhetoric, Johnson shows how even Turner's most pessimistic comments spoke to a wide audience eager for freedom yet demoralized by prejudice, discrimination, and violence. Although Turner's answer to the nation's racism—emigration—did not become a major movement in his lifetime, Johnson's study of Turner's prophetic voice enlarges our understanding of this neglected, but important figure in American history. (Sandra J. Sarkela, The University of Memphis)

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About the Author

Andre E. Johnson is the Dr. James L. Netters professor of Rhetoric & Religion and African American Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary.

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