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SCRIPTURALIZING REVELATION

An African American Postcolonial Reading of Empire

Lynne St. Clair Darden

In this fresh reading of Revelation, Lynne St. Clair Darden examines John the Seer's general rhetorical strategy as well as his use of imperial cult imagery in chapters 4 and 5 through the lens of an African American scripturalization framed by the concepts of signifyin(g) and cultural memory and supplemented by post-colonial theory. The scripturalization proposes that John the Seer's signifyin(g) on empire demonstrated his awareness of the oppressive nature of Roman imperialism on the lives of provincial Asian Christians, shown by his fierce, nonaccommodating stance toward participation in the imperial cult. Ironically, however, John reinscribed imperial processes and practices in his own work. His colonized construction produced a resistance strategy that mimicked the hegemonic tactics of the Roman Empire. Relating the potential for African American cooption by the U.S. empire to the cooption by the Roman Empire both thematized and performed in Revelation, this book argues that African American biblical scholarship must attend to these complex cultural negotiations lest it find itself inadvertently feeding the imperial beast.

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