

Synopsis

This book provides a narrative historical, postcolonial account of African American religions. It examines the intersection of Black religion and colonialism over several centuries to explain the relationship between empire and democratic freedom. Rather than treating freedom and its others (colonialism, slavery, and racism) as opposites, Sylvester A. Johnson interprets multiple periods of Black religious history to discern how Atlantic empires (particularly that of the United States) simultaneously enabled the emergence of particular forms of religious experience and freedom movements as well as disturbing patterns of violent domination. Johnson explains theories of matter and spirit that shaped early indigenous religious movements in Africa, Black political religion responding to the American racial state, the creation of Liberia, and FBI repression of Black religious movements in the twentieth century. By combining historical methods with theoretical analysis, Johnson explains the seeming contradictions that have shaped Black religions in the modern era.

Book Information

Paperback: 438 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (August 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521157005

ISBN-13: 978-0521157001

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #108,627 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Ethnic & Tribal](#) #72 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > African Americans > History](#) #163 in [Books > History > World > Religious > General](#)

Customer Reviews

As a scholar of religion, I am absolutely blown away by Johnson's book. It is an invaluable historical account, but also filled with highly useful attention to intellectual history and issues of theory and method in the study of religion.

Johnson's book is a rich and dense hard read. It is not an easy thing to experience, but it is necessary. As a white American male, I did not realize how much was left out of my education about

the Black Experience in this country, and I was appalled, inspired and intrigued by the narrative of this book. I also had the pleasure of listening to the author lecture on this, and it was incredible! Thoroughly recommend this book!

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