

risen Christ has passed through this abyss and comes through it unrecognizable to his friends" (123). The final chapter, "Will Come Again in Glory" returns to the theme of desire from the first chapter through the notion that all desire—literal and nonliteral—"can open to Christ's desire" (155).

Image and Presence offers a creative and original journey through the power of images to reveal the dynamic between the presence and absence of God, but often is lost in dualistic thinking—the lure of Nestorius, perhaps—in her zeal to make all images and all desire refer to Christ.

SUSIE PAULIK BABKA
University of San Diego

Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience. By M. Shawn Copeland. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. 195 pages. \$24.00 (paper).
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Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience is M. Shawn Copeland's most recent monograph. In it she explains, "The deepest desire of this work is to make clear the brilliance and power, inspiration and relevance of the witness of African American religious experience" (174). Copeland begins fulfilling this task in her introduction, titled "Traces of the Cross." This is followed by three parts: "From the Heart of the Quarter," "Marking and (Re)membering the Body of Christ," and "Following Jesus Crucified and Risen."

In "Traces of the Cross," subtitled "Social Suffering and Practical-Political Theology," Copeland explains how the crucified Christ first captured her mind and heart as a small child, and how this image has served as a North Star enabling her to negotiate the egregious sufferings of African-descended people, and all marginal people, through her faith commitment and her theological scholarship.

Copeland titles part 1 of her text "From the Heart of the Quarter," with a focus on the world of the slaves. The dark wisdom of enslaved African ancestors permeates slave narratives and spirituals. They did not walk alone. Jesus was their friend, companion, and cosufferer. He sustained them as they endured the most evil and diabolical assaults against their minds and bodies. In the face of this violence, they resisted. Their suffering was brutal, but they were able to persevere in their hope for freedom—if not for themselves, then for their kith and kin. The traumatic stress that these enslaved ancestors endured was entrusted to Jesus, and covered by Him, the one who "knew the trouble they'd seen." Nevertheless, these ancestors carried physical and

psychic wounds within their bodies for the rest of their lives—and beyond, through intergenerational suffering that still plagues African-descended peoples.

Through the biblically based spirituals also known as sorrow songs, Copeland cites historian Charles Long, who believed that enslaved ancestors sang themselves a *topos*, a world of meaning that enabled them to manage their life circumstances and persevere through exhausting labor and abuse from sunup until sundown (42–3). This *topos*, shaped by biblical passages that our ancestors heard and memorized, provided them an alternative space where they found meaning alongside Jesus, their suffering brother and savior who understood the depths of their pain. In this world, they learned to resist an ethos that would render them movable property, through prayer in the hush arbors, through the stories of God’s action in the lives of the Hebrew children, and especially through stories of Jesus’ passion and death. Their ironclad belief in Jesus was astounding.

In part 2 of this text, Copeland attends to the contested sites of Jesus’ body and the Body of Christ: “In memory of his body, in memory of the victims of empire, in the service of life and love, theology must protest any imperial word that dismisses his body and seeks the de-creation of human bodies” (62).

In this part of the text, Copeland turns her attention to the Catholic Church’s official teaching that homosexual acts are “intrinsically disordered.” She cites theologian Xavier John Seubert, who says, “to prescribe, in advance, abstinence and celibacy for the homosexual person simply because the person is homosexual is to say that, as it is, homosexual bodily existence stands outside the sacramental transformation to which all creation is called in Christ” (71). Such a deduction is harmful to the homosexual follower of Christ and to the entire Body of Christ.

For Copeland, this teaching is problematic and suggests that not all of God’s children are made in God’s image and likeness. She then reasons that “[j]ust as a black Christ heals the anthropological impoverishment of black bodies so too a ‘queer’ Christ heals the anthropological impoverishment of lesbian and gay and transgender bodies” (74). This celebration of a Christic *topos* pushes back against a culture of necropower where too many are hell-bent on depleting and taking the lives of Black and queer bodies.

In the third part of this text, Copeland turns her attention to following the crucified and risen Christ through solidarity with suffering humanity, past and present. Copeland affirms that “African American religious experience witnesses to the ‘power of the cross to create a new situation,’ to resist destruction, to evoke a new and liberating response” (149). This is reminiscent of resurrection hope and reminds humanity that God makes all things new.

Finally, in the epilogue, Copeland pays homage to the “old slaves” before declaring that “[t]he witness and spirit of our enslaved ancestors has taken

root in the BlackLivesMatter movement” (175). Copeland then writes about the “radical love, hope, and collaboration of Alicia Garza, Patrice Cullors, and Opal Tometi,” the three women who founded the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement “urges us all to make an option for the dispossessed, despised, and excluded black children, women, and men” (176).

The unimaginable power of the cross has borne fruit through worldwide Black Lives Matter protests and demonstrations during the spring and summer of 2020, following the brutal murder of George Floyd (earlier deaths of unarmed Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor in Georgia and Louisville, Kentucky, respectively, were also remembered). From Nairobi to Sydney to Rio de Janeiro to Washington, DC, people of all races joined in. This global groundswell was and is a striking display of resurrection hope and a powerful and long-overdue affirmation of Black life, reminding us of the power of the crucified Christ and the unbreakable hope of enslaved African ancestors.

LaREINE-MARIE MOSELY, SND
Notre Dame of Maryland University

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Curran has written a lucid, enlightening, and engaging text introducing readers to the ongoing development of modern US moral theology by tracking a dozen distinctive voices influencing the discipline since the middle of the twentieth century. In a volume seeking to familiarize us with the range of methods and approaches employed by those shaping modern US moral theology, foster dialogue between entrenched camps of conservative and progressive moral theologians, and illustrate the critical import of a thinker’s *Sitz im Leben* in the development of their thought, Curran introduces readers to the broad and unfolding tapestry of a discipline moving far beyond its long confinement in the manualist tradition and invites us to recognize the fundamental importance of method, dialogue, and context.

Underlying Curran’s historical and irenic study of twelve diverse voices shaping modern US moral theology are the twin assumptions that history and context matter in this discipline and that we can better practice the craft of moral theology if we grasp both the range and limits of various methods of resolving moral problems. These assumptions are consistent with both the move by most modern moral theologians beyond an ahistorical classicism and a simultaneous shift from a reliance upon magisterial authority as the primary grounds for decision making.