

## Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up

Lisa Isherwood

As Mary Hunt says on the cover, this is a book that takes topics that have been taboo even in queer circles and pushes the horizons of theology. Marcella Althaus Reid says of it that it will change lives and in my opinion she is right. Those familiar with the work of Goss will know that he was a Jesuit priest who married a man, thus causing some dismay in Catholic circles! In the first chapter of this book Bob tells his story as gay boy growing up, gay seminarian and priest who fell in love with a man. He also lets us into the sexual/spiritual joy of his 16 year marriage to Frank and the agonies of Frank's AIDS-related death and his own survivor guilt. None of this leads to overly pious reflections on the love of God; instead we are faced with real desires and the face of Christ that emerges from them.

One such theological encounter is when Bob engages with the issue of bare-backing [anal intercourse without a condom] which has become a real issue for gay men since AIDS. Through insight into his own reflection with Frank we are led into a world that is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Frank he tells us was a social justice Christian and so from the time of his diagnosis insisted that condoms be part of their love-making. Bob mourned the loss of intimacy and the deep psychological satisfaction that he describes as part of bare-backing. Through prayer they agreed that sex could occasionally be condomless and Bob describes the intensity of these moments and the deep spiritual impact. This does not remain a personal reflection but becomes instead a development of the 'survivability community ethic' into a theology that centralizes the fact that Jesus did not use a survivability ethic when he went up to Jerusalem—love Goss says is more than survivability, it is also sometimes more than responsible. There is much that disturbs me here and it raises many questions I have about the sex/death juxtaposition that men seem to have and within my experience seems less in women. But this book is not sensationalist and so one finds oneself pondering on things that would never ordinarily enter theological consciousness.

Goss takes us through a wide-range of issues from queer biblical scholarship, queering Christ, imagining the bi-Christ and the transgendered Christ to Christian homodevotion and the clerical camp of the Catholic clergy. This is an excellent book, it does disturb and challenge. There is no hint of dualism here, we see exposed a gay theologian who is being both at the same time, not neatly putting away sex to write theology or theology to have sex. This is queer indeed and certainly worth time—you will find plenty to ponder and much to disagree with as well as to be pushed into new theological space.

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