

Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up, by Robert E. Goss. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002. 263 pp.

In 1993, queer theologian Bob Goss shocked the theological academy with the publication of his first book, *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto*. Described by reviewers as "brilliant," "in-your-face," and "mind-expanding," *Jesus Acted Up* was a call for queer Christians to "follow in the footsteps of the queer Christ" (JAU, 180). It was a manifesto that called for homophobic church leaders to be "zapped" and for acts of civil disobedience to remind homophobic churches that they were "guilty of crucifying queers" (JAU, 179).

Nearly a decade later, Goss has published *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*—a long-awaited sequel to his first book. For Goss, *Queering Christ* reflects his "tremendous personal change and growth as a queer theologian" (xiv). Drawing an explicit connection between politics and sexuality, Goss raises a number of topics in *Queering Christ* that remain taboo for the theological academy, including connecting with God through masturbation and full-body orgasm (64), and the spiritual dimensions of barebacking (that is, unprotected anal sex) (76).

Queering Christ is divided into four parts. The first part, "Queering Sexuality," deals with the connections between queer spirituality and sexuality. Among the dizzying variety of topics addressed by Goss in the five chapters in this part includes his sexual experiences as a former Jesuit priest (15), the culture of camp in the Roman Catholic priesthood (41), erotic spiritual practices that are grounded in "rituals of sex" (69), the ethics and spiritual aspects of barebacking (83), and the "metaphorical procreativity" of queer families (108).

The second part, "Queering Christ," is Goss' attempt to construct a queer christology. Goss begins with a chapter in which he reclaims the sexuality of Jesus Christ throughout the history of the church. Some of these historical events include mystical "erotic visions" of Christ during the Middle Ages (127), and the portrayal of Jesus' genitals during the Renaissance (129). Goss then includes his favorite chapter from *Jesus Acted Up* about the queer Christ who is "politically identified" with all who are "queer-bashed," including those who have suffered from "ecclesial exclusion" (168). Goss concludes this part of *Queering Christ* with a chapter on recent theological developments with respect to the bisexual and transgender Christ (180).

In the third part, "Queering the Bible," Goss reclaims the Bible as a queer theologian. Goss begins with a chapter in which he discusses

recent scholarship on the seven queer "texts of terror" (189): Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, Gen. 19, Judg. 19, 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10 and Rom. 1:26-27. Goss argues that these passages do not address same-sex behaviors so much as fear of "phallic violence" and "gender transgressions" by the biblical authors (189). In the following chapter, Goss contends that it is not enough to "dismantle homophobic interpretations" of the Bible (214). Rather, as queer readers, we must engage in a biblical revolution, or biblical "Stonewall," in our "overthrow[ing] of biblical heterotextuality" by "eroticizing, tricking, allegorizing, using camp or laughing" at scripture (220).

In the fourth and final part, "Queering Theology," Goss talks about the relationship between queer theory and queer theology, and he surveys the current landscape of queer theologies. For Goss, "queer" includes a "variety of gender and sexual differences" (234) and social contexts. By definition, queer theology is always "tentative and open to revision" (238) based on new emerging voices. Goss closes his book with a chapter on the challenges that queer theologies face in the twenty-first century, including the need to address "interlocking networks of oppression" (256) involving racism, sexism, and ablism.

Queering Christ is an important work that should be read by anyone who is interested in queer theology. In a relatively compact work, Goss covers the major issues that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer theologians are writing about today. Goss' research is also comprehensive. He cites most of the theologians who have written on LGBTQ issues during the last decade, as well as a number of emerging voices in the field. In short, *Queering Christ* is a fabulous introduction to the discipline of queer theology.

There are a few areas, however, that could have been strengthened. One such area relates to the relationship between dogmatics and queer theology. For example, Goss rejects outright the Augustinian view of the fall because it leads to the "tragic consequence" of erotophobia (62). However, it would have been interesting for Goss to "queer" classical theological notions in the same way that he tries to reclaim the Bible. For example, what would it mean if the fall and original sin were equated with a *fear* of the erotic (rather than the erotic itself), and our reconciliation and redemption were understood in terms of sexual wholeness in the queer Christ? Perhaps a "neoorthodox" queering of traditional theological categories might lead to more fruitful dialogue between the mainstream academy and queer theologians.

A second area that could have been strengthened relates to Goss' discussion of queer theologians of color. To be sure, Goss acknowledges the need to address issues of race and sexuality within the theological academy (225, 253, 257). Goss also writes in some detail about the work of Leng Lim, a queer Asian American Episcopal priest (66), and Marcella Althaus-Reid, a queer Latin American theologian (171). However, Goss' discussion is focused less on the racial and ethnic social locations of these theologians, and more on erotic body-work in the case of Lim (67), and the theological category of bisexuality in the case of Althaus-Reid (174). It would have been interesting for Goss to wrestle deeply with the ugly issues of racism within white queer communities (theological or otherwise), and to dialogue with the work of important queer theologians of color such as eliyahou farajajé and Renée Hill.

In the end, *Queering Christ* raises important issues about queer sexuality and justice that have been long silenced in the theological academy. Goss' prophetic voice has come at a personal cost, however. As a result of his work, Goss has been the target of a number of hate crimes, including the vandalization of his office (186). In the spring of 2003, Goss was denied tenure by Webster University, notwithstanding allegations of procedural irregularities during the review process. These actions are a stark reminder that the queer theological dream of "liberation in its entirety" (258) remains a thing hoped for, but not yet seen.

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The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible, by David M. Carr.
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David Carr's study offers a clearly-stated aim: To make biblical scholarship—specifically as it discusses the relationship between spirituality and sexuality available to a broad circle of people, among whom he locates church people and scholars (who may overlap, of course). The book unfolds in five sections: An introductory chapter clarifies the questions Carr wishes to engage, and some of their entangled problems. Three central sections take us to: the Genesis creation stories (chapters 1-3, hence sampling material from the Torah); the vineyard narrative of Isaiah (chapter 5, and other passages, thus representing the Prophets); and the love poetry from the Song of Songs (so including the Writings); a final section provides a very quick survey of the presence of the most impor-