struggles on chapters related to meaning, morality, and beauty. Loftus also fails to engage the question of selfless love and essentially gives the chapter to Rauser. His argument, if one can call it that, is a confusing tirade against Rauser's choice of chosen topics.

Rauser also has his share of failed arguments: his explanation on why God commanded genocide borders on the ridiculous (God condemns genocide through irony?). Overall, this book is uneven in quality. Sometimes it feels as if they take their casual tone too seriously. Many of these arguments lack substance and creativity. Rather than twenty rushed topics, it would have been more helpful to have ten well thought-out essays. In addition, this book has a very narrow focus. Many of the chapters use the term 'Biblical God' in the title. It is clear that this book is arguing for and against the concept of God as presented in scripture. Also Rauser is hindered by a somewhat conservative view of scripture. He spends so much time defending and explaining scriptural inconsistencies that he loses his focus. Loftus readily acknowledges that he is attacking scripture in order to undercut the idea of God. This leaves one to wonder if this is a book about the validity of scripture or God. In addition, some chapters have a very esoteric focus. Does a debate about the bodily resurrection of Christ really belong in a book like this?

In conclusion, while flawed in certain sections, the structure of this book should be applauded. It is refreshing to see a real effort at connecting with an audience outside academia. This book will be valuable to those seeking an introduction into the debates between contemporary atheism and Christianity. Although certain chapters can be skipped, there is enough content to make it worth reading for some.

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St Augustine's Interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent, Gerard McLarney, Catholic University of America Press, 2014 (ISBN 978-0-8132-2703-0), xxi + 256 pp., hb $65

Gerard McLarney of St Joseph's College at the University of Alberta produced this book as a revision of his doctoral dissertation at Maynooth. He treats one of the great gems of Augustine's *Expositions of the Psalms*: the expositions of the Psalms of Ascent (Pss 119–33). Of interest to both scholars of Augustine and those new to patristic exegesis, McLarney's five-chapter book functions in two parts. The first part

(Chapters 1–3) introduces the *Expositions of the Psalms* in the broad context of patristic exegesis and sets the stage for Augustine's preaching – from his composition and delivery of the *Expositions of the Psalms* to their social, cultural, and ecclesial contexts and transmission. The final two chapters treat the Psalms of Ascent directly. In Chapter 4, McLarney uses Augustine's 'Exposition of Psalm 119' for a first analysis of an exposition on a Psalm of Ascent. The final chapter treats six more psalms in detail (Pss 120–25). In these last two chapters, McLarney develops his own contribution to further study of the *Expositions of the Psalms*, which he calls a 'hermeneutic of alignment'.

In structuring his rich introductory chapters as he does, McLarney makes an implicit claim about Augustine as a thinker. By working predominantly on the ascent, a motif that the Psalms and Neo-Platonism share in common, McLarney had the opportunity to narrate Augustine's development of it in any number of ways. It is not uncommon in secondary literature treating Augustine to encounter the bishop as a Neo-Platonic thinker who also read and preached on scripture. In these presentations, the former often gives shape to the latter; Neo-Platonism structures exegesis. McLarney's presentation is different and, I think, refreshingly so. Plotinus and Porphyry still play a role in this book, yet one that is quite circumscribed (pp. 102–4). McLarney places Augustine in a different arc of thinkers. He traces the way that patristic exegesis of the Psalms developed from the hymns of the early church through the codification of Psalter and commentaries on the Psalms. Augustine is in the company of Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Basil, and others. Even if Augustine was not reading these thinkers, McLarney draws out the resonances in the ways that Augustine and other early psalm expositors read the Psalms.

Augustine's *Expositions on the Psalms* vary in place and date (pp. 84–95). Augustine never revisited these texts in his *Revisions*. Thus, McLarney cautions against interpretive structures that do not respect the occasional and non-programmatic nature of Augustine's preaching. He proposes instead a flexible hermeneutic for understanding the *Expositions*. McLarney defines his 'hermeneutic of alignment', which he also indicates has been used in the reception of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, as the 'contextualiz[ation of] the song of the Psalmist, the Psalmist, and the lives of [Augustine's] readers within a common framework' (pp. 37–38). Later, McLarney clarifies that it is Augustine who is aligning the listener and the text within a common narrative. Augustine 'seeks to establish a context in which the audience is understood not simply as readers, listeners, or singers of the Songs of Ascent, but as coparticipants with the Psalmist and the saints who embark on the ascent, whether patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or martyrs' (p. 123). In this way, the hermeneutic of alignment serves McLarney well as it allows him to identify how Augustine's preaching on ascents was for

the purpose of the people right before him in a North African basilica. Augustine's audience was to join in the ascent themselves – marked by the humility practiced in the valley of tears – in considering the text of a psalm.

One important aspect of McLarney's hermeneutic of alignment will be controversial. McLarney is consistent in saying throughout the book that there is distance between his hermeneutic of alignment and the Christology of the *Expositions of the Psalms*. Specifically, he wishes to establish the hermeneutic of alignment as distinct from any Christological hermeneutic for reading the *Expositions* (e.g. he names: *unus Christus*, *totus Christus*, and *vox Christi*). The hermeneutic of alignment, he claims, can work in parallel to the *totus Christus* and for different outcomes (p. 210). I raise two points in consideration of whether trying to create this distance is beneficial or not. First, the *totus Christus*, as it evolves and functions in the *Expositions of the Psalms*, is both a way of identifying the voice of Christ and a way of indicating how Christ the head and Christ the body are the same Christ, indeed such that where the head has ascended in reality, the body now prays and waits in hope that it will ascend as well. In this way, the body is being transfigured by its head: the outcome is redemption. Ascent is possible not only because of Christ's kenotic descent, but also because of his ascent to heaven as head. Thus, the *totus Christus* is, as Tarsicius van Bavel has explained, a veritable mode of knowing God for Augustine (*Sermo* 341). Praying with the psalmist is praying to go to where the head is now, such that through him one goes straight toward him, to paraphrase the famous line from the *Trinity* (13.24). In sum, the *totus Christus* does not leave much room for the hermeneutic of alignment's parallel outcomes. Second, one might argue with McLarney about precisely who is being aligned. McLarney is clear that Augustine is aligning his congregation and the text, and indeed that is true. But, one also might just as correctly say that by means of the text of a psalm, Augustine aligns his congregation, the saints, the psalmist, and all the ends of the earth with their head in Christ. The text becomes a means of uniting them to their end. In this way, McLarney would not have to distinguish his hermeneutic from Christology when it appears in the Psalms of Ascent, but could argue for a more integrative synthesis. In one psalm of ascent, Augustine says, 'Hold onto the flesh of Christ, onto which you, sick and helpless, left wounded and half dead by robbers, are hoisted that you may be taken to the inn and healed there' (*En. Ps.* 121.5). Passages like these are suggestive that the ascent may be that which takes place within Christ and is directed toward Christ.

McLarney's text makes a fine contribution to the currently widening field of scholarship on Augustine's *Expositions of the Psalms*. He highlights ascents – fifth-century exercises – not as relics of a saint's solitary contemplation, but as delivered aloud in lively oral sermons in the

context of the liturgy. The ascents were not only the voice of the psalmist but also the voices of the people of Augustine's Africa. In them we have, according to McLarney, a place where the oratorical, liturgical, and interpretive milieus were one and the same.

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Now is the Day of Salvation: An Audience-Oriented Study of 2 Corinthians 5:16–6:2, Timothy Milinovich, Lutterworth, 2012 (ISBN 978-0-7188-9264-7), xvi + 173 pp., pb £17.50

In this revised Catholic University of America dissertation, Timothy Milinovich attempts to read portions of 2 Corinthians with an ear for audience response to Paul's argument. Reflecting a sophisticated understanding of the interplay between oral and written media in antiquity, Milinovich situates his book as a 'text-centered' study aimed at showing what was *heard* by the letter's implied audience as it was orally performed. By 'listening' to the text as a document meant for oral dissemination, Milinovich opens readers' ears (and eyes) to the aural cues that are embedded in and lend structure to 2 Corinthians 1:1–6:2.

Milinovich's central claim is straightforward: 2 Corinthians 1:1–6:2 is structured chiastically through a series of three large 'macrochiasms' (1:8–2:13; 2:14–4:14; 4:15–6:2), each comprised of several smaller chiasms. Although the search for chiasms in the biblical text is not a new approach, Milinovich lends some interesting novelty to the method by explicitly theorizing the chiasm as a common feature of literature intended for oral reading or performance. The chiasm is, as Milinovich sees it, 'the oral equivalent of a paragraph' (p. 18). Where other studies have searched for thematic chiasms, whose presence is difficult to test, Milinovich grounds his approach in 'lexical and grammatical criteria', such that the chiasms he uncovers are based primarily on key words and sounds repeated in the performance of the letter (p. 23).

By delimiting his approach and arguing for larger and smaller chiasms based on objective, lexical criteria, Milinovich offers a careful structuring and close reading of the first half of 2 Corinthians. As the first 'audience-oriented' study of this letter, Milinovich also affords his readers an imaginative, illuminating exploration of the Corinthian audience's potential response as they witnessed the oral performance of 2 Corinthians 1:1–6:2. Where most exegetical studies attempt only to