his written works, there is no chapter here that steps back from the texts to provide an overview or logical reconstruction of that philosophy. Nor does Flasch offer any comments on the contemporary relevance of Eckhart's ideas, though he is critical of Eckhart's realism about universals (see p. 255). Flasch prefers to treat Eckhart as a historical figure rather than as someone who could help us think about our own questions today. But anyone interested in drawing on Eckhart for this purpose will find Flasch's book a valuable guide to Eckhart's thought.

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Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. xviii + 280. £18.99/$28.00.

Professor Miroslav Volf of Yale University continues his important explorations into the political and public theology with his 2015 title, *Flourishing*. Its subtitle reveals the focus of the essay, namely *Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World*. His basic thesis is bold and highly contested in the secular and pluralistic culture of ours: 'far from being a plague on humanity, as many believe and some experience, religions are carriers of compelling visions of flourishing' (p. xi). In other words, he is arguing that – rightly understood – we need 'more' rather than 'less' of religion for the goal of human flourishing to materialise, an argument directly in conflict with not only new atheism but also the (in)famous 'secularisation thesis'.

A highly innovative feature of the book is that while locating himself deeply in Christian tradition, Volf announces to make a sincere effort to tap into the resources of other living faiths. He does that respectfully and in the spirit of hospitality in that he is not claiming to speak on behalf of other traditions, though. Furthermore, as he has been doing increasingly in recent years, not only are theological, biblical and philosophical resources employed; there are also important contributions from sociology, political sciences, economy and related fields.

A leading argument of the book concerns the mutual relationship between globalisation and religion. Contesting the standard view according to which globalisation helps defeat the power of religion on the way to a secular society, he rather argues that religion indeed has contributed to the current rise of globalisation and that globalisation 'needs world religions to deliver

it from its shadows'. How so? He boldly argues that religions 'can situate the pursuit of life that goes well into a more encompassing account of flourishing life in which life being led well has primacy over life going well and life feeling good' (p. 55). Furthermore, Volf claims that religions may help gain a realistic assessment of globalisation, both of its liabilities and gains to humanity. Religions and globalisation are far from enemies; they rather interact and are deeply intertwined with each other. With this and related arguments, the book also goes against the standard complaint against religions according to which they are hopelessly otherworldly. He contends that – while refusing to 'flatten' the world after materialistic and naturalistic ideologies – religions, indeed, affirm ordinary life making it not opposite to but rather integrally related to transcendence from which its ultimate value is derived.

Coming from the war-stricken Balkans, Volf has in many writings considered the relation of religions to violence. This book is no exception. Again, he goes against the tide and, while acknowledging the violence-driven potential of all living faiths, sets his hopes on religions' capacity to not only foster tolerance – a key value for secular pluralisms – but also respect towards other religions and secular people. He also believes firmly that religions have the capacity to cultivate freedom (of religion) even when theologically the majority of believers in all traditions are exclusivist. Indeed, one of the most compelling, and certainly contested, arguments is that 'Religious Exclusivism and Political Pluralism' may live peacefully together (the title of chapter 4). That is a bold claim, indeed, and in many ways counterintuitive. When did you last read a book of this sort, which not only tolerates but in a qualified sense endorses religious exclusivism!

As always, Volf writes well and eloquently. His interlocutors and conversation partners range from Kant, Hobbes and Rousseau to Marx, Engels and Nietzsche, all the way to Pope John Paul II and the Dalai Lama, among others. The references alone are worth gold. Altogether this is an important and sophisticated appeal for the positive function of religions in the pluralistic and secular global world. It is an invitation for a new kind of conversation.

The main challenges and liabilities in my reading include the following. First, for a comparative theologian the book promises more than it delivers in that resources from other faiths are used minimally and (with the exception of Islam), mostly merely as illustrations. Second, one wonders why the book does not engage more widely the intense multidisciplinary conversation under way about the meaning of globalization, even though it is the book's main issue. Third, similarly, the wide and diverse debate among theologians concerning the meaning and conditions of violence both in our faith and in other traditions does not receive much attention; however, it has everything

to do with the potential of various faith traditions to cultivate freedom, tolerance and respect.

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Hans W. Frei, *Reading Faithfully*, vol. 1, *Writings from the Archives: Theology and Hermeneutics*, and vol. 2, *Frei's Theological Background*, ed. Mike Higton and Mark Alan Bowald (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), pp. xx + 226 and pp. vi + 227. $28.00 each.

These two volumes are a very welcome set of largely unpublished selections from Frei's body of writings. The first volume includes letters as well as essays on hermeneutics and theology, extending from 1953 through 1987 (a year before his untimely death). The second volume includes six essays from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, three unpublished (on Lessing, Kant and Barth) and three published in relatively obscure books (two on H. R. Niebuhr and one on German theology). Each selection includes a helpful editorial paragraph on the date and substance of the selection. The editors rightly note that Frei 'is a very significant influence in contemporary theology, but that influence has little to do with the quantity of his publications' (p. xv) – two books and some articles during his lifetime (*The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Fortress, 1975) and *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (Yale, 1974)), two posthumous books (one a set of essays) – *Types of Christian Theology* (Yale, 1992) and *Theology and Narrative* (Oxford, 1993). Neophytes will want to begin with one of the books, using these letters and essays to shed further light. But I can also imagine carefully moving from some of these letters and essays back to the books, so interesting is this collection.

The letters and essays are helpfully framed by a foreword by George Hunsinger (vol. 1, pp. vii–xi) and an afterword by John Webster (vol. 1, pp. 205–20). Hunsinger recalls Frei's personal qualities (his kindness and generosity, 'not always unmixed with severity') along with his academic achievements as an always tentative historian, hermeneutician and theologian, 'finally perhaps even a bit troubled' – but focused on 'the singularity of Jesus' and the theological as well as non-theological resources needed to show this particularity (p. viii). John Webster's essay (republished from a 1999 commemoration of Frei life) helpfully proposes one way to approach Frei's contribution: 'to think of his corpus of writings as a series of essays in practical hermeneutics' (vol. 1, p. 205).