acute onset conditions are based on the understanding that sudden adversity causes a deeply disorienting discontinuity in identity and purpose, and that people need help in negotiating the transition from the old to the new self. Furthermore within Christian pastoral theology there *is already an understanding* of an 'incarnational' ministry of presence, and that what is problematic about suffering is undergoing it in the felt absence of God. There is therefore nothing new in Reinders' analysis of the psychological and spiritual issues at stake.

Interestingly, the book is itself a task of rehabilitation – a reframing of the theology of providence aimed at making it work better. Reinders describes a process of insight effected through the Spirit, making individuals affected by life-changing adversity alive to the presence of God in the gap between the old and new self, helping them to weave a new story in which God is seen always to have been lovingly present. This re-storying does indeed seem to be the way that faith works psychologically for people who undergo positive transformation in the face of adversity, but theism is only one of several possible frameworks that might support such a transformation. Any persuasive story and reliable human presence can do the job. A God of this gap is no less vulnerable to elimination by science than a God of any other gap.

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Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. xv + 321. $38.00.

Kurt Flasch is a major scholar with over sixty years of study of Meister Eckhart (c.1260–1328). His book *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity* reappraises Eckhart and his wide variety of writings on the basis of recent textual advances and Flasch's own rereading of Eckhart's works. For Flasch, the best way into Eckhart's thought lies in Eckhart's own descriptions of his work. These statements, Flasch argues, show that Eckhart thought of himself as first and foremost a philosopher, rather than a mystic or theologian. In his Latin commentary on John, for instance, Eckhart says that he has three goals: to interpret and explain the Gospel by means of philosophical arguments; to show that the content of true philosophy is contained in scripture when properly interpreted; and to offer ethical teachings along the way. This is why Flasch calls Eckhart a 'philosopher of Christianity': he aims to interpret and prove Christian doctrines, including the Trinity and the incarnation, by means of philosophical reason.

Flasch traces Eckhart's philosophical views across all his writings, from his earliest sermons to his final defence against charges of heresy at the end of his life. Flasch argues that these views are derived from Aristotle, the Islamic philosophers Avicenna and Averroes, and his older contemporary (and, possibly, friend) Dietrich of Freiberg. Eckhart is a realist about universals. Justice, goodness, truth, and other similar universals really exist. Moreover, when we say that someone is just, our statement refers to justice itself within her. Justice makes her just by dwelling within her and, so to speak, 'giving birth' to her insofar as she is just. But justice, like goodness, truth, unity and so on, is also uncreated. These universals are identical with God and interchangeable with God. In addition, Eckhart follows Maimonides in holding that God is one and simple. For this reason, all those universals are one in God. It is only our limited reason that distinguishes among them. Thus, God is fully present in the just person and gives birth to her insofar as she is just. The same goes for goodness, truth and the rest.

Following Avicenna, Eckhart identifies God with Being. Whatever being creatures have is identical with God. Apart from God creatures are nothing, and it could be said that creatures exist within God. Eckhart understands God's being as intellectual in nature. When my eye beholds a tree, for instance, my image of the tree is in effect the union of eye and tree brought about by the activity of seeing. In this same way, knowing unites the intellect and the known object. For Eckhart, creatures are like those images and concepts, while God is more like the seeing and knowing that produce them. God, then, is best seen not as a static being, a thing, but as an active, energetic process of creation and union.

Eckhart's work points to the immediate availability of God within the context of ordinary life and existence. There is virtually nothing about the afterlife in his thought. He calls for selfless detachment from the created things of ordinary experience, which are nothing without God, and a life based on love with no thought of reward. Flasch thinks it is no surprise that the church of Eckhart's day condemned him.

Flasch's reading of Eckhart is strong and persuasive, with clear grounding in the texts. Every student of Eckhart should read it. Flasch is too dismissive of mysticism, which he interprets in a narrow way that ignores the work of Bernard McGinn and others to broaden its scope. He debunks the former belief that Eckhart preached mainly to nuns and beguines, but he does not explore Eckhart's relationship to women. There is no mention of Marguerite Porete, whose *Mirror of Simple Souls* may have influenced Eckhart, nor does Flasch go into why Eckhart mentions in his defence the favour his ideas found among both men and women. Though Flasch traces Eckhart's philosophy in

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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