



# Journey between Worlds: Economic Globalization and Luther's God Indwelling Creation

CYNTHIA MOE-LOBEDA

**E**CONOMIC GLOBALIZATION, IN THE MODEL THAT SHAPES OUR WORLD TODAY, presents real dangers. But, despite those dangers, there are rays of hope for a moral-spiritual power to forge new forms of economic life. An ancient faith claim that honors the earth, one found in little-known expressions of Martin Luther, can provide the source for that moral-spiritual power.

“Globalization,” as used in this essay, refers only to the prevailing model of economic globalization today. That model involves seven intimately related trends. The first is a rapid increase in the movement of goods and services as well as capital—trade and investment—across international borders. A second defining trend is the subordination of democratic political power to unaccountable economic power in order to ease that movement. More specifically, international trade and investment agreements increasingly are giving global corporations the legal power to override local and national government policies that protect their people and resources. Third, a growing portion of the world’s largest economies are planned and directed in ways unaccountable to the public as a whole. Indeed, fifty-one of the world’s one hundred largest economies are corporations.<sup>1</sup>

A fourth defining trend in economic globalization, privatization, gives own-

<sup>1</sup>Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh, “The Top 200” (Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1996), using data collected from The World Bank’s *World Development Report 1996* and *Forbes Magazine*. (Accessible online: [www.ips-dc.org/reports/top200text.htm](http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/top200text.htm).) This trend is confirmed in the United Nations Research Institute’s (UNRISD) *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization* (London: Banson, 1995) 154.

*Economic globalization poses grave dangers to the earth and its people. Martin Luther’s notion that “the world is full of God and He fills all” can provide the moral and spiritual power to live differently.*

ership and control of basic goods and services such as water, electricity, health care, and seed strains to corporations or individuals usually not accountable to the communities they impact. To illustrate, the privatization of water allows a foreign corporation to purchase the water supply in an impoverished South American area and export the water for sale at whatever price the market will bear in Seattle, Paris, or wherever. Original users of the water are left without. For many people on this earth, no clean water means death.

A fifth trend is an accelerating commodification of life experiences and of life forms, such as genetic material or seed strains developed over generations by a particular people. "Commodification" refers to placing a monetary value on something and marketing it.<sup>2</sup> A sixth and related trend is the strategic marketing of western consumer-oriented ways of life around the world.<sup>3</sup> An aim, for instance, of some transnational business is to enable every Chinese family to own an automobile and a refrigerator. (Imagine the impact on global warming.)

A final defining trend is the commodification of money. That is, huge amounts of money are bought and sold across national borders instantly at the behest of investors unaccountable for social and environmental impacts of their investments and unregulated by political bodies. The impact, as seen in the recent Southeast Asian and Mexican financial crises, may be devastating.

For the purpose of this essay, the word "globalization" designates the prevailing paradigm of economic globalization characterized by these seven trends. Globalization, thus defined, brings economic growth and, with it, enormous economic benefits to many. Those benefits are overshadowed by a chorus of diverse voices documenting threats that globalization poses to human and other life on earth.

#### I. A DISTURBING STORY: DANGERS PRESENTED BY ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

Shortly, I will invite the reader to imagine and to remember who we are called to be as friends and followers of the God who loves each one of us and this good earth with unquenchable and boundless love. But first I invite you to open your eyes and to see very clearly who we are in the economic and ecological story unfolding on this generous planet. More specifically, consider who we are as a species in relationship to the rest of nature and who we are as economically privileged people in relationship to others far and near who are impoverished. Thus, I ask you for a few moments to bear with a disturbing and frightening story, and particularly to see some of its main characters: human beings of relative economic standing. The intent is not to wallow in the horror of that story but rather to hold it in light of another: a subversive story of life-giving justice-making love incarnate in flesh and

<sup>2</sup>"One tendency in a capitalist society is for more aspects of life to be reduced to commodities over time." Pamela Sparr, "United Methodist Study Guide on Global Economics: Seeking a Christian Ethics" (General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, 1993) 15.

<sup>3</sup>These trends are historically situated. None is new. New is the speed of financial transactions enabled by cyber-technology, the growing number of bilateral and multilateral agreements deregulating trade and investment, and the seventh trend noted here.

earth. My goal is that we might live differently, that, as ordinary Christians, we might resist economic brutality to human beings and earth and craft economic ways that enable the household of earth to flourish.

You and I live according to economic arrangements that spell death for many people and that are destroying earth's capacity to sustain life as we know and love it. To make the point, I draw upon several voices. The first set of voices speaks to the consequences of globalization on many human beings and the second set illuminates the impact on other-than-human parts of nature.

As a missionary in Honduras, I watched young children flounder in malnourishment, children who could have flourished had their parents had access to a *pedacito de tierra* (small plot of land) on which to grow beans, corn, and vegetables. Much arable land, however, was owned and used by transnational corporations growing fruit and beef for North American tables. To organize for land reform could spell death by paramilitary forces in league with wealthy land owners. Later, leading delegations of U.S. citizens to Mexico and Central America, I met a strawberry picker who burns in my memory: "Our children," she declared, "die of hunger because this land which ought grow their food, produces strawberries for your tables."

A Lutheran church worker in India with whom I have worked on a Lutheran World Federation project has dedicated his life to resisting global companies whose bauxite mines displace thousands of tribal folk from their lands. Those lands had enabled the people to feed their children and sustain their health systems, values, family structures, and identity for generations. Despite fierce and courageous resistance from people whose villages are destroyed by the mines, they continue to occupy more Indian lands.<sup>4</sup> The mining companies—based in Norway, the United States, and elsewhere—provide aluminum for our use.

A South Korean theologian: "Suddenly in November 1997...foreign investors, panicked by the Asian currency crisis, demanded their dollars back, and lenders called in their short-term loans....Koreans say that this is the most tragic event ever since the Korean War....Korea is now plunged into a stormy night of company bankruptcies, mass layoffs, [and more]....A layoff in a household means a death sentence to one's family in Korea. Those who have found no way out of the swamp have committed suicide—sometimes a familial suicide....The only winners in Korea are the foreign banks, who will get their money back and then some."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, consider the U.S. worker who spent her life at a good job in a GE aircraft engines plant that is to be closed and moved to Mexico as a result of the so-called "free trade" inscribed by NAFTA. Countless jobs have been lost in similar plant closings. Lives are devastated, yet according to GE's CEO Jack Welch, in an

<sup>4</sup>The information regarding the impact of bauxite mining in India is drawn from two papers: Orissa Development Action Forum, "An Ethical Response to Globalization—A Christian Perspective" (Orissa, India, 2000), and the National Council of Churches in India, "The Land Does Not Belong to Us—We Belong to the Land" (Visakhapatnam, India, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>Chang Yoon-Jae, "From Mammon of Impoverishment to God of Empowerment: Implications of the Free Market Economy to the Theologies of the Third World" (unpublished paper, 1998).

now infamous quote: “Ideally you would have every plant you own on a barge” to move to where labor is cheapest.

According to a United Nations agency, globalization “is concentrating power and marginalizing the poor, both countries and people.”<sup>6</sup> The reality, according to that agency, is staggering: new estimates show that the 225 richest people have combined wealth equal to the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world’s people. The richest three people have assets that exceed the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries.<sup>7</sup>

Consider now the second set of voices. According to a *State of the World Report*:

Biodiversity is the basis for our existence....However, like the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, humanity now finds itself in the midst of a mass extinction: a global evolutionary convulsion with few parallels in the entire history of life....Most estimates are that at least 1,000 species are lost per year....But unlike the dinosaurs, we are not simply the contemporaries of a mass extinction—we are the reason for it.<sup>8</sup>

Reversing this trend calls for “restructuring the global economy....It calls for replacing our consumer culture with a less materialistic and far more environmentally literate way of life....The fate of our children depends upon it, in ways we can barely begin to conceive.”<sup>9</sup>

According to *The Development Dictionary*:

[W]e now consume in one year what it took the earth a million years to store up. Much of our glorious productivity is fed by the gigantic through-put of fossil energy; on the one side, the earth is being excavated and permanently scarred, while on the other a continuous rain of harmful substances drizzles down....If all the countries followed “successfully” the industrialized example, five or six planets would be needed to serve as mines and waste dumps.<sup>10</sup>

In short, the present world is unsustainable. Economic growth, the aim and promise of globalization, has collided with the earth’s natural limits.<sup>11</sup> Economic growth, together with population growth, threatens earth’s capacity to regenerate. The words’ blandness dims the stark reality: while human life depends upon earth’s life-systems, “every natural system on the planet is disintegrating,”<sup>12</sup> and the human species is the cause of it. Life, according to the triune god of growth, profit,

<sup>6</sup>The United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1999* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 30-31.

<sup>7</sup>The United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1998* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 29-30, using data from *Forbes Magazine* (1997).

<sup>8</sup>Lester R. Brown et al., *State of the World 1998* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1998) 41-42.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, book jacket.

<sup>10</sup>Wolfgang Sachs, “Introduction,” *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books; Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993) 2.

<sup>11</sup>According to Lester R. Brown et al., *State of the World*: “As the global economy has expanded from 5 trillion of output in 1950 to 29 trillion in 1997, its demands have crossed many of the earth’s sustainable yield thresholds.”

<sup>12</sup>Paul Hawken, *The Ecology of Commerce* (San Francisco: Harper Books, 1993) 22.

and consumption, is endangering life itself.<sup>13</sup> Daniel Mcguire cuts to the quick: “If current trends continue, we will not....We are an endangered species.”<sup>14</sup>

The pathos of the situation is enormous. Christians are called, before all else except love for God, to love neighbor as self. We were created to receive God’s love, love God in return, reflect God’s love in relationship with each other and all of creation. This is our lifework. We long to fulfill it. In today’s world, the call to love is a call to change as we never have imagined. It is a call to ways of living that make for sustainable earth-human relations and to the abolition of extreme poverty. Yet, in tragic contrast, against our better judgment, and defying our call to walk the ways of Jesus, we North Americans who are relatively comfortable find ourselves in this ungodly situation: we seem locked into complicity with global economic arrangements that degrade and even destroy earth’s life systems and vast numbers of human beings in order that a few—including many of us—might consume far more than we need and a tiny elite might concentrate enormous wealth in their hands. In the contest between powerlessness and hope, it seems that the former prevails. Blindly, we bow at the altar of growth, consumption, and profit. Asleep, it appears, is our moral-spiritual power to rise up subversively and cry, “No! In the name of God, this we refuse: to eat, clothe and transport ourselves, recreate, and equip our dwellings in ways that ravage the good earth and the lives of many.”

The moral crisis—a crisis of our faith lives—raised here is twofold: First, the reigning model of economic globalization threatens a beloved world. Second, as a society, we acquiesce to that economic model. We comply with its demands and accede to its truths, as if, indeed, “There is no alternative.”<sup>15</sup> We fail to consider seriously the long-term social and ecological implications of economic globalization, resist it, and forge alternatives. This great dearth of moral-spiritual energy—and its reawakening—are the concerns of this essay.

## II. RAYS OF HOPE: A SUBVERSIVE EARTH-HONORING FAITH CLAIM

I fear the despair and retreat into private morality that may emerge when we dare to see and hear the cries of those who suffer at the hands of global economic arrangements. I fear that hopelessness because I have known it intimately. Sallie McFague says it well: “At the end of the day, one can easily lose heart....[P]lanetary responsibility is too much for us....How [does one] get up in the morning and keep going?”<sup>16</sup> Wherein, then, lies hope? How can we hope for the moral-spiritual energy

<sup>13</sup>A 1992 “Warning to Humanity” issued by more than 1,600 senior scientists, including a majority of all living Nobel Laureates in the sciences, advises that: “[H]uman beings and the natural world are on a collision course...that may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know.” Cited by David Korten in “Will the God of Life Survive the Institutions of Mammon” (paper delivered at the “Global Economic Justice” conference, Seattle, 30 Sept. 1999).

<sup>14</sup>Daniel Mcguire, *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity: Reclaiming the Revolution* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 13.

<sup>15</sup>The phrase, known as TINA, is Margaret Thatcher’s.

<sup>16</sup>Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 207-208.

to swim upstream against powerful currents, toward economic ways that serve the love of neighbor and sustainable relations between the earth and human beings?

The rays of hope are many. They are offered by groups of people the world over, living toward alternative visions of a global economic order in which the wealth of a few is not bought by the impoverishment of the many and of the earth. And streams of hope are offered by earth's great religious traditions, all of which must be drawn upon now if earth's people are to forge the path into lifeways that nurture the great community of life, rather than lead further to its demise.

Two faith convictions undergird my hope as a follower of Jesus. First, where God calls us to go, God empowers us to go. The God revealed in Scripture calls God's people to the seemingly impossible and empowers them to go there. The other conviction is this: Following Jesus in ways of love and justice is all about seeing. We need to hear Jesus' challenge to his disciples: "Do you have eyes and fail to see?" What we see and refuse to see, and how we see, are morally loaded, bearing upon whether we foster or thwart life-saving social and ecological change. That is, when good and compassionate people do not see and do not understand the consequences of our economic ways, we simply carry on with them. Needed today are critical and morally responsible sight and tools for political-economic literacy about the power arrangements that determine who has food and water and who does not, the terms of the human species' relationship to the planet, and the survival chances of endangered cultures and eco-systems. Simply said: in order to live differently, we must see clearly.

Seeing our economic reality critically and clearly is crucial; but it is not enough. Living as friends of God today entails also coming to see and know ever more fully the mystery that is God, and holding the two—our lived economic realities and God—in one breath. More specifically, here I refer to seeing the mystery of God living and loving in the creatures and elements of this good earth. For guidance toward seeing God's indwelling presence and the moral-spiritual power that it offers, consider the holy terrain of our forebears in faith. In some of them we encounter a contradiction that whispers hope.

While our tendency may be toward moral acquiescence, we are descendants of a cloud of witnesses whose relationship with God disallowed acquiescence to systems of domination seemingly as all-powerful as the global economy of our day. We are well advised to seek the wisdom of these ancestors. How did they come to embody the living Christ, drink the "dew of God's Spirit...diffused throughout all the earth"<sup>17</sup> to such an extent that, despite many mistakes, they defied systems of injustice and lived toward alternative realities that reflected God's gracious and saving love for all?

One of those faith forebears is Martin Luther. According to Luther, as expressed in varied works from sermons and treatises to letters: as gracious gift, God dwells in the faithful and in all things. Dwelling in the faithful, God transforms them—gradually, in communion with others, and never completely—into lovers

<sup>17</sup>Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.17.3.

as God loves. First recipient's of God's love, the faithful become givers of it. As a communion, we are enabled by the indwelling God to love beyond self. That love obligates and empowers us, in all that we do, to serve and benefit others, especially those in need. Hear Luther regarding God indwelling the faithful:

- "Christians are indeed called and made habitation of God, and in them God speaks, and rules, and works."<sup>18</sup>
- "[T]his is...one of the exceedingly great promises granted to us...that we should...be so highly honored as not only to be loved by God through Jesus Christ...but should even have the Lord Himself dwelling completely in us."<sup>19</sup>
- God's power and presence as the Holy Spirit may be written as "a fiery flame on the heart, mak[ing] it...burn with love and delight in whatever pleases God....creat[ing] new courage so that [one]...serves the people."<sup>20</sup>

Luther, of course, refuted the two medieval theological axioms that union with Christ requires human merit, and that union with Christ is a way to earn salvation. But, for Luther, Christ does dwell in sinners, not as a way to salvation but rather as an effect of salvation.

More, Luther insists that God is present not only in the faithful but in all created things:

- "Nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God...with [God's] power."<sup>21</sup>
- "God...exists at the same time in every little seed, whole and entire, and yet also in all and above all and outside all created things."<sup>22</sup>
- "[E]verything is full of Christ through and through."<sup>23</sup>
- "Christ...fills all things...is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water...for he certainly is there."<sup>24</sup>

While for Luther the scope of redemption and of the theo-ethical universe is the human—and these are faultlines with grave consequences<sup>25</sup>—the scope of God's blessed creaturehood in whom God dwells is cosmic.

What do these claims have to do with economic life? What might it mean in our economic lives—as individuals and as faith communities—to live as if God actually does abide in us and in all of nature? How might our being communal and communing body of God empower us to resist economic and ecological brutality?

<sup>18</sup>Luther, "Third Sermon for Pentecost Sunday," in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 3, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) 321.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Luther, *That These Words of Christ, "This is My Body," etc. Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics* (1527), in *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986) 37:58.

<sup>22</sup>Luther, "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 397.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>24</sup>Luther, "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics," in Lull, 321.

<sup>25</sup>See Larry Rasmussen with Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, "Reform Dynamic," in *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics*, ed. Karen Bloomquist and John Stumme (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

The first implication of this view concerns moral-spiritual power to resist dangerous economic practices and to forge alternatives. For Luther, all activity in relationship to neighbor is normed and empowered by one theological principle: a true Christian becomes Christ for neighbors and thus serves the neighbors' well-being in all that she or he does. Economic activity is fundamentally activity in relationship to neighbors and therefore is to serve their well-being. Economic practices that undermine the good of others, and especially of vulnerable people, are to be rejected and replaced with alternatives. The moral-spiritual power to shape economic life according to neighbor-love comes from Christ making habitation in the faithful and changing them into people who love with Christ's very love. This process of transformation happens over time, for the faithful remain simultaneously sinners and righteous. They are—in Luther's words—"rusty tools,"<sup>26</sup> being polished by God for as long as they live.

To glimpse what this meant in Luther's world, a brief look at context is necessary. Luther's was a time of "economic revolution which was gradually transforming Germany from a nation of peasant agriculturalists into a society with at least the beginnings of a capitalist economy."<sup>27</sup> Consequences included high prices, growing disparity of wealth, and increasing poverty, especially of those with small or fixed income. The poor "were a cheap labor pool for an expanding profit economy."<sup>28</sup> In this context, for Luther, economic life as neighbor-love meant vehemently denouncing market activity that enabled a few to make a profit at the expense of the common good or the well-being of the poor. And it meant promoting economic practices that served a widespread good, especially the good of the poor.

We cannot here look extensively at the specific economic norms Luther established to meet these aims. Suffice it to note two:

1. Because selling anything is an act toward neighbor, the transaction's goal should be not profit but rather "an adequate living" and serving the needs of the neighbor.<sup>29</sup>
2. Market activity ought be subject to "rules and regulations" established by civil authorities to prevent the very wealthy from taking advantage of the poor.<sup>30</sup>

In line with these norms, Luther insisted on a number of rules for economic life that speak directly to the global economy today, mirroring the claims of its critics. Reading Luther in 1999 during the WTO-related struggles in Seattle, I was provoked by a startling coherence between WTO protesters and Luther in their insistence that unregulated global "free market" activity endangers the poor and those with limited income. Many of Luther's words and those of globalization's

<sup>26</sup>Luther, WA 2/413.27, cited by George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1954) 92.

<sup>27</sup>Introduction to *Trade and Usury*, in *Luther's Works* 45:233.

<sup>28</sup>Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996) 114.

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Luther, *Trade and Usury*, in *Luther's Works* 45:247-252.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 249-250.



opponents are virtually the same! Regarding large international trading companies: They “are a bottomless pit of avarice and wrong-doing....They control all commodities...raise or lower prices at their pleasure. They oppress and ruin all the small businessmen....Because of it all the world must be sucked dry and all the money sink and swim in their gullets.”<sup>31</sup> Who—Luther or the WTO protestors—declares that public officials “should be alert and resolute enough to establish and maintain order in all areas of trade and commerce in order that the poor may not be burdened and oppressed”?<sup>32</sup> Who denounces the practices of buying out the entire supply of a commodity and then raising the price and of buying at a low price from one who needs money so badly that he or she sells low? The voice in each case was Luther.

In the words of Carter Lindberg, Luther “saw the entire community endangered by the financial power of a few great economic centers....He saw an economic situation immune to moral jurisdiction that would destroy the ethos of the community....Luther believed that the church was called to reject publicly and unequivocally these economic developments and to develop a constructive social ethic that would include public accountability of large business through government regulation.”<sup>33</sup> Contemporary critics of globalization see much the same. So close is the coherence between Luther’s norms and the situation of economic globalization today that, were his norms adopted as guiding principles of economic life today, they would subvert the prevailing paradigm of economic globalization.

My point, of course, is not to advocate a direct and uncritical application of Luther’s economic analyses or norms to the contemporary situation. Given Luther’s inflammatory denunciations of Jews, peasants, and Anabaptists, never are his social ethics to be adopted uncritically as normative. So doing would lack intellectual and moral integrity. Nor is my point to imply that Luther was a “progressive” early anti-capitalist. The implication would be false, failing to acknowledge that his condemnation of emerging capitalism and his crafting of alternative economic norms and practices were not rooted in a bent toward progressive social change. His critique was rooted, social-theoretically, in his “conservative” defense of feudal social arrangements and prohibitions on interest, and, theologically, in his conviction that economic life—as all life—must serve the proclamation and hearing of the gospel and the love of neighbor.

Rather, the relevant points are these: Luther’s economic ethics had subversive implications in his context, which bear uncanny resemblances to our own. The subversive nature of Luther’s economic norms and the moral power for heeding them stem from their foundation, love of neighbor, issuing, in part, from God’s indwelling presence. Economic activity is normed by this one principle: Christians,

<sup>31</sup>Luther, *Trade and Usury*, in *Luther’s Works* 45:270-271. Luther also denounces the trading companies in his comments on the seventh commandment in the *Large Catechism*.

<sup>32</sup>Luther, *The Large Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord*, 398.

<sup>33</sup>Carter Lindberg, *Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 113.

having received God's love through God's grace alone, are "filled with God" and over time come to love others with God's indwelling love. Thus they grow in serving the well-being of the community and the neighbor, especially the needy ones. Widely accepted economic practices that undermine the common good or the well-being of the poor are to be defied and replaced with alternatives by the power of Christ's love actually living within us.

This is one startling and hope-giving implication of the claim that God makes home in matter, in the bodies of us "mud creatures."<sup>34</sup> Recall the question at hand: What might our being body of God contribute to our moral power to live toward economic and ecological justice? Thus far my response has been anthropocentric: God living in human creatures empowers us for lives of justice-making love. Yet, the anthropocentric boundaries of mainstream western ethical frameworks cripple our capacity to address the bio-cide and eco-cide inherent in our economic practices, policies, and systems. Luther's panentheism dissolves those anthropocentric boundaries.

Recall that, for Luther, God who indwells and empowers the faithful "fills all things"; "the power of God...must be essentially present in all places even in the tiniest leaf";<sup>35</sup> God is "present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being";<sup>36</sup> earth bears and reveals the infinite; God "is in and through all creatures, in all their parts and places, so that the world is full of God and He fills all."<sup>37</sup>

The presence of God in our many forms suggests a web of connectedness pregnant with implications for both moral obligation and moral-spiritual power. The community, the common good, the neighbor extends beyond the human to the larger community of life, the earth community. Luther himself did not make this extension. Yet his panentheist claim, held in light of his conviction that the word brings life to places of brokenness and suffering, compels us, his theological heirs, in a time of ecological brokenness to do so. Our concern here, however, is not only the normative but also the transformative implications of Luther's "creation as habitation of God." That is, if, as Luther asserts, God dwells not only in human creatures but also in all of earth's bounty, then, in what sense does God's presence there not only obligate us to live toward the healing and sustaining of creation but also nurture our moral-spiritual power to do so, even when that entails swimming upstream against the ways of life that we have come to assume as natural?

To think theologically about the moral-spiritual power that flows from God's inhabiting "every little seed" and "all creatures," is to struggle for and with "a concept that does not exist"<sup>38</sup> in western Protestant ethics. Luther's panentheism re-

<sup>34</sup>"Mud creature" is the term used by Denis Minns to interpret Irenaeus of Lyons's concept of the created human being. See Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994).

<sup>35</sup>Luther, *That These Words of Christ, "This is My Body," etc. Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics*, in *Luther's Works* 37:57.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>37</sup>Luther, WA 23:134, as cited by many from Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958) 189.

<sup>38</sup>Mary Grey, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption, and Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989) 87.

opens that door theologically. Exploring the fertile terrain on the other side may be a vital step in re-situating humankind in the moral universe in ways that open our capacity to receive and embody God's presence as power to live toward just and sustainable ways of life.

The claim to explore and the hope to unfold is this: "Our efforts on behalf of our planet are not ours alone....[T]he source and power of life in the universe is working *in and through* us [and the rest of nature] for the well-being of all creation, including our tiny part in it."<sup>39</sup> Unfolding that claim is a crucial task of us all as theologians of everyday life today. Here, I but raise possibilities and questions. If, as Luther insists, "Christ...is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water,"<sup>40</sup> then undaunted, redemptive, liberating love lives in the creatures and elements of this good earth.

One species wields power to destroy life as we know and love it on this generous earth and—aided by the laws of economic globalization—is exercising that power. Our capacity to resist that destruction and to move toward socially just and ecologically sustainable economic ways may be fed and watered by God's love coursing through "all created things."<sup>41</sup> Said differently: God makes home in matter. As we awaken each morning, the great Lover and Liberator is alive in and among our bodies. The mystery of creation "is the indwelling of God within it."<sup>42</sup> The mystery of our power to resist economic and ecological violence and to live differently is the living Christ, "pouring and flowing" through us and among us. We "mud creatures" are home of One who breathes through creation, healing, making whole, undoing injustice, and restoring right relationships, so that all might have life and have it abundantly. Having received God's subversive love, we are bearers of it. Tapping that moral-spiritual power entails entry into the mystery of communion with all of life and with God whose love for this world is unquenchable. This will restore the community of life, will liberate humanity from being its destroyers. It fills every cell of all being. The presence and power of God, living in and loving in creation, will lead those who dare to know that presence more intimately and to see the realities of globalization more clearly, along "life-saving and life-savoring"<sup>43</sup> paths. ⊕

CYNTHIA MOE-LOBEDA is Adjunct Professor of Christian Ethics, School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University. This essay is a revision of a lecture sponsored by the Stanley L. Olson Chair of Moral Values, delivered at Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 4 April 2001.

<sup>39</sup>McFague, *Body of God*, 212.

<sup>40</sup>Luther, "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against Fanatics," in Lull, 321.

<sup>41</sup>Luther, "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," in Lull, 397.

<sup>42</sup>Sharon Daloz Parks, "Household Economics," in *Practicing Our Faith*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997) 47.

<sup>43</sup>The phrase is Larry Rasmussen's.