Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God by Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda

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Among the glut of books on globalization, few take the phenomenon seriously as a theological problem. This book does so, arguing that globalization is a moral crisis, a disabling of moral agency, and that life in Christ provides us the resources for resistance. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to globalization, its history, and some of its negative effects. The second shows how globalization enfeebles democracy and disables moral agency worldwide. The third chapter analyzes and effectively critiques the ideological underpinnings of globalization in four pervasive myths: growth benefits all, freedom means market freedom, the human person is made to have and consume, and globalization is inevitable.

Moe-Lobeda then mines Luther’s work, specifically his writings on the indwelling of Christ, for resources to enliven the moral agency disabled by globalization. There follows an examination of the way that the practices of a typical North American church congregation participate in the evils of globalization and detailed suggestions for alternative practices. The book ends with an appendix on methodology.

Among the book’s many strengths is its case against globalization backed up by a wealth of detail in the text and footnotes. The author rightly sees globalization not merely as an economic phenomenon but as a disabling heresy of the human person. Her analysis of the indwelling Christ in Luther builds a bridge between traditional theology and contemporary feminist theologies. Above all, Moe-Lobeda admirably grounds her analysis in the concrete details of everyday life.

The book’s weaknesses mostly center around the theological chapters, where the reading of Luther is sometimes thin and tendentious (e.g., Luther as panentheist). Luther is contrasted against a clumsy caricature of medieval Christianity. Nevertheless, the strengths decidedly outweigh the weaknesses. This is a practical book that would be ideal for parish groups seeking a faithful way to confront the specter of globalization.

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Dancing with the Sacred: Ecology, Evolution, and God
by Karl E. Peters

Convinced by modern science that the idea of a personal God is no longer tenable, Peters seeks a connection with the sacred that fits within his purely naturalistic worldview. To achieve this, Peters declares three things to be “sacred”: the ongoing development of the universe (cosmic evolution), biodiversity (produced by natural selection), and cultural and religious diversity (pluralism). Peters discusses how these “sacred,” creative processes give him a sense of purpose in life, motivate him to behave morally, establish his environmental ethic, and help him deal with the death of his wife. Peters’s book is an elegant explanation of how an atheist can experience the sacred and find meaning. Peters develops the idea that human immortality is found in our legacy of positive influence on others and on nature, and he uses this to advocate environmental responsibility.

I found Peters’s book frustrating because I disagree with his foundational idea—that modern science cannot be reconciled with a loving, personal God. Peters says, “The world view of modern science is naturalistic” (p. 9). I am disturbed by the implication that modern science’s methodology dictates a certain worldview. Naturalism is inherent in scientific methodology, but an atheistic worldview is not. I was also disquieted by his use of “God” (capital G) to refer to the collection of impersonal, mindless, natural processes that he calls sacred. Of course, this use goads the reader to think differently about God, and thus serves Peters’s purpose well.

Who should read this book? Atheists in