

Commentary Speech on Dr. Kuzipa Nalwamba's "Creation in Changing Landscapes"

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Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, colleagues, the GS of LWF and WCC, and friends -

It is a privilege to share with you some reflections on Dr. Kuzipa Nalwamba's profound and timely paper, "Creation in Changing Landscapes." Dr. Nalwamba invites us to revisit the doctrine of creation, a foundational element of Christian theology, and to see it through the lens of the dramatic changes we are witnessing in our physical, cultural, and technological landscapes. She argues that as these landscapes evolve, our understanding of creation must also deepen and expand. This is not merely a theological exercise but a crucial task for the church's mission in today's world.

Dr. Nalwamba begins by basing her own experiences growing up in Zambia, where she witnessed both the beauty of creation and its degradation due to human activity. This personal connection to creation is something many of us share, and it reminds us that our theology of creation is not just abstract—it is deeply intertwined with our lived experiences and the places we call home.

In Christian doctrine, the world is seen as the handiwork of God, who created everything with purpose and intent. The natural world is not merely a backdrop for human activity but a revelation of God's glory and creativity (Genesis 1:1-31). Humans, created in the image of God (Imago Dei) (Genesis 1:27), are entrusted with the responsibility of stewardship. This means caring for creation, preserving its beauty, and ensuring its sustainability for future generations.

Dr. Nalwamba emphasizes the doctrine of creation as a foundational aspect of Christian theology, reminding us that creation is not just a distant past event but a present and ongoing reality. This is particularly relevant to Myanmar, where environmental degradation, deforestation, and the impacts of climate change are increasingly evident. The country's forests, which have been a vital part of its ecological and cultural heritage, are rapidly disappearing due to logging, agriculture, and other human activities.

These environmental challenges are deeply intertwined with social and political issues. The exploitation of natural resources, often driven by profit motives, has not only harmed the environment but has also contributed to conflicts and human rights abuses, particularly in ethnic minority regions. Dr. Nalwamba's call for a theology of creation that emphasizes stewardship, co-creation, and eco-justice is incredibly relevant here. Indeed churches globally must advocate for the protection of creation, recognizing that environmental care is inseparable from social justice.

Dr. Nalwamba's insights into the changing physical landscapes are particularly striking. She highlights how the environmental crises we face are not just scientific or political challenges but deeply theological ones. The concept of eco-theology, which she discusses and takes an insightful thought from Pope Francis' book "Laudato Si", calls us to recognize the interconnectedness of all life and to see the earth as a sacred community of creation. This perspective promotes a vision in which all of creation is appreciated and cared for, but challenging the frequently anthropocentric approach that puts humans at the centre.

This idea is not new, but it is one that we have too often neglected. The call to "till and keep" the garden in Genesis 2:15 is not just an ancient command—it is a mandate for today, urging us to care for our planet in ways that honor the Creator and sustain life for future generations. Dr. Nalwamba reminds us that our role as stewards is both a privilege and a profound responsibility. It is a call to action, to participate in the ongoing work of creation, not just by preserving what remains but by restoring what has been damaged.

Moving beyond the physical, Dr. Nalwamba also addresses the cultural and technological landscapes that are rapidly transforming our world. Here, she offers a compelling argument for the importance of contextualization in mission—recognizing that every culture reflects aspects of God's creativity. This means that the Gospel must be communicated in ways that resonate with specific cultural contexts, affirming the value of cultural diversity as a reflection of God's manifold wisdom.

In today's globalized world, where cultural homogenization often threatens to erase the richness of diverse traditions, the church has a critical role in preserving and nurturing these cultural expressions. This is not just about evangelism but about participating in God's creative work, respecting the uniqueness of every culture while also proclaiming the transformative power of the Gospel.

Finally, Dr. Nalwamba touches on the rapidly advancing technological landscape, raising important ethical and theological questions about our relationship with technology. As she rightly points out, technology is an expression of human creativity, a continuation of God's creative work. However, it also carries the potential for harm, particularly when it is used in ways that exploit or diminish the dignity of human beings or the integrity of creation.

This is an area where the church must engage critically, discerning where technological advancements align with God's purposes and where they diverge. As we grapple with issues like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and the digitalization of human relationships, the church must speak out but carefully advocate for the responsible use of technology that promotes human flourishing and honors the Creator.

In conclusion, Dr. Nalwamba's paper invites us to a deeper and more dynamic understanding of the doctrine of creation. As we face new physical, cultural, and technological landscapes, we are called to expand our theological reflections and engage with contemporary issues in ways that are faithful to the biblical witness. The doctrine of creation, far from being a relic of the past, is a living and dynamic aspect of Christian theology that continues to speak to the present and future.

As we navigate the challenges of our rapidly changing world, may we find inspiration and guidance in the rich theological tradition of creation. Let us remember that we are not just passive recipients of creation but active participants in God's ongoing work of creation, called to be stewards, co-creators, and witnesses to the hope and renewal that God promises for all of creation. Thank you.