



God's Providential Care in Creation: A Theological Reflection on Psalm 104:27-30 (Case Study at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the theological meaning of divine providence in Psalm 104:27-30 and its pedagogical embodiment through the competencies of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang. Grounded in classical and biblical theology, divine providence affirms God as Sustainer, Provider, and Renewer of creation. The research integrates historical-grammatical exegesis with a qualitative case study design to explore how this doctrine is interpreted and implemented within a public junior high school context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with one CRE teacher and two supporting teachers, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials. Findings indicate that effective teaching of Psalm 104:27-30 is closely linked to the four domains of teacher competence: professional, pedagogical, social, and personal. Professional competence ensures accurate biblical interpretation and theological clarity. Pedagogical competence enables contextualization of divine providence within students' daily experiences, fostering reflective learning. Social competence supports respectful engagement within a pluralistic school environment, while personal competence, expressed through authenticity and spiritual integrity, strengthens the credibility of instruction. The study reveals that when these competencies function integratively, students demonstrate increased spiritual awareness, gratitude, ecological responsibility, and relational humility. The research concludes that divine providence is not merely a doctrinal concept but a formative framework for holistic Christian education. In a public-school setting, the CRE teacher competent serves as both educator and witness, embodying theological truth through lived example. This study contributes to contextual Christian pedagogy by demonstrating how biblical theology and teacher competence converge to shape character formation and spiritual maturity.

Keywords: *Providential Care, Christian Religious Education, Creation*

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of divine providence stands at the heart of Christian theology, affirming that God not only created the world but continually sustains, governs, and renews it. Classical

theological reflection consistently underscores this conviction. John Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* describes providence as God's active and meticulous governance, ensuring that creation does not operate independently of divine will. Likewise, Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* articulates providence as God's wise ordering of all things toward their intended purposes. These theological traditions emphasize that providence is not passive oversight but dynamic, sustaining involvement. Biblically, Psalm 104 offers one of the most comprehensive poetic portrayals of this doctrine. Psalm 104:27-30 declares that all creatures look to God for sustenance and that when God sends forth His Spirit, creation is renewed. The psalmist presents a vision of cosmic dependence: life, breath, food, and continuity are gifts of divine generosity. Walter Brueggemann in *Theology of the Old Testament* interprets Psalm 104 as a testimony to God's faithful governance that sustains ecological and social order. Similarly, Christopher J. H. Wright in *The Mission of God* highlights that divine sovereignty in the Old Testament carries ethical implications, calling humanity to responsible participation in God's created order.

The doctrine of divine providence is not merely a theological abstraction; it becomes a foundational worldview shaping how students interpret life, learning, and responsibility. In the Indonesian educational context, CRE teachers (*Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen/PAK*) carry a strategic mandate. They are not only transmitters of biblical knowledge but also facilitators of spiritual formation and character development. According to Thomas H. Groome in *Sharing Faith*, religious education must engage learners in a dialectical process between the Christian story and lived experience. Teaching providence, therefore, requires pedagogical competence that integrates theology, contextual awareness, and reflective practice. Teacher competence is commonly framed in four domains: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence. For Guru PAK, these competencies intersect with theological responsibility. Pedagogical competence involves the ability to design learning experiences that meaningfully connect Psalm 104:27-30 with students' daily realities. Professional competence requires deep biblical-theological understanding, including exegetical skills and doctrinal clarity. Social competence calls teachers to communicate faith respectfully within pluralistic classrooms. Personal competence entails embodying trust in God's providence through integrity, humility, and perseverance. Thus, teaching divine providence demands not only cognitive explanation but also existential modeling.

SMP Negeri 1 Tualang represents a concrete setting where these competencies are tested and enacted. As a public junior high school with diverse backgrounds, it reflects the broader Indonesian context in which Christian faith must be articulated with both theological depth and social sensitivity. In such an environment, the doctrine of providence can shape how students perceive academic achievement, ecological responsibility, and interpersonal relationships. The CRE teacher's competence determines whether providence is presented as rigid determinism or as relational trust in a faithful God. Exploring how divine providence is interpreted and embodied in this setting requires contextual inquiry. Sharan B. Merriam in *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* argues that qualitative case studies are particularly effective for examining meaning-making processes within specific educational contexts. Through such inquiry, it becomes possible to understand not only what is taught about

Psalm 104:27-30 but also how teacher competence influences students' spiritual awareness and ethical orientation. This study therefore seeks to integrate theological reflection and educational analysis by examining: the theological meaning of Psalm 104:27–30 regarding divine providence; the manifestation of Guru PAK competencies in teaching this doctrine at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang; and the implications of such teaching for students' spiritual formation and ecological responsibility. By situating providence within both biblical theology and teacher competence, this research contributes to a contextual and holistic understanding of Christian education in public schools—where doctrine is not merely proclaimed but pedagogically embodied.

METHODS

A qualitative case study design was implemented to explore the theological interpretation of Psalm 104:27–30 and its pedagogical implementation within Christian Religious Education (CRE) at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand lived experiences, interpretive processes, and manifestations of teacher competence within a specific educational context. As articulated by Sharan B. Merriam in *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, qualitative case studies are particularly suitable for investigating how individuals construct meaning within bounded systems such as schools. The research design integrated two primary components: biblical-theological exegesis of Psalm 104:27-30 and empirical field inquiry. The exegetical component utilized a historical-grammatical method to analyze literary structure, key Hebrew terms (especially *ruach* in verse 30), theological themes, and canonical context. This approach follows the interpretive principles outlined by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, emphasizing attention to literary genre, historical background, and theological coherence. The exegetical findings provided the normative theological framework for analyzing classroom practice. The empirical component adopted a descriptive qualitative case study model. The case was bounded by location (SMP Negeri 1 Tualang), subject (Christian Religious Education), and theme (divine providence and teacher competence). This design allowed for in-depth exploration of how Guru PAK competencies, pedagogical, professional, social, and personal, were enacted in relation to the teaching of Psalm 104:27-30. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The primary informant was one Christian Religious Education teacher (Guru PAK) responsible for teaching biblical theology to junior high students. Two additional Christian teachers served as supporting informants to provide triangulated perspectives on instructional practice and professional conduct. Selection criteria included teaching experience, active involvement in CRE instruction, and willingness to participate in reflective interviews. Interviews explored the teacher's theological understanding of divine providence, instructional strategies, and perceptions of professional competence. Questions also addressed how the four domains of teacher competence were integrated in practice. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and verified by participants to ensure accuracy. Classroom observations focused on teaching methods, interaction patterns, integration of biblical texts, and expressions of pedagogical and social competence. Particular attention was given to how Psalm 104:27–30 was contextualized in relation to students' daily experiences, ecological awareness, and character formation. Field notes documented instructional strategies,

student engagement, and teacher modeling of faith-based attitudes. Data analysis followed thematic procedures as described by John W. Creswell in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. The process involved: data organization and transcription, initial coding to identify patterns related to theological interpretation and teacher competence, categorization into broader themes (e.g., dependence on God, ecological stewardship, pedagogical integration, spiritual modeling), interpretive synthesis integrating exegetical findings with empirical data. The exegetical analysis served as a theological lens through which field data were interpreted. Thus, the research maintained a dialogical relationship between biblical text and educational practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a dynamic integration between theological understanding, pedagogical practice, and teacher competence in the teaching of Psalm 104:27-30 at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang. The data, drawn from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, demonstrate that the doctrine of divine providence is not treated merely as a doctrinal abstraction but as a formative theological framework that shapes worldview, character, and educational ethos. At the center of this integration stands the competence of the Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK), whose pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies significantly influence how students perceive and internalize the message of God's sustaining care. The Christian Religious Education teacher consistently interpreted Psalm 104:27-30 as an affirmation of total dependence upon God. In interviews, the teacher emphasized that "all creatures look to God" signifies not only biological dependence but existential reliance. This interpretation aligns with the Old Testament theological vision described by Walter Brueggemann in *Theology of the Old Testament*, where divine governance is portrayed as generous, sustaining involvement rather than distant control. In classroom practice, the teacher translated this theological insight into reflective dialogue, asking students to identify daily experiences, such as receiving health, food, family support, and educational opportunities, as manifestations of God's providential care. Rather than presenting providence in deterministic terms, the teacher framed it relationally: God sustains life, yet humans are called to respond responsibly. This relational interpretation prevented theological fatalism and instead nurtured gratitude and accountability. Professional competence was evident in the teacher's exegetical engagement with the biblical text. Lesson plans demonstrated attention to literary structure, historical context, and theological themes. The teacher explained the Hebrew concept of *ruach* (Spirit) in verse 30 as a symbol of renewal, drawing connections between divine breath in creation (Genesis 2:7) and ongoing renewal in Psalm 104. Such theological depth reflects the interpretive principles outlined by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, where faithful exegesis requires sensitivity to genre and canonical coherence. Observations confirmed that students were guided to read the psalm not merely as poetry but as theological testimony. This professional competence strengthened students' biblical literacy and enabled them to articulate theological meaning in their own words.

Pedagogical competence appeared in the teacher's ability to contextualize doctrine within students' lived realities. Classroom sessions did not rely solely on lecture but incorporated group discussion, reflective journaling, and contextual case analysis. For example, when discussing divine provision, students were invited to consider environmental issues in their community and reflect on how human negligence might disrupt the harmony described in Psalm 104. This approach resonates with the pedagogical model proposed by Thomas H. Groome in *Sharing Faith*, which integrates Christian story with present experience through critical reflection. Students responded actively, expressing that they began to see ecological care not merely as civic duty but as spiritual responsibility. Field notes recorded increased engagement during participatory activities compared to lecture-only segments, suggesting that contextual pedagogy deepened internalization of theological themes. Social competence emerged as particularly significant within the pluralistic public-school environment. Although Christian Religious Education is delivered to Christian students, the broader institutional context includes diverse religious backgrounds. The teacher demonstrated sensitivity in articulating theological convictions without fostering exclusivism. Discussions about God's providence were framed in ways that encouraged respect for creation and social harmony, values that resonate across religious traditions. Supporting teachers observed that the Guru PAK maintained positive collegial relationships and collaborated in school-wide environmental programs, thereby embodying theological convictions through cooperative action. This aligns with the holistic vision of creation care emphasized by Christopher J. H. Wright in *The Mission of God*, where God's redemptive purpose includes restoration of all creation and calls for ethical participation. Thus, social competence ensured that doctrinal instruction contributed to institutional harmony rather than sectarian isolation.

Personal competence, the teacher's character and spiritual authenticity, proved to be the most influential dimension in students' perception of providence. Interview data revealed that students frequently referenced the teacher's attitude during times of limited resources or academic pressure. Observations indicated that the teacher consistently modeled gratitude, beginning lessons with brief prayers of thanksgiving even in challenging circumstances. Students reported that such modeling made the concept of divine providence tangible; it was seen not only in biblical text but in lived resilience. This finding echoes the insight of Parker J. Palmer in *The Courage to Teach*, who argues that effective teaching flows from the integrity of the teacher's inner life. In this case, personal faith authenticity reinforced doctrinal credibility. Students were more receptive to theological claims because they observed congruence between teaching and conduct. The impact on students manifested in three primary areas: spiritual awareness, ecological responsibility, and relational ethics. Spiritually, students articulated a heightened sense of dependence upon God. Interview excerpts showed that many began to interpret daily routines, studying, eating, interacting with peers, as sustained by divine grace. Ecologically, several students reported participating more actively in school cleanliness initiatives, connecting environmental stewardship with gratitude toward the Creator. Relationally, discussions about dependence fostered humility, reducing tendencies toward pride in academic achievement. Rather than attributing success solely to personal effort, students increasingly acknowledged communal and divine support systems. These

attitudinal shifts correspond with the formative aims of Christian education as described by George R. Knight in *Philosophy and Education*, where education in Christian perspective integrates intellectual growth with character formation.

The study confirms that Psalm 104:27-30 offers a robust framework for holistic education. The psalm's emphasis on provision and renewal challenges reductionist views of success grounded solely in human autonomy. In classroom dialogue, students wrestled with questions such as why hardship exists if God provides. The teacher addressed these inquiries by distinguishing between providence and prosperity theology, clarifying that divine care does not eliminate struggle but sustains life within it. Such nuanced theological engagement prevented simplistic interpretations and encouraged mature faith development. Observational data showed that students engaged thoughtfully in these discussions, indicating cognitive as well as affective growth. The integration of doctrine and competence generated a coherent educational culture. Document analysis revealed alignment between lesson objectives, assessment tasks, and competence indicators. Evaluations included reflective essays rather than solely factual quizzes, enabling assessment of worldview transformation. This alignment demonstrates that teacher competence extends beyond delivery to curricular coherence. The case thus illustrates how theological depth, pedagogical creativity, social sensitivity, and personal authenticity converge to shape effective Christian Religious Education in a public-school context. Challenges were also identified. Limited instructional time restricted deeper exegetical exploration. Additionally, some students initially perceived providence as fatalistic determinism, requiring careful clarification. These challenges underscore the importance of ongoing professional development for Guru PAK, particularly in theological literacy and contextual pedagogy. Continuous reflection and collaboration with other educators may strengthen the integration of doctrine and competence. The results demonstrate that at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang, the teaching of Psalm 104:27-30 becomes transformative when mediated through comprehensive teacher competence. Divine providence is interpreted theologically as dependence, provision, and renewal; pedagogically as contextual reflection; socially as harmonious participation; and personally as embodied trust. The discussion confirms that Christian Religious Education in pluralistic public schools can maintain theological integrity while contributing constructively to character formation and communal well-being. Through the convergence of biblical exegesis and professional competence, the doctrine of divine providence moves from textual affirmation to lived educational reality.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the teaching of divine providence in Psalm 104:27-30 possesses strong theological and pedagogical relevance within the context of Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang. The exegetical analysis confirms that the psalm articulates a comprehensive vision of God as Sustainer, Provider, and Renewer of creation, emphasizing humanity's total dependence upon divine generosity. This theological foundation provides a coherent framework for shaping students' worldview, ethical awareness, and spiritual maturity. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of this doctrinal teaching is closely linked to the four domains of Guru Pendidikan Agama

Kristen (PAK) competence. Professional competence ensures accurate and responsible biblical interpretation, preventing reductionist or fatalistic understandings of providence. Pedagogical competence enables the contextualization of theological concepts into students' lived experiences, transforming abstract doctrine into reflective learning. Social competence fosters respectful engagement within a pluralistic public-school environment, allowing theological convictions to contribute constructively to communal harmony. Personal competence, expressed through authenticity, gratitude, and integrity, serves as the most persuasive medium through which students internalize the message of God's sustaining care. The integration of these competencies demonstrates that divine providence is not merely taught cognitively but embodied relationally. Students at SMP Negeri 1 Tualang increasingly interpreted academic life, ecological responsibility, and interpersonal relationships through the lens of dependence upon God. Such outcomes align with the broader aims of Christian education as articulated by George R. Knight in *Philosophy and Education*, where intellectual development and character formation are inseparable dimensions of holistic education. This research affirms that biblical theology and teacher competence must operate integratively within Christian Religious Education. Psalm 104:27-30 offers not only doctrinal affirmation but also pedagogical direction: life is sustained by God, and education becomes a space for cultivating gratitude, humility, responsibility, and hope. In a pluralistic public-school setting, the competent Guru PAK serves as both educator and witness, ensuring that the doctrine of divine providence remains theologically faithful, contextually sensitive, and spiritually formative.

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