


Is God enthroned upon the floods? (Ps 29:10)

Religion and the climate change crisis in contemporary Ghana

**Authors:**Godfred Nsiah^{1,2} **Affiliations:**

¹Department for the Study of Religion, School of Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana

²Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Godfred Nsiah,
gnsiah@ug.edu.gh

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Climate change has been identified as one of the most imminent threats to the survival of the human species. In Ghana, the conversation about climate change has been accentuated by the perennial flooding of major urban centres, often leading to the loss of life and property. While successive governments have been blamed for their seemingly unsuccessful attempts in combating this menace, the problem appears to be compounding as the destruction of the environment through artisanal small-scale mining [*galamsey*] continues to contribute immensely to the climate change crisis, posing more threats to the Ghanaian people. Against this background, the article employs a narrative reading of Psalm 29, a psalm attributed to David, as a lens to examine the impact of flooding resulting from human activities on Ghanaian Christians. It further advocates for the appropriation of insights from the Psalm by Ghanaian Christian leaders in addressing the flooding crisis in the country. It concludes that, just as the ultimate well-being [*shalom*] of the people of Israel was the primary concern of the King, Christian leaders should exercise their God-given mandate to ensure the salvation of the people through sustainable environmental stewardship.

Contribution: The article contributes to the discourse on the effects and responses to climate change from a theological perspective using the framework of African biblical hermeneutics. It presents a biblical-theological dimension to the discourse on environmental care through a contextual reading of a Psalm.

Keywords: Biblical Hermeneutics; climate change; flooding; Ghana; Cathedral.

Introduction

The threat of climate change to the global environment is a daunting one, as the environment undergoes continuous change and degradation. Climatic conditions that are dangerous to human existence and a peaceful environment are becoming the order of the day. Countries across the globe experience different effects of climate change regularly. In his first papal encyclical letter, Pope Francis mainly addressed issues of the environment to represent environmental care as a moral and spiritual concern (Goodstein & Gillis 2015:44). In this letter, he posits that the environment is in crisis and emphasises that those who suffer most from the damage caused by economic systems that favour the rich and wealthy are the poor in the society (Goodstein & Gillis 2015:44). Mention can be made of the release of carbon and fossil fuel into the atmosphere, polluting the air and depleting the ozone layer leading to hot weather conditions and drought in previously rainy environments. Additionally, it is changing rainfall patterns and disrupting water cycles in different places. As a result, there is an increase in the frequency of storms, droughts and floods, among others, whose effects are too damaging for the infrastructure of most countries (Golo 2018:78). Food production is more affected, and post-harvest losses have increased, worsening the already struggling economic and social contexts (Filho 2011:v).

With these developments, Africa appears to be one of the most vulnerable and greatly affected continents despite its abundant mineral deposits and favourable environmental conditions. The devastating effect of this climatic condition on the continent is largely because Africans depend more on agriculture for their livelihood, from food, through crop production, fishing and animal production, to fuel from forestry, energy, etc. Inevitably, the poor and socially vulnerable people face negative consequences of this situation, even though Africa, as a continent, contributes minimally to the global climate change menace by emitting only a small amount of greenhouse gases (Golo 2018:77). This is affirmed by Von Czechowski (2020), in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) African report, that the continent contributes just 3.8% of the global greenhouse gas emissions.

In Ghana, especially, floods cause a range of effects on people during the rainy seasons (Amoako & Boamah 2015:11; Planet Angry 2025), yet successive governments have not succeeded in adequately addressing the havoc caused by floods. Golo (2020:4) asserts that the stark realities of climate change have been stimulated among faith communities and religious professionals. This is evidenced by the continuous reflection by faith-based organisations, religious groups and environmental experts on the consequences of the phenomenon. Churches in Ghana frequently respond to climate change and its looming dangers through clean-up campaigns and tree-planting activities. Hence, with the biblical understanding of humankind being created by God to dwell and improve the earth on behalf of God in the environmental stewardship discourse (Chirisa 2010:1), there is a need to emphasise human responsibility to the environment in religious contexts.

The religious traditions in Africa have sound ecological ontologies derived from their religious understanding of the natural world and the role of humankind in it, which are capable of averting the destruction of the natural world (Golo 2020:11). Golo and Yaro (2013) add to this argument by maintaining that religiously inspired concepts of environmental stewardship are necessary for resolving the environmental problem. Such assertions are relevant to the Ghanaian context, where the majority of the population affiliates with Christianity (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS] 2021, 58). Given these observations, the interpretation of Psalm 29 could offer some insights for Christian leaders in addressing the flooding crisis in Ghana, considering its effects on Ghanaians who appropriate this psalm in their different contexts.

The article, therefore, employs the communicative approach to African biblical hermeneutics (Ossom-Batsa 2007:94–98) as a framework, with a narrative reading of Psalm 29 as a lens to examine how flooding resulting from human activities negatively impacts Ghanaian Christians who read and appropriate the Psalm in their contexts. It advocates that Ghanaian Christian leaders could draw out lessons from the Psalm to address the flooding crisis in the country by contextualising the understanding of the Psalm in the contemporary Ghanaian context. The call to action in the text suggests Ghanaian Christian leaders could provide peace [*shalom*] to the people from the understanding and appropriation of the power of God over the forces of nature in the Psalm, which has been entrusted to humankind through environmental stewardship.

The article is organised as follows. After the introduction, it presents a methodological consideration that discusses African biblical hermeneutics. It is then followed by the proposal of three stages of reading: exegesis of reality, which focuses on climate change and flooding in Ghana; exegesis of the text (Ps 29), then an engagement of the findings from the text and the Ghanaian context and a conclusion of the article.

Methodological considerations: African Biblical hermeneutics

To advance the reception of the biblical message by Africans, scholars in Africa dialogue with elements of the African culture and tradition through language for biblical translation, traditional values, religious and knowledge systems, etc. (Mensah 2024:1). In response to this, African biblical hermeneutics, an interpretative approach that considers the cultural horizon of the reader and focuses on reading biblical passages using the African context as the subject matter of interpretation has been employed to study different biblical text in the African context. Mundele (2012:19) defines it as ‘the interaction between the message of the biblical revelation and African issues according to the mindset and in line with the social, religious, economic and cultural situations of life’. This is supported by Amevenku and Boaheng who maintain that it is an approach to biblical interpretation that employs contextual principles and methods to interpret scripture to adequately address the socio-cultural challenges of the Africans (Amevenku & Boaheng 2022:7). A similar view is expressed by Mensah when he observed that African biblical hermeneutics employs elements within the context, including traditional epistemologies, cultural elements and texts to make the Bible relevant to the readers (Mensah 2024:1).

However, Arthur asserts that texts from the perspective of the Western world are viewed as alphabetic and linear, thereby relegating those that are not linear and alphabetically based writing systems to the background (Arthur 2017:7). Mensah supports this view and argues that Western scholars narrow the definition of texts to conform to a very restricted view without appreciating other forms of text within the African context (Mensah 2023:36). However, there are symbols in Africa that are not linear but communicate important messages to the African people. This affirms the assertion by Mbuvi (2023:13) that studying the Bible:

[I]s an inheritor of a foundation built on racialised theories and presuppositions of its adherents and practitioners that refuses to self-examine critically, resulting in a perpetuation of these theories and presuppositions. (p. 13)

Therefore, the use of interpretive paradigms that engage the African traditional matrix with its cultural elements is very momentous.

What is significant to this interpretive approach is the fact that the Bible itself is cultural because it emerged through the cultural engagements of the Jewish and Graeco-Roman contexts. Hence, a proper understanding of the Bible’s message cannot be achieved only through reading the text, but through an engagement between the context of the text and the reader, which affirms the proposition of the ‘fusion of horizons by Gadamer’ (1989:305). By implication, the fusion of these horizons motivates readers to contribute effectively to the interpretive process and to bring to the fore issues and concepts within their cultural contexts that can illuminate

their reading of biblical texts. This article thus engages the horizon of the text (Ps 29) and the horizon of the reader (Ghanaian context) in dialogue for transformation.

African biblical hermeneutics fosters a transformative dialogue between the biblical and African contexts that positively impacts readers through the interpretation of the given text, making the perlocutionary effect of the text more effective. Consequently, scholars such as Gatti (2017:46–67; 2021:257–258), Manus (2003:10–32), Gatti and Ossom-Batsa (2020:201–223), Ukpong (2000:3), Loba-Mkole (2021:2), etc. employed this hermeneutical tool to study different biblical passages in the African context to address issues that confront people in the continent. Against this background, the article employs African biblical hermeneutics for the study and presents the work in three stages: exegesis of the reality, exegesis of the text and dialogical engagement between findings from the text and context.

The first stage, which is the exegesis of reality, focuses on reporting on flood situations in some urban cities in Ghana by the media, observation of flood scenes in these major cities, and holding discussions with some residents in the flooding communities in some major cities in Ghana. Narrative criticism is employed to analyse Psalm 29 to explore the perlocutionary effect of the text on the reader in stage two. It entails the examination of the compositional and structural elements to arrive at an informed understanding of the text. Stage three focuses on the engagement between findings from the exegetical analysis and exegesis of reality to understand the implications of reading Psalm 29 by Ghanaian Christians and the expected response to the call to action in the text by Christian leaders in the climate change discourse. It further engages the appropriation of the text by Ghanaian Christian leaders in their context to offer a prospective approach in addressing the flooding crisis.

Exegesis of reality: Climate change and flooding, the Ghanaian situation

Floods resulting from climate change are becoming a perennial problem in most of Africa, of which Ghana is no exception. Nkomo, Nyong and Kulindwa (2006:3) assert that over the past 30 years, the frequency and severity of floods and droughts have increased. Floods in recent times have caused a lot of havoc in the country, particularly in the urban and capital cities of Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi and some parts of the Northern region (Douglas et al. 2008:190; Takyi et al. 2025). Heavy downpours during the rainy season often leave several suburbs of Accra and other towns flooded. Communities, like Kaneshie, Weija, Kasoa, Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Ofankor, etc., are the heavily affected areas (GhanaWeb 2025; Planet Angry 2025).

In addition, the spillage of the Weija dam contributes to the perennial flood situation in Accra, while the Akosombo and Bagre dams' spillage also affects their communities, respectively.

These spillages result in serious environmental challenges, creating economic and humanitarian problems. People are displaced from their homes; properties like cars and houses, as well as businesses and people's sources of livelihood, are greatly destroyed by the floods in these communities. Agricultural produce, among others, is all destroyed by the floods. The floods also block several roads in the cities, making it difficult for vehicular and human traffic to flow. People sometimes get stuck on the road for hours, vehicles break down as the running water accumulates in the engines of cars when they get stuck on the road because of the flood (GhanaWeb 2025; Planet Angry 2025), and human lives are lost (OCHA 2007). This situation has negative implications for the economic and social development of the country.

Although floods are a natural phenomenon, some of the damage and losses they cause appear to be the consequences of human actions. It can be observed that modernisation, development and urbanisation contribute to the flooding phenomenon. Undoubtedly, increased migration into the cities impacts urban land surfaces and drainage. These human activities restrict the movement of floodwaters by covering large parts of the ground with roofs, roads and pavements that obstruct natural water outlets. People also construct drains that aid the rapid movement of water to rivers more than they did under natural conditions. This is evident in the capital cities of Ghana as attempts are made to meet the developmental needs of the country through different forms of construction (Abeka et al 2019:2). During heavy downpours, Ghanaians observe the enormous movement of large volumes of water running from the roofs of buildings and paved surfaces in urban areas.

Moreover, the volume of water that runs through the series of culverts and concrete channels created to guide the flow of water cannot adjust to the changes in the frequency of heavy rains recently, as natural streams do. In addition, the culverts are often obstructed by silt and urban debris as some people deliberately throw refuse into the running water, particularly in areas where houses are built near these channels (Amoako & Boamah 2015:114). This affirms the observation by Tarhule that 'flood risks arise from a variety of sources, including extreme rain events and very weak or complete lack of mitigation programmes' (Tarhule 2005:358). Consequently, just moderate rainstorms now produce high volumes of water flowing into rivers because of surface runoff from hard surfaces and drains.

It is worth mentioning that large-scale urbanisation, physical development, population increase in the cities resulting from rural-urban migration and poor economic conditions have contributed to the increased frequency of floods. It is not uncommon to see squatters living in flood-prone areas and people building in waterways, thereby blocking the free flow of surface water when it rains. This is a result of the high cost and difficulty of acquiring land in these urban centres. Unfortunately, government agencies responsible for ensuring that buildings are sited in the right places grant permits for construction work in such unapproved areas. This situation affirms the position of Douglas et al. that flooding in urban

cities in Ghana is not only caused by heavy rainfall and extreme climatic conditions (Douglas et al. 2008:189).

In major cities like Accra, Takoradi, Kumasi, etc., inadequate drainage facilities, as well as poor maintenance of the drainage system, are major contributors to the perennial flooding (Planet Angry 2025). In Accra, for instance, areas like Oponglo, Kwame Nkrumah Circle, West Hills Mall on the Kasoa to Winneba Road, etc., as well as Ayijah, Sofoline and Abuakwa in Kumasi mostly get flooded for such reasons (Takyi et al. 2025). Such occurrences have heightened the flooding situation as the climatic conditions keep changing over time and human activities continue to worsen it with no practical efforts to address this crisis (Abeka et al 2019:7–8).

Exegesis of text: Analysis of Psalm 29

From a literary perspective, Psalm 29 falls under the literary genre of a hymn with three parts conforming to the usual structure of the genre. This hymn is used for liturgy by the Jews to confront human finitude with divine majesty (Mays 1984:60). It has been described by many as one of the most evocative Psalms and one that has been studied extensively in the Psalter (Barbiero 2016:378). Historians from the Ancient Near East have contested to gather echoes of Ugaritic and Mesopotamian mythology from the psalm (Barbiero 2016:378). As a hymn, the Psalm has three parts: The introduction, the main part, and the conclusion. The Psalm 29:1-11, as presented below, helps to analyse the various components of the hymn:

- 1 מזמור לדוד הבו ליהוה בני אלים ליהוה כבוד ועז:
- 2 הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו השתחוו ליהוה בהדרת־קדש:
- 3 קול יהוה על־המים אלהי־הכבוד הרעים יהוה על־מים רבים:
- 4 קול־יהוה בכח קול יהוה בהדר:
- 5 קול יהוה שבר ארוזים וישבר יהוה את־ארוזי הלבנון:
- 6 וירקידם כמרעגל לבנון ושרין כמו בך־ראמים:
- 7 קול־יהוה חצב להבות אש:
- 8 קול יהוה יחיל מדבר יחיל יהוה מדבר קדש:
- 9 קול יהוה יחולל אילות ויחשף יערות ובהיכלו כלו אמר כבוד:
- 10 יהוה למבול ישב וישב יהוה מלך לעולם:
- 11 יהוה עז לעמו יתן יהוה ירך את־עמו בשלום:

Structure of Psalm 29

Commentators of the Psalm structure it differently because of the focus of their studies. Barbiero identified two structures for the Psalm, with the first following a traditional arrangement consistent with the genre of a hymn: an introduction (vv. 1–2), a body or main part (vv. 3–9) and a conclusion (vv. 10–11). A second one that stands in contention with the first is a dynamic structure that begins with praise of God the creator from heaven (vv. 1–4), followed by the victory of God demonstrated over the storm (vv. 5–9). Within this section, v. 9 takes up vv. 5–6a and v.8 takes up vv. 6b–7, forming a chiasmatic structure that joins at vv. 10–11 (Barbiero 2016:390).

Mays presents a structure similar to the first one identified by Barbiero. It starts with a summons for doxology to a divine being (vv. 1–2). The main part of the hymn (vv. 3–9) is a doxology, which depicts a theophany described by employing the theme of *qol* YHWH [voice of the Lord] in a sevenfold repetition, a veritable litany on ‘the voice of the Lord’. It concludes with the reign of God’s glory (vv. 10–11) that gives strength and peace to people (Mays 1984:60).

A careful study of Psalm 29 shows that it is structured into four strophes, characterised by a chiasmatic structure of which the first and last strophes are composed of two rhythmic verses (vv. 1–2 and vv. 10–11). The second and third strophes have four and three verses, respectively (vv. 3–6 and vv. 7–9), and are linked by the phrase ‘glory of the Lord’. The chiasmatic structure is indicated diagrammatically in Table 1.

Strophe 1 (vv. 1–2) and strophe 4 (vv. 10–11) correspond to each other by the presence of יהוה in each verse. The Tetragrammaton appears four times in each strophe. And Barbiero observes that in Hebrew gematria, the number four signifies universality and indicates ‘the four points of the compass: north, south, east and west’ (Barbiero 2016:382). This, I propose, affirms the universal or absolute power of YHWH over the forces of nature.

In the middle of the Psalm, which contains strophes 2 and 3, the Psalmist employs numbers in a very symbolic manner to communicate the reign of YHWH over creation. In the middle strophes, the expression יהוה קול [voice of YHWH] occurs seven times: Four in strophe 2 and three in strophe 3. The number seven, according to Barbiero, symbolically represents the days God used in creation, indicating that קול יהוה means the creative word of YHWH in Genesis chapter 1 through which all the forces of nature came into existence, and by this same voice, God controls nature to ensure peace in the world. In addition, the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, appears on three separate occasions from the יהוה קול, making it a total of 10 appearances in these two strophes. The number 10 is reminiscent of the 10 words of the law that are contained in the decalogue. When this is added to the eight occurrences in strophes 1 and 4, there is a total of 18 occurrences of יהוה in Psalm 29. Symbolically, it can be associated with the pious Jews’ daily prayers presented in eighteen benedictions called *shemoné esré* (Barbiero 2016:383).

Now, with the understanding from Isaiah 6 that the God who dwells in the temple of Jerusalem, whom the Jews pray

TABLE 1: Chiasmatic structure of Psalm 29.

| Strophe | Sub-theme | Style |
|------------------------|---|-------|
| Str. I (vv. 1–2) | Ascribe to YHWH Strength [הבו/עז] | A |
| Str. II (vv. 3–6) | The Glory of the Lord upon the watered land [כבוד/מים] | B |
| Str. III (vv. 7–9) | The Glory of the Lord in the desert [מדבר/כבוד] | B' |
| Str. IV (vv. 10–11) | YHWH gives humankind the strength [עז/יתן] | A' |

to, is the same God who dwells in heaven, there is a suggestion of an oriental conceptual continuation between the heavenly and earthly temples. Implying that when YHWH is worshipped in the earthly temple, there is a continuation of the worship in the heavens; thus, the power of God manifested in worship in the heavens is translated into the earthly through the same act of worship.

A narrative reading of Psalm 29

The poetic structure of Psalm 29 implies that the adoration of YHWH in the temple not only leads to YHWH's acknowledgement of his power over the forces of nature. It necessarily concludes with the fact that YHWH gives power or strength to humankind. YHWH's absolute and everlasting rule is committed to the complete salvation and blessedness of his people [*shalom*]. It is by harnessing that power 'responsibly' that humankind attains peace, that is, the equilibrium in nature.

Strophe I: Ascribe to YHWH strength (vv. 1–2)

Psalm 29 opens with an imperative call to the heavenly beings to 'Ascribe glory and strength' to YHWH (Ps 29:1) to acknowledge YHWH's glory and power. The repetition of the imperative verb 'ascribe' [הִכְבִּיר] three times emphasises the structured nature of this exhortation, which resonates with similar calls found in Psalm 96:7–8 reinforcing YHWH's dominion over creation (Labuschagne 2006:1). This introduction, as analysed in the logotechnical study by Labuschagne, serves as the framework for the psalm, enclosing the core verses that describe divine power (Labuschagne 2006:1).

Theologically, this call to ascribe strength to YHWH aligns with liturgical traditions that highlight divine kingship (Jaffe 2023:47). However, the invocation also raises contemporary concerns, particularly where extreme weather events are often interpreted as manifestations of divine will. The ambiguity inherent in biblical texts allows for multiple readings, yet their placement within structured worship settings mostly constrains interpretation, lending weight to specific theological viewpoints (Jaffe 2023:47–48).

Consequently, in contexts where floods and droughts increasingly affect livelihoods, the Psalmist elicits reflection on the intersection of divine sovereignty and environmental responsibility. It raises the question as to whether acknowledging YHWH's power implies passive submission to climate disruptions or calls for a deeper engagement with environmental stewardship. It proposes that by acknowledging YHWH's power over the forces of nature, readers of the psalm should appreciate their responsibility in environmental stewardship through their relationship with and the worship of God.

Strophe II: The glory of the lord upon the watered land (vv. 3–6)

In this strophe, the Psalmist dramatically shifts the imagery as he introduces the phrase 'The voice of YHWH' [*qol YHWH*],

which appears seven times, symbolising the seven days of creation and reinforcing divine omnipotence over the elements (Labuschagne 2006:3). The depiction of YHWH's voice 'over the waters' (v. 3) has been subject to various interpretations. Rashi views it as an allusion to the giving of the Torah, whereas Ibn Ezra sees it as a literal description of a powerful storm (Jaffe 2023:48). However, more recent analyses, such as Pardee's structural study, suggest that the psalm employs parallelism and repetition to highlight the awe-inspiring nature of divine speech (Pardee 2005:6).

This passage could speak to the volatility of perennial flooding and the devastation wrought by rains in the Ghanaian climate context. The psalm's description of divine power breaking cedars and shaking mountains (vv. 5–6) aligns with Van der Westhuizen's argument that Psalm 29 portrays YHWH not merely as a storm deity but as a force that reshapes the natural world (Van der Westhuizen 1993:115). This reading challenges conventional interpretations that frame climate disasters as punitive acts of God. Instead, it invites theological reflection on how divine sovereignty interacts with human responsibility in mitigating environmental destruction.

The reference to Lebanon and Sirion (Mount Hermon) skipping like a calf (v. 6) evokes the trembling of the earth under divine command. It captures a moment where divine energy shakes the natural world into motion. The description of mountains leaping like living creatures turns the landscape into a participant in the drama of God's voice. In this verse, the poet's language pushes beyond description into performance: Lebanon and Sirion respond to divine command as though caught up in a cosmic liturgy (Vasheghanifarrahani 2024:7). The use of motion conveys both joy and submission, a reminder that YHWH's power is not simply destructive but also life giving (Grosser 2024:12–14). Within the psalm's patterned sequence of seven references to 'the voice of the LORD', this verse serves as a hinge between devastation and worship, binding natural turbulence to theological meaning. As Amzallag (2021:142–143) observes, the poet draws on older Near Eastern storm traditions, reworking them so that the imagery of trembling mountains no longer exalts nature's spirits but proclaims the sovereignty of Israel's God. The result is not a borrowed myth but a reimagined hymn in which familiar symbols are transformed into declarations of divine testimony. The verse thus becomes a theological confrontation in poetic form, dramatising not harmony but submission. Read critically, Psalm 29:6 resists domestication: it portrays divine power as overwhelming, creative and destabilising, leaving the worshipper in awe rather than comfort. Therefore, if YHWH's voice commands both creation and destruction, then any theological discourse on climate change should consider both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Strophe III: The glory of the lord in the desert (vv. 7–9)

The Psalmist indicates the storm becomes severe in the Psalm moving into the wilderness, with YHWH's voice manifesting

in fire and lightning (v. 7). This theophanic imagery recalls the occurrence at Sinai (Ex 19) but also aligns with Vasheghanifarahani's analysis of the Peshitta's translation, which highlights the poetic force of these verses in conveying divine presence (Vasheghanifarahani 2024:4).

The assertion that '[t]he voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh' (v. 8) suggests that divine authority extends even to arid, lifeless regions. This challenges interpretations that see YHWH's presence only in moments of abundance. As Van der Westhuizen notes, 'Psalm 29 portrays a God whose power is not confined to one domain but pervades both fertile and barren landscapes' (Van der Westhuizen 1993:118).

Strophe IV: YHWH gives humankind the strength (vv. 10–11)

Psalm 29 culminates in a powerful declaration: 'The Lord sat enthroned at the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever' (v. 10). The Hebrew term [ולִמְבַיֵּל] has traditionally been associated with Noah's deluge, yet its placement in this storm psalm suggests a broader assertion of divine control over chaos (Labuschagne 2006:4). Pardee argues that this verse serves as a climax, reinforcing YHWH's kingship as both timeless and unchallenged (Pardee 2005:9).

This verse has particular relevance in Ghana, where floods frequently displace communities and devastate farmland. The theological question this raises is whether divine enthronement absolves humanity of responsibility or calls for proactive engagement with climate justice. Jaffe notes that Psalm 29 has been adapted for different liturgical purposes – sometimes emphasising divine kingship, other times highlighting divine judgement (Jaffe 2023:50). Similarly, in the Ghanaian Christian context, interpretations of divine sovereignty over natural disasters can provide insights into responses to environmental challenges by Christian leaders.

The Psalmist concludes the hymn with a blessing: 'May the Lord give strength to His people; may the Lord bless His people with peace' (v. 11). He closes it with a paradox that resists sentimental resolution: the same divine force that splinters cedars and unsettles mountains now becomes the source of strength and peace for Israel, suggesting that divine power is not tamed but redirected towards covenantal fidelity (Amzallag 2021:156–158). Rather than a gentle benediction, the verse reads as a theological provocation with an insistence that *shalom* is born out of the storm itself, not apart from it (Grosser 2024:18). In this way, the Psalmist refuses to divide chaos from blessing, presenting a God whose peace is forged through power, not in its absence (Vasheghanifarahani 2024:9). In the face of climate threats, religious leaders in Ghana can draw upon this verse to advocate for sustainable environmental practices, disaster preparedness and policies that reflect both divine justice and human stewardship.

Response to flooding: A call for conscientious efforts

This Psalm of David is a powerful expression of reverence and wonder for God's majesty and dominion over the natural world. The Psalmist describes God's mighty voice, which he likened to thunder, and the effects that it has on the natural order. This mighty voice of God, which the Psalmist indicates, calls on the sons of God to worship and acknowledge the sovereignty of YHWH throughout nature. It calls on Ghanaian Christians to demonstrate their acknowledgement of him by ascribing praise and worship to God. Implicitly, the daily worship ascribed to God on earth should foster the understanding of the Christian of God's authority over nature and the created order. The understanding of the interpretation of the Psalm, therefore, has the following implications for the Ghanaian context.

Acknowledgement of God's power over nature

The need to recognise God's power over nature is an important dimension of religion and worship. This makes it possible to engage the Ghanaian Christian in dialogue through Psalm 29. By acknowledging the Lord's glory because of his self-revelation, they thus recognise his position as God, his revealed nature and his holy character. Worship entails reverence for the nature and the attributes of God as the creator, which underscores human responsibility in the act of true worship. This could be reflected in the attitude of Christians towards God and the environment. Considering the current flooding crisis in Ghana, this passage takes on renewed significance. It suggests that discussions on climate change from a theological perspective should not only focus on divine power over creation but also explore human responsibility in sustaining the land. It should emphasise the divine power of God available to man to be good stewards of the environment. The fact that YHWH's voice reaches the wilderness suggests that environmental degradation resulting in flooding is not beyond redemption but demands both reverence for God and human action.

Appreciate the sense of delegated power and responsibility

Psalm 29 shows that while God rules over the cosmos, He has entrusted humankind with the authority to govern the earth. This delegated authority to humankind through leadership, governance and institutions requires responsibility to bring about peaceful coexistence between human beings and nature. To some Ghanaians, there appears to be a lack of political will by successive governments to enforce laws that protect the environment, as the problem keeps recurring every year in the Fourth Republic. Institutions and agencies responsible for effectively supervising the enforcement of laws on environmental protection have not been successful in achieving the desired result. Also, the negative attitude of the citizenry to creation care and in adhering to environmental protection laws makes it difficult for them to be enforced, thereby contributing to this perennial problem.

This notwithstanding, in the Ghanaian context, where the majority of the population professes the Christian faith, they should acknowledge that they have a divine mandate from YHWH to be good stewards of the environment. Christian leaders should therefore appreciate the strength of God entrusted to them and appropriate it to manage the environment for *shalom* to prevail in the land. This implies that those serving in government and in agencies responsible for managing the environment could exercise their God-given mandate to ensure environmental sustainability. Practices such as siting buildings in waterways, filling of waterlogged areas for construction, etc., should be resisted at least by Christian leaders to help address the crisis.

Therefore, with the increasing frequency of floods in the cities, Christian leaders within the government, local authorities and other state institutions and agencies responsible for ensuring compliance with environmental protection laws should acknowledge their service as a form of worship to God. They should take proactive and drastic measures to avoid the movement of floodwaters into certain areas of towns and cities, often giving priority to the main business and administrative centres. By this act, the negative impact of such floods on properties and livelihoods will be mitigated, as they have adverse implications on the economic and developmental well-being of the country.

Realign the relationship between religion and creation care

Psalm 29 advocates for Ghanaian Christian leaders to reassess their relationship with YHWH and let it resonate with their care for the environment. The African culture involves the environment, as the ancestors preserved the environment for future generations. They lived and studied the environment as they communed with nature. The worship of God, thus, should include establishing a good relationship with the environment. Observing the beauty in nature and admiring God's creation stimulates an appreciation for the revelation of God in the created order through worship. Hence, the call by the Psalmist on the sons of God to worship communicates to Ghanaian Christians to align the relationship that exists between them and God with creation, which includes the environment, to respond to the floods in their communities. Christians, as human beings, are expected to coexist in harmony with nature, including water bodies. For if we love nature, nature will love us in return. Our salvation [*shalom*] depends also on living in harmony with nature, for our life is incomplete without nature.

Conclusion

The psalm describes YHWH's dominion over forces of nature such as storms, floods and wilderness and compels believers to respond to the worship of YHWH with wisdom and responsibility. As Jaffe (2023:51) highlights, the psalm's adaptability in different liturgical contexts underscores its capacity to address contemporary concerns. Read through the lens of Ghana's climate crisis, Psalm 29 presents a dynamic interplay between divine sovereignty and human

responsibility in the quest for environmental sustainability. The Psalmist calls on Ghanaian Christians to recognise the need for attitudinal and lifestyle change in their production and consumption to address the human causes of the environmental crisis and not to aggravate them. Similarly, Christian leaders should appropriate insights from the psalm in responding to the flooding crisis. As noted by Goodstein and Gillis, 'if present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for us all' (Goodstein & Gillis 2015:20). The complete peace [*shalom*] of God has four dimensions: Peace with God, self, neighbours and the environment. Peace with the environment implies using the power God has given us to care for the environment and the created order. It calls for responsible stewardship. By ensuring prudent and sustainable use of our resources, we can save the climate from destruction, and human society as a whole will also have good health and longevity.

To conclude, the article maintains that by integrating insights from the structural and exegetical analyses of the psalm in the discourse of climate change, focusing on flooding, it demonstrates that Psalm 29 is not merely a hymn of divine power; rather, it is a prospective theological framework that can inform faith-based responses to climate change. Through the understanding of the divine power of YHWH entrusted to humankind, Christian leaders could exercise their divine mandate of environmental stewardship by ensuring effective enforcement of environmental laws. They could appropriate the text advocating for a positive attitude by Ghanaian Christians towards environmental laws. The interpretation of the psalm in a contemporary context thus promotes ecological justice and resilience.

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CRedit authorship contribution

Godfred Nsiah: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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