




# From Personal Holiness to Ecological Holiness: A Wesleyan-Theological Response to Creation's Cry in Contemporary Ghana

Isaac Boaheng<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer in Christian Theology and Ethics, Christian Service University, Ghana; Research Fellow, University of the Free State, South Africa.

## ABSTRACT

Ghana, like many other African countries, is blessed with abundant natural resources that make the country potentially wealthy. However, unethical practices in harnessing these resources have resulted in many environmental challenges that cost the nation a lot of resources to manage, and eventually make the country poorer. Of particular interest to this paper is the illegal mining of gold, which destroys water bodies and vegetation in many parts of Ghana. This issue has attracted public attention, and various meetings, seminars, symposia, and publications have been dedicated to it. Yet, the problem still persists, and so the search for a solution continues. To contribute to the ongoing (theological) discussions, this paper explored how a contextual application of relevant aspects of John Wesley's theology of holiness might serve as a panacea to Ghana's mining-related ecological problems. The author used both empirical and literature-based research approaches for the study. The primary data for the research were gathered by administering questionnaires to participants from selected communities affected by illegal mining activities and analyzed in the light of secondary data from such sources as books, journal articles, and dissertations. The main argument of the paper is that Christian holiness and spirituality should manifest not only in Christians' relationships with God and other human beings but also in their relationship with the environment. The paper found that Ghana's ecological problems are caused by diverse factors and so needs a holistic approach to address them. The paper contributes to the ongoing public discourse about ecological sustainability in Ghana.

## Correspondence

Isaac Boaheng  
Email:  
[revisaacboaheng@gmail.com](mailto:revisaacboaheng@gmail.com)

## Publication History

Received: 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2024  
Accepted: 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2024  
Published online:  
18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

**Keywords:** *Creation, Ghana, Personal Holiness, Illegal Mining, Wesleyan Theology*

## INTRODUCTION

The ecological crisis is a global concern. However, it is more serious in developing countries, including Ghana. Ghana's ecological challenges include air and water pollution, degradation of green areas, improper waste management, and others. Any careful observer would realize that the unethical means of harnessing natural resources have affected the Ghanaian environment in many adverse ways. Of the

many factors that destroy Ghana's environment, this paper focuses on illegal mining (*galamsey*)<sup>1</sup>. As a result of illegal mining activities, the natural resources with which God blessed Ghana have now become a "curse" for the nation. The issue has attracted public attention and many attempts have been made to avert the situation; yet, to no avail. As a predominantly Christian society, Ghanaians look up to the church to lead the campaign to ensure that the beauty and majesty of God's creation are sustained.

A preliminary survey of existing literature reveals that though a lot has been written about the theology of ecology for the Ghanaian context, none of the existing literature has considered the issue from the Wesleyan perspective. This study was, therefore, conducted to fill this research lacuna by exploring how a contextual application of Wesley's concept of holiness might yield a holistic ethical renewal required to deal with Ghana's ecological crisis, especially mining-related ecological problems. The choice of Wesley is justified because his theology of holiness offers a distinctive and comprehensive ethical framework that integrates spiritual renewal with social and environmental responsibility. The study argues for a three-dimensional view of Christian holiness and spirituality; namely Theocentrism, Anthropocentrism, and Biocentrism.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the research was to formulate a theology for ecological care based on biblical teachings about ecology, Wesley's theology of holiness, and the Ghanaian ecological situation. The biblical theology of creation was obtained by analyzing selected biblical texts; the Wesleyan theology of holiness was discussed in the context of Wesleyan soteriology. Unlike the first two components, which involve the collection of qualitative data from commentaries, books, articles, and theses/dissertations, among others, data on the effect of illegal mining activities in Ghana was collected using an empirical research approach. Two key research instruments, namely, participant observation and questionnaires, were used to collect data. Two hundred people were chosen from Dunkwa-on-Offin, Tarkwa, Wassa Akropong, Wassa Asikuma, Assamang, and Yawkrom in the Western and Ashanti Regions of Ghana to participate in the questionnaires. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program and interpreted and discussed to arrive at relevant conclusions.

In conducting empirical research, ethical considerations were paramount to ensure the integrity of the study and the well-being of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants to ensure that they understood the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and how their data would be used. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process, with all personal identifiers removed from data analysis and reporting. More so, all sources used were duly acknowledged.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Study Demographics**

This paper focuses on the environmental devastation caused by illegal mining activities. As indicated earlier, two hundred questionnaires were administered and the results were tallied and then represented statistically as follows.

---

<sup>1</sup> There is a debate as to whether illegal mining is the same as *galamsey*. Without going into the issues in that debate, the reader should understand that in this work the term *galamsey* in reference to illegal small-scale gold mining in Ghana.

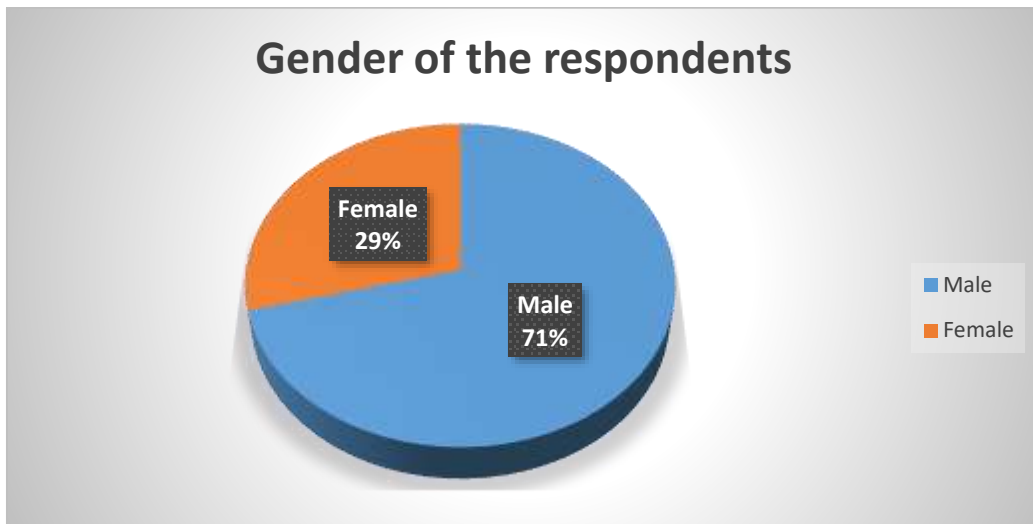


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)

The pie chart above reveals that 71% of the respondents were male, while 29% were female. This disparity is attributed to the fact that illegal mining activities are predominantly carried out by males. Women, on the other hand, are typically present at the sites as food vendors and are less involved in the actual mining operations. Consequently, surveys conducted in communities engaged in these activities are more likely to have a higher male representation among respondents.

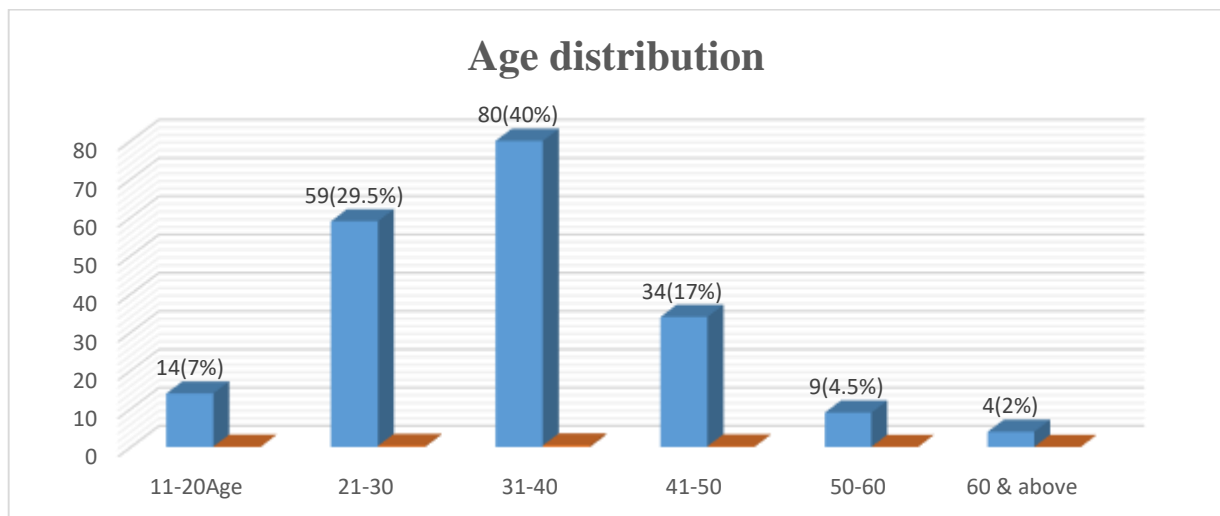


Figure 2: Age Distribution  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)

The graph above indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the youth demographic. This is primarily because mining activities are typically carried out by younger individuals. Contributing factors include the high unemployment rate among the youth and the labor-intensive nature of mining. In contrast, older individuals often act as financiers, playing a supportive role rather than participating in the daily operations at the mining sites.

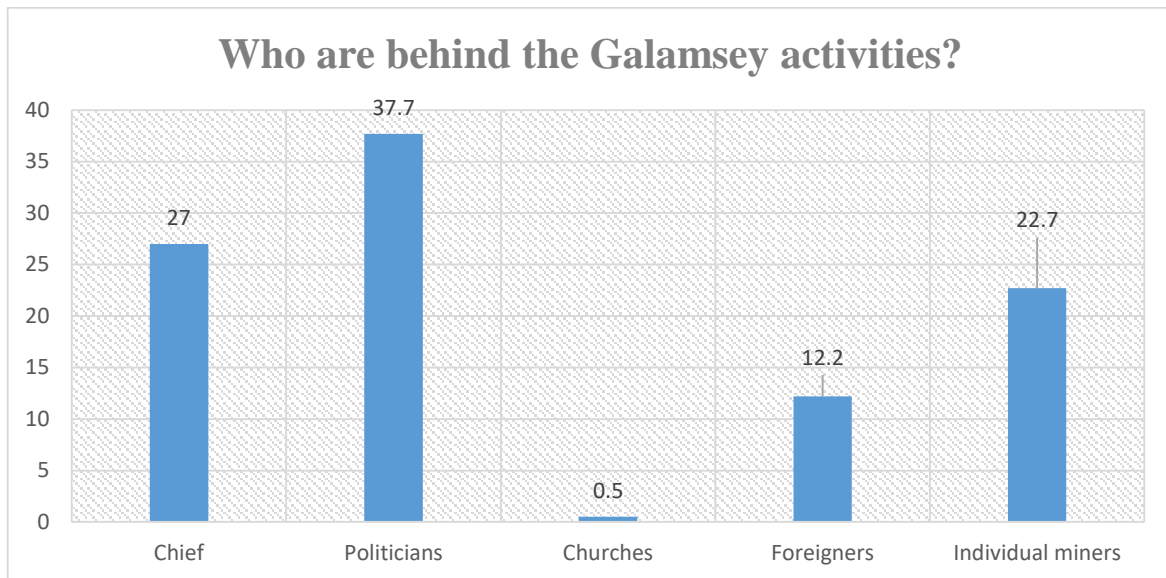


Figure 3: Personalities Behind Illegal Mining Activities  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)

The study sought to find out the personalities behind illegal mining activities in Ghana. The respondents identified politicians as the most influential people in the illegal mining business. After politicians (37.70%), traditional rulers (27.00%) were identified as the key people behind these activities. Individuals (22.70%) and foreigners (12.20%) also had significant percentages in relation to their contribution to the illegal mining business. It is worrying that political and traditional leaders, to whom God has entrusted the well-being of the people, are reportedly the ones behind the environmental destruction caused by illegal mining activities in Ghana. After ravaging the land, these leaders relocate to urban areas to enjoy the benefits, while the residents of the villages and towns affected by mining are left in dire poverty. They suffer the long-term health and socio-economic repercussions of the mining operations, all while those responsible for the destruction reap the rewards.

**Factors that Perpetuate Illegal Mining Activities in Ghana**

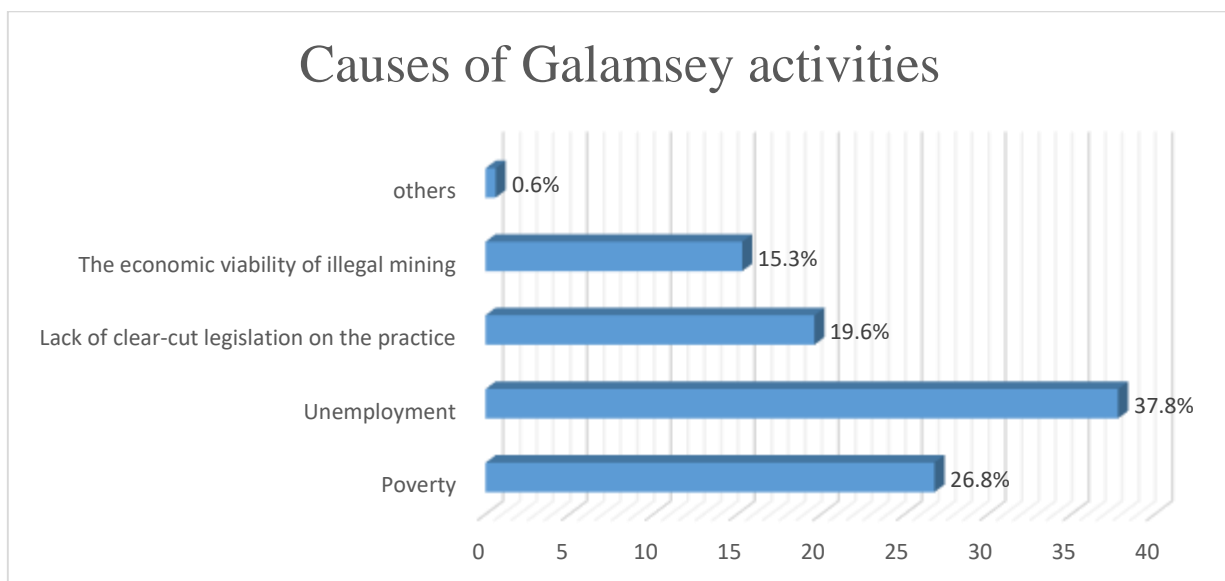


Figure 4: Factors that Perpetuate Illegal Mining  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)

When asked whether *galamsey* (illegal mining activities) activities are increasing or decreasing, 79% of the respondent indicated that it is increasing in their area, while 21% considered it

as decreasing. Given that *galamsey* is illegal, dangerous, and hostile to Ghana's development, as well as the fact that the government keeps making efforts to combat it, one wonders why this practice still prevails in the country and even appears to increase. The results from the survey show that the main factors that perpetuate illegal mining activities in Ghana include unemployment (37.80%), poverty (26.80%), lack of clear-cut legislature on the practice (19.60%), and economic viability of the mining industry (15.30%). Some of these factors are further discussed below.

#### **a. High Rate of Unemployment**

Various research initiatives have shown a correlation between Ghana's high unemployment rate and the increasing levels of illegal mining activities. For example, Emmanuel Attua, Stephen Annan and Frank Nyame have noted that the high unemployment rate in the formal sector is a major reason why people undertake illegal mining activity.<sup>2</sup> Augustine Boateng has also observed that *galamsey* is more common in places with limited employment options.<sup>3</sup> Usually, people exploit the natural resources available to them in order to survive. Those in the coastal areas of Ghana are mainly fishers, who depend on fishing activities to survive. Similarly, those in the forested areas depend on the forest for such resources as food, fuel, medicine, and meat. In the same way, those living in areas rich in minerals use all sorts of means to harness these minerals.

Initially, illegal mining was predominantly carried out by uneducated youth. However, in recent years, the trend has shifted to include unemployed educated youth as well. Each year, numerous graduates from tertiary institutions, armed with various degrees, face challenges in securing employment or starting their own businesses. As a result, many are compelled to turn to illegal mining as an alternative means of livelihood.

#### **b. Poverty**

Poverty remains a significant driver of illegal mining activities. Like many developing African countries, Ghana faces a high poverty rate. In 2024, the country's daily minimum wage stands at GHS 18.15, equivalent to less than \$1.50. This low wage leaves even those with steady jobs struggling to meet their basic needs. For many, illegal mining becomes a viable means to alleviate poverty for themselves, their families, and their communities. In some cases, *galamsey* has provided the financial resources needed to address pressing economic challenges and invest in essential facilities and equipment that improve living conditions. As a result, illegal mining is often the only accessible option for survival in impoverished and remote rural areas where poverty levels are particularly severe.

#### **c. Economic Viability**

Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that 15.30% of respondents identified the economic viability of illegal mining as a key reason for its persistence. Participants in *galamsey* report daily earnings that surpass the annual salary of the average Ghanaian worker. In a context of rising living costs and inflation, the illegal mining enterprise is seen as both lucrative and economically sustainable. This perception fuels a get-rich-quick mentality among many youths in mining areas.

As some individuals amass wealth through these activities, they often exhibit the outward signs of prosperity, such as indulgence in luxury, pride, religious complacency, and selfishness. Unfortunately, this newfound wealth is sometimes accompanied by a decline in discipline among the youth, manifesting as arrogance, alcoholism, drug abuse, and irresponsible behavior. Additionally, many young people drop out of school to join the mining business, prioritizing immediate financial gain over long-term educational opportunities.

#### **d. Ineffective Implementation of Laws**

---

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Morgan Attua, Stephen Twumasi Annan, and Frank Nyame, "Water Quality Analysis of Rivers Used as Drinking Sources in Artisanal Gold Mining Communities of the Akyem-Abuakwa Area: A Multivariate Statistical Approach," *Ghana Journal of Geography* 6 (2014): 24-41, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine Boateng, "Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana" (Helsinki: Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, 2018), 7.

The lack of effective implementation of laws related to illegal mining is another reason for the increasing trend in the practice. Ghana has good legislative and regulatory bodies that should be capable of addressing the menace of illegal mining. These include the Mineral Commission of Ghana, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forestry Commission, and the Water Resources Commission.<sup>4</sup> These agencies were established to regulate mining activities in Ghana and to ensure the protection of natural resources. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is mandated to monitor, control, and prevent environmental pollution caused by human activities, including mining. This includes regulating waste management, air and water pollution, and the proper disposal of toxic materials. The Forestry Commission is tasked with protecting Ghana's forests by preventing illegal logging, unlawful entry into forest reserves, and environmental degradation in forested areas. The Mineral Commission is responsible for issuing licenses to prospective miners and ensuring that all mining activities comply with the nation's mining laws. The Water Resources Commission oversees the management and protection of water bodies to ensure that rivers and streams are not diverted or polluted by mining operations.

Despite the presence of these agencies and their clear mandates, corruption among government officials has significantly undermined their effectiveness. Bribery and favoritism often allow illegal miners to evade regulations and operate without fear of repercussions. Furthermore, the lack of political will to enforce existing laws has emboldened illegal miners, as successive governments have either hesitated to take decisive action or failed to sustain efforts to address the problem. In some cases, the issue is compounded by ambiguous or incomplete legislation that create loopholes for illegal miners to exploit. This combination of weak enforcement, corruption, and legislative gaps has given illegal mining operations the freedom to flourish unchecked.

### The Impact of Illegal Mining on the Environment

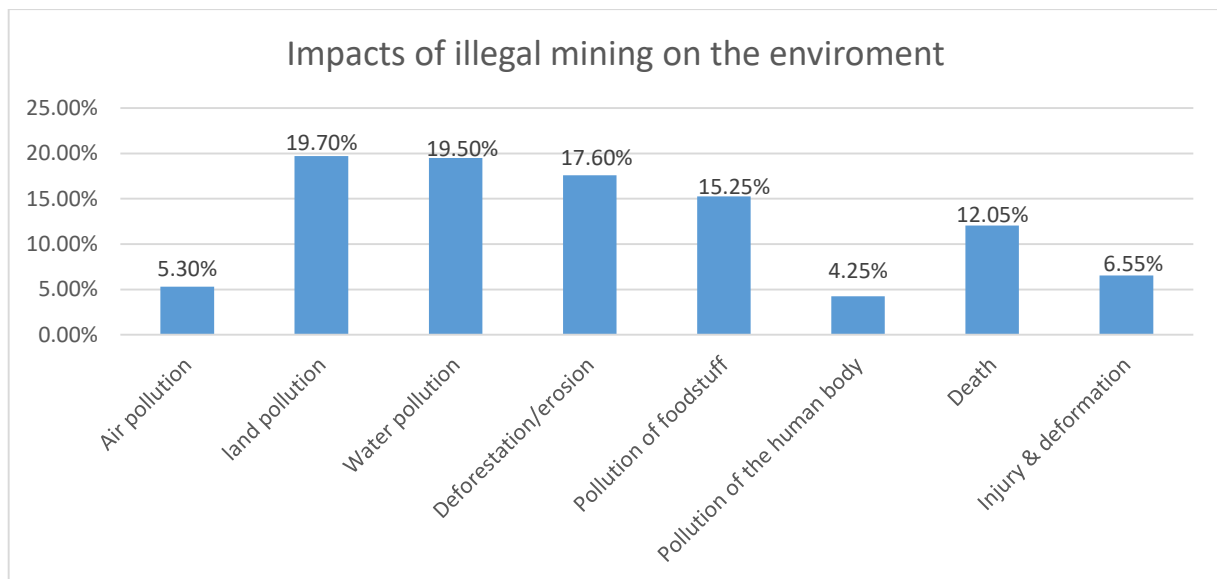


Figure 5: Impact of Illegal Mining on the Environment  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)

The respondents considered land pollution (19.70%) as the most prevalent effect of illegal mining activities. Other important consequences noted are water pollution (19.50%), deforestation/erosion (17.60%), pollution of foodstuff (15.25%), death (12.05%), injury and deformation (6.55%), air pollution (5.30%), and body pollution (4.25%). These findings highlight the wide-ranging and severe consequences of illegal mining on the environment and public health. In the following sections, some of these effects are discussed.

#### a. Deforestation, Land Pollution, and Erosion

<sup>4</sup> Boateng, *Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana*, 4.

Illegal mining activities significantly harm local ecosystems, with 47.30% of respondents identifying the combined effects of deforestation, erosion, and land pollution as key concerns. The removal of topsoil during mining preparations initiates widespread deforestation. This process involves several stages: clearing the land, cutting and burning trees, digging pits, turning the soil, and spraying it with water using electric pumps to reach the gold deposits. Miners then extract gold ore by digging through sand and breaking rocks, loosening the soil and rock structures. This weakened state makes the soil and rocks more susceptible to being washed away by rain or carried off by wind, further exacerbating environmental degradation.

Many people in Ghana have historically relied on farming to survive economic hardships. The Amansie West Municipality, along with towns such as Dunkwa-on-Offin and Tarkwa, have long been known for their strong agricultural traditions. However, these communities have been severely impacted by the rise of illegal mining which has drastically altered the landscape and local livelihoods. The introduction of illegal mining has led to the clearing of vast areas of land, including the destruction of valuable vegetation that once supported agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Some farmers, lured by the promises of quick wealth, have sold their land and crops to miners. While some move on to new trades, others relocate in search of a better life, and a significant number squander the proceeds from land sales, quickly falling into poverty. As a result, once fertile and forested areas have been transformed into barren landscapes resembling deserts.

The mining process itself exacerbates land degradation. The removal of topsoil, which is crucial for supporting plant life, leaves the land unable to support future farming or natural regeneration. This, in turn, creates an environment unsuitable for seed germination and plant growth. Additionally, when mining operations are completed, the land is often left in an exposed and degraded state, making it vulnerable to erosion, especially during the rainy season.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect is that many miners do not engage in land rehabilitation. Their activities leave large tracts of land unusable for future generations. The destruction of forests due to *galamsey* has led to a significant reduction in the number of trees and shrubs in the country.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the digging process mixes soil layers, disrupting the natural profile of the earth and damaging the minerals that were previously intact.

Illegal mining activities lead to deforestation, which harms wildlife by damaging the soil, vegetation, and climate they rely on. Observations at mining sites show that plant destruction causes severe loss of habitat, forcing wildlife to either migrate or face death. Many species, including deer, monkeys, and tortoises, are hunted by miners for food, and carcasses of other animals like egrets and bats are often found at mining locations. Additionally, sand piles left at abandoned sites limit oxygen flow into the soil, affecting organisms like ants and centipedes essential for soil health. Their loss reduces crop yields, contributing to food insecurity.

---

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Kuffour, Benjamin M. Tiimub, Isaac Manu, and Wellington Owusu, "The Effect of Illegal Mining Activities on Vegetation: A Case Study of Bontefufuo Area in the Amansie West District of Ghana," *East African Scholars Journal of Agriculture and Life Sciences* 3, no. 11 (2020): 353–359, 353.

<sup>6</sup> Kuffour, Tiimub, Manu and Owusu, "The Effect of Illegal Mining Activities on Vegetation," 353.



*Figure 6: Impact of Illegal Mining on the Environment  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)*

### **b. Water Pollution**

Most of Ghana's water bodies are polluted mainly through the activities of illegal miners. This development narrows Ghana's chance of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 of the United Nations, which stipulates: "By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable water for all."<sup>7</sup> Ghana is likely to miss this target because it is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to treat water for consumption due to excessive pollution. In 2017, the Executive Secretary of the Commission of the Water Resources Commission (WRC) estimated that about 60% of Ghana's water bodies are polluted.<sup>8</sup> He further noted that most of these water bodies are located in the southwestern parts of the country, where illegal mining activities were widespread.<sup>9</sup>

Water bodies are affected the most during mining activities because mining requires a large amount of water in its operation. For that matter, most mining sites are either established close to water bodies or have water diverted to them.<sup>10</sup> Miners use water for such purposes as sluicing, dust control, drilling of rocks, and amalgamation. The pollution of water bodies by illegal miners is the result of the introduction of chemical substances used for mining.<sup>11</sup> The chemical substances, especially such heavy metal oxides as lead and zinc, also threaten the life of living things in water. After mining, the polluted water flows into water bodies and pollutes them as well, increasing the sediment loads of most water bodies and thereby affecting the balance of life. These substances may also seep into subsurface water and cause it to be polluted.<sup>12</sup> Again, illegal miners frequently alter the natural flow of rivers and streams to access riverbeds or secure a reliable water supply for their operations. Such diversions change the composition of water bodies, often leading to discoloration and rendering them unsuitable for domestic, agricultural, or industrial use. The cumulative effects of these activities severely degrade the quality and sustainability of water resources in affected areas.

In most of the communities the researcher visited, *galamsey* activities have led to the changing of the colour and quality of local rivers, which serve as a source of drinking water for nearby

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, "United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 6)," 2023, <https://ghana.un.org/en/sdgs/6>.

<sup>8</sup> Abu Mubarik, "60% of Ghana's Water Bodies Polluted – Water Resources Commission," Pulse.com.gh, 2017, <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/galamsey-60-of-ghanas-water-bodies-polluted-water-resources-commission/3xs9j84>.

<sup>9</sup> Mubarik, "60% of Ghana's Water Bodies Polluted."

<sup>10</sup> Boateng, *Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Attua, Annan, and Nyame, "Water Quality Analysis of Rivers used as Drinking Sources in Artisanal Gold Mining Communities of the Akyem-Abuakwa area," 25.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Ebo Duncan, "The Dangerous Couple: Illegal Mining and Water Pollution—a Case Study in Fena River in the Ashanti Region of Ghana," *Journal of Chemistry* 2020, no. 1 (2020): 1-9, 1.



communities.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, people in those areas have to rely mostly on filtered water, which has serious economic implications. Those who cannot afford filtered water are compelled to use the polluted water and thus suffer the obvious health consequences. The pollution of water bodies due to illegal mining activities also deprives farmers of the source of water for irrigation purposes. The photo below was taken from one of the polluted water bodies.



*Figure 7: An example of a polluted water body  
(Source: Field survey, 20 April 2023)*

### **c. Air/Noise Pollution**

Mining-related air pollution comes from the generation of dust and emission of mine gases in the course of clearing the land with the excavator, as well as the drilling, blasting, grinding, and crushing of the gold ore.<sup>14</sup> The sieving of the crushed rock or the soil believed to contain the gold ore also throws dust into the air. Dust generated by surface operations gets dispersed by the wind. However, in the case of underground mining operations “dust generated in the stopes accumulates, and serves as a potential health threat to the miners,” because of the confined nature of the cavity in which *galamsey* activities take place underground.<sup>15</sup> Most of the stopes have the same route for entry and exit and lack ventilation systems. Again, as many people work in a small cavity underground, the air around them becomes stale and hence unhealthy for them.

Air pollution due to mining activities can also be caused by mercury. Mercury is one of the key chemicals used for illegal mining activities. It is non-biodegradable and has the ability to transform into different forms. Elemental mercury, inorganic mercury, and methylmercury are the three basic forms that mercury can take and none of them is environmentally friendly.<sup>16</sup> Miners are affected by mercury pollution due to smoke released in the process of using mercury to burn the amalgam.

Boateng explains that mercury enters the human body primarily through inhaling fumes from burned amalgams or consuming organisms, particularly fish, that contain mercury deposits.<sup>17</sup> When inhaled or ingested, mercury poses severe health risks, affecting the central nervous system, brain, and spinal cord.<sup>18</sup> Mercury leaches into the soil during mining activities and eventually contaminates

---

<sup>13</sup> Attua, Annan, and Nyame, “Water Quality Analysis of Rivers used as Drinking Sources in Artisanal Gold Mining Communities of the Akyem-Abuakwa area,” 24 – 41.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth J Bansah, Akuba B Yalley, and Nelson Dumakor-Dupey, “The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana,” *Journal of Sustainable Mining* 15, no. 1 (2016): 8-25, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Bansah, Yalley, and Kumankor-Dupey, “The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana,” 14.

<sup>16</sup> Boateng, *Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Boateng, *Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Boateng, *Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana*, 17.

nearby water bodies and agricultural land. This contamination leads to the accumulation of mercury in essential food staples such as cassava, yam, and fish.

Moreover, as more trees are destroyed due to illegal mining activities, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increases, which leads to air pollution. The increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide supercharges the natural greenhouse effect and causes global temperature to rise. This can also change the rainfall patterns and salinity regimes.

*Galamsey* activities generate significant levels of noise, which contribute to environmental pollution and pose serious health risks. The use of heavy machinery such as excavators, drilling equipment, and blasting tools creates intense and prolonged noise that exceeds safe auditory levels. For the miners themselves, continuous exposure to this noise can result in hearing impairment or even permanent hearing loss over time. The noise disrupts the natural habitat of wildlife, forcing animals to flee from their environments and leading to ecological imbalance. Nearby communities are not spared from the impact, as the constant noise disturbs daily life, disrupts sleep patterns, and can contribute to stress and anxiety among residents.

#### **d. Death, Injury and Body Pollution**

The researcher observed numerous uncovered pits at mining sites, which pose significant risks to miners and residents in nearby communities. Ground failures, often resulting from inadequately supported stopes and poor pit design, frequently lead to fatalities and severe injuries.<sup>19</sup> In the Ashanti region alone, more than twenty people are estimated to have died between 2019 and 2021, either through drowning or getting trapped in mining pits.<sup>20</sup> Mining pit collapses claimed the lives of 18 people in 2009, 45 in 2010, 17 in 2015, 6 in 2016, and 3 in 2021 in various regions across the country.<sup>21</sup> According to K. J. Bansah, A. B. Yalley, and N. Dumakor-Dupey, “the ground failures can be attributed to lack of planning, ignorance of the nature and types of rock (in terms of strength and stability), and inappropriate choice of mining methods, occasioned by lack of technical expertise of the operators.”<sup>22</sup> Writing for *Citi Newsroom*, Hafiz Tijani reported the Ashanti Regional Administrator of NADMO, Nana Atakora Kodua, who lamented: “These illegal mining operators left their pits uncovered after operations, and they have become traps for innocent people, especially children. When the rains set in, it collects water, and it becomes full. As children, they will call their friends to come for a swim, and they end up drowning in them.”<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, these water-filled pits from mining activities create ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes and reptiles, exacerbating public health concerns in affected communities. It is, therefore, not surprising that the mortality rate from malaria continues to rise in mining areas, further underscoring the severe consequences of these unregulated activities.

Furthermore, the miners’ bodies get polluted by mercury and other chemicals that are used in the extraction process, leading to neurological damage and other health-related problems.<sup>24</sup> The state of the miners, shown in the photo below, underscores the level of body pollution at the *galamsey* sites.<sup>25</sup> All the people have parts of their bodies directly exposed to the chemicals used for the extraction. These chemicals eventually get into the miners’ bodies and cause serious health problems.

---

<sup>19</sup> Bansah, Yalley, and Dumakor-Dupey, “The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana,” 14.

<sup>20</sup> Hafiz Tijani, “Ashanti Region: More than 20 People Have Died in Mining Pits in 2 Years,” *Citi Newsroom*, 2022, <https://citinewsroom.com/2022/03/ashanti-region-more-than-20-people-have-died-in-mining-pits-in-2-years/>.

<sup>21</sup> Bansah, Yalley, and Dumakor-Dupey, “The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana,” 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Bansah, Yalley, and Dumakor-Dupey, “The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana,” 15.

<sup>23</sup> Tijani, “Ashanti Region: More than 20 people have died in mining pits in 2 years,”

<sup>24</sup> J Mantey et al., “Mercury Contamination of Soil and Water Media from Different Illegal Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining Operations (Galamsey),” *Heliyon* 6, no. 6 (2020):1-13, 2.

<sup>25</sup> This picture was taken at Wassamanso in the Western Region by a researcher in 2019. Source: <https://www.classmonline.com/news/general/Wassamanso-Galamsey-pit-caves-in-on-7-6510>, accessed 1-05-2023.



Figure 8: An example of a galamsey site

This section highlights the profound environmental crisis facing contemporary Ghana as a result of illegal mining activities. The analysis reveals that the destructive impact extends across all aspects of creation—vegetation cover, aquatic life, terrestrial animals, and humans are all severely affected. Having detailed the ecological challenges stemming from illegal mining, the paper now transitions to exploring the foundational biblical-theological principles on the issues of environmental care.

### **Biblical-Theological Data on Environmental Care**

The Bible opens by showing God as the powerful Creator of the universe, deserving of worship (Gen. 1:1ff). Humanity, created in God's image, has a special role, given traits like morality and creativity, and was tasked with governing other creatures (Gen. 1:26-27). God instructed humans to care for the environment, to populate the earth, and to make use of the resources provided (Gen. 1:28, 2:8, 15).<sup>26</sup> Creation was made good and was meant to fulfill human needs, including food, shelter, medicine, and beauty (Gen. 1:29-31; 3:7, 21).<sup>27</sup>

However, after humanity's fall, sin introduced disorder into God's perfect creation, resulting in a curse that affected both human relationships and the natural world (3:1ff). The harmonious relationship between humans and the environment was disrupted, as the ground was cursed to produce thorns and thistles, and humanity had to toil for survival (3:17-19). This marked the beginning of environmental degradation as a consequence of human disobedience. Over time, the effects of sin, such as selfishness, greed, and exploitation, have compounded this damage. These destructive tendencies have driven humanity to overexploit natural resources, pollute ecosystems, and prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability, further exacerbating the imbalance within creation.

However, (even after the fall) God continued to show care for creation, as seen in Noah's flood, where he preserved all species (Gen. 9:8-17).<sup>28</sup> God gave specific instructions to his people that demonstrate his care for nature. He commanded them not to destroy trees during battle (Deut. 20:19), to practice sanitary waste disposal (23:12-13), to allow land to lie fallow periodically (Ex. 23:10-11), and to enhance the productivity of fruit trees by refraining from eating their produce for a time (Lev. 19:23-25). These laws reveal God's regard for the environment, underscoring that nature holds significant value to Him and should not be carelessly destroyed.

Psalms 147 highlights God's active care for creation, depicting him as the sustainer who provides rain, nourishes animals, and controls natural elements like snow and wind. Creation's beauty

---

<sup>26</sup> George Kinoti, "Christians and the Environment," *African Bible Commentary* Edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 618.

<sup>27</sup> Kinoti, "Christians and the Environment," 618.

<sup>28</sup> Kinoti, "Christians and the Environment," 618.

and order also reflect God's glory and power and reminds people of their duty to honor him through nature (Ps. 19:1-4 cf. Rom. 1:20).

Colossians 1:17 emphasizes that all creation is held together in Christ, showcasing his sustaining role, while Romans 1:20 reveals God's power and glory through nature. Other scriptures, such as Hebrews 1:3 and Psalm 104:24-32, reaffirm God's sustaining power, while Luke 12:24, 27-28 illustrates his provision for ravens, lilies, and grass.

While human salvation is central, the Bible points to the redemption of all creation (Rom. 8:18-21).<sup>29</sup> This redemption aligns with God's plan to restore harmony between humanity and the environment. Therefore, human actions should respect nature, aim to meet needs, and protect the earth for future generations. Based on this biblical view, the study will explore Ghana's environmental issues, focusing on the impact of illegal mining activities.

### **Foundations of a Wesleyan Environmental Theology/Ethics**

Wesley held that the main purpose of God's salvific agenda is the renewal of the human soul after the image of God. To appreciate God's saving love and the necessity of his salvific work, one has to first address the issue of sin. In this section, the paper presents key foundations for Wesley's theology of holiness to provide a framework for developing ecological holiness in the Ghanaian context.

#### ***Humankind in the Image of God***

Wesley held that the main purpose of God's salvific agenda is the renewal of the human soul after the image of God. To appreciate God's saving love and the necessity of his salvific work, one has to first address the issues of creation (especially of humankind) and sin. Wesley subscribes to the idea of the creation of all things (seen or unseen) by God (Gen. 1:1ff.). Wesley's anthropology, informed by the first two chapters of the Bible, recognizes the grace of God in the creation of humankind in his image (cf. 1:26-27). As creatures, human life must not be independent of God, because human existence is meaningless and impossible without God.<sup>30</sup> From a Wesleyan perspective, the divine *imago* includes the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. The natural image is the faculty that defines a human being (comprising will, reason, emotions, and freedom) and facilitates the divine-human relationship.<sup>31</sup> The political image comprises leadership and management endowments by which humans rule themselves and the rest of creation through ethical stewardship.<sup>32</sup> The virtues and character of holiness—love and righteousness—constitute the moral image. These endowments are meant to equip human beings to fulfill their God-given tasks.<sup>33</sup> The divine image in humankind enables humans to mirror God to other creatures. Wesley describes the divine image as a mirror, “not only to mirror God in their own lives but to reflect the grace which they received into the world, and thus to mediate the life of God to the rest of creation.”<sup>34</sup> Wesley's doctrine of the *imago Dei* shows discontinuity with the traditional view of limiting the doctrine to humankind alone. He argues that “the *imago Dei* was best understood as a special relationship between God and all created beings.”<sup>35</sup> His point is that non-human animals also have the *imago Dei* but to a lesser degree than humankind.<sup>36</sup> This view of the *imago Dei* is key to Wesley's ecological ethics.

Wesley identifies four kinds of freedoms that constitute the original divine *imago* in humankind; namely, freedom for God, freedom for the other, freedom from the earth/world, and freedom from self-domination.<sup>37</sup> Freedom for God refers to humankind's total openness to God in a perfect communion

---

<sup>29</sup> Kinoti, “Christians and the Environment,” 618.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Kwabena Boafo, *John Wesley's Theology and Public Life: His Sociopolitical Thought in the Ghanaian Context* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2014), 42.

<sup>31</sup> Boafo, *John Wesley's Theology and Public Life*.

<sup>32</sup> William A Mpere-Gyekye and Robert W Brodie, “A Wesleyan Theology of Politics for the Ghanaian Context,” *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 27, no. 1 (2019): 142–159, 143-144.

<sup>33</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 13-14.

<sup>34</sup> Runyon, *The New Creation*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Bron Taylor, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, vol. 1: A-I (Bloomsbury: A&C Black, 2008), 376.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 376.

<sup>37</sup> H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 278-279.

within which nothing is hidden. The communion that Adam had with God in the “cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8) symbolizes this kind of freedom. The freedom from God was to be maintained through obedience to God in not eating the forbidden fruit, which symbolized the point of testing for this freedom.<sup>38</sup> The freedom for others has to do with the complete openness of humans for humans.<sup>39</sup> Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were open to each other, naked and yet not ashamed. Here, the body is to be considered as the means for human-human relationships.<sup>40</sup> The freedom from the earth/world is rooted in the political responsibility given to humankind to exercise responsible dominion over other creatures of God (1:28; 2:15). Humankind’s dominion over other creatures was symbolized in Adam’s act of naming each animal. A good human-divine relationship ensures that the earth serves humankind, rather than dominating them. This means that human activities on earth must not dominate other creatures. The freedom from self-domination means that humankind must not enslave themselves. God must be the dominant Partner, not humankind. This means that every relationship that humankind enters into must be geared toward giving glory to God. One should, therefore, not “assume an equal partnership role or usurp the prerogative of the Creator.”<sup>41</sup>

### Fallen Humanity

Humanity's perfect relationship with God was disrupted by sin, which entered through Adam and Eve’s disobedience. Deceived by Satan via a serpent, Eve ate the forbidden fruit and shared it with Adam. This first act of sin misused humanity’s moral ability to choose between good and evil.<sup>42</sup> Young Taek Kim asserts that the moral image of God in humankind “is the expression of God’s relation to humanity, a relation that can be corrupted and twisted through the destructive effects of sin.”<sup>43</sup> Humankind abused their freedom and corrupted their moral likeness to God.

Wesley holds that sin is a perversion of humankind’s original condition of being in a perfect relationship with God. Therefore, humankind was originally fashioned with an inherent orientation towards God, viewing Him as the ultimate purpose. However, through the act of sin, humanity veered away from God, turning inward upon itself. This means that though one’s sin may be against others, sin is primarily against God (Psa. 51:4) because sinful actions are violations of God’s laws. Again, God is the ultimate Judge, and sin is an affront to his holiness. Sin, therefore, becomes meaningful only in relation to God. In addition, sin makes humans miss the mark of fulfilling their God-given destiny, “which is to stand in right relationship with God” or to be absolutely holy.<sup>44</sup> Sin deprives humanity of realizing its full humanness. Also, sin is the antithesis of holiness.<sup>45</sup> Wesley also considers sin as the perversion of love. Thus, the sinner’s love is misdirected, because he or she is under the power of sin (Rom. 5:21; 6:12).

Adam’s sin affected the divine-human (Gen. 3:9-10), human-human (2:24; 3:12) and human-environment (3:18-19) relationships, in addition to polluting each of his progeny with a sinful nature (Rom. 5:12). Definitely, the whole four-fold relation—to God, to other persons, to the earth, and to self—were affected by the fall. The effect of Adam’s sin on his offspring—referred to as original sin—needs further examination. Wesley held the classical doctrine of original sin and the absolute inability of human beings to save themselves through good deeds. For Wesley, sin affects every aspect of the human faculty.<sup>46</sup> Thus, original sin makes the natural human completely corrupt and this total corruption requires God’s grace to be reversed.<sup>47</sup> The Methodist Article of Religion defines original sin as “the corruption of the nature of every [hu]man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of

<sup>38</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 279.

<sup>39</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 281-282.

<sup>40</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 282.

<sup>41</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 283.

<sup>42</sup> Alice Russie, *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Selected Sermons, Essays, And Other Writings* (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing Inc., 2011), 115.

<sup>43</sup> Young Taek Kim, “John Wesley’s Anthropology: Restoration of the Imago Dei as a Framework for Wesley’s Theology” (Unpublished Thesis: Drew University, 2006), 44ff.

<sup>44</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 480.

<sup>45</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*.

<sup>46</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 275.

<sup>47</sup> Herald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 21.

Adam, whereby [hu]man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his[or her] own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.”<sup>48</sup> Sin blurred human beings’ understanding, had their will seized by wrong tempers and pride, and made their conscience devoid of virtues. Because of sin, humans have become self-centered beings who not only exploit other people and the available resources but also pervert justice for selfish gains. The fall has rendered all humanity totally depraved, such that the unredeemed person lacks the ability to pursue godliness. The “spiritual senses” of the natural human are not awake; he or she is unable to discern what is spiritually good or evil. Only the natural senses are awake, and so the activities of the natural human are based on natural desires. Thus, a fallen human being exercises his or her free will only in the area of committing sin.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, for Wesley, the moral *imago* was completely eroded by the fall.

Nonetheless, Wesley believes that there is still a remnant of God’s image in fallen humanity because the unredeemed person still has understanding, affection, a degree of freedom, creative ability, social desire and capabilities, and self-governing abilities.<sup>50</sup> The remnant of the *imago Dei* in fallen humanity is the reason why the unredeemed (even those without any moral laws) demonstrate their desire for good and can turn away from evil. However, their actions cannot be considered good in the full theological sense because of the lack of communion with God, meaning their actions are ultimately outside God’s will and purpose.<sup>51</sup> The rule is that whether an action is good or bad depends on the state of the doer. The actions of the unjustified cannot be considered “good,” because the doer is not in communion with God. However, the actions of the justified are good, because they are done in accordance with God’s will and purpose. It is not that the doer is made evil because of evil works, but that the works are evil because the one performing them is evil in the sight of God.

### Salvation and Holiness

According to Wesley, God’s grace restores humanity’s lost divine image through a threefold process. It begins with prevenient grace, which enables people to hear the gospel, repent, and freely choose to believe. This is followed by justifying grace, where God pardons and reconciles repentant sinners through his mercy, Christ’s atoning death, and personal faith in Christ’s sacrifice. Finally, sanctifying grace renews believers, fostering inward and outward holiness. This spiritual renewal, described as new birth, progressively overcomes sin and encourages believers to grow in love for God and others. Wesley saw holiness as central to Christian discipleship, emphasizing maturity of character and love for God, aligning with Jesus’ command to love God fully and love one’s neighbor. For Wesley, holiness or perfection has to do with maturity of character and ever-increasing love for God.<sup>52</sup>

Personal holiness/sanctification, which involves a “total commitment to God, singleness of intention, [and] centering one’s life completely on God,” includes “believing in, trusting, worshipping, initiating, and obeying God” and consists of “constant reliance on God’s grace and using the gifts God gives to become what he intends us to be.”<sup>53</sup> Personal holiness must be demonstrated in a change in the life of the individual. The personal transformation that Wesley’s ministry had on his audience is described as follows: “The drunkard commenced sober and moderate; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication; the unjust from oppression and wrong. He that had been accustomed to curse and swear from many years, now swore no more.”<sup>54</sup> His preaching on sanctification urged people to pursue a new ethic of responsibility and solidarity that “viewed social obligations and involvements primarily from the perspective of individuals, their destiny, and their tasks, although from the very first it struggled against the alternative of ‘change and transformation of the individual or creation of new social conditions, diaconal compassion, loving activity, and caritas, or engagement for social justice.’”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Paul V. Marshall, *Prayer Book Parallels*, vol. 2 (New York: Church Publishing, 2000), 72.

<sup>49</sup> Bofo, *John Wesley’s Theology and Public Life*, 42-44.

<sup>50</sup> Bofo, *John Wesley’s Theology and Public Life*, 42.

<sup>51</sup> Bofo, *John Wesley’s Theology and Public Life*, 42-44.

<sup>52</sup> Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Yrigoyen, *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>54</sup> Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley’s Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 120

<sup>55</sup> Marquardt, *John Wesley’s Social Ethics*, 121.

The inward transformation must yield social/outward holiness that contributes to the transformation of the society. This means that the Christian gospel must have social effects, including promoting justice, equity, and fairness within the social structures and government institutions. Social holiness is promoted by such acts as “patience, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, justice, self-denial, sacrifice, and desiring the best for [one’s] neighbors”; alternatively, social holiness is suppressed by “envy, hasty judgment, pride, anger, injustice, greed, quarreling, intemperance, and neglecting other people’s need.”<sup>56</sup> When the individual is renewed, the accompanying changes in personal attitudes and behavior patterns improve social relations and produce better socioeconomic and political structures. In the economic sphere, one is not expected to undertake any commercial activity that has a negative effect on themselves, others, or on the environment. One is also expected to use economic resources to serve the society, rather than enjoying it all alone. Thus, from a Wesleyan perspective, salvation is first an individual affair and becomes a social issue when individual believers are considered together as one body. Thus, individual transformation is a prerequisite for societal transformation.

The primary conclusion drawn from the preceding discussion is that authentic Christian faith should manifest in both inward and outward holiness. The next section highlights some ecological implications of this holistic understanding of holiness.

### **Christian Holiness as an Antidote to Ghana’s Ecological Crisis**

Wesley’s theology suggests that personal holiness should lead to ecological holiness, an aspect of social holiness, emphasizing human interdependence with creation. His concept underscores mutual responsibility for ecological care, providing a theological basis for addressing environmental issues in Ghana.

#### ***a. Holiness and Economics***

First, **Wesley’s economic principles (outlined below) emanating from the concept of social holiness have ecological-care implications.** There is an interplay between economic and ecological realities. Wesley advocated for simple living and contentment with what one has. This lifestyle promotes sustainability and reduces environmental impact by minimizing consumption and waste. In addition, Wesley’s economic/social holiness can be used to argue for the creation of jobs to reduce the plight of the unemployed and the needy. As was seen from the field data, the high rate of unemployment is a major factor that perpetuates illegal mining activities in Ghana. Therefore, a sustainable way of addressing this issue must address the problem of unemployment in the country. Economic holiness requires that political leaders create enough employment for the increasing population. The government should consider measures that can expand the Ghanaian economy, increase exports, and stabilize the local currency. The church should also speak for the voiceless and those directly affected by illegal mining activities. The holiness of the church should manifest in her active participation in policies that improve the environment.<sup>57</sup> Teachings about environmental care should be given regularly in the church. To reduce the unemployment rate, the government, the church, and nongovernmental organizations should provide entrepreneurial training and startup capital for the skilled youth. The church may collaborate with financial institutions to secure loans for its members.

Wesley’s concept of economic holiness emphasizes communal well-being over individual gain. He views work as a means to serve the community, aligning with the idea of ecological holiness. However, illegal mining activities contradict this, as their long-term effects harm the community. Although individuals may gain wealth and contribute somewhat to local development, the broader impact is negative: school dropouts rise, diseases spread, farmland is lost, immorality increases, and lives are endangered. Thus, *galamsey* fails to align with the ethical standard of serving communal interests and instead leads to significant social and environmental harm.

The communal dimension of ecological holiness is rooted in the traditional Ghanaian communal sense of life. Ghanaians hold that the existence of a person is intrinsically tied up with the existence of other people in the society. Therefore, it is unethical to do anything that undermines the

---

<sup>56</sup> Yrigoyen, *John Wesley*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Social holiness includes justice-seeking.

safety of the society. Traditional leaders are expected to be the custodians of the general culture of the people, including the communal worldview outlined above. There is a need for a general societal transformation. The required transformation needs to start from the leaders themselves. Traditional leaders and politicians involved in these environmentally degrading activities because of their selfish interests should be ashamed of themselves. They need to stop and set good examples for others to emulate. They are reminded that their task is to carry the burdens of their subjects, rather than piling burdens upon them through unethical commercial activities like illegal mining. They must be law-abiding and hence desist from involving themselves in something that is declared illegal.

In the olden days, the society was very much interested in the source of people's wealth. If one went to the city and came back with wealth, the immediate family and the larger society questioned them about the source of their wealth. This does not mean that the society did not want people to be rich. Rather, it shows that even though wealth is good, it must be acquired ethically. Unfortunately, this traditional practice is hardly found in contemporary Ghana. People are hailed for their wealth irrespective of how they were acquired. The study has shown the need for society to scrutinize the source of people's wealth and to punish those who acquire wealth through such unethical means as illegal mining, ritual murder, and more.

### ***b. Holiness and Love***

Second, from the Wesleyan perspective, personal holiness is built upon the love for God and neighbor and this love should extend to all creation. Wesley critiqued unethical means of wealth accumulation and advocated for an economics of justice rooted in God's beneficence and the Christian call to universal love. From the Wesleyan perspective, personal holiness must inform the commercial activities that believers undertake. He argues that one's choice of economic venture must be informed by the love for God and for neighbor. The love principle provides a lens for judging the ethics of any commercial activity.

Obviously, the *galamsey* business does not in any way demonstrate one's love for the neighbor, because it is based on the selfish interest of those behind the business and the miners themselves who want to get rich at the expense of other people's health. At the same time, the activities of the illegal miners do not in any way glorify God. Rather, their activities deprive creatures of their ability to glorify God. The analysis of the data gathered from various mining communities indicates clearly the devastating effects of these activities on the people and the environment. The data revealed a lack of drinking water, health problems, and destruction of vegetation cover as some of the major effects of *galamsey*. One cannot imagine how polluted water that cannot be consumed or degraded land that is neither able to support plant life nor serve as a habitat for wildlife can glorify God.

Wesley emphasized that God's grace calls believers to a holistic love that includes God, humanity, and the environment. This "theocentric" love honors God by following his command to care for his creation, which he deemed good and made a covenant with. True love for one's neighbor includes caring for the environment, as human life is interconnected with all creation. Wesley saw ecological care as essential to Christian love, where protecting nature contributes to neighbors' welfare. His doctrine of the *imago Dei* extends to all creation, establishing an ecological ethic in which love for God and others encompasses responsible stewardship. According to Wesley, humans are the primary bearers of God's image, while other aspects of creation serve as secondary bearers. He argues: "We have no ground to believe that they [animals] are in any degree capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute—the great gulf which they cannot pass over."<sup>58</sup> Yet, he was of the view that the primary bearers of God's image (human beings) mediate the *imago Dei* to the rest of creation. This view is theologically significant for developing the theology that God will restore his image in all creation.

In Ghanaian tradition, there exists a communal understanding of both sin and salvation. The notion of sin extends beyond the individual, encompassing the community and the environment. Similarly, the traditional Ghanaian concept of salvation, aligned with the Hebrew idea of Shalom,

---

<sup>58</sup> Mary Buddemeyer-Porter, *Animals, Immortal Beings: Scriptural Evidence of the Immortality of Animals* (Manchester: Eden Publications, 2005), 125.



encompasses peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare, and tranquility. From the Ghanaian Christian standpoint, salvation involves more than just restoring divine-human and human-human relationships; it also entails the restoration of the human-environment relationship. From the Ghanaian perspective, all three relationships—divine-human, human-human, and human-environment—must be in a state of excellence for true salvation to be realized. This understanding lays the groundwork for embracing the theology of the salvation of the entire creation. With this perspective, personal holiness is seen as leading to the proper alignment of divine-human, human-human, and human-environment relationships.

### ***c. Holiness and Ecological Stewardship***

Third, **personal holiness is a call to ecological stewardship.** Environmental stewardship is “the faithful nurture and management of the God-created order.”<sup>59</sup> The call to ecological stewardship comes in the context of personal holiness, meaning holiness is the means by which one can care effectively for the environment and make it a better place to live. Earlier, the point was made that God, after creating everything, handed it over to humankind to act as caretakers. The call to environmental stewardship predates the fall (Gen. 1:28; 2:8, 15). The fall of humanity affected the human capability of responsibly caring for the ecology. A Wesleyan soteriological perspective has it that the restoration of humankind to relate with God also restores the human ability to care for the environment. Therefore, the believer’s vertical relationship with God (personal holiness) must facilitate their horizontal relationship with other humans and with the environment. Wesley argues that “no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than that of a steward. . . . This appellation is exactly expressive of his situation in the present world, specifying the kind of servant he is to God, and what kind of service his divine master expects of him.”<sup>60</sup> Proper stewardship of the environment can be achieved in various ways, “beginning with recycling and energy conservation and extending to advocacy for ecological sustainability worldwide.”<sup>61</sup> The care for creation is an integral part of Christian discipleship and the worship of the Triune God.

Ecological stewardship requires the adoption of proper means of harnessing natural resources. As noted earlier, the nation’s vast natural resources are a potential wealth. This means that it is proper to explore ways in which the resources can enhance the nation’s socioeconomic growth and development. Such means must, however, not end up creating more problems than they intend to solve. In this regard, deep mining rather than surface mining can serve as a better model for Ghana. There is a need to reclaim land that is destroyed through mining activities. Ecological holiness requires mining methods that uphold good safety standards and promote the well-being of workers. It also requires mining to be done in a way that has the least adverse effect on the environment. Mining companies are expected to reclaim the land after their activities. Government officials are to enforce the law on the mining and the environment. People found to act contrary to the law need to be prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to potential miners.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Before ending this paper, a few recommendations are necessary.

### **1. Recommendations for Individuals**

Individuals can play a crucial role in addressing the issue of illegal mining by actively engaging in advocacy and raising awareness about its negative impact on both the environment and human health. They should report illegal mining operations to the appropriate authorities and participate in educational campaigns that highlight the long-term consequences of these activities. Those involved in illegal mining can seek alternative sources of livelihood, such as farming or small-scale businesses, by taking advantage of training programs offered by the government or NGOs. Furthermore,

---

<sup>59</sup>Wesley cited in Kevin W. Mannoia and Don Thorsen (eds.), *The Holiness Manifesto* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 132.

<sup>60</sup> *The Holiness Manifesto*, 131.

<sup>61</sup> *The Holiness Manifesto*, 131.

individuals should actively engage in environmental stewardship by participating in afforestation and land rehabilitation efforts to restore areas that have been damaged by illegal mining.

## **2. Recommendations for Traditional Authorities**

Traditional authorities, including chiefs and elders, play an essential role in managing land resources within their communities. They must enforce traditional land-use practices that protect the environment and refuse to lease land for illegal mining activities. During cultural event, traditional leaders can raise awareness about the importance of preserving the environment and the harmful effects of illegal mining. They can also act as mediators in resolving conflicts between illegal miners and local communities to ensure that mining operations do not exploit local resources or harm the environment. Traditional leaders can also establish local watch-dog committees to monitor illegal mining activities can also empower communities to take an active role in protecting their land.

## **3. Recommendations for Religious Bodies**

Ghanaians, like many other Africans, are very religious. In Ghana, religion is a very influential institution.<sup>62</sup> Religious leaders can promote environmental care by educating their congregations on the spiritual and moral obligation to protect the environment and combat illegal mining. Religious groups can also organize community outreach programs that provide miners with skills training and alternative livelihood options, such as agriculture, which are more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Furthermore, they can advocate for the enforcement of anti-illegal mining laws and support government and NGO initiatives aimed at rehabilitating areas impacted by mining activities.

## **4. Recommendations for the Government**

The government has a huge responsibility in addressing the nation's challenges. There is the need to strengthen the enforcement of mining regulations, including prosecuting illegal miners and their financiers, is essential to curbing the problem. The government should also develop and support programs that offer miners alternative livelihoods, such as training in sustainable agriculture, vocational skills, and eco-friendly businesses. More so, public-private partnerships can be initiated to invest in sustainable mining practices and technologies that reduce environmental harm. The government should establish a dedicated national task force responsible for monitoring mining sites and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations. To further address the issue, the government should invest in large-scale land reclamation and water restoration projects to rehabilitate areas that have been degraded by illegal mining.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper has highlighted that while illegal mining may provide short-term economic and personal benefits, the long-term environmental costs are far-reaching and must not be ignored. The destruction of ecosystems, water contamination, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity are just a few of the many adverse consequences of these activities. Therefore, it is crucial for all sectors of society to adopt a proactive approach in mitigating these environmental damages. Individuals must embrace personal responsibility by engaging in sustainable practices, raising awareness, and reporting illegal activities. Traditional authorities should enforce land management practices that discourage illegal mining and promote sustainable land use. Religious institutions have a unique opportunity to influence the moral and spiritual attitudes of their followers by emphasizing the religious (biblical/quranic) mandate to care for the environment and offering practical solutions for miners to transition into alternative livelihoods. At the governmental level, stronger enforcement of existing laws, alongside initiatives that provide viable economic alternatives to mining, is essential. As stewards of creation, Christians in Ghana must take on the responsibility of safeguarding the environment, drawing on their faith to advocate for the protection of God's creation. By doing so, they can ensure that future generations inherit a world that is not only prosperous but also preserved and thriving in its natural beauty.

---

<sup>62</sup> Since Ghana has a predominantly Christian population, the Christian Church has a greater responsibility in dealing with the issue.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Attua, Emmanuel Morgan, Stephen Twumasi Annan, and Frank Nyame. "Water Quality Analysis of Rivers Used as Drinking Sources in Artisanal Gold Mining Communities of the Akyem-Abuakwa Area: A Multivariate Statistical Approach." *Ghana Journal of Geography* 6 (2014): 24–41.
- Bansah, Kenneth J, Akuba B Yalley, and Nelson Dumakor-Dupey. "The Hazardous Nature of Small Scale Underground Mining in Ghana." *Journal of Sustainable Mining* 15, no. 1 (2016): 8–25.
- Boafo, Paul Kwabena. *John Wesley's Theology and Public Life: His Sociopolitical Thought in the Ghanaian Context*. Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2014.
- Boateng, Augustine. "Effect of Small Scale Mining on the Environment in Ghana." Helsinki: Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, 2018.
- Buddemeyer-Porter, Mary. *Animals, Immortal Beings: Scriptural Evidence of the Immortality of Animals*. Manchester: Eden Publications, 2005.
- Duncan, Albert Ebo. "The Dangerous Couple: Illegal Mining and Water Pollution—a Case Study in Fena River in the Ashanti Region of Ghana." *Journal of Chemistry* 2020, no. 1 (2020): 1-9.
- Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988.
- Kim, Young Taek. "John Wesley's Anthropology: Restoration of the Imago Dei as a Framework for Wesley's Theology." Unpublished Thesis: Drew University, 2006.
- Kinoti, George. "Christians and the Environment." *African Bible Commentary* Edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006.
- Kuffour, Richard A., Benjamin M. Tiimub, Isaac Manu, and Wellington Owusu. "The Effect of Illegal Mining Activities on Vegetation: A Case Study of Bontefufuo Area in the Amansie West District of Ghana." *East African Scholars Journal of Agriculture and Life Sciences* 3, no. 11 (2020): 353–59.
- Lindstrom, Herald. *Wesley and Sanctification*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980.
- Mannioa, Kevin W., and Don Thorsen. *The Holiness Manifesto*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.
- Mantey, J, K B Nyarko, F Owusu-Nimo, K A Awua, C K Bempah, R K Amankwah, W E Akatu, and E Appiah-Effah. "Mercury Contamination of Soil and Water Media from Different Illegal Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining Operations (*Galamsey*)." *Heliyon* 6, no. 6 (2020): 1-13.
- Marquardt, Manfred. *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.
- Marshall, Paul V. *Prayer Book Parallels*. Vol. 2. New York: Church Publishing, 2000.
- Mpere-Gyekye, William A, and Robert W Brodie. "A Wesleyan Theology of Politics for the Ghanaian Context." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 27, no. 1 (2019): 142–59.
- Mubarik, Abu. "60% of Ghana's Water Bodies Polluted – Water Resources Commission." *Pulse.com.gh*, 2017. <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/galamsey-60-of-ghanas-water-bodies-polluted-water-resources-commission/3xs9j84>.
- Runyon, Theodore. *The New Creation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Russie, Alice. *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Selected Sermons, Essays. And Other Writings*. Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing Inc., 2011.
- Taylor, Bron. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. Vol. 1: A-I. Bloomsbury: A&C Black, 2008.
- Tijani, Hafiz. "Ashanti Region: More than 20 People Have Died in Mining Pits in 2 Years." Citi Newsroom, 2022. <https://citinewsroom.com/2022/03/ashanti-region-more-than-20-people-have-died-in-mining-pits-in-2-years/>.
- United Nations. "United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 6)." (2023). <https://ghana.un.org/en/sdgs/6>.
- Yrigoyen, Charles. *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

**ABOUT AUTHOR**

Isaac Boaheng holds a PhD in Theology from the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is a Senior Lecturer in Theology and Christian Ethics at the Christian Service University, Ghana, and a Research Fellow at the Department of Biblical and Religion Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa. He has over hundred peer-reviewed publications.