



Reflections

Memories of Ghana

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This is my second visit to Ghana, and without a doubt, it will not be my last. This trip, however, was my most memorable, as I had the opportunity to explore new parts of the country. The vastness of Ghana is mind-blowing, yet there is a quietness and homeliness to it, no matter where one is. I spent about a week in Koforidua visiting a fellow minister before returning to Accra and continuing on to Cape Coast.

At times, it was amusing to hear people remark that I resembled someone they knew, only to be surprised to learn that I was not from Ghana, but from Barbados. Moments like these underscored the language barrier, making me acutely aware of the limitations in communication. In so many ways, I felt at home, yet I was unable to express more than the few words I had learned upon arriving.

A few experiences from my time in Ghana stand out for continued reflection:

Meeting a Traditional Priest

On this occasion, I had requested an opportunity to meet with a traditional priest. With the help of friends at the Anglican Television station, I was able to spend most of Saturday morning in conversation with a priest. This interaction was deeply meaningful, offering me insight into the process and function of the traditional priesthood in the Ghanaian context.

My request stemmed from my thoughts about how assertive forms of Christianity have historically sought to marginalize and delegitimize spiritual expressions different from their own. My greatest wonder is what these faith

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traditions might have evolved into had they historically been allowed the freedom to remain mainstream and engage with the emerging human community. As it stands, many have been pushed to the sidelines, undoubtedly hampering their development through the centuries.

A pressing concern of mine is the state of our world today, particularly regarding climate change — a crisis brought about by humanity’s disregard for nature. We have exploited the earth at every turn. I wonder what insights nature-based religions might have provided as a counter to this wanton abuse. Could communities with a deeper respect for the earth, guided by men and women attuned to the spirits of the land, have offered a path distinct from the one that led us to this crisis?

In the West, we are the inheritors of the fallout from the Roman Empire, which blazed its way across the world. Its demise left behind a Church that had ridden on its back for decades, learning to pillage as effectively as the empire itself. That we have not examined this as a matter of urgency is troubling. We continue as though the way in which the Gospel was spread is beyond question, yet one must ask: whose Gospel was truly being proclaimed over the centuries?

Sitting that Saturday morning in the sacred space of the priest, listening to an explanation of the training process for priesthood, I sensed the deep spiritual undergirding of their practice. Where our focus tends to be on the revealed word and the doctrines of the past, their tradition resembles that of the early Church — guided significantly by the Spirit as received in the present moment. At times, I see not just the benefits but also the hindrances associated with a reliance on printed text. While Christianity’s reference is received tradition, traditional religion sees the Spirit as its reference.

Identity, Ancestry, and the “Last Bath”

Building on these reflections, another moment of profound interest arose during a dialogue with my Ghanaian colleague and friend, and one of the writing project mentors, Daniel Eshun, over lunch. We spoke about those who had been taken from these lands and sent across the ocean during the transatlantic trade. He described the traditional Ghanaian naming ceremony and the demonstrative use of water and gin to emphasize the importance of identity. He then spoke of the “last bath,” where that identity was stripped away, and the person became property — the beginning of a new, tragic text in their life.

I reflected on this a few days later while having lunch with my niece, who lives in Austria and is married to an Austrian. She recounted her husband’s disbelief when she mentioned that she could not trace her ancestry beyond her great-grandmother. This conversation reminded me of what Daniel had shared. The unnamed person stepping onto that slave vessel would be at least seven generations removed from my niece’s great-grandmother. For many, it is

incomprehensible not to know one's ancestors beyond a few generations. While DNA testing offers some assistance, it can only approximate origins rather than fully restore lost lineage. In a time when awareness of ancestry is increasingly significant, this historical erasure remains a heavy burden.

During my stay, with the help of Kofi, my taxi driver, I visited Assin Manso, the place of the "last bath," and stood in the water where my ancestors likely took their last baths, about 30 km from the coast. In that moment, I wondered how far they had walked to reach that place — some, I was told, as much as 400 km. The sheer scale of this suffering is unimaginable. Words cannot truly convey it; the reality is beyond comprehension. The entire undertaking seemed inhuman, and even that word feels inadequate. One is left numb.

Transatlantic Anglican Institutional Connections and Disconnections

The remainder of my time in Ghana paled in comparison to what I had learned. Yet, it held its own significance. During our time hosted at St Nicholas Seminary, we explored ways in which the seminaries of St Nicholas and Codrington College could connect across the ocean. Four hundred years ago, the crossing was made with immense interest, yet today, facilitating such a connection seems insurmountable. There is little interest from those with the means to establish direct paths between Ghana and the Caribbean, largely because there is no immediate profit in doing so. Yet, a crucial aspect of reparative justice should be the provision of direct access at a reasonable cost, facilitating the reunification of families torn apart by greed.

At some level, there is a psychological debt due. Such a debt is not about money but about the deliberate effort to mend the historical rupture. Some argue that slavery has always existed in human history — but the transatlantic slave trade occurred on an unprecedented scale and left a wound that remains unhealed. Acknowledging this is not about dwelling on the past but about understanding its impact on the present and taking meaningful steps toward reconciliation. Just as the original inhabitants of the Americas were forced onto reservations, entire generations were torn from their homelands, leaving a legacy of fragmentation. While we cannot condemn past individuals who acted within their historical contexts, we can — and must — recognize the necessity of accountability in addressing these enduring wrongs.

The Transatlantic Writing Project, and particularly the in-person workshops, facilitated the sharing and engagement of writers and potential writers across the ocean. Outcomes included the encouragement of young theologians to write, the sharing of information on publishing, and suggestions for engaging in theological discourse through papers and texts. This was a significant undertaking and signals a future of greater transatlantic collaboration in scholarship and storytelling. Despite centuries of separation, there is now an opportunity to bridge these gaps, to learn from each other's

Michael Clarke
Memories of Ghana

experiences, and to reclaim a shared history that has been deliberately obscured. The challenge before us is whether we will take the necessary steps to dismantle these imposed barriers and foster a deeper, more authentic engagement between Africa and the Caribbean — one that is built not on commerce or exploitation, but on shared identity, history, and mutual growth.

In reflecting on my journey to Ghana, I am left with a profound sense of connection and responsibility. This trip was not just about exploring a country; it was about confronting history, engaging with tradition, and envisioning a future where the descendants of the displaced can reconnect with their roots. The pain of the past remains, but so too does the possibility of healing. It is through conversations, cultural exchanges, and conscious efforts to bridge the divide that we can move towards a more just and reconciled world. Ghana has left an indelible mark on my soul, and as I leave, I carry with me not just memories but a renewed commitment to fostering understanding and unity across the Atlantic.