
By

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Abstract

This paper investigates the history of the Anglican Church in The Gambia, and uses one church, St. Paul’s, Fajara, as a case study to understand the growth of the Church in the country. This paper evaluates the Anglican leadership in the mid-twentieth century to understand why the growth in the Anglican Church has been so small. To understand the stagnant growth, this paper also explores the Islamic and British backgrounds in the country, as well as some of the evangelistic techniques used by the Anglicans, as well as critiquing leaders in the 1970s and 1980s at St. Paul’s, Fajara.
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Timeline of pertinent events

11th century: Arabic Islamic Traders make inroads to The Gambia

1855: Anglican Diocese of the West Indies send their first missionaries to The Gambia: James Leacock (A white priest from Barbados) and John Duport (a black ordinand from St. Kitts). Leacock dies within a few months, but Duport is able to establish the first surviving Anglican Mission in The Gambia, and stays until his death in 1873


1947: St. Paul’s breaks ground for their church.

1951-1957: Bishopric of Roderick Coote. Coote had served in the diocese before his consecration as bishop, but was originally from Ireland.

1958-1963: Bishopric of John Pike, also from Ireland, and passionate preacher.

1965-1970: Bishopric of Timothy Olufosoye, from Nigeria, and interested in constructing buildings for the Diocese

1972-1986: Bishopric of Jean Rigal Elisee, from Haiti, chosen for his Francophone abilities, to minister to the Guinea side of the diocese.

1975-1977: Kwabana Ameayaw-Gyamfi priest at St. Paul’s, Fajara

1977: Jacob Williams becomes priest of Christ Church Serrekunda and St. Paul’s, Fajara.

1982-1988: Malcolm Millard takes over at St. Paul’s Fajara. There was quite a gap before another priest was appointed.


1989-1990: Percy Quarcoopoma priest at St. Paul’s, Fajara

1990-present: Bishopric of Solomon Tilewa Johnson, native Gambian.

2001-present Priscilla Johnson priest at St. Paul’s Fajara.
Chapter One: Introduction

Greeted by Africans singing the Te Deum, Bishop John Daly arrived on the shores of The Gambia on Ascension Day, 1935.\footnote{At the 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the diocese, the congregants concluded the evening prayer and confirmation service by singing the Te Deum. This act tied directly back to Bishop Daly’s arrival.} The newly formed Diocese of the Gambia and the Rio Pongas consisted of The Gambia and Guinea, having cleaved from the larger Sierra Leone diocese. Daly’s initial plan was to concentrate his efforts on the British and then African Anglicans already in the diocese, making the diocese more of a chaplaincy than a mission field. Twelve years after Daly arrived, St. Paul’s broke ground. Adhering to the original vision of Daly’s episcopacy, St. Paul’s represented a fulfilled need for the already converted Europeans of the diocese as well as some of the Africans who lived in the Fajara area. In the past sixty-five years, St. Paul’s has expanded its building at least twice and grew in numbers; many clergy served its people.

The Church as a whole in The Gambia has struggled since its inception to make a mark on the country, but with limited success. In the five hundred years that Christians have sent missionaries and tradesmen to the small country, roughly ninety percent of the population adheres to Islam. Many factors have contributed to this seeming failure of evangelism. Anglicans in particular had a relatively late start in missions to The Gambia, only arriving with a successful mission in 1855.\footnote{According to S.H.M Jones in writing about the history of the diocese, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries faced too many deaths and hostile chiefs to be able to stay in The Gambia, and only the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) missionaries were able to truly brave the harsh conditions. S.H.M. Jones, The Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas 1935-1951: Its Origins and Early History, (Banjul: Banjul Book Production: 1986), 5. As an SPG diocese, it seems that there may have been some rivalry with nearby CMS dioceses such as Sierra Leone.} From then, the Anglican Church in The Gambia has had a firmer footing, a
while we will see that it has had its setbacks, it has slowly moved toward being a self-sufficient diocese.

St. Paul’s, Fajara, will serve as a case study for the dynamics of Anglican growth and parish life in The Gambia. Ingrained mentalities could sometimes be a large roadblock to evangelization. Islam in the country has stayed entrenched and therefore has made evangelization harder for Christians. Evangelization methods used by the Anglican Church and St. Paul’s, Fajara, have not been fully effective. And finally the quality of church leadership has been inconsistent. This paper seeks to use this case towards an understanding of the unique Gambian context and the relative lack of missionary success. I will show that the entrenched mentalities formed by Islamic traders as well as tribal identity could be factors in making the Church small in comparison to Islam. To combat these entrenched mentalities the Church needed strong leaders. The Anglican Church in The Gambia in general, and St. Paul’s, Fajara, in particular, have been handicapped with too few leaders, and with leaders who did not have a wider vision to enact growth for the Church. This paper argues that this lack of visionary leadership, from colonial British mindsets, to the primary goals of many of the bishops in maintaining the status quo, to the inability to recruit and keep strong parish priests may have been among the chief reasons for the lack of growth of the Anglican Church in The Gambia.

Methodology

I spent about five weeks working in The Gambia in April and May of 2010, and the majority of my primary research came from that short time there. I chose to use St. Paul’s as the case study for my paper because that is where I was placed as a deacon. During my time there I scoured the diocesan archives in Bishop’s Court, Banjul, which is where all the St. Paul’s material is now located. More information would have been helpful. As Martha Frederiks has pointed out in her book, We
have toiled all night, the archives are not in the best shape. While I believe some cataloguing has occurred since the time she visited the archives, some of the documents are in poor repair. They have not been kept in ideal situations, and as such, even recent additions from the 1980s and 1990s show signs of mold, and being food for hungry mice and insects. This is not to say that all of the documents are in bad shape, but many were quite fragile, and I know that many of the files and documents from St. Paul’s have disappeared, since one of the Parish Church Council members reported that they sent all of their minutes and files to the diocesan offices to be archived, but these cannot be found there. In other words, there are holes in the primary document record, and as such, I am left with holes in understanding the inner workings of the Anglican Diocese and St. Paul’s Fajara.

Even with these holes, I have been able to gain a picture of the leadership at St. Paul’s, Fajara, and the Anglican Diocese as well as their evangelistic practices during the mid-twentieth century. The bulk of my research about St. Paul’s, in particular comes from the copious letters sent between the various bishops and members of the parish. These letters include communication between the clergy and bishop, as well as the secretary and the bishop, and even some personal letters from members of the congregation. These form the basis for my understanding of the ethos of the diocese and the parish. In the days before email these reflect a large amount of the

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3 Martha T. Frederiks, *We have toiled all night: Christianity in The Gambia 1456-2000*, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003), 19. The full description is as follows: “Documents are kept in file boxes, but are neither chronologically nor thematically arranged. Of most documents only parts remain. Even on the remaining parts, bookworms, fish-mots [sic] and mice have feasted lusciously. The archival material starts with the arrival of Bishop John Daly in 1935. No documents on the 19th century are available and documents after 1975 were not accessible.” In defense of the diocese, it is obvious that some cataloguing has been done since Frederiks was there. Further, I had some access to documents after 1975, but these were limited.

4 For example, several correspondences reveal that divorce and remarriage was an issue for being able to partake in communion. A couple new to the diocese requested to be able to partake since one member had been divorced and remarried. They were given permission as long as they met the bishop later on. Timothy Olufosoje, “Letter,” 7 January 1970. From this alone we can start to see
communication on the diocesan level, and there is little reason to doubt their authenticity since they were the primary means of communication for the diocese. I also was able to find some pamphlets created by the Society of the Gambia and Rio Pongas, a fundraising group for the diocese, which documented what was going on in the diocese to outsiders. Included in the archives were items pertinent to The Gambia proper, such as Educational Acts and investment opportunities produced by the government. Also included were documents about the West African Anglican Province from provincial gatherings and Synods. So while the archives are not as complete as one would hope, there is still a lot of data to be gleaned by looking at letters, and other documents.

The second prong of my initial plan was to gather oral histories from the parishioners. I had previously had some success with this approach, both formally and informally at my previous parish in Canada. I found that conducting oral histories proved to be too problematic. The first reason was that before going to The Gambia, I did not have a clear picture what the church looked like, and therefore I did not really know the right questions to ask. I therefore decided not to attempt a systematic oral research. Nevertheless, when people learned that I was interested in the history of the parish, they sometimes volunteered some informal recollections which I noted with their permission, and which I occasionally cite here. It is evident that oral histories could be an important part of understanding the Church in The Gambia, and should provide viable sources in the future. I initiated an email correspondence with Malcolm Millard, a former pastor of the parish. I also received a written memoir from a member of the congregation. Other than that, I mostly kept my ears open for recollections. I therefore have based my findings not on oral histories, but on written documents, mainly those in the archives, but have occasionally cited volunteered recollections, with permission, for purposes of illustration or perspective.

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the power of the bishop in the diocese, as well as the views on the importance of marriage and communion.
As with any research on a former colony in Africa, one cannot escape the issues of race and racism. At St. Paul’s, there has always been a mixed congregation of British workers and Gambian natives, and the issue of race did arise from time to time. I will show in this thesis that the Anglican Church (like other Churches) probably helped to form the identity of the Aku, over and against other African tribes in the country, as the most European. I want to state for the record, that I do not agree with the practices of white Europeans that actively and even unconsciously sought to keep the Africans “in their place.” Some missionaries worked hard to live with Africans and understand them, but many did not. I also believe that some people discussed in this thesis truly did have “good intentions,” even if today these may be interpreted as disingenuous. White Europeans have much to be blamed for in their conduct in their colonies. And mentalities in The Gambia were no doubt shaped by the experiences of people under British rule.

To help shape this paper, and give some foundation to understanding different mentalities, I am relying on two main understandings of how to approach different cultures. The first is the influence of climate on culture, as put forth by Sarah Lanier. This moves away from a racist view into a competing cultures view and addresses the issues of competing mentalities. The second helpful ideology is postcolonialism, which helps to give some structure for how to understand the interplay between colonial and indigenous cultures both during and after colonialism. Again, this helps to move from a merely race-based look at what happened, and focuses more on mentalities and the exchange between the two cultures.

Let me clarify what I mean by mentalities. The movement to use mentalities to understand historical process came from the Annales school, made popular by Marc Bloch and Lucien Feltre. As part of their histoire totale, they looked beyond the political and economic forces in history, to more gradual changes in culture and people. A good example of the history of mentalities is Johan Huizinga’s Homo Ludens, which explores the value of play in a culture. Patrick H. Hutton describes mentalities as “consider[ing] the attitudes of ordinary people toward everyday life.” My paper is an attempt to understand why the majority of people in The Gambia chose not to convert to Christianity, which at its very being is part of everyday life. The study of mentalities is part of cultural history, and as such, since my paper shows the meeting of cultures or mentalities, it uses some of the same terminology. Martha Frederiks advanced the ideas of mentalities in Church history when she proposed in 2010 that we stop looking at missionary history as pictures of individual missionaries and success stories, and instead focus on the intercultural history of Christianity. Frederiks states, “Historical sources and so-called ‘facts’ have to be re-studied and possibly reinterpreted, taking into account the role played by culture, racism, power-

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relations etc. in the weighing and evaluation of certain events. Generally, this will be helpful in understanding how the British met with the Gambian African culture, but it will also be useful in understanding why Christians in The Gambia primarily come from the Aku tribe.

Sarah Lanier’s book *Foreign to Familiar* uses her own experiences as well as those of others to bring to light how different climates affect cultures. For example, people in northern climates are more at the mercy of the changing weather. They value efficiency and bluntness. Lanier would argue that valuing efficiency may come from the industrialization, and the fact that northern peoples stay indoors more than peoples in hot climate cultures, making them relatively more isolated from one another. People who live in warmer climates, such as The Gambia, spend more time outside, and “live off the land,” which means they can always rely on something edible in the jungle. They value relationships, since in a hot climate it is not efficiency that keeps people alive, but creating friendships with those who can find things to eat. People in warmer climates would rather spend the day talking with each other than farming, and they can survive without the industrial complex so prevalent in the colder climate cultures. So there is an immediate clash of mentalities between the British and the Gambians, which can be explained more by climate than race, although it does lead to friction between the two races.

Postcolonialism is also helpful to understanding the dynamics of the European and the African interactions. This school of thought burgeoned during the second half of the twentieth

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9 Lanier, 19.
10 Lanier describes the difference between hot and cold climate cultures in how they approach offering food. In hot climate cultures it is polite to at first reject the offer, and then accept on subsequent offers. In contrast, in cold climate cultures people take a “no,” for no, and a “yes,” for a yes. Lanier, 8-10.
11 My friend Mike in The Gambia, who is from Canada, related this story to help make the mentality easier to understand. A North American came to The Gambia and asked a man why he was sitting around all day. He wondered why he was not farming or working, so that in a few years he could retire and really enjoy life. The Gambian looked at him, and said, “Because I can sit around and enjoy life now.”
century as a means to understand the relationship between colonizing and indigenous people. What is helpful about postcolonial studies in contrast to some other historical methods is that it does allow for some agency on the part of the indigenous people, so they are not merely pawns of the colonial power, while at the same time recognizing that the colonial powers did change not only how people did business, but also how they identified themselves.

Two authors in particular have helped to frame my understanding of The Gambia in a postcolonial perspective. The first is Ashis Nandy, whose *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* helped to start the study in postcolonialism by studying the effect Britain had in India. In it, he postulates what it means to be authentic to one’s culture. The British in India borrowed from India, but Indianess could never truly be a part of their authentic identity. On the other hand, the native Indians can only become truly Indian now by embracing both the native Indianess and the influences that the British brought with them. They can still be authentic by embracing both, and in fact must come to terms with both before reaching true authenticity.\(^\text{12}\)

Other postcolonial writers such as Frantz Fanon might disagree with this thesis, in that the Europeans have only complicated what it means to be truly African, or truly Indian. Fanon would go so far as to say that all that colonial powers taught the native populations turns to dust, and only by embracing “pure” nativeness can authenticity be retained.\(^\text{13}\) Yet both would see a refining process in the interaction between colonizer and colonized.

The other author who has helped to frame some of my thoughts is Daniel K. Richter. In his book *Facing East from Indian Country*, he explores what it was like for the Native Americans upon


\(^\text{13}\) Fanon argues that when native intellectuals return to their roots, all of what they learned from the Western powers is seen as “artificial sentinel [and] is turned into dust.” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 46-47.
meeting the British settlers. He argues that contrary to popular opinion, the Europeans did not merely take advantage of the Native Americans. He writes,

Almost everywhere they went, these Europeans found people trying to make some kind of alliance with them, trying to gain access to the goods and power they might possess, trying to make sense of their flags and their crucifixes, their Requirimientos and their sea biscuits. These efforts to reach out to people of alien and dangerous ways are more striking than the fact that, in the end, enmity won out over friendship. But most striking of all is the way in which the arrival of the newcomers exacerbated conflicts of one Native group with another: Mococo versus Uctica, Micmacs versus Stadaconans, Stadaconans versus Hochelaagans; everyone discouraging advantageous Europeans from traveling to the next town, but encouraging dangerous ones to pay their neighbors a visit.¹⁴

In other words, we have to recognize that in the case of Native Americans or native Gambians, what the Europeans did was not merely one-sided. The indigenous people did have agency in their initial relationships with the Europeans.¹⁵

**Historiography**

The Gambia has very few sources written about it. The best documented and the most recent book is Martha T. Frederiks’ *We Have Toiled All Night: Christianity in the Gambia 1456-2000*.¹⁶ This book is entirely on the church in The Gambia. She starts her book by recognizing the problem of the Church in The Gambia. Her title, *We have toiled all night*, is taken from Luke 5:5, and was quoted by Anglican bishop Timothy Olufosoye to show his frustration over the church in The Gambia. Christians have toiled for a long time in the face of Islam, and have not been able to

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¹⁵ Clearly there are plenty of examples in which indigenous people did not exercise much agency in the face of European powers. What Richter is portraying is that there was more agency on the part of Native Americans than is often depicted. This does not mean that colonizers are without fault for their actions, which in some cases decimated peoples, this is merely to point out that it was not a one-way street.

get very far. While Frederiks picks up on many of the themes that I also wish to portray, her book looks at the three main churches in The Gambia: Catholic, Anglican and Methodist, on the diocesan level. In her section about the Anglican Church, she focuses primarily on the failed Kristi Kunda experiment—an outpost school meant to give young people practical training and spiritual guidance. She barely mentions the other churches, and certainly spends little time on St. Paul’s. Frederiks’ main argument concerning the Anglican means of evangelism is that it has been one of presence, over against pure expansion. This, as we will see, was the comfortable mode for the Anglican diocese. Further, she argues that since the majority of Christians have been foreigners, there has been little contextualization of the Church in the Gambian context, which has led to its small growth. While it is true that the European bishops envisioned their role initially as a chaplaincy, each tried to make inroads into the Gambian culture; John Daly started Kristi Kunda, and Roderick Coote was fluent in Wolof and Fula, two of the languages of The Gambia.

Other than Frederiks’, few books on The Gambia are recent. Before Frederiks’ book, published in 2003, the next earlier book was published in 1972 by Charlotte A. Quinn. She too has the same complaint that Frederiks will have thirty years later: not much is written on The Gambia. Quinn concentrates her book on the Mandingos in The Gambia, and their adaptation of Islam. Her book is helpful for understanding how Islam became the dominant religion, partly because the Mandingos are the largest ethnic group in The Gambia. British writers, who were more concerned with the political and economic history of the country than its spiritual history, published the other books I have used on The Gambia, mostly in the mid-twentieth century. It must be noted, however, that these authors do write a few lines about the various denominations in The Gambia. These books of course give context to what was happening in the churches, but for the most part, they are

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17 Frederiks, 1.
unconcerned with Church movements. As such, this paper fulfills a specific hole in the research because so little has been written about the country and the Church in it.

The Gambia is so small that it often gets swallowed up into the greater West Africa region. One of the “classic” survey texts for African Christianity is Elizabeth Isichei’s *A History of Christianity in Africa, from Antiquity to the Present*. She mentions Senegambia, the old name for The Gambia, a grand total of three times. Other books and articles lump The Gambia into Senegal, or worse, even though they mention The Gambia as part of West Africa, they talk about all the other countries except The Gambia. Therefore, some of the work in this paper is extrapolation from things written about nearby countries.

**Missionary Historiography**

The role of missionaries in any country is rather complicated. Understanding how much they interacted with the colonial governments in Africa, and their particular views on the people they converted, can be quite tangled. Recently, more and more historians have moved to probing how much agency the Africans exerted during the conversion process; their answers have ranged from seeing no native no agency at all, to seeing quite a bit of agency as native Gambians struggled to meet their own needs, even without converting to Christianity. The earlier research looked at particular endeavors, such as T.F. Victor Buxton’s 1918 article on education in which he bemoaned the then current state of Christian education and lack of funds in the face of the policy of the British government to give full funding to Islamic education. It must also be noted that these earlier sources were primarily written by either missionaries, with an expressed interest to garner more

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20 Most notably an example of this is the Jackson Davis, “Education in British West Africa.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 15 no. 3 (Summer 1946): 358-369.
funds and resources for their work in Africa, or the government, which also needed funds from the taxpayer. In either case, both had an agenda.

The best overview of the historiography of the missions field in general was done by Andrew Porter in 2002. He shows how the field has changed from one of condemning the elitism of the colonial powers in the 1970s and 1980s, to recognizing the inbred agenda of early missionary histories, i.e., they were trying to raise funds. He argues that currently there is renewed interest in researching missionary history in light of the relationship between the Africans and the Europeans, as well as the changing attitudes of the European missionaries. He also acknowledges that for most of the scholarly world, these histories were deemed rather boring.  

This helps to explain why there is so little published on a country like The Gambia, and the role of Christianity there. Building upon his research, my paper will show the importance of the interplay between Africans and the British as a means for establishing the Church. David Lindenfeld continues this line of thinking, but adds more of a postcolonial structure in 2005 arguing for the push and pull of missionaries inside of a culture. He makes the equation that trade often opens the door for people to convert, seeing that another god is perhaps greater than their own. As we shall see, this is indicative of what happened especially for Islam in the case of The Gambia, but failed to produce similar results for the trade-focused British. His thesis only explains half of the religious climate in The Gambia.

In tandem with the imperialistic view of missions work, the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the independence movements in Africa caused people to reevaluate how the missionaries and indigenous people interacted. Scholars began to discuss how much agency the Africans played in the missionary movement. This development did not mean the eradication of

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looking at European elements, but rather the tension in grappling with them. Robert Strayer in 1976 focuses on the interplay between missionaries and the African tribal religions’ own natural progression. Instead of seeing the Christian missionaries as merely oppressors, he wants to give more agency to the Africans; therefore, Christianity “can be viewed as only the most recent phase in a much longer story of African religious development and change. Thus mission studies can tie into a central current concern of African history as well as participating in the history of the expansion of Christianity.”

Strayer gives missionaries almost a guardianship in their work of keeping tribal culture intact.

The dominant trend in missionary histories is that missionaries were simply one arm of the European oppressive regime, bent on eradicating African culture. For example, Peter Mark pointed out in 1980, “Just as Europeanized Africans were considered to be ‘civil,’ so, too, nonconformity to European norms was often equated with barbarism and moral turpitude.”

Neither is this mentality new. In the 1860s, the British Anthropological Society debated on how to best reach Africans, with some coming to the conclusion that they must be civilized before they can be properly Christianized. In effect, the missionary movement was to make new Europeans on a different continent. We can easily find examples of this mentality among Christian missionaries, but it must also be noted that we can find the opposite to be true as well.

Judith Shapiro joins in the imperialistic view claiming that while some missionaries attempted to only transmit the faith, they failed in doing so and instead they “only imposed their

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25 Strayer, 13.
Thus, missionaries did not engage with the culture in such a way as to give the indigenous population any agency. However, there is a bit of sympathy in the sense that some missionaries were indeed trying to transmit the faith and not the culture. By 1986, the trend had shifted toward condemning the European colonizers and missionaries for being oppressive and engaging in cultural imperialism. Steven Kaplan shows the different means of evangelization, including assimilation and Christianization. Kaplan reviews these techniques and shows that many missionaries, even while advocating some sort of agency for Africans, deemed them unable to help the church universal. He uses the example of the CMS in some areas, in which they focused on maintaining African roots for their converts, with the conclusion that the Africans had little to contribute to the rest of the Church, thereby reinforcing paternalistic views of missionaries. Overall, even though some missionaries may have been more open to African beliefs, their interest had little bearing on what they took away and brought back to their own culture. It is evident that even when missionaries attempted to either give Africans more agency, or tried to protect their indigenous culture, they were still considered to have been a detriment to Africans.

What is intriguing is that while Christian missionaries worked hard to make the Christian message intelligible in whatever context they might be, Muslim missionaries worked to make their new converts Arabs. In the literature I have read, I have not found much lambasting the imperialist

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29 Steven Kaplan, “The Africanization of Missionary Christianity: History and Typology,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 16 no. 3 (Oct. 1986): 166-186. He uses polygamy as a major example of how the European missionaries were unable to bend to the realities of African culture. The tension that then arose was between African and European clergy, as noted: “Whatever the arguments put forward by such missionaries it must be stressed again that they strongly differed from those (usually African) clergy who favoured polygamy and viewed it as fully in keeping with a truly African form of Christianity.” 170
30 Kaplan, 180.
techniques propounded by Muslim missionaries,\(^{31}\) which is summarized by Sanneh: “In the Arab heartland and beyond, ‘Arabization’ came to stand for ‘Islamization,’ and cultural identity for religious status.”\(^ {32}\) The historiographical treatment of the different missionaries has not been the same. While Christians have had to endure more scrutiny for their evangelistic efforts in Western literature, many Islamic efforts have not had the same level of criticism, regardless of their tactics.

The tie between colonialism and the religion associated with it, mainly Christianity, is spelled out by Gifford, who states, in 1994, “Thirty years ago, it was commonly thought that Christianity in independent Africa would become ever less significant, because it was associated so closely with colonialism, and depended so strongly on its school systems which would be taken over by the new African governments. This prediction has proved completely false.”\(^ {33}\) The Gambia does not fit this description of Christianity in Africa, but it must be noted that it has not disappeared from The Gambia either. The Church as a whole still retains influence in the country. Government holidays include both Muslim and Christian ones, including Ascension Day, and the Anglican bishop is often asked to attend government functions, but roughly 90-95 percent of the people in The Gambia are Muslims.

**Conclusion**

The Gambia is a small, predominantly Muslim country in which the Anglican Church has not had much success. Because the country has been often overlooked, the amount written about it


has been relatively small, but The Gambia has started to attract attention in the academic world, especially with the publication of Martha Frederiks’ *We have toiled all night*. Although the resources for this thesis are not as plentiful as they might be for other countries, it is still an important story to tell, and we have seen that there are sufficient resources to be able to paint a picture of life in the Anglican Church in The Gambia.

As we will see in the following chapters, a chief characteristic of Gambian Anglicanism is its conflicts between mentalities and cultures, as well as its inability to attract and maintain strong leaders. We have seen that this thesis will incorporate issues of mentalities and culture, and will also touch on the postcolonial aspects of identity formation. Identity and agency are two key aspects to understanding the state of the Anglican Church in The Gambia. By moving away from a primarily missions based history, this thesis seeks to understand the undercurrent of resistance to the Christian message in The Gambia.

**Clarification of Terms**

For a long time, the majority of the Anglican Church’s efforts were directed at the colony portion of the Gambia, or the Banjul area. A note of clarification is necessary here. The capital city, Banjul, was named Bathurst during the British management of it, so at times I will be using Bathurst and at other times Banjul; these are interchangeable for the same area. The name changed back to Banjul (the area had been known as Banjulo before British occupation) when The Gambia declared its independence. Therefore, The Gambia was divided into the colony of Bathurst, and the protectorate. Bathurst encompassed the city and immediately surrounding area, also known as the Kombo or Combo region, which included Bakau and Fajara.

There is also a point of clarification about the name The Gambia. The Gambia derives its name from the river it encapsulates, and the treaties between the French and the English marked its
boundaries. The addition of “The” at the beginning of the name helps to delineate it from Zambia and a city named Kambia. Mail would get directed to these places as well as to The Gambia, so the government officially added the “The” to lessen confusion. However, the Anglican Diocese of the Gambia and Rio Pongas has a lower case “the” since it is named after the rivers in The Gambia and Guinea.

Finally, the local Islamic leaders are often referred to as marabouts, pronounced “mara-boos”. These people lead the smaller Qur’anic schools, lead prayers for the communities, and fashion jujus or fetishes for protection. They are paid for their services in cash or kind, and are revered for their place in the community.
Chapter Two: Background of The Gambia

The state of the Anglican Church and St. Paul’s, Fajara in the twentieth century, and in particular its inability to make considerable headway in conversion and growth, are intertwined with the mentality of the people, which was molded in the centuries before St. Paul’s existed. In this chapter, we will explore the Islamic milieu, and the role of the British that opened the doors for the Anglican Church, both of which contributed to how Gambians perceived the Church. Since the majority of my interest lies in the mid-twentieth century, I will be relying on secondary documents to describe the country of The Gambia. We will see how Islam made slow but steady inroads into the country, but it did not become the majority religion until around the turn of the twentieth century; before then, traditional African religions were the major religions. The slow and steady, almost non-confrontational approach allowed the Gambians to adapt to it slowly. This slow movement influenced the Gambian mentality for accepting Islam and rejecting Christianity.

The Gambia: The country

The Gambia is the smallest African country. Located on the Western side of Africa, it is encapsulated by Senegal. The Gambia River runs through the middle of the country with a few miles on either side belonging to The Gambia. Even though it is small, four major tribes along with smaller tribes occupy the area. Different languages, geographical regions, and income sources demarcate the tribes. The Fula, for example, speak Fula, are lighter skinned than other tribes, and are predominantly cattle herders, and are almost entirely Muslim. The Mandinka, the largest tribe, is located further inland, and are more reliant upon the land, and are predominantly Muslim. The
Wolof live closer to the seacoast, and in the Banjul area Wolof is the lingua franca. Of these only a handful of individuals are Christian. The largest group that is predominately Christian is the Aku. What differentiates the Aku from the other tribes is that they are not originally ethnically linked. Instead, they are a group that formed from freed African slaves, some coming from Sierra Leone, and others from other parts of West Africa. Since many did not know their place of origin, or feared returning in case of recapture, they reconstructed a new sense of identity in The Gambia, which centered on Christianity. While they have their own dialect or language, it is actually based upon a mixture of English and probably Yoruba. Listening to it, an English speaker may get the gist of what is being said.

The Gambia is a peaceful and stable country due to its people’s tolerance and lack of natural resources. Starting from the British colonization period, The Gambia’s major export was the groundnut, or peanut. This cash crop has continued to be a major part of its economy, along with fish and tourism. The Gambia does not have other minerals, such as gold, diamonds, or nickel, and therefore it has not endured recent trade wars as other African countries have. It has been able to maintain a somewhat stable government, again because there has been little conflict over resources or tribal instability. It is currently a secular republic, with democratically elected officials. Even though ninety percent of the population professes Islam, this does not seem to have made the country partial to Shari’a law.

34 Frederiks, 69
35 For example, instead of saying, “How are you?” Aku will say, “How da body?”
37 It must be noted that although they are technically “democratic” the current leader, Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, acquired his position through a coup d’état, and has not lost it since. Some would classify the regime as a benevolent dictatorship.
The majority of people do not wish to engage in evangelism, since they are complacent and non-confrontational in the face of either Islam or Christianity.

What initially brought the British to The Gambia was not the peanut, but the slave trade. The Gambia was one of the major slave trading posts, with its main outpost at James Island, further inland along the Gambia River. While slavery was not uncommon among the African tribes, slaves before European contact normally came from war, and held a specific place in the society. Granted this was not a high level, but some slaves could expect to earn their freedom, or work their way up through the ranks. Selling slaves to the British and the French, the Africans did not necessarily understand the difference in their form of slavery, and the form of slavery their countrymen and women were bound for.

The slave trade molded the country in more ways than one. Some have argued that the reason why the Gambia is so narrow, is that it was the length that a man could go in one day from the river and back on slave expeditions. Another is that that was how far the British gunboats could fire. Both of these probably hold some truth, along with the diplomatic relations between Britain and France, which had to agree on drawing the borders. Further, when Britain finally outlawed the slave trade in 1807, Britain established a full-time colony at Bathurst, to patrol all boats coming from The Gambia and headed out for sea.

39 From the Office of the President: “Despite the fact that Muslims are in the majority, all religions enjoy a peaceful and harmonious co-existence. Although Islam is the predominant religion, the country is a secular state, which promotes respect for all cultural, religious and traditional values. The constitution guarantees freedom to all to practice the religion of their choice. In this light, it is a traditional practice in the Gambia for all official functions to be opened with prayers by a Christian priest and a Muslim Imam.” “Religious Tolerance,” from The Office of the President, The Republic of The Gambia, accessed at <http://www.op.gov.gm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=85>, accessed on 10 March 2012.

The Rise of Islam

Understanding how Islam became the largest religion in The Gambia will help us to understand why Christianity has failed to gain many converts. For this section, I am relying heavily upon the work of J. Spencer Trimingham,41 Charlotte A. Quinn,42 and Martin A. Klein,43 as well as other secondary sources. Trimingham and Quinn have done work on Islam in Africa, and Trimingham has also delved into Islamic history itself, while Klein is an Africanist at the University of Toronto. Since the majority of my paper is concerned with the effects of already ingrained Islam, I will rely on their knowledge as to how Islam came into the country and made its initial mark.

The rise of Islam has been a slow process for much of The Gambia. The current religious demographic is approximately 90 percent Muslim, 8 percent Christian and 2 percent traditional African religions.44 The numbers were not always this way; in fact it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that Islam began to become the majority religion, with some people estimating that the final push to predominant majority came during the 1920s when the Fula converted to Islam. Arriving no later than the eleventh century, Muslim traders slowly made inroads into the Gambian society. These traders made themselves invaluable to the Gambian kingdoms and infiltrated all levels of society. Trimingham posits that the inroads of Islam were for the most part peaceful in West Africa. This non-threatening approach allowed the Gambian tribes to warm up to Islam slowly. The trading towns allowed the Muslims to practice their religion, unlike the tribal

centers in which tribal religion would be more important. Although Islam started on the fringes of society, it moved into the center of it, and therefore the conquest of the society in the name of Allah became easier.

Muslims’ progress into West Africa might have been slow, but it has been quite steady. When the Portuguese arrived in the fifteenth century, there were “Moors at the Wolof courts.” By the mid-nineteenth century, “Muslim clerics had established themselves in nearly all of the Mandingo states of the Gambia. There were communities of practicing Muslims of every ethnic background except Jola and Serer, who generally retained their traditional religion.” According to Charlotte A. Quinn, although they were never allowed to hold positions of power inside the hierarchy such as king or nobles, the Muslims did become prominent advisors and scribes. By holding these positions of power and influence, the Muslims were able to gradually evangelize the country. Their influence as advisors for the elite helped in their evangelistic efforts.

The Muslim traders had easy access to infiltrate the ruling elites of the country. Due to their ability to read and write, they were in demand for their skills. Further, as Martin A. Klein finds, the lingua franca in writing and trade increasingly was Arabic, the language of the Qur’an and of Islam. This particular ability to communicate to many peoples in the region increased the elites’ power, and made the transmission of Islam faster and easier. Trimingham argues, “All north Sudan states,

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45 Trimingham, 31. He argues, “Commercial towns naturally were attracted to Islam.” While this may be true, he does not spend much time illuminating it. It may be fairer to say that Islam was attracted to commercial towns, since many of the traders were initially Muslim, and these towns were free to practice their own religion.
46 Klein, 427.
47 Quinn, 57. She points out that the French explorer L.H. Hecquard made the observation that those practicing true Islam were in the minority in the mid-nineteenth century. Those practicing either traditional African religions or a mixture of the traditional and Islamic customs were the majority.
48 Quinn, 54.
49 Klein, 425.
except the Mossi, adopted Islam as the imperial cult." Islam heightened the ruler’s power and “caused no breach between him and the community, and he never thought of imposing it upon his subjects.”

In trade and high levels of influence, these missionaries were very successful. I also would say that the new religion had one particular strength: the missionaries were black. The Takrur, arguably the first sub-Saharan African converts to Islam by the mid eleventh century, lived primarily in West Africa, and may have inhabited parts of The Gambia. Trimingham shows that the Takrur were “missionaries extending [Islam] among Wolof, Susu, Mandinka groups, Fulbe, Haus, and Kanuri.” A slow process between equals corresponds to the fact that the Christian Church saw the greatest amount of converts not when white missionaries worked in an area, but rather when the Church grew from one African to another. Islamization has taken centuries for The Gambia, and only became complete in the last one hundred and fifty years, in contrast to the Christianization of The Gambia, which began only about one hundred and fifty years ago. The slow moving process for Islam to become entrenched has made it so much more influential on the Gambian mentality than the late arriving Christianity.

The institution of Islam varied throughout the country, and no one should suppose that each tribe was unified in its practice. While Islam initially influenced many rulers, this does not mean that all of them followed a purist form of Islam. As Klein points out, some of the rulers who were Muslim were perhaps not good Muslims, like Musa Molo. Molo surrounded himself with Muslims

50 Trimingham 37
51 Trimingham, 37.
53 Trimingham 47. Al-Naqar is unsure if their missionary activities were the result of peaceful evangelism or war. Al-Naqar, 367.
54 As an example, Isichei, 247-248, in which she describes the Golden period in East Africa as when the white missionaries were gone because of World War I. Frederiks also makes the example of the Mulattoes in West Africa who adapted Portuguese Christianity and made it their own. Frederiks, “Mission or Submission,” 82
and marabouts, but he also drank alcohol. This one aspect of his character would impinge on his being able to claim full Muslim status. Although Islam was greatly syncretized, some aspects remained important, such as abstaining from alcohol, reading the Qur'an, and praying. We are unsure how much of Islam Molo adapted for himself, and how much he used it to gain control of his area. There were other Muslim leaders who were truly devout, such as Ma Ba; a firm follower of the five pillars, he even prayed before taking over a village. But he did not set up any kind of systematized state, and therefore Islam did not become systematized either.

The meeting of Islam and traditional African religions meant, and continues to mean, a certain level of syncretism. When asked if the converts gave up their old beliefs, Jere Sameteh, a Muslim cleric living in the 1970s answered, “They lessened their beliefs in jalang when we came here to settle.” A full adaptation of Islamic beliefs and the full relinquishing of one’s old religion were not required. Conversion happened peaceably because the Muslims were able to fulfill a needed role in society. Marabouts were particularly sought after for their work with jujus. These amulets, which held verses of the Qur’an, were believed to protect the wearer from anything from snakebites to enemy arrows. Wright writes, “Moriya is the work of the marabout, the arts of magic, protection, and divination the Muslim cleric practices for those in need.” The work of magic is not typically

55 Klein, 433.
56 Klein, 433.
57 Klein 434.
59 Wright, 93. Quinn also makes the point when she states, “Muslim priests were welcomed by nonbelievers, as well as by those who had been converted to Islam, for their skills in education, magic, and medicine. They enjoyed a high status in the communities they visited. Though barred from holding office within the traditional political hierarchy of the Mandingo states, they frequently served as advisers to the rulers. Because of their literacy and wide commercial connections, they could offer a variety of services,” 54. This gives further evidence that the Muslims first inhabited a useful position in the society, and through these positions, were able to gain support and evangelize to the nation.
associated with Islam, nor is belief in amulets, but rather the complete and utter devotion to Allah, and the five pillars of faith. Even though jujus were not a part of historic Islam, they became a part of Gambian Islam. This also shows why Islam may have cemented itself into the culture. They were not afraid to take parts of the culture and make it their own. They found a niche in the Gambian society that allowed them to practice their religion, while at the same time they seemed “normal” to the Gambians.\textsuperscript{60}

The Islamic theology that allowed the missionaries to acculturate to traditional African religions was Sufism. This esoteric branch of Islam recognizes the mystical, and is more open to the idea that Allah is working in many ways to bring people to him, so that not all Muslims will worship in the exact same way. It is not as hard-line as some strains of Islam, such as the Shi’a, and is more concerned with communion with God. Sameteh illustrates this more peaceful way of evangelism than jihad. He told Donald R. Wright: “Gradually many converted on their own accord. If you lived with a Soninke it was easy to convert him. During Muslim feasts many Soninke converted. The Soninke did not prevent anyone from converting to Islam.”\textsuperscript{61} When asked how they converted people, he answered, “We shaved their heads, washed them clean, and initiated them to the Koran on a slate and on their palms. Then we taught them until they were as able as we.”\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60} Owen supports this when he writes, “Neither must we suppose that the doctrines of the Koran are received intact. Many of the pagan superstitions of the country are everywhere, in a greater or less degree, blended with them, whilst the evidence of Captain Clapperton and Major Gray shows that, as with the Felatas and the people of Bondou, those brought under its teachings, whilst they keep up the appearance of religion outwardly, have little of its inward influence.” Owen, cxc.

\textsuperscript{61} Wright, 121.

\textsuperscript{62} Wright, 128. It is also important to point out that these people were converting from animist and somewhat polytheistic religions to monotheism. In his book, \textit{Cities of God}, Rodney Stark argues that conversion is easier from polytheistic to monotheistic religions, and further that once converted to a monotheistic religion, such as Islam, it is therefore harder to convert to another monotheistic religion. He also argues that monotheism will eventually win out polytheism in any setting because the monotheists become active missionaries. This seems to be true for The Gambia, where the majority of people now are monotheistic Muslims, but will not make the change to Christianity. Rodney Stark, \textit{Cities of God}, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 3-4.
process did not require that someone fully understand or believe Islam, but that they had a
willingness to follow the religion. After their conversion, the work of education began.

Most of The Gambia’s conversion to Islam has been peaceful, but some converted in the
midst of war. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Mandinka tribe was embroiled in
what has come to be known as the Soninke-Marabout war, which fought over how to properly be
Muslim. This mostly took place closer inland, but did reach the coast on occasions. The end result
was that the Mandinka are primarily Muslim. This extended civil conflict is the only one in recent
history in The Gambia to be fought over religion. While Islam does play a part in politics in the
country, it has not brought war to the area for over one hundred years. The later conversions of the
Fula to Islam in the 1920s, for example, were not related to an armed conflict. Therefore, while
some conversions are related to armed conflict, the majority may still be attributed to a long
presence of Muslims in the country.

The Effects of Islam

Perhaps the greatest impact that Islam exerted on The Gambia has been to be a binding
agent for the people. According to E.W. Blyden, writing in 1901, Islam more than any other factor,
and especially more than Christianity, has been able to bring different Africans together. He argues
that it was a color-blind religion, and that it “makes room for all.” For the Africans, Islam
represented a way to get past tribal issues. Hamilton A.R. Gibb contributes to this thought by
saying Islam creates social levels in which everyone knows their place and functions for the most
efficient society. Recently, anthropologist Mahir Şaul concurred with Blyden when he argued that

1902): 27.
64 Hamilton A.R. Gibb, “The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World (II),” International Journal of
Middle East Studies 1 no. 3 (July, 1970): 222.
to understand West Africa, we needed to put “Islam near the center of our training and thinking—as a major ingredient of West Africa’s historical heritage, and not as a ‘foreign’ incursion.” It cannot be taken as a peripheral matter, but has become part of the heart of what it means for many Africans to be African.

These unifying features in Islam, disregarding the internal conflicts and fractures that Islam has faced during its history, stand out even more prominently against the seemingly discordant features of Christianity. Whereas Muslims could all agree on issues such as specific fast days such as Ramadan and the importance of the Arabic Qur’an, Christian groups differed greatly in practices and doctrine. Different Christian groups fasted or did not fast at different times, and there did not seem to be instruments of unity for the different Christian groups. Moreover, Blyden argues that the Africans saw two main objections to Christianity. First, it was a dissocializing influence that disintegrated families by pushing people to make decisions on their own, and second, that there was an inherent caste system in Christianity. As part of cultures that value community thinking and relationships, West Africans viewed Christianity as a threat with its emphasis on a personal decision for Jesus. Second, Christianity was seen as directly opposite in its assumptions and practices to what many saw in Islam, in which the rich gave more to the poor, and which was seen more as an equalizer than a caste maker.

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67 One need only look at the different theologies and practices surrounding Holy Communion, an act that is supposed to bring Christians together, to see that it is often used as a means of disunion instead of unity.
68 Blyden, “Koran,” 168.
69 Timur Kuran asserts that the opposite is true. He also discusses how Islamic economists have claimed that and Islamic economic system would erase injustices. See Timur Kuran, “On the Notion of Economic Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 21 no. 2 (May, 1989): 171-191.
The particular style of Islam practiced in West Africa does not represent Islam as a whole, and has sparked some problems. Students going to Saudi Arabia have returned to find that the African form of Islam is not considered as pure as that practiced on the Arabian Peninsula. Some such as Momodou Darboe argue that The Gambia today is currently moving ever so slowly to a more fundamentalist type of Islam. He argues that this coincides with the return of Gambian students from Saudi Arabia, and the coup d’état by Jammeh. By trying to garner more Islamic support, Jammeh courted the help of Libya, and embraced a more fundamental Islamic dress. These overtures to stricter forms of Islam may appear alarming to onlookers; however, changing the average Gambian’s mind in regard to religion is a long process. The Gambians are slow to adopt religious changes as witnessed by the fact that although Islam was introduced to the country by the mid-eleventh century, it took almost nine hundred years for it to become the predominant religion. It seems apparent that although the leaders may start to embrace a stricter form of Islam, many of the people at the grassroots level will continue to mix Islam with traditional African practices.

Finally, Islam’s predominance and strength, having started in the eleventh century, did not allow much room for Christianity. Therefore Christianity was fighting an uphill battle for a foothold in Gambian society. A letter from a prominent Muslim leader to his flock makes this clear:

You do evil in refusing to obey my orders and in abandoning yourself to the Christians who have conquered the country by force and would make you embrace

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70 Momodou Darboe, “Gambia.” *African Studies Review* 47 no. 2 (Sept. 2004): 77, 79. He shows that as Jammeh has been in power, he has shifted increasingly from a moderate and tolerant Islam to a more hard line, including adopting Islamic dress instead of his military uniform. He also divorced his first Gambian wife, and married a Moroccan, to show his commitment to a more Arab form of Islam. Yet, at the same time, he still invites leading Christians to events, such as the Anglican Bishop, who will make appearances at government events. So I see that while he wants to court more fundamental Islamic support, possibly for more financial support, he is not ready to completely distance himself from the Christians in his country either. He has made it very clear that The Gambia is a secular state, and will not embrace Shari’ a law. “Religious Tolerance,” from The Office of the President, The Republic of The Gambia, at <http://www.op.gov.gm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=85>, accessed on 10 March 2012.
the Catholic religion. In acting thus, you abandon Islam for Christianity and change the divine laws of Mahomet for others, which are only the work of man. \(^71\)

This cleric’s letter would have been the admonition that some people needed to return to Islam, for fear of giving up divine laws. The strength of Islam, therefore, lay not only in the intrinsic value of its moral code, but rather in its gradual yet steady progress through The Gambia. By being wise advisors and magic developers, the Muslims created for themselves niches that allowed them to prosper. By the time Christianity did make an entrance in The Gambia, the people were far too entrenched in Islamic and traditional African ways to allow an exclusive religion, such as Christianity, to flourish. The initial religious climate was not conducive to Christianity’s growth.

**Britain and The Gambia**

Britain’s main objective in The Gambia was commerce. It had no desire to become embroiled in the governing of the country, although it slowly became more entrenched. \(^72\) The British had little desire to actually govern the country outside Bathurst, but was content to patrol it in order to stop the slave trade from continuing. I think that since they did not have any long-term plans in settling the area, the idea of mounting a spiritual conquest, as they allowed in some other areas through missionaries, was not appealing. Given its small size and limited resources, the British deployed very few workers to Gambia’s shores. At times there were only a handful of British administrators in the country. \(^73\) By not investing heavily in the administration of the colony, other

\(^{71}\) Klein 436, quoting ARS, 13 G 157, no 12 (1864).

\(^{72}\) Quinn, 73.

\(^{73}\) As A.H. M. Kirk-Greene points out in 1980, there were many obstacles to keeping administrative agents in The Gambia, such as disease and climate. In 1922, for example, there were only three officers for the Gambian Secretariat, compared to the Gold Coast’s twelve. Even later in 1957, there were only eighteen officers. So while many officers were recruited for work in Africa, roughly 1,000, only a very small portion of these was ever allotted to The Gambia. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene,
than policing the slave trade, the British allowed for a more laissez-faire approach to the governance of their colony.

With limited agents in The Gambia, the British proceeded to maintain a spiritual status quo. While missionaries did attempt to evangelize in The Gambia, most did not survive there more than two years, giving The Gambia the nickname, “White Man’s Grave.” Uninterested in a permanent settlement, some in Britain, I think, were willing to accept Blyden’s assessment of Islam—that it was an outgrowth of Christianity, and the form that Christianity naturally takes in Africa.74 As a prominent diplomat and writer, Blyden went so far as to advocate that Muslims should be sent to Christian schools, not so that they could become Christian, but so that they could be better Muslims, “not being tied down to customs which are unsuited to their environment.”75

It is not evident that this particular strain of thought ever became widespread in Britain. Other members of British society wailed at the apparent failure in converting the African Muslims. Some people, such as W. Winwood Reade, blamed the missionaries for being “knavish”76 as the reason for the lack of converts. He, along with others, also saw the need to civilize Africans before presenting the Gospel. Reade wanted to make the church a commercial venture, in an effort to “elevate the negro,”77 while Blyden took the approach that before one can elevate another people,

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74 E.W. Blyden, “West Africa Before Europe.” Journal of the Royal African Society 2 (July 1903): 373. He equates different animals to different religions, the reindeer for Christian Europe and the camel for Muslim Africa: “Religion as formulated by the Shemitic [sic] prophet of Arabia in the name of all prophets is the camel in the sands of Arabia and in the Sahara. Both these will furnish stepping stone sin Africa for a higher religious life than man has yet attained to.” In other words, Islam was the natural and good religion of the Africans, and they should not be converted.
77 Reade, clxvii.
one must first understand them. To do this, he advocated people to “think Black.”\textsuperscript{78} What is curious is that Blyden advocated a good way to engage in evangelism, namely understanding and meeting people where they are, yet he nevertheless proposed that Islam is the African Christianity, which would nullify the need for evangelistic efforts. Reade, on the other hand, advocated a paternalistic understanding of the Africans, but actually wanted evangelism to occur.

Although Britain practiced a more laissez-faire approach to its governance of The Gambia, its presence still opened the door for Church of England missionaries in the country. As we will see in the next chapter, the first Anglican bishops in the country viewed their primary objective as providing chaplaincy to the British expatriates first, and not expanding the Church. Due to the trade directive of the government, they did not need a strong missionary presence to further their aims, and as such, even though both the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) did send missionaries, it was not at the forefront of Britain’s objectives. The missionaries who eventually made a successful start in The Gambia hailed from the West Indies and not the British Isles.\textsuperscript{79} As long as The Gambia produced the groundnuts and remained relatively stable, it seems that the British did not take much interest in the state of men’s souls.

\section*{Conclusion}

Both Islamic traders and Christian British colonists have shaped the Gambia. In a slow moving process, Islamic traders infiltrated the country and the mentality of the Gambians for a long time, making the transition more seamless. Since the Muslims in West Africa were more open to syncretistic beliefs and practices, this also made their religion more viable in The Gambia, than the

\textsuperscript{78} Blyden, “West Africa Before Europe,” 364.
newer exclusionist Christianity. The British by not being as proactive in their governance and economic policies also limited the drive of British missionaries. Being more focused on trade than spiritual conquest, they did not allot the number of government administrators necessary to make the same impact that the earlier Muslim traders did over the centuries. We will see in the following chapters that the only tribe that warmed to Christianity was the Aku; for them, Christianity became a part of their identity.

The British did leave a legacy in the country. The country as a whole still observes Christian holidays, even though Muslims outnumber Christians. English is the official language for the country. Britain will forever remain a part of the Gambian identity and mentality, and as Nandy would argue, the Gambians must come to terms with this interaction to be able to be fully Gambian.
Chapter 3: The Anglican Church in The Gambia

Introduction

The Anglican Church in The Gambia had a rocky start. There were missions in West Africa before 1855, but all the missionaries either died or left because of disease. It was not until the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) partnered with the Diocese of the West Indies that two missionaries, John Henry A. Duport, and Hamble James Leacock, were able to make an impact in the area. From then on, it has been a slow battle to gain some ground in the country. The Roman Catholics and the Methodists had already started to carve out a small portion of the population, the former via the Portuguese traders in the late fifteenth century, and the latter in the 1830s. Today Roman Catholicism is the largest Christian denomination in the country.\(^{80}\)

Slowly the Anglican diocese of the Gambia and Rio Pongas made inroads in the country through the Aku. Duport’s initial mission concentrated in the Guinea section of future diocese, but subsequent missionaries made forays into The Gambia.\(^{81}\) The Anglicans, along with the Roman Catholics and Methodists, discovered that evangelization to the Gambian Muslims was nearly impossible. The Catholics turned their attention to the indigenous tribes, and the Anglicans focused


\(^{81}\) Bakary Gibba goes into greater detail of the Anglican Efforts in the Rio Pongas in his dissertation, which outlines the inherent racism between the white and black missionaries. He argues that Duport’s inability to be permanently promoted was due to his race and not abilities. See Bakary Gibba, “The West Indian Mission to West Africa: The Rio Pongas Mission, 1850-1963,” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011).
their efforts on meeting the needs of the British expatriates in the country.\textsuperscript{82} The Anglican Church also ministered to the already converted Aku tribe, and since the main thrust of the Anglican Church’s mission in The Gambia after 1935 was chaplaincy and not growth, this meant that the majority of Gambians in the Church were Aku. As a conglomeration of freed slaves, these already Westernized Africans created an identity that bridged two worlds of being African and British. By embracing British ways of dress, culture, and religion, the Aku created an identity different from the rest of the Gambian tribes. As a community-minded hot climate culture, the Gambians maintain relationships within their tribes. Since the majority of native tribes practiced Islam, Christianity, as associated with a tribe imported from Sierra Leone, did not attract other tribes to convert. While there are individuals in any tribe who do not follow the dominant religious customs and norms, the majority conforms to the majority religion. Most Christians in The Gambia are from the Aku, and most Aku are Christians.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore, there are interlocking mentalities at work in The Gambia. The first is based on community and tribal life in which religion and tribal identity are synonymous. The second is that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Islam had made its mark on many of the tribes, other than the more recently arrived Aku, and therefore it is hard for the tribes and people to change to Christianity now that they are Muslim.

**Missionary Techniques and Identity Formation**

Inherent in much of the missionary work in the nineteenth century was the idea that the missionaries knew something more than the people they were serving. At the basic level their extra knowledge had to do with theology, but the perceived discrepancy in knowledge did not stop at the

\textsuperscript{82} Frederiks, *We have toiled*, 272.

\textsuperscript{83} There is evidence that Aku and Christian are somewhat synonymous, and most people in The Gambia take this identification as a given. The Anglican Bishop confirmed that most of his flock are Aku. When the pastor of House of Wisdom converted to Christianity, he was known as *the* Christian Fula, as in the only one in the country.
theological level, but went on to the civilization level, technological level, etc. For many Africans, this has led to an inconsistency between what Christians preach about native-led ministry, and what they actually did about native-led ministry.\(^8^4\) For example, Henry Venn realized that the African Church could not be dependent on the European establishment forever if it hoped to be a mature expression of church. He propagated the idea that the African Church should be self-sufficient, self-propagating and self-supporting. In essence, the African Church would eventually become an autonomous unit. However, lingering racism characterized Africans as unable to fully take over for themselves the reins of power. Seen as children, or simply lacking the mental capacity to govern themselves, the black Africans were coddled by the Europeans who often sabotaged efforts of a self-sufficient, self-propagating and self-supporting African church. As Paul Gifford writes, “The missionaries and the pastors they link with do not meet as equals; and the effect of this on the Africanness of the African churches needs to be researched.”\(^8^5\) In other words, there was an inherent power imbalance, and this made it possible for a more British flavor to affect most of the diocese.

As we will see throughout the rest of the paper, by not allowing the Africans to truly become self-sufficient and self-reliant, the missionaries ultimately made the Africans more dependent on foreign aid, which led to a mentality of scarcity. It is true that the diocese had many financial hardships, and has had to rely on foreign aid. Unfortunately, they have also had to rely on foreign help in the form of clergy, so they have had a history of importing outside clergy to minister in their diocese.\(^8^6\) They endured financially hard times, and without a domestic clerical training institution

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\(^8^4\) Gibba’s main argument in his thesis is that the racial divide, even among missionaries from the West Indies, prevented black and native leaders from holding positions of power. Gibba, 48.


\(^8^6\) For example, in 1951, Bishop Elisee wanted to recruit a European minister for St. Paul’s Fajara believing that the expatriates needed a European minister. Rigal Elisee, “Epiphany Letter,” January
their reliance upon other dioceses grew. Reliance on outside countries for money and clergy has produced a mentality in which the Gambians may doubt how much they may offer to their own diocese.

The Anglican Diocese of The Gambia credits James Leacock and John Duport for their start, even though the two missionaries spent most of their time in Guinea and not The Gambia. Other missionaries had attempted to brave The Gambia, but most succumbed to disease. By 1865, only one chaplain was appointed to The Gambia at any given time. Many of these chaplains did not survive long.  

Even though The Gambia at first came under the Anglican Diocese of Sierra Leone, a Church Missionary Society diocese (CMS), The Gambia has always considered itself an SPG diocese, and has adapted more of an Anglo-Catholic flavor to their worship. The Gambia has a rich high-church history, which offered a way for people to enter into the worship on a sensory level, in a way that could be reminiscent of the tribal religions which some had left. To borrow David Lindenfeld’s vocabulary, this is a more “extroverted” way of building the church, in that as you behave and belong, you will also believe. This may be why the Catholic Church is the strongest of the original missionary groups that went to The Gambia, since it focused on outward actions that would then influence the heart, instead of trying to change people’s hearts first. New converts could become accustomed to a different way of praying and worship before trying to fully understand what they

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1951. Also, in 1988, The Gambia welcomed two outside clergy, Malcolm Millard and Percy Quarcoopoma. The addition of these two priests increased the size of the clergy by 100 percent. “The Church of the Province of West Africa Minutes of Meeting of the Provincial Standing Committee Held at the Ambassador Hotel, Accra, from 27 to 30th November, 1989.”

87 Work in the colonies: some account of the missionary operations of the Church of England in connexion with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (London: Griffith and Farran, 1865), 179.

88 Lindenfeld makes this argument to explain why Catholics and Muslims had greater success when encountering indigenous religions than some Protestant groups. He makes the distinction between extroverted and introverted religions, in that extroverted ones are more concerned with actions first, and introverted are more concerned with an internal change first. Lindenfeld, 367-368.
were worshipping. This is also reminiscent of how the Muslims would make new converts, according to Sameteh as noted in the previous chapter. Outward behavior influenced inward transformation. Part of the reason why an “extroverted” approach to religion may have worked better in The Gambia was due to the fact that The Gambia is a “hot climate culture”. For the relationally centered Gambian culture outward behavior and actions are of the utmost importance for maintaining proper society.

As another means of evangelization, The Anglican Church in West Africa participated in a common missionary technique of setting up schools for children. The thought process for providing schools was that by providing needed reading and writing skills, children would also be instructed in the Bible, and in turn become Christians. Christian missionaries worked hand in hand with the British government to set up schools for the benefit of the children’s souls and outlook. Belief in the power of education to encourage conversion led Bishop Daly to create the Anglican Training Centre in Kristi Kunda, in 1940, with the vision of providing training for non-colonial office jobs. When the experiment failed to produce converts and was completely reliant upon foreign sources of income, the SPG, as the major contributor, pulled their support, effectively closing the school in 1955. Parents sent their children to Christian schools like the one in Kristi Kunda not to be converted, but to gain a good education. As Edward H. Berman points out, parents’ real reason for sending their children to Christian schools was often to ensure that they developed the language skills for employment in the colonial government, rather than to make them

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90 Priscilla MG Johnson, “Educational Services Development Opportunities & Challenges for Development through Social Action,” 4 in Education Series Folder. Johnson is not only an educator and principal of the St. Mary’s Primary School in Banjul, but she is also Bishop Tilewa Johnson’s wife and the current priest in charge at St. Paul’s, Fajara. According to Gibba Bakary, however, the Kristi Kunda experiment lasted until 1963. Bakary, 280. The Anglican Training Centre has undergone multiple envisioning; currently there is a training center at Farafenni for skilled labor.
Christian. Indeed, this particular means of evangelization yielded almost no converts. The Africans understood the value of church-provided education as a means to an end, the end being higher paying jobs and not eternal salvation. Church schools still exist today such as the Anglican School and the Methodist School, along with Baptist and independent Christian schools, but it seems they have left the assumption of producing converts in the past. Now they are part of a valuable network of schools aimed at providing education for all Gambian children.

Writing in 1918, T.F. Victor Buxton shows that although missionaries introduced education for the Africans, the secular British government took over the administration of most schools. Therefore, the primary mission of evangelization through education was undercut by British government policies. Buxton writes,

> At present there is often a strange lack of impartiality and marked favour shown to a Muhammedan propaganda. In Gambia, for instance, the Muhammedan school is supported almost entirely by Government, and that without having to conform to the code that regulates other schools. Its income for the year under review was made up by fees £5 3s. 9d. contribution from the Moslem community £20: and the remainder, £265, from public funds.

As Strayer points out, for most missionaries, this was their greatest fear, that the government would only support secular or Muslim schools. By providing educational opportunities without having to conform to Christian doctrine, the British government helped the overall educational system in the

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92 Frederiks chastises the Methodist Church in particular for failing to change their evangelistic tactic in the face of almost complete failure. Frederiks, *We have toiled*, 243.
94 Rennie Smith shows that the government saw education as part of its sphere of responsibility. Acknowledging that missionaries were often the first to start schools, the government was still inextricably tied to them. Rennie Smith, “Education in British Africa,” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 31 no. 2 (Jan., 1932): 63.
96 Strayer, 10.
country, but decreased the viability of evangelization through education. It must be noted that the amount of children receiving education was rather small. In 1921, roughly 2 percent of all children were educated, and in 1988 only 60 percent of children were in school.\footnote{Smith, 59 and “Education Policy 1988-2003,” 2.1} The impact that Christian schools had at any given point was arguably small.

Thus the goals of the parents and the educators did not always align. Parents sent their children to the Christian schools with the expectation of securing jobs for the children by learning English. Many missionary schools attempted to teach the children in their native language, translating the Bible into Wolof, for example.\footnote{Lamin Sanneh explores the impact of using the vernacular in the spread of Christianity across the world, and specifically in Africa in his book, \textit{Translating the Message}. His argument is that Christianity recognized the plurality of language and the necessity and ability to translate it into the vernacular, and that this has made Christianity less monolithic, as opposed to Islam, in which only Arabic is acceptable as the way to pray and read the Koran. As such, missionaries would have a singular desire to learn and teach the vernacular. This is also buttressed by Buxton, 216.} Also, the curriculum for Africans varied from typical British education in that it prepared the Africans not for clerical work, but rather manual labor.\footnote{Buxton, 220.} In trying to meet the spiritual needs of the people, the missionaries failed to meet the societal needs of the parents. Further, in cases where parents may have wanted their children to gain an education, but retain their culture, missionaries have been accused of cultural warfare. Abu from Sierra Leone reported, “It was soon obvious that the primary function of this school was to make Christians out of the boys, whatever their backgrounds or previous beliefs.”\footnote{Berman, 534.} The legacy of cultural imperialism continued into the late twentieth century. Priscilla Johnson questioned in 1992 if there could be “a new vision of Christian education in Africa [to] facilitate empowerment of people, possibly by rebuking the servility and a false sense of obedience which were instituted by the
colonial experience, [and] the missionary enterprise…?” What missionaries viewed as an attempt to bring the Gospel to people, was seen by the Africans as a way to keep the African in his place.\textsuperscript{102}

The inequality in the British government and missionary education system led to several outcomes. The first is that it prevented those Africans seeking to better themselves in British office work to fulfill their dreams. Second, since the number of children they reached was rather small, and it failed to reach the people either spiritually or practically. Finally, as a corollary effect, the Anglican Diocese had to rely upon clergy from outside the country to meet their clerical needs. Without a large school system within the country, it left few people capable of ministry work.

The negotiation between what the British offered by means of education, and what the parents expected from a British education shows that the Africans were not merely passive recipients. In contrast to a merely oppressive British missionary regime, the negotiating corresponds to Richter's thesis in \textit{Facing East}, that most of the Native Americans actively partook in the developing relationship with the British settlers.\textsuperscript{103} Africans utilized missionaries and missionary schools for their own needs, thereby creating a two-way street of negotiation, instead of a one-way street. By engaging in this sort of negotiation, the Africans created their identity not merely out of being African, but, as Nandy would argue, by also embracing the British culture. Berman makes it clear that the “Africans were no less adverse to using missionaries for their (the Africans’) own


\textsuperscript{102} Berman concurs, “Most late-19th century missionaries in Africa conceived of the appropriate education as a healthy dose of the four R’s…delivered in the vernacular. The insistence on the vernacular, as opposed to English, French, or German, grew out of the missionary desire to train a group of catechists who could communicate with the local people in the vernacular and who would not exhibit pretension to European culture which would alienate them from the illiterate masses.” Berman, 530. Further, the extent to which people have focused on English has eroded the confidence Africans can have in their place in the Biblical story, as argued in the \textit{Handbook and Syllabus for Christian Religious Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools}, 18 in \textit{Education Folder}.

purposes than the missionaries were for theirs.” By embracing two worlds, the Africans have created a new identity of what it means to be African. As we shall see in the following section, this has been particularly important to the Aku.

**The Aku**

The tribe that converted in the greatest numbers to Christianity was the Aku. Coming from Sierra Leone as a conglomerate tribe, the Aku, or Krio or Creole, population based their identity on being the closest to the Europeans. Some of the tribe were freed slaves from ships bound for the Americas and taken to Sierra Leone to prevent future slaving. Some members came from Nova Scotia and other parts of the Americas, and had either settled originally in Sierra Leone or Liberia. Gradually some were resettled in The Gambia since it was another British colony. As part of their Europeanized ways, many accepted Christianity, either from their time in the Americas, or by belonging to the tribe, so that by the time they were transplanted to The Gambia in the 1830s, most were Christian, and today most Aku are Christians. In fact, the Anglican Church in The Gambia recognizes that most of its African congregants came from Sierra Leone.

Although the Aku could see an advantage in being closer to the British in mentality and language than the other Africans, it could also lead to problems. As Christians, they viewed the world differently than their animistic brothers and sisters, and adopted some of the colder climate traits by living there for some time. Wyse states, “They recognized certain common traits in their

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104 Berman, 527.
cultures; proximity and shared experiences began to mould them through the process of osmosis into an identifiable unit...”

Yet for all their acculturation, they were not accepted as British. For example, Firth observed in 1947 that there were “asymmetrical relations between Europeans and educated Africans.”

Having initially benefited from their relations with the British, they wanted to acculturate more to British ways, and to leave behind their African ways. This could also be due to the fact that some may have forgotten their African ways while living outside Africa. Little observes that all across West Africa, and even as far south at the Congo, the Aku communities “constituted, in many cases, little oases of westernized culture.”

However, in so doing, they lost some jobs because of their inability to relate to their fellow Africans. In their adaptation of British culture, they initially neglected their Africanness, thereby dampening their authentic identity.

David Skinner and Barbara E. Harrell-Bond make the point that that Aku community was not homogeneous. Arguing that “evidences shows that the population was composed of people who identified themselves with many different ethnic origins and religious affiliations,” they try to show that people who did not fully understand the designation have corrupted today’s understanding of Aku or Creole. It is true that not all Creole or Aku necessarily followed all the same traditions, yet they did become a new tribe. In Africa, this sense of tribe continues to play a dominant role, and as such is more important than individualistic tendencies. So, if the majority of a

107 Wyse, 408.
108 Raymond Firth, “Social Problems and Research in British West Africa,” Africa: Journal of the International African Institute 17 no. 2 (Apr., 1947): 82. Wyse states that only Krio population of Sierra Leone, for example, were allowed to be educated at the Methodist schools. Wyse, 409.
111 Skinner and Harrell-Bond, 307. They cite Mr. Wilbraham in 1911, who in taking the census was the first to “officially” use the term Creole, but perhaps incorrectly. Wyse argues to the contrary in rebuttal to their article. He sees that the formation of the tribe occurred much earlier than the 1940s as Skinner and Harrell-Bond suggest. Wyse, 408.
tribe chose to adopt more British ways, then it was likely that the rest of the tribe would follow, for the sake of unity.\textsuperscript{112}

One of the ways that the Aku were distinguished from other tribes was their Christianity. By being the educated Africans as well as the tribe that professed Christianity, they rose to prominent positions in the country. Blyden observed, “All the leaders in Church and State, in society in all the merely ornamental positions are Akus. All the priests or parsons in all the churches, Anglican, Wesleyan, Free Church, etc. are Akus. All the Native Bishops that are or have been, from Bishop Crowther down, have been Akus.”\textsuperscript{113} Leadership, as we will see in a later chapter, is very important to the Gambians. Since the leaders in all of the different denominations came from the Aku, the majority of people in the churches were also likely Aku: this assumption is reasonably safe based on Africans’ hot climate culture in which relationships and tribal identity dictate social norms. The Anglican Church’s demographic in particular reflects the strong Aku presence due to the Church’s goal of chaplaincy and not expansion. Other Churches, such as the Catholic and Methodist, did gain converts from other tribes, and recently Independent churches have had more success reaching other tribes.

As a community minded people, non-Akus in The Gambia would find it hard to feel welcome in the predominantly Aku Anglican Church. Rodney Stark argues that social networks and prior relationships are pivotally important for conversion. He found that many people convert to a new religion if the majority of their friends also adhere to it. By contrast, converting without an already established relationship base does not happen frequently.\textsuperscript{114} In the case of The Gambia, most non-Aku relationships are within the boundaries of Islam. It is true that some non-Aku have converted. The pastor of Evangelical Church of Gambia’s House of Wisdom, a ministry geared

\textsuperscript{112} This also explains why some tribes are considered Muslim, or Christian or still tribal.  
\textsuperscript{113} Skinner and Harrell-Bond, 308 citing (CO/267/528).  
\textsuperscript{114} Stark, 8-11.
toward helping Muslim converts understand Christianity and reenter their own villages, is a Fula.\textsuperscript{115} At the time of his conversion, however, he was one of perhaps two Fulas who were Christian. He has had a successful ministry among Fula and other Muslim dominated tribes. This shows that while becoming a Christian from a non-Aku tribe is not impossible, people are generally more comfortable following leadership from their own tribe, or at least not from the Aku.

To summarize, in forming their identity, the Aku tribe ascribed to Christianity. As the tribe most acculturated to the British, their tribal identity became synonymous with being more Western. For them to be authentic, they had to embrace both the British and African sides of their culture. Other tribes may have perceived accepting Christianity as part of the Aku identity, and would not want to give up their own identity. In the hot climate culture of The Gambia, relationships and community are more important than individual choice or efficiency. Therefore, the mindset that most Aku are Christian created roadblocks for other tribes against conversion to Christianity. By not being able to overcome this pervasive mindset, Anglican leaders remained in chaplaincy mode, and the Church relies on its Aku base.

**The Formation of the Anglican Diocese**

On Ascension Day, 1935, the new diocese of the Gambia and Rio Pongas welcomed its first bishop, John Daly, from England. Originally the diocese had been a part of the Diocese of Sierra Leone. Growth in Sierra Leone coupled with The Gambia and Guinea’s desire for an SPG bishop, and the inability of the West Indies to continue to fund the mission, led to the decision to create the new diocese. Daly made considerable inroads into the Gambian culture, founding the Anglican

Training Centre in Kristi Kunda, and living among the people there.\textsuperscript{116} As its own diocese, The Gambia now could make its own decisions on issues of expansion and spiritual health instead of relying on distant Sierra Leone.

Upon arriving in the newly formed Diocese of the Gambia and Rio Pongas, Bishop John Daly outlined three main aims of his bishopric as follows:

1. To provide a spiritual home for those who had left England to live awhile in Africa.
2. To unite into one Church, people in the Diocese.
3. To extend Christ’s Kingdom through the Diocese.\textsuperscript{117}

According to his first mandate, he was not as concerned with bringing Africans into the Church, but rather maintaining the status quo with the white British, and then if possible extending the Anglican Church to include new African converts. By placing chaplaincy first in his mandate, Daly contributed to the inertia in evangelism, as well as solidifying the Aku’s identity as being the Christian tribe.

The Gambia’s first three bishops all hailed from the United Kingdom: John Daly (1935-1951), Roderick Coote (1951-1957), and John Surridge Pike (1958-1963). Pike ended his episcopacy in The Gambia in 1963, and was also the last of the white British bishops to serve there. All made efforts to understand the Gambian culture. Coote, for example, became fluent in Fula and Wolof (two of the local languages), and Pike built bridges with the Roman Catholic bishop at the time. However, by the mid 1960s, most African nations were beginning to gain their independence, and therefore there was also a shift in attitudes toward British bishops. Wanting to embrace their African identity, the Gambians in 1965 elected Timothy Olufosoye from Nigeria as their next bishop.

\textsuperscript{116} Frederiks goes into great detail about the effects of this ministry of presence, mostly that it made a large impact on the people there. Frederiks, 322-326.

It seems that while he was a proactive bishop, he met quite a few roadblocks that his predecessors had not. I am unsure if this was due to his personality or the fact that he came from Nigeria. In any case, his short episcopacy from 1965 to 1970 seems to have been one of change. For example, he introduced new service books to the diocese, which can always be a matter of contention. Jean Rigal Elisee, who hailed once again from foreign shores, this time Haiti, followed Olufosoye. Elisee was chosen to bolster the Francophone portion of the diocese in Guinea, since he was fluent in both English and French. It seems that for the Guinea side of the diocese, this really paid off, and they were able to grow, so much so that in 1985 the two parts of the diocese split into two new dioceses.

The current bishop, S. Tilewa Johnson, is the first Gambian bishop, and has been bishop since 1990. His episcopacy has been marked by a growth in clergy and in the diocese. One of the things that he is most proud of is that he has ordained more clergy during his time as bishop than all the others combined. He has focused on the youth, and has embraced new technology such as Facebook in order to reach the people of his diocese.

St. Paul’s

It was under Daly’s episcopacy that St. Paul’s was built. A growing expatriate British community burgeoning around the Medical Research Centre (MRC), as well as an already established Gambian population, needed a church in Fajara. The church broke ground in 1947. They had negotiated the land for the new church from the MRC, and even today, many of the British in the

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118 After his short time in Diocese of the Gambia and Rio Pongas he went on to be a bishop in Nigeria, eventually becoming the first archbishop of the newly formed province of Nigeria in 1979.
119 There is a general mistrust of things from Nigeria in The Gambia. Nigeria represents corruption and greed. People do not want to use Nigerian companies for fear that they will make inroads into their country, which has already happened. The largest cell phone company is Nigerian, as well as some of the large banks. I gathered this from various people while I was in The Gambia.
congregation work for the MRC and live onsite. When the church finally opened, it was the occasion for a large celebration, including songs by the children’s choir of St. Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, and of course plenty of food. Designed to meet the needs of the British expatriates, St. Paul’s highlights Daly’s first mandate to provide a “spiritual home” to the British. Therefore, it was not as concerned with expansion. Arguably, the parishioners who truly made it their home were the members of the roughly twelve African families who consistently attended. These twelve families provided the basis for the congregation.¹²¹

Giving an overview of six bishops is infinitely easier than trying to do the same with a parish like St. Paul’s. Due to the fact that at times the diocese had only two or three priests, parishes would share priests, or go without for most of their services. There was a certain fluidity for most of the priests serving in the diocese. I draw the reader’s attention to the timeline at the beginning of the thesis to gain a perspective of the priests at St. Paul’s. St Paul’s secretary, Philip Bridges, carried on a considerable correspondence with the bishop through the 1950s, thus adding credence to the claim that this has been a lay-led congregation for much of its early life. St. Paul’s attempted early on to find a suitable priest by recruiting abroad. In a letter to the congregation in 1951, Daly states, “With the growing members of Europeans, I have for some time felt that the Church should provide a European priest to minister to them.”¹²² Roughly twenty-five years later the sentiment would be continued in a plea from the SPG on behalf of Fajara and Dakar, trying to recruit a priest to go to these places: “Man between 30-45 years, but not strictly [sic]. Preferably single. Lots of experience necessary rather than academic.”¹²³ So it would seem that there was probably a revolving door of priests at St. Paul’s until Jacob Williams’ tenure there in the 1970s. While the bishop and the congregation attempted to bring British or European priests to work at St. Paul’s, it seems the only

British priest to have served consistently was Malcolm Millard (1982-1988), who was already in The Gambia working as a teacher.

As we will see, trying to recruit clergy is a recurring theme for the diocese. As a small diocese with limited resources, attracting competent clergy has been a problem. The early bishops certainly did not see their parish vacancies as retirement posts, but rather as stepping stones for persons early in their ministry. All three British bishops moved on to other dioceses. Coote and Pike returned to Britain, while Daly went on to other dioceses in Africa and Asia. Olufoyse moved on to the growing diocese of Nigeria, eventually becoming the first archbishop of the newly formed Province of Nigeria in 1979. The same turnover is true for St. Paul’s. With a small retinue of clergy required to oversee large areas, the bishops could not aim at providing continuity in leadership or developing strategies towards long-term goals. Maintaining a spiritual home for the already converted Anglicans was all the diocese could handle for much of its history.

Conclusion

The Anglican Church in The Gambia made its arrival after the Catholics, Methodists, and most importantly Muslims. The Anglicans in West Africa utilized education as an evangelistic technique, but it was largely ineffective. The Aku as a tribe were Christian as a part of their identity. As a conglomerate tribe originating in freed slaves, its Christianity acted as one of the binding agents for its tribal identity. The Aku from Sierra Leone were the first Christians in The Gambia. In a hot climate culture, these identities became ingrained, and made it harder for other tribes to convert. With the formation of a new diocese, the Anglican Church sought not to expand their spiritual influence to other tribes, but to provide a spiritual home for the British Expatriates and the already converted Aku. Therefore, without the necessary clergy or vision to create a larger diocese, the Anglican Diocese in The Gambia remained stagnant.
Chapter Four: Leadership in the Church

Introduction

Attracting clergy to serve in The Gambia has been a struggle for the Diocese. The success of growing Anglican Church in The Gambia depends on extending its appeal beyond the Aku and the British community, which together are only a very small minority. Another obstacle to growth is a wide attachment to Islam, which started earlier and has remained popular partly because of its syncretistic accommodation of animistic religion. In this chapter we will argue that the Anglican mission in the country has been ineffective in part because it has been difficult to recruit clergy leaders, and because it has been even more difficult to build a leadership group that is visionary and creative. In particular, the Anglican Church has suffered from limited resources to attract new clergy to the diocese, and a lack of indigenous training programs. As a result, clergy are asked to oversee larger areas of the diocese and undertake heavier burdens of responsibility than would be ideal, sometimes resulting in clergy burnout, and some clergy are kept on despite questions about their conduct. This chapter will consider what is needed for effective and visionary leadership in The Gambia to overcome ingrained mentalities of identity, and the following chapter will offer two case studies of how leadership has been ineffective and effective.

Leadership in the Gambia
M. Masango outlines an African context for leadership, in which he notes that leadership has traditionally taken the form of kings, priests and rulers. He states, “In Africa, a leader is viewed as someone who is a servant to the clan, tribe, community or group.”¹²⁴ He goes on to argue that with
the advent of Christianity, some Africans lost their leadership by collaborating with the Christian missionaries. This may be true, but I would also argue that Christian missionaries and clergy enlarged the group of those who were called leaders. Christian leaders garner considerable respect in The Gambia, as in other African countries.

If we build on Masango’s work, we will conclude that an effective leader in The Gambia has to respect the position one is in, as well as the people in higher positions in his or her accountability structure. For an example, a parish priest would have to recognize that he (most priests up until very recently were men) is not only a servant to the people, as Masango points out, but also is directly underneath the bishop. The bishop, as we shall see, is one to be treated with the utmost respect. By being able to negotiate these two positions, a priest will win the respect not only of his superiors, but also those whom he leads. Being able to live in this hierarchy, as well as meet people where they are, are possibly the prerequisites to effective leadership in The Gambia.

For Gambians, authority is very important. They are very careful about using the proper title to show respect to both authority and age. The bishop is addressed as “your lordship”, or “your grace”, and treated as a very important dignitary. He has authority not only in his diocese, but also in the wider country, often being present at presidential addresses and the like. Priests are always Father or Mother, regardless if the one addressing the priest is also a member of the clergy. Deacons are Deacon, just as doctors are always addressed as Doctor, even outside their professional lives, and most older women are called Auntie as a sign of respect. Gambians highly respect leadership and authority regardless of the immediate context. Therefore, the Anglican Church in The Gambia relies on respected leaders.

Leadership is not limited to members of the clergy, but includes the laity, the lay readers, and the ordained clergy. Lay leaders, such as lay readers, must undertake training for their position,

125 Masango, 711.
adding to the level of respect paid to them. Even those laity who are not trained can rise through the hierarchy which is often created among laity. Such has been the case at St. Paul’s. One of the chief lay leaders of the church was Dr. Sammy Palmer, who passed away in March 2010. From comments made to me about him by his fellow parishioners, and from my observation of what his role had been in church life in general and in vestry meetings in particular, I found it clear that this man had considerable influence on the church. He was referenced quite often when dealing with decisions, concerning what he would have done in a current situation.

But while particular lay leaders can be important in many ways, the expected locus of authority in most Anglican churches is the priest, and such is the case at St. Paul’s and in the Anglican Church in The Gambia. A scarcity of clergy therefore poses a problem for the work of the Anglican Church there.

A Mentality of Scarcity

The Anglican Diocese in The Gambia thinks of itself as dependent upon others. Indeed, for most of its history, the diocese has depended upon foreign money and clergy to meet the needs of the diocese. After Bishop Rigal Elisee arrived, he wrote to a potential donor saying:

I was not surprised to see for myself that not only is the Gambia the smallest country in West Africa, and Guinea one of the least developed, but the Anglican Diocese in the Gambia is the poorest, the most neglected, and the least organised of the whole Anglican Church in Africa. This is a fact!”

Elisee’s assessment of the diocese seems rather harsh, but the diocese did rely on contributions from all around the Anglican Communion throughout its history. The Gambia-Pongas Diocesan Association (GDA) formed in 1935 with the formation of the new diocese and in conjunction with the SPG among the Gambia-Pongas supporters in England and abroad. As a means to raise money,

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this group sent out a newsletter published in The Gambia updating donors on what was happening in The Gambia and Guinea, and even organizing trips from Britain to see how their contributions were put to work in The Gambia. The society was successful in raising funds from many dioceses in the British Isles, as well as dioceses in the Caribbean.\(^\text{127}\) The Diocese of The Gambia, while it is doing much better financially, still relies on foreign aid. As recently as 2008, the Diocese received a large contribution from the Diocese of Chichester. But notwithstanding this mentality of scarcity, it is not clear that, by objective standards, the Diocese is in financial straits. As of April 2010, the Diocese reported a surplus of 5 million Dalasis, which is about $200,000.\(^\text{128}\)

A similar situation exists at St. Paul's Fajara. At a Bible study one week during my time there, a long-time member remarked, “We are a poor parish.” But the week before, at the annual meeting, St. Paul’s distributed a balance sheet for the last ten years showing a surplus of about 2 million Dalasis, which is about $80,000. In addition, the parking lot had Mercedes and other fancy cars, with personal drivers. Many of the congregants were doctors or business people. But even with money in the bank, and the people clearly doing well, the mentality of scarcity is pervasive. This mentality can feed a feeling of having little to offer. The mentality of scarcity combined with issues of identity and community may help explain why the Anglican Church in the Diocese and why St. Paul’s in particular have had a hard time expanding their base outside of British and Aku.

A scarcity of monetary resources has led to a scarcity of clergy. At times there were only two priests in The Gambia. In a culture in which leadership and authority are held in high regard, the


\(^{128}\) “23 April 2010 Diocesan Development Committee.”
scarcity of clergy has been particularly hard for the Anglican Church and St. Paul’s. Churches shared the limited clergy of the diocese, therefore leaving some churches like St. Paul’s without full-time leadership. Clergy were stretched, often being required to cover multiple services in a day. Even with the allowance of a car and personal driver, the amount of traveling can be wearing on a person, particularly in a country where road conditions can be difficult.\textsuperscript{129} Without competent leadership, it is hard for the church to grow. Clergy have been hard to recruit, and without a viable domestic training center, it is expensive to train Gambian clergy. Relying on outside dioceses to supply their clergy reinforced the mentality of scarcity in the Diocese.

One of the biggest reasons for the scarcity of clergy is the lack of opportunities for theological training in The Gambia. Those in the ordination process have had, and still have, to pursue theological training abroad—most go to Nigeria, England, or South Africa. Beyond the prohibitive costs and measures of studying abroad for some members, it could be a very lengthy process of upwards of seven years before being ordained to the diaconate. After ordination to the diaconate there is at least a six-month waiting period before ordination to the priesthood, and for many it is a much longer period. These obstacles have deterred some people from even starting. So in a country where titles and authority are important, it can be hard to fill these requisite spots due to the inability to train new leaders.

Bishop Elisee did try to remedy the issue of indigenous clergy by trying to create a Training Centre, in order to combat Islam, and give Christian leaders better education.\textsuperscript{130} However, as always, money was an issue. Appealing to the SPG as one of the main sources of revenue, Elisee could not

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item As an example of road conditions in The Gambia, in 2010 the 116 km drive from Banjul to Dakar, Senegal, took eight hours. Having a personal drive, which would seem like an extravagance in North America, is considered a necessity in The Gambia, and for good reasons.
\item Rigal Elisee, “Letter to Viscount Camborne,” 9 August 1972, Bishop Elisee Folder.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
convince them to contribute to the project; the SPG argued that the diocese “is so small numerically that the training of ordinands ought almost certainly to be undertaken outside the diocese.” Moreover, the SPG took the view that such a center could not be sustained since the diocese could not raise the other monies from any other source. The result of not having such a theological training school in the country has been that the majority of their clergy until the current bishop have come from outside of The Gambia. While having outside clergy can be positive in the sense that they might bring new ideas, the result is a cultural gap between the parishioners and the clergy. For example, Bishop Olufosoye encountered roadblocks and a short bishopric as a bishop in The Gambia, but was a more effective leader in his native Nigeria. Kwabana Ameyaw-Gyamfi came from Ghana, and Christ Church Serrakunda preferred to have no priest than to put up with him commuting from Banjul instead of living in the parsonage. Further, it has made The Gambia dependent on the good graces of other dioceses and countries to either loan or relinquish their clergy to The Gambia.

In an effort to keep their clergy, the diocese did try to take care of them as well as they could. Part of the clergy salary and benefits package was the use of a car and driver, as well as parsonages to live in. The diocese contributed to pay for education and training outside of the diocese, as well as alleviate travel expenses. For the limited resources the diocese had at its disposal, they did try to make sure their clergy were adequately compensated.

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133 A.E.A. Sulston, “Letter to Bishop Elisee,” 13 October 1972, 2, Bishop Elisee Folder. They were rather harsh: “The leaflet clearly implies that all your plans have been worked out satisfactorily and that the Training Centre is a going concern. This is far from the case. As a matter of fact many of us at this end doubt very much whether you will succeed in raising the very large sums outlined in the estimates sent to me on 26 July. Certainly as far as USPG is concerned, there is no chance at all of our producing anything like £30,000 even spread over a period.”
The diocese was really not in a position to turn people away from being clergy once they were ordained. As we will see in the next chapter, by not being able to turn people away, the diocese has kept some clergy who were not really fit to remain as clergy. In 1989, The Rev. F. Alex York, for example, converted to the Seventh Day Adventist Church for about a year, and then returned to the Anglican Church with full clerical status and credentials because the Diocese desperately needed clergy. Jacob Williams, as we will see in the next chapter, abused the knowledge that the diocese needed clergy.

Another avenue for church leadership for some people were the offices of lay reader and Eucharistic Minister. The biggest differentiation between the two offices was that Eucharistic Ministers were able to help distribute Communion, and their position carried a higher level of authority. To become a lay reader entailed meetings with the local clergy and also the bishop, as well a course of training, before appointment by the bishop. The training included classes on Bible and theology, but this curriculum was offered sporadically at best. To advance to being a Eucharistic Minister required the candidate to have successfully completed the Lay Reader program, and have spent some time ministering in the church. At times people could not complete their studies, and therefore could not become fully licensed lay readers or Eucharistic Ministers.

The choosing of lay readers seems to have been somewhat political, and perhaps even racist. In parishes such as St. Paul’s, which had a mixed congregation, a bishop could appear to favor white European lay readers over black Africans. In 1980 Dr. Andrew Hughes, a white man, was appointed a lay reader. In a letter to the bishop, he made it very clear that he did not think it fair that he was the only one at St. Paul’s allowed to embark on this endeavor. He wrote,

I feel that if I alone am licensed, there will be a real danger of St. Paul’s having an elite European leadership, which I feel would not be a good thing. What surely is needed is to formally involve more of the Gambians in the congregation. Some of
them are just as spiritual (if not more so) than me, and just as capable and knowledgeable. The church is for the people, not for the elect few…”

He then went on to say that he “won’t accept licensing, if others aren’t allowed.” Hughes wanted Gambian people to have as many leadership opportunities as he had. I have seen no evidence to indicate Elisee’s motivation in not promoting the Gambian leaders. In the case of St Paul’s in particular, his choice of European leaders may be attributable to his desire to meet the needs of the British congregants. Bishop Elisee did try to start a theological training school for the express purpose of grooming indigenous leaders, so we cannot say that he promoted policies that only raised up British leaders. The training school failed because of lack of funds, not because of a lack of interest.

Discontinuities in episcopal leadership have also sometimes impeded the process for growing more clergy. From 1986 to 1989, the Diocese of the Gambia did not have a bishop after the resignation of Rigal Elisee in 1986. In 1987, they held an election for a new bishop, which proved inconclusive. Solomon Johnson and Emmanuel Johnson were the front-runners. There were issues with both candidates. Some people wondered how Emmanuel made it on the list since he was Liberian, and they wanted a Gambian for their sixth bishop. Even though Solomon technically won, the Synod called for a postponement and did not declare him bishop since he “was young,” and “in the opinion of some members, great care had to be taken in the election of a bishop lest the Diocese be lumbered with an unsuitable candidate for over a quarter of a century.”

In 1989, the Diocese finally relented when Solomon Tilewa Johnson was once again overwhelmingly

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136 Minutes of the Meeting of Synod Called for the Election of a Bishop for the Diocese, held at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Banjul on Monday 16th November, 1987, 4.
elected to be bishop of The Gambia, and consecrated in 1990. He has been the bishop for the last twenty years.\textsuperscript{137}

During the vacancy in the diocese, authority fell to the archbishop of the ecclesiastical province of West Africa, who of course was not able to give his undivided attention to the diocese.\textsuperscript{138} Some matters of importance fell through the cracks. Since there was no bishop, there are not many letters of correspondence between the parish and the archbishop for these three years. Without a diocesan bishop to shepherd and give vision, there seems to have been minimal growth for both St. Paul’s and the Diocese. Indeed, by Johnson’s second election, he was one of only two priests in the diocese, and was vastly overworked. Becoming bishop did not lighten his load of parish work, but actually increased it.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Gambia has faced specific challenges to leadership. Not having the financial resources to attract and equip clergy, the Diocese has relied on other dioceses to supply priests. Internally in the Diocese, limited resources have prohibited laity from becoming lay readers and Eucharistic Ministers. A scarcity of priests prevented Diocesan leaders from inspiring vision in any particular parish. Therefore, the inability for the Anglican Diocese to be able to grow and reach non-Aku people was greatly restricted by its inability to foster strong leaders.

\textsuperscript{137} Nana Grey Johnson, “Letter to George D. Brown,” 22 November 1989. Johnson won 29 to 11 against Jacob Williams. This rather dismal defeat caused Williams to leave the Diocese. It must be noted that Johnson stopped going by his first name, Solomon, after his election to the episcopate the second time, and has since used his middle name, Tilewa. I think this shows that he is embracing a more African sense of what it means to Anglican.

\textsuperscript{138} For those unfamiliar with Anglican structures, the parish is the local church. In some cases throughout the Anglican world, this may mean multiple church buildings in a given geographical area, but in the case of The Gambia the parishes contain only one church. The next largest organizational level is the diocese. Whereas the priest is in charge of a parish, a bishop is in charge of a diocese. Several dioceses in a geographical region are included in a province, over which an archbishop has power.
Meeting the specific challenges of leadership in The Gambia required certain qualities. Faced with a scarcity of clergy, the Diocese often made do with what was available. A successful priest in the diocese would be able to meet the needs of both the British expatriates as well as the African congregations. The priest should be able to cast a vision that would energize and inspire both of these groups, as well reach out to the non-Aku members of Gambian society. Further, since living in The Gambia requires building relationships and respecting hierarchy, the ideal priest must have possessed the ability to negotiate these systems. Willingness to travel and meet the needs of multiple congregations were also required of the clergy. Therefore, we will see in the next chapter, when these prerequisites are met, as in the case of Malcolm Millard, there can be considerable growth in the Church. On the other hand, when these needs are not met, we see stagnation and an adherence to the status quo.
Chapter Five: Two Case Studies in Leadership

Introduction

The scarcity of leaders outlined in the previous chapter demonstrated why it was so important for the Diocese in The Gambia to recruit competent clergy. In this chapter we will examine two priests who served St. Paul’s, Fajara during the mid-twentieth century: Jacob Williams from 1977 to 1982, and Malcolm Millard from 1982 to 1988. With sequential placements, we will be able to see the contrasting impacts that the self-consumed leadership of Williams, on the one hand, and the self-giving leadership of Millard, on the other, had on the parish. Under strong passionate leadership, the church grew and attempted to engage non-Christians in their life as a parish.

For this chapter I am relying heavily on my research in The Gambia. The bulk of my information, especially on Jacob Williams, comes from the archives of the Diocesan Office in Banjul. Typewritten letters between the bishops and Williams, spanning most of his career, the bulk

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139 Jacob Williams died in 2001, but Malcolm Millard is still alive. I was able to make contact with Millard to fill in a few gaps.
of which are from 1969 to 1982, make up the majority of the evidence available to me on this episode. There are jumps in the correspondence through this time, with the majority of correspondence centering on problems Williams had in parishes and with the bishops. As noted in the previous chapter, respecting elders and the hierarchy is very important in The Gambia. By the tone of these letters, we will see that Williams, unlike Millard, did not respect the bishops over him. I am also relying on some annual reports which have been salvaged for the Williams years. It must be noted that since much of the saved correspondence concerns problems between Williams and the various bishops, there is not much that has been found to shed a positive light on him as a priest. This could be because documents that might present a quite different perspective were lost, but since his own letters are included in the available evidence, we are by no means deprived of his point of view.

In the case of Malcolm Millard, I am also relying on his typed correspondence with the bishops, as well as a few annual reports and issues of Guiding Light, the parish newsletter started under Millard’s leadership, which have survived. The combination of these archived items span the time that he was placed at St. Paul’s. While sources such as annual reports always try to show a parish in the best light possible, the letters to the bishop open up more of what was actually happening. As a hierarchical diocese, formal letters were a viable and useful way of communication. I have exchanged some emails with Millard, which he has allowed me to use, helping to fill in a few gaps and add color to my understanding of what happened.

Jacob Williams

Jacob Williams seems to have been an interesting character and perhaps controversial from the beginning, but the Diocese bent to his will in order to not lose another priest. Ordained as a deacon in 1959 in Barbados, Williams was ordained a priest in 1960 by Bishop Coote in The
Gambia. Throughout his tenure in the diocese, 1960-1990, he worked at almost all the churches including St. Paul’s, Christ Church, St. Andrews, and St. Mary’s. He was involved in several incidents as well. From the historical record that is available, he seems to have been a self-centered man, and the incidents which elicited the most rebuke were those in which he sought to place his needs before the needs of the parish or Diocese.

Like many of the clergy in the Diocese, he went outside the Diocese to receive his formal training. Unlike some priests today who take an accelerated course load outside the Diocese, and rely on practical experience for the bulk of their training, Williams had an impressive educational background. From his record, he studied at Codrington College, Barbados, for four years, before which he had also received his teacher’s qualification at Yumdum in The Gambia, and he also took a year in a London training school in 1963. Later, in 1969, he completed a semester at Virginia Theological Seminary and an internship at a church in Missouri. Therefore, when we review his actions, we must realize that he was not undereducated, but it seems that even with all his training, he was not as effective a priest as might have been expected. After he finished his initial training and moved back to The Gambia, he was placed at St. Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, and he seems to have done his duties without much incident for a few years. The first indication that perhaps not all was well is found in a letter from his bishop in 1967. Bishop Timothy Olufosoye, bishop 1965-1970, wrote him:

“I have had six interviews with you since 1966 and I am sorry that you wilfully disobeyed my order and rejected my admonition. The strong reasons are that (a) It is God's will that you should serve Him faithfully as a Curate, working directly under some one. ...and (b) You are not out to lead as a Vicar or Priest-in-Charge...I am obliged to accept these reasons only because we still need your services.”

140 The Church of the Province of West Africa (Anglican communion) Clerical Directory no date Williams Folder.
It is not clear what these six meetings were about precisely, and it is also not clear when he may have started to be seen as making trouble. However, what I think is important is the Bishop’s final reason for keeping him on among the Diocesan clergy—they simply had no other options. The Gambia accepted a wide range of candidates, especially from among those already ordained. What was probably also a factor was the fact that Williams was Gambian. As the bishop was not Gambian, and many of the clergy were also not Gambian, they needed to retain some indigenous clergy.

Even with his apparent lack of obedience to the bishop, Williams had the opportunity to go to the United States for more training in 1968-1969. He spent a semester at Virginia Theological Seminary and then completed an internship at Grace Episcopal Church in Kirkland, Missouri. Before leaving, Williams had been placed for six months at Christ Church, Serrekunda as the priest-in-charge. It was understood that upon his return, he would continue his work there. I am unsure of all the details, but it seems that while in the U.S.A., he also endeavored to build a house in Bathurst, about half an hour away by car from Serrekunda. There seems to have been some trouble with the completion of said house, and he wanted to stay in Bathurst to oversee its completion when he arrived back home. To do so, he requested that he be placed at St. Mary’s in Bathurst instead of Christ Church. The bishop denied his request.

Instead of simply following the bishop’s orders, he appealed to the church where he did his internship in Missouri to appeal to the bishop. Williams even secured a loan from Grace Episcopal Church of $50 a month in order to complete his house. Williams convinced Arthur Steidmann, pastor at Grace Episcopal Church, to contact the building authorities for him to ensure the work would be completed. I can only imagine the affront Bishop Olufosoye must have felt. Here was a pastor of a church in a foreign country telling him how to run his diocese! In response to Steidmann, Bishop Olufosoye made his reasons very clear:
The Parishioners have been looking after his wife and family so well, paying electric light bills, rates and taxes since he left these shores. It will be grossly unfair to move him for this selfish reason even if we have a vacancy in Bathurst but unfortunately we have no vacancy.\footnote[142]{Timothy Olufosoye, “Letter to Arthur Steidmann, “ 27 May 1969. Jacob Williams Folder. Later, it seems that this loan became a matter of contention between Williams and the next bishop, with Williams claiming that it was merely a gift and not a loan, but it is possible that he could be referencing another loan.}

Clearly the bishop not only had his reasons for placing Williams back in Serrekunda, but was exasperated to have to explain himself to a pastor in the U.S.A. Moreover, it is hard to explain why Williams thought that the Diocese should accommodate his building project in Bathurst when it had already arranged with him that he would be placed in Serrakunda. In going away for training, Williams promised to honor his commitment to Christ Church, Serrakunda, but upon returning, he appears to have been more concerned with his own projects.

In the mid-1970s, Williams’ marriage started to fall apart. His wife left him and returned to Ghana to be with her family. Marriage is very important in West Africa. A divorced person cannot maintain his clerical status. Many people have what are known as traditional or tribal marriages. While these are considered legal in the country, the Anglican Church does not view them as full Christian marriages. Even to be a licensed lay reader, a married person must have had a church wedding. This can be a simple affair, and most churches will do it for free, but it is a necessity.

Following his separation, Williams in 1975 asked his bishop’s permission to go back to Ghana and reach a reconciliation with his wife.\footnote[143]{It seems that the people of Christ Church, Serrekunda were not happy about Williams’ performance of late either. Rigal Elisee, “Letter to K. Ameyaw-Gyamfi,” 29 October 1975, Rigal Elisee Folder.} To do so, he requested an 18-month leave. Williams worked in Ghana Diocese during the reconciliation. The Gambian Diocese further paid for his passage to Ghana. But the funds for return passage were not immediately available, as the bishop explained to Williams:
As you know our Diocese is a poor one, the poorest of the Church of the Province of West Africa, and we are striving to survive by begging to all Christians [sic] of the world. In view of the importance of your mission to your family in Ghana, we cannot let you down. After a lot of combination in our ‘already deficit budget,’ I have succeeded to cut from other Diocesan obligations in order to find this amount of D270.90 (two hundred and seventy dalasis and ninety bututs) to allow you buy the airplane ticket to go to join your family in Ghana. The Diocese does not promise to pay your way back from Ghana.”

To which Williams replied,

I would however, like at this juncture, to withdraw my previous statement of 18 months stay in Ghana. It will therefore be unrealistic to say now that I am going to Ghana for 18 months, at the end of which I shall return to the Gambia with my family. In the light of your refusal to secure our return passage, which is very much impossibility for me to effect, I certainly will not return, even at the completion of 18 months, at Holy Trinity Cathedral. In light of that statement too, I am now seriously and conscientiously reviewing every spectrum of my position with the Diocese.

Williams knew he was in a position of power vis-à-vis the bishop, and exploited the lopsided relationship for his own gain. What is important about this interchange is that the mere threat of not returning secured the necessary monies for Williams. This sort of relationship is not healthy for any organization.

Williams eventually extended his leave by six months after he arrived in Ghana. Both Williams and his wife begged and pleaded to have his leave extended, and the bishop relented. While many people will recognize that marital problems are not solved overnight, the bishop must have thought that two years was more than generous to fix any rifts.

When Williams returned to The Gambia in 1977, he again took over duties at both Christ Church Serrekunda and St. Paul’s, Fajara. Little evidence of his work there, either positive or

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144 Rigal Elisee, “Letter to Jacob Williams,” 29 September 1975, Jacob Williams Folder. It is also important to note that the bishop states that he cannot promise the funds, not that he would not be able to help out at all. A lot can change in 18 months.
negative, appears for the next five years, other than a chastisement in 1979 for taking his vacation without following the proper protocols.¹⁴⁶

Under his direction, St. Paul’s seemed to hold a delicate status quo. After his first year at St. Paul’s, 1976—1977, the attendance dropped from 46 to 42.¹⁴⁷ A loss of four persons is not large numerically, it was proportionately significant, and it certainly fell short of the growth for which some might have hoped. In contrast, under the previous priest, Kwabana Ameyaw-Gyamfi (1975-1977), St. Paul’s saw some growth. In 1976 Ameyaw-Gyamfi baptized five new members, two adults and three infants, and presented two others for confirmation. Moreover, the church undertook the building of a new chapel, and even managed to run a surplus in their budget.¹⁴⁸ The effectiveness of the Sunday School may also have been compromised during Williams’ tenure. As indicators to a church’s health, Sunday School can be helpful in that it charts possible growth in the future, and it shows whether a church is ministering to families. In 1979, the Diocesan report on Sunday Schools mentioned that there were no youth at St. Paul’s.¹ The report stated: “Attendance at St. Paul’s Sunday School, has been irregular over the year, sometimes increasing and at other times decreasing. There are currently, two Sunday School teachers at St. Paul’s.”¹⁴⁹ The report also mentions that St. Paul’s was able to produce a Christmas program, although it is not clear that Williams gave leadership to it.

¹⁴⁶ Rigal Elisee, “Letter Jacob Williams,” 16 Jun 1979. Jacob Williams Folder. Evidently, he merely reported that he would be taking his leave, and did not actually ask permission, or find a replacement for the time while he would be gone.
Most of the positive news during Williams’ tenure at St. Paul’s was the result of lay efforts. For two years (1980-1982) Dr. Hughes ran “Agnostics Anonymous,” which appears to have been a place for people to ask questions about the faith. Details on the exact nature of this group are vague, but its success for two years shows that it garnered some attention.

The year 1982 was not a good one for Williams. At the end of July there was a scandalous incident at the Bishop’s house, and finally he cancelled services without the bishop’s permission again in October. There may have been some growing tensions between Williams and the congregation at St. Paul’s. This came to the breaking point in July 1982, after which the parish welcomed Malcolm Millard.

After living in Serekunda for at least five years, Williams and his wife had some issues with the parsonage. It was in need of repairs and the church had found the money to do them. On 24 July 1982, his wife called the chancellor to know why more work had not been done that day. She was told that there were issues with fuel, so the workers were simply unable to complete as much as they had hoped, but that on the following day things should be resolved. Evidently lack of fuel was not a good enough answer for the Williamses. They went to the bishop’s house to confront the bishop about the lack of work being done to their home. The confrontation escalated, and the Williamses began yelling at the bishop in front of his family. Finally other members of the council and Williams’ brother Esau arrived, and after two hours the incident was sorted. But the incident did not end there. Not only did the Diocesan standing committee demand Williams give an apology to the bishop for disgracing the church and the whole nation, but in addition the head of the Mothers Union, Florence Mahoney, who was a member of Christ Church, wrote a letter to the bishop offering her apologies, and expressed concern that Mrs. Williams was a part of the Mothers

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Finally, Williams wrote an apology saying, “I would like to make it clear that my wife and I had no intention of offending you in anyway. The atmosphere that prevailed in your house that day was the result of the uncharitable way and manner you reacted to the most pressing complaint involving the lives and safety of my family.”

The bishop did not accept this apology, which came almost a month later and without apparent contrition. The power struggle between bishop and priest continued. Williams’ continual lack of respect to the bishop, in a place that so greatly values leadership and titles, could not help his position. But he was not fired or severely reprimanded because they needed him.

He also did not always follow protocol. He canceled a service at St. Paul’s in order for his parish to be able to attend a big event at St. Mary’s. After the bishop found out about this, he upbraided him for taking such an action unilaterally. While Williams thought that canceling the service would be beneficial for the whole diocese, as it very well may have been, the bishop was not pleased. By this time, the bishop may have been disposed to see the incident as just one more irritant instead of a thoughtful gesture.

Feeling that he had not been given his just due, Williams finally left the diocese in 1990. The catalyst for his leaving was losing the Episcopal election to the current bishop, S. Tilewa Johnson. Since Williams was older and more experienced, he felt that it was an affront that he was not elected. He did not follow the proper protocols for leaving the Diocese, but simply left. In reality, this is probably the only way he would have left the Diocese, since bishop after bishop worked with him, and tried to encourage him to think beyond himself. They had invested too much time and money into him to simply fire him or let him go, and therefore he stayed until he decided otherwise.

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151 Florence Mahoney, “Letter to Rigal Elisee,” 26 July 1982, Jacob Williams Folder. She writes, “I am deeply shocked by reports received this afternoon/evening of the disgraceful, alarming and unChristian [sic] behavior of Rev and Mrs Jacob Williams…” She goes on to say, “As Diocesan President of the Mothers’ Union, I wish to express the sincere apologies of the Union…”

The dearth of priests and other clergy was not only a strain on individual parishes or the
priests, but also it put a strain on the entire Diocese, financially and spiritually. The Diocese was not
in the position to take disciplinary action against people who misused their position to serve
themselves. Therefore, Williams was able to maintain his employment even though he may not have
been well suited for the job. At some level, Williams was a decent priest, since the church in
Missouri certainly liked him, and he spent considerable time in the Diocese and at the various
churches. But his record bristles with self-serving behavior and conflicts, and gives little evidence of
effective ministry.

Williams represents an extreme. His effect on the Diocese was only exacerbated since he
was one of two or four priests. The Diocese has also had stellar priests, and one of them is the man
who replaced Williams at St. Paul’s—the Rev. Malcolm Millard.

Malcolm Millard

In November 1982 St. Paul’s officially welcomed Malcolm Millard as a priest. He had been
living and working in the Diocese for a nearly twenty in connection with his teaching at the Anglican
school, but now he took on pastoral duties as a non-stipendiary clergy. Previously he had been
invited by St. Paul’s parishioners to lead Bible studies at the church to fill the perceived gap that
Williams had allowed by having appointments at more than one parish. When Millard’s placement
became official, it allowed Jacob Williams to be the priest of only Christ Church, Serrekunda. I may
be reading too much between the lines, but in a letter to Williams, Bishop Rigal writes, “Be assured
of our prayers and assistance for the promotion of the church’s evangelistic work in the most
populated city of Serrekunda, together with its numerous surrounding villages, now that you have
only one parish unit under your care.” In other words, it seems that Williams did not have a stellar record, and in the goal to not spread their clergy too thinly, the bishop demoted him to one parish in hopes that a single parish may allow him to better concentrate his efforts to make a stronger church.

A parish newsletter, The Guiding Light (1983-1988), gives evidence that Millard brought change. The Guiding Light was established as a newsletter that went out four times a year and was well received (according to itself). It was an effective way, in the mid 1980s, before email and cell phones, for people to be in touch with each other. It was more than a communication tool within the parish; it was also used to tell others about St. Paul’s as well. What is particularly intriguing about the newsletter is that, unlike church newsletters that primarily focus on only church-related events, The Guiding Light incorporated other material as well, such as letters to the editor, comments on bigger issues facing the Diocese, and travel logs from travelers to the Diocese for the fiftieth anniversary of the Diocese. So it had a broader appeal than simply the confines of St. Paul’s.

Under Malcolm Millard’s leadership in the 1980s, St. Paul’s embraced more evangelistic programs and other new initiatives. St. Paul’s also teamed with a few other churches to provide other forms of evangelism, such as showing Christian films and inviting Philip Zampino’s healing ministry to The Gambia. They reported in 1984 that there were a number of non-Anglicans in attendance to watch the films, and it was challenging to all who viewed them. These open and friendly means of evangelism helped to spread the Gospel, but it also fits in with the Gambian way of life. Neither Christians nor Muslims like to feel that they are forced into belief. While driving in

154 Most people do not have landlines in the country. Now with cell phones, almost everyone has a cell phone, and can be connected to each other, but before cell phones, it seems that phones were not very prevalent.
a taxi in The Gambia, one of my colleagues began a conversation with the taxi driver. The driver commented that in The Gambia, all the religions get along, because they tolerate all religions, and no one forces another to change; they simply accept the other’s belief. Therefore, non-pressure events suit the Gambian way of life better than evangelistic crusades where a decision is demanded immediately.

Millard brought change to both parish events and church services. In 1985 St. Paul’s started the International Luncheon. All the different cultures and countries represented at St. Paul’s had a table with their different food, which participants were able to sample. This has become a popular annual event in the life of St. Paul’s. He also instituted coffee hour after the church service to foster fellowship. Further, he started a youth choir, which led the service once a quarter. In addition to this youth choir, there was also a family Sunday once a quarter, which was well received. St. Paul’s also experimented with different orders of service, such as the Alternative Books of Service, and it tried new hymnals. Millard moved the Bible study from Friday to Wednesday nights, which allowed people to have a service, and singing and worship as well as simply a study. An open spirit, innovation, and success with new programs clearly made more people more willing to try new things and to take risks.

Innovative programming and evangelistic efforts bore fruit. The Church grew from 50 members when Millard arrived to 150 in 1987. The Sunday School grew from an average Sunday attendance in 1980 of roughly 20, who were irregular attendees, to 25 regular attendees and 44 listed members in 1984. In less than two years under Millard’s leadership, the Sunday School class had a membership list as large as the whole church was under Williams’ leadership. Some conversions were noted under Millard’s leadership. One of people who wished to be baptized in 1984, for
example, came from a Muslim and Catholic heritage. At the Easter service in 1984, she expressed a desire to embrace Christianity, and she was baptized later that year.  

Millard’s reflections on the period suggest that he was truly concerned about the spiritual growth of his congregation. Millard focused on growing mature Christians, and sought spiritual growth and not only numerical growth. Millard, humble about his efforts, is content to say that only God knows how much people grow spiritually and that God does the real work. Nevertheless, Millard’s leadership illustrates that new initiatives and growth are possible in The Gambia, and that they can help the Church thrive. Millard is an example of self-giving leadership in the Diocese.

Millard’s ability to help to foster growth at St. Paul’s, as well as create opportunities for new ventures seems to come out of two roots. The first was his ability to connect to both British expatriates, since he himself was one, and to the Gambian natives by having spent almost two decades in The Gambia before coming to St. Paul’s. The second was his discipline and faithfulness in studying the Bible.

Millard met the needs of the British expatriates and the Gambian natives. I think this is because of his experience and background in The Gambia, as well as being an expatriate himself. He had lived in The Gambia since 1963 as a teacher at the Anglican School in Banjul. In this capacity, he also participated on the Diocesan Education and Youth committee. He was ordained to the diaconate (1977) and the priesthood (1979) during his time in The Gambia in order to serve in The Gambia. Before serving at St. Paul’s, he also had the opportunity to serve at St. Andrew’s, Lamin. By living in The Gambia for nearly twenty years, as well as serving at another parish before coming to St. Paul’s, Millard had the advantage of understanding the Gambian mindset, and at the same time having British roots to minister to the British expatriates.

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157 Malcolm Millard, “Email St. Paul’s Fajara,” 11 August 2010
Millard took study seriously, which probably translated into thoughtful preaching. In his letter to Bishop Elisee outlining his spiritual journey, Millard wrote about how he had grown up in the Church, and even took some classes for a Diploma in Theological Studies while he read for his Math Degree at Cambridge. He also sat under faithful teachers such as his Sunday School teacher who had been a missionary in India, as well as John Stott when he was older.\(^{158}\) He contemplated entering the ministry around the same time he was at Cambridge, but did not feel called then, so he faithfully pursued the path that God laid for him. In the interim he did not neglect spiritual studies. During his breaks he took the time to conduct in-depth studies of a book of the Bible. Even while not in a formal training program, Millard took the time and effort to make his spiritual walk alive, which his parishioners were sure to pick up on. His ability to study helped to make his ministry one of self-giving, and reflective of the Gospel, instead of self-consumed leadership. By being free to follow God, Millard illustrated leadership that rose above entrenched mentalities, brought the church together, and gave them visionary leadership to grow the Church.

Unfortunately, sometimes good leadership only lasts while the leader is there. Millard writes, “Sadly, after I left through ill health, divisions arose like those St. Paul warned of in Acts 20. I don’t know the details, but there was a period of instability before someone else was appointed as priest-in-charge.”\(^{159}\) In other words, without a leader at the helm, the parish had a hard time maintaining what they had gained under Millard’s leadership. Further, it proves that having a leader such as Millard was essential for the growth of St. Paul’s. Since St. Paul’s had few full-time priests, and some, such as Williams took advantage of their position, growth was only possible under a leader like Millard. Without visionary leadership the parish stagnated, with visionary leadership capable of reaching both Gambians and British, the parish grew.

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Conclusion

Leadership for Gambians is highly respected, and it is extremely important for the effective functioning of the church. In the case of Jacob Williams, leadership failed. The majority of correspondence between him and the various bishops under whom he served concerned issues of things that he wanted or needed. Congregational attendance stagnated, and even dropped under his leadership, and the congregation went out on their own to enlist the help of Malcolm Millard to help with Bible Studies. On the other hand, Malcolm Millard displayed self-giving leadership. He instituted new programs and events, and seems to have been a present pastor for his flock. Millard saw the size of his church triple during his time there, and a new Sunday School building began to be constructed to accommodate the burgeoning group of younger people. He was able to overcome some ingrained mentalities and even welcomed at least one Muslim into the Church’s membership as a new Christian. Williams’ way of doing things represented the status quo and chaplaincy mindset pervasive at the start of the Anglican Diocese in The Gambia. Millard represented overcoming mentalities and growth.

Chapter Six: Conclusion
Some people think of God as a white man, which is an idea which the missionaries brought with them all those years ago and which seems to have stuck in people’s mind. I do not think this is so, because there is no difference between white men and black men; we are all the same; we are just people. And God was here anyway, before the missionaries came. We called him by a different name, then, and he did not live over at the Jews’ place; he lived here in Africa, in the rocks, in the sky, in places where we knew he liked to be. When you died you went somewhere else, and God would have been there too, but you would not be able to get specially close to him. Why should he want that?  

Such are the musings of Precious Ramotswe, a lady detective in Alexander McCall Smith’s popular *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* books. Smith captures many characteristic African sentiments about evangelism, the view of God, racism, and the efforts of missionaries. What Smith failed to address is the particular shortfalls of the Church in being able to adequately express its beliefs and doctrine. The meeting of two different worlds in how to perceive God in the above quotation reflects to a certain degree the problem that the Anglican Church met in The Gambia. Unable to engage in evangelism in a way that was bridge building across cultural lines, the Anglican Church in The Gambia plodded its way through much of the twentieth century.

For the Anglican Church in particular, and to a certain degree at St. Paul’s, Fajara, being complacent with the status quo of serving the already converted British expatriates and then the native Gambians meant that meaningful engagement with the Gambian culture took a backseat to chaplaincy. Even though Bishop Daly eventually saw that engaging in evangelism was more important than his initial proposal for the Diocese, the Diocese itself found itself caught up in a mentality of scarcity and focus on the already converted.

As noted, it was hard for people in The Gambia to convert to Christianity. For most people the opportunity cost to convert from Islam is simply too high due to tribal identity. As we have seen, the predominant tribe in Christian circles is the Aku, and they have created an identity in

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relation to the British colonizers. For the Aku, this included adopting the British religion, and becoming more and more Europeanized. This has been reflected in their style of worship, which for someone coming from North America or Britain, would seem very familiar. In contrast, at House of Wisdom, founded by a Fula convert, the worship practices are more African in style, and more comfortable for someone coming out of a Muslim context. So the identity that the Aku have made in relation to the Church is that of being more British.

It must also be noted that it took a long time for many Gambians to warm to the idea of Islam, and therefore it may also be safe to assume that it may take a long time for them to warm to the idea of Christianity. In the case of Islam, it had many positive factors on its side: trading partners, scribes, and time. For Christianity, as a new comer, and the Anglican Church in particular, they have not had the same amount of time to meet the needs of the Gambians, nor to show the importance of Christianity for commerce and trade.

The Church did itself a disservice by not being able to recruit and maintain clergy. For much of the Diocese's history scarcity of clergy has meant that churches such as St. Paul's relied heavily upon lay led congregations. This in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing. However, in a place like The Gambia, being left without an ordained leader equated little growth, and a chaplaincy mindset. I think that more than anything else, the chaplaincy mindset set forth initially by Daly, and perpetuated in some for or another through the next four bishops and ministers at St. Paul’s, meant that growth was not a top priority—it was a happy side effect.

In the case of the Anglican Church in The Gambia having as few as only two clergy for periods in the twentieth century deterred any real growth for the Diocese. In the case of St. Paul’s, it was a Morning Prayer, lay led church for most of its history. Even when Jacob Williams was the priest there, he still split his time with Christ Church, Serrakunda. What we do see is that when there was intentional, self-giving leadership, exemplified by Malcolm Millard, St. Paul’s grew. We
also know that in the past twenty years, the Diocese has been able to recruit more clergy, both from The Gambia and abroad, so that the current bishop, S. Tilewa Johnson, has ordained more people during his episcopate than all the other bishops combined.

What seems evident from my research is that the Anglican Church, and St. Paul’s, certainly tried to grow at different periods in their lives in The Gambia. However, they were hampered by the lack of visionary leadership for much of their history. Other missionary endeavors in Africa and in other parts of the world have proved more fruitful probably because they put more of an emphasis on growth and evangelism than many clergy did in The Gambia. I do not mean to make the claim that no evangelistic endeavors took place, clearly this is not the case. Nor do I mean to say that the clergy and members in the congregation were always satisfied with the status quo. Bishop Olufosoye adequately rebuffs that argument since he was the one that bewailed that the Church in The Gambia has “toiled all night”. Rather, it seems that the Anglican Church fell into a mode of complacency in the midst of its efforts. Because the foundation for the Diocese was one of chaplaincy and not expansion, because the Diocese was not able to attract the necessary clergy, because the churches such as St. Paul’s basically functioned without clergy—all of these factors reveal why the Anglican Church in particular has not made inroads into the majority of Gambian lives.

What is also evident is that with strong visionary leadership capable of meeting the needs of the people in the pews as well as those outside the church walls, the Church is able to grow in The Gambia. Malcolm Millard’s ministry at St. Paul’s is evident of this. Following a difficult priest, Millard was able to feed the people in Fajara spiritually, and able to implement new programs and initiatives to encourage growth, and in fact he did see growth during the years he was there.

Therefore, although the Anglican Church has struggled in the past, this does not mean that it cannot grow in the future. By looking at the decisions the Diocese has made in the past century, we
can recognize that by trying to merely survive, they did in fact only merely survive. Focusing on chaplaincy, it only ever hold its ground. With the addition of new capable priests, it is evident that growth is possible, and it need not be the case that the Christians simply toil all night. For the Anglican Church in The Gambia, and for St. Paul’s, focusing on leadership will help it to grow.

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