

1

The Nugent School and the Ethno-Religious Politics of Mission Education

O Lord Jesu Christ, Son of the Living God, Who art the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person; the chief corner-stone hewn from the mountain without hands . . . Strengthen this stone about to be laid in Thy Name; and . . . be, we beseech Thee, the beginning, the increase, and the consummation of this our work, which is undertaken to the glory of Thy Name, Who, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. AMEN.

—Llewellyn Gwynne, February 7, 1904

Llewellyn Henry Gwynne was born in South Wales on June 11, 1863. His father, Richard, was a village schoolmaster. According to his sister, Llewellyn was ever the family bad boy and mischief maker. Of superior build, Gwynne excelled at sports. Following ordination in 1886, Gwynne held a curacy at St. Chad's, Derby, and stayed in that position until 1890. Particularly proficient at football, he played routinely for Derby County's Association football team and was the team's only amateur. The team was one of England's best eleven at the time, and Gwynne played in an FA Cup semifinal match. Following his curacy at Derby, he served as curate at St. Andrews (Nottingham) and vicar of Nottingham's Emmanuel Church.¹

Thousands of miles away from England's churches and football fields, epochal events were taking place in the Sudan. In 1885, forces loyal to the Sudanese Mahdi killed Britain's Charles Gordon during the Siege of Khartoum. After an epic campaign, Herbert Kitchener led an Anglo-Egyptian army to the scene of the crime, ready for vengeance. On September 2, 1898, Kitchener's forces bombarded Omdurman. By the end of the afternoon, the Mahdist force commanded by the Khalifa Abdullahi had been decimated. A young war correspondent named Winston Churchill wrote that "thus ended the battle of Omdurman—the most signal triumph ever gained by the arms of science over barbarians. Within the space of five hours the strongest and best-armed savage army yet arrayed against a modern European Power had been destroyed . . . with hardly any difficulty."²

A meeting was held at Exeter Hall the following May, where the honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society alluded to the possibility of evangelizing the Sudan in the near future. "The words," according to W. H. T. Gairdner, "came with a thrill which those who do not remember the events of those former years can hardly understand."³ The honorary secretary shared that it was hoped that a party would be able to go up the Nile from Cairo in the autumn "to occupy some places in the equatorial provinces of the Eastern Sudan. The Committee anticipate that, in answer to many prayers, the existing interdict on missionary work among the Mohammedans of the Upper Nile will shortly be removed."⁴ Llewellyn Gwynne set sail for Sudan as a CMS missionary on November 3, 1899. He arrived in Khartoum just before the dawn of the new century.⁵

Weeks after Gordon's death, the Church Missionary Society in London proposed the Gordon Memorial Mission to Sudan.⁶ The project aimed to "perpetuate Gordon's memory . . . through the direct proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the races inhabiting the upper basin of the Nile."⁷ The postwar Sudanese—or Anglo-Egyptian—government insisted that for a time no mission station be established north of the tenth parallel or in any other part or district that it recognized as Muslim. Kitchener denied Gwynne the right to perform mission work in the North, and Gwynne ministered instead to British soldiers and the small population of British civilians in Khartoum. In 1904, Lord Cromer—Egypt's consul general and chief architect of the new condominium—wrote to the CMS, inviting the society to extend its work into South Sudan. After an appeal by the CMS Committee, a Gwynne-led party of six men was sent out in October 1905.⁸

Rev. Archibald Shaw was one of the men who departed with Gwynne. In his diary of October 17, 1905, Shaw notes that they left from London's

Charing Cross Station at 9 AM: “A number of people were on the platform to see us off, among my own friends being . . . Miss Nugent . . . The train started suddenly & quite unexpectedly . . . there was an undignified rush for the carriage, one by one we were hauled in, and midst great laughter & cheering, we were finally started on our way.”⁹ Gwynne’s party sailed up the Nile and founded the Gordon Memorial Mission at Malek, in South Sudan. While Gwynne did not stay there for long—he returned to Khartoum and was made its first bishop three years later—one of the most important elements of the work in South Sudan was a school named for one of his well-wishers at Charing Cross: the Sophia Nugent School.¹⁰

* * *

In the aftermath of the Mahdist War, the Anglo-Egyptian condominium government wanted to transform South Sudan into a buffer zone that could stem the spread of Arabism and Islam up the Nile. Against this backdrop, missionaries entered South Sudan. The CMS quickly established mission stations and schools, and in 1920 the most important school of them all—the Nugent School—was founded. This chapter provides insights into the life and legacy of the Nugent School and the sociopolitical environment in which it operated.

Francis Deng notes that Christian education in the South fostered a new sense of identity that transcended ethnic loyalties and created a deep anti-North nationalist sentiment. He quotes politician and intellectual Bona Malwal, who remarked, “Southerners, at least those who are educated, have come to live together in schools, have worked together and have shared some political objectives for which tribal differences were played down to give an appearance of unity.” Malwal further stated that differences with the North “were conceived as differences with Arabs, and were therefore differences with an outsider.”¹¹ Despite the notion that southerners downplayed ethnic differences in favor of a unified anti-Arab sentiment, Christian missions were involved in reinforcing ethnic identities and occasionally became sites of ethnic conflict. This reality showcased an enduring question in South Sudanese society—the appropriate role of the church and Christianity in transcending or reinforcing ethnic identity.

To this end, examining the Nugent School is illustrative of several important elements of the South Sudanese mission enterprise. First, it was founded to assist in halting the spread of Islam up the Nile, a project that was religiously

antagonistic, linguistically English, and gendered to produce masculine Christian “warriors.” Second, efforts were made at the school to uphold ethnic identities. And yet, the presence of ethnic conflict at the Nugent School and other mission sites highlighted the tension between efforts to protect diverse social identities on one hand and a common Christian identity on the other. This dynamic leads to the final point: the expressed thought that ethnic conflict was a spiritual problem that Christianity could (and should) conquer. Articulated in this chapter by mostly white mission officials, Sudanese actors echoed similar ideas decades later in the Second Sudanese Civil War and South Sudan’s internal conflict of the 2010s. Thus, the condominium era represented an early and important moment where state and church/mission officials discussed the relationship between religious and social identity. Was Christianity ultimately compatible with or antithetical to ethnicity? For several Christian officials, it was the very salve to ethnic conflict.

BEFORE THE BRITISH

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Islam became increasingly allied to Sudanese political power. Political systems with nominal Islamic allegiance were established in regions like Sinnar and Darfur, and a bevy of political shifts and socioeconomic conditions spurred the adoption of Arabic and Islamic culture in northern and western Sudan.¹² Although the influx of Arabism and Islam did not eliminate the North’s linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity, a cultural unity was established in a manner that was not replicated in the South. In addition to the fact that most northern Muslims claimed patrilineal descent from notable Arab ancestors, “in sharp contrast to Southern Sudan, it was comprehended within a single religious and cultural framework. Most people north of the 13th parallel had by the 19th century become Muslims.”¹³ In the early nineteenth century, South Sudan had social and political systems ranging from the Shilluk and Azande kingdoms to the more egalitarian Nuer and Dinka structures. In a general sense, *Nilotics*—the Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk—compose the main group of southerners, along with other ethnic groups such as the Azande, Bari, and Latuko. Although many languages were spoken and religions practiced, there is reason to believe that these conditions did not result in ethnic isolation; on the contrary, groups had frequent contact with one another.¹⁴

Catholics largely executed pre-Mahdiya Christian missionary work in Sudan. In 1846 Pope Gregory XVI created the Vicariate Apostolic of Central Africa, and Jesuit missionaries began working in the South in 1850. By 1860, however, the Jesuits were compelled to leave their Holy Cross and Gondokoro stations in part because the Bari would only tolerate missionaries if they proved to be sufficient trading partners in firearms and allies in war.¹⁵ The British and Foreign Bible Society started working in the country in 1866, but this proved to be a brief venture that resumed after more than thirty years of inactivity. While only a small number of Muslims were converted during this initial period of mission work, the greatest impact was the establishment of a tangible Christian presence in Sudan (particularly among non-Muslim groups). The rise of Mahdism brought a violent end to this period of mission work.¹⁶

Bahr el-Ghazal, with its proximity to Kurdufan and Darfur (the epicenter of the Mahdist rebellion), was the first South Sudanese province affected by the revolt. Mahdist agents could encourage groups of people to revolt by capitalizing on lengthy widespread disgruntlement with the government. The Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk felt no ties with the Arabs and joined the rebellion not for religious reasons or amity with northerners but rather to cast off an unpopular, oppressive government. During Emin Bey's administration, Rumbek reverted to its role as the nucleus of raiding activity in the area, and Egyptian authorities exported ivory, tamarind, and Dinka "conscripts" to Khartoum through Mashra' al-Rek into 1883. The revolt of the Agar Dinka was the first disturbance in Equatoria linked with Mahdist influence. The Agar Dinka, encouraged by the successful uprising of Dinka groups in Bahr el-Ghazal and angry at raids that the mam'ur of Rumbek had made on them for slaves and cattle, attacked the Rumbek garrison in July 1883 and destroyed the station. Throughout 1884–85, as Egyptian garrisons were cut off from Khartoum, more southerners rebelled against the government.¹⁷

In his study of prophecy and Mahdism in the Upper Nile, Douglas Johnson examined Dinka and Nuer experiences with particular reference to supposed links between Islam and African prophets. Johnson notes that the Dinka were able to incorporate key names and figures from Sudanese Muslim belief and practice into their own experience; one nineteenth-century Dinka hymn referenced the name Mahdi and integrated him into the order of divinities to whom the Dinka already prayed. "The Dinka and Nuer of the nineteenth century," he writes, "were confirmed in their belief in the validity of their own religious life. The impact of the Mahdiyya on the Nilotic

heartland of the Upper Nile was far from benign. On the contrary, it left a legacy of conflict and confrontation.”¹⁸

AFTER THE MAHDI

The British and Egyptian governments signed what became known as the Condominium Agreement in 1899. During the early stages, Egypt was for all intents and purposes a British protectorate and could not act unilaterally. While the Egyptian ruler could appoint the governor general, it would be done on the British government’s recommendation. The British, in effect, controlled the Sudan. Messianic movements in North Sudan continued to manifest but were forcefully squelched. In southern Sudan, the British reopened the Nile channel and started to establish their control. While Mahdism no longer threatened the condominium by the 1920s, southerners tried to retain their independence, and groups like the Azande, Nuer, and Dinka levied armed resistance. The Nuer and Dinka were led by prophets that claimed direct revelation from divinities. To appease Muslims and discourage nationalistic fervor, the government restricted Christian missionary activity to the South, where there was a sparse Muslim population. The administration saw the utility of sending them South, where it encouraged mission organizations to start mission schools and allowed them the right to evangelize.¹⁹

* * *

The Roman Catholics, Church Missionary Society, and United Presbyterian Mission (also known as the American Mission) were the most prominent mission organizations in southern Sudan during the condominium period. In 1904 a mission sphere of influence system was adopted to reduce competition. Spaces of operation were designated to each mission: the Roman Catholics worked along the White Nile’s western bank, with headquarters at Lul; the CMS operated in the Bahr el-Ghazal district and were headquartered at Malek; the Sobat watershed was given to the Americans, with their first station at Doleib Hill. The Lado Enclave became open for all missions. While mission work entailed Bible translation, education, medicine, and industrial work, evangelization was the overarching and unifying element.²⁰

The 1914–19 Annual Report for Egypt and the Sudan stated that though the CMS had established two or three district schools in Mongalla Province,

it had not yet opened its central school, which had been planned for several years.²¹ One January 1918 report on Mongalla noted that

the need of a boarding school where the lads who will in the future be the chiefs and subordinate officials under the Government can get an elementary education is very urgent, and C.M.S. has decided to open one with the approval and support of the Government. . . . This should prove a great missionary opening; to give these boys a Christian education should influence the whole district.²²

ENCOURAGING CHRISTIANITY

In 1919, Rev. C. A. Lea-Wilson was sent to launch a high school for the sons of chiefs and headmen. The Nugent School opened in the Bari village of Juba in 1920. Friends of the deceased Sophia Nugent contributed funds for the original building of Gordon Memorial Mission's first boys' high school. Sophia Nugent of Kensington, with her two sisters, had supported the Gordon Memorial Sudan Mission in the South for many years. Construction work began in January 1920 and comprised the building of a dwelling house, school, church, workshop, and about twelve huts for boys. By August, ten circular huts each capable of housing four to five boys had been built.²³ A 1928 conference decided to move the school to Loka in January 1929, and the move was made the following year. Located 3,000 feet above sea level and sixty miles from Rejaf, Loka contains a massive twin-peaked mountain that reaches a thousand feet high. Initially occupying temporary spaces, the new buildings—a hall, four classrooms, dorms, teachers' houses, and a European house—were completed and occupied in 1933. Numerous improvements and extensions were subsequently made.²⁴

“The school will be quite an English one,” said Lea-Wilson. “English will be the only language spoken, and all teaching will be in English. The only other language possible would be Arabic, but that would involve the danger of paving the way for Islam. The Government are moreover encouraging us to teach English.”²⁵ Lea-Wilson's statement concerning the dangers of Arabic and the preference for English pointed to the school's central mission. According to one Nugent School pamphlet, the institution was purposed to continue—in English—the education of male students who were selected from each of the mission station schools. The ultimate vision was multifaceted: supplying the schools with teachers, building a Sudanese ministry, educating the sons of chiefs and other indigenous leaders, and providing

government departments with superior Sudanese assistants.²⁶ More than these aims, however, Lea-Wilson noted that the school was founded in an effort to confront Islam and stated as much before the New Alliance Club on December 8, 1922:

We were sent there three years ago . . . so that we might do what is an intensely important thing—try to forestall Islam. The Government is greatly hampered by the fact that in the Southern Sudan they have no educated people, and they have to get officers for the troops and clerks for the Government officers from Khartoum, all of whom are Moslems. So the Government asked us to start educational work in the Bari village of Juba, and they have given over all the educational work into C.M.S. Hands.²⁷

In another instance he clothed this aim in martial Crusade-like imagery: “We hope to send out a flow of Christian young men, who will carry the ideals of Christ wherever they go, & occupy posts some of which are at present filled by Moslems. By such means will we help to Christianize this part of Africa.”²⁸

The school’s Christian mission was executed in several ways. The entire school met for prayers at 6 AM and 6 PM, and each morning’s work began with scripture. A short prayer preceded each class. Aside from prayers and scripture, the school’s Christian foundation was emblazoned on the school badge: a red Maltese cross.²⁹ The origins of the eight-pointed Maltese cross have been long debated. The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta was founded in 1048 as a monastic order that ran a hospital to treat Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land. At the peak of its power, Rome commanded the order with the military responsibility to defend Christians from the local Muslim population. The cross is famously connected with the knights of Malta, with some believing that it did not appear until after a failed 1565 Turkish siege of Malta. Its eight points represent the Beatitudes, while the four arms were believed to represent the virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice.³⁰

The selection of the Maltese cross as the school badge is particularly enlightening given that, as Heather Sharkey notes, some Britons in Sudan—particularly CMS missionaries—invoked crusader discourses during the turn of the century. Anthropologist Janice Boddy writes that British officials in Sudan deemed themselves to be “knight administrators” and equated Christianity with civilization.³¹ Although it is unclear whether Lea-Wilson knew about the history of the Maltese knights, his comments following his acknowledgment of the Maltese cross clearly took on a Christianity versus

Islam tone: “We should not be ashamed of the Cross of Christ, particularly in this country which is going to be Moslem unless we bestir ourselves. We had to put the letters ‘J.H.S.’ underneath the Cross (Juba High School) and our hope is that one day these boys will realise that those letters stand also for ‘Jesus the Saviour of the World.’”³²

The Nugent School was home to religious organizations that carried martial symbolism. According to Steven Wöndu, who entered the Loka Intermediate School in 1963, the Boys’ Brigade had been one of the Nugent School’s attractions during the condominium era. William Alexander Smith conceived of the idea for the brigade in Glasgow in 1883. While Wöndu described the Brigade in Scotland as “a zealous or even militant religious movement,” he continued that “its main appeal to us was the uniform, the marching band, and badges.”³³ There was also the Crusader Bible class. Revived at the Nugent School in 1948, the Crusader Bible class was voluntary and held on Sunday afternoons. Boys could write letters or read Sunday books, and attendance was noted for growing each week. By May 1949 there were reportedly 110–15 attendees each Sunday.³⁴

In addition to the Crusaders, the Boy Scouts also had a presence at the school. When Helena Parry gave a picture of Thursdays—or “Club afternoon”—she described the scouts as spending time on the grass beyond the quad, either playing or sitting under the trees doing patrol work. “They are all smart and clean as Scouts should be—they [wear] a white cotton neckerchief edged with their patrol colour, and this with their badge and shoulder tapes and ribbons, transforms their white school uniforms into ‘Scout uniform.’”³⁵ Southern Sudan’s first-ever scoutmasters’ training course took place at Loka over the 1948 Christmas holiday. It was a diverse group of attendees, with Europeans, Africans, and those from various Christian and non-Christian backgrounds.³⁶ J. I. Parry recalled, “We sang carols in English, Italian, Zande, Dinka, Moru, yes, even Welsh! But apart from that we do rejoice that Scouting in the Southern Sudan should have started with a Course which proved from the start the reality of the Scout Brotherhood of Nations based on Christian brotherhood.”³⁷

General Sir Robert Baden-Powell conceived scouting to reduce Edwardian class tensions and improve the quality of potential military recruits. Transplanted to Africa by British administrators, missionaries, and others, colonial youth experts worked with scout officials and looked to promote docile masculinity. “Baden-Powell and the founders of Scouting,” writes Timothy Parsons, “were consciously aware that they were promoting a specific form of masculinity over a range of less desirable masculine identities.

In their eyes, manliness meant physical courage, patriotism, stoicism, chivalry, and sexual continence.” In the scout uniform—modeled on that of the South African Constabulary, a paramilitary force Baden-Powell raised and commanded following the Anglo–South African War—he tried to create a strong socializing instrument that would become an attractive recruiting device, establish the scout’s elite status, and blur class distinctions. In colonial Africa, where Western styles of dress conveyed respectability and sophistication, the scout uniform had greater impact. While the scout uniform brought prestige, membership was relatively low; by the 1950s, all of Anglophone Africa boasted approximately one hundred thousand registered African Boy Scouts.³⁸

The reality of scouting at the Nugent School illuminates several elements of that institution’s work. To begin, it illustrated the elite nature of the Nugent School, within not only South Sudan but British Africa. The scout uniform (along with the Nugent uniform) can be read as a visual symbol of social unity, the sublimation of potentially distinct ethnicities under an alternative, more ecumenical identity. Finally, there was the gender dynamic at play that was inseparable from contemporary religious politics. Scouting exposed students to a particular model of masculinity, one linked to martial identity through the uniform. Whether through the scout uniform or the Nugent School’s appropriation of the Maltese cross, this gender project was conducted in a Christian educational setting. Given the increasingly martial tone that missionary rhetoric took after World War II—one framing Christian work in Sudan as a race against time against an ensuing Arab Muslim takeover—the Nugent School became, in a sense, an important locus in the “war against Islam” as a site that prepared Christian “soldiers.”³⁹

Comments from Ian Watts in 1949 illustrate this paradigm. Watts noted that Nugent School boys would no longer go to Ugandan Christian institutions to continue their education but instead went to the new government secondary school in Dinka country and then to Khartoum’s Gordon College. In addition to this change, more southern officials were being sent north to receive more training for higher government posts. Watts saw the spiritual potentialities that were being opened up: “What a chance there is for them,” he wrote, “to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Islam, and what a challenge to us to send boys out from this School who will be convinced, enthusiastic and knowledgeable Christians with a personal faith in the living Christ which will lead them to witness fearlessly in life and speech, cost what it may!”⁴⁰

The gendered—and uneven—mission enterprise in South Sudan during the condominium era is also evident in the demographics and nature of

girls' education. At the outbreak of World War I, the Catholics—whom Robert Collins termed “the most aggressive” of the three Christian missionary societies working in the South—had 557 boys in nine elementary schools and 246 girls in four elementary schools (statistics, he claimed, that were clearly inflated).⁴¹ While boys were taught a craft like carpentry or bricklaying (or given clerical training), girls were taught needlework and music. Collins elsewhere noted that girls' education in the South was not central to the South's educational development. In March 1939 the government and CMS appointed a commission, composed of a Miss N. E. Ainley and Mrs. M. C. Warburton, to examine, report, and make recommendations on southern girls' education. The report was apparently not too encouraging: indigenous customs and older missionaries' prejudices posed obstacles. Ainley and Warburton ultimately concluded that given the lack of resources, education should be closely incorporated with the life girls would lead in southern societies.⁴²

* * *

Linguistic work—a crucial element of South Sudanese education—was the work of cultural translation. Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls have noted that Protestant missionaries' evangelistic strategy was built on the premise that missionaries build on, rather than supplant, the old religion. Driven by Paul's discourse on the “Unknown God” in Acts 17, “Protestant missionaries set out to identify, name, and preach about unknown Gods . . . they established the architecture of the old religion and related the new Christian religion to the vernacular vocabulary.”⁴³ The Dinka had a story of the founding of their religious belief and practice that corresponded with certain elements of Christ's birth, his early career, and the authority that the apostles inherited at his Crucifixion. Understandings of a high god, sin, sacrifice, blood redemption, and God's forgiveness were also central to Dinka religion.⁴⁴ *Nhialic* became the Dinka word missionaries translated as “God.” The term is often used to refer to the Dinka “supreme being” and comes from a form of *nhial*, which refers to “sky,” “above,” or “up.” *Nhialic* is considered to be just and all-powerful, with similar attributes to the Christian God. Dinka accepted *Nhialic* as the creator of all worldly things and a universal being capable of providing blessing and suffering.⁴⁵

Francis Deng contends that Christian missions' primary objective among the Dinka was seen in traditional terms as the pursuit of *wei*, which in its verb form means “to breathe,” and as a noun, “breath,” and requires supreme moral and physical well-being. The premise was that the Dinka, before

Catholic education, were immersed in darkness or emptiness that was hazardous to *wei*. Catholic teachings were guaranteed to provide the solution and path to salvation. Dinka ideas of *wei*, which focused particularly on personal and collective well-being in this world, were combined to entail a new idea that joined the Dinka understanding of health with the Christian principle of ultimate survival in the spiritual sense.⁴⁶

ENCOURAGING ETHNICITY

The first students were admitted to the Nugent School in July 1920. The first four boys arrived in August, and approximately forty boys were enrolled by October. While the Bari were most heavily represented, the early student body was a diverse lot; in November 1920 the school had Acholis, Madis, Dinka, Nyangwara, Kuku, and one Lotuho.⁴⁷ At one point thirty-six languages and dialects were spoken at the school. In late 1920, Lea-Wilson reported that each student understood either Bari, Acholi, or Dinka. English was taught through these languages and some Arabic, which was used as little as possible and was hoped, at some point, to be dropped completely. By 1922 the director of education in Khartoum supported the Nugent School's efforts to teach English.⁴⁸ The move to Loka did not change the school's diverse demographic. According to one 1949 description,

There are the tall, slim, jet black Dinka and Nuer boys, whose tribes are great cattle owners . . . there are the Zande boys, short and stocky, and lighter coloured, whose parents live a predominantly agricultural life . . . we have the sturdily-built Moru boys from the Lui district, while the boys from the many Bari speaking tribes around the Juba area are variable in size . . . and their people are both pastoral and agricultural. So the pupils in our School differ very widely in race, language, customs, background and outlook.⁴⁹

After attending village school for two years and primary school for three, about five boys from each ethnic area were chosen each year to attend Loka to be trained to lead their communities as agriculturalists, teachers, administrators, and the like.⁵⁰

The 1928 Rejaf Language Conference spurred several important developments. The conference supported the introduction of vernacular languages in elementary schools. Six languages—Bari, Dinka, Nuer, Lotuho, Shilluk, and Zande—were chosen to be used in southern vernacular education. J. G. Matthew, secretary for education and health (among other areas),

announced that English would replace Arabic as the South's official language, while southern colloquial Arabic was rejected in favor of English and local vernaculars as administrative languages.⁵¹ Insulating the South from the proliferation of Arabic was part of the government's stated plan in January 1930 to "build up a series of self contained racial or tribal units with structure and organisation based . . . upon indigenous customs, traditional usage and beliefs."⁵² That month the civil secretary wrote a memorandum that explained the "Southern Policy," which aimed to restrict the number of northern and Arab traders and administrators in the South. The ultimate purpose in doing so was to encourage the development of an indigenous administration and leadership in the South, dividing Sudan into northern and southern administrative principalities (native administration was in fact applied in the northern provinces earlier than in the South). Although the continued work of Muslim and Arab traders and British reliance on northern/Egyptian officials mitigated the policy's effectiveness, southern education shifted toward the use of vernacular languages and English as mediums of instruction within a Christian framework.⁵³

One of the most intriguing areas in which religious and linguistic projects merged was in the area of naming. By June 1933 A. G. Hickson, resident inspector of education for the southern provinces, had noticed that the Wau Catholic Mission was using the English forms of Christian names "as far as possible." Opining that he did not like many of the Christian names that Catholic converts were given, Hickson continued that "they must, by Mission rule, [be] given saints' names many of which are strange to us." Not limited to the Catholic purview, CMS converts chose a biblical name of their liking; however, the CMS apparently prioritized the vernacularization of Christian names. Hickson opined that the Italian (Catholic) Mission should vernacularize the spelling of Christian names as the CMS did and avoid adopting the English forms. Insisting that official correspondences list indigenous and Christian names, he questioned the utility of addressing "Southern employees by their christian names to the exclusion of their native names."⁵⁴ According to this school of thought, conversion to Christianity did not have to mean disavowal of one's cultural heritage.

* * *

Competition was one way unity was encouraged at the diverse Nugent School. In J. B. de Saram's 1945 report from the school, he noted his perception that competing there was beneficial for fostering unity. De Saram

wrote that for twenty-five years, Moru had competed against Dinka and Nuer against Zande, resulting in members of those groups liking and understanding one another and forming strong friendships. This kind of rapport, he concluded, laid the foundation for mutual trust and understanding across tribes.⁵⁵ There were sports and house/interhouse competitions, and activities like the Table Games Club and Debating Club. On one occasion the school was divided into “tribal groups” and a game organized with the goal of making an illustrated primer in every vernacular language.⁵⁶ On occasion the situation devolved into fighting. Interethnic football was organized along house lines “between pupils as different as Greeks and Icelanders,” but these matches had to be temporarily abandoned because of their ferocity.⁵⁷

The training of indigenous teachers was seen as a crucial element in ensuring students’ connections with their community and culture. Hickson noted that children should be taught to value and enrich their heritage rather than to despise it, and that this could not be done if teachers had lost touch with their people.⁵⁸ The Catholic *Messenger* was an educational fortnightly newspaper that was published near Wau, in Bahr el-Ghazal. Founded in 1932, its ethnographic agenda can be gleaned from titles of articles that appeared in the 1930s and 1940s:

Fr. S. Santandrea, “Southern Sudan Folklore—The Bongo in the Central District (Wau) of the B.G.P.” (June 1934)

Fr. E. Mason, “Southern Sudan Folklore—A Shilluk Fable” (Feb.–Mar. 1937)

Jerome Bidai, “Tribal Investigation—To the Zande Readers” (Mar. 1942)

Fr. C. Brogini, “The Belanda” (May 1946)

Joseph Ayok, “Dinka Education” (Dec. 1947)

Mathew L. Jambite, “Notes on Moru Customs” (Sept. 1948)⁵⁹

* * *

In a May 1946 article, “The Controversy over the Belanda,” E. Mason discussed the Belanda language and race: “The two Belandas do not belong to one race; they belong to entirely different racial groups: the Sudanic and the Nilotic.”⁶⁰ He continued to explain that the Bviri language was akin to the Ndogo but still retained words revealing their Bor origin. The name used for God (or Spirit) was *Joki* (similar to the Luo-Shilluk *Juok*) rather than the Ndogo equivalent *Mbiri*, which is closer to the Zande *Mbori*. In 1946 Mason invited African readers to provide input on a controversy over whether the Bor belonged to the Nilotic race and others to the Sudanic, Ndogo-speaking race. *Messenger’s*

ethnic-centric focus was coupled with other missionaries' devotion to the study of South Sudanese history, religion, music, and traditions.⁶¹

Dictionaries produced during the condominium era not only were missionary attempts to transform vernaculars into conduits for Christian revelation but also provide insight into how missionaries sought to fashion political subjectivities.⁶² Perhaps the most illustrative dictionary during the condominium period was Father J. Kiggen's 1948 *Nuer-English Dictionary*. A missionary for the St. Joseph's Society for Foreign Missions, Kiggen's definitions provide a compelling view into the way one missionary text sought to define ethnic, racial, and political identities. Defining *rool* as "country," he used ethnic lands (*Rool Naath*, *TEat* = Nuer, Shilluk country) as illustrative examples. *Mulki* signified "Arab," and Kiggen often included Arabs in definitions connoting difference and oppression. For example, with *LEEiE* ("disavow," "disown," or "do not mix") came the phrase "the Arabs and the Nuer don't mix," and with *PEEiE* (to rob, plunder, take by force, carry off) came "the Turks dragged away the Nuer by force in times gone by."⁶³ The Dinka also occupy a noteworthy place in Kiggen's illustrative examples. Under the very definition of Dinka (*Jan*) came the phrase *Ci jin a jan* (You are not a Dinka), an unabashed declaration of Nuer-Dinka difference. This presumption of difference was reinforced in the illustration given for the genealogical term *LoDih* (race, descent, generation, group), which referred to the Dinka race. In the description for *PEEiE* (to rob, plunder, take by force) the dictionary includes the descriptive phrase "my cattle were stolen by Dinka." Dinka were further placed in an antagonistic position in the description of the word *Mud*, the noun for "spear" (and a war spear in particular), among other definitions. Kiggen's dictionary paired this term with the associated phrase "they went to war with the Dinka."⁶⁴ Nuer readers, then, would have been exposed to associations of Arabs and Dinka in definitional descriptions of social/racial difference and predatory behavior. Kiggen's dictionary was a pedagogical resource that defined ethnicities and behaviors. Rather than trying to denounce or minimize the importance of ethnic identities, Kiggen's text went to great lengths to express a calculated understanding and confirmation of them.

ETHNIC CONFLICT, SPIRITUAL SOLUTION

Despite the effort to cultivate unity, there were tangible markers of division at the Nugent School. John Parry, CMS teacher at Yambio, wrote a letter from Loka intimating that lack of a lingua franca was an obstacle to achieving

social cohesion among the student body. He noted that their knowledge of English was not strong enough to bind them together as a social unit, leading them to revert to vernaculars once they left the classroom. He also decried the fact that they did not mix and instead broke off to eat, talk, and make friends within their own ethnic groups.⁶⁵ Headmaster G. F. Earl opined that ethnic strife at the school was rooted not in the student body but rather in the makeup of the faculty. In 1945 the Sudanese staff consisted of four Moru, one Madi, and one Kakwa, and Earl attributed the imbalanced composition of Moru as “a big disadvantage” during a Dinka-Moru fight, “which might have been averted entirely had there been a Dinka teacher.” He continued that the Nuer, who used to be implicated in almost every interethnic fight, were peaceful throughout the year, and that when the aforementioned fight occurred, they acted as peaceful patrols until the tension subsided. He attributed their pacific change to a teacher from Nasir, leading him to conclude that “clearly the solution to the periodic Nilotic outbreaks of fighting is the presence on the staff of respected leaders of their own tribes. Efforts should be made to recruit a properly balanced staff as soon as the teachers are available.”⁶⁶ According to a 1948 report from Ian Watts, the school’s ethnic diversity meant that conflict was not altogether surprising. “This year,” he wrote, “all lived, worked and played together in peace. This in itself is remarkable and has not always been true. Tribal divisions and even fights in the school have in the past been serious, but we can thank God that this year has been a happy and successful one.”⁶⁷ The following year, however, John Parry expressed that helping the boys become Sudanese rather than members of tight-knit tribal entities was a big problem. This had to be overcome, he continued, so that they could be challenged to do more for their own people (as co-nationals).⁶⁸

One quarrel between boys of different ethnicities—though not at Loka—sheds light on how spirituality was injected into conversations concerning ethnic conflict. Writing from Obel in June 1954, Rev. W. B. Adair noted that a fight that had occurred “in spite of the fact that all older boys are living in four ‘color’ groups irrespective of tribes . . . the matter is not entirely settled after 8 days.” The fight, according to Adair, could have been avoided if a teacher had not been drinking. Adair sustained a cut to his leg in his attempt to pry a spear from one of the combatants.⁶⁹ The following month, an unnamed writer wrote to Reverend Adair and expressed regret over the incident. Conveying the hope that peace had been restored, the writer added that “if they can learn to live together harmoniously, it will be a real witness to the influence of Christ in their lives.”⁷⁰

Another fight occurred at Akot in November 1948, compelling another statement linking spirituality with fighting. Oliver Allison was at the center of the events and provided a detailed account of the scrum. The son of an English clergyman, Allison was ordained in 1932 and, after joining the CMS, arrived in Sudan in 1938. Accepting an assignment in Juba, he had by 1947 been appointed assistant bishop in the Sudan.⁷¹ Allison recounted that he had traveled to Akot, where he had heard that there had been issues with the head teacher. One of the Bor Dinka teachers in training had married a woman that the other teacher—an Agar Dinka—had himself wanted to marry. Conscious of an “underlying unrest” on his arrival, Allison woke up on a Saturday morning and prepared for a confirmation service. It did not happen. “On the evening after prayers,” he wrote, “the spiritual germs of evil got the better of the situation, and the devil entered into the head-teacher.” The head teacher had words with a Bor teacher, which led to a tussle. Later on he tried to start a massive brawl by leading the Agar schoolboys and others he could find against the Bor. Allison and others were informed in time to prevent the quarrel and took actions, with the assistance of some teachers and others, to prevent another incident. The following morning, Allison decided to have a meeting “of all the Christians on the station” in an attempt to put things in order before deciding whether to continue with the confirmation and other services. “All seemed quiet,” he wrote,

until shortly before the time due the unmistakable clash of clubs was heard. By the time we had arrived on the scene a serious fight had developed, and there was even a threat of spears being used. Young teachers and others who were normally peaceful and happy . . . were “seeing red” and blood was beginning to flow. In the providence of God we were able to intervene and stop the fighting, but not before the ring-leader had a fractured skull and other bad wounds.

Rather than holding the confirmation, Allison had to rush to the nearest hospital with those who had sustained the worst injuries. “If only as a result the Christians can be led to see the sin and folly of such actions,” he opined, “and the disgrace that they bring to the Christian Church, good may yet come out of it. Such events are not a good advertisement of the need of the full Gospel of salvation for these people, and of the futility of a nominal adherence to the Christian faith.”⁷²

Fifteen teachers and teacher trainees were thrown in prison. “Those who assembled in March, 1949,” wrote J. B. de Saram, “came very much with their tails between their legs, but not all of them.” Before the term had completed

a month, two teachers were once again involved in a fight. Each was immediately terminated. After outlining the troubles that Akot had experienced, de Saram framed the recent disturbances through a spiritual lens. “The starting point of a religious revival is a sense of sin,” he wrote. “The Abalokole movement in East Africa calls it being ‘broken’—broken in spirit. . . . You must be ‘broken’ before anything can happen. Well, we felt pretty ‘broken’ at Akot.” Noting that remorse was not enough nor the same as a sense of sin, de Saram wrote, “We began, therefore, by realising that Akot’s sad plight was due to *sin*. Hatreds and feuds may be part and parcel of normal Dinka life, but for a Christian they are sins.”⁷³

Allison’s and de Saram’s framing of the Akot clash in spiritual terms was echoed in some sense at the Nugent School. Parry suggested that only Christ’s power could deal with the situations they had encountered at Loka, and that the economic, political, and moral instruction the boys received would be for naught if their hearts were not surrendered to Christ.⁷⁴ De Saram described an incident in which a Nuer chief, having compiled an excellent record in school, became the target of a vengeful Dinka. The Dinka eventually brought charges against him in Teacher’s Court, and the chief was found guilty on one count and punished. Nonetheless, “the Nuer, after his beating, asked to remain behind, knelt down, and prayed for the Dinka, that he might not hate him but win him for Christ.”⁷⁵

The spiritualization of the aforementioned intergroup conflicts marked an important development. For Allison, the fighting was not rooted in jealousy but, rather, could be traced to “spiritual germs of evil” and the devil’s influence on the head teacher. Conversely, providence, according to Allison, was responsible for allowing them to stop a fight. Similar to Allison’s contentions, for de Saram the conflict was not just wrong but sinful. The solution was deep repentance and a “true” adherence to the faith. De Saram’s description of the Nuer chief’s desire to convert his Dinka accuser further highlights the positioning of Christianity as a solution to conflict. Taken together, Allison’s and de Saram’s letters position ethnic conflict as a spiritual dilemma that Christianity could conquer.

While there is no indication that those men believed that ethnicity itself was a problem that had to be done away with, the *Messenger* newspaper published an article—adapted from *Ruru Gene*—that presented Christianity as a community of belonging that should replace ethnicity. Tacisio Migido, a teacher at the Mupo Normal School, wrote, “You should leave charms altogether. Pagans will find some excuse in their utter ignorance. . . . But what reasonable excuse can a Christian have? The custom of your tribe? . . . now

your new tribe is christianity, and unless you are born again . . . you will not be able to enter Heaven.”⁷⁶ There is the inference that one’s ethnicity is as exchangeable as religion; just as one can convert into or out of Christianity, one can just as easily join or leave an ethnicity. Despite his use of the terms *pagan* and *charms*, *tribe* is not employed as antithetical to Christianity; rather, Christianity—as a community of belonging—is itself understood as being tribal. Thus, while Migido establishes an understanding that one must depart from the ignorance of pagans and charms and be born again, he does not associate Christianity as a progression from being “ethnic” or “tribal”; on the contrary, he positions Christianity itself as a tribe.

* * *

C. A. Lea-Wilson and Ian Watts would have been thrilled at the trajectories of Nugent alumni. Paulo Logali, who in 1926 became one of the first three Bari boys to be baptized, was a student at the Nugent School before its move to Loka. A devout Christian, Logali was a founding member of the South Sudan Workers Association (SSWA). Created to represent the interest of southern government employees, it was the first active southern organization and became a political committee in the early 1950s. Joining Logali in cofounding the SSWA was fellow Nugent alum Benjamin Lwoki, who in 1948 was appointed as a member of the legislative assembly.⁷⁷ Alum Joseph Lagu led the rebel Anyanya military force during the First Sudanese Civil War, and his political vision, leadership, and military strategies have been noted as being “clearly . . . influenced by his Christian faith.”⁷⁸ Lagu, Logali, and Lwoki were joined by other alumni who would go on to have a major impact, including (but not limited to) administrator and politician Bullen Alier, MP Dak Dei, MP and Liberal Party member Jon Majak, and Aggrey Jaden—the president of the South Sudan provisional government.⁷⁹

The Nugent School, founded with the hope of stymieing Islam’s percolation up the Nile, became a space in which to produce English-speaking, masculine, Christian students. Through the encouragement and codification of several vernacular languages, athletic and nonathletic competition, and the ethnographic nature of the Catholic *Messenger* newspaper, mission and state authorities made efforts at the school and elsewhere to uphold ethnic identities, reflecting a broader condominium push to protect the South from Arabism. And yet, the reality of ethnic conflict highlighted the tension between efforts to encourage indigenous identities and a common

Christianity. Some concluded that ethnic conflict was a spiritual problem that an authentic Christianity could overcome.

There are three reasons why the school (and the mission enterprise in which it operated) is foundational in the narrative of Christian and ethnic politics in South Sudan. First, it provides an early illustration of the converging agendas that state and mission actors had for the Sudanese: namely, maintain one social identity (ethnicity) while encouraging a religious identity (Christianity) and resisting a racial culture (Arabic, Arab culture) and religion (Islam). At a time when Islam was viewed with antagonism, the matter of whether Christianity and ethnicity were compatible with each other was clear, at least to some: “yes.” One of the most compelling theological ideas to emerge during the post-2011 years—even after the region had witnessed ethnically driven violence, and the traditional Arab and Islamic enemy from the North had been removed—was the notion that God had created ethnicities and that they should be celebrated. This contemporary thought must be placed in the same genealogy with mission and state actions to uphold ethnicity during the condominium era and, as such, testifies to the notion that there have long been Christians in the Sudan that have not viewed ethnicity as a problem. While it might be fair to question whether the Nugent School failed as a multiethnic site given that ethnic rivalries persisted, doing so would risk giving missions perhaps too much credit if the opposite were true. If there were no fights at the school or other mission sites, what would it mean to attribute such peace primarily to the missionaries rather than the pupils themselves?

The second reason why the condominium-era mission enterprise is so significant when examining the interplay of religious and ethnic politics was the effort by Allison and others to spiritualize the roots of ethnic solidarity and discord. While conflict was “sin,” amity reflected authentic Christian influence. This injection of the spiritual into examinations of intra-Sudanese relations is significant considering that for much of the twentieth century, such spiritualization was done within the context of North-South relations. The chapters concerning the First and Second Civil Wars discuss the liberatory theologies that framed various Sudanese regimes as biblical/spiritual evils, while positioning southerners as neo-Israelites destined for freedom. That white mission officials like Allison framed interethnic relations during the condominium necessitates an expanded understanding of political theology in South Sudan from one restricted to interracial and interreligious relations to an interethnic one as well. Sudanese figures like Thomas Attiyah continued to insert theology into discussions about south-

ern ethnicities during the Second Civil War and post-2011 southern conflict, illustrating that for all that can be said about the spiritualization of the Arab Islamic North versus black Christian South rhetoric during the civil wars, there is a tradition of clothing interethnic relations in spiritual terms for an even longer period. This reality can be used to argue that ethnicity, more than race or religion, has been the more stubborn bone of contention in the South.

Finally, the Nugent School illustrates the gendered and martial nature of the Christian project in Sudan. Emblazoned with the Maltese cross and afforded access to the Boy Scouts, Crusader Bible classes, and the Boys' Brigade, Nugent students were surrounded by military idioms. Various Sudanese intellectuals during the twentieth-century civil wars spiritualized those conflicts by referencing relevant biblical passages, invoking a providential God, and at times demonizing Arabs and the government. The fact that various Sudanese regimes attempted to forge the country into an Islamic state further encouraged the notion that the conflicts were inherently religious. And yet, decades before any southern Sudanese Christian Anyanya member or SPLA soldier picked up a gun to fight an Islamizing government, Nugent School founder C. A. Wilson "hope[d] to send out a flow of Christian young men, who will carry the ideals of Christ wherever they go, & occupy posts some of which are at present filled by Moslems." It would not be inaccurate to state that the union of Christianity and militarism among southerners in the twentieth century can be traced to the Nugent School.

The Nugent School was not the only condominium-era institution created to "forestall Islam." The school was joined by the Equatorial Corps, the military unit at the center of the South's most famous rebellion and the subject of the next chapter.