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## Khartoum Goliath

THE MARTIAL THEOLOGY OF *SPLM/SPLA UPDATE*

Like Biblical Philistine Goliath  
The NIF enemy looks giant and great  
tricky and treacherous all the time . . .  
Says thousands of mega-ton lies  
In the name of false Arabism and  
distorted Islam . . .  
The NIF bitter enemy gives terror and destruction  
To the people of Southern Sudan, Nuba and Ingessena  
But Alas! The brave furious confident SPLA  
Like Biblical small David with stone and sling  
The SPLA keeps Goliath at bay  
The stone and sling of our SPLA will smash and mash the skull of NIF  
Falling dead face downward  
Marking the beginning of the end  
Like Goliath defeated by little David  
The NIF brutal enemy is doomed . . .  
With sure triumphant victory  
We shall shout SPLA Oyee  
—Isaac D. Malith, 1995

The Philistines and Israelites were gathered for war. While the Philistines occupied one hill, King Saul and his Israelites were camped on another. A valley lay between them. Goliath, a Philistine champion and mountain of a man, donned the regalia of war—a bronze helmet, a bronze coat of armor, bronze greaves on his legs, a bronze javelin on his back, a spear, and a shield. “Choose a man,” he taunted, “and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.” Goliath took his stand every morning and evening for forty days. Now David, son of Jesse, had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to rule as Israel’s future king. Jesse asked his son to take grain and bread to his brothers in the camp. Early one morning, David left his flock in a shepherd’s care, loaded up, and set out. He reached the camp just as the army was moving into its battle positions and shouting the war cry. Leaving his items, David ran to the battle lines and asked how his brothers were doing. As he was speaking to them, Goliath shouted his habitual message. The shepherd boy asked those standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” David informed Saul that he would fight the giant. Saul conceded, and David warned Goliath that “the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give all of you into our hands.” With stone and sling David stunned Goliath, decapitated him with his own sword, and became a legend.<sup>1</sup>

Goliath’s physical and sartorial description represented the reality of superior Philistine wealth, militancy, and technology. Despite these advantages, the Israelites had God on their side. As Goliath and David represented each of their respective armies, their tête-à-tête was a struggle not only between two men but also between lifestyles and gods, with the dominant position in a master-slave hierarchy at stake.<sup>2</sup> It has also been surmised that while modern racial understandings had no real basis in 1 Samuel or its ancient contexts, biblical tradition often cast the Philistines as an Other to Israel in a higher degree than its other neighbors. For example, Philistines were castigated for being uncircumcised while Israel and most of its neighbors practiced circumcision. Matthew Arnold states that based on the German use of the word *Philistine*, the term “must have originally meant . . . a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people. . . . They regarded [the Philistines] as . . . enemies to light; stupid and oppressive, but

at the same time very strong.”<sup>3</sup> In the mid-1990s, South Sudanese in the midst of the Second Sudanese Civil War wanted the Bible to address them so that their place in the world could be recognized. Apart from the Bible, few other sources were available with which to interpret their position.<sup>4</sup> Episodes from biblical Israel’s history, like David’s clash with Goliath, became popular narratives to fit the modern situation.

The Sudanese government framed its fight against rebel forces as a jihad to recruit more Muslims into the ranks of the Popular Defense Force (PDF). The theme of Islamic martyrdom obscured the war’s high level of casualties sustained by ill-trained PDF members. In a similar fashion, southern leaders infused religious themes into their thought and action. Churches and other Christian institutions and communities fashioned theological responses to the war, and many understood their struggle in terms of biblical themes, especially that of suffering. Though the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) never officially affiliated with any religion and maintained a policy of religious toleration, it manipulated religion to mobilize and garner support at home and abroad. The Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) was transformed into a largely Christian force that explicitly used Christian themes and language as propaganda.<sup>5</sup>

The *SPLM/SPLA Update* is important to the genealogy of religious politics through its contribution to the Second Civil War’s framing in spiritual terms and the significance of circulating print media in the dissemination of political theology. Published by the SPLM and SPLA, the *Update* published content that constituted a martial theology pitting the SPLA against the National Islamic Front (NIF). Founded by Hasan al-Turabi, the Islamist NIF co-ruled the country under his political guidance.<sup>6</sup> After the war’s 2005 conclusion, SPLA leader John Garang became “Moses,” and Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Cush was referenced as foretelling southern independence. Paralleling themes that could be heard over Radio SPLA, *Update* contributors fashioned new theories of conflict and identity and attempted to lend a unified theory of divine “chosenness” and victory over an evil enemy.<sup>7</sup> By featuring David, Moses, and Isaiah, this martial theology was gendered masculine.

Rather than acting as proselytizers, contributors were creative intellectuals who organized a spiritual, liberatory account of the war. These authors interpreted events inside biblical and ancient Israelite templates, placed circumstances in a narrative trajectory, and transformed political history into a spiritual chronicle. That chronicle attracted readers beyond Sudan’s political borders, situating itself within a global Sudanese diaspora and reach-

ing into the ancient past to locate the struggles of Sudanese Christians in an older story of divine chosenness. That the *Update* was a secular medium illustrates the importance of diversifying the sources in which we search and analyze the percolation of religious thought in the diaspora. Though it may be natural to zero in on religious spaces like churches, religious organizations, and media, secular arenas are also significant spaces to explore contours of religious ideology. The danger of marginalizing those spaces in such investigations is to ignore important ways that religion shapes and cuts across the totality of lived experiences in the Sudanese diaspora and, more broadly, the Africana world.

#### THE SPLA AND GLOBAL CHRISTENDOM

Repeated violations of the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement led to a Second Civil War, which began in 1983. The Regional Self-Government Act worked in concert with the 1973 constitution to establish power-sharing arrangements formed between the government and a unified southern region. A decade after these establishments, President Ja'afar al-Nimeiri enacted Sharia law (he realized that he could no longer fend off opposition from the religious right). Nimeiri also repealed the Addis Ababa Agreement and divided the South into regions based on the old Equatoria, Upper Nile, and Bahr el-Ghazal provinces. In May 1983, an army mutiny in the Upper Nile marked the beginning of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A).<sup>8</sup>

Before the Second Civil War, Christianity in South Sudan was more closely linked with educated and formally employed people living in towns rather than those in rural areas. Southerners saw Christian missions as bases to learn skills like literacy rather than resources for spiritual direction. Christian conversions in the East increased after the conclusion of the First Civil War. Sharon Hutchinson explains that this development represented a Nuer attempt to resist a coercive government increasingly stirred by Islamic fundamentalist principles. In addition to such conversions, Nuer labor migration to northern cities after the hostilities transformed many northern churches into social and educational centers in scattered, estranging urban landscapes. The Second Civil War destroyed the southern urban life that had been connected with Christianity, and against the backdrop of the government's politicization of Islam, many southerners began to view churches as political allies. Churches, particularly in northern cities, offered displaced southerners clubs that provided religious teaching, literacy

classes, and other social services—resources that, according to Francis Deng, allowed them to build broader relationships and a sense of unity.<sup>9</sup> The 2005 *CIA World Factbook* reported that Sudan's population was 70 percent Muslim and 5 percent Christian, while 25 percent adhered to indigenous religions. Christian leaders, however, put their numbers quite higher. One report, published in 2007, noted that the Episcopal and Catholic churches were strongest among the Dinka, while the Presbyterians were foremost among the Nuer.<sup>10</sup>

Two events had major repercussions on the SPLM/SPLA's trajectory and the politicization of Christianity in the war. The first was the NIF's rise to power and General Omer al-Bashir's ascendance to national leadership. Organized after Nimeiri's 1985 ouster, the NIF was an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood. Its program underscored national unity and, as a consequence, presented federalism as an answer to civil war. Perhaps most significant was the policy that Islamic law is the only enforceable law. In 1989 al-Bashir came to power in a June coup that unseated Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi's coalition government. Al-Bashir instituted a host of measures centralizing national power and silencing opposition: all political parties were banned, government leaders and scores of military leaders were arrested, and the constitution, national assembly, and trade unions were abolished. The Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation was established as the ruling body, and Hasan al-Turabi—the NIF's founder and ideologue—was considered the regime's main theorist. Southern reactions to al-Bashir's coup were generally negative. A year into the new regime, it had still not had any direct peace talks with the SPLM, and the issue of Islamic law was, generally speaking, non-negotiable for southerners.<sup>11</sup>

An SPLM/SPLA radio broadcast after al-Mahdi's overthrow indicated its sentiment moving forward. Citing the SPLM manifesto's statement concerning the ideal separation between mosque and state, the broadcast stated that "we advise El Bashir not to take the position taken by fundamentalists for that position is dangerous, unhistorical and alien to the Sudan and to Africa. . . . Sharia, or any other religious law pertaining to other religions, is personal law, a relationship between the believer and his God."<sup>12</sup> However, the National Islamic Front had come to power in 1989 with the express aim of establishing an Islamic political order throughout the country.<sup>13</sup>

The fall of Ethiopia's Mengistu regime was the second formative event, signaling important shifts for the SPLA from an operational standpoint and in relation to Christian bodies. The SPLA lost its main supply lines and military bases in southwestern Ethiopia, and 350,000 South Sudanese were forced to flee from their refugee camps. The regime's collapse meant that

major changes were in store for Radio SPLA. *Radio SPLA: The Voice of Revolutionary Armed Struggle* had been established after the SPLM/SPLA was urged to create a revolutionary radio station. Located in suburban Addis Ababa, Radio SPLA made its first long-range broadcast in October 1984 and became a medium for broadcasting SPLM/A policy and changes, battles with the Sudanese government, news, commentaries, war songs, and poems that celebrated the SPLA.<sup>14</sup> Despite Radio SPLA's popularity, the fall of the Mengistu regime spelled doom for the SPLM/A in Ethiopia. Radio SPLA went off the air in 1991, and though the movement had plans to use Upper Talanga as a new radio base, it was unstable. The movement needed to find another foreign communications base and turned to print media as a means to disseminate information.<sup>15</sup>

Without the benefit of Ethiopia and cut off from its Marxist supporters, the SPLA's relations with the church warmed. The evacuation of refugee camps—former arenas for evangelism—meant that many trained ministers and new Christians reentered the country. Military leaders began to show increasing respect for the church, and Christian spirituality appeared among the soldiery. Combatants, for example, created makeshift chapels, and the cross was worn around necks and sewn into uniforms. After al-Bashir's coup the SPLA allowed church leaders more freedom of activity within SPLA-controlled areas. Church leaders were also allowed to form the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), which was joined by all southern churches in 1989 (Khartoum's Sudan Council of Churches could no longer maintain contacts with churches in SPLA-controlled areas). This tightening of SPLA-church relations resulted in improved credentials with industrialized countries by suggesting religious freedom and Christian identity. The movement hoped that the West could be encouraged to give aid to the South, with the NSCC providing channels for assistance from Christian organizations abroad. The council's advocacy visits to England, the World Council of Churches, and the Vatican successfully showcased South Sudanese needs. George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury, repaid these visits with one of his own in 1994.<sup>16</sup>

Amid the ethnic and organizational factionalism of the period, the church tried to rein in the military and reconcile ethnic groups. In August 1991 the SPLA split into two warring factions, a division spurred by an unsuccessful coup led by the Nuer Riek Machar (along with other senior officers) against commander-in-chief John Garang, a Dinka. The coup leaders rejected the SPLA's stated political agenda and instead advocated South Sudanese political independence. This rift eventually led to outright military

conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer, the South's largest ethnic groups. Following the split, the church called for reconciliation and brought the factional leaders together for negotiation.<sup>17</sup>

Within the context of tensions between the SPLA and NSCC, the dialogue at the Anglican parish center of Kejiko in July 1997 was intended to allow wounds and misunderstandings to be discussed and to establish a mutual agreement. The meeting resulted in the Yei Declaration, in which the SPLA and NSCC committed to closer cooperation in factional reconciliation, national peacemaking, human rights promotion, and reconstructing "New Sudan" through activities like demining and demobilization. In 1998 the NSCC's Peace Department responded to cries for peace from Dinka and Nuer civilians in Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal. Thirty-five people met at Lokichoggio, where Nuer and Dinka shared stories of suffering they had experienced because of their interethnic conflict. The Lokichoggio Conference demanded an end to abductions, cattle raiding, and killing, and that all commanders halt hostile actions. Following this conference the Nuer and Dinka participants, along with NSCC staff, prepared for the first reconciliation conference. More than two thousand people witnessed the Wunlit Dinka-Nuer Conference in early 1999, where people gained "release from their pain . . . whilst at the same time identifying the issues that would have to be confronted and solved." More than three hundred Nuer and Dinka leaders signed a covenant.<sup>18</sup> Rev. William Lowrey, who during the 1960s had founded the first multiracial Christian organization at the University of Southern Mississippi, played no small part in reconciliation efforts. Arriving in Sudan as a mission worker among the Nuer in 1991, Rev. Lowrey returned in 1998 as the peace consultant for the NSCC. Through the NSCC, Lowrey developed a People-to-People Peace Process among the Nuer and the Dinka. In June 1998 he convened the Nuer-Dinka Chiefs and Church Leaders Reconciliation Conference in Loki, Kenya.<sup>19</sup>

Lowrey's actions point to the role of international activism. Following the SPLM/A split in 1991, the NSCC found religious activists in the United States who were eager to pressure the American government to get involved in the war. This effort to link with American activists led to a coalition of religious and antislavery human rights organizations, which looked to pressure the government to work toward ending the war. The war, in its view, was between Arabs and Africans, Christianity and Islam, and—particularly important—masters and slaves.<sup>20</sup> Modern Sudanese slavery was first reported in American and British newspapers in the late 1980s, when raiders from the North started attacking southern villages. Christian Solidarity In-

ternational (CSI) pioneered “slave redemptions,” paying traders from North Sudan to purchase captives and return them to their southern homes. A CSI representative would work with SPLA members during the redemption trips, and the Christians who redeemed the freed Sudanese typically addressed them. The American Anti-Slavery Group (AASG) joined CSI in highlighting the issue of modern slavery in the South. American human rights groups like CSI and AASG linked the southern plight with that of Christians, blacks, and Jewish minorities in America. Their work and humanitarian rhetoric influenced the manner in which the conflict was represented in mainstream Western media. The ritualized slave redemptions resonated with slavery’s US history and marked the American and Sudanese participants in the redemptions as liberators.<sup>21</sup>

In 2000, Joe Madison—a civil rights activist, talk show host, and board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—went with CSI on a redemption trip. The following year Gloria White-Hammond, an African American co-pastor of Jamaica Plain’s (Boston) Bethel AME Church, similarly set off on a CSI-organized redemption trip. Perceiving the abductions as modern slavery, White-Hammond and her group saw slave redemption as a way for them—as black American Christians—to address the weights they shouldered concerning slavery and Africa. Black pastors occupied a special position because they could speak to race and religion. Activist ministers like Rev. Walter Fauntroy and Rev. Al Sharpton traveled to South Sudan, gave media interviews, and spoke at rallies and their churches. One cadre of black American pastors wrote to the Congressional Black Caucus demanding greater leadership on the Sudanese slavery issue. During White-Hammond’s 2001 trip, CSI informed Sudanese captives that they were freed because there were people in America (i.e., Christians, black Americans) who had been touched by their suffering.<sup>22</sup>

Beginning in the 1990s, Sudan entered the American evangelical mind as a site of Christian persecution. Samuel Moyn once noted that the Muslim has taken the place of the Communist in the contemporary European imagination (with particular respect to the matter of religious liberty), and in this respect, the post-Cold War context cannot be divorced from America’s turn to Sudan. Only a decade after divisions over antiapartheid activism had showcased racial and political ruptures among theologically conservative believers, black and white Americans rallied around South Sudanese moral claims. More than being a mere evangelical fixation, the Sudan campaign became one of the most broad-based political coalitions on international matters since apartheid’s demise. Conservative pro-Israel



groups listed Sudan—behind Osama bin Laden and Hamas—as principal elements in the fight against the danger posed by “militant Islam.”<sup>23</sup>

#### *SPLA UPDATE: ORIGINS, COMPOSITION, AND CONTEXT*

Many southern Christians viewed Christianity as a unifying mechanism that could curtail ethnic strife and bind the region together against the North. Against the backdrop of ethnic conflict, some thought that since Muslims were not fighting one another, a Christian South could be similarly united.<sup>24</sup> Some elites in the South promoted the notion that Christianity be fostered as an important element of southern identity, a religion that—in league with factors like English and indigenous languages—competed against North Sudan’s Arab and Islamic framework. Francis Deng called this “an essential ingredient in the hidden agendas of the war of visions,” even though, in his estimation, those in the SPLM/SPLA leadership may not have openly supported that model.<sup>25</sup> By the late 1980s, however, Machar recognized the potential for Christian conversion to galvanize southern resistance and encouraged conversion among civilians.<sup>26</sup> One civil official in Bahr el-Ghazal explained, “Christianity is needed to stand firm against encroaching civilisations. We need a Christian Fundamentalism.”<sup>27</sup> With Radio SPLA off the air and a renewed emphasis on Christianity’s position in the war, *SPLM/SPLA Update* became a medium with which to disseminate a martial theology of political dissent.

Created after the SPLA fled Ethiopia, the *Update* was designed to keep accurate records and reach those who could not be reached through traditional communication. Alternate commander George Akol was appointed as its first director. Based in Nairobi, it was disseminated throughout East Africa free of charge. Between 1992 and 2004 it was published almost every week and was a channel of communication between the national leadership, diaspora, and Sudanese public. Most issues included commentaries, field updates, official reports, and poetry. A main media outlet on organizational policy and activities, the *Update* was one of several publications issued by SPLA factions from Nairobi.<sup>28</sup>

The *Update* was a global forum. In addition to being distributed to liberated areas within Sudan, it was distributed to all international SPLM chapters and countries that included the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, and the United States. Atem Yaak Atem noted that Nairobi’s non-Sudanese expatriate community was attracted to his column, and he further noted that Sudanese SPLM sympathizers from the Gulf and Khartoum-controlled

areas secretly read the *Update* and sent letters praising his column.<sup>29</sup> Elhag Paul, who received the *Update* in the UK, remembers first becoming aware of the newspaper when he was posted a copy by the SPLM/A London office. He would receive copies by mail or collect it when he was near their offices: “Many South Sudanese in the UK also read it.”<sup>30</sup> The *Update* was also international in its content and in the distribution of its contributors: there was coverage of apartheid’s demise, Archbishop Benjamin Yugusuk’s visit to Kakuma refugee camp, and a post-9/11 condolence letter to George W. Bush. Contributions came from Nairobi, Lesotho, Germany, New Jersey, London, and Harare.<sup>31</sup>

The *Update*’s global reach may have reflected the movement’s attempt to involve the Sudanese diaspora—and Africans more generally—in its liberationist project. The war separated children from their families, and the SPLA convinced the Ethiopian government to accept southern refugees. The Lost Boys entered Ethiopia in 1987, and SPLA-appointed caretakers in the Panyidu refugee camps organized them into groups.<sup>32</sup> Abraham Nhial’s story is emblematic of the hardships Lost Boys faced in their flight from Sudan. As he shared with me, his walk from Aweil to Ethiopia took over three months and included many hardships: “People were eating young boys and girl[s] were eaten by wild animals, thrown in the rivers, eaten by crocodiles, died because there’s no water.” Nhial—who by the time of our interview was the Anglican bishop of Aweil—credited God’s power in keeping some of them alive as the reason he became a Christian. By 1991 more than 400,000 South Sudanese were living in refugee camps in western Ethiopia, but after Mengistu’s fall, the SPLA facilitated the Lost Boy resettlement in Kenya.<sup>33</sup>

In the late 1990s and early 2000s many southern refugees arrived in Western nations. Nearly four thousand resettled in the United States. The Lost Boys raised the visibility of southern suffering to American Christians who were interested in their struggle against Islam, an interest that seriously influenced US-Sudan relations. The media focused close attention on the Lost Boys’ stories, testimonies sponsored by church groups that directed attention to America’s policy toward Sudan. In March 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell declared before the House Subcommittee on Africa that the world’s greatest tragedy was occurring in Sudan, and two months later, President Bush highlighted Sudan’s religious freedom violations. He appointed Senator John Danforth—an ordained Episcopal minister—as his special envoy on the Sudan. Nhial, who went on to attend college in Georgia and seminary in Pennsylvania, is among those who have raised awareness

about the Lost Boys and broader South Sudanese plight to American audiences.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Lost Boy moniker is misleading; many were entire families on a secondary resettlement scheme adopted by Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Members of the diaspora wrote letters to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and to the United States, UK, and Norway demanding the right to self-determination. Diaspora organizations also drew attention to South Sudanese wishes to secede. The UK-based Sudan Christian Fellowship (SCF) and Sudanese in Diaspora (SID) each spoke about the South's wishes. Run by Josephine Lagu, the SID worked with the House of Commons' All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan. Among other services, it aimed to raise awareness of the refugee plight among policy makers and agencies and to provide assistance for asylum applications.<sup>35</sup> Diasporic support was not lost on John Garang, who "constantly wooed" the diaspora "because he wanted to be the sole leader of South Sudan. . . . Members of the Diaspora used their connections with senior members of the SPLM to influence the agenda."<sup>36</sup> In Garang's 2004 meeting with Lost Boys in Phoenix, he referred to them as "freedom fighters" and, in recognition of their role in strengthening relations between the United States and South Sudan, claimed "that he had 3,800 ambassadors to the United States."<sup>37</sup>

#### MARTIAL THEOLOGY OF SPLM/SPLA UPDATE

Writing from Nairobi, Kong Chang used the example of biblical David to argue that southern youth carried great responsibility: "David, the Israelite youth who was quite religious not only killed Goliath . . . but was also deemed fit to be King . . . our elders . . . did fight in many parts of the country . . . the torch is with you. History will judge you harshly if it burns out in your hands."<sup>38</sup> In many ways, the *Update's* martial brand of Christian thought adopted the theological and racial themes and arguments from the David and Goliath story. As David represented God's chosen people and Goliath an evil Other bent on subjugation, contributors made similar distinctions between themselves and Khartoum. Following the First Abuja Conference, the *Update* published a commentary that likened the regime to "the Biblical Goliath." The conference, convened in May 1992, was intended as a space where the SPLM and Sudanese government could attempt to resolve issues of division. The government argued that the Muslim majority had a right to establish an Islamic constitutional system, that the South

could be exempt from Islamic punishments (but not Islamic laws), and that Sudan would be transformed into an Arab-Islamic country. Both SPLM wings rejected the government's position in favor of a secular democratic system.<sup>39</sup> One writer expressed discontent at Khartoum's position: "Like the Biblical Goliath, the enemy went to Abuja . . . told the SPLM/SPLA to cave in or die . . . the South stood its ground . . . and chose to be free or dead. . . . The Abuja Declaration sent Goliath reeling [reeling]."<sup>40</sup> Years later Isaac Malith appropriated David and Goliath to argue that SPLA victory was certain: "Like Biblical Philistine Goliath / The NIF enemy looks giant. . . . / But Alas! . . . / The stone and sling of our SPLA will smash and mash the skull of NIF. . . . / With sure triumphant victory / We shall shout SPLA Oyee."<sup>41</sup> This framing of the SPLA, though evocative, contradicted reality. With arms and support from the Ethiopian government, the SPLA could by the early 1990s mobilize fifty thousand soldiers that could attack in concert with northern allies. The army had at least twelve battalions and weaponry that included antiaircraft missiles, AK-47s, and mines.<sup>42</sup> While the sense of destiny and righteousness that the David and Goliath parallel imparted was significant, the David appropriation nevertheless covered up the structural realities of the SPLA's war machine.

While the David narrative scripted a victorious outcome, the most famous biblical tale of liberation—Exodus—was also featured to convey a similar message. In this paradigm John Garang was Moses, called to lead Sudan into a new promised land. In 1994 the *Update* published perhaps its first Garang-Moses comparison when Fr. Thomas Attiyah opined that slavery united New Sudan with the historical Jews. Born in eastern Equatoria in 1941, Attiyah was ordained as a priest in the Congregation of the Apostles of Jesus in 1969 in Kenya. During his lengthy clerical career, he served as a rector at several East African seminaries. During the Second Sudanese Civil War, South Sudanese members of the Apostles of Jesus worked primarily in Kenya and liberated areas controlled by the SPLA. Attiyah worked mostly in Juba. Written under the heading "Let my people go," Attiyah acknowledged that God worked through history and suggested that Garang could fill Moses's position in leading his people to an independent state: "He is 'our Moses' . . . Dr John. . . . Be courageous! . . . be humble like Moses of old, full of trust . . . in the Lord and lead the people to their total freedom."<sup>43</sup>

The *Update* published content that used scripture to decry tribalism and political factionalism—realities that, throughout the war, threatened to upend the liberation project. In Fr. Attiyah's published homily, he stated that the Sudanese shared the Israelite experience of suffering and suggested

that they “get united like the Israelites . . . and confront the beast in unity and solidarity.”<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Izale echoed the belief that the Israelites represented a model of unity in his poem against tribalism: “We fight the divisive policy, / Divide and rule, / No Madi No Latuko . . . / ‘Moses’ at Sudan echoes, / A joint front, / Unity, / Equality.”<sup>45</sup> While some used the Jewish scriptures to convey the belief that unity was required for victory, the Christian New Testament was employed for the same purpose. Fr. Attiyah used Colossians to express the harmony that different ethnicities had in Christ: “Every ethnic group in the South has the Christian responsibility to unite with fellow men and women. . . . Today our unity . . . is a matter of life and death.” Paraphrasing Paul, Attiyah stated, “As Christians, we have put on the image of Christ . . . there is no room for distinction between Dinka and Nuer, Shilluk and Zande. . . . There is only Christ.”<sup>46</sup>

A contemporary statement recorded in Wendy James’s *War and Survival* shows both the connection some had with the Exodus narrative outside the *Update* and the different applications that people could glean from it. Itang was a refugee site near Gambela for people from South Sudan. In May 1988, the *New York Times* reported that approximately 182,000 had crowded into the camp. Suske, the first wife of Pastor Paul Sol (a senior elder in Chali’s Christian community), referenced Itang in her following statement to James in early October 1991:

Yes, we are living like the people of old.—*What people?*—The Israelite people . . . we shall wait and eventually believe, as the Israelites did. And when everyone believes, our God will lead us, to look after us in our home where we shall one day live . . . we are like the Israelite people, from crying in the wilderness. They strayed, and they went into a cave in the mountains. Moses led them, he went to help them . . . as we came from Itang, I began to really believe again, as we came through the water. And it was raining, and we were really like the Israelites of old, and I wanted to believe like them, and go on with a good will.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to claims that the Sudanese government could be likened to Goliath, other writers in the *Update* demonized al-Bashir, the NIF, and Arabs in general. Latio Lo Jaden participated in this trend. Born in 1947, Latio Jaden was the son of Aggrey Jaden, the prominent South Sudanese leader who distinguished himself during the First Civil War. Latio Jaden finished primary school as one of the top twenty students in Juba, allowing him entry into secondary school. To his surprise, however, he was rejected and admitted instead to a *mahad* (a Muslim training center that would

have prepared him to become a Muslim teacher for Islamic *khalwa* schools). When his father found out, he advised his son to stay out of school, which he did until the age of fifteen. By 1958 Aggrey Jaden had fallen into disfavor with the Sudanese government, been placed under house arrest, and been informed that none of his children would be educated. Fleeing to Uganda in 1960, Aggrey sent for his family to join him in 1961. Latio resumed his education in Kampala and began learning English. In 1983 he became involved in a movement that advocated for South Sudan's liberation, which led to his final exiling to Zaire and later Uganda.<sup>48</sup> The *Update* published his poem "Khartoum by Night" in its February 27, 1994, issue. Written from Nairobi, it included the following lines:

Oh! Khartoum  
 Holy Khartoum  
 Sodomy  
 possessed souls  
 Drinking at the  
 Brothels and bars  
 And in the open play  
 Grounds at night  
 And in the dark . . .  
 Man to man  
 Man with a donkey . . .  
 Sinful nights  
 Devils wear  
 Angels faces  
 Behaving like saints  
 Oh! Khartoum  
 Holy Khartoum  
 You devilish city.<sup>49</sup>

Latio Jaden's decision to link Khartoum with sodomy hearkened back to similar references made to Khartoum and the adjacent city of Omdurman during earlier periods in Sudanese history. On seeing the carnage and destruction of Omdurman following Kitchener's decisive victory in September 1898, Owen S. Watkins—a Wesleyan chaplain attached to his forces—reflected, "His wrath came to our minds, for this was a veritable African Sodom. . . . Never in my whole life has sin appeared so evil and disgusting as on that day when viewed in its brutal native ugliness."<sup>50</sup> In Andrew Wheeler's description of nineteenth-century mission work in the Sudan, he writes

that Khartoum came to be known as the “Capital of Hell.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, Jaden’s description of Khartoum as a city with souls possessed by sodomy not only aimed to soil its reputation but also echoed other instances of framing North Sudan’s biggest cities as paragons of wickedness.

Jaden was joined in his aspersions by Nyandeng Malek Deliech. Born in 1964, Malek moved with her aunt to Juba to pursue her education at the age of thirteen, a decision that protected her from early nuptials. After completing secondary school, she received a scholarship to attend Egypt’s Zagazig University, and in Egypt, she became politically active and joined the SPLM. Graduating in 1991, she eventually received another scholarship to continue her studies in England, where she earned a master’s degree from the University of Wolverhampton in 2003.<sup>52</sup> It was perhaps during her stint in England that Malek, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, made a Crucifixion analogy when lamenting that southerners had suffered from the same enemy that had just struck America:

We, the survivors of the suffering civil society of South Sudan . . . share the grief with the American leadership and the relatives and friends of the victims of the barbaric attack. . . . We strongly condemn all sorts of violence and wanton massacre of innocent human beings. . . . This has been the plea of South Sudan civilians during the last half century of unmatched brutal atrocities by the same enemies of civilization and democratization. . . . We are being forced . . . to drink from the same cup of the deadly liquid served to Jesus on the Cross.<sup>53</sup>

Malek’s reference to the “same enemies” is revealing when considering the NIF’s ties to Osama bin Laden. In 1991 bin Laden moved from Afghanistan to Khartoum, where he was nominally involved in development projects but actually engaged in furthering his Islamic causes. During his stint in Sudan, he was implicated in several terrorist attacks and accused by the United States of running militant camps in the country. The United States charged Sudan as a “state sponsor of terrorism” after the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The Sudanese foreign minister asked American diplomats what his country needed to do to shed the terrorist label, and after US ambassador Tim Carney applied pressure, bin Laden was forced out in May 1996.<sup>54</sup>

Malek’s involvement with the SPLM and the *Update*’s inclusion of her article is one illustration of women’s involvement in the movement. According to Nhial, “They [women] were the one[s] running the church in most cases. They were the one[s] taking care of the children of our soldiers. Our

soldiers were not having salaries, so they were the one[s] cooking for them and provid[ing] food for them.”<sup>55</sup> To be sure, women’s involvement went beyond simply taking care of soldiers. In 1984 John Garang created Ketiba Banat, the SPLA’s only girls’ battalion. Many left school or home to join the SPLA, including Elizabeth Anei—a member of the University of Juba’s student union, who joined the SPLA and trained others in military tactics. Oftentimes the military life offered women the chance to further their education while gaining job skills on an equal plane with men. Many trained for such positions as armed patrol, radio communications, the medical corps, and participation on the front with men. All told, the SPLA incorporated more women than the Anyanya force in the 1960s. And yet, Clémence Pinaud writes, the SPLA differed from other socialist guerrilla groups through its exclusion of women from its political agenda (a reality that dated to the beginning). Some groups of women in Equatoria, the Nuba Mountains, Ethiopia, and Cuba were militarily trained and stayed in the SPLA longer than most Ketiba Banat recruits, who were speedily married off to SPLA dignitaries and departed the front lines.<sup>56</sup>

Along with Malek’s post-9/11 reference to the Crucifixion came antigovernment vilifications that Khartoum was evil. In Amosa Michael’s “Weapons to Defeat the NIF in the Bible: Letter to All Freedom Fighters,” he used several scriptures to encourage readers to hold fast and resist al-Bashir:

Satan has legions of . . . wicked spirits waging war against you. . . . Their base of operation is . . . Khartoum and other countries that sponsor Islamic fundamentalism . . . the devil is devising this devastating mission of Christian cleansing of which Omer Beshir is one of the field commanders. . . . Let us come together, plan our warfare and fight the enemy of the children of God.

Michael comforted readers by pointing to Luke 7, where Jesus heals a centurion’s servant. In that passage, according to Michael, “we see a classical example of long range missile in the battlefield.” “I challenge you in the name of Jesus,” he continued, “stand up and start bombing any satanic targets in the Sudan.”<sup>57</sup> Father Attiyah similarly adopted the theme of good versus evil when he coupled the assertion that Khartoum’s political system was “evil” with the claim that “social justice requires that evil system be destroyed and replaced with the just one.”<sup>58</sup> Another example of demonization included assistant commander Gabriel Riak’s assertion that the Sudanese were suffering from “blood sucking Lucifers/devils. . . . / Fighting our way out means your liberation / From feisty hands.”<sup>59</sup>



Despite such excoriations, the SPLM/A did not look to completely suppress or distance itself from Islam. On the contrary, the movement—on the battlefield and in the *Update*—made efforts to show respect for Islam. Within the newspaper, some contributors made sure to separate Islam from the SPLA’s Muslim opponents. One such figure was Steven Wöndu, who reserved his disdain for individuals rather than Islam entirely: “The moral and ethical decadence of the Turabi-Beshir syndicate is beyond human understanding. . . . Allah and Islam, I thought, represent purity. . . . The Turabi-Beshir regime . . . portray the characters of Lucifer.”<sup>60</sup> His decision to associate Islam with goodness represents the fact that the *Update* rarely if ever directed angst against Islam writ large but instead targeted the NIF’s fundamentalist Islam. Latio Jaden expressed this distinction in poetic verse: “Ours is not hatred of Arabism or Islam / But this type of Islam.”<sup>61</sup> Nine clerics who participated in the 1993 NSCC General Assembly in Kaya wrote a letter on behalf of South Sudan’s Christian community, expressing pacific sentiments toward North Sudanese Muslims. The *Update* published this letter, with one portion reading: “We do not hate the Arabs and Muslims of Northern Sudan . . . among them there are many who are tired of this senseless war . . . we have still hope that those whose hearts have hardened may . . . recognise that brotherhood and sisterhood is our common call.”<sup>62</sup>

Several of my research participants who were (and still are) active in the church acknowledged the presence of Muslims in the SPLM/SPLA. Rev. John Daau, founder of the Good Shepherd College and Seminary as well as founder and editor of the *Christian Times*, expressed that the SPLA allowed soldiers to follow their religion of choice. Muslims “were given their own opportunities to worship and to preach to their own fellow Muslims . . . on Fridays, Muslims were allowed to do their own thing.”<sup>63</sup> The Rt. Rev. Bismark Avokaya, Anglican bishop of Mundri, referenced the fact that some SPLA senior commanders were Muslim.<sup>64</sup> Angelo Lokoyome, who at the time of our interview was working as the justice and peace coordinator in the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba, similarly acknowledged the Muslim presence in the war: “This war was not fought by Christians alone. We had Muslims . . . in the bush. . . . Even this SPLA war, and even with all our struggles now, we have Muslims also who behave as South Sudanese because for them, they are saying before they became Muslims they were first South Sudanese.”<sup>65</sup> In the words of Mahmoud E. Yousif, former chairman of the New Sudan Islamic Council and South Sudan Islamic Council, “the role played by Muslims in SPLM/A (from South Sudan, Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Darfur), can’t be underestimated, and without them South Sudan wouldn’t

be as it is today.” One illustration he used to support his argument occurred after Riek Machar formed the Nasir faction in 1992. Yousif explained to me that after Machar destroyed several SPLA forces up to Mongalla, Salva Kiir led three SPLM/A battalions from Nuba. These forces—which were more than 65 percent Muslim—repulsed Machar.<sup>66</sup>

The final component of religious thought stipulated that God would protect New Sudan and ensure its liberation. Amosa Michael lent a sense of confidence by borrowing from 2 Corinthians: “Let us stand alongside our brethren who are in combat with the demon possessed Omer Beshir and his followers. All of us are soldiers in Christ. . . . Our weapons have a divine power for the pulling down [of] strongholds.”<sup>67</sup> This New Testament example notwithstanding, a prophecy concerning Cush from the book of Isaiah was the foundational element of the belief in ultimate victory. The Kingdom of Cush was an ancient civilization located south of Egypt. As it controlled the Nile cataracts—barriers to river transportation—it occupied a strategic location with respect to regional trade. In around 650 BCE, a garrison of Jewish mercenary soldiers that had been brought to Egypt to defend the southern border with Cush was established on Elephantine Island. Reputed in ancient art and literature as soldiers, Cush and Cushites are referenced in the Bible fifty-four times.<sup>68</sup> In Isaiah 18, the Old Testament prophet outlined the following “Prophecy against Cush”:

Woe to the land of whirring wings  
   along the rivers of Cush,  
   which sends envoys by sea  
 in papyrus boats over the water.  
 Go, swift messengers,  
 to a people tall and smooth-skinned,  
   to a people feared far and wide,  
 an aggressive nation of strange speech,  
   whose land is divided by rivers.  
 All you people of the world,  
   you who live on the earth,  
 when a banner is raised on the mountains,  
   you will see it,  
 and when a trumpet sounds,  
   you will hear it.

Isaiah states that the Lord would “cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches,” and the Cushites

would be left to become the food of preying mountain birds and wild animals. “At that time,” however,

gifts will be brought to the Lord Almighty  
from a people tall and smooth-skinned,  
from a people feared far and wide,  
an aggressive nation of strange speech,  
whose land is divided by rivers—  
the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the  
Lord Almighty.<sup>69</sup>

Prophecy interpretation is relevant to any discussion concerning Isaiah 18 and South Sudan. Douglas Johnson has analyzed interpretations of the prophecies of Ngundeng, noting that his songs became quite popular with SPLA soldiers who were originally recruited mainly from Dinka and Nuer from Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal. During the 1980s, the SPLA reinterpreted his songs to create military unity among its soldiery and to strengthen its claim to establish bases in Gajaak areas (the Gajaak are the largest Nuer group in Ethiopian territory). Songs that mentioned *Kartum bari* were understood to foretell military and political victory in Khartoum. Increasingly prominent during the war as a symbol of antigovernment resistance, as Christiane Falge has noted, Ngundeng’s post-1991 fame was linked to the fragmentation of southern political and military unity and Nuer society’s ethnic, religious, and political fragmentation.<sup>70</sup>

By the early 1990s, one Nuer evangelist had already begun to invoke Isaiah’s prophecy as an argument to encourage Christian conversion. In James Mut Kueth’s interview with journalist Deborah Scroggins, the Presbyterian minister at Nasir argued that Isaiah 18 foretold Sudan’s future.<sup>71</sup> The *Update* published invocations to Cush as a foundation for Sudanese nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and the belief that liberation was at hand through the realization of Isaiah’s prophecy. A special edition published a paper conveying that “we” were the land of Cush, the dark-skinned people noted for their martial prowess. Cush, the writer maintained, provided the example for New Sudan from which “we must re-trace our cultural roots . . . to evolve a concept of Sudanese nationalism, which is capable of rallying all the present Sudanese peoples around ‘nation-formation,’ ‘nation-building’ and ‘national unity.’”<sup>72</sup> Kwarnyikiir Abdelilah Zion addressed a poem to “Cushites everywhere,” admonishing readers to trust God for victory: “March with hopes and do not despair. / For the God of Isaiah is quite aware. . . . / The present war by all means shall be won. . . . / You have been named by Zion.”<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the

most compelling reference to Cush appeared in Ater Deng Abuk's poem "The Sudan Laugh." Referring to the quip that God laughed when he created Sudan, Abuk rejoiced that the curse on Cush was no more:

Yes! Comes a voice from beyond Isaiah 18. . . . Cush is uncursed! Lam, Riek, Nyuon, Kuanyin *Achan's sons of Jericho* have removed the curse at *Ngundeang's* Sobat Valley of *An-chor*. . . . Cush lost, now regained! You, tall smooth-skinned people feared far and wide! . . . Your Hour has come! . . . the New Sudan!<sup>74</sup>

To grasp the full meaning of Abuk's allusions, political developments in South Sudan in 1994 (when the poem was published) warrant elucidation. Divisions within the SPLA-United resulted in fighting between the two largest Nuer groups. The conference purposed to end the Nuer civil war rededicated the SPLA-United to achieving southern independence and dismissed those accused of collaborating with the government (including Nyuon, Kuanyin, and Lam). This move appeared to pave the way for a truce with the SPLA.<sup>75</sup> Abuk must have interpreted their dismissal as strengthening by subtraction. In the book of Joshua, the Israelite Achan is punished for taking spoils from Jericho that should have been devoted to the Lord's treasury. God turns his anger from Israel after Achan is stoned. Thus, Abuk adopted the biblical narrative by conflating Achan's stoning with the "stoning" of the Khartoum collaborators.

The SPLA leadership also referenced biblical Cush outside the pages of the *Update*. In "Vision, Perspective, and Position of the SPLM," secretary for education and religious affairs Samson L. Kwaje stated that Isaiah's mention of Cush was a clear description of contemporary South Sudan.<sup>76</sup> Garang, a secularist at the beginning of the war, saw utility in including Cush in his politics. He began combing the Bible "in the hope of divining the future outcome of this war."<sup>77</sup> In a paper delivered on his behalf to the All Africa Students Conference in 2005, Garang mentioned Cush in his attempt to link the SPLM project with Pan-Africanism. Connecting Sudan to the Pan-African movement's struggle, Sudanese fights against oppression were "aimed and are aimed at regaining African dignity and nationhood that has been mutilated over the centuries." He contextualized the liberation struggle by referencing civilizations that had appeared and disappeared in South Sudan (including Cush). For Garang such precedents spoke to Sudan's critical role in history and provided a counterargument for those wishing to remove Sudanese from history.<sup>78</sup> In these ways the SPLM/A adopted Cush as a means to add a sense of heritage and prophetic destiny.

And yet, one of my research participants, whom I have given the pseudonym “Faith,” explained that borrowing Cush may have been related to the SPLA’s heavily Dinka membership. She noted that just as many northerners trace their genealogy to Muhammad, the Dinka have an affinity for tracing “their ancestry to ancient Cush and therefore Jewish ancestry.” The Dinka, in her view, conceptualized themselves as being like the Cushites—modern warriors who likely dreamed of creating a kingdom as their imagined predecessors had.<sup>79</sup> Thus, appropriating Cush may have been used to support two objectives: first, to invite people to perform ethnic and gender identities; and second, to justify the organization’s objective of a united Sudan (Elhag Paul opined that using Cush may have related to Garang’s attempt to sell his united objective to people in the North and South).<sup>80</sup> Such a desire would contradict the references to Cush and Isaiah leading up to and through independence, when they were linked to the prospect of political separation.

African religionists have long identified with the history of ancient Israel. Tudor Parfitt notes that Israelite racial identities were widely suggested and imposed throughout the world during colonialism. Often imbued with area- or group-specific genealogies and justifications, adopting an Israelite faith “was a way of creating . . . independence from colonial authority, of establishing a measure of racial superiority, of saying ‘this is *our* religion.’” Olaudah Equiano suggested in his slave narrative that the Igbo might be related to the ancient Jews and that Igbo religion may have been a modern vestige of ancient Jewish faith. Recent Igbo history—namely, being a scattered minority in Nigeria’s cities and experiencing the Biafran genocide—has drawn comparisons between their experiences and those of the Jews.<sup>81</sup> In the first Zulu history written by a Zulu author, Magema Fuze—who was cognizant of colonial analogies between Zulu practices and Israel’s rituals—claimed that his people did not originate in southern Africa and agreed with the notion that “we black people came from the people of Israel.”<sup>82</sup> In addition to the Igbo and Zulu, other African claims to links with biblical Israel include the Malian Inadan, who claim descent from David; Ethiopian claims that trace back to Solomon; and Ugandan traditions that claim a lineage of thirty-three kings tracing back to David.<sup>83</sup>

Finally, Salim C. Wilson was the first Dinka to publish the claim that they were descended from the ancient Israelites, an assertion he made in his circa 1939 *I Was a Slave*.<sup>84</sup> Decades later, Professor M. M. Ninan of Juba University wrote a comparative study of Kuku and Hebrew culture, suggesting that “a historical common contact theory or information exchange theory

could not possibly explain such close similarity. We are thus led to the only alternative of common source . . . God did reveal himself to Kukul in a way similar to the Hebrews.”<sup>85</sup>

#### COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AND THE DEATH OF MOSES

The *SPLA Update* illustrates that political theology did not end with the First Civil War; on the contrary, this newspaper produced by the revolutionary SPLM/SPLA disseminated content during the subsequent war that spiritualized the conflict in creative ways. Wendy James notes that the influence of old ideas about suffering, loss, and wandering in the bush may have joined with the concept of a war against evil, a combination that perhaps led to strange and novel visions, dreams, and enactments. “But through dreams and memories,” she writes, “both strong Christian believers and others can find meaningful ways of connecting present experience with the past, and somehow rationalizing the world by looking back to . . . kinds of self-understanding which refer back to times long before the advent of the missionaries.”<sup>86</sup> The religious references found throughout the *Update* reveal the SPLA’s newspaper as a space where contributors creatively used theology to fashion a sense of self that was historical, spiritual, and divinely favored in the midst of war.

The *Update’s* biblical references suggest that its editors wanted to use scripture to broadcast a narrative in which oppressed Sudanese obtain victory and liberation from the Khartoum government. Facing the reality of factionalism, invocations of Cush and ancient Israel not only provided a common heritage and reading of history but also invited readers to turn their gaze from challenges to a narrative of assured victory. Theology performed the political work of defining enemies and reinterpreting circumstances into biblical templates so that a trajectory ending with SPLM/A victory could be established and disseminated. While the *Update’s* use of theology mirrored Khartoum’s use of Islam in framing the war as a jihad, the SPLA’s use of Christianity was not comparable in scale. Nevertheless, the *Update’s* religious thought was similarly intended to transform the war into a spiritual contest for its readership within and outside Sudan.

There is room to consider how Sudanese invocations of Cush may parallel those by other African or diasporic religionists. The *Africa Bible Commentary’s* coverage of Cush/Cushites offers insight into the meaning of Cush for African theologians. Edouard Nsiku, a Congolese Baptist, used the Isaiah prophecy to both argue that blacks and whites have been oppressive and

that Africans have reason to hope: “Africa will turn to god in its misery . . . and its former glory will be restored (18:7). What a message of hope for our continent!”<sup>87</sup> Congolese Nupanga Weanzana noted that Cush could be considered Africa’s ancestors, thereby widening the scope of the term to infer all Africans (and not just Sudanese).<sup>88</sup> In another instance Weanzana, along with the Kenyan Samuel Ngewa, Eritrean Tewoldemedhin Habtu, and Nigerian Zamani Kafang, used Cush’s appearance in Psalm 7 to note that the psalmist speaks to the African Church “and reminds it of the role it should play in promoting justice.”<sup>89</sup> In these ways, then, the *Commentary* frames Cush as being representative of Africa and, consequently, a reference point by which Africans can see themselves in scripture. Furthermore, there is the added assurance that Africans can look to Cush to provide hope for the present day. This perspective is consistent with Garang’s use of the Cush moniker to link the SPLM project with Pan-Africanism. Identifying Cush with Sudan not only provided Sudanese with historical legitimacy but also situated the nation in an African framework despite Khartoum’s historical efforts to align itself with the Arab world. Cush, therefore, provided a biblical, African, and liberationist heritage for the SPLM.

This chapter suggests that more deeply examining diasporic print forms like the *Update* can advance our knowledge of religion’s movement and sociopolitical usage in the African diaspora. Advances in communications and technology have facilitated the flow of cultures, peoples, and ideas to the point where a “global village” has become realized in the blurring of geographic and virtual spaces.<sup>90</sup> The *Update* connected Sudanese to people and developments back home and served as a printed space in which an imagined community of diasporic readers and contributors could be forged and exposed to the same religious ideas.

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On January 9, 2005, the SPLM and Sudanese government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). With John Garang and Vice President ‘Ali Osman Muhammad Taha as the main negotiators, the CPA ended the Second Civil War. The agreement’s main features included separate governance for the South, an even split of oil revenues between North and South, and a six-year transitional period to unity or separation. A southern referendum for unity or secession was mandated to take place in 2011. The issue of religion—which was, during the negotiations, the most contentious issue—was addressed, with Sharia law withdrawn from the South

and non-Muslims in the North exempted from its enforcement. Though the boundary of the Abyei region was unresolved, the national assembly approved the agreement. Like the process leading up to the Addis Ababa Agreement, the church played an influential role in reaching peace, including ECS archbishop Daniel Deng serving as an architect and the Sudan Council of Churches advocating for peace and reconciliation.<sup>91</sup> The CPA catapulted Garang to further heights of adoration. The feeling in Khartoum when Garang was sworn in as first vice president of Sudan (and president of South Sudan) was triumphant. Millions came to see him. Christian elements imbued his swearing-in ceremony; he placed his left hand on a Bible, and cries of Alleluia accompanied his booming English oath. Field marshal al-Bashir and Muhammad Taha were sworn in in Arabic, with their hands on a Koran and accompanied by shouts of Allahu Akbar. One commentator noted that “the Southern Sudanese in the crowd went wild, perhaps at the substance of the words, more likely at the contrasts John evoked.”<sup>92</sup>

The manner in which Garang’s life ended cemented the Mosaic narrative. Despite the intimate relationship that Moses enjoyed with God, he was prohibited from entering the promised land after an act of disobedience (Num. 20:6–12). In Deuteronomy 31 Moses spoke before Israel and told them that Joshua would cross the Jordan River with them, and he died three chapters later on Mount Nebo. After Garang’s swearing in, he returned from Khartoum and called all the important cabinet members. Salva Kiir, an early follower of Garang who had fought in the first war and stayed with him amid the factionalism of the second, was present.<sup>93</sup> Garang took Kiir by the arm and brought him aside. They talked for roughly two hours, with no one aware of what they were discussing. When they returned, Garang told the people that Kiir was their leader and charged him with the task of taking care of them. “That is why some people now,” Bishop Ezekiel Diing expressed to me, “say Salva is Joshua, because of what they heard when Garang” spoke.<sup>94</sup> Garang decided to go to Uganda. He was about to leave for Kampala with his wife, Rebecca, when she refused to accompany him. After meeting with President Museveni, the Ugandan presidential helicopter carrying Garang back to Sudan crashed into a mountain in the Imatong Range. He died.<sup>95</sup> According to Diing, Moses and Garang had given their lives in the same way: “Moses end up his life on the mountain. . . . Garang also end up his life on the mountain. . . . When Moses . . . knew that he was living but that he was not going to continue . . . and he looked beyond at the land that the people had, but he will not cross, go back and talk to Joshua.”<sup>96</sup>



Garang's funeral was held at Juba's All Saints Cathedral. Thousands of soldiers patrolled the streets, and President al-Bashir pledged that Khartoum would not back away from the peace agreement. Despite this showing of solidarity, anti-Arab sentiment was violently tangible. Much of Juba's Arab community fled the city after clashes resulted in the deaths of at least fifteen people. Many Muslim-owned shops were burned down. One man in Juba was quoted as saying, "The northerners hate us, we hate them, so we demand our own country."<sup>97</sup>