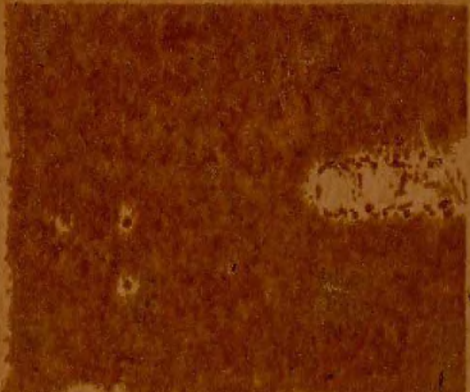


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J.S.MOFFAT AND THE MATABELE MISSION. 1857 - 1865

by

G. VERDAL AUSTIN

"The sword may blot out the Matabele: the Gospel alone can save them..."(1) Christianity in Rhodesia has been closely linked with the formal occupation of the country by Europeans. Although the religious pioneers of Inyati preceded their political counterparts by thirty years, it took the power of this secular arm of western civilisation to create the circumstances whereby Christianity could take root. Although this paper does not set out directly to prove or disprove the conquest before Christianity theory, it becomes very apparent in studying John Smith Moffat's religious work in Matabeleland between 1859 and 1865 that secular conquest of the Ndebele state was a prerequisite to missionary endeavour. A miracle was needed in Matabeleland between the establishment of the state in the early 1840s and the later half of the century if Christianity was to succeed without the backing of political power. This miracle did not occur for a number of reasons, and the violent power of man and his weapons replaced the power of God as the catalyst of conversion. One major thematic difference between Moffat's religious and political roles in Matabeleland is that in his former role he failed in his task, whereas his political work did much to hurry the dawn of Christianity which he had longed for since 1859. It is ironic that as a missionary in the country he came to believe that the breakup of the Ndebele state was probably the only solution, while he balked from this violent solution in the 1890s when it had become inevitable. Moffat was both a messenger of peace and war to the Ndebele. The frustration and failure of his years of peaceful endeavour moulded 'new' attitudes which he carried back to Matabeleland reinforced by government power in 1887. This does not imply that Moffat became an overt advocate of war, but nevertheless his political dealings between 1887 and 1893 helped create the situation where war was the only outcome. One of the objects of this paper is to establish Moffat within a peaceful religious framework so that a direct comparison can be made later on with the effects of his political work. Moffat regretted the part he played in fostering the confrontation in Matabeleland in 1893, yet he realised between 1859-65 that this confrontation would come unless the state changed radically, or was left to its old ways forever. Yet at no time did he succeed in effectively disassociating himself from a people he both respected and disliked. Only in the immediate pre-war months in late 1893 did he divorce himself from the king and people he had fought to protect from European designs. His attempts to ensure that the Ndebele got a fair deal tarnished his reputation to little avail. Moffat's relationship with the Ndebele was a double-edged one, and because of this he never came fully to believe and accept that war was either completely inevitable or right. In the final analysis the whole morality of conquest before Christianity remained as the tortured problem it had been thirty years before. This dual attitude developed during his missionary years and is both a significant and vital aspect of his work in Rhodesia. It played an influential part in establishing Moffat as the father of liberal European opinion in the country. His basic reason for trying to steer a middle course stemmed from his fears that direct confrontation and the resultant

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(1) Haile, A.J. Historical Survey of the London Missionary Society in Southern Africa. Morya Printing Works, Basutoland, 1951, p.10. [In 1873 the directors of the L.M.S. asked if the Inyati Mission should be continued. Sykes of Inyati, Thomson of Hope Fountain and Ashton, Hepburn, Mackenzie, Price and Wookey of Bechuanaland missions submitted this quote as part of their reply.]

victory for the commercial and political force of European colonisation would lead to the indigenous people being excluded from the society they would have to serve. To Moffat this was as immoral as Mzilikazi's rule. The power of the gospel to save, therefore, meant far more than merely religious salvation. He fervently hoped that it would, in changing the Ndebele in a variety of ways, make them more acceptable and more capable of winning a place in the new order. The gospel did not, however, save the Ndebele, and it is debateable whether Christianity, successfully implanted in Matabeleland before the expansion of European power from the South, would have lessened the impact of this expansion in terms of the people obtaining a fair deal. This paper deals with the two major reasons why the gospel failed in Matabeleland between 1859-65 and the effect this had on the man who years later returned in the service of another master.

The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a continuation of the historical analysis of the Ndebele people's interaction with the gospel and European colonialism. The text discusses the social and economic conditions of the Ndebele at the time, the role of missionaries, and the impact of the expansion of European power from the south. The author's argument is that the gospel failed to save the Ndebele from the consequences of colonialism, and that this failure had significant effects on the individuals who later served in the colonial system.

[1] The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a footnote or a reference note at the bottom of the page, providing additional context or citations related to the main text.

## The Concept and Logistics of the Inyati Mission

A mood of high enthusiasm characterised the decision on February 10, 1857, by the directors of the London Missionary Society to establish twin missions amongst the Ndobele and the Kololo.(1) Their decision was the result of two main influences - the rousing challenge of David Livingstone's Central African explorations and the ability of the Society by 1856 to extend the geographic boundaries of its evangelical work. But although the Society found itself practically able and emotionally enthusiastic about spreading the frontiers of Christianity, the concept of the double-barrelled resolution(2) was essentially faulty because it was unrealistic. The concept, conjured up out of the heady excitement following Livingstone's return to England, was not based on the actual situations existing in Matabeleland<sup>and</sup> in Kololo territory but on purely external considerations. The logistics of the resolution, such as they were, show just how unrealistic the concept was. They also show the Society to be almost uncaring about the feasibility of the mission to the Matabele and the fate of its agents as long as a forward move was made - irrespective of material or human cost. Both the concept and logistics of the mission reflect on Moffat. The concept in effect symbolises his idealism, the logistics his unsuitability. Both, however, were criticised by him after the reality of missionary endeavour at Inyati had shattered the theory and forced him to reassess his own position and beliefs and the burning question of conquest before Christianity.

Duty versus Prudence. The ability of the Society to extend the geographic boundaries of its work arose from the process of gradual decentralisation the Board had adopted some years before.(3) This policy had seen the control of many of the mission churches of the Cape pass into the hands of local boards of trustees. As a result, the Society, relieved of heavy Cape responsibilities, felt able to "spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other unenlightened nations".(4) This potential ability to press forward with evangelistic work was stimulated into action by Livingstone's return to England. Popular interest, science, commerce, the churches and the Colonial Office were roused by his words. Evangelizing zeal was also prepared to answer his call, and so the concept of the twin missions was born. On paper it looked feasible, and eminently laudable.

The mission to the Kololo - Livingstone's favourites - was designed to persuade Sekaletu to move his headquarters from fever-riddled Linyanti to an upland site. Here, Christian instruction would be given. Theoretically, however, this noble plan raised the problem that "the permanency of such a location could only be ensured by securing the friendship of Mzilikazi, who could at any time order out a body of his warriors to pass the Zambezi to pillage and drive the tribes from that quarter as he had done before."(5) On July 6, 1857, Robert Moffat received a letter from the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary

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- (1) The London Quarterly Review (Methodist). January 1886, p.279.
  - (2) C. Silvester Horne - The Story of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895. John Snow & Co., 1894, p.246.
  - (3) A.J.Haile - Historical Survey of the London Missionary Society in Southern Africa. Morya Printing Works, Basutoland, 1951, p.8.
  - (4) From The Society's Fundamental Principle Then and Now. Essays on Mission No.1. Unwin Bros. Ltd. 1960. (Wilfred Scopes).
  - (5) The Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat, Vol.II. Ed. J.P.R.Wallis, London, 1945. Chatto & Windus. Letter dated October 27, 1859. pp.202-203.

Society dated April 4, 1857, announcing the double-barrelled decision and suggesting that he inaugurate the mission to the Matabele.(1) The concept of this mission can, therefore, be criticised on two unrealistic counts - one, that little consideration was given to its feasibility in terms of the Matabele scene by men living 7,000 miles away; and two, that it was devised as a protective measure for the Kololo mission, virtually as an afterthought. Robert Moffat's reaction to the resolution shows the serious doubts he had from the beginning about the feasibility of the concept. "The planting of a mission among the Matabele, I need scarcely say, weighs very heavy on my mind, notwithstanding my fullest convictions as to the path of duty. Everything considered, it is only what was to be expected. A succession of events has been bringing it on: 'Coming events cast their shadows before.'...." Moffat speaks of the financial position of the Society and the "distant and isolated position" of the Matabele as reasons militating against a mission project. Because the former was no longer a disqualifying consideration this did not, however, mean that the latter did not remain an extremely important aspect of any plans to establish a mission among the Matabele. He goes on to speak of the Matabele's "dreadfully savage state - this is no exaggeration - seemed sometime to require a faith I did not possess; and, added to this, the peculiar character of their government, worshipping their king with the idea that he is superhuman... Whatever may be the results, I feel resigned... I am glad that I have uniformly represented to the Directors what would be the character of this mission, and the requisites - faith, prayer, patience and perseverance. I cannot help having my fears..... Why should we doubt? Is it because we look at the instruments?...."(2) The letter from the Society's Foreign Secretary to him announcing the decision expressed the hope and belief that his son, John Smith, would join the Matabele mission.(3)

Robert Moffat's reservations about the plan are echoed in 1886 when a magazine article refers to the fact that if the decision had been his "...he would not have advised immediate action, but he answered the call with his usual loyalty to the Society."(4) But because he was party to the plan, if not the originator, Robert Moffat tried to absolve himself from the very beginning of any responsibility for the idea. "The commencing of a mission among the Matabele originated entirely with the Directors..."(5) These men, whose ideas in theory cannot be faulted, had, however, been caught in the surge of enthusiasm of the time and with clouded judgement decided on a plan which eventually forced John Smith Moffat to live on blind faith. "So a great plan took shape, which, like a good many other plans of man's making, after costing a deal of money and life came to nothing.... Missionary Societies are sometimes in danger of yielding unwisely to popular pressure. A spirited policy seems necessary to secure support; but the history of missions shows that due care must be taken to secure a firm basis of operations and choose well the time for aggressive work..."(6) This paper will show that in terms of timing no opportunity existed until the physical breakup of the Matabele state for Christianity to be successfully transplanted into Rhodesia. The logistics of the project can be criticised initially, because of the failure to take this consideration into account.

The concept of John Smith Moffat as unofficial leader of the Inyati team was wrong both in theory and practice. In theory the London Missionary Society revealed a gross disregard for the calibre

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- (1) MO 5/1/1. Correspondence. London Missionary Society to Robert Moffat, London, April 4, 1857.
  - (2) The Matabele Journals, Vol.II, pp.202-203.
  - (3) Ibid. Introduction, p.1, para.1.
  - (4) The London Quarterly Review (Methodist), Jan. 1886, p.279.
  - (5) The Matabele Journals, II, pp.202-203.
  - (6) The London Quarterly Review (Methodist), January 1886, p.279.

and ability of the men chosen to lead the team. The Society was in fact disinterested in such considerations. Given the exceptional difficulty of the task of establishing a mission among a people who have been described as the least likely in Southern Africa to accept Christianity, the Society should have selected an experienced missionary as leader of the Matabele team. Moffat was fresh out of College and apart from this was unsuitable, even after years of experience, as his life revealed. The London Missionary Society's apparent lack of judgement and knowledge about both Moffat and the Matabele scene stemmed, however, from reasons of expediency. They were not idealistic in launching the plan but merely foolhardy. Their prime consideration, irrespective of the cost, was to extend their field of endeavour. If the project had been subjected to a thorough-going assessment of its chances of success it is hardly imaginable that the Society would have continued with the idea. A Moffat, however, was a necessary prerequisite if the plan was even to reach the stage of acceptance by Mzilikazi. Robert Moffat had committed his son to Inyati because he could not stay in Matabeleland.(1) & (2) Mzilikazi's wariness at accepting permanent white settlement in his country was exceptionally strong, and consequently one way, perhaps the only way, of gaining his consent was on the basis of promising his son as second choice to ameliorate the king's suspicion. Consequently the anomalous situation arose whereby John Moffat, who had broken from the Society under in-harmonious circumstances and was now an independent agent, stood as the guarantee to Mzilikazi of a Society which he no longer supported.(3) From the very beginning of his work in Rhodesia, both religious and political, the fate-like destiny of Moffat in being involved in the country against his own wishes becomes apparent. While still in England he decided to go to the Kololo, probably because he was to be supported by Livingstone and the tribe were his favourites. But on reaching Cape Town he was confronted with a commitment unknown to him until then, to go to Matabeleland. The Society's failure to object to the fact that a former agent was now the key to the plan is indicative of their overwhelming desire to expand their frontier. Robert Moffat's role in all this stemmed from his unqualified loyalty to the Society - a loyalty in this instance which was incompatible with his fears about the failure of the endeavour. "Mzilikazi regarded John Moffat as head of the mission because he was Robert Moffat's son, and his colleagues depended upon John to gain a firm foothold through his father's tie with the king. The London Missionary Society benefited by John Moffat's presence, and it had the further advantage of not having to pay and support him..."(4) Livingstone confirms the view that Moffat's position in Matabeleland was one of unofficial importance in a letter to him in 1860. "Moselekatse will probably look on you as head-man of the mission after your father. I would not object to it, as some straight-laced independants would...." He goes on to sum up Moffat's invidious position by expressing concern that "you may not be comfortable in a post of quasi-connection where the L.M.Society appropriates the entire credit of the mission..."(5) Theoretically, in terms of Moffat's importance to the mission, the Society had everything to gain and much to lose by allowing this position to continue. Practically it will be seen that Moffat by his very disinterest in establishing a working relationship with Mzilikazi, was incapable of gaining the foothold that was so important.

"Zeal without foresight and discretion.... The directors of the London Missionary Society ... were blindly enthusiastic, unaware or

(1) The Matabele Journals, II, p.83, October 4, 1857.

(2) The Matabele Mission of John and Emily Moffat, ed. J.P.R.Wallis. Chatto & Windus, 1945. Introd. p.xiii.

(3) The Matabele Journals, II, p.165. Introd. to his fifth journey.

(4) "His position in relation to his son was not easy. Before he left England, John had cut his connexion with the London Missionary Society, and had come out as a free-lance, supported by money from his brother-in-law Livingstone, who had wished him to visit the scenes of both the Matabele and the Makololo missions before making his choice...but here Moselekatse persisted in looking upon him ... as head of the new community, a position to which he had no official claim. His father felt the awkwardness of the situation, but was powerless to mend it."

impatient of the need for practical wisdom and knowledge and organization, and too remote or too careless to exercise control and direction over their emissaries."(1) In the case of the Inyati mission, Robert Moffat, as sceptical about the plan as he was, could have exerted more influence on the Society to abandon the idea. Ultimately, if his counselling had not prevailed, he could have declined to inaugurate the mission. "Dear good Mr. and Mrs. Moffat are so wedded to the Society: it is really an essential to their Christianity to believe in it."(2) This quote from Emily Moffat casts a penetrating light on Robert Moffat's position with regard to the Inyati Mission. His contact and experience with Mzilikazi led him to have little real hope for the mission. He was, however, the one man who had sufficient influence over the king possibly to be able to win him over. Consequently, when the decision to establish the mission was made he either had to try and achieve this, knowing at the same time the heavy chances of failure, or go against a Society which he had served his whole working life. Duty to Robert Moffat always came first,(3) and so he forsakes the second alternative, and in so doing is the prime mover in establishing a mission which led his son into a spiritual wilderness. "A mission station and liberty to proselytize would in his [Mzilikazi's] eyes be a light price to pay for the continued presence of the only man he could trust and for whom he felt a deeper affection than for any other mortal. But it would be quite another matter to be asked to admit two complete strangers, who, however worthy, might not be congenial."(4) This statement creates an entirely wrong impression about the attitude of Mzilikazi to missionary penetration and about the strength of the Robert Moffat-Mzilikazi relationship. It is also wrong for one extremely important factual point - Robert Moffat had no intention of remaining permanently at the mission and this he made clear to Mzilikazi in 1857.(5) Robert Moffat's relationship with the Matabele king must be considered in two ways. He did wield a remarkable degree of influence in lessening the Matabele desire to kill indiscriminately, and he also wielded a degree of social influence,(6) but these personal triumphs are not to be confused with the larger issue of Christianity which Moffat failed, and the Inyati missionaries also failed, to implant. When it came to Christianity, which if it were to be effective would erode the state both politically and socially, Moffat's influence came to be the broken reed(7) which he describes it as. Mzilikazi's decision to allow missionaries into Matabeleland must be seen as a purely personal concession to Robert Moffat, but it is highly unlikely that the king considered liberty to proselytize as a light price to pay for Moffat's 'continued' presence.

By December 1859 Robert Moffat confessed that he was "not prepared for the disappointment I have felt in the attempt to plant a mission among the Matabele, though I always stated, both in public and private, that the undertaking was an arduous one and would call for strong faith and unflinching perseverance."(8) He goes on in apologetic mood: "It was through my acquaintance with the Matabele that a mission to that people was resolved on, so that, though I never recommended beginning the mission yet I am indirectly the cause of the brethren coming there..."(9)

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[Notes continued from previous page]

(4) Tabler, E.C., The Far Interior. Cape Town, 1955. A.A. Balkema, p.254.

(5) The Matabele Mission, Letter 54. David Livingstone to J.S.Moffat, Sesheke, August 21, 1860.

(1) Ibid. Introd. p.xvi. (2) Ibid., Introd. p.xv.

(3) The Matabele Journals, II, Introd. para.3.

(4) Ibid. Introd. p.i, and p.83.

(5) Ibid. Fourth Journey, October 4, 1857, p.83.

(6) Ibid. Introd. to Fifth Journey, August 7, 1859, - January 2, 1860.

(7) Ibid. Robert Moffat to the L.M.S. Kuruman, February 7, 1855, p.165.

(8) Ibid. Letter dated December 13, 1859, p.243.

(9) Ibid. p.245.

Moffat describes his young colleagues as "flushed with expectation, having heard little and read still less of the histories of early missions and the intense sufferings of a noble army..."(1) Two years later the idealistic expectation of John Moffat had turned into a more practical realisation of exactly what they were up against. "As is not infrequently the case we found the reality somewhat more sombre than the prospect had been. We have learned since to account for much that was so incomprehensible at the time..."(2) This early incomprehensibility stemmed from two faults: firstly, a too theoretical attitude, and secondly a failure to understand the workings and attitudes of the Matabele state. The realisation that the task was not going to be one of miraculous religious break-through forced Emily to confess failure. In chastising herself she says she should have "shrunk from coming to Africa could I have seen all - not from being a missionary here but I have failed in many things not being prepared for the difficulties."(3) This again indicates the theory of the endeavour which in no way was modified by adequate training, or at very least an understanding, a warning of the enormous problems to be contended with.

The "grand conception" of the twin missions idea has been described as "bold and daring as any Empire-maker's dream..."(4) From as early as 1854 Robert Moffat held out little hope for the gospel in Matabeleland while the state remained intact.(5) For the next three years his doubts about the Matabele accepting Christianity continued unabated. In 1855 he specifically referred to Mzilikazi's opposition to the Word of God,(6) and having been informed of the Society's decision to establish Kololo and Matabele missions he says, "... there were other and perhaps more promising fields of labour calling for extended efforts on your part..."(7) At the same time, Moffat was perfectly willing to go to Matabeleland for twelve months as requested, but he suggested that there should at least be an intermediate station between Inyati and Kuruman as the 700 mile distance was too far.(8) This proposal was just one of a number which, had they been implemented, the logistics of the mission might not have militated as heavily against its success, let alone existence, as they did.

As much as the concept of the mission to the Matabele needed a heavy dose of practical wisdom, so the logistics needed in the first place consideration. Their virtual non-existence did not stem mainly from break-down, although this occurred in some instances, but from the simple fact that they were never really taken into account. One of these is the timing of the campaign to convert the Matabele, and another is the Society's selection of agents for the mission. In criticising the Society's lack of discrimination in selecting its agents Moffat labels himself as unfit. Apart from the question of timing, which would have rendered the project unviable even if other logistical aspects had been perfect, several other circumstances contributed to the logistical failure of the mission. Food was insufficient because the missionaries' gardens failed (either through the fickleness of nature or

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(1) The Matabele Journals, II.

(2) MO 1/1/6. Personal Papers. September 11, 1847 - January 1st, 1919. Letter to the Editors of Evangelical Christendom. Inyati 29/10/1861. Draft.

(3) MO 1/1/1/5. Emily Moffat's Journal. Sunday morning 17 February, 1861.

(4) A.J.Haile, op.cit., p.8.

(5) MO 5/1/1. Robert Moffat's correspondence. Robert Moffat to Mary Moffat. Aug.1854. Moselekatse's Town, Mashona country. [This is an interesting reference - it could be a mistake, or could indicate that the king actually had a town, if not more, in what he considered to be Shona territory - i.e. areas not under his direct control. It could also mean an area of predominantly Shona people within the administrative boundaries of the Ndebele State.

(6) Ibid. Robert Moffat to the L.M.S., February 7, 1855, Kuruman. "I could not prevail on Moselekatse to allow me to proclaim to him and his people the truths of the Gospel."

(7) Ibid. Robert Moffat to the L.M.S. Kuruman, July 15, 1857.

(8) MO 5/1/1. Robert Moffat to the L.M.S. Kuruman, July 15, 1857.



because of their inexperience and lack of knowledge) and Mzilikazi was an unreliable donor. Over the question of local food supplies, Robert Moffat made a grave error, one which caused Emily and John to remark bitterly later on. He believed that the missionaries would be well supplied and would never lack essential foodstuffs.(1) As I will show later, he failed to take into account natural disasters - such as the three year drought which started with the missionaries' arrival and was taken as an ill-omen by the people - and he also misjudged the reliability of Mzilikazi. As optimistic as he was about regular food supplies, Robert Moffat also misjudged the attitude of the people to religion. In assuming that they would welcome it because it promised release from bondage, he blinded himself not only to their established ways but also to the power of Mzilikazi to disallow his people taking any real interest. The supply of local grain was in any case erratic because there was seldom a local surplus (the people were also wary of trading in case they incurred the king's displeasure), and the arrival of traders from the south was an infrequent, hence joyously received, occasion. The loneliness of the station and its lack of regular communication with the outside world made it even more vulnerable simply because assistance could not be called for in times of need, and this was aggravated by the inadequate training of the missionaries which militated against their chances of being able to fend successfully for themselves. They were often short of essentials ranging from medicine to clothes; servants, whether domestics or labourers, were unreliable when available, which was seldom.

"Out here, I think, it very much depends upon the amount of interest and intercourse kept up with Home whether a family rises or sinks."(2) This comment of Emily's was written in Cape Town, so one can imagine how heavily the isolated nature of Inyati weighed on her. By 1865 John had decided to give way after vainly endeavouring to contend with growing difficulties for more than a year. "Your agents at Inyati cannot afford to be left in solitude so profound...; solitude I mean as far as any reliable not to mention Christian aid and companionship are concerned. Were they bachelors the case might be different. Their own hands would then suffice to keep them whilst they lived, and when they died their carcasses would trouble no one... I shall not be surprised if things come very soon to a dead-lock or break-down at Inyati for sheer want of men."(3) Emily put her discriminating finger on the folly of sending married men to Matabeleland - folly which the simplest forethought would have avoided. The task was arduous enough without the added emotional burden of having a wife and children to care for. "I am almost an advocate in such raw missions as this, so remote from help in times of need, for a bachelor commencement. It would involve so much less than the residence of families does and give more time for language study and acquaintance with the people. I thank God for the privilege of coming here, and I like to feel that he sent me with my husband; still, I think wiser human plans might be devised."(4) Because such practical prudence was not a feature of the mission the directors of the Society can be accused of the grossest disregard for the livelihood of the women and children at Inyati. By the time the Moffats were forced to withdraw in 1865 Emily was a mere shell of the gay woman she had been six years earlier. She was 29 years old, her eyesight was all but failing due to a protracted diet which can only be described as survival fare, and her emotional state had been stretched to a dangerous tautness. Emily had already had one nervous breakdown,(5)

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- (1) The Matabele Journals. Appendix. Letter to the Rev. Arthur Tidman, Kuruman, Spet. 4, 1860. "...but the King promised that their wants should be supplied. I have no doubt but every inconvenience in that respect has been long since removed."
  - (2) The Matabele Mission. Letter 11. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Cape Town, May 26, 1858.
  - (3) J.S.Moffat. Papers. MO 1/1/2, folios 1-252. J.S.Moffat to Rev. Dr. Tidman, Shoshong, Gamanguato, October 10, 1865.
  - (4) MO 1/1/1/6. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, Matabele country. January 18, 1862.
  - (5) MO 1/1/1/7. Four letters from Emily to J.S.Unwin: 1 May 1863; 2 July 1863; 13 July 1863; August 19, 1863.

and it is credit to her courage that she returned to Inyati. The lack of provision for regular food supplies was a serious enough fault of the planning of the mission by itself and irrespective of circumstances. The foolhardiness of not ensuring regular supplies can be seen for what it really was when the country suffered from drought and lung sickness decimated the cattle.(1) Robert Moffat believed that "a missionary without a wife ... was like a boat with only one oar. A good missionary's wife can be as useful as her husband in the Lord's vineyard."(2) In the Inyati context, however, this comment was proved wrong, because the circumstances showed that a bachelor missionary would simply have had one less burden and the very nature of the post nullified the chances of a missionary wife being able to be useful in a religious sense. This was certainly the case with Emily Moffat. Her ill-health involved her husband too heavily in domestic affairs, and not being the most light-hearted of men the responsibility of an ailing wife and a young family must have subjected his emotional system to considerable tension. Emily was not really suited to be a missionary wife at Inyati. "I will confess to you my sins and you will say, as I often do, 'She is not fit to be a missionary wife'."(3) One aspect of her unsuitability was her fear while her husband was away. While I do not for a moment scorn these fears, nor find them unusual considering the circumstances, Emily's nervousness can only have aggravated John's domestic responsibilities. With little meat, hardly any milk, no vegetables and tea, coffee and bread as their usual daily fare while Emily was nursing a child in 1860,(4) it is not at all surprising that she was physically drained and emotionally exhausted. Add to this the almost non-existent, certainly unreliable services of local servants, and the resulting household burden, and any ability Emily might have had was neutralised by the very weight of secular survival. Her religious role was unavoidably subjugated. "It is a wonder to me that Emily holds out as she does with her scanty aids..."(5) The fact that the missionaries were without regular assistance from the Matabele most of the time reveals another of Robert Moffat's logistical errors of judgement.(6) He was confident that servants would be no problem, just as he was confident that food would be no problem, but from bitter and frustrating experience John bewails the fact that they did not secure "at least semi-civilized people"(7) from Kuruman before entering the country. One can only assume that Robert Moffat based his attitude on the question of local servants on his own personal experience. He had visited Mzilikazi twice before 1859 (1854 and 1857) unfettered by family considerations for a few months at a time, and as Mzilikazi's great white friend, servants would have been no problem simply because he did not need them. He also assumed that Mzilikazi would personally provide the missionaries with such assistance, ensuring the permanency of service in so doing, but the Matabele king did not even go to this extent in easing the lot of the Inyati missionaries, and this is, I feel, indicative of his general and unflinching policy of harassment in the hope that the men of God would pack their bags and go to greener pastures.(8) By 1861, Emily's failing eyesight and extreme stomachic debility had been "unavoidably brought on by protracted nursing and unsuitable food."(9) Most of the material trials of the Inyati mission could have been avoided if the organisation had not been so haphazard.

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- (1) MO 1/1/6. J.S.Moffat to the Editors of Evangelical Christendom. Bloemfontein, O.F.S., S.Africa. January 31, 1863.
  - (2) The London Quarterly Review (Methodist). January 1886.
  - (3) The Matabele Mission. Letter 52. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, Matabele country, June 24, 1860.
  - (4) Ibid. Letter 58. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, Matabele country, November 6, 1860.
  - (5) Ibid. Letter 58.
  - (6) Ibid. Letter 58.
  - (7) Ibid. Letter 58.
  - (8) (i) The delay in granting a site; (ii) in giving permission to preach; and (iii) in supplying food at regular intervals are some indications of this policy. [Introd. p.xviii].
  - (9) The Matabele Mission. Letter 68. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, July 24, 1861.

"Some of our kind friends in the South have given us exceedingly good advice on the necessity of keeping up our strength with suitable food, supposing apparently that by doing so they were exempting themselves from any obligation to render the assistance for which we had appealed to them in procuring our necessary supplies."(1) The bitterness of this remark is echoed by Emily, who pinpoints the guilty party(s) instead of generalising as her husband does. In December 1861, she says she ordered two pairs of boots from the Cape two years previously. The trader duly arrived at Kuruman in July 1861, "so I may hope for it some day..."(2) While the delay in the arrival of the boots at Kuruman would appear, even under the transport services of the time, to be somewhat protracted, the delay in sending them on to Inyati illustrates the failure of the Kuruman station to supply Inyati reasonably quickly. This failure of supply became a sore point of the Moffats, and while it is unlikely that the rather strained relationship between Robert Moffat and his son and daughter-in-law had anything to do with it, in their minds Moffat Senior was being unduly tardy, at times even biased, in his attitude towards their circumstances.(3) The serious effect Inyati life had on Emily could have been modified to some extent in spite of her unsuitability had the mission been backed by better organisation. Although, as the only child of a wealthy Brighton tea merchant, cultured and used to refinement, Emily never made the radical transition that life in Matabeleland demanded, sound organisation would at least have provided a few comforts, even if only in the form of reliable local assistance. As the problems remained unsolved and her health deteriorated, Emily's letters change in tone from gaiety and hope to maternal anxiety. Like her husband, however, Emily started off with somewhat dreamlike views ["...and I often build some airy castles of the days when we shall have our castle for our own selves, and carry on these varied scenes in the Matabele country" in reference to life at Kuruman](4) Neither did Emily really try and adjust to her new life, and without the right psychological approach, came to cling to the haven that she called "Brighton Lodge", with its tokens of family life(5) at home, more heavily than she should have. There is something pathetic, a lingering homesickness about her sentimentality. At one stage she kept her watch at English time so that she could think when looking at it of the activities of the moment at home - a strange act of attempted retention of and association with a life sorely missed. In spite of this, Emily Moffat's existence at Inyati is testimony to the theoretically unsound and practically unsafe scheme to convert the Matabele.

In January 1862, the Inyati missionaries had last received anything from Kuruman in April of 1861. The effect of this long delay in contact with the south had drawn on the Moffats' deepest reserves - their faith. "We now need faith that our wants will be supplied."(6) The failure of supply from Kuruman could not have come at a worse time - the second drought had come towards the end of 1861, as well as a lung sickness epidemic - and consequently by early 1862 the vital need of regular supply from the south had shown just how insubstantial were the foundations of the mission. It is at this time that Emily speaks bitterly of her father-in-law's attitude to the mission: "Of course poor Good Grand Papa still believes and makes others believe that we are in a land of Goshen and a land of plenty so that our real destitution is not heeded nor believed."(7) Wallis contends that the Kuruman Station spared no pains to supply Inyati. "The welfare of the mission ... was bound up with that of their own... There was a family tie."(8)

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(1) The Matabele Mission, Letter 68.

(2) Ibid. Letter 72. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, 1 December 1861.

(3) MO 1/1/1/6. Copies and extracts of correspondence made by J.S.Unwin from letters and journal of J.S. and Emily Moffat. 9 June 1861 - 20 November 1862.

(4) The Matabele Mission. Letter 37. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Kuruman, 22 June 1859.

(5) Ibid. Letter 52. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati. 24 June 1860.

(6) MO 1/1/1/6. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, January 18, 1862.

(7) MO 1/1/1/6. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, 18 January 1862.

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Apart from Robert Moffat's misconceptions about the circumstances of the station, the family tie was not all that sound, and even accepting that the task of supplying Inyati, isolated by 700 miles of rugged terrain and situated in a country not exactly inducive to outsiders, was indeed a difficult one, nevertheless this statement is not true. The two major practical counts on which Robert Moffat can be criticised, apart from his theoretical mistake in presuming the Matabele people would welcome the emancipation of Christianity, are his unrealistic attitude towards supplies and towards the Matabele being prepared to work as domestic servants and labourers.(1) The situation at Inyati had become so desperate by the middle of 1862 that John decided to travel to Kuruman, partly for health and partly to arrange for the unforthcoming corn supplies. It is significant that the arranging had to be undertaken by someone from Inyati and did not emanate from Kuruman. By now two of Moffat's early ideals had been reduced. One of them - the belief in local supplies had admittedly been induced by his father - but the other, the assumption that he could support himself and his family from his own agricultural efforts had no such excuse clause, and the force of cruel circumstances had led him to reconsider. One of these circumstances was their reliance for the barest necessity on the whim of Mzilikazi. It is ironic that when he was away from Inhati the supply of local food was reasonably good. His absence, however, greatly affected the size of congregations. When Mzilikazi was in local residence, attendances were better but the people feared to sell food to the missionaries.(2)

Inyati's isolation, the overall logistical weakness of the mission, could have been lessened if communication with the outside world had been based on a regular postal service. As it was, the mission was left to fortuitous opportunities as the rare postal occasions were. Postal communication was, however, the one aspect about which an earnest attempt was made in the beginning to establish an organised service for the mission, not one which became apparent later as a result of circumstances.(3) With the announcement in 1857 of the intention to establish two interior missions, Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa, decided that a regular mail service to the interior would be useful, not only to the missions,(4) but to the government as an agency for gathering and despatching economic and political information. The Cape Parliament voted the money, Robert Moffat undertook the inaugural work in the field, and twelve donkeys were bought for service between Matabeleland and Kololo country. Although the donkeys refused to co-operate, the scheme suffered a fatal blow from another quarter on its maiden run.(5) Consequently the missionaries were forced to rely on traders and hunters for their mail, and during those early days white penetration into Matabeleland was both irregular and on a small scale. Some indication of the effect news from home had can be seen in Emily's reaction when she received some letters while still in Cape Town. "I ran almost frantic to the door and seized hold of him, my onw greeting being, 'Oh, where are the letters?'"(6) At Inyati where memories of home became more and more to be an antidote for their suffering, the arrival of a package of letters shows the loneliness of Emily and the thirst for company she could feel at home with. This lack of suitable company was yet another of the failures in planning which characterised the mission. John Moffat's criticism of the lack of discrimination(7)

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- (1) The Matabele Mission. Letter 46. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Enyateen Valley, March 28, 1860. Also Letter 58. J.S. Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, Matabele country. November 6, 1860.
  - (2) Ibid. Letter 69. Emily Moffat to an Aunt. Nyati, August 3, 1861.
  - (3) The Matabele Journals, pp.271-273.
  - (4) The Matabele Mission. Letter 9. Emily Moffat to J.S. Unwin. Cape Town, May 20, 1858.
  - (5) Tabler, op.cit., pp.142-143.
  - (6) The Matabele Mission. Letter 12. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. June 11, 1858.
  - (7) MO 1/1/1/6. J.S.Moffat to his father-in-law. March 7, 1866.

in the selection of agents is all too valid when one considers the personality clashes at Inyati which resulted from poor composition of the team.(1) Emily's joy at seeing real friends again in 1862 is as she says beyond expression. "After a three years absence one's heart just luxuriates in the fellowship of kindred hearts" (in reference to Mr. and Mrs. Price at Shoshong).(2) Although Emily and Mrs. Thomas associated without any friction, they had little in common and in terms of companionship had little to offer each other.

Moffat's criticism of the selection of agents is based on the general argument that because no effective principles governed the selection of candidates, a readiness to volunteer was the prime consideration. He also criticised the lack of administrative and diplomatic training and the little use made in training of practical experience gained in the field. "In my humble opinion the London Missionary Society is too indiscriminate in their agents. Half the number of picked men with more attention given to them and the Society would do far more good. As it is, they do much and do it badly."(3) While better training of all descriptions would probably have fitted Moffat out far more comprehensively, it is, however, unlikely that in the Matabele context this would have ameliorated his mental and spiritual anguish to any great extent. Even if his mind had been conditioned to the realities of the situation beforehand, it is likely that, assuming he had still gone to Inyati even with an honest knowledge of what to expect, he would still have suffered considerably. He might have been more capable and more knowledgeable, but I doubt if he would have been any more suitable. The Matabele field was a closed one to missionary endeavour, but this was only proved through bitter failure. Although it stood as a formidable barrier, the challenge and the hope that the gospel could be implanted still existed. And how much sweeter the victory when so formidable an enemy is humbled. But in Matabeleland even better trained men would have failed for the simple reason that they would not have been allowed to do much. Emily was also critical of home attitudes to the kind of person needed for missionary work in Africa. "Home folk think anyone will do for Africa, however ignorant, and if they resemble the barbarians they teach, so much the better."(4) Anyone certainly would not have done as the Moffats proved, but then no one else managed to achieve a break-through for the gospel. In spite of the insurmountable barrier the Ndebele state posed, the Inyati mission project for a variety of reasons was weakened from within. One of these weaknesses was Robert Moffat's influence over Mzilikazi. "Catsey has all his work done now so may let the Governor go for that remarkable friendship is just based on what he can get out of Moshete and it is a pity English friends are deluded."(5) The decision to establish a mission in Matabeleland was justified to a large extent by the influence Robert supposedly had over Mzilikazi. While he had established a remarkable accord with the king, he himself admits that this influence was really a broken reed when it came to religious matters.(6) But by the time he realised this, the die had been cast and the Inyati missionaries were faced with an agonising choice - either to stay on in the faint hope of a change for the better or withdraw and so admit the hopelessness of the task. Moffat's influence was misjudged because it was not seen in the light of the structure of the Ndebele state. The prospects of the mission were judged on a purely personal reading of the Moffat-Mzilikazi relationship. Little heed or attention was paid to the circumstances of the king and country about to be saved.

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(1) The Inyati mission party consisted of J.S.Moffat and his wife, William Sykes (1829-1887), recently widowed, and Thomas Morgan Thomas (1830-1884) with Mrs.Thomas and a small son. Apart from their character differences, the vastly different social backgrounds these people had burdened them from the start with a problem of finding common ground and interest. Thomas as a result was sensitive about his background, and Moffat was apt to decry the natural abilities of the man, possibly because he had few. They all had too dominant characters to be a cohesive, harmonious team.

(2) MO 1/1/1/6. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Shoshong, Friday eve., 13/6/1862

(3) MO 1/1/1/6. J.S.Moffat to his father-in-law. March 7, 1856.

(4) The Matabele Mission. Letter 59. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, 25 November 1860.

(5) Ibid. Letter 50. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, May 24, 1860.

The Ndebele State as a barrier to Christianity.

By 1859 the Ndebele State had been established in Matabeleland for nearly twenty years. During these years the state had consolidated its position, and by the time the Inyati missionaries arrived it had reached the plateau of its power. It is ironic and significant that one of the state's three most important military towns was at Inyati. With the establishment of the mission the name became the symbol of two conflicting powers. Both of them revolved around the authority of a supreme being who in turn expected an equal amount of love and loyalty from their followers. William Sykes (one of the pioneer Inyati missionaries) described the personal barrier to Christianity which Mzilikazi presented when writing about the relationship of the Ndebele and their king. The loyalty "of these unenlightened heathens was something more than ordinary; nay, it was nothing less than infatuation. I have never heard of such devotion to a royal family and to the will of a sovereign as the Amandabele were showing."<sup>(1)</sup> This was the godhead which to the missionaries stood as the symbol of everything they opposed.

A major difficulty of this section is the scanty information about the development of the state. After Maund's visit in 1886 more information is available about the political and social organisation of the state, but as Wallis remarks: "It is remarkable how little the extant records of the Inyati missionaries reveal of Moselekatse and his people."<sup>(2)</sup> Nevertheless certain conclusions can be made about the state as a barrier to Christianity. By looking at the history of the Ndebele before their settlement in Rhodesia, the problems of removal and re-settlement, and the position the state was in by the late 1880s, a fairly accurate, if thinly documented, impression of the state during Moffat's years at Inyati can be gained.

"In Southern Rhodesia the Ndebele State went through the final stages of its evolution."<sup>(3)</sup> By 1859 this evolution had seen the emergence of a compact, highly controlled military state, isolationist in nature and composed of a variety of social classes. The state system made the king the all-powerful ruler that he was, and that state system was of his design. Maund estimated in 1886 that the Ndebele state's real geographic limits in terms of settlement and regular control were comparatively small, stretching approximately 150 miles on a north-south axis, and 180 miles on an east-west axis.<sup>(4)</sup> Maund talks of the detailed centralisation of the state, the pre-eminence of the king and the problem, which caused these two characteristics, of the continual need to maintain unity because of the mixture of peoples. "Military bondage"<sup>(5)</sup> was the one way of retaining a degree of unity, hence the opposition of Mzilikazi to any attempts to undermine the military foundations of the state. "Undermine that foundation, as is gradually being done, and the whole fabric will collapse like a house of cards."<sup>(6)</sup> Twenty years earlier Thomas Morgan Thomas also described the centralisation Mzilikazi had achieved. The king "had so divided the country into towns, and had so distributed his officers and wives throughout his dominions that all the affairs of the land were known to him, and it was he that conducted them."<sup>(7)</sup> On moving into Matabeleland between

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[Notes continued from previous page]

- (6) Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat, Vol.II. Robert Moffat to L.M.S. Kuruman, February 7, 1855.
- (1) The Matabele Mission of John & Emily Moffat. Letter III. Wm. Sykes to Joseph Mullens. Kuruman, December 25, 1868.
- (2) The Matabele Mission of John & Emily Moffat, ed. J.P.R.Wallis. Introd. p.xix.
- (3) Omer-Cooper, J.D. The Zulu Aftermath. Longmans, 1966, p.148.
- (4) C4643 of 1886, p.113. Further correspondence respecting the Affairs of the Transvaal and Adjacent Territories. In continuation of C4432.
- (5) Ibid. (6) Ibid.
- (7) Thomas, T.M. Eleven Years in Central South Africa. London, John Snow and Co. [1873]. p.224.

1840-42, the class structure of what was to be Central Africa's dominant power, prior to the arrival of European power, "crystallized into a three-tier system".(1) Two of these tiers were already in being before the embryo state arrived in the country. They brought with them the major state structures which characterised, with modifications, the Zulu state which the Zansi, the prestige group, had fled in 1822. The Enhla group were mainly descendants of numerous tribes of Sotho and Tswana stock and were incorporated during the years the Zansi spent in the Transvaal prior to removal to Rhodesia.(2) By 1825 Mzilikazi's people, consisting of the original Khumalo nucleus and several thousand young Sotho-speaking men and women incorporated during three years of conquest and movement north, were being spoken of as the Matabele (-tebele means to sink out of sight and refers to their disappearance behind immense oxhide shields when challenged).(3) The tribe was already powerful and prosperous, mainly from a policy of raiding and campaigning against weaker neighbours. For another twelve years Matabele power continued to grow while the state system continued to consolidate. Then in November 1837 they were driven out of the Marico district in the Transvaal where they had settled, and this signalled the start of Mzilikazi's three years in the wilderness which resulted in the establishment of Rhodesia's Ndebele state. Early in 1840 the first Ndebele settlement in Matabeleland, twelve miles west of present-day Bulawayo at a place called Ntabazinduna, was established. Mzilikazi called the settlement Mahlokohloko. The beginnings of the social and military system which was to confront the Inyati missionaries so massively in 1859 can be seen in Mzilikazi's decision to settle some of his three hundred wives at Mahlokohloko as well as a regiment. He then proceeded to divide the territory which he had selected and encompassed with temporary boundaries into two main sections. The first included the Bulalima-Mangwe and Nyamandlovu districts to the west, and the second extended north towards the Gwelo district. Both sections were subdivided into districts administered by indunas whose allegiance was to Mzilikazi alone.(4) During the next five years the Rozvi, Kalanga and Shona peoples buckled under onslaughts of Ndebele power. A mere ten years before the arrival of the missionaries, the raiding state with all its social, political and administrative features had been firmly established. During this period, and at intervals throughout Ndebele history, the Holi, the lowest group in terms of status, was incorporated. They were the Shona peoples gathered during raids. This class system was incorporated within the military system and consequently Mzilikazi reduced the chances of another centre of power developing as will be shown later on. The army and the state, as a result, became identical and the regimental system and military towns (Inyati, Mahlokohloko and Amhlandhlela were the most important) became hereditary, as opposed to the Zulu system, constituting permanent "territorial divisions of the state".(5) By 1859 the Ndebele was a thorough-going barrier to the words of love, peace and brotherhood preached by the missionaries. Some indication of its success and strength can be seen in the short period of time it took Mzilikazi to weld so much unity out of so many different peoples.(6) This was only achieved by physical force backed up by a highly centralised administrative system, both of which were designed to prevent alien influences from undermining Mzilikazi's position.

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(1) Omer-Cooper, op.cit., p.149.

(2) Becker, P. Path of Blood. London, Longmans, 1966. pp.66-70; Omer-Cooper, op.cit., p.149; Brown, R., Aspects of the Scramble for Matabeleland, in The Zambesian Past. Manchester Univ. Press, 1966, p.64.

(3) Becker, op.cit., p.66.

(4) Ibid. pp.185-186.

(5) Omer-Cooper, op.cit., p.148.

(6) Ibid. p.150.

"There is no evidence available today to suggest that the administrative division of the Ndebele nation into provinces and regiments was complicated by any formal recognition of allegiances cutting across these groupings.(1) Consequently the missionaries did not have a secondary centre of power through which they could try and establish their influence. No chance existed, because of the controlled unity of the state and by the very nature of its structure, to play one group off against another. The regimental and provincial system provided the framework of the administrative system and this was controlled at the top by the king and councillors and all the way down by loyal appointed officials of state.(2) When Mzilikazi began to lay the foundations of the Ndebele state he was faced with the main problem of unity from all social groups. In these early days he had to consolidate his power as well as devise a system which protected this power. Among the Zansi, for example, were people who had owed allegiance to many different chiefs and who had only tenuous kinship ties with the Khumalo clan. A noticeable difference between the socio-political structure of the Zulu state system and the Ndebele system consequently emerges. There is an apparent lack of any genealogical basis in the Ndebele system for political power. "We cannot ignore the possibility that Mzilikazi may have deliberately discouraged the growth of political groupings based on kinship, seeing in them a danger to his own absolute authority over his subjects."(3) The effectiveness of members of the royal family as political levers for the missionaries was also unrecognised in theory and negligible in practice. "If there was a lack of such clear-cut divisions among the king's immediate descendants, they could obviously not have been reflected in the national political organisation."(4) The wisdom of this aspect of the system is revealed when some of Mzilikazi's sons, as I will show later on, became attracted to missionary teaching. They were, however, powerless to champion the cause. The effective authorities over the different regimental towns were not members of the royal family, although the family was spread out in the towns, but commoner indunas chosen for the posts because of military ability. "They might act as a check on the action of the ruler to some extent but far less than territorial rulers of the royal blood."(5) As the various subdivisions of the state appeared to have administrative functions as well, once again controlled within the military framework from which the royal family was excluded, descendants of Mzilikazi were effectively stripped of any power - administrative, military and political - which carried a potential threat to the king's authority. Royal villages existed in the sense that queens' settlements (izigodhlo) were found in the national and provincial capitals and elsewhere. No evidence has been found, however, which suggests that there was "any type of affiliation of individuals to royal homesteads that cut across the division of the nation into regiments and provinces."(6) Those settlements which had important royal homesteads acted as a focus on Mzilikazi's authority and as a channel of relationship to this central power. The missionaries were consequently faced with a state system which offered negligible chances of infiltration and which was kept at a high level of efficiency. Further, the Ndebele state system during John Moffat's years at Inyati revealed no signs of disintegration, however small, (the succession crisis, to be dealt with later proves this) and their only recourse time and again was through Mzilikazi, whose attitude to Christianity was never more than one of watchful disapproval.

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(1) Hughes, A.J.B. Kin, Caste and Nation among the Rhodesian Ndebele. Manchester Univ. Press, 1956, p.18.

(2) Ibid. p.14.

(3) Ibid. p.19.

(4) Ibid. pp.19-20.

(5) Omer-Cooper, op.cit., p.149.

(6) Hughes, op.cit., p.17.



Thomas Morgan Thomas in a letter to the London Missionary Society in September 1862, refers to the influence the missionaries had succeeded in establishing in certain top-ranking quarters. "...the Prince Mangnana for the last month has paid us daily visits... He as well as Mangeba (the Prime Minister) and all others in these quarters seem to have much confidence in us, and a strong inclination to be like us in all things, so much so that they have given up their own native doctors and apply to us for medicine, both for themselves and for their children. These changes in the manners and tastes of the Matabele give us ... much satisfaction."(1) Fifteen months later Emily refers to the friendliness of "Catsey's sons" and their "great interest".(2) Moffat also speaks of the warm reception they received on their return to Inyati in August 1863 from "Umntu and Lopengole" two of Mzilikazi's sons. This interest of the sons and Mangebe (the Prime Minister's name as spelt by the Moffats) was still apparent in June 1864, and could be credited to a desire for pure personal material gain. Apart from the missionaries' ability to inoculate cattle (as they did in June 1864 for Mangwane)(3), they had little else to offer in the material line. The interest and friendliness moreover does not fluctuate when benefits are not forthcoming. Nor do the Moffats refer to this contact in terms of personal gain, and given their firm stand against gaining influence through gifts, it seems likely that these important men had by 1863 developed some genuine regard for the Moffats. The sons' ability, even if they were interested, to influence Mzilikazi's attitude in the missionaries' favour, was non-existent. For this reason Mzilikazi allowed the relationship to continue because it posed no threat to his security. Mangeba suffered a fate also appropriate to his position in society. In March 1863 Moffat writes cynically: "A little more encouraging tidings from Inyati ... Mangebe, a great friend of ours and one who used to stand very high with the king is gone..., a victim of the ambitions of his enemies ... including Sieme, who used to be one of our interpreters..."(4) No evidence exists as to exactly why Mangebe was killed, but it cannot be entirely ruled out that his connection with the missionaries did not have something to do with it. As a high-ranking, influential man this association was a reflection on official policy and official policy was again the missionaries. Furthermore, Mangebe had influence and power which in missionary hands posed a threat to Mzilikazi. The friendship of the princes falls into an entirely different socio-political category in the state structure. Mangebe was likely to have wielded considerable military and administrative influence which added weight to the missionary cause. This cause is summed up for Mzilikazi by Robert Moffat: "Moselekatse knows and some of his people know well that if the Christian faith was propagated and received here, god of war, rapine, beef-eating, beer-drinking and wickedness would be thrown prostrate..."(5)

A parallel was drawn by John Moffat between Mzilikazi's state and that of "Umpanda - king of the Zooloos near Natal" over the question of missionary endeavour. He tells how for many years missionaries laboured faithfully among the Zulus and how considerate Umpanda was, but "the moment, however, that any one of his people gives sign of decided change in character under the influence of the Gospel a secret order goes forth and the man disappears."(6) Mzilikazi's state is an exact copy of this, according to Moffat. His fears about their ability to break the heathen barrier are centred on the degree of political perfection achieved by the state and the level of the social system.

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- (1) Annual Report of the L.M.S. 1868-69. Thomas' letter dated September 18, 1862.
  - (2) MO 1/1/1/7. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, December 28, 1863.
  - (3) The Matabele Mission. Letter 101. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati, June 21, 1864.
  - (4) Ibid. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Bloemfontein, O.F.S., March 1st, 1863.
  - (5) MO 5/1/1. Correspondence Robert Moffat to Mary Moffat, August 1854.
  - (6) MO 1/1/1/4. J.S.Moffat. Mahalapi River, February 4, 1859.

Where political organization is "most perfect and the social system still in its aboriginal vigour" missionaries have "least success in making an impression".(1) Only where change has occurred, where there is a degree of disorganisation and old habits have been broken is there chance for the gospel. Arriving at a time when the Ndebele state had a consolidated, secure system of government, the missionaries had little chance. "If there is such a state as preparedness of mind for the gospel then the Matabele were unprepared. No people could be less prepared or inclined to receive it. To preach the gospel, in point of fact, was to condemn their whole social system from its very roots."(2)

The succession crisis following Mzilikazi's death in September 1868, and lasting until January 1870 when Lobengula was installed, is indicative of the political strength and control the Ndebele state system had achieved.(3) Throughout this period the system continued to keep an effective control on the state's affairs in spite of the unsettled mood which the succession created. "A succession dispute had always represented the greatest danger to the integrity of southern African political societies."(4) But although there was internal intrigue and external pressure the crisis "when at last it came was an anti-climax".(5) After the dispersal of the Zwangendaba regiment Lobengula's position became almost universally acclaimed in spite of the fact that he and Nombate, his advocate, were both considered to be pro-white and had as a result aroused a degree of opposition.(6) No signs of disintegration were revealed, and once Lobengula had the reins of government firmly in hand the country settled back into its old pattern of life with remarkable ease. As the crisis occurred a mere three years after Moffat's withdrawal, it is fair to conclude that the power revealed during the succession also existed between 1859-65. Missionary fears about the results of Mzilikazi's death proved unfounded. "Poor old chief still hangs on, but inaccessible and dark... Gross darkness covers the land. Our words are but an idle tale...." The conflicting whisperings in high quarters about a successor makes Moffat feel that "it is very likely to be 'out of the frying pan into the fire'".(7) He expects no change in policy. Thomas Morgan Thomas was even more apprehensive about the unknown consequences which might have arisen on Mzilikazi's death. "From the past it might be concluded that at the death of Moselekatshe there will be great fighting and slaughter in this country."(8) Sykes refers to the supreme importance for the future interests of the mission of the character of the man who will succeed Mzilikazi's "cruel and destructive" government.(9) Although Sykes is right in that the king could have wielded more power in favour of Christianity, he forgets that the all-powerful man was bound by a system of government which made him so, and consequently could not, unless he was prepared for a changed personal status, make policy changes which in effect would cause radical upheavals in society. Thomas' comments are disproven. The Zwangendaba battle was a deliberate and necessary political move. There certainly was no surfeit of lawlessness. The success of the system can be seen for what it was during the succession crisis, particularly when the social ingredients of the state are taken into account. "This rapid growth by incorporation rather than by natural increase obviously posed formidable problems of political and social organisation."(10) By the

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- (1) MO 1/1/1/4. J.S.Moffat. Mahalapi River, February 4, 1859.
  - (2) Mackenzie, J. Ten Years North of the Orange River 1859-69. Edinburgh, Edmonston and Douglas, 1871, p.332.
  - (3) MO 1/1/5/3. J.S.Moffat to Sir H.B.Loch, December 9, 1890.
  - (4) Brown, R. The Ndebele Succession Crisis. Leverhulme History Conference, September 1960. U.C.R. Publication.
  - (5) Ibid. (6) Ibid.
  - (7) The Matabele Mission. Letter 107. J.S.Moffat to Robert Moffat. Inyati, October 2, 1864.
  - (8) 68-69th Annual Report of the L.M.S. 1861-63, p.77. Letter dated September 18, 1862, from Thomas.
  - (9) Ibid. Letter from Robert Moffat dated 20 November 1861, giving extracts from letters of Inyati missionaries.
  - (10) Brown, op.cit., p.65.

time the missionaries arrived, however, Mzilikazi had successfully welded the diverse parts of his state into one. By 1859 he had promoted his kingship as the primary unifying force.(1) This force was determinedly opposed to the word of God.(2) It had the general backing of the majority of the people whose savage nature, tribal system, superstitions, military code, polygamy and haughty arrogance "the result of long years of most successful warfare and bloodshed, rendered them in all South Africa least likely to accept readily the Gospel".(3)

Mzilikazi's opposition is not at all unusual under the circumstances. "...there is no blinking the fact that the tendency of Christianity is to overturn native governments."(4) His opposition to Christianity stemmed from this source, which Robert Moffat says he became aware of in 1854, if not earlier, and from his fear that Boers would follow the missionaries.(5) John Moffat's forebodings about the chances Christianity had, given these two fears, were entirely justified. The Bechuana were a vastly different proposition as the type of society being dealt with here at least allowed some level of missionary impact. Although the Inyati missionaries were "occasionally made use of in diplomatic, technical and medical affairs, they were never allowed to gain any real influence with the people."(6) Because of his fears and natural aversion to the word of God, Mzilikazi appears to have deliberately shuttered his mind against the missionaries.(7) His unapproachability and impenetrability on many occasions are proof of this attitude. His indifference was deliberate. In adopting this attitude Mzilikazi probably hoped that the missionaries would tire of trying to get through to him and so leave him alone. Mzilikazi's fears and suspicions about missionary work come to the fore over the question of reinforcing the mission. Even after three years of their presence, and with the knowledge that he can and does control their material effectiveness, the king fears what might come in their wake from the South.((8)

naively  
Moffat/misjudged Mzilikazi's attitude to Christianity by naively assuming that his whimsical nature was purely a result of the king playing at personal games, indulging himself, because of his exalted position. His non-committal policy is as consistent as Moffat's fluctuating belief that a chance existed "if I could only say something to him which might pierce to the heart within"(9) that missionary endeavour might get the king's official backing. But although getting old, Mzilikazi was still shrewd and clear-minded and aware of "the superior ability and capacity of the white man".(10) Why, after all, should he embark on what would amount to a revolutionary policy, the effects of which might easily have torn his state apart in his declining years? His exclusive sovereignty included extensive religious and secular power as well. These further enhanced his sway over the people.(11) The text of one of Thomas' addresses urged the people to honour their fathers and mothers. "He [Mzilikazi] was pleased with the first part, but to the second he objected, saying, 'It is false. Believe him not. What honour can be done to a woman seeing that she never goes out to war.'"(12) When Moffat, preaching on prayer, told his congregation

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- (1) Brown, op.cit., p.65. (2) Mackenzie, op.cit., p.337.  
(3) Lovett, R. History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895, Vol.I. Chapter XXV.  
(4) Moffat, R.U. John Smith Moffat. Murray, London, 1921, p.207.  
(5) The Matabele Mission, p.80. Emily Moffat's Journal to her father.  
(8) Ibid. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, July 29, 1861.  
(9) Ibid. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, November 8, 1860.  
(10) MO 6/1/2. L.M.S. Vol.II. Robert Moffat to Tidman, October 2, 1860, Kuruman.  
(11) Brown, op.cit., p.65.  
(12) Thomas, C.C. Thomas Morgan Thomas. (Hand duplicated. Family edition). 1950, p.18.
- (Noted 6 and 7 omitted above)  
(6) Brown, op.cit., pp.67-68.  
(7) The Matabele Mission. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, November 6, 1860.

that God listened equally to the prayers of a rich king and a poor man, Mzilikazi exclaimed, "It's a lie, I don't believe it." (1) This barrier of social custom made the missionaries' lot even more difficult. The traditional attitudes of the people had, in effect, to be reduced before the gospel had any hope. Unfortunately little research at depth had been done on the part played by religion in Ndebele society. It is, however, generally recognised that a form of religion, as opposed to superstition, did exist, (2) and because of this competing force, accepted and long established, yet another obstacle confronted the missionaries. The Ndebele attended Christian services either because they were afraid not to on account of the missionaries' connection with the king, or for what they could gain materially. (3) Both reasons, however, made for little real interest in what was being said, and this is borne out by the attentive and respectful reception the missionaries invariably received but the lack of any feed-back. The words of God were in Matabele a one way traffic, pouring into a bottomless well never to reappear again. (4) The unresponsiveness of the people has two main causes - the strangeness of the white religion in the context of custom and tradition, and Mzilikazi's failure actually to support the religion. Elliot refers to the king's "common inconsistency" on several occasions in showing his appreciation for missionary efforts, "while he himself rejected the light". (5) Mzilikazi once offered his whole country to Thomas - "teach where you will, and whom you will; and may you be successful." (6) This, says Elliot, was the royal charter for the mission. (7) He failed to realise, however, that Mzilikazi was merely going through the motions of accepting the missionaries without giving their cause his personal, unequivocal support. "We fear the king, he does not wish us to learn otherwise he would learn himself, or at least send his own children to be taught. How can we do what the king does not wish us to do?" (8)

A sideline of this is Moffat's refusal to ask the king for permission to preach. This was tantamount to allowing him to determine a man's relations with God. (9) Unrealistically, however, in assuming the right to preach without recourse to Mzilikazi, and irrespective of the morality of the king's attitude, Moffat failed to recognise that without this support their cause was lost. There was a very real difference between allowing the missionaries to stay in the country and underwriting what they were there for. Moffat confused morality with necessity, but in so doing probably brought a smile to Mzilikazi's face, simply because in refusing to tax the king on the right to preach he spared him having to make a decision. Moffat could assume any right he wanted to - it simply made no difference in reality.

Another aspect of this reality was the influence witchcraft had as "...lord of the minds of the people, even as Mzilikazi was lord of their bodies... It rules with deadly sway..." (10) Once again it is difficult to judge to what exact extent witchcraft influenced the minds of the Ndebele people, simply because little research has been done into the subject, but from the correspondence of the Inyati missionaries and from later information it is likely that it had a considerable effect. Elliot contends that the Society was terrorized with probably no single day passing without one or more being done to death in the accursed name of witchcraft. (11) It is most likely that as a phenomenon of daily life, witchcraft was an accepted, traditional fact. The missionaries refer to witchdoctors and to the relationship between them and

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- (1) Thomas, C.C., op.cit., p.18.  
(2) Bullock, C. The Mashona and the Matabele. Juta & Co. Cape Town, 1950. Ch.XI, Note 2, p.143.  
(3) MO 1/1/1/6. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, January 14, 1862.  
(4) The Matabele Mission. Journal 90. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Nyati, November 15, 1863.  
(5) Elliot, W.A. Gold from Quartz. L.M.S.1910, p.68.  
(6) Ibid. (7) Ibid. (8) Ibid.  
(9) The Matabele Mission. Journal 90. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, December 11, 1863.  
(10) Elliot, op.cit., p.96. (11) Ibid., p.98.

the king,(1) and as he stood as the symbol of every facet of the state it is fair to contend, I feel, that this facet was an integral part of society. At times witchcraft was used specifically against more 'pro-missionary' people who were regarded as traitors.(2)

In the years before the Scramble for Africa began, the Ndebele state "was regarded as one of the leading African powers south of the Zambesi".(3) The final strand in the barrier the Ndebele state posed to Christianity is its external policy. In 1888 Lobengula claimed that the raiding system "was indispensably necessary to the preservation of his power and the political existence of his people..."(4) I trust I have shown this system of government existed between 1859-65. Indeed it was probably functioning then on a higher level of efficiency. Whereas the economy and social organisation of the state depended on that aspect of 'external' policy which involved raiding outside the settled areas of the state, it did not depend on an external policy in relation to southern Africa. Matabeleland "proved highly resistant to the twin influences of Christianity and commerce which elsewhere in Africa so often smoothed the way to European control".(5) This resistance is based firstly on Mzilikazi's and later Lobengula's disinterest in becoming involved in the economic system of southern Africa (in other words, the state maintained a closed, watertight attitude so as not to allow alien influences in), and secondly on the very nature of the State. Before the formal colonisation of Rhodesia "hunters seem to have been the most welcome visitors at the king's kraal, but their impact on Matabele society was necessarily slight".(6) The effectiveness of this pre-colonial contact can be judged, in terms of Matabele policy, from the fact that it was mostly welcome. The missionaries, however, represented an alien influence which this policy could not accommodate. "And if the missionaries who were received with suspicion and distrust at the outset, and who constantly advocated doctrines unpopular, unpatriotic and illegal"(7) might once have offered a degree of security from outside threats, by 1859 this power was no longer needed. In the turbulent days in the Transvaal and prior to the stage when the state was firmly established in Matabeleland, Robert Moffat was security to Mzilikazi. By 1859 his need of a missionary shield had diminished (Mzilikazi's fear of Boer attack still remained), and this is a possible reason why Moffat feels his influence had become a broken reed. It simply did not have the same value anymore, not in terms of what it stood for but what it might prevent. The missionaries were, however, by 1859, an external threat because the state had overcome the problems of development and would not tolerate any undermining of its foundations. Mzilikazi's concession, the first Matabele concession to Robert Moffat, can only be seen in terms of an act of honouring a commitment made earlier. It was, however, extremely reluctantly given and it was followed up with a thorough-going policy of non-encouragement and control. Whereas Mzilikazi was prepared to be loyal to his white friend, he had also to be loyal to all that he had built. His loyalty to Moffat was in his eyes fraught with danger, and for this reason was a remarkable act. "The Matabele were nearly as indifferent to the trade as to the religion brought by the whites."(8) Apart from not wanting their religion, Mzilikazi did not really need them even for limited co-operation over things such as trade and messages. Because of the isolationist nature of the state neither wielded much influence in Mzilikazi's decision. Missionary evidence between 1859-65 shows that interest in external trade

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- (1) T.M.Thomas, op.cit., Chaps. 7-8, pp.274-305.
  - (2) Haynes, C.E. "Matabeleland" in the Journal of The Manchester Geographic Society, p.247.
  - (3) Brown, op.cit., p.64.
  - (4) C.5918. Enclosure in No.32. Shippard to Sir Hercules Robinson, October 22, 1888.
  - (5) Brown, op.cit., pp.67-68.
  - (6) Ibid., p.67.
  - (7) Mackenzie, op.cit., p.334. Ch.XVII.
  - (8) Brown, op.cit., p.69.

(as opposed to bartering) from Mzilikazi down was at a low level. Occasionally he would ask them to send ivory to the south for sale, but there is no evidence to suggest that the trade that did occur was not motivated mainly for personal reasons. Consequently, by 1885, after nearly fifty years of contact with Europeans of a variety of trades, the Ndebele state remained basically intact, having made no major policy changes. The European contact that had occurred had hardly been noticed in terms of results. Into this society came John Smith Moffat with the hope that "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the desert as the garden of the Lord".(1)

#### A Crisis of Faith.

John Smith Moffat (1835-1918) has been described as a man who was "not of the stuff, whatever that may be, of which missionaries are made".(2) Moffat's son has said that his father was "at no time anything else" but a missionary.(3) Both definitions, superficially contradictory as they are and by the same token an accurate judgement of the man, hold however more than a grain of truth. The object of this section of the paper is to analyse Moffat in terms of London Missionary Society theory, and in terms of practical reality, and show that whereas he might not have been "of the stuff" for missionary work in Matabeleland, his consuming passion for the principles of truth and justice stamped him as a missionary in the wider sense of the word. Various statements of policy and belief and the Congregationalist nature of the Society establish a standard against which Moffat can be measured. This standard is the stuff which should characterise a missionary. In Moffat's case two heavy disadvantages - his character and the Matabele situation - weigh against him, ultimately cause his crisis of faith because of their incompatibility and diminish his rating. But as wanting as he might be found in the ideal and in the Inyati context, certain characteristics do justify one of his obituary notices - "He was greater than anything that he ever did."(4)

The 1930 Report of the London Missionary Society's Survey Committee defines the missionary movement as "the organised expression of the duty of Christian people to their brother men..."(5) On March 31, 1858, Moffat was ordained in Brighton and became an official part of this expression. It was unfortunate that a man of such deep and sensitive nature should have had to prove his faith and ability on a testing ground as harsh and hopeless as the Ndebele one. In later years, while serving as a missionary in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Moffat still reveals that unfortunate inability to adjust to circumstances, tolerate other opinions and establish harmonious relations with his fellow missionaries, but in spite of this it is unlikely that had he been blooded in an area which offered greater hope of success, his faith, not only in himself but in the Word of God, would have been so heavily assailed.

A missionary "needs a steadfastness which can endure monotony, disappointment and trial, a love which knows no limits and never grows weary, and a faith which burns with an undying flame.(6) These gifts

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- (1) The Brighton Pulpit, April 3, 1858, No.172. Part of valedictory address at Moffat's ordination.
  - (2) The Matabele Mission of John & Emily Moffat. Introd. p.xv.
  - (3) Moffat, R.U., John Smith Moffat. Murray, London, 1921. Ch.VI, p.43.
  - (4) Ibid. Introduction, p.xiii.
  - (5) 1930 Survey Committee Report of the London Missionary Society. London, 1930. A Critical Review of its Work Abroad, p.8.
  - (6) Oldham, J.A., The Word and the Gospel, quoted in Report of Survey Committee, London Missionary Society, 1930, p.169.

were indispensable ones in the physically and emotionally exhausting circumstances of Inyati. This missionary outpost was indeed an example of the time when "missionary work was heroic but simple..."(1) Seventy years after the founding of the mission, the L.M.S. realised that "a self-supporting, self-propagating church cannot be built up among illiterate people..."(2) One of the major themes of Moffat's work at Inyati is how he modifies his untried, idealistic beliefs in the process of gaining practical knowledge and experience. Even with these modifications, however, he was still unsuited for missionary work among the Ndebele. This unsuitability - emotional and physical - was heightened to the crisis stage by the reality that was Inyati, and consequently Moffat emerges as something of a tragic-hero - heroic because he stood for principles of race relations uncommon in Rhodesia; tragic because of the torment he endured to no avail.

The character of John Smith Moffat. A brief analysis at this early stage of Moffat's character is necessary to give some indication of the man. Moffat was both an idealist and an egoist. He belonged to the strictly evangelical school of old-fashioned theology, having no faith in what he called "the gasbags of the Higher Criticism", (3) those who came from the rationalistic school. This simple religious attitude, unadorned and down to earth, is apparent throughout his life. In 1906 the firmness of his original beliefs is revealed by his criticism of the Reverend R.J. Campbell: "He is too metaphysical for the average man.... The Scriptures are good enough for us as they are without being translated into a language which to us has either a non-natural meaning or no meaning at all."(4) While acknowledging the fact that Campbell might do good work, Moffat wished he would give up "his dreamy mysticism in which he has become befogged and fall back upon the few definite facts..."(5) Moffat's idealism was consequently blended with a strong feeling for practicality, and these two qualities did not make compatible partners. Because of his "more liberal opportunities and slightly more emancipated generation"(6) Moffat saw the problems of missionary work in a different light to the crude means and meagre results of, for example, his father's day, and his practical criticism of this method was apt to give the impression that his religious zeal was flagging. Because his creed was a simple Puritan one he was liable to decry and become intolerant of people who expressed advanced views. He was an ardent devotee of Congregationalism because he believed it to be the form of Church government closest to primitive Christianity.(7) The pomp and

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- (1) 1930 Survey Committee Report, p.6. Quote from Summary Statement re Society's work abroad.
- (2) Ibid. (3) Moffat, R.U., John Smith Moffat, p.298.
- (4) Ibid. (5) Ibid. (6) The Matabele Mission. Introd. p.xiv.
- (7) Note on Congregationalism from the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F.L.Cross. O.U.P., 1958. Congregationalism is "that form of Church polity which rests on the independence and autonomy of each local church. It professes to represent the principle of democracy in Church government, a polity which is held to follow from its fundamental belief in Christ as the sole head of His Church." All members are 'priests unto God'. Where two or three meet in Christ's name "He is in their midst guiding their thoughts and inspiring their actions." It is held that the system is primitive in that it represents the earliest form of Church Order. "It requires a very high standard of Christian devotion to maintain it, though it is admitted that in practice it has fallen sometimes sadly below that ideal." Modern Congregationalism begins with the Reformation... Independents, in spite of their Calvinism, were the broader in outlook and the more evangelical in tone... 'Congregationalists for many generations were accustomed to assert the claims of the intellect in religion far more earnestly than other evangelical Churches.' At the same time they were evangelistic in practice, as witness their founding of the L.M.S. 1832: Congregational Union of England and Wales formed. Its Declaration of Faith and Order set forth a moderate Calvinism. Congregationalists are sometimes described as creedless. But though they regard creeds or confessions as useful declarations of faith, they insist that such formulae are not to be imposed as tests of communion.

ceremony of the Anglican Church had no appeal for him, and he firmly believed that if the vital individual power of spirituality was lacking "all the machinery in the world won't help..."(1) In 1903 he described himself as seeming to be a lukewarm Congregationalist but believing himself to be "more of an Independent than most of you."(2) He said that he failed to understand the argument that the church was losing ground for want of organisation. "If the vital power is there all shall grow. If it is not there all the machinery in the world won't help."(3) This attitude existed in 1856 when he was still training to be a missionary, and shows how heavy a personal responsibility Moffat placed on himself, on the individual in maintaining a spiritual power in life. He refused to hide behind dogma and ritual, or behind any form of organised expression of the word of God, because he felt that this was not the type of relationship one should have with God. It should be a direct, deeply personal one, not one which had in a sense commitments on earth in the form of belonging to some form of organised expression. This self-imposed high standard of personal Christian devotion shorn of any external support suited Moffat's independence of character, but the will power necessary to maintain it in no way minimised his self-centredness. "My struggle has been to keep up that frank independence without which we are not men and the struggle has been very difficult against the many and great inducements to bow to and to fawn upon those who are disposed to be liberal. I believe we missionaries' children are in great danger of becoming courtiers."(4) This independence and individual spiritual relationship needed a strength which Inyati tested to the full. Some idea of his desire to be a free agent, uncommitted and answerable to nobody but himself, can be seen in his early break with the London Missionary Society - a break which is not totally the result of the delay in posting him to Africa.(5) The intensity with which he felt and reacted is reflected in a letter to the directors of the Society in February 1858, when he was 23 years old. The delay had caused him "seven months of complete suspense and often painful uncertainty". His anomalous position annoyed him because he was not the kind of man who hedged. He also spoke of being "destitute of a home".(6) At the same time he reveals that independence of mind and that determined forthrightness which characterises his whole life, "...whence arises this deep conviction of the value of medical knowledge and this spasmodic attempt to attain its advantages in the eleventh hour? If it is of so much importance why was it not more seriously thought of before..."(7) Totally unafraid to say what he thought, justifying this attitude by his deep belief in himself, and consequently not one for accepting the majority wish, normally because he had other ideas which he considered right, Moffat was undoubtedly "an uncomfortable colleague to those who had to labour with him, especially before the enthusiasm and impetuosity of earlier life had been softened by the larger tolerance and charity that come with increasing years."(8) Moffat was not a humble man simply because his individuality, forcefully expressed, sprang from deep personal conviction. He was basically too self-centred to suffer fools gladly, too highly principled to be able to cope with the exigencies of missionary work in Matabeleland, and too much of a crusader for truth and justice to realise the broader practical issues. But because of all this he was a man of unusual stature. His often self-damaging integrity, defiant championing of the oppressed and guardianship of what he considered to be the moral way won him few friends in high places, but "he was not one of those

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- (1) Moffat, R.U., op.cit., p.298. (Letter quoted addressed to Mr. E. Unwin, senior).
  - (2) Ibid. ('Independents' is another name for congregationalists, as upholders of the independence or autonomy of each local congregation.)
  - (3) Ibid.
  - (4) MO 3/1/1. J.S.Moffat's Correspondence. J.S.Moffat to Robert Moffat, Jnr. January 10th 1856. St. John's Wood, London.
  - (5) MO 1/1/3/1. Corresp. with the L.M.S. J.S.Moffat to the Directors, Brighton, February 3rd, 1858.
  - (6) Ibid.
  - (7) Ibid.
  - (8) Moffat, R.U., op.cit., p.44.



who would speak comfortable things for the mere sake of doing so, or cry Peace when there was no Peace, and his blunt criticisms not infrequently annoyed those who resent listening to unpleasant truths that disturb the easy current of a self-satisfied existence."(1) His sternness and restraint set him against embellishment and sensationalism and the tone of his letters from Inyati paint a sombre picture of a man heavily weighed down with his own conscience but seldom able to relieve the burden. "A good cause should require no such fictitious aids" (in reference to the glamour and emotion surrounding missionary enterprise in the mid-1800s).(2) Moffat was prepared to stand on his own, backed by his own judgement and believing in the all-powerfulness of God's cause. He did not, however, have the emotional balance or the practical realisation to live in the sterility of missionary life at Inyati without suffering a crisis of faith. As much as he abhorred moral and religious humbug, Moffat also strongly disapproved of zeal not being tempered by discretion. His criticism of the Society's method of choosing missionaries, its financial extravagance, methods and organisation reveal a hard, discriminatory side of the man: "...there is such a thing as casting your pearls before swine".(3) This remark is characteristic of his attitude towards religion and towards everyday associations with people. As much as he believed that his own salvation depended largely on himself, so he was apt to expect others to carry within them a similar moral standard. At times, because people failed to reveal this inner strength, he was apt to be a prophet of doom. 'The fallen could not be redeemed, except by God's power. Disillusioned with Mzilikazi's disinterest in redemption Moffat came more and more to hope for the intervention of this power, and when this did not occur and he could make no impression on the chief, his faith challenged by the strength of a secular power came under heavy pressure. "While ready to credit men with good intentions where he could, he held that facts speak for themselves".(4) The facts in Mzilikazi's case were all condemnatory in Moffat's eyes. While he did not undergo any mental or spiritual indecision about his role in life before deciding to become a missionary - the decision seemed to be an automatic one - a prominent feature of his Inyati years was the sapping test of faith he underwent. Life, to Moffat, was not something to be treated lightheartedly. He had an earnest belief that his had been given to him to spend wisely and for good. When this was not possible, as it was at Inyati, Moffat became frustrated and disillusioned with himself and his work. He believed that missions stood or fell on their merits, needed no aids except the power of the gospel, "as the fulfilment of a Divine command; to introduce other considerations by appealing to a lower order of emotions was to demean them."(5) In fulfilling this Divine command he hoped to fulfil his role in life. Neither, however, was to be realised at Inyati between 1859-65. Although from 1863 he did appeal to a lower order of emotions, having modified his previously rigid principles, Moffat was still doomed to disillusionment. It had, moreover, taken him years to make the agonising decision to accept that he had been too idealistic, but to no avail.

His faith under attack. "...But the silent faith of a man who trusts and serves Christ must have a fountain within, a vital source, or it will soon dry up..."(6) This is Moffat talking as the ideal Congregationalist, recognising that a high standard of personal devotion was necessary to maintain his faith. Yet even before leaving Cape Town on route for Inyati he reveals that weakness which

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- (1) Ibid., p.296.
  - (2) Ibid., p.45.
  - (3) Ibid., pp.300-301.
  - (4) Ibid., p.300.
  - (5) Ibid., pp.45-46.
  - (6) Ibid., pp.300-301.

seriously jeopardised his ability to maintain this high standard. Moffat was at all times too easily and heavily affected by circumstances. "As you will have learned from her [Emily's] journal, she suffered much on the voyage, and it taxed all my courage and spirits sometimes to keep things going."(1) A common feature of his Inyati years is this breach in his otherwise steadfast character. Because of the emotional effect events had on him, he came to rely more and more on his faith to carry him through, and consequently as his faith failed to produce the longed-for results, this too weakened. Setting out as he did, fired by pure and iron-clad ideals, as a free agent but with two London Missionary Society colleagues and bound to Matabeleland by his father though preferring a Kololo station, Moffat's first real test of faith arises by August 1859, two months before arrival in Matabeleland. "We go there because John feels, if any kind of promise was made by his father that John should be missionary to Moselekatse, it would not be right to alter now; so for the present we are bound thither... There is one great difficulty before us in our intercourse with Moselekatse. Grandpapa has established a precedent, and it will be impossible for us to follow in his steps... He has yielded to the tyrant's wishes and given almost anything that has been asked for. You can imagine we sometimes tremble to begin missionary work on such a foundation, and while Grandpapa has opened the way, he has also opened up difficulties for his successors."(2) To the young Moffats this reinforcement of personal influence was nothing short of bribery, and they would have none of it. So at this early stage the whole morality of missionary method was thrust on the untried and finely principled young man. In terms of the effectiveness from a religious point of view of gifts, Robert Moffat probably used too little discretion and made these concessions too casually.(3) It is difficult to judge if he used gifts as a means to an end, purely because of his friendship with Mzilikazi or to reinforce this friendship. It is likely that he saw in gift-making a means to ease and expedite their work. The reasonable use of such an aid cannot be gansured out of hand if it succeeds in obtaining an opening for the top priority, the gospel. Here, however, Robert Moffat misjudged and was proven wrong. In spite of all his gifts, this did not transpire. The younger Moffats' initial attitude was based on an unequivocal belief, naive and unpractical but strangely accurate, that if Mzilikazi wanted them for what they really were there was no need for gift-making - the gospel to them was the greatest gift they could offer. As a result of these opposing views on how to approach their task there were "bitter and almost daily provocations"(4) during the months Robert spent at Inyati helping establish the mission. Until the actual grant of land had been made, and until they had actually moved on to the land, John and Emily "purposefully avoided giving the king any presents, as we did not wish him to act under the influence of bribery".(5) Moffat seemed to have a very real fear of his religious role becoming subordinate to trade and other considerations, and he was determined from the start to establish in Mzilikazi's mind their exact position so that he was in no doubt as to their attitude. "The position of this mission is a most anomalous one and as [its establishment has just been trading in ivory, so, if it be to continue the same very questionable trade must be continued. Only our consciences will not let us build up such a] mission and John determines to remain here as a missionary or to go."(6) After a thirty-year friendship with Robert Moffat, one of unusual warmth, John must have

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(1) The Matabele Mission. Letter 10. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Cape Town. May 20, 1858.

(2) Ibid. Letter 40. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. The Bawanketse, August 9, 1859.

(3) Ibid. Introd. p.xiv. (4) Ibid. Introd. p.xv.

(5) Ibid. Journal, p.80. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, December 26, 1859.

(6) Ibid. Letter 46. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Enyatheen Valley, March 28, 1860. The bracketed words in this quotation signify the text from Unwin's transcript. The passage is torn out in Emily's original.

been a disappointment to Mzilikazi. Cold, aloof and stern where his father was warm and friendly, he had the task of establishing his own standards with a man who had happily accepted differing standards from his father. Living in the shadow of his father's friendship as he did, determinedly refusing to provide gifts from the outset and revealing a pitying dislike for the man, Moffat confronted all that the king stood for with a singular lack of tact and judgement. While his father was probably too free-handed, John was too set in his own attitudes to distinguish between bribery and gift-making in terms of social convention. In the final analysis his stand in theory proved right in that no method, short of the breakup of the state, had any effect in breaching the walls and allowing the gospel in, but this does not minimise the fact that his approach was wrong. "I don't think it right to bow and yield to a heathen despot, though some may. I believe he will respect and admire more a firm unyielding conduct." (1) He was undoubtedly right in not bowing, but his unyielding conduct in the face of the all-powerful Mzilikazi, courageous as it might have been, did little to improve what was to the missionaries a vital relationship. In showing such determination Moffat also established himself as a dedicated man. The fact that he appeared unlikely to give up his prime quest for the sake of friendship could in no way have ameliorated Mzilikazi's suspicions and distrust. A slightly lower-toned approach would certainly have done no harm, although admittedly it would also have done no good.

Because he was too honest to palter with the facts as he saw them, Moffat bred in himself an intolerance which too quickly and easily revealed itself. The tragedy of the man was that he stood for ideals of great value and rarity but was incapable of winning for them through ordinary relationships the support they deserved and needed if they were to be successful. The sombre strain he inherited from his mother made him even less capable of inspiring friendship. He had no common touch. Some indication of the mental and emotional pressures the man suffered at Inyati can be gained from his reaction to the everyday inconvenience the mission team faced in Cape Town before departure for the north. "I write the date above almost in despair. The quagmire of hindrances seems to get thickest as we approach the termination of our long detention here, and now the very clouds seem determined to dispute our progress." (2) Three weeks later he speaks of requiring "a little more faith". (3) Already that flaw which was to contribute so heavily towards his crisis of faith has begun to tax his emotional reserves. By the end of 1859 he has also revealed probably the worst aspect of his character - his intolerance and at times somewhat vicious disregard for other people and other ideas. He has broken with the Society under inharmonious circumstances. "John says one of the Secretaries is a fool, and the other a knave... I don't find even that the fellow missionaries of the Society are very harmonious." (4) His second break is with his father over methods in Matabeleland, his father's attitude to the mission when back at Kuruman, and his connection with the London Missionary Society. (5) The older Moffats never forgave their son for breaking from the Society they had dedicated their lives to (6) and John and Emily wrote at times somewhat disparagingly of their parents' total loyalty to the Society. (7)

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- (1) The Matabele Mission. Letter 59. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati, Matabele Country. Sunday afternoon, December 9, 1860.
  - (2) Ibid. Letter 18. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Cape Town, August 18, 1858.
  - (3) Ibid. Letter 20. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Bain's Pass, September 3, 1858.
  - (4) Ibid. Letter 14. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Cape Town. July 19, 1858.
  - (5) Ibid. Introd. p.xv. "Dear good Mr. & Mrs. Moffat are so wedded to the Society: it is really an essential to their Christianity to believe in it."
  - (6) Ibid. Introd. p.xiv.
  - (7) Ibid. Introd. p.xv.

This family break did not help the Inyati mission. The intolerance of John Moffat also played a part in his dislike of Thomas Morgan Thomas. Although the running battle between Moffat and Sykes and Thomas stemmed mainly from policy disputes at the station, Moffat and his wife reveal their almost natural inability to accept other peoples' behavioural characteristics early on.(1)

One of the major themes of Moffat's missionary years in Matabeleland is the fact that he was there as an independent agent who modified his beliefs on personal judgement. During his political years in the country he was not a free agent but an instrument of government policy who eventually ostracised himself because he refused to modify his personal views so that they dovetailed with this policy. The irony of these two positions is that whereas in the missionary period he came to the conclusion that conquest would probably be necessary before Christianity could find an opening, he balked against this later on. The judgement that can be made here once again illustrates the indomitable vein of individuality in the man. As a freelance missionary he could determine what he believed to be for the best; as a government agent he did not have this executive power, and when government policy became incompatible with his ideas he refused to accept without making his opposition known. In 1864 he writes significantly of his position at Inyati. "Should they [the London Missionary Society] accept me I cannot see but that my relations with the brethren will be more difficult to maintain, for my insular position at present enables [me] to choose my own ground, whereas I shall be involved, molens volens, in much which pains the heart... But though I may be drawn out of a peaceful niche, there are certainly some advantages which will accrue to the internal mechanism of the mission by an addition to the number of accredited agents whose votes and opinions must be recognised..."(2) Ironically, when he had a free hand he was unable to influence affairs as he saw fit, whereas during his years as political agent, when this personal ability had been restricted by the very nature of his post, he exerted considerable influence in determining the future of Rhodesia.

Before reaching Inyati Moffat says that he was not sanguine on the point that there had been decline or disintegration of the Ndebele social structure.(3) Because of this little opportunity probably existed for the gospel to gain a foothold. His pessimism about their chances does not, however, at this stage modify his idealism or his attitude. Six months later Emily speaks of becoming "more and more confirmed in the one feeling of our hearts, painful as it is, that there is no entrance for the Gospel, and Moselekatse has such an erroneous opinion of our objects in coming here than an entirely new effort will need to introduce the Gospel."(4) She does not expand on what she means by an entirely new effort, but she does make the mistake of underestimating Mzilikazi's awareness of their role and all that it stood for. By November 1860 the climate had affected Moffat so much that hard labour "knocks me up and will, it is to be feared, except in a moderate degree".(5) Within a year - he was then 26 years old - Moffat was certainly not in the position to be part of that new effort, taking it to be a more vigorous, better mounted campaign, that his wife speaks of. As the reality of the situation begins to tell, Moffat begins to criticise the concept and logistics of this great plan. Hard facts have caused him to think about the scheme, and he speaks of the "error of judgement for us to have come hither without having secured the permanent services of some at least semi-civilized people. It is a wonder to me that Emily holds out as she does with her scanty aids."(6) The following day Moffat is incapacitated by

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- (1) The Matabele Mission. Letter 68. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati. July 29, 1861. In reference to the Thomases.
  - (2) Ibid. Letter 103. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati. August 15, 1864.
  - (3) Ibid. Letter 42. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Mahalapí River. September 4, 1859.
  - (4) Ibid. Letter 46. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. March 28, 1860. Wed. eve.
  - (5) Ibid. Letter 58. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, Matabele country. November 6, 1860.
  - (6) Ibid.

violent pains in the loins and stomach. He cuttingly expresses no surprise at his wife's worn appearance, and with both of them labouring under the physical burden of ill-health the desperate wish that "it cannot be much longer before we have some kind of help from the South,"(1) speaks loudly of their plight.

Moffat's crisis of faith flows from two main considerations - firstly his idealism and secondly what could be termed the secular circumstances of the mission. These circumstances act as the catalyst which causes the dichotomy in his mind. Because of the secular hardships of Inyati Mission life, his religious and moral beliefs become increasingly to be his source of strength, but when results fail to materialise these too begin to weaken. His emotional instability also plays a part in the test of faith which develops simply because it causes fluctuating moods which eventually wear down his steadfast religious and moral disposition. "I think on greatest trial is the withering effect that all this has on our spirits. It is very hard to keep up to our duty... We felt many times self-condemned..."(2) Failure in David Livingstone's eyes was the greatest offence,(3) and the increasing feeling of failure at Inyati undoubtedly shook the resolve of a man of Moffat's nature. Son of Robert Moffat, and brother-in-law of Livingstone, Moffat, apart from his ambitious nature and his desire to see results, needed achievement to establish him on his own merits. By November 1860 Moffat was beginning to question his ability to show Mzilikazi the light which would be his salvation. "It is one of the sorest puzzles to me how the old man is to be at all penetrated with the truth..."(4) Although reality has made him realise that "to the Christian Church will not belong the glory of having Christianized the Word..."(5) at the same time he still held out hope that the omnipotent power of God would intervene. Moffat at this stage was caught between a lingering if fading hope in all that he stood for achieving the supreme victory, and an increasing realisation that secular circumstances were an insurmountable barrier. By early 1864 Emily spoke of her husband as being "very much shaken as to our path of duty..."(6) Five months later the physical and emotional strain forced their dilemma to a head. The Moffats felt that they had failed. Because they had been found wanting, the tangible results they needed to bolster their flagging spirits would not be forthcoming. "What we want and what we long for is God's spirit influencing the heart, and Oh I tremble lest our faithlessness and prayerlessness should hinder the spirit's work."(7) This is where Moffat started to become tragically involved for reasons of personal expiation in the religious campaign in Matabeleland. He had come to realise that while Mzilikazi and the state structure remained intact the gospel would never reign, his hopes and beliefs had taken a heavy battering, and he began to blame himself for the failure of the mission - as an agent of God he had failed, and so personal religious considerations blinded him to the reality which was the real cause of failure. While his beliefs had begun to buckle, Mzilikazi's attitude remained unchanged. In 1857 Robert Moffat had warned his son not to "expect great things for yourself, or you will be sure to be disappointed..."(8) But by his very nature Moffat needed results to keep himself from being disappointed. At the same time as he warned his son about expectation, Robert Moffat spoke of his "many opportunities of observing the missionary character, and I have come to the conclusion that if there is not single-minded devotion to the cause with natural abilities all the Colleges in the world will fail to make a missionary."(9) John's single-mindedness had been

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- (1) The Matabele Mission. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. November 7, 1860.
  - (2) Ibid. Journal, 90. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, October 11, 1863.
  - (3) Ibid. Note 1, p.178, following Letter 81. Livingstone to J.S. Moffat. Kongone, May 29, 1862.
  - (4) Ibid. Letter 58. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Nyati, November 6, 1860.
  - (5) MO 1/1/1/5. February 17, 1861. Letter not addressed to anyone.
  - (6) MO 1/1/1/7. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati. February 13, 1864.
  - (7) MO 1/1/1/7. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, July 17, 1864.
  - (8) MO 1/1/6. Personal Papers. September 11, 1847 - January 1, 1919. Robert Moffat to J.S.Moffat. Kuruman, March 10 & May 27, 1857.
  - (9) Ibid.

distracted in Matabeleland by the urgent secularities of existence, and eroded by reality. His faith had been further tortured because he did not have those natural abilities, human or manual, of which his father spoke. Ill-health put further burdens on his spirit. In human terms he fell far short of one of the great prerequisites his father believed necessary for a successful missionary - compassion for perishing souls.(1) John proved to be too disinterested in the very aspects of Ndebele life which he needed to understand - not condemn out of hand. As much as Robert Moffat admired learning, he was "sometimes a little nervous about Collegians".(2) In his estimation the collegians who had come to southern Africa in the past had cut poor figures. Another of his prerequisites for a successful missionary was a love to God,(3) and while John's love might have been severely shaken it did not diminish from the days when he spoke of not caring how deeply he became involved in preparation for missionary work and for the life he believed Providence intended him.(4) His deep involvement contributed, however, to his feelings of failure because of its emotional nature. In the Ndebele context, however, he was not "best adapted"(5) to missionary work as he believed in 1857.

What was required among the heathen was "simple, earnest and affectionate address".(6) Simplicity Moffat did believe in.(7) His whole religious character was against profundity of thought, and there is little doubt of his earnestness. It is unlikely that he would have undergone the crisis of faith he did had he not been sincere and earnest. Moffat can be criticised, however, for his inability to become involved in Ndebele society as a necessity to understanding, if not affection. His failure to make a deliberate effort to take a grass roots interest in local history, legend, belief and custom, in essence to try and understand why the people were what they were, stemmed from his defect of human sympathy.(8) Ethnological details were submerged beneath a largely religious frame of mind, and with this heightened importance for only one aspect of life Moffat blinded himself to reality. So much emphasis on his religious role inevitably led to his becoming broodingly absorbed in the chances of success. In reacting with condemnation to their depraved and licentious ways,(9) he extinguished any chance secular interest might have had. This attitude told in his relations with Mzilikazi and top-ranking men of state. He saw them when he felt the need, but made no attempt to establish a regular relationship with any of them. At one stage he deliberately had nothing to do with them.(10) Disillusionment made him more impatient and intolerant, and from this came his feeling that the gospel was not the weapon of conversion. "Evangelism is more effective when adapted to the mentality and habits of the people..."(11) One of these habits was an expectation, or hope, on the part of some of the people that Moffat would mend their guns. But until he decided to do this,(12) after years of refusal, he was not prepared to adapt his evangelism to the circumstances that existed. For too long he believed in direct evangelism and nothing more. This involved telling the people "about Him" and showing "Him to them".(13) Because he

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- (1) MO 1/1/6. Personal Papers. Robert Moffat to J.S.Moffat.
  - (2) Ibid. (3) Ibid.
  - (4) MO 3/1/1. Correspondence of Robert Moffat, Jnr., 1827-62. J.S. Moffat to Robert Moffat. St. John's Wood, January 10, 1856.
  - (5) Ibid.
  - (6) Meinhof, C. The Soul of an African Language. International Review of Missions, January 1927.
  - (7) Moffat, R.U., op.cit., p.298.
  - (8) The Matabele Mission. Introd. p.xix.
  - (9) Ibid.
  - (10) Ibid. Letter 74. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati, Matabele country. January 14, 1862.
  - (11) Meinhof, C., op.cit., p.12.
  - (12) The Matabele Mission. Letter 98. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati, December 20, 1863.
  - (13) L.M.S. A critical Review of its Work Abroad. Report of the 1930 Survey Committee, p.10.

failed to distinguish between bribery and social custom he was apt to judge too heavily that any deflection from direct evangelism was involving the gospel in secular considerations. This is borne out by his refusal to even provide Mzilikazi with a welcoming gift when they arrived in 1859. His feelings were again the paramount ones, and these led to his forgetting or deliberately ignoring the fact that Mzilikazi considered a gift as a recognition of his position. In considering only his morality, Moffat ignored Mzilikazi's, and this attitude showed Moffat looking at the situation with a blinkered and biased mind. The 1930 Survey Committee reported that missionaries, by involving themselves in schemes of social and economic betterment(1) showed that they had "more than words to offer".(2) Undoubtedly if direct evangelism carried the day without any need for inducements or aids there would be little need for a missionary, in attempting to achieve a religious breakthrough, to do anything but confine himself to this method. "But preaching alone will not build up strong indigenous churches, and to build up such churches is an essential objective of missionary work... We cannot, therefore, agree with those who would limit evangelism to preaching etc., any more than we could agree with those who would leave it out - or give it a secondary place. At the same time, there is need for watchfulness to see that the work as a whole is kept in balance and that it is ruled by the main purpose for which missionary societies exist."(3) It must be recognised that the Moffats did attempt to interest the Ndebele in social and economic betterment(4) but the indifference of the people militated against the attempt. The missionaries also tried to get a rudimentary form of educational instruction going which was vetoed by the king. Balance, however, in terms of attitude, Moffat did not have. His varied moods are indicative of this. That inner quiet and confidence which is an unmatched anchor for faith was slowly loosened by the assault of daily circumstances. In becoming cynical about the Ndebele's chances of salvation, Moffat was being strangely realistic on two counts - it was a refuge for his tarnished spirit, and it also gave his feelings about the inevitability of conquest before Christianity a degree of backing which made the thought more palatable.

Return and Re-assessment: In December 1863, four months after their return to Inyati after a fifteen month absence in South Africa, Moffat decided to mend guns. This act of re-assessment is a significant one, but strangely he referred to it at the same time as talking about how easy it would be "for the Lord to reveal Himself to them - He could do it today - but where is our faith - He waits for us and we stand in His way."(5) Moffat said that he was not being impatient, but "when we think of the power of God in His Word and Spirit and that it is only our faith that is wanting how near the accomplishment seems..."(6) He had confessed by now to a too exalted vision of missionary work but still held out little hope for the success of the mission. As a result of his despair for the barren field that was Matabeleland, Moffat decided in July 1862 to abandon Inyati. "I need hardly remind you that I went to the Matabele in deference to your wishes, with the conviction that my doing so was necessary to prevent a breach of faith to Moselekatse. The object for which I went has been accomplished, and the missionaries appear to be tolerably well established in the Matabele country. I sincerely believe that we are all pretty much on an equal footing and that if I now left I should not be more missed than one of the others. You also know that we are doing absolutely nothing among the Matabele in the way of direct missionary work and that the subtraction of one from the number of missionaries there would not lessen, humanly speaking, the amount of influence that is brought to bear on the people."(7) His decision to abandon Inyati was not lightly made and the lengthy consideration given to the idea and to

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- (1) L.M.S. A Critical Review... op.cit., p.6. (2) Ibid.  
(3) Ibid., p.10.  
(4) The Matabele Mission. Letter 64. J.S.Moffat to R.Moffat, Snr. Inyati, January 23, 1861.  
(5) MO 1/1/1/7. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, December 20, 1863. (6) Ibid.  
(7) The Matabele Mission. Letter 84. J.S.Moffat to Robert Moffat, Snr. Litheyana, July 12, 1862.

the counter plan of going to the Kololo is indicative of the uncertainty that existed in his mind. Nearly a year later he was still wrestling with two conflicting forces within him. Emily wrote of the continuing "darkness as to our future and truly we can only shut our eyes and pray... As to where we go if I only feel it is the right way, the path of duty, I shall be satisfied."(1) In June 1862 Moffat and Mackenzie had nightly midnight chats(2) while travelling south about their Kololo plans. It was their intention to write to Sekeletu telling him that they would be happy to go to him in April 1863.(3) By August, the Kololo plan had taken on some definite form.(4) "My Father has given his unqualified assent, whilst my Mother says she had cherished other hopes but will not stand in the way..."(5) The new plan appealed to Emily for many reasons - "but now it will be very hard for me to tear myself away from Inyati".(6) In February 1862 Livingstone summed up his brother-in-law's dilemma when urging him not to go "unless you feel fully persuaded in your own mind that such is the path of duty..."(7) Consequently, as with his political years in Matabeleland, Moffat was drawn back by some strange force, a combination of unwillingness and duty, to a people he felt he was almost fated to serve. The fact, however, that nearly a year after definitely formulating Kololo plans he was still unsure of the rightness of his decision speaks of the crisis he was embroiled in.(8) It was not the collapse of the Kololo plan due to the disappearance of the tribe which created this dilemma of where to go. Sekeletu died in late 1863, whereas Moffat was still wrestling with his conscience in March 1863 when the project was still on. In April he had made the decision. "We have made up our minds ... that to start for Inyati as soon as possible is clearly the path of duty..."(9) He speaks of the urgent call of the interior, and by October they are shaking the hands of their brethren "with many mingled feelings".(10) Two months later Moffat exclaims, "What shortsighted mortals we are! My ideas of missionary work are very different from what they were; perhaps I have come down a peg!"(11)

Failure and Personal Suffering: In spite of this re-assessment, the Matabele scene appears no more hopeful to Moffat. He talks of the humdrum of Inyati life, the depressing effects of the climate, the lack of contact with the people, the unchanged state of missionary enterprise, frail hope and the feeling of self-condemnation which all these considerations helped foster in his mind.(12) Within two months of returning, because he felt it his duty to do so, he writes of the ultimate trial they had to contend with, "the withering effect that all this has on our spirits. It is very hard to keep up to our duty..."(13) With his decision to return to a mission he had long despaired for, and which he was not bound to serve, Moffat became inextricably and peculiarly involved with the Matabele. In his political years in the country (1887-93) this relationship was also manifest. He had by now begun to feel it was his duty to serve and suffer for a people doomed in the eyes of God. His religious remarks in December when he decided to mend guns are significant. He speaks of the power of God and chastises himself because he feels that his wanting faith is the only barrier to success. His role had become in his mind one of necessary, almost obligatory, suffering for the people and for his failure.

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- (1) MO 1/1/1/7. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin, Bloemfontein, March 1, 1863.
  - (2) MO 1/1/1/6. Emily Moffat to Aunt Charlotte, June 29, 1862.
  - (3) Ibid. July 13, 1862. Written from Sechele's village.
  - (4) Ibid. Letter from Mr. J. Moffat enclosed in letter from Emily to her father, dated August 5, 1862.
  - (5) MO 1/1/1/6. From Mr.J.Moffat, Kuruman, August 5, 1862.
  - (6) Ibid. Emily Moffat to Aunt Charlotte. Sunday morning, July 29, 1862. Letter written from Sechele's village.
  - (7) The Matabele Mission. Letter 76. D.Livingstone to J.S.Moffat. Zambesi, February 23, 1862.
  - (8) MO 1/1/1/7. Emily Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Bloemfontein, 1/3/1863.
  - (9) The Matabele Mission and MO 1/1/1/7. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin, April 13, 1863.
  - (10) Ibid. Journal, October 10, 1863.
  - (11) Ibid. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati. December 20, 1863.
  - (12) Ibid. Journal 90. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. October 11, 1863. Sunday.
  - (13) Ibid., October 11, 1863.



This pure, personal involvement with God over the Ndebele shows how deeply events and circumstances had affected him. He still held out little if any hope for the eventual salvation of the people, but this consideration, based on the reality of their existence, was no longer the contending power it had been. In accepting the reality as unchangeable he now, through feelings of personal failure, saw Inyati as a place of suffering for the love and blessing of God. This is Moffat, the heavily self-involved, almost martyr-like, suffering for a cause he knew to be hopeless. "It is perfectly astounding to look back and to think that we should ever have looked for the Divine Blessing upon our poor, erring, sin-defiled ways..."(1) Events had humbled his formerly superior approach, but they had heightened his self-pitying nature. Moffat regarded it "as one of the most blessed signs of our Lord's increasing favour towards us that Emily and I are so weighed down with a sense of our unworthy conduct..."(2) He had by now reached the stage whereby personal contrition and suffering were a way of salving his conscience for his feelings of failure. With his deep personal responsibility as an agent of God, he considered himself unworthy for the mission. The gospel had failed to pierce heathen hearts because he was lacking. This stage in his emotional scale was not out of character considering his brooding and tortured nature. There are two possible interpretations of this mood. One, the purely egoistical, and two, the genuine religious belief in the need for personal suffering as a way to salvation. If the latter is chosen there are again two interpretations - one that through his suffering he would expiate the failure of the mission and win personal reconciliation, or two, that by suffering he would be considered worthy enough to enable God's word to convert the Ndebele. Although I feel that the last of these interpretations is the fairest, because it includes both the Ndebele and Moffat, when one takes into account his almost unremitting pessimism about the prospects of the mission and that aspect of his character which was impatient for results, it is hard to believe entirely that Moffat had now, having reached a stage where he considered it his duty to stay at his post in spite of being almost totally disillusioned, been inspired to believe that all that was needed to achieve a religious breakthrough was deeper personal suffering. There is more than a shade of truth in the argument that Moffat was wallowing in contrition. His self-centredness, sensitivity and sombreness proved before this stage that he was apt to become too involved in his own feelings. Further, his belief in the power of God was based on his need to prove this power by achieving tangible results himself. His faith, depending on personal achievement as it did, was consequently seriously weakened under the harshness and sterility of Inyati life, and his resolution submerged under personal considerations.

In re-assessing, Moffat goes through two different changes in attitude. His gun decision shows a change of attitude, a more realistic one, in the context of Ndebele society. His religious re-assessment is strangely more idealistic. The decision to mend guns can be seen as an aid in his attempts to implant Christianity. In 1862 he said that there "is no means of gaining influence so potent in South Africa as gun-mending. A good gunsmith at once takes rank and can obtain what no one else can..."(3) He justifies the decision of 1863 by hoping that some day "these poor Matabele will understand why it is we do these things for them..."(4) His hopes were never to materialise. Moffat's life at Inyati simply confirms that Christianity had no place in Matabeleland while the state remained intact. From an early belief

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(1) MO 1/1/1/7. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati. December 20, 1863.

(2) Ibid.

(3) The Matabele Mission. Letter 74. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. January 14, 1862.

(4) Ibid. Letter 98. J.S.Moffat to J.S.Unwin. Inyati. December 20, 1863.

in the omnipotence of God and in his own ability to convert the Ndebele, backed by a steadfast refusal to use any other means, Moffat by 1865 had been forced to change his religious attitude and his social method. Neither won the victory the Christian Church hoped for.

Moffat began to get a glimmering of the immensity of the peaceful task when he said, "The more we learn of the language and of the social life of the Matabele, the more does our task grow in magnitude..."(1) In October 1864, Matabeleland to him is covered in gross darkness, their words "are but an idle tale, and we watch wearily for the dawn..."(2) The dawn of Christianity which his political work helped colour red.

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- (1) The Matabele Mission. Letter 102. J.S.Moffat to his mother, Mary Moffat. Inyati, August 4, 1864.
  - (2) Ibid. Letter 107. J.S.Moffat to Robert Moffat, Snr. Inyati, October 2, 1864.

## SOURCES

### A. ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS:

Almost without exception all the sources used in this paper derive from the National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury, which contains the Moffat Papers and other records pertaining to the first European settlement in Matabeleland. The Moffat Papers are filed under 6 major class headings. Class I, Correspondence, has, however, eight sections within it. These are the MO 1/1/1/1 to MO 1/1/1/8 files, which give a blow by blow account of the affairs of the mission. They cover the period April 6, 1858, to February 20, 1867. MO 1/1/2 and MO 1/1/3 contain correspondence with the London Missionary Society from 1862-1915 and 1858-1880 respectively.

### PRIVATE PAPERS CLASSIFIED UNDER HIST.MSS.

#### JOHN SMITH MOFFAT PAPERS

- MO 1/1 Correspondence.  
MO 1/1/1 Copies and extracts made by J.S.Unwin from the letters and journals of John and Emily Moffat.  
MO 1/1/1/1 April 16, 1858 - August 18. From Emily Moffat's papers.  
MO 1/1/1/2 August 27, 1858 - February 11, 1859.  
MO 1/1/1/3 February 11, 1859 - September 1.  
MO 1/1/1/4 September 30, 1859 - July 27, 1860.  
MO 1/1/1/5 July 27, 1860 - June 9, 1861.  
MO 1/1/1/6 June 9, 1861 - November 20, 1862.  
MO 1/1/1/7 December 4, 1862 - September 30, 1864.  
MO 1/1/1/8 February 27, 1865 - February 20, 1867.  
MO 1/1/2 Correspondence with the London Missionary Society: September 5 1862 - October 25, 1915.  
MO 1/1/3 Correspondence with the London Missionary Society 1858 - 1880. In quarto notebooks.  
MO 1/1/6 Personal Papers. September 11, 1847 - January 1, 1919.  
MO 1/3 Diaries.  
1. September 3, 1887 - May 26, 1892.  
2. (1) January 22, 1863 - December 27.  
(2) January 2, 1864 - March 24, 1865.  
(Copies of these two made by J.S.Unwin)  
MO 1/5. Newspaper Cuttings and Printed Extracts.  
1. Articles by J.S.Moffat, 1876-1913.  
4. Miscellaneous: 1858-1919.

#### ROBERT MOFFAT PAPERS

- MO 5/1/1 Correspondence. October 24 1808 - December 20, 1875. folios 838-3328. These cover the period December 30, 1828 to October 13, 1868 and include Moffat's dealings with Mzilikazi, the establishment of the mission and attitudes and advice following the establishment.

#### DAVID LIVINGSTONE PAPERS

- LI1/1 Correspondence and other Papers.  
LI 1/1/1 General. May 1852-December 1872.  
LI 1/2 Agreements. Duplicate copy of an indenture whereby Livingstone covenants to pay to J.S.Moffat, on the latter's marriage to Emily Unwin, an annuity of £150; February 13, 1858. This arrangement enabled Moffat to break with the London Missionary Society and go to Inyati as an independent agent.  
Twenty-two letters from Livingstone, mainly to J.S. Moffat printed in the Matabele Mission of John and Emily Moffat, ed. by J.P.R. Wallis.

LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY PAPERS

- LO 6/1                      Correspondence  
 LO 6/1/1                  Matabele Mission 1835-36, 1855, 1857-59. Vol.1.  
                               folios 1-98.  
 LO 6/1/2                  Matabele Mission 1860-62. Vol.2, folios 1-166.  
 LO 6/1/3                  Matabele Mission 1863-65, 1867-1870, Vol.3, folios 1-175.

ROBERT MOFFAT JNR. PAPERS

- MO 3/1/1.                  Correspondence.

B. EDITED DOCUMENTS.

Although the Matabele Mission of John and Emily Moffat is a published source of material included under Section D, I mention here that the originals of some letters from Emily Moffat to her father, Jonah Stephen Unwin, are not extant but are found copied by Unwin who transcribed his daughter's letters. These letters have been marked with an asterisk by J.P.R. Wallis, who edited the Matabele Mission volume.

C. UNPUBLISHED WORKS

Thomas, T.M. - Eleven Years in Central South Africa. Printed for family circulation.

D. PUBLISHED WORKS - BOOKS AND PERIODICALS.

These were used mainly as sources for specific quotes and references on particular aspects of the paper. The biography of Moffat by R.U.Moffat provided a full and valuable, if biased, background and character study. Other works more fully used were: The Matabele Mission of John and Emily Moffat, and the Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat, both edited by J.P.R.Wallis; Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath; and Hughes' Kin, Caste and Nation among the Rhodesian Ndebele.

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