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Isobel Esther Reid, *Myth and reality of the missionary family: Livingstonia Mission 1921 - 1928*. Publisher: Mzuni Press, 2024, 184 pages. ISBN # 978-99960-60-94-6.

Reviewed by: Bourouayah Mohamed, former Vice-Rector of Emir Abdelkader University, Constantine, Algeria.

Isobel Reid was a qualified nurse/midwife. She lived with her doctor husband and young family for 18 months on Ekwendeni CCPA Mission Station before transferring to Mzuzu, where Dr. Reid was in charge of St. John's Roman Catholic Mission Hospital for four further years [1]. This book is classified as 'travel literature', as it provides an accurate description of a church medical trip that contributed to providing both medical and humanitarian services to specific communities in Malawi suffering from critical situations and social deprivation.

The events of this book revolve around Malawi in general and Livingstonia Mission in particular during a given period (1921-1928). Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa, formerly known as Nyasaland. The country is called the "Warm Heart of Africa." It is classified, and has been for a long time, among the least developed countries in the world. The Malawi government faces challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, health care, and protecting the environment.

Livingstonia is an outstanding example of the work of the Scottish missionaries in Malawi, following in the tradition established in the 1870s. A particularly interesting place to visit in Livingstonia is the Livingstonia Mission, located high above Lake Malawi, in a fascinating and pretty town with a remarkable history. It provided opportunities for farming and a ready supply of timber. In his Foreword, David S. Bone gives an overview of the book and the Livingstonia Mission. Three useful facts about these three samples can be mentioned as follows:

First: David S. Bone acknowledges that the book offers a concise and informative account of the internal dynamics of the Livingstonia Mission. It also explains the background and personalities of Mamie and Jack Martin. Second: David S. Bone praises the tremendous work achieved by the young missionary couple Mamie and Jack Martin in the medical and church charitable fields, as they had a wonderful imprint that could be a model to be emulated. Third: David S. Bone argues that the

book makes a significant contribution to an understudied aspect of Scottish mission history, showing, as it does, how the prevailing attitudes and values in the home country did much to influence the lives of the people they sent to work.

The results of the critical analysis of the contents of this book that I reached have proven the rightness of many of the opinions mentioned by David S. Bone, far from the flattery that we discover in many critical studies. Indeed, books and studies related to medical and charitable works are mostly characterized by credibility, unlike literary and other works that do not rise to this level because they are controlled by factors of favoritism, bias, and fanaticism for one group against another.

Doctors or those who care for patients have a sincere feeling and a high sense of humanity because their choice of this profession stems from their love of serving others, especially patients who need special care. The language of the book seems very simple; this simplicity is required to attract a larger number of readers, among whom are illiterate people who do not understand many of the complex linguistic styles and prefer direct language.

Despite the simplicity of the book's language, its content carries deep connotations that indicate, in their entirety, the author's control over the subject and its various aspects, and her method of conveying the image as if it were real. The book comprises five chapters: The first chapter, entitled "The Missionary Myth," shows the high cooperation and harmony between spouses ("couple") to perform their duties in the best possible way. The writer highlights the important role played by the wife in such a medical and evangelistic mission. This chapter also shows the critical circumstances and challenges faced by those working in the field of medicine, especially in the shadow of wars such as the horrific events of World War I, which left behind a huge number of disabled and wounded people who need great and specific care.

The second chapter contains a historical background of the Martin family history and the history of Livingstonia Mission. The author succeeded in conveying images of the Martin family cooperation to perform a medical service motivated by religious and humanitarian reasons. This task was an inherited family work that was passed down from grandparents to fathers, sons, and grandchildren and was not by any means an individual or isolated work. The author concluded this part by noting that "the point to be noted here is that in their letters of the 1920s, Jack and Mamie Martin demonstrate their determination to be survivors, not sacrificial victims of the missionary experience" [2]. The author provides great importance to the history of Livingstonia Mission because it is considered the beating heart and backbone of every pastoral, ecclesiastical, or medical work. Here is the useful conclusion

reached by the author in his overview about the history of Livingstonia Mission: “The historical background of Livingstonia Mission in juxtaposition with that of the Martin couple suggests that the couple were to all outward appearances ideally suited to the task” [3].

The third chapter sheds light on the Livingstonia Mission from the Martins’ perspective. The author argues that this mission was “a conventional view of successful missionary activity. Our task, however, is to explore a parallel reality, the aspect of missionary life that is not usually revealed. Despite his evangelistic success, the Reverend Jack Martin was gradually physically and emotionally depleted - but he was apparently unable to confide this even to his fellow clergy” [4]. The fourth chapter speaks about Mamie Martin: Missionary Wife. This is the author’s witness: “Dr. Martián Turner’s wife was a mentor for Mamie Martin, as the older man was for her husband, and together they formed a congenial relationship” [5]. The fifth chapter deals with Missionary Women in the Livingstonia Scottish Presbyterian Mission Context. The author shows how male and female teachers collaborate and contribute to the missionary services. The images of solidarity and cooperation between men and women presented by the author are evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of missionary missions, especially in times of disasters and social crises like the one Malawi suffered from. The major strengths of the book are:

- The book's approach is consistent with its title, and the author was able to employ this approach in a wonderful way in his treatment of the issues he dealt with without any noticeable deficiencies, which is a positive element and evidence of the distinction of this book.
- The book is supported by maps and pictures of the ecclesiastical and educational sites covered by the mission, which provides the reader with a complete overview of the mission.
- There is an objective sequence of ideas as required by research, and this is one of the book’s strengths.
- The book combines fiction and history, and it presents information in a satisfying and harmonious manner.

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