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978-1-107-59449-4 - Terrot Reaveley Glover: A Biography
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Excerpt
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Chapter I

BRISTOL, 1869–1887

Early days : boyhood and youth : Home, Church, and School

Terrot Reaveley Glover was born on 23 July 1869, at 10 Belgrave Road, Cotham, Bristol. Towards the end of his life, he would sometimes say, ‘I have only two regrets: the first that Oxford refused to elect me to a scholarship before I went over to Cambridge; and the second that my father migrated from Scotland to England some months before I was born.’ Neither regret should be taken too seriously; there were disappointments and sorrows in his life that cut deeper. Though he would have liked to go to Oxford, he was proud of being a Cambridge man. Though he would have liked to be born in Scotland, he was proud of his birthplace and glad to be a Bristolian. But his regret focuses his delight in his Scottish ancestry. His names came to him from his father’s side. His paternal grandfather, Terrot Glover, belonged to Scotland and his paternal grandmother, Anne Reaveley, was a north-country woman. His mother hailed from Glasgow, and through her he could claim many Scottish relatives.

His father, Richard Glover, was the youngest of eight brothers. Born on 6 January 1837, Richard Glover was a year older than his wife, Anne Finlay, whose birthday fell on 6 February 1838. They were married in Glasgow on 27 March 1866. Early in 1869 they moved to Bristol, Richard Glover having accepted the call to become the first minister of the newly formed Baptist Church, which met in the chapel in Whiteladies Road, known as Tyndale. The young minister preached his first sermon in Tyndale on 11 April. He was to spend his whole long and honoured ministerial career as pastor of the same church. A few months after their settlement in Bristol, their first child and only son was born.¹ Two years later, on 10 October 1871, a daughter,

¹ Late on in life, reflecting on the date of his birth, and stimulated by listening to an address on shipbuilding, Glover described himself as ‘Clyde-built and Bristol-launched’.

Elizabeth, was born, to be followed in 1875 by a second daughter, Dorothy Finlay.

In physique and temperament, the boy's inheritance was plain to see. His younger sister once said she knew no two people more alike than her mother and her brother. Perhaps the resemblance was more in temperament than in physique, but one who knew them well said to Glover in 1888, 'Your mother looks out of your mouth', and he himself assumed that his high cheek-bones, which often suggested to observers the physiognomy of a Highlander or a Red Indian, were a link with his mother. In stature and build, in his forehead and in his expressive eyes, he took more after his father. If his mother looked out of his mouth, his father looked out of his eyes.¹

In one of his diaries, he suggests that he derived from his mother the uneasy temperament which included a tendency to be over-anxious, and a nervous impatient irritability. In so far as it was an inheritance, this uneasy temperament came to him from his mother's side, but it was accentuated in Glover by his ill-health and by the undue weight of responsibility which is often assumed by the first-born in a family. In his early days at the Bristol Grammar School, teasing might sometimes reduce him to tears, and this not because of any physical cowardice but because he possessed an almost feminine sensibility. Later on his outspoken children would warn him against becoming sentimental—'soupy' they called it—in sermons and addresses. For the most part such warnings were quite unnecessary. Few preachers were more manly than Glover. Yet there was in him this streak of emotional sensitiveness. With regard to irritability and over-anxiety, his elder sister Elizabeth once advised him to learn to play Patience, and more than once rallied him for crossing his bridges before he came to them. But the advice he did not take and his nervous apprehensiveness he could never shake off.

In another of his diaries Glover recalls that his mother 'did things honestly, not living wastefully and was strict in keeping to her father's religion'. He inherited or imbibed her Scottish thrift, her hatred of waste and her care in the use of money. If she had something of Martha's carefulness, she also exhibited

¹ A Scottish friend, Mrs McCrie, described him as 'a beautiful combination of parents'.

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Martha's grace of hospitality. It was said of her by her daughter that

she belonged to a generation not trained to speak, preside, take meetings or classes. But hospitality was her strong suit. Morning, noon and night, an ever open door and an ever spread table. Callers, visitors and friends, and sometimes those whom we children called 'strays'. People who were lonely, people without family, people in sorrow, people in perplexity, the strangers in a strange land, people who wanted a few weeks nursing or feeding up, people on the eve of marriage, sometimes the poor that are cast out,—she was always there and they were always welcome.

Her son shared both her pleasure in company, and her sympathies. If he shared her caution about the use of money, like her when he gave, he gave generously and unostentatiously.

A staunch loyalty to religious conviction was instilled into him by both his parents. Not only in certain physical features, but also in his intellectual ability, in his gifts of self-expression by speech and the written word, in his power of imagination and in his humour, above all in his unusual spiritual vitality, he took after his father. The direct influence of his father went deep, and remembrance and gratitude drove it deeper. He sketched the character and interests of his father in one of his Saturday articles in the *Daily News*. No name was mentioned, but all who knew Dr Richard Glover recognized the portrait and appreciated the truth and the charm of his son's tribute. I recall it here, as it is much the best way of indicating his debt to his father. If T. R. Glover had written *Father and Son* it would have been a very different book. The article was entitled 'A generation ago'; it should have been called 'My Father'.

In the first place he was good to look at—an apt illustration of Spenser's belief that 'soul is form and doth the body make'. For his hair was for forty years a gleaming white and there was plenty of it to the very end; his beard was white and well-trimmed; he had a good complexion, and great, brown, smiling eyes, capable of fun and sympathy, and telling of a nature, too, that you would not wish to trifle with, though you could readily be at home with it. The eyes told true. He was a man of wide range, nowhere a specialist, but at home in all sorts of things and with all sorts of people to a degree that you might not expect. He could never

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pass a tool-shop without a good look at it: he loved machinery; and he bought books as his means allowed. Books, not editions; for he had not the money, and, then, like Charles Lamb, he did not care very much about the externals of a book, so long as the author and the printer made reading possible. He would buy a book on Science or on History; the poets he had gathered in his youth, and in middle life he added Browning to them and read him till he knew him intimately.

In his old age it was more to History that he turned. Properly speaking, you would have expected him to read more Theology than he ever did, and to keep abreast more conscientiously of Philosophy; but he preferred perhaps what men did, and what they felt, to what others speculated about them. He just escaped being a mathematician; and, though he never was technically a scholar, he read in his college days a fair amount of Homer and St Augustine in the original. He liked people, too, as well as tools and books, and was at once a shrewd judge and a very gentle critic.

He was one of a great bunch of brothers, bred in a home where thrift and good temper and the sea were real factors. Most of them turned in one way or other to the sea, and he began his voyaging when a student. It was a long voyage, and he had plenty of leisure on the sailing ship of the fifties, and he used it in teaching sailors in the forecabin to read and in learning navigation himself. Ever afterwards St Paul's voyage appealed to him; many things drew him to St Paul, but the voyage was irresistible.

He was always fond of children, and made friends with them by cutting out of envelopes splendid railway trains and even more wonderful animals; and he could make up fascinating stories. Servants liked to wait on him, he was so gracious; and, if some shocking piece of domestic plumbing called him away from his sermons the cook was glad to leave the kitchen to hold the washer or to fetch the screw-driver, for he had the plumber's own knack of never having quite all the tools he wanted. His study was full of handy but terrible contrivances made of biscuit tins, clock springs, cocoa boxes, and the like. He loved singing. Hymns and Scottish psalms and Scottish songs never lost their appeal. Day by day for many years he had, in the old Scottish way, a psalm or (later on) a hymn at family prayers, as long as he had family enough to sing them. Eventually, when, as reported to an absent member, 'Your father sang a solo to the cook at prayers', the singing was reluctantly given up.

He held his opinions very strongly; he had what someone

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called a ‘gracious stubbornness’. The fact was that he had left the church of his parents, for the ministry of which he had started to prepare himself, because he found he could not sign its formularies. An elder brother had strayed before him, and trying to argue him in again, he argued himself out, and stayed out with his eyes open to what he was doing, never regretting the change, always rejoicing and believing in the freedom he had found, and always loyal both to the church he had left and the church he had joined.

He never went to Keswick or to any convention for the ‘second blessing’, or for holiness, or even for the deepening of the spiritual life; but he seemed to have a larger conception of God than many who frequent such gatherings. He confessed that he could not read other men’s sermons, and he did not; but he was frankly interested in Darwin, and it never seemed to occur to him that you could not be friends at once with Darwin and St John. As to Higher Criticism, the older sort looked askance at him, but again he was tranquil and reasonable. He conceded the critic’s central position; of course, you had the right to weigh evidence, to learn, and to know—or rather it was your duty; but you had also to make good your conclusions by sufficient argument and evidence; neither critic nor old school should carry it off with mere dogma. He saw plainly enough that the Love of God could not depend on the verbal inspiration of a supposed divine command to kill Canaanites; and if Darwin and Genesis did not altogether agree, well, both might be wrong here or there, and both might be right, Genesis as to God being the Author of all things and Darwin as to God’s procedure. Evolution no more implied a Godless universe than Creation.

You could not live near him, frequent his church, meet him on committee or even on the tram, without becoming more and more conscious that here was a man for whom God was real and Christ central. One man, who heard him preach for many years, said he always gravitated to the Love of God. He believed in God—pessimism, he said, was an orthodox form of unbelief. From his experience came his love of the great evangelical hymns, of St John, of St Paul; an enthusiasm for preaching, for helping others to preach, for foreign missions. He could not understand how anybody who knew the Gospel could do anything but try to make it available for everyone.

Unruffled courtesy, playfulness, kindness, a large interest in everything human, and at the centre a passion for Jesus Christ—he made it difficult to doubt the reality of the best things; he made it seem natural to believe in God.

It will be readily understood that the life of the home was interwoven with the life of the Church. The minister's son will be regular in attending public worship on Sundays. As he grows older, he will attend the week-night service also. He passes through the Sunday School, entering as a scholar and becoming a teacher. Family worship and public worship combine to place habit on the side of religion—to use a phrase of Gladstone's which Glover entered in one of his commonplace books. Writing to his eldest son, Gladstone said, 'You cannot depend upon your tastes and feelings toward Divine things to be uniform: lay hold upon an instrument which will carry you over their inequalities and keep you in the honest practice of your spiritual exercises, when but for this they would have been intermittent.' This instrument was put into Glover's hands as a boy. He never lost his hold on it and never ceased to be thankful for it.

The Church was the centre of a vigorous social life. Apart from bazaars which were always occasions of interest, not to say excitement for young people, there was a regular Christmas party for the children of the congregation, when a deacon 'with a long beard and a droll whimsical voice' would entertain them with a magic-lantern. From time to time there were soirées which brought the younger folk together. The Church was attracting a number of families—Robinsons, Sargents, Garaways, Jenkins and many others.

As a boy Terrot Reaveley seems to have been more interested in his girl contemporaries than in the boys in the church-circle. When he taught in the Sunday school, he was given a class of young girls to teach. He early felt the attraction of feminine society and early developed his ideas of what constituted excellence in women. His schoolboy diaries contain many references to his impressions of girls he liked. Thus on 15 January 1886 he finished Tennyson's *Maud*. 'It is very beautiful, and so is Maude—too.' He regrets that Tennyson left off the last letter of Maude's name. Ethel—too is very pretty. 'She has more mind than any girl I know.' There is, however, only qualified approval. 'Ethel is very fine, but should not be so vehement. I am that, but she, being a girl, should not. Still I admire her.' This youthful admirer of many of the girls he met was to grow into the man, who, as his friend Dil Calvin said, 'was not ready

to accept any woman, still less, women as a whole'. His commonplace books record rather more epigrams which are witty at the expense of women than sayings or stories appreciative of or sympathetic with them. His hasty generalizations about women provoked his friend J. C. Carlile into telling him that it was wonderfully condescending of him to have had a mother. But at least in his teens, admiration for youthful members of the opposite sex tended to outrun cautious discrimination. Ethel, whose intelligence he rated so high, said of him, 'he is a nice sort of boy, but too fond of girls', and when his first attempt to win a scholarship at Oxford failed, the father of one of his school-fellows rather unfairly accused him of not working, and told him that he could not go running after petticoats and get scholarships too!

The social influence of Tyndale was not, of course, confined to Glover's friendships with young people of his own age. The stream of visitors to the home brought contacts with interesting people, including as it did ministers, missionaries, lecturers and occasionally politicians. The boy early learned the attractions of serious well-informed conversation. He took full advantage of his contacts with his seniors.

His religious convictions owed everything to the combined influence of home and church. On 27 February 1883, when he was fourteen years old, he was baptized and joined the Church. The date is remembered with thankfulness in every succeeding diary. Baptism by immersion on one's responsible public confession of faith in Christ involves a personal commitment of some intensity.¹ The main idea of the sacrament for Glover would be the original meaning of the word, *sacramentum*, as the Roman soldier's oath of loyal obedience to his commander. That he took the step, conscious of his need of Christ, and of his debt to Him as his Saviour, is obvious, and he may well have been aware of the symbolic significance of baptism by immersion as uniting him with Christ in His death and resurrection. But the confirmation hymn, 'O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end', expressed the dominant note of the rite. He was irrevocably

¹ Cf. what Glover wrote of Tertullian: 'Like men who are baptized of their own motion and understanding he was greatly impressed by baptism' (*Conflict of Religions*, p. 328).

committed to Christ's cause, and he had made the personal commitment, which was to shape and control all his thought and action.

From the time of his baptism onwards, the claims and the romance of the missionary enterprise of the Christian Church appealed to him. This interest came to him in the first instance from his father. It was deepened by visits and addresses from missionaries. Bristol Baptists were closely associated with the development of the mission in the Congo, the starting of which in the 'eighties involved the sacrifice of many lives. An address by T. J. Comber stirred the schoolboy and, when J. H. Shindler was accepted for the Congo in March 1886, he wrote, 'Lucky fellow! I am glad for him!' A year later, both Shindler and Comber had fallen victims to the pestilential fevers endemic on the Congo. But Glover's enthusiasm for missions was not confined to a particular field. In 1886, he writes, 'I should like to be a missionary, I think, but where to?' He was attracted by the personality and outlook of Timothy Richard, one of the most original and vigorous of the minds devoted to evangelizing China. On 28 May 1886 he records, 'Mr Timothy Richard was at dinner. He left for London and I saw him off from Clifton Down. He is a splendid character. May I be like him.' Timothy Richard was to be an exponent of the new evangelism which presents the Gospel as preserving and fulfilling all that is best in the cultures of those to whom the message is addressed. Whether he could have influenced Glover in that way in 1886 is doubtful, but it is noteworthy that the boy's mind was already moving in that direction. On the same day, he records: 'Finished Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*: I admire Buddha', and 'I would like to be a missionary, I think.' Glover, however, was not destined for the mission-field, and when he spent a year abroad with the Y.M.C.A. during the first World War, he went to India, where the cultural background was less congenial to him than the Chinese tradition and atmosphere might have been.

The missionary interest so well sustained at Tyndale did not engender indifference to conditions nearer home. From very early on Tyndale was responsible for a mission church in a poorer part of the city and Glover took an active interest in the work there. Above and beyond this special activity, through the life

of its members Tyndale contributed to the life and well-being of the city. It is often wrongfully alleged that people who care for missions ignore and overlook the needy at home. The same ardent women workers ran the Dorcas Society which assisted institutions and individuals in Bristol, and the working party which furnished the wonderful annual missionary sale. Like Carrs Lane in Birmingham, Tyndale in Bristol contributed many fine men to the Magistrates' Bench and the City Council. Four men took the initiative in a move to celebrate Queen Victoria's second Jubilee by founding a convalescent home for the poor of Bristol. They were the minister of Tyndale and a leading deacon, Mr Edward Robinson, an elderly Quaker chocolate manufacturer, no doubt Joseph Storrs Fry, and a prominent brewer. Edward Robinson once told Glover, 'Your father taught me to give, and it's been a great blessing to me.' As a member of Tyndale, the youth could not be unaware of or indifferent to the claims of social service.

Through home and Church, Glover found his first and ultimate loyalty to Jesus Christ, and he learned something of the ways in which that loyalty works out in evangelism and social service. His fundamental Christian convictions were nurtured in the setting of orthodox Dissent, marked by the emphasis on individual responsibility characteristic of the Baptists. Glover grew up a convinced Dissenter and a Baptist. He was much impressed by a lecture on the Claims of the Free Churches, given by R. F. Horton at Highbury Congregational Church in November 1886. Horton indeed became one of his heroes and exemplars, for had he not, as a young Oxford don with a brilliant academic career before him, given it all up for the sake of the ministry among the Congregationalists? Glover took full notes of the lecture which outlined the debt of gratitude which England owes to non-episcopalians, and which ended by insisting that 'men are not ashamed of dissenters till dissenters are ashamed of themselves'. Nonconformity is an absurd name, according to Horton, since the Dissenter stands for great positive principles, such as progress in religion, the importance of individual choice and decision, simplicity in worship and organization, and a refusal to identify the truth of Christ with the outlook and standards of any visible church. These principles Glover never forgot and

never abandoned. The importance of this last principle was to be tested in his lifetime in connexion with the Baptist denomination to which he was deeply attached. While he was still in the Sixth Form at school, C. H. Spurgeon precipitated the 'Down-grade' controversy among the Baptists. Not without reason Spurgeon believed that many of his fellow-ministers were slipping from the standards which had hitherto been regarded as essential. They no longer believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible or in eternal punishment in the literal traditional sense. They were, he said, on the Down-grade. He would not make specific charges of heresy against individuals, and this the Council of the Baptist Union regarded as unsatisfactory. On 16 January 1888 Richard Glover went up to a special meeting of the Council to consider Spurgeon's resignation. When he returned two days later, his son learned that the resignation had been accepted. This unhappy controversy raised for Glover the question whether the traditional Calvinistic standards of the Particular Baptists can be identified with the truth of Christ, and even as a schoolboy he felt convinced that they could not. There is little doubt that Dr John Clifford was the arch-heretic whom Spurgeon would not name, and Clifford was becoming one of Glover's heroes. On 23 April 1888 he goes down to the Free Library to read Dr Clifford's article in the *Contemporary Review* on 'Baptist Theology'. On returning home, he writes, 'Think I am a Restorationist'. It is clear where his sympathies lay.

Next to home and church, his school was naturally the most important formative influence in his life. For reasons which are not very clear, his father decided to send him to the Bristol Grammar School rather than to Clifton College, to which most boys from his preparatory school went on as day-boys. The fees for day-boys at Clifton were not appreciably higher than those at the Grammar School and certainly Dr Glover could have afforded them. At the Grammar School, Glover was to be under a headmaster, R. L. Leighton, who was a layman and a strong Liberal in politics. However when Glover first went in 1881, Leighton had not yet been appointed and the school was not very flourishing. 'It had less than 300 boys, and the Governors were seriously crippled by the expense of building the new school premises in Tyndalls Park. The teaching in Classics and Mathe-