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T. R. Glover

REVIEW AND REMINISCENCE

THE choice of Dr. H. G. Wood to write the biography¹ of T. R. Glover was a happy one. We are duly grateful. His task was not easy. Though diaries, notes, correspondence and books supplied material in abundance, the sifting and arrangement of it in such a way as to present a well-balanced account of so full a life and of a personality which had so many facets, was a formidable undertaking. To say that he has done his work well is superfluous praise for such a writer. He had a fascinating subject and, though he frankly records his difficulties, he obviously enjoyed it. He speaks with affection, as well as discrimination, of an old friend, and throughout the reader is conscious of an *amici pietas* which gives the book a special attractiveness. Naturally its different parts will vary in interest according to the tastes of those who read it, but this reviewer did not find any page dull and, once embarked upon it, found it difficult to lay it down. Its appeal will be wide, and no intelligent Baptist should miss it, for Glover was a real Baptist and a devout Christian man whose memory will linger fragrant in the hearts of all who knew him, even of many who at times differed from him sharply and were repelled by his blunt outspokenness and his attitude to movements and views with which he had no sympathy and attacked at times with more force than politeness and occasionally with too little patience and understanding.

While we shall cherish our personal recollections of the man, his bigness, his charm, his erudition and his delicious humour, history will judge him by his writings. It is good that H. G. Wood should have given so much space to them. I only wish he could have incorporated a chronological bibliography. It would have been of considerable value for those whose appetite he will surely have whetted for a closer acquaintance with them. One reader at least laid the book down with a feeling that he must read them all over again. We can follow Wood with considerable assurance in his estimate, sometimes plain and sometimes implied, of their relative value. While, for a host of people, Glover's books on the Founder and early story of Christianity will probably bulk most largely, it should not be forgotten that he was primarily a student and teacher of ancient classical literature and history. His scholarship was massive. He never obtruded it when he spoke or preached,

¹ *T. R. Glover. A Biography*, by H. G. Wood. Cambridge University Press, 21s.

but you knew it was there, the immense background of all he thought and said. He loved those old Romans and Greeks, lived with them and was saturated with their ideas. I told him once that the freshness and delight of his specifically Christian writings was due to the fact that he was able to see Christianity and the early Church through pagan eyes. He admitted it. That is why they had a vogue with many people who do not normally read Christian books.

Nobody is better qualified than Wood to supply us with such an introduction to them. A classical scholar and theologian himself with an intimate knowledge of Cambridge and Glover, and brought up in the denomination to which the hero of his story was proud to belong, his guidance may be safely taken. He can get inside Glover's mind and skin.

"T.R." was an expert Latinist. The message he drafted as Public Orator of Cambridge to Oxford University on the occasion of the death of Lord Grey, its Chancellor, his delicious "cameo" speeches, with their light touch, in introducing the recipients of honorary degrees in the Senate House and, well worth a special mention, his translation of Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses*, reveal his skill in handling the language he loved so well for its clarity and euphony. Once, in our lecture hall at Cambridge,² soon after he became Orator, calling on him to speak I humorously suggested that, in view of the character of his audience, he should try to speak in English. That was enough for him. Addressing me as "Domine," he went off in Latin and it was remarked that he spoke much more rapidly than when he turned to our native tongue! It takes nothing from his outstanding accomplishments as a "Grecian" that Latin was his first and always greatest love.

It is not for me to pose as a critic of literature on the Classics, but I may venture the opinion that none of his books will live longer than *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century* and *The Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire*, one chapter of which, on "Jesus of Nazareth," was the starting-point of *The Jesus of History*. *The Ancient World*, as Wood truly observes, is "a little masterpiece" and, though it missed its first intention, is likely to remain as a permanent contribution to classical historical study, and so is his chapter on the Augustan Age in the *Cambridge Ancient History*. His beautiful *Virgil* and his *Herodotus* are a joy to read and re-read, while *From Pericles to Philip* is a pure delight to all who have any love for Ancient Greece.

In the realm of Christian beginnings and theology, he did not move with quite the same ease and mastery. His biographer has indicated certain limitations. A distinguished professor at West-

²The writer was minister at St. Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge (where Glover was a deacon) 1913-1925.

minster College one day blurted out to me that "Glover has no exegetical conscience." That was an over-statement, though it may be admitted that his interpretations were at times imaginative and rather forced. Yet no one can doubt that he brought new light to bear on the New Testament, the early Church and some of the first thinkers, like Paul, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine. Cyprian understandably made no appeal to him, but it is a pity he did not give more time to Athanasius and some others of the Nicene Fathers. His greatest contribution was that he made effectively real (these words are deliberate) for thousands the person and challenge of the Lord whom he humbly followed, served and adored. He never lost his sense of the wonder and the glory of the splendour that broke into the world with Christ and, by the dedication of his gifts, he communicated it to others as perhaps no other writer of this century has done.

One day before he went to India he handed me an old, shabby, bulky envelope containing some manuscripts and asked me if I could find time to read them and let him know frankly what I thought of them. I thought a great deal, for they were the first drafts of the lectures and addresses which, written and re-written again, became *The Jesus of History*. They fascinated me. He was pleased and we discussed them. His attitude to the book was not that of a writer concerned with its success but of a devotee eager to bring a worthy offering to the altar. It met a need, as its phenomenal circulation showed, and created a demand. Other books followed, not perhaps of equal value, like *Jesus in the Experience of Men*, *The Influence of Christ in the Ancient World* and *The World of the New Testament*. Through them all runs the same characteristic notes of understanding homage and realisation of the debt owed by men to the Saviour with whom, beyond all question, he had fallen in love. That fact comes out in little books like *Vocation* and *The Disciple*. His supreme purpose was to exalt his Lord. Most of his prayers in public began with the address "Lord Jesus"; when, as often, there was no address, they were directed to Christ rather than to God the Father. His thinking was Christo-centric. He told me of "the Keswick school" that "they don't know anything about the Old Testament but they've got the heart of the New." His Christology made him part company from the Friends because he thought theirs inadequate and vague, and also made the Oxford Group Movement suspect, though his aversion from that had other reasons. Christ meant God to him. I visited him once when he was suffering from a really serious bout of influenza. When I entered the room he looked at me and said, "Aubrey, aren't you afraid to visit people with influenza?" Catching his whimsical mood, I answered that I believed in a Providence who looked after little children and

big fools. He chuckled and I asked him what he was doing there in bed. He said—

"I've been thinking."

"That is surprising! Thinking about what?"

"I've been thinking about God, how big He is, what a job He's got on, this world, all those stars, the immensities of space, and here am I, a little man lying in a bed with influenza. What can He know or care about me?"

Then lifting himself on his pillows and shooting out a finger at me with intense earnestness: "Aubrey, I need a Mediator."

"Well, Glover, you have One."

"Yes, yes, thank God, I have One," and, quiet again, he fell back content. That was what Jesus Christ meant to Him. He resented any belittling of Christ. When he learned that I had been asked to speak at a welcome meeting to a new Unitarian minister in Cambridge, he told me I ought not to go and was obviously doubtful, since absence from home on that date in any case made acceptance of the invitation impossible, of my right even to send a courteous message of goodwill.

Selbie told him he was no theologian, though his *Paul of Tarsus* somewhat modified that view. But if there is any truth in *Pectus facit theologum*, he had good ground for his thinking. He was himself conscious of some *lacunæ* in his theological equipment. He rather distrusted philosophy, had little taste for it and told me his daughter Mary, who had just taken an Oxford "first" knew more about it than he ever would. Psychology, incidentally, seemed a complete delusion, which was strange in one who often showed an almost uncanny insight into the moods and aspirations of souls. The Old Testament came to have less and less value and in his last years he appeared to resent ministers taking texts or even lessons from it. To the more recent eschatological interpretations of the work and teaching of Christ he gave little if any serious attention. His interest was in the New Testament portrait of the Master and His influence on individuals and, through them, on history.

He was a thorough-going individualist. It came out in his religious, ecclesiastical and political views. It showed in his personal contacts. He respected highly those who could and did stand up for their own views—he expressed his own, sometimes, with little regard for the feelings of others, even though for so strong a man he seemed unusually sensitive himself to criticism and praise. He inevitably awakened antagonisms by the very force and bluntness of his utterance. This was grievous often because it diverted attention from what he was trying to say—less than justice was done in some quarters to the man and the truth for which he stood.

But if he aroused antipathies in others he had a full measure of his own. With his mistrust of organisation and the consequent limitation of freedom (the Greek mind there he cherished more than the Roman) he tended to dislike on principle officials, secretaries, superintendents and the like. F. J. Walkley resented his remarks on General Superintendents and said so. He was in T. R.'s black books until once he was persuaded, in an emergency, to entertain him for a week-end in his home. From that time they were a mutual admiration society all of their own. The same was true for a long time of J. C. Carlile, but, after he had enjoyed the latter's hospitality at Folkestone, he could not have enough of it, for close contact showed him that he was dealing with a really great man and their friendship was one of the most treasured things in his later life. His outbursts were, I believe, due largely to poor health. He had arthritis and suffered more than he admitted. His hatred of draughts came from the same cause. Though he did not complain of his pain, the very sight of an open window in church, in a railway compartment or even in a motor car, dismayed him. I was planning a series of sermons on Jesus Christ and human experiences. It was significant that he suggested two subjects, "Jesus Christ and Pain" and "Jesus Christ and Fact," both of them with some reference to Christian Science which never failed to rouse his wrath.

Here I would pay tribute to his friendship and unflinching helpfulness to his minister. He was not demonstrative but his encouragement was of immeasurable value. After a service he would now and again put his face round the corner of my vestry door and say: "I've heard you preach worse than that!" It was meant to be high praise. Or, if he had been really moved it would be: "Thank you. You got there!" as he put his hand on his chest. He was always ready to discuss books and subjects with me, and he stood by me manfully. It was not easy, I think, for either of us when the time came for me to leave Cambridge.

I ran up against his prejudices frequently. He hated sentimentality. I do myself, but at times he seemed to carry it to extremes. He hated what he called "sloppy" hymns. He told me *O Love that wilt not let me go* was "bilge." Soon after I went to St. Andrew's Street we sang one Sunday morning *Dear Lord and Father of mankind*. Afterwards he told me that if I announced it again he would walk out. That couldn't be allowed to pass and I pointed out vigorously that I was not only his minister but had the needs and desires of several hundreds of others to consider. He grunted and went away. Next day I received a letter full of affection and kindness which began with the words *Amantium irae*, and that was that. But his particular aversion was hymns about angels. He had no place for them.

Orthodox angelology and hagiology were an intrusion of Gnosticism into Christianity. He preached the sermon in Derby when we held our Council meetings there. As usual he was keyed-up before the service when someone put before him the list of hymns and an anthem. He never approved of anthems and this one had angels in the title. At once he exploded: "If you sing that I won't preach." He was told that a united choir had practised it. "Well, they can sing it, but I won't preach." I asked the secretary if they could manage something else. After a few grim minutes he came back to say, "Dr. Glover, they say they can sing *God so loved the World*; will that do?" I shall never forget his shout, "Of course it will do! That's the Gospel." He never preached better than that night. But it was significant. The Gospel was his business. Hymns must have "stuff in them" and real experience. Watts of course he loved, Newton, Montgomery, Charles Wesley and, rather grudgingly, Anna Waring. *I feel like singing all the day* met with his approval, though "not poetry, of course." After he had conducted a service at Swanwick David Cairns was sitting with us at lunch and said: "Aubrey, I thought that was a good service this morning." Catching his eye I said, "Yes, very good, but why that last hymn?" "What's that?" snapped Glover. "Oh," I replied, "just your Arminian tendency." Cairns' eyes were already twinkling. "Imagine," I went on, "a Baptist New Testament scholar singing:

Look and be saved by faith alone,
Be justified by grace.

Paul says just the reverse. I thought we were Calvinists and believed in justification by faith." It was pure teasing, for Wesley's is a glorious hymn, but Glover looked hard at me and was thoughtful. Then Cairns led us off into a discussion on the amount of Calvinism left in Baptist and Presbyterian preaching, and all was well.

Glover's range of reading and experience was surprisingly wide as some will remember who read his *Daily News* articles. He could write fascinatingly about Canada, India and Cambridge, and he had the knack of turning all his experiences to good account. One day he walked into my room at the Church House when I was about to have luncheon with an American Senator who had come over with an introduction. I forget his name but he was something big in the world of finance as well as politics. T. R. joined us. Our guest's almost comical astonishment when he went off into a dissertation on Grover Cleveland and bimetalism is something I can laugh about still. He was left almost gasping for breath for, compared with Glover, he clearly knew little about it.

Behind his flow of talk, natural and almost always beautiful, whether he spoke of his beloved Wordsworth, Lamb and Coleridge, or the classics, or the New Testament or of Christ Himself, there was almost always a tremendous intensity. His capacity for work Wood reveals. He could not easily relax. He had none of John Clifford's or Charles Brown's, facility of withdrawing himself and being at rest. His very worship was a whole-souled effort that cost him much. He disliked mysticism and that way of quietness, for all his contact with Rendel Harris and the Quakers, was not for him. He might have lived longer and been spared some of his moods of reaction and disappointment if he had learned more of their secret. Carlyle, himself a very abstemious man, humorously said to me once, when Glover had exasperated him, "If T. R. would only smoke a cigar and drink a glass of wine once a day, he might be a Christian!" This was, of course, deliberately facetious, for Glover had no truer friend and greater admirer, but it had meaning. Sometimes I used to think he did not realise who his best friends were. His sensitiveness too often took criticism as implying personal hostility. Nevertheless, his friends were legion and they were proud of him. He liked warmth and sunshine in a social as well as physical sense. Appreciation and praise drew him out. Some of his happiest days were spent at Swanwick where we all looked up to him. He was at his best. We shall not forget his boyish fun and his boisterous "limericks." But above all we shall remember his great-heartedness, the little unostentatious kindnesses for which many of our ministers thank God, and his essential humility.

Perhaps a word should be said about his filial piety. There was nobody like Richard Glover for him. It accounted for his attitude to Spurgeon which, as Wood points out, caused some of us distress. Carlyle, who knew the story from inside, was positive it was unjustified and that Spurgeon never thought to attack his father as he believed he had done. Nothing would persuade him, however, and his father was his great hero. Once he gleefully displayed to me a photograph he had found of Richard Glover before he had a beard. The likeness was startling. To see what he would say I remarked, "The facial resemblance is wonderful. Maybe one day you will be like him in other ways." At once he was serious: "Yes, perhaps, please God."

So faithful and frank a biography as Wood has given us puts us deeply in his debt. Has he given us the full measure of the man? Could anyone do so in less than three hundred pages—or more? His learning, his style, allusive and yet clear, his concreteness, his impatience with humbug, shoddy work and pretentiousness, his gusty enthusiasms, his moods of depression, his passionate valour for truth, and his loyalty to One Who for him was the

Truth, the Way and the Life—we saw them all. But the man himself, built physically, morally, spiritually on grand lines, the face, flashing eyes, the quick turn of the head, his stride as he walked to College from his home. Oh, to see them again, to listen to him talk and to feel nearer to God in listening, to hear him speaking to Christ “as a man speaketh with his friend.” We who knew and loved him know we shall never again find anyone quite like him, to open our eyes to the high mountains and vast horizons, to set us to seeking them. With simple gratitude one man thanks God here and now for him, and if, by God’s grace, it is given him on the far shore to meet again those whom he has loved, one of the first faces for which he will look will be that of Reavely Glover.

M. E. AUBREY.

“*The Faith that is in us*,” by John Huxtable. (Independent Press, 5s.)

Readers of Free Church periodicals are familiar with the able and attractive manner in which the minister of Palmers Green Congregational Church expounds his faith, and this little book is sure of a welcome. The contents formed originally a series of twelve articles in the *British Weekly*, setting forth the essentials of Christian belief. The subjects dealt with include “Faith,” “Jesus Christ,” “God,” “The Forgiveness of Sins,” “The Holy Spirit,” “Christian Behaviour,” etc. The author defines his intention as (i) to throw some light on problems which concern many a Christian wayfarer, and (ii) to encourage further reading. He certainly succeeds in the first of these objectives, and his book would form an admirable basis for a study group. (Ministers might find it useful in planning a series of sermons!). Inevitably, when a writer tries to cover so wide a field in such a narrow compass, the reader feels that some points are inadequately emphasised, but it is difficult to see how, within its limits, the treatment as a whole could have been improved. As for encouraging further reading, Mr. Huxtable would have increased the book’s value if he had given his Biblical references, and added a bibliography.

W. D. HUDSON.