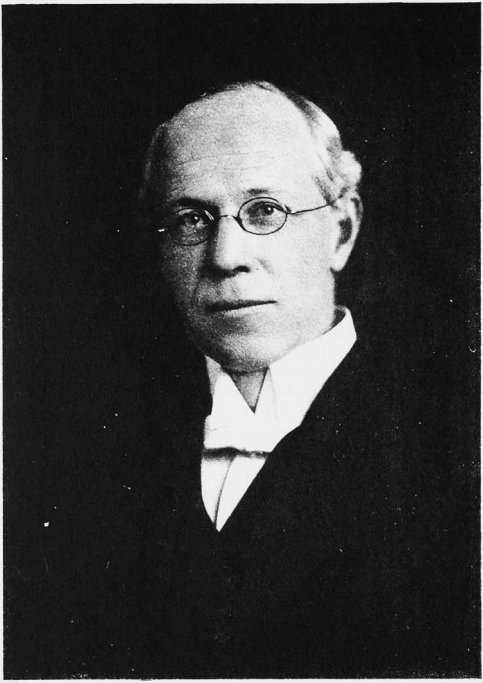

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FRANCIS ERNEST HUTCHINSON

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1871–1947

WHEN in 1943, two years before he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy, F. E. Hutchinson was granted leave to supplicate for an Oxford Doctorate of Letters it was on the evidence of his edition of the *Works of George Herbert*, the contribution of three chapters and some sections of bibliography to the *Cambridge History of Literature*, the Hulsean Lectures on *Christian Freedom*, and a number of reviews and articles representing original research. There were still to come the biographical study of Henry Vaughan; two volumes in an educational series, one on Milton and the other on Cranmer; and a monograph on the *Medieval Glass at All Souls College*. The perfecting of the two last was interrupted by his sudden death on the Sunday before Christmas, 21 December 1947. It is with his literary work that this short memoir must be mainly concerned, but the value of that work, its bulk, character, and quality, will be the more nicely estimated for being seen in the setting of his clerical career. He was never a pure scholar until the last four years of his life when in happy single-mindedness he wrote with unusual fluency. His vocation, as he saw it, was rather that of scholar-priest and he had a clear conception of the service he could give to the Church in this double capacity. The greater part of his life was given to pastoral and administrative work and to various forms of teaching. The cost in terms of time was heavy but he managed to turn its necessity to the subtler gains of mental discipline and experience which can be felt in all that he wrote.

Francis Ernest Hutchinson was born on 17 September 1871, the third son of the Rev. C. P. Hutchinson, Vicar of St. John's, Forton, Gosport. He traced descent proudly from the parliamentarian Colonel Hutchinson, and his daughter bore the name of the equally famous colonel's wife, Lucy. In 1885 he went as a scholar to Lancing and in 1890 came up to Trinity College, Oxford, and read Classical Moderations and Modern History. He travelled a little in Germany after going down and then taught for five years at Radley College, where he took orders, and for three years as Chaplain and House Tutor at the Royal Indian Engineering College, Cooper's Hill. In 1904 he married Julia

Margaret, daughter of Colonel G. A. Crawford. All his life he delighted in her beautiful musical gift. For the first eight years of their married life the Hutchinsons were in Cambridge where he served as Chaplain of King's College and for two years was a Magdalene College Lecturer. He became M.A. by Incorporation and in 1906 edited the *Cambridge Review*. The chapters included in the *Cambridge History of Literature* were composed at this time and show the resources of his reading and the finely poised judgement which distinguish all his criticism. He was responsible for two sections of a theological character: 'The English Pulpit from Fisher to Donne' (IV. 12) and the 'Growth of Liberal Theology' (XII.14), and for a fine survey of the 'Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century' (VII. 2). His interest in the art of preaching was more than historical and theoretic; he wrote with the authority of natural aptitude and carefully matured taste and could relish Latimer's power to hold a restive audience of 'a boy of eleven and idle courtiers' as well as the sober styles of Jewel, Hooker, Perkins, and Rainolds or the conviction which gave Donne his true eloquence. His imaginative understanding of 'metaphysical' poetry in all its variety was to manifest itself in more detailed work later: it developed but did not essentially change.

In 1912 a family living fell vacant and, moved by a sense that it was his duty to have some experience of the life of a parish priest, and possibly not uninfluenced by the example of Herbert, he went north to Leyland in Lancashire. Work in this industrial district was heavy going for him but he won the respect and affection of his parishioners largely, one may believe, because of a quality which is illustrated by an anecdote confided by his family. In 1913 there was a big factory fire and the vicar was among the first on the scene working with a will to remove great 5 cwt. barrels of naphtha. This is the more telling when one remembers what a tiny frame he had—he was a small man with a big voice and had coxed the Trinity Eight. He laboured on up in the north all through the First World War. The circumstances were more than physically hard and it would not be wrong to detect in the Hulsean Lectures which he delivered at Cambridge in 1918/1919, and published in 1921, the reason why he found himself cramped and thwarted. He chose for his subject 'Christian Freedom' and developed a reasoned plea for a relaxing of doctrinal rigidities which to him only served to exaggerate divisions within the body of Christian people. It is significant that the epigraph chosen for this course was taken from the Prayer Book of 1549 and is also to be found as the con-

cluding sentence to his study of Cranmer, his last book. 'Christ's Gospel . . . is a religion to serve God, not in bondage of the figure or shadow, but in the freedom of spirit.'

His case may be represented by part of his summing up:

> For the sake of continuity with the Christian past, those who feel most the pressure of the present will cherish every link of association with the past, that conscience will allow; for the sake of fellowship with living Christians, they will be patient of wide differences in belief and mode of worship. They will not ask their fellow-Christians to surrender any belief or practice which is precious to them. They do not suppose themselves to have all the truth, nor their own preferred way of worship to be the only way, or even the best way—except for them. 'Uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum.' They are for excluding none, they desire themselves not to be excluded for any defect of belief, so long as they still look to Christ for the inspiration of their lives. Is such unconditional fellowship in Christ dangerous and impracticable? Or is it, though venturesome, the true Christian aim which shall find its fulfilment so soon as the spirit of Christ possesses the hearts of all his followers?

In the charity that he preached he also schooled himself and lived it out in private patience often at the price of much tribulation of spirit. In this, the only theological book he ever wrote, he came into the open knowing that in many quarters it would meet with disapproval and, as he confided to a friend some twenty-five years later, in 1920 he voluntarily resigned his living and came to Oxford to work for the Extra-mural Delegacy. This meant a considerable sacrifice; he had now a son and a daughter to be educated. The reasons for his move, however, were not merely negative, he had been stirred about the cause of adult education by William Temple and had already been concerned with W.E.A. classes in Preston.

When Hutchinson was appointed Secretary one eminent member of the Committee remarked of his interview, 'Not imposing'; his colleague retorted, 'But not an impostor'. The first years at Oxford were not easy but he had a real gift for striking a balance between the claims of academic standards and the conditions for learning outside academic society proper. The hospitality of his family, especially during the summer schools, was given freely and served a cause that was dear to him, the attempt to do anything he could as a scholar and a liberal to build a bridge for like-minded people now isolated and depressed in post-war Europe. For the first six years of his

tenure of the Secretaryship he served as Chaplain of All Souls and his election to a Fellowship in 1934 gave him peculiar pleasure. He winced a little at the irony that this honour should coincide with another in the same year, the offer of a Canonry of Worcester Cathedral. It was a wrench to leave Oxford at this juncture but on the advice of Warden Adams and Archbishop Lang he made the choice and moved away. It proved a wise decision. In spite of his initial reluctance the nine years at Worcester (1934–43) were happy and rewarding. His scholarship, taste, and judgement were fully appreciated and he and his wife made many friends. War-time privations could not quench their hospitality and there was often music and good talk for small companies of people in their large and beautiful house. To the Hutchinsons at this time might be transferred the praise accorded to Sir Robert Sherley who founded the Chapel at Staunton Harold in 1653 'whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in the worst times and hoped them in the most calamitous'.

Canon Hutchinson was much in demand in ecclesiastical affairs and on judicial committees but in 1941 he completed the edition on which he had laboured for some thirteen years snatching scraps of time with ingenuity and heroic persistence. George Herbert wrote comparatively little as a poet but his editor took on the *Country Parson* as well as the *Temple* and gathered in Latin verses, orations, and epistles as well as the few English letters, the translation of Cornaro and notes on Valdesso and the collections of proverbs. The texts with their thorough commentary sum up to a volume of over 600 pages. For all his apparent limpidity Herbert is not easy to understand properly. No one has appreciated the nature and degree of his difficulty with more scrupulous good sense than Canon Hutchinson. A learned friend wrote: 'I like to see a job done for good and all.' To an even more expert reviewer the commentary seemed 'to come as near perfection as possible'. Such praise, and there was much of it, must have been deeply gratifying but he would have been the first to welcome the contribution of future scholars. He was fond of quoting a remark of George Tyrrell's: 'Had I been Moses I don't think I should have felt not entering the Land of Promise one bit, so long as I knew that Israel would do so one day.' Though Hutchinson had a touch of this magnanimity it is hard to see how what he has done for his author could be better done, and it is surely by this fine edition that both will be remembered. It is not known what first attracted

him to Herbert: the affinity went deep and after keeping company so long the interpretation gained a kind of intuitive surety. He responded as readily to Herbert's artistic conscience as to his spirituality. The nice conceits, the exquisite choice of allusion, whether to some recondite text or some daring immediacy, taxed his editorial acumen and satisfied his wit by their emergent rightness. He was stimulated both to ransack his own stores of reading and to make particular inquiries of a number of specialists: the results of these endeavours are found in the commentary which is at once so substantial and in form so economical. He admired the skill shown by the first printers of the *Temple* and matched it by his own meticulous care. Herbert has been well served in the earliest and latest editions.

The fine balance and unobtrusive penetration which are to be found in the Introduction to the Herbert appear again in *Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation*, 1947. Vaughan's poetry had been edited by Professor L. C. Martin and the need was for support of a more historical kind. Dr. Hutchinson saw his chance when he was invited to report on the elaborate collection of documents made by Miss Gwenllian Morgan and Miss Louise Guiney. It was he who brought order into this mass and wrote, with ample tribute to their devoted labours, the book they must have hoped would result. He was now working in retirement at Oxford but in spite of his age he spared no physical pains but bicycled all over the Vaughan country, hail, fine, or dry, until he had mastered its topographical detail and felt himself competent to relate the poems to a total setting which went further than the minutiae of family affairs and quarrels. His insight was welcomed by discerning critics who had by birth and upbringing chances of understanding the Welsh element in Vaughan's scene and idiom which the English critic had had to acquire.

Meanwhile for the first few years after leaving Worcester Dr. Hutchinson occupied himself with a smaller book but one where the metal is very finely tempered, his *Milton and the English Mind* for the Teach Yourself History Library edited by A. L. Rowse. This shows perfectly his way of hitting the centre, his knack of organizing complicated and controversial views into a fair and lucid statement, and an ability to expound hard doctrine without falsifying the issue. One who knew him well has seen in this little book the best expression of its author as 'a liberal with an informed respect for the past, one who had in him both scholar and crusader'.

His second contribution to the series, *Cranmer and the English*

Reformation, was perfected by the General Editor and published posthumously in 1951. It has the stamp of Canon Hutchinson's mind as it had been revealed years ago in the Cambridge period. His deep sympathy for Cranmer and his life-long gratitude for what his literary genius had done for the liturgy of the English Church did not disturb the critical detachment with which his tragic story is told or the fairness with which the course of the Reformation is described.

In 1949, two years after his death, a monograph on the *Medieval Glass at All Souls College*, a history and description based upon the notes of the late G. M. Rushforth, was brought out by Professor Jacob with the help of Dr. Christopher Woodforde. This represents Canon Hutchinson's antiquarian interests and should be grouped with the paper he read in 1942 on *The Medieval Effigies in the Cathedral Church of Worcester* and the transcription of *Monumental Inscriptions in the Chapel of All Souls College, Oxford*, prepared for publication in 1944 by Sir Edmund Craster.

It would be possible to gather together into a tidy volume a number of occasional writings: sermons, articles, and reviews. Of particular interest are the University sermon on *Pride, True and False*, preached at St. Mary's, 1920; and the sermon on *The Majesty of Law* at All Souls, 5 November 1944; three talks in the *Listener*, February 1934, on 'The Churches in National Life'; a lecture on 'The Poetry of the Bible' printed in the *Modern Churchman*, March 1944; an excellent critique of 'Sir Thomas More as a Translator of the Bible' in the *Review of English Studies*, January 1941; and in the same journal a number of learned reviews: of Margoliouth's edition of Marvell (January 1929); of various studies in 'Metaphysical' poetry by Elizabeth Holmes (April 1934); Mrs. Bennett and J. B. Leishman (October 1935); of Sisson's *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker* (April 1941); of Daiches's *King James' Version of the English Bible* (January 1942); and of the *Poems of Samuel Johnson* edited by D. Nichol Smith and E. L. McAdam (April 1942). It is noticeable how firmly based each small piece is, how rich in evidence of its author's wide and curious reading. He gave generously to each occasion and not only in print but in conversation and correspondence. He was remarkably encouraging to younger scholars and would find little ways of consulting them with a tact that was in itself a part of education and experience.

A reviewer remarked of the *Milton*, 'what we admire so much in Hutchinson's volume is the rare skill shown in the quotations,

from Milton's poetry and prose, woven into the fabric of interpretation and criticism'. This is something characteristic of all his work. He would quote extensively from a great variety of authors, sometimes perhaps almost to a fault as in the first few Hulsean Lectures which read like a *catena* of authorities. This habit does not argue timidity: it was rather a sign of his own awareness of debt. He knew what had shaped his mind; he was grateful and constant in his acknowledgement. Hooker with his 'reverence for truth wherever he found it' had meant much to him; and Herbert, it goes without saying. The Cambridge Platonists and principally Whichcote proved congenial. Wordsworth was never far off. He had been deeply moved by Donne's personal struggle and by his high tolerance based upon a conviction of God's mercies. He was fascinated by the delicate shadings of a fine writer's vocabulary yet he loved to repeat a remark attributed to St. Hilary that he had picked up from one of Bishop Gore's sermons: 'We are driven to strain our weak human language in the utterance of things beyond its scope, . . . to climb where we cannot reach, to speak what we cannot utter.' One of Jowett's *dicta* had obviously been formative to him: 'That is a maimed soul which loves goodness and has no love of truth, or which loves truth and has no love of goodness': by such a test his own character was beautifully whole.

As a scholar Dr. Hutchinson's distinguishing powers were to sift and to set in order. He managed to harmonize theological, historical, and literary disciplines which might easily have been at odds. Herbert's *Easter* lines involuntarily come to mind and will not be too much strained by cross-quotation:

> Or, since all music is but three parts vied,
> And multiplied,
> O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
> And make up our defects with his sweet art.

It has been truly said of him in one of his many minor avocations, this time as Chaplain of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and as member and for a time Chairman of its Council, that 'he served it as devotedly as though it had been his sole concern, and far more effectively than if he had had no other interests'.

In himself he will be remembered for his good will to reconcile. He was a man of reason and peace, never of compromise, and he strove all his days, in the activity of committees and in

deeper ways of contemplation, to play fair to ideas, causes, and persons. All he had of natural sweetness he had cultivated into a larger charity.

K. M. LEA

I am much indebted to Mrs. Hutchinson and to his son Mr. Michael Hutchinson and his wife for help in the preparation of this memoir.