

Louis F. Hartman, C.Ss.R. Papers

**Baltimore Province of the Redemptorists Archives
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The scope of the papers of Louis F. Hartman, C.Ss.R., a member of the Baltimore Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, encompasses letters, course notes, manuscripts, notebooks, articles, and news clippings dating from c. 1922 to 1970, the year of his death. The collection is especially important—however partial—for research on the history of the study and teaching of Semitics as well as the editing and production of the New American Bible. Of particular interest are the subject files, which contain numerous items pertaining to some of the most arcane questions of contemporary biblical theology. Father Hartman wrote numerous reviews—mostly unpublished—giving assessments on manuscripts for scholarly work for publishers in the United States and abroad, thereby influencing the shape of the literature of biblical studies at mid-century. His work in connection with the Catholic Biblical Association and the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate, the National Bible Week, and other professional projects, is an important chapter in the story of how the reader of the Bible encounters the text and comes to a deeper understanding of it as sacred scripture. The entirety of the collection is open to qualified researchers. Consultation of these materials will be at the discretion of the Province Archivist.

Biography:

By almost all accounts, Father Hartman was blessed with a diligence and zealous work ethic that routinely drove a perspicacious and fertile mind. He was also an ardent naturalist and on occasion could be found birding along the Hudson. He was a master of ancient languages, from biblical Hebrew to Akkadian. During World War II, he used those linguistic skills to monitor phone conversations in Semitic languages for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He catalogued all of the incunabula in the library at Esopus and saved a few rare items from the furnace when the librarians were inclined to toss out some of the more “unsightly” volumes. He also played the piccolo and could also appreciate a good cigar.

Father Louis Francis Hartman was born in the Bronx, New York, on January 17, 1901. The son of Louis and Josephine (Grennan) Hartman, he was baptized in the Redemptorist parish of Immaculate Conception in the Melrose section of the Bronx. Later, he was educated at the parish school where, he later wrote, “school days passed just the same as any other boy’s,” though he felt early impulses toward entering religious life. In his autobiography, drafted prior to his first profession in 1922, he indicated that an impression was made on him by the sudden commitment of his second oldest sister to become a Poor Clare. “At her departure, as I can now distinctly recall, my little mind wondered whether I too would have to leave home some day for God.” He credited a Christian Brother for fostering his early vocation toward becoming a Redemptorist. The young Hartman’s confessor was Fr. George Bienlein who encouraged him further to apply to St. Mary’s College in North East, PA, in the fall of 1915. Hartman professed August 2, 1922 at St. Mary’s College, Ilchester, Maryland, and made final vows September 2, 1925 at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, New York. He was ordained at the Mount June 19, 1927, by Patrick Cardinal Hayes.

Father Hartman made his second novitiate at Annapolis beginning in September 1928. In February 1929 he was assigned to Ilchester and began higher studies at Catholic University, but was there for only the

spring semester. In the summer of 1929, he was stationed in North East, Pennsylvania, to assist in local parishes, but in September he was transferred to the Schola Major in Rome. He remained in the Eternal City until July 1932 as a student at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. There he obtained a licentiate in sacred scripture and a licentiate in Ancient Near East Languages. From Rome he wrote to his Provincial, Father Andrew Kuhn, C.Ss.R., in June 1930, that he was the province's "sole representative at the Schola Major." He was about to take three-hour written examinations each in Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac and was preparing oral examinations in Aramaic, Biblical Archaeology, Inspiration, Hermeneutics, *Crítica Textus*, the Synoptic Question, and the History of New Testament Times. "This," he wrote, "ought to be enough for any man."

During his Roman studies he managed to make a trip to the Holy Land—the first of several—from July to October 1931. A confrere reported that when he came back to San Alfonso, Hartman was sporting "a fine Jewish beard" though it was on his own face. Hartman wrote again to Kuhn that he learned more in the four months away than he had in the previous two years of study. In the last ten days, he toured Egypt and visited Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor, Karnak, Assuan, and other places. Continuous correspondence with his Baltimore Province superiors indicated their approval of his pursuit of the coveted Doctorate in Sacred Scripture, but by late 1931 it seemed that, due to remodeling, no physical space could be found for Hartman at San Alfonso. Meanwhile he was finishing up his license paper or *seminarium* entitled "The Influence of the Liturgical Psalms on the Literary Style and Form of the Lyrical Portions of the Prophets." For this he earned the Biblicum's approbation as having graduated *cum laude* and as "the best scholar this year." With "no room at the inn" at San Alfonso he gladly returned to the United States to teach Old Testament at Mount St. Alphonsus. His stay was brief—from the summer of 1932 through September 1934. He returned to the Biblicum between 1934 and 1936, intending to obtain the doctorate, but instead he was degreed with another licentiate in Oriental Languages. During this period he apprehended Sumerian and Ugaritic. It eventually led to the preparation of a doctoral thesis in the Faculty of the Ancient Near East, developed from a cataloging project Hartman did for the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Between 1940 and 1941, he copied the Met's collection of about a hundred Cuneiform tablets, but he was finally unable to submit the project to the faculty because of the war. He never pursued the doctoral degree after that.

Hartman returned to teach at Mount St. Alphonsus in July 1936 and remained a professor there until August 1948, teaching Old Testament beginning in 1936 and then New Testament from 1939 to 1948. In September 1948 he assumed responsibilities to serve full time as Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation of the Bible. Bishop Edwin O'Hara was then chair of the Episcopal committee of the CCD and personally requested Hartman's presence. In the same year, Hartman was elected to become the executive secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association, a position he held for nearly two decades. With his work on the Confraternity edition and in his capacity as the CBA's liaison with the CCD and the Bishops' Committee of the CCD, Hartman was at the axis of sometimes competing constituencies. While keeping an eye on the financing of the project and the contractual obligations of the parties, he nevertheless managed to keep his attention squarely on the editorial requirements of the text that would eventually morph into the New American Bible. For as long as he was alive and working on the CCD edition, Hartman remained chairman of the editorial board for the Old Testament, joining his colleague Father Myles Bourke, who was his counterpart for the New Testament. Through their labors, sales from the New American Bible continue to earn royalties for the CCD and the CBA.

In 1950 he began to teach at the Catholic University of America in the Department of Semitics. He was promoted to associate professor in 1953 and full professor in 1962.

In the 1959-1960 academic year, he was an annual professor at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, as well as in Jordan. He first travelled the Atlantic on the Queen Elizabeth with Fr. Francis X. Murphy, C.Ss.R., who was on his way to Rome to begin teaching patristic moral theology at the Alphonsianum. Hartman made a stop in England to attend an international conference on the Old Testament. This Oxford meeting proved disappointing to Hartman, not merely for the lack of meaty papers, but also because he had no luck reaching C. S. Lewis, whose introduction had been arranged by a mutual friend (Oxford, it seemed, had no public telephones for Hartman to arrange a meeting). From London, where he stayed with the Redemptorists of Clapham, he flew to Brussels and then Zurich where friends brought him to Einsiedeln and Kriens. There, on the summit of its mountain, Hartman said he came back "with as sun burnt a face as if I had been at Jones Beach all day." From Zurich he travelled to Geneva for a plane to Beirut by way of Athens. For this year as annual professor, Hartman wrote seven long circular letters to friends and colleagues about this trip.

During his career as a scholar, his literary output ranged from scripture commentaries on Matthew, Mark, and Luke in a one-volume work published by the Catholic Biblical Association (1942) to more specialized studies on Cuneiform texts (see Hartman, "The Domestic Animals of Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 4:3 [1945]: 152-177 and [with Leo Oppenheim] "On Beer and Brewing Techniques in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Suppl. 10 [1950]: iii-55). Between 1956 and 1962 translated and adapted from the Dutch of A. van den Born the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, an immense work of over 1,600 pages. Between 1962 and 1966 he served as staff editor for scripture and adjunct fields for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, whose offices were on the campus of Catholic University. At the time of his death he had a number of book projects underway, including a commentary on the Book of Daniel for the Anchor Bible series that was eventually published posthumously through the efforts of his colleague, Fr. Alexander di Lella.

As a faculty member in the Department of Semitics at the Catholic University of America, Hartman was involved in several committees, including the Conference of Clerical and Religious Faculty Members, an ad hoc group on campus. In 1966, he served as treasurer. It attempted to bring parity to the salaries and pensions of faculty clergy just as other Catholic colleges in the nation had done. Dozens of priests subscribed. The University's Board of Trustees was approached and lobbied, though Father Hartman's files do not reveal the outcome. Likely this will never be known because the Board of Trustees minutes for Catholic University are sealed.

Hartman's work with the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) and his chairmanship of the editorial team that translated the Old Testament for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine's edition of the Bible placed him at the heart of a controversy over royalties. However, larger questions over the orthodoxy of the CBA's flagship journal, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (CBQ), and its editorial practices lay in the background and frequently caused tension between members of the CBA, the editors and writers for the journal, and some American bishops. During the 1950s the trend toward the use of the historical critical method among highly accredited Catholic biblical scholars suggested a rapprochement with Protestant scholars. These Catholic biblicists were often the subject of backlash, frequently by those outside the guild. The highly respected Hartman often found himself attempting to mediate these disputes. The CBA was entitled to royalties, as well as to editorial independence, though at least one bishop, Most Rev. Matthew Brady of Manchester in New Hampshire, could see that the links between the CBA and the CCD were damaging the relationship between the bishops' conference and the CCD. Brady argued that the CBA was not an approved body, even though its membership was largely responsible for the editorial work on the CCD edition of the Bible. In the end, Hartman was able to defend the scholarly

integrity of the CBA, as well as its journal, and fend off the bishops' conference as the work of the CCD Bible proceeded [see further Gerald P. Fogarty, *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A History of the Early Republic to Vatican II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 219-275 et passim]. Before he died, Father Hartman had completed most of the text of the CCD's Old Testament—the first time in history that an English translation was made from the original languages by Catholics.

In a letter to a sometime correspondent and classmate, Fr. Rudolph Reiss, March 31, 1969, Hartman confessed that two months prior he was having “dizzy spells” and went in for a checkup. His electrocardiogram revealed not only high blood pressure, but the signs of a mild heart attack. It did not deter him from work, however, and he plowed ahead on the decennial index for the *CBQ*. By June of that year he wrote to a colleague, David Noel Freedman, of continued “dizzy spells” that would result in ten to fifteen minutes of paralysis. He was given coumadin which he noted he had to take for the remainder of his life. While he explained the “cheerful thought” that if ever he was subject to a serious accident, he “would easily bleed to death,” the physicians' warnings were enough to keep him away from alcohol and cigars. Again, he kept up the pace. In September of 1969 he met with an international gathering of leaders of biblical associations in Vienna and in October he was back in Washington for National Bible Week, during which time he was a member of a delegation at the White House that induced President Richard Nixon to serve as honorary chairman. President Nixon, in turn, gave Father Hartman a personalized fountain pen.

As Executive Secretary of the CBA, Hartman was often called upon to provide the Catholic voice for such things as the National Bible Week, but he also lent his considerable wisdom on the Bible and ancient Near East to publishers seeking knowledgeable consultants. The stipends offered by these relatively short-term projects were regularly accepted by Hartman and turned over to his community's rectors to alleviate the financial burdens on the house. While serving as a manuscript reader or contributor to various encyclopedias, his own scholarship had to be set aside and several deadlines were left unmet. The correspondence files suggest that in the last few years of his life, Hartman was a man burdened by obligations.

Rather than forego any new projects, he assumed responsibility for a venture driven by the Second Vatican Council and spearheaded by Augustin Cardinal Bea and his assistant, Father Walter Abbott, SJ. Contact was made with Hartman, again in his capacity as Executive Secretary of the CBA, to join the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) in assembling information on the prospect of ecumenical biblical study. By May 1970 Hartman could be found in Rome at a meeting of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate—an outgrowth of the SPCU's efforts—for which he was elected vice-chairman of the Executive Committee. Designed to bring together into one unit the entire world's Catholic biblical societies, it aimed to work toward the production and reading of a common bible with Protestants. In July 1970, Bishop Charles P. Greco of the American bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine announced that the publication of the New American Bible would be released on September 30, the feast of St. Jerome, patron of scripture study. Bishop Greco was also proud to call attention to the awarding of the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal to Fr. Hartman on September 27. For Hartman, it would be a moment to relax after this long and sometimes embattled project.

Ever apostolic, Father Hartman left Washington by train on the morning of August 21, 1970, to administer viaticum to an elderly acquaintance in Mineola, New York. With the sacrament administered he turned around and departed for Washington. He mentioned to the rector at Holy Redeemer College, Fr. Charles Fehrenbach, he was fatigued and resolved to sleep in the next day. He had no appointments

to keep except for a noon Mass that was to be celebrated in the home of another friend. But when he did not arrive, a confrere went to his room to wake him. Father Hartman was found dead, August 22, 1970. He was waked at Holy Redeemer College on August 24 with three of his surviving sisters present—Josephine Frey of the Bronx, Mary Carbone of White Plains, New York, and Margaret Weisberger of Yonkers, New York. Another sister, a Poor Clare, Sr. Mary Bentivoglio, OSC, of Lowell, Massachusetts, could not attend. On August 25, his body was returned to New York and the obsequies were celebrated at Immaculate Conception in the Bronx. Present in the sanctuary were Archbishop John Whealan of Hartford, and Redemptorist Bishops McManus, Reilly and Harper. The (misdated) eulogy, a copy of which may be found in the Holy Redeemer College house chronicles, was delivered by Fr. John J. Keegan, C.Ss.R. All of the Washington, D.C., newspapers and *The New York Times* wrote obituaries of this scholar priest. These, too, may be found in the house chronicles. Father Hartman is interred in the Redemptorist cemetery at Mount St. Alphonsus, Esopus, New York.

For his labors in service to the church, Pope Paul VI nonetheless awarded Father Hartman the medal *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, though he is among a small group of individuals who received it post-mortem. Hartman's rector and the provincial's designate, Fr. Fehrenbach, accepted the posthumous honor on October 3, 1970.