

In Memoriam Lars Hartman (1930–2019)

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LIFE AND ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

On November 27, 2019, professor emeritus Lars Olov Hartman passed away. With him, Uppsala University, New Testament Studies, and scholars from various fields across the world have lost a cherished colleague, teacher, and friend whom they will remember as a paragon of sound criticism and intellectual stringency. He was born as the son of Olov and Ingrid (née Olsson) Hartman, a family with deep roots in the church. His father Olov was a Lutheran priest and a much-appreciated hymn writer. Also, Lars Hartman's paternal grandparents were lieutenant-colonels in the Salvation Army, a tradition which, as he recalled with fondness later in life, is renowned for laypersons' participation in

congregational music, including with brass instruments. His first educational training was as a church musician (*kantor*). At Uppsala University, Hartman completed undergraduate degrees in Classics (1953) and Theology (1957) before specialising in New Testament Studies (MA 1959; Teol. Lic. 1961; ThD 1966) and was, like his father, ordained as a priest in the Church of Sweden.

In 1948, when Lars Hartman was about to commence his final year of gymnasium, the family moved to Sigtuna, located between Stockholm and Uppsala, where his father became the director of the Sigtuna Foundation (*Sigtunastiftelsen*), a retreat centre known for nurturing the church's spiritual, cultural, and intellectual life. In 1974, when at the invitation of the Uppsala professor Harald Riesenfeld, the annual meeting of the Society of New Testament Studies took place in Sigtuna, it was Lars Hartman who arranged the logistical matters.

Hartman was guest professor at Harvard University (1968–1969) and was appointed in 1971 as Acting Professor of New Testament Studies at Uppsala University. He succeeded Harald Riesenfeld as the Chair of the New Testament research seminar in 1978. Hartman was on leave from the university faculty during the years prior to his retirement (1989–1995), serving as the head of the Church of Sweden's Research Council (*Svenska kyrkans forskningsenhet*), a newly founded department for theological research. In Lutheran congregations, moreover, he was sought after for spiritual advice and direction. As a trained musician, moreover, he led student choirs and played organ during church services. Above all, he was devoted to his wife Ulla and their four children.

Hartman's tenure at Uppsala University was a fruitful time for the New Testament research seminar. He supervised more than twenty candidates for the licentiate and doctoral degrees in Uppsala as well as in the other Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway. He was regarded as a straightforward and demanding supervisor but always well-meaning and encouraging. His *Doktorkinder* wrote dissertations on a variety of topics; as a consequence, he became conversant with a diversity of materials—not only within New Testament Studies

but also Hebrew Bible, Ancient Judaism, History of Religion, and Patristics. This was equally true of new methodological approaches, such as ancient rhetoric and text-linguistics, which he himself came to employ. In the research seminar, not only the numerous doctoral students but also the faculty's professor of history of religion, Jan Bergman, and, during one academic year, the German-American professor Hans Dieter Betz contributed to lively and constructive discussions.¹

Over the years, Hartman was keen on keeping track of what his former students were doing professionally both inside and outside the academic world. He offered advice and encouragement to numerous younger women scholars, including specialists in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament who were testing newer methodologies and feminist hermeneutics. Drawing on his wide knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin texts, he was also engaged in interdisciplinary discussions of the religions and philosophies of the ancient Mediterranean world. Both in seminars and in one-on-one conversations, and regardless whether a topic was in "his" area, he had an exceptional talent for criticizing a weak argument while, at the same time, expressing respect for its merits and potential. He thus became an important dialogue partner—even an indispensable informal tutor—for younger scholars struggling to interpret ancient texts through unconventional lenses.

SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

Among Hartman's many publications, a few words are in order about his doctoral thesis; study of 1 Enoch 1–5; commentary on Colossians;

¹ H. D. Betz spent a sabbatical as a visiting professor in Uppsala (1973–1974) and during that year wrote much of his celebrated Galatians commentary. At that time, it was a novel—and controversial—idea to propose that Paul's letters be studied in the light of ancient rhetoric. Long after that sabbatical, Betz remained grateful for the opportunity to present and sharpen his early work in conversation with colleagues in the Uppsala research seminar.

monograph on early Christian baptism; volumes of collected essays; and commentary on the Gospel of Mark. Written in the mid 1960s, his dissertation *Prophecy Interpreted* is a traditionally oriented historical-critical discussion of the eschatological discourse (Mark 13 par.) and parts of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.² Hartman asked, How is the end-time described with the help of Old Testament passages, which are brought together to make up a mosaic of scriptural quotations and allusions? As the New Testament authors saw it, the fact that they used “biblical” texts guaranteed the veracity of the anticipated eschatological drama(s). Hartman’s methodology reveals links to the so-called “Uppsala school” in exegesis and comparative religion, with its emphasis on ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman sources.

Under the influence of general trends in the international exegetical and hermeneutical arena, Hartman shifted during the 1970s from strictly historical-critical questions to a more linguistic and text-internal approach. Emblematic of that shift is his monograph on 1 Enoch 1–5.³ The title of the book, *Asking for a Meaning*, is telling: Hartman no longer looked for the “correct” meaning *within* the text but, rather, for one or more possible meanings that ancient *readers* may have found in the text.⁴ Additionally, in Hartman’s commentary on Colossians—which, regrettably, has never been translated—the historical-critical and text-internal approaches complement one another and are brought to bear upon the multifarious world of religious syncretism in the Lycus valley in Asia Minor.⁵

² *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse (Mark 13 par.)*, ConBNT 1 (Lund: Gleerup, 1966).

³ *Asking for a Meaning: A Study of 1 Enoch 1–5*, ConBNT 12 (Lund: Gleerup, 1979).

⁴ Additionally, the text examined is no longer a canonical one but one from the surrounding world, the relevance of which was emphasized by earlier representatives of the Uppsala faculty such as Geo Widengren, professor of comparative religion.

⁵ *Kolosserbrevet*, KNT 12 (Uppsala: EFS-förlaget, 1985; 2nd ed., Stockholm: Verbum, 2013).

In the early 1990s, while Hartman was leading the Church of Sweden's Research Council, the significance of baptism was much discussed in anticipation that, from the year 2000, the Church of Sweden would no longer be a "state" church but would need to re-evaluate its identity. Henceforth that Lutheran body would no longer define itself (if only in part) in relation to political matters but, rather, solely in the light of the Christian theological heritage. Given that ecclesial context, it is no coincidence that Hartman devoted himself to baptismal theology, as is witnessed by his monograph, a study which played a significant role in not only the Swedish Lutheran church but also international scholarly circles.⁶ Emblematic of Hartman's ecumenical orientation is the fact that the first (German) edition of that work appeared with a Catholic academic press.⁷

When considering the diverse research projects and competences represented in his research seminar, Hartman once remarked humbly, "It is not easy to try to be the best in the class"—but of course he was! His humble attitude is also evident in the preface to the first volume of his collected essays:

When the articles of this collection are presented as "text-theoretical studies," this may sound somewhat presumptuous, both to professional text theorists and to colleagues in exegesis who are more proficient in theory of literature, text-linguistics etc. than I am. Nevertheless[,] the papers here gathered reflect a growing conviction on their author's part that exegesis can gain a good deal from what is done in these fields.⁸

⁶ The German monograph, *Auf den Namen des Herrn Jesus: Die Taufe in den neutestamentlichen Schriften*, SBS 148 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1992) was followed by a Swedish version, *Till Herrens Jesu namn*, Tro & Tanke 4 (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd, 1993). Four years later, a revised and expanded English version appeared, *"Into the Name of the Lord Jesus": Baptism in the Early Church, Studies of the New Testament and Its World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997).

⁷ Additionally, the English version appeared with T&T Clark, a press with roots in the Scottish Reformed tradition.

⁸ Preface to *Text-Centered New Testament Studies: Text-Theoretical Essays on Early Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. David Hellholm, WUNT 102 (Tübingen:

The same modest attitude is apparent in the title he chose for the second volume of collected essays, *Approaching New Testament Texts and Contexts*,⁹ an attitude which was appreciated by many in the guild. For example, after a seminar session at an international conference, one prominent colleague remarked:

Lars Hartman—different from many other colleagues—does not come with definite interpretive statements, but much rather poses sharp and relevant questions to the texts as well as to his colleagues, a sober way to secure that the discussion would be carried forward in a fruitful manner.

Sadly, after Hartman's retirement in 1995, his scholarly work became hampered by the fact that he progressively became blind, which necessitated that two of his former students edit the aforementioned volumes of his collected essays. Hartman's commentary on the Gospel of Mark was among his final contributions—not only to scholars but also to “ordinary” readers of the Bible, whom he also wanted to serve.¹⁰ His work on Mark reflects how his theoretical approach developed over time: a central question that he poses is, What would a reader who receives Mark's Gospel find in the text? In biblical studies at that time, such a reader-oriented perspective was unusual, but for Hartman it represented a refinement of the methodology in his 1979 monograph (see above). The commentary builds on the scholarly consensus that Mark wrote for a church in the Western part of the Roman Empire, and that the readers/listeners were not Jews but Gentiles. Hartman therefore devotes particular attention to Greco-Roman sources, with which the

Mohr Siebeck, 1997), v. The fifteen studies in this volume are organised under the headings “Narrative Texts” and “Argumentative Texts.”

⁹ *Approaching New Testament Texts and Contexts: Collected Essays II*, ed. David Hellholm and Tord Fornberg, WUNT 311 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). The volume comprises twenty-five studies organised under the rubrics “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” “the Gospel of Mark,” “Baptism,” and “Hellenistic Contexts.”

¹⁰ *Markusevangeliet*, 2 vols., KNT 2A, 2B (Stockholm: EFS-förlaget, 2004–2005).

Markan audience would have been familiar, in order to illuminate what the audience likely understood when they encountered Mark's text.

The revised and updated English version of the commentary serves as a lasting witness to Hartman's importance in the field.¹¹ A leading scholar, Margaret M. Mitchell (University of Chicago), endorsed the commentary with the following words:

It is a unique privilege to read the Gospel of Mark with Prof Lars Hartman as a guide. His excellent commentary combines keen erudition in philological and historical matters with a cogent lively narrative-critical reading of the first gospel.¹²

As a final testament to his readers, and long after he had lost his eyesight and the ability to read and write, Hartman dictated orally a short book for non-specialists on select Markan topics.¹³

During those hard years, Hartman found both joy and consolation in visits from former students and other colleagues and, given his faltering eyesight, was eager to hear of new developments in the field and of happenings at recent conferences. Such meetings in the Hartmans' home were characterised by mutual giving and receiving between the emeritus professor and his guests. Last year, for example, he suggested that a colleague look into the relevance of Stoic philosophy for understanding New Testament conceptions of "repentance," and cited Greek philosophical terms which remained fresh in his mind. He also participated in the New Testament research seminar whenever his health allowed. In September 2019, his final appearance in an academic setting was at the dissertation defence of a student with whom he had met regularly and who, during their conversations, had read aloud both the Greek texts examined and much of the dissertation manuscript.

¹¹ *Mark for the Nations: A Text- and Reader-Oriented Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

¹² M. M. Mitchell, endorsement of *Mark for the Nations*; her "blurb" appears on the volume's dust jacket.

¹³ *Bara Markus: Text- och läsarorienterade studier av Markusevangeliet* [Mark Alone: Text- and Reader-Oriented Studies of the Gospel of Mark] (Kivst: Eravnå, 2018).

A sign of Hartman's accomplishments was his induction, in 1989, into the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (*Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien*).¹⁴ Additionally, the theological faculty of the University of Helsinki awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2011. A further indication of his stature in the field was the response to the invitation to contribute to a Festschrift for his sixty-fifth birthday: the volume comprises fifty-two essays and a total of 1070 pages.¹⁵ In the preface to that volume, the editors write:

In your teaching as well as in your scholarly work you have constantly emphasized the importance of the context for the interpretation of biblical texts; you have done so out of the conviction that the textual as well as the situational contexts are of utmost importance for the semantic interpretation as well as for the pragmatic-communicative function of biblical texts.¹⁶

Alluding to the Festschrift's title, Hans Dieter Betz remarked in a recent email:

Serving within all these "texts and contexts" in Sweden, Scandinavia and the rest of the world was Lars Hartman's vocation.... In discussions Lars was a lively partner who did not hesitate to offer his opinions, but he was not abrasive or trying to dominate.

Both Hartman's service to the profession and his encouragement and advice to many will be missed.

Requiescat in pace

¹⁴ Hartman also served on the board of the above-mentioned society and was a member of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (*Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab*), as well as other honorary academic societies.

¹⁵ *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman*, ed. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995).

¹⁶ Fornberg and Hellholm, Preface to *Texts and Contexts*.