

Michael Holmes
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-Benjamin Sternfield Baum, "A Biography based on the letters of James Otis Sargent Huntington."

Benjamin Baum's essay tells the life of James Otis Sargent Huntington, son of Frederick Dan Huntington and great-uncle to Dr. James Lincoln Huntington. Baum details Huntington's dearly childhood and his close relationship to his older brother George. From there Baum discusses Huntington's education at Harvard followed by his religious education at St. Andrew's. Readers should note Huntington's close relationship with his father during his education. Baum then talks about Huntington's move to New York City and the foundation of the Order of the Holy Cross under his leadership. Further correspondence with his father reveals their clashes over traditions in the Episcopalian Church. Baum discusses Huntington's move to Maryland and how the deaths of his father and brother deeply affected Huntington. The biography concludes with Huntington's later correspondence with James Lincoln Huntington about the preservation of Forty Acres and then his death.

-Andre Cotton, "Doctor James Huntington and the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House: A Work of Memory and Love."

For future graduate students doing work in the field of public history, I recommend reading this essay. Andre Cotton was a graduate student who wrote this paper back in 1999 for the UMass History Department. Cotton discusses in greater detail the early preservation and restoration efforts of Dr. James Huntington. Cotton reveals that Huntington had a lot of help in his efforts in saving the House from destruction. Cotton discusses the efforts of Harvard Professor Samuel Morrison and William Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Cotton includes the letters of correspondence between these men, illustrating their enthusiasm and unity behind Huntington's dream. Cotton also provides a brief family history of Forty Acres and how this history motivated Huntington to save the House to begin with. Again, this a good paper that graduate students can refer to in terms of the kind of research and other requirements that go into a thoughtful research project.

*Your loving son
James O. S. Huntington
Nov. 20, 1935*

A Biography
based on the letters of
James Otis Sargent Huntington
1854-1935

with Related Documents

Benjamin Sternfield Baum
December 2001

James Otis Sargent Huntington was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts on July 23, 1854. When his father, Frederic Dan Huntington, became the Unitarian preacher for Harvard College five years later, the family moved to Cambridge where the older brother by ten years, George Putnam Huntington, became James's closest confidant. "Your answer to my conundrum," wrote James to George when he was but ten years old, "was not the one in the book but it is if anything better".¹ James's "conundrum" remained a secret between the two boys. He excitedly told his father about the brotherly-duo "digging a path through the drift" of snow and taking tours of Boston to see the oldest houses in the country.²

Through James's early letters to his brother, we find an image of a rather ordinary boy in an upper class family. James talked about fencing lessons³, skating "almost every afternoon"⁴ with friends, and repeatedly pestered George for use of his botanical case.⁵ In one undated letter, he makes a rebus puzzle for his brother.⁶

Familial relations were central to James, as well as to the entire Huntington family. The "Forty Acres" estate in Hadley, Massachusetts, was the emotional home of the family and its summer retreat despite their many moves. Later in life, James would claim to "bring up Hadley to my mind sight" in an effort to dispel despondent moments.⁷ In addition to George, James would stay close with his older sister by six years, Arria Sargent Huntington, and his younger sisters, Ruth and Mary. With age came even more prolific letter-writing, as James kept track of

1 to George. April 5, 1864.

2 to Frederic. March 13, 1860.

3 to George. February 26, 1865.

4 to George. January 17 1867.

5 to George. February 26, 1865.

6 See Document #1.

7 to Frederic. August 4, 1876.

far-flung cousins and had a long correspondence with his mother, Hannah Dane Sargent Huntington.

Because of a crisis of faith, Frederic Huntington moved his family from Cambridge to Boston in 1860. The elder Huntington left Unitarianism to become an Episcopalian priest and, in 1869, he moved to Syracuse to become Bishop of the Diocese of Central New York.⁸ By this time, George had already been ordained an Episcopal priest in Malden, Massachusetts. James, about to begin his senior year of high school, finished his secondary education at his father's new Diocesan school in Manlius, New York. He told his brother that being the Bishop's son could be "extremely unpleasant and irksome",⁹ but any social troubles caused by his position failed to affect James's school work. By this time, his precociousness already shined. He wrote his brother in 1868 to ask for advice with his writing: "Please, if you write, tell me the mistakes in everything but handwriting as those would be too numerous to mention".¹⁰ Even when in far away Manlius, James read George's advice in his letters: "I have it over in my room at school and it is my rule to go over all the exercises you have prescribed before dinner every day".¹¹ James graduated from Manlius at the head of his class.¹²

But it was with his father that James was most intellectually connected. For Christmas 1869, Frederic gave James two books: The Prayer Book and a history of Greek and Roman antiquities.¹³ When his preparatory education ended after a subsequent year of schooling back in Roxbury, James started at Harvard College in 1871. He excitedly wrote to his father in 1874 about his intellectual enthusiasm. "Best of all," he said, "every course I have taken plays into the

8 Scudder, 51.

9 Adamson, 32 from a letter to George. October 15, 1869.

10 to George. August 30, 1868.

11 to George. December 18, 1869.

12 Adamson, 33.

hands of some other".¹⁴ He saw connections between his Greek Philosophy course and Ecclesiastical History class, as well as with a German course on Goethe. While at Harvard, he co-founded with his roommate Henry (Harry) Merwin the *Harvard Magenta* (now the *Crimson*), became its editor, and by his senior year was the president of the Episcopalian group on campus, the St. Paul Society.¹⁵ His sister Arria wrote brother George during James's senior year: "I see by the *Magenta* that James is President of the St. Paul Society this year. I should think from all the honors he receives that he must be highly esteemed by the class". But there was also an ominous note later in the letter. "He needs sympathy and a steady influence to keep him from extremes," said Arria because "the reverence and loyalty of the ultra-Ritualists attract him".¹⁶ Already, Arria perceived the extreme religious devotion of her brother.

From the beginning of his higher schooling, there was no indication that James would take any other path than the priesthood. He received the Matthews Scholarship for three hundred dollars "intended for Episcopalians looking towards the ministry".¹⁷ Yet his decision was not so prosaic. We know from a letter to his father during his senior year that James had been plagued by some issue concerning the priesthood:

You will never know, in the world, how much your many letters to me . . . have, by the help of the Holy Ghost, I believe, helped me in my life. I hope I am making this choice [to enter the ministry] for the right reasons -- the desire to fulfill my baptismal vows. It is very hard to tell whether vain notions do not form part of the motive, but I hope that the ideas of self-sacrifice I have now, however obtained at first, may be sanctified as I realize them in my life.¹⁸

His sister, Ruth Huntington Sessions, an early biographer of James, hypothesized that the source

13 to George. December 31, 1869.

14 to Frederic. October 9, 1874.

15 Adamson, 36.

16 Adamson, 36 from a letter between Arria and George. October 18, 1874.

17 Scudder, 62.

of conflict came from a book, *Modern Christianity, a Civilized Heathenism* by Henry William Pullen,¹⁹ which criticized the worldliness of priests at the expense of helping the poor. Perhaps James was strongly moved by this “plea for asceticism,”²⁰ for that would be the path he would decide to take. In his junior year at Harvard, he wrote his mother regarding Lent: “What a solemn thought it is that in the next few days people everywhere will be laying aside amusements, dress, extravagance and joining in the Fast which the whole Church ordains -- Greek, Roman, Anglican, American -- in this humiliation and abstinence we are united”.²¹ Perhaps Harvard forced him to look for unifying elements amongst the different branches of Christianity. We can only hypothesize about the source of James’s solemnity. Certainly, his father and brother were clear guides in the direction of the religious life, but they were no examples of ascetic virtue.

During his last months at Harvard, James worried about financially supporting himself. In a series of letters in 1874 and 1875, he apologetically requests money from Frederic with the repeated condition that he will soon be making his own money. “I think I have every chance to earn my own living” by teaching.²² He sold his suit for some extra money and told his father not to “mention this to mother as she seems to have an idea that I must have several new garments which I know I do not need”.²³ No doubt this concern for saving money emerged from real need. Yet James’s disagreement with his mother over new clothing may reveal his budding sense of ascetism that differed so strongly from his family.

Still, more concrete money problems arose the following year when James and Harry Merwin traveled in Great Britain for the summer. “There is a painful confession for me to make .

18 to Frederic. 1874.

19 Scudder, 63.

20 Adamson, 43.

21 James Lincoln Huntington, p. 328.

22 to Frederic. 1874.

. . and [you] will not feel the same trust in me for some time”²⁴. Through “wretched carelessness” James had seriously overspent his budget and needed more money. “What a failure and botch I seem to have made of supporting myself,” he says. Clearly, despite the social importance of the Huntington family, Frederic was not particularly wealthy.

James’s time in Europe was not pleasant. He often described himself as homesick and miserable. “The trip is not just what I hoped for”.²⁵ Such complaints, interestingly, are never included in James’s letters to his mother. As would remain true for the duration of his life, James would never fail to honor his mother with letters of love, but would save for his intimate problems with his father. There was true honesty in the relationship between James and Frederic.

In an effort to make up for spending what money his father gave him, James planned on tutoring after his 1875 Harvard graduation in addition to attending divinity school. The plan called for James to enroll at St. Andrews’ Divinity School, a part of his father’s Diocese in Syracuse. In one letter, he again betrayed his desire for financial independence: “Do not obtain for me a position, no matter how tempting or lucrative, do not, I beg of you, obtain for me a position which rests on respect for you or desire to do you a service.” James promised to work hard. “What further element is necessary for honest work and respectful treatment?”²⁶

In the end, whether due to his own work or his father’s, James would attend St. Andrews. In just two years, he finished school and took on extensive duties at the Cavalry Mission on the outskirts of Syracuse. By 1880, he was elevated to the priesthood. In that capacity, a letter came to the Frederic explaining why James would not be able to join the family for a holiday in

23 Ibid.

24 to Frederic. August 4, 1876.

25 Ibid.

Hadley. That letter, postmarked from the Onondaga County Penitentiary, explained that James needed to help several young parishioners in trouble with the law.²⁷ It also expresses his need for independence from his family. For twenty-six years James had lived with, worked with, and been financially dependent on his father. Yet even apart, the two men would remain close.

James's first exposure to others who felt similarly about priestly asceticism in the Episcopal movement was in November 1880. At the Knox Little Retreat in Philadelphia, he met Robert Dod, who became his partner in meditation and prayer at the Retreat. James wrote excitedly to his father and to his brother afterward that he wished "you could have been with me at the Retreat".²⁸ By early 1881, the young priest decided to leave the seat of his father's Bishopric and move to New York City with Dod and his friend James Cameron. The three dressed in traditional monastic clothing: "a black cassock -- a rope for a belt".²⁹ Together, they joined forces with the Holy Cross Clergy House and dedicated their energies to helping the poor. They moved about in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in those early years, alongside the poorest immigrants of New York City and within the same tenement buildings. Bishop Henry Potter, the leading Episcopal cleric in New York and a strong advocate of social Christianity, allowed them to run the Holy Cross chapel, to teach religious school, and to aid the residents of the impoverished neighborhood in any way they could. Synthesizing James's sense of religious austerity and devotion to public service, the three men became the Order of the Holy Cross.

In 1883, James wrote his father to encourage him and others to support the Order. He claimed that any donor could be sure that they served the community in a number of ways:

1. The needs of the people in our district -- their poverty, immorality, foreign

26 to Frederic. February 6, 1875

27 See Document #2

28 to George. November 23, 1880.

29 James Lincoln Huntington, 330.

nationality . . . numbers, and almost utter want of anything to raise their minds above merely bodily necessities and pleasures.

2. Our knowledge of the people. We do understand them; we live among them; we are in and out of their houses; we know how to meet them, to reach them; we can make them trust us and feel at home with us.

3. The certainty of our continuing in the work and its going on on the same lines which have been tested and proved successful . . .

4. The certainty of the continued assistance of the community . . .

5. The fact that whoever aids in the building up of the Order and so, as we humbly trust, conferring a benefit on the Church at large . . .³⁰

Frederic Huntington seemed to need little convincing. As early as 1881, he had already donated money for the chapel carpeting and promoted the Order through a sermon in Syracuse. "Of course I should not feel right to receive any personal gifts now,"³¹ James insisted. But this was, as James knew, an impossibility. Throughout his years in New York, Frederic supported him. Letter after letter profusely thanked the elder Huntington for his "many, many kind, wise acts".³² Each letter, no matter how personal in nature, was always signed "James O.S. Huntington, O.H.C.". Work, life, and family had become one enterprise for the young priest: the Order of the the Holy Cross.

By early 1884, James Cameron had left the Order and Robert Dod fell ill. Dod's sickness incapacitated him as the leader of the Holy Cross. As James explained in a letter to his father, by March Dod had decided to leave the Order permanently.³³ Left as the sole member of an organization for which he cared so deeply, James committed himself more fully. On November 25, 1884, he formally took the monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. The service

³⁰ to Frederic. September 5, 1883.

³¹ to Frederic. December 15, 1881.

³² to Frederic. June 7, 1882.

³³ See Document #5.

was presided over by his father as well as Bishop Potter: "We have studied simplicity in the Service and there will be nothing I think that everyone who comes will not expect and not so much as some will look for".³⁴ James's concern for the content of the service was warranted. While he gives few clues as to the public reaction to his monasticism, November 25, 1884 was the founding date of not just the Order of the Holy Cross, but of the first Episcopalian Religious Order. Bishops Huntington and Potter were a more accepting breed of Episcopalians, willing to allow James's deviant religious practices. Just as Arria had predicted so many years earlier, the youngest son Huntington was strongly attracted to ritual asceticism. In many ways, James practiced a variant of Episcopalianism more similar to Roman Catholicism. While moderately accepting of this practice, Frederic would continually clash with James over certain key religious points in the letters that flashed between the two. "As close as Frederic Dan Huntington and James had always been, and always would be, they never saw eye to eye on Ritualism".³⁵ Heavily intellectual, the religious letters, dated from 1880 through Frederic's death in 1904, are filled with Biblical quotations. Justifying his choice to work in the tenements of New York as a religious role, James quoted the Greek text of I Corinthians, 7:34: "ει ολον το σωμα οπηαλριοσ".³⁶ "It is only to the eyes that the body is one whole," but there are many different parts. In particular, the conflict between father and son focused around the Mass. In a series of letters in May and June 1893, Frederic expressed his anger over an article James wrote in the *Churchman* "concerning the presence of God during the Communion"³⁷. While the content of James's opinion may be lost, he no doubt argued for some, if limited, role of God during the

34 to Frederic. November 18, 1884.

35 Adamson, 54.

36 to Frederic. February 17, 1882.

37 to George. May 19, 1893.

Eucharist. His mother, too, was not so supportive of James's lifestyle. "Her feeling in regard to me rather indicates a tendency to that depression which, at times, has given her so much suffering," he confided in his brother George.³⁸ Thus, he sent her a letter strongly reminding her of his love.³⁹

With his brother George, the debate continued not just about religious practice, but about James's social commitments, and with good reason.⁴⁰ In 1885, James wrote his father about his life's direction:

I feel that I am passing through a change, not I trust of the purpose of my life, but of the way that purpose is to be accomplished.⁴¹

He refers to his expanded social agenda. By the late 1880s, James became more of a social revolutionary than a mere charity-giver. In an essay he wrote for the *Land and Labor Library*, he demands that society "strive for the destruction of the tenement house system":

They are jumbled together in utter disorder, Prussians, Bohemians, Swiss, Scotch, Chinese, Halims, Turks, Jews and Christians, black and white; a restless seething mass of human beings, unable to talk together, able only, under some overmastering passion, to act together . . . This is not a matter for sentiment or pious condolence, but for justice.⁴²

In that spirit, James joined Henry George's campaign for mayor of New York in 1886. After reading George's *Progress and Poverty* that same year, he became committed to the idea of the "Single Tax" -- an idea meant to improve the fortunes of poor city-dwellers. The program would have eliminated all taxes except for a large increase on land taxes. The money generated from the tax would be so great as to support all the people of the world, and would eliminate poverty. James's sermons for the Holy Cross Clergy House chapel would often focus on issues of the

38 to Frederic. March 7, 1882.

39 See Document #4.

40 See Document #5.

41 to Frederic. December 16, 1885.

poor and the promotion of men like Henry George and organizations like the Knights of Labor.

James also traveled across the country in support of his causes. In 1890, this note appeared in a Chicago newspaper:

Chicago, Aug. 26th. A special from Streator, Ill. says a sensation is caused there by the appearance on the streets unheralded of Father J.O.S. Huntington of New York, a priest in the Order of the Holy Cross clad in striking and picturesque garb. He gained the confidence of the striking coal miners and being allowed to address them, he prevailed upon them to rescind the violent resolutions of a recent meeting and to consent to moderate measures. His appearance on the scene may put an entirely new face on the mining troubles there.⁴³

In the end, James successfully mediated a resolution of the conflict and was cheered by the strikers.

Between 1881 and 1890, James saw his work in New York as fulfilling the work of God. He claimed in one letter to his father that "all the organizations, choir, Sunday-school, guilds, etc. are the instruments for bringing the powers of the Kingdom to bear on the hearts of the people."⁴⁴ Yet through his work with the poor, his traveling for the benefit of labor, and his support for Henry George and the Single Tax, James found himself lost as to his true purpose. He wrote to his brother in 1889 in an attempt to justify his life of service, but betrayed the beginning of a brewing dissatisfaction.⁴⁵ In a later letter to his father, James confessed his despondence. While "it seemed hardly right to shut ourselves up and lead a practically cloistered life, waiting for someone to come," he still did not "feel satisfied with what I am doing these two months, that is [,] it does not seem to be aiming definitely enough at the one end for which GOD seems to have raised us up".⁴⁶ James finally made one of his more momentous decisions. In 1892, the Order

42 Tenement House Morality in "The Land and Labor Library" magazine. July 16, 1887.

43 James Lincoln Huntington, 330.

44 to Frederic. February 17, 1882.

45 See Document #7.

46 to Frederic. 1890.

moved to a donated Victorian mansion in rural Westminster, Maryland. As he explained later in life:

At the end of our first decade of life at the Mission, we still had only three members in the Order of the Holy Cross. There seemed to be no prospect that our number would increase unless we made a fresh beginning . . . So we withdrew to a rented house on Pleasant Ave., near 125th Street, and after a year or so there we moved to Westminster, Maryland, where a new era was to be inaugurated, and a new wealth of Divine blessing was to be poured out on us.⁴⁷

The new philosophy that spurred his decision also manifested itself in a withdrawal from actively working for the many causes he had once supported. On August 1, 1892, James delivered a lecture entitled "Philosophy and Morality" that touched the heart of his conflict:

The 'service of humanity' is set forward as a substitute for adherence to creeds and dogmas and formularies of devotion, or the development of ethical systems . . . When a fundamental social injustice has come to be known and recognized, any efforts toward correcting special evils that are not contributive to the movement against the underlying wrong tend to become nugatory and abortive . . . [thus,] I believe that morality must precede philanthropy.⁴⁸

Life in Westminster allowed James to fully devote himself to the Holy Cross and the monastic life.

The regimen in Westminster would occupy the rest of James's life.⁴⁹ Strenuous, the Rules of the Order emphasized meditation and prayer coupled with a Roman Catholic-like emphasis on ritual Communion. Apparently, James's decision to leave active service upset many of his friends and relatives. In a letter to his younger sister Ruth, he claims to be harassed to reenter that life. "I feel what helps me most is to keep my Rule more thoroughly"⁵⁰. But despite the criticism, the Order grew. Running Missions throughout the country, James had become well-known as a leader of the Episcopal Church. In the 1890s he would receive many

47 Scudder, 170.

48 "Philanthropy and Morality". Lecture at the School of Applied Ethics, Plymouth, Massachusetts. August 1, 1892.

49 See Document #8.

Despite the fundamental changes in the Order, these years would also be tumultuous times for James's family life. In 1904, both his brother George and his father died. Mother Hannah would live six more years until 1910. There is a conspicuous lack of mention of the deaths in James's letters. One can imagine, however, how devastating they were.⁵⁴ "My own father passed from this world twelve years ago . . . but the sense of loss is still with me," he wrote years later.⁵⁵ For fifty years James had never truly been without his father. Suddenly, thirty years of letter writing, sharing of confidences, and intellectual debate abruptly ended. From a purely historical standpoint, without father, brother, mother, or the communications with Arria, there is a huge gap in our access to James's personal feelings during the later years of his life.

Where James's communication necessarily ended with his parents and brother, it seemed to pick up with George's grandson, James Lincoln Huntington. In those letters, we discover that James became President of the Huntington Association and was responsible for family reunions and maintaining family history. When James Lincoln expressed interest in the Forty Acres estate in Hadley, the elder James excitedly wrote:

It is a great comfort to me that you . . . are feeling such a sense of appreciation of the 'old place.' It was, for those of us who knew it in our childhood, a rich store of memories and associations and we would . . . that the coming generation should inherit and add to them.⁵⁶

James Lincoln described his great uncle as "a most delightful companion" with a "fund of stories [that] was inexhaustible and his sense of humor most keen and broad".⁵⁷ James was eighty-one years old when he suddenly took ill. In July 1935, with his grand-nephew and other family at his

⁵⁴ See Documents #10 and #11.

⁵⁵ Scudder, 275.

⁵⁶ to JLH. February 1, 1922.

⁵⁷ James Lincoln Huntington, 332.

bedside in St. Luke's Hospital in New York, James Otis Sargent Huntington died.

The next day, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Mass was held for the hundreds to priests to honor James. The memorial service on December 8th of that year drew over one thousand admirers, and several New York newspapers. The New York Herald Tribune called James "a man of action and not a theorist." The Reverend William Manning commented on his "deep unfailing sympathy and his love for human souls, the humble, the forgotten, and the under-privileged".⁵⁸ The New York Times, quoting a professed member of the Order of the Holy Cross, Reverend Granville Williams, read:

For over fifty years Father Huntington, as a religious, dedicated to God under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, has lived with us . . . we shall not see his like again. But those who have known and loved him, rejoice that he has lived and that we have known him. For, after all, it is no small thing to have known a saint.

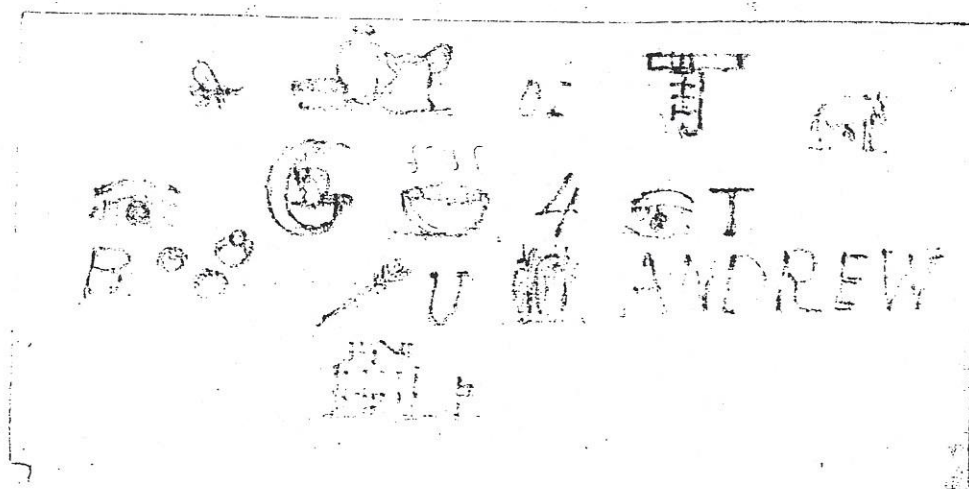
⁵⁸ *The Living Church*, July 20, 1935.

Documents

Letters of James Otis Sargent Huntington

Document #1:

A rebus puzzle made by the young James for his brother George. As of yet it is undeciphered.
"Beware of the ..."



Document #2:

James comments in this letter on his love for family but his greater love for God.

July 20, 1880
Onondaga Co. Penitentiary

Dear Father,

It does seem to me that GOD has been very good to us; we have a happy household and many comforts, above all else we are united together in our LORD, each one of us trying, however imperfectly, to follow in His footsteps and all holding the ONE Faith and abiding in true and pure branch of the Catholic Church. How different from many a family that is of our acquaintance! And in regard to my stay with you; how few souls can go on living at home as I do almost all the year. GOD might have sent me, I do not say into foreign lands, but into some part of our own country where my visits to you would have been rare and brief, He might have left me free to marry and so separated me from you in that way, but none of these things has He done. Does it not seem then that we ought to bear patiently this brief separation? After all GOD has done for us must we ask Him that I should leave His work here just when it must need me and just when He has given me the strength to do it? . . . I would be content to forgo my own comfort."

. . .

Your loving son,

James O. S. Huntington

Document #3:

Clearly, James's commitment to the Church was more than as career. In this letter to his father, he proudly tells of his accomplishments in bringing men closer to religion.

October 14, 1880

St. Mark's Mission [Companion Mission to Cavalry Mission]

Dear Father,

Whatever may be said of me as an extreme man it cannot, I think be said that I am either morbid, effeminate, or dreamy. I have too good an appetite for the first, I walk too much for the second, and the atmosphere of police courts and county houses is not favorable to the state of mind I described by the third. In the rightness and advantage of two things I strongly believe -- religious orders of men and women and confession. But I do not view either of these with a sickly sentimentalism or an enthusiasm that cannot see the evils to which they may so easily lead. On the contrary I could paint the bad consequences of both in as dark colors as would satisfy even the Am. Prot. Union, but at the same time I believe they were both appointed by our LORD Himself for the benefit of the souls of men is used in His Spirit with obedience and humility with a single eye to His Glory they must do good in accordance with His Promise. 'He that can receive it, let him receive it.' 'Whoso so ever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven.' I heard the confession of two old men at the County House lately; they had both been baptized and confirmed in England but had never received the Holy Communion. The Sisters had talked with them but could not bring them to it, they were too unworthy they said, they had not faith, they could not feel easy in their minds, I talked with them only to get the same answer. At last I pointed out to them the benefit of absolution to be won by a full and clear confession to GOD in the presence of His Minister. That was something tangible, they could do that, cost what it might, so they both came and told the story of their lives, one of them his white head bent and tears streaming from his eyes and then they both in perfect confidence and humility took the B. Sacrament. I saw them a month later, they did not need to tell, their faces showed the peace that had come to them. They both received when I was out last and they are living as reconciled children on the Father."

...

Your loving son,

James O. S. Huntington

Document #4:

Truly, James's letters to his mother were by-and-large "cold and dull". Often, they are descriptions of his more mundane activities -- lonely walks through the woods, having tea with friends. He seemed to have trouble maintaining the close relationship he had with his father through letters with his mother. The following letter expresses that trouble, but also assures her of his love.

Holy Cross Clergy House
March 3, 1882

...

Dear mother, I do not feel satisfied with my letters to you; they tell about outside things, but those which are really the least important in my life. Yet I cannot write of these quiet hours that I spend in my room here or going to and from to our frequent offices in the chapel, of that sense of the Presence of GOD which is becoming, I trust, more habitual to me, of those moments when I realize more and more deeply the Love of our dear LORD and my own great unworthiness, of the prayers that I say for you and the others and the loving thoughts that are going out towards you, all day long. I am less and less distracted by or taken up with affairs of this world, especially in the quiet season (Lent) I have time such as I have never had for GOD and for the dear ones he had given me. Please think of these things if at any time my letter should seem cold or dull.

...

Your loving son

James O.S. Huntington
Nov. O.H.C.

Document #5.

James explores his idea of synthesizing pieces of different Christian religions together to form a "catholic" church in this letter to his brother. At James's death, he would be accused of being "the cause of antagonism between the liberal and conservative branches of the Episcopal Church" because of his willingness to include other religious perspectives.

August 9, 1889

Dear George:-

...

Are not the various movements -- Single Tax - Socialism - Ritualism -- attempts, really and in essence, to establish the Kingdom of GOD? . . . The longer I live the clearer it is that with regard to the needs of this age and land (a) Protestantism and all such partial systems can't fit the bill, (b) Romanism as a machine not only fails but repels, (c) only a truly catholic Church can gather together in harmony the forces, now disorganized and virtually antagonistic, of human society.

Your loving brother,

James O.S. Huntington
Sup. O.H.C.

Document #6:

James cared deeply for his mentor Robert Dod, whose departure for the Order greatly affected him. Propelled to the leadership of the Holy Cross, James seeks advice and approval in this letter to his father.

Holy Cross Clergy House
330 East 13th Street
March 18, 1884

My dear Father:-

I feel as if a few words from you would be a great help to me just now and, though I hate to trouble you, I do wish that you should write to me. Fr. Dod has, quite suddenly at last, realized that he cannot go on, his own conviction is that he will never go on, with the work and life. He took off his habit this afternoon and went to Princeton, Thursday morning he will sail for Havana. Three or four more weeks hence he will be there and decide where to go for a year at least. As I say he does not expect even to come back here. The wrench was a very hard one to make but he has made it and, he feels sure that he is doing GOD's Will. It seems as if he could not be happy under such a disappointment to the hopes of years yet his [illegible] late is too deep and true that I think he will be happy and at peace. Of course he lays aside the life entirely. He has taken no vows and is free to marry. He wished you to know this but please do not say outside anything other further than that he has gone away for his health.

I must succeed him. It is a crushing weight. GOD help me to bear it. Explain all to mother.

Your loving son,

James O.S. Huntington
Nov. O.H.C.

Document #7:

*James argues with his brother about the relationship between religion and community service.
That debate would dominate James's entire religious life.*

Holy Cross Clergy House
Avenue C and Fourth Street,
New York, April 3 1889.

My dear George:-

...

I recognize the force of what you say about not letting men think they can have Heaven without holiness. But yet it seems to me also that the Church is the truly revolutionary agency because she does not rest content with leading men to change places with each other or modify their outward actions but goes down to the springs of character and creates a new ideal of life. Nor do I think that we are to be satisfied with leading merely with individuals or that "they generally will find their only comfort in looking beyond this world." Our LORD says surprisingly little about a future state, there are hardly half-a-dozen references to a future life in S. Luke's Gospel. Of course it is everywhere assumed. I did not quite mean that men are not going to pay any heed to Xian [Christian] preaching unless relief could be promoted than social evils. What I meant was that men demanded a Gospel which would have its word about relations between man and man as well as between man and GOD (though this is the foundation of the other) and that social questions must be made religious questions. Relief from personal suffering is of my subordinate concern.

... Love to all,

Your loving brother
James O.S. Huntington, O.H.C.

Document #8:

James wrote his mother on June 27, 1895 to give her his daily schedule at the house in Westminster, Maryland. As Superior of the Order, the schedule is of James's own devising. A similar schedule remained for the later Westminster years as well as at the home in West Park following 1904.

Daily Schedule:

5.00	Rise
5.30-5.45	[illegible]
5.45-6.45	Meditation -- in my own room
6.45-7	Morning Prayer
7-7.20	Preparation for the Holy Communion
7.20-8	Celebration of the Holy Communion and Thanksgiving
8-8.15	Breakfast
8.10-8.35	Care of room, making bed, etc.
9-9.15	[illegible] and a Litany
9.30-10	Bible reading . . .
10-12.00	Study on writing
12.00-12.15	Text
12.30-12.50	Dinner
1-1.20	Recreation together in Library
1.20-1.40	House's and the tercessions
1.40-1.50	Confessions
1.50-3	Free time
3-4.55	Reading or writing
4.55-5.25	Spiritual reading . . .
5.25-6	Vespers
6-6.20	Evening Prayer
6.20-6.40	Supper
6.40-7.20	Recreation together in Library
7.20-8.30	Free time
8.30-9	[illegible]
9-9.30	Laundry
10.	Lights out

Document #9:

A fascinating message to a prospective member of the Order, this letter explains James's sense of commitment to religion and sense of religious destiny.

Holy Cross, West Park, new York
November 6, 1915

My dear brother:

When I became Superior of our community two months ago, a large amount of correspondence was handed me by my predecessor in office. Among these letters was one from you, dated November 3rd, 1913. In it you make some enquiries about our Community, and imply that you have, at time at any rate, had some thought of making trial of the Religious Life.

I do not know what information was given you, or if you felt that your questions were satisfactorily answered. And, of course, I do not know what is your present state of mind.

But two things are very clear to me. One is that the needs of the Church in our time and land cry loudly for the increase of Religious Communities, for the devotion to God in the Religious Life of numbers of men, both laymen and priests. The other is that, if a man has received from God the high privilege of entering a Religious Community, he does himself a very great,--probably an irreparable,--injury, and injustice, if he lightly turns away from it.

Will you let me say a word to you in regard to both these points?

1. THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH. Consider what responsibility rests upon the Church in this country. It is nothing less than the conversion of America to the Catholic faith, the uniting of all the divided sections of the great nation in a common belief in God, and a common effort to carry out His Will, as He has made and is making it known. This, I say, is the responsibility of the Church in relation to the American nation, and to the whole world. You are a member of the Church. The responsibility rests on *You*. What are you going to do about it? What contribution have you to make? God may have made it plain to you that His plan for you is to serve Him, and to work for the Church and for the country. He may have called you yourself to be a lawyer, a doctor, a soldier, (sic), a merchant, a sailor, an engineer. If so, well and good. But if you have no such definite call as to preclude your entering a Religious Community, then is it not at least likely that it is in such an association that you can do the best for your Church and your country? In how many enterprises men are realizing the power and effectiveness of combination! Men join together to mine coal, to build railroads, to manufacture automobiles, to publish books, to slaughter their fellow-men.

Is it only work for God, work for souls, work for the highest interests of humanity, in time and eternity, which shall continue to be done by isolated individuals, in hap-hazard, hand-to-mouth ways, with no concerted action, no thought-out plans, no economy of effort, no leadership or statesmanlike action? For God's sake, let's get together!

2. THEN YOUR OWN NEEDS. You were created for union with God, to know Him, to love Him, to share His life now and forever. To fulfill that purpose, for which you exist, you must strive to be like God, as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. You must aim at perfection,

to be perfect like your Father which is in Heaven is perfect. That means hard work. Can you do it better alone, or with others to help you? When Our Lord was on earth, many people listened to Him and tried to do as He said. But to some His call was, "Follow Me." He chose some to be with Him, to live as He lived, to be strong against the world by sharing His poverty, joyful by having His friendship in a life of chastity, free by giving up their own wills in loving obedience to Him, ready to go anywhere and do anything at His bidding. Christ still calls some to "vow perfection" by promising to follow Him in poverty, chastity, and obedience. Is He not calling you? Is there any other way in which you can be sure of "acquiring perfection," of attaining to God and having Him as your portion forever? Of course it is a hard life, in some respects the very hardest. To get up before five o'clock every morning, to live on the rations given you with no choice as to your food, to pray, in chapel or in your cell, four times a day, to work under orders, to go where you are sent, to do as you are told whether you like it or not, to bear humiliation, to fast, to be ridiculed by the world, and to keep on at all this as old age arrives, and to die in harness at the end,--this is not an easy life. But is it a harder life than Jesus Christ lived? And isn't it true that those who live it wouldn't exchange it for anything the world can give, that it is they who keep their freshness and elasticity, who have brightness in their eyes, a smile on their lips, warmth in their hearts? Is it not they who see the fruits of their sacrifices in the salvation and sanctification of other souls?

At any rate, don't play fast and loose with a call to be an intimate friends of Jesus Christ. If you believe He wants you in the ranks of the Religious Life, make up your mind once for all, and come as soon as He opens the way. if not, do whatever else he has for you, and may He bless and help you to do it with all you might. We shall continue to have you in our prayers.

Faithfully in our B. Lord,

James O. S. Huntington
Superior O.H.C.

Document #10:

James wrote this short note to Frederic on his birthday sometime in the 1890s. As James Lincoln Huntington notes, while undated, the letter must have been sent before 1897 and after 1890. A testament to his love for family and father, the birthday card indicates how deeply James must have been affected by the death of his father in 1904.

My dear Father:

This ought to reach you in time for me to wish you many blessings on your birthday. More and more precious to me every year seem the relations of the family and the home, more and more do I realize that any knowledge I may have of God came to me first because I had a father and that you were that father. For this and for all else that has come to me through you I ask GOD's benediction on your birthday.

Your loving son,

J.O.S.H., O.H.C.

Document #11:

This letter is the last in the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Collection between son and mother before her death in 1910.

August 20, 1909

My own dear, dear Mother-

...

I think if you every hour, and fancy what you are doing. And I find that I cannot be too humbly thankful that I could have this last week, so often by your side.

Your loving son,

James O.S. Huntington
O.H.C.

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