
Introduction to This Issue

Honoring Walter F. Taylor Jr.: A *Festschrift*

Walter Frederick Taylor Jr. came to Trinity Lutheran Seminary in July of 1981 to serve a little more than thirty-five years as a professor of New Testament studies. He retired at the end of 2016, having impacted the lives of more than 2,000 students, most of whom he knew well and still remembers. I don't mean that he remembers students with the sort of photographic recall attributed to his mentor John Reumann; I mean that he remembers their gifts for ministry and, above all, that he remembers what he learned from them. Professor Taylor has always been proud to admit how much he learns from his students.

Taylor received his higher education at Midland Lutheran College (B.A., 1969), Yale University Divinity School (1969–1970), Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (M.Div., 1973), and Claremont Graduate University (Ph.D., 1981). In addition to his seminary professors Gerhard Krodel and John Reumann (and numerous students), important instructors include Hans Dieter Betz (under whom he wrote a doctoral dissertation on anthropology in Paul) and Gerd Theissen (with whom he spent a year as a Fulbright Professor at the University of Heidelberg).

Taylor's professional interests have ranged somewhat widely over the years, but primary passions often involved Pauline studies and/or the use of cultural anthropology as a tool for studying the New Testament. At Trinity, Taylor's seminars on Romans and Pauline Theology always filled to capacity. He also developed popular courses on "The Apocalypse" (book of Revelation) and on "Early Christian Piety" (which included Greek reading of Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, and others). He served as Director of Graduate Studies and as editor of the *Trinity Seminary Review*; he led numerous travel courses to Italy, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, and Egypt. In 2009, he served as Visiting Professor at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.

Taylor is known to many for *Paul, Apostle to the Nations*, a classroom text that will serve at least a generation of students who want to engage the historical, literary, and theological contributions of the man Paul and his letters. But some of Taylor's lesser-known works have had an equivalent impact. While sometimes writing for the academy, he has more frequently viewed himself as a public scholar of the church, developing resources that meet current needs, whether that means dealing with difficult issues (sexuality, end-times speculation) or providing educational materials that are pastorally oriented but also intellectually honest and stimulating. And he has been a frequent speaker at synod assemblies and professional leadership conferences.

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Taylor is also known as:

- a devoted husband (who will celebrate fifty years of marriage to Dyann Gottula this August);
- a father (to Rick and Jennifer) and grandfather (to Amelie, Lindy and Wilder);
- a Nebraska Cornhuskers fan, whose inexplicable devotion led him to post scores on the blackboard as though these were important data demanding student attention;
- an extremely high "J" on the Meyers-Briggs scale, whose organizational abilities and attention to detail were (usually) appreciated by colleagues and administrators;
- a heart-attack survivor, whose resuscitation aboard an airplane in 2002 made national news and allowed him to talk forever about the time he was "a centerfold" in *The Lutheran*.

Early in his career, Taylor served as pastor of First Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, and he would always view his subsequent work as a seminary professor as a calling to pastoral ministry as well. In every context he approached his work as pastor and professor with deep gratitude for the opportunity of being allowed to serve in such capacities. It is noteworthy that he devoted most of his final sabbatical to a "Thank You tour" whereby he lectured or preached free-of-charge in congregations that were supportive of theological education.

The following are introductions to the articles contributed to the *Festschrift* by grateful colleagues. This section of the journal concludes with a select bibliography from the career of our honoree, Walter Frederick Taylor Jr.

Joy Schroeder explores Martin Luther's conservative perspectives on gender roles, his relationship with his spouse Katharina von Bora, and the impact of his teaching on women living in ter-

ritories that embraced Lutheranism. Despite Luther's translation of scripture into the vernacular, and his call for girls to attend school for an hour each day to gain literacy, Lutheran leaders generally did not encourage women's independent interpretation of scripture. Argula von Grumbach (1492–ca. 1568), can serve to inspire modern readers to continue the unfinished work of reforming the church in the area of gender equality.

Matthew Mellott explains how victory is a key theme throughout the book of Revelation that has often been interpreted in light of military victories and Roman conquest. However, the language of victory in Revelation could just as easily draw from the realm of athletics. During the time of John's writing of Revelation there was an explosion of new athletic festivals and a rehabilitation of traditional Greek spectacle culture. Such significant cultural phenomena would likely have influenced John's audience's understanding of the calls to be victorious at the end of the seven messages in Revelation 2–3 as calls to bear faithful witness to Jesus' lordship.

Arland J. Hultgren discusses that when Paul writes about his life prior to his call as an apostle, he says that he was blameless in following the law of Moses (Phil 3:6), a model of life under the law. Paul realized that the law of Moses (dealing not only with moral, but also with ceremonial and dietary matters) cannot possibly be imposed upon Gentiles. Paul exhorts his readers to be guided by "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), an enigmatic phrase summing up moral and communal values, reviewed here, that cohere with the life in Christ.

Julie Faith Parker points to recent scholarship by Walter F. Taylor Jr., then applies insights from his social scientific approach to the story of Jesus' birth. Social scientific methodology forms bridges between the world of the text and our own, as does a congregational Christmas pageant. After noting contradictions in the infancy narratives, this article offers a short, original Christmas play, incorporating the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, as well as Mary's Magnificat, into the pageant traditions. Readers receive both a scholarly and a useful resource in tribute to a colleague whose career immeasurably increased knowledge and love of the biblical text in the academy and the life of the church.

Kenneth Stenstrup assesses the recent model by Fiske and Rai (*Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships*) applying cross-cultural perspectives to violence as an intentional act. Following an overview of the model, an application of data from some of the authentic letters of Paul is presented. The author concludes with a brief assessment of the model's relevance for both understanding these scriptural portrayals and possible contemporary Christian responses to such forms of violence.

Paul D. Numrich argues that Communion is a Christian identity-marking rite and thus it is justifiably restricted to Christian participation. A distinction is made between Communion and Jesus' radically inclusive dining fellowship, the latter providing a model for sharing meals with adherents of other faiths. The article challenges the notion that closed Communion hampers harmonious interfaith relations and encourages Christians to dine with adherents of other faiths in a way that both accomplishes interfaith goals and maintains the integrity of the Christian rite of Communion.

In the *Currents Focus* feature **Kelly J. Kelleher** and **John Edgar** describe how inequities in assets characterize many U.S. urban neighborhoods with concentrated poverty as a result of decades of structural racism and class bias. In an inner-city neighborhood on the South Side of Columbus, the United Methodist Church for All People and Nationwide Children's Hospital have formed a dynamic partnership between the faith community and a healthcare institution that generates significant transformation. This work is grounded in shared goals and has been nurtured over time with deepening mutual trust. By investing our complementary strengths, we can enhance the quality of life for individuals who are poor and marginalized.

In the *Listening to Immigrant Voices* feature **Francisco Javier Goitía Padilla** reflects on the experience of Huracán María as it hit Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017. He focusses on the Puerto Rican location in general and this experience in particular to consider the preaching of the Gospel as a source of courage and hope. The author explores local materials in trying to identify a possible contextual homiletic ethos in the Puerto Rican landscape.

This issue again includes a wonderful selection of *Book Reviews* and the next installment of *Preaching Helps* by our gifted contributors to aid in study of the lectionary texts for the upcoming seasons in the church year. We celebrate the opportunity to provide this issue in gratitude for the teaching and scholarly career of Walter F. Taylor Jr.

*Mark Allan Powell, Guest Editor
Kathleen D. Billman and Craig L. Nesson, Issue Co-Editors*

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