BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTION

The Reverend Gardner C. Taylor Collection is one of the most extensive collections at the Archives Research Center. Spanning more than 1100 manuscript titles, the Collection includes sermons as well as a few speeches, prayers, eulogies, and lectures, and covers the period of 1947-2001. Rev. Taylor (b. June 18, 1918) was named the “Dean of the nation’s Black preachers” by Time Magazine and has preached all over the world to a variety of audiences. He holds more than 100 honorary doctorate degrees and has been an invited speaker for over seven decades.

An examination of his sermons reveals the vast number of topics that Rev. Taylor addresses, from the war in Vietnam, to Civil Rights, to evangelism, to race relations and self-development. Students, researchers and instructors will find this collection relevant to teaching and learning about a variety of subjects in African American Religion, Religious Studies, Political Science, Literature, Composition, and more. This guide has been composed to aid teachers, researchers, and undergraduate and graduate students in utilizing the collection based on their interests and needs.

The Reverend Gardner C. Taylor Collection encapsulates a life’s work: sermons under constant revision, thoughtful variations on recurring historical themes, and the consistent work to progress as a preacher in improving one’s messages and ability to connect to one’s audience.

OVERVIEW OF COLLECTION

Although the Reverend Gardner C. Taylor collection is primarily an archive of sermons, students, instructors and researchers of a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and foci will find the Collection relevant due to the breadth of Rev. Taylor’s subject matter, his vivid and picturesque writing style, and the historical scope of his work, which spans more than 6 decades. The Religious Studies or Divinity student will find that Rev. Taylor’s messages, while captivating and clear, also speak beyond doctrine and across denominations as he addresses moral and ethical values that he believes individuals should strive to possess. The Literature student and researcher will find Taylor’s sermons picturesque; his words paint the scene and recreate his experiences for his listeners and readers. (e.g., “Announcing the New Age.” [12/17/1978] Box 2, Folder 8). The English or literary studies student and reader will also find Taylor’s robust use of metaphors and analogies from everyday life refreshing and instructive. Instructors will find it helpful to guide students in charting Taylor’s editing and revision processes over several different versions of his sermons to teach students about how even slight changes in word choice and sentence structure can improve writing tremendously.

The History student and researcher will find timeless some of Taylor’s messages, while also observing their relevance to specific time periods, such as the Vietnam War (e.g., see “Already – Not Yet!” [3/3/1968] in Box 1, Folder 34). The student of Folklore will encounter Taylor’s storytelling techniques, and would appreciate an examination of the changes and continuities in his storytelling style over his oeuvre of more than six decades. Students and researchers in Political Science will find ways in which President Barack Obama’s messages of hope resonate with many of Rev. Taylor’s sermons, and will find interest in his sermons on race relations. And Ministers and students of Theology will find many tips and hints for constructing an effective sermon, tips which are given most explicitly in “Building a Sermon” (Box 4, Folder 22). Taylor states that preachers enter “a kind of brooding, unmorose introspection, as if listening to some mysterious, often melancholy music, within” (6). Church leaders and pastors can find inspiration and words of wisdom for cultivating their church communities as well. Please note that the Rev. Gardner C. Taylor Preaching Laboratory at the Interdenominational Theological Center houses Taylor’s Recorded Sermons, which will also prove useful in your exploration of Rev. Taylor’s work. Learn more at http://www.itc.edu/pages%5CTaylorArchives.asp

SELECTED SERMONS BY SUBJECT

Please note that the Collection is comprised of 1148 manuscript titles. Given the scope of the Collection, this list comprises initial recommendations based on one’s subject of interest. Students, instructors, and researchers are encouraged to utilize this list as an entry point into one’s topic, and then browse the Collection for more titles of interest. Please see the Collection’s Finding Aid (by manuscript title) at the following link: http://www.auctr.edu/Portals/0/pdfs/FindingAids/FindingAid_bytitleTaylorGardner.pdf
Politics, Power & War

Race Relations

Christian Values & Spiritual Development
“The Call to Greatness.” April 22 (no year). Box 5, Folder 3.

Discipleship & Church Communities
“By This the Church Lives.” n.d. Box 4, Folder 29.

Christian Life
“Creative Waiting.” n.d. Box 8, Folder 12.

On Preaching
“Building a Sermon.” n.d. Box 4, Folder 22
Literary Devices & Techniques
Can be found throughout the sermons, but here are a few of note:

Historical Events & Historical Bridges Between Past, Present & Future
“1952 – And God!” Box 1, Folder 1.
“Count-down!” (About the 1st man to land on the moon.). February 25, 1962. Box 8, Folder 1.

QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

○ How might understanding the faith perspective on events and themes that occur throughout history shed light on your research or teaching topics of interest?
○ How do Reverend Gardner C. Taylor’s sermons relate to Black Liberation Theology?
○ In exploring themes such as redemption, faith, and salvation, how do Rev. Taylor’s sermons expand or enable a more nuanced understanding of such themes?
○ What themes or issues does Rev. Taylor address in regards to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements?
○ How, if at all, do Rev. Gardner C. Taylor’s sermons relate to other sermons you have read and/or heard?
○ How might the sermon “An Abundant Life” (Box 1, Folder 3) relate to President Obama’s message of hope?
○ How does Rev. Taylor’s tone change with different topics and in different time periods?
○ What differences exist between Rev. Taylor’s written messages and his recorded ones?

The Rev. Gardner C. Taylor Lab at the Interdenominational Theological Center houses Taylor’s Recorded Sermons. Learn more at http://www.itc.edu/pages%5CTaylorArchives.asp