

**Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, 1667;  
Florence Nightingale, Nurse, Social Reformer, 1910: Mass  
August 13, 2020**

**By the Reverend Stephen Gerth**

*Romans 14:7–9, 10b–12; Psalm 139:1–9; Matthew 25:31–46*

Today is the anniversary of death for two influential Anglican Christians, Jeremy Taylor, a seventeenth-century bishop in the Church of Ireland, and Florence Nightingale, who needs no introduction. “She is,” in the words of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, “honored throughout the world as the founder of the modern profession of nursing.”<sup>1</sup> Bishop Taylor died in 1667, Nurse Nightingale, in 1910.

I think I have a complete collection of all editions of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, which supplies the proper, meaning the collect and the lessons, for our Episcopal Church commemorations and holy days. The first edition, published in 1963, had no descriptions of Holy Days or biographies of persons included in the calendar. The second edition, published in 1973, included biographies. The 1980 edition had biographies and descriptions of the fixed holy days.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2006* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2006), 342.

When I woke up this morning, I could tell you from reading that Jeremy Taylor was a bishop in the Anglican Church of Ireland, and he had remained loyal to the crown after the execution of Charles I. He was the author of two books that are still influential and in print, *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. The 1789 American Prayer Book adapted a prayer from *Holy Dying* that I include in almost all funerals except those of children and young adults. I want to read it to you in the traditional language in which Taylor himself wrote:

*O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered: Make us, we beseech thee, deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life; and let thy Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days; that, when we shall have served thee in our generation, we may be gathered unto our fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience; in the communion of the Catholic Church; in the confidence of a certain faith; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope; in favor with thee our God; and in perfect charity with the world. All which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*<sup>2</sup>

After reading Taylor's entry in the current edition of Lesser Feasts, I turned to the 1978 edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. I learned that as

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<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* [1979], 489.

bishop from 1660 until he died in 1667, “His episcopate was much troubled by the Presbyterians, who refused submission and whom he treated with considerable harshness, as also the [Roman Catholics], against whom he wrote . . . a violent invective.”<sup>3</sup> I suspect these words are accurate, but Taylor’s entry and the entry on [Religious] “Toleration” credit him with publishing an important plea for toleration.<sup>4</sup>

I knew that the first edition of *Lesser Feasts* had no descriptions or biographies, then I remembered that there had been biographies in *Prayer Book Studies IX: The Calendar* published in 1957. No mention of Taylor’s difficulties in 1957, but the second edition in 1973, allowed that this “controversy made his years bitter.”<sup>5</sup> This sketch also says, “His advocacy of the giving of Holy Communion to young children is of special interest today.”<sup>6</sup> If I come across an accurate and somewhat sympathetic biography, I’ll probably read it.

One thing I learned about Florence Nightingale early this morning was that she was born in Florence, Italy,

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<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2ed. (New York: Oxford University Press 1978), s.v. “Taylor, Jeremy,” 1343.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1383–84.

<sup>5</sup> *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, rev. ed. (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1973), 267.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

on May 12, 1820. She came from a privileged background and was well-educated. Despite resistance from her family, she was able to study at the Institution of Protestant Deaconesses, in Germany, for two weeks in the summer of 1850 and three months a year later.<sup>7</sup> In 1853, she took charge of an “Institution for Sick Gentlewomen”—governesses—“in Distressed Circumstances, in London.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1854, she brought 38 nurses to address the horrific conditions of the field hospitals in the Crimean War. Her voluntary contribution during the war led to the establishment of the Nightingale Fund, which led to the establishment of a nursing school at Saint Thomas Hospital, London. She was the first woman to receive the Order of Merit, established by Edward VII—there can only be 24 living members.

Though brought up in a Unitarian family, she was baptized in the Church of England—I’m not sure when. She was an active practicing communicant of the Church of England. When she no longer could go to church, her parish priest “regularly brought

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Florence-Nightingale>, (Accessed 13 August 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Communion to her.”<sup>9</sup> Her book *Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not* is still in print.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2006* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2006), 342.