

Century Marks

Century Marks in the [November 27, 2007](#) issue

BABY BOOMERS REACH SOCIAL SECURITY AGE...



Feast for all: Theologian Jürgen Moltmann says his understanding of the Eucharist was shaped by two distinct experiences in 1968. On one occasion he and a motley crew protesting the Vietnam War sat on the floor of the London offices of the Catholic publisher Sheed & Ward, passing the bread and cup from one person to the next. In this small circle they felt the bodily presence of Jesus. The other occasion was at St. Giles Church (John Knox’s church) in Scotland, where the elements were passed out on silver trays by servers wearing black, with the participants separated from each other. He left the church depressed. Later he concluded that the Lord’s Supper “is not a church meal for people who belong to one’s own denomination. It is the feast of the crucified Christ, whose hands are stretched out to everyone” (*A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, Fortress).

Good news for whiners: Grumbling is part of the human condition, says Art Ross; it is a reminder to us that not all is well with God’s creation. There is, however, a difference between whining and lamenting. “A whine is a form of grumbling, and a lament is a debate with God. In a lament, the speaker demands that God be faithful. A lament is a statement on behalf of creation, a yearning for God to heal creation; a grumble is a complaint against creation.” The gospel, as embodied in the “lost parables” of Luke 15, “offers prophetic hope to a grumbling world,” Ross says.

“Every person who hears these words of Jesus and responds with repentance causes God to rejoice.” Likewise, “Discipleship turns away from grumbling and toward a life of joy—joy for God and joy for the disciple” (*Interpretation*, October).

Christ and culture: Scottish historian Niall Ferguson was raised by atheist parents who thought religion was a source of conflict, not enlightenment. He does not think that he can ever become a person of faith himself, but he does concede that atheists face a challenge in teaching people to be good. “I think it is better that people be educated as Christians than not,” he says, noting that he took his own children to church when they were young. “If I had to choose an ethical system to make generally available, I would choose the teaching of Christ. There’s no superior atheistic alternative if you want to make a society behave well” (*Third Way*, November).

Stalling out: In 1993 President Clinton launched the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles. It was designed to assist the big three automakers in producing cars that would increase fuel efficiency threefold in 10 years. In 2002, after \$1 billion of federal money had been spent and each of the Big Three had produced models of fuel-efficient cars, the Bush administration scrapped this program in favor of the FreedomCAR project, which is aimed at creating a car that runs on pure hydrogen. Meanwhile, the average car sold in the U.S. today gets 20 miles per gallon—about the same as in 1993 when Clinton launched the Partnership program and less than what Henry Ford’s Model T got when it went on the market 99 years ago (*New Yorker*, November 5).

Left out: At least since the 1960s Germany has attempted to deal with its Nazi past: Holocaust studies are compulsory in high schools; there is an abundance of films, articles and books on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust; and former concentrations camps have become memorials and museums to which scores of German students go on field trips. But in spite of all the education and commemoration, in a 2005 poll half of German youth under 24 couldn’t define what the Holocaust was. Many younger Germans don’t want to carry guilt about what their parents or grandparents did over a half century ago. And neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism is on the rise, especially in the former East Germany. In addition, out of sympathy with Palestinians and other beleaguered Arabs, many Muslim youth in Germany deny the reality of the Holocaust and are virulently anti-Semitic. The problem with Holocaust studies in Germany, according to Stacy Perman, is that they deal dispassionately with past realities and don’t touch recent ones (*Utne Reader*,

September-October).

WMD: Paul Tibbets Jr., pilot of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in World War II, died recently at the age of 92. He didn't think he had done anything wrong in the devastating bombing, and he described his action as "impersonal." After 9/11 Tibbets suggested that the U.S. should nuke Arab and Islamic capitals. He also apparently profited from his place in history. At enolagay.org he sold, among other items, an autographed replica of the "little boy" bomb for \$350 plus shipping (*Daytona Beach News-Journal*, November 6).

Faith at the polls: John Arthur Eaves ran for the governor's office in Mississippi as a new kind of Democrat, making his Christian faith a centerpiece of his campaign (see "Democrats for Jesus," October 30). However, he was defeated by nearly 20 percent by the Republican incumbent, Haley Barbour, who was widely credited with using his Washington connections to get billions of dollars in Hurricane Katrina relief (ABC News).

Male abuse? A prominent Muslim cleric in Malaysia has urged Malaysian women to stop wearing figure-hugging clothes. He calls the wearing of such clothing a form of emotional abuse of men, since it makes it hard for them to focus on their prayers and disturbs their sleep (UPI).