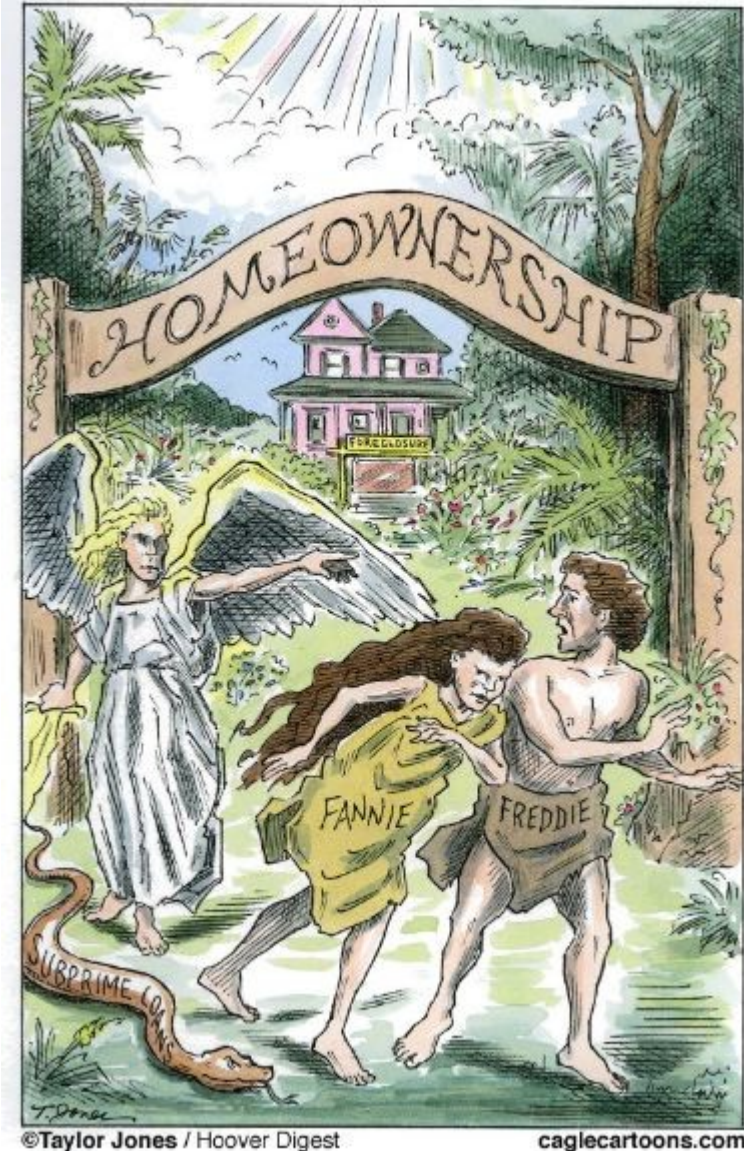


Century Marks

Century Marks in the [March 24, 2009](#) issue



To hate or not: The Dalai Lama and an Indian psychoanalyst held a public dialogue in which the subject of hate arose. The psychoanalyst said that a healthy person should be able both to hate and to transcend hating. The Dalai Lama said that that was not the Buddhist view, and he told a story about a man who had been imprisoned in Tibet and tortured by the Chinese. After he got out, the man told the Dalai Lama that on two occasions things had gotten very bad in prison. Had he been close to death? the Dalai Lama asked. “No,” the man responded. “Twice I almost

hated the Chinese!" (Harvard Divinity Bulletin, Winter).

Up from Carolina: Fourteen-year-old Ty'Sheoma Bethea, a guest of the Obamas at the president's speech to a joint session of Congress in February, goes to a school in Dillon, South Carolina, where the roof leaks and classroom temperatures in the winter can drop to 50 degrees. She had written to Congress and the president, imploring them to help her school system. "We are not quitters," she said of her peers, noting that they want to become lawyers, doctors and members of Congress so they can change the world. Ben Bernanke, chair of the Federal Reserve, is a graduate of Bethea's school (*Chicago Tribune* and NPR, February 25).

The writing life: Paul Elie, an author and an editor at Farrar, Straus & Giroux, wrote a profile of Anglican archbishop Rowan Williams for the March issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. What impressed Elie most about Williams was how the archbishop identifies himself as an author, not just as a church leader who happens to write. Williams has written several dozen books, and he took off one summer to work on a book about Dostoevsky while living in the Jesuit community at Georgetown University. "I think that writing is his way of not losing himself totally to the job," said Elie. "In a book, he can be the one posing the questions, not merely reacting to the things that people are asking him. He can also engage with the questions in effect posed by the dead" (online interview with Elie at theatlantic.com).

Power of prayer: Research and debate continue on whether faith contributes to health and healing. One datum generally agreed on is that it helps ill people to know that people are praying for them; from a scientific point of view, the placebo effect seems to kick in. In other research, Daniel Hall, an Episcopal priest and a surgeon, found that church attendance adds two to three additional years to one's life, but exercise adds three to five years. A study by Neal Krause, a sociologist and public-health expert, concluded that parishioners benefit from the social support system of a church, but they benefit even more if they help others (*Time*, February 23).

Farewell to freedom: In a region that includes the Swat Valley, the Pakistan government agreed in February to introduce Shari'a, or Islamic law, thereby overruling constitutional and juridical law. While there are few Christians in the region covered by the government's deal with the Islamic groups, the wider North West Frontier Province has hundreds of thousands Christians who feel threatened by the developments (ENI).

Osama's victory: Osama bin Laden's attacks on the United States were not intended to defeat the U.S. but to provoke the U.S. into costly conflicts in the Middle East, especially in Afghanistan, argues journalist and New America Foundation head Steve Coll in *The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century*. Bin Laden seems to have gotten what he was looking for—U.S. forces mired in a conflict with the Taliban in Afghanistan—plus a bonus he never imagined: war in Iraq, which turned out to be a great recruiting tool for jihadis in the region (Fred Halliday's review of *The Bin Ladens*, in the *New York Review of Books*, March 12).

Oil salesperson: A prominent Islamic scholar in Saudi Arabia is warning that the use of alcohol-based biofuels may be a sin. His warning is especially directed at Saudi youth studying abroad. This scholar said that he isn't issuing a religious edict, and that the subject needs more study by religious bodies. Three separate verses in the Qur'an prohibit use of alcohol (*Christian Science Monitor*, February 20).

Forget retirement: Because no one can afford to retire, says columnist Gail Collins, we should get used to the idea of a 75-year-old person fixing our car or removing our tonsils. In fact, we should start thinking of everyone as 20 years younger than they actually are. "Then you will feel much better when the 80-year-old postman delivers your mail and it includes a request for money from your 38-year-old offspring doing post-post-post-doctoral work at Ohio State" (*New York Times*, February 12).

Think fast: F. Belton Joyner Jr., a retired United Methodist pastor, has come up with a top-ten list of questions pastors fear, including: "Is my Jewish neighbor going to hell?" "What do you mean, you changed the light that Grand ma gave the church?" "Who are you going to vote for, Reverend?" and "Why can't we use Christmas red on the altar table during December?" (*Ten Questions Every Pastor Fears*, Abingdon).

Outranking Jesus: In a recent survey conducted by the Harris Poll, Americans say their number-one hero is President Barack Obama, followed by Jesus Christ and Martin Luther King Jr. Others in the top ten are Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Abraham Lincoln, John McCain, John F. Kennedy, Chesley Sullenberger and Mother Teresa. When this question was first asked in 2001, Jesus Christ topped the list, followed by King, Colin Powell, Kennedy and Mother Teresa (*Chicago Sun-Times*, February 20).