

# Century Marks

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Daryl Cagle, MSNBC.com

**To tell the truth:** Tony Judt, author of *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, says that the stability of Europe in the postwar years depended on the ability of many countries to forget what had happened between 1939 and 1945. Yet no society can move beyond painful memories until they are addressed publicly. Here the historian has a role. The historian's task, says Judt, "is to tell what is almost always an uncomfortable story and explain why the discomfort is part of the truth we need to live well and live properly. A well-organized society is one in which we know the truth about ourselves collectively, not one in which we tell pleasant lies about ourselves" (*Historically Speaking*, January-February).

**Write it down:** "One of the saddest sentences I know is 'I wish I had asked my mother about that,'" says memoirist William Zinsser (*American Scholar*, spring). Zinsser encourages people to write memoirs, in part for themselves, but also to leave behind memories for subsequent generations. When you write your family

history, he says, don't try to be a writer—just be yourself. And let it be your story; don't try to write for your whole family. Be honest, but don't use the memoir to air grievances or play victim. And think small: start by writing a series of episodes that are meaningful to you. Eventually, a pattern will emerge that gives your life a narrative shape.

**Expect crises:** Dennis Olson, professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, sees six principles of leadership in the story about God providing manna for the people in the wilderness. First, leaders should expect crises and the murmurings of the people. Second, they need to sort out illegitimate from legitimate complaints. Third, they should share the burden of leadership. Fourth, they should assure people that God will be faithful and will provide what is needed. Fifth, leaders need to point the people away from Egypt, the symbol of enslavement, and toward God's future of freedom. And sixth, for their own health and that of the community, they should observe the sabbath (*Cloud of Witnesses* audio journal, volume 9, [www.ptsem.edu/iym](http://www.ptsem.edu/iym)).

**Time out:** A Buddhist monk visiting New York was told by his Western host that they could save ten minutes by making a complex transfer in the subway at Grand Central Station. When they emerged from the underground in Central Park, the monk sat down on a bench. His host wanted to know what he was doing. "I thought we should enjoy the ten minutes," the monk replied (*American Scholar*, winter).

**Skating on thin ice:** Jesus might not have walked on water, as the Gospel of Mark declares. Doron Nof, professor of oceanography at Florida State University, says that Jesus might have been walking on ice. Although it hasn't happened in recent years, cold weather invaded the region 1,500 to 2,500 years ago, and ice could have formed over parts of the freshwater Sea of Galilee (*New York Times*, April 4).

**Selective gospel?** The American Bible Society is refusing to print New Testaments with covers that say "Jesus Loves Porn Stars." California pastors Mike Foster and Craig Gross, whose antiporn ministry is called XXXchurch.com, had ordered 10,000 of the customized Bibles to hand out at adult film conventions. But the edgy cover led the publisher to cancel the paid order. The American Bible Society says that while it appreciates the pastors' mission, the words "Jesus Loves Porn Stars" are "misleading and inappropriate for a New Testament" (Associated Press).

**Signs of the times:** A Century reader reported seeing a church sign in western New York that said, “If you’re through with sin, come on in.” Somebody wrote below it: “If not, phone 425-XXXX.” A sign by the baggage claim area in the international airport in Amman, Jordan, advertises a German armored-car company. It reads: “When going to Iraq, make sure you drive armored!” (*New York Review of Books*, April 6).

**Five score years:** Paul S. Minear, professor emeritus of biblical theology at Yale Divinity School, celebrated his 100th birthday in February. He began his distinguished teaching career in 1934 and authored more than 25 books. *The Bible and the Historian*, a collection of his essays, was published in 2002 (Abingdon), and two of his well-known works, *The Kingdom and the Power* and *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (with a biographical essay by Leander Keck), were reissued in 2005 by Westminster John Knox. Minear and his wife, Gladys, have been married for 75 years and still live in their own house in Connecticut (Society of Biblical Literature).

**Lonely hearts:** If you are over 50 years of age and are lonely, your blood pressure could be elevated as much as 30 points, making you susceptible to hypertension, according to a study conducted at the University of Chicago. The older a lonely person gets, the higher his or her blood pressure seems to get, according to the researchers. But socializing more is not necessarily the antidote (*Medical News Today*, March 29).