

A stupid war, a beautiful death, and more reader feedback

What we've heard from our readers

Letters & Comments

July 15, 2026

A stupid war

Mac Loftin's ["The crowning stupidity of our stupid age" \(July\)](#) is one of the best articles about the present I have read anywhere. Thank you.

—Marv Waschke
Bellingham, WA

Loftin argues beautifully about the stupidity of the Iran war. Why there haven't been more protests puzzles me. He uses Bonhoeffer and Tolstoy to show how foolish this—and indeed any—war is. While I agree with Reinhold Niebuhr that sometimes wars are necessary (such as the defense of Ukraine), the default position of Christianity should be against war. Even Pope Leo is saying that. Mac Loftin is a theologian to watch!

—Charles R. Crawley
Cedar Rapids, IA

A beautiful death

In her article ["Natural death and Christian love" \(June\)](#), Rachel Rim takes a sensitive approach to the difficulty some deaths can present. However, it is jarring to me when she concludes that scripture tells us death is wrong, that it is horrific, wrenching, and bewildering—especially jarring considering the compassion of the rest of the article.

As I see it, death is a natural end just as birth is a natural beginning. Birth and death are natural events built into the plan of creation. Everything in creation dies. Do you know anything that doesn't? Why, then, should it be viewed as the consequence of sin?

Yes, the death of my 42-year-old son from leukemia in the middle of a marvelous life was horrific, wrenching, and bewildering. But humanity often causes such deaths by the toxins that flood our environment. Murder, accident, disease, and war are indeed hideous ways to die, but humanity is responsible for those—not God. Outside of the wrongful deaths we cause, death is the natural God-given consequence of birth. And death can be just as beautiful.

—Carol Soderholm
Mount Morris, IL

I really appreciate Rim's article. I found her insight into the way the moment of death has evolved in our society to be personally instructive. Years ago, our family was present at the moment of my dad's natural death. One of us held his hand as he let go of this life for the next. It truly was a sacred moment that we still treasure to this day. The experience was tough yet beautiful.

—Don Huizinga
Grand Rapids, MI

Commandments in translation

I was intrigued by Matt Thomas's article (["The Louisiana Standard Version"](#)) in the June issue of the century. My first objection to the laws about displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms is that they promote archaic language that sounds like the King James Version of the Bible, language that was valid and instructive a few centuries ago. If the government's religious promoters wish to speak to young people today, this language ("Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images") is not the way to do it. Second, we shouldn't be promoting any particular religion, even ours. (What would these lawmakers do if someone proposed statements based on the Qur'an?) And third, I agree with Thomas that it is wrong to delete the important social justice statements from the real Ten Commandments. Doing so shows the legislators' political bias.

—Dennis Lees
Eugene, OR

Interpreting Claremont

Rebecca Bratten Weiss's review of *Furious Minds* (["The minds and money behind MAGA,"](#) May) retails what has become, since the publication of Laura Field's book, a familiar misreading of things gone wrong at the Claremont Institute. Weiss assumes that the Claremonters' support of Trump is the logical outcome of what they were taught in graduate school and what they once set out to do. In fact, it shows they have forgotten both.

When the *Claremont Review*'s editors published Michael Anton's "Flight 93" essay, which claimed that the American republic's survival depended on the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, they abandoned their original mission of promoting a principled American statesmanship. By no means were they pursuing to their logical conclusion the teachings either of Leo Strauss or of Strauss's student Harry Jaffa, who taught those who founded the Claremont Institute.

Weiss seems unaware of one thing that distinguishes Strauss: his attention to the political context in which earlier political philosophers wrote. They were acutely conscious of the persecution they might suffer if they stated their ideas too plainly. Strauss taught his students to look for a hidden argument underneath the surface of the text—including the surface of his own writing.

Similarly, Jaffa emphasized political "prudence." He showed how a statesman like Lincoln pursued justice, using prudent speech and deed to lead the people toward a good they had forgotten or never understood. For Lincoln, that good was the preservation of a republic dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Founding the Claremont Institute, Jaffa's students called for leadership that upholds equality under the law and equality of opportunity, while rejecting as unrealistic and divisive any attempts to distribute wealth and power

equally.

Some of Jaffa's students went on to political careers. Those who remained at the institute—and their financial supporters—longed for political influence. Hence their bid to become the intellectual nerve center of Trump's administration. They thought that if they allied themselves with Trump, they could guide his choices. As Trump proved less and less teachable, they bent their opinions to match his. They exchanged their principles for access to power.

—Ellen D. Tucker
Monterey, CA

Church for all abilities

Melissa Florer-Bixler's interview of Bill Gaventa and Jason Le Shana about multisensory worship for disability inclusion caused me to think of worship in my home congregation in the 1950s ([“God's whole body and ours,”](#) June). My oldest brother, Kennie, had Down syndrome. He attended worship regularly with my family. Though he could not read, he heard the hymns of faith the congregation sang. He sat quietly through prayers, scripture reading, and sermons. Among the gathered body in worship, Kennie felt accepted. He belonged.

On a particular Sunday, Mother and Dad wanted to skip worship to travel to visit relatives in Maryland. Kennie refused to go. He wanted to go to his church.

One Christmas, Kennie asked our family to sing “Silent Night” for comedian Mary Livingstone, whose husband and performing partner Jack Benny had just died. As we sang, Kennie wept bitterly for his friend Jack from the radio. I believe that Kennie learned to express his grief and to think of others who grieve from his experience of regular worship.

The traditional patterns of worship encourage those gathered to live intentional, rich lives of faith, whatever their abilities.

—Paul Roth
Rockingham, VA

Countering Christian nationalism

I had never heard of Donald McGavran before I read Francisco Herrera's article about him ([“Donald McGavran's complicated legacy,”](#) June). I don't know what it was like in McGavran's time, but for more than four decades now, evangelicals have not simply let new converts keep the prejudices they brought with them to the faith—they have actively urged them to *adopt* political conservatism and White nationalism.

If they can make that a part of the so-called discipling or perfecting stage of Christian pedagogy, why shouldn't progressive churches pursue a counter-program? Dealing with the guilt of White racism does not have to be an obstacle to Christian development: If the freeing gospel of God's grace brought them into the church, it seems important to help them apply that love to social and ethical issues in their lives. We who lead in the church must have the humility to admit that we are all both saints and sinners, continually dependent on God's mercy, and that forgiveness of sins is a real power in our lives.

The story of McGavran inviting Janki and her people to the faith made me think about another aspect of evangelism. Those of us who work for justice and peace in this world may find ourselves working for years alongside non-Christian people who have similar ethical principles, yet we never share with them how the love of Christ motivates, informs, and strengthens us in our social action. Even if that sharing doesn't convert them, they at least have the opportunity to learn that not all Christians are White nationalists and that the joy and hope we bring to the table is part of our praise of God's redemptive work among all those created in God's image.

—Gerald Anderson
Rhineland, WI