

Welcome to the Summer Edition of *Verba Vitae*!

In this issue, we explore the profound relationship between Creation and Life—how the Christian understanding of origin, purpose, and destiny shapes our vocation in the world.

We begin with a biblical study, “Creation and the Meaning of Life in the Apocalypse: Eschatological Renewal and Divine Purpose,” by Dan Lioy, who offers a cohesive and theologically rich exploration of Revelation’s eschatological vision. Rooted in Lutheran theology, Lioy traces the biblical arc from the ordered creation in Genesis, through the Fall’s corruption, to Revelation’s vision of cosmic renewal centered in Christ’s redemptive work. With theological clarity, he weaves together themes of creation, fall, redemption, and ultimate restoration—not only of the human creature but of the entire cosmos. His essay invites readers to embrace their Christian vocation as agents of God’s redemptive plan in a world awaiting its final renewal at the eschaton.

In “Martin Luther’s Definition of the Human Creature,” Robert Kolb examines Luther’s evolving theological anthropology. Grounded in Scripture and shaped by the distinction between law and gospel, Luther defines human identity not through autonomous performance—as in Ockhamist and scholastic traditions—but through the relationship of trust, love, and reverence before the Creator. Integrating body, soul, and spirit, and drawing deeply from Genesis, Luther’s view emphasizes the *imago Dei* as expressed in reason, will, and emotion. Kolb’s contribution offers both clarity and depth, inviting readers to reflect on what it truly means to be human in light of God’s creative and redemptive grace.

The third article, “The Ontology of Decision” by Dennis Bielfeldt, probes the nature of human freedom, moral choice, and the metaphysical questions that underlie existence. Drawing on thinkers such as William James, Heidegger, Sartre, and Wittgenstein, Bielfeldt argues that fundamental decisions—such as whether to sustain life or embrace death—cannot be resolved by empirical reasoning alone. Instead, they reflect an ontological freedom that precedes empirical and rational evidence-giving and invites faith. He suggests that whether we see the universe as a divine gift or as a cosmic accident determines not only our ethical decisions but also our fundamental orientation toward meaning itself.

In “Life, Death, and Life Again: Natural Burial and Resurrection Promise,” Beth Hoeltke challenges our culture’s sanitized, death-denying practices. She contrasts today’s professionalized, often detached approaches to death with historic Christian practices rooted in communal care and resurrection hope. Advocating for natural burial—modeled on Christ’s own—Hoeltke highlights its ecological, theological, and eschatological significance. Using biodegradable materials and avoiding embalming, natural burial honors the body, the earth, and the Creator. It serves as a liturgical and ecological witness to the promise of resurrection, allowing believers to testify to God’s redemptive story even in death.

The final article, “Looking the Right Way through the Telescope” by Martin Christiansen, confronts the dominance of empirical scientism in modern thought. Christiansen argues that instead of seeking proof of God from within the narrow framework of Enlightenment rationalism, Christians must begin with the assumption of God’s real and active presence. Drawing from Lennox, Hodge, Clarke, and Pannenberg, he proposes a renewed “faithful inquiry” grounded in the reality of divine theophysical causality. To look through the telescope the right way, he suggests, is to see the world first and foremost as God-created—and only then to explore its meaning through science and reason shaped by faith.

This issue concludes with four insightful book reviews, highlighting significant recent works that deepen our understanding of creation, human life, and Christian vocation. Each title invites theological reflection on what it means to be created, to live faithfully within a created order, and to bear witness to God’s redemptive purposes in the world. Whether exploring science, ethics, or metaphysics, these books challenge and inspire us to engage the complexities of contemporary life through the lens of faithful Christian thought.

So pull up a chair, pour yourself a cup of coffee or tea, and enjoy this summer edition of *Verba Vitae*—a theological reflection on life as a gift, a calling, and a sacred mystery.

Dennis Bielfeldt
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