



**A Serious Christian Journal of Life  
and its Significance**

Volume 2, Number 3

Autumn 2025

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***Verba Vitae***  
**A Serious Christian Journal of Life  
and its Significance**

*Verba Vitae* is committed to bringing the classical Christian tradition into conversation with life issues now confronting us. Modeling the reasoned *logos* of the theological tradition, *Verba Vitae* explores the truth-claims made by thinkers and examines the grounds upon which these assertions are made.

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# Welcome to the Autumn Issue

Over fifty years ago, French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin stated that “the last continent unknown to humanity is humanity itself.” This provocative statement invites serious inquiry into the nature of human self-understanding. Accordingly, the current issue of *Verba Vitae* is dedicated to the theme, “God’s Anthropology: An Inquiry into What It Means to Be Human.” Within this framework, we explore fundamental questions about human identity, purpose, and relationships in an era marked by rapid change and widespread ambiguity. This volume features a collection of scholarly essays that engage with the interdisciplinary convergence of theology, philosophy, and ethics, offering nuanced perspectives on the contemporary human condition.

In “Created, Fallen, and Redeemed: A Lutheran Theological Anthropology for a Confused Age,” Dan Lioy addresses the urgent crisis of human identity through Lutheran theology. Rooted in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, Lioy critiques modern ideologies such as materialism, expressive individualism, and transhumanism, while affirming humanity’s creation in the image of God, its redemption through Christ, and the transformative power of Word and Sacrament. His essay calls the Church to a bold witness that upholds the sanctity of life and proclaims the Gospel as the ultimate hope for a fractured world.

Dennis Di Mauro’s “*Imago Dei* as ‘Original Righteousness’ in the Old Testament” explores the biblical concept of the *imago Dei*, examining its theological implications for human dignity and the sanctity of life. By comparing Protestant and Roman Catholic perspectives, Di Mauro highlights the enduring importance of humanity’s creation in God’s image as a foundation for living for “the other” and pro-life advocacy.

In “Authenticity, Bad Faith, and the Public Self: A Wittgensteinian-Lutheran Reframing,” Dennis Bielfeldt challenges the modern obsession with authenticity by reframing identity as relational and vocational. Drawing on Wittgenstein, Sartre, Heidegger, and Luther, Bielfeldt critiques the cultural pursuit of the “authentic self” and proposes a view of self that is rooted in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As Bielfeldt writes, “The divine image is not an essence to be discovered but a relation to be lived.” Later, he concludes with, “Life is not secured by turning inward but by being turned outward. *For we are ultimately an ecstatic self, alive only in the gracious gaze of God.*” Only this can enable us to see who we truly are, and then to live out our vocations in love for and responsibility to our neighbor.

William Fredstrom’s “The Limits of Chatbot Love and the Good of Embodied Relationality” examines the rise of emotional attachments to AI-enabled companion chatbots, a phenomenon reshaping human relationships. While recognizing their benefits, Fredstrom critiques the ethical and relational limitations of “algorithmic intimacy,” advocating for a return to embodied relationality and self-giving love.

Finally, Joel Biermann’s “Learning to Be What You Were Created to Be” offers a compelling call to integrate doctrine and ethics in the Christian life. He draws on Lutheran theology, especially “passive” and “active” righteousness, as explained by Luther in his “Two Kinds of Righteousness.” Biermann writes, “Before his Creator, the Christian receives the grace, forgiveness, and righteousness of Christ and so is fully justified and made entirely righteous. He now lives without burden, debt, or obligation.... Meanwhile, before his fellow creatures, the same believer at the same time lives in relationships in which he has work to do for the sake of those around him.” Thus, in Christ, the Christian is justified and righteous apart from works. Before our neighbor, the Christian lives a life of work-filled service.

Additionally, the section on book reviews covers topics such as cultural anthropology, transgender issues, and the decline of American society into a form of neopaganism.

This issue of *Verba Vitae* invites you to reflect deeply on the challenges and opportunities of our age, offering a vision of humanity grounded in divine grace, ethical responsibility, and relational love. We hope these essays inspire you to engage with the pressing questions of our time and to live out your calling with renewed faith and purpose.

Dennis Bielfeldt  
General Editor, *Verba Vitae*



## A Call for Papers

***Verba Vitae* is seeking essay submissions  
for the following upcoming issues:**

**Volume 2, No. 4 (Winter 2025):**

“Engaging a Culture of Death: How Shall We Live?”

**Volume 3, No. 1 (Spring 2026):**

“Christian Vocation as an Antidote to Radical Contemporary Critical Theory”

**Volume 3, No. 2 (Summer 2026):**

“Christian Medical Ethics in a Secular Medical Environment”

**Volume 3, No. 3 (Autumn 2026):**

“Christianity and Transhumanism: Ethical Considerations”

**Volume 3, No. 4 (Winter 2026):**

“Artificial Intelligence: A Rigorous Examination”

**Volume 4, No. 1 (Spring 2027):**

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**Volume 4, No. 2 (Summer 2027):**

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**Volume 4, No. 3 (Autumn 2027):**

“The Power of Language: Navigating Ethical Communication  
in the Era of Newspeak”

**Volume 4, No. 4 (Winter 2027):**

“Facing the Final Frontier: Divine Perspectives and Social Narratives  
on Mortality”

*All essay submissions should be made at*

**<https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/index>**

**Submitting authors need to register with a *Verba Vitae* account**

***Please see the Submissions Guidelines for important information!***

*Any questions should be directed to:*

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