

Tracking the Issue of Life in a Context of Antisemitism/Anti-Judaism

IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP between the Hamas attacks on Jewish citizens, Israel's defense of its country via an intense attack on Hamas and its minions in the Gaza Strip, and the issue of life generally? If so, what precisely is that relationship? Does Just War theory connect to the current context of widespread support for Hamas and the concomitant virulent denunciation of the Jewish policy and citizens? If so, how does it connect? Moreover, is the display of antisemitism/anti-Judaism we are witnessing worldwide suggestive of an underlying *ontology of death*, or is the matter simply that different people see things differently, namely, that antisemitism/anti-Judaism now merely exist in the eyes of the beholder?

Clearly, these are very large questions, and they cannot be adjudicated facilely in a brief article. However, we do have the requisite space in this first issue of *Verba Vitae* to present Rev. John Rasmussen's statement on the reappearance of antisemitism/anti-Judaism again around the world. Rev. Rasmussen presented the following to the faculties of ILT's Christ School of Theology and Christ College recently. We print what he presented below in its entirety because we believe that John's work deserves to be in print and because we believe that the issues involved in Just War theory have much to teach us about the being of life generally.

Dennis Bielfeldt, General Editor

On the Eruption of Antisemitism/Anti-Judaism on University and College Campuses in the Wake of Hamas' Terrorist Attack on Israel and Israel's Declaration of War on Hamas:

A Declaration

John Rasmussen

WE STIPULATE THE FOLLOWING FACTS—

- On October 7, 2023, the terrorist organization known as *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya* (HAMAS) [the Islamic Resistance Movement], without warning, launched a coordinated surprise attack on Israeli civilians from the Gaza Strip, massacring over 1200 non-combatants of whom at least 31 were Americans.¹

- The assault included the intentional and wanton slaughter of young people attending a peace concert, the butchering of families in their homes, the raping of women, both young and elderly, and the beheading and burning of infants and toddlers. In one case, a pregnant woman's belly was sliced open and the infant mercilessly ripped from her womb and murdered before the woman was executed.²
- During the assault, the terrorists kidnapped over 200 innocents and soldiers, of whom at least 13 were Americans, bringing them to Gaza as hostages.³
- In magnitude and brutality, the massacre of October 7 constitutes the greatest crime against the Jewish people since the Holocaust.⁴
- On October 8, the Israeli cabinet issued a formal declaration of war against Hamas followed by the formation of a unity government on October 11 to deal with the national emergency.⁵
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated the war mission as follows: "This is a war for our home. It must end with one thing—in *total victory*, and the *crushing and elimination of Hamas*."⁶
- While the Biden administration has stated that the United States unequivocally supports the right of Israel to protect its people, it urges her to obey the "Law of War," especially with respect to the *jus in bello* (justice in war) requirements of *discrimination* (between combatants and non-combatants) and *proportionality* (limiting the damage and casualties to the minimum required to accomplish the mission).⁷
- Almost immediately, as news of the massacre began to break, voices broke out in the United States and around the world celebrating the attack and blaming Israel. Cries of "From the river to the sea..." "Gas the Jews!" and the display of swastikas were heard and seen far and wide on American and European university and college campuses.⁸
- Answering the call of Khaled Mashal, former political bureau chairman of Hamas, for a global "Day of Jihad," anti-Jewish and antisemitic demonstrations have exploded in our universities and colleges across the length and breadth of our country under the slogan, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," replete with demonstration "toolkits" featuring silhouettes of Hamas paragliders and flags.⁹
- Jewish students fear for their lives. They are isolated, marginalized, and scapegoated in the very institutions in which they once felt a sense of belonging.¹⁰

- We acknowledge that: “Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.”¹¹

+ Before God (*Coram Deo*), “None is righteous, no not one” [Rom 3:10].

+ Before God, I must confess that I am the guilty one. I am Judas who betrayed Christ. I am Peter who denied him. I crucified him. I murdered God’s only begotten Son.

You must get this thought through your head and not doubt that you are the one who is torturing Christ thus, for your sins have truly wrought this... When you see the nails piercing Christ’s hands you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold the crown of thorns, you may rest assured that these are your evil thoughts etc.¹²

+ We name antisemitism/anti-Judaism¹³ as the primordial Adamic tactic of self-defense, of self-justification, of deflection of guilt. It is to scapegoat the Jews in order to escape the blame that belongs to me. It is to place the Jews under divine wrath, in order to deflect the curse that falls on me. It is to justify their exile and alienation from all peoples, to preserve my own standing. It is to caricature the Jew as the quintessential “Other,” as the infection from which the world needs to be inoculated. It is to add the crime of slander and false witness to the crime of murder.

+ We acknowledge that historically Christianity has been complicit in harboring antisemitism/anti-Judaism within itself, within its theology, preaching, and practice.¹⁴

- We acknowledge that though our works, statements, and judgments are devoid of righteousness before God, we are not thereby excused from our answerability before God and before humanity (*coram hominibus*) to bear witness against the evil of antisemitism/anti-Judaism as it manifests itself in our day. God himself thunders to Ezekiel:

If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning, ... that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness..., he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life [Ezek 3:18-19].

- Thus, we declare that though all our judgments are bankrupt before God, we are nevertheless called to testify before humanity, sinners to sinners, against the blight of antisemitism/anti-Judaism as it infects our present, culture, society, and world—to “sin boldly, but to believe more boldly still.”¹⁵
 - + We stand with those Christians throughout history who have harshly and forthrightly condemned the very antisemitism/anti-Judaism they found embedded in their midst.
 - + We stand with Israeli innocents and unequivocally condemn the barbaric, indiscriminate, terrorist attacks of Hamas upon men, women, children, and infants—the intentional slaughter of unarmed youth attending a peace concert, the kidnapping, burning, and decapitation of toddlers and infants, the butchering of entire families in their homes, the massacre of over 1200 human beings not as enemy combatants, but simply because they are Jews.
 - + We stand with our Jewish-American students and other citizens in universities and colleges across our country who are subjected to antisemitic/anti-Judaistic hate, intimidation, fear, and violence.
 - + We unequivocally condemn those who celebrate such hate in our student bodies but especially among those who incite, teach, promote, and indoctrinate it in the name of free speech and academic freedom, polluting the minds of the very young people who are entrusted to their guidance and instruction.

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS—

- We acknowledge that: “That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things that have actually happened [Rom 1:20].”¹⁶
 - + We deny that the inscrutable, unpreached will of God in his divine hiddenness (*Deus Absconditus*) can be divined in nature or history by any method devised by human beings.
 - + We reject the sort of revisionist historicism taking place today that claims to be able to interpret historical events from a position outside of history uncompromised by the interpreter’s existence within history.
 - + We reject the sort of revisionist historicism taking place today that claims to be able to interpret all historical events from within a

closed meta-narrative of the antithesis between the oppressor and the oppressed.

- + We name such revisionist historicism as a form of idolatry that arrogates to the interpreter a divine objectivity that belongs to God alone.
 - To say to the United Nations Security Council that while one deplores the bloodshed of the Hamas incursion while simultaneously justifying it by saying that it “did not happen in a vacuum” is to participate in such idolatry.¹⁷
 - For the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA to “[denounce] the egregious acts of Hamas” while simultaneously “calling out” “the power exerted against the Palestinian people [by Israel] ... as a root cause of what we are witnessing” is to participate in such idolatry.¹⁸
- + We reject the notion that, apart from revelation, there is any time within the dynamics of history that we can claim as *normative*.
 - Thus, while some might say that root cause of the present horror is Israel’s acceptance of UN Resolution 181 in 1947 and subsequent declaration of independence which resulted in the displacement of the Palestinians,¹⁹ it might just as well be said that—
 - The root cause for the necessity of a Jewish state was the Holocaust... which exposed, once and for all, the final trajectory of the diaspora, and that,
 - This trajectory resulted from centuries of successive imperial domination, persecution, and displacement (i.e., Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Macedonian, Roman, Ottoman etc.) of the Jewish people and that therefore the establishment of Israel was fully justified.
- + We declare that it is a “fool’s errand” to attempt to divine from any subjective narrative of the facts of history definitive root causes or justifications regarding contemporary events; such attempts inevitably lead to antinomies of infinite regression (“turtles all the way down”).²⁰
- Consequently, we declare that the judgement of whether the attacks upon the citizens of Israel and the condemnation of Israel around the world as being motivated by anti-Judaism or antisemitism/anti-Judaism is logically independent from the question of whether the Jewish state ought to have been created where it is in 1948.

- We condemn as antisemitism/anti-Judaism every attempt to justify the October 7th massacre by referring to the sort of so-called “root causes” and “justifications” cited above.

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS—

- We acknowledge that: “[That person] deserves to be called a theologian who comprehends the visible and manifold things of God seen through suffering and the cross.”²¹
 - + Luther says, “. . . [I]t is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross.”²²
 - + Concerning the Jews, Luther says—
 - “If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian.”²³
 - “If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles.”²⁴
 - “When we are inclined to boast of our position, we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are, as St. Paul says in Romans 9[:5].”²⁵
 - “To no nation among the Gentile has [God] granted so high an honor as he has to the Jews. For among the Gentiles there have been raised up no patriarchs, no apostles, no prophets, indeed, very few genuine Christians either.”²⁶
- We profess that according to the flesh: “The law came through Moses [Israel’s offspring]; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ [Israel’s offspring]” [John 1:18]; therefore—
 - + *In Christ*, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile; we are *one in him*.
 - + *Apart from Christ* there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile; we are *one in sin*.
 - + *As created in Christ’s image* [John 1:3] there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile; we are *one in our common humanity*.

- We declare that—
 - + Antisemitism/anti-Judaism is not merely racial hate; it is hatred of Christ himself, the Jew, who was descended from David according to the flesh [Rom 1:3].
 - + We recognize the crucifixion of Christ here and now in the humiliation and shaming of and the violence against the Jewish people in our nation and around the world.
 - + We hear the ancient cry of “Crucify him! Crucify him!” in the present-day cries of “From the river to the sea...” and “Gas the Jews!” and the celebration of Hamas terrorists.

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS—

- We acknowledge that: “The theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. The theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.”²⁷
- We will call the thing what it actually is by declaring that—
 - The root cause of slaughtering innocent people, raping women, beheading babies, and burning people to death is the coldness of the human heart. It is SIN that causes us to dehumanize the Other, to objectify them and not look at their face and eyes when killing them mercilessly. Not everything is structural. Some things are the responsibility of individuals who perpetrate them.²⁸
- We will call the thing what it actually is by declaring that the Hamas massacre of October 7—
 - + is terrorism, a hate crime, a genocide, a crime against humanity; it is not a legitimate or justifiable act of war.
 - A justifiable act of war (*jus ad bellum*)²⁹ is conducted *by* a legitimate authority, *for* a just cause, and *with* right intention.
 - Hamas is a usurper of authority in Gaza; its cause is the elimination of the Jewish people “from the river to the sea”—and beyond; its intention is to prevent any peace from being established in the region.
 - The Israeli government is the legitimate authority of an internationally recognized nation-state; its cause is to protect its people from death and destruction; its intention is to reach an end-state in which peace is the status quo.

+ is terrorism, a hate crime, a genocide, a crime against humanity; it is not just war fighting.

- Justice in war (*jus in bello*), i.e., just war fighting, is conducted with *discrimination* between combatants and non-combatants and with *proportionality*, i.e., keeping the lethality employed to the minimum necessary to accomplish the mission.

Hamas directly violates both principles by intentionally targeting non-combatants with gratuitous and unnecessary cruelty, using hostages and Palestinian non-combatants as human shields, and preventing at gunpoint those whom it claims to represent from obtaining access to safe zones and their access corridors.

The Israeli government bends over backwards to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants (e.g., creating safe zones and corridors with tactical pauses, using precision ordinance, warning of imminent attacks, delaying the ground war, striving to avoid collateral damage and unnecessary bloodshed to the extent possible, etc.).

- We will call the thing what it actually is by recognizing no moral equivalency between Hamas and Israel with respect to either the classic just war tradition³⁰ or Article 16 (Concerning Public Order and Civil Government) of the Augsburg Confession.³¹

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS—

- We acknowledge that: “We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.”³²

+ With Luther, we acknowledge the Satanic nature of this bondage—

Scripture sets before us a man who is not only bound, wretched, captive, sick, and dead, but who, through the operation of Satan, his lord, adds to his other miseries that of blindness, so that he believes himself to be free, happy, possessed of liberty and ability, whole and alive. Satan knows that if men knew their own misery, he could keep no man in his kingdom.³³

+ With Bonhoeffer, we acknowledge the mindlessness of this bondage—

Stupidity (*Dummheit*)³⁴ is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice... Against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons

fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgments simply need not be believed—in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical—and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person...is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, become dangerous by going on the attack.... Never ... will we try to persuade the stupid person with reasons, for it is useless and dangerous.³⁵

+ With Bonhoeffer, we acknowledge the mob-mentality of this bondage—

We note...that people who...live in solitude manifest this defect less frequently than individuals or groups...inclined or condemned to sociability. And so it would seem that stupidity is perhaps less a psychological than a sociological problem. Upon closer observation, it becomes apparent that every strong upsurge of power in the public sphere, be it of a political or a religious nature, infects a large part of humankind with stupidity.³⁶

+ With Bonhoeffer, we acknowledge the diabolical nature of this bondage—

The process at work here is not that particular human capacities, for instance, the intellect, suddenly atrophy or fail. Instead, it seems that under the overwhelming impact of rising power, humans are deprived of their inner independence... The fact that the stupid person is often stubborn must not blind us to the fact that he is not independent. In conversation with him, one virtually feels that *one is dealing not at all with a person, but with slogans, catchwords, and the like that have taken possession of him. He is under a spell*, blinded, misused, and abused in his very being. Having thus become a mindless tool, the stupid person will also be capable of any evil and at the same time incapable of seeing that it is evil. ...*[O]nly an act of liberation, not instruction, can overcome stupidity.*³⁷

• We declare that—

+ The explosion of antisemitism/anti-Judaism on our campuses, on our streets, in the halls of our government manifests the mindlessness, the mob-mentality, and the diabolical nature of “stupidity” (*Dummheit*) in our midst.

+ Not reasons, not instruction, not appeals to decency, but only an act of liberation can overcome the antisemitic stupidity that possesses our nation and world.

- + “We must come to terms with the fact that...a genuine internal liberation becomes possible only when external liberation has preceded it.”³⁸
- + Therefore, external sanctions, coercions, and prosecutions under the law, i.e., God’s left-handed rule, must be employed both by the civil authorities and especially institutions of higher learning against those who are caught up in such madness.
- + Therefore, those who encourage, indoctrinate, incite, or facilitate such madness must bear the most severe external sanctions, coercions, and prosecutions as the ones who cause God’s “little ones to fall” [Matt 18:6]; they are the “tyrannical despisers of human beings” who “[consider] the people stupid and they become stupid.”³⁹

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS—

- We believe, teach, and confess that in a time of persecution [such as this], when an unequivocal confession of faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to our opponents in such...matters. As the Apostle wrote, “Stand firm in the freedom for which Christ has set us free...” [Gal 5:1].⁴⁰
 - + While some may argue that “technically” we do not find ourselves in a “state of confession” (*status confessionis*) since the state (*polititia*) is not *directly*, i.e., by force of arms, requiring us, the church (*ecclesia*), to teach antisemitism/anti-Judaism, this “technicality” must not be used to justify our remaining silent quietists in the face of manifest evil.
 - + There are countless *indirect* ways and means by which the state is willing and able to coerce our churches and church-related institutions.
- We believe, teach, and confess that “...in such [situations] it is no longer indifferent matters [*adiaphora*] that are at stake. The truth of the gospel and Christian freedom are at stake.”⁴¹
 - + Our Christian freedom before God (*coram Deo*) by faith as “perfectly free lord[s] of all, subject to none,”⁴² is at stake.
 - + Since the concrete expression of our freedom before God is always expressed concretely in being “perfectly dutiful servant[s] of all [in love], subject to all,”⁴³ our freedom before humanity (*coram hominibus*) is at stake.

- + As our President Dennis Bielfeldt avers, “We are theologians of the cross in a situation of the persecution of our neighbor.”
- + Therefore, we declare that while our situation may not meet a “canon lawyer’s” standard for being formally declared a “state of confession” (*status confessionis*), it is no “matter of indifference” (*adiaphora*) either. We cannot stand idle in our faith as if it were. Freedom *itself* is at issue!

AS THEOLOGIANS OF THE CROSS IN THE PRESENT CRISIS—

- We declare that “in [these] matters we can make no concessions but must offer an unequivocal confession and suffer whatever God sends and permits the enemies of his Word to inflict on us.”⁴⁴
- We don the yellow Star of David... We stand with the despised and hated. We ask God to repent us of our sinfulness and to situate us in our proper place, in our respective stations and callings. We pray that in those stations and callings he would make us of use to our neighbors, that he would place us in solidarity, as exiles, with our Jewish brothers and sisters, indeed with all our fellow human beings, without boundaries, praying for God’s mercy for friends and enemies. In the name of Jesus Christ, the despised and hated Jew, our Lord. Amen.

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Notes

1. Daniel Byman, Alexander Palmer, Catrina Doxsee, Mackenzie Holtz, and Delaney Duff, Commentary: “ Hamas’s October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data” (December 19, 2023), *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data> [Accessed January 2, 2024].
2. Lucy Williamson, “Israel Gaza: Hamas raped and mutilated women on 7 October, BBC hears,” (December 5, 2023), BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67629181> [accessed on January 2, 2024]. See also Noëlle Quéniwet, “Israel-Hamas Symposium – Sexual Violence on October 7, 2023,” *Lieber Institute for Law & Warfare at West Point*, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/sexual-violence-october-7/> [Accessed, January 2, 2024].
3. Barak Ravid, Erin Doherty, “31 Americans killed in Israel, others held hostage by Hamas in Gaza,” *Axios* (October 17, 2023), <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/08/hamas-attack-israel-americans-killed-hotages-gaza> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
4. Byman, “ Hamas’s October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data.”

5. "Israel's parliament approves national unity government," *Reuters* (October 12, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israels-parliament-approves-national-unity-government-2023-10-12/> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
6. *Ibid.*
7. "Readout of President Biden's Call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel," *The White House* (October 29, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/29/readout-of-president-bidens-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-7/> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
8. Kevin McGill, Stephen Smith, and Collin Binkley, "Israel-Hamas war has led to demonstrations on college campuses," *AP News* (November 15, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinian-hamas-college-protest-tulane-29dca6e670639b73f5bfe7bfcf6befee> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
9. " Hamas Calls on the Entire Islamic Nation to Join the Jihad against Israel, Declares Friday, October 13, 2023 'Day of General Mobilization,' for *Al-Aqsa*," *Memri* (October 12, 2023), <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-calls-entire-islamic-nation-join-jihad-against-israel-declares-friday-october-13-2023> [Accessed January 8, 2024]. See also, Christ Nesi, "'Day of Jihad' protests draw tens of thousands around world as demonstrators clash with cops, burn US, Israel flags," *New York Post* (October 13, 2023), <https://nypost.com/2023/10/13/anti-israel-protesters-burn-flags-fight-police-in-global-day-of-jihad/> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
10. "ADL survey finds Jewish students feel significantly less safe since Oct. 7; more than 75 percent are dissatisfied with their university's response to antisemitism," *Anti-Defamation League* (November 29, 2023), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/nearly-three-quarters-jewish-students-experienced-or-witnessed-antisemitism> [Accessed January 8, 2024].
11. Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* [Thesis 11] (1518); *Luther's Works*, American ed., 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 31:48; hereafter cited as *LW*.
12. Luther, *A Meditation on Christ's Passion* (1519); *LW* 42:9.
13. The use of the word pair 'antisemitism/anti-Judaism' requires some explanation. For the purposes of this statement the word pair accomplishes two objectives: 1) it distinguishes the hatred of Jews as a racial group (antisemitism) from the hatred of Jews as a religious group (anti-Judaism); 2) it recognizes that despite the distinction between them, anti-Judaistic tendencies tend to presage antisemitism and antisemitism inevitably employs the language of anti-Judaism to express its racism. The distinction is historically important because the term 'antisemitism' tends to be a twentieth century term while anti-Judaism has a millennia spanning history. Indeed, Hannah Arendt pushes this historical distinction to its limit: "Antisemitism, a secular nineteenth-century ideology—which in name, though not in argument, was unknown before the 1870s—and religious Jew-hatred, inspired by the mutually hostile antagonism of two conflicting creeds, are obviously not the same; and even the extent to which the former derives its argument and emotional appeal from the latter is open to question" (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "Preface to Part One: Antisemitism," [New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1976], xi). While I tend to emphasize the "*communicatio*" between them more than Arendt, the use of the word pair gives both perspectives their due. For a much more comprehensive analysis of this matter, see Jeanne Favret-Saada, "A Fuzzy Distinction: Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism

(An Excerpt from *Le Judaïsme et ses Juifs*),” trans. Eléonore Rimbault, *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4/3 (2014): 335–340.

From a Christian theological perspective, a further distinction must also be made. To confess Jesus as the Messiah and to proclaim that our justification before God is by faith alone apart from the works of the law is not to be equated with anti-Judaistic hatred of Jews as a religious group. On the other hand, to name the Jews as “Christ-killers”—placing them under God’s wrath is to be equated as such. Paul Hinlicky offers a helpful distinction with respect to this matter between “popular [Christianity],” or perhaps better, “mob Christianity” and “doctrinal Christianity.” He writes: “Many Christians today have learned from the Holocaust to read the Bible historically and to appreciate the difference between doctrinal and popular Christianity. As a result they have widely repudiated not only anti-Semitism, but more profoundly the anti-Judaism that shadows the Christian tradition” (Hinlicky, “What is Anti-Semitism?” Roanoke College, Op-Ed). He points to courageous theologians such as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who proclaimed that “Jesus Christ *is* (not *was*!) a Jew,” so that “whoever opposes the Jew (today!) opposes God” (Ibid.). “They could cogently make such a distinction,” he avers, concluding that “In spite of the hold over the mob which the charge of ‘deicide’ has had, it represents a fall from normative Christian theology, which holds that ‘I, I crucified the Lord’” (Ibid.).

14. The Lutheran tradition, of course, is not exempted from this complicity. It is particularly important, in light of the many failures of the evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany and elsewhere during the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, that those who claim to be theologians of the cross acknowledge this, and issue their testimonies not as the self-righteous judge but as the publican of Jesus’ parable— “God be merciful to me, a sinner” [Luke 18:13]. For a comprehensive account and assessment of these failures, see Paul R. Hinlicky, *Before Auschwitz: What Christian Theology Must Learn from the Rise of Nazism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013).
15. The entire citation reads as follows: “If you are a preacher of Grace, then preach a true, not a fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and *sin boldly, but believe* and rejoice in Christ *more boldly still*. For he is victorious over sin, death, and the world. As long as we are here, we have to sin. This life is not the dwelling place of righteousness but, as Peter says, we look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. It is enough that by the riches of God’s glory we have come to know the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.... Do you think that the purchase price that was paid for the redemption of our sins by so great a Lamb is too small? Pray boldly—you too are a mighty sinner” (Luther, *Letter to Philip Melancthon* [Wartburg, August 1, 1521], No. 91; *LW* 48:282; emphasis added).
16. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* [Thesis 19] (1518); *LW* 31:52.
17. Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres’ remarks to the Security Council, October 23, 2023. A more complete citation of his remarks reads as follows: “I am deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza. Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law... I have condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October act of terror by Hamas in Israel... [However], it is important to also recognize the attack by Hamas *did not happen in a vacuum*. The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation. They have seen their lands steadily devoured by

settlements and plagued by violence, their economies stifled, their people displaced and their homes demolished. Their hopes for a political solution to their plight have been vanishing” (Antonio Guterres, Remarks to UN Security Council, October 23, 2023, *Israel National News*, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/379091> [accessed January 2, 2024]; emphasis added).

18. Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton’s statement on the Israel-Hamas War, October 13, 2023. A more complete citation of her remarks reads as follows: “As Lutherans, we are accustomed to holding tension between two truths. Thus the ELCA denounces the egregious acts of Hamas, acts that have led to unspeakable loss of life and hope. At the same time the ELCA denounces the indiscriminate retaliation of Israel against the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim. For the past week we have borne witness to the horrors of the escalating crisis between Israel and Hamas. We also watch a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza as Israel blocks food, water, fuel, and medical supplies and as airstrikes continue to cause unbearable civilian casualties ahead of a just-announced ground assault... *We must also call a thing a thing. The power exerted against all Palestinian people — through the occupation, the expansion of settlements and the escalating violence—must be called out as a root cause of what we are witnessing*” (Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, “Statement on the Israel-Hamas War,” *ELCA News and Events* (October 13, 2023), https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/8207?_ga=2.177148326.2036997126.1704493285-1959082996.1704493285 [accessed January 2, 2024]; emphasis added).

19. The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a proposal by the United Nations that recommended a partitioning of Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate. On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted the Plan as Resolution 181. The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states linked economically and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings. The Jewish negotiators accepted the plan; the Arab negotiators did not. In accordance with its acceptance, Israel declared its independence which resulted in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in which portions of Mandatory Palestine reserved for the Arab state by Resolution 181 were occupied by Israel (“UN Resolution 181: Israeli-Palestinian History,” *Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Resolution-181> [accessed January 2, 2024]).

20. “Turtles all the way down” is an expression of the problem of infinite regress. The saying alludes to the mythological idea of a World Turtle that supports a flat Earth on its back. It suggests that this turtle rests on the back of an even larger turtle, which itself is part of a column of increasingly larger turtles that continues indefinitely (“Turtles All the Way Down,” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turtles_all_the_way_down [accessed January 2, 2024]).

21. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* [Thesis 20] (1518); *LW* 31:52.

22. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* [Proof of Thesis 20] (1518); *LW* 31:52.

23. Luther, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523); *LW* 45:200.

It is true, of course, that Luther also penned the infamous treatise, *On the Jews and their Lies* (1543) which descended into a virulent anti-Judaism (*LW* 47:137-306). The contrast between 1523 and 1543 is jarring, to say the least. The treatise caused widespread dismay among the Jews of Luther’s time, but also among Protestant colleagues such as Melanch-

thon, Osiander, Bucer, and Bullinger. While there is no space in this declaration for a more extensive discussion of this matter, it is important for us to acknowledge Luther's failure and sinfulness in this regard. It is also important to make the attempt, at least, to understand the contrast.

Gerhard Forde, in his excellent essay, "Luther and the Jews," *Lutheran Quarterly* 27/2 (Summer, 2013): 125-142, suggests that Luther's failure is that he fell short in applying the very evangelical perspective to his Jewish neighbors that had freed him. "If Luther is to be charged with something in this matter, it would seem to me that it would have to be that he did not work through sufficiently some of his own reformation principles in this regard. He did not hold to or work out sufficiently his own premise that God in his wrath is indeed hidden in nature and history and that one cannot so easily assign it to one group in distinction from another" ("Luther and the Jews," 139). In this regard, he became a theologian of glory, "[calling] evil good and good evil" (see *Heidelberg Declaration* (Thesis 21), below, 9, n. 17).

In the end, there is only Christ and him crucified—by me. Forde provides poignant and wise counsel and testimony regarding this, the heart of the Christian witness: "I cannot, of course, speak for others on this, but it seems to me that it belongs to the very essence of a faith founded on justification by grace, that there is no distinction, and that I am called upon to preach Christ crucified, not by Jews, but by us all, and thus to proclaim him to all. It is true, of course, that the Jews form a quite special case, since we share a large common heritage. But speaking for myself at least, if I thought there was something about Christ that would hurt the Jews or rob them of their heritage, I don't think I could preach him to anyone (Ibid., 140-141).

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 201.

26. Ibid.

27. Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* (Thesis 21); *LW* 31:53.

28. President of the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), Dr. Dennis Bielfeldt, PhD, "Response to Bishop Eaton's statement on the Israel-Hamas War," Facebook post, October 24, 2023 (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100006370534681> [accessed January 2, 2024]).

29. *Jus ad bellum* refers to the justification for war and *jus in bello* refers to just war-making during war. Robert Kolb states that these terms are artificial constructions that were coined during the time of the League of Nations and have only been used since the Second World War. They are nevertheless the conventional terms employed by the academy with respect to the Just War theory and the Law of War. Robert Kolb, "Origin of the Twin Terms *Jus ad Bellum/Jus in Bello*," *International Review of the Red Cross* 320 (1997): 553-562.

30. See James Turner Johnson, "Just War as It Was and Is," *First Things* 149 (January 2005): 14-24.

31. See Leif Grane, "Article 16: 'Civil Affairs,'" in *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 166-177.

32. *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 56.

33. Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), trans. Packer & Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), 162; cf. *LW* 33:130.

34. The English translation of “*Dummheit*” as “Stupidity” fails to convey the sense of hypnotic numbness to reality and vulnerability to seduction evoked by the German word.
35. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “On Stupidity,” in *Letters and Papers from Prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Works*, English ed., 17 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996-2014), 8:43; hereafter cited as *DBWE*.
36. Ibid.
37. *DBWE* 8:44; emphasis added.
38. Ibid.
39. Bonhoeffer, “Ethics as Formation,” in *Ethics; DBWE* 6:86.
40. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 516.6; hereafter cited as BC.
41. Ibid.
42. Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520); *LW* 31:344.
43. Ibid.
44. BC, 516.6.