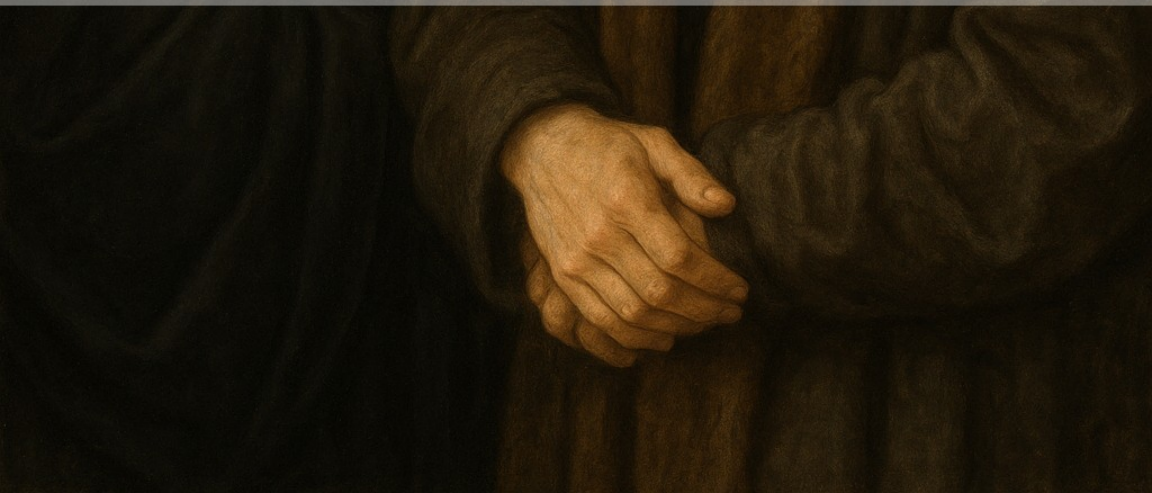
THE UNCLEAN ROOTS of Modern Protestantism



The Unclean Roots of Modern Protestantism

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The Cross is not enforced with a sword, and the Kingdom of God is not advanced by law, but by grace.

An Eastern Orthodox Witness to the Atrocities of Luther and Calvin, the Absurdity of Vicarious Apology, and the Idolatry of Men

From the vantage point of the Orthodox Church—the Body of Christ unbroken since Pentecost—the Protestant Reformation certainly does not stand as a renewal of the Gospel, but as a violent rupture from the life-giving Tradition of the Apostles. The schism that began in 1517 with Martin Luther did not liberate the Church; it fragmented her further. It did not restore Christian unity; it fostered theological chaos and licentious individualism. The Orthodox Church, as the keeper of Holy Tradition, observes with grief the moral incoherence and spiritual pride that have often accompanied the cult-like veneration of Protestantism's founding figures – Martin Luther and John Calvin.

This tractate will examine, through the lens of Holy Orthodoxy, the historical and moral collapse represented by these two men – their persecution of Catholics, their inexcusable hatred toward the Jewish people, their theological tyranny, and the modern-day scandal of those who dare to call themselves by their names. It will also expose the false notion that one can apologise on behalf of another—especially the dead—and demonstrate the bankruptcy of such efforts.

—Fr. Charles of Jesus and Mary

The Shameful Record of Martin Luther

Martin Luther is often hailed in Protestant circles as a brave monk who stood against the corruption of Rome and recovered the so-called "pure Gospel." In sermons and textbooks across the Protestant world, he is portrayed as a solitary hero confronting tyranny, a new Elijah calling a corrupt Church to repentance. Yet from the perspective of the Orthodox Church—rooted in the unbroken continuity of apostolic teaching and sacramental life—Luther is not a restorer, but a destroyer. He is not regarded as a holy reformer, but as a man whose private delusions and unchecked pride brought incalculable suffering upon Christendom. The legacy he inaugurated is not that of gospel clarity, but of theological anarchy, institutional fragmentation, and spiritual violence.

Luther's personal spiritual crisis, while sincere, led him not to repentance and deeper communion with the Church, but to revolt. Rather than work within the Church in a spirit of humility and obedience—as so many saints did in times of moral laxity—he tore asunder the visible unity of Christ's Body in Western Europe. And worse, he established a precedent whereby private interpretation, rebellion against spiritual authority, and divisive polemic became celebrated virtues. In this, Luther's role cannot be viewed as isolated. He bears direct responsibility for initiating an ecclesiastical wildfire that still burns today, centuries later, in the form of tens of thousands of conflicting Protestant sects, all proclaiming divergent "truths" while claiming fidelity to the same Bible.

Hatred Toward the Catholic Church

The rhetoric employed by Luther against the Church of his ordination was not that of a reforming son correcting his mother; it was the language of a bitter rebel disowning her entirely. His rejection was not nuanced nor restrained. It was vitriolic and total. Consider his infamous denunciation: "I

believe the pope is the Antichrist… The papacy is nothing else but the kingdom of Babylon, and the violence of Nimrod the mighty hunter." (*Against the Roman Papacy: An Institution of the Devil*, 1545)

Such a statement cannot be seen as theological hyperbole. It is a wholesale demonisation of the ecclesiastical institution through which he had received baptism, ordination, and education. His target was not simply papal corruption or doctrinal error—both of which had been addressed by saints before him without recourse to schism—but the very existence and legitimacy of the Church herself.

Indeed, Luther advocated not healing but destruction. He rejoiced in the tearing down of monasteries, the desecration of altars, the whitewashing of sacred icons, and the suppression of religious orders. In his tract Against the Roman Papacy, he calls the Church "the abominable whore of Babylon" and goes so far as to suggest that faithful Catholics are not Christians at all. He wrote: "Whoever wants to be saved must avoid the Roman church as the devil's own plague." (WA 53, 323)

These are not the words of a man seeking true spiritual reform; they are the words of one possessed by hatred and fuelled by self-righteous zeal.

Luther's incitement bore immediate fruit in blood and chaos. During the German Peasants' War (1524–1525), when the common people, inspired by his language of liberty, rose up against their overlords, Luther initially sympathised with their grievances. But once their revolt threatened the social order upon which his movement depended, he turned on them with savagery. In his pamphlet Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants, he wrote: "Let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab [them], secretly or openly… There is nothing

more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel." (WA 18, 357)

This is a remarkable reversal, one that reveals not only Luther's inconsistency but his deeper allegiance—not to the Gospel or to Christ, but to political expedience and the preservation of his own power.

Nor was this merely theoretical. Thousands of peasants were slaughtered, and Luther's words were used to justify the brutal suppression of the very people who had looked to him as a liberator. In the Orthodox view, such betrayal is not incidental; it is symptomatic of a spirituality unmoored from humility, prayer, and ecclesial discernment. It reflects what the holy fathers warn against—zeal without knowledge (*cf.* Romans 10:2), divorced from the sobering ascetical path of the Church.

Furthermore, Luther openly rejected apostolic tradition, the Holy Mysteries, and the sacramental priesthood. He dismantled the sacramental world-view of the Church and replaced it with a rationalised, legalistic framework of justification and imputed righteousness—concepts foreign to the spiritual language of the Fathers. His reinterpretation of salvation led to a truncation of Christian life itself, reducing it to intellectual assent and legal pardon rather than transformative communion with God.

The Orthodox Church cannot recognise in such a man the likeness of a saint or the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of his revolt—division, iconoclasm, moral confusion, and anti-sacramentalism—bear no resemblance to the Church of Pentecost, the Church of the Cappadocian Fathers, or the Church of the martyrs. His hatred for the Catholic Church was not borne of a desire for sanctity, but of pride, resentment, and despair. He did not rebuild; he demolished.

In this, the Orthodox witness must be unwavering. Martin Luther was no reformer. He was a schismatic, and his legacy is not one of renewal but of rupture.

Luther's War on the Jews

The Eastern Orthodox Church, while preserving the fullness of Christian truth, does not subscribe to the persecution or hatred of the Jewish people. Though we reject the theological errors of Rabbinic Judaism and maintain that the Messiah has come in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we recognise the Jews as bearers of a sacred history. Saint Paul himself writes with sorrow and longing for the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh (*cf.* Romans 9:1–5), and the Fathers of the Church—though sometimes severe in their polemics—do not advocate violence against the Jewish people. The Orthodox ethos is one of humility, sobriety, and the constant awareness of our own need for repentance. Never is hatred a Christian virtue.

Against this sacred backdrop, the writings of Martin Luther appear not only jarring but diabolical. His 1543 treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies* is not simply misguided or impassioned—it is a calculated manifesto of absolute ungodly hatred. It is a document whose venom continues to stain the pages of history with blood. It is astonishing that anyone would speak in such a way, much less a man regarded as a "hero" of Christian renewal.

In this treatise, Luther writes with revolting vitriol: "First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed... Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds... Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more... Fifthly, safe-conduct on the highways should be abolished completely for the Jews...

Sixthly, usury should be prohibited to them, and all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and kept for safekeeping... Seventhly, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the axe, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and the spindle, and let them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow." (WA 53, 523–529)

Luther does not couch his recommendations in abstract theology or generalised critique. He calls for specific and systematic acts of cruelty – arson, exile, book-burning, economic disenfranchisement, and forced labour. His language is not spiritual exhortation but incitement to state-sponsored terror.

This is not a solitary outburst. It represents a consistent trajectory in Luther's later writings. Having once hoped that the Jews would convert to his perverted version of the Gospel, and having been disappointed in their refusal to do so, he turned against them with ferocious rage. In another work from the same year, Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of Christ, he referred to the Jews as "a base, whoring people, that is, no people of God... Their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be counted as filth." (WA 53, 489)

The Orthodox Church recognises that such speech is not at all inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is not prophetic; it is satanic. The Lord Himself wept over Jerusalem. He never called for the burning of synagogues. The Apostle Paul endured stoning and imprisonment at the hands of some of his Jewish brethren, yet still affirmed, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Romans 10:1)

In contrast, Luther prayed not for their conversion but for their eradication. He did not plead for their illumination, but

for their humiliation. His failure was not merely doctrinal; it was moral.

The consequences of Luther's anti-Semitic vitriol would echo far beyond his time. In the twentieth century, the architects of the Nazi regime found in Luther an ideological ancestor. His writings were distributed and cited as justification for the Reich's persecution of the Jews. In 1933, on Luther's birthday, the German Protestant Church declared him "the greatest German of all time." His book *On the Jews and Their Lies* was republished by Nazi propagandists and distributed by the thousands. A 1936 Nazi pamphlet entitled *Martin Luther über die Juden: Weg mit ihnen!* ("Martin Luther on the Jews: Away with Them!") drew directly from his writings.

As Orthodox Christians, we must state plainly that it is not sufficient to distance oneself from this rhetoric while continuing to venerate the man who authored it. One cannot simultaneously praise Luther as a liberator and excuse his desire to extinguish an entire people's dignity. Nor is it enough to claim, as some Protestants do, that "he was a man of his time." There were many men in his time—and before and after—who resisted such hatred. The Orthodox Church, persecuted though she was, did not produce such filth from her saints.

What we see in Luther's invective is not a man sanctified by suffering or purified by prayer. We see a man unmoored from the ascetical life of the Church, puffed up with his own intellect, and embittered by rejection. His words breathe not the peace of Christ but the rage of the flesh.

The patristic witness is quite clear on this matter. Hatred is antithetical to holiness. Saint John Chrysostom, though himself often misquoted by critics of Orthodoxy for his polemical sermons against Jewish error, never called for the destruction of synagogues, homes, or sacred texts. His

intention was spiritual correction, not physical extermination. Furthermore, the Orthodox Church has always contextualised such patristic writings within the broader ethic of love, repentance, and respect for the human person.

In stark contrast, Luther's writings present no such context—no theological nuance, no pastoral concern, no Christian compassion. They are, simply put, a manifesto of extreme hatred. That so many Protestant denominations today can read these words and still name their ecclesial identity after such a man is a moral scandal. It is a stain not only on Protestantism but on the public conscience of Christendom.

It should be understood that a denomination or sect which continues to celebrate the memory of Martin Luther without full and public repudiation of his wicked exhortations toward the Jews has no right to claim moral authority. And any individual who dares to call himself a "Lutheran" while defending, minimising, or ignoring these words allies himself —knowingly or unknowingly—with one of the most shameful legacies in Christian history.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20)

Luther's pen dripped with hatred and blood. His legacy must be judged not by the myths of Protestant imagination, but by the fruits of his actual writings—fruits that reek not of Gospel joy, but of sulphur and blood.

John Calvin—The Tyrant of Geneva

If Martin Luther's legacy is one marked by tempestuous rage, vulgar invective, and theological instability, John Calvin's reputation is characterised by cold-blooded precision, calculated authoritarianism, and the erection of a theocratic system cloaked in doctrinal purity. He is often revered in Reformed circles as a great exegete, a man of logic and intellect, whose vision of the Church restored order and sound doctrine. But from the perspective of Holy Orthodoxy, what Calvin accomplished in Geneva was not a reformation, but a formal codification of tyranny—an anti-ecclesiastical machine dressed in religious garments and enforced by civil sword.

Geneva, under Calvin, became less a city of God and more a laboratory of ecclesiastical absolutism. It was not holiness that ruled there, but suspicion, control, and the ever-tightening grasp of a man who conflated his own authority with that of divine law. His system bore none of the freedom, beauty, or mystical awe that marks the Church of the Fathers. Instead, it imposed a cold religiosity that reduced the mystery of salvation to legal decrees and God's mercy to an arbitrary decree of election. Grace became mechanical. Worship became sterile. And conscience was monitored not by a spiritual father, but by the enforcers of the Genevan Consistory.

The Death of Servetus—The Mask Torn Off

Among the most damning indictments of Calvin's legacy is the judicial murder of Michael Servetus, a Spanish theologian, physician, and polymath. Servetus was a controversial figure who held views that were undeniably heretical. He denied the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, rejected the practice of infant baptism, and advanced what he believed to be a purer form of Christianity based on a unitarian reading of the Scriptures.

However, heresy—no matter how serious—has never warranted execution in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The

Church anathematises heresy, yes; she prays for the repentance of the heretic, yes; but she does not burn him alive. Nowhere in the history of the Orthodox Church does one find a precedent for executing those who err in doctrine. Correction is medicinal, not punitive. Judgment belongs to God, not to ecclesiastical tribunals wielding the sword of Caesar. Yet in Calvin's Geneva, such mercy was not to be found.

When Servetus, fleeing Catholic authorities, made the fatal mistake of entering Calvin's jurisdiction, he was quickly recognised and arrested. Calvin had been corresponding with him for years, and the tension between the two had already reached a boiling point. Calvin had made his intentions known in writing as early as 1546. "If he [Servetus] comes, I shall never let him go out alive, if my authority has weight." (Calvin to Farel, 13 February 1546)

This chilling statement was definitely not an idle threat. Servetus was imprisoned, tried, and condemned. The trial itself was marked by Calvin's direct involvement. Though some have attempted to argue that Calvin lacked the civil authority to condemn Servetus, he wielded enormous influence over the Genevan Council and acted as both accuser and theological judge.

On 27 October 1553, Michael Servetus was burned alive in Geneva's Champel square. The execution was intentionally cruel. It consisted of a slow fire, and green wood used so that the flames would burn less intensely, prolonging the agony. Eyewitnesses reported that it took over half an hour for Servetus to die. He screamed in torment, clutching a copy of his book to his chest, and crying out, "Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me!"

The brutality of this act cannot be overstated. This was no moment of reluctant civic discipline. It was a calculated public

demonstration—a show of force. It was intended to make an example of Servetus, and by extension, all dissenters.

What is more grievous, however, is Calvin's unapologetic defence of this atrocity. In his *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*, Calvin writes, "Whoever shall maintain that it is wrong to put heretics and blasphemers to death will himself be judged as guilty."

Such language might be expected from a Roman emperor or a pagan tyrant, but not from one who claims to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. Here, Calvin's true nature is unmasked. For all his erudition, he was not a shepherd but a censor; not a spiritual physician, but a magistrate of death. There was no room for spiritual growth or divine mercy—only submission to Calvin's logic.

It must be noted that even some of Calvin's contemporaries were scandalised by the execution. Sebastian Castellio, himself a Reformer, rebuked Calvin in righteous outrage, writing, "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine—it is to kill a man."

The Orthodox Church agrees wholeheartedly. Even the most grievous heretic bears the image of God. Christ died for all, and the possibility of repentance must never be extinguished by the fires of dogmatic cruelty.

Calvin's defenders have often attempted to justify the execution of Servetus on the grounds of heresy being a civic crime, a danger to the peace of Christian society. But such arguments collapse under the weight of the Gospel itself. Christ did not command His disciples to establish a police state. He did not call for the eradication of error by violence, but for its defeat by truth and love. The true Church suffers persecution; she does not inflict it. In contrast, Calvin's Geneva was a place of secret informants, harsh punishments for

minor infractions, and a system that kept records on baptisms, marriages, absences from sermons, and even table prayers. Moral purity was enforced by coercion, and theological dissent was watched like treason. It was a spiritual panopticon, and Calvin was its architect.

The Orthodox Judgment

To this day, many Reformed Christians revere John Calvin as the great doctor of their tradition. His writings are studied, his doctrines systematised, and his name honoured. Yet the blood of Servetus cries out from the ground, a testimony against the myth of Calvin's sanctity.

The Orthodox Church, though doctrinally opposed to the views of Servetus, would never glorify the man who had him murdered. She would mourn his errors, but never celebrate his killer. It is a scandal beyond measure that modern Christians, in full knowledge of these events, still name their faith after this man.

Calvin did not merely misinterpret the Holy Scriptures. He used them as a justification for control, surveillance, and death. His "church" bore none of the healing, sacramental grace of the Body of Christ. It was a machine of ideology and punishment. And if this is what it means to be "Reformed," then let it be rejected by all who love Christ.

For as the Lord Himself declared: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6; *cf.* Matthew 9:13) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

Calvin showed no mercy. And the Orthodox Church cannot, and will not, sanctify such tyranny. The Orthodox Church finds such a regime wholly foreign to the spirit of the Gospel. Discipline, yes—but not surveillance. Correction, yes—but not terror. The Church of the Fathers calls men to repentance

through asceticism, prayer, fasting, and confession—not by threatening them with imprisonment. True spiritual transformation cannot be imposed by force or legislated by councils of the morally self-righteous. It is the work of grace in the heart of a willing soul, moved by love for God, not by fear of earthly tribunals.

Moreover, Calvin's Geneva lacked sacramental grace. There was no spiritual fatherhood, no inner healing through the Mysteries, no holy icons to draw the heart to heaven. There was only the preacher, the policies, and the watchman. The Church was reduced to an austere lecture hall, the liturgy replaced with didacticism, and the Holy Spirit confined within the parameters of Calvin's systematic theology.

Calvin's ideal society was not a community of saints, but a regimented collective in which suspicion reigned, joy was policed, and dissent was stamped out in the name of purity. It was, in a word, a spiritual dystopia. And while its defenders may continue to admire its "order" and "discipline," the Orthodox conscience recoils from such a model. The human soul is not a machine to be tuned by theological mechanics; it is a temple, a garden, and a battlefield. It must be cultivated with tenderness, not terror.

The Fathers of the Church—Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Isaac the Syrian—never advocated the use of state power to enforce ecclesiastical compliance. Even when bishops wielded immense influence, the emphasis was always on persuasion, charity, and the slow conversion of the heart. Holiness cannot be legislated. Grace cannot be coerced.

Calvin's Geneva is not a model for Christian civilisation. It is a cautionary tale—a reminder that when theology is stripped of mysticism, love, and humility, it becomes a weapon. And when ecclesiastical authority forgets the Cross and takes up the

sword, it ceases to reflect the Church of Christ and instead becomes an idol in its own image.

The Hollow Sound of Vicarious Apology

In recent decades, a number of Lutheran and Reformed ecclesial bodies have issued public apologies for the writings and deeds of their founders, particularly for Martin Luther's virulent anti-Semitism and John Calvin's role in the execution of Michael Servetus. Such gestures are often accompanied by formal statements, theological disclaimers, and commemorative services. They are presented to the world as acts of moral courage and institutional humility.

The Orthodox Church, observing these developments from the vantage point of her uninterrupted apostolic inheritance, regards them with mixed emotion. On the one hand, there is a measure of appreciation for the recognition that such acts—once lauded by Protestants as necessary or even virtuous—are now finally seen for what they were: unjust, cruel, and incompatible with the Gospel of Christ. Yet there is also deep sadness, for these apologies, however sincere they may appear, are not acts of repentance in the proper spiritual sense. They are declarations of disassociation, but they do not atone. They may attempt to cleanse the record, but they cannot heal the wound.

The Orthodox Church affirms that true repentance is always personal and existential. It is not performed by committees or approved by councils. It is a work of the heart before God, issuing forth from contrition, sorrow, and an appeal for divine mercy. The Holy Scriptures are unequivocal. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 50:17, LXX verse numbering)

No such contrition is possible on behalf of another, let alone one long deceased. One cannot repent for another man's sin. One cannot weep for another's pride and thereby cancel it. One cannot, by official proclamation, remove the eternal weight of guilt borne by souls who died unrepentant.

Martin Luther has not repented. His final years were marked not by sorrow or reconsideration, but by greater vitriol, especially against the Jews and the papacy. He did not retract *On the Jews and Their Lies*, nor did he express regret for calling for violence against Catholic priests and monastics. His death came without reconciliation or humility. Likewise, John Calvin, when confronted with opposition to the execution of Servetus, wrote with increased self-assurance and issued more rigorous defences of his actions. He died surrounded by admirers, unshaken in his belief that what he had done was righteous and just.

Thus, when modern Protestant denominations attempt to apologise on their behalf, they engage in a theological impossibility. Their resolutions, however well-meaning, do not erase the reality of un-repented sin. They cannot intercede for men whose souls are now in the hands of the living God. They cannot produce from dead bones the tears that were never wept.

The early Church knew the difference between penance and public disavowal. Even when Christians in later generations condemned the heresies of earlier figures, they did not pretend to undo their deeds. They wept for the confusion such men caused, but they did not offer apologies in their name. The Church Fathers never presumed to absolve Arius, Nestorius, or Apollinaris. They simply rejected their doctrines and reaffirmed the truth. They did not canonise them posthumously through the backdoor of historical revisionism.

What makes the apologies of modern Protestant churches particularly hollow is the continued reverence paid to the very men they are trying to distance themselves from. How can one apologise for Luther's hatred of the Jews and his incitement against the Catholic Church, and then proudly bear his name? How can a community condemn Calvin's hand in judicial murder and yet call itself "Calvinist" with pride? This is moral schizophrenia. It is to denounce the crime while building statues to the criminal. It is to curse the fruit while watering the tree.

Such duplicity renders the apology meaningless. It is not enough to say, "We no longer affirm what our founder said about this matter," while simultaneously upholding him as a spiritual authority, naming seminaries and churches after him, and spreading his doctrines with evangelical zeal. If the crime is serious enough to apologise for, the man who committed it is not worthy of reverence. And if he is worthy of reverence, then why apologise at all?

From the Orthodox standpoint, this reveals a deeper problem—the idolatry of founders. Protestantism, which often prides itself on rejecting human traditions, has created a substitute priesthood of reformers, whose writings and reputations are preserved with almost talismanic reverence. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others are cited as if they were apostles. Their failures are downplayed. Their sins are rationalised. Their critics are silenced. And even when their actions are acknowledged as shameful, their status remains intact. This is not repentance. It is whitewashing.

In Orthodoxy, even the greatest saints are not beyond criticism. We do not canonise men because they were perfect, but because they repented deeply. Their lives are judged according to their final end—the humility they demonstrated, the love they bore, and the truth they preserved. When a

bishop errs, we do not rename the Church after him. When a patriarch falls, we do not found an entire theology on his failure. We remember them with sobriety and prayer, not fanfare and branding.

The path forward for Protestant communities is not to issue apologies on behalf of their founders, but to disown their founders altogether. Let the names “Lutheran” and “Calvinist” be retired forever. Let Christ be the only name they bear. Let them return to the fulness of the apostolic Church—Orthodox, undivided, and holy—where doctrine is not built on the personality of reformers, but on the witness of the saints and the unchanging tradition of the Fathers.

Until that day, their apologies will continue to ring hollow—like bells tolling for the dead, yet summoning no living soul to repentance.

The Idolatry of Protestant Founders

There exists within many branches of Protestantism a form of reverence for their founders that borders on idolatry. Indeed, in some quarters, it surpasses the honour accorded to the Apostles and Fathers of the undivided Church. One finds denominations proudly bearing the names of Martin Luther or John Calvin, as though this were a mark of doctrinal purity or ecclesiastical honour. In reality, it is a badge of schism. It is a public declaration that their ecclesial identity is not in Christ alone, but in allegiance to men whose teachings tore the fabric of Christian unity and introduced doctrines alien to the Holy Tradition.

The Apostle Paul himself rebuked such behaviour in no uncertain terms. Addressing the Corinthians, he lamented the rise of factions within the Church and wrote, “For while one saith, I indeed am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollo; are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:4) The Orthodox Church, guided

by the same apostolic wisdom, sees in this passage a perpetual warning. If it was inappropriate for Christians to divide themselves under the names of Paul and Apollos—men who were indeed apostles and saints—how much more offensive is it to name oneself after Luther or Calvin, who were not apostles, not saints, and whose legacy is one of rebellion, confusion, and bloodshed?

To call oneself a Lutheran or a Calvinist is to enshrine a division that ought never to have existed. It is to perpetuate a break from the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. It is to celebrate a historical catastrophe as though it were a triumph. These titles do not indicate fidelity to Christ. They signify fidelity to a human system, a human mind, a human agenda. They are not marks of unity; they are labels of fracture. They are not honourable distinctions; they are, in truth, shameful reminders of theological pride and ecclesiastical rebellion.

Many Protestants, to their credit, are unaware of the full scope of their founders' lives. They are raised in churches that speak glowingly of Luther's "boldness" and Calvin's "brilliance," but they are rarely taught of Luther's hate-filled incitements against the Jews and Catholics, or Calvin's theocratic strangulation of Geneva and his role in Servetus's death. Their ignorance is tragic, but somewhat excusable.

What is more grievous are those who know these facts and continue to glorify the men regardless. They praise Luther as though he were a prophet, dismissing his calls for synagogue-burning and the subjugation of the Jews. They exalt Calvin as a theological genius, even as they overlook his advocacy for the death of heretics and the imposition of state control over Christian conscience. This is not Christianity. It is cultic veneration. It is the elevation of fallible men to the status of infallible oracles.

Neither Luther nor Calvin is a prophet. Neither is a saint. Their lives bear no resemblance to the sanctity of a Saint Anthony the Great, a Saint Seraphim of Sarov, or a Saint Gregory Palamas. Their writings lack the humility, the spiritual depth, and the ascetical sobriety of the Fathers. Their theology does not illumine the soul with divine grace, but agitates it with legalism, fatalism, and moral confusion. Their legacies have not brought unity, but division. And if one judges a tree by its fruit, as Christ commanded (*cf.* Matthew 7:16), then their trees are surrounded by branches of contradiction and roots of pride.

Protestantism, born from their example, has splintered into tens of thousands of denominations—each claiming to be faithful to the Bible, and yet each contradicting the others on baptism, the Eucharist, the nature of salvation, and the very identity of the Church. This disunity is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit unites. The Spirit does not divide. The Spirit leads into all truth—not contradictory truths. The Spirit builds up the Body of Christ, not a collection of religious store-fronts and theological hobby-groups bearing the names of dead reformers.

There is something spiritually dangerous about identifying oneself more readily with a human founder than with Christ. In Orthodoxy, Christians are not known by the name of Basil, or Chrysostom, or Gregory, despite their towering sanctity and doctrinal brilliance. We do not call ourselves Basilian Christians or Palamite Christians. These saints are revered, but they are not the head of the Church. Christ alone is the Head. And the only acceptable name for His followers is Christian—not Lutheran, Calvinist, Zwinglian, or Wesleyan.

To continue using these labels is to participate in the sin of division. It is to enshrine human pride in the very name of the Church. And no matter how much theological refinement or

ecumenical outreach is undertaken, as long as these names are held aloft, the scandal of sectarianism remains. It is blasphemous to name the Body of Christ after men who maimed that Body. It is offensive to the saints and angels to associate the Church with men who persecuted their fellow Christians and incited hatred in the name of reform. The time has come for Protestants of good conscience to renounce the idolatry of founders and return to the unity, humility, and sanctity of the apostolic Church.

The words of the Apostle remain ever true. “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13)

Christ is not divided. But Protestantism is. And it will remain so as long as men cling to the names of Luther and Calvin, rather than bowing before the Name that is above every name —Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.

An Orthodox Response

The Orthodox Church bears no hatred for Protestants. She prays for their return to the fullness of the faith, and welcomes any who sincerely seek Christ. But she cannot, in good conscience, remain silent while Luther and Calvin are glorified as champions of truth.

The Reformation did not produce martyrs. It produced persecutors. It did not restore unity. It birthed an ever-dividing confusion. And its founders—men of violence, pride, and doctrinal arrogance—should be remembered, not with reverence, but with sorrow and warning.

Let no man call himself “Lutheran” or “Calvinist.” Let him instead call himself a Christian—and strive to live according to the undivided faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Did the Church Fathers Teach Hatred Toward the Jews?
Some have made the accusation that the Eastern Orthodox Church teaches hatred toward the Jewish people—or that it is dogma within Orthodoxy to regard the Jews as cursed or abandoned by God. Such an accusation is both historically inaccurate and theologically false. While it is true that some patristic writings contain severe polemical language directed against Jewish religious leaders or beliefs, such statements must be interpreted carefully within their historical context and theological purpose. They do not represent official dogma, nor do they constitute a mandate for hatred, persecution, or exclusion. The Orthodox Church unequivocally condemns hatred of any people group, and holds out sincere hope for the salvation of all—including the Jewish people. The Orthodox Church does not apologise for the statements made by individuals who were expressing personal opinions outside dogma.

The Nature of Patristic Writings
It is essential, when engaging with the writings of the Church Fathers, to approach them with both reverence and discernment. These were not men insulated from the world in sterile academic chambers. The Fathers of the Church lived, struggled, taught, and died in an environment of considerable volatility. Many of them were born into an empire still under pagan rule, where Christians were maligned, misunderstood, and often persecuted. Others lived during the transition from persecution to toleration, when the Church was emerging as a visible and formative presence in public life, grappling with newfound political and theological pressures.

These holy men were often contending on multiple fronts including against pagan idolatry and imperial power, against internal heresies such as Arianism, Sabellianism, and Gnosticism, and against movements that threatened to dilute or distort the apostolic faith. It is in this context—not that of

modern liberal democracies or pluralistic societies—that their writings must be understood. Their rhetoric, at times severe or even abrasive, was shaped not by racial hatred or prejudice, but by theological and pastoral demands.

Many of the Fathers spoke against Rabbinic Judaism as it existed in the post-Temple period—not as a racial or ethnic identity, but as a competing religious world-view that denied the divinity of Christ and the New Covenant. Their opposition was rooted in fidelity to the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Resurrection. They viewed the Gospel not as one religion among many, but as the definitive and exclusive truth revealed by God through His Son.

A frequently misrepresented example is Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, whose Adversus Judaeos homilies are often seised upon by those outside the Church to allege that Orthodoxy has a doctrinal commitment to anti-Semitism. This is both historically and theologically false. A closer reading of Chrysostom's sermons reveals that his true concern was not the Jewish community *per se*, but the presence of Judaising Christians within his own flock. That is, members of the Church who were partaking in certain Jewish fasts, attending synagogue services where Christians were never welcome to begin with—behaviour which, to Chrysostom, blurred the lines of Christian identity and threatened ecclesial unity. In Homily I of Adversus Judaeos, Chrysostom was writing not of the Jews, but of the Judaising Christians.

This distinction is critical. Chrysostom's objective was to safeguard the Christian identity of his congregation, not to incite racial hatred or civic persecution of Jews. It must also be remembered that while his tone is unquestionably harsh by modern standards – to extract his phrases from their pastoral and cultural context and present them as if they constitute

ecclesiastical dogma is intellectually dishonest and spiritually dangerous.

Furthermore, no ecumenical council, synod, or patriarchal decree within the Orthodox Church has ever declared hatred of the Jews—or of any people—as dogma. There is no canon law, no liturgical formula, and no doctrinal statement that mandates animosity toward the Jewish people. On the contrary, the Church prays for the conversion and salvation of all, including the Jews, who, as Saint Paul writes, are the "beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Romans 11:28).

The same principle applies to other Fathers who wrote strongly against Rabbinic Judaism, such as Saint Epiphanius of Salamis, Saint Hippolytus of Rome, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Their arguments, while sometimes polemical and sharp-edged, were theological, not ethnocentric. They were responding to real controversies, including challenges to Christ's divinity or the rejection of the New Covenant. These writings were never intended to dehumanise the Jewish people or justify their persecution.

Indeed, the Orthodox Church insists on a distinction between theological error and ethnic enmity. One may reject the theology of post-Temple Judaism while still affirming the dignity and worth of every Jewish person as a bearer of the image of God. This distinction is not only possible—it is necessary. The holy Fathers condemned error, not humanity. The Church may speak firmly against unbelief, but she weeps for the unbeliever, praying always for his reconciliation with Christ.

It is also worth noting that several Orthodox saints and writers, both ancient and modern, have emphasised charity and compassion toward the Jewish people. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, for example, while addressing theological concerns

with Judaism, spoke of God's enduring providence over the Jewish people and warned against arrogance among Gentile Christians. Likewise, in the modern period, figures such as Saint Nicholas Velimirovich and Saint Luke of Crimea—though sometimes quoted selectively—have elsewhere expressed hope for the conversion and spiritual renewal of the Jewish people, not their condemnation.

In sum, while some patristic texts reflect the rhetorical forms and theological battles of their time, they do not constitute binding dogma—certainly not where they express personal opinions or culturally conditioned language. The Orthodox Church reveres the Fathers not because they were flawless, but because, as a whole, they bore faithful witness to the apostolic deposit of truth. That does not render every phrase or polemic they penned immutable doctrine.

To interpret isolated passages from these writings as doctrinal mandates for hatred is to misunderstand the very nature of patristic authority in Orthodoxy. The Fathers are authoritative insofar as they speak in harmony with the mind of the Councils and the witness of the liturgical life. Where they speak outside that harmony—particularly in rhetorical or pastoral contexts—their words must be weighed, not weaponised.

Hatred has never been dogma. It never will be. The Orthodox Church rejects it as a distortion of the Gospel and a betrayal of the Cross.

Not Hatred, but Hope

At the very heart of the Orthodox Church's understanding of the Jewish people lies not rejection or enmity, but an enduring recognition of their unique place in salvation history and an abiding hope for their return to the fullness of the truth in Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. The Orthodox Church does not—and never has—taught hatred as a theological principle. She does not curse the Jewish people, nor does she proclaim their destruction as some necessary eschatological event. Rather, the Church prays, teaches, and hopes that the children of Israel, according to the flesh, will embrace the fulfilment of their covenantal calling in the Person of Jesus Christ.

This position is not derived from human sentimentality, but from the inspired words of the Apostle to the Nations. Saint Paul, himself a Hebrew of Hebrews (Philippians 3:5), writing with apostolic authority and under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, affirms, "I say then: Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (Romans 11:1)

And again, in one of the most mysterious and theologically rich passages of his epistles, "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery ... that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25–26)

These words reveal the Orthodox position in its essence. The current spiritual blindness that afflicts Israel is not final. It is partial, and it is, within the providential mystery of God, temporary. The hardening of Israel has allowed for the ingathering of the Gentiles, but this very process will

culminate, according to Saint Paul, in a reawakening of Israel —a turning of the Jewish people toward their Messiah.

This is not the language of theological despair. It is not the cry of a man who has abandoned hope for his people. On the contrary, it is the confession of a deep and enduring love for Israel, rooted in the unshakable promises of God. The Orthodox Church, taking her cue from the Apostle, has never declared the Jews to be irrevocably cursed, nor has she dogmatised a theology of rejection. The covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in Christ—not annulled—and its fruit is meant for all.

This perspective has been consistently articulated in the Orthodox world, both ancient and modern. For instance, Ecumenical Patriarch Metrophanes III in a 1568 encyclical explicitly condemned injustice towards Jews, calling it impermissible even when directed at those of different beliefs.

Such statements are not isolated or exceptional. They are expressions of the ecclesial conscience—the mind of the Church. While the Orthodox Church affirms the fullness of the truth is found only in Jesus Christ, it does not seek to enforce this truth through coercion, insult, or disdain. Instead, she prays for the conversion of all—Jew, Gentile, Catholic, Protestant, and wayward Orthodox alike—with tears, not contempt.

The Orthodox Church prays for the Jews, that they may come to recognise their Messiah, Jesus Christ. But we do not condemn them as a people. Hatred is foreign to the Gospel. No hatred toward the Jewish people is doctrinally sanctioned. Hope for their salvation in Christ is a genuine part of Orthodox prayer and eschatological hope. This simple affirmation should be the lens through which all Orthodox Christians understand our relationship to the Jewish people. Christ did

not come to destroy, but to save. The Church, which is His Body, does not trade in hatred, nor does it sanctify historical enmity.

The Church does not sanction racial, ethnic, or religious hatred. The Jewish people are respected as the ancestors according to the flesh of our Lord, and as those who have preserved monotheism even through much suffering.

Orthodoxy has always held a deep reverence and respect for the role of the Jewish people in the divine economy. The Theotokos herself was a daughter of Israel. The prophets, patriarchs, and martyrs of the Old Testament are venerated by the Orthodox Church as saints. Our liturgical calendar includes figures such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, and the Maccabees. Their feasts are celebrated. Their words are sung. Their lives are held up as examples of faith and endurance.

Moreover, the Old Testament, faithfully preserved by the Jewish people, are an integral part of Orthodox theology, worship, and daily prayer. The Psalms—composed by David, the anointed King of Israel—form the heartbeat of Orthodox liturgy. One cannot overstate the Jewish roots of the Orthodox Church, which are neither denied nor despised, but honoured.

Even in the eschatological prayers of the Church, there remains hope for the eventual enlightenment of all people, including the Jewish people, through the mercy of God. It is not for us to predict who shall be saved or condemned. It is for us to pray for the salvation of all—for the return of the world to Christ. This hope, this yearning, is embedded in the liturgical life of the Church. During every Divine Liturgy, we pray not only for the Orthodox faithful, but for the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all. That union of all includes the Jewish

people, whom the Church has never ceased to remember as the people of promise.

A Gospel Without Hatred

In summation, the Orthodox Church does not teach hatred of the Jews—nor has she ever made such hatred dogmatic. She recognises their place in sacred history, she honours their role in preparing the way of the Lord, and she prays, with tears and longing, for their return to the Messiah who was born of their blood and for their salvation in the one true Church of Christ.

The words of Saint Paul is the Orthodox Church's answer to those who claim otherwise. "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29)

It is not for us to harden our hearts where God has left His door open. The Orthodox Church stands not as a judge with a clenched fist, but as a mother with open arms—firm in doctrine, but wide in mercy; immovable in truth, but inexhaustible in love.

Hatred is not our creed. Christ is.

From Polemic to Prayer

The memory of the Orthodox Church is not frozen in time, nor is it beholden to every word uttered in the heat of historical polemic. The Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has always distinguished between the mind of the Fathers—their unified witness to apostolic truth—and the particular circumstances or rhetorical styles in which individual Fathers expressed themselves. This distinction is especially important when considering how the Church has remembered the Jewish people over the centuries—not through the perpetuation of polemical hostility, but increasingly through prayer, humility, and hope.

When recounting the Passion narrative, there are often strong expressions concerning those who brought charges up against the Jewish leaders of the time; but these must be understood not as condemnations of an entire people, but as dramatic, poetic references to the rejection of Christ by those Jewish leaders and crowds at a specific moment in salvation history. Such language was never meant as dogmatic pronouncement or racial condemnation. Just as the Church uses bold imagery when referring to heresies, or the traitor Judas Iscariot, so too does it employ rhetorical flourish to express the grief and mystery of Christ's rejection. But these phrases are not instructions for hatred, nor are they directed toward the Jewish people as they exist today. The Church, in her wisdom, recognises the difference between sacred history and contemporary reality.

Indeed, as the Orthodox Church's theological and liturgical sensibility has matured over time, so too has her language become more refined and merciful in tone. Modern translations and service books in many jurisdictions have softened or removed these controversial expressions, choosing instead to emphasise the universal guilt of all humanity in the rejection of Christ. The Church speaks not only of the crowd that cried, "Crucify Him!" but also implicates all sinners, recognising that Christ died for the transgressions of all and that all have fallen short of the glory of God.

The point is not to revise or erase the past, but to deepen its meaning through a spirit of prayer and repentance. The Church does not whitewash her liturgical memory; she purifies it through grace. She does not deny that once, in grief and polemic, harsh words were spoken. But she does not repeat them uncritically, nor does she elevate them to the level of eternal truth. The movement of the Church is always from

confrontation toward communion, from rhetorical division toward spiritual reconciliation.

Our prayer is of intercession, not of condemnation. It includes all who have wandered from the truth—Jews, Muslims, heretics, atheists, and nominal Christians—yet it expresses no malice. It is suffused with compassion. We pray the Lord bring them back by His grace. This reveals the Orthodox approach—conversion is not forced, nor is it achieved through polemics or programmes. It is a gift of divine love, received freely and with gratitude.

This is not triumphalism over others; it is a call to universal reconciliation. It is not a song of victory over enemies, but of life over death. The risen Christ is offered to all, including those who rejected Him. The feast is open. The door is unbarred. The invitation is extended to Jew and Gentile, believer and unbeliever, sinner and saint.

The Great Litany at nearly every Orthodox service also reflects this catholic spirit. Petitions such as “for the peace of the whole world” and “for all those in afflictions, captivity, and need” reveal the universality of the Church’s prayer. Nowhere is hatred sanctioned. Nowhere are prayers of cursing offered. The Church is not a cult of tribal preservation; she is the ark of salvation, ever reaching toward the lost and scattered.

Our prayers, offered throughout the year, are as much for others as for ourselves. It is impossible to pray it with hatred in the heart. We do not call for vengeance, but for purification—and this includes purification from prejudice, inherited bias, and historical anger.

Thus, the tone of Orthodoxy, when rightly understood, is not that of crusade or contempt, but of longing, mercy, and expectation. The Church grieves over all who are outside her

embrace—not because she is superior, but because she knows the joy and freedom that come from life in Christ. Her mission is not to crush the unbeliever, but to raise him. Not to mock the wanderer, but to guide him home.

The Jewish people, in particular, are never forgotten. They are remembered with reverence for their sacred history, their preservation of the Law and the Prophets, and their unique place in God's providential plan. The Church prays—not shouts—for their return. She weeps—not rages—for their blindness. She waits—not scorns—for their enlightenment in the light of Christ, the Messiah born of Israel.

In the words of the Prophet Isaiah, often sung in Orthodox liturgical services: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." (Isaiah 40:1)

This is the voice of the Church. Not the voice of polemic, but the voice of prayer. Not the memory of hatred, but the memory of love.

Christianity Without Hatred

In every generation, there arise distortions of the Christian faith that tragically confuse opposition to theological error with hatred of persons. Nowhere is this confusion more dangerous than in discussions concerning the Jewish people. It is a grievous error—too often perpetuated by critics, political ideologues, and fringe extremist groups—to suggest that the Church's rejection of certain religious positions implies or requires hatred toward those who hold them. This is not, and has never been, the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

The Church of Christ anathematises heresies and denounces doctrinal error, but this is never done to destroy, humiliate, or

marginalise. It is undertaken out of a deep concern for the salvation of souls and for the integrity of the truth. The Church is a spiritual hospital. She condemns sin the way a physician diagnoses disease—not with spite, but with the aim of healing. She warns against the errors of disbelief not out of arrogance, but out of love. This has been the consistent pattern of her saints, her liturgy, and her life.

Indeed, the rejection of falsehood is not a rejection of the person. It is the very opposite. It is an affirmation of that person's dignity, that they are worthy of the truth, that they are not to be left in darkness. The Orthodox Church proclaims Christ not with triumphalism, but with tears. She weeps for the unbeliever, she fasts for his enlightenment, and she begs God daily to open the eyes of those who have not yet seen the light of the Resurrection.

Hatred, in Orthodox anthropology, is not simply a moral failing —it is a passion of the fallen mind, a sickness of the soul. It represents a distortion of the image of God within man. To hate another is to deny God's likeness in him. It is to rebel against the commandment to love even one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). It is, in essence, to crucify Christ afresh in our neighbour. The Church Fathers do not leave this matter open to interpretation. The Christian must not curse anyone—not even the Jews, nor the heretics. He must only pray, because if he curses, he does not have Christ within him. (cf. John 5:42)

These are not the private sentiments of isolated mystics. They reflect the universal phronema—the spiritual mind—of the Orthodox Church. It is a mind not shaped by bitterness, nationalism, or historical resentment, but by the kenosis of the Cross, the self-emptying love of Christ, who prayed for those who crucified Him and forgave even from the wood of death.

It must also be firmly understood that the Jewish people—as a people—are not to be conflated with the modern political apparatus of the State of Israel. The Church acknowledges the theological and historical distinctiveness of the Jewish people, but she does not equate that with unconditional political support for any contemporary government.

Orthodox Christians are called to exercise discernment when evaluating political events in the modern State of Israel. We may, and indeed must, affirm the right of the Jewish people to live in peace, to preserve their cultural and religious identity, and to dwell in safety. But this does not oblige us to endorse every political decision or military action undertaken by the Israeli state. Like all nations, it is accountable to God's moral law.

Orthodox Christianity affirms that the standards of divine justice are universal. We support the modern State of Israel only insofar as it does not violate the moral and spiritual precepts of the Scriptures—the same standard by which we judge the actions of every nation, including our own. We neither demonise nor deify the state. We assess it through the lens of the Gospel, mindful of Christ's teachings, the justice of the Prophets, and the dignity of every human life.

This distinction must be made especially clear, because failure to do so has led many into theological error and political idolatry. Some Christians have conflated the secular government of Israel with the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), forgetting that the true Israel is no longer defined by ethnicity or geography, but by faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Others, in reaction, have turned their frustration with modern geopolitics into ethnic hostility against Jews as a people. Both extremes are spiritually deadly and utterly foreign to Orthodox belief.

Orthodoxy neither supports political Zionism uncritically, nor does it entertain racial animosity. She walks the royal path, which means loving the Jewish people as bearers of sacred history, praying for their illumination in Christ, while remaining vigilant and morally clear-sighted about the policies of all earthly governments. Christianity is neither Jew nor Greek, neither East nor West. It is the Kingdom of God revealed in the Church, where all are invited, and no one is hated.

It is a grave spiritual error to allow political frustration to manifest as racial animosity. It is a betrayal of Christ to curse a people for whom He died. The Gospel offers salvation to all—to Jews first, as Saint Paul said, and also to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16). The proper Christian posture toward the Jewish people is not suspicion, but intercession—not scorn, but sincere hope for their return to the Messiah.

Thus, the Orthodox Church stands firm on the fact that hatred of the Jews is not only a moral failure, it is heresy. It is a denial of the nature of Christ, a blasphemy against the Incarnate God, and a fracture of the heart of the Gospel. The Jew is our neighbour. The Jew is our brother according to the flesh of Christ. And the Jew is our hope, for the Apostle says: “If their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?”
(Romans 11:15)

This is the Christian vision—not a faith built on resentment, but on resurrection. Not on walls of hostility, but on the open arms of the Cross. The Orthodox Church holds out that vision still.

The Orthodox Path Forward

I conclude by saying that it is not, and never has been, dogma within the Orthodox Church to hate the Jewish people. Those who claim otherwise—whether out of malice, ignorance, or ideological manipulation—gravely misrepresent both Orthodox history and Orthodox theology. While it is historically true that certain Church Fathers, in the context of their time, employed severe rhetoric against Judaic disbelief and against particular behaviours they deemed contrary to the Gospel, this should never be mistaken for doctrinal hatred, nor can it be retroactively weaponised to justify modern anti-Semitism.

The Orthodox Church has no doctrine of racial or religious enmity. The Church stands not upon the passions of polemicists, nor on the prejudices of any particular culture or era, but upon the eternal foundation of Jesus Christ, who said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44) This is a commandment, given by the Incarnate Word of God, and it is binding upon all who call themselves by His name. No disciple of Christ may hate. No bearer of the Holy Cross may curse the children of Abraham. To do so is not only to violate the ethical teachings of the Lord, but to strike at the very heart of the New Covenant, which is one of mercy, not vengeance; reconciliation, not retribution.

Hatred, regardless of denomination, ethnic allegiance, or theological tradition, has no place in the heart of a Christian. It is a flame kindled by pride and fuelled by the passions. The Protestant Reformers who invoked hatred—Martin Luther, with his calls to burn synagogues and confiscate Jewish writings; John Calvin, with his cold theological justifications for the execution of those who differed from his personal opinions—were not following the meek and crucified Christ. They were following their own fallen passions. Their legacy of

violence and theological tribalism bears witness not to Gospel fidelity, but to a rupture from the patristic mind of the Church.

The Orthodox Church, by contrast, holds to the integrity of the apostolic tradition—a tradition that, while acknowledging the rejection of Christ by some, never renders that rejection as an irreversible curse upon a people. Rather, the Church pleads with Israel, prays for her enlightenment, and remembers her not as a foe, but as a beloved estranged sister, whose return will be a cause of universal joy.

Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Nations, offers the definitive Orthodox response. “For if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, art grafted in among them... boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” (Romans 11:17–18)

To boast against the Jews—to mock, hate, or diminish them—is to forget that it is from them that salvation came (*cf.* John 4:22). Christ, our God, was born of a Jewish mother. The Theotokos, ever-virgin and all-pure, was a daughter of Israel. The Apostles were Hebrews. The Prophets who foretold the Messiah and the Patriarchs who obeyed God’s voice were of the same lineage. To despise Israel is to despise our own spiritual ancestry.

And yet, it must also be said with equal firmness that the Orthodox Church does not preach a double covenant. She does not teach that the Jewish people are saved apart from Christ. She does not offer false comfort or theological ambiguity. The Church preaches Christ crucified, risen, and ascended—Messiah, Lord, and Judge of all. To the Jewish people, as to all peoples, she offers not scorn, but the Gospel. To the world, not condemnation, but Christ. The Church is not selective in her mission. She does not privilege one ethnicity over another. She

offers the same Christ to all—to Jew and Gentile, to Greek and barbarian, to the circumcised and uncircumcised.

In the unfolding of history, the Orthodox Church does not forget her calling. She is not a political movement, nor an ethnic religion. She is the Body of Christ on earth—the ark of salvation for all who would enter. Her gates are open. Her prayers rise for the world. Her heart longs for the return of all those who have wandered, including the children of Israel.

She does not curse Israel. She prays for her.

She does not persecute. She pleads.

She does not despise. She hopes.

Let no one claim Orthodoxy while harbouring hatred. Let no Christian take the name of Christ while embracing the dark and corrosive spirit of anti-Semitism. The Orthodox path is the path of Christ, who said from the Cross, “Father, forgive them.” It is the path of Saint Stephen, the protomartyr, who prayed for his murderers with his dying breath. It is the path of the Saints, who saw in every soul the image of God, tarnished but never erased.

The Orthodox Church walks that path still. It is a narrow path, to be sure—but it is the way that leads to life.

And as she walks, she extends her hand—not in accusation, but in invitation.

To Israel: Come home. Your Messiah awaits.
To the world: Receive Him. He is life.

This is the Orthodox way. It always was. And it shall never be otherwise.