

ARCHPRIEST JOSIAH TRENHAM

# *Rock and Sand*

*An Orthodox Appraisal of  
the Protestant Reformers and Their Teachings*



*The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew,  
beating hard on that house. Yet, it did not collapse, because  
it was founded on the rock. (Matt. 7:25)*



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Archpriest Josiah Trenham  
ROCK AND SAND  
*An Orthodox Appraisal of the  
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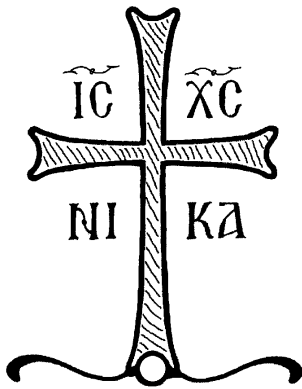
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## *Dedication*

*To Christopher and Sophia Hetrick  
without whose encouragement and  
sacrifice this text would not exist.*



## *Acknowledgments*

*Special thanks to His Grace,  
Bishop Basil, Fr. Peter Heers,  
and Monk Menas of  
St. Anthony Monastery,  
Florence, AZ*

*Forgive me.*



His Grace Bishop BASIL of Wichita and Mid-America



## *Foreword*

Everyone therefore who hears my words and does them, I will compare to a wise person who built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, beating hard on that house. Yet, it did not collapse, because it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears my words and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, beating hard on that house; then it collapsed, and great was its downfall. (Matt. 7:24-27)

While the imagery employed in the Parable of Rock and Sand is quite effective in affirming the wisdom of hearing and the importance of incarnating the Gospel of Christ – that is, after all, what our Saviour was addressing – the same imagery can be used to describe the various bodies which profess to proclaim that Good News. Hence the title of this book, authored by my beloved spiritual son, The Very Reverend Josiah B.G. Trenham (Ph.D. *Dunelm*).

What *is not* discussed in this book is the Rock, Holy Orthodoxy – the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,

the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27) built by our Lord Himself upon the Rock of the True Faith (Matt. 16:18). Countless volumes have been written about the Orthodox Church, against which the “rain” and “floods” and “winds” of two millennia have beat, leaving Her unscathed, “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ... holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). And after the greatest of storms – “The Perfect Storm,” if you will – which is yet to come, the storm which shall culminate in the great and last Day, the Church shall be revealed by Her Bridegroom to be in truth the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 7), the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).

What *is* discussed in this book are some of those bodies which, having been established only over the past several centuries, stand upon unstable and shifting Sand. May the Reader find it edifying for mind and salvific for soul!

† Bishop Basil

Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
of North America



## *Introduction*

Over the last 50 years, there has been a significant increase in global population. Meanwhile, the world itself has become “smaller” due to new modes of communication which have altered the way humans interact. This phenomenon of globalization has lessened traditional cultural barriers and religious distinctions between East and West. In much of the developed world, homogeneity has given way to a heterogeneous cosmopolitan society. This is dramatically evident in America, the world’s most religiously diverse society.

The rapid societal changes due to globalization are providing new opportunities for Westerners to become acquainted with Orthodox Christianity through social encounters with believers and the widespread availability of Orthodox literature in Western languages. However, globalization has also presented new challenges for Orthodox believers living in the West. Orthodox Christians often interact with Protestants<sup>1</sup> who invite them to Bible studies

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<sup>1</sup> On the origin of the word “Protestant” MacCulloch (2003) writes, “It originally related to a specific occasion, in 1529, when at the Holy Roman Empire’s Diet (imperial assembly) held in the city of Speyer, the group of princes and cities who supported the programs of reformation promoted by Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli found themselves in a voting minority:

and home groups, preaching with zeal and devotion, often calling upon them “to be saved.” Such encounters leave the Orthodox believer wanting to respond to the Protestant’s lack of familiarity with traditional Christianity. However, since most Orthodox Christians know very little about the historical roots of Protestantism and the myriad of forms it has taken in the 21st century, they are unsure how best to reply.

This book has been written for three purposes. First, to provide the Orthodox reader with a competent overview of the history of Protestantism and its major traditions, from its beginnings in the 16th century to the present day. This overview relies heavily upon the Reformer’s own words as well as the creeds of various Protestant faiths, in order to avoid misrepresentation and caricature. Second, to acquaint Orthodox and non-Orthodox readers with a narrative of the historical relations between the Orthodox East and the Protestant West. Finally, to provide a summary of Orthodox theological opinion on the tenets of Protestantism.

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to keep their solidarity, they issued a ‘Protestatio’, affirming the reforming beliefs they shared. The label ‘Protestant’ thereafter was part of German or imperial politics for decades, and did not have a wider reference than that. When the coronation of little King Edward VI was being organized in London in 1547, the planners putting in order the procession of dignitaries through the city appointed a place for ‘the Protestants’, by whom they meant the diplomatic representatives of these reforming Germans who were staying in the capital. Only rather later did the word gain a broader reference” (xx). The word “evangelical” was the word widely used and recognized at the time for what we now would call “Protestant.”



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*The World at the Time of the Protestant Reformation*

The Protestant Reformation cannot be understood without a cursory grasp of the political, social, cultural, and ecclesiastical developments that created 15th century Europe. The Crusades were especially important during this period. The Crusades, begun in A.D. 1095 and continuing into the 13th century, were envisioned, organized and carried out by Western Christians with the express purpose of liberating the Holy Land from Muslim control as well as repelling their advance into Christian lands. Though they experienced limited successes, especially the First Crusade which was a joint endeavor with the Christian East, in the final analysis they were a failure. This was made evident when the Queen City, Constantinople, fell to the Turkish Muslims on May 29, 1453, and the Great Church of Christ (Patriarchate of Constantinople) found itself captive to Ottoman rule. Further Turkish incursions into the heart of Europe showed the European peoples that the Muslim threat was closer to home than Jerusalem.

Fifteenth century Christendom was also suffering from centuries of internal division. The Great Schism of 1054, the most sorrowful event in the history of the undivided Church, left the East and West eucharistically alienated and tragically divided. The Sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in A.D. 1204 created an enduring animosity towards Western Christians. Previously Eastern Christians

believed that their Western brothers had fallen into a regrettable heresy, but now saw them as little better than barbarians.<sup>2</sup> Two papal sponsored councils, Lyons in 1274 and Ferrara-Florence in 1438-9, failed miserably at reuniting East and West, and also demonstrated the degree to which the Latin church had become wed to its many theological innovations. Furthermore, the centuries-long separation between Christians of the East and West led to a profound ignorance of each other. This ignorance, borne of theological and political separation, impeded meaningful contact and dialogue between reform-minded Latin clergymen and Orthodox leaders. Though we will document official Orthodox interaction with Protestant leaders of the 16th and 17th centuries, such contact was rare.

*The Papacy and Roman Catholicism  
at the Time of the Reformation*

Most examples of ecclesiastical histories authored in a Western context are distinctly biased. The traditional western historiographic categories of “Dark Ages,” “Middle Ages,” Renaissance,” and “Reformation,” have little meaning in the East, and in fact have now been widely discarded in Western academia. The fall of Rome in A.D. 410, a seminal

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<sup>2</sup> The Orthodox could also be brutal, as is witnessed by the massacre of the Latin community in Constantinople in 1182 during which the majority of the 60,000 strong Latin community was massacred or forced to flee, and 4,000 sold into slavery to the Turks. Fossier (1997), pp. 506–508.

event for West and Western Christians, was not as significant in the East nor did it create the beginning of any “Dark Ages”. The Eastern Empire was spared the incursion of many Northern barbarian hordes who were repelled by the walls of Constantinople and instead went toward the West. Furthermore, as Western Christians in the 5th-9th centuries were struggling to survive and trying to sustain an educated and informed faith, the Orthodox East demonstrated remarkable theological and pastoral vigor and never lost its connection to classical or patristic learning.

Prior to the Reformation, the papal West entered into a scholastic period in which theology was conformed to philosophical paradigms and detached from its traditional ascetic milieu. Theologians became academics,<sup>3</sup> and bishops political lords. Detached from the Orthodox East and its insistence on patristic continuity, papal innovations – theological and practical – abounded. These innovations, advanced by a newly articulated and aggressive view of papal supremacy, were supported by a collection of forged historical documents known as the *False Decretals*.<sup>4</sup> These *Decretals* are a collection of canon law written under the

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<sup>3</sup> A good example is Peter Abelard (1079-1142) who became the theological and philosophical scholar *par excellence* while carrying on a sexually immoral relationship with the nun Héloïse. This relationship was memorialized in a collection of letters which have been published regularly over the course of the last millennium. *The Letters of Abelard and Héloïse* Ed. Michael Clanchy (2004), Penguin Classics: London.

<sup>4</sup> *Collectio falsarum decretalium Isidori mercatoris*.

pseudonym “Isidore Mercator,” a reference to the 6th century St. Isidore of Seville. In fact, the decretals were compiled in the 9th century, most probably in France. The first section of the *Decretals* consists of letters purported to be written by pre-Nicene popes from St. Clement of Rome (A.D. 96) to St. Miltiades (A.D. 314) during whose pontificate Emperor Constantine became a Christian and issued his Edict of Milan granting toleration to Christians. These forged papal letters were fabricated in order to place the ever-growing claims of papal arrogance and supremacy into the mouths of early saint-popes and thus establish the papal novelties as ancient Christian faith.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the aforementioned counterfeit papal letters, the *Decretals* also included a document called the *Donation of Constantine*. This falsified imperial decree is said to have been written by Emperor Constantine the Great to Pope Sylvester I (314-35), and includes an account of the Emperor’s conversion to Christianity, as well as an enumeration of the privileges bestowed upon the pope and his successors. These privileges included supremacy over the churches of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem, dominion over Rome and all Western provinces, supreme

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<sup>5</sup> Met. Panteleimon Rodopoulos (2007) writes that the publication of these Pseudo-Isidorean ordinances provoked a “radical change” in the canon law of the western church, in which papal decrees began to be listed in canonical collections immediately after Scripture and before the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils as sources of canon law, p. 80.

judge of the clergy, chief of whom were to have rank as senators, and the Imperial crown.

Pope Nicholas I knew of these *False Decretals* and used them in his disputation against St. Photios the Great, who so vigorously contended for Holy Orthodoxy. Throughout the Western Middle Ages, these spurious documents were generally considered to be authentic, and served to establish the innovative deceptions of successive popes. They were first explicitly used in a letter to support the papacy in A.D. 1053 by Leo IX to Orthodox Emperor Michael Cerularius. Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa,<sup>6</sup> an influential German Roman Catholic churchman of the 15th century exposed the false provenance of these documents. Martin Luther was aware of Cusa's work and obtained a copy as a young theologian,<sup>7</sup> which certainly influenced his thinking on the proclaimed rights of the papacy. Their authenticity has been universally rejected for hundreds of years, even by the papacy.

### *The Holy Roman Empire in Relation with the Papacy*

Politics played a definitive role in the enduring success of the Protestant Reformation. The Imperial princes of the

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) was a reforming German cardinal and humanist, with deep interests in reconciliation with the Greek East. He was a papal legate in Constantinople prior to its fall to the Turks. He was a firm opponent of indulgence preaching and his *De Concordantia Catholica* was probably the most influential piece of Conciliarist literature. Duffy (1997), p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> In February 1520 Luther read Ulrich von Hutten's edition of Valla's treatise which showed the famous *Donation of Constantine* to be a forgery.

15th and 16th century<sup>8</sup> were upset by the taxation policy of the Roman Church, as well as its political encroachment into German sovereign estates. During this time, local diocesan bishops were competing for control with European political powers, and the early Protestant leaders found a receptive audience amongst rulers who were pleased to hear that Rome had no temporal rights over Germany. These rulers were assisted in this cause by a reform movement from within the Roman Catholic Church of the 14th-16th centuries called Conciliarism. Conciliarism, which asserted that ecclesiastical authority lay not with the Pope, but with the ecumenical/general councils of the Church. The appearance of the Conciliarist movement was contemporaneous with an effort by certain monarchies in Catholic Europe to assert their authority over the papacy. Resistance to papal authority was in the air of Western Europe and was supported by the kings of France and Spain. A strong argument can be made that the Protestant Reformation itself was more a land grab by the Protestant princes than about ecclesiastical renewal, and that without their cooperation Martin Luther would have been a flame that quickly ignited, but then rapidly dissipated. With this summary of the historical background to the period, we will now turn our attention to the Protestant Reformers.

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<sup>8</sup> Since 1485 in Saxony (long before Luther posted his 95 theses in 1517) the electors of the Holy Roman Empire had rejected the Pope's right to sell indulgences in their estates.



Philip Melanchthon, Martin Luther, Johann Bugenhagen and Gaspard Creuziger, four German Protestant theologians shown working on Luther's translation of the Bible.