
I am on the Rock, the Rock that Lasts

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
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I spent the last few weeks of the summer among the rocks and forests of Ontario, Canada. My family and I have a couple of little cabins there, and we return to that rugged land every summer. The living there is rather rugged, because it is rocky and uneven. The lake, of course, can be beautifully smooth; but the shore and forests are full of twisted and slippery rocks.

I have usually considered a rock as something that is unchangeable. A rock is what is solid, something one should build on. "God is our Rock," we say, because God is secure and unmoving.

This year, however, I have been reminded of the opposite: rocks do change, rocks do move. Some of the outdoor places we admire the most, maybe the great mountains some of us visited this summer, are beautiful because they are the result of movement. Those slicing mountains and deep canyons are the result of massive shifts in the earth. Our great vistas were formed by rock upturning and eroding. It took a lot of time, of course, but rocks do change. And they are beautiful because of it.

Some of us may have spent time at the beach this summer. Do you know where all that beautiful white sand came from? On our Georgia beaches, all that sand is from the Appalachian Mountains. Gradually, over time, as the Appalachians erode, their rock and soil flow down rivers to the Atlantic Ocean. By then, the rock has turned to sand. Those eroded rocks are now the small white grains of sand on our beaches.

"I am on the rock, the rock that lasts. I am on the rock that lasts...." God is our rock, we say. But that does not mean that God does not change. Maybe some of us once thought of our parents as rocks, as sure and steady foundations for our lives. We loved their sturdiness and we depended on their security. But, of course, our parents got older; and, gradually, they changed.

There is something that does not change, and which might even grow stronger with age. There is a force in this earth that brings things together, too, that does not erode. That force is love, which I have sometimes considered as the opposite principle of entropy. Entropy, of course, is how we define that natural principle by which things dissolve and erode to states of lower and lower motion. Entropy is the gradual erosion of the rocks around us.

But love somehow acts against entropy. Love somehow brings atoms and molecules together. Love brings bodies together. Love brings hearts together. Love causes things to grow, even against the universe's tendency to disintegrate. Love integrates. Love is the Christ force, the cosmic Christ force.

When I officiated at the funeral of an old friend this summer, I was reminded of this different kind of rock. Even as we missed her as friend, as mother, as grandmother, we were somehow surrounded by her love, in each one of us. The rock of love. There is a rock which opens up for each one of us, that draws us in, that protects us. We are acknowledging this rock of love when we sing, "Rock of ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee." We are asking the rock of love to open for us; that means it changes for us. The rock of love changes for the better. The rock of love changes for growth, for beauty, for eternity.



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