

FUNDAMENTALISTS vs. FOUNDATIONAL BELIEVERS

As Catholic Christians we do not isolate one passage in Scripture from the rest of Scripture, including both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Fundamentalist believers overemphasize the divinity of the biblical text to such an extent that they deny the text's real human character. *Foundational believers*, on the other hand, emphasize a balanced approach that considers the literary form and culture of the human word as well as the revelation of the divinely inspired word. Therefore, we seek the literal intention of God's Word, not the literal interpretation of each word in the Bible. Most of the Old Testament texts were composed gradually, often over centuries (between 900 BC and 50 BC), by generations of authors who committed to writing, and revised repeatedly, material they first encountered in Oral Tradition or as Liturgical Traditions. For example, in the Book of Genesis there are numerous references to Abraham, our father in faith, when God identifies himself as the *God of your father Abraham*. See Genesis 26:24, 28:13, 32:10.

The New Testament texts were also composed gradually over 100 years (between 50 AD and 150 AD) from the Oral Tradition of preaching and teaching by Jesus and his followers. Fundamentalism is the isolation and interpretation of one passage, such as Matthew 23:9. *Call no one on earth your father; you have but one father in heaven*. The literal intention of God's Word here is to make no person your god for there is only one God in heaven. Consequently, we frequently call our fathers "father" and our teachers "teacher" and our priests "father." Of course, the priest is a *spiritual father* of his people just as St. Paul regarded himself as the *spiritual father* of the children whom he brings to faith in Christ through the Gospel. Compare the Matthew 23:9 passage cited above with Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 4:15-17. *Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me. For this reason, I am sending you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord; he will remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach them everywhere in every church*. As seen from this comparison, it is very risky to take one passage in Scripture out of context and to interpret it in isolation.

God wants men to be spiritual fathers who lead others to faith through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the pastoral letters of Timothy and Titus how tenderly the author speaks of St. Paul as the father of his children in the faith! *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, my true child in faith....* (1 Timothy 1:1-2) *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God for the promise of life in Christ Jesus to Timothy, my dear child....* (2 Timothy 1:1-2) *Paul, a slave of God and apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's chosen ones and the recognition of religious truth, ... to Titus, my true child in our common faith....* (Titus 1:1, 4) *I urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment,* (St. Paul's letter to Philemon, verse 10). Therefore, every priest is honored to serve the one God in heaven by begetting children for Christ following the time-honored tradition of Paul.