

# Were the Pharisees Fundamentalists?



All Scripture is Authorized King James Version, 1769 Edition of the 1611 King James Version.

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In popular, or mainstream “Christianity” there are some people who are simply unwelcome. This is primarily due to what they believe. The attitude of the leaders of mainstream Christianity toward those individuals is certainly not Christian, and borders on outright persecution. It is understandable that those such as the Atheists would refer to Bible-believing fundamentalists as “fundies,” but it’s not at all understandable for someone who claims Christ and professes to be a Baptist to refer to another, far more conservative Baptist as a “funny-dementalist.” When this occurs, it is evident that the individual using the pejorative holds in disdain those who desire to abide strictly by the Scripture. Somehow, I find it hard to believe this is an attitude the Lord Jesus Christ approves of in any of His children. However, this kind of attitude is not at all uncommon; rather it is a very prevalent attitude among those in mainstream Christianity. The following excerpt from a “Christian” forum illustrates the point quite well. Please note that all emphasis in the excerpt below is mine, and is made by the use of underlining>.

*cowboyinaf*

*7/24/2005 5:44 AM 36 out of 39*

*([http://jesus.beliefnet.com/boards/message\\_list.asp?pageID=9&discussionID=426833&messages\\_per\\_page=4](http://jesus.beliefnet.com/boards/message_list.asp?pageID=9&discussionID=426833&messages_per_page=4))*

*Whilst we are defining terms, I would submit that some are posting here under the quise(sic) of conservatism, when they*

*are more closely allied with fundamentalism. Conservative thought and theology is careful, rarely malleable, but not intolerant.*

*Fundamentalism brooks no deviation, nor dissent. The Pharisees were fundamentalists. And we all know, or should know, what Jesus thought of their self rightouesness(sic) approach to worship. As has been stated above, Jesus taught on many occasions we must be humble in thought and in deed. You may not agree with someones(sic) approach to thier(sic) relationship with God, but the best way to show that your path is superior is through the way you life your life. When you reach the point of being judgmental, you have poisoned your own well, and it becomes difficult to be of service to God or yourself. Much harm has been done in the world through fundamentalist thought and action, within all of the major religions.*

Now, I find it amazing that this person and others have taken it upon themselves to determine what a fundamentalist is, what fundamentalists believe and practice, and that they are identical to the Pharisees of the Lord Jesus Christ's day and time. It is an interesting, but not uncommon claim that the Pharisees were fundamental in their doctrine and practice, when the Scripture in no place describes what a fundamentalist is, or even uses the word "fundamental" or "fundamentalist." However, since it is a common assumption that the Pharisees were "fundamentalists," it is fair game and scripturally proper to challenge that assumption to see if it is actually valid and true.

Before even beginning to discuss whether fundamentalists are as some claim they are, it is appropriate to actually define the term. The term fundamentalist is not in the 1971 Oxford Dictionary of the English Language on a Historical Basis. However, the word "fundamental" does appear, and we can use it as a basis for the word "fundamentalist." In contrast, the

word "fundamentalism" does appear in the Random House Collegiate Dictionary, along with the word "fundamental." If we hold that fundamentalists practice fundamentalism, it is possible to derive a definition from the word "fundamental," as defined in the dictionary. Although, if the definition is inaccurate in any degree, we are going to arrive at an inaccurate determination of what a fundamentalist actually is. Thus, to cover all the bases, both dictionaries, along with all the pertinent words, will be used in defining the term. That way, we don't depend upon someone's subjective and possibly pejorative definition.

*Oxford Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, Compact Edition*

*Fundamental adjective and subjective*

1. *Of or pertaining to the foundation or base of a building.*

*Obsolete*

1b. *Having a foundation, fixed, not temporary. Rare*

2. *Of, or pertaining to the foundation or groundwork, going to the root of the matter.*

3. *Serving as the foundation or base on which something is built. Chiefly and now exclusively in immaterial applications. Hence, forming an essential or indispensable part of a system, institution, etc.*

3b. *Primary, original; from which others are derived.*

4. *Of strata: Lying at the bottom.*

*The rest of the definitions (5 through 7) apply to science, music and humor (British) and thus do not apply here.*

*Fundamentalness*

1. *A leading or primary principle, rule, law, or article, which serves as the ground work of a system; an essential part.*

1b. *Fundamental requisites*

*Definition 2 applies to music, and thus is not applicable here.*

*Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition, Abridged, copyright 1983.*

*Fundamental adjective*

1. *Serving as, or being an essential part of, a foundation or basis; basic; underlying: fundamental principles.*

2. *Of, pertaining to, or affecting the foundation or basis: a fundamental revision.*

3. *Being an original or primary source: a fundamental idea.*

*Definitions 4 through 7 apply to music and physics, and thus do not apply here.*

*Fundamentalism noun*

1. *A movement in American Protestantism that arose in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that stresses the infallibility of the Bible in all matters of faith and doctrine, accepting it as a literal historical record.*

2. *The beliefs held by those in this movement.*

Now, judging from the words used by *cowboyinaf*, who posted to the *Beliefnet* forum above, there are some questions that he ought to answer as to what basis he used to define fundamentalism, and precisely what standard was used in his determination of what fundamentalists believe. It is rather clear what he thinks they think and behave like, and it is also abundantly clear that he doesn't like them.

However, regardless of how *cowboyinaf* arrived at what he believes defines fundamentalism, the dictionaries plainly demonstrate that there is nothing inherently dangerous or destructive about being fundamental, or a fundamentalist. In fact, if we examine the following passages of Scripture in light of the above definitions, we will arrive at some startling conclusions concerning fundamentalism and just who was actually fundamental in their doctrine.

In examining the following passages, please note carefully the

setting and the individuals involved.

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. (*Matthew 15:1-9*)

In the above passage, the parties involved in this exchange are the Lord Jesus Christ and the scribes and Pharisees. Plainly, the incident involved an accusation by the Pharisees and the response of the Lord Jesus Christ to that accusation. In the second passage below, this incident is covered in greater detail.

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath

Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (*Mark 7:1-13*)

In both accounts of this incident, there is something that is readily apparent in the way that Christ responds to the scribes and Pharisees. It is plain that the Lord Jesus refers to Scripture and depends upon nothing else for His answer to the Pharisees. It is notable that the scribes and Pharisees lay blame or find fault, and that their finding of fault is determined by the standard of tradition. It is equally notable that the Lord Jesus Christ answers them with something far more fundamental than tradition – the commandment of God. In fact, by the above dictionary definitions, it is not the scribes and Pharisees who are the fundamentalists here. Rather, they appear to be what one could easily define as “progressives” or “traditionalists” rather than fundamentalists, in that they have the charge laid against them by the Lord Jesus Christ of changing the commandment of God, and thus setting it aside in favor of a tradition they developed. Given the charge laid by Christ, and the record of the Scriptures, it is evident that the scribes and Pharisees accepted this tradition handed down to them, in plain opposition to the Scriptures they outwardly revered. If the

scribes and Pharisees were true fundamentalists, as some claim, they would have overthrown the tradition and followed Scripture. Then the Lord Jesus Christ could not and would not have laid this particular charge against them.

The commandment the Lord Jesus Christ referred to is and was far more fundamental than the tradition the scribes and Pharisees were depending upon to prove themselves righteous. Why? Because the commandment was given even before Israel entered into covenant with the Lord to be the House of Witness. In fact, this commandment was one of the strictures laid before the children of Israel as a condition of their acceptance of the covenant. Please note that the expectations of the covenant are given in Exodus, chapters 20 through 23, and the covenant is accepted and agreed to in chapter 24.

And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. (*Exodus 21:17*)

Thus, Israel had no prior tradition of how a child was to respect and deal with his parents. If they had, it certainly would have been set aside in the acceptance of the covenant at Mount Sinai. Hence, the real fundamentalist in the above exchange recorded in both Matthew and Mark is the Lord Jesus Christ, not the scribes and Pharisees.

However, this is not the only incident in which the Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the religious leaders of Israel for their "progressive" attitude and behavior. In the following passage, the Lord Jesus Christ contrasts his absolute obedience to the Father with the Jews' failure to keep the Law of Moses as it was delivered to them.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,

whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? (*John 7:14-19*)

if we understand the import of the above exchange, we cannot help but understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is plainly accusing the Jews of having a progressive and modernist mindset. In contrast, the Lord Jesus makes it very plain that he will not depart from the express commandment of God the Father.

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (*John 12:44-50*)

The Lord Jesus Christ held this same mind toward the Scripture, in that he quoted the Old Testament extensively and never raised question as to its authenticity, or whether what it stated was to be taken literally. In the following passages the dependence the Lord Jesus Christ placed upon the Scriptures it is clearly evident. It is also quite evident that the Lord Jesus took the Scriptures literally and applied them in that way.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe



all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took *it*, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. (Luke 24:40-44)

In the following passage, the Lord Jesus references the event that happened to Jonah the prophet for his disobedience to the plain commandment of God. Immediately after that, He references the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon. In so doing, He draws an equality between these events, and thus places both events on the same level of authenticity. Moreover, this also declares that these events were clearly and accurately recorded in Scripture, and are both to be taken literally.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a

greater than Solomon *is* here. (*Matthew 12:38-42*)

Thus, from all evidence that can be gathered from the Scripture, and judging by the definitions given in the dictionaries above, the scribes and Pharisees were not fundamentalists in any sense of the word. Rather, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the fundamentalist, and rightly so, as he is Almighty God manifest in the flesh, and the Creator of all, and the foundation of all.

So then, what are we to make of *cowboyinaf's* definition of fundamentalism and fundamentalists, which is very much the popular, albeit wrong, definition of fundamentalism?

Plainly, such statements as:

*"Fundamentalism brooks no deviation, nor dissent."*

*"The Pharisees were fundamentalists."*

*"Much harm has been done in the world through fundamentalist thought and action,"*

evinced an attitude of nothing more than ill-informed "judgementalism," which is the very thing that the poster to the *Beliefnet* forum accused those he perceived as fundamentalists of practicing. The sad part of this whole affair is that those who label themselves "Christian" and do not hold to the Scripture are quick to use the label of "fundamentalist" as a pejorative against those who do hold to Scripture, not realizing that the Scripture is express in demonstrating that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Fundamentalist. The Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God, and He has never changed and never will change. Moreover, He is the only Foundation upon which to build one's life. In all things, God is fundamental, and He takes a very fundamental view of His word.

## The Catholic View

What then does this mean with regard to the Catholic view of fundamentalism? If we note the writings of Catholic apologists, we find that they brand “fundamentalism” a heretical view, and condemn it roundly as being opposed to Catholicism. In looking at this we will examine two authors, as they state the Catholic Church’s opposition to fundamentalism rather well, and put forth their reasons for not being fundamental about as lucidly as can be done.

One of the primary tenets of fundamentalism holds that the Scripture forbids the making of images for worship, and that the LORD God is not pleased with such, as it is rank idolatry, or leads to idolatry, which is to be avoided at all costs. Simply put, the position on idolatry in the New Testament is summed up in the apostle Paul’s commandment to the church at Corinth:

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (*I Corinthians 10:14*)

This is about as succinct as it can get for how the Christian ought to view anything that tends to, or flavors of idolatry. However, this is not the Catholic position as outlined in their Catechism. In the following quotation, the author of the article summarizes how he understands the use of images, and then gives the reference from the Catechism for support. I have underlined certain points for emphasis.

*The Catholic position is simple: If Jesus really is true God and true man, and if he has existed physically in this world, then he can be represented in visual arts. The Old Testament decrees against images were made when mankind was just beginning to understand who Yahweh was and how he related to humanity. The “fullness of time” had not yet been realized—humanity had much to learn before God would come as man and dwell among us. But with the Incarnation came big changes.*

*The Catechism explains this beautifully:*

*“The sacred image, the liturgical icon, principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the Incarnation of the Son of God has ushered in a new ‘economy’ of images: Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God . . . and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled. . . . The veneration of sacred images is based on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. It is not contrary to the first commandment” (CCC 1159, 2141; see 1160). ((The Heretical Roots of Fundamentalism, Carl E. Olson, This Rock, 1999, Catholic Answers, <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1999/9910fea4.asp>))*

Now, in the first paragraph, I emphasized two points that fly in the face of what the Scripture declares plainly – that man has known and understood what the LORD God has required of him from very shortly after the Fall, when the LORD God walked in the Garden and called to Adam, condemned his sin, and then presented the Gospel to him. It is plainly testified in Hebrews that Abel knew the gospel, and that his faith was expressed in the acceptable sacrifice to God. It is also testified throughout the Old Testament that many knew the very same Gospel that is preached in the New Testament, and were saved in the very same manner as someone is today: by grace through faith, not by works. The following passage of Scripture is clear evidence of this very fact:

Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes

shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me. (*Job 19:23-27*)

Since Job was a contemporary of Abraham, and he expresses plainly and clearly that he knows, not guesses, that his redeemer lives, and that He will come in the flesh, and that at some point he (Job) will see his Lord and Redeemer in his (Job's) flesh. This is as much to say that Job understood fully that Christ was to come at some point, and that, at some point, Job would be resurrected with a body similar to the body he was in at that moment.

However, Job is not the only witness of the fact that men during Old Testament times understood every bit as much about God as we do today. It is interesting to note what both the Old and New Testaments declare about Abraham's knowledge of God, and of Christ to come.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (*Galatians 3:6-8*)

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. (*Hebrews 11:17-19*)

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (*Genesis 14:18-20*)

In the three preceding passages addressing Abraham, we find that Abraham had the very same gospel preached to him that is preached in the New Testament. Moreover, Abraham had absolute confidence when asked of the LORD God to sacrifice Isaac, that when he did so God would raise Isaac from the dead, as Christ was promised to come through Isaac's lineage. Finally, in Genesis, chapter 14, we find that Abraham was not the only one that knew and understood what God required of man. Rather, what is clearly testified to is that Melchizedek, king of Salem, which would become Jerusalem, was an anointed priest of the LORD God.

Now, since Abraham knew all that he knew and understood about the LORD God, which was considerable, as he was called the "Friend of God," ((James 2:23, Authorized King James Version, 1611, 1769 Edition.)) what can we then make of Melchizedek's understanding of the LORD God, seeing that he is a priest of the Most High God (the LORD God)? Certainly, it was no less than Abimelech's understanding of God and what God required of him, as is testified to in Genesis, chapter 20:

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou *art but* a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she *is* a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She *is* my sister? and she, even she herself said, He *is* my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man *his* wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine.

Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the

men were sore afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. (*Genesis 20:3-9*)

What then are we to make of the statements recorded in Scripture as to Abimelech's understanding of God, seeing that he states that the Philistines are a righteous nation, and he is a righteous king, and the LORD God does not disagree, but confirms this very fact? Plainly, the fact that Abimelech tells Abraham that Abraham caused him to sin and that is not to be done, means that Abimelech understood something that many Christians today don't seem to grasp at all.

The above examples are not the only ones in the Old Testament that expressly demonstrate and prove that they knew just as much about the LORD God and Christ to come as the most knowledgeable of Christians today. In fact, I would hazard that the Old Testament saints knew and understood more about the LORD than the vast majority of believers today. Indeed, it is in the Old Testament that the guidelines for what one may glory about are given:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD. (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*)

Thus, we are forced to ask the question: If, as Carl Olson claims, men in Old Testament time did not really know and understand the LORD God, what is the above passage doing in Scripture? How is it that Carl Olson is more authoritative on what men during the time of the Old Testament knew than the Scripture, whose Author is the LORD God Himself?

Plainly, the LORD God would never give such a guideline if it were not possible, both then and now, to know and understand the LORD in a very personal way. Just as it is today, so it was all during the time of the Old Testament: we can know and understand the LORD, who He is, and what He likes and does not like. In short, it is, and has always been, possible to know the LORD God personally.

There is one final example before moving to the second paragraph of the Catholic author's quote. This example is best understood in light of the question: Is it possible to please someone when you do not have a good understanding of their personality and nature, and what they like and dislike? While you consider the question, carefully read the following passage of Scripture from Hebrews that addresses Enoch and Noah:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (*Hebrews 11:5-7*)

The short answer to the question is: No. It is impossible to please anyone when you understand little to nothing about their character and nature. Thus, it is plain both Enoch and Noah knew the LORD God personally, and they ordered their lives in accordance with what faith showed them.

The second paragraph of the Catholic author's quotation consists of an excerpt from the Catechism and it states the following:



*“Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God . . .”*

“Previously,” in the context of the quote, means that before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, no man had seen God so that an image could be made. This logic is used to justify the following:

*“But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God . . .”*

To the above logic, I must respond with the testimony of Old Testament Scripture:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, *Woe is me!* for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. (*Isaiah 6:1-5*)

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, *Art* thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, *Nay;* but *as* captain of the host of the LORD *am* I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the

earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so. (*Joshua 5:13-15*)

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed. (*Daniel 7:9-14*)

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham

hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead *it*, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave *it* unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. (*Genesis 18:1-8*)

I have only quoted four passages of Scripture, but there are many more, both before and after the giving of the Law at Mount Horeb when the Old Covenant was entered into by the Jews. Thus, I take great exception to the statement that God (the Word) had not manifest Himself in the flesh prior to His birth in Bethlehem. Now then, if the LORD manifested Himself in the flesh to both Abraham and Joshua, which He did, and one is prior to the giving of the commandment, and the other is after, why did neither one ever make an image of the LORD God that they saw? Moreover, why is the physical appearance of the LORD God never described in anything other than general terms? Plainly, Daniel and Isaiah both saw the LORD God upon His throne, and knew and understood that it was the LORD God that they were looking at. In fact, Daniel describes the appearance of the Son of man, which is the exact term used for the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Gospel of Luke, and yet nowhere is it ever recorded that Daniel made an image of Christ to come. The very plain reason that no images were authorized or produced to represent God in the Old Testament holds true today – and the reason is expressly given in the following passage addressing the brasen serpent:

Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He removed the

high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. (*II Kings 18:1-6*)

Now, Moses made the brasen serpent at the express commandment of God as a representation of the work of Christ to come. However, the LORD did it knowing that there were some in Israel who would follow after it to worship it as an idol, thinking that their salvation would come from it. That is an unavoidable consequence anytime that any image is made of anything that can be construed to represent God or thought to have the power of God, as the brasen serpent did. In the following passage from Numbers, chapter 21, the incident that involved the brasen serpent is detailed:

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a

serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (*Numbers 21:4-9*)

And so it was that there were some in Israel who worshipped the brasen serpent, despite the fact that they were commanded to worship and serve the LORD God only. This is the snare of images that are used to represent God and the power of God. Thus, the commandment is given in the New Testament to “flee from idolatry,” which is to say that we ought to flee from any hint of idolatry. This, taken with the totality of witness from the Old Testament concerning those who saw God in the flesh, means that we are to have no images at all of what is supposed to represent Christ. To do otherwise is to fall into the trap and snare of idolatry, which the Catholic Church has done and seeks to justify, even though the Scripture plainly testifies against them.

Thus, one of the most obvious reasons that fundamentalism is condemned by the Catholic Church is the fact that the practice of fundamentalism, which includes extensive study of the Bible and taking the Scriptures literally, roundly condemns significant elements of the Catechism. ((The use of images is by no means the only place the Catechism violates Scripture. There are numerous places in the Catechism that cannot be reconciled with Scripture, it just so happens that the use of images is one of the most prominent.))

The second Catholic author’s view is also consistent with the Catholic Church’s attempt to discredit fundamentalism as a movement by claiming it to be of recent origin, and by mislabeling it as a Protestant oddity.

*“Fundamentalism is a relatively new brand of Protestantism started in America that has attracted a tremendous following, including many fallen away Catholics.”* ((*Fundamentalism, Catholic* Answers, <http://www.catholic.com/library/fundamentalism.asp>))

*“While the origin of the term “Fundamentalist” has a fairly simple history, the movement itself has a more confused origin. There was no individual founder, nor was there a single event that precipitated its advent. Of course, Fundamentalist writers insist that Fundamentalism is nothing but a continuation of Christian orthodoxy. According to this theory, Fundamentalism flourished for three centuries after Christ, went underground for twelve hundred years, surfaced again with the Reformation, took its knocks from various sources, and was alternately prominent or diminished in its influence and visibility. In short, according to its partisans, Fundamentalism always has been the Christian remnant, the faithful who remain after the rest of Christianity (if it can even be granted the title) has fallen into apostasy.” ((Ibid.))*

Now, it is plain in the Scriptures what constitutes “orthodoxy,” if we can even use such a term, and those things of “orthodoxy” are quite provable by the Scripture. However, the Scripture is not the only witness to contradict the above author. Books such as *Martyrs Mirror* and *Fox’s Book of Martyrs* detail the persecution and suffering of persons, who can only be labeled as fundamentalists, at the hands of the Catholic Church. In fact, at least one Catholic Cardinal was honest enough to admit that they actively persecuted those who held strictly to Scripture.

*“Were it not that the baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years, they would swarm in greater number than all the Reformers.” ((Cardinal Hosius, 1524, President of the Council of Trent: Hosius, Letters; Apud Opera, pp. 112, 113.))*

Thus, by several witnesses, including one of their own, they hold (or held) fundamentalists to be such heretics that they must be put to death. The plain and clear reason for this is

not that fundamentalists and fundamentalism is dangerous. Rather, fundamentalism exposes the deficiencies in Catholic doctrine and practice, and undermines the power of the Church to control what people think, who they worship, and how they worship Him.

## **Traditionalism and Modernism**

Earlier in this article, I referenced the Pharisees as traditionalists when I noted that they held to tradition instead of setting it aside when it plainly contradicted the Scripture. Thus it is expressly true that they were traditionalists. However, at some point in the past, some number of the Jewish leadership decided to innovate and arrived at a very interesting interpretation of the commandment regarding children cursing their parents, and what ought to be done about that. In fact, the interpretation they arrived at was entirely contradictory to the commandment itself. We are not told how this was accomplished. What we are told by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is that it happened, and that it was and is wrong.

Nonetheless, we need to examine an aspect of this for the lesson contained in it. That is, how the traditionalists of the Lord Jesus' day were at one time modernists and progressives. After all, this doctrine that is and was entirely contradictory to the commandment of God had not always been there, and it certainly was not there prior to the commandment being given at Mount Horeb. Thus, one or more persons sometime in the past were progressive and modern in their thinking, and arrived at an interpretation that can only be described as "twisted." The problem is not that someone in Jewish antiquity arrived at such a twisted determination of what the Scripture plainly stated, though that is a serious problem for that individual and all who believed him over the Scripture; rather, the greater problem is that successive generations of Jewish leaders and priests did nothing to change that abominable interpretation. Instead, what they did

was the ancient equivalent of the modern legal theory of *stare decisis*.

*Stare Decisis* is defined in Black's Law Dictionary as "To abide by, or adhere to, decided cases. ((Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition, The West Group, 1990.))" which is given as "Policy of courts to stand by precedent and not to disturb settled point." This raises the question: Since when is the original not a settled point? It would seem to be a pretty settled point that children are to always honor their father and mother. How is it then that this clear point was moved away from – to the extent of being interpreted as meaning the exact opposite of the express words given?

Moreover, herein lies an interesting phenomena: How is it that the original (which was still readily accessible) was set aside in favor of the "interpretation" of the original? This is especially intriguing when the interpretation is exactly like the Lord Jesus described to the Pharisees – directly contradictory to the original. We could say that this phenomenon is strictly limited to the Scripture, but that would be to deny what we observe every day. The practice of *stare decisis* seems to occur in just about every endeavor of man. However, it's effect is particularly evident when constitutional issues are examined, especially concerning individual rights. Without going into detail, the "Commerce Clause" is one such area of constitutional law that has been subject to *stare decisis*, much to the detriment of individual liberty.

In much the same way, I suppose we ought not be shocked when someone utterly misinterprets the Scripture to his or her own advantage. However, it is disturbing when they do so and then have the audacity to claim that they are expressly *not* doing so. This tends to be one of the most distressing tendencies of man – to look right at and plainly read a text, and then claim that "so and so said that this passage means this, or that, and thus we will follow what so and so said," despite the fact that the passage read is simple and easily understood. The



problem lies in the basic nature of man – we do not want to follow the plain, literal, simple teaching, but would rather have the most convoluted and hard-to-understand “interpretations” of the Scripture given. That way we can say that we are something special and have a unique and highly-educated understanding that is just not available to the “common man.”

## **Conclusion**

Were the Pharisees fundamentalists? By the Scripture and the dictionaries, clearly they were not. By the standard of those who choose to utilize their own definitions to suit their purposes, they most certainly were. However, if we understand what the Scripture has to say about creating private definitions and using our own standard to judge things by, we will understand who is in error here. In this matter, the Scripture is express:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (*II Corinthians 10:12*)

The principle is consistent here: for a person to create their own definition when established meanings exist is to become an authority unto themselves, and to measure things by the standard of their own understanding. For those who say it does not matter, I would suggest to them that they develop their own system of measurement and define their own length for a foot, yard, pound, ton, etc. and see how well-received it is – particularly when they want to use it in trade for goods. Of course, the LORD has very much to say about this subject:

Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. (*Leviticus 19:36*)

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a

small. (*Deuteronomy 25:13*)

Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD. (*Proverbs 20:10*)

Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good. (*Proverbs 20:23*)

Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? (*Micah 6:11*)

The principle here is one that bears directly upon this issue: when there exists an established standard or definition of measure, departing from it is an abomination to the LORD, and is inherently deceitful. By the same principle, so is creating a new definition of an established word to fit your own purposes.

Plainly, we are not free to use unequal weights and measures, and we are not free to redefine the foot, yard, pound, etc. In short, we are not to use unorthodox, proprietary definitions in place of provable, established meanings for various weights and measures. In like manner, we are not free to redefine words so that they mean something other than what the dictionary says they mean – and then use them for a pejorative.

The most sad part of this is that those who claim to be fundamentalists allow themselves to be defined by their detractors. Moreover, they never attempt to defend why it is necessary to hold strictly to the literal (physical and spiritual) meaning of Scripture. Instead, they seem to openly embrace and choose the definitions created by those who would discredit them. I have on more than one occasion heard fundamental, unaffiliated Baptist preachers expressly state that the Pharisees were indeed fundamentalists. However, by the established definitions, and by the express declaration of Scripture, the Pharisees and scribes were traditionalists and modernists, *not* fundamentalists.

Though this lack of discernment on the part of those claiming to be fundamentalists may call into question fundamentalism as a movement, it can never set aside the plain testimony of Scripture and the open fundamentalism of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those things are forever settled in heaven and men will be required to answer for their lack of acceptance of the clear, literal testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (*John 12:48*)

*Finis*