

THE PLIGHT OF THE ORIGINALIST IN TODAY'S WORLD

Psalm 119:160 - The sum of Your word is truth,
And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

In the United States (or at least that is how it is named), there have been voices of discontent as to how the Constitution of the United States is to be interpreted – this vying of voices has seemed to increase exponentially since the inception of the Constitution. Mainly there are two camps to which those voices belong – the Originalist and the Living Constitutionalist.

Originalism means applying the Constitution as the Founders understood it. Originalism is practiced by nearly all English and American judges and lawyers when they read legal documents; this they have done for nearly 500 years. By respecting the understanding behind a document, originalism keeps the document alive.

By contrast, the “Living Constitutionals” dislike many of the Constitution’s rules and standards and, therefore, seek to “adjust” the Constitution to serve their political goals. “Living Constitutionalism” is a misnomer because when we abandon a document’s rules and standards, the document dies. In practice, “Living Constitutionalism” converts our Constitution into parchment loincloth meant to cover political unmentionables.

Among the inconsistencies of living constitutionalists are claims that the Constitution is both “too rigid” and “too vague,” however, their greatest challenge to the Constitution is that it is “outdated.” This “outdated” accusation has recently been demonstrated in Boulder, Colorado, where billboard spaces have been bought in order to display a message meant to disparage originalists. One of these billboards reads, “Imagine highways using traffic laws written in 1791. Imagine radio, television, and the internet run by 1791 regulations. Imagine limiting yourself to medical care available in 1791. The Second Amendment was written in 1791. Thoughts and prayers are not enough.”

What these billboard renters fail to understand is that ordinary laws, such as traffic laws and constitutional precepts, are two very different things. For instance, the Second Amendment does not protect “the right of people to keep and bear muskets and swords.” It protects “the right to keep and bear Arms.” That’s why the Second Amendment protects the right to own and use modern “bearable” (portable) weapons. To confuse the original meaning of the Second Amendment with “traffic laws” is absurd because how the Framers of the Constitution understood this Second Amendment is still how it is to be understood today.

While much more time and explanation could be given to the United States Constitution and its advocates and its adversaries, shall we rather move on to even a more important subject – the interpretation of Holy Scripture? Much like the two camps concerning themselves with the Constitution, there exists many of the same voices concerning Holy Scripture. There are those who are staunch originalists, as I am myself, and then there are those who wish to argue that Scripture is both “too rigid” and “too vague” and, of course, that it is simply “outdated.”

I am of the persuasion that Scripture MUST be understood as the author meant it to be understood. One wise minister used to say that “the Bible means what it says and says what it means.” I couldn’t agree more. However, there are voices who desire to change the meaning of Scripture in order to fit their lifestyle. These are they who readily and quickly will denounce the Apostle Paul for declaring that if a woman were to cut her hair, she is the same as if she were shaven. They also take umbrage to the clear teaching that a woman is not to wear clothing that identifies with the male.

These are only a few of the attacks voiced against Scripture. There are even assaults against the clearly stated formula of water baptism of being only salvational in experience when performed in the Name of Jesus Christ – but this is too divisive for many of today’s “cancel culture” adherents, for they wish to be more compatible with present-day religious groups.

Either we teach and believe that Holy Scripture speaks the Mind of God as He originally meant it to speak, or we “transform” a Living Word into a dead and noneffective jumble of words.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

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