

The Potential Ichabod in America: Her Glory Based on Principles of Order from the Founders; Kirk's *The Roots of American Order* Warns of the Loss of Glory

- 8- These elements were brought together by our Founding Fathers in the State Papers of our national government and reflect the Zeitgeist of the American people at its founding. This nation was originally made up of a number of British colonies and upon independence from the Crown its original culture was British. Thus the phrase, "We are all immigrants" is demonstrably wrong.
- 9- The population of the United States at its founding was made up overwhelmingly of former British subjects made free and independent by victory at Yorktown. They were citizens of the United States, not immigrants. Others that came later may have immigrated but it was done at the good pleasure of the citizens of this country who offered them opportunity and often refuge.
- 10- Today, many, to whom grace and charity have been extended for 232 years, are now condemning our culture and seeking to eradicate its Western European origins under the rhetorical veil of multiculturalism and diversity. I clearly state to you today that multiculturalism and diversity are the root causes of the recent ambush of innocent civilians in New York and the cheap shot taken at our military's nerve center at the Pentagon.
- 11- What the Islamic pirates sought to sabotage in Manhattan and Arlington were the visible manifestations of America's glory which at its core are found in the absolute principles of Protestant theology.
- 12- The true glory of a nation is the reflection of its people's devotion to the order, establishment, and spiritual codes of their dispensation. Unfortunately, our nation has been riding the crest of a wave of prosperity imputed over several generations to those who knew doctrine and applied it in every aspect of life. These truths were abandoned following World War II and in a short sixty years we have sown the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind. (Hosea 8:7)
- 13- Our glory was originally built on the solid foundation of immutable truth. Today this glory has become a mere façade, its ever-weakening ability to sustain made evident by the events of September 11, 2001.
- 14- The *sine qua non* for a freedom-loving people is a civil social order based on the permanent things found in Scripture. With order comes freedom and the preservation of freedom demands responsibility. And the responsibility of freedom requires that every generation instruct the succeeding generation about these responsibilities.
- 15- One of the best dissertations on the subjects of order and freedom was written by Dr. Russell A. Kirk in his *magnum opus*, *The Roots of American Order*. It is fascinating how his pungent commentary of 34 years ago seems prophetic in retrospect.
- 16- Before we begin we need a good definition of the word "order." For that we consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

Order. 16. A method according to which things act or events take place; the fixed arrangement found in the existing constitution of things; a natural, moral, or spiritual system in which things proceed according to definite laws. Chiefly in such phrases as *order of nature, of things, of the world, moral order, spiritual order*.

19. (*Civil or public order.*) The condition in which the laws regulating individuals in the community and their public conduct are maintained and observed; the rule of law or constituted authority; law-abiding state; absence of insurrection, riot, turbulence, unruliness, or crimes of violence.¹

Dr. Kirk's commentary on the principles of order is one of the best summations on the subject by the traditionalist writers of the twentieth century:

Simone Weil / Vey / wrote that our twentieth century is a time of disorder very like the disorder of Greece in the fifth century before Christ. In her words, "It is as though we had returned to the age of Protagoras² and the Sophists,³ the age when the art of persuasion took the place of thought and controlled the fate of cities and accomplished coups d'état. So the ninth book of Plato's *Republic* reads like a description of contemporary events." (p. 4)

This analogy of fifth-century Greece with our age is too true. One may add that our time of troubles also is like the disorder of the Roman republic in the first century before Christ, and like the catastrophic collapse of Roman civilization in the fifth century after Christ. As individuals and as a civilization we people in the closing days of the twentieth century grope for order. (pp. 4-5)

If a society falls into general disorder, many of its members will cease to exist at all. And if the members of a society are disordered in spirit, the outward order of the commonwealth cannot endure. (p. 5)

Seeking for the roots of order, we are led to four cities: Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and London. The order which Americans experience is derived from the experience of those four old cities. **If our souls are disordered, we fall into abnormality, unable to control our impulses. If our commonwealth is disordered, we fall into anarchy, every man's hand against every other man's.**

Order is the first need of the soul. It is not possible to love what one ought to love, unless we recognize some principles of order by which to govern ourselves.

Order is the first need of the commonwealth. It is not possible for us to live in peace with one another, unless we recognize some principle of order by which to do justice.

The good society is marked by a high degree of order, justice, and freedom. Among these, order has primacy: for justice cannot be enforced until a tolerable civil social order is attained, nor can freedom be anything better than violence until order gives us laws. (p. 6)

¹ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2005.

² Protagoras (485-410 B.C. Greek philosopher. His books were burned and he was exiled (c. 415 B.C.). His philosophy was epitomized in famous saying "man is the measure of all things: of those which are, that they are; of those which are not, that they are not."

³ Sophist: Any of a class of ancient Greek teachers of rhetoric and philosophy prominent about the middle of the fifth century B.C. for their subtle and often specious reasoning.

In America, order and justice and freedom have developed together; but they can decay in parallel fashion. In every generation, some human beings bitterly defy the moral order and the social order. Although the hatred of order is suicidal, it must be reckoned with: ignore a fact, and that fact will be your master. Half a century ago, perceiving a widespread disintegration of private and public order, William Butler Yeats wrote of what had become the torment of much of the modern world (in "The Second Coming"):

Things fall apart: the center [Pivot] cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.⁴ (p. 7)

Corruptio optima pessima (Corruption of the best is the worst of all).

⁴ Russell Kirk, "Order, the First Need of All," chap. 1 in *The Roots of American Order* (La Salle: Open Court, 1974), 4-7.