



Warp & Woof: An Idiom Illustrating America's Cultural Tapestry; Russell Kirk's *The Roots of American Order*; Cicero's *The Republic*

24. One may implore the Church to alter its “moral laws” he deems to be “unfavorable” but he runs into an absolute that immediately nol-prosses his grievance:

1 Peter 1:24b - [Isaiah 40:8] “The grass withers and the flower falls away,

v. 25 - but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you.

25. The Ten Commandments bring order to a client nation and provide the basic principles for both blessings and prosperity among the people.
26. Violations of these are not only sinful they create the dispositions that tear at the warp and woof of society.
27. The idiom, “warp and woof” refers to the “underlying structure upon which something is built; a foundation; a base” (*AHDEL*: 1445).
28. The idiom is derived from the field of textiles. Fabrics are produced by weaving threads called “warp” and “woof” or “weft.” The threads or yarns that run lengthwise are called the *warp*; the crosswise threads or yarns are called the *woof* or *weft*. The *web* is the name given the completed woven fabric.
29. A tapestry is a type of textile that is usually handwoven and produces when finished a pictorial design. The finished product may represent any given subject but its foundation is made up of thousands of interwoven threads of lengthwise warps and crosswise woofs.
30. The tapestry of Anglo-Saxon culture is described by our national motto: *e pluribus unum*: out of many, one.
31. The motto recognizes that our nation, our culture, and our civilization are the overall result of a massive number of individuals who are united around a mutually agreed upon set of foundational principles from which unity occurs, order is maintained, and justice applied.
32. The foundation of the American tapestry is an expression of the Founders’ understanding of order derived from the more successful civilizations of history.
33. This concept is summarized by:

Kirk, Russell. *The Roots of American Order*. (La Salle: Open Court, 1974), 6-7:

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.



Once I was told by a scholar born in Russia of how he had come to understand through terrible events that order necessarily precedes justice and freedom. He had been a Menshevik [The Social Democratic party before the Revolution which believed in gradual socialism by means of law.] at the time of the Russian Revolution. When the Bolsheviks [who advocated the violent overthrow of capitalism] seized power in St. Petersburg, he fled to Odessa, on the Black Sea, where he found a great city in anarchy. Bands of young men commandeered street-cars and clattered wildly through the heart of Odessa, firing with rifles at any pedestrian, as though they were hunting pigeons. At any moment, one's apartment might be invaded by a casual criminal or fanatic, murdering for the sake of a loaf of bread. In this anarchy, justice and freedom were only words. "Then I learned that before we can know justice and freedom, we must have order," my friend said. "Much though I hated the Communists, I saw then that even the grim order of Communism is better than no order at all. Many might survive under Communism; no one could survive in general disorder."

In America, order, 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 widespread disintegration of private and public order, William Butler Yeats wrote of what had become of the torment of much of the modern world [from his poem, "The Second Coming"]:

Things fall apart; the centre [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.

During the past half-century, the center has failed to hold in many nations. Yet once revolution or war has demolished an established order, a people find it imperative to search for principles of order afresh, that they may survive. Once they have undone an old order, revolutionaries proceed to decree a new order—often an order harsher than the order which they had overthrown.

Our times resemble those of the concluding years of the Roman Republic, the age of Marcus Tullius Cicero. As disorder washed about him, Cicero examined the causes of private and public confusion. "Long before our time," he wrote in his treatise *The Republic*, "the customs of our ancestors molded admirable men, and in turn those eminent men upheld the ways and institutions of their forebears. Our age, however, inherited the Republic as if it were some beautiful painting of bygone ages, its colors already fading through great antiquity; and not only has our time neglected to freshen the colors of the picture, but we have failed to preserve its form and outlines."

Cicero understood that the problem of order is simultaneously personal and social: Roman men and Roman justice had declined together. It is so still.

34. Cicero described the decline of order in the Roman Republic as a painting whose colors had faded through time and which were never freshened by succeeding generations which instead failed to even preserve its form and outlines.
35. My illustration is that of a tapestry whose foundational threads of warp and woof have been allowed to fray, snap, ravel, and drop out of the frame.



36. The warp and woof that make up the foundation of our national tapestry are the same establishment principles that were the foundation of order, justice, and freedom applied in Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome and which found their way first to London and later to Philadelphia.
37. Paul instructs Timothy that the loss of order in Ephesus was manifest by those who were in open revolt against the principles of order imposed by the Ten Commandments.
38. Those who were involved in this social, cultural, and civic revolt are classified as “lawless and rebellious,” “ungodly and sinners,” and “unholy and profane,” a summary of those who violate the code of spiritual order found among the first four commandments.
39. The principle that may be observed is that once a people lose spiritual order then loss of establishment order follows close behind.