

Bash of January 25, 2003

The Modest Newsletter

A supplementary and not entirely unnecessary nor ominous harbinger of the upcoming bash.

The Bash, as you already know, is about Impressionism. So here are some quotations:

There is nothing harder to learn than painting and nothing which most people take less trouble about learning. An art school is a place where about three people work with feverish energy and everybody else idles to a degree that I should have conceived unattainable by human nature.

G. K. Chesterton, *Autobiography*.

The Impressionist painters worked on the principle that the play of light was the true reality; objects are not the solid things with a definite outline and color that we take them to be; nor are shadows uniformly dark. They contain the color complementary to that of the object that casts the shadow. The artists made use of the phenomenon of optical merging, by which two colors put close together—say, yellow and blue—will be seen as if blended into green and much brighter than if actually mixed. This technique gives the characteristic luminosity of Impressionist work.

Jacques Barzun, *Dawn to Decadence*.

What I am suggesting is that the first phase of romanticism is one of extraordinary, unremitting, “unspecialized” production in all fields. The next three phases, which we are about to examine, are efforts at specialization, selection, refinement, and intensification. Romanticism sounds all the themes of the century in its first movement. The next three movements develop one theme each. These next three movements are: Realism, Symbolism—which may also be called Impressionism—and Naturalism.

It remains to explain what symbolism means, since it is clear that all art whatever uses symbols. The specialization that deserves the new name consists either in new combinations of symbols—be they words or shapes—or in the unexpected transfer of a symbol from its usual meaning and context to a new one . . . By limiting itself to words and images that are universally current, Realism rapidly wears out its symbols.

A comparable course of action explains the development of the school of painting known as Impressionism. By refining more and more on the perceptions of the human eye. By making use of the scientific truth that white light is made up of colors, and that complementary colors heighten each other’s intensity when set close together, the Impressionists followed intensity a worthy “realistic” bent which soon landed them clean outside the photographic reality. The effects achieved by their divided palette and the pointillism that gives such a wonderful brightness and shimmer to their canvases were so exactly studied and managed that the original beholders thought the painters were mad or making fun of the public. The retort was that realism was itself and arbitrary selection from among visible objects, and that the impressionist goal was to convey a new truth by means of a new set of symbols—dots and dashes of bright paint. Outline

may have disappeared in the process, just as fixed views of natural objects had proved illusory under changing lights, “but”—prophesied the Impressionists—“you will soon see Nature as we do”; an outcome which Oscar Wilde was to erect into the principle that Nature imitates art.

Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern*.

Some observations and suggestions for the Bashes.

- 1 It would be very nice to have regular bashes. I really think this is the way they will best work. Does anybody have objections or concerns with the idea of a monthly bash?
- 2 The location is still an open thing. The places that have been thrown open are the Zartman’s, the Bauder’s, the Mitchell’s and perhaps the White’s. If you have a bash idea your best way of going is to try to get it scheduled at your place and if your place won’t do, to talk to one of us because this is the reason we have thrown our places open.
- 3 This modest newsletter is calculated to precede and enhance our bashes. It has three purposes:
 - A - To provide information about the bashes.
 - B - To provide supplementary material for the bashes.
Such as: the poem being examined, or the essay being discussed, or an essay supplementing the presentation, or pictures, or music.
 - C - To provide a place for us to share contributions. This means such things as we provoke each other to produce that are worthwhile. In this way we have some sort of critical response and a sort of audience on which to hone our skills at producing worthwhile stuff.
- 4 Your fecund production of ideas is most welcome, but we are only interested in serious things. We are devoted to the idea of Radical Monotheism – maybe one of these newsletters could feature an essay on Radical Monotheism by Kevin Bauder. And, of course, the principle derived from Radical Monotheism that those who value God alone for His own sake, are interested in the full scope of human affairs.

Some observations and suggestions for a publication.

The suggestion has been made that while it ambitious and even perhaps pretentious for those of us who frequent bashes, and our sympathizers elsewhere, to have a regularly published journal of opinion, that perhaps it may not be too wild an idea to make ourselves come up with a collection of serious writing at least once a year. The idea would be to have a variety of scholarly essays, or good imaginative essays or even allegorical stories or satires to put together for wider distribution so that our squawking make be heard in other places. The benefits of such a collection of ideas may not extend outside of the circle of the contributors, but at least it will

serve to drive the contributors to work hard at something and to produce material that runs the risk of public criticism. The main idea would be Radical Monotheism – perhaps Kevin Bauder would be so kind as to introduce this idea more thoroughly in an essay. So this collection would want to avoid ponderous or pompous writing. Nothing that is sententious or too serious to be taken seriously. We are not talking about light writing, but delightful writing. Writing that is interesting. If you are wondering what I'm after here, look up G. K. Chesterton's essay called "The Case for the Ephemeral" and read the first two paragraphs (bet you can't read just two)(the essay is available online). The topic would cover the full scope of human affairs.

The way that the contributions would be admitted would be by judgment of those present at our bashes. The product would be a representation or a sampler of what our bashes are about so that the sounds we make may be heard and perhaps in some places welcomed. What would be nice would be if by this means we can locate and encourage our sympathizers. One would think that in congregations of the size that exist in our land, there would be at least one or two who are serious about God.

Some observations and suggestions about a retreat.

It would seem not unreasonable, that the only thing better than a bash, would be a long time of continuous bashing. What do you think? These are some of the items to dream about:

1 - Having several days with a protracted worship service that is both solemn and dignified. We want to cultivate true piety and to have a taste of corporate worship. In short, we want to encourage Radical Monotheism.

2 - Having several days with protracted mealtimes in a place where the atmosphere of serious piety and serious intellectual discussions stimulate our table talk.

3 - Having several days with serious intellectual discussions during the afternoons. The discussions would be directed by serious people who are truly pious. The discussions would be about the full scope of human affairs.

4 - Having several days which ended with late evening reading's of poetry or prose but something definitely imaginative.

5 - If you combined all these elements you would be talking about a retreat. Would you consider devoting the time to it? Would it be worth the money you'd have to pay to stay at a place where we could do this?

Some further questions which arise when one considers a retreat:

1 - Where?

2 - Who would come and address us?

3 - How about paying them for their trouble? Or would it be better to do all this for the love of it? Is that something that we can expect?

Some observations and suggestions for thought.

When the mind is affected with a thing much, it is led into such schemes of thought about it, as, if they were written down, would seem very impertinent to one that was not affected. It is so in all matters. The scripture falls in with the natural stream of one's thought when the mind is affected with the things of which they speak; but are very wide of their series of thought, who are not affected. For instance, the text says "One generation passeth away and another cometh, but the earth abideth forever," seems to me in a common frame of mind insipid; the latter part of the verse seems impertinently to be brought in, as what may better tend to illustrate the former: the thought of the earth being the same, does not seem very naturally and affectingly to fall in after the thought of one generation passing, and another coming. What is it to the purpose whether the earth remains the same or no? This makes not the changes of the inhabitants either more or less affecting.

But yet when, upon an occasion, I was more than ordinarily affected with the passing of one generation after another; how all those, who made such a noise and bluster now, and were so much concerned about their life, would be clean gone off from the face of the earth in sixty or seventy years time, and that the world would be left desolate with respect to them, and that another generation would come on, that would be very little concerned about them, and so one after the other: it was particularly affecting to me to think that the earth still remained the same through all these changes upon the surface: the same spots of ground, the same mountains and valleys where those things were done, remaining just as they were, though the actors ceased, and the actors just gone. And then this text came into my mind.

Jonathan Edwards

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