

religious orders or seminaries. But they are fairly easy to see through.

It may seem from all this that there can be no signs of the presence in a soul of the grace of God's calling to religious or priestly life. Everything, it seems, may equally well be a sign of a vocation or of a pseudo-vocation. The answer is that there is in all this not a denial that there are signs, but only an insistence that it takes delicacy and prudence (engendered of a slow and hesitant experience) to recognize the probable presence of a vocation. It should at least set us on guard against rash assertion one way or the other. And, from the aspirant's point of view, it is fortunate that there is, besides the divine call in a vocation, the other element of ecclesiastical call. That, and the gifts and qualities that must be found in the recipient of a vocation, remain to be considered.

(to be concluded)



THE BATTLE AGAINST PRESENT-DAY RESTLESSNESS*

FRANZ HILLIG, S.J.

NOISE and haste brand our times. . . . No novel statement, this: we have all heard it in some form or other, and most people, at least in the Western world, surely agree. We are slaves—the very watch on our wrist a sign of servitude—we have ‘no time’, ‘no rest’; ‘Angina Temporis’ (as Dr Bramesfeld terms it) is a common disease. It is a fact that, even if a few free days do come our way, we are no longer capable of relaxing; restless activity holds us entirely in its power. Man, his nerves tense and his mind fuddled, finds no shelter of peace awaiting him when he is ejected nightly from office or factory; wearily he reaches home, only to plunge himself into so-called amusements. His money is taken from him and in return he becomes momentarily intoxicated with unhealthy, forced excitement, but there is neither peace nor lasting satisfaction in it.

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Everywhere we come up against sensation and exaggeration; the tempo of life tends to overpower us, it is all too big, too intense. . . . The individual faces giant concepts of technical, social and economic problems in helpless isolation, and is simply smothered.

For many thousand years the rhythm of breathing set the tempo of living: man followed the regular beat of the hooves of his helpmates the beasts of burden; the wind, caught in the sail, brought strength with it and power; today it seems as if human life is whirled along by an inhuman motor placed in the centre of all, capable of uncanny, incomprehensible speed. Man is but a tiny wheel in this huge machinery, swept along in unceasing turmoil, so that listening and watching become practically impossible, and body and spirit break under the strain. 'Man is a faulty construction', they explain, coldly amused; 'the species is unfit for the demands of the machine.' . . .

So much for the diagnosis. . . . But the question 'Can anything be done about it?' is more vitally important.

Utopian daydreaming provides no answer

One thing is certain: there is no point in a protest against the machine-age. You cannot snatch the car or the 'plane away from man. Goosefeather quills and horse-cabs are things of the past; it is no use building an ideal on ruins. We cannot escape the development of things; we are travelling along the road at breakneck speed, but are more likely to break our necks by attempting to get out than by continuing the journey. No, let us not waste our energy, so much needed in the struggle against this present restlessness, by fighting for utopian goals. 'The balance of rest and movement can be gained only by crossing through dangerous zones.' (E. Jünger: *Sanduhrbuch*.) To protest actively against the developments of the times by, for instance, neglecting traffic regulations, merely endangers life and heightens the general perplexity. True liberty lies in the mastery of these things.

The problem is how to prevent the machine from killing the spirit and liberty, from enslaving human dignities; how can we stem the tide of unrest and master it? God never allows an evil beyond our strength to threaten us, we know: but we seek practical suggestions for the combat.

Negative points: where we need not join in

First of all a few negative points: We complain: 'Everybody seems to be in a rush!' Must we rush along with them then? I am not here to rush with others, but to rest with them. Why dash across the road between two cars instead of waiting for the change of traffic lights? The excuse is not merely that we have to be in time for this or that, it is rather this deep-seated spirit of unrest within us. We are not yet fully masters of ourselves, we must learn to govern more firmly.

Undoubtedly the battle against present-day restlessness must have its beginning in the small enclosure of our own heart. We must learn to be still . . . to give ourselves time. After all, the progress of the world does not depend upon us, the competition of production, the making and re-making of laws is not our personal concern; ours are the simpler duties of an ordinary citizen. Our home is the place where we have some say and authority, and it is here that we can build up a firm battle-front.

One day Sister Simplicia asked St Francis de Sales how he would go about things, were he a sister in the Convent. (She was so simple and unaffected, that she could ask such things with ease.) Smiling, the good Bishop gave his answer: 'I would try to close the doors quietly.' (Actually he said quite a bit more, but let this short quotation suffice for us here.) We cannot change the ways of the world, but we can close a door quietly. We can consider the folks upstairs or next-door when turning on the wireless. There is really no need to shout or to bang things about. One could extend the examination of modern consciences considerably in this direction.

Here is another point: we can stay at home. Some people rush from one engagement to the next; every film, concert, lecture, or musical must be attended, they just cannot stay away. Did not Pascal say that he discovered every human tragedy to have its roots in people's inability to stay quietly at home? Because their minds are empty they cannot endure their own company (Pascal's 'ennui'). He was by no means the first to speak in this strain; St Benedict has a sharp rebuke for restless monks in his Rule, and Thomas à-Kempis also warns monks to stay in their cells, where they will find that which is lost outside. (*Imit.* I, 20.) Inward peace, a good conscience, and ability to 'be still' are

most important then; here is another point to be considered: that of freedom, liberty. An example: it seems that man cannot do without a newspaper, one at the very least. Very well, we will also take one, we do not wish to be singular. But it depends entirely on ourselves as to how much time we spend on reading it. Our power of free choice must be trained to discern what may be of cultural and spiritual worth in our reading-matter. Much time can be gained by merely scanning the morning paper and only reading one or two articles fully.

It is the same with the radio, books, invitations. . . . 'Have you read the latest Graham Greene, Bruce Marshall's most recent, this one of Hemingway's?' Such questions have their root in restlessness, increase the rush of life, and foster a servile spirit. It takes some doing to become free in these matters, to refuse with thanks, with a laugh. . . . Apart from professional demands, our reading should be measured by the needs of our inner life. We must guard this life, the life of Christ within us, the love of God, and our very prayer, from what Pius XII called 'the heresy of action'. Let us not overestimate performance and speed: the kingdom of God lies in stillness and peace, and in these only the seed secretly takes root and grows. . . .

It depends on ourselves how much we are swept along by forceful ambition, endlessly aspiring to better jobs and higher wages. For many, satisfaction in the following of their vocation is a source of happiness, but often the restlessness of modern industrialism interferes and gives rise to grave consequences. In its train follow unhealthy desires for wealth, material good living, success and esteem. Doctors attribute to these distorted values the cause of much sickness. 'These desires with their faulty perception of "important" and "valuable" signify the mass-neurosis of modern man, who hardly recognizes any scale of values, save that of material goods. Riches alone never bring joy; on the contrary. . . .' (Dr K. Gauger.)

Positive possibilities

To liberate oneself, to stand out from prevalent attitudes, to refrain from hurrying and rushing along with the crowd, are all negative measures. They leave a void which must be filled. We must foster within ourselves the growth of peace, of independence and spiritual riches, of which, by God's grace, we already possess

in larger measure perhaps than our pessimism leads us to believe.

We can introduce order into our lives. During the Ordination ceremony the Bishop bids Exorcists become 'spirituales imperatores'; so also must we, by our very vocation as Christians, become rulers of our own spirit.

Much wisdom can be discovered in the simple old sayings, rules of order: 'One thing at a time', and 'First things first'! They assume a new and weightier meaning these days. Order rescues the spirit from being driven along; it secures space and freedom for reflection. It can produce wonders in the midst of a full working day. An old school-master, forty-three years in the profession, never once felt that his strength had been overtaxed: 'I have always distributed the work, allotted everything.' This distribution is most important; surely it is overestimation of self to think that, for example, as foreman, the entire job in hand falls on oneself. A good leader must be able to delegate work, to distinguish between the important and the less important. He must educate others to become qualified helpers.

A person who rushes about, busy with many things, is not necessarily the most hard-working; as an Italian business-man once remarked: 'I never saw a really busy man move quickly.'

Haste is a bad councillor; it not only hinders the full fruition of one's work, but it also harms the soul. As an old German proverb has it: 'God gave us time; he never mentioned haste.' And the Arabs are even more forthright: 'Haste is a gift of the devil; God gave us stillness and rest.' It would be profitable to include the question of stillness and rest when we examine our consciences; it might reveal to us the cause of much distress and failure.

It seems to be rather forgotten, these days, that an important aspect of 'order' lies in an orderly division of one's time. With forethought and firmness it is possible to give the night its due of sleep. The Sunday, too, as seventh-day rest, assumes a new importance, especially for the 'overworked'. The number of those who will not give up their Sunday is on the increase. The rhythm of night and day, of work and relaxation, weekday and Sunday, the idea of 'feast-day' or 'holiday', are all important factors in the struggle against unrest, and some of us need to learn all over again to understand these things.

It is not only the individual as such who is affected; the problem

leads further into society as a whole. Family life in particular is seriously threatened with destruction in this scientific age of ours. If saved, fostered and strengthened, this family-life is a powerful antidote against all the prevalent rush and haste. 'A man who can no longer spare the time to take his children for a walk, or to listen to their chatter, will also find that he is no longer able to pray.' (Fr Hirschmann.)

To eat and drink in a leisurely way is in harmony with order in nature. How many rush through their meals, treating them as burdensome business to be got through as hastily as possible! The family gathered round the table, so psychologists assure us, is a most important aspect of social life. In fact anything which will foster personal contact is important in this impersonal, cold machine-age. A little word, a letter, an informal meeting, all these can mean so much. . . .

By his very presence, a good man, however insignificant he may seem in the eye of the public, becomes a blessing to his family and his friends. Someone who will listen to our troubles, give advice or console us, can do more for us than any machine. No mechanical construction will ever replace home, family or friends. On the contrary; the man who has the peaceful security of a home waiting for him when he leaves the noise and turmoil of his job, can hold his own better than others less fortunate in this respect. With wife and children ready to welcome him, he can relax in familiar surroundings, and enjoy a quiet hour or two, perhaps with a book. What a stand-by a book can be in the tumult of life! If it is the kind of book which nourishes the spirit, it will be a most powerful ally, provided we use it aright. Even here desire for sensation and distraction can mar the good effect. It is important to steep oneself in the spirit of the book. A weary man does well to read slowly, to read over again some striking passage, to reflect a little here and there, closing the book awhile. . . . It is not a question of how much you read, but rather of how much you gain by reading. Thoughtful reading constitutes an experience; it opens the door to meditation.

The radio is often blamed for the noise around us. Here too the fault lies at man's door for putting an invention, in itself a good thing, to unprofitable use, to the detriment of all. One must learn to listen thoughtfully and judiciously; wonderful concerts are brought to listeners who would never be able to go out to

hear them; refreshment and strength will be gained by purposeful listening.

It is the same with pictures: we are more and more subjected to 'visual aids'. Again let us select. So many look but fail to see. Few films are really worth seeing. We might benefit more by staying at home and picking up a book of Old Masters, for example, and looking in peace and quiet at pictures, paintings which have something to give us, which enrich the mind in peace. Claudel maintained that Dutch interiors have such powerful influence and impress people, because these pictures have a centre, a soul. What a difference, he said, from some modern paintings, which make you feel that, were they not held together by a frame, they would explode, and fizzle away like effervescing lemonade. He is far from condemning all modern art, however. The point is this: he who seeks inward peace must choose pictures which radiate such peace.

Generally speaking, does our generation ever take time and trouble to think? A German business-man, travelling in India, was deeply impressed when an Indian colleague refused an invitation to some function with the words: 'Thank you, but I cannot afford the time; I really must give myself time tonight to do some thinking.' Where in our Western world is the man who would give such an explanation for 'having no time'? With us it generally means, surely, that we have time, plenty of it in fact, for an accumulation of all sorts of unnecessary and superfluous things. There is too much doing and talking and not enough thinking.

It is sad to see how much we Christians have forgotten the heritage of stillness which is ours by right; so much so that we have come to regard it as typical of Eastern wisdom, alien to us. Thinking, growing in knowledge of God and self, silence and meditation, are all an integral part of the ancient, hallowed traditions of Christianity. They did not pass with the middle ages, but continue the same in our day, as much the heritage of busy lay-people deep in the activity of life as of those who live in the somewhat less hectic atmosphere of the cloister. Let us not find excuses in superficiality and 'busy-ness'.

Someone said once: 'A man who prays is connecting his village with Heaven.' There is abundant cause for hope while we have men living among us who have the strength, by God's grace, to

withstand the hectic rush of life by giving time to silent recollection, to meditation . . . spending some time daily in 'the antechamber of Heaven'. They bring healing for the world's restlessness in the peace which comes to them from God, which is God. This explains the need, deeply felt by many modern lay-folk, to draw apart from time to time in 'retreat'. Thus only can they find themselves, in the stillness and peace which alone has the power to heal wounds caused by the restlessness of modern living.



THE MARTYRS OF LYONS, A.D. 177

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

WE have a first-hand account of the sufferings of these martyrs in a letter which the Christians of Lyons, in the south of France, wrote to the churches of Asia Minor, with whom they had historical connections. The letter was quoted at length by the Church historian Eusebius in the fourth century, and a translation of it as he gives it is here presented. The reader will notice that the word 'confession' occurs very often. It is always used in the sense of a confession of faith, and never in the sense of a confession of sins. Besides describing the gruesome torments which the martyrs endured, the writer constantly refers to them in terms from the athletic world. One such phrase which he uses has become a commonplace of Christian language, the phrase 'a martyr's crown'. Nowadays we think of a crown as a king's head-dress, made of gold and precious stones. But to the writer of this letter a crown meant a wreath of bay leaves with which the winner of athletic competitions was crowned. So I have translated the word as 'garland', since 'wreath' has for us rather funereal associations. The flowery and high-flown way in which the martyrs' ordeal is described, though it does not always appeal to modern taste, has this value that it gives us an inkling of how the early Christians regarded, ideally at least, these grisly crises which were always liable to fall upon them. What in themselves were just episodes of disgusting brutality, were seen as chances of competing in God's honour, of showing one's mettle, and of worsting the devil and his satellites in a strenuous wrestling or boxing match. The eyes of faith could even see them as festive wedding processions. The imagination is the weakest point in a man's armour when he is faced with such horrors, and perhaps this way of thinking about