

## CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE MILITARY

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(translated from Romanian by *Cristian Baciu*)

*In this paper are presented the following issues: bridging the gap between the Church and the Army; the Lord of Hosts and the Lord of Love; the Lord of the Heavens and the Lords of the World; love your enemies; why do we raise the sword?; Quo vadis, homine?...*

### **Bridging the gap between the Church and the Army**

**A** standing drive in human history has been a strong propensity for material comfort and civilisation. So far so good, as long as living in comfort does not invite to spiritual decline or total neglect ending up in the drift of millions away from their Maker – the Author of our earthly passage.

Marin Preda, a notable Romanian author, defined culture as the mode of life displaying the creative abilities of a certain community. It should be noted, however, that culture displays an astonishing medley of genuine Christian values with such values as tend to break man away from God. The result is a restless and often confusing dynamics, with people and even communities conflicting one-another in angry support of conflicting values. As the crisis escalates, warfare is in sight and the parties rise in arms: one to conquer and invade, another to stand up against invasion. In either case, the parties will find a more or less plausible explanation to make their case and grab the sword.

What possible argument could bridge the uncompromising abyss that separates man's love for his like from man's hating his like to death? What kind of stuff could build a bridge strong enough to join the Church and the Army — two institutions of perfectly opposite missions, the more so nowadays?

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Public opinion polls since 1989 have constantly indicated that, of all institutions, most Romanians paradoxically place their better trust on the Church and the Military – two apparently incompatible bodies. It is absurd to take it as a statistic accident by just looking at the differences. Rather, we should look for the common denominators that qualify the authority of both institutions in terms of life mission and lifestyle: discipline, austerity, obedience, hierarchy, courage, sacrifice, defence of the “flock” (in the sense of the Biblical metaphor, of course), victory.

Warfare is an extreme experience whose basic ingredients are shock, pain and looming death. It is under such pressure of fatality that character is forged and proved in the most dramatic manner that life will ever have to offer. This is where the waters are split — courage from cowardice, loyalty from treachery, stamina from crude instinct. Here, on the battlefield, the grinning face of death stalks all over the place to challenge the human spirit for an ultimate, decisive, agonising option.

Victory is the obvious goal of any belligerent engagement, eagerly pursued by both the aggressor and the defendant. The Old Testament tells about victories of the Chosen People under God’s direct command conveyed through His “emissaries” and about bitter defeats whenever the people went against God’s orders. Then, at the proper time, the incarnate Son of God descends into human history to provide the topmost Personal Example in ultimate fulfilment of the Divine Commandments.

The New Testament brings the strife from the physical into the spiritual plane as the Saviour preaches unconditional love and sympathy amongst people in anticipation of a higher level of existence at the end of earthly life. The Son of Man never fought against the people, but for the people against the common foe that instils sinful conduct into the realm of Divine Creation. His own way of life on earth demonstrated that the path toward the ultimate victory includes bodily sacrifice: *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul* (Matthew 10:28)<sup>1</sup>. From the span of absolute knowledge, in legitimate awareness of the physical turmoil, slaughter and warfare the world was to expect, the Lord preached spiritual victory above all else.

To define His mission, Jesus often addresses His audience in metaphorical language: *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* (Matthew 10:34). A radical solution to an irreconcilable

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<sup>1</sup> Scriptural quotations in this text are tributary to King James’ version of the Holy Bible. Source address: <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=KjvMatt.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=24&division=div1>.

conflict, the sword stands as an instrumental symbol for the ultimate separation of the antagonising principles of Good and Evil.

#### **The Lord of Hosts and the Lord of Love**

The Old Testament reveals how God stood in military support of His Chosen People. 1 Samuel, 2 reads as follows: *6. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. (...) 10. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them; the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king...*

God commands to us: *Thou shalt not kill* (Deuteronomy 5:17). On the other hand, Chapter 20 of the same Book makes a record of the “rules of warfare”. This does not mean that God contradicts Himself: rather, He draws a line between the regular conduct of daily life and the extreme experience of armed conflict. Even at this point, however, the Lord does not encourage morbid violence: *When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. (...) And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it* (Deuteronomy 20:10,12).

While preaching peace, the Gospel mentions the Church Militant on Earth and the Church Triumphant in Heaven. In fact, struggle and victory are such ingredients as warfare is made of. On the other hand, Jehovah Sabaoth of the Old Testament was also called the Lord of Hosts (i.e. of the armies), and much of the Old Testament is about wars that happened and still more wars that will happen. Again, the New Testament records the Saviour’s own prediction when asked by His disciples about the end of the world: *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet* (Matthew 24:6). Judging by the time span covered by such predictions, immeasurably far beyond a regular human lifetime, it is obvious that Jesus Christ spoke over the heads of His disciples and into the minds of a long succession of generations to come and bear witness for their confirmation.

However, when Peter the Apostle tried to stand in defence of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Christ rebuked him: *Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword* (Matthew 26:52). (A reflection of this in terms of physical laws is to be found in Newton’s third law of motion: to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.) In the same spirit, the Gospel reads under Matthew 5:5,9: *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (...) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

The episode on the miraculous healing performed by Jesus on the centurion’s servant (see Matthew, 8) is an excellent illustration of the relation

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between the military hierarchy and faith in Christ's authority. The centurion's candid faith and modesty acted like a conveyor belt for Jesus' healing power on to his servant. Moreover, the fact that the centurion belonged to the invading forces bore no relevance whatsoever to our Saviour. Three qualities stand out in this episode: humility (*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof*); absolute confidence (*but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*); and love for one's fellow being (the centurion comes to beg assistance not for himself, but for his servant). It is these qualities, the sum of which feature genuine faith, that made Jesus exclaim in true admiration: *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*. The Lord will have all the more appreciated the fact that the centurion's deep sympathy for his servant was so deep as to burn his formal status of a conqueror and make him bow for help to one of the conquered.

In the New Testament warfare becomes a subject of transcendent, spiritual, connotations. While assuming the traditions of the Old Testament, where Lord Sabaoth is the Lord of Hosts and wars are waged in defence of true faith, under command of God Himself, the New Testament projects "the ideal of militant Christianity on to the spiritual battlefield, against the devil and the evil temptations of this world, against our own flaws and passions"<sup>2</sup>. Divine Grace will replace the *Lex Talionis* (*eye for eye, tooth for tooth* – Deuteronomy 19:21), love and charity will be substitutes for revenge. Apparently, this all comes in utter contradiction to the same God's previous arrangement. Is the Law overturned — or, rather, transfigured?

Jesus Himself declares: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil* (Matthew 5:17). And the Law is fulfilled by the ultimate sacrifice of the Law Maker, who has laid down His own life in redemption of a sinful world. It takes no less than the Love of God to save man from the dire consequences of the original sin while paving the way to the original purity of the human soul through faith, humility and sacrifice.

The three attributes mentioned above may provide good material to start building a bridge between the Church and the Military. Humility is a notion that develops within hierarchies. If we look at military hierarchies as an earthly reflection of the transcendental hierarchies, a soldier is provided with a good hold to start building his way up to Heaven. His faith in God will provide the material, along with the courage to defend his land and his people at the assumed cost of possibly having to lay down his life.

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from priest and lecturer Vasile Merticaru, *Sfinții militari în spațiul românesc*, in: cdr. Ilie Manole, coord., *Armata și Biserica*, "Revista de istorie militară" Collection, Bucharest, 1996, p. 119.

### **The Lord of the Heavens and the lords of the world**

Along the past two millennia of dramatic history, sword and fire have forged an enduring population within the borders that define today's Romania. Challenged by cultural alienation and the danger of being assimilated by other nations, the Romanians largely owe their resilience to their Christian faith.

During the Middle Age, the Romanian Provinces were blessed with many a ruler who placed their faith in the hand of God. Most of them had to take up the sword and lead their armies against the powerful empires that craved this land. As a significant detail, they used to profess their religious faith at the head of important documents. Mircea the Elder<sup>3</sup>, for instance, would begin an official document like this: *In Christ our God faithfully trusting (...) I Mircea, great voivode and prince...*

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie*<sup>4</sup> were not exclusively addressed to the voivode's son, but to the young generations at large living on Romanian land, much as Jesus Christ spoke in all awareness beyond his contemporaries and to the whole world. To hearten the army in defence of the country and call upon the Almighty to bestow upon them all the fortitude and strength they needed in battle, the voivode proposes to both his contemporaries and the posterity the following prayer to God:

*And if you see that the invaders will not go their way, fear them not or their numbers, but take heart in God for succour and say this in prayer: Our Lord, maker of all there is and good God, we are your humble servants who take no pleasure in this here plight. (...) neither wish we the blood of man to stain our hands. (...) And so have we bowed to them in humility, but they would not abate to our humility and want to pride their strength against Thee. (...) For that, oh Lord, we have no other hope to nourish if not Thy fair judgment, for all good things from Thee are bestowed.*<sup>5</sup>

With Neagoe Basarab, the concepts of war and peace were integrated in a theological view which was not to be found in the western world or even in

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<sup>3</sup> Mircea the Elder, grandfather of Vlad the Impaler (who became a legend while being identified with the fictitious character Count Dracula), ruled Wallachia between 1385 and 1418. Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romanian historiography has also referred to him as Mircea the Great.

<sup>4</sup> *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, Ed. Minerva, București, 1970. Neagoe Basarab ruled over Wallachia between 1512 and 1521.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, Ed. Minerva, București, 1970, pp. 279-280.

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Orthodox Byzantium, but was quite common before him with Stephen the Great<sup>6</sup>, who professed that wars were won by God and victories should be celebrated in austere fasting and prayers in gratitude for His divine assistance.

The early 16<sup>th</sup> century is also the time when Niccoló Machiavelli wrote *Il Principe* to pronounce the divorce between politics and Christian faith in the western world<sup>7</sup>. It was the beginning of a secular frame of mind which has since gained ground the world over. With such developments at the time, we might say that the people inhabiting the space of today's Romania preferred to stay medieval against a modern world.

However, it was this very “belated” Christian faith that gave strength to Michael the Brave<sup>8</sup> to bring together the Romanians under one single authority — be it only for a short time —, in anticipation of the national unity which was to be acknowledged three hundred years later. Again, it was the same unwavering Christian faith that prompted Constantin Brâncoveanu to lay down his life and that of his sons for the name of Christ.

### **Love your enemies<sup>9</sup>**

Indeed, of all the Commandments of Christ this may appear to be the most confusing to the soldier who really cares to stay a true believer. How could I love the enemy whose life I am supposed to take? Some will say the military should be exempted from this commandment: they are those who will stick to the letter of the law, often missing the very spirit of it.

Killing people is certainly a major sin, and God hates sin, though He loves us sinners. The intensity and scope of God's love, incomprehensible to the human mind, is the measure of His ability to forgive, also beyond the scope of our comprehension. Jesus Christ bestowed His loving forgiveness on the centurion in Capernaum, on the malefactor on the cross, even on His persecutors, for whom He prayed to His Father: *Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34).

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen the Great (Ștefan cel Mare), Voivode of Greater Moldova between 1457 and 1504.

<sup>7</sup> Niccoló Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, a political treatise written in 1513 and published in 1532, five years after the author's death.

<sup>8</sup> Michael the Brave (Mihai Viteazul) was the first prince to have united the three Romanian provinces of Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldova. He ruled between 1593 and 1601, when he was assassinated.

<sup>9</sup> *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you* (Matthew 5:44).

But even in everyday life, as an ingredient of current ethics, the act of forgiveness contains an extra-human flavour, somehow redolent of the stupefaction with which the Absolute contemplates the world — a kind of stupefaction that imperceptibly turns into leniency<sup>10</sup>.

“Love is a better counsel than hate” said Richard Wurmbrandt, an evangelic minister who spent over fourteen years in communist prisons on religious grounds, along with thousands of others<sup>11</sup>.

Many cases were recorded on the battlefield when a soldier would not only spare the life of an incapacitated opponent, but stopped by to dress the latter’s wounds to the best of his means and ability or to give him a mouthful of water. Under extreme circumstances, on death’s doorstep, humaneness often cries in triumph over hostility.

As an impulse of the collective conscience, itself under the same divine address, is the act of taking prisoners as an alternative to total annihilation of the enemy (except for special situations or pathological cases). The same collective conscience has dictated the special legislation designed to regulate and control hostile developments, and violation of these laws are liable to most severe forms of punishment<sup>12</sup>.

### **Why do we raise the sword?**

The struggle and the adversities suffered by the population living in the area marked by the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube and the Black Sea for international acknowledgment of a unitary Romanian people cannot be fully explained against the background of an unfavourable geopolitical context. After all, there are not many places on this planet but have been “blessed” with armed conflicts. The differences, however, lie in the reasons behind the raised sword.

The Crusades, for instance, ravaged Europe and the Middle East for nearly two centuries, pretending to restore Christian control over the Holy Land. “Western knights expected everything from the Crusades: eternal redemption, satisfaction of their lust for adventure and, for the most part, the fabulous riches of the Orient.”<sup>13</sup> It is a known fact today that these religiously sanctioned campaigns were, more

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<sup>10</sup> See also Andrei Pleșu, *Minima moralia*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Wurmbrand, *Isus, prietenul teroriștilor*, Analele pătimirii Collection, Stephanus Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> The Geneva Conventions consist of four treaties and three additional protocols that set the standards in international law for humanitarian treatment of the victims of war. — [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva\\_Conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Conventions).

<sup>13</sup> Professor priest Ioan Rămureanu Ph.D., *Istoria Bisericească Universală*, 2004, p. 266.

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often than not, conducted on political and economic grounds. The 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade, for example, driven by Pope Innocent III's desire to gain control of the entire Christian world from West across to East, was deflected from the initial goal of liberating Muslim Jerusalem to sacking Christian Constantinople, clearly exposing the degradation of religious ideals in favour of mean political interests<sup>14</sup>.

The painful lesson of the Crusades was never learned, which is why the Ottomans managed to recover the states in the Orient, one by one. The Christian believer will see this as a punitive act sanctioned by the Providence for a hypocritical enterprise, as ample in scope and effort invested as it was contrary to the Christian message.

Such fratricide wars are a confirmation of the common belief that a fortress (be it made of solid stone or religious beliefs) is most easily destroyed from the inside — in our case, through dwindling faith under the weight of excessive pride breeding thirst for worldly power and glory. This aspect is masterfully described in Mihai Eminescu's<sup>15</sup> *Satire III*, in Mircea the Elder's reply to Sultan Bayezid I in the form of an antithetical argument:

*But what the high aspiring cause that did their hearts endure ?  
The vanity of every brave, of every cavalier;  
The pomp of noisy conquest; for they had set their vow  
To tear the pride from out your heart, the laurels from your brow.  
But I defend the poverty and the needs of a struggling land...<sup>16</sup>*

We see a very different motivation in the age-long resilience of the Romanian armies, which display an array of admirable qualities forged in the crucible of a tumultuous history: bitter determination along with modesty, fierce bravery along with sympathy and understanding, sound common sense and a lust for life along with readiness for the ultimate sacrifice. Cowards and traitors there may have been too, but they only served to emphasise the contrast.

Nicolae Titulescu, an illustrious Romanian diplomat and minister of foreign affairs between the two World Wars, once declared: "We want to be friends with all nations without exception, but our own affairs will only have our own people for a master"<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See also Alexandru Mihail Niță, *Cruciada a IV-a anticreștină*, in: *Desfigurarea și transfigurarea lumii*, EIKON Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, pp. 69-73.

<sup>15</sup> Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), a national classic of Romanian poetry.

<sup>16</sup> Translation by Corneliu M. Popescu.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, *Reflecții*, Cogito Collection, Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 1985, p. 24.



The military profession is requested by certain antagonising interests which cannot be asserted other than by the use of violence<sup>18</sup>.

A military professional is defined by his ability to manage violence rather than apply it, and his responsibility is to ensure the military security of the community. A military professional is different from the mercenary offering his service to the better payer, and he is also different from the citizen-soldier in temporary service, inspired and motivated by patriotism and a sense of duty, but free from permanent concern to improve his military skills. The motivations of the military professional are devotion to his trade and a sense of social duty to employ his abilities to the benefit of the community<sup>19</sup>.

“There is no higher and more beneficial ideal than to lay down one’s own life in defence of one’s brethren, homeland and people”<sup>20</sup>, said Dimitrie Gusti<sup>21</sup>.

In John’s Gospel, the Saviour pronounced a commandment which was to define true Christian conduct: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (John 13:34,35).

Philosopher and sociologist Dimitrie Gusti defined ethics as the science designed to educate personal willpower in a social context<sup>22</sup>.

Christian ethics does not urge the moral subject to explore across his ethic life in search of any possible evidence that he is on communication terms with the Divinity. In Christian ethics, we should understand that God addresses man through His Word, speaking to his conscience in anticipated warning of the ultimate Judgment<sup>23</sup>.

Christianity describes man as originally designed in God’s likeness. At the top of the list of all Creation, man is the only “item” to have been made in the

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Military Mind: Conservative Realism of the Professional Military Ethic*, în S.P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State, The Theories and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Vintage Books, New York, 1957, p. 179.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Officership as a Profession*, în S.P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State, The Theories and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* Vintage Books, New York, 1957, pp. 246-248.

<sup>20</sup> Alexandru Stănculescu Bîrda, ed., *Coloana infinită — Din gândirea română modernă*, Cogito Collection, Albatros Publishing House, p. 456.

<sup>21</sup> Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955), Romanian philosopher, sociologist and aesthete, chairman of the Romanian Academy (1944-1946), Minister of Education (1932-1933), professor at Iași and Bucharest Universities.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>23</sup> Carl. F. H. Henry, *Etica creștină personală*, Cartea Creștină Publishing House, Oradea, 2004, p. 223.

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image of God (*Imago Dei*) — the only creature essentially endowed with reason and morality, the keys to elevated knowledge. At this point, man cannot possibly avoid moral responsibility. *Imago Dei* is not a mere Latin archaism: indeed it defines the essential nature of man within the span of Creation<sup>24</sup>.

The moral commandment mirrors each and every individual in terms of his personal experience of reality. Values accepted and values rejected are the components that blend to make an intuitive, rather than articulate, perception of God, the world and the moral order.

In his volume *Aspectul psihologic al răsboiului* (The Psychological Dimension of War), Dumitru Caracostea<sup>25</sup> makes an impressive record of episodes describing the religious faith of Romanian soldiers during WW1<sup>26</sup>. The author remarks that “under the impact of immediate danger, the thought of him who looks death in the face will inevitably fly up to God”<sup>27</sup>. A few pages on, the recorded statement of Col. Popescu I. Dumitru: “During the divine service performed in the field you could see believers and non-believers kneeling side by side: they all joined in need to believe and pray for salvation, the kind of ultimate salvation they could entrust themselves to”<sup>28</sup>. At the end of an account of episodes of episodes involving either eye-witnesses to or direct participants in exceptional experiences, the author comes to a most reasonable and consistent conclusion: “In a desperate struggle for survival on the battlefield, we should clearly understand that the religious feeling is a most effective way to fight back the fear of death. He who finds himself in close dependence on the divine power is indeed well equipped against fright and depression, and death’s grin shall lose its grip on him. Moreover, he will sense an additional supply of power growing inside him, of the kind needed for truly heroic deeds. We can see that, out of equally qualified individuals, the bearer of true faith shall be the winner. Genuine faith can prevail over the most impressive physical powers”<sup>29</sup>.

Deeply rooted in the human conscience, the faith in God is a source of power and peace of mind in excess of any other worldly comfort — such as a just cause, a charismatic commander, or a state-of-the-art military equipment. None of these can transcend the instinctive fear of death as can the intimate call of our Maker, who deals eternal life against our earthly illusions.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup> Dumitru Caracostea (1879-1964), Romanian folklorist, literary critic and historian.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from Dumitru Caracostea, *Aspectul psihologic al răsboiului*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1922.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 246.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 262.

**Quo vadis, homine?...**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has not come down to earth to stand for this nation against that. His true mission is to replace flesh and blood with spirit — which goes far beyond ethnical disparities. However, we should not take it for an order to do away with the concept of national spirit and thus ignore the principle of unity in diversity. On the other hand, nationalistic rhetoric verging on xenophobia is tantamount to intellectual blindness in an age when terrestrial borders of nations should be regarded rather as outlining specific cultural backgrounds in a world that truly deserves a bit of symphonic coherence, after ages upon ages of commotion.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century seems to have been the bloodiest stretch of human history: two atrocious World Wars, the Holocaust of WW II, the plagues of fascism and communism, and a litter of totalitarian regimes that raised the younger generations against their parents in the name of a so-called Cultural Revolution. The battlefields of South-East Asia, the near-genocides in the Balkans and in Rwanda, the emerging Islamic fundamentalism are a few examples to illustrate the little, if any, progress made by the human race away from the atrocity, depravity and evildoing that brought about the Great Flood. The 20<sup>th</sup> century left a record of twice as many dead in martyrdom as the whole of the preceding nineteen centuries. The question arises: will the 21<sup>st</sup> century make a difference?<sup>30</sup>

French author and politician André Malraux is alleged to have warned that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be religious or it will not be. Mankind has stepped into the 21<sup>st</sup> century now, with a motley collection of religions going hand in hand with an endless train of wars. Father Dumitru Stăniloae was more specific as he said that subsiding Christian faith is bound to bring about warfare against all rhetoric on world peace, and that genuine Christian faith is the only reliable deterrent of war.

The copious spread of armed conflict in our days also feeds on the expanding scope of the concept of warfare. We learn about economic warfare, intelligence warfare, electronic warfare, media warfare, and, last but not least, religious warfare kindled by fanaticism and fundamentalism — all of which eventually come to ignite hostility to the point of pulling the trigger.

The military background of our time is changing fast as manpower decreases in parallel with an unprecedented acceleration of technological development. Contact with the enemy is ever more remote, to the point of a virtual target on a computer screen, a mere technical shadow that fails to ring a bell in my conscience as I pull the trigger or press the button. Under such circumstances, the thought of having duly executed an order fails to cut the difference between a soldier and an executioner.

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<sup>30</sup> See also: Cindy Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, Bethany House Publishers, 2008.

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Technological progress certainly has many advantages: reduction of military personnel, which means lower costs and risks, fewer victims among the military and less collateral damage through increased accuracy of strikes. All of these make a consistent difference from the clashes of vast armies in history that left thousands of dead on the battlefield. With today's state-of-the-art technology casualties are comparatively rare, to the point that each fallen soldier can be brought home and buried with military honours.

On the other hand, we cannot help noticing that technology in excess (in all domains, the military included) results in man's growing alienation from his genuine spiritual parentage. We seem to be experiencing a spiritual draught in which our relation to the Creator is gradually melting behind the illusive appeal of such mechanistic, hollow concepts as efficiency, productivity, benefit, comfort, etc. The feeling of security induced by an ever more sophisticated and highly operational equipment and the fascination of technical perfection may subdue the discreet voice of a soldier's conscience that prompts his true mission in life. Against this background, it is up to Christian believers to spend more of their faith in an effort to restore the world's true relation to God. Bringing the soldier's morale to rest on Christian morals will ultimately boost the quality of military service, under every aspect of this delicate calling and profession.

