

A Scripturistical and Cultural Perspective on War; Saint Gregory Palamas and contemporary patristic view on conflicts in the plan of the unseen war

Cristian Andrei THEMISTOCLE¹

Abstract: In a large number of cases the conflicts that have arisen in recent years in various parts of the world, with their diversity, rapid development and their disastrous consequences for man and human society in general have led to the conclusion that a more careful and precise perspective on the conflict as a whole, is needed, an interdisciplinary research of the variety of causes, effects, and possible solutions that can be found in such cases, and that can prove to be really effective.

The general target of this work constitutes a possible beginning of that type of research. It is an attempt to understand and highlight, from a cultural and spiritual point of view, the causes of conflicts, the various consequences of their emergence and maintaining, as well as the possible solutions that Orthodox tradition and spirituality, including, of course, the evangelical message, as well as the patristic sources, have offered over the ages in order to overcome the conflict on a personal level, as well as on a general, social level.

Keywords: conflict, interdisciplinary, spirituality, Saint Gregory Palamas, unseen war

Introduction

‘But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who harm you

¹ Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Email: cristianandreithemistocle@yahoo.com.

*you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain both on the just and on the unjust.*²

In many cases the conflicts that have arisen in recent years in various parts of the world, their diversity and their disastrous consequences for man and human society in general constitute, among other things, an invitation to a more careful and precise perspective on the conflict as a whole, to the causes, effects, and possible solutions that can be found in such cases, and that can prove to be really effective.

This is also the purpose of this work. It is an attempt to understand and highlight from a spiritual point of view the causes of conflicts, the various consequences of their emergence and maintaining, as well as the possible solutions that Orthodox tradition and spirituality, including, of course, the evangelical message, as well as the patristic sources, have offered over time to overcome the conflict on a personal level, as well as on a general, social level.

One of the most comprehensive, profound, and accurate biblical perspectives on conflicts in general, and war in particular, can be found in the Epistle of Saint James (Ιακώβου, Jacob in some versions) the Apostle, in the famous passage from chapter 4, where he essentially describes the conflicts and its causes.

*'From where do wars and fights come among you? Is it not from here: from your passions fighting inside you? You desire and do not have; you kill and are jealous, and are not able to acquire what you wish for; you do combat and wage war, and you have not, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wickedly, so that you may spend in pleasures. Adulterers! Don't you know that the friendship of the world is hostility towards God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks in vain?'*³

It can be noted from the first analysis of the quote above that it begins with a theological, but at the same time a philosophical question. It is a question that may arise in the minds and lips of men, no doubt, even in times of peace; retrospective socio-

² Matthew 5, 44-5.

³ James 4, 1-5.

cultural analysis regarding conflicts, wars, etc., have always appeared. But the value that this question gains in times when peace disappears from a theoretically evolved world or society, which has known and knows progress, theoretically present on a large majority of various socio-cultural levels, is completely different. When conflict, in general, and war in particular (conflict in one of its worst forms), appear in the world, both the question and the answer of Saint James acquire an essential relevance.

With a special attention and with an obvious prophetic spirit, verified by reality throughout the ages, Saint Apostle James highlights from the very beginning *human sin* and *passion*, as some which are among the first guilty regarding the emergence of conflicts. Mischievous, murder, evil counsel, evil request, friendship with the world as enmity with God are among the main negative elements of the inner man (*eso anthropos*) which have unfortunately led countless times throughout the ages to the emergence of conflicts.

Also, as is well known, since the Old Testament the Holy Scripture has urged and urges people of all times and everywhere to seek peace (*‘Seek peace and pursue it’*⁴). But here the Apostle James also emphasizes one of the greatest *dangers* regarding the position people in general and believers in particular take regarding the Holy Scripture; it is about the tendency to ignore or to look carelessly at certain essential principles of this special writing, hence the question: *‘Or do you think that the Scripture speaks in vain?’*⁵

The Holy Scriptures do not speak and have never spoken in vain, but unfortunately, this situation often appears throughout history when people, consciously or not, have taken and are taking the Holy Scriptures (the Divine Word) in vain. The solution that Saint Gregory offers in this case is the return to the essential landmarks, to the Gospel, to God (*‘When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, Lord, I will seek”*⁶).

⁴ Psalm 33, 13.

⁵ James 4, 5.

⁶ Psalm 27, 8.

The fundamental evangelical perspective for the solution of conflicts

The essential image offered by the dialogue from the writings of Saint Apostle James also contains an answer and a call to knowledge; following this calling will lead to introspection, self-knowledge in an initial perspective and, finally, to practical solutions regarding the great problem of conflicts, of war which, as it is well known, appears in the patristic perspective first as an unseen war, of every person with his own passions, with his or her temptations. Ignored and not addressed in a timely manner, this type of conflict can lead to subsequent conflicts, such as tense relations and controversies among states, federations of states, and other entities. The answer first describes the relationship between God and man and the line on which it develops, namely that kind of relationship in which the needs for the presence of love, humility, tolerance, and mutual understanding are evident, and provide an essential element for the birth and the development of healthy, useful dialogue.

*Therefore He says: "God stands against the proud, But gives grace to the humble". Therefore submit to God. Stand against the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.'*⁷

The answer present in the above-mentioned Epistle represents a quite clear answer, closely related and supported by the very words of Christ the Savior, present in the dialogue with the Saint Apostles, a dialogue that the Apostle of love, the beloved disciple of Christ, the Saint Apostle and Evangelist John records in chapter 14 of his Gospel.

The answer comes to dispel the bewilderment and lack of power of the disciples who, although they had been close to Christ for so much time, had witnessed the preaching, the miracles, and the spreading of the Gospel, were still subject many times to various doubts.

"And you know where I go, and you know the way." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how

⁷ James 4, 6-8.

*can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*⁸

In his many doubts, both before the Lord's Resurrection and, amazingly, also even after this essential moment in the history of salvation, Saint Apostle Thomas receives in this fragment a fairly clear and accessible answer to his questions. The words come from the Teacher Himself, the Savior of the World and the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, although this answer of divine source contains an amazing clarity, depth and simplicity, it has been observed since the first centuries of Christianity the presence of many temptations of doubt, confusion, especially regarding the disputes of the Saint Apostles and disciples of the Lord with the heresies and heresiarchs of their time. In numerous cases, the history of the Church has recorded cases in which the Gospel message was truncated, modified, affected, so that its preaching and spreading, which was one of the essential tasks of the Savior (*'Therefore, go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'*⁹), to encounter various obstacles over time and for the reality mentioned by Saint Apostle Paul to appear:

*'Then let us not be like infants anymore, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, holding the truth in love, we will grow to become in every aspect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting connection, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.'*¹⁰

Regarding the essential virtue of love, fundamental virtue of the three cardinal qualities in the Pauline conception (*πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη*), it is known that this has always represented the healthy basis on which inter-human relations could be built throughout history (compliance for monks in the monastery, discipline for the soldiers in the army, harmony and solidarity in society and in the Christian world, etc.). But this virtue, even if

⁸ John 14, 4-6.

⁹ Matthew, 28, 19.

¹⁰ Ephesians, 4, 14-16.

important, has proved to be, as a paradox, a form of vulnerability in numerous cases.

Out of a desire to protect the faithful of the Church from confusion and vulnerability in their assessments and understanding, Saint Apostle John describes the healthy, careful relating with those around, present in the Church in general and towards the various attempts of preaching the Gospel of Christ throughout the ages. *The criterion*, this time, is the same one mentioned by the Savior Himself (*‘For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me’*¹¹) regarding the Last Judgment, namely the love of the neighbor. These metaphorical and holy words of Christ represent nevertheless an essential part of his Gospel. One can find there a strong relation with another essential part of the Gospel, which is to be found in the writings of Saint Apostle John. The possible confusion in the minds and hearts of believers of all times is somehow removed by the his words full of love and humbleness (ταπεινοφροσύνη).

*‘If someone says, “I love God”, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?’*¹²

The theological perspective of Saint Gregory Palamas

Regarding the vision of the Holy Hierarchy of Thessaloniki, Saint Gregory Palamas, towards personal or social conflicts, one of the most important events that deserve and must be observed from the very beginning is that of the *preeminence*, precedence, of the processes that take place in the spiritual zone, in the above world, and, on the other hand, in a secondary frame, that is, that frame where these conflicts make their presence felt in reality. In other words, the visible, tangible conflict or war is preceded, in most cases at least, by an unseen conflict or war, much more important, sometimes difficult to notice, war that takes place at the level of the inner man (*eso anthropos*). If the passions and conflicts, their

¹¹ Matthew, 25, 35-6.

¹² 1 John 4, 20.

manifestation, the unrest and disturbance which they often produce, and the necessary struggle against them, can be more easily explained and harder to blame in the case of simple, uneducated people; in the case of rulers, of the people endowed with a certain knowledge, the value they acquire is significantly different. For the struggle against them, often martyrical, is carried on to another level, and although this discussion may seem pointless to an unexperienced reader, the value of this struggle, its victory, is essential, at least in the vision of Saint Gregory. Both as a simple monk, and as a bishop, he was engaged in this struggle, in this form of ascetic life, of spiritual evolution in stages. With our eyes fixed on Christ the Lord, the Savior of the world, this fight, complex and difficult many times, must be fought with all weapons and on all levels. Its purpose is the finding of grace, the encountering of peace, the obtaining of true silence and tranquility (*'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you'*¹³). The gathering of all soul powers, the struggle with the scattering of the soul in the outside, close to the worldly occupations, is described in detail in the basic works of the Holy Hierarch of Thessaloniki, such as *The Triads in the Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* 1, 2, 3. Those who truly seek peace retreat in silence, fleeing from the noise and endless and incurable conflicts of the world, trying to win one of the most important existential battles, namely the battle with themselves, with the self, with their own passions such as selfishness, pride, etc. The Varlaamite theoretical understanding of the *strictly rational* progress towards theosis (godlike state) is condemned and abolished with clear arguments in the writings of Saint Gregory. In the personal struggle of spiritual evolution, a certain participation (*metohi*) is needed, a comprehensive understanding of complex concepts such as *'harmolypi'*, *'prospatheia gia diakrisi'*, in other words, a much more comprehensive commitment than a simple rational effort.

On the victory in this battle depend other, much more important victories. Also, from this point of view, ideas that appear in recent writings such as that of *'politikos isyhasmos'*, seem to be at least difficult to understand. It is known that, basically,

¹³ John, 14, 27.

hesychasm implies *withdrawal from the world*, escape from it, the search for peace with oneself and peace with others in an essential way. Also, from the point of view of *the historical reality*, it can be mentioned that the activity of Saint Gregory took place, for the most part, during a period full of conflict, turmoil and rapid changes in the society of the Byzantine Empire, which was close to its sunset, regardless of whether we are talking about the conflicts that involved Ioannis Kantakuzino, Patriarch Ioannis Kalekas, the Zealot Movement in Thessaloniki, pirate attacks on the Holy Mountain, etc., it is worth noting that exactly this turbulent period is the period in which Saint Gregory is concerned about spiritual asceticism, patristic readings and continuous growth towards God, as well as the understanding of the wonderful possibility given to man of psycho-somatic involvement, of participation (*metohi*) in the Divine plan of salvation through the uncreated energies. The importance of the ascetic life and the search of God have been emphasized by the church fathers and writers throughout the ages. One of the most brilliant examples in this case in the contemporary era is offered by the writings of Saint Hierarch Nicolai Velimirovich, the new John Chrisostomos of 20th century Orthodoxy. In his famous work, *The Prologues from Ochrid*, more precisely in the Meditation of July 6, the day of commemoration of Saint Sisoies the Great, Saint Nicholai emphasizes: '*Let us remember the wonderful descent of the manna from heaven to feed the people in the wilderness (Exodus, Ch. 16):*

1. *How the Lord fed the Jews in the wilderness with manna from heaven, heavenly food and sweet as honey;*

2. *How this heavenly manna was a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life who came down from heaven to sate the spiritual hunger of the human race in the wilderness of paganism;*

3. *How nothing can satisfy my hungry soul except Christ the Living and sweeter than honey Lord.'*¹⁴

It is this struggle on a personal level and its winning that can bring tangible results in terms of interpersonal, social conflicts. The lack of participation in this struggle, indifference, building on

¹⁴ Nicolae Velimirovici, *Proloagele de la Ohrida [The Prologues from Ochrid]* (Galați: Egumenița, 2010), 32.

other bases can have disastrous consequences, as it has been proven in history, such as tensions, social conflicts, wars, etc. In the ‘Homily on peace with one another’, one of Saint Gregory’s main homilies on conflicts and their overcoming, Saint Gregory Palamas concentrates on three important images. The first of these has to do with describing what people share, about their common origin. *‘We are all brothers because we come from one Father and Creator. We alone were created in the image and likeness of God. Also, we are all descended from one earthly father, Adam. We also live in the same place and have a common mother, the Church. The leader of the Church and the improver is Christ, the true Son of God, Who is not only our God, but also wanted to become our Brother and Father. When he appeared to the women who were coming to the tomb, after the Resurrection on the third day from the dead, he said: “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me” (Matt. 28:10).’*¹⁵

However, with God’s permission, since the fall of the Forefathers Adam and Eve and until the end of time, until the day of the judgment, people have been, are and will be exposed to temptations. Temptations as a form of manifestation of the unseen enemy’s action, come in different forms, but most of the times they tend to have the same result.

*‘Through the trickery of the evil one, unfortunately, indifference and sometimes hatred entered among us and love was removed. Now we have been broken from our communion and become hostile to each other. It is precisely because of this that there is war between us, confusions and disturbances. We live in the same city and we have become adversaries, so that one would think that this city is ruled by enemies....’*¹⁶

Saint Gregory points out with a certain indignation and righteous anger the negative manifestation of these passions raising an alarm signal. His words seem more relevant than ever in the contemporary age. *‘What passion! How great is the size of our*

¹⁵ Saint Grigorie Palamas, ‘Despre pacea cu ceilalți,’ in Methodios Alexiou (ed.), *Viața în Hristos după Sfântul Grigorie Palama* [About the peace with the others,’ in *The life in Christ according to Saint Gregory Palamas*], 3rd edition (Thessaloniki, 2019), 25.

¹⁶ Ibid.

*wretchedness? The same city to fight with itself and fall down by its own hands. The older ones were silent because of fear, while the rough and mean ones held sway.*¹⁷

Saint Gregory's inner motivation is characterized by love and concern for his rational sheep, for the flock which was entrusted to him. This motivation makes him eager for pastoral care and involvement, from the perspective of the bishop of the city attempting many times to find a wise and balanced way of solving its conflicts.

*'Do not be troubled by the things you hear, for they are true, and I tell them to you so that you may recognize the lack of power that dominates us and seek the cause. I help you to wish to find the healing and to do everything possible to get it and keep it. Because for what other reason have you lost love among yourselves and with God, if not because of your disposition and preference for sin? The Lord says in the Gospel that: "Because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold". However, when love cools down completely, it is impossible for God's grace and care to remain between us.'*¹⁸

Among the most famous evangelical quotes regarding the building of the Church is definitely that of Saint Apostle Paul, which refers to the foundation of Christ (*'For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ'*¹⁹). However, ignorance or insufficient knowledge of this form of evolution, which is essential for both personal and social development, has repeatedly led to the collapse of many ideals and the emergence of numerous conflicts in the history of the Church. In almost perfect consonance with the evangelical thought expressed by the apostolic thought, Saint Gregory emphasizes the fact that *'The disturbances among us are caused by the fact that God has turned His face away from us. We have preferred sin and misunderstandings, and confusion come between us. There it is the work of the ruler of evil who causes men to become like beasts and acquire the character of demons, opposing the Life-Giver Christ.'*²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 3, 11.

²⁰ Palama, 'Despre pacea cu ceilalți,' 26.

Reflecting on the fact that one of the forms of showing love to God, as well as to others, is that of caring for the rational sheep entrusted to him, Saint Gregory emphasizes the essence of his intentions in the homily about peace. As a true shepherd of souls, he tries to take into account the perspective of others on him, the relationship of believers with representatives of the clergy. By these ideas, Saint Gregory tries to understand and follow the Gospel of Christ. *"Do not think only of evil and never want to repay evil for evil. Overcome it with good and embrace the love that is between you, so that you also acquire the love of God. Those who do not love their brothers cannot have love for God and enjoy His grace and care."*²¹ The causes and effects of conflicts and various disturbances that may occur in a given society are related to a general view of conflict, of war, of their structure. Saint Gregory calls the faithful to a continuous effort in the fight against their own passions, a continuous attempt of spiritual evolution, and, of course, a success in the fight against the warlike tendency, inclined to passion, to tension, tendencies to which all people were subjected, in different manners, after the fall of the Forefathers Adam and Eve. Some of these ideas are to be found in the calling at the end of the *Homily on Peace*.

*'Brothers, listen to my words. I preach peace to you, and I ask you to work together to obtain it with me. Everyone is called to forgive to each other the fault that they may have and become children of peace. Christ told His disciples, and through them He addressed us, that in whatever city or house we enter, we should preach peace. Saint Apostle Paul writes: "Seek peace with all and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord". So that we may all live reconciled among ourselves and united by peace, love and good understanding. That is how we will have our Lord Jesus Christ and His sweet promise among us.'*²²

In this attempt of spiritual evolution, the wish to understand and follow God's will plays a major role, as well as a certain ascetic effort related to this endeavor. The healing of passions, the escape from sin, the attempt to be different from the spirit of the world (*'Come out from among them and be separate,*

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Ibid.

*says the Lord Almighty*²³), are desires that sometimes exceed the ordinary, natural understanding of man. But the process of personal progress, understanding the essential difference between the love of the world and the love of God, rejecting the thoughts sown by the evil one, can help in this process of ontological transformation and real spiritual growth.

Various conflicts and challenges in the contemporary society

Fortunately enough, examples of confessors and seekers of peace, of real peace with the Creator and with fellow men, were not absent from the contemporary period either. One example is Daniel Sandu Tudor, the leader of the Burning Bush Movement from the Antim Monastery in Bucharest, a spiritual and cultural movement that emerged in the early years of the communist regime's establishment in Romania. A martyr in the communist regime,²⁴ Daniel represented a complex, peace-loving, polyvalent personality, with an impressive wide range of occupations, journalist, publicist, author of religious writings (such as the Akathist of Saint Demetrius the New, Basarabov, the Akathist of the Burning Bush of the Mother of God, *etc.*). After a life full of searches and after visiting Mount Athos, Sandu Tudor entered monasticism at a fairly old age (48 years old). However, before this important period of his life, Daniel had always tried to keep a balance in relation to political life, showing, first of all, a special interest in culture, for the important meeting between spirituality and intellectuality. However, this did not prevent the phenomenon of continuous accusations that were brought to him, being often called a member of the Legion, a fascist, a communist, an opportunist, a fundamentalist, *etc.*²⁵ As in the case of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, most of these accusations only managed to show a large part of the important problems of an important part of the intellectuals of the

²³ 2 Corinthians 6, 17.

²⁴ Nicolae Grebenea, *Amintiri din întuneric [Memories from the Darkness]*, Vol. I (București: Blassco, 2018), 404.

²⁵ George Enache, *Sandu Tudor (Părintele Daniil), ideologiile extremiste și poliția politică [Sandu Tudor (Father Daniel), the extremist ideologies and the political police]* (București: Lumea credinței, 2018).

time and the major internal conflicts with which, unfortunately, he was relentlessly struggling. In order to address the conflicts with himself, with friends, and with others around him, Daniil always campaigned for a return to the fundamental evangelical landmarks of the search for holiness and the relationship with the Divinity (fasting, prayer, charity). *‘Walking among the miserable and poor you will meet and be overwhelmed by your own cruelty, you will meet your own wickedness, you will know your own decay. Walking among the ragged and the ones with lice, among the dirty and embittered by the ugliness of life, you will wander through your own wretchedness like a foreign pilgrim seeking escape. We give some help to the needy, we have forgotten for centuries to give Christian charity. Not philanthropy that cultivates in the soul the joy of the one who gives and does not take too much into account the one who takes. It’s a kind of pride and feeling of relief from a debt you’ve gotten rid of. Philanthropy is an illusion and a great temptation added superfluously to you. While the one who gives help according to Christ, feels the poverty of his wealth, he loathes himself, and when he gives alms, he gives it as if he were receiving, he is deeply ashamed, he is embarrassed.’*²⁶

Charity is part of a wider effort to return to naturalness, to fight with the egoistic self, to come back to the fundamental landmarks of existence and the relationship with those around. The *unnatural way* of relating to the others, its manifestation and its various forms of expression represent as many possible causes for the generation, emergence and maintaining of conflicts. We find this behavior in a lot of urges and ideas present in various writings from the interwar period. Among them is the article ‘The return to naturalness’ by Daniil Sandu Tudor, in the *Credința* newspaper, column ‘Duh și slovă’: *“Nothing new under the sun”. This word of Scripture seals a great truth. A truth that our Chroniclers knew and had present, as a basis, in researching the past, along their historical vision [...]. This “wheel of the times”, under which the “Rumanian” submits, was considered by many, wrongly, as a sign of orientalism,*

²⁶ Sandu Tudor, ‘Întoarcerea la milostenie,’ *Credința* [‘The return to charity,’ in *Faith*] (years of appearance 1933-1938), 3.

*fatalism, reactionism...*²⁷ Without a return to simplicity, to the natural, and to fundamental values, both on a personal level and on a more comprehensive socio-cultural level, finding solutions for the development of an evolved society based on solidarity becomes more than difficult. On the contrary, one can easily reach various ideological obstacles, real conflicts, more or less obvious, both at the socio-cultural level and at a higher level of representing or leading a community.

The structure of conflicts and the structure of possible solutions, in the vision and works of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich

One of the most well-known and documented works from the 20th century regarding the emergence, development, and resolution of conflicts, viewed from the perspective of Holy Scripture, is that of Saint Hierarch Nikolai Velimirovich, titled "The War and the Bible."

From the very beginning of his masterpiece, Bishop Nikolai delimits the scriptural vision, essential in importance, regarding conflicts and war in general, highlighting, on the one hand, its perennial value and, on the other hand, the *major differences* between this wide-ranging perspective and any other form of conflict assessment.

In the discussion that takes place between General Clark and his guests, during a boat trip in the Boston Bay, in the Atlantic Ocean, in August 1927, meeting described by Saint Nikolai in his work from memory, one of the main topics of discussion is also represented by the sensitive and valuable theme of the causes (apparent and real) of war.

'You ask me, general, what could be the causes of the future war?

Are you really asking me about the real causes of this war or about the incident that will start the war? Because, you see, these are two different things.

²⁷ Sandu Tudor, 'Întoarcerea la fire,' *Credința* 84 [*The return to naturalness*, in the newspaper *Faith*] (1934): 3.

*European politicians and ultra-patriots who believe that the last World War was caused by the attack in Sarajevo are not at all qualified to explain to us the causes of the future war.*²⁸

The distinction between the so called visible causes and, on the other hand, the real cause of a conflict is firmly highlighted, from the beginning of the work, by Saint Nikolai Velimirovich. Having known well enough some tendencies of certain press commentators, the structure of certain currents of opinion related to conflicts, Saint Nikolai seems to emphasize this difference from the attempt, on the one hand, to highlight a truth verified by reality countless times throughout history and, on the other hand, to sound the alarm regarding the need of correctly understanding and evaluation of the conflict, an essential part of the process of finding the peace.

*'If the citizens of a city have sprinkled their houses with oil, and a child is found who, out of ill will or teribilism, throws a lighted match into the city, will it be said that he caused the fire? [...]. When people want war, such incidents are quickly found to serve as preludes to war. If the people are ready for war, will there be need for a long time to wait for an assassination attempt, or the burning of a flag, or the ill-treatment of a consul, or the killing of a missionary?'*²⁹

Many times throughout history it has been confirmed that, although on the surface the causes of a conflict may seem simple, easy to evaluate and to understand, in reality they could actually turn out to be much more complex, combining more factors and determining more effects than appearances could show at first glance.

The archetypal value of the Holy Scripture delimits its message in comparison with any other message, firstly from the point of view of the source and secondly from the point of view of the historically verified validity of the processes and evaluations that the scriptural authors, of divine inspiration, have described within the Scriptures regarding the sources of the emergence and extinction of conflicts. The authentic view of the Holy Scripture and

²⁸ Nikolai Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia [The war and the Bible]* (București: Sofia, 2002), 47-8.

²⁹ Ibid.

its proper reception have always depended and will always depend on the simplicity and authenticity with which this type of message is received.

*'It is obvious that not all wars in the history of human kind are described in the Bible, but those which are described and explained in it are illustrating for all wars in the past and future. This fact does not change either the scale of the war or the technique of war. Both local and world wars take place as a result of the same causes, so that each and every one of them, of whatever magnitude and on whatever battlefield they would have taken place, are just as easily explained by the Bible. And, therefore, the future war will be able to be understood and explained only by the Holy Scriptures, that is, through the examples of wars mentioned and explained in the Bible.'*³⁰

It is worth remembering and highlighting the fact that the first conflicts of human history began early, from the very first stages of this history. Until the emergence and expansion of social and state conflicts, internal conflicts, man's struggle with everyday life, internal passions and the repeated loss of this struggle are highlighted even in the beginning stages of the Bible. This loss of the first conflicts is recorded in the Holy Scriptures as being decisive in the birth of the strange, unnatural, inexplicable decision to fight with those around, to kill and, unfortunately, even to fight with the closest family members.

*'This is how the history of the human race began on earth, namely with a fratricide. A fratricide out of envy! The same satanic envy that has turned cold the love of our forefathers towards the Maker also turned cold the love of their first son towards his brother. [...]. But this was only the illustrating example for the whole future of their descendants. What is the exemplary character of this lawlessness? In that man's sin against man appears as a result of man's sin against God. Or, in other words - when we talk about war - that the war of man against man arises as a result of the war of man against God.'*³¹

Observing and understanding the huge, even fantastic, difference between the brilliance and beauty of God's creation, full

³⁰ Ibid., 50-1.

³¹ Ibid., 53.

of harmony, order and unity, on the one hand, and the limited, weak, deficient endeavors or various social creations and associations of men, men nevertheless endowed with the image and the resemblance of God on the other, it is more than honest to highlight that these two represent two strong and different elements which are more than enough to concern and assail the honest seeker of fundamental answers from any historical age.

The lustful desire for control, domination, glory in vain, or even deification without God (as it was the case with the Forefathers Adam and Eve), has plagued human history, as it is well known, countless times throughout the ages. Fortunately, there have been and always will be in creation a host of silent witnesses of these unfortunate slips.

'It was night and the stars were wandering across the sky. Delighted by the beauty of the different groups of shining stars that sparkled softly above our heads, a scholar said:

- Oh, if only such order reigned in the lives of men and nations as it reigns among the stars!

- And doesn't it?'³²

The lack of an inner order, of attention to the inner world, has unfortunately led, throughout the history of human existence, to major psychosomatic disorders. Sins or their aggravated forms (the passions), have generated and generate slavery ('Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin'³³). The struggle for liberation, both on a personal and communal level, has been one of the fundamental goals of Christian asceticism for centuries, as it emerges from the patristic sources. The accurate knowledge and understanding of these processes represent one of the first basic steps towards the cultural and spiritual evolution of men.

'As such, the physical, external slavery of a people is only a symbol of its preceding spiritual slavery. In the light of the Bible, this is a rule that rarely admits some exceptions. These exceptions are related to testing the strength of faith and character of a person (such as Joseph, the sold slave) or of a people (such as the Jews in the Egyptian captivity). Such exceptions are included in God's plan

³² Ibid., 76-7.

³³ John 8, 34.

for the greater glorification of some individuals (the apostles and martyrs of Christ) or of some collectivities (the Church of God).³⁴

The examples of slavery that the Holy Scripture underlines in this sense in the pages of the Old Testament are various. Their purpose, as it is, at least apparently, quite easy to understand, was and is a positive, formative, enlightening, forewarning one. In an overall vision, these repeated examples of the Holy Scriptures also contain, of course, a parental hinting and briefing addressed to the following generations, regarding the prevention of conflicts and tensions that could lead to wars.

‘After the death of the God-fearing and victorious Joshua, the Israelites fell into captivity, only during the time of the Judges, six or seven times. The first captivity was under Husham Rishataim, the king of Mesopotamia and lasted eight years. The second captivity of the people of Israel was under Eglon, king of Moab, and lasted eighteen years. The third captivity was under Javin, king of Canaan, and lasted a short time. [...] The sixth captivity was again under the Philistines and lasted forty years.’³⁵

The term used by the biblical authors for these repeated falls is a term that occurs quite often in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, namely that of *slavery* (from the Greek term *douleia*). From a liturgical point of view, as is known in the Church liturgical tradition (Orthodoxon Typikon), this term is to be found in Church texts during the Matins service (morning religious service) and, repeatedly, in the chanting of the Polyelos *The servants of the Lord (Douloi Kyrion)*, with verses from the Psalms. And this association emphasizes once again the strong, substantial relationship between the attempt to seek closeness to God and to the Lord’s will and, consequently, the peace that appears as a result of the above-mentioned inner approach of the faithful. Ascetic effort and prayer also help. The stages of this process of acquiring peace are different, being first about peace with one’s own self and, in a second phase with those around.

‘In the first case: “So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.... Therefore the anger of the Lord was bitter against Israel, and He left them into the hands of Hushan-

³⁴ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 77.

³⁵ Ibid., 77-8.

Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia.”³⁶ In the second case: “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel.”³⁷[...] In the sixth case: “Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.”³⁸

Old Testament history seems to describe essentially a huge process of *metamorphosis*, even of spiritual evolution, which God’s chosen people were called to go through. This huge pedagogical and parental approach of the Divinity, the repeated series of falls and comebacks of this people, distinguished them from the others by history, knowledge and tradition, the repeated examples of the holy and prophetic figures sent by God to guide the people towards the way of salvation, they all represent the core of a paradigmatic, essential model for the entire history of humanity. Within the process that this complex model of evolution describes, one can notice the alteration of diversity, appropriate understanding, and relating to the divine law, both of the people and of their leaders.

‘After the eight-year captivity under Hushan-Rishathaim, “the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Hushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Hushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years.”³⁹ After that, Israel fell into captivity again, which lasted eighteen years.’⁴⁰

In the contemporary exegesis of these events, the saints of the Church, including Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, underlined the connection between the inner spiritual wars, their results (losses, victories, some temporary truces, etc.), on the one hand, and the emergence and evolution of conflicts of all kinds, both civil and with other peoples, on the other hand. As mentioned from the beginning,

³⁶ Judges 3, 7-8.

³⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁸ Judges 13, 1 .

³⁹ Judges 3, 9-11.

⁴⁰ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 85.

this type of relationship represents one of the elements of the research that this article has dealt with. The value and validity of this research is obvious nowadays, even more so as the danger and risk of conflicts has increased exponentially in the 21st century.

‘What do we see from these biblical examples? We see what is biblically clear. In the exterior freedom, the people became spiritually enslaved by their laziness and greed. The outer freedom was only a golden curtain for the inner darkness, the darkness of enslavement. This inner, spiritual enslavement could not fail to reach its external physical manifestation, its symbol – the external slavery. When the people were in their blessed freedom, in peace, and in prosperity, their hearts have thicken and turned against God, the One and Living, and clung to the impurity of sin and pagan idols. In freedom, the people left far from God and brutally trespassed God’s law.’⁴¹

The comprehensive perception and the usual understanding of a man, traditionally devoted to reading and prayer, as Bishop Nikolai was, has repeatedly proven throughout his writings to be a privileged, complex, well adapted feature in assessing and helping both himself as well as the believers who read him and followed him. A form of help was also offered in the unseen war with the powers of darkness, the spiritual struggle and its various phases and stages. One of the elements of the spiritual evolution that the hierarch Nikolai had highlighted starting from his early writings, was the connection and the difference between the blessing and *the divine constancy in love towards man*, the masterpiece of His creation, and the inconstancy of human nature, which was to be found in a continuous process of seeking, understanding, evaluating, and determining a proper line of relating and appropriate behavior regarding the fundamental, eternal landmarks of evanescent and temporary human existence in this age of continuous deception.

‘When for this reason the people fell into captivity, their impetuous heart softened and their mind was enlightened. But this softening of the heart and enlightenment of the mind did not happen all at once, but gradually. In captivity, the enslaved are forced to be

⁴¹ Ibid., 87.

*silent, to endure, and to remember. By silence, patience, and remembrance, in the end the people were softened in heart, enlightened in spirit, and taught by remembrance. Then came the repentance, and with repentance came the cry to God for help, for deliverance.'*⁴²

Among the famous evangelical advises, remarkable for their simplicity and clarity, are to be found also those that we can find in the Epistle to the Romans of Saint Apostle Paul. The importance of these ideas is a special one, related to the search and spiritual evolution effort of each believer, as it was mentioned above. The solutions that Saint Paul's callings to be found contain in those fragments particularly an obvious practical value in terms of man's relationship with himself and with those around him.

*'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble ones. Do not think of yourselves to be wise in your own opinions. Repay no one evil for evil. Take care of good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peacefully with all men.'*⁴³

Divinity's love and call for solidarity, harmony and unity among the faithful of the Church are abundantly proved by the discreet, careful way in which God's intervention in human history takes place and has taken place so many times. The holy life and work, full of humility, but also of the amazing power of the miracles brought before by the Savior Jesus Christ, as described by the Holy Gospels, from the wonderful Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Passion on the Cross and the cosmic event of the Resurrection of the Lord, is one of the most revealing examples in this regard. But also throughout the biblically recorded history of the chosen people we can encounter numerous divine interventions, surpassing the laws of common logic.

'Just as the number of soldiers is not decisive in war, neither are the weapons decisive. [...] God's Holy Scripture clearly teaches us that weapons do not help in war. And then what helps? Only God helps. [...] And when he helps the former against the latter, God does not use His power with which He could destroy all the worlds in an

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Romans 12, 15-18.

*instant, but He often uses completely small means, insignificant to the point of ridiculous in people's eyes.'*⁴⁴

The value of understanding the conflict and the various wars between peoples is given, in the vision of Saint Nikolai, first of all by the source of inexhaustible wisdom which is the Holy Scripture. One of the advises that he addresses, sometimes indirectly, indeed, throughout his writings, is that of the overall view and understanding. Although it is easier for anyone to determine the fault of one or the others in a conflict, Saint Nikolai repeatedly recommends the Holy Scripture as a source of inspiration and overview (*synoptiki apopsi*), as a form of relating to events, considering them as the most appropriate methods of historical research on conflict.

*'Remember the Bible again. When Judea sinned, Israel struck her and conquered her. When Israel sinned, Judea struck and defeated him. And when both of these countries turned away from God, the One and Living, and sank into the worship of idols, God called from afar the Assyrian king Salmanassar and the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar - and gave in their hands both Jewish kingdoms. The current mutual relationship between the Christian peoples is very similar to that between Judea and Israel. Victory was gained by one power in the beginning, then by another, until in the last war it was no longer known, to be fair, who is the real defeated and who is the real victorious one.'*⁴⁵

Among the scriptural accounts of the battles between the people of Israel and the surrounding peoples, the Old Testament history also includes wonderful, unexpected, completely out of the ordinary moments that managed to impress and fill with amazement and joy the readers of the Bible throughout the ages. Knowing and understanding these events helps undoubtedly in understanding the process of the unfolding of a conflict, as well as its possible solutions, sometimes more unexpected and difficult to perceive and understand with the help of ordinary logic. One of these episodes is and will remain that of the confrontation between the young David and the giant Goliath.

⁴⁴ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 102-103.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 171.

‘Emperor Saul was at war with the Philistines in the Terevint Valley. In this war took place the famous battle between Goliath and David, which decided the fate of the war. Goliath was a fearsome giant, six cubits and a span, armored and terribly armed. [...] while David was a young lad, the youngest of his father’s sons, a shepherd. No armor, no weapons, no weapon bearer, no war experience. He was not a soldier, nor had he been taken into the army, but had come from home and brought food to his brothers. Standing with Saul’s army, David saw Goliath and heard him reviling the Israelites and calling for one of them to come out to fight, but no one dared to come out. The blood and the spirit revived in the young David, and he shouted that he wants to come out and fight with the giant.’⁴⁶

The well-known outcome of the fight with Goliath, the unexpected victory of the future King David and the joy he thus brought to the people led by King Saul are also mentioned in the pages of the Holy Scripture. By defeating Goliath, young David does not only defeat an opponent, but also an entire mentality formed of a variety of fears, lack of courage, disbelief in the help and the possibility of intervention of the Providence in everyday life. Such images also manage to offer an amazing, totally different solution to ending a conflict in a wonderful way.

However, it is worth noting that, as expected, the largest number of contexts in which it was possible to find solutions to conflicts, as they are described in the Holy Scriptures, are related, most of the time, to repentance and to the returning to God, both of the people as a whole, as well as of their leaders. An obvious part of spiritual evolutions, this kind of return to perennial values is of essential importance in the Old Testament history of salvation. Even if the deliverance can also come in a wonderful way, as shown above, the exiting from a period of slavery to foreign oppressors had, in the pages of the Holy Scripture, most of the times, to do with the difficult and complex process of *meta-noia* (repentance) of the people.

‘After this new slavery of eighteen years under the Philistines, “The children of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying: we

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

have sinned before You, that we have forsaken our God and served the Baals. And the Lord said to the children of Israel: ... go and cry to the gods you have chosen, so that they will deliver you in the time of your trouble. And the children of Israel said to the Lord: I have sinned; do with us as you please, only save us at this time” (Judges 10, 10-15). Then the Lord had mercy and delivered them through His chosen one, the judge Jephtah. After that Israel, because of his sins, fell into captivity again under the Philistines, and he was a slave for forty years. And then he was delivered by the Lord through the judge Samson.

And so on, in a row, throughout the entire Book of Judges and throughout all the Books of the Kings of Israel.’⁴⁷

The repeated series of changes that the people of Israel went through during the Old Testament history, changes that the Holy Scriptures mention in an essential way, shows, on the one hand, the presence and direct involvement of God in the evolution of this special people, and, on the other hand, the obvious difficulty in finding that constancy of spiritual evolution. The complexity of this process, however, also manages to highlight the variety of difficult trials and temptations through which the people were called to go through, and also the multitude of ways in which the divine Providence intervened in this history to offer help and guidance on the path of salvation. The various conflicts that the chosen people have gone through represent only a part of the various trials and tests to which they have been subjected.

‘The fundamental conclusion is that war is understood and explained only in the biblical light. All secular literature, taken all together, does not explain the wars between men nearly as well as God’s Holy Scriptures do. From all that has been said so far, it is clear that war - like every individual and social problem - depends exclusively on our relationship with God and God’s law. This is true for non-Christians and Christians alike. The difference lies only in the fact that with non-Christians war depends on their relationship with God and with God’s law placed in their consciousness and explained to a certain extent by their wise men, while with Christians war depends on their relationship with the One Living God and with

⁴⁷ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 86-7.

*the law of God, as it was revealed through the person of Jesus Christ.*⁴⁸

Various secular perspectives on understanding and describing war

One of the famous laic descriptions of the unfolding of a conflict is the one provided by the valuable and well-known work *War and Peace* of the Russian writer Lev Tolstoy.

A remarkable and famous piece of literature, studied all over the world, this work tries to provide a complex perspective, a social fresco of the 19th century on several levels, as well as the description of Napoleon Bonaparte's rise in power, his wars fought in the European space, as well as the French army's invasion of Russia in 1812.

Unlike Lev Tolstoy, it can also be observed in this case that Saint Nikolai's perspective on the rise of conflicts in the 19th century European space tries to take into account, as always, both the evolution and conflicts of the inner world, as well as the outer conflicts of the 19th century European space. It is the understanding of the connection between the two worlds that can lead to an overall understanding of these recent historical realities.

*'But in his power and glory Napoleon became proud beyond all measure and in his arrogance, he began to see himself as an earthly God, and to look down upon all other men with contempt [...]. It was for the sins of the Russians, and not for his French war power, that Napoleon was permitted to enter Russian soil and subdue it as far as Moscow. And this success increased even more the arrogance of Emperor Napoleon, so that he completely forgot his duty to the Lord of hosts.'*⁴⁹

As it can be noticed many times throughout European history, the decline of Napoleon's power was linked to his negative inner evolution. Saint Nikolai's remarkable ability to describe this development and, by extension, this inner war, provides an aid in the comprehensive understanding of the general image and outcome. Pride has also proven in this case to be one of the human passions that is particularly difficult to fight with.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 196-97.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 127-28.

*‘And the emperor Napoleon was defeated in his last battle, captured and sent as a prisoner to the island of despair in the sea. Seven years Napoleon spent on that island as a hopeless man, until gradually his pride was humbled and his heart softened. And Napoleon, in his humility, began to speak full of wonder about Christ the Lord.’*⁵⁰

The art of war

Throughout the history of mankind, there have been a lot of works that have tried to approach the structure of war, the causes and possible effects of a battle, the various strategies for winning a conflict, etc. One of the oldest and best-known works of this kind is *‘The Art of War’*, a remarkable work for its time, written by the Chinese general Sun Tzu, in the 6th century BC. Known in the West since the 18th century, under the name *‘The Thirteen Articles’*, this work became quickly an important landmark for a lot of educated people of that period. Various principles enunciated in this work such as, *‘The best conflict is the one that is avoided’*, represent, more or less directly, calls to seek a peaceful relationship with those around. One could point out here even a closeness to some scriptural principles (*‘Seek peace and follow it’*⁵¹), as well as to some ideas found in the bimillennial tradition of the Church. *‘Through the principle “The best war is the one that is avoided”, Sun Tzu urges us to seek the path of peace and mutual understanding. This lesson urges us to approach conflicts with diplomacy, seeking solutions that benefit all parties involved. Because basically, you can’t win a war without losing in your turn.’*⁵²

Among the valuable works of general culture of any present or future military leader, the work of General Sun Tzu is certainly included. Its various qualities have been highlighted by a whole series of reviews over time. Among the most recent and interesting

⁵⁰ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 130.

⁵¹ Psalm 33, 13.

⁵² Antoniu Sîntimbrean, ‘Recenzie: «Arta Războiului» de Sun Tzu’ [‘Book Review: Sun Tzu’s «The Art of War»], January 27, 2024, <https://www.mindsetup.ro/recenzie-arta-razboiului-de-sun-tzu/>.

reviews of this kind is the one made by the website www.mindsetup.ro.

*'In short, The Art of War embraces the essence of humanity, urging us to cultivate self-knowledge, to harness the power of adaptability, and approach life with a wise strategy. This ancient work urges us to look beyond appearances, decipher the essence behind conflicts, and turn daily challenges into opportunities for growth and learning.'*⁵³

Although complex and qualitative, dealing both with self-knowledge and with the various strategies, means of war, and the various types of engagements, the analysis of the structure of this work, as well as of other works of military history of this type, shows some remarkable differences in comparison with the approach of Saint Nikolai in the understanding of conflicts. His vision has a unique base for that.

*'You ask me, general, what could then show and explain to us the causes of the future war or of war in general? None other than God's Holy Scripture. There is not a single book in this world in which so many wars are described as in the Bible, descriptions accompanied by their explanation, which goes to the first root. There one can find collected a vast experience of wars, victories and defeats, of the human race from three continents - and all this experience is explained and elucidated in a special light.'*⁵⁴

Conclusions

In conclusion, following the analysis above, we can speak of a real meeting, even a theological identification between the vision of Saint Apostle James, the principles underlined in the homily of Saint Hierarch Gregory Palamas about understanding and approaching conflicts, about peace, about the finding of peace and also the modern theological approach, of the 20th century, regarding these essential themes about the disappearance of war and the engagement within this essential search for the future of humankind in the 21st century.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Velimirovich, *Războiul și Biblia*, 49-50.

War and peace in society and the world were and will still be related to the complex process of spiritual evolution, restoration or renewal of human nature. As examples of the various evolutions of this process, we can find both in the Holy Scriptures and in the holy tradition of the Church, the accurate description of paradigmatic, dynamic moments and events in this sense, whose value and importance managed to cross the ages.

References

Enache, George. *Sandu Tudor (Părintele Daniil), ideologiile extremiste și poliția politică [Sandu Tudor (Father Daniel), the extremist ideologies and the political police]*. București: Lumea credinței, 2018.

Grebenea, Nicolae. *Amintiri din întuneric [Memories from the Darkness]*, Vol. I. București: Blassco, 2018.

Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά. «Ομιλία Α'. Περί της Ειρήνης προς αλλήλους.» *Άπαντα τα έργα 9. Ομιλίες (Α' - Κ')* [Homily 1. On Peace to one another.' *Collected works 9. Homilies (1-20)*], ΕΠΕ 72, Εισαγωγή. Translation Παναγιώτης Χρήστου. Thessaloniki: Πατερικαί Εκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς», 1985.

Κωτσιόπουλου, Κωνσταντίνου Π. *Το Κίνημα των Ζηλοτών στη Θεσσαλονίκη (1342-1349). Ιστορική, Θεολογική και Κοινωνική διερεύνηση [The Zealot Movement in Thessaloniki (1342-1349). Historical, Theological and Social investigation]*. Thessaloniki: Greek College of Thessaloniki, 1997.

“New International Version of the Bible.” *Biblegateway.com*.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205&version=NIV>.

“New King James Version of the Bible.” *Biblegateway.com*.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-King-James-Version-NKJV-Bible/>.

Sfântul Grigorie Palamas [Saint Gregory Palamas]. ‘Despre pacea cu ceilalți.’ In Methodios Alexiou (ed.), *Viața în Hristos după Sfântul Grigorie Palama* [‘About the peace with the others.’ In *The*

life in Christ according to Saint Gregory Palamas], 3rd edition. Thesaloniki, 2019.

Saint Gregory Palamas. "Homily One. On Peace with one another." *Johnsanidopoulos.com*, January 18, 2021. <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2021/01/on-peace-with-one-another-timeless-and.html>.

Sîntimbreaan, Antoniu. 'Recenzie: «Arta Războiului» de Sun Tzu' [Book Review: Sun Tzu's «The Art of War»], January 27, 2024. <https://www.mindsetup.ro/recenzie-arta-razboiului-de-sun-tzu/>.

Tudor, Sandu. 'Întoarcerea la firesc.' *Credința* 84 ['The return to naturalness.' In *Faith*]. 1934.

--'Întoarcerea la milostenie.' *Credința* ['The return to charity.' In *Faith*] (years of appearance 1933-1938).

Velimirovich, Nikolai. *Războiul și Biblia [The war and the Bible]*. București: Sofia, 2002.

Velimirovici, Nicolae. *Proloagele de la Ohrida [The Prologues from Ochrid]*. Galați: Egumenița, 2010.