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Man, the “Orthodox Church”, the State and the Inevitability of War in Lev Karsavin’s Philosophy

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the implications that arise from Karsavin’s reflections on man, the “Orthodox Church” and the state with particular reference to the issue of war. In doing so, I pose the question of the inevitability of war. The question posed refers to the main hypothesis of the research formulated in reference to Karsavin’s views – war is necessary. I focus my research on Karsavin’s considerations contained in the dissertation entitled *Tserkov’, lichnost’ i gosudarstvo* [1927] (*The Orthodox Church, the Person and the State*). With the analytical method used, the order of the issues discussed and repeated reference to them is due to the interpretive approach, and the findings made and conclusions reached were used to answer the question posed about the inevitability of war. The result of the research is the confirmation of the main hypothesis and also the demonstration of the relationships that exist between the causes of war and the responsibility for its initiation.

Keywords: man, Orthodox Church, state, war, Karsavin

“Cleopatra’s nose: if it were shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been different”.¹

B. Pascal

Lev Karsavin, in his dissertation entitled *Tserkov’, lichnost’ i gosudarstvo* [1927] (*The Orthodox Church, the Person and the State*), not only addresses the core topics indicated in the title, but he repeatedly touches on the issue of war. War is not mentioned in the title of the dissertation, but in terms of interpretation, it is reasonable to accept the thesis that this issue plays a key role in Karsavin’s deliberations. First of all, war is the example of evil singled out by him, which is not irrelevant to theodicy. One of the two broad contexts of consideration is therefore religion, precisely Christianity, of which, according to Karsavin, Orthodoxy is the only true embodiment. The next context, this time theoretical, is his philosophy of omni-unity, to which he refers sporadically in the dissertation under review, nevertheless making use of the solutions appropriate to it. Considered within the framework of religion and the philosophy of omni-unity, war, along with the explanation of its causes, turns out to be one of the more problematic issues.

Karsavin’s life (1882–1952) coincides with a period of rapid political change in Russia, including political system changes accompanied by revolutions and warfare. He witnessed the effects of these changes personally, and therefore there are reasons to assume that these experiences were at least one of the reasons for his attention to the issue of war, especially since, as his statements show, he understood war as a simple consequence of the existence of the state. In the dissertation under review, however, there is no mention of either a specific war or personal experience. He also wrote about the state in general terms, so he considered the issue of the state as such. However, it should be noted that Russia is mentioned in a few examples. There are also references to communism and revolution, as well as references to historical figures associated with Russia and the “Orthodox Church”.²

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Myśli*, transl. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (Warszawa: PAX, 1989), 104 [180].

² Cf. Lev Platonovich Karsavin, “Tserkov’, lichnost’ i gosudarstvo”, in: Lev Platonovich Karsavin, *Sochineniya* (Moscow: RARITET, 1993), e.g. 426–427, 431, 433. An explanation of the use of quotation marks for “Orthodox Church” is given in the next part of the article titled “Orthodox Church and orthodox church”.

In contrast to a specific war and its specific causes, Karsavin as a philosopher and at the same time a historian was interested in war in philosophical terms, war as such and its general causes, i.e. regularities arising from the existence of the state, but also the existence of the “Orthodox Church” and human activity in the broadest sense. War, along with the explanation of its causes, has been the subject of consideration for many philosophers starting from antiquity. However, in the case of Karsavin, one can speak of a particular originality of deliberations on this subject, among other things, due to the contexts mentioned, the relationship that occurs between the “Orthodox Church” and the state, or responsibility, but also due to the controversial nature of some elements of his position.

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the implications that arise from Karsavin’s reflections on man, the “Orthodox Church” and the state, with particular reference to the issue of war. In doing so, I pose the question of the inevitability of war. “War is a deadly serious matter”. However, in reference to the motto of the deliberations, assuming that as a universal example, it also applies to a potential war, symbolically indicating its cause. Half-jokingly, half-seriously, I pose the question: could Cleopatra’s nose be shorter? The order of the analysed issues and repeated reference to them is due to the interpretive approach, and the findings made and conclusions reached will serve to answer the question posed about the inevitability of war.

Man as a person and as an individual

In the title of the dissertation under review, Karsavin used the concept of person (личность) and referred it to one of the hypostases of the Trinity – the Son of God Jesus Christ, while emphasising that the person as a hypostasis is not His human person.³ Reserving the concept of person for Jesus Christ, Karsavin did not abandon the term when he spoke of man but stipulated that in this case, it had a figurative sense. Leaving aside the theological complexities of the relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ and understanding him as a person, in the proposed interpretive approach, I also

³ Cf. *ibidem*, 408.

apply the concept of person to man. However, it applies only to discussing man in relation to the “Orthodox Church”. On the other hand, in relation to the state, the concept of the individual will apply; Karsavin also used this concept, especially when he made statements about – as he put it – the animal nature of man, which is subject to the necessary laws of nature (hereinafter: laws of nature). Accordingly, man is considered in two ways, either as a person or as an individual, depending on the context of the “Orthodox Church” or the state and nature, respectively (in these senses, hereinafter: person, individual; or, alternatively, in general terms, man).

For the consideration of a person or an individual, in addition to the aforementioned context, conditions arising from the nature of man are also important, and this nature is dual. These conditions are evil acts resulting from the sinful (animal) nature of the individual and good acts resulting from the good (divine) nature of the person. Despite the dual nature, however, man is not both good and evil at the same time. “Evil may be his actions and thoughts, but not himself; or: he may be “of evil nature” but not “evil”, because evil is non-personal, non-individual, non-human”⁴

According to Karsavin, every man, even the worst, by virtue of being a creature of God is good and not evil, but as an individual he is a sinner because his animal nature⁵ is determined by the laws of nature, hence evil. In other words, the individual, due to his animal and necessarily sinful nature, cannot avoid sin, but despite this, he can overcome this nature and thus stop sinning. He can do so because, first, he is free; second, he receives “instructions” from God on what to do. Choosing this path results in metanoia and leads to salvation;⁶ thus, a man becomes a complete person.

In interpretive terms, Karsavin’s position should be supplemented by the resulting conclusion. It consists in accepting gradability and dependence in being an individual and a person. In other words, the more a man becomes an individuum (because he sins), the less of a person he is, and vice versa. Achieving the fullness of one would mean the complete disappearance of the other, but Karsavin was only talking about the complete disappearance of the

⁴ Ibidem, 414.

⁵ Cf. ibidem, 416.

⁶ Cf. ibidem, 425.

empirical world – that is, nature along with the individuum and the world it produces, which is partly related to the transformation of nature, among other things, for the functioning of the state. The person may be diminished, but as a good, he will not disappear, since he is the work of God. In the case of Karsavin’s philosophy, however, this does not mean that the physical world was not created by God; but, in God’s plans, it is destined for annihilation.

The ability to overcome sinful nature stems from the goodness that is man, with whether his actions will be good or bad being conditioned by freedom.⁷ From this, Karsavin derived the conclusion that the animal nature of man determined by the laws of nature is not determined in an absolute way.

From the statement made, Karsavin derived another conclusion, this time of a moral nature. Because of freedom, man cannot justify his actions by circumstances beyond his control. No man can consider himself sinless and justify himself by acting according to the law of sinful necessity,⁸ that is, with the laws of nature and established laws, the embodiment of which is the state and – in addition, while accepting the interpretive findings, it should be added – the earthly orthodox church.⁹

Karsavin derived another important conclusion from the solution of appealing to freedom. In view of the fact that freedom is a gift received from God, no man, whether living or dead, can be judged for his actions by another man, or a group of people, or even an earthly orthodox church, only the God-man Jesus Christ,¹⁰ i.e., the Orthodox Church of Christ. Despite the fact that Karsavin did not mention the state on this occasion, it would also have to be ruled out for the same reason; instead, the indirect rationale is the aforementioned group of people functioning within it, as well as the state’s connection to the earthly orthodox church. The proposed solution, however, contradicts the tasks of the state, which Karsavin mentioned in another part of the dissertation,¹¹

⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, 421.

⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 414.

⁹ The interpretive findings, the rationale for which is presented in the section of the article entitled “Orthodox Church and orthodox church”, concern the distinction of “Orthodox Church” into the Orthodox Church of Christ (spiritual church) and the earthly orthodox church (church in the empirical dimension).

¹⁰ Cf. Karsavin, “Tserkov’ lichnost’ i gosudarstv”, 414.

¹¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 416–417.

which, in turn, makes it possible to speak of inconsistency. (I will return to the question of the relationship between the state and the earthly orthodox church and the tasks of the state.)

The solutions adopted by Karsavin are based on the assumption that the laws of nature that determine the animal nature of man are the same laws according to which, in terms of what is empirical, the state and the earthly orthodox church function. This assumption makes it possible to speak of them together and makes it possible to explain not only how they function but also the activity of the individual in relation to nature, the state and the earthly orthodox church. With this approach, the laws enacted by both the state and the earthly orthodox church, which also determine the individual, should be considered derivative of the laws of nature. Karsavin did not deal with the justification of this issue, but the premise for such justification is the animal nature of man and the possibility of his perfecting himself, including the perfecting of his deeds. According to his religious perspective, Karsavin even spoke of the obligation to perfect himself, which leads to the complete transformation of the individuum into a person. The aforementioned premises make it possible to find analogies between Karsavin's position and that of Plato, to whom I will refer as an exception.

Plato, in explaining the genesis of the state, began with the individual human being (individuum) and what is inalienable to his life, namely the necessity of satisfying basic needs conditioned by the laws of nature. A well-organised social group is required to satisfy needs optimally, which necessitates flawless actions. Subsequent enhancement of needs (living beyond one's means) and their satisfaction in an optimal manner, on the other hand, requires the establishment of an army and the establishment of government, which in turn already allows one to speak of a well-organised state including its laws established.¹² Karsavin did not consider the genesis of the state and did not mention Plato, but the premises on the functioning of the state contained in the dissertation under review give grounds for finding inspiration in Plato's philosophy, especially since he made the proper functioning of the state dependent on its conduct of wars – such a solution was also discussed by Karsavin. It is also

¹² Plato, *Państwo*, transl. Władysław Witwicki (Warszawa: AKME, 1990), 102 and n. (369 B and n.).

worth adding that Plato, taking into account the highest degree of knowledge of philosophers and their pursuit of the Good, justified the introduction of religious worship, which in turn, leaving aside the question of revealed faith, can be considered an element analogous to the justification of the establishment and functioning of the earthly orthodox church.

It has been established that the laws of nature dictate that an individual will perform certain acts, including those that, because of the negative consequences for both the individual and others, are described as evil; within the religious context, however, sin is mentioned. Nevertheless, according to Karsavin, sin can be overcome because of the freedom and goodness that is man and “the voice of God in man”, hence the conclusion that the laws of nature do not determine man’s animal nature in an absolute way. This raises the following question: do the laws of nature that determine both the individual and the state and the earthly orthodox church in the case of the state determine things in an absolute way? The question posed in this way would have to be answered in the affirmative, and in justification it would have to be pointed out that the state and the earthly orthodox church as institutions are not endowed with freedom – this, based on what has been established so far, is granted only to man.

However, the issue of the laws of the natural world, and more broadly the laws of the empirical world, takes on a different dimension in the context of belief in an omnipotent God, and because of this omnipotence, the answer to the question of things being determined in an absolute manner by the laws of nature should be negative. In this case, however, Karsavin did not provide any justification, instead pointing to a number of biblical examples and religious “truths” that testify to the possibility of a miracle; one of them is that faith moves mountains, and that what is impossible for man is possible for God.¹³ In other words, the necessity of sin that arises from the laws of nature, which consequently affects not only the individual but also the state and the earthly orthodox church (these institutions are therefore sinful by their very nature) can be overcome, but according to Karsavin, this can only be done by uniting in true faith with the God-man Jesus Christ.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Karsavin, “Tserkov’ lichnost’ i gosudarstvo”, 414–415.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, 416.

However, from the mere fact that the individuum is a living being and determined by the laws of the empirical world, his sinfulness does not follow, as one would think on the basis of the findings so far. According to Karsavin, one should speak of sinfulness only when the individuum does not raise his life to the level of humanity, in other words, when he does not perfect himself to the extent of his potential; only then does he become a slave of necessity. At the same time, Karsavin added that if an individual does not perfect himself, it means that he does not want to do so and, in addition, takes sinful necessity for granted, and this in turn plunges him even further into sin and does not allow him to free himself from it. He also stressed that blaming God for one's predicament in this case is an even greater sin.¹⁵

Orthodox Church and orthodox church

Karsavin has annotated the analysed treatise with a motto that is a confession of faith in the one, holy, conciliar and apostolic "Orthodox Church".¹⁶ The dissertation itself, on the other hand, begins as follows:

The Orthodox Church is holy and spotless. It does not sin and cannot sin. It is always in the fullness and perfection of its own, like the Most Holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the empirical Christian humanity, not the empirical humanity, not the empirical world in their sinful imperfection, but – the perfection and fullness of the world *saved* by the Son of God, and not only *saved* but also *saving*.¹⁷

"Orthodox Church" spelled with a capital letter is the Orthodox Church of Christ (Karsavin sometimes wrote interchangeably – the Orthodox Church of Jesus Christ), for which the world is material to be transformed, i.e. to be made salvable. According to Karsavin, the meaning of the world's existence lies in the fact that in a free, therefore undetermined way, it returns and will fully return to the Body of Jesus Christ. This is made possible by the way God,

¹⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, 415.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, 403.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 403.

through the Orthodox Church of Christ, shows the world. The goal is to find the Truth, which is Christ, and this can only be done in love, the object of which is God, not man.¹⁸ The Orthodox Church of Christ, however, is not, according to Karsavin, an organisation, a system of worship and teaching.¹⁹

The world is returning to the Orthodox Church of Christ through its manifestation, which on earth is the Universal Orthodox Church.²⁰ This Church is a concentrating centre for the world; one could say its axis around which the world changes in a dynamic process, striving for salvation. This goal is possible, among other things, because the Universal Orthodox Church has a dual dimension. According to Karsavin, the Universal Orthodox Church, on the one hand, is a manifestation of the Orthodox Church of Christ, which makes it possible to speak of its spiritual (invisible) dimension – for this reason, in terms of interpretation, I propose that when speaking of the Orthodox Church of Christ one should also have in mind the Universal Orthodox Church in its spiritual dimension. So that there is no doubt, it should be added that it is only about the Universal Orthodox Church, since Karsavin considered Catholicism and Protestantism to be manifestations of heresy.²¹ On the other hand, the Universal Orthodox Church has its empirical, therefore visible and institutionalised dimension, which, in order to distinguish it from the spiritual dimension, I propose to express with the phrase “earthly orthodox church”. The use of lowercase spelling is also intended to emphasise the difference indicated. Although Karsavin distinguished between the spiritual and empirical dimensions of the Universal Orthodox Church, he did not indicate this in his spelling by using a capital and lowercase letter; he also often omitted adjectives, writing simply about the “Orthodox Church”. Only from the context of his statements does it become clear what dimension of “Orthodox Church” he was writing about, while this is not always explicit, which in turn requires an

¹⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 405, 408.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, 406.

²⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 404.

²¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 410. For this reason, despite the universal nature of Karsavin’s considerations, I translate the Russian word Karsavin, *Tserkov’* as “Orthodox Church” rather than “Church”. Karsavin, writing about the duties of the Orthodox state, which, among other things, should defend the Orthodox, mentioned atheistic liberalism, communism, and Catholicism in succession as examples of the threat (cf. *ibidem*, 432).

interpretive approach. In cases that do not require a distinction between the Orthodox Church of Christ and the earthly orthodox church, I use the word “Orthodox Church” with quotation marks. It is still worth noting that Karsavin, however, used the lowercase spelling when referring to the orthodox church considered within the framework of pagan religions and to “earthly national orthodox churches”,²² as well as to denominations other than the Orthodox.

I consider the distinction introduced in the previous part of the article between the Orthodox Church of Christ and the earthly orthodox church legitimate not only because of the simplification of Karsavin’s description of his position, but also because in this way, one essential common element of the state and the Universal Orthodox Church in its empirical dimension (the earthly orthodox church) is symbolically singled out – one and the other is an institution with its own rights and means of exercising power and thus organising life for subjects in the case of the state, for the faithful in the case of the earthly orthodox church. Another rationale for such a solution is that Karsavin, in the dissertation under review, essentially wrote – as has already been hinted at – neither about a specific state nor about a specific national orthodox church. Instead, he wrote in general about the “Orthodox Church” in its empirical dimension, whose embodiment, however, are earthly national orthodox churches; so for this reason, too, in order to avoid interpretive misunderstandings, I propose to maintain the distinction between the Orthodox Church of Christ and the earthly orthodox church.

Because of the issue of war, which as inherent in state action always involves earthly affairs, even when conducted on behalf of God or in the name of God, I will be primarily interested in the earthly orthodox church, an institution with its own history, teachings and mission. The mission of the earthly orthodox church is that in the course of its development, it shows, as Karsavin stated, “the new without rejecting the old”, that is, a new way of development and pursuit of perfection without rejecting the tradition associated with the faith; and also, that in the earthly orthodox church as a developing centre, the whole world will also develop. The earthly orthodox church, through its development, creates the necessary conditions for the development of the world

²² Cf. *ibidem*, 406, 409.

because, unlike the determinative laws of nature, it enables its free²³ (undetermined) development. The world, developing in the earthly orthodox church, aspires to perfection, that is, to the Orthodox Church of Christ, which, as the Body of Jesus Christ, is one Truth for all; it is one Truth, just as there is one “beloved concordance, or symphony of *all* its individual expressions, as – in the ideal and perfect being – their omni-unity”.²⁴ What is important in the context of the philosophy of omni-unity is that such a Truth is not complete unless all its possible expressions (manifestations) are actualised (developed); those that are not actualised are only potency.

State

Karsavin had no doubt what the state is:

After all, *the state* is nothing but *an expression and realization, like a form of unity of some national or multinational cultural whole*. The state is a *necessary form of the personal being of a nation or multinational whole*; but it is a *secondary form*, since *the first and true personal form of the conciliar subject is the Orthodox Church*. In this way, the state is distinguished from the Orthodox Church, as a *self-organization of the sinful world*, because it lives in itself and does not become, that is, has not yet become, the Orthodox Church.²⁵

The quoted statement implies that the state is a necessary form of the unity of a nation or nations regardless of their cultural identity and distinctiveness – the state unifies national cultures to form a multinational cultural whole, and it does this through the self-organisation of the sinful world using various means, including oppression. Although the state as a form is necessary, it is secondary and, in addition, false, since the true form is only the Orthodox

²³ Cf. *ibidem*, 406. Speaking of freedom in relation to the earthly orthodox church, a contradiction with the previous findings arises. The solution to this problem will be to take into account the Orthodox Church of Christ, to which the earthly orthodox church refers in its teaching, showing the direction of development.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 407.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 415.

Church of Christ. The problem becomes more complicated if the findings already made regarding the genesis of the state are taken into account, as well as the question: is the state really necessary if it is false? Karsavin did not draw attention to such difficulties, and since they are beyond the accepted scope of the subject matter of the analyses under way, I only signal them.

In addition to the quoted statement, Karsavin said that the state is not the Orthodox Church of Christ, since it is imperfect; interpretively, it should be added that the state is also not the earthly orthodox church, although in this case the criterion of perfection plays a lesser role, since both are imperfect. If the state were perfect, according to Karsavin, it would merge with the Orthodox Church of Christ, although it would continue to be something separate with its goals and tasks – in other words, it would not disappear in favour of the Orthodox Church of Christ, but only exist within the Orthodox Church of Christ.

I read the clear distinction between the state and the Orthodox Church of Christ as a declaration by Karsavin that the state, despite the fact that it can take the form of a denominational state (according to Karsavin, it would be a Christian state, and consequently, the earthly orthodox church would play a special role in it) and reach the highest level of perfection, it will never become the Orthodox Church of Christ. The fundamental reason is that the state, unlike the Orthodox Church of Christ, is an institution of the sinful world, created for the sinful world. However, if the state is not perfect and sins, according to Karsavin, this does not mean that the state is evil. Nor does it mean that it is a good; rather it is a relative good. “The state is a relative good not only because it would be worse off without it, but also because it realises a certain degree of goodness”.²⁶

Karsavin pointed out a fundamental regularity in the actions of man and the state. Man, who, despite the determining laws of nature, is free in his actions, without the God-man Jesus Christ, however, cannot stop sinning. The same is true of the state, which, according to earlier findings, came into being as a result of the laws of nature acting on man, but left to itself, also cannot do without sin, and if it abandons its activity, meaning that it ceases to perform its functions, it will fall into an even greater sin of self-destruction. Karsavin

²⁶ Ibidem, 416.

understood the state by analogy with considerations of the individual and the earthly orthodox church; thus, although the state is sinful by nature, it is also a relative good and should strive for perfection.

State means war

The pursuit of excellence requires the state to carry out its functions, which in itself is already problematic and, on top of that, conflicting.

It [the state – A. O.] cannot fail to catch and convict criminals, it cannot fail to defend itself when they attack it, it cannot disregard concern for its borders if they have been violated, and for its subjects if another state has enslaved them. It is also forced to fight when it seeks to realise legal [lawful – A. O.] and legitimate [just – A. O.] goals.²⁷

While there is no doubt that the first part of the quoted statement is obvious (requiring no justification), the second part is debatable and controversial because in this way, any war can be justified; it is enough to invoke the established law of a given state and its goals, which – with a view to the so-called *raison d'état* – will always be right. In this case, in order to justify the initiation and waging of war, it is not necessary to look for a pretext or appeal to ideologies that undermine the *raison d'être* of other nations or ethnic groups. Waging war is simply a duty of the state, and in the case of a religious state, which means close cooperation with the earthly orthodox church, even a sacred duty. The realisation of such a duty is, of course, related to the state's capabilities – for example, the condition of its army, its financial resources, its material resources, but also the way it practices foreign policy and diplomacy (in the context of war, it is primarily about the ability to intimidate potential opponents and win allies). In this context, the political system should also be considered, which, depending on the model, hinders (e.g. democracy) or facilitates (e.g. monarchy) the conduct of wars.

²⁷ Ibidem, 416–417.

Karsavin's reference to the legal and legitimate goals of the state can be understood as a justification for any war, which makes the statement controversial; but it can also be interpreted as a statement of the state of affairs and a resulting warning, provided that the aforementioned capabilities of the state are taken into account. In the case of a warning, a simple relationship should be noted: the greater the capabilities of a state, the more likely it is to provoke wars.

Karsavin, however, after pointing out the legal and moral prerequisites for waging war as the realisation of goals arising from the state's duty to carry out its tasks, stated that "all this" is an evil necessity of the state's sinful existence, while it is not an absolute necessity.²⁸ The thesis posited by Karsavin is consistent with earlier findings on the laws of nature, which determine both the individual and the state and the earthly orthodox church in a relative manner, but it must be remembered that this compatibility occurs only in a religious view, therefore in the context of belief in an omnipotent God while accepting the possibility of a miracle. Leaving aside the religious view and the possibility of God's interference, it should instead be stated that the laws of nature determine in an absolute way. Karsavin did not explain the functioning of the individual, the state and the earthly orthodox church and the phenomenon of war in this way, but it is worth paying attention to this reasoning because a person who does not believe in God and at the same time assumes the determinative laws of nature will live in the belief that "all this" (including war) that is related to his animal nature, the state and the earthly orthodox church is an absolute necessity. I deliberately draw attention to this justification of absolute necessity in order to emphasise the difference in Karsavin's understanding of it. As is evident from his reflections, he identified absolute necessity with God's action and not with the direct and indirect effects of this action.

The sinful existence of the state is an evil necessity, but it is not an absolute necessity – a thesis central both to Karsavin's theodicy and to answering the question of the inevitability of war in the context of his philosophy. In the case of theodicy, I will first draw attention to what Karsavin did not say. From the thesis posed – war is necessary, but it is not absolutely necessary – it follows that Karsavin "took" the responsibility for war away from God. If war were absolutely necessary, there would be grounds for pointing to God as the cul-

²⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 417.

prit, but it is not absolutely necessary; therefore, it is "only" necessary (relative necessity), and its initiation is determined each time only by what is earthly. The immediate cause of war is the state, but it should also be borne in mind that its origin and development was conditioned by the laws of nature, and its functioning also depends on the sinful nature of man.

In defence of God against the charge of responsibility for war, Karsavin turned his attention to freedom. Although he allowed for a miracle, understood as the intervention of God, who in a case chosen by Himself can suspend the validity of the laws of nature and thus make it so that war does not occur, He cannot do this at the request of man, because God's actions would then not be free.

According to Karsavin, God could also limit or eliminate man's freedom while adopting such laws of nature that would not lead to wars, but then by limiting or taking away man's freedom He would annihilate man's essence; man is therefore man because God has endowed him with freedom.

Much more interesting is the indirect argument, referring to what results from human freedom. According to Karsavin, human freedom is directly connected with responsibility for the consequences of actions, including contributing to the state's causing of war, whether it is a man's active action for war or failure to act to avoid it. According to Karsavin, blaming God for war demonstrates the cowardice of Christians, the shifting of responsibility from themselves to Jesus Christ.²⁹ Thus, despite the fact that the direct cause of war is the state, only man is responsible for war because freedom is only for him. In addition, along with the empirical world, he determines war by his sinful nature. "Determining war" means that man's activity is conflicting in terms of actions that are inseparable from the empirical world. Due to free will and the pursuit of perfection, however, man can influence these activities, eliminate or at least reduce their negative effects.

On the occasion of defending God against the charge of responsibility for evil, Karsavin also stood up for the Orthodox Church of Christ. In this case, too, he drew attention to freedom. "It is clear that, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Orthodox Church cannot and does not want to restrict a person's freedom. Otherwise by what means would it be free itself?"³⁰

²⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, 420.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 421.

In contrast to the explanatory weak argument for the freedom of the Orthodox Church of Christ, it is worth noting that in the context of Karsavin's further statement following the quoted words, another, much more serious problem arises. In the quoted passage of the text, reference is made to the "Orthodox Church" led by the Holy Spirit and to a person (личности), which in turn, according to the accepted interpretive proposal, means that reference is made to the Orthodox Church of Christ understood as the Body of Jesus Christ. In the same paragraph, however, Karsavin spoke not only about the "Orthodox Church" blessing every man (человека), but he also stated that it blesses the warrior if he strives for good, when he wants to defend his brothers and his homeland, when he achieves great good, when he sacrifices his life.³¹ At the same time, Karsavin stipulated that the "Orthodox Church" does not justify the atrocities of war, does not justify the empirical fact of killing enemies. "Sin remains sin, and the Orthodox Church does not transform sin into good".³²

If the thesis is accepted that war, by definition, involves atrocities and death, and the Orthodox Church of Christ, on the one hand, blesses the combatant, and on the other hand, neither takes responsibility for war nor justifies its atrocities, then there are grounds to speak of a contradiction. However, Karsavin did not see this as a problem: the Truth of the Orthodox Church of Christ is absolute; therefore, it blesses only those fighting on behalf of the state whose laws, goals and rationale are in line with this Truth.

A possible defence of Karsavin's considerations can be made, keeping in mind the distinction made between the Orthodox Church of Christ and the earthly orthodox church. The Orthodox Church of Christ, due to its perfection and the Truth impossible for man to understand, blesses the chosen ones, that is, the righteous, who, while struggling physically, nevertheless achieve a spiritual goal in accordance with the Truth. What is important is that the Orthodox Church of Christ, as the embodiment of Truth, blesses without making a mistake. By contrast, the earthly orthodox church, on the one hand, represents the Orthodox Church of Christ; on the other, it is subject to the laws of the natural world (relative necessity), which means that by its nature, like the individual and the state, it too is imperfect, therefore fallible and conse-

³¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 421–422.

³² *Ibidem*, 422.

quently sinful. The earthly orthodox church, being imperfect, makes mistakes, for example, by ascribing to itself a monopoly on understanding the Truth and interpreting the principles of the Faith – as national orthodox churches do, according to Karsavin – and blesses the wrong kind of fighters.

Karsavin strongly opposed the idea of separating the state from the earthly orthodox church, stating in his justification that they should form a symphony,³³ as has already been mentioned when drawing attention to the perfection identical to the Orthodox Church of Christ. In the case of the relationship between the state and the earthly orthodox church, he explained that the symphony is the harmony of a multifaceted reality (unity), including its spiritual realm, the realisation of which should be pursued (omni-unity). Thus, for Karsavin, the connection between the state and the earthly orthodox church was a given, and the involvement of the clergy in the affairs of the state, whether it be a priest, monk or hierarch, was even presented as a duty. Karsavin even allowed for the possibility of the clergy to create political theories. Interference in the affairs of the state should be justified by the overriding goal of striving for the aforementioned perfection (the Orthodox Church of Christ).

The relationship between the state and the earthly orthodox church, despite being obvious, was not, however, presented explicitly by Karsavin. This is because Karsavin stipulated that the earthly orthodox church does not set earthly, specific goals and tasks for the state. In his view, this is done only by the clergy as individual people, who, like every individual, possess a physical (in addition, we should add, therefore sinful) nature.³⁴ In this way, Karsavin – despite the conclusions that follow from the analysis so far – defended the earthly orthodox church against accusations of contributing to evil, including initiating or supporting war, when, for example, it blesses the wrong combatants, rather than those, who, according to the Truth of the Orthodox Church of Christ, need to be blessed. Karsavin, not only as a philosopher, but in this case first and foremost as a historian, was fully aware that in universal history, one can find many examples of clerics who, representing a particular religion and denomination, prayed to the same God and ordained the weapons of armies fighting each other by blessing them. However, Karsavin's theoretical challenge

³³ Cf. *ibidem*, 428–431.

³⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, 425.

was the example of a war in which Orthodox nations are fighting against each other. It is significant that in this case Karsavin was not writing about states, but nations, which in turn, given the aforementioned understanding of the state as a necessary form of unity of a nation or nations explains the possibility of war within a single state.

The problem expressed by the example of the ordination of weapons and the blessing of armies has been clearly resolved. The earthly orthodox church never advocates, for example, through the blessing of the state, the army and war for specific actions of the state. In his rationale, Karsavin said that the earthly orthodox church is still imperfect and has no knowledge of what specific state actions and means used contribute to the fight against evil. The earthly orthodox church, while blessing the state, army and war, instead blesses only the good that results from the actions taken.³⁵ Speaking of the good, one must, of course, have in mind the good already mentioned many times, through which perfection identical to the Orthodox Church of Christ is achieved. The earthly orthodox church prays for the realisation of this good, and not for victory over the enemy, because according to Karsavin, war is not about defeating the enemy, but about defeating the only enemy of Christians – evil. The position presented is also a response to the problem of war waged by Orthodox nations. In this case – according to Karsavin – if the earthly orthodox church prayed for victory over the opponent, it would have to pray for the victory of both sides, which consequently means that its prayer would have no meaning at all.³⁶ However, it should be noted that regarding this case, Karsavin did not take into account the national orthodox churches that pray for the victory of their countries.

Thus, from the position taken by Karsavin, it follows that the actions of the earthly orthodox church, which are observable and describable, cannot be interpreted in accordance with this observation. A clergyman who ordains, for example, tanks that are to take part in a war launched by the state, from the point of view of the earthly orthodox church he represents, does not actually ordain either the physical tanks, nor does he sanctify the real destruction and killing of the enemy, nor does he sanctify the specific actions of the state

³⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, 425–426.

³⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, 426.

resulting from its tasks. Instead, the clergyman who represents the earthly orthodox church, by ordaining tanks, only sanctifies the good that can come out of "all this" evil.

In the context of ordaining weapons and blessing the actions of the state, including war, I separately draw attention to the earthly orthodox church and the clergyman in order to clearly emphasise Karsavin's position that the earthly orthodox church, although sinful by nature, when engaging in the affairs of the state, never makes a mistake and thus does not sin, unlike the clergymen who represent it. Let me remind you that the responsibility for evil, of which war is an example, falls not on the institution of the state and the earthly orthodox church, but on man, including the clergy. However, a problem arises from Karsavin's proposed position, which is that in earthly realities it is impossible to decide whether an action is evil (whether it is a sin) or not. This can be done only after reaching perfection identical to the Orthodox Church of Christ. I would also remind the reader that Karsavin, in addition to the aforementioned inconsistency in the case of the state, firmly rejected the possibility of judging for acts committed, attributing "the power of judging" only to the Orthodox Church of Christ. From this, however, it follows that in earthly realities, since one cannot judge for atrocities and crimes committed, one cannot punish for them either.

In terms of interpretation, it should be noted that Karsavin, avoiding the charge of apologia for impunity, repeatedly said that sin is sin, and no atrocity or crime can be justified. However, inaction – that is, failure to oppose evil, cannot be justified either. Karsavin strongly rejected as fundamentally unchristian and irrational the attitude of not opposing evil with evil. The exception is experiencing suffering due to evil and when this attitude results in making one's life a victim. The complexity of the issue of not opposing evil is partially conveyed by the example he cited of rescuing a child from an evildoer, assuming that the only way to do so is to kill him. Karsavin, however, required much more from a Christian than one might think. It is the Christian's duty, regardless of the possibility of losing his own life, to save the child and at the same time, regardless of the way, to save the soul of the evildoer by preventing him from committing an evil act.³⁷

³⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, 439–440.

Many conclusions can be drawn from Karsavin's proposed position. I will draw attention to the most controversial one, while assuming that Karsavin was aware of it. Due to, on the one hand, the lack of perfection and full knowledge of goodness, and on the other hand, the duty of a Christian, Karsavin accepted preventive action – one cannot commit a crime with impunity, but one can commit a crime in order to save the soul of a potential torturer, which, due to sinful nature, anyone can become. By analogy, one can speak of the preventive actions of the state, which initiates a war through concern for the salvation of the souls of those it puts to death, because by doing so it prevents the victims of war from committing sin.

In the context of the issues raised of non-judgment and non-punishment, but also the obligation to oppose evil with evil, which is difficult to reconcile with itself, one should still pay attention to the issue of sacrifice. Karsavin's repeated references to this subject can be summed up by the following statement: "[...] »whoever wants to be perfect« should know that the price of perfection [is – A. O.] as a sacrificial death.”³⁸

Metanoia and absolute perfection

What is needed is not only “true” faith, but also metanoia, understood in the broadest sense of the word, lest Karsavin's proposed position be considered preposterous and himself a dangerous religious fanatic. The fundamental problem is that this position can be a source of inspiration or a means of explanation not only for state leaders but also for clerics convinced of the rightness of their actions, especially since Karsavin's views are well-founded within the framework of his philosophy of omni-unity, while theologically in a soteriology that emphasises the saving work of Christ and the necessity of following him. Karsavin understood this literally, which is why he required a mortal sacrifice from the individual; the reward was to become a person in the Orthodox Church of Christ, i.e. to attain perfection identical to it – absolute perfection. “Absolute perfection must be pursued, but it must be understood

³⁸ Ibidem, 434.

that its place is not in the limited empirical reality, but beyond its limits, and that the way to it – in overcoming empirical reality, in victory over it”³⁹

In doing so, Karsavin mentioned that the way to achieve this goal is through love, but it is love not for man, but for Jesus Christ, the consequence of which is the abandonment of empirical reality, which in practice also means mortal sacrifice. Then man, reaching absolute perfection, ceases to be an individual with his sinful animal nature in favour of becoming a person in full. Similarly, the empirical state (Caesar’s kingdom) loses its earthly character in favour of a state not of this world (God’s kingdom), while the empirical world loses its necessary laws and transforms into Paradise, where for God everything is possible. In the case of the empirical state, another contradiction with Karsavin’s earlier statements should be noted when he spoke of the state reaching perfection and merging with the Orthodox Church of Christ, still retaining its distinctiveness and tasks.

However, absolute perfection does not exclude perfection in the empirical world. According to Karsavin, perfection is but first – it is only empirical perfection; second, it manifests itself in various degrees in both the individual, the state and the world (consequently, the earthly orthodox church must also be included), with the degrees of empirical perfection depending on the degree of their sacralisation by the “Orthodox Church” (от степени их оцерковления), which is the “salt of the world”.⁴⁰

Despite the empirical perfection, even in the case of its highest degree achieved by the individual, the state, the earthly orthodox church and the world as a whole, there is no basis for answering the question of the inevitability of war in the negative. Its cause is the state (the state means war) with the complicity of the individual and – as is clear from Karsavin’s considerations, although he himself does not articulate this explicitly – the earthly orthodox church, due to its inseparable connection with the state and the activities of the individual clergy. Thus, under earthly conditions, war is necessary, but it is not an absolute necessity, because, as has already been established, God, together

³⁹ Ibidem, 436.

⁴⁰ Cf. ibidem, 439. In the section of the article titled “Orthodox Church and orthodox church”, there was a reference to the “Orthodox Church”, which is a concentrating centre for the world, its axis.

with the Orthodox Church of Christ, is not the cause of wars and even less responsible for them. It should be remembered that, according to Karsavin, responsibility falls solely on man.

Could Cleopatra's nose be shorter, then? With reference to Karsavin's considerations and the consequences that follow, while taking into account the findings on the laws of nature, the question posed should be answered in the negative. However, there is no doubt that if it had been shorter "the whole face of the earth would have been different". However, many such causes that condition the whole face of the earth can be pointed out, especially since, in addition to the laws of nature, one must also take into account established rights and human freedom. For example, there will always be someone who stands out for his or her uncommon beauty, will be betrayed, will not get into an academy of fine arts, will not graduate from a seminary, will have a difficult childhood, or will simply be stupid, while distinguishing between innate and acquired stupidity.

The grotesqueness of these examples only underscores the human tragedy and meaninglessness of life when it turns out that they were the indirect or, worse, direct cause of wars. Because of the stance taken by Karsavin and the resulting consequences, it is therefore necessary to ask once again about the responsibility for war. Karsavin, pointing to man, used the singular, but given the range of conditions and the complexity of the causes of any war, it should be said that all those who even in the slightest degree, often unwittingly, contributed to its initiation, for example, by tolerating someone's stupidity, are responsible for war.

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