

# SOCIAL REFLECTION OF PROFESSOR FRANČ GRIVEC IN TURBULENT TIMES: CHRISTIAN UNITY, SLOVENIAN NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, SLAVIC SOLIDARITY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** MALMENVALL, Simon. *Social Reflection of Professor Franc Grivec in Turbulent Times: Christian Unity, Slovenian National Consciousness, Slavic Solidarity*. Franc Grivec (1878 – 1963), a pioneer in systematic research of Eastern Christianity in Slovenian higher education, was not a political thinker but a theologian and historian. However, some ecclesiological and historical themes he studied answered the pressing social questions of his time. In Grivec's works, it is possible to identify a certain Christian social vision that opposes both socialism and liberal capitalism. The first core of Grivec's social vision is unity among Christians under the auspices of the Catholic Church, where the thought of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853 – 1900) is highlighted. The second core is the national consciousness among Slovenians and other Slavs, which acts as a defense mechanism against the socialist revolution. In Grivec's social vision, Russia occupies a negative and at the same time positive starting point for reflection – based on the revolution carried out and at the same time experiences in preventing its spread and a preserved sense of the search for truth. The Slovenian author places the two conceptual cores (Christian unity and national consciousness) within the example of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. In this way, he establishes a mythical idea of the medieval period, thus approaching the theory of the “New Middle Ages” of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948).

**Keywords:** *Franc Grivec, ecclesiastical unity, national consciousness, October Revolution, social engagement in higher education, Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev*

## Introduction

Franc Grivec (1878 – 1963) was a Catholic priest and long-time professor (1920 – 1963) at the Ljubljana Faculty of Theology. He can be described as the leading Slovenian expert on ecclesiology, Eastern Christian theology and the missionary work of the holy brothers Cyril (died 869) and Methodius (died 885). His scientific approach is characterized by combining philology, historiography and theology. In his teaching and research, he drew connections between the Slovenian historical experience and the wider Slavic world. He also served, three times, as dean (in academic years 1921/1922, 1927/1928, 1933/1934) of the Faculty of Theology, a founding member institution of the University of Ljubljana, which opened in 1919, and was one of its most creative representatives (Malmenvall 2022, 10). It is important to consider that the study of Russian culture was one of the main lines of work of this Slovenian professor, which was present throughout his academic career, from his first publications in the early twentieth century to his final period in the

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early 1960s. Grivec's reception of Russian culture can be divided into three parts. The first covers the history of the East Slavic space, with a special focus on the Russian Orthodox Church. The second part provides an interpretation of the religious and political thinking of notable nineteenth-century men of letters and philosophers, such as Aleksey Khomyakov (1804 – 1860), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821 – 1881) and Vladimir Solovyov (1853 – 1900). The third part – while relating to the first two – focuses on the ideational reasons for and consequences of the revolutionary ferment in Russian society at the turn of the nineteenth century (Malmenvall 2022, 12-13).

Grivec shaped Slovenian higher education at a pivotal time in history, i.e., after Slovenia joined a South Slavic as well as mostly non-Catholic country (Malmenvall 2023b, 959). Even though he was foremost a theologian and historian rather than a political thinker, the ecclesiological and historical themes he studied provided answers to the burning social issues of his time, linking the past with the present. Before and during World War II, when Grivec studied Russia and the revolution, Bolshevism in particular drew significant attention and was often perceived as “the Russian threat” in Yugoslav and European intellectual circles. In the teaching and research of the professor in question, it is possible to discern a certain Christian social vision that opposes both socialism and liberal capitalism. In this study, such content is drawn from Grivec's publications on Russian culture. They reflect both an effort for renewed unity among Christians, where the thought of Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), a Russian philosopher, is central, and a search for the ideational reasons for the success of the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, where the Slovenian author advocates religious consciousness complemented by national consciousness as a counterbalance to socialism. Among his publications on Russian culture considered in the present study, the popular monograph *Narodna zavest in boljševizem (National Consciousness and Bolshevism)* (1944) exhibits the most social engagement. Grivec compiled it based on lectures to the primary- and high-school teachers of Ljubljana in the first half of 1944. Its content can be compared with the monographic discussion by Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948), a Russian philosopher, titled *The New Middle Ages: Reflections on the Fate of Russia and Europe (Новое средневековье: Размышление о судьбе России и Европы)*, 1924). This publication by Grivec, coupled with his previous treatise “Boljševiška brezbožnost” (“Bolshevik Godlessness”) in *Bogoslovni vestnik (Theological Quarterly)*, 1925), the scientific journal of the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana, provides an insight into a notable part of socially engaged thinking that had formed in the Slovenian higher education environment and was linked with other levels of contemporary education (Malmenvall 2023a, 101; 2023b, 959). Despite their theological character, similar claims can be made about at least two other publications: the article “Vladimir Sergejevič Solovjev” (“Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov”) in *Čas (Time)* (1917), a Catholic scientific periodical for social and cultural issues, and the article “Od sv. Tomaža Akvinskega do Vladimira Sergejeviča Solovjeva” (“From St. Thomas Aquinas to Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov”) in *Zbornik razprav Teološke fakultete v Ljubljani (Miscellany of Articles of the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana)* (1963), the post-war successor to *Bogoslovni vestnik*. This article analyzes those and other works in line with the comparative and contextual approach of intellectual history<sup>2</sup> and historical theology, which provide an interlacement between historiography and a consideration for the theological giving of meaning to reality.

<sup>2</sup> As a special branch of (post)modern historiography and related humanities, intellectual history asserted itself in the second half of the twentieth century; its guiding principles are the study of ideas in correlation with the social-cultural background of a particular period and space and the discursive or linguistic dimension of expressing ideas. Quentin Skinner (1940 –) (Skinner 1969) and John Pocock (1924 – 2023) (Pocock 1987), professors at the University of Cambridge, are considered the founders of intellectual history.

## Russia and Christianity

Positions of Franc Grivec concerning the unity among Christians and revolutionary turmoil in Russia were reflected on the background of the European history of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. It was an era of profound socio-economic and technological change shaped by modern capitalism gaining ground and by the parallel strengthening of secular thought influenced by the Enlightenment. The period in question was also characterized by the establishment of new collective identities. In particular, two multifaceted and occasionally intertwined systems of ideas were consolidated: nationalism and socialism (Malmenvall 2023b, 958-959).<sup>3</sup> The Catholic Church, too, responded to the new social situation, mainly polemically. It formally rejected socialism – as is evidenced, *inter alia*, by papal documents, including a “programmatically” encyclical on workers’ issues, *Rerum novarum* (1891), by Leo XIII (in office: 1879 – 1903); on the other hand, it harbored a more diverse, mostly positive attitude towards national identity.<sup>4</sup> Within Slovenian culture, Franc Grivec, who linked the Slovenian historical experience with the wider Slavic world, actively entered this debate. He conducted his work in a momentous time of Slovenian history, i.e., after joining a South Slavic as well as mostly non-Catholic country and later during the occupation in World War II. His research included ideational reasons for the success of the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, advocating religious consciousness complemented by national identity as a counterbalance to socialism (Malmenvall 2023b, 959).

In the context of Russian culture and the social reflection derived from it, Professor Grivec devoted the most attention to Vladimir Solovyov. He considered him a promoter of united Christianity or synthesis between papal authority and the messianic mission of the Russian nation (Malmenvall 2018, 953-955; 2021, 204). In a similar vein to how Solovyov’s creativity reflected a dialogical openness to Catholicism, which was unusual for Russian high culture at the time, Grivec is characterized by an understanding attitude to Orthodoxy; *inter alia*, he consistently considered sociohistorical and terminological variables in cases of objective dogmatic differences. Even so, he showed loyalty to the official position of the Catholic Church of the time, which did not yet practice ecumenism in the modern sense of the word and advocated the so-called Uniate method, i.e., the return and integration of “eastern schismatics” into the Catholic Church as Christ’s only real spiritual organism on Earth while preserving their liturgical and legal specificities. Grivec built on this position with the idea of the connecting character of the heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius and of (Catholic) Slavs as intermediaries between the East and West. He built all his research into medieval ecclesiastical and philological questions on this pragmatic unifying foundation (Malmenvall 2018, 953-955; Zajc 2018, 902-904, 913; Trontelj 2019, 48-49, 51-53).

In Grivec’s opinion, the most in-depth works by Vladimir Solovyov are his ecclesiological treatises *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* (Великий спор и христианская политика, 1883) and *Russia and the Universal Church* (Россия и вселенская Церковь, 1889). For Solovyov, the central intellectual goal was always the same: to find the integrality of knowledge and life as

<sup>3</sup> The emergence of modern national consciousness as a result of economic and technological change in correlation with capitalism (or with opposition to it in the form of socialism) is widely accepted in contemporary historiography. Similar insights are advanced by Anthony Smith (1939–2016) (Smith 2009), a British historian and sociologist and one of the leading experts on studying nationalisms, though he recognizes pre-modern features in the formation of modern nations.

<sup>4</sup> On the philosophical-theological basics of the Catholic social movement during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and its version in Slovene lands: Žalec 2022. On the Catholic highlighting of the primacy of religious identity alongside the coexistence of national identity, as exemplified by the life and work of Anton Mahnič (1850 – 1920), the founder of Slovenian political Catholicism and the bishop of the Krk island (1897 – 1920): Maver–Juhart – Osojnik 2021.

an absence of contradictions between faith and reason. In the context of searching for integrality, a special place is given to a desire for the reunion of the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) parts of the same universal Church. The ecumenical significance of his thought is based on the still existing mystical unity between the Eastern and Western parts as shown in the recognition of Jesus Christ as the true God and true human (God-man), the continuation of the common apostolic succession of their hierarchies and the drawing of spiritual strength from the same sacraments (Grivec 1960, 28; Malmenvall 2015, 348-349). In relation to the magisterium of the Church, the Slovenian author highlights, most explicitly in his article “Od sv. Tomaža Akvinskega do Vladimira Sergejeviča Solovjeva,” that Solovyov is part of a wider context of Catholic efforts for doctrinary and legal unification or union of Orthodoxy and Catholicism – from the 1274 Council of Lyon and 1439 Council of Florence up until Pope Leo XIII (1878 – 1903) and Grivec’s time. (Grivec 1960, 20-25) In doing so, he actually declares Solovyov a Catholic thinker that is part of the centuries-long Uniate movement. What is more, this approach contextualizes Grivec’s long-standing study of the Russian thinker, whom he consistently views in the light of his own support to Uniate beliefs and Slavic reciprocity (Malmenvall 2015; 953; 2021, 215). This view reflects a continuity of the author’s optimistic prediction – written as early as 1909 in the article “Vzhodno cerkveno vprašanje” (The Eastern Church Issue) in *Voditelj v bogoslovnih vedah*, the predecessor of *Bogoslovni vestnik* – that Solovyov’s ideas of unification will gain “more and more supporters among the Russian audience.” In his view, this would be aided by the increased interest of recent popes in the Orthodox question – such as that shown by Leo XIII (1878 – 1903) with the encyclical *Grande munus* of 1880 on the importance of Cyril and Methodius, the apostolic constitution *Orientalium dignitas* of 1894 on the Eastern Catholic Churches and the encyclical *Praeclara gratulationis* of the same year on the unification of the Catholic and Eastern Churches (Grivec 1909, 245-250; Malmenvall 2022, 28-29). Official signs of attention devoted to the Christian East also include the decision by Pope Benedict XV (reigned: 1914 – 1922) in 1917 to establish the Pontifical Oriental Institute (Latin: *Pontificum institutum Orientale*) as a higher education institution for educating priests and other individuals working in predominantly Orthodox environments or studying Eastern Christian theology and history.<sup>5</sup>

As explained by the Slovenian researcher, Solovyov does not understand his ecumenic attitude in terms of leaving the Russian Orthodox Church but rather as the unification of both Church parts in the same mystical body of Christ on Earth, led by the bishop of Rome, i.e., the pope, which would actually entail an expansion and reform of the existing Catholic Church (Hondzinskij 2017, 369). Such a reformed society is facilitated not only by the Church hierarchy headed by the pope, but also by a global state led by the Russian emperor, who is to become the secular “arm” of the pope’s spiritual authority. Thus, with Solovyov, the ideal of the universality of the Church translates to the universality of secular authority, which is to help believers freely realize Christian principles in social life, along with the Church (Malmenvall 2021, 208). In this regard, Solovyov also perceives the organization of the existing Catholic Church as a pragmatic foundation of social engagement against ever stronger “anti-Christian forces.” (Hondzinskij 2017, 382, 384). According to Solovyov, in his time, it is the “connective” Russian culture, supposedly characterized both by accepting the “best experiences” of foreign nations and by the preserved faith in God with a sense for seeking out the truth, that is able to establish such a synthesis within a reformed Church (Malmenvall 2021, 208; Hondzinskij 2017, 371; Vasilenko 2004, 78-79).

Grivec notes that a turning point for Russian culture occurred in the fifteenth century when, following the fall of its former Byzantine “teacher,” the Muscovite state assumed the role of the protector of worldwide Orthodoxy and consequently adopted a more rigid stance towards people

<sup>5</sup> An overview study on the establishment of the Pontifical Oriental Institute: Kolojevskij 1993.

of other faiths. Then, in the early eighteenth century, following the example of Protestant regional Churches, Peter the Great (reigned: 1682 – 1725) subordinated the Moscow Patriarchate to the state, taking away its independent initiative and “tearing it away from organic development.” (Grivec 1915, 126-127). According to him, even the intellectual ferment of the nineteenth century and the later revolutionary developments took inconstant and extreme forms. Notably, unlike in the West, the Russian socialist movement did not originate in the working class; most revolutionaries were educated people. According to Grivec, the latter took Western atheist ideas “out of the Western cultural context, transplanted them blindly” to the Russian environment and tinged them with a “religious fervor.” (Grivec 1915, 134-136).

As the Slovenian author explains in the article “Boljševiška brezbožnost” (1925), the extremism of Bolsheviks is an integral part of a broader mechanism of Russian cultural history, in which there were “repeated occurrences of the idea of the special Christian mission of the Russian nation” in relation to other lands and peoples, something also discussed by Slavophiles,<sup>6</sup> Dostoyevsky and Solovyov. “In its own way, this idea was expressed a long time ago<sup>7</sup> in the belief that Moscow was the Third Rome.” (Grivec 1925, 108). Notably, in addition to Grivec, but independently, a link between the uncompromisingness of the Bolshevik idea as a substitute for religion and past notions about the special mission of Russia in the salvation of the world is also recognized by the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) in his work *The Origin and Meaning of Russian Communism* (*Истоки и смысл русского коммунизма*, 1937) (Berdjaev 1990, 8-11, 18-19, 24-25, 100-101, 117, 125-126, 137-138). Based on what is explained above, it can be surmised that, as believed by the Slovenian professor, a genuine attitude to the truth and the role of religion in society, developed further with the vision of the (re)establishment of unity among Christians, is reflected exactly by the works of Vladimir Solovyov. An opposite to this ardor of the Russian philosopher is found in Bolshevism as a form of false or twisted secular religion.

## Revolution and national consciousness

The monograph titled *Narodna zavest in boljševezem* was compiled based on Grivec’s wartime popular scientific lectures to the primary- and high-school teachers of Ljubljana and published in 1944. He held these lectures between January and April of that year as an activity of the administration of the Province of Ljubljana led by General Leon Rupnik (1880 – 1946) and his commissary of propaganda, Ludovik Puš (1896 – 1989). This is the only instance of Grivec actively engaging in political activities of the Slovene anti-revolutionary forces, who collaborated with the German occupying forces. The lecturers included other reputable names of the cultural-academic world of the time centered around the University of Ljubljana, such as Leonid Pitamic (1885 – 1971), a professor of law, and France Veber (1890 – 1975), a professor of philosophy (Mlakar 2003, 294-295; Malmenvall 2022, 69; 2023b, 962-963).

<sup>6</sup> The term Slavophiles refers to a literary and philosophical circle of intellectuals who argued that the Russian historical path was special vis-à-vis the rest of Europe and praised the “organic” (socially harmonic) character of Russian Orthodoxy. The main representatives of this circle were Aleksey Khomyakov (1804 – 1860), Ivan Kireyevsky (1806 – 1856) and Yuri Samarin (1819 – 1876) (Malmenvall 2022, 31-34). An elucidating overview of the phenomenon of Slavophilia is provided in the following reference work: Walicki 1964.

<sup>7</sup> An overview of the idea of Moscow as the “Third Rome” – the successor to the Byzantine Empire and the protector of Orthodoxy in the “end times” before the Second Coming of Christ – is provided in the following classical study: Stremoukhoff 1953.

Grivec believes the most reliable path to prevent socialist revolutions is harmony between faith – represented by an orderly and established organization such as the Church – and social life. In this vein, he again finds that the success of the Bolsheviks was “to some extent the fault of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was inept at solving life’s issues” and “did not know how to defend the faith in a modern way.” (Grivec 1944, 10). Bolshevism thus threatens especially those nations “whose patriotic consciousness is not rooted in holy religious traditions.” Only a “firmly anchored” Christian and national culture can resist revolution. Grivec affirms: “The only solution for humanity is to return to consistent and active Christianity. Half-heartedness is doomed to servitude and ruin.” (Grivec 1944, 14). In this context, it is worth mentioning that overcoming the polarity or extreme choice between socialism and capitalism was emphasized in the Slovene cultural sphere in the interwar period by Andrej Gosar (1887 – 1970), a professor of sociology (1929 – 1958) at the University of Ljubljana, Technical Faculty.<sup>8</sup>

In the second part of *Narodna zavest in boljševizem*, the author turns towards a more direct discussion of Slovenian cultural history. It is worth noting his view that Slovenians and Russians share a lack of national consciousness and “excessive partisanship,” which allegedly benefits the spread of communism. Grivec substantiates his claims with the thought that Slovenian culture had an opportunity to develop its national consciousness after World War I within the Yugoslav monarchy with the attainment of its own university in 1919 and academy of science in 1937 but failed to seize it (Malmenvall 2023b, 964). The growth of national consciousness was allegedly hindered by two barriers: from within, Slovenians were divided by the issue of autonomy and centralism in the governance arrangements of Yugoslavia, “even the issue of whether Slovenians even constituted a nation;” externally, the unification with Serbs and Croats exacerbated socio-economic issues that “fueled the discontent of the masses and cleared the way for the socialist international.” (Grivec 1944, 20-21).

The author in question is characterized by an orientation towards the early Slovenian as well as shared Slavic history, which he claims enables the development of a single social orientation combining religious and modern national consciousness. This concerns questions about the “contact of Slovenians” with the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. (Malmenvall 2023b, 966) Building on this, the author draws attention to Russian propaganda literature occurring at the time, which, in its explanations of local and world history, systematically builds an image of centuries-long slavery of the masses under the yoke of the Church, state and capitalism, portraying the Christian faith and Church as allies to oppressors of humanity, whose actions necessitate a rebellion of the oppressed.<sup>9</sup> “Emphasizing the slave past is psychological preparation [...] for the dissemination of Bolshevik ideas.” (Grivec 1944, 27). The Slovenian author concludes it is thus “understandable that the triumphal Russian Bolshevism fatally hit Slavist scientific research” and thus rejected the positive example and nation-building character of the work of Cyril and Methodius (Grivec 1944, 27).

Concerning the early periods of Slovenian history, Grivec considers there is a key linguistic, historical and theological link between the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius and the

<sup>8</sup> He commented on the Catholic social teachings up to that time in an overview monographic study (Gosar 1939). Gosar’s life and work is comprehensively covered in the following edited volume: Gašparič – Veber 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Following the Soviet example, emphasizing the subordination of Slovenian ancestors as farmers and workers in the Middle Ages and early modern period, which was allegedly encouraged by the “oppressive” Church, entered also Slovenian historiography in schools after World War II. Thus, the mentioned conception of (domestic) history shaped the consciousness of multiple generations of the Slovenian population. In this context, a high-school textbook compiled by a college professor of education, Bogdan Binter (1906 – 1967), is a representative example (Binter 1947).

Freising Manuscripts as the earliest written monument in Slovenian as well as the oldest Slavic monument in the Latin script. (Malmenvall 2023b, 967) The Slovenian author continues that it is common knowledge that in Moravia and Pannonia, Cyril and Methodius used Western prayer forms and adapted to the Roman Rite, “without, however, completely suppressing their Eastern Christian mindset.” Thus, if at least sporadic Eastern Christian or originally Slavic forms are attested in the second Freising Manuscript – and according to Grivec, they are<sup>10</sup> – “this is already solid evidence of contact with Saints Cyril and Methodius.” (Grivec 1944, 31). Moreover, the Freising Manuscripts allegedly confirm that contacts with the brothers from Thessaloniki were no “insignificant episode” at the extreme Pannonian edge of Slovenian territory, but rather “stretched deep into its center.” Allegedly, the Freising Manuscripts were first compiled in Carantania, and in terms of content and style, their second sermon was similar to a speech by Methodius preserved in the so-called *Glagolita Clozianus*,<sup>11</sup> one of the earliest miscellanies of Church Slavic literature as a whole (Grivec 1944, 32).

According to Grivec, the acts of Cyril and Methodius raise “another social peculiarity.” Their “brilliant work” stresses the “charity” of Christianity, i.e., the respect of those who are not part of the political elite or who are not yet educated enough to accept the Christian faith. In this context, the Slovenian researcher asserts the Slovenian cultural history features another person considered a “great teacher and educator,” whose personality and achievements “exemplarily amalgamated” national and spiritual values. “He avidly pointed out cherished memories of the ninth century while his heart felt for the lower social classes.” Here, Grivec refers to the theological professor, national awakener, writer and bishop of Lavant/Maribor, Anton Martin Slomšek (1800 – 1862) (Grivec 1944, 33).<sup>12</sup>

Grivec concludes the monograph in question with the reflection that national consciousness is part of the universalist Christian worldview, according to which each nation is equal before God and has an opportunity for coexistence with other nations (Malmenvall 2023b, 969).

“The nation is a large family, a natural group of families. Just as a person has a duty towards their parents and family, so they have a duty to their nation and homeland. The smaller a nation is and the more meager its history is, the more danger is posed to it by ideas that [...] tear down family and nationality. [...] At the same time, such Christian and humane love for one’s nation promotes humane principles for dignified and bearable coexistence between nations.” (Grivec 1944, 34).

## European history and the “New Middle Ages”

The first part of *Narodna zavest in boljševizem*, where Grivec discusses the lines of ideas in Russian culture that contributed to the victory of the October Revolution, is heavily based on the views of the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, which Grivec mostly agrees with. Although the Slovenian author does not explicitly refer to Berdyaev’s monographic discussion *The New Middle Ages*, Grivec’s notions of the Slavic Middle Ages, which are to be an example for social life in terms

<sup>10</sup> He summarized his research on the Freising Manuscripts and their link with the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius in a monograph: Grivec 1942.

<sup>11</sup> A reference scholarly edition of the miscellany was prepared by Fran Miklošič (1813 – 1891), a famous Slovenian-Austrian linguist (1860).

<sup>12</sup> In many respects, Grivec’s praise for Slomšek’s achievements in the religious and social spheres matches the previously established positive image of the Lavant bishop in the Slovenian Catholic camp during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. (Deželak Trojar 2016)

of values, reflect a similarity to the philosopher's perception of that time as a road to the "New Middle Ages." According to Berdyaev, the course of history is a series of "organic" and "critical" or "sacral" and "secular" periods, with his time being a time of a period shift. In this regard, his current moment defines the end of the modern era and the start of New Middle Ages, i.e., a new type of society and culture (Berdjaev 2002, 222).

The Russian thinker notes that it is impossible to return to what is "temporal and transient" or restore past periods, but it is possible to return to what is "eternal," which is found in the past. He finds deep reactionism in returning to the principles of the modern era, which peaked in the nineteenth century and "are now disintegrating." In particular, the principles of the *passé* modern era include rationalist education, individualism and liberalism with "powerful national monarchies and their imperialist politics" and an industrial capitalistic economic system. The climax of the modern era is the rejection of God, with socialism appearing as the end of this historical path as well as the start of a new one. Berdyaev continues that it is impossible to return to the past Middle Ages after experiencing the modern era, but it is possible for New Middle Ages to start – in a similar vein to how it was impossible to return to past antiquity after experiencing the Middle Ages, but it was possible for Renaissance to appear as a multifaceted synthesis of pagan (ancient) and Christian (medieval) principles (Berdjaev 2002, 227-228). In this regard, the author's call for the New Middle Ages appears as a call for a "spiritual revolution" or new consciousness (Berdjaev 2002, 229). Berdyaev thus conceptualizes a new society reformed by drawing from the "wisdom of the ancients." Such retrospection with the intention of paving a way into the future is a general characteristic of Christian philosophical and theological tradition, which finds the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, where the wisdom of the Hebrew Old Testament is enhanced with an eschatological completion of history, incessantly relevant to all people and all periods (Gilbert 2012, 154).

According to Berdyaev, the decline of the rational and secular social order, accompanied on the other hand by aggravation based on religion-like absolute and revolutionary ideas, marks the beginning of a "new religious period," the New Middle Ages. This does not mean that the religion of the "true God," Jesus Christ, will prevail in terms of numbers in the New Middle Ages, but rather that all layers of life will be marked by religious struggle, "religious polarization." The period of the bitter struggle between the "religion of God" and "religion of the devil," between the principles of Christ and the Antichrist, will no longer be secular but, in a way, holy, even if the "spirit of the Antichrist" wins in terms of numbers. Based on this, Russian socialism, which involves the search for "something eternal," with its "religious drama," is no longer part of the modern era but constitutes the beginning of the New Middle Ages. The Bolshevik revolution has thus brought a secularized form of medieval patterns as Russia has never given up on the dimensions of the holy and almost directly transitioned from the vestiges of the past Middle Ages, from the "old theocracy" of Orthodoxy<sup>13</sup> to the Bolshevik final truth about humankind and society (Berdjaev 2002, 230-231). Indeed, a universal collectivist social order began with the October Revolution. This provides humans with the revelation of the untenability of sustaining themselves with their own strength by relying on values such as rational thought, written law and parliamentary discussion, which deny

<sup>13</sup> The historical weakness of the legal consciousness, institutional autonomy as well as of the creative role of men as individuals in Russian society, which, on the level of ideas, enabled the success of a collectivist system such as Bolshevism, is particularly highlighted by Nikolai Berdyaev and Richard Pipes (1923 – 2018), a Polish American historian of Jewish descent who is one of the leading authorities on Russian revolutionary movements: Malmenvall 2017, 682-684; Berdjaev 1990, 10-16, 99-104; Pipes 1990. Pipes' view is backed by Orlando Figes (Figes 1996), a contemporary British cultural historian, in his breakthrough monographic study of Russian revolutionary violence.



the existence of a single and objective truth (Berdjaev 2002, 233). The clearest expression of the defeat of the modern era and, by extension, of reactionary resistance to the New Middle Ages – both in its socialist and Christian forms – is the capitalist economy, a “child of desire” created in a society that has given up on God and Christian asceticism and turned from “heaven” to the mere satisfaction of earthly needs. In capitalism, a human being is merely a resource for the profit of the owners of commercial facilities, which elevates the economic perception of reality above all spiritual, moral and political efforts. In this regard, according to Berdyaev, socialism, too, is trapped within this “covetous” economic thinking, even if it fights against it with the opposite slogans and deeds (Berdjaev 2002, 237; Gilbert 2012, 148-149).

“Among all nations of the world, the Russian nation is the most all-encompassing, universal by spirit,” claims Berdyaev. The mission of the Russian nation should be to unite the world, to establish a “single Christian cosmos.” In order to accomplish this mission, it should first achieve “robust national individuality.” This is because on its path through history, Russian culture has given in to the “worst” and diametrically opposed temptations: the exclusive internationalism of West-oriented intelligentsia, which aimed to abolish Russia, and the exclusive nationalism aiming for Russia to break away from Europe. Processes aiming to overcome “national isolation” and for universal unity are signs of the modern era ending and the New Middle Ages beginning. The signs of the new historical period include both the socialist universalism and the efforts to join the separate parts of the Christian world (Berdjaev 2002, 242). The New Middle Ages thus overcome the individualism or atomism of the modern era – either “falsely” through socialism or “truly” through the Church or “sobornost” (*соборность*),<sup>14</sup> which leads to unity among Christians. The greatest merit of the spirit of the New Middle Ages is the discovery of humans as beings of community, who belong or yearn to belong to an “organic and hierarchically organized” community, such as the “mystical body of Christ,” i.e., the Church, the ideal form according to Berdyaev. In this regard, socialism, similarly to Christianity, may be “anti-individualistic and hierarchical” but requires individuals to totally subject themselves to political authority and be drowned in the collective, providing a twisted version of community life. According to Berdyaev, modern-era individualism as well as socialist collectivism can be abolished only by the discovery of the redemptive voluntary entry into the (Orthodox) Church, which will enable the establishment of an “organic sobornost,” where a key role will be played by active Christian laypeople (Berdjaev 2002, 248; Gilbert 2012, 146, 159).

Grivec shares a common starting point with the Russian philosopher as the works of both emphasize the decisive importance of their own moments in history, from which they call for reflection on the past that has led to the current situation and for action to create a better future. In this regard, they share opposition to liberalism, socialism and nationalism; they understand them as three ideological and social systems making individuals depersonalized and dependent on political authority, whereas faith and the Church, the bearer of “eternal” values, are barred from or restricted in acting in the public sphere. Grivec and Berdyaev advocate for a society that is based on Christian teachings, coordinated between different classes and grows with the voluntary entry of individuals into the “body” of the Church. In their opinion, such a harmonious society requires the presence of religious principles in public life, i.e., overcoming the modern-era distinction

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<sup>14</sup> Berdyaev bases the concept of sobornost on the views of Slavophiles, especially Aleksey Khomyakov, according to whom sobornost refers to a voluntary reception of the heritage of the Church and an amicable connectedness of its members resulting in harmony between the hierarchy and laypeople (Homjakov 1995; Hondzinskij 2017, 172-173, 182-183, 188-189; Malmenvall 2021, 205). For Berdyaev, sobornost is the foundation of a new, “organic” social order that transcends both (Western) individualism and socialist collectivism.

between the religious and secular realities – their goal is to attain a social synthesis deriving from a holistic view of humans as persons involved in the ecclesiastic and political community. Both authors appreciate the Middle Ages, which they identify as an exemplary Christian period that, in the contemporary situation, provides a counterbalance to both internationalism and national “isolation.” They both advocate for loyalty to one’s own national community while respecting other nations, claiming all people are sons of the same Creator. The most important aspect of the Middle Ages according to Grivec and Berdyaev is its prioritization of spiritual over material values, the latter being only results of the spiritual ones. In Grivec’s case, the Middle Ages have an additional value – within Slavic history, they are defined by the work and heritage of Cyril and Methodius, which provides the dimension of connecting the Christian East and West, something also pursued by Berdyaev and even more so by Solovyov, one of the main “protagonists” of Grivec’s publications.

## Conclusion

Franc Grivec (1878 – 1963), a long-time professor at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana and pioneer in systematic research of Eastern Christianity in Slovenian higher education, was not a political thinker but a theologian and historian. However, some ecclesiological and historical themes he studied answered the pressing social questions of his time, thus connecting the past with the present. In Grivec’s pedagogical and research work, it is possible to identify a certain Christian social vision that opposes both socialism and liberal capitalism. His views are expressed at the level of principles, as they provide ideational guidelines, not elaborate proposals for improving the actual circumstances. The first core of Grivec’s social vision is unity among Christians under the auspices of the Catholic Church, i.e., the Uniate movement, where the thought of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853 – 1900) is highlighted. The second core is the national consciousness among Slovenians and other Slavs, which acts as a defense mechanism against the socialist revolution and expresses the equal dignity of every nation before its Creator. In Grivec’s social vision, Russia occupies a negative and at the same time positive starting point for reflection – based on the exclusivity of its Orthodoxy and at the same time a preserved sense of the search for truth, based on the revolution carried out and at the same time experiences in preventing its spread. The Slovenian author places the two conceptual cores (Christian unity and national consciousness) within the example of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius. In this way, he establishes a mythical idea of the medieval period, thus approaching the theory of the “New Middle Ages” of the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948).

Based on the given explanations, it can be concluded that the published texts of Franc Grivec about Russian themes are not, nor do they strive to be, factually impersonal; in addition to their empirical basis, which familiarizes the Slovene audience with hitherto unknown facts for the first time, they reflect his own views (Malmenvall 2022, 73). Here, a significant finding for Grivec is that the October revolution only changed its object of worship and became a religious sect of sorts trying to destroy the previous “value system” – Christianity. He believes the extremism of Bolsheviks is an integral part of a broader mechanism of Russian cultural history, in which there were repeated occurrences of the idea of a messianic mission, starting with the idea of Moscow as the “Third Rome.” The Bolshevik Revolution only developed this messianic idea of the noble mission of Russia in the opposite direction, flying the flag of godlessness and radical change in the political, social, and economic spheres. Grivec does not portray the Bolshevik regime as some distant happening, allowing for the possibility that a revolution could unfold on Slovenian soil. In such a way, he places his reflection in the context of the Kulturkampf of his time, which, at its core, is a fight between Christianity and secular substitutes for religion (Malmenvall 2022,

76-77). In his writings, the Slovenian author was conscious about the importance of the historical consciousness, which is, according to his belief, the basis for the resilience of the Slovenian and any other society to socialist revolution. In this case, historical consciousness consists of two main dimensions – a national dimension and a religious dimension. Grivec's nexus of identity belongs to the Middle Ages and is concentrated in the work of the "Slavic apostles," Cyril and Methodius. The two missionaries thus act as agents connecting Slovenianness with Slavhood and both with Christianity. It seems that Cyril and Methodius enable such universality to Slovenian national thought by placing it in the Christian religious teachings according to which members of all national and other groups are equal before their Creator, as well as generality by addressing it, due to the temporal distance, with events thought to be acceptable to different strata of the Slovenian society and to the whole Slavic world (Malmenvall 2023b, 970).

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