



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

GALINA SCOLNIC

BA (University of Victoria, 2015)

“Pentecostalism in Soviet Union: A Nihilistic Analysis”

Department of Sociology

Thursday, April 20, 2017

11:00AM

Cornett Building

Room A317

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Serhy Yekelchuk, Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. William Carroll, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Gregory Blue, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. David Scott, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Abstract

Recently secularization has been reinterpreted, by Vattimo, as that which metamorphoses religion in order to make it possible for the day and age one lives in. In this thesis, I argue that New Religious Movements (NRM) represent a secularization of religion in the sense that they reinterpret the “text” and adjust it to the needs of the adherents of that particular movement. Since the Enlightenment, secularism has been understood as that which is not religious. Separation of church and state took place at times peacefully and at times violently. An example of the latter is the Soviet Union where secularization was imposed upon the people regardless of their religious beliefs. While the early Soviet state was at war with the Orthodox Church, a NRM—Pentecostalism—has thrived and spread like fire across the Soviet nations. My research question is: *How did the Pentecostal movement succeed in establishing itself in the Soviet Union, given the hostile environment where the state tried to secularize the society?* To answer this question I look at: (i) the Pentecostal movement’s establishment in the Soviet Union, and (ii) the sociopolitical and cultural elements that provided the fertile ground for the movement. In order to situate this event within the historical times, namely late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ understandings of religion and secularization, I offer a literature review of secularization theory as understood by Weber, Durkheim, Berger, and Vattimo among others. I analyze various social events throughout the history of Christianity in Russia in order to understand that which prepared the ground for this religious movement. I give the comprehensive analysis of Pentecostalism in Soviet Union by analyzing primary sources from the movement’s view of themselves as well as the Soviet view of the Pentecostals in particular and religion in general. Lastly, I show how Pentecostalism was a form of secularization and how, in fact, the Soviets and the Pentecostals were working towards the same goal—secularism, only through different means.