

All this went along with some close fraternal relations between Baptist and Orthodox leaders during this period. Something of that has continued beyond 1990, but since then the influence of USA-based evangelicals on Russian Baptists has also meant a certain distancing from some of the ‘commonalities’ between Baptists and Orthodoxy described here.

I found Prokhorov’s thesis compelling, based as it is on a wealth of primary sources, especially the official journals of both the ‘registered’ Baptists (AUCECB) and the breakaway ‘Reform Baptists’ or *Initsiativniki* (CCECB). Notably, he detects the same Orthodox influences on both groups.

Extensive interviews with former Russian Baptist leaders now living in North America bring this story to life in a most interesting way, with some delightful vignettes of Russian Baptist (and Orthodox) life in this period.

Overall, this is a fascinating window on the history of Russian Baptists in a unique and challenging time in their history, and an important study for anyone seeking to understand the traditions that inform the life of present-day Russian Baptists.

Reviewed by Revd Tony Peck — General Secretary, European Baptist Federation.

Konstantin Prokhorov, *In the Siberian Palestines: History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptist Church in Omsk (1890-1941)* [my translation of the original book title in Russian: В СИБИРСКИХ ПАЛЕСТИНАХ - История Омской церкви евангельских христиан-баптистов (1890-е – 1941 г.)] (Omsk, Steinhagen: Samenkorn Publishing, 2019), 928 pages. ISBN: 978-3862032273.

This book is dedicated to recent memorable dates such as the 300th anniversary of the city of Omsk and the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Omsk Evangelical Christians-Baptist church. The project was supported by the Union of Baptist Churches of the Omsk region, as well as by the Research Center of the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association.

The author focuses primarily on the first foundational fifty years of the Omsk church. In thirteen chapters Prokhorov describes the beginnings of the church and some of its activities, while at the same time relating them to the overall historical processes and influences in Eastern Europe and in the region. The church was born and registered in difficult times and flourished in spite of limited freedoms before the 1917 revolution, followed by Soviet

persecution. As the author unfolds the story of the growing Baptist movement in Western Siberia, he stops just short of the dawn of the Second World War.

Prokhorov's account of the Omsk church history is a rich collection of archival documents, pictures and drawings that bring to life a time period that merits much more research and uncovering. The author not only unveils important memories, but also documents the shaping of the identity of the early Baptist movement in Western Siberia. In the midst of the larger narrative, little stories are told about different people, their everyday life and specific events. All these convey to the reader a feeling of the time and context of the early years of the Baptist movement in the region. Baptists in Omsk are presented as active participants in the social, economic and cultural life of their region. The author encourages his Baptist readers to follow their example and again engage meaningfully with contemporary society.

The story of the Omsk church and the Baptist movement in wider Western Siberia is painted against many historical developments in Russia and beyond. Omsk and Western Siberia are portrayed as a centre of Baptist faith in this vast territory, reflected against developments in wider Russian Baptist circles. Therefore, the reader encounters rich references to Russian culture, history, its novelists and poets and many other aspects that round off the picture drawn by the author.

The book is well constructed and its writing style effectively bridges popular and academic language. It brings joy to the heart of a historian and archivist who finds all sources collected like a treasure room! Prokhorov pursues a rigorous academic approach in his referencing and integration of many historical sources. At the same time, the text is easily readable, with many explanations and illustrations which invite not only academics but also lay readers to discover the history of evangelicals in Omsk and its surroundings.

This book sets out to present the history of the Baptists in the Omsk region, but it accomplishes more than that. It is a witness to God's acting in human realities and through faithful people — men and women, poor and rich, respected and outcast. They were all touched and changed by the love of Christ, who is in the midst of the movement and walks through the city of Omsk, its adjacent villages and the whole region, just as he at one time walked through Palestine.

Reviewed by Dr Peter Penner — Professor of Missiology and New Testament, Campus Danubia, Austria.