*Be It Resolved* stimulates questions about audience, then and now. No doubt, many readers will be encountering these documents for the first time. Even the compilers, veteran Mennonite church workers, asked themselves "How didn't we know this vital history, these sacred promises?" (vi). One of the most radical documents chosen for the book is a litany of confession spoken at the Conference of Mennonites in Canada sessions in 1970. The litany was prepared by Mennonite Pioneer Mission (now Indigenous Relations) staff and read in the presence of Indigenous representatives. Delegates were prompted to respond "Forgive us, Lord!" and "We are ashamed, Lord!" as the leader iterated reasons for penance (reasons that may also hold up fifty years later): for not listening to Indigenous voices, for judgmental attitudes and actions, for placing the program of missions above relationships, for siding with government and industry, for ignoring Indigenous histories, and for presuming that missionaries were the only carriers of God's truth (17–19). The confession was first printed in 1970 in the conference organ (the *Bulletin*), but did Canadian Mennonites "back home" at the time read it and wrestle with its implications?

Will *Be It Resolved* be read today? The included study guide, if followed carefully, requires a significant commitment from the general reader. There are gaps in its presentation of the history of Indigenous-Mennonite encounter that are beyond the scope and format of this book to bridge. Yet *Be It Resolved* has the capacity to inspire both humility and curiosity (two qualities essential for contemplating the past), and goes beyond the origin stories of Indigenous-Mennonite encounter in "pioneer days" to acknowledge the presence of a living history that matters deeply, and is still unfolding.

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## Leonard G. Friesen, *Mennonites in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union: Through Much Tribulation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022. Pp. xviii + 401. Softcover, $42.95.

Leonard Friesen's latest monograph is an important contribution to Mennonite historiography. It is the first history to follow Mennonites from their initial steps in imperial Russia to the end of the Soviet Union. Friesen skillfully re-envisages Mennonite history "in light of

a transformed world" (5), narrating the myriad ways Russian Mennonites navigated and negotiated their transition to the modern age. The author equally excels in describing how Mennonites themselves were key influencers in the development of imperial Russian and Soviet modernity.

Friesen effectively counters claims that Mennonites were uniquely fractious by noting that this was a feature common to all Reformation-era groups and more broadly a discernible feature of "liquid modernity" itself (7). However, Friesen's own explanation that "Mennonite identities have been, and continue to be, organically determined over time and space" is opaque (8). What exactly qualifies as "organic," especially given that external state categorizations significantly shaped what constituted a "Russian Mennonite"? A more thorough discussion of identity as a category of analysis could have offered greater clarity in this key historiographical debate.

Part 1 serves as a prologue to the arrival of Mennonites in the Russian Empire, discussing the origins of the Mennonite faith and Mennonites' subsequent flight from persecution in the Netherlands to Danzig and the Kingdom of Poland. This section highlights the progression "from persecution to prosperity" (64), Mennonites' move into the economic mainstream coupled with political restrictions, and the questions about Mennonite identity that social accommodation provoked. Friesen also draws attention to the growing importance of martyrdom and exceptionalism as key Mennonite identity markers.

Part 2 begins by outlining the main push and pull factors that caused Mennonites to migrate to the frontier borderlands of southern Ukraine—dubbed "New Russia" by Catherine II. Friesen offers critical insight into how Russian imperial designations and Mennonite self-governance shaped early Russian Mennonite identity. The reader is guided through Johann Cornies's transformational "pietistic progressivism" and how Mennonites in imperial Russia survived their mid-nineteenth-century three-fold crisis of congregational schism, landlessness, and military conscription. The section's final chapter explores the ethnic categorization of Mennonites as "German" and how this increasingly became a critical point of contention and existential threat from the late-nineteenth century to the First World War.

Friesen challenges the notion that Russian Mennonites were a closed society. He persuasively explains the many ways Mennonites accommodated to the imperial bureaucracy and functioned as critical economic—indeed modernist—innovators, while at the same time maintaining their core spiritual identity. Friesen also shows

how, despite this integration and growing economic prosperity, the Russian state turned increasingly hostile amidst a growing wave of Russian nationalism and Germanophobia.

Part 3 guides the reader through the Russian Mennonites' twentieth-century tribulations, from the Makhnovist massacres to the famines, terror, and forced secularization of the Stalinist era to the cataclysm of the Second World War and the fall of the Soviet Union. Throughout, Friesen shows that while Mennonites were targeted victims of the Soviet regime, they survived through adaptation, be it via skilled negotiations at the official level, strategic assimilation within the Soviet bureaucracy, or more covert efforts such as the critical role Mennonite women played in maintaining Mennonite identity during the purges.

My main criticism centres on Friesen's self-professed Rankean methodology of documenting history "the way it essentially was" (xviii). This is a noble goal but has historiographical implications that potentially sidestep thorny questions around history's narrative structure. Friesen is aware of the ways minority groups, such as the Mennonites, have been "occluded" from history, and presents his history as a correction (6). Friesen succeeds in this task but at the same time does not fully integrate his subject's non-Mennonite neighbours into his narrative. Friesen offers no critical commentary on Russia's drive to colonize southern Ukraine and the negative effects this had on the region's peoples' ways of life. Nor does Friesen explicitly reflect on Russia's instrumentalization of Mennonites in this imperial project and what implications that may have for how Russian Mennonite history is told.

Friesen chooses to exclusively use Russian toponyms for Ukrainian territory because they had the "greatest geopolitical currency" and were used by Mennonites themselves (xvii). At the same time, Friesen uses German toponyms for Mennonite settlements. The question of historical toponyms in mixed regions like southern Ukraine is difficult to navigate and Friesen is sensitive to this fact. However, the exclusive use of Russian toponyms privileges imperial terminology over Ukraine's majority Ukrainian- and Surzhyk-speaking rural inhabitants. In this sense, it is a narrative choice that does not simply describe the past in a straightforward manner.

The relative absence of Ukrainian voices and perspectives likewise has consequences for narrating the revolutionary period. If, as Friesen suggests, pre-revolutionary Mennonite-Ukrainian relations were in certain ways mutually beneficial and accusations of worker abuse possibly exaggerated (149, 167–168), what explains the revolutionary peasants' vicious attacks on their erstwhile neighbours? What role did Mennonite collaboration with Austro-German and

White Army forces play? And how did local socioeconomics, ethnicity, and ideology factor into the pattern of violence against Mennonites? Friesen motions toward these questions in chapter 10 and implies certain answers but does not offer a comprehensive assessment. A deeper exploration of Mennonite-Ukrainian relations and regional Ukrainian narratives could have offered more insight into this key historical inflection point.

These critiques do not detract from Friesen's overall accomplishment. The monograph offers a wealth of historical knowledge and provides a cogent examination of Russian Mennonites and modernity. It is certain to become a standard textbook in the field. Friesen convincingly argues that far from being "the quiet in the land," Russian Mennonites were dynamic contributors to the evolving economic, social, and cultural landscapes they inhabited.

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## Dora Dueck, ed., *On Holy Ground: Stories by and about Women in Ministry Leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2022. Pp. vii + 201. Softcover, $22.95.

Who gets to tell their own stories? Does it matter? The subtitle of *On Holy Ground*, "Stories *by and about* women in ministry leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church," implies there is something significant about women telling their own stories. According to editor Dora Dueck, it was a lack of Mennonite Brethren (MB) women's voices in Doug Heidebrecht's book *Women in Ministry Leadership: The Journey of the Mennonite Brethren, 1954-2010*, that spurred the need for *On Holy Ground* (1). The book is a collection of fifteen women's experiences of ministry leadership, told in their own words—told in their own words until after publication three pages of Mary Anne Isaak's chapter were removed, and the book republished.

*On Holy Ground* is informed by an emphasis on experience and storytelling, or, as Dueck calls it, "life-writing" (1). It may be likened to a feminist commitment to the experiences of those for whom there is/was the most at stake (in this case, women). History is not written in a vacuum devoid of power dynamics, including the social location of the person(s) writing the history. It is therefore important to privilege the voices of those whose history this is, and who