that must be recognized and acted upon. Toews's novels have addressed violent silencing by inscribing "silenced rage into the printed word" (117). Dirks presses the reader to use these kinds of insights to address violence against women, without which "we will have no currency as peacemakers in the world" (118). She expresses her own rage at readings of the Bible that serve to subjugate women under the guise of following the teachings of Scripture. But Dirks is not content to embrace rage; rather she hopes for this rage to turn into work, "much like all the protagonists in Toews's novels have learned to fight and write and live" (122). This deeply personal conclusion, along with the hard-earned insights from Toews's Mennonite novels, present to the reader the crucial importance of confronting the truth revealed to us in fiction.

Paul Doerksen, Associate Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

~

Marlene Epp. *Eating like a Mennonite: Food and Community across Borders.* Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023.

What does it mean to "eat like a Mennonite"? This deceptively simple question guides Marlene Epp's recent work of scholarship. It leads her through a discussion of the Mennonite history of migrations and missions, gender dynamics among twentieth and twenty-first century Mennonites (mostly in North America), a plethora of Mennonite cookbooks, the impact of histories of food scarcity, and the interplay of religion and food in Mennonite culture. This engaging book is a work of "cross-over" scholarship; it is sourced like an academic work, but it avoids jargon and clearly explains bits of theory so that readers without prior knowledge of food studies or Mennonite history can easily read and understand the research and analysis.

Epp does not provide a definitive answer to her question, arguing that Mennonites are too diverse for there to be only one food culture or food practice. Instead, she finds themes that sometimes reflect commonalities among Mennonites of different ethnicities and sometimes illuminate different historical trajectories. The chapter on the impact of hunger and

food scarcity, for example, draws largely on the stories of Mennonites who experienced starvation or near starvation in the Soviet Union. She, however, connects them to that of hunger and food scarcity elsewhere. She points particularly to that experienced by Laotian Mennonites in the late 1970s and to North American Mennonites in the Great Depression. Hunger, according to Epp, is a necessary corollary to understanding the more typical understanding of Mennonite foodways as a revel in abundance.

Apart from times of scarcity—and even occasionally during such times—food has brought pleasure for Mennonites. Time and again, Epp cites Mennonites and former Mennonites who speak of food as something to be enjoyed. In religious practice, this enjoyment is coupled with community building and/or charity at potluck meals or Mennonite relief sales. When Mennonites use food to maintain an ethnic identity, enjoyment is filled with nostalgia, often of the particular foods shaped by their people's migrations. Various branches of the Mennonite faith have scorned different types of pleasure, but even the most dour and non-conformist of Mennonite sects have allowed for pleasure in food.

The lack of food prohibitions based on religion means that Mennonite food can be any food eaten by Mennonites. Indeed, the first chapter of *Eating like a Mennonite* traces the hybridity of Mennonite foods that developed their "Mennonite-ness" through a series of migrations where Mennonites adopted and adapted local foods, or by people converting to the Mennonite faith and bringing their foodways with them. This breadth of possibility does not, however, stop food from being a cultural marker. Epp echoes other food scholars in outlining the ways in which immigrant women have served as cultural carriers, preserving ethnic identities in part through cooking and the preservation of recipes.

There may be no dietary prohibitions in the Mennonite faith but there remains a certain unease. Epp states in the introduction and again in the chapter on food and religion that some Mennonites object to linking the term "Mennonite" with food because "the former is a purely religious [category] and the second purely cultural" (186). This separation of religion and culture also coincides with the traditional division between the masculine world in the front of the church and the feminine world in the church (and home) kitchen. It is no surprise that the women who compiled the Mennonite Treasury

of Recipes in 1961 felt the need to justify their actions as to the utility of their task (that they would help future women providing food for church gatherings) and to designate any earnings to charity. Few were comfortable simply taking pleasure and pride in the foods they made and the recipes they shared.

Food ethics, like those found in Doris Janzen Lanacre's *More-with-Less Cookbook,* may be the closest Mennonites get to religious dietary prohibitions. They provide a bridge between food as sustenance and food as a concern for people living out their faith through daily life. The chapter on food and religious practice ranges from a discussion of food as a spiritual symbol to religious rituals, food charity, and communal eating. Surprisingly missing from the survey is any discussion of table grace and the propensity of Mennonites (or at least some Mennonites) to sing before meals. This reflects a tendency to focus more on the foodstuffs (and what they mean to Mennonites) than on the "how" of eating. Just as there is no discussion of the rituals of folding or holding hands before meals, there are no accounts of church kitchen disputations over whether to use fine china or pottery mugs, styrofoam cups or paper.

As a work of history, *Eating like a Mennonite* focuses on the twentieth and twenty-first century. During this period, food did not play the same roles as sex, clothing or technology in Mennonite internal conflict and controversies. This was not always true—the first Mennonite Brethren objected to the carousing that accompanied pig butchering; the followers of Jakob Amman objected to eating together with non-believers. None of these moments mark changes in the Mennonite diet but they reflect tension in what it meant to "eat like a Mennonite" before the twentieth century. Why food practices ceased to be controversial after the late nineteenth century is perhaps a puzzle for another book.

S.L. Klassen, Public Historian and Research Administrator, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.

~

Carol Penner. *Unburdened: A Lenten Journey Toward Forgiveness.* Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2024.

Sitting in the armchair in the corner of my office, I look at the bulletin board