decline that actively avoid messianic political theology in favor of the self-emptying path taken by Dostoevsky's elder Zosima, Kroeker contends that "only one freed from the isolation of self-love can truly love others, and such freedom is made possible through spiritual rebirth in the image of Christ—conformity to the 'form of the servant' that builds up the human community through embodied deeds of humble love" (247).

Since there are far too many thickets and plains to explore here, each raising profound questions about the patient labor required to live and love in exile, perhaps the most appropriate way to conclude this review is to borrow a phrase from Augustine's *Confessions*: Take up and read; take up and read!

Kyle Gingerich Hiebert, Director, Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, Toronto, Ontario.

Margaret Loewen Reimer. *Approaching the Divine: Signs and Symbols of the Christian Faith*. Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2017.

In *Approaching the Divine*, Margaret Loewen Reimer offers a short primer on some of the more common or curious Christian signs and symbols. The book is based on a column created in the late 1990s in the periodical now known as *Canadian Mennonite*. After a brief introduction reflecting on the role of symbols and signs, there are short entries with illustrations divided roughly according to the church year, and then more loosely connected entries on Signs and Tokens, and Art and Tradition. The volume concludes by reprinting a sermon on artistic imagination entitled "Biblical Magic" and an advent meditation named "The Virgin and the Unicorn."

Loewen Reimer states that "for people of faith, words and images suggesting the divine take on a sacred quality. These words and objects are not holy in themselves, but they are revered because they point beyond themselves to the source of all holiness" (13). She explains that "signs and symbols are outward, visible forms through which are revealed the invisible, inner meanings of our lives" (12), and notes that "a ritual is an act that can awaken us to new dimensions and realities" (53). This perspective invites the

reader to reflect and gives the book its title.

With an odd few exceptions, the descriptions in this collection are not especially novel for people from most liturgical traditions. What is interesting to consider, therefore, are the underlying assumptions about why this information is needed in a Mennonite context. The author says her goal is to interpret the symbols for Mennonite audiences. She notes that "religious faith is always forged within specific cultures and experiences" (70), so this book reveals her own cultural context and assumptions, whether or not Mennonite perspectives are specifically mentioned.

Having rejected much from liturgical traditions in our early history, Mennonites seem to be drawn to revisit the wealth of symbol and meaning across ecumenical lines and to incorporate them into worship. For example, in my own congregation's worship and in denominational resources (curricula, worship themes, etc.), growing attention is paid to a broader understanding of the liturgical calendar, to using symbols in worship (candles, liturgical colors, etc.), and to the Revised Common Lectionary for developing resources or for guiding preaching. When first published, the material in Loewen Roemer's book was an early contribution to this journey, offering to fill in some gaps the author perceived within Mennonite worship culture. It may still provide this bridging and complementary role for contemporary readers.

Most entries are offered without much commentary. Yet there are a few times when Loewen Reimer takes extra steps to make direct connections with her personal experience or to Mennonite practice. For instance, there is an entry on head coverings and another on charms and hexes. There are also topics where a more specific Anabaptist perspective is not identified or expanded upon, although it could have been fruitful. The entry about communion misses an opportunity to present a uniquely Anabaptist perspective or reflect on how Anabaptists view the practice compared to other traditions. I also found it curious that the author did not take the opportunity to expand upon *Tottensontag* (Eternity Sunday or Sunday of the Dead), since it is somewhat unusual ecumenically and seems to be a German protestant particularity that some Canadian Mennonite congregations commemorate in place of All Saints Day.

Finally, in "Biblical Magic," a sermon delivered in 1998, Loewen

Reimer draws upon her work on Mennonites and the artistic imagination. Here we find a deeper reflection and the foundational assumptions behind the invitation to approach the Divine through symbol. She offers a critique of Mennonite/Christian over-reliance on words and suspicion of images, which have the effect of flattening out the artistic elements of scripture. "We are used to thinking about God communicating with us through the spoken word, not through images or tangible, physical representations" (88). To counter this, she references the visual splendor of the temple and the wealth of metaphorical images in the Hebrew scriptures, and lays out a case for the arts and imagination in our encounters with the Bible and with culture. Importantly, the author sees this as a way to avoid an "impoverished literalism" (91).

Approaching the Divine will be helpful in its intended purpose of resourcing lay individuals in Mennonite congregations as they explore symbols and artistic expressions from the Christian tradition.

Michele Rae Rizoli, Pastor, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ontario.

J. Denny Weaver. *God without Violence: Following a Nonviolent God in a Violent World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.

Considering that, as I write this, news of white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, is circulating widely, the timeliness of J. Denny Weaver's *God without Violence* is hardly debatable. In this popular version of his earlier books, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (2001, 2011) and *The Nonviolent God* (2013), Weaver traces evidence for divine nonviolence throughout the narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection within the "conversation about the character and identity of God" spanning the Old and New Testaments (115, 128-29), addressing seemingly stubborn examples of divine violence within mainstream understandings of the atonement and the book of Revelation, and delineating the implications of divine nonviolence for Christian ethics and social justice. He frames his discussion with a