

Things Hidden Scripture as Spirituality

by Richard Rohr
Published by Franciscan Media,
2022. (USD 21.99)
Reviewed by Peter Matheson



We all need to sit at the feet of a master. Richard Rohr is a master of an earthy, praxis-oriented spirituality which offers a radical revisioning of our understanding of God and of the Church. We need, he argues, to get away from a bookish take on Scripture. After all, in our world with its crisis of meaning, it's transformation we hunger for, not pat answers. And the sole path to reach transformation is through the "knife-edge" of experience. Rohr's aim, in a nutshell, is to forge together Scripture and spirituality, to "join the dots" in Scripture to get beyond our projections about God to Godself. For Rohr, spiritual cognition is always re-cognition. To read Scripture meaningfully we need to let it read us.

Rohr's very accessible book suggests that "participatory knowing" is the key. As we struggle with the texts, with the messiness of the history of Israel or the disciples' experience of Jesus, we will find ourselves being messed up, astonished, alerted to counter-intuitive ways of being and thinking, and learn that "we have to die before we die". God will come to us in the ordinary business of living "disguised as our life".

More Than a Roof Housing, in Poems and Prose

Edited by Adrienne Jansen, Joan Berg, Rebecca Chester, Wesley Hollis and Roman Ratcliff
Published by Landing Press, 2021. (NZD 25.00)
Reviewed by Pat Lythe

The Landing Press publishers have followed up their book about cleaners with this collection about housing. It brings together voices of renters, homeowners, the homeless, those living in cars, transitional housing, in the bush, and those who will never have a house.

Both well-known writers and first-time authors give us their brief personal insights into what makes a house a home or just a place to live; what constantly moving does to the spirit; how inequality or ethnicity affect the chances of renting; and the nostalgia which can be evoked by a formica table or creaking floorboards.

Each contribution is about a page in length, and followed by an interesting short biography of the writer.

Some pieces are heart-breaking: "losing identity and security, moving every week." Others are heart-warming: "a house is pricy, a home is priceless; a house is what you want, a home is what you need."

The writers describe their feelings about flatmates, neighbours, landlords, children growing up and leaving, as well as the structures they dwell in (or don't). For those of us blessed to own a home when it is no longer the norm in this country, *More Than a Roof* is a salutary read. It is a book both to dip into and to reflect on.



Voices from the New Zealand Wars He Reo nō ngā Pakanga O Aotearoa

by Vincent O'Malley
Published by Bridget Williams Books, 2021. (NZD 49.99)
Reviewed by Richard Wild

Vincent O'Malley's *Voices from the New Zealand Wars* is both a lucid narrative and a treasure trove of perspectives. O'Malley's main focus here is to provide readers with a rich diversity of viewpoints – and so *Voices from the New Zealand Wars* includes contemporary viewpoints from individual Māori, British settlers, soldiers and politicians.

The various narratives provide just enough context of the New Zealand wars for the reader to appreciate the contrasting interpretations contained in the sources. O'Malley argues that historical sources are never neutral; they represent the mindset and world view of those who produced them, in this case the coloniser and those colonised. The wars were a time of terror and trauma, producing very different life experiences and conflicting narratives of people's lives and the "birth" of Aotearoa.

Until recently, the "accepted" or dominant national narrative of New Zealand's colonial history has largely gone unchallenged. Accordingly, some readers may find O'Malley's narrative and sources confronting. However, those readers who would like a more balanced and complete knowledge of our nation's story will find *Voices from the New Zealand Wars* inspiring.

