



Promoting Literature

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It is my honour as Chair of the ATF Literary Trust to announce the winners of the Book Prize for 2021, which is this year named in honour of the Australian theologian, Denis Edwards. The judges of the prize had to examine 19 books that were submitted. The books were divided up between five judges and a lengthy process of reviewing each book over several months with short lists of books which then went to a second and third round of judging. On behalf of the Trust, I wish to thank all those who submitted books and all the judges for their work. The judges recommended that two authors receive the prize and the Trustees accepted this recommendation and accordingly both authors will receive the \$2,000 prize. The words of the judges is as follows:

‘The ATF annual Theological Book Prize has been awarded to authors of two books: Ormond Rush, *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles*, Liturgical Press, 2019; David Newheiser, *Hope in a Secular Age: Deconstruction, Negative Theology, and the Future of Faith*, Cambridge University Press, 2019. The decision, not without precedent, to award the prize to two books is a reflection of the outstanding quality of both books chosen from an excellent and diverse field of entrants for 2021.

It is difficult to overestimate the magnitude of the achievement of Ormond Rush’s *Vision of Vatican II*. The author offers a remarkable tour de force of the theological and ecclesial principles the author discerns in the documents, background and fundamental vision of Vatican II. Rush does this from the vantage point of half a century of critical engagement, reflection and reception within the wider ecumenical Church. Combining a breadth and depth of scholarship with creativity and insight the author provides a foundational theological resource not simply for students and theologians of Vatican II but for all who would seek to understand some of the great themes that have preoccupied the hearts and minds of Christians in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. The reception of this book already suggests that it is destined to become a major point of reference in Vatican II studies.

David Newheiser’s, *Hope in a Secular Age*, tackles a critical issue for contemporary theological discourse; the possibility of Christian language about central ideas of its faith. In a post structuralist environment in which the meaning of language is dissipated by multi layered critical analysis Newheiser undertakes a defence of the central Christian idea of hope. In an informed and sophisticated manner Newheiser interrogates the resources of the rich tradition of Christian mystical thought. The ‘darkness of unknowing’ in the mystical tradition (Dionysius) and in post-modern notions of deferral (Derrida) provides Newheiser with parameters to engage in the meaningful development of Christian language in a contemporary context. This fine exegetical and philosophical study offers a highly original, insightful and persuasive account of a hope that is at once ethical, political and spiritual. A much slimmer volume than Rush’s, but one that has the hallmark of a programmatic essay and point of reference for future theological inquiry as it charts a way for meaningful dialogue with contemporary philosophical thought whilst addressing the perennial issue of a meaningful vision of the Christian hope in the midst of despair in contemporary Western culture.’

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark O'Brien'.

Mark O’Brien OP  
Chair  
ATF Literary Trust