



Alex Baker Photography

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, today awarded the 2016 Michael Ramsey Prize for theological writing to *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* by John Swinton at a ceremony at the Greenbelt festival. The winner received a cheque for £10,000.

Speaking about the winning entry, the Archbishop, who presided over the prize for the first time, said: “After much thought and struggle, we concluded that John Swinton's book should take the Michael Ramsey Prize this year. It is a cross-disciplinary book that goes straight to the heart of tackling one of the most profound failures of our society - the failure to value people in other than economic terms and to see the dignity of the human person.

"John has written a book which is deeply challenging and brings to bear a coherent theological approach, with clinical background and understanding, to an issue that has touched many of us, and is one of the great issues of our society. He has done the church and our country a huge service."

The Archbishop also paid tribute the runner up book, *Faith & Struggle on Smokey Mountain* by Benigno Beltran, which he said contained "profound spirituality and immensely creative theological thinking".

On receiving the prize John Swinton said: “I am really pleased to win the Michael Ramsey Prize and grateful for the hard work the judges have put in and for everybody who has been involved. My hope is that this book helps us to recognise that in the Kingdom of God everything looks different. Even in something as apparently hopeless as dementia you can find possibilities, because God is a God who never forgets us, who says: 'I will always be with you, I will always be for you, in all things at all times.'

"It's not what we remember about ourselves that matters, it's what God remembers about us - and that's not just for people with dementia, that's for all of us. I hope the book will help us to open up our understanding of what it means to be a human being, of what it means to have a vocation, of what it means to trust in God in all things at all times."

Of the six shortlisted titles, Archbishop Justin Welby said: “This year’s Michael Ramsey Prize shortlist offers a glimpse into the riches not just of contemporary Christian thinking, but of Christian living. Each book has been a gift to the Church – helping us to think more deeply, act more wisely and witness more effectively to the glory of God. Writing such as this challenges, nourishes and inspires the Church to be ever more deeply and more joyfully what it is called to be: a praying, reconciling, proclaiming and witnessing community of people following Jesus Christ. It has been a real privilege to join my fellow judges in reflecting on these books, and to have the opportunity to share them with a wider audience.”

Launched in 2005 by Rowan Williams, the Michael Ramsey Prize is awarded every two to three years and celebrates the most promising contemporary theological writing from the global church.

The shortlisted titles in 2016 were:

Benigno Beltran, Faith & Struggle on Smokey Mountain (Orbis)

Stephen Cherry, Healing Agony: Re-imagining Forgiveness (Continuum)

Anne Richards, Children in the Bible (SPCK)

Francis Spufford, Unapologetic (Faber & Faber)

John Swinton, Dementia: Living in the memories of God (SCM)

Frances Young, God's Presence: a contemporary recapitulation of early Christianity (Cambridge University Press)

The judges for the 2016 prize were:

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon: Secretary General of the Anglican Communion; former Archbishop of the Province of Kaduna in Nigeria.

Sally Magnusson: Broadcaster & Writer

Dr Anna Rowlands: Lecturer in Catholic Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University

Professor Rosalind Searle: Director at The Centre for Trust, Peace, & Social Relations

For more information about the Michael Ramsey Prize visit [www.michaelramseyprize.org.uk](http://www.michaelramseyprize.org.uk)

Notes to editors:

· The Michael Ramsey Prize, which is sponsored by the Lambeth Trust and administered by SPCK, was inaugurated by Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams in 2005 to encourage the most promising contemporary theological writing and to identify it for a wider Christian readership.

· The prize commemorates Dr Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961-1974, and his commitment to increasing the breadth of theological understanding among the Christian, and non-Christian, population at large.

· Previous winners of the Michael Ramsey Prize:

o 2013: Luke Bretherton, Christianity and Contemporary Politics

o 2011: David Bentley Hart, Atheist Delusions

o 2009: Richard Baukham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses

o 2007: Fr Timothy Radcliffe, What is the point of being a Christian?



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