



THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY



importance of theological writing in this article for the Church Times.

I never thought I would study theology, let alone write it myself. I liked art and music and creative pursuits. And debating. I was always full of questions, and my church got fed up of not having all the answers. Why all the violence in the Old Testament? Why are women so badly treated? How can a God of love possibly let children suffer? How do we translate texts from thousands of years ago into something relevant today? Is God vengeful and vindictive?

After a while, unanswered questions sapped my enthusiasm and started draining my faith. Questions about justice, gender and race became so strong that I withdrew from church and arguments. That is when I had an unexpected encounter.

I read Walter Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament*, and things started to make (some) sense. As I read more of his work I discovered the beauty and depth of the Old Testament, its raw struggle with the reality of a broken world. I read Jürgen Moltmann and was caught up in the picture of the Crucified God.

My questions weren't 'answered', but they were reframed, refined and at times corrected. I grew back into faith, which was now more mature, more solid and very differently shaped.

This is why theological writing matters. The way we speak about God, and the underlying assumptions behind what is preached and taught and prayed in every church, shape our relationships to God and to one another. It stretches our imaginations, and encourages us to think beyond the boundaries of our own little corner of the universe.

Theological writing at its best brings together insights from tradition and cultures, from places and times faraway, and from the insistent questions of our contemporary experience. It unlocks the riches of Scripture, of tradition and of the universal church.

This is what we are celebrating with the Michael Ramsay Prize.

We are looking for deep, embedded theology, which is at the same time accessible. The kind of theology that will bring healing, shape faith and transform lives, the kind of theology that will bring the treasures of the universal church to bear on the great questions of today.

We will be looking for new and diverse voices, who can speak into our world and change the way we pray, the way we share and the way we love.

Rev Dr Isabelle Hamley is chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Nominations for the Michael Ramsey Prize 2019 are now open.

The Archbishop would particularly welcome writing which highlights one of his three personal priorities – prayer and the renewal of the religious life, reconciliation and evangelism.

