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ELINA JUNTUNEN

Tensions in Diaconal Work: Experiences of Tensions in Diaconal Financial Support

Diaconal workers in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland help clients for instance by offering financial support. This financial support is an essential part of diaconal work. The Church Order (chapter 4, section 3) stipulates that the purpose of diaconal work is to help people whom no one else will help in their extreme need. Despite this definition and the comprehensive approach of diaconal care, the financial support provided causes tensions within the Church and in society at large. This article discusses how diaconal workers understand the tensions concerning financial support. Data for the article were collected through themed interviews and questionnaires. The results show that there are tensions involved in the distribution of welfare work, the essence and professionalism of diaconal work, and support processes. These tensions testify to the unclear status of diaconal work within the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and in the social welfare system in general.

TIMO ESKOLA

Qur'an Criticism and the Birth of Historical Investigation of the Bible

Medieval criticism declared that the Qur'an is full of contradictions, errors and myths and therefore cannot be held as divine truth. As Bible criticism began to develop in the 18th century, Hermann Reimarus applied similar principles when assessing the historical and religious nature of the Bible. According to Reimarus, the Bible too appears to be a collection of separate fables and therefore cannot be regarded as divine revelation. Through David Strauss's biography of Reimarus, these principles influenced the whole subsequent tradition of historical-critical study of the Bible.

JUSSI KOIVISTO

From Prayers to Matrimony: Same-Sex Couples in the Church of Sweden (1994–2009)

In recent decades, the homosexual issue has caused much controversy in churches. The Church of Sweden has been one of the forerunners regarding church ceremonies for homosexuals. This article analyses administrative development in the Church of Sweden between 1994 and 2009, the period when the Church made its most important decisions regarding church ceremonies for same-sex couples. In addition to administrative analysis, the article also evaluates decision-making from the argumentative and theological perspectives.

JAAKKO OLAVI ANTILA

Was the People's Church Meant to Be Politicised?

From the late 19th century onwards, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland increasingly came to be seen as a "church of the people". As the Church became identified with the people and the nation instead of the hierarchical authority of the Tsar of Russia in his role as Grand Duke of Finland, relations between the Church and party politics became much more problematic, especially since the nation was divided. The ideal was to achieve a Church which would be highly democratic yet bound to the Word of God, and which would take an active stand in social matters yet not be identified with any political party. When ideologically different and political parties began to take part in church elections in the 1970s in keen competition, conflicting ideals of the "people's church" clashed.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi