

# In this number

JUHA PAKKALA

## Attitudes towards Foreigners in the Old Testament

Relationships between the Israelites and other nations is a key theme that runs through the Old Testament. Attitudes towards foreigners in the Bible have become particularly topical with the current refugee crisis in Europe. The Bible has been cited to support the argument that Christians should be charitable towards asylum seekers. However, the Bible offers no consistent code of conduct; there are several contradictions in this respect. In parts of the Old Testament, aliens living among the Israelites are viewed with exceptional benevolence, but other texts emphasise how distinct and apart the Israelites are from other peoples, and outright hostility against foreigners can also be found. In addition to taking this plurality of attitudes into account, citing the Bible as an authority in a responsible way requires an understanding of the backgrounds of its writings. Suitable Bible quotes can be found for all kinds of purposes, and removed from their context they can be used to justify practically any course of action.

TIMO NISULA

## “Who Shall Declare His Generation?": Augustine's Christmas Sermons – Apophatic Mysticism or Sacramental Words on the Divine?

Augustine's sermons for Christmas Day (*Sermons* 184–196, 369, 370) are a distinct collection of brief and poetic discourses on the mystery of the Incar-

nation. Although the Christmas sermons present as a rhetorical element a qualified attitude to the ability of human language to reach divine truths, the main concern of Augustine is to declare Christological doctrines with words that are worthy of the great miracle of the Incarnation. The article shows how the Christmas sermons lead their audience to grasp the human birth of Logos, the way in which Augustine talks of the flesh (*caro*) of Christ and how Augustine includes his audience in the sacramental mystery of the birth of Christ.

KIMMO HEINILÄ

## The Confirmation of Hessen (1539) and its Liturgical-Historical Origins

Scholars of confirmation are fairly unanimous that the Lutheran liturgical practice of confirmation is based on two Ordinances of Confirmation published in Hessen in 1539 and also that their principal architect was Martin Bucer (1491–1551), leader of the southern German Reformation movement and of reformation in the city of Strassburg. According to Bucer, his conception of confirmation was founded on the traditions of the early Church. Scholars, however, note that Bucer's principal influences for his conception of confirmation came from several sources predating and/or contemporaneous with the Reformation (the Bohemian Brethren, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Luther, critics of infant baptism). The present article contends that Bucer and the reformers in Hessen actually only had one liturgical model and specimen text for their confirmation formats. The structure and

content of the Confirmation of Hessen indicate with high probability that Bucer derived it from the Zwinglian-leaning confessional book *Rechenschaft des Glaubens (Account of Faith)*, published in German by the Bohemian Brethren in Zurich in 1532.

ANTTI RÄIHÄ

### **Religiousness, Politicality and Communality: The Consistories' Operation in the 18th-century Russian Border Area**

This article discusses the operation of diocesan boards (in this case, the Consistories of Fredrikshamn and Vyborg) in the Lutheran border area of the otherwise Orthodox Russian Empire in the late 18th century. The focus is on communal and political intentions that were included, sometimes hidden, in the religious activities of the Consistories. The questions involved in the research will be approached through the analysis of the suggestions of the Consistories concerning the texts and the dates of the intercession days and the role of the Consistories in supervising religious services held by clerics. These aspects are closely interconnected, because the message of the Consistories was filtered through the clergy to the subjects.

CAROLIN AHLVIK-HARJU

### **It's Good That You're Here: Human Value, the Image of God and Persons with Serious Cognitive Impairment**

The purpose of this article is to reclaim significance in the concept of human dignity by approaching it as a value commitment. The starting point for the theological constructive argument put forward is found in experience-based narratives of profound intellectual disabilities, described in light of the Christian narrative of creation. On a conceptual level, it is suggested that dominant norms for recognition can be broadened by implementing a 'disability hermeneutic' of human being and God. On a practical level, the potential implications of implementing a 'disability hermeneutic' of love is discussed as a route towards reclaiming significance in the concept of human dignity.

JOONAS RIIKONEN

### **Atonement and Shame: Examining the Christian Doctrine of Atonement from the Perspective of the Tension between Shame and Guilt**

The doctrine of atonement is a key traditional part of Christian theology. The most common interpretations of the doctrine of atonement are rooted in the concepts of guilt and forgiveness. Pastoral psychology research in the past decades has identified shame in particular as one of the major issues in pastoral care and theology. This prompts a challenge to consider the tension between interpretations of the doctrine of atonement and shame. The present article discusses various atonement models in relation to the theological challenges involving shame arising from pastoral psychology research. Closer examination reveals that the most common interpretations of the doctrine of atonement pay little attention to issues of shame. A synthesis of shame and atonement would require reflection on a theology of shame, which in turn would require a reinterpretation of theological points emphasising guilt. In conclusion, the article discusses elements of a constructive theology of shame that would anchor the doctrine of atonement firmly to the theology of creation and incarnation and to an understanding of shame as a disruption in a person's relationship to God.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi