

Tämä *Teologisen Aikakauskirjan* numero on toteutettu yhteistyössä teologia.fi -sivuston kanssa.  
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## In this number

KAISA-MARIA PIHLAVA

### **Women Hosts of Early Christian Gatherings as Authorities**

Some early Christian writings briefly mention women hosts of early Christian gatherings. These sources do not describe in detail who these women were or how they had become heads of their households, nor do they describe how these women were perceived in their early Christian communities. Were they authorities, silent providers of a meeting venue, or something in between? I approach these questions with a focus on the authority of the women hosts. I suggest that the authority structures of each early Christian community varied due to the varying combinations of potential authorities. Due to the household context and patronage networks that encompassed early Christian communities that met in private homes, women hosts were indeed authorities in some congregations.

MINNA HEIMOLA

### **Neither Greek nor Jew, neither Slave nor Free, neither Male nor Female: The Ethiopian Eunuch in Category Crisis**

In this article, the author considers the story of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) from the perspective of intersectionality, marginalisation and category crisis. The article argues that as a eunuch, a foreigner and a slave, he was a marginalised figure in the Graeco-Roman context. However, at the same time he challenged many of the usual categories: he was between genders; he was a slave but also a high-ranking official; and he was neither a Jew nor a pagan, his religious identity being described in a complex and ambivalent way.

TEEMU RATINEN

### **Sexuality, Shame and the Power of God**

Power is usually comprehended as the repressing of a subject. From the queer theoretical point of view, however, power creates the subject and

the conditions of its existence. In this article, the power of shame is considered as a key part of the cultural process that forms and maintains sexual subjectivity. Shame is thus a 'vehicle of power' that inculcates cultural ideals within an individual. Moreover, an individual's relationship to God can be seen as a historically formed power relation that constructs sexual subjectivity and maintains the boundaries between acceptable and shameful sexuality for example by means of victimising a human being on the grounds of his or her sexuality.

SINI MIKKOLA

**A Languished Sheep and the Queen of Sheba: Female Agency and Self-Authorisation in the Rhetoric of Katharina Schütz Zell and Florentina von Oberweimar**

The heated religious, social and political controversies of the 1520s provided several women an enhanced opportunity to act and write publicly. Since women lacked legitimate authority, they had to justify their action. The article discusses female agency and self-authorisation through texts written by three contemporaries in the 1520s: Martin Luther (1483–1546), Katharina Schütz Zell (1498–1562) and Florentina von Oberweimar (c. 1509–?). Luther's writings show how male theologians defined women and their (lack of) power. Schütz Zell's and von Oberweimar's texts are analysed from the viewpoint of how they legitimised their agency and built their authority and whether there were common denominators in how they argued for a public voice.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi