

In this number

JOHAN BASTUBACKA &
ANNE-MAIJA MALMISALO-LENSU

Abraham and Three Angels: Artwork by Mordecai Moreh as a Bearer and Shaper of Cultural Memory

Semiotic analysis forms a significant horizon in the interpretation of religious art and in the pursuit of understanding how works of art pertain to, use, shape and reform traditional visual elements and ideas. A contemporary artwork by Mordecai Moreh, *Abraham and Three Angels*, combines elements of Jewish and Christian religious art, influences of pagan Antiquity and stylistic characteristics of the 20th century. The semiotic analysis of this artwork calls for practices to study signs and codes as structural elements in larger cultural complexes and to define how both traditional and surprising visual elements gain their meaning.

JAAKKO HÄMEEN-ANTTILA

Islam and the Holiness of Jerusalem

The attitude of Islam towards Jerusalem has changed over the centuries. It seems probable that, for some time during the life of the Prophet Muhammad, Jerusalem used to be the direction

of prayer for the early community. In the late 600s, the Caliph Abdalmalik even made an attempt at redirecting the pilgrimage to that city instead of Mecca. Later, however, the special status of Jerusalem waned, and the Crusades did not prompt any major counter-action to recapture it from the Christians; the conquest of Jerusalem was simply more important for the Crusaders than it was for the Muslims. In modern times, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians can scarcely said to be based on any particular religious significance of Jerusalem for Muslims.

JARI PORTAANKORVA

Reaching for Peace between Faiths: A Common Word Letter and Yale Response Are Building Reconciliation between Christians and Muslims.

In this article, I examine religious peace building. In 2007, the world Muslim leaders representing every major school of Islamic thought wrote "A Common Word between Us and You", an open letter to Christians (and Jews) intended to start a new dialogue between religions. The letter also had a political dimension, as its purpose was to demonstrate that Islam is not a monolithic and

hostile religion. The Yale Response was one of the Christian letters replying to the Muslim initiative. Both letters affirm a common ground for beliefs that can be found in the Abrahamic religions: believing in God, loving one's neighbour and building reconciliation.

JUHA PENTIKÄINEN

The Unspoken Sámi Identity of Lars Levi Laestadius

Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–1861), a clergyman in the Church of Sweden, was actually an ethnic Sámi – a fact that ecclesiastical history has frequently overlooked. Laestadius's Sámi identity came from his mother's Sámi antecedents and the Luleå Sámi language that he learned in his childhood. He also spent the major part of his career as a minister among the Sámi. Even the Sámi woman who led to his decisive conversion, Milla Clemensdotter or 'Lapland Maria', whom Laestadius met at Åsele in 1844, may have served to strengthen his Sámi identity. Alongside his ministry, Laestadius wrote a book entitled *Fragments of Lappish Mythology*, which demonstrates that he identified keenly with the way of life and philosophy of the Sámi people. He was also interested in promoting the teaching of religious matters in the language of the people and advocated a reform of the written Sámi language.

ANTTI MIETTINEN

Membership of the Folk Church in the Theology of Einar Billing and Gustaf Wingren

Einar Billing and Gustaf Wingren are the two most influential Swedish theologians who have formed the ecclesiology of the 'folk church' or 'national church' theology. Both Billing and Wingren emphasise the open character of folk church membership. Everyone is welcome to become a member, even without baptism. Open membership is based on the assumption that faith is a result of membership rather than a condition for

membership. The ideal is not to create any close togetherness between the members but to build communion with all people inside and outside of the church and even with creation as a whole. Membership calls members to serve all people in their everyday life.

OLLI-PEKKA VAINIO

Reason and Tradition According to Alasdair MacIntyre

This article examines the development of tradition-dependent rationality in the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre. Interestingly, his theory of rationality has been criticised in ways that render the criticisms themselves irreconcilable. For example, some accuse him of being a relativist; some say he is an authoritarian; while some claim that his system is self-contradictory. I will summarise the main criticisms and construe responses that might be given from MacIntyre's late Thomistic perspective to knowledge.

ANNA KUISMIN

On the Way to the Heavenly Wedding: Jacob Ahlsman's Tract from 1858

Jacob Ahlsman (1798–1872) from south-western Finland was a mere beggar as a boy but managed to rise to the position of an ambulatory teacher at a time when literacy was unusual among the common people. In 1858, he published a 16-page tract entitled *Jesuksen Kristuksen Sotamies* (Soldier of Jesus Christ), republished in this issue with its numerous Biblical references. The text is preceded by an introductory article that sheds light on the autobiographical context of the tract as well as its religious background, including Herrnhutism and Prayerism.

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