

also recognisable in other contexts: the influence of the broader evangelical gender debate; the previously mentioned areas of tension; men dominating the conversation at conventions; the importance of role models in practice and discussion. That is why this work of Heidebrecht transcends the situation and context of the Mennonite Brethren and — despite all the differences — calls for recognition in different contexts. This thick description provides insight into how processes in Conventions and Unions run, and that is valuable for everyone involved in these lengthy discernment processes.

Reviewed by Ingeborg te Loo — Co-ordinator of Learning Network, IBTS Centre, Amsterdam.

Andrew J. Kirk, *Being Human: An Historical Enquiry into Who We Are* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 404 pages. ISBN: 978-1532664199.

In this book Andrew Kirk focuses on the question of what it means to be human. This author is well-known for his contribution on the subject of mission and relevant aspects of missiology of Western culture. *Being Human* is a fruit of Kirk's sustained interest in the aspects of secular culture and how these are related to the Christian mission and message. The book is unique in that it offers an account of the views on humanity and human nature from the Renaissance, including the Reformation, through the Enlightenment to the present. It is motivated by the intention 'to grapple afresh with the notion of being human' (p. 3). The book encompasses a timespan of five centuries, different intellectual milieus, many authors and various topics.

After introducing the foundational presuppositions of the enquiry (ch. 1), Kirk proceeds to a description of the Renaissance shift towards humanism (ch. 2) and its consequences for the external authority in politics represented by John Locke (ch. 3). Chapters 4 to 9 explore the Enlightenment humanism exemplified by such figures as Hume and Diderot, Darwin and 'masters of suspicion' Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Kirk argues that the Enlightenment has departed from the yet theocentric Renaissance humanism and that this has resulted in what he calls 'secular humanism' (ch. 10), which denies any reality beyond the natural world (p. 277). In two final chapters the author outlines the perspectives of some prominent Christian theologians who have dealt with the issues relevant to human existence and identity. He summarises the key topics of the enquiry and in chapter 12 proposes a method of abduction for 'dialogue in the context of truth' (p. 379).

The book is an apologetic essay that consistently argues for the theistic metanarrative as the proper context in which humans could make sense of themselves and their experience. Dealing with different authors and their contribution on the subject, Kirk demonstrates that materialistic or secular humanism lacks explanatory power to answer satisfactorily the most acute aspects of being human — their origin, humanness, morality and the problem of evil. He concludes that Neo-Darwinists cannot resolve convincingly the issue of human origin, while secular humanists fail to explain the origin of consciousness and morality.

A vast project like this is by necessity a complex one. However, Kirk deals skilfully with its complexity, explaining some knotty ideas and demonstrating flaws and consequences of the secular humanist metanarrative. Although the book is straightforwardly theistic, Kirk demonstrates a commendable openness to honest and sincere dialogue with opponents. Whether such dialogue is ever possible at all is hard to tell.

Andrew Kirk has written an important book, which not only fills a gap but also points to the field in which theologians should invest their efforts in the near future.

**Reviewed by Dr Oleksandr Geychenko — Rector of Odessa Theological Seminary,
Ukraine.**

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Theory* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2016), 250 pages. ISBN: 978-1842279090.

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Praxis* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2016), 234 pages. ISBN: 978-1842279106.

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Stories* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2019), 274 pages. ISBN: 978-1780781853.

In this review I discuss the trilogy of books in the *Mission in Marginal Places* series co-edited by sociological scholar Paul Cloke (Professor of Human Geography at the University of Exeter) and theological scholar Mike Pears. Pears was part of an Urban Expression community and carried out his PhD research (at IBTS Centre, Amsterdam) on a theology of place. He is currently Director of IBTS Centre in Amsterdam.