

Book Review:

“Spiritual Awakening:” by Edy Korthals Altes, Peeters, Leuven, 2008, 48 Euro

This book is subtitled “The Hidden Key to Peace and Security, Just and Sustainable Economics, A Responsible European Union”. The author, Dr. Edy Korthals Altes, is a former high-ranking Dutch diplomat who became increasingly aware of the conflict between the actions that he was required to take as Ambassador to Spain and his deeply-felt Christian faith. Because of this conflict, he resigned from the Foreign Service of the Netherlands in 1986, and since that time he has devoted himself to working for peace, inter-religious understanding and sustainability. He has been actively involved with Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an organization that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995. Dr. Altes has also served as Co-President of the World Council of Religions for Peace.

Dr. Altes names and discusses in detail three threats faced by the modern world:

1. Nuclear destruction
2. Catastrophic ecological degradation
3. Intolerable economic inequality

He feels that human hubris is responsible for these threats, and that a new global ethic is needed to help civilization through its present crisis. The establishment of such an ethic of universal respect for life, the environment, and social justice, he feels, will require a change of heart - a spiritual awakening. Religions, Dr. Altes says, can offer us help by providing a solid foundation for ethical principles.

The author’s heart-felt idealism and his practical experience with international affairs both contribute to making this an important and challenging book.

John Scales Avery