

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

We encourage readers to request a book or books for a short review of up to 500 words; There are many more books to choose from. Contact the Book Review Editor at: 613-225-7216 or E-mail: ae947@ncf.ca.

TILTING AT RELIGION - a critical scrutiny, Glenn W Ferguson, Prometheus Bks 2003, 152pp, \$20hc. Religious belief and church sects no longer relate to dogma or theology, but to a way of life. Most thinking Americans are cowed into silence.

IN SEARCH OF OUR HUMANITY: Neither Paradise Nor Hell, Valerii A Kuvakin, Prometheus Bks 2003, 342pp, \$36hc. A Russian philosopher reviews the principles of humanism, and the "antivalues" of greed, corruption, addiction, violence, and environmental destruction. The aim is to help people to become aware of themselves.

CROSSROADS TO ISLAM: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State, Yehuda D Nevo & Judith Koren, Prometheus Bks 2003, 462pp \$32hc. A revolutionary theory based on evidence hitherto neglected: local Christian literature, archaeological excavations, numismatics, and rock inscriptions, making untenable the Traditional Account found in Muslim literature.

UNINTELLIGENT DESIGN, Mark Perakh, Prometheus Bks 2003, 459pp \$32hc. An evaluation of ID claims, dissecting creationist pretensions, and exposing the smoke-and-mirrors tactics of Dembski, Behe, and the like. A critique of the "mental acrobatics" of Christian and Jewish writers, plus a description of how genuine science is conducted.

Peter R. Smith reviews:

CORPORATE RULE: Understanding and Challenging the New World Order

David Model

Black Rose Books,
Montreal 2002, 222 pages
\$53.99hc, \$24.99sc

According to Webster's dictionary, democracy is "government in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled". Allegedly it's the form of government that we have in Canada, so why do "we the people" feel such a lack of power? Why do we feel that the government, whatever party it may represent, pays more attention to business than it does to the people who have the power to vote it in or out of office?

Even without the excesses of our neighbors to the South, the political system of this country requires large amounts of money to grease its wheels: approximately \$53 million in political donations in 1997, 97% of which went to the big four (Liberal, NDP, PC and Reform); while parties such as the Green Party garnered only \$63,000. On top of this, corporations spent millions more on their lobbying efforts. But according to Model, it isn't simply that corporations have bought their influence over the political process with large donations, they have also convinced many voters that the neo-liberal policies they promote are actually in our own best interest.

Some of these policies, such as lower taxes and a balanced

budget, have been an easy sell. After all, who would vote for a party promoting higher taxes or spending above your means? The policies may have some appeal, but as the author shows, tax cuts put more money into the pockets of the rich than the poor, and when the budget was balanced by cutting social programs it drove the poorest Canadians deeper into poverty. Similarly, deregulation and 'smaller government' leave corporations free to treat the air, land, and water as their private dumping ground.

While little of this is entirely new to me, the author does bring all the issues together in one place, presenting a somewhat depressing picture of a political system over which we have lost control. However, having helped the reader to understand the issues, as per the subtitle, the author offers another vision of society and some tools for creating it. He offers us a five-fold path: "Awareness" of the alternatives; a "Lifestyle" that is consistent with our standards and principles; "Membership" in a group opposing corporate rule; active "Participation" in these groups and in the political process; and finally taking a "Leadership" role in making the changes you wish to see.

I would recommend this book to every Humanist, but it has a weakness common to most such books. It will change your life only if you make a conscious effort to follow through on the author's suggestions. Simply reading it and understanding it is not enough; you need also to act on it. To quote Gandhi: "You need to be the change you wish to see in the world."

Peter Smith is a long-time humanist and HAC past-president, who lives near Sarnia, Ontario.