

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

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### JEAN-LUC HIEBEL: ASSISTANCE SPIRITUELLE ET CONFLITS ARMÉS — DROIT HUMAIN<sup>1</sup>

Readers of *International Review* will recall that the January-February 1980 number contained a study by Mr. Hiebel entitled "Human rights relating to spiritual assistance as embodied in the Geneva Conventions of 1949". This paper anticipated and summarized the remarkable book which has just come out and which was the author's doctoral thesis for a degree in theology, at the University of Strasbourg. Mr. Hiebel's earlier article for *International Review* will dispense me from writing too lengthy a review, even though the outstanding significance of the book which the Henry Dunant Institute has had the privilege of publishing in its Scientific Collection would have called for more detailed treatment.

Mr. Hiebel is not a jurist and, as we said above, he submitted a theological thesis. Nevertheless, anyone reading it would have certainly been justified in assuming that he had addressed himself to extensive legal studies and indeed the book would have made a perfectly valid thesis for a doctorate in laws. But the approach is also ethical.

A debt of gratitude is owed to Mr. Jean-Luc Hiebel for having devoted considerable effort and time to gathering all that is related to the exercise of the spiritual mission in time of war, the legal basis of which is to be found, of course, in the Geneva Conventions. We are thus offered an indispensable tool for all those who share some responsibility in the implementation and teaching of international humanitarian law—one which is a veritable "summa" on questions well beyond matters of military chaplaincy alone. The book also contains a detailed analysis—quite unique in the case of spiritual assistance—of the deliberations of the Diplomatic Conferences which elaborated the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols, an analysis which renders the book of real topical interest.

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific Collection of the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, 1980, 462 p., 67 Swiss francs, in French only.

After an introductory chapter on the historical background of the question, giving a useful outline of early practices, the author puts forward some major questions: how did spiritual assistance become a subject in international law (chapter 1); how did the right to spiritual assistance evolve in the course of its development (chapters 2 to 8); what is the outlook for spiritual assistance in a law of human rights (chapter 9)? The central portion consists, as a matter of course, of a detailed and pertinent commentary on the treaty provisions governing the right of victims of conflicts to spiritual assistance and the protection and status of chaplains. These considerations are interspersed with a number of cogent observations on such matters as the protection of civilians, the nature of conflicts, the extension of the notion of "combatant", the protection of properties and other relevant subjects.

But no misapprehension should be entertained about the treatise referred to so briefly here. It is not restricted to "technicalities". It also contains some general reflections on the philosophy which inspires assistance and even on such fundamental concepts as religion, war and law.

In short, we have here a book both of science and of thought, a book that is forceful, well constructed and well written, permeated by a spirit of objectivity and liberal-mindedness. It fills a gap that had been hitherto sorely felt and there is no doubt that it will do a great deal to maintain and develop spiritual assistance, a valuable complement to the medical services and indissolubly linked to respect for the human person when acts of violence lead to grievous rifts and schisms among peoples.

**J. P.**

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