

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

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### Two new publications on Henry Dunant

#### FELIX CHRIST: HENRY DUNANT, LIFE AND FAITH OF THE FOUNDER OF THE RED CROSS <sup>1</sup>

Dr. F. Christ, a doctor of theology of the University of Basle, is chief press officer of the Swiss Red Cross in Berne and for several years he has studied the spiritual side of the Red Cross founder's character.

In his book Henry Dunant's life is outlined in five chapters: early years, the Red Cross, solitary wanderings, hope, and lasting fame. At each stage, Dr. Christ places the emphasis on the relation between faith and work, an unusual approach to the deep motivations of the man who was a great deal more than merely "the good Samaritan of Solferino".

The author's theological studies and his careful reading of manuscripts preserved in Geneva have enabled him to fill out aspects of Dunant's personality which are still little known. For example, he describes and comments on, with great exactitude and pertinence, three diagrams by Dunant displayed in the Institute which bears his name. These bizarre compositions, with bright colours and symbolic emblems trace the history of the human race as recounted in the Bible. Such representations always fascinated Dunant; they gave him insight into the risks of a world war and spurred him to work for peace.

Dealing with a subject which has no implications for the present day—religious and theological speculation—the theologian in Dr. Christ has developed his ideas very fully in what is, on the whole, a very interesting book.

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<sup>1</sup> Felix Christ: *Henry Dunant, Leben und Glauben des Rotkreuzgründers*, Imba Verlag, Fribourg-Switzerland, Friedrich Wittig Verlag, Hamburg, 1979, 64 pp., collection « Gelebtes Christentum ».

Unfortunately, some of Dunant's extreme attitudes to events of his time are not mentioned. The inner life of this philanthropist of genius was probably more animated and contained more contradictions than can be inferred from the book.

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## JACQUES POUS: HENRY DUNANT L'ALGÉRIEN <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Pous' book illustrates quite another side of the complex personality of Dunant "The Algerian", in other words, the colonizer and financier. The author had access to archives only recently made available to the public and his work deserves the closest attention.

While Algeria was still smarting in the aftermath of the French conquest, Henry Dunant was among those Europeans who came to colonize it and he later became involved in speculative operations which were neither philanthropic nor completely untainted by questionable dealings. These are the thorny problems surrounding the activities of Dunant which embarrass his admirers. But it must be conceded that a great man may also have his weaknesses; and Dunant, in later years, outgrew the phase in which men seek to conquer their fellows to impose their will and their culture on them, and in his writings he defended each individual and each culture. His final attitude and message, set against the ideas prevalent at the end of the 19th century, gain in originality and grandeur.

Thus Mr. Pous' book discloses some aspects of Dunant's viewpoints which, far from diminishing him, show him as a man who is fallible even though he is a genius, in other words, it brings to light Dunant's humanity.

**Roger Durand**

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Pous, *Henry Dunant l'Algérien ou le mirage colonial*, Geneva, éditions Grounauer, collection Histoire 4, 1979, 291 pp., preface by Henri Guillemin.