



Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis

By Tim Townsend

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Mission at Nuremberg is Tim Townsend's gripping story of the American Army chaplain sent to save the souls of the Nazis incarcerated at Nuremberg, a compelling and thought-provoking tale that raises questions of faith, guilt, morality, vengeance, forgiveness, salvation, and the essence of humanity.

Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke was fifty years old when he enlisted as an Army chaplain during World War II. As two of his three sons faced danger and death on the battlefield, Gerecke tended to the battered bodies and souls of wounded and dying GIs outside London. At the war's end, when other soldiers were coming home, Gerecke was recruited for the most difficult engagement of his life: ministering to the twenty-one Nazis leaders awaiting trial at Nuremberg.

Based on scrupulous research and first-hand accounts, including interviews with still-living participants and featuring sixteen pages of black-and-white photos, *Mission at Nuremberg* takes us inside the Nuremberg Palace of Justice, into the cells of the accused and the courtroom where they faced their crimes. As the drama leading to the court's final judgments unfolds, Tim Townsend brings to life the developing relationship between Gerecke and Hermann Goering, Albert Speer, Wilhelm Keitel, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and other imprisoned Nazis as they awaited trial.

Powerful and harrowing, *Mission at Nuremberg* offers a fresh look at one most horrifying times in human history, probing difficult spiritual and ethical issues that continue to hold meaning, forcing us to confront the ultimate moral question: Are some men so evil they are beyond redemption?

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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In 1945, as the Allies readied the complicated plans for the Nuremberg trials, religion was a consideration, per the Geneva Convention's regulations. As award-winning religion reporter and first-time book author Townsend puts it, they had to determine "whether to supply the architects of the Holocaust with a Christian minister to comfort their spirits as they explained to the world the murder of six million Jews." The Lutheran minister the Allies provided was Henry Gerecke, a middle-aged U.S. Army chaplain from south St. Louis. Along with Father Sixtus O'Connor, a Catholic, Chaplain Gerecke spent months ministering to the top tier of Nazi criminals. In a clear, gripping, and extensively researched narrative, Townsend raises the hard questions of good and evil, forgiveness and retribution; and, also, whether these killers, obeying orders and ignoring morality, deserved spiritual succor in what were, for many of them, their final days. There is much to ponder and bemoan in this detailed report of the trials and of a brave, kindly pastor moving through the "most frightening experience of his life." --Eloise Kinney

Review

"Townsend's account is full of surreal moments Gerecke witnessed during his time in Nuremberg" (*Publishers Weekly*)

"Rich, potentially explosive. ... Townsend authoritatively addresses the excruciating moral and religious issues confronting wartime chaplains." (Kirkus Reviews)

"Gripping." (*Daily Mail (London)*)

"Engagingly told...Townsend illuminates a hidden gem of World War II history and brings to light the life and career of a truly heroic Christian man...an important book. It deserves a wide audience." (Christianity Today)

"A gripping story... puts the reader inside the cells of various Hitler henchmen." (Wichita Eagle)

"Sheds light on a little-known player in an iconic episode of world history. ... A well-written study about a subject matter that can't help but hold a reader's attention." (America in WWII Magazine)

"A dramatic story." (Lutheran Quarterly)

From the Back Cover

The gripping story of the American army chaplain sent to save the souls of the Nazis incarcerated at Nuremberg

Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke was fifty years old when he enlisted as an army chaplain during World War II. As two of his three sons faced danger and death on the battlefield, Gerecke tended to the battered bodies and souls of wounded and dying GIs outside London. But at the close of the European theater, with Hitler defeated and scores of American troops returning home to resume their lives, Gerecke received his most challenging assignment: he was sent to Nuremberg to minister to the twenty-one imprisoned Nazi leaders awaiting trial for crimes against humanity.

A crucial yet largely untold coda to the horrors of World War II, *Mission at Nuremberg* unearths groundbreaking new research and compelling firsthand accounts to take us deep inside the Nuremberg Palace of Justice, into the very cells of the accused and the courtroom where they answered to the world for their crimes. Never before in modern history had man accomplished mass slaughter with such precision. These twenty-one Nazis had sat at the right hand of Adolf Hitler; Hermann Goering, Albert Speer, Wilhelm Keitel, Hans Frank, and Ernst Kaltenbrunner were the orchestrators, and in some cases the direct perpetrators, of the most methodical genocide in history.

As the drama leading to the court's final judgments unfolds, Tim Townsend brings Henry Gerecke's impossible moral quandary to life: How, having risked his own life (and those of his sons) to eliminate the Nazi threat, could he now win the confidence of these men? In the months after the war ended, Gerecke had visited Dachau. He had touched the walls of the camp's crematorium. He had seen the consequences of the choices these men had made, the orders they had given and carried out. As he worked to form compassionate relationships with them, how could he preach the gospel of mercy, knowing full well the devastating nature of the atrocities they had committed? And as the day came nearer when he had to escort these men to the gallows, what comfort could he offer—and what promises of salvation could he make—to evil itself?

Detailed, harrowing, and emotionally charged, *Mission at Nuremberg* is an incisive new history of the Nuremberg trials as well as a nuanced reflection on the nature of morality and sin, the price of empathy, and the limits of forgiveness.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Judith Tate:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a publication. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled *Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis*. Try to make book *Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis* as your friend. It means that it can being your friend when you feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let's make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

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Sandra Black:

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