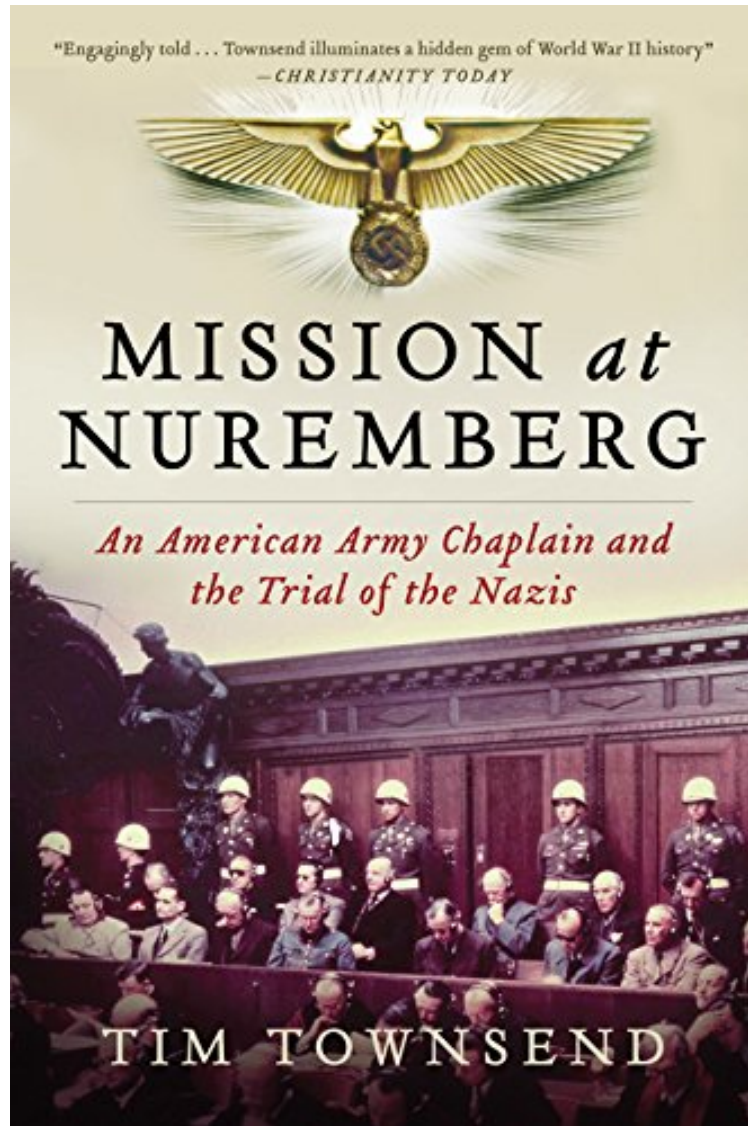


Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis

Tim Townsend

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#588334 in Books Tim Townsend 2015-03-03 2015-03-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .94 x 5.311, .0 #File Name: 006199720X416 pages Mission at Nuremberg An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis | File size: 24.Mb

Tim Townsend : Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Grace-in-actionBy Robert G. LeroeI grew up in Germany as an

Army Brat and served there twice as an Army chaplain, yet in all that time I never heard this story. The multi-volume history of the US Army chaplaincy doesn't even mention Chaplain Gerecke. What a gift to have this amazing story of a man of God who faced pure evil with grace. Tim Townsend presents the origins and mission of the military chaplaincy, gives extensive background on Nuremberg and the Third Reich, and offers a detailed biography of the tireless and talented Missouri Synod Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke. We learn of his civilian pastorate (including prison ministry), his combat ministry in an Army hospital, his visit to Dachau, his devotionals on AFN, and finally his assignment to the high-ranking Nazi defendants during the Nuremberg trial. Gerecke was so effective and needed that the Nazi prisoners wrote his wife Alma, pleading with her to allow him to stay longer to provide pastoral care for them and their families. The letter, with each of their signatures, has to be one of the most remarkable documents of WWII. We could easily disregard the Nazi prisoners' warm reception to the American chaplains as a ploy to be seen in a better light, yet even after the sentencing they continued to meet for worship, read Scripture, and have long daily talks with the chaplains. Only five refused any pastoral care. After the verdict, several admitted their guilt and expressed remorse. Townsend offers a brief bio of each of the Nazi defendants. Other chaplains served at the Nuremberg trial, and it would have been helpful to know more about the rest of the team. Townsend mentions that the Catholic chaplain Fr O'Connor smuggled Speers' manuscript of *Inside the Third Reich* to a publisher (but not why). Were there no UCMJ repercussions? The brief section on theodicy opens a can of worms, poses questions, and offers few answers. What's the point? To cast doubt on God's person and plan? Townsend suggests that by giving us free will, God is culpable for our choices. Also, the section on the JEDP theory of the Torah was not necessary and is not universally accepted. The identity of the NCO in charge of the executions was kept secret by the military. Townsend gives the person's name, while implying the secrecy was to avoid shaming the executioner. He describes the executions as if they were a disgraceful event. Note: the Nazis complained about the dishonor of hanging, wanting a military firing squad instead, and were told they were being executed as criminals, not soldiers. Fr O'Connor insisted, "You absolve them of their sins, but you don't absolve them of their actions." Minor objections aside, *Mission at Nuremberg* chronicles a significant event of military/church history that has until now been overlooked. There was never a question of whether to provide pastoral care to these heinous Nazis, but how. That the victors should care about the spiritual condition of some of the most evil men in history shows their great compassion. This is indeed a moving story of grace-in-action.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An extra star for the discussion it started. By M. Heiss. This is a three star book. An extra star because it inspired great discussions. Townsend does a good job presenting religion as non-manipulative (141, 153, 165, 174), vital, and comforting (141, 164, 251). His ability to present how religion offers a restoration of a relationship with God is mixed, at best. His best attempts at explaining forgiveness are on 253, 261, and 277. These guys were lucky to have an LCMS pastor, although Tim Townsend never quite gets why. It's because the Lutherans believe that Christ's death covered the sins of all. There isn't any sin too big or too horrifying. Jesus died to forgive it. Full stop. The Nazis were big sinners, but they weren't worse sinners than me. If I am forgiven (and I am), they are forgiven. All confessing Christians are forgiven. The Nuremberg Nazis who repented and became confessing Christians were cleansed of all their sins. That's where Tim Townsend's book falls short. He has a section on the differences between Jewish and Catholic concepts of forgiveness (278-287), but he doesn't present Gerecke's LUTHERAN understanding of forgiveness, Christian forgiveness. And so what should have been a powerful idea in the book is... overlooked... lacking. He actually gets it entirely wrong on pages 251 and 265: "The Nuremberg chaplains were not judging the members of their flocks, nor were they forgiving their crimes against humanity. They were trying to lead those Nazis who were willing to follow toward a deeper insight into what they had done. They were attempting to give Hitler's henchmen new standing as human beings before their executions." And "... Gerecke said, 'You may be on the church roll, but you do not have faith in Christ and have not accepted him as your savior.' As a Lutheran pastor, Gerecke would not have been trying to give 'deeper insights' or bring about 'accepting Jesus as a savior.'" That may be a secular definition of forgiveness, but it is not a Lutheran understanding of forgiveness. There is a Lutheran pastor mentioned as a resource for the writer, Travis Scholl at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Perhaps Scholl did not get to read these passages and offer a better understanding. Perhaps Scholl was only on background for general Lutheran pastor training. Townsend does a good job of presenting the sense of outrage the public felt that these notorious criminals should have spiritual succor. (135, 140) He brings in the idea of the Mark of Cain (248-251), as God's way of protecting the sinner from the rage of the innocent. The most interesting part of the book were the descriptions of the prison layout and routines, including the construction of the gallows (255-258) and the process of the executions (first chapter, also after 269). The writing here was clean and interesting, and I excerpted this section for use with teens studying the holocaust. (First they read Corrie Ten Boom's "The Hiding Place," which is far more exciting and adventurous than the Anne Frank diary.) The biographical information in the book made for somewhat dull reading, but the brief sections on the trial and executions were worthwhile. 34 black and white photos. Horrible notes system - no note numbers in the text. If you flip to the end of the book, you get some notes by PAGE NUMBER. That's a bad system. Glad I read the book, because it clarified my understanding of what Gerecke was offering: Christian forgiveness through grace. Nothing less.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. True Christian Love. By Eugene D. Mossner. I had previously heard and read about Lutheran Pastor (Chaplain) Henry

Gerecke, years ago, but this book tells the whole story about his ministry to the Nazi war criminals, and how he tried to bring them to faith in Christ before their execution. In some cases he succeeded; in others he did not. But his efforts were appreciated by most, even Goering who attended chapel services faithfully, yet, in the end, refused to return to his former faith, and died at his own hand. It also gives us insight into the work of Catholic Chaplain, Fr. Richard (Sixtus) O'Conner, and his work with the six Catholic prisoners. This truly was an ecumenical effort to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to 21 men who needed to hear it. Anyone reading this book will be inspired by what it has to say about Christian love -- even for those who, for many years, did not practice it toward others.

Once Adolf Hitler was defeated, U.S. Army Chaplain Henry 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. *Mission at Nuremberg* takes us deep inside the Nuremberg Palace of Justice, into the cells of the accused and the courtroom where they answered to the world for their crimes. These twenty-one Nazis had sat at Hitler's right hand; 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. Gerecke had visited Dachau and had seen the consequences of the choices these men had made, the orders they had given and carried out. How could he preach the gospel of mercy, knowing full well the devastating nature of the atrocities they had committed? As execution day drew near, 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.

From Booklist In 1945, as the Allies readied the complicated plans for the Nuremberg trials, religion was a consideration, per the Geneva Conventions 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 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 s) 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 Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke was fifty years old when he enlisted as an army chaplain during World War II. At the close of the European theater, 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. Detailed, incisive and emotionally charged, *Mission at Nuremberg* unearths groundbreaking new research and compelling first-hand 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. 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 of the most methodical genocide in history. As the drama leading to the court's final judgments unfolds, Townsend brings Henry Gerecke's impossible moral quandary to life. As he worked to form compassionate relationships with these men, 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 when he had to escort each of these men to the gallows, what comfort could he offer and what promises of salvation could he make to evil itself?