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## [Book Review of] *In Good Conscience: Abortion and Moral Necessity*, by David Mall

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tigious medical journals, do not speak of killing unborn infants by abortion. Rather, talk is of "emptying the uterus of its contents," or of "evacuating the product of conception," or of "terminating a pregnancy."

Brennan is brilliant in exposing the linguistic distortions used both in Nazi Germany to conceal the barbarism of genocide and in contemporary America to hide the killing involved in abortion.

This work is sure to evoke outrage from those who are aware of the barbarity of abortion, and especially — if it is not ignored — from those who defend abortion for daring to compare what they defend to the atrocities of Nazi Germany. One can only hope that this work will help open the eyes and hearts and minds of many who may, unfortunately, have been deceived by the rhetoric of abortion advocates. In 1970, an editorial in *California Medicine* (cited by Brennan) observed: "The considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as anything but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not put forward under socially impeccable auspices." Unfortunately, elitist groups in the United States have been quite successful in their rationalizations of this barbarity. Brennan's sobering work, so devastatingly chilling and massively documented, may help to unmask the ugly reality of the holocaust of abortion in America today.

— William E. May  
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## *In Good Conscience: Abortion and Moral Necessity*

David Mall

*Kairos Books, Inc., P.O. Box 708, Libertyville, Ill. 60048, 1982, 212 pp., \$18.50 cloth, \$8.50 paper.*

This stimulating book, a work of rhetoric and moral analysis, seeks "to make persuasion easier for those who uphold the 'pro-life' position" (p. ix). It offers a "meta-rhetoric" resting on Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Mall does not take Kohlberg's theory purely at face value, but rather analyzes it critically throughout his book while using it as a tool "to increase the reader's awareness of and sensitivity to the moral reasoning patterns used in the abortion debate" (p. 2). He believes that the rhetorician's task is to help people change their patterns of moral thinking.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with some theoretical considerations and with an exposition of the stages of moral development. Here Mall notes that morality needs to be grounded in human nature and he contends that, at least at the advanced levels, moral judgment is linked to certain outcomes. In particular, advance in moral reasoning leads one ultimately to a "pro-life" position. "Moralizing that favors abortion is really an anti-development" (p. 41). Following Kohlberg, Mall argues that justice is central to morality and forms the basis for civil society. Yet he goes beyond Kohlberg in arguing that further consid-

eration needs to be given to the negative side of the stages of moral development, and in further developing Kohlberg's ideas in speaking of the *modes* of moral development. "... a mode is used to describe moral thinking within a single content area at a given point in time, whereas a stage covers an array of content areas as they converge over a period of time" (p. 57).

In perhaps the most fascinating part of his study, Mall devotes Part II to classifying current moral arguments on the abortion question, both pro and con, according to the modes of moral discourse. Thus arguments range from those at mode 1, based on punishment, to those at mode 6, based on universal principles, and continue to the cosmic awareness of mode 7. Significantly, in discussing mode 6, Mall argues that choice is an insufficient ordering principle since it cannot lead to the equilibrium of rights and duties called for by principled thinking.

In Part III, Mall discusses thought and action, arguing that the educator is to stimulate moral growth by optimizing those conditions which promote it. The rhetorician seeks to promote growth in a particular area. He or she is concerned with action and commitment on the abortion question. Because of the critical problems facing our society, "Moral educators must be socializers and advocates" (p. 119). The developmentalism of Kohlberg applied to this content area becomes a persuasive instrument. Mall offers some general ideas on such persuasion. Rhetoricians are called to "cue people in" by opening discussion of developmental structures, to promote role-taking with its emphatic regard for all participants in the discussion, to promote alternatives which would help all sides to see themselves as winners in the debate while eliminating abortion, to join with others who promote similar values of human life, and to create that cognitive dissonance which leads to moral growth. The rhetorician needs to avoid self-righteousness and to embrace love and humility in helping others to come to sound moral reasoning.

Mall's work is well-written and insightful. It shows a depth of research and approaches a very controverted question from a refreshing point of view which leads the reader to see things in a new way. Mall shows an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of Kohlberg's position, though his reasons for accepting the controverted post-conventional stages of moral autonomy could stand some further elaboration. In all, Mall offers those involved in the "pro-life" movement a challenging and helpful rhetorical synthesis.

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