

*Religious Violence and Abortion: The Gideon Project.* By Dallas A. Blanchard and Terry J. Prewitt. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993. Pp. xvi, 347. Illustrations, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

Dallas Blanchard and Terry Prewitt's important and impressive book is much more than just a case study of four young fundamentalist Christians who were arrested and convicted for bombing four abortion clinics in Pensacola, Florida, in 1984. Most significantly, it is also a comprehensive examination of the social roots and religious motivations underlying anti-abortion terrorism; all told it represents the best-informed overview analysis of violent "right to life" activities yet provided by any scholar.

Matt Goldsby and Jimmy Simmons were drawn toward anti-abortion violence by their involvement in the Assembly of God. Picketing of Pensacola abortion clinics had begun in March 1983 by former Ku Klux Klansman John Burt, another Assembly of God member, and fifteen months later Goldsby and Simmons carried out their first bombing. Exactly half-a-year later, on Christmas Day 1984, they detonated bombs at three different Pensacola facilities. Identified and arrested as a result of painstaking detective work by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, both Goldsby and Simmons were tried and convicted by a Pensacola federal court jury and sentenced to prison. Simmons' young wife and Goldsby's girlfriend also were convicted of conspiracy but not sent to jail.

Blanchard and Prewitt note the "strong indication that the bombings were not a secret held only among the four principals" (p. 290) and report that "perhaps as many as a dozen members or attendees of First Assembly [of God] knew Jimmy and Matt had committed the June 25 bombing" (p. 296). More broadly, they argue that a "bent toward violence is encouraged by the fundamentalist tendency to see conspiracies lurking behind what is perceived as moral decay" (p. 229), and that "violence is endemic to fundamentalism itself" and "inherent" in fundamentalists' "central theological tenet" (p. 261).

Goldsby and Simmons' bombing plans, Blanchard and Prewitt believe, were reinforced by "the belief that they had a community of support, that they would be enforcing community norms and values" (p. 242). "Clinic violence across the country," they point out, "has all been perpetrated by intensely religious, fundamentally religious, persons," and an "essential condition for the violence appears to be the presence of and interaction with a community that is perceived as a source of support, a community to act on behalf of, to give moral sanction to the act of violence" (pp. 242-43). "There was clear support of the Pensacola bombings and the bombers" among Goldsby and Simmons' religious colleagues, and Blanchard and Prewitt note that "there is a cooperative and mutually reinforcing relationship between

the nonviolent public activist and the violent incognito actors. . . . The more extreme the behavior of the 'non-violent' activists and the closer their actions come to actual violence against persons, the higher the likelihood of 'real' violence" (p. 264). They correctly emphasize that "the violent wing of any movement can arise and continue to operate only with an approving audience" (p. 257).

A comprehensive survey, Blanchard and Prewitt report, shows anti-abortion bombers and arsonists to be working-class men in their twenties or thirties. "Uniformly fundamentalists," with "few, if any, close ties outside their religious community," such men appear to be "operating out of a desire to control and even punish women" (p. 274). Today even some right to life activists acknowledge their movement's disappointing inability to move beyond such socially marginal bases of support, and as Blanchard and Prewitt state, "the escalation of violence in the anti-abortion movement is an important indication of its failure to mobilize popular support" beyond "a fairly solid core of determined activists" who receive far more media attention than "their number warrants" (pp. 260, 237).

Anti-abortion violence, the authors realize, has relatively little to do with the status of the fetus or abortion per se. As earlier writers have also concluded, "abortion is only a skirmish in the battle over the nature of the family in a war to establish a theocracy" (p. 275). While the 1992 Supreme Court ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* marks the end of the road for the right to life efforts to reverse *Roe v. Wade*, ongoing but scattered efforts by extremist figures such as Randall Terry guarantee that public controversy over the issue will not completely disappear. Blanchard and Prewitt's book is an extremely valuable contribution, and merits far more attention than it is likely to receive.

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*Images of the South: Constructing a Regional Culture on Film and Video.* Edited by Karl G. Heider. Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings, No. 26. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993. Pp. vi, 207. Illustrations, figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.00 cloth, \$16.00 paper.)

This is a collection of research papers presented at an academic conference. They were written by individual researchers doing their own things with disparate materials and different ideas of what those materials may mean. But they're all thinking about the same phenomenon ultimately: the relentless presence all this century of certain types of southerners and of certain southern places in American popular entertainment, in everything from minstrel shows to