

constrained by *Roe v. Wade*, and the solution is not to criminalize abortion, but to change hearts and minds. However, in an imperfect world it is possible to limit the incidence of abortion, which the partial-birth ban would clearly do. In voting against this measure Kerry failed to exercise his right to validate what he claims as his private view—that abortion is wrong. This is baffling since the majority of Americans do not favor unrestricted abortion rights and find the partial-birth procedure morally and physically repugnant. Kerry had nothing to lose. For me this is a question of his fundamental honesty, and so I am deeply troubled by his ambivalent stand on this issue. I have never been a one-issue voter and refuse to be defined by anyone's litmus test. But I must confess there are times I wish there was a ballot choice for "none of the above."

PHYLLIS L. TOWNLEY
New York, N.Y.

Censure the bishops

I agree with your editorial on "Communion Politics" (May 21), but do not share your hope that "individual bishops" will challenge Archbishops Myers and Burke on their statements about denying Communion to pro-choice politicians. So far neither the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops nor individual bishops have had the courage to challenge bishops who enabled and facilitated the sexual abuse of children. Why would they rock the ecclesiastical boat on this subject?

I believe that the church should lose its tax-exempt status if it continues to inject a selective enforcement of Catholic teachings into elections. Intelligent voters understand that pro-choice and pro-life labels conceal a multitude of sins, but uninformed Catholics may follow the lead of their bishops and pastors, regardless of their lack of knowledge about other important issues.

EILEEN M. FORD
Rockport, Mass.

Ending abortion

With regard to your "Communion Politics" editorial (May 21), four points:

1. Contrary to what you seem to suggest, most Catholic proliferers are not seriously aiming at the universal recriminalization of abortion. Their aim is to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which would throw the abortion question back to the states, some of which (for example, many Southern states) would recriminalize, while others (for example, New York and California) would maintain the highly permissive status quo.

2. John Kerry very publicly rejects an ancient moral doctrine of the church, namely that abortion is a grave evil. This makes him a heretic (to use an old-fashioned but technically correct word). If the U.S. bishops fail to make a forceful response to his heresy, they will have failed in their teaching office, sending a message to Catholics that the church is not truly serious in its condemnation of abortion.

3. If Kerry contends that he is not heretical since he is "personally opposed" to abortion, this only compounds the offense, adding insincerity to doctrinal deviance. Here is a man who repeatedly votes to protect partial-birth abortion, who vows that he will have a pro-*Roe* litmus test for Supreme Court justices, and who eagerly courts the political support of America's most rabid champions of abortion—how can such a man honestly say that he agrees with the church's teaching that abortion is a form of homicide?

4. While the bishops are obliged to sanction Kerry in a strong and conspicuous manner, they don't necessarily have to do it by denying him Communion. A good press conference might do just as well.

DAVID R. CARLIN
Newport, R.I.

The editors reply:

It is good to have former columnist and old friend David Carlin back in *Commonweal's* pages even when he is advancing misguided policies. Some of the issues he raises were addressed in a subsequent editorial, "Kerry, the Catholic," (June 18). We would add

the following points: Although most Catholic proliferers may not be working for the recriminalization of abortion, official church statements appear to be advocating that. The church's appeal to absolutist rhetoric, like David Carlin's imprecise use of the terms "heresy" and "murder," makes the pro-life case less convincing to many and the possibility of political compromise that would reduce the number of abortions less likely.

Before 'Roe'

Regarding your issue on abortion politics (June 4): I am a former seminarian and a retired high-school teacher. Early in my career, before *Roe v. Wade*, a female student came to me and told me that she was pregnant. The reason she came to me was that she had an important paper due on the following Monday and she wanted an extension. We made an arrangement for her paper to be late. As it turned out, that was the last time I spoke to her. A few days later, police found her body in a dumpster. She had gone to an "abortion mill" and was killed during the procedure.

There will always be some women who, for their own very personal reasons, will want to have an abortion. Should they be forced to undergo this procedure illegally, it would most likely be very unsafe. Would it not fall under Christian charity to supply these women with a safe place to have an abortion? Wouldn't that be the pro-life thing to do?

C. JAMES SCHRENKER JR.
Summerville, S.C.

Stopping genocide

I was confused by the statement in your editorial on Sudan ("Collateral Damage," June 4) that the American people and their representatives must, in concert with other nations, act to end ethnic cleansing in Darfur. It seems you have set up the perfect situation. You have called for action and then ensured it would not happen.

The United Nations is not going to act. It hasn't in the past and nothing suggests it will do so now. Is this a job

for NATO—or have France and Germany had their fill? I expect they have. Who thinks that Russia or China or India or Japan will act? The only local nation that might be able to intervene is Egypt and it is occupied with the consequences of the Israeli pullout from Gaza and the spread of terrorism from Saudi Arabia.

If there is to be intervention to prevent another wave of mass murder it is up to the United States, Great Britain, and Australia and a few friends. Can we do it? Do we have the forces? Yes. We can call up two divisions—and associated forces—out of the Guard and Reserve and activate the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. We would also have to increase Army strength by 175,000 and Air Force strength by 25,000. This may turn out to be a long and messy intervention and we need to be prepared for that outcome.

Now, we have to get our forces in place between the Sudanese government forces and those they have been attacking. Sudan is land locked, so this means getting flyover rights. From whom? We would probably have to impose ourselves on Ethiopia and eat the added cost of flying around Egypt. Now we get to the hard part. We can protect our vulnerable transports by escorting them, taking our losses as they come, or by destroying the Sudanese Air Force on the ground. Which is it to be? The loss of the odd C-17 and Boeing 747 or a quick bombing campaign? Either way, we are now into killing to avoid being killed. And, we haven't even faced Sudanese ground forces. Is this what *Commonweal* is recommending? Urging action means accepting the consequences.

C. R. KRIEGER
Lowell, Mass.

The writer is a retired Air Force colonel. He has commanded a fighter wing and served as chief of the Joint Staff Strategy Division.

Blaming Bush

C'mon guys, I know you have a burning need to blame everything on President George W. Bush, but claiming that his unilateral actions in Iraq have

prevented the world from doing anything in Sudan is pretty ludicrous. The world refused to do anything about Sudan long before Bush was president. You can't blame him for this mess.

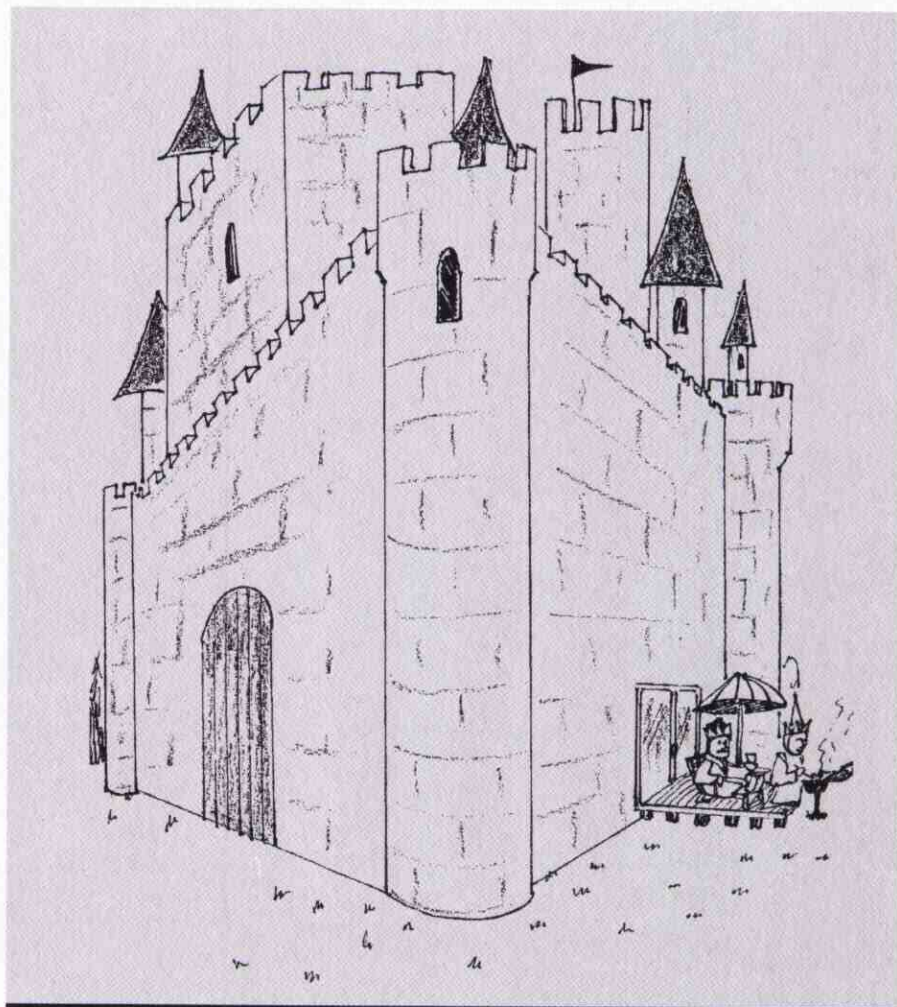
GERRY GILLESPIE
Meriden, Conn.

The editors reply:

Nowhere does our editorial blame President George W. Bush for the "mess" in Darfur. On the contrary, we put the onus squarely on the Sudanese government, and praise the Bush administration for drawing the UN's attention to the disaster. That said, the U.S. response has been hesitant and tardy, in part because of Washington's weakened credibility and lack of focus following the invasion of Iraq. This has not "prevented" others from acting in Sudan; but lacking U.S. leadership, the situation has become a humanitarian disaster. The

recent visit of Secretary of State Colin Powell to the region is welcome, but it came only after increased domestic pressure.

The thrust of Colonel Krieger's argument is that without massive infusions of U.S. troops and logistical support, little can be done in Darfur. We disagree. Military intervention is only the last of a series of options, including UN sanctions. But even then, only small forces could prove significant. A scant two hundred U.S. troops deployed to Liberia last year helped to end the brutal civil war there. Renewed diplomatic relations with Sudan's neighbor Libya (one of the Bush administration's signal foreign-policy achievements) suggests potential access to Darfur. Nor is Sudan unaware of the potential for U.S. missile strikes, or the increased presence of U.S. military personnel in East Africa following the bombing of two



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