

WorldWatch

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A European President?

A heated debate taking place within the EU is over whether the EU should have a president. The larger countries—England, France, Spain—favor this arrangement because it will allow Europe to become "influential on the world scene" by having a single point of governmental authority. With the current system, no single voice speaks for the EU, but rather individual EU states are recognized as holding the presidency. Smaller countries—Austria, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands—oppose the idea of an EU president as this would strengthen large countries' influence in Europe. They argue that the future EU president would always be a national from a big state. So far, Germany, a large EU country but of a federalist tradition, holds an uncertain position on the issue.

In-Vitro Fertilization

The American Infertility Association estimates that a million children have been born due to in-vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment since the first "test tube baby" was born in England in 1978. The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children responds by pointing out, "Tens of millions of IVF babies have perished in a process which puts early unborn lives at an enormously disproportionate risk of death." Earlier this year, Australian researchers found that IVF babies are twice as likely to have birth defects as those conceived naturally. According to Dr. Evelyn Billings, only 1.7% of conceptions generated by IVF treatment results in a live birth.

Education

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) says 73% of polled U.S. college seniors admit instructors consistently teach a post-modern philosophy that there are no uniform standards of right and wrong. Stephen Balch, president of NAS, says professors pass on their personal philosophy of "anything goes" to their students, and to fix the problem we must change the way professors are educated. Students also report that "diversity in the workforce" is taught more than is "providing accurate business statements to stockholders and creditors." The belief that right and wrong are "socially constructed" has been taught for about two decades. This type of philosophy, Balch says, may have played a role in recent corporate scandals.

Europe and the Catholic Church

The European Convention aims to set up the constitutional and institutional framework of the future Europe. Pope John Paul II has appealed that it "acknowledge and safeguard those values that constitute the most precious heritage of European humanism." He wants it to respect "the dignity of the person; the sacred character of human life; the central role of the family founded on marriage; the importance of education; freedom of thought, word and profession of one's convictions and religion." What is more, he insists, the Church has the "right-duty" to offer its "specific contribution" to the new Europe. John Paul II explained that multiple cultural roots "have contributed to the affirmation" of these values: from the Greek and Roman, as well as the Latin, Celtic, Germanic, Slav, Hungarian, and Scandinavian peoples, and the Jewish and Muslim worlds. "In recognizing this historical fact in

the current process toward institutional ordering, Europe will not be able to ignore its Christian heritage," the Pope declared. He has made several similar statements this year.

Catholic and Other Churches

» Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury, primate of the Anglican Communion, called John Paul II the "spiritual leader of the whole of Christianity." "In our conversations we have spoken of the way toward the most profound unity; of course there are differences, but on fundamental aspects the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are, in reality, very close." In January 2001, the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church formed a working group to encourage mutual relations and work toward unity.

» Although the process has been slow, Pope John Paul II remains committed to ecumenism and continued theological dialogue between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. According to Rome, much "still remains to be done, especially in view of the effort to reinforce or bring peace to various parts of the world, including the Holy Land."

» A recent study reveals that a third of Church of England clergy doubt or disbelieve in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, and only half believe in the virgin birth. The poll of nearly 2,000 of the 10,000 clergy also finds that only half believe that faith in Christ is the only route to salvation. While it has long been known that numerous clerics are unconvinced about the historic creeds of the Church, the survey is the first to disclose how widespread the skepticism is.