

1968: A Global Perspective

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Catholic Bioethics in Slumber

With the promulgation of his encyclical "Humane Vitae," Paul VI reiterated the Church's teaching that contraception was a grave moral evil, and thereby its use forbidden among Catholics wishing to adhere to the church's magisterium. Much has been made of the well-attested fact that in doing this, Paul VI also publically contravened an international advisory panel who suggested a change in church teaching, which a number of high-ranking Vatican officials supported. But this document had more than a localized effect. While mainline Protestants continued to accommodate biotechnological developments, "Humanae Vitae" set the stage for a distinctively Catholic bioethic with wide-ranging implications. This paper examines those implications by exploring the integral links between "Humanae Vitae" and the recent non-accommodationalist statements on bioethics made in the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.