**Christian Churches and the Sanctity of Life**

The concept of the right to life is deeply rooted in the Bible. The Bible begins with the story of creation, with mankind (out of all of creation) being made in His image. The Old Testament is full of stories of God's involvement in the affairs of mankind, and of His love for His creation. The Psalms repeatedly speak of God's relationship with Man. The cornerstone of the Christian faith is that God loved humanity so much that He gave His only son as a sacrifice to save all people from death. In his life, Jesus demonstrated love for all people, especially the poor, weak and sick.

In summary, Christianity teaches that all people, at all stages of life, are sacred and should be treated with the greatest of respect. However, Christian churches have not agreed about how to respond to life and death issues.

**The Roman Catholic Church**

As you will see by reading through the Catholic Church's teaching on Abortion, Euthansia and Contraception, the Church teaches that human life needs to be treated as sacred from the moment of conception. While it is impossible to demonstrate that human life begins at conception, Catholics hold that it is certainly possible, and therefore even at the embryonic stage you need to treat the embryo as a human being.

The Catholic Church also adopts an absolutist ethical stance. This means that they believe in rules that have no exceptions, and 'Do not kill' is an example of one of these rules. As a result, they oppose abortion even in cases where, for example, the mother's life is at risk. One case involved a 9 year old who was raped - an abortion was carried out and the doctors involved were excommunicated (kicked out of the church).

**The Church of England**

The Church of England is typical of many Protestant churches. They have a great deal of respect for the principle of the sanctity of life, but feel it needs to be balanced against the command to 'love thy neighbour'. As such, they are able to see abortion as, in all cases, evil, but sometimes the lesser of two evils. The Church of England supports experimentation on embryos during the first 14 days, which could lead to very important medical advances that affect the lives of millions of people.