

**Chelmsford Cathedral**  
**The Keene Lectures 2008**  
***Changing Climates***  
**Lecture 3: The Social Climate**  
**Michael Schluter**

The text of the lecture delivered by Dr Michael Schluter in Chelmsford Cathedral on  
Wednesday November 19<sup>th</sup> 2008

**Introduction**

I work with two major organisations: the Jubilee Centre and the Relationships Foundation. At the Jubilee Centre we are quite specifically concerned about how you apply the Bible to public life. The Relationships Foundation, on the other hand, is not a Christian organisation. It is inclusive, if you like, but it is based on the ethical values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

If you want to get into many organisations today in Britain, as a Christian you're not allowed to get past the door of entry, because people are worried about you being sectarian or fundamentalist or doing evangelism. It's very difficult to engage, for example, in a prison; to engage with the whole prison population, as they will say: 'Well, we have five prisoners who are Christians and they meet on Sundays and you can go and talk to them over there.' However, if you want to engage with the entire prison population about the values and issues that concern them, then it is important that you are seen to be inclusive. So for those and other reasons we have the two bodies that work side by side: the Jubilee Centre and the Relationships Foundation. I am speaking to you tonight under the Jubilee Centre umbrella, as a Christian audience, although I will be referring a lot to the kinds of values that inform the work of the Relationships Foundation.

**1. What is the 'social climate'?**

My title tonight is 'The Social Climate' and I hope you will forgive me if I begin by defining terms. The first word is 'social'. I'm an economist by background, and I'm therefore going to refer to quite a number of issues that include economics and politics as well as what might be broadly defined as sociology. And secondly, the

word 'climate'. I understand climate to include the climate of opinion, so I believe refers to attitudes, feelings, perceptions – all of these, of course, are drawn from the reality that people experience; but it's a slightly intangible thing. 'Climate' in this sense is how you *feel* about things.

I'm going to be talking about what people refer to as normal or acceptable; what people feel comfortable with, or uncomfortable with. I'm also going to talk about why it matters and what we can do about it. Karl Marx said that the important thing in thinking about society is not just to understand it but to change it. And I think, as a Christian, that is absolutely right. I think Christ would endorse Karl Marx on that point. What matters is where does our understanding of our reality take us in the light of God's revelation of himself, both in his word and supremely in the person of Christ. Our goal should not be just to understand the world but to change the world, so it conforms to the way that God would like it to be.

Those who know the work of the Jubilee Centre will not be surprised that I want to focus in on the issue of relationships. I think the social climate is primarily concerned with how people relate to each other. But I want to stress that I am not just interested in how *individuals* relate to each other, although in our individualistic western society that becomes very quickly our preoccupation.

## **2. A 'Relational Framework'**

We think of relationships – first of all, if you're a teenager, as sexual relationships. When you get beyond your teens and into your twenties and thirties you might extend your understanding of the word relationships to include a wider set of friendships. It's now a vocabulary that's coming into the life of business and into the public services and so on, much more generally. But I think as western individualistic Christians we're a bit slow to recognise that if God is interested in relationships he is also interested in the relationships that exist *between groups* of people, between churches, between denominations, between companies; between Tesco's and the farmers in Cornwall who produce milk for it. Between cities, between nations, between Britain and France, for example, is a relationship that God is most interested in. Between ethnic groups and racial groups, and how they treat each other . . . . So I think the word relationship has a very broad span.

At the Jubilee Centre we argue that Christianity is, more than any other religion on the face of the earth, a religion about relationships. Think of our understanding of

God in Christianity. Freud argued that we, as human beings, invented God because we wanted a kind of father figure in the sky to look after us. But surely nobody had the creativity to come up with the idea of God as Trinity. Who would ever think of inventing a God who is out there beyond ourselves as *three* Persons? Admittedly we believe they are united in love with one another so that they are also One Person, but 'God as Trinity' says that relationship is not just something that God out there tells us as human beings we must do (as you could say Islam suggests) but rather that God is within himself or herself in an ultimate sense relational. So relationships have existed since before the beginning of time. Relationships existed before the physical creation. Relationships in that sense are ultimate reality.

Now I don't want to get into a kind of dualism of body and spirit or anything like that. Relationships are incarnated into our physical existence; but I think it is important to recognise that Christianity is a relational, a person religion, over against the eastern religions where ultimately your soul is absorbed into the Great Nirvana or nothingness where it ceases to have individual identity and where there is no relationship. There is ultimately no relationship with another person if you're a Buddhist or a Hindu, and therefore death in that sense is ultimate, total and final separation from other people.

So Trinity – in Christianity we have a concept of covenant which refers to a long-term, stable, committed relationship. The atonement – when Paul is trying to explain about the cross, what is the language he uses for that? It's the language of reconciliation; of putting right a broken relationship. 'Eternal life is this,' says Jesus, 'That you may *know* the Father and the Son who he has sent.' Again, knowing – relationship. Christian ethics is about love, and Christian lifestyle (in 1 Corinthians 13) is also about love. Love is a term which describes not a financial arrangement or a contract. Love is a word which describes a relationship. And personal ambition. Think of Paul's famous statement to the Philippians, where he says, 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and share in the fellowship of his sufferings.' Think of all the relational language which is wrapped up in what Paul says there. And for us, as Christians, surely Paul is suggesting that our greatest, overriding ambition should be our relationship with Christ.

Now Jesus, of course, is the ultimate model of all our relationships and he shows us how we should be relating. And this has very far-reaching implications when you start studying the life of Jesus in terms of his patterns of relationship. That's a very big

subject in itself and I would like to refer you, if you are interested, to some of the material posted on the Jubilee Centre website [www.jubilee-centre.org](http://www.jubilee-centre.org)

Now we live in a surprisingly individualistic and financially-oriented culture. If you listen to Radio 4, it is promoting on a daily basis, unremittingly, this individualistic and materialistic way of looking at the world. It happens so much and so often that we've become immune to it. We don't notice it's happening. We don't notice the language and the values that are coming through on Radio 4. But to rethink the way that we live is fundamental to what New Testament Christianity is all about. Paul says, 'Be transformed by the renewing of your minds' (Romans 12.1-2). There is a change in our thought process that has to happen if we are going to come to grips with how we should think about the social climate. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Take a microwave. When you bought the microwave, did you ask yourself the financial question: 'Can I afford it?' Did you ask yourself the spatial question: 'Can I fit it in my kitchen?' Or did you ask yourself the relational question: 'How will the microwave change the pattern of relationships in my household?' Because microwaves *do* change the way people relate in their households. I remember, when I was a teenager, how my family would gather in the kitchen to watch my mother make the dinner. It was a sort of spectator sport. And of course the kitchen was the one really one warm room in the house in the 1950s, so that was another good reason to be there. But that pattern of people gathering around during the food preparation period so that we could then eat together round the table has gone by the board; and part of the reason for that, particularly in younger households today with teenagers and so on, is that people will come in at different times and zap that food in the microwave and then head off to their room to do different things.

The microwave can, of course, be a very relational piece of electronic equipment, because it can enable you to spend longer sitting round talking after the meal. It's all a question of how you use technology; but do we ask the relational question?

Or I might ask you to think of a less-developed country. You might think of one that's in Africa, or in Asia, or even Latin America. But how many of you think of a country in Western Europe or in North America? Because what you've done, with your western individualistic, materialistic mind-set, is to use the word 'development' to mean 'high income'. But if you were evaluating a country from a relationships point of view

instead of a financial point of view, would you really say the United States is a 'developed' country? Or, bringing it nearer home, would you say that we are a 'developed' country? Haven't we just had the case of Baby P? *[Baby P died in August 2007 at the age of 17 months, having suffered cruelty at the hands of his mother and two of her male friends. Haringey social services were censured for their failure to intervene to protect a clearly vulnerable child.]* How do we treat our children? How do we treat our old people? If you look at how Kenyans treat their families, you might feel that, by comparison, we are an extremely *under*-developed country.

Now all countries have relational problems because, in a sense, sin is a breakdown of relationship. I don't think any country can put itself on a pedestal. We should be very careful about our language if we really believe relationships are the way God looks at the world. And we should also reflect on our own relationships rather carefully if we believe that it is by relationships that God will evaluate our lives. It is when we recognise that God will judge us by our relationships that we realise just how much we need Christ.

I'm reminded of the story of the minister who wanted to illustrate sin to his congregation. So he said to them, 'Is there anyone here who has perfect relationships?' One man in the front row immediately got up. So the minister looked at him with some surprise and asked, 'Excuse me sir, but are you saying that you've got perfect relationships?' He said, 'No – I'm just standing here proxy for my mother in law!'

### **3. Symptoms of a breakdown in social/relational capital in the UK**

After the Baby P issue of the past few weeks we are probably all painfully aware that all is not well. I want to define the loss of 'social capital' as a breakdown in the quality of relationships; something wrong in our social climate. It becomes a dreary catalogue, but here are some thoughts for your reflection.

There is disengagement in Britain today from social and political activity. The numbers of people who voted in the UK General Election in 2001 was just over 50%. 17 million out of 42 million didn't bother to vote. And between 1990 and 1997, Britain was ranked 65<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries in terms of national election turnout. We are disengaging from politics even more in local elections than in national elections.

Local elections now, sometimes are as low as 25% of the population turning out and bothering to vote.

I was in Sydney a few weeks ago and I was approached by one of the big management consultancies who wanted to use our relational matrix to look at, or to design, some way of measuring disengagement by employees in companies. In the USA one in four people have been in their job less than a year. One in two have been in their job less than five years. Why are people moving jobs so much? It may be they are thrown out or are inefficient; but I suspect a great many people have really very little commitment to the job they're in, so they are constantly moving on and looking for a better one.

Now at a relatively trivial level you may think things are not too bad. I found these statistics about how well people know their neighbours. The question was: What percentage of people would feel comfortable to ask their neighbour these three things:

- to borrow a plunger to unblock a sink? (50% said Yes)
- to ask your neighbour to collect a prescription?
- to ask your neighbour to borrow a fiver to pay the milkman? (20% said Yes)

But at a more serious level, what about the breakdown of marriage or the loss of trust and respect across gender? There may be people here who have had very painful experiences in this area and I'm going to quote some national statistics, but I'm not wanting to imply blame of anybody in doing that. I am also not wanting to minimise the pain people go through in the course of the break-ups of these relationships. I just want to tell you 'how it is' as an indication that we are struggling with relationships at a more serious level.

If you get married today, you probably know the figure that about 50% of people who get married today will end up divorcing. The good news is that that percentage is slightly declining; the bad news is that many fewer people are bothering to get married in the first place. So about 28% of couples are now cohabiting rather than being married (that's nearly a third of all couples), and the average length of a cohabitation is 5 years. So you've got to recognise that, for enormous parts of our population, being together as a couple is very much a temporary affair. They are unable to find the commitment to maintain that relationship, or they are unable to find the relational skills necessary to sustain that relationship.

Think about relationships across gender. One of the major effects of the internet has been an explosion in the amount of pornography. I thought it would be nice to give you some statistics from my computer; but when I thought about Googling the word 'pornography' I realised I would probably be tormented for the rest of my life with the most awful images and suggestions that I would rather not have. So forgive me, but I didn't go there!

But what are the attitudes to women that are being promoted by pornography? What does it say about the way that many men are thinking and feeling about women, that they are prepared to see them and to use them as sex symbols in that kind of way?

I found a statistic in a recent piece of work we're doing in the office, that 72% of women (that's nearly three-quarters) say that they have been bullied in the work place because of their gender. As men, how are we treating women?

What about the treatment of children and older people? There has been a UNICEF survey which, again, you will all be aware of as it was big news in the papers, that among OECD countries – that's the rich countries of the world – Britain UK ranks as 21<sup>st</sup> out of a list of 21 countries in a measure of children's well-being and happiness. We were bottom among the rich countries of the world in terms of how we look after our children.

You may not think it can get worse than that but it does. If you look into those statistics carefully you find that we were 12<sup>th</sup> out of 21 on health and safety. On income levels of households with children we were 18<sup>th</sup> out of 21. But where we were bottom was in family and peer relationships. Our children have worse family and peer relationships than any other rich country in the world – and that probably means than *any* other country in the world. These are sad, sad stories for us. They talk about a social climate where there is fear and distrust and anguish.

Or talk about older people. In a recent survey, more than a million people over 65 said that they feel lonely. A quarter say that they have no friends or family. One in five do not see a friend or a relative as often as once a week.

Or what about the loss of trust in our public institutions and public officials? If you ask people 'Do you trust politicians?' 76% of people – over three-quarters – say No. If

you ask people: 'Do you trust the police?' (here's a frightening figure) less than a third of people in Britain today say that they trust the police. If you ask people: 'Do you trust clergy and priests?' only 1 in 5 say that they trust them. On the other hand, with teachers, the number who *don't* trust teachers is less than 1 in 10. The number of people who don't trust doctors is only 1 in 20.

Now you might say, after that terrible catalogue of statistics, I've been very biased in the statistics I've taken. You might say there are some aspects, surely, that are very positive. You might say, what about issues of equality: aren't men and women treated more equally today than in the past? That is probably true. I'm sure that we could find quite a range of statistics to encourage us and I will give some rays of hope a little bit later. But I do think we have to confront what a serious situation we are in today: the kind of crisis that surrounds our social climate. I think if I were to stand here and give you a different message than that, I would have been unfair to you and untruthful to you.

And you have to realise that these are not just dry statistics. We have just had Remembrance Day. What did people die for in the Second World War? What are our young men and women dying for in Afghanistan and Iraq? What kind of society are we leaving to our children? These are really important and major questions and certainly as a group of Christians met here tonight we should be earnestly concerned about what is happening under our noses and about the pain and the suffering this is bringing into so many people's lives.

#### **4. Some drivers of social climate change**

But I'm more interested really in what is driving this social climate change. Why is there this breakdown of relationship? Why is there disengagement from the community? Why is there a lack of commitment to family and marriage? Why is there this lack of contact for older people with their family and friends, and a lack of trust in public officials? Now again I can only scratch the surface here, but let me give you one or two indications.

- I think there's a **growth of an individualistic mind-set**: the use of 'rights' language; the impact of advertising that talks about 'my' holiday: 'This is the holiday you deserve – give it to yourself'. It's a bit like the safety instructions on an aeroplane when the oxygen masks are coming down: 'Look after yourself first and then look after the child sitting next to you.' That's an entirely

reasonable proposition in terms of an emergency situation on a flight, but it's a dangerous proposition if you take that as your attitude to life as a whole.

- Or take **mobility of labour**. We take mobility for granted now. During the 1990s, 1 in 8 people moved house every year. I suspect it's rather less than that at the moment! But what is the effect of people moving house? What is the effect of having more than 10% of the population moving house every year? In some London schools, at the end of a two-year period, there is not a single teacher and not a single pupil left in the school who was there at the beginning of the two-year period. That's how much people are moving in inner-city contexts. Every time people move a whole lot of social relationships have to be renegotiated.
- What about **the absence of boundaries in sexual behaviour**? Now I'm aware in talking about sexual behaviour that Christians are constantly accused of wanting to talk about sex. But sex of course does determine a whole range of relationships. It has enormous knock-on effects, not least to the welfare of children. Today we have about 16% of children brought up in one-parent families and another 16% in step-families. Again there is no criticism of any individual here. There are all kinds of circumstances leading to it. All I can tell you is the statistics are clear, that if this happens you will get unfortunate consequences for those involved.

If by the age of 16 you are living with only one of your biological parents, according to this study, you are more likely to suffer from multiple disadvantages compared with other children. You are 70% more likely to have a criminal conviction by the age of 15. You are twice as likely to leave a school with no diploma. You are twice as likely to have a child in your teens. You are 50% more likely to be doing nothing by the age of 20. And so on.

I think one of the relationship issues that I find most troubling in Britain is the lack of trust between men and women – across the board. Now it may be my age – maybe I remember golden years in the past but I don't think so. I think there is growing distrust between men and women, growing competition in the work place, a lack of what I call 'gender co-operation'. One of the most risky things I did with my wife was to write a paper (one of the Jubilee Centre's *Cambridge Papers*) called 'Gender Co-operation'! Fortunately our marriage survived.

What happens when a man has a sexual relationship with a woman and then a baby is born and the man walks away; or a tax system which actually *encourages* that to happen – and a woman is left struggling to bring up a child on her own? Surely it often results in a sense of bitterness on behalf of the woman. ‘Why should I have to struggle with all of this as the result of a person relating to me in a certain way and then walking away and abdicating responsibility?’ And children coming out of those relationships often feel betrayed as well as neglected.

But there is also anger the other way. You’ve heard of ‘Fathers for Justice’ – men who climb on cranes over the M25 or clamber onto the Buckingham Palace roof dressed as Superman. These men are angry because they cannot get access to their children because the women are locking them out. There is anger between men and women. There are all kinds of broken relationships: the social climate is not healthy. But it comes out of the absence of sexual boundaries, I suggest.

- **The built environment.** It’s harder to have relationships in vertical space, if you’re living in a high-rise building, than it is in terraced homes. We have lots of research to show that and I probably don’t need to elaborate it.
- Or we just had the collapse of **the global financial system**. We’re in a really bad way. Many of us are tempted to blame the directors of the banks and financial institutions for taking these huge bonuses. I certainly feel angry that these people take bonuses the way they do. But isn’t there a problem for all of us, in that we all have pensions, we all have savings, and we expect to gain a reward in the form of interest, dividends, or whatever it may be – larger pensions, perhaps – just by putting our money in the institution. That’s all we have to do and all this reward, all this profit, comes back to us. All we’ve done is put our money there and walked away from it.

Well go away and look again at the parable of the talents and see what Jesus says: that this is the sign of a hard person who reaps where they haven’t sown (Luke 19.21) . Somehow we fail to recognise that God intends us to be responsible for how our money is used, to know where it’s gone and to engage ourselves with the companies or the people that use our money. We have a maxim we’ve developed, like the old ‘No taxation without representation’, - ours is ‘No reward without responsibility; no profit without participation’.

- And then I should talk about **the diminishing role of Christianity in our public life**, as a major reason for the breakdown of these relationships. Two thirds of adults in Britain have no connection today with the church. There's a lack of respect for church leaders. There's a disregard for the church's views on war, as in the case of the war in Iraq. We seem to value sport more than we value collective worship.

## 5. Rays of Hope

Well – that's the end of the dismal bit. Now to a few rays of hope. It's really interesting to me that **22% of people in Greater London go to church regularly**. There's not that kind of renewal of church-going in any other part of the country; but a recent survey of 7000 adults, which is quite a big survey statistically, showed that in Greater London 22% of people go to church regularly. And I think that's something to be encouraged about. And there's still a quarter of the population (slightly more, in fact) who are in church at least once a year.

I think a **lot of companies are re-engaging with the concept of relationship**. I think shareholder value, as a way of running companies, is gradually diminishing in importance. I think relationships in companies are still mainly about means rather than ends – you have relationships to increase profits – but there's a small group of companies who are starting to say: 'We want profits so that we can develop relationships with our stakeholders'.

Our **concern for the physical environment**. Why is it that so many people are concerned for the physical environment? Surely a major part is concern for Bangladesh, the Maldives, with what will happen to people in areas affected by global warming.

Or take '**Jubilee 2000**'. I thought it was a wonderful demonstration of people's concern about low-income countries, about their neighbours in Africa and Asia, who are being severely harmed by the interest payments on international debt. It was a great encouragement that many people in the UK were prepared to go to considerable lengths to participate in a campaign of that kind to try and get relief of that debt.

The **emphasis on partnership in public service delivery** – because interventions in, for example, the medical services are more and more complex – we rely increasingly on partnerships, on collaboration between professionals, in order to get the right medical outcomes. If you get cancer, the relationship between the oncologist, the surgeon and the anaesthetist is likely to be crucial to your survival; you need those professionals to have a good relationship together.

And I think **the focus on fairness in our ethnic and racial relationships** is also something we can be proud of in Britain. I know there are major problems in the police still, and ethnic minorities complain bitterly that they are excluded from top jobs; I know we have a long way to go in politics in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, but it is a subject that's in constant public debate in this country; it is something we're conscious of and are striving to do something about. My father used to say comparisons are odious, but I think if one compares the efforts that are being made in this country compared with the efforts that are being made in most of continental Europe, I think Britain is doing comparatively well.

#### **6. A relational / theological framework for social transformation**

I think there is one major point I would like to get across. I think as Christians we have been inclined to write off large chunks of the Old Testament as being too difficult to grapple with. So we will allow the Ten Commandments because they are relatively straightforward, but if you want to get into Leviticus or Exodus or Numbers or Deuteronomy, then we rather shy away from these passages because they seem to be culturally different from where we are. It seems difficult to draw out the principles that lie at the heart of those ancient texts. Now what the Jubilee Centre has done – and we do it particularly in our book *The Jubilee Manifesto* – is to argue that if you're interested in righteousness (which is right relationships) Jesus himself points us back to the Old Testament and to the Law. So in that famous passage (Matthew 5.13-16) where Jesus talks about us being salt and light, he goes on immediately to say: 'Don't think I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil'; and then he says those who practise and teach the law will be called great in the kingdom (5.19) – so he links the law and the kingdom together.

I suggest to you that in Jesus' mind he didn't come to tell us how to reform society. He came to tell us how to build the kingdom of God, which is the community of God's own people. If you want to know how to reform society, Jesus says, we've been there

and done that, if you like, and we can look back to the law and the prophets to see what needs to be done and how to go about doing it: how to be salt and light.

Now the central theme of biblical law is not justice, family, stewardship, or anything to do explicitly with the environment. Jesus himself tells us what the major central theme of biblical law is. You remember he is asked the question, 'Which is the greatest commandment?' and his answer is 'Love God and love your neighbour.' And then Jesus says 'on these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets'. All the law and the prophets are about the issue of love; are about the issue of relationship.

Now if we had taken the Jubilee principle seriously, which is ultimately, I think, about rootedness - in land, in community - we might as Christians have said after World War II that this high level of mobility was not going to be good for society because it wasn't going to be good for building long-term relationships. We might have taken the ban on interest more seriously and said it isn't a good thing to base our financial system around interest. We need to base our financial system around engaging ourselves with the people who use our capital. Jesus even went so far as to say that we should use our capital in ways that would build friends for ourselves in eternity.

Love, of course, is a quality of relationships, and Jesus seems to draw all of the Old Testament law – the Jubilee, the ban on interest, the Sabbath, the sex only within marriage, the criminal justice ('relational' justice, as we call it), he brings all of those areas that the Old Testament talks about back to the central theme of relationships.

## **7. An agenda for Christians to change the social climate for good**

What is then an agenda for Christians to change the social climate for good? And I'd like to suggest to you seven things we might do to build a more positive social climate:

- **Train ourselves to see the world through a relational lens.** Learn to think about every issue from a relationships point of view. So that we need to learn to talk about relationships poverty as much as we talk about financial poverty. We need to talk about our relational pension – that is, what is our stock of relationships for the time we retire – as much as we talk about our financial pensions. We need to talk about the relational health of society as much as we talk about the physical health of society. We need to talk about the quality

of relationships in our churches. We might talk about relational business, relational finance, relational justice, relational education, and relational health-care. It's a completely different way of thinking about every aspect of life. And if you read your newspapers and if you listen to Radio 4, you will still be bombarded by these messages which rest on a foundation of individualistic and materialistic thinking. So to re-educate yourself to think relationally you will need to talk about it to other people, and perhaps the stuff that the Jubilee Centre puts out will help you down the route of re-training your mind to think in a different direction.

- We need to **argue for principles of community and justice in sexual morality**. I think as Christians we've been slow to take the battle into society for the sexual morality we believe in. It isn't good enough to say to non-Christians: 'The Bible says you should only have sex within marriage', because the non-Christian says, 'But I don't believe the Bible, so give me another reason.' What is the other reason?

The Jubilee Centre is just putting out a book with the title '*Just Sex – is it ever just sex?*' It's a play on the word 'just', which can mean 'only' or it can mean 'justice'. So is 'just sex' (just having sex with somebody) ever 'just' sex (in the sense of justice)? There are four possible meanings to the title.

The point we want to make is that British morality is based on the proposition that if two adults consent to a sexual act, it's all right. They consented, and the argument then is 'was he old enough?' and 'was she drunk?' and all those sort of questions. But surely as Christians we say 'No.' First of all, if we're going to base it around consent, all the different people affected need to consent. So not just the present partners, but if they're going to have future partners the future partners must consent. Because if a man has sex with a girl tonight and she contracts Chlamydia as a consequence, then her future husband is not going to be able to have children. Is that fair? Is that just? That a bloke should have a one night stand with a girl and mean that this man in the future, who is her legitimate husband, should not be able to have children. Is that justice? What about the person's parents? They brought the child into the world – do they have no stake at all, no rights, no claims at all, concerning what happens with their children's sexual lives? Are they to be completely disregarded?

There are so many people whose lives are fundamentally affected. Supposing a child results – the average cost of a child to a one parent family: I don't know the figures, but let's say it's £100,000. Could that £100,000 be better used – to renovate an inner-city school, or something like that? Are we going to say that the cost is immaterial; that there is no ethical consequence to these things? Now I know that I'm talking a lot of politically incorrect things here, but as Christians, haven't you got to start raising the issues as to what does constitute 'just' sex - sex which involves justice? Who really needs to consent to a sexual act? And if a sexual act today is going to affect people who have a sexual act tomorrow, then is it right that we totally ignore those longer-term considerations?

- I propose that we **promote relational values and perspectives in the workplace**. I think there is a whole range of ways in which, whether it's in the National Health Service, or whether it's in business, or in schools, or wherever it is, relational values can be introduced.
- And we need to **encourage wisdom rather than knowledge as the goal of education**. 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,' writes the author of Proverbs. Wisdom is not just *what* you know but your ability to *use* your knowledge for the benefit of other people, and the Institute of Education in Bristol is now pursuing that as part of its thought process. Wisdom is why all the things that students do at school, outside the school curriculum, are important. It's why SATS and targets do not tell the whole story. Can we use our influence as parents, school governors, teachers and local citizens, to promote the wisdom agenda in our schools?
- Can we **use capital to build relationships**, rather than just maximise returns? Can we find out where our capital is going? Can we build relationships with those who use our money? It's very difficult in a modern economy, but I think that's the challenge for us as Christians – to develop ways in which people can use their money so that we can build relationships between those who invest and those who manage.
- Can we **lobby for change in the focus of public policy**? Can we argue that all policy needs to be *triple tested*? Policy at the moment has an

economic test: what is the likely financial consequence of this policy? It has an environmental test: what will be the impact on the environment? But we have no relational or social test of our national policies. The government is like a bull in a china shop. It doesn't know what it's doing, socially and relationally, too often because it never does any systematic analysis to test that end of its own policies.

I raised this at the highest levels in Australia and in this country as well. I don't have any satisfactory answer from a politician as to why we don't do it, except that it's difficult; and I'm not sure that that's an adequate answer. At least we should try.

- Lastly, I come back to remembering **the importance of a shared weekly day of rest for everybody**. We have fought the 'Sunday' campaign for 23 years now. We started the *Keep Sunday Special* campaign in Cambridge in 1985. And it seems, if we're going to talk about the social climate, that this is a good point for me on which to close my talk.

My children say that I manage to bring the Sunday issue into every talk I give, so I've managed it tonight as well. But I do passionately believe that Sundays matter. We've had a thousand years of protection of Sundays in this country by Christians and I believe for good reason. Sunday should not just be a day for sport. I'm not saying that all sport should be excluded, but I think primarily it still needs to be a day of rest: a day to spend time with God, certainly for Christians; time to spend time with family and friends: a matter of giving God priority with our time, which is our scarcest resource. It's a way of keeping life in perspective; and if we want to escape the materialism and individualism of our culture, this surely is not a bad place to start the process of changing the social climate for good. (*Applause*).

**For further reading:**

- *Jubilee Manifesto* (IVP, 2005)
- *The R Factor* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1993)
- *The R Option* (Relationships Foundation, 2003)
- *Relational Justice* (Waterside press, 1994)
- *The Relational Company* (Relationships Foundation website, 2008)

Websites: [www.jubilee-centre.org](http://www.jubilee-centre.org)

[www.relationshipsfoundation.org](http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org)

Dr Michael Schluter is a leading thinker and social entrepreneur. He is Chairman of Relationships Foundation International, based in Cambridge, and from there travels widely to address audiences all over the world. He has authored and contributed to a number of books including: *Building a Relational Society*, *Relational Justice*, *The R Option* and *The R Factor*. This last is to be published by Lion/Hudson as *The Relational Executive*.