Relationships between parents, children, and society are in the midst of a tectonic shift. Behaviors once thought to be private matters, such as child battery, alcoholism, drug abuse, and spousal abuse, are now considered public matters. Attitudes have changed drastically in just a century. Consider:

- Just 150 years ago, children “hurriers” in Great Britain were still sent down tiny mine shafts to haul coal wagons up to the surface. Most died early and horrible deaths of black lung disease. The US did not ban child labor until 1938.

- When my grandfather was born, women in England and the US did not have the right to vote. Women did not get the right to vote until 1920 in the United States and 1928 in England—and not until 1971 in Switzerland!

- Ten striking workmen were killed by policemen and thirty wounded in Chicago in 1937. Among their outrageous demands? A 40-hour work week. This event is within the memory span of many people still alive today.
Gift From the Future

Written by Dawson Church, PhD

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Gift from the Future

Relationships between parents, children, and society are in the midst of a tectonic shift. Behaviors once thought to be private matters, such as child battery, alcoholism, drug abuse, and sexual abuse, are now considered public matters. Attitudes have changed drastically in just a century. Consider:

- Just six years ago, children "hurting" in Great Britain were still sent down the mine shafts to haul coal against the surface. Most died early and horrible deaths of black lung disease. The US did not ban child labor until 1990.
- When my grandfather was born, women in England and the US did not have the right to vote. Women did not get the right to vote until 1920 in the United States and until 1945 in the United Kingdom — and not until 1970 in Switzerland.
- Ten striking workers were killed by policemen and three wounded in Chicago in 1917: Among the morning demands, a 40-hour work week. This event is within the memory span of many people still alive today.
- There are many countries today in which exercising your religious preference can cost you your life. In Iraq in 2003, there was a stable, established, and thriving Christian population. Today, an estimated two-thirds of Iraq's Christians have been killed or driven out. But in most Western societies, religious preference has become so unimportant that friends may not even know which church others go to, or whether they go to church at all.

I could cite many other examples of radical social mind change. When we are embedded in a society, change can appear slow, just the way a parent rarely notices, day by day, how a child is growing. Then a friend may remark, "Goodness, how big Johnny's become!" and suddenly we realize the change. From within a society, social progress might be equally invisible. But in small groups, religious preference has become so unimportant that friends may not even know which church others go to, or whether they go to church at all.

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