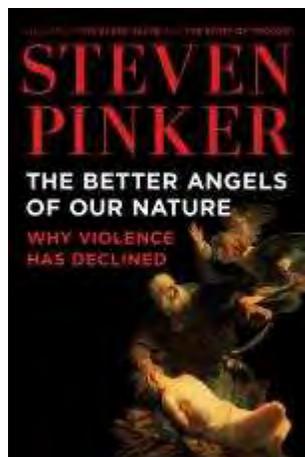


The Better Angels of our Nature: A Testimony to the Providence of God

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February 18, 2016



What would you think if someone told you that we are now living in the most peaceful and least violent era of human history? You would probably think that person crazy. A cursory glance at the evening news obviously tells us otherwise. We have mass murders in our theaters, ISIS in the Middle East and the Soviet Union in Ukraine. Steven Pinker, the author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, knows this. He states that his message has been met with skepticism, incredulity and sometimes anger. However, when he lays out the statistics in voluminous detail in his 700 page tome, the message is clear. We are in fact living in the most peaceable and least violent time in history. And, for Unificationists the message is hopeful and encouraging. Surprisingly, not only does the book verify our view of history, it also demonstrates that our work with Rev. & Mrs. Moon in God's providence has been more successful than we realized.

The world does seem to be filled with violence and cruelty. However, Pinker asks us to look back from whence we came. It may be hard for us to imagine that barbaric practices were woven into the fabric of everyday life throughout much of human history. We know of the horrifying practice of child sacrifice in ancient cultures. In the story of Jesus we have a description of the brutal Roman punishment of crucifixion. In 16th century Paris a popular form of entertainment was cat-burning, in which a cat was lowered into a fire. It is recorded that audiences, including kings and queens, shrieked with laughter as the animals, howling in pain, were singed and roasted. One response to torture of that time is recorded thus, "He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy." Burning at the stake was a common form of execution in Europe and was practiced in America as well. The barbaric practice of slavery was a part of every culture in the world. As Thomas Hobbes so aptly put it peoples' lives through pre-history, biblical history and history in general have been "nasty, brutish and short."

When and how has this changed? How is it that we have come to the point today that we do not only have "human rights" but even "animal rights?" Pinker holds that humans are neither innately good nor innately evil. We have a dark side but also we have what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature" a goodness in us that inclines us toward cooperation and peace. Pinker points to what he calls "exogenous" factors, things in the environment that we have responded to in positive ways which have caused us to move toward this cooperation. He points to trade and business as one such development. Instead of conquering countries to gain wealth it became more profitable to trade with them. (You want your trading partner to be alive.) There was also the development of centralized governments. The roughly 5,000 small baronies and fiefdoms in the 15th century spent much of their time raiding and feuding with each other. As they were absorbed into larger monarchies some order and control could be exerted establishing "the King's peace." Technological development such as the use of money instead of barter, spinning wheels, roads, transport, and the printing press all contributed to people controlling their impulses and planning for their futures. One author Pinker quotes, Norbert Elias, calls this the "Civilizing Process."

Out of these developments came what he calls the "Humanitarian Revolution." Torture, slavery and dueling began to be outlawed. From the Age of Enlightenment came the notions of rights and the concept of "sympathy" for our fellow humans. On this foundation Thomas Jefferson could pen "all men are created equal," a new and revolutionary idea. And, the notion came that violence is "a problem to be solved rather than a contest to be won."

In an array of graphs he shows that rates of murder, war, rape, robbery and all forms of violence have plummeted over the centuries. For example we consider the number of people being murdered in America in our time to be high but it is roughly 15 times lower than the rate of murder in Europe in the middle ages. Where in the 1400s European states were starting violent conflicts at a rate of more than three every year in Europe today there are virtually none. And the news has gotten even better after WWII. Annual battle deaths since that war have fallen by 90%. Pinker calls this time period, "The Long Peace."

However, he notes that there were three spikes of violence in the 20th century that were exceptions to the trend. He tries his hardest to explain, WWI, WWII and the atrocities of Mao and Marxists but he cannot. He calls Nazism a "counter-enlightenment" trend and Marxist ideology a "historical tsunami" and admits, "We will never know how to explain the most calamitous events of the 20th century." He is not alone. Adam Gopnik reviewed the books of seven authors who "were still, almost a century later, trying to figure out exactly how World War I happened."

Pinker may not know the answer to these spikes in violence but there is one book that does explain World War I, World War II and the “Marxist tsunami,” as well. *Divine Principle* by Rev. Sun Myung Moon explains clearly the meaning of each of these wars, their place in God’s providence and spiritual biblical principles underlying them. And in the process the Principle explains that history is not moved primarily by “exogenous” external factors such as the development of trade. The Principle explains that these trends are certainly at work but they are connected to God’s effort to restore the world. It is here that we find the true engine underlying historical developments.

This is shown again in what Pinker describes as one of his most startling discoveries. The year is 1992. To quote Pinker, “In 1992 a strange thing happened. The homicide rate went down by almost 10 percent from the year before, and it continued to sink for another seven years. Even more shockingly, the rate stayed put for another seven years and then dropped even further.” And, it was not only homicide. He goes on to explain that in fact the rates of every major category of crime dropped by about half, including rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and even auto theft. This occurred not just in America but in Canada as well and across the world. This trend was so striking that Pinker gives the time from 1992 forward a name. He calls it, “The New Peace.”

About this decrease in violence Pinker states, “None of the experts had predicted it.” He quotes James Q. Wilson who predicted in 1995 that crime in fact would get worse. Wilson explained that because of the higher birthrates a million more young people will be born. Of these million more young people “six percent of them will become high-rate, repeat offenders—30,000 more young muggers, killers, and thieves than we have now. Get ready.” His cohort Alan Fox agreed predicting a “blood bath” (of crime) by 2005. It never happened.

Again, Pinker has no explanation. He attempts an explanation by noting that crime went down at the same time that American cities were putting more police on the streets. But again, only Rev. Moon understood the providential meaning of the time. Unificationists know Rev. Moon’s prediction and explanation of the fall of communism very well. We know he alone got it right. And we saw it happen before our eyes. We saw the collapse of the Berlin Wall and then the Soviet Union. We saw Communist flag coming down over the Kremlin on Christmas day of 1991. However, even we did not know how successful God’s providence had been. The data Pinker lays out indicates that not only did violence and evil collapse in the Soviet Union many kinds of evil declined throughout the world.

Could it have been a coincidence that the world became better at the same time the Soviet Union collapsed? Maybe, but others have noted that there seem to be forces beyond politics and economy at work in all of this. Although Pinker, who is an atheist, cannot agree with them, to his credit he at least quotes them. James Payne states that he is tempted to allude to, “a higher power at work,” of a process that seems “almost magical.” Robert Wright wonders if it is “evidence of divinity,” signs of “a divinely imparted meaning,” or a story with a “cosmic author.” Both of these men are correct. Like Rev. Moon they sensed some force of providence at work in all of this.

I salute Steven Pinker for his painstaking research and the publication of this book. It is truly refreshing news that is important for the world to know about. Even more the news is important because the facts he lays out before us are a testimony to the providence of God. Unfortunately as a self-described “Jewish Atheist” he has blinders on to the providential force that Christianity had to play in this. Without the *Divine Principle* he has no way of understanding the course of history. Be that as it may I am sure many books will eventually be written to give a more balanced account of the course of God’s providence in history.

With this said, some may ask, where do we go from here? It is good that the world has become less violent. It is still a world very much in turmoil. In answering this I would say we must remember the Principle states there is one “final chapter” in God’s providence of restoration to be completed. It is WW III and that conflict is still with us. The last Marxist stronghold, North Korea, has yet to be reconciled with its brother South Korea. Rev. Moon prayed and worked for that day, but it still has not been fulfilled. When it comes about having one nation on God’s side has the potential for furthering the peace. And, if the unity of North and South Korea is the final chapter of the providence we can see signs of a new chapter of God’s work unfolding before our eyes in Asia. In a recent webinar Dr. Robert Kittel described the heavenly fortune in the mass Blessings there as, “A tsunami of goodness sweeping Southeast Asia.” The world is struggling through tumultuous times of *indemnity* and change but with God’s guidance and our efforts Pinker’s “New Peace” may become a “Permanent Peace” and eventually Heaven on Earth.