

ON THE GENTILES ALSO

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Jordan Peterson is an interesting person, and he has made quite a name for himself. He has said a number of things that have proved controversial. He has said, for example, “Clean your room and sort yourself out before you try to change the world.” This advice has angered many social justice warriors living in their parents’ basements. These warriors wish to change the world, but Peterson says they first need to change themselves. They wish to change the world, not by changing themselves, but by alienating those who differ with them, or who simply are different from them. Last year, a student group at the University of Michigan called for the administration to create a space for students of color to organize. Students at Evergreen State College in Washington called for a day without white people. Last month, Scripps College in California was to host a pool party for people of color only. After complaints, the party was changed to a people of color centering space. Recently, some people calling themselves as Incels, that is to say, *involuntary celibates*, have become violent because they have been deprived. Last month, one of these Incels killed eight women, and two men, and injured sixteen. These are some examples of what has come to be known as *Identity Politics*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *Identity Politics* as “A tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics.” Merriam-Webster defines it as “politics in which groups of people having a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity tend to promote their own specific interests or concerns without regard to the interests or concerns of any larger political group.” Some say that the problem is that the United States and other western nations disintegrating into such tribal groups. Some say that the answer for the United States is for all citizens to see themselves as American first and foremost. The problem with that answer, however, is that people no longer agree on what it means to be an American. How can people find unity? How can they change the world?

After the fall of man into sin, it did not take long for sinful men to ravage the world. Men indulged in sexual immorality and, especially, in violence. The Sons of God took wives from among the daughters of men, although they were forbidden so to do. Cain murdered his brother. Lamech, too, killed a man. Men ran amok, and violence was pervasive. God reached the limit of His patience, and He said to Noah, “The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Genesis 6:13) So God said He would bring a great flood upon the earth to destroy every living thing. He would spare Noah and his household, however, and told him to build an ark which would preserve them. Noah did what God commanded, and so Noah and his household were saved, but all others destroyed. God purged the earth of its impurities, but He preserved Noah and his household. The world had been in bondage to sin, but God delivered it from its bondage. After the rains stopped falling from the heavens, and after water ceased to come up from under the earth, the flood waters began to recede. Noah then sent out from the ark a dove, in order to see if the waters had completely receded from the ground. The dove, finding no dry ground, returned to the ark. Seven days later, Noah again sent out the dove. The dove returned with an olive leaf that it had plucked off, and so Noah knew that dry ground had appeared. A week later, he again sent out the dove, but this time it did not return. So, Noah knew that it was time to disembark. The waters assuaged, and so did the wrath of God. As God had blessed Adam and Eve, and told them to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, so he did to Noah and his sons. God made a covenant with Noah, and by extension with all men, that He would never again destroy the world. He would rather save it. Just as Adam stood as the head of the race of men, so Noah stood as the new head of the race of men. It was a new beginning for the world. God had cleansed it of sin, and He would, over the course of time, make it holy. He had justified it; He would sanctify it. So, the dove and the olive branch have come to symbolize peace. God gave mankind the rainbow as a sign of the covenant He made with them.

Some time after the Great Flood, God, at the Tower of Babel, disbursed the people, dividing them into various nations. He then from among them chose Abraham and his descendents, the children of Israel, as His own nation. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, and He gave them circumcision as a sign of that covenant. After the children of Israel fell into bondage in Egypt, God in a great exodus delivered them

from their bondage. They fled from Egypt, but the army of the Egyptians, led by Pharaoh, pursued them. The Egyptians trapped the children of Israel before the Red Sea. So, Moses, at God's command, parted the sea, and the people passed through in safety. The Egyptians continued their pursuit, and attempted to follow the people through the passage, but Moses caused the waters to return to their place, and cover them, and Pharaoh and his army were annihilated.

So, God by the hand of Moses delivered the children of Israel from their bondage, and gave them a new life as His covenant people. After the Exodus, Moses gave the people the Law which was to be for them life, and the foundation of this Law was the Ten Commandments. Through Moses God told the people, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD." (Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:12) The passing through the Red Sea was for the children of Israel a kind of baptism. They passed unharmed through the waters, which were a judgment upon the enemies of God. So, Saint Paul writes, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2) They were baptized into Moses, which is to say, they identified with him as their deliverer and ruler. In the mind of the Jew, then, a Jew was a descendant of Abraham, and he had the sign of circumcision and the Law of Moses. So also, in the mind of the Jew, if a Gentile was to be right with God and one of the people of God, then he had to become a Jew by receiving circumcision, and by keeping the Law of Moses. The Jews took pride in their heritage. They considered themselves to be morally superior to the heathen, and they considered themselves to be their guides. They were, however, breakers of the Law and blind guides. They who were to be an example to the nations became the cause of blasphemy of among the nations. (Romans 2) They were privileged to have circumcision as a sign of God's covenant with them, and they were privileged to have God's Law. They were, however, powerless to keep that Law. They were bound to fail. They possessed the Law, but they could not keep it, and their failure to keep it brought them under the curse of God. The Law itself said, "Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them." (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10) So, the Law which was meant to be life for the people of God became their death. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans, "And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death." (Romans 7:10) They had the Law written in stone, but they had not the ability to obey it. So, Saint Paul calls the Mosaic dispensation the 'ministration of death' and the 'ministration of condemnation.' (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9) This was no fault of the Law of God, of course. "The law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," Saint Paul wrote to the Romans. (Romans 7:12) The fault lay with the people; they were "carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

The children of Israel were not justified before God by their works. A man is always justified before God by faith, as the example of Abraham shows. "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6) "The just shall live by his faith," the prophet Habakkuk said. (Habakkuk 2:4) Had the children of Israel perfectly kept the Law of God, and never sinned, they would have had no need of forgiveness. They all sinned, however; therefore, they were all in need of forgiveness. The wages of sin is death, but God graciously gave the children of Israel a system of animal sacrifices to cover their sins. These sacrifices did not make atonement however; they were only a temporary solution to the problem. Saint Paul wrote, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4) Real atonement for sin requires human sacrifice, particularly of the one who has sinned. God is just, and leaves no sin unpunished; yet, in His forbearance He for many generations left sins unremitted. (Exodus 34:6, 7; Romans 3:25) The children of Israel, try as they might, could not keep the Law. The animal sacrifices did not make full atonement for their sins. Their possession of the Law, or rather their inability to keep it, showed that they needed something greater than the written law, and greater than the animal sacrifices. The children of Israel were justified by faith. However, the faith they exercised under the Mosaic dispensation was, like the animal sacrifices, provisional; their faith did not yet have the ultimate object of faith: Jesus Christ. Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Galatians 3:23-25) The Advent of Jesus Christ brought both the ability to keep the Law, and real atonement for failing to keep it.

The four Evangelists record that, before Jesus began His earthly ministry, John was baptizing in the wilderness of Judaea. They relate that his baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Of course, Jesus had no sin, and so he had no need of forgiveness. When Jesus came to John for baptism, John, at first, refused, saying that Jesus should baptize him. Jesus answered that, as God had sent John to baptize the people, He, as one of the people, would receive John's baptism. So, John did baptize him. When Jesus came up out of the water, He and John saw the Holy Spirit descend from heaven in the form of a dove, and rest upon Jesus, and Jesus heard a voice from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Just as, after the world's baptism, the dove had with an olive leaf come to Noah, so after Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove came to Him. Just as Noah stood as the new head of the race of men, so Jesus stood as the head of a new race, the race of redeemed men. John told the people that his baptism was preparatory, and would be superseded by Jesus's baptism. He said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire: Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:11, 12) The Evangelists do not explain the origin of John's baptism, but it had precedent in the Old Testament. Saint Peter says that baptism corresponds to the Great flood. Just as the Great Flood washed away the sins of the world, giving it a new beginning, so water baptism washes away the sins of the one baptized, giving him a new beginning. (1 Peter 3:21) Moreover, Jesus, by sanctifying individuals, is sanctifying the world.

After Jesus ascended into heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to take His place. On one occasion, the Spirit told Saint Peter to accompany some Gentiles who wished to take him to the home of their master. The Law of Moses forbade Jews from eating with, or even associating with, Gentiles, but the apostle did as the Spirit told him. He, and some Jewish believers, went with Cornelius's men. When Saint Peter arrived at Cornelius's home, he addressed the man's household. Cornelius was no heathen. His sympathies lay with true religion, although he had not received the rite of circumcision. Peter spoke of Jesus's life, some of which Cornelius had already heard. He spoke of how, when John baptized Jesus, God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he did much good, and healed those who oppressed by the devil. He spoke of how the Jews killed Jesus and hanged him on a tree. He also spoke of how God raised him from the dead, and that the apostles not only saw Him alive, but ate and drank with Him. Saint Peter said that Jesus commanded them to proclaim that He is the One that God has appointed to judge the living and the dead; that He is the one of whom the prophets foretold. Finally he said "that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." That is to say, Saint Peter proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ. Saint Luke relates what happened next.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. (Acts 10:44-48)

Peter and his companions knew that Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit. They knew it because they heard them speaking in tongues, just as they had done when they received the Spirit. The Jewish believers were amazed at this, because it meant that God gave the Spirit to Gentiles without their receiving circumcision. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was broken down, and God was receiving Gentiles, not as Jews, but as men. He was making two bodies into one, making peace between them. He was uniting by one Spirit all those who have faith in Jesus. Moreover, He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. At the birth of Christ, the angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14) Cornelius and his household had received the Spirit without receiving water baptism. At Pentecost, Saint Peter had told the crowd of Jews, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38) To receive the Spirit this

way is normative, but not necessary, as God demonstrated through Cornelius and his household. Yet, it was natural for them, having received the thing signified, to receive the sign. So, because they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Saint Peter ordered that they receive water baptism. At the baptism of the world, a dove brought to Noah a sign of peace with God. At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit appeared as dove, and God spoke of His good pleasure in His Son. At the first baptism of Gentiles, the Spirit appeared and brought peace to Jew and Gentile, and of course, peace with God. Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13) Not only does the Spirit join Jew and Gentile to Christ, and so to each other, but the Spirit also empowers them to do what they could not otherwise do, that is, live a life of obedience to God. God is uniting all mankind by His Spirit, and He is changing them by that same Spirit. In this way, God is changing the world.

Let us be thankful that God in Christ forgives our sins, so that we have peace with Him Let us be grateful that He unites all believers in one body, so that we are at peace with each other. Let us walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us. (Romans 8:4)

Unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit, be ascribed in the Church all honor and glory, might, majesty, dominion, and blessing, now, henceforth, and for ever. *Amen.*