



## Chaos or Community?

**M**artin Luther King Jr. set out to redeem the soul of America from the triple evils of racism, war and poverty. MLK Jr. loved Isaiah 40:4-5:

*Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it.*

*Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (published in 1967), was the fourth and last book written by Martin Luther King Jr. before his assassination in 1968.

In *Chaos or Community?* Dr. King pleaded for an end to violence, because violence always gives birth to the chaos of more violence—he raised our sights beyond the chaos that always results when violence and hatred spawns retribution and retaliation and he encouraged community.

This question asked by MLK Jr. rings true today, over 50 years later. It rings true in the middle of the deep and fractured racial chaos in our nation and in our world today. It rings true in the middle of our bitter, hostile, chaotic political divides...it rings true as we see the chaos of hatred and animosity that flourishes in the toxic soil of our media, our schools, our government and yes, in many of our churches.

When hatred and violence are examined over the long run of history, we discover religion has inflicted hatred and violence as well as being victimized by warfare and violence.

Jesus said that all who pick up the sword and live by violence will eventually die by the sword. Jesus insisted that his followers return

good for evil, that they turn the other cheek rather than repay violence with violence. Jesus taught his followers to pray for their enemies.

The root problem with religion is that people, in the name of God, turn their backs on him, busying themselves in efforts to recreate God in their own image. Within the religion that passes as Christianity many people “go to church” to hear and participate in something they already believe in. They reject Jesus, and the grace and mercy of God because all they want to do is be assured that all they believe and practice is in concert with God’s will.

Violence all over the world is a continuing and unceasing narrative. We see nation against nation, religion against religion, ism against ism...based in violence or the threat of violence. It all leads to *chaos, not community*.

We see unspeakable barbarism and brutality—much of it in the name of God. And once again, Christ-less religion is promoting and producing *chaos, not community*.

In *Chaos or Community?* Dr. King said:

*“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.*

*Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate.*

*In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars...*

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”*

We live in the midst of a world that might be described as a seething cauldron, a boiling pot of hatred—we see dispassionate indifference about the plight of the young, the old, the disadvantaged, the alienated, the weak and the abused.

Multinational corporations pay their top executives hundreds of millions of dollars in annual salaries and benefits while the poor must dumpster dive for their next meal.

We live in a world where an obsession for pleasure addicts people via drugs and alcohol. The relentless quest for pleasure means a huge percentage of our youth are discarded and neglected so that they live aimless lives, amused with their games and devices, with instant gratification and quick thrills as their sole goal in life.

The great emptiness in North America, and in fact all the Western world today is more than a valley—it is a dark, bottomless pit dug by **racism, warfare and poverty**.

Our passionate obsessions, addictions, violence and lust for gratification of all our senses produces a loss of meaning—a loss of what it means to care and love and reach out to others. Jesus alone can restore and redeem us so that we do love one another and find spiritual meaning and significance in him. □

—Greg Albrecht

*Join us for the complete message of “Chaos or Community?” at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of January 20, 2019.*