

# Christendom and The Way

By

Curtis Dickinson

Recently a friend sent me a copy of an article by the late Carl Ketcherside, who used to publish a monthly paper called Mission Messenger. This issue of Mission Messenger was published in April of 1972, but speaks to conditions of our time. The article asks the question, what is Christendom? Before answering this question the editor gave a synopsis of the conditions and events that led up to the great Council of Nicaea in 325. This council of bishops, called by the emperor Constantine, resulted in a statement that is known as the Nicene Creed.

The creed of the apostles was Jesus Christ. It consisted of a historical fact and was stated in the simple proposition that Jesus was the Anointed One, the Son of God. But it became the core of heated theological debate.

Before that convocation on June 14, 325, freedom of opinion and tolerance had always existed among Christians. “Now an emperor, not yet converted to Christ, used temporal power to bring together those spiritual leaders who would set the stage for bitter persecution and make honest dissent a horrible crime. From now on such dissent would be heresy, and communication would be contingent upon conformity. Prior to this the saints had been persecuted by the pagans who sought to blot out the name of Christ. Now they would be persecuted by their fellows in the name of Christ.”

While Constantine urged the need for agreement, that agreement never came. “But the majority, the so-called forces of orthodoxy, determined upon a statement of faith which would eventually shatter the religious world to fragments.”

The Mission Messenger article quotes Edward Backhouse and Charles Tylor: “What might have happened if the Nicene Creed had not been adopted no one can say. But let us not ignore the incalculable mischief of enforced conformity, nor overlook the fact that the conclusion arrived at by the council was very far from settling the question at issue” (*Early Church History to the Death of Constantine*). German historian Neander wrote, “The manner in which the controversy was left could only contain the seeds for new disputes.”

The above is only a brief synopsis of the background, which Editor Ketcherside gave before finally giving his own definition of Christendom. In my own opinion, his definition is even more descriptive of Christendom today than that of 31 years ago.

“Christendom is the huge umbrella of many patches and colors, providing shelter and shade for every form of political and religious delusion and chicanery. It is the sprawling tent under which millions huddle to watch the antics of religious clowns and buffoons, and to see the three-ring circus of professional entertainers, putting on a constant show for the shekels thrown them by the fear motivated spectators. It is the labyrinthine maze,

which entraps and ensnares the unwary, and dooms them to the perpetual and hopeless search for happiness, promising them everything and delivering nothing.

“Christendom is not the creation of God. It is the machinery of the clergy, a special class of which God's word knows nothing but which sprung out of human pride and then captured the holy city and placed its citizens under tribute for its maintenance. It is the new mediator between God and man, christening, consecrating, shriving, burying, and intoning prayers for a fee. Christendom is the kingdom presided over by popes, cardinals, primates, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, prelates, deans, arch deacons, canons, rectors, vicars and curates. In the suburban areas it is sometime under the direction of priests, pastors and parsons, and these frequently try to hide their relationship. It is the realm of ecclesiastical jargon, that language of the Scholastics, which has become a dialect or patois, unintelligible to the masses and serving only to confuse the uninitiated and confound the humble student.

“Christendom is not The Way! The Way is the habitat of free men; of men free to think for themselves and, what may be just as important, free to allow others to think for themselves. The Way is the path of communion and not always of conformation.”

Carl Ketcherside held that Christendom is the mother of doubt and skepticism, the imposer of creeds that bind the intellect. For these reasons he called for “scrapping of all traditions except the apostolic tradition of Jesus Christ.”

In contrast to Christendom, as described by Carl Ketcherside, is the way of Christ. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He did not say “a” way among many others, but the one and only way. He went on to explain: “No one comes to the Father, but by me.” This claim to be the only way immediately incited opposition from the religious leaders, just as it does today. In 1934 John Dewey wrote a book, *A Common Faith*, in which he described the need for a synchronization of religions toward a common faith. In the September 1950 issue of the Masonic magazine called *The New Age*, C. William Smith calls for “the unification of all races, religions and creeds. A new religion of 'The Great Light'...and the American race will be the sixth Aryan Civilization.” Few Christians were aware of the seed being sown at that time, but today we see the fruit of such seed as churches abandon the exclusive claims of Christ to compromise with the world.

The Way of Christ is opposed by the world. In the all-out campaign for a New World Order and a common world religion, the world insists on a diversity that abolishes the exclusive claims of Jesus. **The world will now tolerate any religion except the one that offers the only way to God and to life and immortality.** Jesus promised that “whosoever believes on him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). This means that all who reject him perish. This is the offense that incites the hatred of the world.

Modern churchdom seeks to ingratiate itself with the world, to satisfy worldly desires, but Jesus said that the world hates him because he testifies that its works are evil. Try testifying to the evil of sodomy and you will feel the wrath of the world.

Christ's way is not something to add to the already overloaded life of modern man. Christ ever suggested that we “invite him into our hearts” as we so often hear today; rather he invites us to enter into the narrow way, the way he has already made. All other ways are opposed by Christ. His way is to take the place of the worldly life.

When Jesus said, “I am the truth” he labeled as false all other religious claims and revealed for all time the source of true enlightenment. His claim to be Truth excludes as true any philosophy or idea that is contrary to his teaching. One thing the serious student is taught in the halls of education is that there is no absolute truth. Where Jesus is despised, truth is despised, and the more Christian doctrine (Christ's teachings) is suppressed by education, the press, and the government, the greater the decline in morality, peace, order, and stability.

The way of Christ is the narrow way, while the way of Christendom is the broad way with the wide gate, and “many are they that enter in thereby” (Matt. 7:13). Christ deals with individuals. His commands must be obeyed personally. He himself stood alone, prayed alone, obeyed alone, and died alone. No one could do his work for him. Christian faith cannot be delegated or shared by a committee. Jesus chose the will of God in private, and was put to shame in public. This is the way to which he calls us.

The way of Christ is the way of glory. Jesus recognized that it is easy to be blinded by the world's promise of glory and honor. He asked, “How can you believe, who receive glory one of another and the glory that comes from the only Cod you seek not?” (John 5:44). The honor men seek is from the crowds, organizations, and institutions. But Jesus promises, “If any man will serve me” him will the Father honor” (John 12:26). Not the honor of multitudes, but honor from one: God. This is the narrow way of Jesus. It is the way of self-denial, it is to set out on the course that will be unsung by men, where your sacrifice will be unseen and your name forgotten by the world.

**Honor from God!** This is the glory of the narrow way. It is the way to the peace of God that passes understanding. Those who seek for such honor will receive it in glorious immortality for eternity, while the world that seeks glory among men will get only that, and nothing more (Rom:2:7-8).

The creeds and traditions of Christendom divide and confuse. It is the Christ, crucified and raised from the grave, then exalted and glorified at God's right hand as Lord and Christ, who brings unity and peace. Therefore:

“Enter in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads unto life, and few are they that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14).

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries. Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article for permission to be valid. Vol. XLIII, Number 8.  
.....