

ONE WAY

Paul wrote letters to the sprouting first century churches.
In fact, he is credited with writing 13 letters that are included in the New Testament; about half of the NT.
Some scholars question his authorship of a few of them.

Interestingly, we have little inclination about how his letters were received. We assume he was well respected as a leader, but that is not always the case in Christendom.
Maybe they immediately went into the recycle bin?
Who knows? Nevertheless, his persistent and persuasive influence endured.

These few letters from Paul were chosen to be canonized, and countless other letters from Christian leaders were left out.
Paul's influence prevailed.

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Theological, Paul insisted that the Jewish roots remain in Christianity, as long as tradition and legalism didn't trump Christ. He had a high Christology, and he quickly argued against those who's modified theology devalued Christ.

This is the case in today's text from Colossians.

Paul likely had not yet been to Colossae when he wrote this letter, but obviously he had heard about their theological tilt.

They had infused some of the local spirituality into their teachings, which is called Gnosticism. Gnosticism has a mystical and metaphysical flavour to it. Emotions / how the spirit feels are important, and superstitions and angels are significant,....to the point of displacing the dominance of Christ. With their mystical appreciation came certain rules and rituals to support their beliefs, and Paul was convinced they didn't coalesce with the way and teachings of Jesus.  
So, he wrote a firm letter to the Colossians to correct their deviations.

This text begins with the admonition to recall who you are --Christians!, and...to Live in Christ.

He warns them to Not be misled or deceived by their cultural influence, even if it sounds reasonable.

Paul stresses God was in Jesus, all things are in Christ, and so are believers.  
In other words, it's all about Christ--everything!

Christ is the way, the only way.

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Paul's message is comparable to what Jesus taught in the John text.

Chapter 14 begins with Jesus explaining how it is being with God the father, and that there is a place for all who know the way.

Thomas injected that he didn't know the way, or at least, wasn't clear about it. Jesus clearly stated that he is the way, saying, No ONE comes to God the father except through him-- Jesus.

Philip wanted clarity about God the father. Jesus patiently shares that father is a relationship: that Jesus is in the father and the father is in Jesus, and that the father affects Jesus. We can conclude that God is much bigger than this connection, yet this relationship--the father and the son-- is enough for us to find the way to God.

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I suppose the disciples were displaying blank stares as Jesus was teaching. So, he ended with, .... "Well, if this father/son connection is confusing, then focus on the works / the life / the actions I've lived and taught.

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The way to God.....The ONE Way to God.
.... Jesus is the way to God.

We the keepers of the way,....we the keepers of the New Testament.... We the Christians.....take great satisfaction in owning "The One Way."
There is a lot of satisfaction in the assurance that our way is THE way,.....and...to the excess of being abusive.

We have used this perception of being the sole travelers on the journey to God to negatively judge others. Our arrogance fed the missionary movement and imperialism. To be sure, we wanted others to join us, as long as they became as us. Historically, Christians have demanded conformity and allegiance, and sometimes those demands were not very nice. No doubt, many, many Christian missionaries were gracious and patient.

Nevertheless, the declaration of "Our way or No way" is not real appealing to non-Christians, nor is it beneficial for those who claim to be followers of Christ. Devaluing, belittling, castigating people is Not the way of Christ, even when motivated by good intentions.

Yet, the words are clearly printed in the New Testament that Jesus is THE Way, the only way to God.

And so, let us begin with this context--the New Testament.

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Each book / each Gospel / each letter was written for the church. The readers, including us, know about Jesus, and most have chosen to be followers,.....or at least are wanting to be followers.

The New Testament writings, including Paul, are strongly emphasizing to their select audience.....to keep the course / to remember and adhere to what the handed down teachings of Jesus are. Much of the writings are admonitions and encouragements. The N.T. was for the church. Therefore, we know about Jesus' relationship with God. We affirm that God was in Jesus and Jesus in God. We accept that Jesus is the saviour and God's son / gift to humanity,..... so why would we need or desire to get off that path?

The New Testament is declaring "You're on the right path" / "Keep going!  
To do otherwise, is to reject Christ.  
Don't be discouraged or dissuaded. Jesus is the way, the only way. Keep going."

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Years ago, I was asked, "Why are you a Christian? Why not consider other religions, they may be just as good or even more enriching?"

I responded by saying that I'd studied other religions, and appreciated what they offered, but there was no point in leaving Christianity..... because Christianity works.

Christianity was MY religious language. It was what I grew up into, and what I know best.....AND it rings true.
It works / it is valid, and for me, the way of Christ is The Way.
There is no point in testing other paths, when I know my path / my journey is going where I want to go.

Are other religions wrong?

Do other roads have to be wrong, if they are not the same as the ONE I know to be right? ??????

The answer to that all depends on perspective, and keep in mind, we are a New Testament / Christian audience.

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To put it another way:

A week ago, I was on a plane heading to Saskatoon. I had made the decision to fly home, and I was personally committed to that decision. I was completely invested in flying to Saskatoon. At 35,000 feet, keeping to that decision was the only way to get to Saskatoon. It was THE Way. All other options could prove fatal,.....or worse. I could end up in Winnipeg or even Toronto.

In that / in The context of flying above the clouds heading to Saskatoon, I was ON THE Way to my chosen destination.

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We are in the context of a Christian community.

Are there other possible ways to Saskatoon?
Well, that all depends on how you define way.

Realistically, it is possible to walk, skip, ride a horse or a train or a bus, or use a car, but that means going back to the beginning,....where ever that is,.....and it depends on how you define way.

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Similarly, how we define "THE WAY" makes all the difference in the world.

I fear that some people regard Jesus like a "password", a door key or a ticket.

They think, in essence, that all that is necessary is to "claim" Jesus / or profess Jesus and they have entry into the kingdom of God.

That perception gives magical quality to the word Jesus and the dogma of Christianity.

They can punch in the word Jesus into the pearly gate lock, like one who owns a password, and viola.....the gate opens.

There is the flavour of Gnosticism in that perception. The life and teaching of Jesus are of little concern. It's all about claiming Jesus / owning Jesus.....knowing the correct code, and God can't refuse you.

And, the other consequence to that perception is that those who don't "know" Jesus are left out in the cold.

They didn't accept Jesus as their saviour. They don't know the password to God.

Knowing / doing the exact method is essential to that understanding. The exact mode of transportation is critical.

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Here is an illustration:

Katherine is lost in some desperate place,....let's say Toronto. She doesn't know where I am or my new cell phone number.

She's suppose to be with me, and isn't so I know she's lost.

So, I send a trust friend to go find her and bring her back to me. He knows the way to find me.

In the mean time, I keep sending out messages to her, through various channels, trying to reach her and tell her how to find me.

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Then, low and behold, she finds me. We are together.

Would I reject her and send her away because she didn't find me through the means that I intended for her?

Would I refuse her, if she had decided to not listen to my trusted friend instructions on the how to find me?

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If God would do such a thing, then God has less love than I do.

If God would refuse relationship because the explicit rules were not followed, then what kind of God is that?

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Nevertheless, as Jesus clearly stated, the Way of Jesus is the way to God. There is but One Way!

And, that way is Jesus.....NOT the name / not as a password / not by saying the salvation mantra,.....but by travelling the way.

The clue Jesus gave to his disciples was to consider his works--his life and teaching.

If you need a better definition, then reread the Gospels, especially Matthew 25.

The way to God is the way of Christ.

It includes compassion, grace, a love and acceptance of all people. It means living for peace and justice.

The journey is giving self for the weak and powerless.

The way is fully trusting in God, and not our own agenda or in money.

The way.....is a relationship of love with all things, including creation, ourselves and God.

It's about relationships, and relationships are difficult and messy.

There is NO other way.

Anyone who thinks that a few magic words, such as asking Jesus into your heart, is enough,.....is only fooling themselves.

Repentance and commitment is only a beginning, and that's it.

Plus, the kingdom of God is more than just heaven.

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Moreover, If your passion does not include the desire that all people will be with God, no matter how they find God, then you are likely following another lord. **You are on the wrong path.**

The way of Jesus is the way of open love and it includes acceptance of all people: Gentiles, Samaritans, people of different races and different sexual orientation.

There is ONLY ONE WAY to God. There is only one way to the fullness of LOVE..... It's the love of love.

"For God so loved the world....."