

**The Death and Resurrection of Christianity:
Rediscovering the Way of Love at the Heart of the Truth**

A Book Proposal

by

Kenneth W. Howard

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Synopsis

Does the future have a Church?

In this book, the author examines the current conflicts plaguing and issues confronting the Church and concludes that these are the symptoms of an underlying illness for which the prognosis is death – that the Church as we have known it is dying – and that this is a good thing! The author believes that dying is the only way the Church can survive: the Church needs to die so it can experience a resurrection.

The author suggests that the Church is heading toward a massive realignment on a scale greater than any it has ever experienced, except perhaps the realignment represented by its own birth out of Judaism two millennia ago. This realignment is coming because several of the major paradigms under which the Church has operated for hundreds or thousands of years are no longer able to adequately explain and make sense of reality as humanity is coming to know it.

In Part One, the author peels back these paradigms one at a time and asks fundamental questions about each one: How and why did it come into being? How did it seek to explain and make sense of reality as it was coming to be known at the time? What were its positive and negative impacts on the Church and the world? How and why did it begin to collapse? And where does its collapse leave the Church today?

In Part Two, the author investigates a number of past movements within the Church – from “The Way” of the Pauline and Jewish-Christian Jesus movements of the first century to the “Middle Way” of the emerging Anglican Church of the seventeenth century – which arose during times of great change in the life of the Church and of the world. The author examines these movements for clues as to how they tried to shift the paradigms of Church to cope with those changes and how those coping strategies might help the Church anticipate and deal with the changes that are coming..

In Part Three, the author explores current developments – from quantum physics and post-modern philosophy – to uncover what new ways of thinking about reality they might offer.

Finally, in Part Four, the author draws the strands together in order to provide a sense of what the new paradigm of Church might be and proposes the outlines of a *convergent theology*: a way of thinking about Church which might transcend the current controversies and provide members of the body of Christ from across the current divides a common ground on which to stand.

Enhancements

The author explores issues of significance and depth with an engaging approach: brisk and conversational, with dry humor and reverent irreverence. The pages of the book are sprinkled with thought-provoking quotations and cultural references: from Jesus Christ to Albert Einstein, from the words of traditional hymns to the lyrics of popular music. Each chapter ends with biblical reflections, application exercises, and resources for further study and action.

About the Author

As a pastor, preacher, church planter, and church growth and strategic planning specialist, the author is uniquely positioned to understand the conflicts and issues confronting the church and the world in the current day.

Kenneth W. Howard has been an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church since 1993. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary, with an emphasis on Church History. Prior to ordination he worked as a management consultant specializing in organizational development.

He is respected and trusted for his expertise in conflict resolution and consensus building, and for his ability to appreciate and foster understanding of points of view from across the theological and political spectrum. He has been called upon to facilitate dialogue on a number of issues: from human sexuality to interfaith relations.

As a Christian of Jewish origins – the third generation of an immigrant Jewish family from Belarus in the former Soviet Union and the great grandson of an Orthodox Rabbi – he comes at Christianity with a greater sense of its uniqueness than – and without the assumptions and preconceptions of – someone raised in the Christian faith.

The author brings to this book a unique understanding of the development of the Church as we know it. In addition to his research on Jewish Christianity in the Early Church,” the author has done extensive research on the ancient Celtic Christian movement.

The author is the founding vicar and first rector of St. Nicholas’ Episcopal Church in Germantown, Maryland, the congregation with whose help he has developed and tested the ideas outlined in this book. Planted in 1995 in rented space with the twelve households, the congregation has grown to more than 350 baptized members representing theological viewpoints from across the conservative-to-liberal spectrum, united by Christ’s love.

Chapter Outline

1. Introduction – Dead Man Walking?

Part I – Does the Future Have a Church? – The Death of Christianity

2. The End of the World (As We Know It) –Life in an Age of Collapsing Paradigms
3. Reality Ain't What It Used to Be – The Collapse of Foundationalism : The Shift from Certainty to Faith
4. Constantine's Ghost – The Collapse of Christendom: The Shift from Control to Relationship
5. And No Religion, Too – The Collapse of Religionism: The Shift from Perfection to Wholeness

Part II: O God, Our Help in Ages Past; Our Hope for Years to Come – Paradigm Pioneers in the History of the Church and Their Contributions to the Discussion of What it Means to Be Church

6. Neither Jew Nor Greek – Peter and Paul and the Jewish Christian and Pauline Movements of the First Century – How Christ Makes Religion Irrelevant
7. Barbarians Need Love, Too – Martin of Tours and the Rural Monastic Movement of the Fourth Century – How a Roman Military Officer Created an Alternative to Imperial Christianity
8. I Bind Unto Myself Today – Patrick and the Celtic Christian Movement of the Fifth Century and Beyond – How Radical Hospitality Creates Faith
9. The Middle Way – Richard Hooker and the Anglican Movement of the Seventeenth Century – How Worship Creates Christian Community

Part III: Sing to the Lord a New Song – Post-Modern Philosophy and How Quantum Physics are Shaking and Shaping the Paradigm of Church

10. Postmodern Pilate? – The Enduring Importance of the Question: “What is Truth?”
11. Polkinghorne's Parallels – Quantum Physics, Critical Realism, and the Search for Verisimilitude

Part IV: Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life – The Outlines of a Convergent Theology of Church

12. Here There Be Dragons! – The Danger and Excitement of Exploring Beyond Our Current Horizons and Mapping Out New Boundaries
13. Common Threads, Common Ground – What We Can Learn from the Paradigm Pioneers
14. The Shape of Things to Come –Emerging Principles and Practices of a New Way