



# *Why Christians are useless and irrelevant in today's society*

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Student group presentation for Ministry,  
Church and Society course

Based on chapters 1-2 of Rodney Clapp's "Peculiar People"



## *The Church as Unchurch...*

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“We seem no longer to be where the action is, where the plans are made, and where the strategies are discussed.”

-- Henri Nouwen



## ★ Sentimental capitulation

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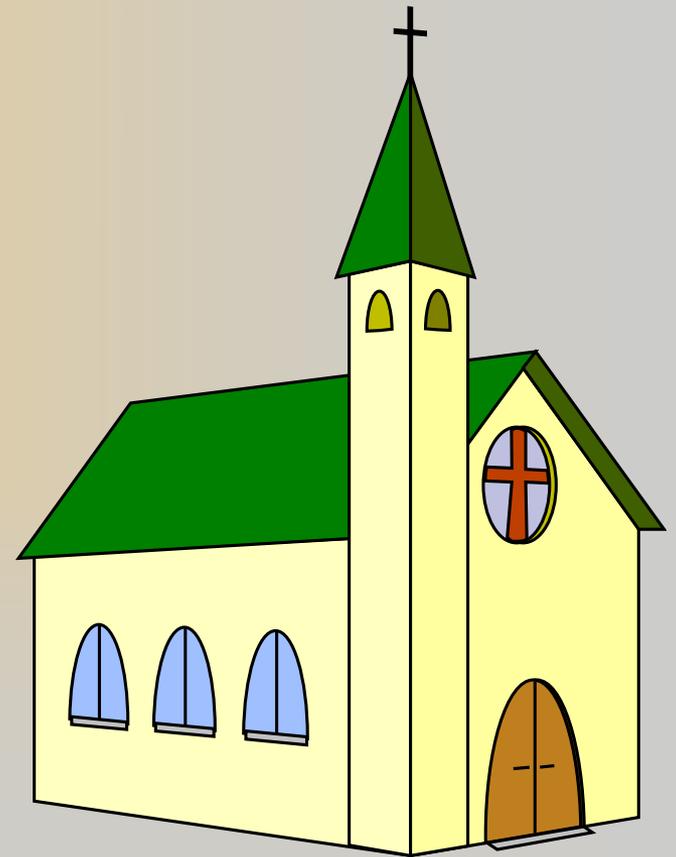


- The church has nothing distinctive to offer or to be,. Yet, it sentimentally hangs on to Christian language and practice anyway.



# *Society vs. Church*

- ★ The more secular our society becomes, the church is seen as useless.
- ★ Christians feel useless because the church feels useless. And the church feels useless because it keeps on trying to perform Constantinian duties in a world that is not longer Constantinian.



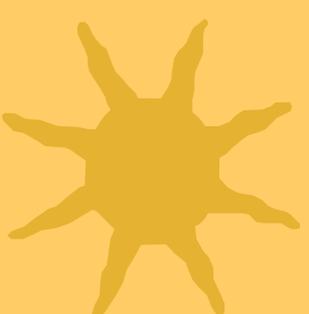


## *What is Constantinianism?*

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- ★ Constantine was the first emperor to declare Christianity as a national religion.
- ★ He was the first of a long line of leaders to see Christianity as the unifying force that might bring together the empire's diverse population.
- ★ With this shift, the church derived its importance with the purpose and identity of the state.





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“Early Christians knew . . .the Church existed, but had to believe against appearances that Christ ruled over the world. After Constantine, one knew as a fact of experience that Christ was ruling over the world, but had to believe against the evidence that there existed a believing Church.” -- RodneyClapp



# *Progression of Church and State*

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- ★ Those behind the Reformation wanted to renew the visible, faithful bodies of believers.
- ★ Deism began to emerge as a prominent worldview.





# *Umbrella-ism*



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- ★ Christians have become misled through a Constantin-ian belief that the church is still plays a dominant role in today's society.
  - ★ Host of other religions are rapidly growing in our country





# *The Three Rs afflicting the Church*

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★ Retrenchment



★ Relinquishment



★ Radicalization



## *The Church as Private Club*

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★ One strategy of retrenchment is the migration of faith from social and cultural and placing itself in the individual.



★ Gnosticism

- Individualized faith
- Attempt to escape from everything but self
- Faith is solitary affair between God and self





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★ Jesus in history



★ Jesus in community





# *Gnosticism's impact on the Church*

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★ Church adapted by shifting its focus

– Psychologizers/Self-Help

– From social change to how the individual can adjust to the status quo



★ By definition, the Constantinian church is reactive and reflexive to the surrounding culture.





# *The God of Gnostic Consumerism*

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★ Pressures for church leaders to focus only on individual faith.



★ People leave churches because their “needs aren’t being met.”

– This attitude fosters a doctor- patient relationship with God.

– We have made Him a God who only *meets our needs*.





# *Dead End of Privatizing Faith*

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- ★ Constantinianism has been a a “dead end theologically and sociologically.”
- ★ Cultural developments have rendered the Church ineffective.





This PowerPoint presentation is available along with related materials and other PowerPoint presentations at <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/ppt.htm>

