

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

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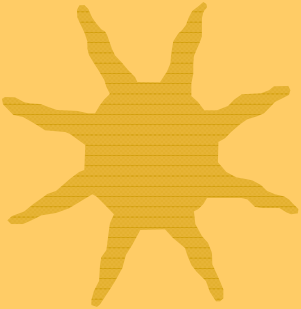
Student group presentation for Ministry,  
Church and Society course

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



## *The Church as Unchurch...*

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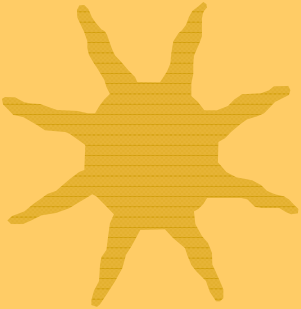
“We seem no longer to be where the action is, where the plans are made, and where the strategies are discussed.”

--Father Henri Nouwen



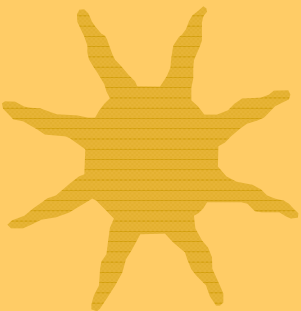
## ★ Sentimental capitulation

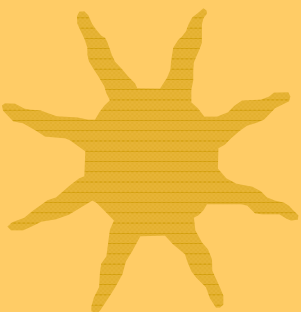
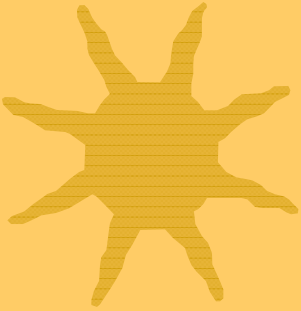
- The church has nothing distinctive to offer or to be, yet sentimentally hangs on to its Christian language and practice anyway.



## ★ Retrenchment

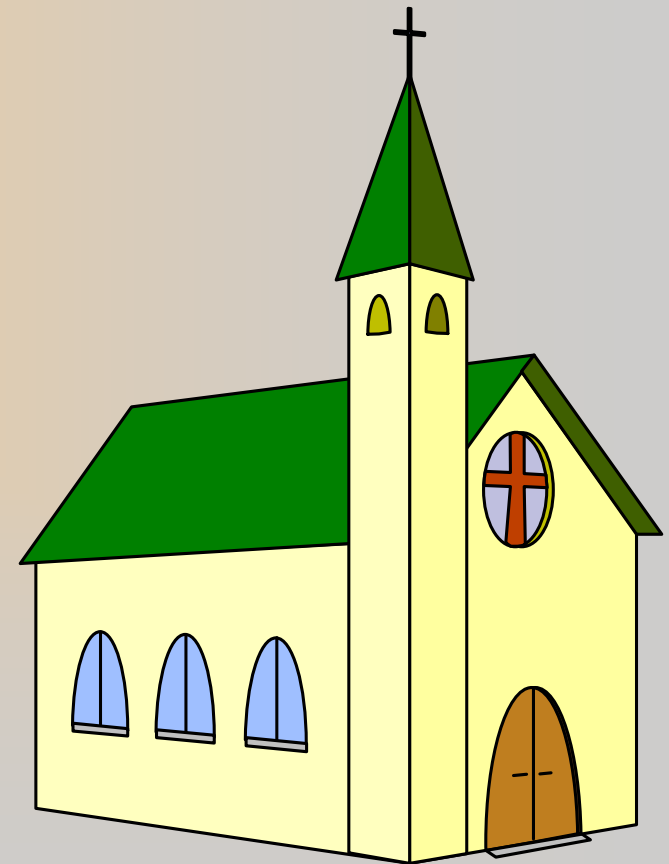
- Television evangelist/Presidential candidate Pat Robertson: Christian voters are the nation's moral strength
- Pastor D. James Kennedy: “Our responsibility in the church is to insist that the laws of this Christian nation be consistent with God's word.”





## *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.

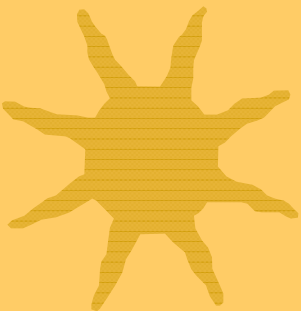


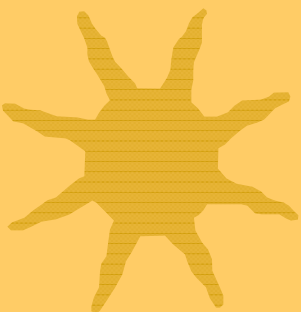
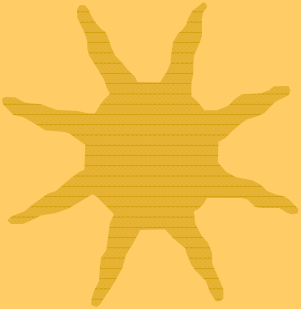


## *What is Constantinianism?*

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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.



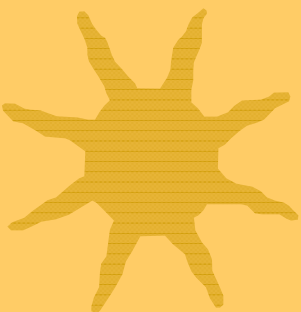
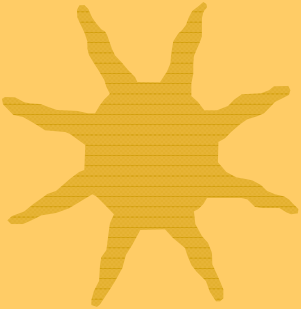


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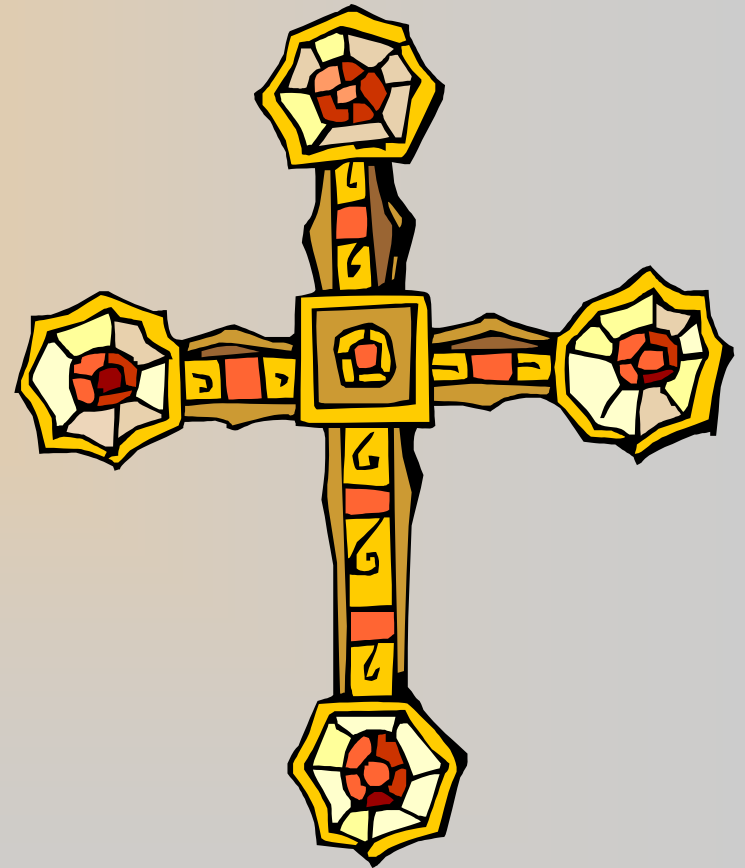
“Christians had known as a fact of experience that the Church existed, but had to believe against appearances that Christ ruled over the world. After Constantine one knew as a fact of experience that Christ was ruling over the world, but had to believe against the evidence that there existed a believing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



# *Progression of Church and State*



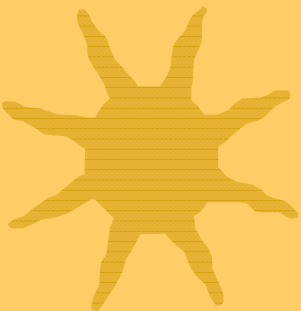
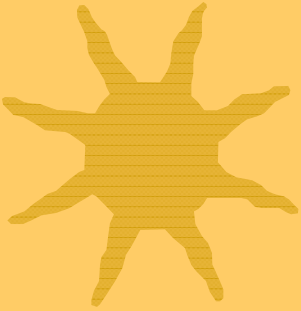
- ★ Those behind the Reformation wanted to renew the visible, faithful bodies of believers.
- ★ Deism began to emerge as a prominent worldview.





## *Umbrella-ism*

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







## *The Three Rs*

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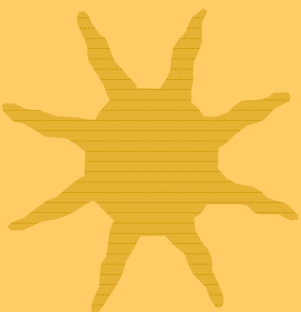
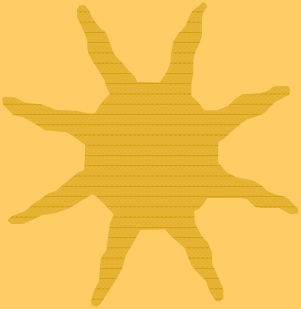
★ Retrenchment



★ Relinquishment



★ Radicalization



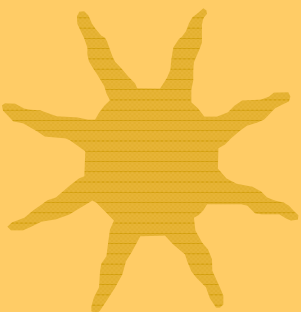
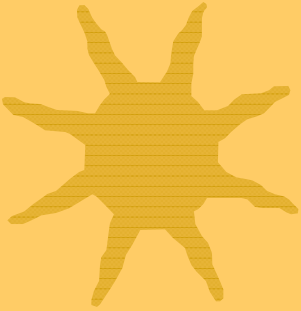
## *The Church as Private Club*

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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



# *Our Culture's View...*



★ Jesus in history



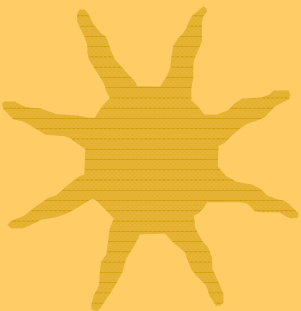
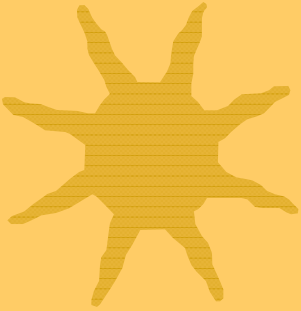
★ Jesus in community





## *Gnosticism's impact on the Church*

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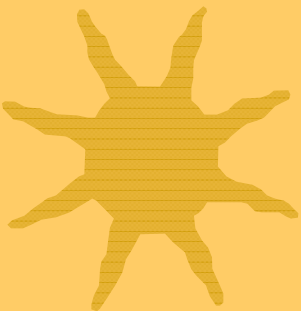
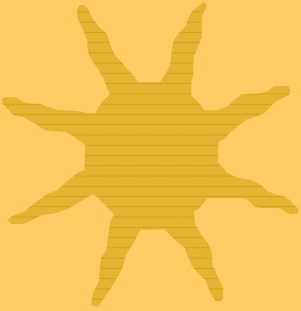


- ★ Church adapted by shifting its focus
  - Psychologizers/Self-Help
  - From social change to how the individual can adjust to the status quo
- ★ By definition, the Constantinian church is reactive and reflexive to the surrounding culture.

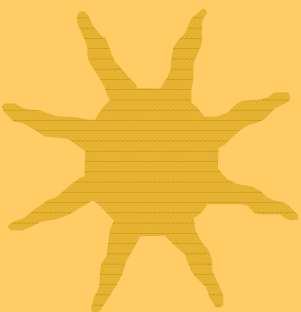
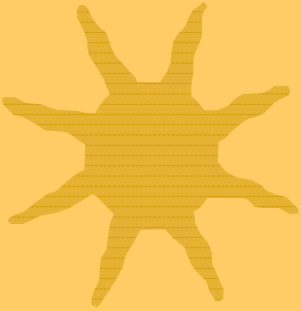


## *The God of Gnostic Consumerism*

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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 causes 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 always be a “dead end theologically and sociologically.”
- ★ Cultural developments have rendered the Church ineffective.

