Why Christians are useless and irrelevant in today's society

Student group presentation for Ministry, Church and Society course
Based on chapters 1-2 of Rodney Clapp’s “Peculiar People”
The Church as Unchurch...

“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

- 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?

- 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.
“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.” — Rodney 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

- 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

- Retrenchment
- Relinquishment
- Radicalization
The Church as Private Club

- 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
Jesus in history

Jesus in community
Gnosticism’s impact on the Church

- 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.
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

- Constantinianism has been 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