



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.”

--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.

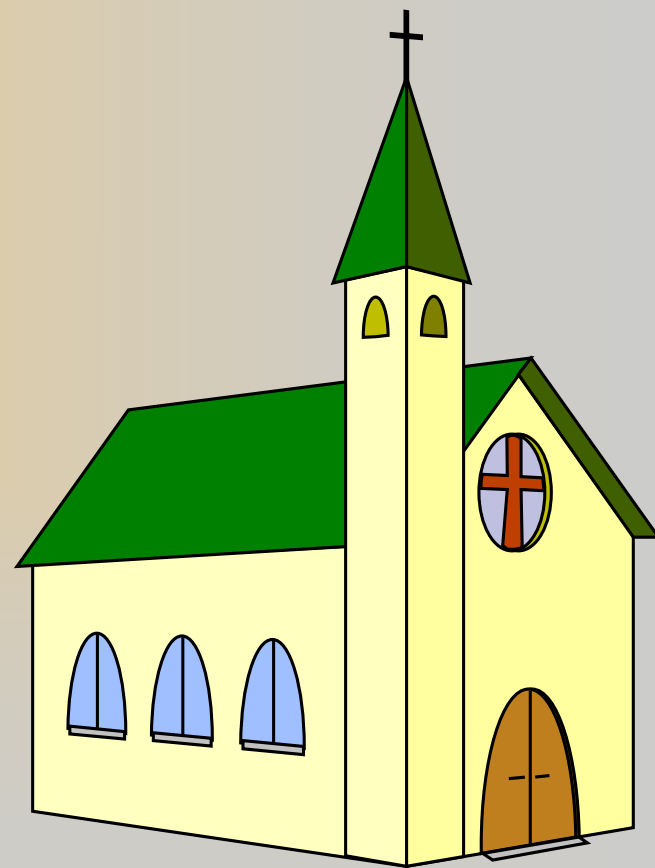
★ Retrenchment

- 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?

- ★ 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.



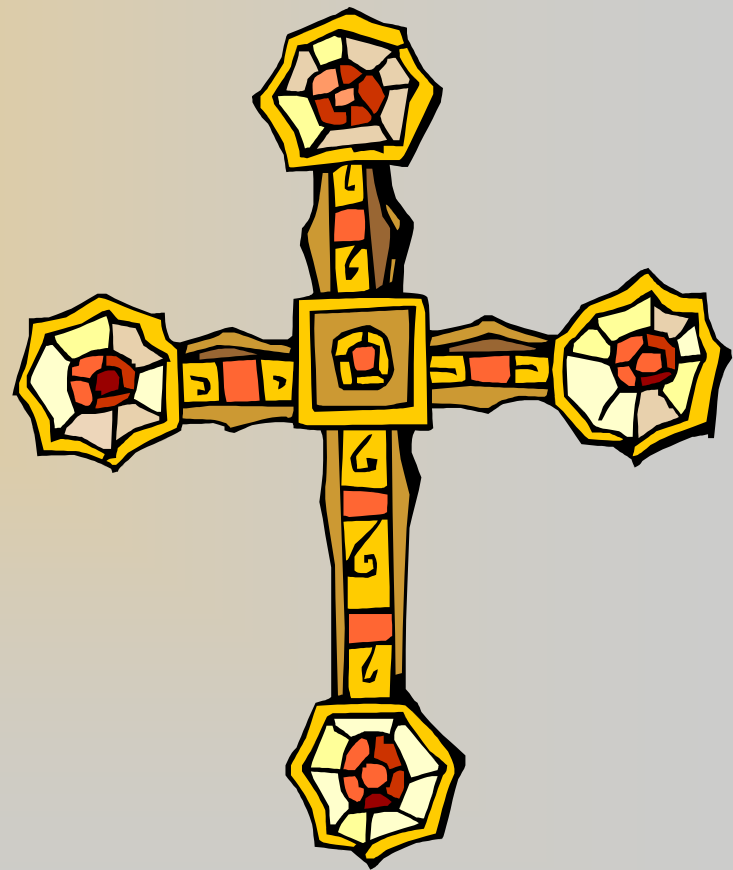


“Christians had known as a fact of experience that the Church existed, but had to believe against appearances that Christ ruled over the world. After Constantine one knew as a fact of experience that Christ was ruling over the world, but had to believe against the evidence that there existed a believing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



- ★ 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



★ 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





Our Culture's View...

★ 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.



The God of Gnostic Consumerism

- ★ 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

- ★ Constantinianism has always be 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>
