The 'Crumbling Christendom' Scenario

A Historic Overview Summary of the Development of the Church

	Apostolic Church	**Constantinian/Christendom Church**	**Emerging/Missional Church**
	Life of Christ to 3-400 AD	*400 AD – 1900's*	*Present*
Environment or Context	Larger society is clearly hostile to Christians. Christianity is illegal. C~~hurch~~ S~~ociety~~	Under Constantine, Christianity becomes not only legal, but in time it is illegal to be anything else. Society considers it good and normal to be Christian. Church & State are united. C~~hurch~~ S~~ociety~~	Society is at best indifferent to the Church, at worst, somewhat antagonistic. Being Christian is a choice, but looked down on a bit. The symbiotic relationship is ending. C~~hurch~~ S~~ociety~~
Nature of Christian Community	Tightly knit, committed, dedicated, somewhat difficult to enter group.	The state is considered to be Christian, so the whole civilized world is understood to be part of the faith community. A small group does the work & the majority fill pews (or not).	The congregation again becomes the 'working unit' of faith. Commitment, and dedication again become defining of membership.
Mission	Very clear understanding of the call for EACH Christian to live out, witness and share their faith with others in their personal lives	As society becomes understood as Christian, it is increasingly accepted that mission is done 'out there', to the pagan lands, carried out by 'expert' missionaries on behalf of the church.	The frontier of mission is, much like in the apostolic church, seen as local. Every Christian is again seen as 'sent' and responsible for missions. Mission 'overseas' is increasingly seen in partnership terms.
Clergy/Laity	Mostly gifts & function related jobs & titles. Very little sense of hierarchy.	The distinction between clergy and laity becomes very large, with increasing power, prestige & responsibility vested in the clergy and less & less expected of the laity.	The role of clergy is once again increasingly defined in terms of mentoring, training, supporting and and encouraging the members of the congregation to be active, dedicated and faithful.

Adapted from Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, An Alban Institute video, with help from Alan Kreider lectures at 2003 Missional Leaders Training Course.