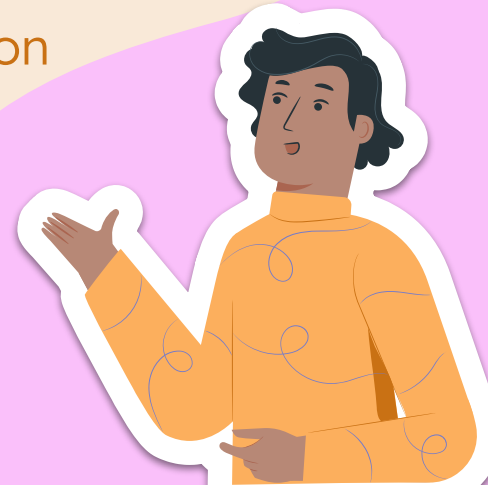


Where Two or Three are Logged On

The Rhetoric of Christian Comments Left on
Instagram Meme Pages

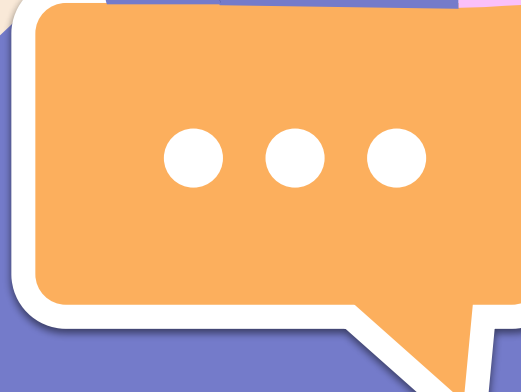
Annika B. Cambigue



01

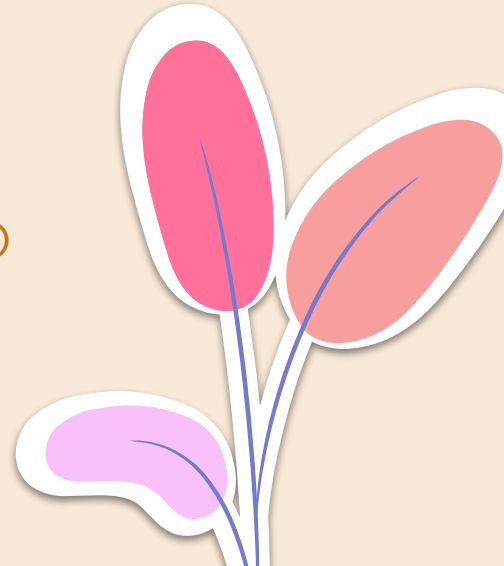
Why Study Memes?

Using rhetorical principles, what can we learn from how Christians use language to reinforce and challenge arguments in a nondenominational Christian internet space?



02: Framing Concepts

- Memes
 - Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1976)
 - Esteves and Meikle (2018)
 - “shared, rule-based representations of online interactions that are not only adopted but also adapted by others” (p. 564).
- Participatory culture (Bellar et al., 2013)
 - Create and consume simultaneously
- Digital lived religion (Burroughs & Feller, 2015; Bellar et al., 2013)
 - “The process in which people draw from religious sources to make sense of their world, and experience the sacred in everyday practices” (p. 7)



03: Methodology

- How do Christians respond to memes about Christianity in Christian affinity spaces?
- I selected three Christian meme aggregation pages on Instagram
 - @thebestchristianmemes
 - @epicchristianmemes
 - @memesforjesus
- I selected five recent posts from each page and analyzed comment sections with case study approach

03: Methodology

- My analysis focused on principles of rhetoric
 - “the study of producing discourses and interpreting how, when, and why discourses are persuasive (Lundberg & Keith, 2017)
- I sorted each comment by viewpoint and tone
 - Supportive, opposing, and off topic
 - Playful, serious
- Finally, I looked for patterns



04

Key Findings



Stock Issues

@torrencesampson commented, “I bet a random guy is going to leave a note complaining about the women workout group saying ‘its [sic] causing him to stumble’”



“Yes, and”

@chelsea_sherrod commented, “A nugget for each of the disciples. It is written 🔥”



Jonathan
@jnthnwill



Prayed over the 8-piece Chick-Fil-A nugget I bought, then opened the box and found 12 nuggets. This is my testimony.

11/29/17, 1:57 PM

@thebestchristianmemes
August 11, 2023

“Yes, I”

@stephanie_loftin commented “My daughter is named Selah. My husband has this shirt and is the young adults ministry leader... 100 100 100 100 lol.”



“No, because”

@clinical.engineer commented, “Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let’s steward them well with proper nutrition (see the first five books), hydration, rest, exercise, intellectual stimulation - and not cover them with graffiti. Remember: Occupy til [sic] He comes; Take ground; Build the Kingdom. He coming for a glorious bride/kehilat/ assembly/congregation/church/ecclesia - not a slovenly one.”

When you tryna work out and remember that in heaven we will be given new bodies..



@thebestchristianmemes
November 1, 2023

“No, because”

@michaeldavidmontalv0 commented,
“Correct them through Love, truth and
grace as he taught us to do. Or just correct
them.”



@thebestchristianmemes
October 31, 2023

In-group References, Warrant Validity and Clash

@alexisstpaul commented, “As a Lutheran who celebrates Halloween you can catch me having 95 Reese’s for dinner 🙌.”

- Lutheranism was founded by Martin Luther, known for writing 95 Theses (rhymes with Reese’s) against the Catholic sale of indulgences and publishing it on October 31, the same day as Halloween.

In-group References, Warrant Validity and Clash

- @bass.boosted8.30 commented, “kids belong in church”
- @c4n1d.c4nn1b4l replies, “@bass.boosted8.30 kids belong outside playing or literally doing whatever they want instead of being brainwashed and groomed :)”
- @djdu.nks replies, “@c4n1d.c4nn1b4l that’s why we take them to church... So they can spend eternity doing those things with Christ and enjoying His creation the way He intended.”
- @c4n1d.c4nn1b4l replies, “@djdu.nks sad that you want to waste the life that kids are given so they can potentially go to some magical fantasy world.”

05

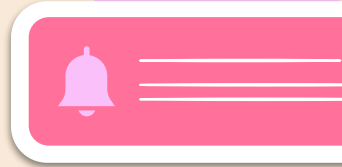
Conclusion

So what?



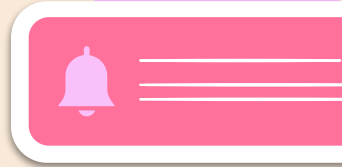
So what?

- Memes, as carriers of rhetorical arguments, beget rhetorical arguments
- The topics and stances reflected in meme comments reflect centuries of debate over Christianity and its sub-issues.
- When social media becomes part of everyday life, it seeps into the religious practices of believers.
 - As believers use persuasive language to respond to memes, how does it impact their spiritual experience?



So what?

- The best way to find out how internet users feel about the arguments and frames presented in a meme is to listen to their responses.
- Christians, despite their faith's emphasis on evangelism, are not always aware of how to argue effectively.
- Further research into comments left on Christian memes has the potential to uncover not only patterns of interaction but also how Christianity is evolving in the Digital Age.





Thank you!

Any questions?



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