



The Quest for Charisma: Christianity and Persuasion

Craig R. Smith

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Smith examines the major canons of classical rhetorical theory by demonstrating their influence on Christian speakers. He begins by explaining why charisma has become a misused term. He then explores why writing about charisma has been so difficult in terms of the academic prejudice in favor of objectivity and reason. He then constructs a three-level definition of charisma to replace the current one.

After analyzing the charisma of Jesus in terms of the three personae he developed as teacher, human, and messiah, Smith argues that his power arose from this rich development of character. The textual charisma of the Gospel narrators is explored in terms of their narrative techniques, and Smith then examines the concept of *ethos*, the use of emotion in persuasion, and explicates the theories of leading existential thinkers to develop advanced notions of human responsibility and transcendent spirituality. These two notions are used to refine and improve previous definitions of charisma. Smith then establishes a matrix that crosses levels of charisma with different types of identification. This work will be of particular interest to scholars, students, and researchers involved with Christianity, philosophy, and persuasion.

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