

God Talk: Shifting Religious Rhetoric in Post-Katrina New Orleans

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Abstract

In 1960, Kenneth Burke wrote *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*. In his book Burke comments on the rhetoric of religion and its uses. Using Burke's analysis of religious rhetoric, this study attempts to show that Burke's concepts of religion as a rhetorical device are applicable in a modern case study of post-Katrina New Orleans concerning the way words in the New Orleans community have taken on new meanings among both secular and religious institutions. Likewise, this case study will raise serious questions about why the language changed and what the implications are for society. This project shows how religious rhetoric in New Orleans has shifted in African American communities from being confined simply to the religious sphere, and how it has taken on more philanthropic overtones in the Protestant African American community and more racist overtones in the Catholic African American community. Since the tragedy of Katrina churches, religious organizations, and institutions have used their grassroots efforts to bring the city back to life. The African American community is the majority population in New Orleans, and they were also the population most affected by Katrina. In sum, this study shows how religious rhetoric shifted in Catholic African American communities and Protestant African American communities through a Burkian lens and presents the implications of what a shifting rhetoric means.

Subject

[theodicy](#)
[disaster](#)

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