

# POPULAR CHRISTIAN MUSIC IN TRUMP'S AMERICA

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*ABSTRACT: Since election day 2016, experts from various fields of study have weighed in on Donald J. Trump's political ascendancy and enduring support. A growing body of literature recognizes how the "Make America Great Again" movement has grown, in large part, out of a predominantly white, rural and suburban, Christian subculture (Pew Research Center, 2018). This subculture has been in steady decline for decades as the urban population increases (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2015) and younger generations shift the nation towards ethnic, racial, and religious equity (Barna Group, 2020; Parker et al., 2019). In this context, my study examines popular Christian music as an important site of cultural production and consumption among a significant portion of Trump's base. After pinpointing the 12 most popular Christian songs during Trump's candidacy and through his pre-Covid-19 presidency, I conducted an inductive rhetorical analysis to identify the main messages, persons, and metaphors contained within the lyrics. I found that God is consistently presented as an ultimate, male authority who defies human reasoning and is worthy of loyalty in every circumstance. In parallel, every song portrays the believer as responding to a range of crises, consistently describing an external locus of control, adherence to individualism, and a high value for loyalty to God as a means of survival. I then utilized well-known New Testament passages and the Nicene Creed to construct qualitative codes for identifying the presence and/or absence of essential Christian themes. Roughly 75% of the songs relate to the power of God and the faith or hope of a believer who is mourning or poor in spirit. Most other Christian themes were mentioned once or not at all. By implication, the primary rhetorical purpose of this music is to affirm a personal theology consistent with authoritarian norms as a strategy for coping with perceived powerlessness.*

*Keywords: Christianity, Music, Trump, MAGA, Rhetorical Analysis*

## References

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