

The "Humor" Rings False

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Just Say Christian (@JustSayXtian):

CHRISTIANS: this verse in the old testament says X

JEWS: It doesn't say that

CHRISTIAN: maybe. Who knows?

JEWS: we do. That's not in the Hebrew

CHRISTIAN: no one knows what the original language means

JEWS: Yes we do. We can read it.

CHRISTIAN: It's lost forever

Elizabeth Magaletta:

Hebrew is a standard requirement of Christian theological education across many denominations. I've studied it myself, and I'm a layperson. Christian scholars have been actively consulting with Jewish ones since ancient times. Look up St. Jerome or Johann Reuchlin. That's how the Hebrew Scriptures got translated first into Latin, then into other Western languages. With the exception of Greek (the Septuagint), it was Christians who did this work.

So, this meme is unsubtly about denying that Hebrew Messianic prophecy refers to Jesus Christ. I could quote you chapter and verse as to what the person who made it probably had in mind, but passages where there's really a translation dispute are a tiny fraction of the Messianic references, many of them startlingly specific in their applicability to Jesus. To a very real extent, it's Jewish people who are often playing the "eh, who can say?" game with this material, in order to avoid its implications. Though of course, many people of both Jewish and Gentile origin also reject everything in the Jewish interpretation of the Bible, its testimony of a transcendent father God who demands worship and judges our ethical behavior. Inasmuch as snarky atheism isn't the Jewish interpretation either, the discourse of this meme is deeply disingenuous - intellectually dishonest, and transparently motivated by the need to suppress the nagging suspicion that there really is such a God, and such moral accountability, after all. The "humor" rings false; there's no joy in it. Which is only natural! No matter how pointedly loud the forced, mean-spirited cackling gets, "God is dead, everybody is permitted" will never be a message of joy. Anyone, please consider. Blessedly, they can't hear you think.