



Rhetoric in an Organizational Society: Managing Multiple Identities (Studies in Rhetoric Communication)

By George Cheney

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What does it mean to speak with a collective voice? This is the central question addressed in "Rhetoric in an Organizational Society". The author explains how in advanced industrial society many of the messages that individuals see and hear are associated with organizations of great size, resources, and power.

Organizational messages take the forms of advertising, public relations, issue advocacy, doctrine, annual reports, policy statements, newsletters, declarations, and so forth. However, given an accustomed emphasis on the individual, citizens and scholars alike have difficulty interpreting messages that represent collectiveness. Cheney cites the historic case of the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace" (1983) to illustrate the management of multiple identities in the world's largest and oldest organization - the Catholic Church. The bishops struggled with their identities, both individually and as a corporate body; they handled multiple interests and groups, inside and outside the Church; and they dealt with the audiences they sought to influence, including US Catholics, the Reagan administration, and the larger public.

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