

Capturing the Chimera: Ideology and Persuasion in the Rhetoric of Soulforce

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(ABSTRACT)

For more than half a century, gay rights organizations have sought cultural and political equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals in society. The organization Soulforce continues that legacy, but from a distinctive perspective. Soulforce, has positioned itself in a unique playing field by speaking directly to religious leaders and organizations in attempt to alter their ideological underpinnings and subsequently garner their support for LGBT individuals. This level of persuasion is particularly difficult due to the fact that religious ideology is so strongly held and protected in American society.

To evaluate the persuasive rhetoric of Soulforce, I conducted an ideological criticism of the documents published within the Soulforce website based on the foundation of McGee's ideograph. The ideographs presented throughout the discourse coalesce to form the overarching ideology of Soulforce evidenced in the discourse. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals experience unwarranted <suffering>, <injustice> and <discrimination> as a direct result of the <untruth> promoted by the religious institutions of America. This <untruth> is the consequence of Biblical misinterpretation coupled with the misunderstanding of modern scientific research resulting in fear and hate that subsequently cultivate <violence> and <suffering>. Only by directly confronting <untruth> with <truth> and exchanging <suffering> with <voluntary suffering> can the LGBT community educate the misinformed thereby delivering their own <justice>, <equality> and full acceptance within society.