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A Rhetorical Analysis of Value Claims in the Glenn Beck Program

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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF VALUE CLAIMS IN THE GLENN BECK
PROGRAM

by

James John Bailey
Bachelor of Science, East Tennessee State University, 1990

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

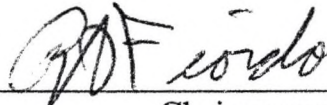
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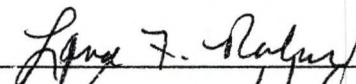
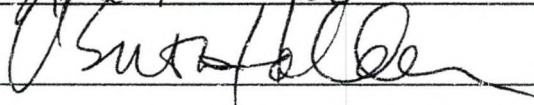
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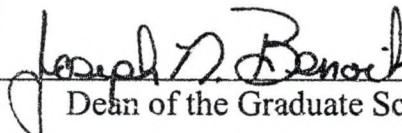
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This thesis, submitted by James J. Bailey in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.


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To "The Sons of Thunder" St. James and John

ABSTRACT

A Rhetorical Analysis of Value Claims in the Glenn Beck Program explores the use of rhetoric to promote morals and traditional Judaeo-Christian values on Glenn Beck's radio program to the greater society. This value analysis seeks to reveal the quality of the argumentation that is implemented and a selection of the theoretical reasons for its appeal to the program's listeners. The program extols a traditional Judaeo-Christian view that is not commonly seen or practiced in America after the decade of the 1940s. The radio program seeks to counter the inroads of modernism and postmodernism in society's psyche through an array of rhetorical criticism, humor, sarcasm, and storytelling. The traditional Judaeo-Christian values advocated by the Glenn Beck Program are in contention with the scientific perspectives of modernism and the humanistic perspectives of postmodernism. The suppositions of the host are intentionally biased representing a historical metaphysical viewpoint in opposition to the advances and promises made by science. Glenn Beck's traditional metaphysical arguments criticize the premise of proportional values and relativism that he concludes are a part of postmodernism's fabric.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This analysis examines the rhetoric and dynamics of a popular nationally syndicated radio program that advocates traditional Judaeo-Christian American value claims. The Glenn Beck Program is a Premiere Radio Network's syndicated show that will be examined in this thesis. A crucial part of this analysis is to determine whether the value claims are supported with adequate evidence and reasoning. The examination of the Glenn Beck Program exposes the show's attitudes and purpose, apart from the commercial profit motive, and reflects a substantial portion of the national audiences' attitudes and values. The program's rhetoric may serve to reinforce values, mostly Judaeo-Christian, that may already be in place among its listeners.

Purpose of this Rhetorical Analysis

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the rhetorical adjudication and execution of moral and value claims made by a national radio talk show, the Glenn Beck Program. The host, Glenn Beck, is a middle aged male who takes his traditional Judaeo-Christian American values and implements these values in his show's programming. The Glenn Beck Program appears to go back to basic Judaeo-Christian values as espoused through mainline traditional Protestant and Catholic teachings until approximately the 1940s. Beck's traditional Judaeo-Christian views are based predominately on Old and New Testament Biblical principles that promote: honesty, a strong self-sufficiency work ethic,

and conservative morals. Beck would describe his conservative moral values as consisting of no premarital or extramarital sex, support for the Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States, promotion of loving and intact families consisting of a mother, father, and children, and a pro-life agenda that would be against the death penalty, euthanasia and abortion. Beck would be the first to admit that he takes controversial and even judgmental positions, because almost all of the traditional Judaeo-Christian values he now accepts, he once rejected. Beck touts himself as a work in progress. He admits his failings in life, which include one failed marriage, drug and alcohol abuse as a teenager and young adult, and having been an ego maniac during his earlier career in radio. He often talks about his struggles in life, including the suicide of his mother when he was thirteen, his special-needs daughter, and his search for redemption.

The importance of this exploration of discourse is to better understand how rhetorical value claims in talk radio help shape the debate, contemplation, and role of values in our society. I will only be mentioning Glenn Beck and a few other radio personalities, such as, Sean Hannity, Alan Colmes, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, and Rush Limbaugh. These shows, to a greater or lesser degree, also use moral dialogue. I believe we can become more familiar with our own conscious and unconscious beliefs and values through the rhetorical examination espoused by others. I decided the Glenn Beck Program would serve as a catalyst for this examination because it appears to have a broad base of listener support. The program reveals something about the values of a large portion of society, and/or the lack of values in our society. Also, this program has a

unique style of presentation, and it explicitly and clearly states that it does have a value-driven agenda.

Talk radio has exploded on the scene drawing millions of people daily. As noted by Richard Campbell (1998), “the nation’s fastest growing format through the early and mid-1990s was the news/talk format” (p.110). There appears to be no end in sight to radio’s growth. There are many nationally syndicated programs today, which individually draw millions of listeners weekly. The Glenn Beck radio program provides online access, the “Insider,” which allows limited retrieval of previous shows. I made numerous attempts to contact members of the Glenn Beck Program, including his executive producer, his operations manager and Glenn Beck through email and telephone calls over a six month period to no avail. I did get one email reply from John Carney, Beck’s operation manager, which he gave me his phone number. After leaving several messages on the voice mail of the operation manager, I never did receive any of the information I requested regarding statistics, biographies, or any other pertinent information regarding the Glenn Beck Program. All of Glenn Beck’s quotations and facts regarding his program are taken from the Premiere Radio Network’s official Web site for the Glenn Beck Program (<http://glennbeck.premiereinteractive.com/home/index.shtml>). The Glenn Beck Program, as of February 16, 2005, boasts an audience of more than eight million weekly listeners and is still growing. The show also claims to have one of the youngest listening audiences in talk radio. It is thus important to take heed of the impact that value-driven talk shows have on the community, regardless if the values have a family orientation or a political orientation. The significance of this rhetorical analysis might

encourage others in communication studies to investigate what millions of people find comforting or challenging about value-driven talk radio.

Since value claims are at the heart of this thesis, it is fitting to introduce and disclose some details about the author of this thesis. “We bring to our research our own subjectivities, based on part on our genders. We also bring race, class, and other sensibilities, all part of our socially constructed identity” (Rakow, 1987, p. 81). The process of performing a rhetorical analysis of value claims is an academic endeavor, yet it is still a subjective work entailing various perspectives and biases by the author and the readers of the author’s work.

I was the youngest of five children and raised in a lower income household in Northeast Tennessee. I worked and paid my way through undergraduate school. After graduating from college, I worked for six and a half years professionally as a social service worker for three different state governments. Politically, I do not label myself as a Democrat or Republican, as I hold values that reflect both liberal and conservative viewpoints; therefore, I consider myself an Independent. Philosophically, I consider myself to be aligned most closely with a traditional Roman Catholic ideology. I approach this thesis with a critical mindset, yet “we need to be aware of how these parts of us act upon our research” (Rakow, 1987, p. 81). I became aware of the Glenn Beck Program on September 11, 2001, when listening to coverage of the World Trade Center attacks. I would listen to talk radio while working for Health and Human Services to find out news and to alleviate some of the stress from my job. I have listened to the Glenn Beck Program ever since. I had never taken the time or effort to analyze the content until I was encouraged to do so by one of my instructors in graduate school.

As of April 2005, the Glenn Beck Program airs on 183 affiliates nationwide for three hours a day for five days a week from Monday through Friday mostly in the morning to noon time slots. He has been nationally syndicated since the occurrence of the September 11th terrorist attacks. His show was not supposed to have appeared nationally until several months later, but the September 11th event propelled the early release of his program. The program is based on a talk radio format that has unscripted and scripted comedy segments, call-in listeners, current events, and news driven critical analysis and commentary. All quotations and specific references were taken from August 2004 to March 2005, which was the time period that this thesis was being completed, though I have listened to the program for four years. The segments I discussed were chosen due to the dramatic nature that best exemplifies Glenn Beck's compassionate, sarcastic, dark, and sometimes harsh side of his values and personality.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This value analysis will address three various aspects of value judgments that occur in the Glenn Beck Program. I will begin the examination by reviewing the literature on the meaning of value claims. I then will look at literature on the following three aspects: (1) How do these values reflect a traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective? (2) How do these values differ from the modernist perspective? (3) How do these values differ from the postmodern perspective?

Value Claims

Values are among those terms that will have different meanings to different scholars. A value is “a type of belief, centrally located within one’s total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 124). Values are often used, sometimes correctly and incorrectly in an almost interchangeable way, with moral judgments, ethics, principles, beliefs, worth, and standards, to name a few. “Simply defined, values are judgments concerning the worth of something. Value premises put into statement form our concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, and importance and unimportance” (Ziegelmueller & Dause, 1975, p. 51). We are often admonished to avoid being judgmental: for example, whether it is about someone’s decision to buy expensive things, one’s lifestyle, or one’s career choice. Is this not a value in itself, to decide that we

should not be judgmental? “Values enter, at some state or other, into every argument” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 75). Whether we like it or not, value judgments are being made all around us, and even by those who think they are out of the realm of value judgments. We cannot avoid value claims, as “values are important because of their centrality to other beliefs and attitudes” (Bem, 1970, p. 17). We make value judgments everyday. Determining if we will go home at the end of the day to the person to whom we have made a commitment or showing care for family pets entrusted to us instead of neglecting or beating them illustrate but a few such value judgments.

When we decide to embrace a value, we have our own reasons and outside influences that create that value as being a fact in our minds. “Value-theorists are much concerned with whether or not all judgments of value are judgments of fact, but much less with whether all judgments of fact are judgments of value” (Buchler, 1965, p. 32). First, we have to be honest about our reasons for the making of value claims, regardless of our ideological stances. Second, we need to admit that there are varying levels of importance that we extend to the values we hold dear. “In fact, most of us, liberals and conservatives alike, share many of the same values, and our differences of opinion stem from the relative importance we assign to them” (Bem, 1970, p. 17). Just as we are able to understand that many of us share similar values, it should not startle us when we derive contrasting conclusions, as “moral dilemmas revolve around competing rights.” (Bloom, 1990 p. 246). A value does not necessarily carry with it a universal truth, but it does reflect a personal decision. “A value is seen to be a disposition of a person just like an attitude, but more basic than an attitude, often underlying it” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 124). Values are often the basic foundation from which we strive to find meaning and truth, and

to guide our behaviors and attitudes. Values are sought after, consciously or unconsciously, because they provide structure to our existence. “A vast proportion of our activity is organized, too, systematized, and directed to desired ends. Human life is not chaos, it is not anarchy, it is not beastlike obedience to instinct; it is on the whole, project life” (Coe, 1924, p. 29). Perhaps, those we label as criminals and deviants are individuals who lack structure in their life or who adhere to values that are different from the accepted societal norm. Philosophically it would be correct to conclude that everyone has values. Even those on the perimeter of society have values, though not very popular ones according to the larger society.

On the whole, when looking at Western culture, we have the freedom to choose from an array of values. Schwartz and Sagie (2000) writes, “Democratic ideology has clear implications not only for which values people acquire, but also for how much freedom they have to choose different values” (p. 476). The desire for structure and order in society and in one’s life is a driving factor that propels us to make value decisions. Yet, since we are not islands unto ourselves, the values collectively held in a democracy or republic also give us the responsibility or even the burden to exclude some values from our list of probable choices. “Values are appealed to in order to influence our choices of action. They supply reasons for preferring one type of behavior to another, although not all would necessarily accept them as good reasons” (Perelman, 1979, p. 15). The population of the United States is the audience of the Glenn Beck Program; therefore, the application of freedom exercised in our country is indispensable upon the values discussed. It has been the legacy of the United States to struggle to obtain and to cherish our individual rights and values. “The American values are all linked to individualism”

(Rieke & Sillars, 2001,p. 200). It is this individualism that uniquely and collectively unites our society. Individual rights, along with the autonomy to select from various values without forcible coercion, have seeded a rich environment to assess the multitude of ideas, opinions, commentaries, and ideologies available to us.

Value judgments are not the monopoly of any organization, religion, or ideology; rather they are a human choice. “Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 124). Values are often not thought of as tangible things, though they often refer or guide one to tangible goals. One often hears of values being stated in reference to family values. Values in this sense may concern one’s behavior or attitude toward providing or safeguarding the family unit. The values shape one’s priorities and behavior, thus leading to a tangible outcome, such as a family of a wife, a husband, children, a dog, a white picket fence, and a two-car garage. “Values are ends, not means, and their desirability is either nonconsciously taken for granted or seen as a direct derivation from one’s experience or from some external authority” (Bem, 1970, p. 16). Often nations’, ethnic groups’, and even some organizations’ values are shaped by national pride, shared goals, or a shared sense of cultural or religious cohesion. Such “values are standards that are to a large extent derived, learned, and internalized from society and its institutions” (Rokeach, 1979, p. 6). Values shape our lives by giving order to our thinking and beliefs. “A value is a general conception of a desirable mode” of belief and action (Rieke & Sillars, 2001,p. 216). Whether our ideology is considered traditional, modern, or postmodern, we base our view of the world and our values, “for sociological purposes, by taking knowledge to consist in

accepted belief, and publicly available, shared representations” (Barnes, 1984, p. 102). Because of these shared representations, identity is formed about ourselves and our role in the community. Milton Rokeach (1979) echoes this sentiment by stating “these standards guide the development of a society defined sense of self as a competent and moral member of society” (p. 6). Once we accept the position that values play in our society, the repercussions of our assent to them or rejection of them become apparent. “When a value is in question, a person may disqualify it, subordinate it to others, or interpret it,” but to ignore value claims would be a denial of the reality that we all have them (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 75).

Sometimes people become caught up with thoughts of resentment because they may believe that values, not of their own, are being forced upon them. The typical statement I have heard said in reference to this is, “Who are you to tell me what I am supposed to do?” Yet our civil laws and even our tax system reflect a values system, perhaps not our own, but someone’s value system that we are legally bound to obey. Values “have to do with modes of conduct and end-states of existence,” regardless if the assent to values is to keep us out of prison, out of hell, or to aspire us to noble purposes (Rokeach, 1972, p. 159-160). It is part of human history that “in the fields of law, politics, and philosophy, values intervene as a basis for argument at all stages of the developments” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 75). Do laws and restrictions reflect our values or do they shape the value judgments that we make, or both? As a whole, it appears that values, somewhere down the line, shaped the civil codes upon which we base our society. “A value is a standard employed to influence the values, attitudes, and actions of at least some” members of any given society or organization

(Rokeach, 1972, p. 160). To ask, as in the chicken-and-egg scenario, which came first, would be missing the point. Values are not created in a vacuum and are not extraordinary creatures or principles that just manifest themselves out of nothing. Values are understood through reason influenced by family priorities, self-interests, experience, historical roots, knowledge, religious and traditional perspectives, and societal pressures. The reality is that we need codes of acceptable behavior for a structured society of over 350 million people to avoid chaos or anarchy. “While attitude and value are both widely assumed to be determinants of social behavior, value is a determinant of attitude as well as of behavior” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 157). One can argue that values are a staple and building block to one’s personal character and also to society’s overall welfare.

Judaeo-Christian (Traditional)

For the most part, few would demean the importance of a substantial academic education for our children. Yet, there seems to be weariness if we bring up moral and value judgments in the public domain. Humans, as history has shown, have a broad spectrum of needs that require addressing. We not only want to know and understand how to sustain ourselves, but also to aspire to the unknown aspect of the psyche. One could ascribe to the transcendent side of one’s psyche, for example, a supernatural belief in God(s), but the fact remains that throughout history there is a void in people that seeks to be filled. “Many arguments begin with the assumption that humans are superior to animals, and gods to humans” (Perelman, 1982, p. 29). It is within this milieu that the Judaeo-Christian perspective enters the scene. “The Judaeo-Christian awareness of history as moving towards an end implied some kind of progress or, more apocalyptically, a notion of Redemption” (Ferrall, 2001, p. 1). Values and morals are a part of that

fulfillment that are ascribed to the traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective. There is not a set of preprogrammed values and instincts in the human genius. Women and men, throughout human history, have had the “need to be educated” as “they are born into this world ignorant - ignorant of themselves and ignorant of the world in which they are to live” (West, 1977, p. 433). The Judaeo-Christian approach to the human condition of being born ignorant is to believe that we do have the ability to recognize virtue and truths when exposed to them.

The Judaeo-Christian perspective reflects value judgments based on metaphysics and reasoning, rather than on science or personal feelings and interpretations. “If one denies God’s infinite nature and God’s omnipotence, then the object of discourse is no longer God, but at best an inferior being with human-like foibles” (Hikins, 1989, p. 162). It would go against the grain of precepts in the traditional mindset to deny absolute values and truths, as it would be to deny God’s omnipotence. This does not mean the Judaeo-Christian views science and personal interpretations as obsolete; we are not living in the Middle Ages. Yet an omnipotent belief system of appraising values and truth does take precedence over modern and postmodern claims. The Christian understanding of value judgments are attributed to one’s faith. “Faith refers to one or more beliefs a person accepts as true, good, or desirable, regardless of social consensus or objective evidence, which are perceived as irrelevant” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 125). I think this definition of faith is a bit harsh and even biased in a negative way, but it seems to reflect a common attitude displayed in many scholarly works I have read.

The classical understanding of value, as reflected by Aristotle, finds “the roots of art, science, and philosophy in the natural capacities of humans” (Buchler, 1965, p. 8-9).

According to Aristotle, the capacity to conceive and discern values is natural within human beings. If this is the case, one can reason that values and virtue are not contingent upon subsequent scientific axioms or relativistic arguments. “The virtues, then, come neither by nature nor against nature, but nature gives the capacity for acquiring them, and this is developed by training” (Rand, 1909, p. 66).

I included the traditional Judaeo-Christian and Classical terms together in this section of the literature review, because I believe both affirm a natural capacity in human nature to perceive and discern truth, morality, and nobility. This is because values, truth, nobility of character, and happiness are all tied together within the same frame of the traditional Judaeo-Christian mind. As noted in The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong, “Aristotle could say that only the noble ‘person’ is truly happy” (Brentano, 1969, p. 160). This is certainly compatible with a traditional Judaeo-Christian ideology because we would “define happiness as well-being combined with virtue” (Freese, 1926, p. 47). When one looks at value claims and judgments, one must remember that values are tied to the search for truth. “For truth, though articulated, as we may say, by mind, is assimilated by life; mind being precisely, as Aristotle taught, the capacity of life to articulate truth” (Buchler, 1965, p. 29). Human beings, from this perspective, have the natural ability to recognize truth, whether it be a God-given imprint, a life of exhibiting honorable character, or an innate trait. Therefore, truth does not become a matter left up to scientific methods or personal impulses to determine its meaning. John Finnis (1992) writes, “no sound sense can be made of ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’, here or elsewhere, otherwise than in terms of rational judgement” (p. 136).

The traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective of appraising values does something that modernism and postmodernism cannot do; the Judaeo-Christian mindset exalts the supernatural aspect of human nature or the soul to the realm of the infinite. A shift, as seen in our popular culture, has abandoned the supernatural aspect as taught by religion from our public institutions, schools and universities, and the workplace. Regardless if one agrees with this development, it does not change its reality. “We can say that religiously connected beliefs and values have, over the last half century, moved from personal salvation to social ethics” (Rokeach, 1979, p. 36). The implication is that Western culture is moving away from the traditional Judaeo-Christian roots of the past and focusing on the trends, materialism, consumerism, sociology, current scientific studies and discoveries, and fads of the day. One can hypothesize that, “as affluence increases, opportunities for self-indulgence and pleasure seeking increases as well, and demands for self-denial lose their legitimacy” (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 472). This is where one clearly sees a demarcation between the traditional Judaeo-Christian conception of values and those advocated by the modernist and postmodern perspective. Karl Scheibe (1970) notes, “few normative principles” and values “find broad or universal agreement” (p. 42). It is worth noting that there seems to be no more agreement now on values and principles than in the past, merely on the yardstick that we use to judge these values.

Through the eyes of religion, the origins of value and truth are not a product of science and modern thought. Rather, the traditional Judaeo-Christian view would advocate that value and truths are the basis of any real substance, if any, that may come out of value claims made by modernists and postmodernists. When adhering to a strict

Judaeo-Christian value system, a traditional Christian differentiates between “traditional views seen as true and absolute,” while not necessarily being militant toward the ideologies of others (Brill, 1995, p. 26).

Speaking in terms of absolutes in today’s environment can sound foreign to many. The reaction to a Judaeo-Christian perspective or Aristotelian rendering of discourse may be countered by those opposed to such ideologies with unflattering responses. It is not uncommon to hear the opposition accuse those holding a traditional Judaeo-Christian belief system as being hate mongers or oppressors. I have observed in conversation and in research that those who practice religiously orthodox lifestyles, steeped in historically traditional values, are often debased as being radical or on the fringe of society. Richard Gregg (1994) states, in a most unflattering way, that “the phrase ‘family values,’ was the covering term for ‘hot button’ issues in the culture war; the issue of abortion was the ugliest button pushed by true believers on the radical right” (p. 230). I use this statement, not because of the issue of abortion, but because of the way Christians who practice traditional values are perceived. The above quotation seems to imply that if one holds to a clear-cut “right and wrong value system,” one must be closed-minded and on the radical right. There is a hostility displayed toward those holding such Judaeo-Christian values as being “true believers” who are intolerant of others. The correlation between “family values” and “hot button” seems to imply a flash point of militancy that is somehow incongruent with the understanding that is held by the rest of modern society.

I bring this up because of the prevalence in today’s popular culture to devalue or dismiss those who hold the traditional Judaeo-Christian view of discerning values and morals. “In a discussion, it is not possible to escape from a value simply by denying it”

or by bastardizing the individual(s) or institutions that advocate such claims (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 75). Why must one disagree with the traditional ideology by patronizing and demeaning those who practice that form of belief system, rather than the debating the Judaeo-Christian perspectives that mold the values and arguments themselves? One need not to make a villain out of the claims of another or of the source making those claims to show that those values are not shared by others. "Values do not stand alone," and it is the prerogative of other free members in society to make the case for why they adhere to the values that they view the world (Rieke & Sillars, 2001, p. 200). It is a responsible endeavor for one to be analytical and critical of the values, judgments, and laws that we all live under, regardless if they are from a traditional Judaeo-Christian, modernist, or postmodern perspective. It is my general impression that value claims are made for sincere reasons, not out of a desire to bring harm and misery to others. "Value judgments refer to what is wanted, what is best, what is desirable or preferable, what ought to be done. They suggest the operation of wishes, desires, goals, passions, valences, or morals" (Scheibe, 1970, p. 41-42). So in the process of evaluating, critiquing, and arguing value points, we need to keep this in mind. People, in general, who are passionate about their perspective of life and our role in society can become engulfed in personal attacks. I have seen and personally experienced such attacks in literature, in discussions, in presentations, and in practicing my own faith and value system. Yet, this is not to infer that I am defending, excusing, or trying to understate the bad behavior or violence also committed by some labeling themselves as traditional Christians. I realize that superfluous, tacky, and non-diplomatic behavior and arguments go both ways.

The world we live in is inhabited by a large portion of the citizenry that has spiritual, moral and religious philosophies. “What do we mean by ‘reality?’ Things as they really are, of course” (Medhurst, Ivie, Wander, & Scott, 1990, p. 5). Regardless of one’s personal views or lack thereof, we should not discount ethical, moral or value judgments as somehow beneath scholarly dialogue and credible rhetorical consideration. If one believes that truth can be obtained, then it probably would not be a stretch to discern that we can determine right and wrong. One has to be careful to not dismiss the moralistic and religious nature that values and truth represent. Some secularists might say that value claims of right and wrong should not be imposed upon individuals who do not share the larger society’s definition of right and wrong. Yet, I think many in society would agree that “if a given system of values is accepted by a group of people, it makes sense to talk about values as ‘right’ and wrong’ within that context” (Scheibe, 1970, p. 42). It may be argued by those from a traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective that values of right and wrong can be discerned by one’s innate nature. Yet, it does not preclude one from freely choosing a value that would be considered bad or wrong by the rest of society. Since the discernment of value is not a static truth among all human beings, one’s values may be stealing money from those that have a lot, thus being rewarded with prison. However, there are those that adhere to the practice of religious values and ethical values, which address issues of “right from wrong or good from bad” (James, Pratt & Smith, 1994, p. 71). We will see this later taking shape in the thesis when we analyze Glenn Beck’s statements.

Beck becomes, as Aristotle wrote, the orator who is a “competent judge of virtue and character; he must have a thorough knowledge of the emotions (or passions); and he

must possess the power of reasoning” (Freese, 1926, p. xxxii). It can be surmised, at least in the minds of those who subscribe to traditional Judaeo-Christian values, that values of right and wrong can be ascertained. Just as right and wrong can be extracted from the value claims, so it is that “good and evil are revealed in certain valuations and tendencies” (Rand, 1909, p. 633). Value claims allowed us to recognize and call the activities performed at the Nazi extermination camps as being evil. Of course, there is a moral implication in using words like good and evil. Yet, value judgments aid us in distinguishing such atrocities that may otherwise be construed as merely a misunderstanding or just a psychological reaction to some repressed childhood trauma or self-esteem issue.

Good and evil value claims made in the Judaeo-Christian sense puts responsibility back on us individually and as a society, as opposed to explaining it away by science or some other mitigating reasons. If society had grounded its values on ethically reasoned traditional moral judgments regarding good and evil, perhaps more than six million Jews and Christians would be alive to write about its effectiveness. In the world of academia there appears to be a trend toward coercive ideology and language, some of it being intolerant of traditional views and values. Where once the “phenomenon of intolerance” during “the McCarthy era involved the right wing of the American political spectrum victimizing the university (among others), now it is said to be the university itself in the thralls of the left devouring its own members” (Bollinger, 2000, p. 31). The mere fact of acknowledging the role that religion or traditional values plays in society sometimes brings charges that one is trying to encourage or promote such values.

One needs to ask oneself again, who is the arbiter of reason, of knowledge, and of truth? And where are these moral conclusions derived? Most of us know that there is not an answer to these questions that will satisfy everyone. Like it or not, “ideas and meanings are by and large the outcome of living rather than of pure psychic invention” (Buchler, 1965, p. 29). Therefore, some of the answers we are seeking might be right under our spectacles. Western thought and values embody a preponderance of Judeo-Christian history and influence in its development and operation. It would only make sense to probe value claims in light of the chronicled impact that Judeo-Christian values have had in our culture. I think the Glenn Beck Program provides an open analysis of value claims that entail an unhindered use of ideas, concepts, and religious value judgments that have guided Western thought for more than five thousand years.

Modernism

Modernism is discussed in this thesis because the modernist ideology has had a tremendous impact on western culture in the last hundred years. Modernism “has transformed human relations” because it has “developed a moral theology or a political and social ethic which has largely contributed to redefining relations between churches, societies and states” (Theobald, 1992, p. 27). It is modernism’s redefining of our social, moral, and political environment that is at odds with the principles and theme making up the Glenn Beck Program. Modernism, along with postmodernism, is at the heart of the opposing behavior exhibited by a number of individuals and groups who identify themselves as having traditional Judaeo-Christian values.

Adherence to traditional Judaeo-Christian principles began weakening due to the “paradigm change of the Reformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” as a

“new paradigm change to modernity has emerged: the *modern paradigm*, as shaped by modern philosophy and science and by the new understanding of the state and society” (Kung, 1988, p. 197). Modernism’s appearance is also reflected in Gregory Baum’s (1992) statement that “sociologists tend to define modernity as the civilization initiated in the late eighteenth century by two major societal events, the industrial revolution and the democratic revolution. These dramatic institutional changes produced and promoted a new culture” (p. 3). Overall values as espoused by traditional Judaeo-Christian ideology began being replaced or dismissed with a new order of evaluation and attitudes brought about by the arrival of science. “In broad strokes, modernism can be dated conveniently, if artificially from around the beginning of our own century, when a change of attitude and values seemed to pervade Western culture” (Benson, 1989, p. 158). The dissident Catholic theologian Hans Kung (1988), noted that the Roman Church recognized the onset of modernism’s encroachment upon traditional Christian teachings with the writings of “Pius IX’s ‘Syllabus of Errors’ (1864), the commotion over modernism and the encyclical *Pascendi* of Pius X (1907), the ‘nouvelle theologie’ and the encyclical *Humani generis* of Pius XII (1950)” (p. 105). Though modernism’s origin is mostly credited to the Reformation era, some believe that “the modern attitude is part of the Enlightenment tradition. It is concerned with rational control of our lives, beliefs, values, and aesthetic sensibilities” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 10). While there is not a uniform agreement of an exact beginning, it is commonly accepted that modernism was well in place during the last century.

As Helmut Peukert (1992) writes, “the rise of modern science marks an epoch-making break. What is decisively new is procedure by which another understanding of

reality is outlined” (p. 18). This new era “seems to consist in the conviction that we ourselves are somehow new, that a new age is beginning, that everything is possible and nothing can ever be the same again” (Jameson, 1991, p. 310). Religious beliefs and practices became strained due to the new wonders experienced by society. “Thus in the modern period religion was increasingly privatized and ignored, repressed and on account of the reactionary attitude of the churches actually persecuted” (Kung, 1988, p. 197-198). There are a number of people who have held to traditional values, yet many “others have taken the ground of cultural modernity, which since the beginning of this century has secularized relations between individual and religious institutions” (Theobald, 1992, p. 27). The once-powerful religious institutions and doctrines became just another ideology or theory on the consumer shelf of choices.

John Lucaites & Celeste Condit (1999) state, “modernism places its faith in the possibility of certainty, absolute truth, and universal objectivity” (p. 609). Modernism becomes “a religion that psychologizes God into a personification of social values, that belittles sin and the need of salvation through the working of God’s Spirit, that would merely substitute a liberal theology for a conservative” (Mathews, 1924, p. 21-22). The point of contention the traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective and modernism is who makes the decision and defines the meaning of values and absolute truth.

Truth and values were once defined by doctrines and disciplines of religion(s). Now, truth and values become defined by a broad and diverse culture with many competing interests and ideologies. Charles Ferrall (2001) writes, “The idea of the modern has always harboured its opposite and the Judaeo-Christian view of the world and the hereafter is that opposite (p. 1). “Modernity, in the form of this constructed

world, opposed the romantic, the religious, the national, and the traditional” (Galison, 1993, p. 28). This modern culture “promoted the development of science and technology and generated the expectation of unending progress” (Baum, 1992, p. 3). People in Western society for thousands of years relied upon prayer, sacrifice, pain, and submission to deal with the trials of life, with the promise of a Garden of Eden awaiting them in the afterlife. A great paradigm shift occurred when society was offered the promise of an idealized utopia, not in the afterlife, but in the here and now. Instead of people living their lives around religion and God(s), “they began to live as if humans themselves were the center of the scheme of things - indeed, perhaps the only scheme of things” (Benson, 1989, p. 158). This new utopia was not a transfigured Messiah or some transcendental power; rather utopia came in the form of science and technology that promised unending progress.

Society desired that we did not “want anything to be the same again, we want to ‘make it new,’ get rid of all those old objects, values, mentalities, and ways of doing things, and to be somehow transfigured” (Jameson, 1991, p. 310). Society shifted to a new philosophical standpoint that left its religious roots abandoned to the dust heap as some archaic mythical tale. Are we really more sophisticated, mature, and advanced than those of yesteryear? Modernism was embraced, not because it had all the answers, but because it promised all the answers. Society’s “hope” had previously been called by various names, for example: Yahweh, Jesus, Allah, or Buddha, but hope’s new name became know as “modernism.” One’s hope, faith, and values were once based upon the entity of a God or god(s), but now modernism became the new demigod.

Modernism is not a set doctrine; rather it is diverse compilation of various sciences and/or philosophies. “The problem is that it is difficult to isolate ‘modernity’ as an entity and to reduce everything to it” (Poulat, 1992, p. 13). Some of these sciences include technologies in communication and medicine, advances in bio-sciences, and physics. Some of the philosophies that advanced modernism’s battle with religious tradition were championed by such names as Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud. “Literary Modernism, we might say, was the major intellectual discourse to take on board the final implications of the ‘death of God’” (Brown, 1989, p. 108). The diversity of modernism places women and men at the center and focus of the universe, and removes us from the fate of a supernatural being (religion and/or God).

Modernism may have made appeals to the common person, yet the reality is different. Leander Keyser (1925) states, “we fear the modernistic religion is not for unlearned people, but is meant only for the would-be intellectual aristocracy, the so-called ‘intelligensia’” (p. 18). Yet, the concept of modernism subverts the perception of women’s contributions to the equation, to that of men, “the image of modernism as predominantly male, misogynistic, elitist, and exclusionary” (Weir, 1995, p. 200). Some may argue that the traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective also demolishes women’s contributions to society’s well-being because of assigning distinctive roles to the two sexes based upon implied gender assignments. Yet, it can also be argued that the traditional Judaeo-Christian value system elevated women far faster than other cultures and by accrediting women as the focal point of the family, the builders of society, and the sustaining force behind humankind’s progress.

My research has shown me that there is not a static definition for modernism.

Modernists “rely upon the efforts of elite experts - priests, philosophers, scientists, and so on - to obtain the knowledge of certain and universal truths, with the goal of translating these truths into normative social and political practices” (Lucaites & Condit, 1999, p. 609). Not all modernist definitions would necessarily include priests or theologians as being part of the group of experts, as metaphysics would not be given equal weight as the other sciences. Modernism relies on specialists in scientific fields of study to give clear quantitative structure, because “modernism is, on the whole, profoundly unhappy with the randomness it perceives in and writes into contemporary life” (Brown, 1989, p. 144).

Modernism’s unhappiness with randomness exemplifies a rift it has with Judaeo-Christian principles, as the process of prayer and leaving a situation to the “will of God” would not be an exact science or outcome. It is ironic that even modernistic and postmodernistic theories and sciences are not immune to the same criticism leveled at Judaeo-Christian principles. An example of such criticism is stated by Whalen and Cheney (1991), “sociology, like communication studies, is in a period of identity crisis.” This in part due to many competing forces redefining our “collective understanding of the foundations of human relationships” (p. 474). If we attack or dismiss our culture’s historical link to traditional Judaeo-Christian beliefs on family and societal relationships, where is the magic panacea that will restore the void that has been the human struggle? Are we to assume that we can logically comprehend the foundation of human relations with each other and the transcendent without a road marker indicating from where we came and where we hope to go? If we are not careful, we may find that we are reinventing the wheel only this time with a different tread. Modernists and

postmodernists may be embarrassed about the human behavior of centuries past, but least we start from scratch to think that we are somehow made up of something different from generations of yesterday. Our history of human understanding of what is real ought not collapse because we have an identity crisis in our society, in our communication, or in our interpretation of values and beliefs.

It is understandable that we differ about process, but to think that the human endeavor to find the truth is beyond formulating alternative theories is to fool ourselves. “A judgment or assertion is a claim to truth; and the study of judgment traditionally, therefore, has belonged to the theory of knowledge” (Buchler, 1965, p. 49-50). We would be delinquent as scholars to think that any single ideology, for example, the modernistic, Aristotelian, traditional Judaeo-Christian, or postmodernist perspective, comprises the lone basis for human knowledge and understanding. We tend to make things harder than they need to be. For one accepted perception to be more highly favored today, and another perception or theory tomorrow, has been the saga of the human condition. We must rely on our consciousness to critically analyze the world around us and the ideologies working within that world, because that is all we have as human beings to use. “If human consciousness is all arbiter not only of values and beliefs but also of the nature of reason and reality itself then the possibility of human self-deception puts all in doubt.” (Brown, 1989, p. 108). Modernism promised progress and assurance of our future, but the same can be said about the Judaeo-Christian view. The advances in simple terms of logic appear to be rather slim in substance, because not everything can be made new, as we still have heartache, pain, conflict, taxes, and death.

It is not my intention to be bleak or flippant, but some things are a reality of the human condition, no matter how you frame them.

Postmodernism

Modernism sets the stage for postmodernism's debut. If modernism can replace centuries old beliefs, a precedent is set that nothing is sacred. "The transition from the modern to the postmodern lies then in showing how at length modernization triumphs and wipes the old completely out" (Jameson, 1991, p. 311). We live in a society that tells us that modernism's sciences will allow us to stay or become healthy, happy, and prosperous. "By contrast, postmodernism prefers interpretation over scientific study because it operates with the assumption that all knowledge is subjective and/or intersubjective, morally culpable, and local. In the postmodern worldview, the universe is a rapidly changing, highly complex entity" (Lucaites and Condit, 1999, p. 11). Yet, would the postmodernist suggest we throw out medical research? Perhaps not, but postmodernism may question who performed the research, who is interpreting the research's findings, and who benefits from that research. Since everything is constantly changing, the postmodernist may say, "Who are we to impose a fixed value system on such a diverse complex world?" Yet, postmodernism's significance is derived by humans, not metaphysics or science, but postmodernism is reluctant to put a "one size fits all ideological jacket" on any culture with diverse members having multiple and divergent needs.

Where modernists dismiss the theories of the past, "post-modernists appear to reject the very notion of having general theories. In literary study a certain relativism is now taken for granted, and the notion that there might be objective phenomena to be

explained seems strange, and even oppressive” (Jackson, 1991, p. 255). What is striking about postmodernism, is that it dismisses the scientific studies and theories of modernists and the religious views of the traditionalists as being a scourge on society’s back.

Postmodernism “desires to break up and displace the modernist legacy, for that failed ensemble of social and linguistic relations acts hegemonically to mask social difference and the possibility of achieving even tentative but stable human values” (Bove, 1986, p. 4-5). The scientific rigidity of modernism and the inflexibility of traditional Judaeo-Christianity would be an affront to postmodernism’s reluctance to form absolute statements that would apply to society at large.

Like that of modernism, the definitions used to describe “postmodernism” are even more varied than those used to describe the modernist perspective. “Postmodernism eschews the faith in certainty and absolute or universal knowledge as woefully mistaken or a deceit” (Lucaites & Condit, 1999, p. 609). The authors of this interpretation of postmodernism admit that it “is not intended to suggest a totalizing philosophical or conceptual framework,” but rather to refer “to the range of conceptual and philosophical oppositions to ‘modernist’ thinking that have emerged in the wake of the cultural, social, political, and economic conditions of modernity” (Lucaites & Condit, 1999, p. 613). The chasm between the traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective and postmodernism is even larger than its opposition to modernism. Traditional Judaeo-Christian ideology proposes absolute truth statements, while postmodernism says “that ‘truth’ is something produced in relations of power, or that meaning is a product of interpretation. This can form the basis of broad philosophical attacks on the concepts of impersonal rationality, objectivity and truth” (Jackson, 1991, p. 255). This postmodern definition correlates with Lucaites

and Condit's (1999) assertion that "public statements that are claimed as true in any absolute or universal sense are characterized as the efforts of elites to deceive the less powerful into serving the interests of those with the power" (p. 609). There is a preponderance for postmodernists to view moral and value judgments, along with scientific claims, as power exerted by elitists, both in the public and private sector. This is reflected in Alan O'Connor's (1992) statement, "The postmodern declaration of the end of history plays entirely into the hands of the dominant media and their owners, who are busily shaping the future (cable, television, satellites, computer networks) in their commercial image of personal advantage" (p. 194-195). If postmodernism declares "the end of history" for the elitists of the Judaeo-Christian tradition or for the scientific communities' experts, does it not open the door to other barons? The power void created could be replaced by industrial conglomerates, media giants, and self-serving politicians rather than civil liberty groups representing minorities, the underrepresented, and the underprivileged. This potential power grab by economic, commercial, and political aristocrats could actually be more repressive than the "historical bondage" that postmodernists fought against to achieve a more just society.

The open and unfixed nature of the postmodernist perspective exemplifies the conflict with traditional Judaeo-Christian's explicit and rigid value claims. This ideological friction will help explain some of the dynamics, execution, and success of Glenn Beck radio show that will be examined later. As Thomas Lindlof (1995) points out: "the kinds of explanations we seek in qualitative research are almost exclusively ones of understanding, not prediction or control" (p. 56). It is precisely understanding and speculative inquiry that helps to unmask the competing values occurring in our

national culture. “While such a postmodern relativization can be exhilarating, it also undermines the intellectual authority of its very proponents, as well as that of anyone who would advance a moral or political position in the name of facts or reasons” (Brown, 1992, p. 219). Postmodernism’s premise could be flawed to the point that it implodes on itself. Susan Brill (1995) writes, “postmodern skepticism” is “a skepticism that discursively dismantles the past and opens up the present and future to new discursive structures, but that is incapable of effecting change beyond the superficial level of discourse” (p. 127).

Postmodernism in today’s environment tends to reject the traditional Judaeo-Christian values as an exclusionary, hierarchical, and intolerant ideology. The traditional Judaeo-Christian view may speculate, if postmodernism were to prevail, what would fill the void in the human heart that for thousands of years sought after the supernatural or God(s)? Postmodernism would also view modernism as a repudiating elitist male-created and male-dominated ideology with limited means to interpret the world. Modernists would also fear the prevailing success of postmodernism because what would fill the place of science? Is it possible to have a harmonic society of millions and millions of people based on competing ideological values without a fixed set of rules and values to stabilize the culture of that society? Modernists and traditional Judaeo-Christians would probably say no, because society needs a somewhat anchored philosophy to guide it through the unknown. Postmodernists would say that society could live and prosper successfully with a postmodern value system, but it has been hampered because of barriers placed in its way by those traditionally holding power. The modernists and traditional Judaeo-Christian power brokers may feel threatened to have their role in

society diminished or that society would be led by a subjective and changing value system determined only by postmodernism norms.

This is not to say that postmodernists have a value-free ideology. Postmodernists' values are often used to champion the underestimated or ignored segments of society that have not fared well under the modernist and traditional Judaeo-Christian ideologies of the past. The postmodern perspective embraces the values that promote tolerance and acceptance of diverse races, genders, cultures, and even religions. Postmodernism may be viewed by some as being scornful of the America's traditional Judaeo-Christian origins, yet postmodernism has a distinctive American spirit. Many Americans pride themselves on the historical tendency to "root for the underdog" and postmodernism's values tend to "root for the underdog." Segments of society have felt alienated by our laws, public organizations, and even left out of the political structure for a number of reasons. Some reasons for postmodernism's success and growth is due to giving a voice to those who have little political power, were not well organized, or were suppressed in making their needs and values known. The postmodern perspective acts a catalyst for the values of the once unseen or oppressed. It can be rationalized that postmodernism was established as a noble concept and sought justice and fairness for the marginalized members of society. The contention that arises between postmodernism and the traditional Judaeo-Christian and modernism perspectives is often one of perception and execution.

It can be argued one must be guarded to the point that we ought not say or do anything that could potentially offend someone. Our freedom to raise questions, perform research, and even to relay ideas to one another becomes squelched by threat of reprisal.

We would be misled to think that competing or conflicting values are peacefully benign social concepts. Postmodernism's view of the world and its espoused values can be intimidating to many in the current culture. I have heard some socialist academic professionals over the years state concern over their ability to freely discuss certain values in the classroom due to reprisal by postmodernists. Postmodernism is actually construed by some as a militant concept because it lashes out at members of society who dare to make a value claim, a rhetorical criticism, or scientific assertion that contradict postmodernism's mores.

A commonly held perception by modernists and traditional Judaeo-Christians is that the postmodernism ideology is imbued in subjectivism, relativism, and even intolerance, which would be counter to postmodernism's own claims. Nonetheless, "if absolute uncertainty and relativism are accepted, there is little else for ethnographers to say about the social world, for what they say can claim no superiority in terms of adequacy over that which anyone else says" (Porter, 2002, p. 59). Is this not the direction we see some societies going, when they use terms like "hate speech" to silence claims that have a value judgment to them? Unless there are threats of violence or intimidation to one's well being, does a contrary view necessarily imply hate speech or merely a differing of opinions and values? Some might think that value claims are negatively judgmental, if counter to a humanly derived perspective or even a subjective or a relativism prospective. Differing values do not have to entail "hate" as a motivation or implication of the corresponding speech to defend why one adheres to one set of values over another. Yet, there seems to be proclivity to in today's environment to throw the words "hate speech" into the debate to shut down the conversation. Is this not a form of

“hate” to silence those on the left or right wing of ideologies to say that their arguments are of no value and laced with contempt? One may want to also remember that some of the same “hate speech” that put people into chains and ovens was also some of the same “intolerant speech” that unlocked those chains and extinguished those ovens to free people. Subjectivism can be as dangerous to tolerance as it is a promoter of tolerance. Suppose the postmodern perspective had its way, which was to “allow us little or no confidence to assume that one interpretation of the social world can claim epistemological superiority over any other” (Porter, 2002, p. 58-59). Would the United States have liberated Europe in World War II, or merely fought Japan for bombing us? Would we have claimed an epistemological superiority over a European nation that wanted to murder millions of Jews, Christians, minorities, homosexuals, and disabled persons? One would have to reason that the unwillingness to judge superiority of value claims would have prevented us from imposing our will upon the Nazis. After all, who are we to judge, since we have the guilt of expansion onto the American Indian lands and the slavery of our past, right? Absolutely not, because society is made up of people who are imperfect and may falter from time to time. Yet, it does not diminish the fact that a society claiming to be composed of ethical value judgments must address unethical behavior once it recognizes it. It is tied into the whole moral argument of right and wrong and good and evil.

Postmodernism, Modernism, and traditional Judaeo-Christian perspectives each strive to champion a value system seen as being beneficial to society, but the conflict occurs when they collide. Postmodernism sees alarm in the other two perspectives trying to claim superiority of their values over opposing values. Yet postmodernism engages in

the same debate of superiority as a proponent for its value judgments, in seeking society's attention and acceptance as do modernism and traditional Judaeo-Christian perspectives. To use a modernism cliché, there is a sense of "survival of the fittest" in these competing value systems, as they appeal to society's sense of reason, logic, emotion, passion, and experience.

Summary

The meanings attached to value claims are often framed by the environment and pressures in which we are immersed, and by the ideologies that appeal to our reason and interests. The traditional Judaeo-Christian, Modern, and postmodern perspectives are adversaries on the sociological stage competing for our assent. The value judgments and priorities that we adhere to are often influenced by the marketing, commentary, and media attention each is given. In the following two chapters, these three perspectives are all at work to some degree in the rhetoric of value claims being made in the Glenn Beck Program.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses discourse analysis to evaluate value claims. The literature review looked at what is meant by value claims. It also looked at the Judaeo-Christian, modernist, and postmodernist perspectives because they will be the prism through which the value claims in the thesis will be reviewed. This section of the paper will involve what and how value claims are discerned in the Glenn Beck Program. Talk radio is defined by the Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook 2005 as “topical programs on various subjects. Includes health, finance, and community issues. Listener call-in and interview shows are common, and the host’s personality tends to be an important element” (Jessell, 2004, p. D696). Due to the controversies that swirl in society over issues of value claims and who gets to make them, this analysis sheds light on some aspects of that equation. As Phillip Tichenor (1981) writes, because of “the complexity of events of concern in a topical area of interest, an investigator selects and formulates a problem in terms that give it some generality and make it amenable to systematic study” (p. 11). The following analysis seeks to give clarity to the value judgments advocated in this nationally syndicated radio program. The Glenn Beck Program is filled with value judgments and is the epitome of a media program that tirelessly promotes its view of values upon its listeners. The program’s “traditional Judaeo-Christian perspectives” challenge the “modernism” and “postmodernism” perspectives because of the perceived threats to the

order of family and society as interpreted by the traditional Judaeo-Christian culture. The popularity of the Glenn Beck Program somewhat surprises me because of what I see as our national popular culture's push to become a nonjudgmental, tolerance oriented, religious and politically sensitive society. As mentioned in the opening of this thesis, Glenn Beck has more than eight million weekly listeners. This national appeal propels the show to one of today's most popular in radio broadcasting. Radio is a commercial business "aimed at obtaining the adherence of an audience" for its growth and success (Perelman, 1982, p. 146). So, when other media have failed to address interests, concerns, or entertainment demands of a given segment of the population, there was a void that Glenn Beck Program was able to fill. The radio program often begins and ends with the sound bite, "The Glenn Beck Program, the next generation of talk radio." This statement has a number of implied meanings, which will become more evident later in this thesis.

Before getting too involved in assessing value claims, it might be useful to look at the medium in which this analysis is based. The decision to do an analysis of a radio program is partly due to the growth of the news/talk format. "The news/talk format is often a mixture of news and entertainment" (Medoff & Kaye, 2005, p. 112) and the Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook 2005 defines news/talk as a "combination of news and talk formats. One of these elements may receive more emphasis" (Jessell, 2004, p. D696). The reporting of news is often present to some degree, but the commentary and entertainment aspect often supersede the unadulterated news portion. "Launched widely in the 1960s but not a national phenomenon until the 1980s, talk radio dominates AM and ranks only behind music in drawing listeners to radio" (Davie & Upshaw, 2003, p. 168).

There are 18,550 FM and AM radio stations in the United States playing everything from music to news. Of this number, 2,021 of them broadcast exclusively talk and news/talk formats, which is nearly 10.8 percent of all radio stations (Jessell, 2004, p. D699). “Talk radio’s popularity and impact have grown dramatically in recent years” (Hollander, 1996, p. 102). Just over two decades ago, AM radio had almost become extinct to the point that radio manufacturers started making radios without the AM band. Yet, due to the popularity of talk radio in the last twenty years that trend has changed, so much so that 23.5 percent of all AM radio stations are now playing talk and new/talk formats (Jessell, 2004, p. D699).

Radio has the appeal of being able to go almost anywhere we do. I have even seen radios that can be safely hung in the shower where one would be foolish to take cell phones, computers and televisions. “The mobility of radio accounts in large part for its personal nature. We can listen anywhere, at any time. We listen at work, while exercising, while sitting in the sun” (Baran, 1999, p. 195). Because of radio’s mobility, “The majority of us, more than 60%, get our first news of the day from radio. Most of the listening is done away from home” (Baran, 1999, p. 192). If over than half of our population gets its first news from the radio, what other things are they picking up from the radio? Obviously, with such a great rise in audience attention in the last two decades to news/talk formats, there is something drawing people to this medium besides just convenience. Convenience allows opportunity for listening to radio, but with all the competing media seeking our attention, such as cell phones, the Internet, computer games, sports, and television, there must be a reason to listen to radio.

Does radio have a large enough audience in the United States to truly affect the public agenda? Sometimes the impact of radio, especially talk radio, is underestimated by many in the news media and academia. Stephen Bennett (2001) seems to reflect this in his statement that “the fact that only a third of the public listens to talk radio and that these programs are entertainment driven by economic forces” (p. 72). To say “only a third of the public listens to talk radio” is to downplay the sheer numbers that this statement entails. A “third of the public” is a tremendous number especially when talking about a nation of over 350 million people. The motives for the radio programs producers, advertisers, and hosts may be “driven by economic forces,” but the programs’ appeal to listeners might be for entertainment or for gaining information. So, perhaps it is entertainment that explains why listeners are tuning to the programs, but I think it would be a mistake to think that is all that is occurring, just entertainment.

It appears radio has become a mouthpiece for many in society who are feeling disenfranchised by the pop culture, their elected officials, and their limitation to freely express themselves in the workplace and public institutions. Traditionally, when we as a nation have had a large segment of society feeling disenfranchised, there were leaders that emerged to become spokespersons for them. When the nation was gripped with fear and poverty during World War II, Eleanor Roosevelt was seen as the voice box for underprivileged silent masses. During the nineteen sixties “Martin Luther King became a symbol of passive resistance” and voice for American blacks who had been suppressed and treated as second class citizens (Scott, 1967, p. 26). As a nation historically, we have had political figures and religious figures champion causes that may not have been heard otherwise. It can be argued that talk radio hosts have now emerged as the voices for those

feeling left out in the political and societal arena. Many of the talk show call-in listeners I have heard on Glenn Beck Program and other radio talk shows say they are feeling ignored by politicians and the rest of mass media. When people are prevented from being heard, there is the threat of civil disobedience, violence, riots, and anarchy due to a lack of faith in the government and society. This reaction by those without a voice is usually the result of having been suppressed or marginalized. Eugene Roberts (2000) suggests: "Freedom of expression was absolutely fundamental to achieving all other rights." (p. 152-153). Talk radio, whether it is liberal or conservative, or fair-and-balanced, allows an exchange of ideas, venting, and a national forum to occur.

"Given the cost of producing enough programming to fill airtime 24/7, radio stations may rely on network and syndicated programs for news/talk/information shows" (Medoff & Kaye, 2005, p. 114). The national forum seems to have accelerated the radio's newfound growth because it widens the spectrum of radio's operation and impact. Regional programming appeals to localized audiences by generating and tapping into its own set of priorities and passions, and those of the communities it enlists. When programs are offered on a nationally syndicated level, the appeal to listeners is no longer confined to a limited access of local concerns, ideas, opinions and news topics. The national forum opens doors where "discourse seeks to have an effect on an audience, although the audience may consist of only one person and the discourse be an inward deliberation." (Perelman, 1979, p. 7). Yet the discourse occurring in an inward deliberation is now occurring for millions of listeners simultaneously. This rhetorical deliberation occurs in spite of the filtering and gatekeeping role of host because one has the freedom to choose another radio program or different medium entirely. Glenn Beck

pointed out that news/talk radio and the Internet were widely credited with causing a retraction by CBS television news, having aired falsified military documents about President Bush prior to the 2004 election. It was talk radio hosts and their listeners, along with bloggers on the Internet, who pointed out inconsistencies in the documents that were being reported as authentic by CBS. The scrutiny over the airwaves and the Internet created a swift and critical public outcry about an error that may have otherwise gone unnoticed or trivialized.

Radio has a personal nature to it, which I have heard some describe as sitting in on conversations at a reunion of family and friends. The difference is that with radio “mediated deliberation proceeds not face-to-face, but through mass media” (Page & Tannenbaum, 1996, p. 33). Radio has a unifying quality about it, historically and in today’s time. In the early days of radio “families had gathered around the radio set to listen together; we now listen to the radio alone” (Baran, 1999, p. 195). Many people today listen alone, but this does not mean that we are isolated; actually quite the opposite. Most of us have heard at sometime in our lives a saying that goes something like this, “the most lonely people are those who live in cities surrounded by thousands if not millions of people.” We may listen to the radio by ourselves, yet we are joined with millions of others who are sharing the same dialogue. “It has become evident that communication relationships are by no means limited to groups of two persons” (Schramm, 1983, p. 15). There is a comfort zone that comes along with radio. As listeners, and most notably, “callers not only listen in on the conversation but also become participants in a mediated, interpersonal encounter, which is freer from threat and embarrassment than face-to-face interaction” (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989, p. 92). Our

participation in radio becomes an active conversation in our minds, and with our neighbors, and the larger society. Barker and Knight (2000) notes that “talk radio’s most salient contribution to the national dialogue may be in providing listeners with rhetorical ammunition that can be employed in attempting to win over spouses, friends, and acquaintances” (p. 151).

Of the nationally syndicated talk shows, the programs that draw the most listeners are the programs with a central host that delves into political issues, health and psychological issues, relationships, current news events, and entertainment. “Little is known about the influence talk radio has on listeners. Early studies portray the audience, and callers in particular, as a socially peripheral and alienated group. Most of this research, however, predates talk radio’s new popularity and influence” (Hollander, 1996, p. 102). This presumably antiquated theory about listeners being isolated and socially inept was turned on its head. Because “a new portrait of talk radio and its audience appears to be emerging, an audience not socially isolated but rather one open to political mobilization” (Hollander, 1996, p. 110). This new and growing radio audience is coming at a time when we hear news reports of major city newspapers' circulation declining. Perhaps the audience growth in radio is due to a number of practical reasons. As people’s lives are becoming more and more hectic, the search for news is being transferred from one communication medium to another. The “new media such as talk radio may have reincarnated the partisan press of the nineteenth century, trading ink for airwaves” (Barker & Knight, 2000, p. 168).

There is also the growing perception that television news programs are becoming more partisan in their reporting while yet claiming to be unbiased. It appears that some

news and entertainment consumers today are now asking the media outlets, “What are your political inclinations and objectives” (Hawes, 1994, p. 10)? How ethical is it for those communication media to insert biases in their content while claiming that none has taken place? “Communication ethics cut loose from general morality tends to be self-serving” (Christians & Lambeth, 1996, p. 236). To not admit one’s biases is to deceive one’s audience about the true motives and intentions of the news, commentaries, and reports they are disseminating.

A case can be made that most of the successful liberal and conservative radio programs that are nationally syndicated come right out and state their biases, such as the Glenn Beck Program, Sean Hannity, or Rush Limbaugh. One need not be a constant listener to any of these programs to determine where their ideological passions dwell. Each of these hosts will tell the audience where they stand politically and morally from my exposure to their programs. This does not mean that the listener has a way to know if the host actually follows their own stated biases in their behavior off the airwaves. Yet, during the time the listener is tuned into the program, the listener is not kept in the dark as to the position that the host claims to hold. I have been a listener to talk radio for over twelve years and during that time I have never heard any of the above personalities claim to be unbiased in their remarks. The hosts actually take great pride in repeating, either seriously or sarcastically their ideological bent. Glenn Beck will often refer to himself as an “evil conservative” throughout a monologue or during his criticism of a news story.

There appears to be a thirst for honesty in programming by many consumers, even if we disagree with the points of view being espoused. A number of callers allowed on the air with Glenn Beck are often in disagreement to his stances, yet I will hear them state

that they are long time listeners of his program. As critical and ethical scholars, we should admit and factor into the reasoning of our conclusions the predisposition and biases we bring to the table. “We must be careful, then, to specify who we are studying and to acknowledge our own subjectivities” (Rakow, 1987, p. 81). No matter how much we like to think of ourselves or others as being unbiased, “all of us have our predispositions” (Smythe & Dinh, 1983, p. 117). This can be summed up with Lana Rakow’s (1987) statement to “be up front about our politics. All research is political, so why not clearly acknowledge whose side we are on?” (p. 79). Rakow’s assertion, as a feminist scholar, shows an honesty and understanding that those who control the shaping and defining of our words, news, commentaries, and research, also exercise societal power over others. Maykut & Morehouse (1994) writes, “Defining words is also a political activity” (p. 19). We also need to acknowledge the predisposition and biases of the subjects, programs, and mediums of communication being analyzed. There seems to be either an agenda or denial that pervades some individuals or branches of communication, which delude themselves with the notion that they are some way detached, neutral, or unbiased in their commentary. We would be deceiving ourselves to think that news outlets, talk shows, and entertainment shows are operating in some kind of a sanitary, unbiased vacuum in today’s environment.

Biases usually reflect some organization’s or individual’s ideology and values. “An ideology is an organization of beliefs and attitudes - religious, political or philosophical in nature - that is more or less institutionalized or shared with others, deriving from external authority” (Rokeach, 1972, p. 123-124). The Glenn Beck Program is very blatant about its biases. The program lauds traditional Judaeo-Christian values

and principles from the point of view of the host, Glenn Beck. When one listens and examines what Beck's show promotes, it helps to keep in mind that the host's "ethos is a factor in our judgment of evidence" (Carlson, 1994, p. 22). One would need to listen to the show for several days or weeks perhaps to have an informed idea of what makes up Beck's moral character. Beck's ethos is based on his checkered past experiences that have been tempered by his growth in his religious faith and his family centered activities. Many listeners will acknowledge that they appreciate his honesty in wrestling with an issue, his knowledge of basic human emotions and temptations, and his sense humor. I began listening to Beck for the same reasons. Glenn Beck was honest enough to admit on the air when he has changed his mind on some very controversial subjects. In one example, Beck stated that he was once an avid proponent for Terri Schindler-Schiavo's feeding tube to be removed some years back when he was still broadcasting from Tampa, Florida. Beck said that he changed his mind after a caller had asked him, "To define what artificial means of sustaining life is?" Beck said that after a few days of contemplation that he talked with his producer about going on the air about having changed his mind on the ordeal. Beck said that his producer warned him that he would be committing talk radio "career suicide" by telling the listeners that he was wrong to have lobbied so passionately for Terri being allowed to die. Beck said that he could not live with himself to not address his change of conscience and the next day he went on the air to correct his stance. Beck said that he was surprised from the support of listeners that appreciated Beck's honesty about his change of conscience, even from callers that disagreed with his position.

Glenn Beck is a flawed individual with a past that would rival some of the most troubled members of the entertainment world. He freely admits that he grew up abusing drugs and alcohol. He has mentioned that his mother committed suicide when he was still a boy. Though he admits his colorful history, he goes on to unabashedly speak of his conversion to a conservative Christian lifestyle. He states that he is a “recovering alcoholic drug addict DJ” and “former scum bag,” yet he chooses every day now to “struggle and try to be a good guy.” His honesty about his past actually frees him to exalt the biased nature of his conservative values. As he has pointed out from time to time, if you hold in secrets of former bad or troubled behavior, then these secrets can be used against you. Yet, if you come right out and state your flaws, then you disarm your opponents from dredging up unpleasantries to be used as ammunition against you. This actually makes sense on two levels. The first is that another person cannot blackmail you over something that is now common knowledge. The second reason for doing this is that it gives Beck credibility by letting audiences know that he has made mistakes that left him broken and nearly killed him. Sometimes we hear charges, such as, “how do you know what it’s like to be poor?” or “how do you know what it’s like, since you’ve never had to live from paycheck to paycheck?” In response, Mr. Beck can actually say he has been on the other side of the fence, and he labored to get out of there.

A key element to Glenn Beck’s biases and value judgments is his religion. He is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In four years of my listening to Beck, I have not heard him come right out and say that he is Mormon, but he is constantly alluding to it in his argumentation and reasoning. Yet, Beck did say after having viewed some of the Olympic events in Athens in 2004 that it was Mormon porn

that he was watching because of some of the skimpy attire of the women athletes. When callers have asked him questions about his Mormon faith, Beck will answer them. I have never heard Beck correct a caller when the caller mentions Beck's Mormonism, but Beck will quickly correct a caller if the caller labels Beck by any other denomination than Mormon. Beck will also subtly mention his Mormon beliefs by referring to basic Mormon precepts, such as being "married for all eternity", and that the "handicapped are special spirits" entrusted to us by God to be treasured. It does not appear that he is trying to conceal his religion, as much as he wants to keep his audience's attention on the overall values he is promoting. Since Glenn Beck is so forthright about his past and with his conservative views, it may be his way of avoiding confrontation with his listeners about certain individual aspects of his particular denomination. It seems to be an effective strategy to stay focused on mainstream conservative Judaeo-Christian values, rather than to plunge into the particularities of any specific religious differences between him and his conservative listeners. I suspect Glenn Beck would argue that the "meat or substance" of the issues and values are more important than the "flavor or denominational glaze" coating the meat of the issues. Unless people are well versed in their own faith or that of Mormonism, they would not recognize Beck's ideology as being really any different from a practicing evangelical, Southern Baptist or other mainline traditional Christians. This may be why his appeal as a conservative is so broadly accepted because it is not lined with a denomination's label, as it is with a conservative message and agenda.

Glenn Beck's life growing experiences has been a kaleidoscope of twists and turns, which obviously impacted his value system later in life. It is almost as though that

Milton Rokeach (1979) had Glenn Beck in mind when he wrote, “We know that values are learned. This means that they are developed through some kind of experience - of pain or pleasure, deprivation or gratification, goal attainment or frustration or failure, social approval or disapproval, love or hate” (p. 22). Glenn Beck has had a belly full of pain or pleasure and love or hate as part of his history to draw upon when making his value claims. He has come full circle from having been a self-proclaimed “scum bag,” to being a responsible father and community member, free from the dependency of drugs and alcohol addiction. It can be argued that Beck does meet at least some of the Aristotelian qualities to be an orator with credibility. According to Aristotle, an orator has “a sufficient natural capacity for the truth and indeed in most cases attain to it” (Freese, 1926, p. 11). Beck had a history of being troubled in his childhood and as a young adult, but finally attained the understanding of truth, according to what he and his church understand that truth to be.

Glenn Beck extols the program’s principal theme of “right and wrong” while not espousing the political virtues of “left and right” ideology. Once one listens to the show, one may find the claim about the program being neither “left wing nor right wing” debatable. There is a political dimension to the show, but then again, if one believes right and wrong permeates our lives, it ought not surprise anyone that politics is pulled into the show’s programming. One may inquire about the virtues and credibility of the “right and wrong” judgments being bolstered. Glenn Beck is constantly using terms like good and evil in unison with the notions of right and wrong. The use of the terms good and evil seems to be embarrassing or unsettling to some people, perhaps out of apathy, condescension, guilt, or some other reason. I have seen these two terms create a sense of

anxiety when they have been used in certain areas; for example, in the media, in academic works or discussions, and political addresses. It is an odd thing, especially in countries that enjoy the freedom of speech, that people are compelled to feel uncomfortable when using the ethical discourse terminology of good and evil. Are we some way threatened by a sense we are not modern, educated, or sophisticated when using such axioms?

Historically, terms like good and evil have been used frequently in primitive cultures, throughout the Middle Ages, and even by extremist groups. Yet it should not prohibit the validity of their usage or meaning in describing the world we experience today.

I chose to examine this program mainly due to Beck's unapologetic principles and morals that he touts and how these principles are touted. The Glenn Beck Program is fascinating because "the social world in which we live today is transparent to reason because it is our own human creation" (Kronman, 1983, p. 169). If reason is transparent to our own human creation, then it can be deduced that "right and wrong" is subject to change with the ideology of those alive at any given time, or based upon the history of previous generation's ideology of moral truths. I heard it said more than once in my studies of systematic theology "that today's doctrines were yesterday's ideologies." There is some truth in that statement, but it is incredibly cynical. Its premise reduces moral truths to mere human conjecture, fabrication, interpretation, or simply the development of ideologies motivated by social pressures, political agendas, or the psychology and science of a given era. In our culture today there rages a "debate over whether the individual or the community should be considered primary in ethical decision making" processes (Hicks & Warren, 1998, p. 14). If one were looking at values of right and wrong from a secular perspective, they would most likely say that values should be a

human construct. The traditional Judaeo-Christian aspect of reason would say that there is a transcendence of value claims of right and wrong based upon ancient biblical rules.

It is safe to state that “in everyday discourse it is often useful to say that what may be a fact for one individual may not be for another” (Buchler, 1965, p. 157). The interpretation of “right and wrong” can be ascribed to the understanding and experiences of the host and critic, Glenn Beck, yet also freely rejected or accepted by the listener’s own personal understanding and interpretation. Cheree Carlson (1994) writes that the “criterion for judging evidence is tied inextricably to the *ethos* of the critic. So much of what we accept as data is taken on ‘faith,’ augmented by the persuasive ability of the critic” (p. 22). Beck’s view of society is based on a lifetime experience of hard knocks and upon a decision to embrace a religious conversion of ideologies and lifestyle. As noted by Aristotle, “The orator must therefore be a competent judge of virtue and character; he must have a thorough knowledge of the emotions (or passions); and he must possess the power of reasoning” (Freese, 1926, p. xxxii). This leave us with the dilemma of not only analyzing the message, but also the orator of that message. Since all of this is subjective, and prejudiced from the personal and reasoned point of view, a case could be made that Beck would meet this criterion. Beck, who is in his early forties, has three children, two girls and one boy. The two girls, one having special needs, is from a first marriage that he had during his years of being a self proclaimed “alcoholic, drug addict, scum bag.” The third child is a baby boy that was adopted during his second marriage to a devoutly practicing Mormon woman. He moved his radio program from Tampa to Philadelphia where his two girls live, so he would be an active father in their lives. His listeners, myself included, approach Beck’s credibility through his experience of having

lived on the dark side of reality; yet, Beck decided to make a positive and a literal life-saving change. Beck's desperate life leading up to his becoming a clean, sober and responsible father and spouse, illustrates the reality of what he preaches as a host and critic. "A person's values, like all beliefs, may be consciously conceived or unconsciously held, and must be inferred from what a person says or does" (Rokeach, 1972, p. 124). Beck not only says what his values are but has implemented those values in his own life.

Listeners may have a multiple of reasons for listening to the Glenn Beck Program. Some reasons could include acquiring information as news, ideas, opinions, and entertainment. This desire springs from the inquisitiveness of human nature. "Accordingly, we aim throughout our lives to acquire knowledge" (Moser, Mulder, & Trout, 1998, p. 2). Radio is probably one of the most practical means to acquire knowledge in a busy and fast paced world. Since we are rushing from one activity or another, here in the United States we often lose the close community connections that are so prevalent in other countries. Radio bridges the gap that our independence from each other has created. "Knowledge is not produced by passively perceiving individuals, but by interacting social groups engaged in particular activities" (Barnes, 1984, p. 103-104). This might sound counter on the surface to my argument of talk radio's impact, but listeners are having a connection to each other and to the host. I have interviewed thousands of people as a social service worker and taught public speaking courses, and I will be the first to attest that being a good listener is truly an active endeavor. Knowledge is being gained from news/talk radio programs, but the value and critical nature of the knowledge is up for debate. "There is little support for the demographic portrait of the

talk radio audience as individuals on the periphery of society, typically older, and less politically and socially active” (Hollander, 1996, p. 110). The connection among listeners may not be a friend or buddy relationship, but there is information and knowledge being exchanged. The attraction and information that the listeners seem to derive from the host may be attributed to one’s perceived shared views. “A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects” (Geertz, 1973, p. 127).

The values and ideas that were once batted around the kitchen table by the family elders or friends at a community café are now being initiated by national high profile hosts of talk radio, such as Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, Alan Colmes, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, and Rush Limbaugh. “The hosts set the tone with their own opinions, humor, off-the-cuff remarks, wild accusations, cynical remarks, light-hearted conversation, and other interjections that keep the audience entertained and amused yet informed about current events and politics” (Medoff & Kaye, 2005, p. 112). It is important that the host have skill in relating to the audience on several levels. If a host has hope of relating values important to her or his perspective, they should be able to relate on a personal and intellectual level to their listeners. “Values are an essential part of the analysis of every argumentative” discourse, which Beck integrates the traditional Judaeo-Christian element in his selection of news stories and current event monologues (Rieke & Sillars, 2001, p. 216). Beck’s reciprocation with his conservative audience continues the tradition, like the dinner table conversation, where correlating traditional values with current events spurs understanding and perhaps learning. “Values emerge

from learning; hence, by implication, they are generalized from experience” and that experience can be personal or the shared experience of others, even from a radio host (Rokeach, 1979, p. 34).

I think Beck and his show’s producers saw an opportunity to capitalize on the feeling among many conservatives in our country by making a humorous show containing traditional Judaeo-Christian overtones. Glenn Beck’s value system is operating in a secular society that replaced traditional values with modernism and postmodernism. Once “people in large numbers began to turn their backs on a past in which life was thought to be controlled by mysterious or mechanical forces,” traditional values decreased in influence on society and politics. (Benson, 1989, p. 158). Along with America’s secularism, “we hypothesize that conformity, security, tradition, and power values become less important as societies develop socioeconomically” (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 472). This coincides with Lucaites and Condit’s (1999) statement, “the scientific modernism of the present century spawned an intellectual predisposition for theories of knowledge in which the values of universality and objectivity were privileged over those of particularity” (p. 6). “Values of universality” are a claim that is also used by traditional Judaeo-Christians in defense of their ideology, though the universal standards of judging values differ among the modernists and traditional Christians. Beck’s program also saw a deficiency in the logic generated from postmodernism, where “a certain relativism is now taken for granted, and the notion that there might be objective phenomena to be explained seems strange, and even oppressive.” (Jackson, 1991, p. 255). Beck counters the relativism phenomenon by creating “meanings from which we can act” to have an impact on reclaiming our religious roots (Anderson, 1992, p. 354).

Beck uses the phrase “the real America” when he speaks of a safe America for our children, an intact family, and tolerance for traditional Christian values without fear of retribution. The real America of Glenn Beck’s rhetoric might be as much of an illusion as it is a reality. Depending on the perspective of the listener, “the real America” may be a drive down memory lane, if the lane ever existed, or one of segregation and intolerance. This use of “the real America” seems to be utilized as an appeal to conservatives, nationalists, and even those with a nostalgic sense of America’s past, regardless if it even existed or not. This does not imply that Beck makes excuses for those Christians who lack tact or tolerance on issues such as homosexuality or violence towards abortion clinic workers, but rather expresses contempt for those intolerant Christians. Yet, the main for us of Beck’s rhetoric about “the real America” entails inspiring traditional Christians in the United States to seek the reclamation of historical values from what he calls a “lessening of morals” and a “culture of death.” I have heard talk show hosts change their position on core issues that they hold, but I have not encountered Beck changing any core value that he has shared with his listeners. Beck stays consistent with his stated beliefs to build credibility with his conservative audience. His consistency, along with his adherence to Judaeo-Christian values, is used to combat the confusion created when postmodernism “ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts” and societal values (Jameson, 1991, p. 96). It is his perceived honesty and struggle, apart from his humor, to be a better spouse and father that seems to endear Beck to many of his callers. The presentation of clarity and consistency of Beck’s Judaeo-Christian values, combined with his own life journey, seem to help his listeners to bond with him. “The value of knowing the mind of others will depend further on the degree of penetration of that

knowledge” (Findlay, 1961, p. 270). Having had shared experiences, whether they are actual or sympathetic, listeners form a connection to Beck’s personality and frame of reference.

Radio hosts are the gatekeepers of the programs’ content, just as there are filters and gatekeepers in other media outlets, such as editors, journalists, and commentators. Perhaps, it can be argued, that talk radio hosts are “speaking to or for the public, act, in effect, as agents or representatives for the broader citizenry” (Page & Tannenbaum, 1996, p. 33). Do we think The New York Times and The Washington Times are unbiased presenters of truth and knowledge? Of course not, because their ideologies are different and that is due to a filtering of how they report a story and what they choose to report. Though these two media outlets espouse differing ideologies and values, one would hardly deny that knowledge and values are still present in the content. Radio hosts have bias, but you are more likely to hear radio hosts come out and state their position, where as other mediums tend to deflect the charges of what their true biases are.

Radio becomes a powerful force in our society “due to the nature of the medium, which allows one to listen in on two-way conversation without getting directly involved and without laying self-esteem on the line” (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989, p. 92). Listeners are not idle or inept in the dynamics of shaping the morals, values, and politics of society. A case could also be made that radio is not only a vehicle for those without a voice, but is an instrument used by those that already are involved society’s dynamics. “Talk radio listeners (as compared to nonlisteners) are younger, have greater feelings of political self-efficacy, are more politically active, and are more likely to read newspapers” (Hollander, 1996, p. 110). Hollander’s statement dispels the questionable image of talk radio

listeners as lonely old recluses, not subscribing to other media sources for their edification, such as newspapers, and being sideline observers in current events and politics. “The recent, rapid growth in the number of programs, their sophistication, and the broadening of the audience makes the previous portrait of the talk radio listener suspect” (Hollander, 1996, p. 103). This is not to exclude the lighter side, or perhaps darker side, of talk radio listener’s attraction for entertainment. Some listeners are drawn to talk programs that are considered vulgar, such as Howard Stern show, which provides some form of comic relief or sordid stimulation for its audience members. As Stuart Hyde (2004) writes, “Much of the talk generated by the new breed of talk-show host has been angry and often tasteless, but talk shows have revitalized AM radio” (p. 188). Excluding Howard Stern, most nationally syndicated programs are absent of vulgar content. This is not to say that the other nationally syndicated shows do not indulge in dark humor, sarcasm, and controversial issues.

Summary

Radio has an attractive appeal among its listeners due to it being compatible with the busy lifestyle in the United States. People are able to listen to radio while driving, at work, during exercise, or almost any other activity. The active lifestyle of Americans might discourage them from seeking out news, information, and commentary in other media that is not as accessible or convenient. Talk radio reaches out to the public by providing entertainment, news and criticism that generates attention to current events and issues of the day. Many talk radio programs make value claims and the Glenn Beck Program is one of them. The values advocated by the Glenn Beck Program represent a traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective. The rhetoric of Beck’s Judaeo-Christian values

is contrasted with the values of the modern and postmodern perspectives. The next chapter will analyze the discourse of the value claims espoused by the Glenn Beck Program.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

We live in a culture that has so-called experts and media celebrities from every field telling us what we are to think about from every subject, such as health, education, family, politics, and spiritual matters to name a few. “In modern mass societies much political deliberation is mediated by professional communicators, who may fail to represent the values of ordinary citizens” (Page & Tannenbaum, 1996, p. 33). Also, David Craig (1999) writes, “Professionals make many more decisions in society than they once did and that power has shifted to them from individuals and political representatives” (p. 17). Glenn Beck does not claim to be an expert in any field. He even ridicules himself by sometimes saying that he should stand up while he is doing commentary so that we can hear him talk out of his “bottom.” Beck manifests a common touch and a common sense that he conveys humorously and even crudely that give us a connection with him. A constant bombardment of “experts” telling us what we need to know is refreshingly given a break by someone expounding common sense and who sounds as if he could be a cousin, friend, father, or brother. “What we usually call common sense consists of a series of beliefs which are accepted within a particular society and which the members of that society suppose to be shared by every reasonable being” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 99). One could hardly argue, in Glenn Beck’s case, that the beliefs he shares does not resonate with a good number of people.

In reference to common sense, there is always the wider contention over who defines what is meant by a reasonable being. “A communicator’s values are among the many sources for his or her assumptions. It is important for critical thinkers to discover these values when reading, viewing, or listening to a message.” (Makau & Marty, 2001, p. 21). As a free and democratic society, do we not have the choice to discern what is reasonable and what we use to make this discernment? This does not mean that we will always make healthy or wise decisions, yet we are relatively free to make these decisions based on our perceived interests. Unlike some cultures where “totalitarian regimes demand total acceptance of their aims by societal members,” we are not under edict to do so in ours (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 474). The value claims made by Glenn Beck are not forced nor are they obligatory. Postmodernists might view a totalitarian regime as perhaps the ideal messenger for traditional Christians to use in promoting the acceptance of their fixed rigid value system. This premise would be counter to the “free will” nature of human beings as taught by the traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective. Consent of the faithful would be meaningless if it were apart from free will, although the Middle Ages lost sight of this for a while. “Democratic ideology decries coercion or manipulation of citizens to adopt particular values. Ideally, individuals are encouraged to develop and express their own value priorities” (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 476). Since it is a free choice to become a listener to talk radio, is it not an expressed value choice being made by the individual? Are we to think that individuals in a free society are being coerced or manipulated as a captive audience, when it was free will that motivated them to choose this rhetoric? This is not to say that persuasion is not occurring, but it would be ludicrous

to call it coercion or manipulation, when the audience is not captive or mandated to give credence to this form of dialogue.

The Glenn Beck Program is first and foremost a show of entertainment expressing value claims. Beck has a dark sense of humor and a constant sarcasm woven through almost the entire show. An example of Beck's "dark sense of humor" was his threat to kill a puppy named Bobo, if his listeners did not purchase his book, The Real America. If the book sells did not reach the top ten of Amazon.com's list, Beck would "put down" this cute little puppy. What he did not let the listeners know for a week, was that the puppy is "factitious." Beck later explained that he received hate mail from listeners, threats from attorneys and animal rights groups with prosecution, radio stations affiliates and sponsors were going to drop his radio program. At the end of the week, Beck smothered this fake puppy in an almost cartoonish silly sounding way on the air. After the false puppy suffocation, we discovered that this was treated like a dream sequence. Beck, being construed like Dorothy waking up in the Wizard of OZ, came back to reality. Beck said the whole Bobo sketch was his way to show how people care and rally around images like cute little puppies and kittens when threatened with being harmed. Beck pointed out that people were willing to take time out of their day to call sponsors, police departments, and various other organizations to save one little animal. Beck correlated his audience's response over saving a puppy to the lack of response of people make to save a disabled lady in Florida, Terri Schiavo? There was a dark parody to Beck's sketch, but there was the serious side to the point too. Beck wanted to show that people have compassion to help a cute defenseless animal, but they fail to transfer that same concern to human beings.

The program does allow listeners to call in, but Beck often tells his audience to listen to the show for at least eight weeks before ever calling. The reason for the eight-week wait is because most new listeners to the show call in to react to something that they misunderstood due to his use of sarcasm. He takes stances that clearly represent a conservative point of view regarding family, religious conscience, and politics. He does call himself a Republican politically, but he openly disagrees when his religious and moral values differ from the Republican Party's view. Beck's politics are subjugated to his religious stances, because he believes that religion is more important than party affiliation. He is for cutting off illegal aliens from entering and staying in the United States, yet he supports legalized immigration. He is pro-life when it comes to the issue of abortion, but he is against the death penalty being used in our judicial system. He supports the United States war on terror in Iraq and globally but is appalled at the abuses that occurred to the prisoners while in America's military custody.

Glenn Beck often describes himself as a "work in progress." Beck will from time to time bring up his heartaches from his past regarding his mother's suicide, his drug and alcoholism, and his first marriage. Beck likes to talk about turning points in one's life. He disarms his call-in detractors by freely admitting his shortcomings, which helps to diffuse hostile callers' claims that he is aloft in some ivory tower sitting in judgment. He relates his own turning point in life when he decided to give up drugs and alcohol. This occurred when he failed to realize why his baby girl was crying; he was drunk and did not see a rubber band that had become tangled around his little girl's wrist. His wife at the time went to check on the baby after he did not find anything wrong with her, and she found the rubber band and raised heck with him for not finding it. Beck said this incident

troubled him because he now knew that his addictions were affecting him to the point that he was not being a responsible father. The anguish he felt about his daughter being in pain, which he was too drunk to alleviate, seemed to influence his direction on becoming a clean, sober, and moral person. This is where the value judgments that Beck proclaims so strongly had their roots. He has been on the other side of religion and moralistic guiding principles and found that it created harm and distress to people in his life.

The following sentence by Whitehead (1960) epitomizes the trial and enlightenment that Glenn Beck experienced: religion is “an endeavour to find something permanent and intelligible by which to interpret the confusion of immediate detail” (p. 47). When one sees a society in flux with changing standards and criteria for judging situations and behavior, one is apt to turn to a place of solace and stability. This is especially true for listeners who call in to Beck’s program who struggle with alcoholism and drug abuse in their lives or the life of a loved one. Beck speaks about how he found redemption in religion for his past faults of being an egotistical, self-indulgent, addicted and irresponsible father. He said that if it were not for his religious conversion he would probably be dead. Beck stresses to his audience that in the stormy sea of self-gratification, that the single most important thing that he needed in his life was redemption. This journey of religious conversion changed his behavior and outlook on life on every level. He went on to find a spouse who is religiously devout, and make amends to his two girls from the first marriage, and to build a career that contributes to the family’s and society’s well being. He applied meaning to his life because he saw that “values serve as criteria for selection in action. When most explicit and fully conceptualized, values become criteria for judgment, preference, and choice” (Rokeach,

1979, p. 16). It was such choices that changed over twenty years of lascivious behavior and self-destructive abuse in his life. He expounds upon his experiences and his own values every day in the news articles he reads, the stories he tells, and the issues he brings up.

One of Glenn Beck is a masterful storyteller. I do not know of anyone on the radio, in my thirty some years, who does as effective a job of telling a story, except perhaps Paul Harvey. His choice of stories and presentation of stories have sometimes left those who call in to his show in tears, including myself. Beck told a personal story on September 24, 2005, about his and his spouse's recent adoption of a baby boy, after three years of trying to have a baby of their own. The adoption process began when Beck had his wife on his radio program and they were talking about their decision to try adopting a baby. The conversation took place in the context that they both are against abortion and thought that this would be the avenue that they would pursue instead of going through fertilization procedures. After his spouse's appearance on his program, Beck was contacted by a young girl and her family living in Texas who said she was pregnant and wanted her baby to be adopted by a loving family. After some months passed, Beck informed his audience that he and his spouse were flying to Texas to finalize the adoption. He asked his listeners to "pray for God's will and strength." When the adoption was completed, Beck told his radio audience of the details of the adoption process and its many trials. At the last moment, the young girl decided not to go through with giving up the baby boy, even after talking to the social worker and various family members. He indicated that this was a very emotional and touch-and-go open adoption, because the birth mother, a fourteen-year-old girl, had changed her mind several times.

Beck and his spouse left the hospital distressed and went to pray and comfort each other in their grief. After all the parties had left the hospital room of the young mother, an attending nurse came into the room to check on the young girl. Beck said that the nurse sat down with the young girl, “hugged her, cried and said, your son would be proud of you for the tough decisions that you’re going to make. You can make something of your life, and show him what you’re made of.” Soon after, the nurse called Beck and told him and his wife to come to the hospital, because “you have your son, take him home.” Beck said the nurse explained, “I don’t know how it happened the Lord was using me.”

Glenn Beck said this was the toughest thing that he has ever had to go through in his entire life. Beck spoke of the bravery of the baby’s birth mother and then Beck began to sob on the air. Beck said of the fourteen-year-old birth mother, “She is quite possibly the most amazing girl, woman that I’ve ever met.” Soon after this statement, Beck then went into a monologue of how

little boys like stories of Spiderman, and Superman, and Batman. Little boys like stories of bigger than life heroes, and I am so glad that I will always be able to tell my son about the biggest hero I’ve ever met. A little girl that went to a party, somebody slipped her a date rape drug and she found herself in an unbelievable position. Faced with a choice on whether to go on with her life and not let anybody know what happened and abort the child. She said no. Then when her heart was being ripped out of her chest because she truly loved that little boy. She made the hardest choice and said, ‘I’m going to giving it to somebody else that can raise it with a mother and a father.’ I don’t need to tell my son about Superman or Spiderman, when I want to share a hero’s story with my son, I will just tell him the story of his mom.

This is just one example of how Beck’s stories are laden with values, struggle, and ethical choices that serve the purpose to engage the audience in deliberative thought. Beck tells

stories that have a tone of Christian witness and morals, while laden with a tremendous amount of passion and emotion.

Beck embodies in speech and action that “acting ethically implies that we are governed, not ruled, by moral universals” (Richardson, 1994, p. 111). By exhibiting humble acts of courage, Glenn Beck shows that our actions should be based on choices that reflect our sense of religious values and commitments. Nobody will make us choose to do the ethical or moral action; rather we strive to consent freely to do the noble thing. “Ethics is not prescribed or proscribed conduct to learned from a code or set of rules, but rather is an active decision-making behavior based on duties and consequences that are an integral part of the day-to-day newsgathering process” (Brislin, 1997, p. 223). The ethical values portrayed in these stories express “responsibility to community over self-interest, profit, or careerism; to social ethics over rampant libertarian individual interests” (Baker, 1999, p. 75). Yet these social interests champion Judaeo-Christian ethics, absent a postmodernistic self-interpretation of events.

Another story Beck told was of a married couple, walking on the beach holding hands, who had been swept out into the sea by the tsunami wave that hit Asia on December 26, 2004. Beck speaks of the man’s effort to keep his wife above water, but her hand slips away and she goes under. The man had to make a decision if he would seek his wife, to whom he had been married for more than twenty years, or help save others treading water who were calling for his help. His dilemma comes down to saving lives of strangers who are floating by him, or to search for his spouse who may already be drowned. There are a number of value judgments occurring here. It is a Christian principle to help a stranger in need, but also a Christian precept to lay down one’s life for

a friend, and no greater friend does one have than one's loving spouse. The man has made a vow and a sacramental commitment to his spouse and God; therefore, the most important thing for him to do, for better or worse, is to hunt for his spouse.

A parallel dilemma is taking place as well. The modernistic view would say that you have a proven scientific entity, a living and breathing person floating past you who will die if you do not act. The modernistic argument would point out that the spouse is in currents so strong that they brought down buildings, and she is probably dead. With all the debris, cloudy muddy water, and swift current, he will most likely not even find her, so why sacrifice a living being for a presumed dead one who may never be found?

Postmodernism is not as clinical as modernism's view of the world. A postmodernistic argument might be that one person is no more important than another, just because of history or vows exchanged. Therefore, one should pursue the stranger that will most likely survive the flood, rather than the person that is likely dead. Yet, it is just as plausible from the postmodernism perspective to search and assist any individual that one seeks to help, including and especially one's spouse. Though the motivations, concerns, or reasoning may differ, one still has to conclude that values, commitment, and love are as much a part of the postmodernism mindset as they are with the Judaeo-Christians traditions. This is because the nature of postmodernism is to give attention to and accord values to elements of society thought of as abandoned, neglected or abused. The man in the story ultimately decides to plunge underwater to find his lost love and brings her pale, lifeless body to the surface. He also discovers that those who have called for his help have also now perished. He eventually makes his way to a hospital in hope that health

workers may resuscitate her, which against all odds eventually does occur. The story ends that they are both healthy and continuing their life together.

What I found interesting, from a traditional Christian perspective, is that I did not know what I would have done if I were in his place. I almost always have an opinion or at least an idea of what I would do in most situations, but this time I was at a loss. I have, since I was five years old, always thought that if God gave me a spouse that she would be the greatest treasure that I could have this side of heaven. Yet I did not know if I could look into someone else's eyes that are moments away from death and turn away based only on a "hope." It is ironic that one would hesitate because a lot of traditional Judaeo-Christian beliefs are based on "hope." For example, one of the main precepts taught and accepted by traditional Christians is the "hope" of afterlife filled bliss. I have played a few of these clips to people that I knew, only to find that they were almost speechless on hearing the story and how it was told.

There emerges a purpose to the Glenn Beck Program to draw listeners in by the entertainment, but to keep them thinking during and after the show about something bigger than themselves. "It is certainly of the nature of the human mind to think spontaneously, continuously, and pervasively but it is not of the nature of the human mind to think critically about the standards and principles guiding its spontaneous thought" (Paul, 1990, p. 30). Beck provokes his audience to think critically, not just emotionally, about the value choices occurring in the stories and news he is articulating. This is the outward serious and spiritual side Glenn Beck. Most of the program does have a serious thread woven into it, but it is often masked by his dark humor and relentless sarcasm. Beck's show on August 26, 2004, had a segment regarding the slander that is evident in

many campaign commercials. Beck said he was so tired of all the negative campaign ads tearing the other opponents apart. Beck played a clip of how a campaign ad might sound against Jesus if he was running for congress. “You may know that a man named Jesus is running for congress; here is what you may not know. Fact: Out of his twelve disciples, none of them are women. Fact: Went out of his way to change water into wine, sounds like a drinking problem to me. Fact: He’s hiding his Hispanic heritage by mispronouncing his real name, Jesus. Fact: His dad got him the job. Fact: His biography contains judgmental language. Fact: Hurt local economy by kicking merchants out of churches. Fact: He says he walked on water, look, it’s called ice! Fact: He was killed once then came back to life. Once he gets into office, we’ll never get rid of him. Fact: He claims to have walked on water. He had too, his father flooded the earth. Fact: For a man who claims to have all the answers, there sure are a lot of questions. Call Jesus’ office and tell him to stop holding our souls ransom for political gain. I’m the prince of darkness and I approved this message.” Beck indicated that he just wanted all the partisan bickering between the “swift boat people” and the “Michael Moores of the world” to just stop it because it is destructive and nonsense. Beck believed that we should be concentrating on the United States’ security and our children’s future, instead of “re-fighting the Vietnam War!”

Glenn Beck’s sarcasm is brutal. He has a proclivity to push his points to the extreme, sometimes to the point of being irreverent and perhaps even insensitive. He castigates those accused of causing harm to children, by taunting and making fun of the alleged perpetrators with jingles. One such jingle is put to a variation of the tune of the old rock song, “She’s sixteen she’s beautiful and she’s mine.” The jingle is played before

he talks about the Michael Jackson child abuse case and it goes as follows: “So, come on little boy, I’ll show you my toy and ply you with candy and wine. You’re thirteen, you’re cancerous, and you’re mine.” Is this rude, extremely sarcastic, over the edge, or offensive to someone? Probably. “Ultimately, respect for others and their rights cannot be legislated” (Husselbee, 1994, p. 149). If we mandated respect, satire and criticism about political and societal issues would suffer along with our protection of the exercise of free thought and speech.

Although Beck is conservative to his core, he cuts loose by being dark with his humor, but I think the dark humor serves a number of purposes. First, it grabs the listener’s attention by creating some shock value. Also, it points out the absurdity of the whole spectacle and atmosphere that is sensationalized by entertainment gossip shows and news reporting agencies that trivialize the horrid and serious nature of charges. It can be argued that exaggerating the absurdity of something can actually pull our focus back to the magnitude of what the situation is. Think of the times we hear something ridiculous and we shake our heads while laughing and say “oh, that’s bad.” We are probably saying that because we realize how farfetched the statement is from the sheer gravity of the matter, it still has an element of truth embedded in it. “We begin to understand how our image of the world is shaped by the mode of presentation” (Lang, 1979, p.89).

We may have our own ideal perception of how we want to see the world and its values, but we also have that side of us that sees the world as it actually is. Sometimes the clarity is so crisp that our cynical nature begins blending the competing factors of the absurd, cold reality, and idealistic values. like a child swirling its mashed potatoes, peas, and gravy. I think one seeks stress relief from the constant barrage of news stories of

child sexual abuse and abductions, family crisis and tragedies from the Terri Schindler-Schiavo ordeal, the Laci Peterson murder, and the September 11th catastrophe. Beck provides relief for himself and for his audience through his sometimes-barbaric parodies of the tragic. On an April 24, 2005, Beck explains, "I have the darkest sense of humor of anybody you'll ever meet. And it comes from, I believe, my mother's suicide when I was thirteen. Humor was my way of dealing with pain, and sorrow, and darkness."

Often before Beck launches into a gut-wrenching news story, he will tell his audience to "get out your duck tape and wrap it around your head really tight to keep your head from exploding." Since he has a special-needs daughter and he lived through his mother's suicide, I think a lot of these stories in the news hit close to his soul. I know from my six-and-a-half years of being a social service worker, I have a dark sense of humor, because my psyche and my value system were constantly under fire and assault.

Beck was horrified by a news report he related in February of 2005 regarding a teenage girl who threw her newborn baby out the window of a moving car with its umbilical cord still attached. How does one absorb a story like this from a clinical, practical frame of mind? Parents, along with most sane people, are dumbfounded that a human being could do such a deed. If one can fight fire with fire, can one not fight against the absurdity of reality with the absurdity of a burlesque sense of humor? Most of the senseless violence toward women and children that make national headlines contain little plausible explanation that would "satisfy" our rational intellect. Should a talk show host relay a sense of mind-boggling aversion when speaking of a pregnant women, Laci Peterson, who was duck taped, murdered, and thrown into the bay by her husband? It stands to reason that Beck would interject his antipathy since his show is about right and

wrong, and the crime was not a crime of passion but one of methodical planning and execution. The seemingly callous and happy-go-lucky Scott Peterson was calling his mistress and telling her of his ventures in Europe, all the while he was still in California and the search for Laci was still underway. Perhaps most of us who followed the Laci Peterson murder trial wanted to metaphorically grab the duck tape to keep our heads from exploding because of the constant assault on our values and on common decency. There is not a static method of success in presentation that all hosts use, and often it correlates with the format that the show uses. With all the competing media outlets seeking our attention, it does speak volumes to have a successful radio program based on conservative values, while still using extreme sarcasm and dark humor to entertain its audience.

Glenn Beck will use terms, such as ‘bastards,’ ‘pedophiles,’ ‘terrorists,’ ‘adulators,’ ‘morons,’ ‘RamaHanuKwanzMas,’ ‘sick freaks,’ ‘evil conservatives,’ ‘murders,’ ‘slugs,’ ‘scum bags,’ ‘Nazis,’ and ‘pin heads,’ as part of his politically incorrect vocabulary of sarcasm. Yet, the intention does not appear to be merely to shock his listeners, but to emphasize his discontent and frustration with the modern and postmodern impact on our society and its laws. He plays a game where he takes phone calls from listeners and asks them simple questions. The name of the game show segment is called ‘Jeputardy.’ He never comes right out and says why he calls certain segments of the show the names he does, but I think the meaning can be deduced from his overall persona. Some accusers say that he is being insensitive or trying to make fun of retarded people by the use of the term, Jeputardy. Beck retorts that he is not making fun of retarded people, because he has a special-need's child and his faith ‘regards the

handicapped as special spirits” entrusted to us by God to be treasured. Beck uses harsh language to counter the sanitized language expounded by political correctness.

The Glenn Beck Programs taps into the frustration that many people voice on his show about the culture of secularism, consumerism, and religiously disinfected public arenas and workplaces. There is such an influence from the modernist and postmodernist divisions upon our society’s public and private institutions that many conservative and traditional people feel intimidated or threatened. This intimidation is steeped with fear that there will be reprisals if we communicate who we are in public due to politically correct morays. The threat of intimidation or reprisal is not experienced by traditional Judaeo-Christian practitioners alone, as modernists and postmodernists also claim threat and intimidation towards them as well.

Glenn Beck denounces the removal of the Ten Commandments from courthouses, the dismantling of crosses and Stars-of-David from some military grave sites, and the banning of religious imagery from public squares and the workplace. Beck tries to turn the ideology of modernism and postmodernism on their head with his form civilly disobedient free speech. Where political correctness appears to soften the tone of rhetoric, it wages war against a Judaeo-Christian value system by promoting what traditionalists would consider lascivious and violent agendas. Beck, who states that he does not see R rated movies, will talk about how sex and immorality are pushed in the media. He talks about how pornography and violence against women are portrayed on television, in movies, in much of the popular music, in literature, and on the Internet. I have never heard him say that the government should intervene, but I have heard him speak of how parents and Christians should become involved in curbing the erosion of

traditional family values. Beck's discourse strongly encourages us to engage our Christian perspectives in deciding "which priorities must be assessed and some values chosen over others"(Rokeach, 1979, p. 161). Beck is not telling the opposition to be silent; rather he is encouraging those that agree with his perspective to be heard.

He also has another politically incorrect game which he plays during the football season called "More-on-Trivia." This game consists of phone calls to convenience stores of two major cities that will have professional teams playing against each other the following weekend. He asks the store workers simple questions and keeps score of which city has the most correct answers; thus predicting the winner of this game. Of course this is silly and even the term "More-on-Trivia" is to imply the same as the meaning of "moron trivia."

So again, why would Beck use terms like "Jeputardy" and "More-on-Trivia?" One would think that phrases like these would make him look cold, hypocritical, or non-Christian. Beck is not using terms like this to offend retarded people; instead he is mocking and sarcastically taunting those that he finds to be disingenuous and the society that they have created. There appears to be contempt on Beck's part regarding the importance that society places on sanitizing our words so as not to offend others. Beck refuses to refrain from using the words that so-called experts in sociology and psychology have deemed as banned, and he rarely uses the words that they deem appropriate. This does not mean that he is seeking to disrespect his conservative listeners, as much as he is showing an in-your-face disagreement with those opposing his traditional Judaeo-Christian values. I think of it as a primal thumping of one's chest to show, "I'm not afraid of you." It is not a very Christian attitude or behavior he displays in his choice of

verbiage, but it seems to stem from the license that a lot of comedians and hosts exhibit. We have all seen or heard, at some time, hosts and comedians who are irreverent or tell jokes about what they consider to be their own experience or in their own backyard. For example, Southerners tell redneck jokes, Jewish comedians tell Jewish jokes, Catholics engaging in Catholic mockery, and blacks indulging in crude black jokes, while justifying their behavior, "Hey, I come from that background" or "I'm one of them, so I can say these things." None of these make it tactful or right, but it does grab the attention of the audience, for better or worse.

Beck's revels in pointing out what he considers shallow values embraced by an "increasingly more secularized world as opposed to the Church" and its teachings (Hans Kung, 1988, p. 197). Beck sees a modern and postmodern society that does not use the same consistency, tolerance, and respect for the values of Christians that it stipulates for itself. Therefore, using "Jeputardy" and "More-on-Trivia" as a part of his program's entertainment segments, he sarcastically illustrates the "intentional and conscious" irony of claiming an overall compassionate and empathic value system spattered with hypocritical underpinnings. By mocking and allegorizing his opponent's values and inconsistent implementation, Beck tries to establish that his traditional views are fundamentally sound, and not fabricated to suit an elitist agenda or current philosophical assumptions. A subtle way that Beck demonstrates how society's trajectory is wrong is by showing the ignorance of so much of the population. He will ask questions like, what is the freezing point of water, what is the capital of the United States, what country are we at war with in the Middle East? He does this, in part for entertainment, but more so to

make the point that forsaking our historical values was not the panacea promised us by the modernists and postmodernists.

We were told by the newer philosophies that the Judaeo-Christian values that we once believed were archaic fantasies and superstitions, a created utopia of the imagination, and a drug to the masses. Beck unfolds for our ears the new-found values and wisdom that science and tolerance have created for average people. These game show segments are not presented in a vacuum, but as an entirety of the show composition. Beck's rudimentary allegation is that our overall values, understanding, behavior, and personal knowledge have progressed no further in the modern age by having forsaken our traditional values. In supporting his claims, these segments are surrounded with current events of teenage suicides, shootings, spousal and child abuse and abandonment, and of institutional denial of common sense.

Beck not only rips into those that challenge the traditional Judaeo-Christian values from the outside, but also sears those from within the Christian community. Beck has a segment containing a jingle with the words "pedophile priests" repeated time and time again. This segment contains the latest news on those who were supposed to be protecting and teaching children, but instead were raping children and the bishops who were accomplices to this evil. Beck does not sugarcoat or hold back punches on those who represent his point of view, but fail to do so. Again, it shows that Beck has the paradox of not being very forgiving in his "Christian" outlook, while espousing Christian values. It may be Beck's way of rooting out hypocrisy among those claiming traditional Judaeo-Christian values, when they are the very persecutors of those values. Yet the

means that Beck uses to do this is in itself a hypocritical strategy, but employed intentionally to raise the eyebrows of the listeners.

I think it would be helpful to speak of an example of the institutional lack of common sense and distorted values that caught Glenn Beck's attention. In his August 26, 2004, program, Beck read a newspaper article by Naomi Aoki that came out of the August 23, 2004, Boston Globe. The article was about how some school systems are now mandating the use of alternative colors of ink to grade papers, instead of red ink. The new wisdom produced by modernism's science and psychological dissertations that these school systems are embracing, propelled Beck into one of the longest sarcastic and facetious monologues I have heard in the four years of his show. Beck began the segment by saying, "I swear there's not enough duck tape in all of North America to stop your head from exploding. If you would like to take a safety precaution right now, grab the duck tape, take it out, take a big strip, wrap it around your head, just to keep it in place in case your head does start to explode; because you're going to need it on this story."

He then started reading the article, "The harshness of red marks has students seeing purple. When it comes to correcting papers and grading tests, purple is emerging as the new red." His voice fluctuates as he reads in amazement about this attempt to soften the means of telling the students that they are wrong, so as to maintain a positive self-esteem by changing ink colors. He continues with the article, "If you see a whole paper in red it seems pretty frightening. Purple stands out, but doesn't look as scary as red," said one middle school teacher. In response, Beck screams, "Oh please send me more duck tape!" He went on to say that he will only be taking phone calls "from people who have been horribly disfigured and scared for all of life because there was red ink on

the papers they got back.” Beck proceeds into his diatribe of devaluing the premise and implications of the postmodern view as merely representing “a perceived difference on the superficial level” (Brill, 1995, p. 129). He condemns that the attention given to grading papers is placed on feelings, rather than the betterment of the children to understand what they did wrong and how to correct the mistakes in the future. Beck says that we need children to learn the values of hard work and to strive for the best answer, as opposed to feeling better about being doing things incorrectly. He speaks of his own schooling when he received his corrected papers back. He facetiously states about himself, “There was so much red ink, they would hand my paper to me, and it was like it went through a meat processing plant it was so full of red. I wasn’t scared, maybe I need more therapy. Maybe, I need to sit on a couch and pay someone eighty dollars, so they can tell me, ‘well, you know what it is, Glenn, you know why you’re so friggin’ screwed up, because you had red ink on your school work.’ I’ve got news for you, man, I ain’t screwed up because of the red ink, I’ve got real issues.” When he says he has “real issues,” Beck is referring to his life of drugs, alcoholism, failed marriage, and being responsible for a special needs child. He continues, “How sweet is your life, if you can get to the point where you’re like, ‘you know what screwed me up, all the red ink.’ How sweet has your life been, I got real problems. If I’m walking around the house going, why am I so screwed me up? Oh my gosh, it must have been that red ink.”

Beck asserts that we have allowed a devotion to tolerance and an avoidance of hurt feelings, to replace our values and concern for children being able to read and work out problems correctly. Beck maintains that we need to teach our children how to handle being corrected and made to strive how to discern the accurate answers. Instead of

worrying about colors of ink, we should be instilling the values, tools, and skills needed by our children to handle the stress of college and compete for jobs that will elevate their lives. He addresses the next statement to teachers that are buying into the whole ink argument, "Here's an idea, why don't you think about, I don't know, making tomorrow's lesson plan, better! Instead of thinking," again referring to the article, "a mix of red and blue, the color purple, embodies red's sense of authority, but also blue's association with serenity, making it less negative and a more constructive color for correcting students' papers.' Who has time to think of this crap!" Beck, who is only in his early forties, says in a beaten, sincere, and tired manner, "What happened to my America? I want to know, what happened to my America? My America made sense. The one I grew up with, with the canned peaches and the fruit cellar underneath my house. I understood that America, I don't understand this America anymore." This statement coincides with his use of "The Real America," that he drops from time to time throughout his program. His use of this story demonstrates the absurdity that he sees in our nation's values and priorities, which have replaced what he believes to be a more discriminating Judaeo-Christian perspective.

Beck longs for the America that he understood. The question arises, did the rest of society understand Glenn Beck's illusory America? First of all, the America that Beck speaks about appears to be a nostalgic fantasy as much as a reality. Postmodernists would look at the Beck's statements and perhaps think of riots and water cannons instead of canned peaches in the cellar. Secondly, if Beck's America were a reality of tranquilly and common shared values, how does one explain Beck's turning to drugs and alcohol during this ideal time? Modernists and postmodernists might point out that Beck's mother committed suicide during this fanciful account of America which Beck describes.

Women's health issues were not as evolved in Beck's real America as they are now, due to the contributions and values brought about by modernism's science. Equality for many segments of society, especially women, was not as prominent in Beck's real America. The medical science of modernism and the equality expounded by postmodernism's values could have potentially helped recognize and resolve some issues that Beck's mother had been wrestling with in Beck's idealized nostalgic Christian era. This is not meant to demean the tragedy experienced in Glenn Beck's childhood, but to clarify that the times reflected upon by Beck were not necessarily as optimistic and as authentically simple as imagined.

Though the Glenn Beck Program claims to not be a political talk show, it does have that dimension because it is concerned with current events and morals, which, of course, spill into politics. One has to remember that in the Classical / Judaeo-Christian philosophy that values, character, and virtue are not confined to one compartment of one's life. Rather, modernists and postmodernists would say that the Judaeo-Christians are allowing their values and beliefs to "interfere with politics." Most of the arguments that emerge from the clash between Judaeo-Christian values and modernism's and postmodernism's values are a struggle for dominance, which lacks tolerance. Modernists may not be known for their claiming to be champions of tolerance, because of their scientific bent, but the postmodernism and Christian perspectives do stress tolerance. Where is it? When the postmodernists exercise their value system, the Judaeo-Christian's response tends to be that the postmodernists are misguided or apathetic to universal norms of right and wrong value judgments, and therefore should be mitigated in light of traditional values. The postmodern view would tend to say that traditional Christian's

should stop their hate rhetoric and to keep their religiosity and blanket value judgments to themselves, "Don't impose your beliefs on the rest of us."

Summary

The Glenn Beck Program's advocacy of traditional Judaeo-Christian values challenges modernism's so-called experts and the application of science in reconfiguring the beliefs of the United States' citizenry. Beck also challenges postmodernism understanding of America's history and its societal and family structures. Beck utilizes rhetoric of sarcasm, the absurd, dark humor, storytelling and biblical principles to engage his listeners. To dispel accusations of being arrogant, Beck freely admits to "being a work in progress" because of his troubled past with drug abuse, alcoholism, and family problems. His anguishing experiences from childhood and early adulthood are used to explain his conversion to a Judaeo-Christian belief system and the promotion of these values. Beck encourages his listeners to take an active role in their family, community, and politics to be a competing voice to counter the modern and postmodern perspectives.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Glenn Beck Program blends entertainment, criticism, sarcasm, and personal experiences to convey the host's religious, societal, and family values. His program offers one to discover choices and insights that may have otherwise gone unrecognized to a large number of people if it were merely a preachy talk format. Values, in Glenn Beck's presentation, are not represented as opinions, but instead as truth seen through the eyes of a traditional Judaeo-Christian perspective. His value claims act in opposition to modernistic and postmodernistic ideologies. Beck and his producers, in order to justify the primacy of the Judaeo-Christian value system, "acknowledge the other values marshaled against it in order to be able to fight them" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 75). I have heard talk show hosts, friends, managers, teachers, clients, journalists, and politicians throughout my life who argue a point without offering opposing claims and answering their charges. Modernism and postmodernism provided reasons for "a justification for change, to a revolutionary spirit" apart from the accepted values held for many millennia (Perelman, 1982, p. 28).

Modernism overall disqualifies the notion of a deity because there is no hard scientific proof of such a thing existing. Postmodernism tends to dismiss the value of a deity and the relevance of science because values and "each situation must be addressed in its own and often chaotic particularity" (Lucaites and Condit, 1999, p. 11). Glenn

Beck, through serious and absurd means, debates the greater value that the Judaeo-Christian perspective provides for holding families and societies together. Beck's show emphasizes news stories and comedy skits to display the contempt or lack of acknowledgment that many institutions give to traditional values. He speaks of how values and truth are subjugated to self-interest, rather than the greater good of society. The Glenn Beck show has tapped into a society in moral flux and ambivalence; he in turn criticizes the indifference and hostility that it produces toward his Judaeo-Christian beliefs. If Western society tends to reconfigure and establish the meaning of truth as a product of science or one's self-interest, then where does one go who holds to traditional values? The traditional Judaeo-Christian would argue that the Glenn Beck Program indicates a biblical timelessness to the morals that it espouses, regardless of the human condition and trends in the modern world.

Various interpretations to the Glenn Beck Program can be attributed to one's belief system based upon a multitude of factors. Some examples of these factors can be a result of conditioning due to one's culture, family ties, relationship to organizational and institutional demands, or one's personal experiences and interests. The show's value judgments may be objectionable to those adhering to the modernistic and postmodernistic perspectives, but individuals of these two perspectives may still listen due to Beck's humor and story telling ability. There is also the possibility that modernists and postmodernists listen to hear what and how current events are being addressed and spun by opponents of their value systems. Those that identify themselves as traditional Judaeo-Christians may find Beck's program appealing due to his pandering to a belief system that closely matches their own values and principles. Beck's critical analysis of

current events and news, seem to endure Beck to a traditional Judaeo-Christian audience that may feel alienated or persecuted for holding ancient beliefs in a modern world.

Beck's injection of sarcasm and humor appears to draw in listeners still developing their value system, which coincides with Beck's claim that the program appeals to some of the youngest listeners to talk radio. Beck emerges as more than just a cheerleader for traditional Judo-Christian values, but as one who advocates and shapes those values in a secular society.

One may think that comfort and support is given to traditional Judaeo-Christian individuals by merely going to those Churches or institutions that still hold traditional truths as their fundamental teachings. Yet, in the United States Today, secularism, modernism, and postmodernism pervade all aspects of our lives, even those institutions that claim to oppose modernism, postmodernism, and secularism values. Therefore, we are left with a dilemma, as there appears to be a vacuum in Western society that once you step outside of the church door you become bombarded with messages of relativism and modernism. One does not necessarily have to even step outside the church today to experience instances where "mainstream religions put less emphasis on Christian doctrine and their role as moral watchdogs than on their community service functions ('good works'), frequently transforming the cleric into a combination social worker and therapist" (McGee, 1999, p. 75). This is precisely where the Glenn Beck Program bridges the chasm left by the modernism and postmodernism vacuum in which many find themselves engulfed throughout their waking hours. I think it is a reasonable conjecture to look at the public's assent to the ideals, criticism, and entertainment that the Glenn Beck Program displays in the advocacy of his claims. Beck uses rhetoric that counters

the ideals set out by modernism and postmodernism. “Much modern and ‘postmodern’ thought has proceeded from the assumption that the powers and limits of the human mind, whatever they may be, are directly correlated with the powers and limits of the human language” (Brown, 1983, p. 3). If one were to deduce that the limits of the human mind are correlated with language, one could hypothesize our understanding and acceptance of value judgments is also a condition of our language.

The rhetoric of Glenn Beck disseminated through the airwaves allows greater societal discussion and contemplation among his listeners. “Talk radio could help citizens obtain information to make reasoned political judgments” along with other value judgments (Bennett, 2001, p. 72). Although there does not appear to be support for the quality of the claim, the possibility remains that radio can help in the decision-making process. “Values are as much sociological as psychological concepts; it is just as meaningful to speak of cultural, societal, institutional, organizational, and group values as it is to speak of individual values”(Rokeach, 1979, p. 50). We become the arbiter of any values that we ultimately accept; because “according to democratic ideology, the unique individual is the basic unit of society” (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 473). The Glenn Beck Program gives us biased, critical, and sometimes twisted and even logical ways of looking at values that many other forms of media would not touch because of politically or socially sensitive content and repercussions.

In a society filled with constant public services messages to be tolerant of diversity, it does not appear to apply to those that hold to the traditional concepts of values and faith. The meaning of tolerance seems to be defined and understood in the eye of the beholder, to the detriment of the many. “In the past decade, speech prevention has

often come from groups that have triumphed over or are still struggling against discrimination and unequal treatment” (Roberts, 2000, p. 152). The hypocrisy of the oppressed, now becoming the oppressor, is glibly addressed by Glenn Beck. The postmodern perspective would tell us that we should remain tolerant and not judge others according to our own standards, as our standards may be biased or suppressive to the group that does not accept our value system. Yet, it could be argued that those who adhere to postmodern ideology would be the first to be intolerant of the Glenn Beck Program, because of the program’s universal value statements. Beck supports the right of all people to exercise their liberty, but he encourages them to critically weigh the values to which they assent. This view is well explained in Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca’s (1969) statement, “One appeals to values in order to induce the hearer to make certain choices rather than others and, most of all, to justify those choices so that they may be accepted and approved by others” (p. 75). Beck says that the only way we are able to change society’s values is to “change people’s heart.” The program makes critical, logical, emotional, and sarcastic appeals to its listeners to influence a change by free consent, as “values compatible with democratic ideology are those that emphasize independent thought and action” (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000, p. 474). The program has the capability to appeal to the sensitive side of its listeners, even if its message is put in sarcastic and sometimes cynical ways. Yet I believe shows like his stimulate conversations that would otherwise be considered to sensitive or politically incorrect to address.

Radio, along with all other commercial media, is regulated by government, but any real censorship and gatekeeping functions are performed by private individuals and

organizations, not government. Too many times today, we see communication being shut down and conversations stifled because this makes someone feel uncomfortable. Rather than knee-jerk reactions, we need to allow the freedom of speech to occur and trust that a nation is better off by allowing the exchange of ideas, than to mandate artificial barriers to thought. As a future communication professional, I find great hope and solace in the fact that provocative and controversial shows, like the Glenn Beck Program, fill the airways. It is a bit distressing to think of all the politically negative repercussions that can occur by voicing opinions, unpopular research and ideas in the workplace and in the world of scholarship. Radio, regardless if it is liberal talk "Air America" or conservative talk "Glenn Beck," expands the communication options available to the public that were once dominated by newspaper and television commentators and editorials. It is debatable that the messages being relayed are much different, as there are a disproportionate amount of white conservative males that dominate the talk radio airwaves. "And so it is with great alarm that I proceed," George Comstock (1983) says, "for the opportunity to appear foolish is vast and the probabilities of wisdom, as always, are low" (p. 42). The success of various AM talk radio hosts have kept AM radio a viable medium in the communication market, thereby, allowing the possibility that other diverse voices in the future may enter into the fray of talk radio's popularity. The national hosts that I have studied, including Glenn Beck, all originated in local radio markets and only later became nationally recognized. There are still more opportunities for diverse voices to enter into the public arena through radio than television, because even small communities may have radio stations that are still independently owned. This will probably soon change as well, because the trend of large corporations is to buy up the small independent radio stations,

as they did with newspapers and television stations. The end product will again be the limitation of access of new and diverse voices and values from entering into society's greater debates.

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