**Critical Reflection 1: Westboro Baptist Church**

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COM 31800: Prin. Of Persuasion

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September 16, 2020

Chapter 1

The WBC has the persuasive intent of trying to convince the population at large to convert to their version of Christianity. They align their self with persuasion as rhetoric, they don’t use ambiguity as per Burke’s definition, they don’t co-create some common ground as per Larson’s definition, and they most especially aren’t manipulating the minds of men to their own ends like Brembeck & Howell might. From their downplaying of gay rights and intensifying of God’s power, they may follow Rank’s Model to some extent. This is primarily because they use God’s wrath as a persuasive point, and they try to intensify it.

Chapter 2

The late Fred Phelps used the propaganda employed by his people, additionally he used that fear of god (A big social cause) to convert people to his cause. As a pastor, he would wield leadership over many people and exerted his power through spoken word. However, it is unknown as to whether Fred was a hypocrite. Despite that, Fred was a demagogue. It is seeing the message that they spread, that “God Hates Fags”, leads me to believe that the WBC is not ethical. Fags being a derogatory term, is hurtful to others and thus unethical. Additionally, the picketing of funerals can be stressful and traumatizing for the funeral goers adding even more to the unethical aura surrounding the WBC.

Chapter 3

It seems clear that the WBC does not utilize the aspects of logos or ethos. They utilize simply pathos, a pathos based on fear of God’s wrath and an eternity in Hell. They may use metaphors relating God’s wrath to that of a deluge or typhoon, but they mostly speak in Christian platitudes about how they follow God’s truth and that the sinners and non-believers will be damned. The WBC doesn’t utilize a dialogical or epistemic approach, because they believe that God and his testaments are absolute and not open to interpretation. However, the consistent use of dramatic wording and shocking statements might indicate the use of a dramatistic approach.

Chapter 4 Response

It is obvious through watching interviews and simply reading the signs they brandish, with words like “You’re Going to Hell” or “Rabbis Rape Kids” that they utilize shock tactics, quite effectively since numerous people see fit to harass the followers. They utilize norms-based persuasion to indoctrinate their children. Despite how easily they indoctrinate their children, it is much harder for them to adopt new followers. Since they make no use of anchor effects, they speak their beliefs with no adulteration or attempts to align themselves with the listeners latitude of acceptance, which typically lands them in the latitude of rejection.