

## 2017 Research Week Proposal

**Title** – The Ethics of God

**Program of Study** – Philosophy

**Presentation Type** – PowerPoint

**Mentor(s) and Mentor Email** - Dr. Thomas Provenzola (tprovencola@liberty.edu)

**Student name(s) and email(s)** – Jimmy Lewis (jlewis42@liberty.edu)

**Category** – Textual

**Abstract:**

In this presentation, two major approaches to the ethics of God will be addressed and juxtaposed; these will include Divine Command Theory and Divine Utilitarianism. A case will be made for the validity and superiority of Divine Utilitarianism, and this will be done by examining the argument in favor of this theory and determining its explanatory power. The juxtaposition of these two theories will make at least two clear distinctions in favor of Divine Utilitarianism. The first will be that its explanatory power is more thorough than that of Divine Command Theory. The second conclusion that will be drawn from this contrasting of ideas will be that Divine Utilitarianism has been supported by prominent Christian figures over the past several centuries—thus corroborating the theory's validity.

Once the juxtaposition of these theories is completed and assessed, a brief historical treatment of Divine Utilitarianism will be given. The historical survey of Divine Utilitarianism will reveal notable philosophers and theologians throughout the centuries that have outright argued in favor of the theory (i.e. William Paley, and John Gay), as well as Christians that have unintentionally or less forcefully supported Divine Utilitarianism (i.e. Jonathan Edwards, the Westminster Catechism, C.S. Lewis). The ends which this presentation hopes to achieve is to convey not only that God is a utilitarian, but that God has been seen in this way by significant

Christian figures. While the former issue will be the main thrust and endeavor of this work, the latter will reinforce and corroborate the findings of this argument.

**Christian worldview integration:**

As a Christian, I firmly believe that the entire purpose of natural and special revelation is so that mankind may have the means to understand their Creator more thoroughly and consequently worship him more appropriately. God reveals himself through natural theology as well as biblical theology, and he uses man's rationality in order to aid in man's more thorough understanding of God. In my research, I am not concerned with pushing a specific theological or ethical agenda; rather, I am concerned with revealing more of God's nature to people so that they may revel in his glory and grace all the more. One's aim when doing theology and/or philosophy ought not to be to find the answers which merely conform to one's sensibilities; rather one's aim in these endeavors ought to be to accurately adjudicate the truth concerning God in order that one may worship him more rightly and bring him more glory. It is with this truth in mind and this end desired that I have conducted my research.

If I have achieved this end in my research and findings, then the recipients of this work will subsequently recognize attributes of God which had not previously been revealed to them, and this revelation will lead to more ardent worship of God in their lives. If the argument I propose in my research is accepted, then one will see God as a perfect being, whom is concerned with one's happiness, and is worthy of worship due to his nature and ethical acts in relational with mankind. This is precisely the impact that I desire this research to have on individuals; and if my conclusion is false, I desire all the more that people may think on the topics considered in my research in order that the questions raised therein may be answered.