

DIVINE COMMAND THEORY OF ETHICS

Basic logic: if God commands / requires one to do an action, it is morally 'right.'

If God commands one not to do / prohibits an action, it is morally 'wrong.'

If God neither commands to do or not to do an action, if God does not require nor prohibit the action, it is morally 'permissible.'

Five Assumptions / Dynamics of a Divine Command theory of Ethics in practice:

1. You assume that YOU are correct: **God exists – as a Moral Lawgiver**
2. You assume that YOU know the **true revelation** of God's will / God's commands.
3. You assume that YOU know the **correct interpretation** of the true revelation / of God's will.
4. You assume that YOU make the **correct application** of the interpreted revelation / of God's commands.
5. You have the **correct motivation** in obeying God's commands (reverence, love, etc.)

Robert M. Adams held that it is *not simply the commands* of a 'willful God' that are the foundation of ethics, but the will / commands *of a loving God* – a God who is a loving God is the ultimate authority grounding ethics. *It is the character of God*, which grounds what God wills / does not will and what God commands / does not command, that is the foundation of moral right and wrong / ethics.

He affirmed this in response to the '**Euthyphro Dilemma**':

- 1) Is something good / right because God commands it?

OR

- 2) Does God command something because it is ("in itself") good / right?

1) is unacceptable because it *makes morality arbitrary* - anything that God could command (rape, theft, etc.) would then be morally right, simply because God commanded it.

2) is unacceptable because it *makes God subordinate* to some superior moral standard / authority – and God would thus no longer be God!