The virtue of obedience

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Abstract: In this paper I give an account and defence of the thought and practice associated with the notion of obedience in religious ethics, especially in reply to the claim that obedience is necessarily unconscientious. First, I argue that it is conscientious to give weight to commands if they are identifiable as pieces of authoritative advice, or, as theists commonly believe, if they have intrinsic moral force. Second, I argue that a theist's strictly moral reasons for fulfilling obligations are not replaced but reinforced by reasons arising out of a personal relationship with God. Anyone who loves God will want to please God, to act in accordance with His teaching and to avoid His punishment, and theists can do these things by respecting existing moral reasons for action. Third, I show how it can be valuable that people submit to God in further ways, by doing what God commends, and by committing themselves to obeying divine commands which would not otherwise be addressed to them. Finally, I argue that subordinating oneself to God's will is itself a partial attainment of the spiritual ideal of mystical union with God.

People who believe in God sometimes say that the reason they do certain things is because God has, directly or indirectly, told them to do those things. In variations on this theme, people say that they act in a certain way because it pleases God, or that the fulfilment of perfectly ordinary duties to other people is 'God's will'. One fundamental idea at work in such theist attitudes seems to be the unfashionable notion that obedience to God is a virtue, and perhaps is the central virtue of religious morality. I shall in this paper give an analysis of this talk, with a view both to explaining what it means and to defending its coherence.

This will involve discussion, in succeeding sections, of the attitude of obedience and the relationship between obedience and autonomy, the relationship between obedience and other moral and prudential reasons for action, and the role of obedience in the theist's relationship with God. In order to deal with these closely related issues I shall take as my starting point the situation presented by traditional Christian theism (although the discussion should have a rather wider application), in which God is taken to be perfectly good, and is understood to have the right to impose obligations on humans, having various reasons to do so and means of

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doing so. The question of what exactly God's reasons for imposing obligations on humans may be is treated only tangentially here; I have devoted more space to it elsewhere.[1] The question of how God might make His commands known is more an empirical than a philosophical issue, but presumably if God existed and wanted to leave us in no doubt that He had commanded something, He would find a way of doing so.

The nature of God's goodness and authority must, if the discussion of obedience is to proceed, similarly be settled by reference to what I hope is a reasonable interpretation of traditional Christian theism. I shall take it that God would not do wrong, such as break His promises or lie, but that He also has rights over His creatures, such as the right to take life and to impose obligations. Being good, He will only impose obligations which it is good be imposed, but it does not follow from this that He will not impose any new obligations on us, or that there is only one thing, in any given situation, which He could command us to do. The theoretical defence of the room for manoeuvre which Christian theism (in line with most religious traditions) teaches that God has with respect to commands, is again something which I have attempted elsewhere.[2]

Obedience and autonomy

My first task is to address the familiar objection to religious attitudes to divine commands, that acting in obedience to a divine command shows a person to lack (as Patrick Nowell-Smith put it) moral 'autonomy', 'conscientiousness', or a grown-up attitude to decision-making, since the careful assessment of the moral importance of alternative courses of action seems to be replaced by a slavish following of instructions.[3]

Bernard Williams[4] and Paul Rooney[5] both suggest, in response to this kind of worry, that obedience may be motivated by fear of punishment, and that this is perfectly rational, indeed shading into standard moral motivation. This, I believe, concedes too much to the objection. What theists would normally say, I take it, is simply that it is morally obligatory to obey divine commands.[6] Conscientious moral agents take what they believe to be the morally relevant circumstances of a case into account in deciding what to do. If theists believe that divine commands are morally relevant, they are acting conscientiously in taking them into account. The superficial plausibility of the original objection (such as it is) is owed to the assumption that commands are not relevant, coupled with a confusion about conscientiousness. The confusion is in the idea that if theists are mistaken about commands being relevant then they are acting unconscientiously in allowing their decisions to be influenced by commands. But on the contrary, in order to be conscientious theists must take commands into account unless and until they are persuaded that they are not, after all, relevant.

It may be claimed that it is simply obvious that commands are always irrelevant.

It is not hard to show, however, that at least some of the sorts of commands theists suppose God to issue are relevant, since any sensible theory of morality will allow the moral importance of commands considered as *advice*. Familiar examples of advice in the form of commands are 'Don't drink and drive', 'Do not exceed the stated dose', and so on. Any sensible moral theory will give weight to considerations of safety, making these homely imperatives morally relevant; divine pronouncements may contain all sorts of information, such as natural facts and eternal moral truths, which a conscientious person ought to take into account in deciding what to do.

Divine commands which encapsulate advice will, moreover, have weight far beyond the advice of our fellow creatures. The weight of advice depends on the trustworthiness of the adviser and the relative knowledge of the adviser and the advisee, noting that it can be valuable to be told what one already knows, but has forgotten (or is simply not bearing in mind). Since God is omniscient, perfectly rational, and perfectly good, any information He may provide about what we should do will be worth listening to. It should be noted that, although advice is important only because of our relative ignorance, this situation is neither avoidable nor always regrettable. It is usually more rational to follow an engineer's advice about building a house, or a doctor's about combating a disease, than to try to attempt to work these things out for oneself.[7]

Interesting though these considerations are, the objector is likely to say that they do not go to the heart of the matter. A narrower objection would focus exclusively on those commands which allegedly create new obligations, and do not merely remind us about obligations or other facts which already obtain; equally, an adequate account of the role of divine commands in religious ethics cannot limit them to the role of encapsulating existing moral and other truths. If we were to ask Abraham why he left his homeland for Canaan,[8] and Jonah why he went to Nineveh,[9] they would alike answer 'Because God said so': they believed that God had created an obligation on them to do these things. An objector with this sort of thing in mind might claim that these cases show a substitution of genuine reasons for action, considered in a process of sincere moral reflection, for a fanatical or robotic response to an arbitrary command.

However, they do not. First, the command need not be arbitrary: God plainly had good reasons for sending Jonah to Nineveh and Abraham to Canaan. Second, there is nothing automatic or predetermined about the response; it is a free choice, and subjects can choose to disobey, as is made clear by the case of Jonah. Neither divine commands nor parental commands to children, nor the law of the land, take away recipients' free will; they just give them reasons to do things. Third, to repeat what I suggested at the beginning of this section, the subjects' response is not a failure to take seriously the relevant reasons for action, if God has the moral authority to impose new obligations upon them. Accordingly, if recipients believe

that commands can create genuine obligations, such as override any conflicting obligations, then the adult and conscientious thing for them to do is to obey.[10]

A further worry related to the last objection is expressed by the idea that, in accepting a command, a subject fails (as Jonathan Wolff puts it, with the state in mind) 'to determine for himself whether what is commanded is good or wise'.[11] However, theists are not necessarily discouraged from asking whether the commanded action is good or wise; indeed, since any command coming from God must be good and wise, doing so is one way of weeding out fraudulent commands. Contrary to many who make this point,[12] however, on most views God would still have a range of options in choosing what to command, since there is a range of possible good actions which are not obligatory in the absence of a command.

There arise, at this point, the questions I set aside at the beginning of this paper, of whether and why divine commands might have intrinsic moral force, what God's reasons might be for issuing commands, and how one can be sure that a command comes from God. Interesting though these questions are, it is important to note that they are not what the original objection claimed to be about. That objection was supposed to undermine religious morality by reference to the effect of the attitude of obedience on human moral autonomy. My answer to that is that if one could be justified in thinking, first, that a command came from God, and second, that God has the authority to create the obligation which the command purports to create, then it does not make sense to suggest that one would be unconscientious to obey. This establishes the coherence of the very *idea* of obedience; the coherence of the detailed practice demands further attention.

Obedience and non-religious duties

Part of what remains to be explained is the way theism traditionally seems to encourage an attitude of obedience which goes far beyond simply taking commands into strict account. Obedience is raised from the level of a necessary response to a particular kind of obligation to something which is valued in its own right. It is taken to be a virtue and an ideal.

One aspect of this is the way theists focus their moral lives on God by talking of performing and failing to perform duties as doing and failing to do God's will, even when the duties concerned do not have God directly as their object; I shall deal with this in the present section. Another is that theists seem to seek out opportunities to act in obedience, by agreeing to do what God has not required, but is taken to wish, and by agreeing to be subject to more divine commands than would otherwise be directed towards them; I shall turn to this in the next section.

The notion of treating non-religious duties (duties owed to humans, such as not to kill or rob them, and to other creatures) as religious duties (duties owed directly to God, such as to worship and obey Him) has been explained in more than one way. Some views accept the distinction between religious and non-

religious duties, but claim that non-religious duties are founded on, or are corollaries of, religious duties. Thus John Duns Scotus suggested that one's sole ultimate duty is to seek God, with the proviso that divine commands have made justice towards our fellows a necessary condition of fulfilling this.[13] John Locke suggested similarly that our obligation not to destroy ourselves or each other follows from the fact that we and our fellows are all God's property.[14] Both these views explain why it is appropriate to treat non-religious duties as if they were religious ones, for on these views they follow from religious ones. It nevertheless seems most implausible to deny that the reason we (normally) should not kill and steal from each other is connected to the value and nature of human beings and our relationship with them, rather than some extraneous factor such as a divine command.

Other views deny the reality of the distinction between religious and non-religious duties. Immanuel Kant denied that there were any specifically religious duties,[15] but nevertheless urged 'the recognition of all duties as divine commands'.[16] Thus, although duties do not actually derive from a duty to obey God, one should keep them in a spirit of obedience to God. Karl Barth reached a similar position by a different route: while claiming that all duties do derive from God's command, he nevertheless denied that commands create any specifically religious duties: 'the claim of God's command always wears the garment of another claim'.[17] Barth's approach is subject to the objection just given against Scotus and Locke, that we are (surely) obliged to treat each other justly out of consideration for each other, not merely out of consideration for God. He and Kant are both subject to the further objection that they seem to leave no room for the rather well-established phenomenon of religious duties, not only of worship but of the kind of direct and personal obedience to God one finds in Scripture, such as that of Abraham and Jonah noted above. As I shall argue, moreover, all of these views do violence to the relationship that ought to exist between religious and moral motivation.

One classical and, for Christian theists, normative expression of the relationship between religious and non-religious duties is St Paul's suggestion that Christians should do their everyday work 'for the Lord'.[18] St Paul's point, in context, is to encourage his readers to perform their non-religious duties with the same devotion with which they perform religious ones: that is, to carry their religious zeal through into their ethical action in ordinary life. It seems to me that this obliterates neither the natural basis of non-religious duties, nor the contrast between religious and non-religious duties. On the latter, indeed, we cannot act towards others in the spirit of our service to God if there *is* no spirit of service to God, and there will be no spirit of service to God if there is no service to God separate from our actions towards others. If the attitude of serving God is to be extended to all our actions, it must have an independent basis. In order to understand the idea of doing ordinary duties 'for the Lord' we need to understand why there is such a

thing as devotion to do the will of God as a thing in its own right, and then see what implications this devotion can have for the rest of a believer's moral life.

The first of these two steps is straightforward, since the basis of religious motivation is rather clear: it is the believer's relationship with God. While theists usually take it to be morally obligatory to cultivate such a relationship, the relationship itself generates motives to act in ways which go beyond what is required by strict moral accounting, just as close relationships between humans do. The next question is, if believers love (and are loved by) God, what implications does this have on their wider moral lives?

Any friendly relationship may stimulate an agent to try not to let the other party down, or appear to the other party to be bad; if the other party is morally good and difficult to deceive this will have the effect of creating extra motivation to be morally good. More than this, however, God is not only a friend to the believer but the creator and governor of the universe, who teaches humanity about morality and punishes the wicked. When believers contravene ordinary, non-religious duties (that is, not only when they contravene their religious duties, including duties created specifically by divine commands), they are rejecting God's words, wronging God's creatures, and incurring God's punishment. In this respect their position parallels that of children vis-à-vis their parents: when children wrong their siblings, if they have good parents they are rejecting their parents' teaching, wronging a party the parents are bound to protect, and incurring parental punishment. Believers who love God, and children who love their parents, will want to avoid the repercussions which wrongful action will have on their relationship with God and their parents respectively. This means that the relationship gives them motives which reinforce the motives of morality itself. Conversely, believers can act so as to please God by doing good to their fellows, who are God's creatures, by taking His teaching to heart, and by acting so as to deserve God's rewards; children can act to please their parents by analogy. None of this requires that a duty to God (or parents) is the ultimate ground of all other duties.

A different way of putting this point would be to say that, in the context of believers' relationship with God, actions directed towards third parties can be expressive of believers' attitudes towards God. If they act rightly, they are giving God, as well as the person directly affected by the action, His due, and so expressing respect for God. If they act wrongly, this expresses contempt; if they act in a supererogatory fashion, this expresses love.

The net result of this is that ethical action need not be specifically religious to have significance for a believer's relationship with God: good and supererogatory actions will be a way of deepening the relationship, and bad actions will damage the relationship. This fact, I would suggest, is the source of the pattern of thought and talk among theists concerning the 'will of God'. God's will, as I will show in the next section, can relate to the supererogatory, but what is contrary to God's will is always wrong, since it is invariably against God's will to fail in our ('all-

things-considered') obligations either to each other or to God Himself. For this reason the notions of wrongness and contrariness to God's will are extensionally equivalent, the cases falling under one falling under the other; this can be so without any need to appeal to a much more radical (and less plausible) claim, that for theists they mean the same thing.

An objector may think at this point that in seeking to please God by doing what He has taught and threatens to enforce, the theist acts morally for reasons which are not themselves moral.[19] But this is not quite correct: theists are motivated to feed the hungry and clothe the naked not just because that is a way of pleasing God, but because these are good deeds, and good deeds please God. Moral reasons have not been *replaced*, unless theists are confused; rather, they have been given an extra reason to give moral reasons the weight they ought to have. This point deserves a little labouring.

The idea of a reason to act for a reason is not as odd as it sounds. Considerations of road safety give me a reason to signal before turning off a road in a car. If I have children in my car, my concern for their wellbeing gives me an extra reason to signal. This extra reason is not in any kind of competition with the original reason: having children in the car is not an alternative reason for signalling to the considerations of road safety. Rather, it is a reason for taking seriously, or more seriously, reasons deriving from considerations of safety. Thinking of the children should make me think more about safety, not less. Examples of reasons for acting for reasons could be multiplied.[20]

The fact that doing good to God's creatures pleases God may on occasion have been the basis for a kind of 'charity' which uses the unfortunate as means to an end rather than as ends in themselves, but the possibility of this kind of mistake should not distract us from the real theist claim. God is not so easily fooled: what pleases Him is to see us being genuinely concerned for each other, for each others' sakes. Another kind of parallel might be helpful here: for a spouse's sake, one might try to like the spouse's friends for their own sakes, which is, after all, the only genuine way to like them.

This account of why theists do their ordinary duties as if they were owed to God is compatible with saying that God can create new and decisive moral reasons for action by issuing commands (such as Abraham's reasons for going to Canaan). If these reasons are indeed genuine ones they will behave in the same way, with regard to the above discussion, as the moral reasons which might exist prior to any commands.

Voluntary obedience

Theists do more, however, than simply perform ordinary duties 'for the Lord'; the theist tradition also praises voluntary obedience, and I turn to this next. It is exemplified both by doing what God commends rather than commands, and

by undertaking to obey an open-ended set of commands which would not otherwise be addressed to one. When Isaiah accepted the call to be a prophet, he seems to have been doing both. First, God invited but did not compel him to undertake the mission. In Isaiah's vision of God in the temple, God said 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' to which Isaiah replied, 'Here I am! Send me'.[21] Second, in accepting the mission Isaiah committed himself to delivering God's messages on demand. While it would not have been a dereliction of duty not to have volunteered in the first place, once he had done so Isaiah was, I take it, bound to obey these new commands. This situation is perfectly familiar, and applies not only to religious vocations generally, but to non-religious cases of volunteering, such as for a military mission.

The point of this kind of volunteering is clear enough. In addition to deepening a relationship with God by conforming to God's wishes, the religious volunteer is undertaking to perform actions with value in themselves; the latter point alone will commonly be enough to motivate the taking up of such commitments in non-religious contexts. If it be objected that divine wishes invariably create obligations, it should be pointed out that God may prefer that the action not be made obligatory. Commending rather than commanding such things is a happy way of getting things done, since it allows the volunteer to do an action of greater value, both morally, as an act of supererogation, and in terms of the personal relationship with the commender. If God wants to bring the goodness of an action to an agent's attention without making it obligatory, He presumably has the power to do so. There are many possible projects which are good and worthwhile but which no one is, in the absence of a command, obliged to undertake; when God commends such projects, this creates the possibility of voluntary obedience.

The worry might still persist, at this point, that Isaiah and others like him are deliberately giving up a portion of their self-direction. There is an element of truth in this charge; Thomas Aquinas describes supererogatory obedience as the giving up of 'honour', just as voluntary poverty involves giving up wealth, and celibacy giving up family life.[22] The important question is whether this is good or bad.

As Aquinas suggests, honour, wealth and family life are genuine goods, and individuals have a right to pursue these things, but they can be given up supererogatorily. The good of honour, in contradistinction to obedience, is the good of directing oneself and others; it is part of the Aristotelian good life.[23] People with political or familial authority have special honour in this sense because they direct others. They do this partly by teaching and enforcing pre-existing moral truths ('Don't kick your sister') but leaders can usually also choose and promote group projects.

In doing this, they exercise a good deal of discretion, since the choice between different worthwhile projects is typically morally underdetermined. There are an indefinitely large number of projects a group could engage in, and an indefinitely large number of ways it could pursue any given project: the ocean of charitable

causes which greets the philanthropist illustrates this. While some causes are more worthy than others, and some approaches more efficient than others, a great many are so close in value and efficiency that it makes no practical difference to value outcomes which are chosen by any given individual or small group. If we add further ethical assumptions, leaders' freedom of choice is widened even more. First, if there is no obligation to maximize value outcomes, people would be free to pursue any project which is worthwhile in an absolute, rather than relative sense: any project which did some good, and was not a negligent waste of resources. Second, if comparisons between the values of some different goods (museums and hospitals, say) are at some point meaningless – which is to say, if there is incommensurability – then the choice between projects which produce these different goods could not be decided by such a comparison.

The fact that leaders have discretion means that in choosing between different projects, and approaches to projects, leaders inevitably set their own stamp on the nature and achievements of the group. The group's projects will reflect the interests and expertise of present and past leaders; those seeking authority wish, among other things, to enrich the group by their own insights into what is interesting and valuable among possible projects. Bearing this in mind helps to explain the notion that leadership positions are genuinely and rightly worth pursuing.

This explains why an Aristotelian head of household or, come to that, an independent individual has reason to value self-direction; it has yet to be explained why anyone should want to give it up. The reason is this: if a crowd of well-meaning individuals turns itself into a co-ordinated group, division of labour and economies of scale can enable each member to achieve more valuable results than would have been possible for each member in isolation; within limits, the larger the group and the more dedicated the members, the better. However, this requires most of the individuals in the crowd to give up a degree of self-direction, and to allow themselves to be directed by another. If a group is to pursue a goal efficiently, even within the limits of an agreed common aim, its members must allow decisions to be made on their behalf, and must regard themselves (within limits) as bound by them. In committing themselves to this they give up some honour, in Aquinas's sense, and create one or more positions of authority within the group which carry honour; the bigger and more dedicated the group, presumably, the more honour the leader attains. However, whereas increasing returns to scale enables more valuable output for the same input of effort by group members, the realization of the good of honour is (to put it crudely) a zero-sum game: the leader's honour depends on others giving honour up, and if one person has more, someone else must have less.

This means that giving up some honour does not destroy value, since the honour I disavow is gained by some one else; at least potentially it creates value, since I can become more effective in pursuing valuable projects. This explains why, odd as it may sound, it can be praiseworthy to give up some of one's honour,

as it can be to give up some of one's money, despite its being a valuable thing to have. Another result is that in giving it up I am giving it to some other person or group. Within human groups this, in conjunction with the rest of what I have said, explains the widespread practice of giving leadership positions to people as rewards. In the case of projects proposed by God, the honour is given to God. This is a further aspect of obedience as expressive of the agent's relationship with God.

It is worth emphasizing that there is no question here of anyone giving up self-direction entirely; all that is at issue is an agent's voluntary participation in a project which was selected and is co-ordinated by another agent. There is no point denying, however, that the ideal of obedience is contrary to the Aristotelian ideal, which focuses attention on the goodness of honour itself. First, however, as has often been pointed out, the Aristotelian ideal can only be pursued by a small proportion of people, broadly speaking, the ruling class. Everyone can direct their own selves, at least to a degree, but it is obviously impossible for everyone to direct a group of a worthwhile size for a worthwhile period of time. By contrast, the ideal of obedience is open to all. Second, while the possession of honour may flatter our pride, the practice of obedience is no less heroic, morally speaking: indeed, it is often much more genuinely so.

Third, it is perhaps misleading to say that the ideal of obedience undermines self-direction, and more accurate to say that it moves the focus from one kind of self-direction to another: from minute-by-minute *management* to periodic, or once-and-for-all acts of *commitment*. The moral value of self-direction lies in the fact that in having it one is to be able to choose a particular course of life, to mould one's character and to pursue one's chosen ends. Commitment does this no less than management. In choosing the commitment – and it is voluntary obedience which is at issue here – one chooses what values to pursue, and during the course of the commitment one is constantly faced with the question of how to live up to it.

The point may again be illustrated by Isaiah, or by any number of people who have committed themselves to obeying God in a special way. It would be absurd to say that such people have failed to act conscientiously either in choosing their way of life or in living it out, or that they didn't make a personal contribution to the life of their societies. Their commitment was not a matter of *absorption* by something else, but a constant readiness to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of a set of values in which they passionately believed, in obedience to God whom they loved.

It is unfashionable to analyse political and familial authority in terms of the pursuit of collective projects, since theorists tend to focus on the rights and interests of individual members.[24] It must, however, remain an appropriate way to understand voluntary associations set up with the express purpose of pursuing collective goals, and it is these, especially religious ones, which are pertinent in

this context. When the nature of the choice facing potential members of such groups is made clear, it should be clear both that in joining they give up something genuinely worthwhile, which I have followed Aquinas in calling 'honour', and also that giving this up is a highly valuable action. It is characteristic of ordinary morality in this kind of situation to say that the better option is not obligatory, but supererogatory.

Before ending, it is worth noting another way in which obedience can have value, related to the spiritual ideal of mystical union with God. Although this is not the place for a full treatment of the issue, it is clear enough that theists typically want to enter into the closest possible relationship with God, since, in simple terms, they believe that it is the most valuable relationship one can have. The highest levels of such a relationship are attainable only after death, but before death we can do more than just prepare for it: we can actually begin to live it. The most obvious way to do so is in prayer, which creates temporarily a situation of attention and openness to God which would be permanent in the ideal state. Obedience to God is another way of anticipating this relationship. I have already noted various ways it can promote a relationship with God; the further idea here would be that in obedience one is actually living out an aspect of the ideal of mystical union, by uniting one's will with God's, and in this way participating in the divine life.[25] It is presumably neglect of the possibility of a partial attainment of the spiritual ideals in the present life which has led to the criticism of them as 'pie in the sky when you die'.

I shall end with a summary of the view of obedience in religious ethics which emerges from this paper as a whole. First, divine commands may have moral relevance as advice, and they may have intrinsic moral force: in either case, a conscientious consideration of a moral situation which includes them must give them weight. Second, a theist's strictly moral reasons for fulfilling obligations and doing good are not replaced but reinforced by reasons arising out of the theist's personal relationship with God, and God's role as creator and governor of the universe. Anyone who loves God will want to please God, to act in accordance with His teaching and to avoid His punishment, and theists can do these things by respecting existing moral reasons for action. In short, religious motivation should make people more morally conscientious, not less.

Third, it can be enormously valuable that people submit to God in further ways, by doing what God commends, and by committing themselves to obeying divine commands which would not otherwise be addressed to them. In undertaking voluntary obedience theists give up something good, the good of directing themselves and others in a certain area. But they do this for a good reason, both in terms of their relationship with God and in terms of the projects instituted by God to which they commit themselves. This kind of obedience is not a failure of independence, but a voluntary sacrifice of personal interests for a closer relationship with God and a greater contribution to the common good. Related to this is the

final point, that subordinating oneself to God's will is itself a partial attainment of the spiritual ideal of mystical union with God.

Notes

1. Joseph Shaw 'The application of divine commands', *Religious Studies*, **35** (1999), 307–321.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Patrick Nowell-Smith 'Morality: religious and secular', in I. T. Ramsey (ed.) *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 95–112. Closely related concerns are voiced in Kai Nielsen *Ethics Without God* (London: Pemberton, 1973), 3; Vincent MacNamara 'Ethics human and Christian', in Seán Freyne (ed.) *Ethics and the Christian* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1991), 86; Gabriel Daly 'Conscience, guilt and sin', in *ibid.*, 59–60; James Rachels 'God and human attitudes', in Paul Helm (ed.) *Divine Commands and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 34–48; and John Stuart Mill 'The utility of religion' in his *Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 1969) vol. 10, 403–428, 424.
4. Bernard Williams 'God, morality, and prudence', in Helm *Divine Commands*, 135–140.
5. Paul Rooney *Divine Command Morality* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996), 36.
6. See Jeffrey G. Murphy 'Kantian autonomy and divine commands', *Faith and Philosophy*, **4** (1987), 276; R. N. van Wyk 'Autonomy theses revisited', *Faith and Philosophy*, **3** (1986), 372–382.
7. See Joseph Raz *Practical Reason and Norms* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 212–215. On the force of commands being independent of individual agents' judgement, see Van Wyk 'Autonomy theses', 377. See also Deuteronomy 18.21f; 1 Kings 13.3–5; 18.37–38; 22.28.
8. Genesis 12.1.
9. Jonah 1.1–2.
10. See L. H. Davis 'The importance of reverence', *Faith and Philosophy*, **7** (1990), 135–148.
11. R. P. Wolff *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1970), 14.
12. Alasdair MacIntyre 'Which God ought we obey and why?', *Faith and Philosophy*, **3** (1986), 365; S. R. L. Clark 'God's law and morality', *Philosophical Quarterly*, **32** (1982), 346; Hugo Meynell 'The *Euthyphro* dilemma II', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supplementary vol. **46** (1972), 232; P. T. Geach 'The moral law and the law of God', in Helm *Divine Commands*, 120. See also P. L. Quinn 'Religious obedience and moral autonomy', in *ibid.*, 49–66; Gregory Vlastos *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 157–178.
13. Duns Scotus *Ordinatio* III, suppl. dist. 37. Translated in Allan B. Wolter *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 202.
14. John Locke *Two Treatises of Government*, Second Treatise, ch. 2, §6; *idem An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk 1, ch. 3, §§5 and 6.
15. Immanuel Kant *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, in J. W. Ellington *Immanuel Kant: Ethical Philosophy* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1983), 113, footnote.
16. Kant *Grounding*, 142; cf. 140, 112; 100, 90–91. See also A. T. Nuyen 'Is Kant a divine command theorist?', *The History of Philosophy Quarterly*, **15** (1998), 555–566. This is contrary to a common view of Kant: see D. M. MacKinnon 'The *Euthyphro* dilemma I', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supplementary vol. **46** (1972), 215; Rachels 'God and human attitudes', 34 (epigraph), 44; Williams 'God, morality, and prudence', 135; Quinn 'Religious obedience and moral autonomy', 49; Murphy 'Kantian autonomy', 276; Davis 'The importance of reverence', 137–138.
17. Karl Barth *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 584.
18. Colossians 3.23; cf. Ephesians 6.5–7.
19. MacNamara 'Ethics human and Christian', 85.
20. See Raz *Practical Reason*, 39–40.
21. Isaiah 6.9.
22. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 3, part 2, q. 130.
23. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* VI. 5, 1149b10; *idem Politics* I. 13, 1260a17–20. This corresponds to the 'active' rather than the 'contemplative' ideal: see *Nicomachean Ethics* X. 8, 1178a9–1179a33; *Politics* VII. 3, 1325a18–b33. For Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's account of authority see his *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Lecture XII, 1020–1024; *Summa Theologica* Ia IIae q. 94 a. 5.

24. On the state see John Rawls *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 325–332; on the family see David Archard (ed.) *Children*: *Rights and Childhood* (London: Routledge, 1993), 51–58.
25. John 15.9–11.