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AUTONOMY THESES REVISITED

Robert N. Van Wyk

A recurring topic in moral philosophy and the philosophy of religion is the so-called autonomy thesis. I wish to make a distinction between what I will call a weak autonomy thesis and what I will call a strong autonomy thesis. The former maintains that basic moral convictions are in some sense prior to basic religious convictions, so that if it is possible to justify any set of moral convictions at all, it is possible to justify some such set without reference to God. A strong autonomy thesis would go further by not only maintaining that reference to the nature or will of God is not necessary for arriving at some set of moral convictions, but also that such reference to the will or nature of God is totally irrelevant to any set of moral convictions, that is, that any conclusions reached with the aid of such references could have been reached without them or are else unjustified. I wish to take issue with the strong autonomy thesis and to say something about the relationship between an ethic that a person might consider to be justified or vindicated on nontheological grounds and one he or she might consider to be justified on theological grounds.

One attempt to justify a theologically based ethics is by means of defining "right" or "good" totally in terms of some reference to the will or nature of God. Definitions of "God," can be divided into two basic types, but both of these types present problems for defining "right" or "good" in terms of conformity to God's will or nature. There are those approaches which include moral or evaluative criteria, such as when "God" is defined as "that being which is worthy of worship," and there are those which do not include evaluative criteria, such as when "God" is defined as "The Creator," "The Necessary Being," or "The Eternal Being." If the first sort of approach is taken, then not all moral concepts can be defined by means of some reference to God, although there is the possibility that "right" could be defined in such a way while "good" was not so defined. Suppose, however, that the second sort of approach is taken. Presumably a person who seeks to maintain that "good" or "right" is equivalent by definition to conformity to the will or nature of God does so to deal with such a question as "Why is it right to obey God?" But if the second sort of approach is taken any such question can be reintroduced as a question about why this definition of "good" or "right" should be adopted.

A second attempt to justify a theologically based ethic is by means of reference

to the power of God. It would be foolish to resist absolute power. This is a position taken by P. T. Geach¹ and perhaps by the theologian Emil Brunner,² though his position is somewhat ambiguous. This approach has been criticized widely on moral grounds by atheistic philosophers, such as Kai Nielsen,³ by Theistic philosophers, such as A. C. Ewing,⁴ and also by such theologians as Karl Barth. Barth writes:

Of itself this (God's power) does not provide us with the basis of the divine claim and the basis of human obedience to this claim Man as man is still free in face of power as power. He can sink under it; he can be annihilated by it. But he does not owe it obedience, and even the most preponderant power cannot as such compel him to obey. Power as power does not have any divine claim, no matter how imposing or effective it might be. To maintain himself against power as power, even to his undoing, is not merely a possibility for man. it is not merely the assertion of his right and dignity. It is the duty he has to fulfil with his existence as man.⁵

Perhaps in discussing the types of justifications for acting on the basis of a theological ethic we ought to begin with those that are found in the religious texts. In fact a common reason given in the Bible for acting in a particular way is that God himself acts in that way, or that acting in such a way expresses a kind of disposition that is intrinsic to God's nature. According to Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus taught that the goal of human life is for one to become a son or child of God, which in fact means reflecting God's nature and purpose. God's nature is reflected in his purpose, which, according to this passage, is to have compassion and mercy indiscriminately on all people. A child of God, then, is one who has such mercy and love, even for the enemy. Similar views are frequently expressed elsewhere in the New Testament as well.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

And walk in love, as Christ loved us. (Ephesians 5:32)

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive. (Colossians 3:13)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (I John 4:13)

Why should we accept God's commands as binding on us? One objection we raise to other people's expectations concerning us and demands on us is that they expect us to live up to standards or fulfil expectations that they themselves do not live up to or fulfil. These Biblical passages claim that God conforms to the standards he imposes on others.

Of course we might have every right to object to someone's imposing demands

on us, even if that person himself lived according to the standards reflected in these demands. These demands may reflect misguided principles. So it would seem that we only have a good reason to obey God if God's nature as expressed in his own actions and in his demands on human beings is good. Theologians have agreed with this. Karl Barth writes:

The goodness of human action consists in the goodness with which God acts toward man. But God deals with man through His Word. Therefore man does good in so far as he hears the Word of God and acts as a hearer of this Word. In this action as a hearer he is obedient. Why is obedience good? . . . It is good because the divine address is good, because God Himself is good.⁶

But does this not in fact acknowledge the truth of the autonomy thesis, for how can we come to the conclusion that God in his nature and activity is good, except by our own judgment? In fact, however, accepting what Barth writes here only commits one to the weak autonomy thesis, that is, to the possibility of legitimately using moral criteria which make no reference to God. It does not show that God's nature, purpose, and will are irrelevant to ethics. They may in fact be relevant in various ways.

While there must be some moral criteria that are logically prior to any judgment about the goodness of God, the recognition of the validity of such criteria is not necessarily temporally prior to the judgment that God is good. So one connection between religion and ethics is shown in the following example. While considering the harm that people do to each other a person may not see extensive forgiveness as something that is morally commendable, but in coming to see himself or herself as both deeply in need of forgiveness and as being forgiven by God through Christ, that person may, possibly in the very process of becoming a Christian, recognize in the same instant the goodness of God and the goodness of forgiveness. Although such a person can only judge God to be good according to a set of criteria that includes the criterion that unmerited forgiveness is good, and so in a sense "forgiveness is good" is an autonomous judgment logically prior to the judgment, "God is good," it is also true that it is only because beliefs about God and about himself or herself have forced that person to look at forgiveness from a different angle that either of these judgments are arrived at, and therefore also that God's demand that one be forgiving is recognized as good and as binding on one's behavior.

A proponent of the autonomy thesis might respond in the following manner. It may indeed be true that religious experience or religious faith may change a person's perspective on moral issues, but so might many other things, e.g., being helped by a member of an enemy group or a group against which one had been prejudiced, getting sick, falling in love, watching someone die, living

among the poor, etc. Conceivably one could come to look at love or forgiveness in the way that the New Testament does without having any belief in God. It can still be claimed, therefore, that while beliefs about God may not be psychologically irrelevant to ethics, they are logically irrelevant. I wish to refute such a claim.

In attempting to refute the strong autonomy thesis the task to be accomplished should not be made to appear more formidable than necessary. The discussion of the pros and cons of the autonomy thesis has often been led astray by concentrating on atypical examples, such as the story in Genesis in which God purportedly commands Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. So we are faced with a case in which God is portrayed as commanding something which just about everyone would regard as morally forbidden, whatever their moral theories might be. God says it is obligatory to do X. Our own moral sentiments and moral judgments lead us to say that it is obligatory to refrain from doing X. But in fact this is not a typical case. If we take the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount for our example, or those found in numerous other passages in the New Testament, what God is portrayed as commanding is not something which would probably be judged to be morally forbidden, either by criteria that people of that time might use, or by criteria that we ourselves might use. Rather what God is portrayed as commanding is generally something which at worst would be regarded as morally neutral and at best would be regarded as morally admirable, but not morally required. So the relationship between an ethic of a particular religious community and the ethics of morally sensitive people in the society generally is not usually one in which what is forbidden in the latter is required in the former, but one, for the most part, in which what is not required in the latter, but perhaps admired, is in fact regarded as obligatory in the former (e.g., loving not only friends, but enemies as well, not only abiding by the minimal requirements of justice, but also sacrificing for the benefit of the poor, etc.)⁷ In those cases where what God is believed to command is incompatible with what independent moral considerations would seem to require, the believer is not likely to say that God's command overrides other moral considerations, but rather that the independent criteria being used are either mistaken or misapplied. The task of one who sets out to refute the autonomy thesis is thus not necessarily the formidable task of somehow showing how reference to the will or nature of God can make moral judgments appear where otherwise they would be totally unknown, and it is definitely not the even more formidable task of making what would otherwise seem evil into a moral obligation.⁸

It would seem, then, that a necessary condition for God's commands being binding on us is that they express purposes which meet independent criteria of goodness. Suppose that they in fact do that. This would not be sufficient to generate a duty of obedience to those commands. The purposes of CROP, the

Red Cross, etc. very likely meet such criteria of goodness, and, while there may be an imperfect duty to be charitable there is no perfect duty to support any particular one of these groups, or to obey their commands if they were to issue any. For the commands of God to be binding on us some other condition or conditions must be met which would distinguish God's commands from others issued in pursuit of desirable goals. One reason for regarding God's commands as authoritative in a way that others are not is that God's purposes are understood to be all-encompassing and based on total awareness of all considerations, while others are not. In addition, it can be argued, as R. G. Swinburne⁹ and Baruch Brody¹⁰ have both argued, that the commands of God impose obligations on us because God is the Creator who has property rights both over the world in general, of which we make use, and over ourselves as part of the world. We are not owners of the world, and that of which we are not owners includes our wealth, abilities, etc., but rather we are stewards, who, in Brody's words, "have an obligation to follow the wishes of him from whom we got our stewardship."¹¹ Brody seems to be arguing that God's having property rights over us, and over that of which we make use, would be a sufficient condition for our having an obligation of obedience to God. This does not seem to me to be true. The fact that someone else owns something that is temporarily in my possession does not put me under an obligation to use that possession for anything for which he might want me to use it, even if it is something evil, or even to make it available for use by the owner if the intended use is evil. In other words, obligations of stewardship could be overridden by other duties. R. G. Swinburne makes the same point, asserting that "there are surely limits to the obligations which a divine command could create. Exactly where they are to be set men will differ."¹² If the owner of that of which we have temporary possession, including ourselves, requires us, however, to make what we have available for some good purpose (or perhaps even for a morally neutral one), and if the owner cannot be challenged as to his understanding of the total situation, then the issue of an obligation of stewardship being overridden by another duty does not arise. So the fact that we are in this particular relationship to the owner of all we have, including ourselves, would seem to put us in the position of being under an obligation to do some things which, although perhaps admirable, would not otherwise be required. Thus the combination of beliefs about God's goodness, God's knowledge, and God's being our Creator, would seem to be sufficient to impose on us duties we would not otherwise have reason to acknowledge.¹³ This seems to me to refute the claim that an advocate of a strong autonomy thesis might be making (another claim an advocate of a strong autonomy thesis might be making will be considered in the final section of this paper.) It does not, however, contradict the weak autonomy thesis, since it would seem that for God's will to be binding on us there must be independent criteria of goodness that it does not

violate.

A person who approaches these matters primarily with theological rather than philosophical concerns might be uneasy with the approach here outlined because it may seem to make humanity's duty of obedience to God contingent on a human judgment that God does or does not meet certain criteria of goodness. I do not, however, believe that this position has that difficulty. We can look again at the illustration of a person who, because of religious experience, or because of newly acquired religious beliefs, comes to believe at the same time both in the goodness of forgiveness and in the goodness of the God who grants and demands forgiveness. In a sense God's command met logically independent (though not necessarily psychologically independent) criteria of goodness. If the person had never achieved this change of outlook, however, this would not have somehow made it to be true that God's command was not good. Similarly, the failure of a whole society, or of the whole human race, to see that certain criteria are the appropriate ones and that God's command meets those criteria would not mean that in fact it did not meet the appropriate criteria. Perhaps there are factors, which Christianity calls sin, such as pride, selfishness, self-righteousness, prejudice, etc., which hinder human beings from seeing certain things properly, such as when they fail to appreciate the goodness of forgiveness or compassion. In addition, an individual human being making a judgment in specific historical circumstances is ignorant of much of the larger context of the situation which may be relevant to deciding what is morally required.¹⁴ So to say that a necessary condition for God's command being binding on us is its being issued by a Being who has certain characteristics that meet independent criteria of goodness, perhaps as part of an overall purpose that meets independent criteria of goodness, is not to say that God's goodness is dependent on the judgment of any particular person or society. It may or may not be true that when a person says that something is morally good or morally right he or she is appealing to some kind of ultimate consensus of those who seek to be rational, impartial, consistent, and fully informed concerning the relevant facts, as Frankena says; but if it is true, the consensus being appealed to is not an actual consensus, but is, as Frankena also says, a hypothetical consensus "that never comes or comes only on the Day of Judgment."¹⁵ The judgment that any particular individual or society makes may be far different from what would be made under the specified conditions. So the duty of obedience to commands which reflect God's purposes is not contingent on the judgments of any particular human beings in the actual world.

The view that in order to generate a duty of obedience the will of God must meet some independent criteria of goodness does not require that we accept the position that these criteria are the ones which would be acknowledged by human beings looking at the matter from some ideal perspective, but it is quite compatible with that position, and that position seems plausible. The person who approaches

the matter primarily with theological concerns might still feel uneasy with this position, however, objecting that such a position would still seem to make humanity in some sense the judge of God. I do not, however, believe that this unease is necessary. What criteria would human beings in a position where they were no longer influenced by partiality, prejudice, ignorance, pride, etc., that is, where they are no longer influenced either by sin or by the effects of finitude, use in judging whether God, as reflected in his purposes and commands, is good? The believer's answer should be, it would seem, those criteria which fundamental human nature, freed from the above mentioned distortions, and other similar ones, would lead human beings to use. But where does that human nature come from? It was, according to the believer, created by God in God's own image in the light of and for the sake of God's own purposes. God and God's purposes are thus still ontologically prior to everything else. What human beings would judge to be good in such an ideal situation, therefore, would be determined by the nature of man created in God's image, which in turn is determined by God's purposes, and thus ultimately by God's own nature.

We have been dealing with what the autonomy thesis would seem to be claiming, and with what in fact seems to be true, about the relationship between correct moral criteria and the ability of the actual commands of an actual God to create moral obligations binding on human beings. Human beings, however, have to make moral judgments from where they are now, and not from some position of ideal knowledge. Where they are now is a position where criteria of goodness are not uncontroversial, and where the content of God's commands, even among adherents of the same faith, such as Christianity, is a matter of disagreement and uncertainty. What happens when a person who believes that God is good and that there is an obligation to obey God comes across purported commands of God which seem to run counter to that person's previously held or newly acquired beliefs about what is morally good? Suppose that person seeks to reevaluate those moral beliefs in the light of moral intuitions or the apparent implications of moral principles. Suppose the intuitions, or the principles and the attempt to see their implications, have been carefully examined and compensated for when there was any reason to believe that they were influenced by prejudice, vested interest, lack of sensitivity, etc. What happens when those beliefs continue to conflict with the purported command of God? A person facing this situation can modify his or her beliefs by ceasing to believe that God exists, or by ceasing to believe that God is good, or by coming to believe that the being who issues these commands is not worthy to be called, "God," whatever metaphysical attributes that being might possess, or by concluding that certain moral beliefs or processes of reasoning about morality must be revised, or by concluding that generally reliable moral principles, intuitions, criteria, or processes of reasoning may not be reliable in every particular case. Probably the

alternative that is most often taken, however, is that of simply concluding that God was not really the source of the troublesome command. Choosing this alternative will often require other changes in a person's system of beliefs, especially with respect to how the will of God is to be known. Many Catholics, finding the teaching of the hierarchy on contraception to be troublesome, have chosen to modify their beliefs about the ways in which the teaching of the Catholic Church is to be regarded as authoritatively expressing the will of God, rather than choosing any of the other alternatives. Similarly, many Christians of various traditions have chosen to reject certain theories of Biblical inspiration when those theories seemed to require them to believe that God really did command the Israelites indiscriminately to slaughter the Canaanites, or Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. This option, however, becomes less attractive as the beliefs in question get nearer to the heart of a particular faith. One can reject many things most Christians have traditionally believed and still plausibly call oneself a Christian, but to reject the New Testament's view on love and forgiveness is to reject the Christian understanding of God, and so to reject Christianity.

In the previous paragraph a person's moral and religious beliefs were looked at as part of the sort of web of beliefs of which Quine writes.¹⁶ Looking at the matter from this point of view, it would seem that what the strong autonomy thesis would be claiming is that while it is permissible for a person to reject or modify previously held moral beliefs, perhaps radically, for the sake of reestablishing consistency within his or her system of beliefs, it is never permissible to do so if some of the beliefs which produce the inconsistency are theological or religious beliefs and there is the option of rejecting or modifying these beliefs instead. But this is to say that with respect to such a web of beliefs it can be legislated in advance where modifications may or may not be made when recalcitrant data are encountered or when inconsistencies arise. Perhaps this is true for something like the law of noncontradiction, but I cannot think of any reason to regard it as true with respect to the sorts of moral and religious beliefs under consideration here. Can it really be said that a person who has been employing moral criteria that do not lead him to accept absolute nonviolence, but who then comes to believe that in fact God does command absolute nonviolence, must necessarily be making a wrong choice if he believes he has a moral obligation to abide by what he takes to be the will of God. From this point of view the strong autonomy thesis seems to me to be obviously false, perhaps almost absurd. At the same time four considerations seem to me to support a weak autonomy thesis: (1) People without theological beliefs obviously have moral beliefs and use moral language; (2) people with theological beliefs and those without theological beliefs frequently discuss moral issues fruitfully so that there must be some overlap in the criteria that they use for the application of various moral terms; (3) people with theological beliefs do modify those beliefs because of inconsis-

tencies brought about by the application of such criteria; and (4) I cannot think of any reason to regard them as doing anything irrational, immoral, impious, or improper when they do so. If we think of our individual beliefs as belonging to the sort of web of beliefs that Quine describes, which I believe is the correct way of looking at them, then both rejecting a weak autonomy thesis and accepting a strong autonomy thesis are ways of attempting to legislate in advance where modifications may not be made when inconsistencies arise. I cannot think of any reason for legislating such prohibitions, or accepting them.

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NOTES

1. P. T. Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 126-127.
 2. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, tr. by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 141-142.
 3. A. C. Ewing, "The Autonomy of Ethics," in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., *Prospect for Metaphysics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 40.
 4. Kai Nielsen, "God and the Good," *Theology Today*, XX (1964), p. 50.
 5. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II, *The Doctrine of God*, Part II (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), pp. 552-553.
 6. *Ibid.* p. 546.
 7. The major exception to this has to do with situations in which person A believes that person B has a moral duty to some third party. The libertarian may recognize no obligation to sacrifice for the benefit of others, but he may admire the person who does sacrifice, or he at least does not regard such a person as violating any moral prohibition. A Christian of some variety or other may, on the basis of his interpretation of the Bible or Church teaching, recognize not only a personal duty to sacrifice for those in need, but a duty incumbent on every well-off person in the society, and so support policies that pay for aiding those in need through the tax system. The libertarian, however, while not regarding contributing to those in need to be morally wrong, does believe that being forced to contribute violates a valid moral prohibition. Thus what the Christian may believe to be morally required some other members of his society may believe to be morally prohibited.
- Similarly the libertarian does not regard the anti-abortionist to be doing anything wrong when she makes personal sacrifices to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term, but she would regard it to be morally wrong for someone, especially herself, to be forced to make such sacrifices. Some Christians, however, believe that in the light of their interpretation of the will of God they in fact do have a moral duty to try to use the legislative process to force others to make such sacrifices. Another case would be where one member of a society may not question the right of the person who interprets the will of God as forbidding all violence to renounce violence as a means of protecting himself, but may regard that person to be morally obligated, with an obligation that should be legally enforced, to do whatever is necessary to defend his country or some innocent third party who may be threatened

with harm, by any means necessary, including the use of violence. In this case what one person believes to be prohibited another regards as morally required. So there are exceptions to the generalization I have made.

8. R. G. Swinburne cites Duns Scotus as claiming that acts are often good or bad apart from any reference to God, but that God's command makes them obligatory. ["Duty and the Will of God," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, IV (Dec., 1974), 213-217; reprinted in Paul Helm, ed., *Divine Commands and Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 120-134, reference on p. 133].

9. pp. 131-132.

10. Baruch Brody, "Morality and Religion Reconsidered," in Baruch Brody, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), pp. 597-598.

11. *Ibid.*

12. p. 133 in Helm.

13. Although, in agreement with Swinburne and Brody, I maintain that God's command can create moral obligations where they would not otherwise exist, I do not deal with the question of whether or in what sense the believer might define "morally right" as "in accordance with God's command" or in some similar way. The position here being defended would, however, seem to be compatible with, and probably similar in intent to, those positions that say that it is plausible, at least for the believer, to define rightness or wrongness by reference to the will of a God who has certain attributes, but not to define all value concepts in this way. Robert Merrihew Adams has claimed that "wrong" = def. "contrary to the will of a loving God." But of course in supporting such a definition, as opposed to one which refers to some other properties that are, or could be, attributed to God, one has to make a value judgment about love. Adams writes:

The modified divine command theory clearly conceives of believers as valuing some things independently of their relation to God's commands I grant that in giving reasons for his attitudes towards God's commands the believer will probably use or presuppose concepts which, in the context, it is reasonable to count as nontheological value concepts Perhaps some of them might count as moral concepts Divine command theorists, including the modified divine command theorist, need not maintain that *all* value concepts must be understood in terms of God's commands. ["A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness," in Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, eds., *Religion and Morality: A Collection of Essays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 330-332.

14. A person may in fact make a different judgment than he or she would have made when looking at the matter from some ideal point of view, not only because of the distortions brought about by partiality, pride, etc., but also because of limitations of knowledge about the facts of the situation. For example, a person may say that he or she has no duty to sacrifice himself or herself for a specific cause because it is unlikely that the cause will succeed, and one does not have a duty to make sacrifices in such a situation. The person who believes that he has information about what will or will not eventually succeed, such as a religious believer, or a Marxist, regards himself or herself as being closer to evaluating the matter from the point of view of a hypothetical, or real but future, consensus. The Marxist believer, or the religious believer, may thus have reason to see a duty where another person who does not share such metaphysical or religious beliefs does not. This is another way in which beliefs about God and his purposes can change a person's perspective on what duties he or she in fact has.

15. *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, 1973), first edition, p. 96, second edition, p. 112. Presentations of the same or similar points of view can be found in the following: Ronald Glossop, "The Nature of Hume's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXVII (June, 1967), 530-532; and F. C. Sharp, "Hume's Ethical Theory and Its Critics," *Mind*, XXX (1921), 54. Another way of putting the matter is to say that to believe that God is good is to believe that His purposes, and what He does and commands in accordance with that purpose, will ultimately be (or would ultimately be) vindicated in a similar manner, as Paul Taylor, for example has argued [*Normative Discourse* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), ch.6]. Such an analysis of what it means to say that God is good would not seem to be fundamentally different from that of James Ross when he writes that "It would appear that the actions of a morally perfect being should be such that no one who fully grasps the circumstances can reasonably disapprove of them" [*Philosophical Theology* (Indianapolis & New York: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., 1969), p. 230]. "Fully grasping the circumstances" would seem to require some ideal perspective, and "reasonable disapproval" would seem to be disapproval that is not irrational, partial, based on vested interest, based on inconsistent beliefs, etc.

16. See Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," ch. 2 in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961) pp. 42-43. Similar views had been expressed by Pierre Duhem [*The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp.183-190] and have been supported in a slightly modified form by Hilary Putnam ["The Analytic and the Synthetic," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. III, ed. by Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962, p. 362]. This sort of discussion of the relationship of a set of beliefs to experience has been expanded to include moral beliefs and moral experience by Morton White in *Toward Reunion in Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 185. This paper further expands it to include religious belief and religious experience.

17. An earlier version of this paper was presented under the title, "The Will of God as a Moral Authority," at the meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers, held in Chicago in conjunction with the Central Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association, in April 1983. Some of the ideas of this paper go back to my 1971 Ph.D. Thesis, "God and Ethics: A Study in Moral Philosophy and the Philosophy of Religion," available in the University of Pittsburgh Library and from University Microfilms. Some topics of the paper are there given more extensive treatment.