

**DIVINE VOLUNTARISM:
MORAL OBLIGATION SUPERVENES ON GOD'S ANTECEDENT WILL**

A Thesis

by

MI YOUNG NAM

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

August 2004

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Divine Voluntarism:

Moral Obligation Supervenes on God's Antecedent Will. (August 2004)

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Divine voluntarism (Divine command theory) is a series of theories that claim that God is prior to moral obligation and that moral obligation is determined by God's will. Divine voluntarism has to be formulated in a way that it does not have undesirable implications, e.g., that moral obligation is arbitrary and that God's goodness is trivial. Also, while it avoids these undesirable implications, divine voluntarism must not imply that God is, in some way, restricted by moral obligation which exists independently of Him.

Divine voluntarism can admit God's sovereignty over moral obligation and avoid making moral obligation arbitrary or God's goodness trivial by admitting various aspects of God's will. Moral obligation is relevant to both God's will for human moral obligation and God's will for human moral good. After all, God's will for human moral obligation is God's willing that His own will for human moral good constitute moral obligation for humans.

To my parents
with gratitude, respect and love

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I am happy to express special appreciation to my family. I thank my daddy for teaching me to have a dream and supporting me to pursue it, and I thank my mom for loving me unconditionally and guiding me to follow God's will all the time. I thank my brother, Chunjong, for being such a good brother.

I offer my deepest thanks to God, who has led me thus far according to His good will. I firmly believe that He uses me and my knowledge for His good purpose.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The phrase “Divine Command Theory” has been used to refer to any theory maintaining that moral obligation depends on God’s command or God’s will. Though this name has been used for decades, some philosophers do not think that “divine command theory” is the best name for the theory in question. Such philosophers think that God’s will rather than God’s command is fundamentally related to moral obligation, and thus they think that it is not right to include “command” in the name of the theory. Thus, Philip L. Quinn has introduced a new term “theological voluntarism.”¹ Mark K. Murphy explicitly points out problems in the use of the expression “divine command theory,” and adopts Quinn’s “theological voluntarism”:

But the name “divine command theory” is a bit misleading: what these views [versions of the theory in question] have in common is their appeal to the divine will; while many of these views hold that the relevant act of divine will is that of commanding, some deny it. So we would do well to have a label for this class of views that does not prejudge the issue of the relevant act of divine will. The label that I will use, following Quinn 1990, is “theological voluntarism.”²

I agree with Murphy in thinking that “divine command theory” is a misleading name.

This thesis follows the style of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th Edition.

¹ Philip L. Quinn, “The Recent Revival of Divine Command Ethics,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (Fall 1990): 345-365.

² Mark K. Murphy, “Theological Voluntarism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2002 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2002/entries/voluntarism-theological/> (accessed July 3, 2003).

Yet I do not think that there is any reason against substituting “divine” for “theological.”

Rather, I think that “divine” voluntarism captures what the advocates of the theory in question want to endorse better than “theological” voluntarism does. Therefore, respecting the good part of the established name and employing the correction of its misleading part, I will use “divine voluntarism” for the theory in question.

There are three tasks that are to be done in defending divine voluntarism: providing positive reasons for it, answering objections made against divine voluntarism, and formulating a clear and acceptable theory of divine voluntarism.³ Among these three, it seems to me that the last task is the most important. If what a theory of divine voluntarism claims is not clearly stated, then it is not very meaningful to present good reasons supporting the theory. Also, if a theory of divine voluntarism is vague, then it will invite many unnecessary objections. Thus, I want to undertake the task of formulating the theory in its best form.

In formulating a theory of divine voluntarism, I shall presuppose several points about morality and God. As to morality, I will assume that both moral obligation and moral goodness actually and objectively exist. Also, I will assume a certain understanding of moral obligation: Moral obligation is something that ties or binds an agent to moral good by requiring the agent to achieve the moral good. Based on this understanding of moral obligation, I will argue that moral goodness is prior to moral

³ Murphy, “Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation,” *Faith and Philosophy* 15 (1998): 3.

obligation. That is, based on the specific understanding of moral obligation that I assume, it will be seen that a teleological view about moral obligation is more plausible than a deontological view.

In regard to God, I will presuppose that standard theistic beliefs are true. In other words, I will assume that God, the Creator of the universe, exists and that He is omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent. In particular, the assumptions about God's sovereignty, sincerity, and rationality which are included in the general assumptions of God's nature will play critical roles in formulating a theory of divine voluntarism.

It has often been pointed out that three issues must be discussed in formulating any theory of divine voluntarism: (1) the relevant divine "action," (2) the relevant moral property, and (3) the nature of the relation between (1) and (2), i.e., between the relevant moral property and the relevant divine "action." In regard to the first issue, the relevant divine "action," there are two opposing views. One view claims that moral property depends on God's will; the other view claims that moral property depends on God's command. In this thesis, I will presuppose that the first view is preferable to the second, and I will focus on refining the first view. Doing so will involve discussion of various aspects of God's will. The conclusion of the discussion will be that a theory of divine voluntarism must employ three aspects of God's will: God's obligating will, God's antecedent will, and God's consequent will.

In regard to the second issue, the relevant moral property, philosophers have

made a general agreement that a theory of divine voluntarism must deal with only moral obligation. Moral properties can largely be divided into two kinds: moral obligation and moral value. Moral obligation includes the properties of being morally obligatory, forbidden, and allowed, and moral value includes moral goodness and moral badness. Philosophers generally agree that divine voluntarism tries to explain the nature and origin of moral obligation but not the nature and origin of moral value, in terms of God's will.

I uphold this general agreement in the sense that divine voluntarism is not a theory which tries to explain the nature of moral value in terms of *God's will or command*. Nevertheless, I do not think divine voluntarism must be silent on the issue of moral value. Rather, divine voluntarism must seriously consider the issue of moral value because of two points: divine voluntarism entails that God, Himself, even though not God's will or commands, is the standard of moral goodness, and divine voluntarism must appeal to God's will for human moral good as the ground of God's will for human moral obligation. In order to argue for these two points, I will discuss the nature of moral goodness, the nature of moral obligation, and the metaphysical difference between doing moral good and fulfilling moral obligation.

In regard to the last issue, the relation between God's will and moral obligation, I will discuss four views: the analysis view, the causation view, the reduction view, and the supervenience view. I will introduce arguments for all the first three views, and

explain the problems that the arguments have. Then, I will explain the supervenience view that I defend. The theory of divine voluntarism thus formulated will be that moral obligation supervenes on God's antecedent will. This theory of divine voluntarism, unlike the other theories, admits all the three aspects of God's will — that is, antecedent, consequent and obligating willing — and thus it explains moral obligation through a dynamic relation of the three aspects of God's will.

The body of this thesis consists of three parts, and the three parts will have discussions regarding the three issues that must be examined in formulating a theory of divine voluntarism: the relevant "action" of God, moral obligation as the relevant moral property, and the relation between the relevant "action" of God and moral obligation.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I will summarize what has been discussed, and examine the merit of the theory of divine voluntarism formulated in this thesis in regard to the Euthyphro dilemma. Finally, I will explain what more has to be done to complete a theory of divine voluntarism.

CHAPTER II

THE RELEVANT GOD'S WILL

The first issue that must be discussed in connection with divine voluntarism is the issue of what kind of “action” on the part of God is relevant to moral obligation. If a theory claims that moral obligation is dependent on God’s commands rather than on God’s will, the theory can be called a command formulation of divine voluntarism. On the other hand, if a theory regards God’s will as the primarily relevant “action” that generates moral obligation, then the theory can be called a will formulation of divine voluntarism. In this thesis, I shall presuppose that the will formulation of divine voluntarism is the preferable formulation. I will, therefore, focus on refining the will formulation, and I will do so by examining various aspects of God’s will that are involved in moral obligation. However, since Robert M. Adams has recently defended the command formulation and has attacked the will formulation, I will begin by presenting the problems that I see in the command formulation.

Preliminary Work

Murphy considers and rejects two different reasons for accepting the command formulation. The first reason is “a purported analogy between the way that voluntary human activity generates obligations and the way that voluntary divine activity generates

obligations.”⁴ Murphy points out that the speaker’s will, which is *inside his mind*, does not matter, but what the speaker actually *says* matters when an obligation is created among humans, and he illustrates this point with a pair of examples. The first is a case in which an obligation to keep a promise is created by someone’s saying, “I will give you a dollar.” The will of the speaker is irrelevant to his obligation to give a dollar. No matter whether the speaker is willing or reluctant to give the dollar, simply in virtue of his saying that he would give a dollar, he is promising to give a dollar, and therefore he is obligated to do so. The second example is a case in which a sergeant orders a private to scrub the latrine. As in the case of promising, Murphy points out, whether the sergeant really wants the private to scrub the latrine or not is, at most, a secondary issue. The private’s obligation to scrub the latrine comes from what the sergeant says. Thus, what is actually said is crucial for the content of the obligation generated by a command in human society, and what is willed is not crucial. Murphy proposes that if we regard God’s obligation-generating activity as similar to that of humans, we should reject the will formulation of divine voluntarism and accept the command formulation.

However, Murphy finds that the purported analogy has two problems, and he concludes that such an analogy cannot support the command formulation of divine voluntarism. The first problem is that “even if God’s commands generate obligations in the way that human speech-acts do, the obligations are nothing like the *moral*

⁴ Ibid., 4.

obligations.”⁵ The second — and probably more serious — problem is that “God’s obligation-producing power is objectionably contingent.”⁶ I agree with the general idea of Murphy, but I think his discussion is not very convincing. Thus, I will make my own argument to show the problems of the purported analogy.

When an obligation is created in human society, it is neither the speaker’s will nor his words alone that generates the obligation. In order for saying some words to generate an obligation, there must be a prior rule according to which saying such words shall bind the speaker or listener to do a certain thing. Consider the example of making a promise. Were it not for an antecedent rule that one must keep a promise if he makes it, the act of making a promise would not obligate the speaker to keep the promise. Likewise, a military rule is necessary for the order of the sergeant to generate an obligation on the part of the private.

Thus, the purported analogy between God’s obligation-generating activity and that of humans implies that God’s commands alone cannot generate moral obligation and that an antecedent rule, independent of God’s will and God’s commands, is required. “Humans must obey God,” or “Creatures must obey the commands of their Creator” may be a candidate for the rule. Defenders of the command formulation have an unsolvable dilemma as to how to explicate such a rule. They cannot understand the rule as being a moral obligation, because if they do, they must admit that there is at least one

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

moral obligation that does not depend on God's commands. This admission contradicts what defenders of the command formulation assert.⁷

Alternatively, defenders of the command formulation can claim that the obligation to obey God is not a moral obligation. For example, they might claim the obligation is a religious one, or that it is grounded on God's ownership of the universe. On this approach, however, it is not explained why the commands or willing of God generates a *moral* obligation for humans.⁸ The connection between an amoral obligation to obey God and a moral obligation generated from this amoral obligation is not explained. If human moral obligation comes from human religious obligation, it is not explained why the obligation to obey God does not remain merely religious, but rather has the property of being a moral obligation. Also, if a duty to the owner of the universe is the ground of moral obligation, it is not explained why the commands of the owner of the universe generate a moral obligation for us. In other words, the generation of moral obligation from amoral obligation is left unaccounted for. Thus, the claim that human

⁷ In "Theological Voluntarism," Murphy entertains the possibility of a theory of divine voluntarism which "asserts that some normative state of affairs obtains—namely, the normative state of affairs *its being obligatory to obey God*." I do not think such a theory of divine voluntarism is possible because it is not an explanation of moral obligation but a mere stipulation of a certain obligation.

⁸ Murphy does not consider the first choice of the dilemma. That is, he simply states that the rule cannot be regarded as a moral obligation. He takes such rule as amoral and raises two objections. The one is what I discussed: "...even if God's commands generate obligations in the way that human speech-acts do, the obligations are nothing like moral obligations..." "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 5. The other is that, according to this view, God's ability to obligate humans depends on an institutional rule and thus "God's obligation-producing power is objectionably contingent." "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 7.

moral obligation depends on an amoral obligation to obey God's commands is not satisfactory.

Thus far, I have discussed the first reason Murphy considers for supporting the command formulation of divine voluntarism, i.e., the purported analogy between humans' obligation-generating activity and that of God. I have argued that if such an analogy is valid, then an antecedent rule is required for God's commands to generate a moral obligation. An admission of such an antecedent rule yields a dilemma: the rule cannot be either moral or amoral. I conclude that the first reason for advocating the command formulation is unacceptable.

The second reason that Murphy considers for supporting the command formulation of divine voluntarism is concerned with an epistemological problem. It may be that God's will is too unknowable to be the ground for moral obligation: "The content of God's will is, to put it mildly, very difficult to know without God's making it known by way of His commands. But it might be thought that what we are morally obligated to do must be knowable, so that unless God's will is made known by His issuing commands, one cannot be under any moral obligations."⁹ This idea is explicit in Adams's criticism of the will formulation:

So the point of replacing divine commands with divine will in a theory of obligation would depend on the assumption that God's will can be what it is without being revealed. But this yields an unattractive picture of divine-human relations, one in which the wish of God's heart imposes binding

⁹ Murphy, "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 8.

obligations without even being communicated, much less issuing in a command. Games in which one party incurs guilt for failing to guess the unexpressed wishes of the other party are not nice games.¹⁰

Such an argument for favoring the command formulation over the will formulation can be replied to in several ways. First, even if it be granted that God's commands are necessary for humans to be morally obligated, the commands may not be the fundamental source of moral obligation. It can be the case that God's will is the ground and source of moral obligation, but the commands through which God's will is revealed are required for His will to be known by humans. Murphy anticipated the possibility that God's will is the ground, but God's commands are required for epistemological reasons. He explained that, if such a possibility is true, then God's commands can be "validating conditions" for moral obligation, but this fact does not show that God's commands, rather than God's will, are the ground.¹¹ I agree with Murphy and conclude that even if we concede the informative role of God's commands, we should not conclude that God's commands are the ground for moral obligation.

Edward R. Wierenga provided a slightly different reply to a similar objection:

According to the theory [that Wierenga formulates], there is the property of being wrong, a property distinct from the property of being forbidden by God or from any other theological property. However, it is not part of the theory that a person can only recognize that an act has the property of being wrong by first recognizing that the act has the property of being forbidden by God. Analogous remarks hold for acts that are obligatory, right, or

¹⁰ Robert M. Adams, "The Concept of a Divine Command," in *Religion and Morality*, ed. D. Z. Phillips, 59-80 (London: Macmillan, 1996), 61.

¹¹ Murphy, "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 8.

permissible.¹²

Wierenga's argument reminds us of the main issue of divine voluntarism. How humans recognize moral obligation or a moral property of certain actions is not the primary issue for the theory. The issue at stake is whether moral obligation is grounded in God's will or rather in God's commands. Therefore, the fact (if it is a fact) that humans know moral obligations through God's commands is an irrelevant issue to defending the command formulation of divine voluntarism. Even if humans know moral obligations naturally, this fact must not be regarded as affecting the theory.

Thus far, we have examined two reasons for supporting the command formulation of divine voluntarism and have concluded that neither of them makes that formulation preferable to the will formulation. It has been discovered that the first reason, i.e., the analogy between obligation-generation activities of God and humans yields a problem in the form of a dilemma, and the second, epistemological reason is the result of losing the sight of the main issue of divine voluntarism. My discussion may not be enough to defeat the command formulation. However, I believe that it is enough to motivate a serious consideration of an alternative, the will formulation.

God's Obligating Will, Antecedent Will, and Consequent Will

Formulating divine voluntarism in terms of God's will requires much more to be

¹² Edward R. Wierenga, "A Defensible Divine Command Theory," *Nous*, 17 (1983): 396.

said than merely that “Moral obligation is dependent on God’s will.” There are two questions that have to be answered. The first question is whether S’s moral obligation to Φ depends on “God’s willing that S Φ ” or rather on “God’s willing that S be morally obligated to Φ .” For example, if I have a moral obligation to tell the truth, the question would be whether God wills that I tell truth or He wills that I be morally obligated to tell the truth. The second question is how a violation of moral obligation can occur if a moral obligation depends on God’s will. If my moral obligation to tell the truth depends on God’s will, I go against God’s will when I violate the moral obligation. Then, such a violation may seem to be inconsistent with God’s omnipotence because God fails to make His will obtain. Or it may seem to be inconsistent with God’s rationality because He wills something that He knows would not obtain. Thus, when a theory is formulated in terms of God’s will, it should be formulated in such a way that violation of moral obligation does not conflict with God’s omnipotence and rationality.

In order to solve these two perplexing questions, three aspects of God’s will must be considered: God’s obligating will, God’s antecedent will, and God’s consequent will. The notion of God’s obligating will appears in Quinn’s early theory, though he did not use this exact term. God’s antecedent will and God’s consequent will were first stipulated by Aquinas and adopted into divine voluntarism by Murphy. In the next section, I will argue that, contrary to the claims of Quinn and Murphy, all three aspects of God’s will need to be employed together in the formulation of divine voluntarism. In

this section, I will simply introduce these three aspects of God's will as they appear in the discussions of Quinn and Murphy.

God's obligating will can be defined as *God's willing of an obligation itself*. In other words, it is not God's willing that a certain action be performed but God's willing that a certain obligation obtain. For example, if I have a moral obligation to tell the truth, then God wills that I be obligated to tell the truth. Such a willing is an obligating will. Quinn formulates his early theory of divine voluntarism in terms of this obligating will, which is clearly shown in the statement, "*Truth-telling being obligatory* being willed by God contributes to bringing about truth-telling being obligatory."¹³

There are the two grounds on which Quinn argues for this conception of divine voluntarism: his moderate interpretation of the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and his definition of "a state of affairs being metaphysically dependent on being willed by God."¹⁴ Quinn's theory of divine voluntarism is heavily dependent on the doctrine of divine sovereignty. This doctrine can be formulated in various degrees of strength. For example, one may hold an extremely strong version to the effect that every state of affairs that obtains, including God's existence and his nature, depends on God's will. In order to achieve the largest consensus, Quinn takes the doctrine very moderately as "the claim that every obtaining state of affairs that is...wholly distinct from God existing is

¹³ Quinn, "An Argument for Divine Command Ethics," in *Christian Theism and the Problem of Philosophy*, ed. M. D. Beaty, 289-302 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 298.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 296.

metaphysically dependent on being willed by God.”¹⁵ Also, Quinn defines “a state of affairs being metaphysically dependent on being willed by God” as “p [the state of affairs] being willed by God contributes to bringing about p, and it is not the case that p contributes to bringing about p being willed by God.”¹⁶

On the basis of this moderate doctrine of divine sovereignty and the definition of metaphysical dependence of a state of affairs on God’s will, Quinn explains how a moral obligation to tell the truth is dependent on God’s obligating will. Since the state of affairs of truth-telling being obligatory is distinct from God’s existence, Quinn deduces “Truth-telling being obligatory is metaphysically dependent on being willed by God”¹⁷ from the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Then, by the definition of metaphysical dependence of a state of affairs on God’s will, he concludes “Truth-telling being obligatory being willed by God contributes to bringing about truth-telling being obligatory.”¹⁸ That is, truth-telling being obligatory is brought about by *God’s willing that truth-telling be obligatory*, and is not brought about by God’s willing that truth-telling be performed. Quinn’s early theory of divine voluntarism is formulated in terms of God’s obligating will.

By contrast, Murphy views God’s will in regard to moral obligation as the

¹⁵ Ibid., 294-295. Quinn explains what is to be taken as “distinct.” Here, assuming that truth-telling being obligatory is obviously distinct from God or God’s existence, I will not discuss his definition of “being distinct.”

¹⁶ Ibid., 296.

¹⁷ Ibid., 297-298.

¹⁸ Ibid., 298.

willing that a certain action be performed, rather than the willing that an obligation obtain: “The state of affairs of S’s being morally obligated to Φ depends on the state of affairs of God’s willing that S Φ .”¹⁹ For example, if I have a moral obligation to tell the truth, then God wills that *I tell the truth* rather than that I be obligated to tell the truth.

Murphy’s formulation, unlike that of Quinn, has a problem with explaining the violation of moral obligation. If moral obligation is relevant to God’s obligating will as Quinn proposes, then God only wills that S be obligated to Φ but does not necessarily will that S Φ . Then, S’s violating the moral obligation to Φ does not bring about a problem with God’s omnipotence because God may not will that S Φ . However, if God wills that S Φ and such a will is the ground for a moral obligation, as Murphy proposed, then S’s violation of the moral obligation to Φ goes directly against God’s willing that S Φ . The fact that something happens against God’s will may seem inconsistent with God’s omnipotence or rationality. In the face of this problem, Murphy identifies the task that needs to be done as follows: “It seems that we should aim to specify a sense of God’s willing that passes between these extremes, that is, that will be strong enough for obligation but not strong enough to preclude violation.”²⁰ To put it in a better way, the task is “specifying a sense of will strong enough genuinely to be God’s will and not strong enough that God’s willing guarantees that the object of God’s willing will

¹⁹ Murphy, “Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation,” 4.

²⁰ Ibid., 17.

obtain.”²¹

To accomplish this task, Murphy borrows the notions of God’s antecedent will and consequent will from Aquinas. Since it is very important to understand these notions clearly, I will quote the entire passages of Aquinas’s discussion cited by Murphy:

This distinction [between God’s antecedent and consequent will] must not be taken as applying to the divine will itself, in which there is nothing antecedent or consequent, but to the things willed.

To understand this we must consider that everything, insofar as it is good, is willed by God. A thing taken in its primary sense, and absolutely considered, may be good or evil, and yet when some additional circumstances are taken into account, by a consequent consideration may be changed into the contrary. That a man should live is good; and that a man should be killed is evil, absolutely considered. But if in a particular case we add that a man is a murderer or dangerous to society, to kill him is a good; that he live is an evil. Hence it may be said of a just judge, that antecedently he wills all men to live; but consequently wills the murderer to be hanged.²²

According to Aquinas, the distinction between God’s antecedent will and consequent will lies not in God’s will itself but rather in the way in which things are regarded as good and willed by God. The things that are antecedently willed by God are good in an abstract sense. That is, God antecedently wills them without consideration of particular situations. Thus, what God antecedently wills may not be actualized in particular situations. On the other hand, God considers all things in His consequent willing, and there is no additional factor or situation left which gives God reasons for willing something other than what He consequently wills. Therefore, what God

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 18.

consequently wills is always actualized in all situations where God holds any consequent will.

Murphy applies the notions of God's antecedent will and consequent will to divine voluntarism, and tries to explain violation of moral obligation without sacrificing God's omnipotence or rationality. He took God's antecedent will as constituting moral obligation. The fact that God leaves something out of His consideration in His antecedent willing and thus an antecedent will is not necessarily achieved in actual, particular situations explains the violation of moral obligations. Meanwhile, God's consequent will always obtains, and thus explains what actually happens, i.e., either the actual fulfillment or violation of the moral obligation. In Murphy's formulation of divine voluntarism, "The state of affairs of S's being morally obligated to Φ depends on the state of affairs of God's willing that S Φ ," he meant God's antecedent will by "God's willing."²³

Why Should We Consider the Three Aspects of God's Will?

Thus far, I have discussed the notion of God's obligating will brought up by Quinn and those of God's antecedent will and consequent will discussed by Murphy.

Earlier, I said that all three aspects of God's will need to be admitted in a theory of

²³ Ibid., 4. Later, Quinn seems to sympathize with Murphy in using God's antecedent will instead of God's obligating will in formulating a theory. See Quinn's "Divine Command Ethics," in *the Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed., Hugh Lafollette, 53-73 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 55-57.

divine voluntarism. Now, for each aspect of God's will, I will discuss the reason that it must be admitted in the theory. These reasons may already be suggested in the previous section, but they are presented by Quinn and Murphy, neither of whom endorses all three notions of God's will simultaneously in his theory of divine voluntarism. Therefore, those reasons need to be examined and confirmed in my own theory.

First, as Quinn argues and Murphy also admits, a modest interpretation of the doctrine of divine sovereignty supports the validity of God's obligating will. Quinn's moderate version of the doctrine of divine sovereignty, "the claim that every obtaining state of affairs that is...wholly distinct from God existing is metaphysically dependent on being willed by God"²⁴ is what most theists would want to hold. All theists who admit God as a sustainer and sovereign of the world would agree that all states of affairs that do not involve God's existence and nature depend on God's will. Also, as Murphy admits, all the states of affairs that consist in moral obligations obtaining are distinct from God's existing.²⁵ Thus, anyone who accepts Quinn's version of the doctrine of divine sovereignty must accept God's obligating will. Thus, God's obligating will must be admitted as a part of divine voluntarism. If any moral obligation ever exists, then God

²⁴ Quinn, "An Argument for Divine Command Ethics," 294-295. Quinn explains what is to be taken as "distinct." Here, assuming that truth-telling being obligatory is obviously distinct from God or God's existence, I will not discuss his definition of being distinct.

²⁵ Murphy, "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 12-13. However, I do not think that Murphy is completely right in maintaining that "Most states of affairs involving morality are obviously wholly distinct from God's existing," because moral value might depend on God's nature. See Adams's *Finite and Infinite Goods*, (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14, 28.

wills the moral obligation itself. It should not be the case that even though God never wants or wills any moral obligation to obtain, a certain moral obligation obtains anyway.

Second, whereas the doctrine of divine sovereignty supports the notion of God's obligating will, the assumption of God's sincerity supports the notion of God's antecedent will. If God sincerely wills that a moral obligation obtain, it is necessary to assume that He simultaneously or primarily wills the performance of the action that the moral obligation requires. If God wills that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ rather than Φ and simultaneously wills that S be obligated to Φ , then God cannot be regarded as being sincere. Therefore, a sincere God must will that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ when He wills that S be obligated to Φ . Therefore, we need both God's willing that S be obligated to Φ and God's willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$. God's willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ can be understood as God's antecedent will, the same antecedent will that Murphy defined.

Finally, God's consequent willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$, which is different from God's antecedent willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$, is supported, once again, by Quinn's modest version of the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Should S fail to Φ , S 's violation of a moral obligation is distinct from God's existence. Hence, according to the doctrine of divine sovereignty as interpreted by Quinn, S 's violation of the moral obligation somehow depends on God's willing that S *does not* Φ . This result seems to be contradictory because if S has a moral obligation to Φ , then God wills that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ as well as that S be obligated to Φ . This contradiction is resolved by categorizing God's willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ as God's antecedent

will and God's willing that S not Φ as God's consequent will as defined by Murphy. Likewise, when S fulfills his moral obligation to Φ , God has the consequent will that S Φ together with His antecedent will that S Φ . In conclusion, neither God's obligating will, nor his antecedent will, nor his consequent will can be thrown out.

However, Murphy rejects the notion of God's obligating will in his theory of divine voluntarism. In his discussion, he stipulates that God's antecedent will and God's obligating will constitute two different formulations of divine voluntarism. Murphy understands God's obligating will as belonging to this formulation of divine voluntarism: "The state of affairs of S 's being morally obligated to Φ depends on the state of affairs of *God's willing that S be morally obligated to Φ* ," whereas he regards God's antecedent will as a constituent of another formulation, "The state of affairs of S 's being morally obligated to Φ depends on the state of affairs of *God's willing that S Φ* ."

Even though Murphy regards Quinn's argument for God's obligating will as flawless, the reason that Murphy denies God's obligating will is that a theory formulated in terms of God's obligating will is "too uncontroversial" and thus "lacks distinctiveness."²⁶ He takes the doctrine of divine sovereignty moderately interpreted by Quinn as too general to constitute divine voluntarism as a distinctive ethical view. Thus, if a theory of divine voluntarism is based on the doctrine of divine sovereignty and formulated in terms of God's obligating will, it cannot make any distinctive claim that

²⁶ Murphy, "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," 14.

distinguishes the theory from other ethical theories. After all, it may be that the truths of morality depend on God's will only in the way scientific laws do — that is, by supervening on the created world. But:

That the doctrine of divine sovereignty implies that truths of morality might be dependent on God's will only to the extent that truths of physics are thus dependent suggests, however, that defenders of natural law theory, Kantianism, utilitarianism, and intuitionism should not be at all threatened... The natural law theorist can make all of his or her normative claims, and can provide an account of how the normative states of affairs that obtain depend on facts about human nature... All that he or she has to assert, in addition to the claims that he or she makes about the connections between human nature and natural law, is that the truth of all of these claims depends on God's willing... Kantians and classical utilitarians might make similar arguments...²⁷

Murphy's objection to formulating a theory of divine voluntarism in terms of God's obligating will is reasonable. Actually, even if a theory of divine voluntarism is compatible with Kantianism, utilitarianism and intuitionism, it would be viable as long as it has explanatory power about the human moral situation. Quinn's theory of divine voluntarism thus formulated, however, neither brings up any interesting point nor bears an important implication regarding moral value and moral obligation. The simple claim, a moral obligation depends on God's willing such a moral obligation, hardly prompts interesting discussion, much less fosters a further exploration of important issues regarding morality. Therefore, it is understandable that Murphy complains that Quinn's formulation is trivially true and lacks distinctiveness.

²⁷ Ibid.

Nevertheless, I think Murphy is mistaken in completely neglecting God's obligating will in his theory of divine voluntarism. The fact that a theory of divine voluntarism formulated centrally in terms of God's obligating will is "too uncontroversial" forces us to formulate a theory of divine voluntarism in terms of some other aspects of God's will, e.g., God's antecedent will. However, such a fact does not justify the complete exclusion of God's obligating will. As I have discussed and Quinn and Murphy acknowledge, we cannot admit God's sovereignty without admitting God's obligating will. Also, God's obligating will may be discovered to have some more important implication in further discussion of the issue, so that it is safer to be included. Therefore, God's obligating will is necessary and worthy to be admitted and explored in the discourse of divine voluntarism.

Murphy's mistake of neglecting God's obligating will seems to be caused by the fact that he considers God's obligating will only as a constituent of the formulation that he rejects. By doing so, Murphy forces himself to throw away God's obligating will together with the formulation that he rejects. God's obligating will, however, can be admitted without being regarded by the divine voluntarist as the central notion on which moral obligation is directly dependent. Even if it is right that a theory of divine voluntarism should be formulated in terms of God's antecedent will, this fact does not give us reason to exclude God's obligating will from consideration any more than it gives us reason to exclude God's consequent will. After all, moral obligation may be

brought up in a complex context and can be understood only in terms of various notions of God's will.

The Dynamic Relation of Three Aspects of God's Will

If it is agreed that all three aspects of God's will should be admitted as parts of divine voluntarism, the question is how different aspects of God's will can be included in one single theory of divine voluntarism. In answer to this question, I will show the dynamic relation between the three aspects of God's will. The best way to explore the relation between God's three wills seems to be to ask whether any one of the three aspects has priority over the others.

First, it is obvious that God's antecedent will is prior to God's obligating will. In the discussion regarding what kinds of will are required to explain moral obligation, the way that God's antecedent will was inferred from God's obligating will reflects the priority of God's antecedent will to His obligating will. On the assumption of the doctrine of divine sovereignty, it was first concluded that God's obligating will is necessary whenever an obligation obtains. Then, God's antecedent will was inferred from God's obligating will on the assumption that God is sincere. The idea is that it is impossible that God have an obligating will but not have an antecedent will without losing his sincerity; if God only wills that S be under an obligation to Φ when He never wills or wants S to Φ , then God wills an obligation only for the sake of obligation and it

is doubtful that God is sincere. Thus, God's obligating willing that S is obligated to Φ cannot exist without His antecedent willing that S Φ . However, the other way is possible: God can will that S Φ and not will that S be obligated to Φ , and God can will in this way without sacrificing sincerity. That is, God's antecedent will can exist without His obligating will. Therefore, God's antecedent will is prior to God's obligating will. If God's obligating will ever obtains, then it is rooted in God's antecedent will.

Meanwhile, it is also obvious that God's antecedent will is prior to His consequent will. According to Aquinas's notions of them, God's consequent will can be understood as a result of particularizing His antecedent will. That is, God's consequent will is a notion derivative from God's antecedent will, and like God's obligating will, God's consequent will cannot exist without God's antecedent will.

Now, it is settled that God's antecedent will is the foundation for His consequent will and obligating will. This is the reason that God's antecedent will rather than God's obligating will should be the center of the discussion of divine voluntarism. Formulating a theory in terms of God's obligating will is not adequate — and not just because the resultant theory is too uncontroversial but rather also because such an approach does not touch on the deeper and fundamental aspect of God's will. God's obligating will is only derivative from God's antecedent will. Though we should still admit God's obligating will, it is necessary to deal with its root, God's antecedent will.

Then, the next question is why God's consequent will is different from His

antecedent will, i.e., why God sometimes wills a violation of moral obligation.

Intuitively, the reason that moral obligation is violated is due to human choice. Moreover, an intuitive reason why moral obligation exists is the existence of human freedom which permits us sometimes not to follow God's will. Here, I take these intuitive ideas as right and maintain that the difference between God's consequent will and His antecedent will is related to God's bestowing a freedom of choice on humans. In other words, God's bestowal of human freedom is reflected in God's consequent will, which is different from God's antecedent will.

It should be pointed out that though the notions of God's antecedent will and consequent will are adopted from Aquinas's philosophy and applied to the issue of moral obligation, the concepts of them used in divine voluntarism should not be as general as those of Aquinas. In Aquinas, the gap between God's antecedent will and consequent will can be explained with factors other than human free will. For example, God may antecedently will that nobody die from disease. Nevertheless, God may consequently will that some people die from disease. In such a case, the gap between God's antecedent will and consequent will is not explained by God's consideration of human freedom; it may be explained by His maintenance of some natural laws of the universe or natural functions of human body. Therefore, in such cases, even though God's antecedent will for each person is that he shall not die from disease and His consequent will is different from this antecedent will, a human does not have any obligation to refrain from dying

from disease.

Among various cases in which God's antecedent will and God's consequent will are different from each other, only the cases in which they are different because of God's bestowing freedom of choice are morally significant. In cases where God's bestowing freedom on humans is the reason for a possible difference between God's antecedent will and the consequent will, God's obligating will obtains. If there is no distinction between God's antecedent will and God's consequent will, God's mere willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ does not make a moral obligation to Φ . Also, if God's antecedent will is distinct from God's consequent will, but if such a distinction does not reflect S's freedom either to Φ or to refrain from Φ ing, then S does not have any moral obligation. However, if God gives S freedom either to Φ or not to Φ while He antecedently wills that $S \rightarrow \Phi$, then this implies that God gives S a responsibility to Φ , obligates S to Φ , or wills that S is obligated to Φ . God's obligating will can obtain when there is God's antecedent will distinct from God's consequent will and when the distinction between God's antecedent will and God's consequent will is due to God's bestowal of freedom on humans.

CHAPTER III

MORAL GOODNESS, MORAL OBLIGATION AND GOD'S WILL

In the second chapter of the thesis, I argued that a theory of divine voluntarism must employ three aspects of God's will, i.e., God's antecedent will, God's consequent will, and God's obligating will. I also discussed that, among the three, God's antecedent will is the most fundamental aspect of God's will and serves as the ground for the other two. For this reason, I endorsed the idea that a theory of divine voluntarism must be formulated in terms of God's antecedent will.

To clarify and deepen the understanding of the relation between the three aspects of God's will and morality, I want to discuss a general feature of moral obligation and moral goodness. Therefore, in the first section, by examining the relation between moral obligation and moral good, I will argue that moral goodness is prior to moral obligation and that only a morally defective agent can have moral obligation. In the second section, I will show that such a conclusion regarding moral goodness and moral obligation entails that God, who is essentially morally good, does not have moral obligation and that He is the standard of moral goodness. Then, in the third section, I will endorse the view that God's will for human moral obligation is grounded on God's will for human moral good.

Doing Moral Good and Fulfilling Moral Obligation

I shall now discuss two points in regard to the relation between moral goodness and moral obligation. The first point is that moral goodness is metaphysically prior to moral obligation; the second is that moral obligation requires an agent with a particular nature. My argument for these two points is *a priori*. It is from a particular understanding of moral obligation as being something that ties or binds an agent to a moral good by requiring the agent to achieve that moral good.

First, such an understanding of moral obligation entails that a moral obligation presupposes the existence of some moral value. Since moral obligation is something like a ligature that ties an agent to a moral good, the moral value must exist before any occurrence of a moral obligation that requires an agent to realize it. Therefore it is not true that moral obligation exists first, and moral good comes from the fulfillment of moral obligation. Rather, moral good exists first, without any moral obligation, and moral obligation exists on the ground of the preexisting moral value. In conclusion, according to my understanding, moral good is metaphysically prior to moral obligation.

The priority of moral good and moral goodness to moral obligation is intuitively more plausible than the priority of moral obligation to moral good. For example, it is absurd to say that telling the truth is morally good by virtue of its being morally obligatory or that torturing a dog for minor pleasure is morally bad by virtue of its being morally forbidden. On the contrary, telling the truth is morally good and torturing a dog

for minor pleasure is morally bad, and these facts make telling the truth morally obligatory and torturing a dog morally forbidden. A necessary part of the explanation of the fact that a certain action is morally obligatory or forbidden is and must be the preexisting moral value of the action, either positive or negative.

Second, moral obligation requires not only preexisting moral value but also an agent of a particular nature. Moral obligation is being understood as something that binds an agent to some morally value-laden actions. A moral obligation is not a law that exists in some abstract form and that is sometimes effective and at other times not. A moral obligation is a bond that *actually* binds an agent morally to some actions. Therefore, by the nature of moral obligation, when moral obligation exists, it is always “effective” for some agents. Moral obligation is always someone’s moral obligation. In other words, moral obligation necessarily requires an agent toward whom it is “effective.”

Not every agent, of any nature, however, is capable of being under moral obligation. If an agent by nature essentially does moral good, i.e., if an agent is essentially morally good, then nothing can bind him to moral good. No ligature or bond makes sense for such an essentially morally good agent. Therefore, moral obligation requires an agent who is capable of doing moral evil by its nature. In conclusion, moral obligation exists in a relational fabric. On the one hand, moral obligation requires moral good as its standard; on the other hand, moral obligation requires an agent of a particular

nature as its target. Moral obligation exists between moral good and morally defective agents, and it ties them together.

Now, from this conclusion, it is easily inferred that doing moral good is metaphysically different from fulfilling moral obligation. Since moral good exists prior to moral obligation, it is possible for one to do moral good without being under any moral obligation. An essentially morally good agent does moral good without being under moral obligation. On the other hand, an agent who is *not* essentially morally good is capable of doing moral good but his achievement of moral good may have another implication, i.e., the fulfillment of moral obligation. Only a morally defective agent is capable of being under moral obligation and fulfilling moral obligation. Therefore, in spite of an often observed correlation between the actions of doing moral good and fulfilling moral obligation, doing moral good is metaphysically different from fulfilling moral obligation, and, indeed, is prior to fulfilling moral obligation. One interesting and ironical consequence of this discussion is that one's fulfillment of moral obligation, though it is better than the violation of moral obligation, still implies a morally defective nature on the part of the agent.

God and Morality

Many defenders of divine voluntarism support the idea that God is essentially morally good, and He does not have any moral obligation. Actually, this idea is implied

by any theory of divine voluntarism. God's essential moral goodness is what standard theists would assume. Therefore, theorists of divine voluntarism would naturally hold that God is essentially morally good. Also, divine voluntarism makes it logically impossible that God has any moral obligation because moral obligation depends on God's will and thus there is no moral obligation prior to God. Consequently, the claim of God's essential moral goodness and His lack of moral obligation is an essential part of divine voluntarism.

The conclusion of the previous section regarding moral obligation and moral goodness supports this essential idea of divine voluntarism. It was concluded that moral good is prior to moral obligation and that only a morally defective agent can have moral obligation. According to such a conclusion, an essentially morally good God cannot have moral obligation.

Many argue for God's lack of moral obligation on the ground of His essential moral goodness. For example, Thomas V. Morris makes "a distinction between following a rule and merely acting in accordance with a rule" and argues that "as a maximally perfect being, God necessarily acts in accordance with those principles which lesser beings ought to comply with."²⁸ After asserting that God is necessarily morally good and that there is no possible world in which God does moral evil, Morris concludes that God does not have any moral obligation:

²⁸ Thomas V. Morris, "Duty and Divine Goodness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1984): 265.

We human beings exist in a state of being bound by moral duty. In this state we act under obligation, either satisfying or contravening our duties. Because of his distinctive nature, God does not share our ontological status. Specifically, *he does not share our relation to moral principle—that of being bound by some of these principles as duties.* Nevertheless, God acts in accordance with those principles which would express duties for a moral agent in his relevant circumstances.²⁹

Because God lacks the possibility of doing other than moral good, the ligature which binds human beings with moral good cannot bind God. Similarly, William P. Alston defines the condition of moral obligation in this way: “...a necessary condition of the truth of ‘S ought to do A’ is at least *the metaphysical possibility that S does not do A*,” and concludes that “...no obligations attach to God, assuming, as we are here, that God is essentially perfectly good.”³⁰ Quinn also writes that moral goodness is simply in God’s nature and that God is not obligated to achieve moral good.³¹ Quinn’s argument

²⁹ Morris, “Duty and Divine Goodness,” 266 (My Italic). I agree with Morris on this point about God, i.e., that God does not have any moral obligation because of the lack of the possibility of doing other than moral good. However, I do not agree with his general view of moral value and obligation. Endorsing “the duty mode,” Morris claims that moral goodness comes from fulfilling moral duty. By doing so, he puts moral obligation prior to moral value. The different views about moral value and obligation suggests that Morris and I may have different reasons for thinking that God lacks the possibility of doing other than moral good and thus is free from obligation. I think that it is because God’s actions are the first realization and standard of moral good, as Alston and Adams claimed. See William P. Alston, “Some Suggestions for Divine Command Theories,” in *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, ed. M. D. Beaty, 303-324 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) 322, and Adams, “Finite and Infinite Goods,” 14. Morris may think that God’s actions accord with a preexisting moral obligation.

³⁰ Alston, “Some Suggestions for Divine Command Theories,” 315. Alston disagrees with Morris’s claim that God does not have freedom of doing either moral good or evil. However, Alston’s claim that there is no possibility that God does other than moral good means that God is not free in the libertarian view which Morris takes. Therefore, in spite of Alston’s own idea that his idea is different from Morris’s, it is not very different from Morris after all.

³¹ Quinn, “Divine Command Theory,” 70-71.

for God's lack of moral obligation is grounded on "a *necessity* of the divine nature,"³² and, by a necessity of the divine nature, he means God's essential moral goodness.

Based on the ideas that moral goodness is prior to moral obligation and that only a morally defective agent can have a moral obligation, I have argued that an essentially morally good God does not have moral obligation. I have introduced several similar arguments for God's lack of moral obligation. The common ground of these arguments for God's lack of moral obligation is His essential moral goodness. This fact reveals that, though it was not explicitly pointed out, all the arguments imply both that only a morally defective agent can have moral obligation and that moral goodness is prior to moral obligation.

The priority of moral goodness to moral obligation supports not only the idea that an essentially morally good God does not have a moral obligation but also that God is the standard of moral goodness. Moral obligation is something that requires an agent to do moral good. On the contrary, moral goodness is a property of an action or agent that exists by actually obtaining. If moral goodness is prior to moral obligation, then it means that a morally good agent or a morally good action exists before any moral obligation. The best candidate for the morally good agent that exists before moral obligation is God. Moral goodness exists because God exists. Moral obligation simply follows moral goodness, which is nothing but the nature of God.

³² Ibid., 71.

There are several divine voluntarists who claim that God is the standard of moral goodness. Alston maintains that God, the particular person, is the supreme standard of moral goodness:

On my particularist view God will simply act as He is inclined to act, will simply act in accordance with His character, and that will necessarily be the best. No preliminary stage of checking the relevant principles is required.

I would invite one who finds it arbitrary to invoke God as the supreme standard of goodness to explain why this is more arbitrary than the invocation of a supreme general principle. Perhaps the principle seems self-evidently true to him. But it will not seem so to many others; and it seems self-evident to some that God is the supreme standard.³³

Adams offers a similar claim as follows: “To the extent that I am following Plato at all, it is as an exemplar that I am conceiving of the Good itself. If God is the Good itself, then the Good is not an abstract object but a concrete (though not a physical) individual. Indeed it is a person, or importantly like a person... God is the exemplar or standard of a goodness that includes much more than moral virtue.³⁴ Adams asserts that God is the standard of goodness, and that excellence is resemblance of God.³⁵

Alston’s and Adams’s claim that a particular person, rather than a principle, is the standard of moral goodness makes good sense if it is considered that moral goodness is prior to moral obligation. It is very reasonable to say that a particular person or his

³³ Alston, “Some Suggestions for Divine Command Theorists,” 320, 322.

³⁴ Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

action is morally good, yet it is utterly absurd to say that a principle is morally good.

Hence, it is not only plausible but also natural that a person, rather than a principle, be the standard of moral goodness, and the best candidate for this person is God.

Now, on the ground of the priority of moral goodness to moral obligation, I conclude that one of the essential ideas of divine voluntarism is true, i.e., that an essentially morally good God does not have any moral obligation. Also, on the same ground, I maintain that God is the standard of moral goodness. God and His actions are both moral goodness itself and the basis of moral obligation.

Humans, Morality, and God's Will

In the second chapter of the thesis, I argued that God's antecedent will is prior to His obligating will as its ground and that God's antecedent will constitutes moral obligation only when it can differ from His consequent will because of human freedom of choice. In the present chapter, I have showed that moral good is prior to moral obligation and that it is the standard of moral obligation. Also, I have argued that moral obligation occurs only for the agent who has the possibility of doing other than moral good. If we put together these points that are discussed thus far, we can make two conclusions: (1) the object of God's antecedent will is human moral good and (2) God's will for human moral obligation comes from God's will for human moral good and His bestowal of freedom upon humans.

In the discussion of the three aspects of God's will, it was clearly shown that God wills moral obligation in His obligating will, but it was not clearly shown that God wills *moral good* in His antecedent will. What were mentioned as objects of God's antecedent will were particular actions such as telling the truth, and the common feature of those actions was not explicitly discussed. When, however, the idea that God's obligating will is grounded on *God's antecedent will* is considered together with the idea that moral obligation is grounded on *moral good*, it becomes clear that the object of God's antecedent will is human moral good. This conclusion denies the idea that divine voluntarism is the claim that God merely *superimposes* moral obligation. The theory of divine voluntarism that I defend claims that God primarily wills a special good for humans, i.e., moral good and that God's will for moral obligation is solidly rooted in God's will for moral good.

The point that God's obligating will obtains only when God's antecedent will and consequent will are distinct because of human freedom dovetails well with the point that moral obligation occurs only for the agent who has the possibility of doing other than moral good. God's willing for human moral good does not necessarily include God's willing for human moral obligation. Only when God wills to give humans freedom of choice with moral matters while holding His antecedent will that humans do moral good, He has the obligating will and morally obligates humans. To look at the situation another way, without moral freedom, humans are still capable of doing moral

good, and they could even be essentially morally good. By having freedom, i.e., the possibility of doing other than moral good, however, it is not possible for humans to have an essential moral goodness. In other words, they can sometimes be morally good, but they cannot be essentially morally good. This is why they are under moral obligation. In conclusion, humans are willed to be morally obligated by God in situations in which they are willed to do moral good and are free.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF RELATION

BETWEEN GOD’S WILL AND MORAL OBLIGATION

In the second chapter of this thesis, I discussed the three aspects of God’s will, namely God’s obligating will, God’s antecedent will, and God’s consequent will. I argued that God’s antecedent will is the most fundamental part in God’s will. In the third chapter, I showed that the employment of all the three aspects of God’s will in the theory of divine voluntarism allows the theory to explain God’s will for human moral obligation separately from God’s will for human moral good. In this, the last chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the nature of the *relation* between God’s will and moral obligation. In regard to the relation between God’s will and moral obligation, four views have been put forth: the analysis view, the causation view, the reduction view, and the supervenience view. I will examine and criticize the analysis view, the causation view, and the reduction view, and then I will introduce and defend the supervenience view.

The Analysis View

Adams once maintained that divine voluntarism is a theory that “offers an analysis of the meaning of ‘wrong’ in Judeo-Christian religious ethical discourse.”

According to Adams, divine voluntarism is the claim that, in Judeo-Christian discourse,

the meaning of the term “being morally wrong” can be analyzed in terms of “being contrary to God’s commands.”³⁶ Later, such view about the relation between moral obligation and God’s will or command was called as the analysis view.

The problem with this view was that it makes meaningful discourse about moral issues between Judeo-Christian believers and non-believers impossible. In response to this problem, Adams gave up the analysis view and endorsed the reduction view. Murphy, however, thinks the analysis view can be defensible against this problem. Murphy maintains that divine voluntarism can be a claim about the meaning of “moral obligation” for both theists and nontheists in the following way: “One could say that the meaning of ‘morally obligatory’ includes ‘being commanded by God,’ for both theists and nontheists. Those who do not grasp that it is of the essence of obligations to be divinely commanded — whether theists or nontheists — fail to be masterful users of the language of moral obligation.”³⁷ According to this view, the key point of divine voluntarism is that “the concept of obligation is inherently theological.”³⁸

I think the idea that the concept of obligation is inherently theological or the one that the concept of moral obligation is to be analyzed in terms of God’s will may be right. Nevertheless, I do not think that such an idea can constitute divine voluntarism. I understand divine voluntarism to be a claim about the actual *property* of moral

³⁶ Adams, “A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness,” in *Religion and Morality*, ed., G Outka and J. P. Reeder, Jr., 318-347 (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1973), 319.

³⁷ Murphy, “Theological Voluntarism”

³⁸ Ibid.

obligation, and not about the *meaning* of the term, “moral obligation.” If divine voluntarism is only a claim about what certain groups of people mean by moral terms, as Adams early stated, divine voluntarism is harmless to any other ethical theories. Also, the analysis view that Murphy considers plausible, viz., the claim that “the meaning of ‘morally obligatory’ includes ‘being commanded by God’ for both theists and nontheists” is not better than Adams’s analysis view. If it is a claim only about meaning, then this view does not constitute divine voluntarism for just the same reason that Adams’s analysis view does not. If this claim is grounded on some ontological facts about moral obligation, then the view needs to provide a further explanation or argument, and the further explanation or argument must be the critical part of the theory. In conclusion, I do not think that the analysis view of the relation between God’s will and moral obligation, either Adams’s version or Murphy’s version, is worthy to be considered as divine voluntarism.

The Causation View

The causation view about the relation between God’s will and moral obligation claims that that moral obligation is causally dependent on God’s will, i.e., a moral obligation is caused by God’s will. As Murphy discusses,³⁹ the causation view can be interpreted in two different ways, according to whether it speaks of God’s obligating or

³⁹ Ibid.

God's antecedent will. God's obligating will is God's will for the obtaining of moral obligation and God's antecedent will is God's will for the performance of an action. If God's obligating will is applied to the causation view, then divine voluntarism will be the claim that S's moral obligation to Φ is caused by 'God's willing that S *be obligated to* Φ .' If God's antecedent will is applied to the causation view, then divine voluntarism will be the claim that S's moral obligation is caused by 'God's antecedently willing that S Φ .' Even though I already discussed the problem of formulating divine voluntarism in terms of God's obligating will, it will be still good to consider the causation view formulated in terms of both God's obligating will and God's antecedent will. Since Quinn maintained the first version of the causation view and later changed to the second version, the examination of causation view will be done via an examination of the early and later versions of Quinn's divine voluntarism.

Quinn once claimed that S's moral obligation to Φ is caused by God's willing that S *be obligated to* Φ .⁴⁰ As Murphy admitted, this view has "some plausibility as a result of God's sovereignty and omnipotence."⁴¹ However, there is a serious problem with the view that moral obligation is causally related to God's obligating will. Either this view supports only what is trivially true and thus does not make divine voluntarism a distinctive theory or it is inconsistent with the assumption that God is sincere.

According to the doctrine of divine sovereignty, moderately interpreted, it is true that all

⁴⁰ Quinn, "An Argument for Divine Command Ethics," 298.

⁴¹ Murphy, "Theological Voluntarism."

states of affairs are dependent on God's will and, in that sense, it is true that all states of affairs are caused by God's will. The claim that moral obligation is caused by God's will in this sense, however, does not constitute any distinctive ethical theory because it does not exclude other theories such as naturalism, Kantianism, or utilitarianism.⁴² As we saw earlier, according to the doctrine of divine sovereignty all physical states of affairs are caused by God's will. This fact, however, does not make any distinctive theory of physics. Likewise, the claim that all deontic states of affairs are caused by God's will to the same extent that other states of affairs are caused by God's will does not make any distinctive theory of ethics. Still, while conceding such a claim, people can provide various different explanations for morality.

In response to this objection, it might be argued that the causal relation between God's will and moral obligation is particularly strong. For example, it might be argued that moral obligation is *exclusively* caused by God's willing such a moral obligation and thus that one neither can think of any reason for God's obligating will nor provide any other additional explanation for moral obligation besides God's obligating will. But the causation view, especially when it is maintained in this strong sense, has another serious problem: it is inconsistent with an assumption that God is sincere. If moral obligation is caused by God's merely willing such an obligation, and if there is no other reason or explanation for God's thus willing, then moral obligation is willed by God just for the

⁴² We already discussed Murphy's worry about this problem in the second chapter of this thesis.

sake of moral obligation. This conclusion implies that God's willing that S be morally obligated to Φ is not grounded on God's willing that S Φ . It is possible that, regardless of the fact that God wants S to ψ , He will that S be obligated to Φ . This result makes it hard to regard God as sincere. The conflict with the assumption of God's sincerity becomes more serious as the causal relation is regarded as stronger. Thus, the causation view to which God's obligating will is applied causes a dilemma. If the view endorses the causal relation between God's obligating will and moral obligation in a weak sense, it does not make divine voluntarism a distinctive theory; if the view endorses the causal relation in a strong sense, it is inconsistent with the assumption that God is sincere.

Later, Quinn formulates another version of the causation view employing God's antecedent will. The new theory defended by Quinn supports the causal relation between God's *antecedent* will and moral obligation: "For every human agent x, state of affairs S, and time t, (i) it is morally obligatory that x bring about S at t if and only if God *antecedently* intends that *x bring about S at t*, and (ii) if it is morally obligatory that x bring about S at t, then by antecedently intending that x bring about S at t God brings it about that it is morally obligatory that x bring about S at t."⁴³ Quinn characterizes the causal relation between God's will and moral obligation as very strong by attributing to

⁴³ Quinn, "Divine Command Theory," 56 (My Italic). Here, Quinn takes "intending" of God as being a stronger notion than "willing" of God, and maintains that "intending" of God is the foundation of moral obligation. I think we can explain moral obligation with God's willing alone without employing any stronger notion such as God's intending.

it the features of “totality, exclusivity, activity, immediacy, and necessity.”⁴⁴ He explains

these features as follows:

By totality, I mean that what does the bringing about is the total cause of what is brought about. By exclusivity, I mean that what does the bringing about is the sole cause of what is brought about. By activity, I mean that what does the bringing about does so in virtue of the exercise of some active power. By immediacy, I mean that what does the bringing about causes what is brought about immediately rather than by means of secondary causes or instruments. And by necessity, I mean that what does the bringing about necessitates what is brought about.⁴⁵

The causation view in terms of God’s antecedent will is not inconsistent with the assumption that God is sincere, because it maintains that S’s moral obligation to Φ is caused by God’s willing that S Φ . That is, moral obligation occurs because God actually wants a certain action to be performed. Also, this view makes divine voluntarism a distinctive theory, because the claim that the moral obligation is caused by God’s willing that the action be performed can challenge other ethical theories such as naturalism or utilitarianism. The causation view, however, still has a problem, even though it is formulated in terms of God’s antecedent will. No matter whether the causation view employs God’s obligating will or His antecedent will, there is a serious problem fundamental in characterizing the relation between God’s will and moral obligation *as causal*.

A fundamental problem of the causation view is that it makes God, in generating

⁴⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

moral obligation, dependent on a causal law which exists independently of God.

According to the causation view, God's will, either His obligating will or His antecedent will, works for the generation of moral obligation, but only because there is a law which makes God's will cause moral obligation. Then, like the command formulation of divine voluntarism, this view implies the conclusion that God's obligation-generating activity is dependent on something other than God's will, viz., an independent causal law. This conclusion is what divine voluntarists want to avoid.

This problem is related to one of the problems that Murphy sees regarding the causation view. According to Murphy, "for one to be a practical authority over another is, at least, for one to have some sort of control over others' reasons for action."⁴⁶ If, however, God's will merely causes S's moral obligation to Φ , the reason for S's Φ -ing does not essentially include God's will. Murphy presented his worry as follows:

But if God's commands to Φ have merely causal power to bring about obligations to Φ , then the resultant state of affairs that is the reason for action is its being obligatory to Φ — a state of affairs that need not be in any way constituted by God's issuing any commands.⁴⁷

God's will happens to cause moral obligation, and God's will is important only to that extent. It may have been possible that something other than God's will cause moral obligation. This possibility implies that God's will is not authoritative over humans.

Some people might try to solve this problem by saying "God may not be

⁴⁶ "Theological Voluntarism."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

essentially authoritative over humans, but He is actually authoritative over humans because it actually happens to be the case that God's will and nothing else causes moral obligation. Thus, the causation view is defensible." The risk to God's authority, however, is more serious in this version of the causation view. Consider this problem in relation with the problem that I presented regarding the causation view. According to the causation view, the fact that God is authoritative over humans is possible or actual only in virtue of a certain causal law. If the causal law did not exist or if it were different, God's will might not cause moral obligation to obtain and God would not be authoritative over humans. That is, God's authority is made to depend on an independent causal law. Since this consequence is what divine voluntarists want to avoid, the causation view regarding the relation between God's will and moral obligation should not be the formulation of divine voluntarism.

As Murphy rightly states, the problems of the causation view show that there should be no distance between God's will and moral obligation.⁴⁸ If God's will is as distinct from moral obligation as an effect is distinct from its cause, then the connection between God's will and moral obligation is too loose. There is a distance between God's will and moral obligation. Then, we cannot help considering an independent law that governs the distance relation between God's will and moral obligation. This result makes God depend on something other than Himself in generating moral obligation.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Therefore, there should not be any distance between God's will and moral obligation. That is, God's will should be essentially related to moral obligation. There are two views that adequately specify this essential relation: either God's will is identical with moral obligation, or God's will constitutes a part of moral obligation.⁴⁹ The former is the reduction view and the latter is the supervenience view. Murphy thinks that the supervenience view is not defensible, but he seems to maintain that, in spite of some problems, the reduction view can be a plausible view. I, however, think that the reduction view has an unsolvable problem and cannot survive scrutiny, and I regard the supervenience view as making the best theory of divine voluntarism. In the next two sections, I will discuss these two views.

The Reduction View

The reduction view is the claim that the property of being morally obligatory is identical with the property of being willed by God. Adams defines and defends the reduction view in giving up the analysis view: "My new divine command theory of the nature of ethical wrongness, then, is that ethical wrongness is (i.e. is identical with) the property of being contrary to the commands of a loving God. I regard this as a metaphysically necessary, but not an analytic or a priori truth."⁵⁰ Adams asserts that the

⁴⁹ Murphy considers these two possibilities in "Theological Voluntarism."

⁵⁰ Adams, "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (1979): 76. Though Adams presents the reduction view in terms of God's commands, we can

statement of an identity relation between God's command and moral obligation is a necessary a posteriori truth and makes an analogy of the relation between God's command and moral obligation to the relation between the property of being H₂O and the property of being water.⁵¹ If divine voluntarism is formulated in terms of God's will according to this reduction view, the theory of divine voluntarism will be the claim that the property of being morally obligatory is identical with the property of being willed by God.

Murphy, however, expresses doubt about whether it is a necessary a posteriori truth that God's will is identical with moral obligation: "One might argue that Adam's analogy to 'H₂O is water' is inappropriate, as the identification of water with H₂O is clearly a posteriori, whereas the identification of the morally obligatory with the commanded by God is a priori."⁵² Murphy explains that since the identification of water with H₂O is clearly a posteriori, "no unintelligibility creeps into the life of agents that do not grasp that water is H₂O."⁵³ The agent who does not know that water is H₂O just misses one property of water, but still his knowledge of water is flawless as far as it goes. However, Murphy argues that since the identification of moral obligation with God's will (if they are identical) is a priori, there is unintelligibility in the life of an agent who

ignore this as an irrelevant issue and just focus on the nature of relation between (the will of) God and moral obligation.

⁵¹ Ibid., 71-73.

⁵² "Theological Voluntarism."

⁵³ Ibid.

does not know that moral obligation is identical with God's will.⁵⁴ According to Murphy, an agent who does not know that moral obligation is God's will has a completely wrong understanding of moral obligation.

I think Murphy's objection is not adequate. The ground of Murphy's objection is the idea that "It is clearly a priori that the only being that could impose the sort of obligation that could plausibly be classified as moral would be God."⁵⁵ In Adams's view, this idea is not right. He does not define moral obligation in terms of God's will, but simply claims that the property of being morally obligatory and the property of being willed by God are properties of the same thing. Therefore, Adams does not have to admit that it is a priori truth that moral obligation is identical with God's will. Adams's claims is that (at least some) humans get to know, by experience, that moral obligation is identical with God's will. This is the reason that Adams admits "the notion of the issuance of a divine command requires a theory of revelation for its adequate development."⁵⁶ This revelation can include the revelation of God, Himself, as well as the revelation of His will or commands. Thus, Adams's view can escape Murphy's worry.

According to the reduction view, the theory of divine voluntarism is the claim that the property of being morally obligatory is identical with the property of being willed by God. Again, God's willing can be interpreted as either His obligating will or

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Adams, "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again," 66-79.

His antecedent will.

First, if we understand God's will as an obligating will, then the reduction view will be the claim that moral obligation is identical with God's willing such an obligation. In spite of the first impression that this claim is plausible, it is false. Let us think of any specific example of S's moral obligation to Φ . "The property of S's being morally obligated to Φ " is clearly different from "the property of God's willing that the property of S's being morally obligated to Φ obtain." It is logically impossible that the former property is identical with the latter. Therefore, the reduction view cannot be right when God's obligating will is applied to it.

Second, if we understand God's will as God's antecedent will, then the reduction view will be the claim that S's moral obligation to Φ is identical with God's willing that S Φ . This view does not have the problem that arises for the claim that S's moral obligation to Φ is identical with God's willing that S's moral obligation to Φ obtain. It is not logically impossible that S's moral obligation to Φ is identical with God's willing that S Φ . Also, this view avoids the problems that the causation view has. Since this view claims that God's willing the performance of a certain action is *identical* with moral obligation, it does not make God dependent on something else such a causal law. This view is the most sophisticatedly developed version of divine voluntarism among the views thus far discussed.

Nevertheless, thus formulated the theory of divine voluntarism has a problem: it

entails an implausible consequence about moral obligation by rendering anything antecedently willed by God to be morally obligatory. Consider these three cases. First, God antecedently wills that a boy in Somalia eat enough healthy food and get the necessary nutrition for survival, but, after all, he starves to death. Second, God antecedently wills that a man marry Jane rather than Mary because God sees that Jane is a better woman for the man, but, after all, he marries Mary. Third, God antecedently wills that I tell the truth to my parents, but I lie to them.

There is God's antecedent will in all the three cases, yet, moral obligation occurs only in the last case. Even though God antecedently wills that a boy eat enough healthy food, it is not a moral obligation for the boy to eat enough healthy food. The boy probably desires to do so, and if the situation allows, he must do so. However, if there is no food, and the boy does not have any food to eat. God's antecedent will does not make any moral obligation for the boy. Likewise, even though God antecedently wills that a man marry Jane because Jane is a perfect woman for the man in the sight of God, God's will does not make any moral obligation to marry Jane. A man's choice to marry Mary rather than Jane may be an unwise choice, but it is not a moral evil. However, God's antecedent will that I tell truth to my parents does a make moral obligation for me. The reduction view that simply claims that moral obligation is identical with God's antecedent will entails an implausible consequences that the boy in Somalia has a moral obligation to eat enough healthy food and that the man has a moral obligation to marry

Jane.

I agree with Murphy in thinking that the reduction view is right in eliminating the distance between God's will and moral obligation. However, God's antecedent will can be towards many other actions and events than the actions to which moral obligation is applied, and thus moral obligation cannot be regarded simply as identical with God's antecedent will. That is, God's antecedent will is *constitutive of* moral obligation, but it is not *identical with* moral obligation. Therefore, we should consider some other constituents of moral obligation or conditions under which some of God's antecedent willing creates moral obligations.

The Supervenience View

I advocate the supervenience view about the relation between God's will and moral obligation. Quinn once wrote "Since supervenience relations are supposed to be asymmetrical, this possibility is worth exploring, though, as far as I know, no one has formulated a divine command theory in supervenience terms."⁵⁷ After Quinn wrote this, Murphy discussed the supervenience view in great detail, even though finally he rejected it.

Murphy takes the intuitive notion of supervenience as "the no-difference-in-

⁵⁷ Quinn, "Divine Command Theory," 54.

moral-properties-without-some-difference-in-nonmoral-properties thesis.”⁵⁸ Murphy states that when moral obligation supervenes on God’s command in this intuitive sense, there are two possibilities: Either moral obligation is wholly distinct from God’s command, or it is partially constituted by God’s command. Murphy rejected the first possibility because if the supervenience view claims that moral obligation is wholly distinct from God’s command, then the supervenience view will have the same problem as the causation view has:

For the causation view is, after all, just the adequately strengthened supervenience view plus the claim that the dependence relationship involved in a particular sort of causal dependence. So, understood as affirming a dependence relationship between wholly distinct moral obligations and divine commands, the supervenience view has all of the problems of the causation view.⁵⁹

Murphy’s conclusion is that the supervenience view must be the claim that moral obligation is partially constituted by God’s commands.

I think Murphy is right in his reasoning for this conclusion. Let us apply Murphy’s discussion to the theory of divine voluntarism formulated in terms of God’s will. If the supervenience view maintains that moral obligation supervenes on God’s will and that moral obligation is wholly distinct from God’s will, then the supervenience view must admit a kind of law which changes moral obligation correspondingly with God’s will. Then, the supervenience view will make God depend on this kind of law in making moral obligation, just as the causation view does. Therefore, the supervenience

⁵⁸ Murphy, “Theological Voluntarism.”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

view must be the claim that moral obligation is partially constituted by God's will. This is the supervenience view that I shall defend. I have argued that divine voluntarism must be formulated in terms of God's antecedent will. Therefore, the theory of divine voluntarism that I will advocate is the claim that moral obligation supervenes on God's antecedent will in the sense that moral obligation is partially constituted by God's antecedent will.

Thus formulated, the supervenience view does not have the problems that the causation view has, because the supervenience view claims that moral obligation is not wholly distinct from God's will and, rather, that God's will partially constitutes moral obligation. Such a claim allows God to be authoritative over humans. Also, the supervenience view does not have the problem the reduction view has, because the supervenience view does not assert that moral obligation is constituted *only* by God's antecedent will or that God's antecedent will *always* makes moral obligation. According to the supervenience view, not everything that God antecedently wills is moral obligation.

Now, the question is what else besides God's antecedent will constitutes moral obligation. In the second and third chapters of this thesis, I argued that even though divine voluntarism must be formulated primarily in terms of God's antecedent will, God's obligating will also must be employed in the theory of divine voluntarism. Now, if moral obligation is only partially constituted by God's antecedent will, it is natural to

consider the other constituent of moral obligation as having something to do with God's obligating will, though not necessarily as being identical with it.⁶⁰ Therefore, a careful examination of God's obligating will can give a clue for the additional constituent of moral obligation to God's antecedent will.

I showed that, for S's moral obligation to Φ , God antecedently wills that S Φ , and God also wills that S be obligated to Φ . The first willing is regarded as being God's antecedent will, and the second is regarded as being God's obligating will. It might seem that God's obligating will is completely separate and independent from God's antecedent will. As I argued in the second chapter of this thesis, however, God's obligating will is grounded on God's antecedent will. God's willing that S be obligated to Φ is, after all, God's willing that the action that He antecedently wills be morally obligatory.

It is not the case that God's obligating will obtains whenever God's antecedent will obtains.⁶¹ There are two conditions under which God's obligating will obtains. The first condition is that God bestows freedom of choice upon the agent regarding the particular action that He wills to be performed. In other words, God wills that His antecedently willing that S Φ constitute moral obligation for S to Φ only when God gives S the freedom to choose either to Φ or not to Φ . In this view, not everything that

⁶⁰ If God's obligating will is regarded as being one of the constituent of moral obligation, the problem of infinite regress will be raised.

⁶¹ If God's obligating will obtains whenever God's antecedent will obtains, God's antecedent will alone always constitute moral obligation, and God's antecedent will must be regarded as being identical with moral obligation.

God antecedently wills makes moral obligation. Only when God's bestowal of human freedom is added to God's antecedent will, God's obligating will obtains, and thus God's antecedent will constitutes moral obligation.

This condition, "God's bestowal of freedom of choice upon humans" rules out God's antecedent will from constituting moral obligation in the example of the boy in Somalia. The boy in Somalia does not have freedom of choice either to eat enough healthy food or not. God's consequent will that the boy starve to death did not come from God's bestowal of freedom upon him. Therefore, this freedom condition explains why the boy does not have any moral obligation to eat enough healthy food when God antecedently wills that he eat enough healthy food.

The second condition under which God's obligating will obtains is that God's antecedent will for a particular action is universal. God's antecedently willing that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ is universal when, for some other person P , God would will that $P \rightarrow \Phi$ if P was in the same situation as S . Only when God's antecedent will is universal can God's obligating will obtain. Thus, the reason for God's antecedent will that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ must not be a unique personal character that S has. God's antecedent will must include God's consideration of something universal.

This second condition explains why God's antecedent will that a man marry Jane does not constitute a moral obligation for the man. If God antecedently wills that a man marry Jane because she would make the best wife for him, God's primary

consideration in His antecedently willing that the man marry Jane is the personal characters of the man and Jane. If another man were put into the same situation, God would not will that he marry Jane. If, however, God antecedently wills that the man marry Jane not because he would make the best couple with Jane but because of something he did to Jane, then God's primary consideration in His antecedent will is not the personal nature of the man. God would will the same thing for any other man if he did the same thing to Jane as the first man did. In such a case, God's antecedent will that the man marry Jane would constitute a moral obligation for the man.

In summary, I have proposed that moral obligation supervenes on God's antecedent will in the sense that moral obligation is only partially constituted by God's antecedent will. Instead of immediately trying to identify the additional constituent of moral obligation, I have pointed out that it is God's obligating will which makes God's antecedent will constitute moral obligation. Then, I have discussed the two conditions under which God's obligating will obtains. The first condition is that God bestows human freedom of choice in regard to the action that He antecedently wills to be performed. The second condition is that God's antecedent will that $S \rightarrow \Phi$ is universal. Only when these two conditions are fulfilled, God wills that His antecedent will constitute moral obligation.

From the discussion summarized above, the two conditions under which God's obligating will obtains can be regarded as the additional constituents of moral obligation

to God's antecedent will. For S's moral obligation to Φ , it is necessary that God give S freedom of choice either to Φ or not to Φ and that God's willing of Φ -ing is universal. Then, in addition to God's antecedent willing that S Φ , God's bestowal of freedom and the universality of God's antecedent will are required for the constitution of moral obligation.

I, however, do not assert that God's antecedent will, God's bestowal of freedom and the universality of God's antecedent will are the complete constituents of moral obligation. The two conditions for the obtaining of God's obligating will are only necessary conditions for moral obligation, and they may not be the sufficient conditions for moral obligation. If there is some other condition for God's obligating will, it also must be regarded as being a constituent of moral obligation. Therefore, I maintain that God's antecedent will partially constitutes moral obligation in virtue of God's obligating will, and that, whatever other conditions are required for the obtaining of God's obligating will, they are the constituents of moral obligation that are additional to God's antecedent will.

It will make my formulation more clear to discuss Murphy's objection to the supervenience view. As a problem of the supervenience view that claims "moral obligation is only partially constituted by divine command," Murphy proposes that it is impossible satisfactorily to identify the other constituent of moral obligation in addition to God's will. He claims one has to satisfy the following conditions when identifying

the other constituent of moral obligation:

It is nonnegotiable that (1) the state of affairs *its being morally obligatory to Φ* is partially constituted by *God's commanding Φ -ing*. It is nonnegotiable that (2) there is, apart from *God's commanding Φ -ing*, at least one state of affairs S that partially constituted *its being morally obligatory to Φ* . It is nonnegotiable that (3) S either obtains necessarily or at the least necessarily obtains if *God's commanding Φ -ing* obtains (Otherwise moral obligation would not supervene on divine command). And it is nonnegotiable that (4) S not involve moral obligation.⁶²

Condition (1), condition (2), and condition (4) are satisfied by the theory of divine voluntarism that I advocate. Condition (3), however, is not satisfied. It is not necessary that when God antecedently wills that S Φ , God give S freedom of choice to Φ or not to Φ . In the example of the boy in Somalia, when God antecedently wills that the boy eat enough healthy food, God does not give him freedom of choice to eat enough healthy food. Neither is it necessary that when God antecedently wills that S Φ , God's antecedent will be universal. When God antecedently wills that a man marry Jane because she will make the best wife for the man, God's antecedent will is not universal.

I will show that the failure to satisfy condition (3) is not a problem for the theory that I defend. First, contrary to Murphy's claim, moral obligation still can supervene on God's antecedent will when condition (3) is not satisfied. Earlier, I pointed out that Murphy took the intuitive notion of supervenience as "the no-difference-in-moral-properties-without-some-difference-in-nonmoral-properties." If this notion is applied to divine voluntarism formulated in terms of God's antecedent will, divine voluntarism is

⁶² "Theological Voluntarism."

the claim that God's antecedent will differs whenever moral obligation differs, and it is not the claim that moral obligation differs whenever God's antecedent will differs.

Therefore, even though the other constituents of moral obligation do not always come with God's antecedent will and thus some of God's antecedent will fails to constitute moral obligation, moral obligation still supervenes on God's antecedent will.

Actually, Murphy's condition (3) is wrong, and the supervenience view must not satisfy it. The other constituents must play the role of distinguishing God's antecedent will that constitutes moral obligation and God's other antecedent will that does not constitute moral obligation. If the additional constituents necessarily come with God's antecedent will, then everything that God antecedently wills will become morally obligatory. Then, the supervenience view has the same problem that the reduction view has. Therefore, the failure to satisfy condition (3) is a merit of the theory that I defend.

One of merits of the theory of divine voluntarism that I formulate is that it admits both God's antecedent will and God's obligating will. If a theory is formulated only in terms of God's obligating will without God's antecedent will, the theory implies that God's willing moral obligation is not related to God's willing the performance of an action. Then, the theory is inconsistent with the assumption that God is sincere. On the other hand, if a theory is formulated in terms of God's antecedent will without God's obligating will, the theory implies that something independent from God makes God's antecedent will to constitute moral obligation. The theory would then be inconsistent

with the assumption that God is sovereign over moral obligation.

By employing both God's antecedent will and God's obligating will, the theory that I propose is consistent with the assumptions that God is sovereign and that God is sincere. By employing God's obligating will and thus by admitting that God wills *moral obligation itself*, the theory admits God's sovereignty over moral obligation. Also, by acknowledging that God's willing moral obligation is grounded on God's willing *the performance of the action itself*, the theory is consistent with the assumption that God is sincere. The theory not only admits the mere obtaining of God's antecedent will and God's obligating will but also specifies the dynamic relation between the two. As a result, the theory can admit God's sovereignty over moral obligation without implying that moral obligation is merely superimposed by God and thus without sacrificing God's sincerity.

In addition, the two conditions that I presented for the obtaining of God's obligating will make this theory of divine voluntarism consistent with an intuitive view of moral obligation. Intuitively, moral obligation occurs only when humans are free, and moral obligation does not vary from person to person. I said that God's obligating will for a certain action can obtain in situations in which a human has freedom of choice in regard to the action and in which God's obligating will for the action could be applied to all humans. It is reasonable to regard these two conditions together as being the additional constituents of moral obligation. Also, the fact that God's obligating will

obtains under these two conditions does not put any limit on God's omnipotence.

Whether these two conditions are satisfied or not is decided by God's will and action.

The first condition is that *God* bestows freedom upon humans. The second condition is that the antecedent willing of *God* is universal. Therefore, the additional constituents of moral obligation do not make God depend on something other than Himself.

In conclusion, moral obligation is only partially constituted by God's antecedent will, and it is God's obligating will that makes God's antecedent will constitute moral obligation. The two conditions under which God's obligating will obtains are the additional constituents of moral obligation. Therefore, S's moral obligation to Φ is constituted by God's antecedent will that S Φ , the universality of God's antecedent will, and S's freedom to Φ or not to Φ . It should be examined whether there are still further conditions for the obtaining of God's obligating will, and if there are, the other conditions must be regarded as being constituents of moral obligation that are additional to God's antecedent will.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have formulated the theory of divine voluntarism in such a way that it is consistent with an intuitive assumption of moral obligation and standard theistic assumptions about God. In regard to morality, I assumed that moral obligation actually exists and defined it as being something that ties or binds an agent to a moral good by requiring the agent to achieve that moral good. Also, I assumed the standard theistic beliefs about God's omnibenevolence, omnipotence and, omniscience to be true; more specifically, I assumed that God is sincere, rational and sovereign over the world.

As preliminary work, I presented some problems that the command formulation of divine voluntarism has. According to Murphy, there are two motivations that people may have for supporting the command formulation: the purported analogy between God's obligation-generating activity and that of humans, and the worry that God's will is hard to know. The command formulation motivated by the purported analogy between God's obligation-generating activity and that of humans makes God dependent on a law independent of God's will. Also, whether God's will or God's command is knowable or not is irrelevant to the theory of divine voluntarism because divine voluntarism is not about how moral obligation is known but about what the nature of moral obligation is. Therefore, the command formulation of divine voluntarism is not preferable to the will

formulation of divine voluntarism.

To refine the will formulation of divine voluntarism, I first discussed what kind of God's will is relevant to moral obligation. I argued that, in order to explain S's moral obligation to Φ and S's actual violation or fulfillment of the moral obligation, three aspects of God's will must be considered: God's antecedent will, God's consequent will, and God's obligating will. Among the three, two aspects of God's will can be regarded as being the ground of moral obligation: God's obligating will, namely God's will that S is obligated to Φ , and God's antecedent will that $S \nrightarrow \Phi$. Divine voluntarists who have considered those distinct kinds of God's will have maintained that only one of them should be employed as a part of divine voluntarism. I argued that, even though God's antecedent will is to be regarded as being the ground of moral obligation, not only God's antecedent will but also God's obligating will must be included in the theory of divine voluntarism. The doctrine of divine sovereignty, which I (after Quinn) interpret so moderately that all theists would accept it, requires that we admit for any obtaining of moral obligation, that God wills the moral obligation itself. That is, divine voluntarism must consider God's will that S be obligated to Φ . Then, in virtue of the assumption that God is sincere, we have to admit that God antecedently wills the performance of any action that He wills to be morally obligatory. In other words, divine voluntarism must also consider God's antecedent will that $S \nrightarrow \Phi$.

Then, in order to show the advantage of admitting both God's antecedent will

and God's obligating will, I showed that doing moral good and fulfilling moral obligation are metaphysically different. Since doing moral good and fulfilling moral obligation are metaphysically different, divine voluntarism must be able to explain God's will for human moral good separately from God's will for human moral obligation. God's antecedent will can be regarded as God's willing human moral good whereas God's obligating will can be regarded as God's willing human moral obligation. Nevertheless, God's obligating will alone does not suffice to explain moral obligation because God's obligating will itself is rooted in God's antecedent will. Moral obligation cannot be fully understood if we do not admit God's antecedent will as well as God's obligating will.

Finally, I discussed the nature of the relation between God's will and moral obligation by considering four views: the analysis view, the causation view, the reduction view, and the supervenience view. The analysis view is not adequate as a theory of divine voluntarism because the analysis view is a claim about the meaning of a term 'moral obligation' whereas divine voluntarism is a claim about the metaphysical nature of moral obligation. Even if it be true that the notion of moral obligation is theological, such truth is irrelevant to divine voluntarism. The causation view has the problem of making God dependent on a causal law. The reduction view is not defensible, either, because it yields an implausible consequence that everything that God antecedently wills is morally obligatory. I then argued that moral obligation supervenes

on God's antecedent will in the sense that moral obligation is partially constituted by God's antecedent will. I discussed that God's bestowal of freedom upon humans and the universality of God's antecedent will as constituents of moral obligation in addition to God's antecedent will.

The formulation of divine voluntarism that I establish has the merit that it admits God's sovereignty in moral obligation without implying that God gratuitously superimposes moral obligation. By admitting God's obligating will as a partial constituent of moral obligation, my formulation of divine voluntarism admits that God is sovereign over moral obligation. At the same time, it is not the case that God wills human moral obligation for no good reason. God's obligating will is grounded on God's antecedent will, and God's antecedent will is God's will for human moral good.

The fact that God's willing moral obligation is grounded on God's willing moral good implies that God's willing moral obligation is ultimately grounded on God's willing that humans be like God. Because God Himself is the standard of moral good, God wills that humans be like Himself in willing that humans be morally good. The good that God ultimately wills in His willing moral obligation is not a minor good but the good that God Himself bears.

This theory of divine voluntarism, which claims that God's willing of moral obligation is related to God's willing that humans be like Himself, solves the dilemma the Euthyphro. The theory avoids the problem that God is limited by an independent

moral law or principle because the theory claims that moral obligation supervenes on God's antecedent will. Neither does it have the problems that morality is arbitrary and that God's goodness is trivial because God, Himself is the standard of moral goodness. The key to the Euthyphro's dilemma lies in the clear distinction between moral goodness and moral obligation and the priority of moral goodness to moral obligation. Moral obligation is determined by God's will; moral goodness is determined by God Himself.⁶³

I can expect a possible objection to the theory of divine voluntarism that I defend. One can argue that the theory does not give any satisfactory explanation of God's obligating will by arguing as follows: "It is logically possible for an agent to be essentially morally good without being under moral obligation. In other words, it is logically possible that humans could be essentially morally good like God. Then, an omnipotent God could will human moral good without willing human moral obligation. After all, humans are not like God at all when they are under moral obligation."

As this objection points out, the question of *why* God has His obligating will was not dealt with in this thesis. Two conditions for the obtaining of God's obligating will were mentioned. Nevertheless, they are only necessary conditions for God's obligating will. Necessary conditions are not sufficient conditions for God's obligating will. Moreover, conditions, either sufficient or necessary, still may not be the *reason* for

⁶³ Alston solves the Euthyphro dilemma in the exactly same way in "Some Suggestions for Divine Command Theorists," 324: "The divine nature, apart from anything God has willed or done, is sufficient to determine what counts as good, including morally good. But we are obliged, bound, or required to do something only on the basis of a divine command."

God's obligating will.

The question of why God has His obligating will cannot be answered fully without addressing theological issues. I conjecture that an important necessary condition for God's obligating will is human knowledge of moral goodness. Then, a following question will be why God gives such knowledge, which will result in human moral obligation. I think that this question can be answered by saying that God does not give the knowledge but only allows the knowledge. When God does not give humans the knowledge of moral good, He requires that humans *freely trust God* and be satisfied with the fact that God achieves all good. Human decision to know moral goodness and achieve it for themselves renders them to be under moral obligation. God wills to obligate them to do moral good when they choose to do moral good for themselves rather than trusting God's goodness.

After all, I think that the complete explanation of human moral obligation involves the personal relation between God and humans and thus that the completion of divine voluntarism is possible only in a discussion of theological issues. Such a task must be very challenging. The task is not impossible, however. If the task is successfully done, then it will yield a very insightful understanding about the relation between humans and God as well as about human moral situation.

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