

Reply to Comments on 'Commanding Belief'

I thank Max Baker-Hytch and Christian Miller for their generous comments on my paper. I don't yet know what exactly to reply. So my replies are brief.

Baker-Hytch objects against the premise that compliance with a command requires believing that there is a command. He denies this, with an example where there is compliance but some level of confidence less than belief—over one half but less than the belief threshold (p. 1).

I see two ways of replying. The first stipulates that compliance requires belief. Indeed, I stipulate as much (p. 166). The description of the example is then rejected. Furthermore, the religious sources requiring compliance do take it to involve belief. So the argument will stand for them. Nevertheless, the reply concedes that there can still be something close to compliance such that we can have it without belief.

The second reply denies that there is any level of confidence over one half but less than belief. This entangles us in a debate about belief and credence. However, I am not familiar enough with this debate to take part in it seriously.

Miller's comments address various parts of the paper. I do not think I disagree with anything he says, and I think I agree with everything he says. The replies clarify points properly, and provoke further thought.

But there might be one minor disagreement, insubstantial in this context. Miller contends that saying "I have a moral obligation to help my friend, and to do so for the reason that it would express love of my neighbor... is a lot more plausible than saying that I have a moral obligation to help my friend, and to do so for the reason that God issued the command" (p. 2). It seems to me that one might have an obligation to help a friend out of love and for reason of God's commanding it. God's commands might create new obligations or deepen existing obligations because e.g. we owe God a lot. But I do not know whether Miller is implying otherwise.

A final point: Miller wonders whether coming to a belief could be an action and thus directly subject to a command (p. 2-3). Crescas indeed presents an argument along such lines for the conclusion that there cannot be a command to believe in God. However, this argument, depending on direct doxastic voluntarism, was beyond the scope of the paper.