

“(2) Universal moral truths often must be understood comparatively even though they are not cast in that form. Thus God “desired mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6, Matt 9:13, 12:7) yet the sacrificial system was part of His revelation as well. This, then, must be understood in terms of priorities and by saying, “this first and then that” (cf. 1Sam 15:22, Ps 51:17,19, Jer 7:22-23).

(3) Negative moral principles include affirmatives and affirmatives include negatives so that when any sin is forbidden, the opposite duty is urged upon us and when duty is encouraged, its opposite sin is forbidden. So, Deuteronomy 6:13 commands us to serve God, we are thereby forbidden to serve any other god- without the text explicitly forbidding it. Likewise, when we are commanded to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12) , we are forbidden to curse them. Stealing is prohibited (Exodus. 20:15), but diligence in our job and whole tenor of life is therefore set forth.”

Walter C. Kaiser Jr. “ Toward Old Testament Ethics” page 65

### **Interpretation of the Decalogue**

“The interpretation of the Decalogue is not especially difficult, but there are a few observations that should be borne in mind. They include:

- 1) The moral law has a loving spirit in its prologue as well as in the main body of its commands. A course of action ought to be taken because it best reflects the character, nature, and will of God.
- 2) The Decalogue could have been stated positively throughout as well as negatively, **for moral law is always double-sided**. Every moral act is at the same time also a refraining from a contrary mode of action that could have been taken.
- 3) Merely omitting or refraining from doing a forbidden thing is not moral at all, otherwise a command could be fulfilled by sheer inactivity, which in the moral realm is just another name for death.
- 4) Consequently, when an evil is forbidden in one of the commands, its opposite good must be practiced before one can be called obedient.
- 5) To reject virtue is to choose vice, thus the absence of positive moral action has the force of rejecting that value or virtue.
- 6) A command is never fulfilled either by the mere refraining to engage in an act (e.g. murdering) or by a single act of positive aid. Therefore we will not only refrain from injuring our neighbor, but we will do all that is in our power to contribute to the life and the well-being of our neighbor.

7) The command speaks not only to acts attitudes, but to any and all incentives, enticements, or pressures that lead up to a thing forbidden.

8) Since it is easier to state in fewer words a command in the negative form, and since that negative form strives to meet the strong current of evil in the human heart, most of the Decalogue takes this form. But our freedom in grace is so large that it would be difficult to give a set of moral prescriptions in the positive form with the scope and succinctness with which the Decalogue is presently cast.”

Quotation from Walter C. Kaiser Jr. , “Toward Old Testament Ethics, pages 83,84