“Getting Caught in the Negative”
“The Peril of Emphasizing a Negative”
“Accentuating the Positive”

Text Act 15:1 Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

This was the position taken by Jewish Christians when Gentiles began coming into the Church. They placed their whole emphasis on a negative. Jews and Gentiles alike believed in the gospel but while the Gentiles dispensed with the Law, the Jews did not, and they staked everything on the mere denial of a position held by others. Nothing can ever come out of bare negation, and there is always the danger that it may take the place of what you positively believe.

(1) There are sects today that are quite outmoded for any intelligent person, and yet this same sect can produce some of the finest types of Christian character. The reason is that with all their narrowness they hold fast to some positive truths, but too often they are not content with that and take to denouncing all views that differ from their own. In course of time this mere antagonism becomes their religion, and then they merely cumber the ground.

(2) The principle holds good in the case of other sects which pride themselves on their liberalism. They have broken away from an outworn mode of thought, and this is well, but in their emancipation they contrast themselves with those who are not so favoured. They cease to have much interest in what they do believe, and are satisfied with not believing what other people do.

Conclusion The real argument against most forms of scepticism is not that they are false, but that they are empty. It can matter little to anybody what you do not believe. The question always arises when you have condemned the errors of other men, what truth can you put in their place? Jesus could say “ye have had it said of old, but I say.” He didn’t stop with a mere criticism of the past, but he went on with a positive affirmation.

Don’t get bogged down in the negative. Christianity must forever offer to the world a dynamic positive.

It is interesting to note that these Jewish Christians spend all their time opposing Paul. Their Christianity was wholly negative, with the result that it ceased to count, and the movement went forward without it. It had given the new religion to the world, and seemed destined to mould and direct it, but it fell by the wayside. It is a tragedy which has many parallels in history, and religious history generally. Movements which began gloriously and brought liberty and new life have died as mere obstructions, not because they had outlived their usefulness but because they allowed themselves to drift into mere negation. The thing they stood for was forgot-

1 Jesus repeated this phrase several times in Matthew 5
2 Cf Acts 14:19-15:6
On the front and back of a notecard titled "The Foolishness of Preaching," King writes, "Preaching stirs within men a desire to change the social situation" and that "It is through the Foolishness of preaching that many have found a new way of life which [brings] joy and peace" (1948–1954).

ten in the effort to hinder some other movement which was working for the same object in a different way. What the world demands is always the positive thing, however it may be presented, and those who do nothing to advance it are ruthlessly pushed aside.

AD. CSKC: Sermon file, folder 50, Sermons Not Preached.