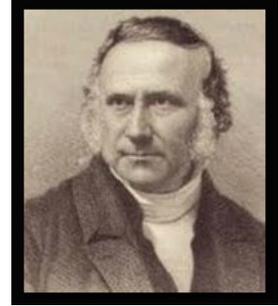


Proselyting



During the progress of a revival of religion, I remarked the absence of the young people of one family from our meetings, which they had been accustomed to attend, and in which their attention had been turned towards religion. They had become serious inquirers about the way of salvation. I had conversed with them. Their solemnity appeared to be growing more deep; and I was surprised at their absence. I soon found they had been very urgently requested to attend similar religious meetings of another church, and had yielded to the solicitation. They preferred to attend there. The young minister of that church was particularly attentive to them, visiting them almost daily, and sometimes more, and taking special pains to induce them to attend all his religious exercises. He would invite them, and urge them, and sometimes send for them. One of their parents told me, “how very much interested” they were in Mr. B—, and expressed the opinion, they “ought to go to church where they feel the most interest. And then, Mr. B— is so attentive; they love him dearly; the girls think there never was such a minister; they can talk about nothing else but Mr. B—.” I replied, that I should rather hear they were “interested” about Christ than about him; and enquired how they appeared to be affected on the subject of salvation. The reply was, “Mr. B— thinks they are getting along very well; and they seem so happy when they come from his meetings.” I asked whether they believed, that God had given them a new heart, and was answered, “No, not yet; but they seem very much engaged.”

It was manifest, as I thought, that their favorite, Mr. B—, was tickling their vanity and pride by his visits and other attentions, which were encouraged by parental influence. Through the medium of a trust-worthy friend of the family I aimed to have some influence upon them; but it was all in vain. These three young persons were sometimes in our religious meetings, but it was manifest that they were dissatisfied there; and we thought their influence upon our other young people tended more to levity than solemnity, to fanaticism than to faith. But they did not annoy us long. They continued their preference for Mr. B—, they became his “converts;” and within a year from that time, they: had thrown off all the restraints of religion, and one of them all restraints of parental authority.

An interest about religion may be very different from an interest in it. Men talk of being “interested,” and “interesting meetings.” This is all suspicious. It is commonly a mark of either fanaticism or pride, or of both. True religion is solemn and humble. And if it is happy, it is happy in truth, in God, in duty. To mislead souls is no trifle. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.