

MILLENNIAL CHURCH.*

IF we had space we would quote from the "ROLL and BOOK," the largest part of the sixteenth chapter, to which we especially refer the candid and curious. Each reader will, of course, interpret the sentences after his own light. The biblical student will probably pronounce them rank heresies, the scientific arrant nonsense, the poetic dull theology; but upon the disciples of Association we might urge them as a development of that law of union, under which the "Church," from which the book proceeds, has flourished for so many years, while numerous efforts on other principles have struggled for a season and failed.

It is interesting to observe, that while Fourier in France was speculating on the attainment of many advantages by union, these people have, at home, actually attained them. Fourier has the merit of beautiful words and theories; and their importation from a foreign land is made subject for exultation by a large and excellent portion of our public; but the Shakers have the superior merit of excellent actions and practices; unappreciated, perhaps, because they are not exotic. "Attractive Industry and Moral Harmony," on which Fourier dwells so promisingly, have long characterized the Shakers, whose plans have always in view the passing of each individual into his or her right position, and of providing suitable, pleasant, and profitable employment for every one. A pretty close parallel could be drawn between these two parties, were this the occasion to adduce it.

Friendly reviewers commonly conclude with a strong recommendation to read the book criticised. On this occasion we urge no such course; but rather that a perusal of the work should be delayed until the reader is in a state to appreciate it with fairness and candor. A condition

* A Holy, Sacred, and Divine ROLL and BOOK; from the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of the Earth: revealed in the United Society at New Lebanon, county of Columbia, State of New York, United States of America. In two Parts. Part I. Received by the church of this communion, and published in union with the same. Printed in the United Society, Canterbury, N. H. 1843. 8vo. pp. 222.

which, looking at the book and its pretensions from exoteric ground, demands much suavity, even from the friendly mind.

Considerable prejudice is occasionally harbored against the Millennial Church, on the ground of the unnatural doctrine and practice it is said to maintain on the important subject of marriage. In the ordinary course of the natural feelings, the idea of a celibate or virgin life, must present itself as so cold, cheerless, and even ungodlike a state of existence, that the man or woman living under the influence of *natural* instincts is, by the law of nature, bound to condemn any one who whispers a doubt of the propriety of continually abiding subject to that law. Now, upon this point, the doctrine of the Church is made plain in the work before us. If not for the first time avowed, it is at least brought out in bolder relief than in their previous publications. It is simply this; that those who live, and design to remain, in the order of nature, shall comply with the law of nature; while those who are called to the order of grace shall be permitted inoffensively to comply with its law.

"I do require, saith the Lord, (who is descended to the earth in mercy, and in heavy judgment,) that all such as desire to live in nature, propagating their own species, keep the law of nature unviolated, as I have commanded from the beginning.

"And all such as desire to come into the gospel of grace, must keep the law of grace, as I did command in the first appearing of my blessed Son, your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who stands as the first true Anointed One."—p. 30.

Here we think the discussion may be very pacifically allowed to remain. As to the impurities perpetrated by many in the natural order of marriage, we are not disposed to stain our page therewith, whether they be confessed or unconfessed by the world. But we can join in the appeal here made to such as determine to live in the natural order, to conform to the natural law in respect to time, state, season and sensual indulgence. The argument might indeed be respectfully carried a little further. A disputant has no right to urge upon another any practice in conformity with his (the disputant's) doctrine: but he has a right to insist that his opponent shall exemplify *his own* theories. When we find a multitude of people year after year, day after

day, repeating the wish with apparent sincerity that God our Father's "kingdom may come, and his will be done, on earth *as it is in heaven*;" while such fervent minds are instructed, by the very same authority which teaches them thus to pray, that "*in heaven* they are neither married nor given in marriage, but are as the angels are," we have a claim upon them to help to realize their own expressed desires. This they ought to do, or cease their prayers. If they comply with the former requisition, they are Shakers: if with the latter, they are not Christians. Each party may, at all events, in charity, let the other proceed in peace. The Millennial Church declares its determination to do so. It neither attempts to proselyte the world, nor to condemn it. But, when invited to intercourse, it has the right to urge upon the world a faithful adherence to its own purest acknowledged principles; as the world has in like manner the right to demand a strict compliance with the higher law it professes to obey.

One point of considerable interest is clearly if not agreeably stated in this volume. The children of nature are anxious to learn whether they cannot continue in the enjoyment of sensual delights, and yet be admitted into the heavenly kingdom. In opposition to Christ's express dictate, the modern Christian endeavors to persuade himself that he can continue to indulge in all the human gratifications in the outer world, while he is wholly and fully subject to divine influence in the inner world. Such persons imagine, or pretend to imagine, that all natural actions, when performed strictly according to God's natural laws, can consist with God's law of grace ruling in the soul. Every one who thus imagines, can easily add the supplemental delusion, that his (or her) natural action is quite pure, and thus is the empire of licentiousness maintained.

But, granting the utmost purity in natural actions, this thought is directly at variance with Christ's instructions and life. It is not possible to "forsake *all*," and yet retain *some* things of the lower world, as the lower nature would fondly persuade itself. The very supposition is evidence that the querist is not yet a re-born being. Accordingly we find this idea met in a note at page 209, in which it is observed that "where the dominion of Christ is estab-

lished in souls, and where the law of grace reigns, the law of nature is thereby superseded."

And here lies the root of the prejudices of which we have spoken. Could the Millennial Church, as other Churches pretend to do, reconcile these irreconcilable opposites, it would be in extremely popular favor. Had the child of nature *no* intuition of a state of grace, of a state of being in which the soul is in all things, and at all times, preferred to the body, he would never feel any hostility to his re-born neighbor. But both these qualifications are in him; the natural in positive existence; the gracious in possibility. And it is the consciousness of this latent germ of grace within him, and the conviction that in some degree its birth depends upon himself, which combine to worry, anger, and vex the soul until it either boils over in fiery prejudice, or turns inwardly to HEAVENLY LOVE.
