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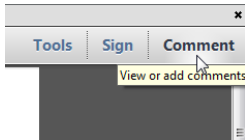
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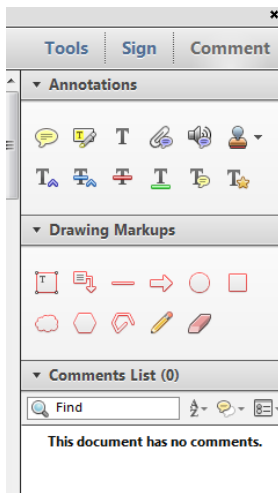
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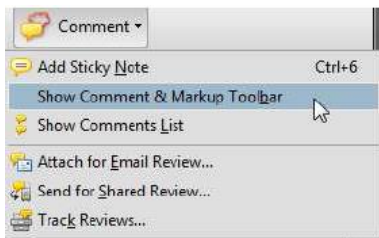


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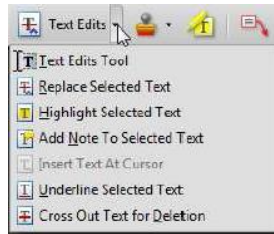
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AQ1–AQ5

# Sculpture and Faith at St Paul’s Cathedral, c. 1796–1914: F. J. Williamson, Monument to Henry Hart Milman (1876)

AQ6

1.5

Peter Howarth\*

## ABSTRACT

Milman’s monument represents the Dean as if he had just fallen asleep, with little reference either to death or resurrection. Milman was an historian and man of letters as well as Dean of St Paul’s, and the article argues that this monument reflects his latitudinarian tendency to regard sacred history with wise suspicion, but also to overlook the apocalyptic, world-interrupting demands of his own faith.

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**KEYWORDS:** Milman, Dean Henry Hart, broad church, Jewish history, mosaics

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Henry Hart Milman lies as if he has just fallen asleep (Figure 1). Befitting his status as Dean of St Paul’s, he is wearing full Anglican ecclesiastical dress with stole and slippers, and the sleeves of his surplice are carved with exquisite skill. But the face, with its recognizably large eyebrows, is naturalistic, and casual: the Dean has dozed off. This is not a body from which the life has been taken; nor is he, apparently, waiting for the second trumpet, or praying. He is not surrounded by saints or angels, or any paraphernalia other than a cushion, as if he were lying on a chaise longue. If this is a retrospective view of his life, it is a very short one: it is more as if time has just stopped. The only gesture to his past or his future is the rolled straw mat underneath the cushion, alluding to his spiritual pilgrimage, and more delicately, to his distinguished career as the first modern Historian of the Jews, who described Moses as a type of Bedouin nomad leader whose sacred law ‘breathes the air of the desert.’<sup>1</sup>

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Milman’s contextualization of Bible figures – he describes Abraham as an ‘independent Sheik or Emir’ – and his use of modern critical methods for the texts of Hebrew scripture sent shockwaves through some parts of the clergy, and his history was condemned at the time from the University pulpit at St Mary’s, Oxford.<sup>2</sup> But while Milman believed the Jews had been chosen to be a holy witness, he also thought God had not wished to make their culture and society incomparable with those of other Ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. Divine calling meant progressive revelation, not the institution of a uniquely advanced society which stood ahead of its neighbours: ‘the chosen people appear to have been left to themselves to pass

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Hart Milman, *History of the Jews*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1829), I, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Milman, *History*, I, 9. On the furor, see ‘Henry Hart Milman, D. D., Dean of St Paul’s’, *Edinburgh Review*, 191.392 (1 April 1900), pp. 519–20; on the struggles between emergent liberal and tractarian faith the book anticipated, see Mark D Chapman, ‘Liberal Anglicanism’, *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, vol. 3, ed. by Rowan Strong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 214–17.

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Figure 1 

through the ordinary stages of the social state; and to that state their habits and opinions were accommodated', he warned his critics: 'the Jews were more or less barbarians'.<sup>3</sup>

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When Milman turned his attention to a massive history of the Latin Church, the close fit between a sacred message of the faith and its worldly envelope remained his theme. The Latin inscription around his tomb calls him a 'conciliator', not only because he was an extremely amiable man, but because intellectually he sought to reconcile sacred history with the sceptical insights of Enlightenment historians for whom the church's story could best be told in terms of politics and influence. The later volumes of Milman's *History of the Jews* had ascribed Jewish national decline to a defensive cultural introversion, a Judaism he saw epitomized in the post-exilic quest for purity among the rabbis of Palestine, rather than the sophistication of the Hellenistic rabbi-philosophers of Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> But criticizing faith that thought itself separate from worldly learning also put Milman out of step with the rise of the Evangelical and High Church tendencies of Anglicanism in his own time, both of which required faith to mean some kind of true break with its milieu, either through personal conversion or a church that remained independent of liberalism, utilitarian calculation and Empire politics.<sup>5</sup> Milman was a broad churchman, and the intricate, disappointing but necessary relations between present power and spiritual truth were his great theme, and his own life's work as Dean of St Paul's. So the dextrous realism of the monument is completely appropriate; there is almost nothing otherworldly about the treatment.

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There is also nothing otherworldly about the time. Milman lies asleep, unprepared for death: he looks like he might wake up in heaven with a snort, muttering, 'where was I?' But

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<sup>3</sup> Preface to the Third Volume of the First Edition, repr. in *History of the Jews*, 4th edn (London: Murray, 1866), p. xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> For criticism of Milman's history, see Simon Goldhill, 'What has Alexandria to do with Jerusalem? Writing the History of the Jews in the Nineteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 59 (2016), 125–51.

<sup>5</sup> On the anti-Enlightenment lineage of English Evangelicalism and Anglo-Catholicism, see Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1943), pp. 31–34.

that means there is no hint of necessary transformation, no apocalyptic destruction of worldly power, no pattern of crucifixion. A resurrection of this body will be more just a re-start, after a temporary interruption of service.<sup>6</sup> On the lowest part of the monument are some lines from a hymn Milman wrote, 'When our heads are bowed with woe'. Verse three is engraved: 'When the sullen death-bell tolls | For our own departed souls | When our final doom is near | Gracious Son of Mary hear'. Verse four continues: 'Thou hast bow'd the dying head | Thou the blood of life has shed | Thou hast fill'd a mortal bier'. Milman, by contrast, is looking pretty comfortable. 3.57

This may be a problem of the nineteenth-century broad church writ in stone. If the high church and the evangelicals were too prone to separate faith off from scientific criticism and secular politics, the broad church's trouble was being an extension of the powers of this world, reforming their worst tendencies but really accommodating their hierarchy and their deep drive for domination. In an address to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1862, Milman condemned Britain's rapidly growing Empire in the manner of Amos, or Thomas Piketty. 'European civilization contains within itself a more formidable and dangerous barbarism than any civilization it invades', he writes, and 'almost the uniform character of that civilization is, as it can hardly be otherwise, a vast inequality . . . in social condition'. No matter what benefits Empire brings, 'wealth, with its palaces, its luxuries, its pomps, will soar upward to an increasing distance', and 'intelligence will enter into an alliance with wealth . . . and wealth will go on almost interminably accumulating its capital'.<sup>7</sup> But his remedy is benevolent liberal education, not serious change or systematic redistribution: 3.62

The great and legitimate object of Social Science . . . [is] to alleviate the evils of this formidable, to the wise and Christian mind, hateful inequality; to arrest, if possible, the jealous antagonism, which is ever inevitably, imperceptibly arising, between these two diverging classes . . . Not to dream of the mad impracticalability [sic] of the equal redistribution of wealth . . . but to multiply the truest means of obtaining wealth . . . to diffuse intelligence, so that it . . . become common in the air we breathe.<sup>8</sup> 3.67

There is no interruption, no loss, and no one need be hurt. We all just need to wake up a bit. 3.82

This is the kind of accommodation a Dean of St Paul's must make all the time, though. You are there to make Christian worship happen; you are also the custodian of a building which Parliament has designated 'a Valhalla for English worthies', in Milman's pointed phrase.<sup>9</sup> The tension emerges nicely in the last chapter of the last book he wrote, the *Annals of St Paul's*, which is about the Cathedral monuments under discussion in this round table. Christopher Wren had built a cathedral with arcades and niches, but no statues. Milman was proud of the fact that the first person to have a monument was John Howard, the penal reformer, for 'perhaps no man has assuaged so much human misery as John Howard'.<sup>10</sup> The second was Samuel Johnson, a regular communicant. But after that, he wrote, 'Parliament voted and demanded 3.87

<sup>6</sup> The classic essay on the distinction is Oscar Cullman, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection from the Dead?* (1956; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> 'Address on Education', *National Association for the Promotion Social Science: London Meeting* (London: Emily Faithfull, 1862), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> 'Address', pp. 34–35. 3.97

<sup>9</sup> Henry Hart Milman, *The Annals of St Paul's* (London: Murray, 1868), p. 480.

<sup>10</sup> Milman, *Annals*, p. 481.



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Figure 2. 

4.25 vast masses of marble, more to the advantage of the artists than to their sublime art. Fames and Victories and all kind of unmeaning allegories, gallant men fighting and dying in every conceivable or hardly conceivable attitude, rose on every side, on every wall, under every arch.<sup>11</sup> But his sarcasm about military vanity then gives way to an uncritical catalogue of the tombs of Nelson, whom Milman saw buried, Wellington, whose interment he conducted, and Cornwallis, who, as Governor-General of India, 'laboured with primitive wisdom to repress the dominant grasping rapacity and insolent contempt of our native subjects.'<sup>12</sup> As an historian, Milman had traced the histories of the victors and the defeated; as Dean, he had helped to secure the victor's monuments.

4.30 But this is to talk as if Milman designed his own memorial. In fact, the two alterations to the Cathedral he instigated himself are both mosaics. The first are G. F. Watts and Alfred Stevens' famous 1864–1865 mosaics of the gospel writers and prophets over the dome, which he wanted following the success of informal Sunday evening preaching services in the round underneath it (Figure 2). 'I would see the dome, instead of brooding like a dead weight over the area below, expanding and elevating the soul towards heaven.'<sup>13</sup> The second are under the feet of visitors to the Crypt and to Milman's tomb in it (Figure 3) These 'opus criminale' mosaics were made in the 1860s by female prisoners in Woking jail as part of their rehabilitation, and Milman as Dean, supported by the Surveyor F. C. Penrose, must have approved their installation. The mosaics on his own monument perhaps echo them. If his given statue represents the wide reach of the Whig latitudinarian, the work he commissioned reflects what his Church is sometimes good at: reaching from top to bottom.

4.45 <sup>11</sup> Milman, *Annals*, p. 482.  
<sup>12</sup> Milman, *Annals*, p. 487.  
<sup>13</sup> Milman, *Annals*, p. 496.



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Figure 3. 

AQ9 

### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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AQ8

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