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John Lawrence Milton (c1793-1869): "teetotaller, homerpathist and omnireligionist"

It is rare to start an article in this journal with a quotation (taken *verbatim*) from a Tasmanian newspaper - the *Hobart Mercury*, 15 November 1854. It reflects the multifaceted nature of a man who touched the lives of three continents, and whose comet shone brightly but erratically over Southampton in the 1840s.

John L Milton (for as such he was always known) was born in the United States of America, to Archibald and Martha Milton. His age recorded at death in 1869 - 76 years - suggests a birth date of c1793. He was ordained into the Church of England on 24 March 1833. His early calling was as a missionary in Lower Canada for the London-based United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. He served in Terrebonne (now an off-island suburb of Montreal) and, between 1834 and 1835, at Rawdon, a settlement to the north. He later served as a missionary in the United States. The fact that Milton named his first residence in Southampton Oberlin House suggests a connection with the religious colony of Oberlin, founded in northeast Ohio in 1833 on the principles of the Alsace pastor and philanthropist Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740-1826). The early colonists pledged themselves to the plainest living and the highest thinking. Oberlin College trained Christian missionaries for work on the American frontier.

The European leg of Milton's nomadic life began c1835, recorded in a list of residences provided for an insolvency petition printed in the *London Gazette*, 25 July 1843: the King's Arms, Palace Street, Liverpool; 5 Queen Square, Bartholomew Close, London; the George Hotel, Southampton; 18 Rue des Pyramides, Paris; 1 Delamotte Piquet Desinvalides, Rue Saint Honore, Paris; Boulevard Mont Parnesse, Paris (doing clerical duty); 9 Thanet Place, Strand, London; 7 Cecil Street, Strand (doing occasional clerical duty); Boulogne (tutor); Tours (officiating curate); Blois (chaplain); Denant [the last four in France]; Jersey; Plymouth; Stoke, near Plymouth (classical teacher); Exeter; Honiton; Lyme Regis; Weymouth; Wareham; Poole; Wimborne; Blandford (procuring subscribers "to a work about to be published by me"); New Street, Salisbury (lecturer); and late of the town and county of Southampton (doing clerical duty, publisher and agent for Morrison and Moat of the British College of Health). He is briefly glimpsed in Salisbury as publisher in February 1851 of a poem, printed on silk, in honour of Queen Victoria's first child: *To the illustrious Princess Royal, Victoria Adelaide Mary Louisa, heiress presumptive to the throne of England*.

We first find the Reverend Milton in Southampton on 3 October 1841, being entered into the Baptist church by the Reverend B H Draper at East Street Chapel. His missionary work had begun a new phase: to bring religion to the seamen of this rapidly-developing port. In January 1842 he established the National Sailors' Home and Evangelizing Society. It was to provide "every necessary comfort and advantage for seamen, their wives and children, their widows and orphans, their sick, infirm, and superannuated". The specific agenda included a bethel [seamans' church], boarding and lodging house, reading rooms, school rooms and library. Asylum was to be given to "the shipwrecked, the afflicted, and destitute seamen of all nations, and all denominations, on nearing the port of Southampton". Repose, protection and every

necessary comfort was to be afforded to the wives and children of sailors who were away at sea. A prospectus was issued and a board of directors appointed. The nominal list of officials included a president, vice-presidents, treasurer, corresponding secretary, recording (or minute) secretary and chaplain. Evangelical prayer meetings were held both on dry land and on board ship. A Bethel was established in July 1842 in Milton's residence: 14 St Mary Street. Divine service, held three times on the Sabbath and on Tuesday and Friday evenings, was signalled by the unfurling of the Bethel flag. Sittings were free. The services were open to all, recognizing "neither Episcopalians, nor Baptists, nor Independents, nor Presbyterians, nor Wesleyans, nor Friends, nor Plymouth Brethren, nor any other division of Christians, - but simply all who love and obey the truth, as constituting the Church of Christ Militant." Unfermented wine was used in the communion: Milton was forced to deny rumours that tea and coffee were substituted. Subscriptions at the end of the first year were put at £63.17s.

It was a sham. Meetings in support of the mission struggled to attract an audience, and tended to end in disarray. In April 1842, Milton spoke at an open meeting in the Long Rooms called by the Reverend Herbert Smith as part of his campaign to establish asylums for the poor. Here, Milton "began to unfold views so distasteful to Mr Smith that he left the chair". A novel experience no doubt for Herbert Smith, as it was usually his religious views that caused offence. In December 1842, Milton himself hired the Long Rooms. Speakers were to include "Ministers of the Gospel and other friends of mariners, ... several captains and other gentlemen connected with the seas". None appeared, leaving Milton alone on the platform. His audience, of about 30 labourers, was less than even Herbert Smith had attracted. After this debacle, the *Hampshire Advertiser* announced - prematurely - that Milton, abandoning both his premises and his promises, had last been seen *en route* to the Isle of Wight. The list of officials was equally illusory. The Reverend George Stevens, Independent minister at Totton, told *The Patriot* in November 1842 that his name appeared in the prospectus as vice president not only against his will but before he knew that the society existed. John Kellow, partner in the High Street grocers Kellow and Bienvenu, was nominally treasurer. When asked by an investigating meeting to supply a financial report, he replied "as he had never received any money on account of the Society, he had not paid any". Apart from Simon Morwood, a school teacher of Bevois Street, who acted briefly as recording secretary, the only official who appears to have taken any active part in the society is its corresponding secretary and chaplain, *viz* the Reverend Milton himself.

Nemesis came in the form of the society's first annual general meeting held on 6 January 1843 at James Withers' Temperance Hotel in Winchester Terrace. The meeting was packed, largely with "the principal residents of the High Street", doubtless worried that the integrity of the town was being put at risk. Milton was forced to man the redoubt alone, supported by none of his ethereal officials. His appearance an hour after the scheduled start suggests a reluctance to meet his critics. Finance was the key issue. Milton antagonized the hostile audience by arguing that the society was in his debt, subscriptions (after deduction of expenses) being £40 short of the £70 he claimed as salary. When asked to supply supporting vouchers, he claimed to have left these at home. The elucidation of the treasurer, bearded in his own shop by a member of the audience, is quoted above. In the words of the *Hampshire Advertiser*, the society "was denounced as something more than useless,

and the secretary as more than a mystifier. The REVEREND Secretary retorted by an unorthodox expression, and took shelter behind a table". A series of resolutions was passed unanimously expressing lack of confidence in Milton as a person and dissolving the society with immediate effect. To avoid a resurrection of the "impost" in other towns, the notice of dissolution was widely published, including in *The Times*.

The list of those who proposed and seconded the damning resolutions comprised the elite of the High Street shopkeepers: George Laishley, draper; Edward Palk, chemist; Andrew Forbes and John Gray, booksellers; Sampson Payne, china and glass merchant; and Charles Rogers, draper. Behind all lay the invisible presence of the Reverend James Crabb, for decades an advocate of the spiritual needs of the poor and self-proclaimed sailors' friend. In 1836 he had established a Bethel at the bottom of the High Street. He later found ready allies in his mission among officials of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company after its relocation to Southampton in 1841. He was allowed to hold services on board P&O ships whilst in port. Lieutenant Edward Nicholas Kendall, RN, agent to the company in Southampton, had been chairman of the annual general meeting. He often assisted Crabb in his services, giving out the hymns. Andrew Lamb, chief engineer to P&O, had moved the motion of dissolution. He was also a member of Crabb's Zion Hill congregation. Crabb objected to the scheme of the *parvenu* Milton on practical and personal grounds. It was unwieldy and over-elaborate. A seaman's home, in Crabb's view, should have the single object of keeping sailors who were between ships out of the clutches of 'crimps': unscrupulous agents who found lodgings and ships for seamen but often at the expense of all their money. It was also, as Crabb told his ally John Coupland, proprietor of the *Hampshire Advertiser*, a "bubble, in which self-interest appeared to be the object of support". As such, it compromised the work of others in the same field, and was an indirect threat to his unofficial position of sailors' chaplain in Southampton.

Milton believed that the meeting had no power to dissolve the society, for none of those who voted were members. Declaring that "a greater outrage has seldom been perpetuated against any individual", he called a fresh annual general meeting at his new lodgings (to which he transferred the name Oberlin House) at 19 South Front, Kingsland. A set of allegedly audited accounts was produced. John Coupland - to Milton "the wanton libeller" - sent along a reporter, who found but three visitors present, one an entire stranger. Persistency personified, Milton paid for an advertisement in the *Hampshire Independent* in October 1844 in an attempt to revive the dead. It was an essay on the theme of calumny. It only required the settling of his debt of nearly £70 to allow immediate publication of "a faithful and fearless Report of the Society". None was published. Few would have believed it even if it had been.

The Reverend Milton had a transcendental belief in the precepts of the Gospel. He declared himself a Rechabite: indeed to be a "chief Rechabite". A fundamentalist, ascetic, millennial Israelite sect, its members adhered to what had been established in the Wilderness period. Wine and other strong liquor was abjured. The use of unfermented wine in communion was a specific Rechabite instruction. Milton glorified in the outward symbols of the sect, parading a prodigious pair of whiskers and a fearsome moustache. An Old Testament prophet walking the streets of

Southampton? Or, in the words of the *Hampshire Advertiser* (December 1846), "an open-air brawler under the pretence of preacher"?

This impulse to religious martyrdom was given expression in his appearance before Southampton Insolvent Court in August 1843, owing debts of £13. He refused to take an oath on the Bible: "I decline to be sworn! I am a Christian minister, and on Christian principles I refuse! Christ says - 'Swear not at all'". His secular authority was a book of travels [not identified] by Captain Pickering in which a police court allowed the author to affirm. The court tried to save Milton from his obstinacy, partly perhaps because he cast such a sorry figure: his appearance, according to the *Hampshire Advertiser*, showing a better lining outside than within. His counsel offered the defence of claiming exemption as a Separatist, a sect in common with Quakers and Moravians allowed to affirm. Milton refused: "My religion is that of Christ. I have no knowledge of the Separatists". The Insolvency Commissioner tried to save Milton from gaol by offering to obtain bail in London. Conciliation was met with intransigence. "I rejoice that I have had this opportunity of bearing testimony to the truth, even if imprisonment or even death itself be the consequence". He escaped the gallows, but not a return to Southampton gaol. He was reported as still incarcerated in April 1844 in a petition to parliament from Staffordshire Baptists for exemption from the requirement of oaths. To quote again the ever-antagonistic *Hampshire Advertiser*, "The Insolvent Martyr!!"

December 1846 witnessed a second confrontation with the Reverend Herbert Smith. It was an explosive mix of two myopic religionists, the one a seceder from the Established Church and a believer in Primitivism, the other an advocate for the pre-reformed Anglican Church. The venue was the Royal Victoria Rooms, at a meeting called by Smith for the revival of the office of deacon in the Church of England. The *Hampshire Advertiser* reported: "Then a person calling himself Milton ... got up and abused Mr Smith and his Church too. Mr Smith said very neatly and properly, that if ever Mr Milton had been in the Church, every one of its members must rejoice that he no longer belonged to it. Then Mr Milton poured forth a torrent of abuse on Mr Smith, and Mr Yarnold [Reverend William Yarnold, Baptist minister] joined in the affray, the people meanwhile applauding, stamping, clapping, and roaring according to their fancies". The reporter left in despair after three hours.

A more considered attack on secessionists came in April 1847 with publication of *Marturia; or testimony against certain manifestations of Anti-Christ*. It was sold for 2d by C and J Rayner. *Marturia* has the same Greek root as martyr. This was prompted by a Nonconformist Society meeting in East Street Baptist Church - the very church in which Milton was entered in 1841 - calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Speakers included ministers of the main Baptist and Independent chapels in the town. An impression of the tract - which does not survive - is given by a notice in the *Hampshire Advertiser*. It is an attack on the "Liberty of Dissenters, demanding much, giving nothing". "The abuse is of but a mediocre character; what the object of publication may be, beyond selling, we do not learn from its content".

Purification lay at the core of Milton's religious creed. It also infused his embracement of the pseudo-science of Hygeism, an extreme form of medical botany. Hygeists believed that all illness derives from the impurity of the blood. Salvation comes

through systematic and violent purgation, induced by the application of vegetable remedies. For Milton, the cleansing of souls and the cleansing of bodies were symbiotic with a common justification in the gospels, following "the example of ONE who ever went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men". Milton was a disciple of James Morison (1770-1840), founder of the British College of Health, a medical school in London, and inventor of 'Morison's Vegetable Pills'. In late 1842, Milton was appointed by the then owners of the franchise, Morison, Moat and Company, general agent for Hampshire. He supplied 35 sub-agents, amongst who, as sub-agent for Southampton, was Henry William LARBALSTIER, perfumer of the High Street. Simultaneously Milton was appointed a general hygeian lecturer and became a practitioner of the hygeian system, authorised to use the initial PHS. He gave a series of lectures in Southampton contrasting false and real medicine. In December 1842 he was appointed one of three national judges for the annual Morison prize.

It was through Hygeism that Milton met his future wife. Emma Tomkins was a Hygeian practitioner - "a thorough Hygeist" in her husband's words - in and around Romsey. They were married, by the Reverend Draper, at East Street Baptist Church on 26 May 1842. Both were in their late forties. It was a union both medical and religious. Emma was the second daughter of James and Anne (nee Steele) Tomkins of Broughton House. Her mother's forebears included two pastors of Broughton Baptist Church as well as the evangelical hymn writer and poet Anne Steele (1717-78). Her father was from a prominent Baptist family in Abingdon, where Emma, born in 1796, was entered into what is now Oke Street Baptist Church. He moved to Bath, and then to Hampshire, renting Portswood House between 1809 and c1812. He later succeeded, through his wife, to the 800-acre Broughton House estate. The Baptist connection is continued through the marriage of Emma's elder sister Mary to Charles Carpenter Bombas in 1822. A lawyer - later Serjeant-at-law and leader of the western circuit - he is reputedly the inspiration for Serjeant Buzfuz in *Pickwick papers*. It says much for Milton's pariah status in Southampton that not even such respectable family connections could offer a veneer of respectability.

The honeymoon with Morison, Moat and Company soon ended. An advertisement was placed in the local press in May 1843 to caution that the Reverend J L Milton was no longer agent to the British College of Health. Sub-agents were to send their orders direct to the college. There is a suggestion that Milton may have been selling his own medicines under the guise of the college. By 1844 the Miltons have established their own independent Southampton Hygeian Dispensary at 1 Trafalgar Place, West Front. A full-page advertisement in the 1845 *Post-Office directory*, published December 1844, is reproduced below. Hygeian medicines were sold both wholesale and retail. Orders were taken from any part of the kingdom. Consultations on the principles of Hygeian pathology were given daily between 9am and 4pm. Mrs Milton personally attended female patients whose cases were of a delicate nature. "This is as it should be in all medical practice". The destitute were treated *gratis* as far as contributions allowed. "Mr Milton is happy in feeling that the *practice of medical science*, combined with the performance of his *clerical duties*, is in perfect accordance with the requirements of the Gospel".

We last find the Miltons in Southampton in April 1847, at a fourth address: 12 West Front, Kingsland. They next appear, on the 1851 census (taken in April), in Hull as lodgers at 24 Silvester Street, close to the present day Pearson Park. He is

138 ADVERTISEMENTS.

SOUTHAMPTON

HYGEIAN DISPENSARY,

No. 1, TRAFALGAR PLACE, WEST FRONT, VICTORIA ROAD,


CONDUCTED BY

THE REV. J. L. MILTON AND MRS. MILTON,

Hygeian Practitioners.

HYGEIAN MEDICINES are sold at this DISPENSARY, wholesale and retail. Orders received from any part of the kingdom.

Captains of vessels, and seamen generally, furnished at a liberal discount. No vessel should go to sea without a full supply of *Hygeian* medicines. They are most safe, and most efficacious, under all circumstances. No family should be without them.

 The destitute poor will be supplied *gratis*, so far as Contributions received for this purpose shall justify such benevolence.

Mr. and Mrs. MILTON will be happy to give advice to all patients, upon the principles of Hygeian Pathology, between the hours of Nine A. M., and Four P. M., and at all other times when necessary.—Mrs. Milton more especially attends to those female patients whose cases are of a delicate character.—This is as it should be in all medical practice.

Mr. and Mrs. MILTON are Hygeists from deep conviction of the truth and efficacy of the *Hygeian* system of medicine, in contradistinction to the *organic* system. Testimony in favor of the truth of the former may be adduced thus ;—medical practice, based upon the *organic* or *solidist* system, will lose, say, at least, *one* patient in *ten* ; but medical practice, governed by the unerring laws of the *Hygeian* system, will not lose *one* patient in a *hundred*.

All diseases are attributable to impurities of the blood. PURIFY THE BLOOD, AND HEALTH MUST FOLLOW. THIS IS HYGEIAISM.

In view of the example of ONE who ever went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men, Mr. Milton is happy in feeling that the *practice of medical science* combined with the performance of his *clerical duties*, is in perfect accordance with the requirements of the Gospel.

described as 'Clergyman seceding from the Established Church' and his spouse as 'Minister's wife'. He had already set up his own chapel in the town - the Reformed Baptist Evangelizing Church - and published the first issue of a crusading journal, *The Marturia: or testimony of the Reformed Baptist Church*.

The confines of England were soon to be left behind. In November 1852, at the height of the Australian gold rush, Milton and his wife arrived in Melbourne on board the *Lady Eveline* from London. It may be an indication of new beginnings that both took almost ten years off their ages when registering with the immigration authorities. It had been a fraught voyage. Passengers and crew were quarantined for six weeks on arrival after an outbreak of smallpox, with two fatalities. Milton was sponsored in his new life by the

Reformed Medical College of New York. Founded in 1829 by Dr Wooster Beach, the college promoted a system of botanical, herbal and native American

remedies under the rubric of Reformed or Eclectic Medicine. Milton may have met Dr Beach during the latter's tour of Europe in 1848-9. Milton had a specific remit: to establish the Reformed Practice in Australia; to explore the medical botany of the continent; and to enhance the *materia medica* collections of the college by providing a *Herbarium* and "other interesting objects of Nature's history". Milton was armed with a diploma from the Reformed Medical College, conferring the title doctor of medicine (MD). The Reverend Milton was instantly transformed into Dr Milton, or "the so-called" Dr Milton according to his critics. Furnished with a good supply of medicine and books, Milton immediately undertook a tour of the goldfields. Here he was happy to find the inhabitants "well versed in Botany and other sciences". Steps were taken to establish a Medical Botanic Society for Australia. A clinic was opened at the Miltons' home in Melbourne, with daily consultations and the double purgation of aperient vegetable pills and a medicated vapour bath.

Within eighteen months of arrival in Australia, Milton was visited by a ghost of his English past. Dr William C Moat, as partner in the firm Morison and Moat, had been partly responsible for the termination of Milton's agency in 1843. The partnership had been dissolved amid much acrimony in March 1851, and a subsequent Chancery injunction had forbidden Moat from using the Morison name. Moat subsequently

emigrated to Australia, and here set up in partnership with Milton, now "his esteemed friend". The two doctors - one a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the other the holder of a college diploma - set up a practice in Milton's house, offering remedies based on vegetable compounds, medical vapour baths and the controversial new theory of electro-biology. The two initially shared platforms at temperance meetings and sat on a committee to help the unemployed. The partnership, however, soon broke up. By early 1855 Moat is in practice alone, setting up a network of agents to peddle 'Moat's Pills'.

The Miltons had arrived in Melbourne at a critical time in its history. The city was, as we have seen, in the grip of gold fever following discovery the previous year of rich alluvial deposits at Ballarat. Melbourne was transformed within months from a small pastoral community into a maelstrom of seething humanity. The population exploded from 29,000 in 1851 to 123,000 in 1854. Civil administration haemorrhaged. A letter in Hampshire Record Office (42M80/F8) from Alexander Stuart Waddell, captain of the *Rattler*, described the conditions on his arrival in Melbourne in January 1852: all is "disorder and confusion ... all classes have made a general rush to the mines ... there is not one constable or other police officer in either the Port or City". The Inferno indeed. To a man of Milton's fundamental christianity salvation could come only through the resurrection of the Apostolic church as first created by the Holy Spirit after the accession of Christ. He became a self-proclaimed minister in 'The Pentecostal or Primitive Christian Church, Unsectarian, Missionary and Aggressive'. The elitist title reverend was abandoned in favour of the more sparse designation VDM: '*verbi dei minister*', minister of the divine word or preacher of God's word. As Dr Milton, VDM, he waged a relentless war against the powers of Satan and anti-Christ. It was ultimately to destroy him.

The mission was initially *ad hoc*. Prayer meetings were held, under cover or in open air, wherever an audience could be found: at the Houseless Immigrants' House, the Immigrants' Depot, the Female Penitentiary, among the "dwellers in tents" in Canvas Town, at Mrs Chisholm's Tent Ground near the barracks, under the Flagstaff, at the Eastern Market or on the wharf. Five services were held each Sabbath. A printer was advertised (February 1853) as ready, with his press and type, to join the Christian Church Mission on the goldfields. A more permanent structure was imposed in July 1853 when Milton became *de facto* chaplain to the City Police Court. A daily routine, lasting almost the rest of his life, was established. Early each morning - Sabbath-day, weekday, even Christmas day - he visited the nightly intake of prisoners in the cells of Swanston Street workhouse: "that loathsome den, where he beheld dirt, and blood, and bruises, and corruption - wretches actually piled up, heaped up together - while the stench was hardly endurable". Many were victims of a system that allowed all-night drinking licenses and tolerated the sale of alcohol to those already insensible through drink. Some saw the spirit of John Howard abroad. Later in the morning Milton accompanied the prisoners to the police court. He used the court as a *poste restante* and granted audiences each morning at 10am. He became part of a bold experiment implemented by the chief magistrate, the mayor of Melbourne John Thomas Smith. Those prisoners who took the pledge of abstinence were discharged, sometimes into Milton's care, on the understanding that re-offence would incur double the usual fine and double the prescribed term of imprisonment. Milton testified before the Temperance Committee of the Victoria Legislative Council in 1854 that about 1,000 of those arraigned for drunkenness had given him a written pledge of

abstinence. At times, and often to the amusement of onlookers, a verbal pledge was administered in open court.

The City Police Mission was formally recognised in late 1855, evolving, under Milton's guidance, into the City Court and Model Farm Mission, the City Court Missionary and Female Reformatory Home Society, the City Court and General Christian Mission, and the City Court Evangelical and Philanthropic Mission. A wooden mission church was erected and a school for offending juveniles planned. The centre of operations was moved from the claustrophobic police court to the Miltons' residence at 77 Spring Street. Daily counselling sessions were held at 2pm and 6pm to complement the 10am court appointments. The house became a focus for the distribution of alms: cast-off garments for the destitute and prisoners just released from gaol; spectacles (donated by local opticians) to enable the poorly-sighted to read the scriptures and those evangelical tracts so freely given out by the mission; and loaves of bread in times of economic distress. In 1856 the mission house was transformed into a Female Reformatory, or *Magdalene*, as a refuge for vulnerable women and girls released from court. It was run, nominally, by a board of directors. Dr Milton appointed himself managing director and corresponding secretary. His wife became resident superintendent, aided by a matron and housekeeper. Emma's death at the home in July 1857 removed a spiritual helpmate and support. The reformatory housed up to eleven inmates, many being former prostitutes. Each shared the family table with the doctor "as though they had been my sisters".

Central to the existence of the City Court Mission was the backing of the two chief magistrates of Melbourne. John Thomas Smith, mayor seven times between 1851 and 1864 (the first five terms being consecutive), was mission treasurer and main financial supporter. He gave over £130 of his own money and donated the profits of an evangelical pamphlet published in 1858 - *Three addresses by the Right Worshipful Mayor of Melbourne* - to Dr Milton in order to allow him "the means of continuing his labors [*sic*] with a mind undisturbed by narrow cares". Evelyn Sturt, younger brother of the explorer Charles Sturt, gave Milton the full support of the magistrates' bench during his 25-year tenure as police magistrate of Melbourne. State officials - from the governor, lieutenant governor, colonial secretary to the attorney general - gave money to the cause. Many of the leading inhabitants of Melbourne similarly donated money and religious material. The aggregate income of the mission was estimated in the mid-1860s to be £5,400, with over 1,400,000 pages of evangelical tracts and 900 Bibles distributed in the city. Seed-corn in Milton's belief, to be sown as released prisoners moved across Australia.

The fundamental weakness of the mission was its reliance on the energy and direction of a man who, as we have seen from his time in Southampton, was deeply flawed. The burden fell unsustainably on him. He devoted hours of voluntary labour to the cause. He underpinned the mission financially, and by 1864 was owed £250, a burden he found "painfully oppressive". An attempt that year to obtain a state salary through his appointment as *de jure* chaplain to the City Court failed. The fabric of the enterprise started to unravel. The Female Reformatory closed within a year of its establishment, superseded by a larger, better organised and financially more secure Female Refuge. Its projectors ignored Milton at every stage, the Refuge committee issuing a public denial that it had any connection with the reformatory in Spring Street. Milton could only be philosophical: "I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon". The

entire executive committee of the City Mission resigned in 1863, and the original mission itself atrophied after illness forced Milton to retire from public life three years later.

The scenes that Milton witnessed daily in Melbourne can only have confirmed him in his belief that the great barrier to the spread of the gospel was drunkenness. A near universal theme, intruded into virtually every meeting at which he spoke and every pamphlet that he wrote, was "the mortiferous influence of the alcoholic system" and its consequences: "the murders, the suicides, the robberies, the diseases, the deaths, the poverty, the degradation, misery, loss of time, money, employment, character, and the multiplied crimes of almost every grade". Interrogating the prisoners in the police cells, he attempted to estimate the financial consequences of drink. From 578 replies, he put the figure at £150,000 *per annum*. The temperance movement was notoriously fragmented, and Milton spread his membership widely: the Total Abstinence Society, the Temperance General Debating Society, the Melbourne Good Samaritan Total Abstinence Society, the Evangelistic Total Abstinence Society, the Collingwood Teetotal Society and the Victoria Liquor Law League. Membership of the latter, advocating total prohibition on the model of the American Maine Liquor Law, brought Milton into a working relationship with a man he doubtless knew in Southampton. David Blair, agent to the league, had been a member of the triangulation staff of the Ordnance Survey between 1841 and 1851, and had obtained some local notoriety as a Chartist lecturer. Emigrating to Australia in 1850 he became a radical politician, champion of the Ballarat miners at the Eureka stockade (a short-lived rebellion in 1854 against police harassment over costly mining licences, bloodily suppressed but contributing to the early achievement of democratic government in Victoria), a republican, a founder member of the Australian League, and a newspaperman, described at his death in 1899 as the grandfather of Australian journalism. A unique form of conversion championed by Milton was the "gospel tea meeting". An account in the *Argus* of one such meeting, at the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute in May 1854, is worth quoting *verbatim*. Admission was 5 shillings. It was mischievously reproduced in the *Hampshire Independent*, 9 September 1854, for the delectation of those who remembered the "strange eccentricities" of the doctor whilst in Southampton some years ago.

"The programme of the entertainment was skilfully drawn up, and embraced "all the talent" in the city. Very few of the performers, however, made their appearance. Indeed, it was doubtful at first whether the performance was to come off at all. It was announced that tea should be on the table at half-past four; but at that hour the hall was empty, and neither the tea nor the Rev Doctor had made their appearance. It was six o'clock before a beginning was made, so that punctuality does not appear to form part of the Doctor's gospel. About seventy people sat down to partake of the hot water which the Doctor had the conscience to call tea. The preliminaries consisted of two psalms and a prayer. The cups began to clatter, and the rev gentleman warned the audience against ungodly conversation, which had the effect of putting a damper upon conversation altogether. The Doctor subsequently got upon the platform, cup in hand, and said he wished to introduce "a new order of things." Hereupon he began to discourse of salvation, alternately helping himself to a mouthful of tea, and helping the audience to a mouthful of gospel. Then followed the *multum in parvo* addresses, Mr David Blair leading off with a philosophical disquisition on geology and creation, and drawing out a little demonstration of feet worship, which Dr Milton denounced as

"Herodian idolatry", and inconsistent with the new order of things which he wishes to inaugurate, and which is to consist exclusively of tea and salvation."

The forces of drunkenness were confronted each quarter at the City Licensing Sessions, held at the City Police Court. It was a rare session that did not begin without a lengthy memorial from Milton calling for a *moratorium* on all new approvals. One such address - *Calamities that may be avoided* - published in 1863 can be read online at <http://search.slv.vic.gov.au>. Individual licenses were opposed whenever evidence of impropriety was found. Exchanges could be colourful, especially when Milton was pitched against John Curtis, a former reporter on the *Argus* and founder in 1851 of the weekly *Telegraph*, the organ of the licensed victuallers. A particularly lively encounter was reported in the *Argus* in December 1853, following an application by Curtis for a license for the Oxford Arms in Collingwood, supported by a petition several yards in length.

"Dr Milton opposed the application and presented a printed paper, in which the arguments against the sale of intoxicating liquor were reiterated at great length. The Rev gentleman, in his usual uncompromising style, opposed the granting of any new licence. The appearance of the Doctor was evidently gall and wormwood to the publicans and their friends, by whom the court was crammed to suffocation. Their fury increased as he went on, and ultimately forgetting altogether the respect to the majesty of law and authority, they burst into hissing, hooting, and other demonstrations of rage the court resembled the gallery of the Queen's theatre more than a place where magistrates were presiding.... Some of the curtains and the railings were broken down, and there was not a solitary policeman to keep order except [Sergeant] Hadley".

Four years later, Curtis cautioned the bench against placing reliance on the testimony "of such an individual as Dr Milton, ... whom personally he considered nothing more than an extensive vagrant, an imposter and a humbug (Shouts of laughter, completely destroying all decorum)". Exploitation of Milton's refusal to give evidence on oath was a more subtle form of counter attack. Given a generally sympathetic bench, however, he was usually allowed to affirm.

Prostitution, or to use its sanitised forms "the social evil" or "the Sin of Great Cities", was the twin Hydra to drunkenness. Milton had confronted it in three continents. "He had travelled much, and had long laboured in the cause". There was a clear contrast: love for the victims - "his erring sisters" allowed to share his table - and hatred for the system. Milton promoted a raft of "preventative, restrictive and remedial measures", aimed at making the life of the prostitute "painfully exclusive": forced to reside in a designated quarter of the city; prevented from self-exhibition either in the street or at their doors and windows; excluded from tap rooms and hotels, theatres and places of amusement. An official register was to be kept, recording the name of each convicted prostitute, her age, parentage, birthplace, former occupation, denomination, education, length of time in the country, mode of conveyance and time of entry into prostitution. Naive and impracticable, such draconian measures were never likely to attract widespread support. An attempt in 1861, in concert with David Blair, to form a committee of respectable gentlemen to put pressure on the state legislature failed. The one public meeting, held in the Mechanics' Institution, degenerated into confusion and farce, ended only when the Institution secretary turned the gas off.

The appearance of Lola Montez, the most scandalous actress and dancer of the day and now remembered as the eponymous heroine of 'Whatever Lola wants Lola gets', at Melbourne's Royal Theatre in September 1855 was an opportunity for the defence of public morality that Milton could not ignore. Centrepiece of the performance was the erotic 'Spider Dance', which had enthralled and outraged audiences throughout the world. Immediately the performance was over - at which it need hardly be said Milton had not been present - he requested the Melbourne bench, "in the name of an outraged community, of prostrated decency, and insulted morality", to issue a warrant restraining Madame Montez from a repeat performance. The bench demurred, requesting Milton, along with a competent colleague, to attend the next performance in order to provide evidence for an information. Montez responded with a letter to the *Melbourne Herald*, repeating her determination to proceed in order to test public opinion as to the propriety of her conduct. In the event, Milton was denied the confrontation he craved as Montez left for Geelong, forty miles away, before any warrant could be issued. It was reported from here that she had instructed her solicitor to prosecute Milton for defamation of character, but this fizzled out. Her only revenge was to incorporate "that old fellow" into her stage act. During the performance of the farce *Antony and Cleopatra* in her last Melbourne show, she alluded, amidst shouts of laughter, to Dr Milton as her future husband.

Milton had a very clear vision of the future of the British race and the inevitability of its colonial future. This stemmed from his belief in the Israelitish origin of the Saxon race, a theory which originated with the Levellers of the mid-seventeenth century and was undergoing a revival in the 1850s largely through the writings of John Wilson. Contemporaries struggled to comprehend Milton's somewhat individualistic interpretation, which he tried to explain in a series of long and dense lectures - "as clear as liquid mud in a tumbler" according to the unimpressed audience of the Collingwood Christian Association in September 1854. His argument was based on unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies, and can be summarised as follows. The promises made by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the Jews shall inherit the earth have clearly not been fulfilled. It follows that the Saxon race, now so numerous over the earth and so powerful, must be those very descendants. However, as the Saxons and the present Jews are not the same people, the Saxons must be another set of Jews - to wit, the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Promulgated during the Crimean War, the immediate relevance of this biblical reinterpretation was to guarantee British success in the conflict with Russia, with its natural corollary the certain restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land. More exponentially, it predetermined the global spread of the Saxon race and gave biblical justification to the expansion of the colonies. "The promises of the Hebrew patriarchs were now being fulfilled by the colonisation of America and Australia, the supplanting of the North American savages and the Australian aborigines by the English".

Colonisation of the largely unchartered territories of northern and north-western Australia was part of this irresistible *Diaspora*. It is symbolic that each member of the doomed 1860 transcontinental expedition of Burke and Wills from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria carried a small copy of the New Testament and the Psalter donated by Milton. Two years later he supported a joint stock company floated by the Melbourne projector John Hall to create a settlement, initially of 300 emigrants, at the

head of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Hall's 21-page pamphlet - *The colonisation of Northern Australia, Prince Albert Land; the first settlement Burke City on the Albert River the most likely gold country out of Victoria* - can be read at <http://search.slv.vic.gov.au>. Milton became a member of Hall's Northern Australian Colonisation Association, which he supported through a series of fund-raising lectures. The refusal of the government of Queensland to grant the association land killed the scheme, which was viewed by many as little more than a fraud. It evoked the paradise of Eden which Mr Scadder had sought on the banks of the Mississippi in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. John Hall now proposed a settlement in Western Australia - also designated Prince Albert Land - at Camden Harbour, the first settlement to be at Grey City (named after the explorer Sir James Grey). Squattages were to be rent-free for four years, promoted with the slogan "Homes for the Million. Land for Nothing". Milton was chairman of the committee appointed to assess the feasibility of the project. It was equally a predictable failure. As the *Perth Gazette* commented in May 1863: "The cause must be in the last stage of helplessness, when a benevolent old gentleman like Dr Milton has felt called upon to interfere".

The Christian Israelite Church was a Messianic sect founded by Bradford-born John Wroe in the 1820s, owing much to the earlier prophecies of Joanna Southcott. Members were vulgarly known as Wroeites. Melbourne was the church's stronghold in Australia and a major source of finance. The Wroeite's English temple, near Wakefield, built in the 1850s, was called Melbourne House and modelled on Melbourne Town Hall. Wroe himself died at the Christian Israelite's Sanctuary in Melbourne in February 1863 during a preaching and fund-raising tour of the continent. Milton was an implacable enemy of the sect, and in particular a secret penitential rite known as the "cleansing process". An opportunity to reveal its allegedly true nature came in 1863 when a recent apostate then living in Melbourne, Allan Stewart, gave what he claimed to be an explicit account of the ceremony. Whether or not the revelations - "revolting and demoralizing" to Milton - were apocryphal is a matter of debate, but Milton believed them and effectively became Stewart's publicist. A public meeting was called at St George's Hall in Melbourne, at which Stewart held a capacity audience of over 2,000 - all men - in rapt attention. A pamphlet was published - *The abominations of the Wroeites (or Christian Israelites) fully and completely exposed* - written by Stewart but edited by Milton. What purported to be a corroborative account of the rite, given to Milton on oath seven years earlier by Alexander Payne, was also included. The authorities saw the pamphlet as crossing a moral boundary. The offices of the printers, Messrs Abbott and Co, were raided by the police, who confiscated 2,000 undistributed copies. Lorimer Fison, the manager and sole representative of the firm then in the colony, was charged before the City Court with publishing an obscene work. It was the first trial for obscene publication in the state of Victoria. The court rejected the hapless Fison's defence that he was induced to incur the risk of publication by the affirmation of Dr Milton. Declaring the pamphlet to be of a most beastly character, the magistrates sent Fison to trial at a higher court. A surviving copy of the pamphlet in the State Library of Victoria (accessible through <http://search.slv.vic.au>) is marked Exhibit A in 'The Queen v Fison'. The offending passages, on pages 6 and 7, are highlighted. Later that year Fison, now an ordained Methodist minister, left Australia for Fiji, to follow a glittering career as missionary, pioneering anthropologist and journalist.

Political radicalism was a natural corollary to Milton's mission to the underclasses. He took pride in being "a working-man" and "the working man's friend". He believed in universal suffrage, the ballot, universal education, the ending of forced transportation and liberty of the press. During the economic distress in Melbourne in the mid-1850s, he helped to mobilise those thrown out of work. He convened a 1,000-strong open air meeting of the unemployed and chaired the committee set up by the meeting. His remedies included establishment of a central labour registration office, abolition of the gold diggers' licence fee and foundation of a working man's newspaper, *The Operative*. A report on the condition of the labouring classes of the city was commissioned. The committee of the unemployed evolved into the short-lived Working Classes Association, of which Milton was chairman. A report on the labour market was forwarded to England in an attempt to deter further mass immigration. On the great political issue of the day, the land question, Milton sided with the extremists. The poor man should no longer be excluded from his rightful property. The Crown Lands were to be unlocked, with allotments of between 50 and 100 acres sold at a *ne plus ultra* price of 5 shillings an acre. In cases of need, payment was to be deferred for ten or even twenty years. The government was to provide agricultural implements, paid for whenever the settler had sufficient funds. "That was his creed, and he was prepared to buckle on his armour, and war until it was accomplished".

A prototype was to be provided by the township of Maidstone, on the Saltwater River to the north west of Melbourne. A settlement was begun in 1858, financed by the sale of building allotments, under the banner "Every man his own landlord". James William Thompson, the projector who also owned the land, told the inaugural meeting that "his principal inducement in establishing a home for the people here, was that he had been with his friend Dr Milton through the dark by-lanes of Melbourne, and had seen how necessary it was that some means should be taken for providing the poor as well as the rich with fresh air and fresh water". Milton was subsequently elected on to the committee of management. However, as with John Hall later, Milton misjudged the character of the speculation. Ten houses only had been built by 1860, with no sign of the promised school and chapel. The land largely reverted to Thompson as the original owner, forfeited through the fraudulent levy of an annual fee which few could afford to pay. Milton led the campaign to obtain financial redress, but failed even to force Thompson to produce the estate books. The township was revived later in the century and now forms part of the city of Maribynong.

The projected establishment of a self-sustaining system of Model Farms encapsulates Milton's aspirations for his adopted country. The goal was pursued for over a decade through a myriad of public meetings and pamphlets. It was the universal panacea; the most certain way to spread the message of the gospels. The farms were to be socially inclusive, embracing the whole gamut of those whom Milton saw as his moral constituency: immigrants, operatives, persons of both sexes out of employment, destitute and deserted children, juvenile and adult offenders, and erring females. Unemployment would be consigned to the past, paid work being guaranteed to immigrants on landing and to anyone thrown out of work. Skills to make individuals self-sufficient were to be taught. In the original proposal, 500 acres were given over to the teaching of agriculture and horticulture on "the most approved and scientific principles". Existing industrial schools were to be absorbed so that, in a telling example used by Milton, servants arriving in the country too ignorant to boil a potato or cook a joint would be thoroughly instructed in domestic economy. Strong drink

was to be prohibited, and no one under its influence admitted. Chapels were to be built, open to all irrespective of creed. Crime would be reduced by the absorption of the existing Juvenile Reformatory. It was re-labelled 'the Prince Albert Industrial Home Farm', after the death in 1862 of the Prince Consort. Any hope that the project might become the official colonial memorial was, inevitably, a chimera.

Eschatological preoccupations - the certainty of the Second Coming of Christ - dominated the last years of Milton's sentient life. His mind was turned by the prophesies of the Anglican clergyman the Reverend Michael Paget Baxter (later founder and editor of the *Christian Herald*) in *Louis Napoleon, the destined monarch of the world, and future antichrist*, published in 1861 but reissued throughout the 1860s and sent *gratis* to ministers in the distant colonies in 1865. Part of the apocalyptic paranoia that surrounded Napoleon III, the book foresaw the descent of Christ in, or shortly after, 1873, a consequence of the end of the War of Armageddon. It can be read at www.google.co.uk/books. Milton entered into a series of lectures in September 1866 entitled 'Anti-Christ, Napoleon, Armageddon, Second Advent, Millenium'. The first offering was advertised as a discourse on the anti-Christ, the epiphaneia [the manifestation of Christ to the Magi], the resurrection, the great tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, the parousia [the Second Coming], the triumph, the millenium, and the closing scenes of the economy of grace toward the human family. The fare as offered, however, according to the *Argus*, was two hours of scathing censure on one and all from Baxter's critics, the Baptist preacher Spurgeon to the Melbourne daily press. Milton ended the lecture, without exhausting his programme, only when he saw his audience fast thinning. It was his last performance on the public stage. The remainder of his life was spent as an invalid, dependent upon charitable donations. In June 1868 he was admitted into the Benevolent Asylum. He died there on 17 October 1869, going "to his rest like one who, weary with protracted toil, falls into a welcome sleep". He is buried in Melbourne General Cemetery. It is the same cemetery in which John Wroe is buried.



The newly-built offices of the *Argus* in Melbourne. Ultra Liberal and advocating the immediate independence of the Australian colonies, the newspaper had a daily circulation of 10,500. David Blair, formerly of Southampton, was sub-editor

The Illustrated London News, 29 October 1853, p 372

Milton's life is a journey through a vale of tears. In Southampton, he was an outcast, a pariah, regarded as little more than a fraudster. Respectable citizens combined to drive him out of town. He endured months of self-inflicted imprisonment for debt. In Melbourne he met adversity at almost every turn. There were times when he was given a police escort home from the City Court. The Mission House was firebombed in 1857, prompting the *Melbourne Herald* by-line "BLOWING UP DR MILTON". Observers remarked that he often looked worn out. Financial distress was a constant companion. As early as 1854, only two years after his arrival in Melbourne, he was reported to be penniless, and he died in indigent circumstances. His last work - *The Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us"*, published in 1865 - is an essay on unfinished work. It can be read at <http://search.slv.vic.au>. Yet, and this is the great difference with his time in Southampton, in Melbourne Milton was part of the fabric of city life. He was a regular invitee to the governor's annual levee, a stock character in the local press, a target of the satirical *Melbourne Punch* and member of a range of local societies from the Victoria Phonetic Association (of which he was one of the founders) to the Acclimatisation Society, promoting the introduction and naturalisation of fauna and flora from around the world. Whenever laid low by illness, relief funds were established to supply him with the necessities of life, food and money, and even the occasional luxury. Organized by the police magistrate Evelyn Sturt, the sergeants and constables of the city police force were especially generous. Other donations came from the spectrum of local society: £5 from the governor, £2 from Mr Justice Molesworth, £1 from the teachers of Victoria Grammar School all the way to 6d from Master Price and "postage stamps as the widow's mite". His admittance to the Benevolent Asylum was a final act of charity.

Digitised copies of the *Argus* - available through <http://www.nla.gov.au/> - give modern observers a far clearer view of the antipodean life of Dr Milton than was granted to his contemporaries in England. It may be apposite to end with a quotation from the issue of 15 February 1856. The final sentence could no doubt stand for every town in which he served.

"Dr Milton is a man whose benevolence of intention we have no right to question, and it is so seldom that we meet with men whose life is dedicated to other than personal objects, that we feel disposed to think well of any one who sets an exceptional example in this respect. But to speak the plain truth, Dr Milton's judgment is so bad - he is so eminently wanting in discretion and common sense - that we often wish he was exercising his charitable impulses somewhere else than here".

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