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## Andrew Melville, sacred chronology and world history: the *Carmina Danielis* 9 and the *Antichristus*

**Abstract:** The accepted view of the ecclesiastical reformer Andrew Melville (1545–1622) as the dynamic leader of the Presbyterian movement in Jacobean Scotland has been severely eroded in recent years, with particular criticism of the actual importance of his contribution to the Kirk and to Scottish higher education. While this reductionism has been necessary, it has resulted in an inversion of the overwhelmingly positive traditional image of Melville, and does not give us a rounded assessment of his life and works. This article attempts to partially redress this balance by looking at a neglected aspect of Melville’s Latin writings, which showcase his talents as a humanist intellectual and biblical commentator. It focuses on two long poems that are both commentaries and paraphrases of Daniel and Revelation: the *Carmina Danielis* and the *Antichristus*. Through these poems, we see how Melville engaged with two problems exercising reformed theologians across Europe: the dating of key biblical events and the historicised meaning of prophecies within these texts. We also find evidence that Melville read widely among both contemporary and ancient commentators on both these issues.

**Key words:** Andrew Melville; poetry; history; sacred chronology; apocalypse.

### *Introduction*

Andrew Melville (1545–1622) is best known to historians of early modern Scotland as the definitive Presbyterian radical, though he is a figure that attracts considerable controversy. Described by several of his contemporaries as *episcoporum exactor* and *episcopomastix*—the ‘thrower-out’ and ‘scourge’ of bishops<sup>1</sup>—Melville was unrelenting in his criticism of James VI and I’s attempts to establish a Church ruled by government-appointed clerics and the royal will. Melville was portrayed by his nineteenth-century biographer Thomas M’Crie<sup>2</sup> as the decisive leader of a united Scottish Kirk between 1574 and 1606. However, modern historiography has deconstructed Melville to the point where a completely opposite view of him has emerged, as no more than the leading influence in a minority faction of a Church that was on the whole

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<sup>1</sup> James Melville, *Autobiography and Diary*, ed. Robert Pitcairn (Edinburgh, 1842), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas M’Crie, *Life of Andrew Melville*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1819); revd edn, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1824); single vol. edn (Edinburgh, 1856); new edn (Edinburgh, 1899).

submissive to royal government.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, recent research on Melville's other contribution to Jacobean society, the post-Reformation reform of the Scottish universities, has become equally polarised. James Kirk argued that Melville had huge success in reforming the universities of Glasgow and St Andrews with new Protestant and humanist constitutions between 1574 and 1580, and exerted a major influence on reforms at King's College, Aberdeen (1582/3), and on the new foundations of Edinburgh (1582) and Marischal College (1593).<sup>4</sup> However, several historians have roundly rebutted the all-encompassing success of 'Melvillian' reform, and argued that beyond Glasgow his programme had minimal impact.<sup>5</sup>

With this sustained reductionism of Melville and his achievements, two very different versions of him have emerged. The iconic reformer of Presbyterian legend continues to survive alongside the prosaic, intemperate and ineffectual figure created by a more critical modern historiography, and these two interpretations often seem to be mutually exclusive, although recent research into Melville's relationship with his supposed 'arch-rival' Patrick Adamson points towards the complex reality behind the doctrinaire facade.<sup>6</sup> Are there other ways, then, to approach Melville that also avoid these partisan divides? What of Melville the intellectual, the person behind these two radically different images? Did Melville himself leave anything that can provide a more rounded or alternative view of him? The answer is yes—Melville left an entire volume of letters, over 160 poems, and several religious

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<sup>3</sup> Most effectively argued in Alan R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy, 1567–1625* (Aldershot, 1998), esp. at 31–4, 58–65, 171–80, and his 'James VI and the General Assembly', in *The Reign of James VI*, ed. Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh, 2000), 170–85. See also Gordon Donaldson, *James V–James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 198–207, and David Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1986), 78–9.

<sup>4</sup> James Durkan and James Kirk, *The University of Glasgow, 1451–1577* (Glasgow, 1977), 262–346; James Kirk, "'Melvillian' reform in the Scottish universities', in *The Renaissance in Scotland: Studies in Literature, Religion, History and Culture*, ed. A. A. MacDonald, Michael Lynch and Ian B. Cowan (Leiden, 1994), 276–300.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Lynch, 'The origins of Edinburgh's "Toun College": a revision article', *IR* 33 (1982), 3–14, and his 'The creation of a college', in Robert D. Anderson, Michael Lynch and Nicholas Phillipson, *The University of Edinburgh: an Illustrated History* (Edinburgh, 2003), 1–49, at 9–18; Steven John Reid, 'Aberdeen's "Toun College": Marischal College, 1593–1623', *IR* 58 (2007), 173–95, and his 'Education in post-Reformation Scotland: Andrew Melville and the University of St Andrews, 1560–1606' (University of St Andrews, unpublished PhD thesis, 2008), *passim*; David Stevenson, *King's College, Aberdeen, 1560–1641: From Protestant Reformation to Covenanting Revolution* (Aberdeen, 1990), esp. chs 2 and 3, 20–60.

<sup>6</sup> Alan R. MacDonald, 'Best of enemies: Andrew Melville and Patrick Adamson, c.1574–1592', in *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*, ed. Julian Goodare and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Leiden, 2008), 257–76. I am grateful to Dr MacDonald for a copy of this essay.

commentaries that are deserving of study.<sup>7</sup> However, his writings are an area that has received very little attention, in part because the sources have never been systematically collected and published, and in part because, with the exception of a few letters, Melville wrote in a highly rebarbative Latin. Only in recent years has a very small portion of his poetry been published and translated,<sup>8</sup> but much more needs to be done before we have a complete overview of the themes and ideas prevalent in the *corpus* of his surviving works. This article seeks to illuminate one theme that dominates these writings—Melville’s interest in the chronology and historicity of the events of the Bible, and how these two interconnected issues help explain the apocalyptic prophecies contained in scriptural texts such as Daniel and Revelation. It is two of his longest surviving poetic works that underpin the discussion that follows—the *Antichristus*, published in several collections of Melville’s poetry in the early seventeenth century, and the *Carmina Danielis* 9, which exists in a single surviving manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin. Together, these two texts not only illuminate an area of biblical study that Melville was deeply interested in: they also provide information on, and the names of, a range of authors whom he had consulted on the subject. The *Antichristus* and the *Carmina* further confirm what has long been known about Melville from circumstantial and anecdotal evidence, and

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<sup>7</sup> The main collections of Melville’s poetry are *Viri clarissimi A. Melvini Musae et P. Adamsoni Vita et Palinodia ... Brevis & Aperta Descriptio*, ed. Thomas Wilson ([Netherlands?], 1620) [hereafter *Musae*]; *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum*, ed. Arthur Johnstone, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1637). All references to the *Delitiae* [hereafter *DPS*] are to the second volume. The *Andrae Melvini Epistolae* (Edinburgh University Library, DC6.45) contain the majority of his letters, but a handful also survive in the Wodrow Collection at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh [hereafter NLS], and in collections in the Bodleian Library, Oxford and British Library, London.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Williamson and Paul McGinnis have published translations of two of Melville’s major works, the *Principis Scoti-Britannorum Natalia* and *Gathelus*, in their *George Buchanan: the Political Poetry*, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1995), 276–97. See also their comments on Melville’s relation to David Hume of Godscroft in their edition of his *The British Union* (Aldershot, 2002), 9–19, and their translation of Melville’s prefatory letter to the work, 136–9. I am grateful to Professors Williamson and McGinnis for supplying me with their unpublished article ‘Politics, patriotism and poetry during the Melvillian moment’, and their translation of Melville’s *Antichristus*, which provided me with useful insights on my own translation and discussion of the text. James Doelman assesses Melville’s literary relationship with King James, mainly after 1603, in his *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge, 2000), 57–72. Ian C. Cunningham has produced a translation of Melville’s ‘Topography of Scotland’ (*Scotiae Topographica*), available online at the NLS website, <http://193.130.15.3/maps/early/blaeu/900.html> (accessed 3 January 2008). On Melville’s written response to the St Bartholomew’s Day massacres, see Steven John Reid, ‘Early polemic by Andrew Melville: the *Carmen Mosis* (1574) and the St Bartholomew’s Day massacres’, *Renaissance and Reformation* 30.4 (Autumn 2006/7), 63–82.

from limited surveys of his own writings: that he had read broadly among his contemporaries in the field of history, but had also consulted a range of historical texts, including Greco-Roman and Jewish authors, in his attempts to understand the biblical significance of world history.

*Melville and Daniel: the Carmina Danielis* 9

Melville's short poem 'The true praise of history' (*Historiae vera laus*) shows how much value he placed on understanding the past. He describes history as the 'touchstone of every age, light of truth, eye of the mind' and as the 'advisor of kings, and the god-like source of laws'.<sup>9</sup> Other circumstantial evidence confirms his enthusiasm for history—James Melville states that his uncle taught 'Chronologie and Chirographie'<sup>10</sup> using Melancthon's *Chronicorum ab Orbe Condito . . . a Christi Natali Augustique Imperio* (1560) and Johannes Sleidan's *De Quatuor Summis Imperiis*,<sup>11</sup> and Melville's library included Bodin's *Methodus ad Facilem Historiarum Cognitionem* (1566), Censorinus' *De Die Natali Liber* (1593 edition, published at Lyon) and Charles de Bouelle's *Aetatum Mundi Septem Supputatio* (1520/1).<sup>12</sup>

As part of this interest in history, Melville believed that Daniel was central to the correct interpretation of biblical chronology, specifically as heralding the arrival of Christ. Written at some point between 167 and 164 BC, but believed in the sixteenth century to have been written during the enslavement of the Jews in Babylon four centuries earlier, Daniel gained favour with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as an interpreter of dreams. His prophecies in chapters 7–12 included the fall of four mighty kingdoms, represented as four beasts, and the rise of a Messiah who would rule a fifth kingdom. In reformed circles the first three kingdoms were commonly interpreted as the Persian, Greek and Roman empires which ruled successively in the near east in the four centuries prior to the birth of Christ, and which were succeeded by a fourth empire, the papacy, also commonly identified with the second beast of Revelation. The central set of prophecies in Daniel 9: 24–7 states first that there will be a total of seventy weeks remaining to Jerusalem before its destruction (9: 24). After sixty-nine weeks, comprising a block of seven, and then a block of sixty-two, from the 'going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem' after its destruction at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, the Messiah would arrive (9: 25). He would then 'be cut off, but not for himself', and his people would 'come and destroy the city

<sup>9</sup> Williamson and McGinnis, *George Buchanan*, 282–3.

<sup>10</sup> Melville, *Autobiography and Diary*, ed. Pitcairn, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Durkan and Kirk, *University of Glasgow*, 277, 316–17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 421–2.

and the sanctuary' of Jerusalem and its temple (9: 26). In the final week, the Messiah would 'confirm the covenant with many', and would finally cause the 'sacrifice and oblation to cease, and . . . make it desolate', which would then 'be poured upon the desolate' (9: 27).

It is explicitly with these prophecies that Melville's 'Poems on Daniel, Chapter 9' (*Carmina Danielis 9*) is concerned. Surviving only in a single copy as two folios of MS 416 in the Ussher collection of Trinity College Dublin,<sup>13</sup> there is no indication of its provenance, dating or conclusive authorship, save that the full title on the opening page (*Carmina Dan. 9 Andreae Melvini Scoti*), the content, and stylistic evidence make it highly likely that it was authored by Melville.<sup>14</sup> The *Carmina* is a series of three overlapping poems comprising some 234 lines, with a number of prose comments interspersed between them. The text is clearly a rough draft, and the poems are full of variant spellings for Old Testament names, highly repetitive, and poorly constructed in several places. Nevertheless, this work provides us with one of the greatest insights into some of the sources, both ancient and contemporary, that Melville read on chronology, as he names several of the authors whom he consulted in preparing his text.

The first poem, lines 1–33 of the whole text, offers a straightforward paraphrase of verses 24–7 with no analysis of their meaning. This is followed by the second poem in the cycle, a 38-line 'Detailed exposition of the prophecy' (*Prophetiae Enarratio*). Here Melville argues that each day of the seventy weeks is representative of a year, and altogether they represent the 490 years before the death of Christ in AD 33. The 'seven weeks' of the first part of the prophecy correspond to the period of c. 456 BC to c. 408 BC, when the Jewish nation was led by the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah after their return from the Babylonian captivity. The sixty-two weeks thereafter correspond to the 434 years remaining until the death of Christ, during the period of the Persian, Greek and Roman empires.

This interpretation corresponds exactly with that put forward by the German chronologist Abraham Bucholtzer, whom Melville had read

<sup>13</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 416, fols 2r–4v.

<sup>14</sup> How it came to be in the Ussher collection is anyone's guess. It seems possible that the poem was taken down by James Ussher, who took his MA at Trinity shortly after it opened, during a series of book-buying visits to London in 1602, 1606 and 1609. On these visits Ussher, who had a strong interest in biblical chronology, made time to meet with leading English intellectuals including Sir Henry Savile and William Camden. He may also have visited Melville in the Tower, perhaps on behalf of his old teachers at Trinity, whom Melville had taught. Alan Ford, 'James Ussher (1581–1666)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28034> (accessed 4 February 2008); Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford, 2007), 48–9, 76–84.

extensively. Bucholtzer's *Isagoge Chronologica*, published in various editions from 1580 onwards, enjoyed considerable favour in reformed circles, particularly in Geneva and the Palatinate. A 1596 copy was owned by Melville and was heavily annotated by him: the 'Index chronologicum' attached to the work, a table of world history running from the Creation to AD 1580, was used by Melville as a place to jot down the key events in his life, including his birthday and entrance to study for his MA at St Andrews.<sup>15</sup> Bucholtzer devoted much of his work to explicating Daniel, including attempts to match the identities of the Persian and Assyrian kings the text mentions with those named in Ptolemy and Xenophon,<sup>16</sup> and to pinpointing the start and end dates of the seventy weeks.<sup>17</sup> Bucholtzer was convinced that the reference to 'rebuilding Jerusalem' had to refer to one of the four dispensations given to the Jews by Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes in Esra 1–6 and Nehemiah 1–2. Although he could prove that each dispensation related to a significant event in world history 490 years later,<sup>18</sup> only the third, given in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes (456/7 BC), was the one linked to the death of Christ. Bucholtzer also believed that the prophecy of 'one week to confirm the contract with many' and the destruction of Jerusalem were inextricably intertwined. Half this 'week' referred to the approximate three-and-a-half years when Christ actively spread his gospel, while the second half referred to the siege during the fall of Jerusalem between AD 66 and 70.

Melville warmly endorsed Bucholtzer's view that the fall of Jerusalem represented the last week of the prophecy, heavily annotating sections in his copy of the *Isagoge* which stated that the 'abominations' spread across the city were in fact the raised standards of the conquering Roman force.<sup>19</sup> However, Melville's interpretation in the *Enarratio* of the 'week to confirm the contract with many' differs slightly to that of

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<sup>15</sup> Abraham Bucholtzer, *Isagoge Chronologica, Id est: Opusculam ad Annorum Seriem in Sacris Bibliis Contexendam, Compendio Viam Monstrans ac Fundamenta Indicans* (In officina Sanctandreana [false imprint], 1596); Melville's copy held at NLS, E.84.f.16; Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: a Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* vol. ii, *Historical Chronology* (Oxford, 1993), 397–8.

<sup>16</sup> Bucholtzer, *Isagoge Chronologica*, 19–23. Bucholtzer argues that the Nabonassar and Nabopolassar found in Ptolemy and Xenophon are actually the Old Testament kings Salmanassar and Nebuchadnezzar whom he states began their rules in 746 BC and 623 BC respectively. He argues that following them Cyrus reigned from 557 BC, Cambyses from 527 BC, and Darius from 519 BC.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–90.

<sup>18</sup> These included the murder of Pompey Magnus by Caesar in 48 BC, an estimated 490 years after the dispensation granted by Cyrus, and the elevation of Augustus following the death of Mark Anthony in 27 BC, 490 years after the dispensation granted by Darius: *ibid.*, 89–90.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–9. Melville has heavily underscored this section in his copy, and written 'ala' and 'Aquila Rom.' in the margins on pp. 87–8.

Bucholtzer. Melville saw it as only referring to the seven years before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, and not in any way to the ministry of Jesus. To justify this, Melville cites anecdotal evidence of miracles and prophetic portents seen in Jerusalem prior to its destruction from a quite different source altogether—the ancient Jewish writer Flavius Josephus. Josephus had been a leader in the Jewish insurgency until his surrender at Masada, and then became a Roman apologist under Titus and Vespasian. His account of the Jewish War was one often sourced by chronologists to explain the timeline and symbolism in Daniel, and Melville is no exception. Josephus wrote that at the Festival of Tabernacles in Jerusalem in autumn AD 62, Jesus Ben Ananias, a local peasant, began shouting throughout the city:

‘A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds: a voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary, a voice against the bridegroom and the bride, a voice against all the people’ ... [and] although flayed to the bone with scourges, he neither sued for mercy nor shed a tear, but ... responded to each stroke with ‘Woe to Jerusalem!’

Ananias continued his lament every day as a beggar in the city until its fall seven years and five months later, when he was killed by a stone from a *ballista*.<sup>20</sup> Melville closely paraphrases Josephus, as seen in this excerpt from the *Enarratio*:

Then a whole seven years with Jesus Ben-Ananius, contrary to established custom and without restraint, constantly repeating ‘woe! woe!’, through the city, ‘woe!’ in Jerusalem, and ‘woe! woe!’ within the gateways of the sacred temple (lines 20–3).<sup>21</sup>

Melville also paraphrases another of Josephus’ portents, where he describes a series of celestial battles in the sky and a voice from the temple shrine that advised the Jews they would have to leave Jerusalem, and the ending of the *Enarratio* also draws on Josephus’ account where Melville describes the slaughter of the Jewish priests at the temple altar by the Romans.<sup>22</sup> Thus we clearly see Melville in the *Enarratio* attempting

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<sup>20</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War: Books IV–VII*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library 210 (London, 1928), vi.5, 462–7.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Tum Iesu Ananias assidue sine more modoque/ Totos septem annos “yae, yae!” ingeminante per urbem./ “Yae!” Solymis, “yae, yae!” sacri intra et limina templi ...’

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, trans. Thackeray, vi.5, 462–7: ‘Again, not many days after the festival, on the twenty-first of the month Artemisium ... throughout all parts of the country chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the clouds and encompassing the cities. Moreover, at the feast which is called Pentecost, the priests ... were conscious, first of a commotion and a din, and after that of a voice as of a host,



to draw on ancient, as well as contemporary authors in his attempts to unravel the historical significance of the prophecies of Daniel, and we see some initial evidence of the range of reading he had undertaken on the subject.

Following the opening paraphrase and the *Enarratio*, the remaining 133 lines of the text constitute a third and separate poem devoted to locating the events of the ninth chapter of Daniel in the entire narrative of world history from the Creation until the events of AD 70. Melville cites references in this section from a much wider selection of sources than simply Bucholtzer and Josephus, gathering his information from passages in Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah, the histories of Herodotus and Tacitus, and from works authored by several other contemporary reformed chronologists. Lines 8–81 of this third poem state that the world was created from the void and Adam born in 4000 BC, and that the flood of Noah took place in 2344 BC. The birth of Abraham took place in the year 2008 BC, and he accepted the covenant with God in his tent (*ex carris*) at the age of seventy-five in Mesopotamia in 1933 BC. Moses heard God's voice in 1487 BC at Mount Horeb, and the founding of the temple took place in the reign of Solomon in 1007 BC.

While these dates may seem entirely arbitrary, they actually correspond exactly with those worked out by the French Calvinist scholar Matthieu Béroalde in his chronology, the *Chronicum Scripturae Sacrae Autoritate Constitutum*, published in Geneva in 1575. This chronology was adopted wholesale in English translations of Béroalde's work by the Cambridge-educated Hebraist, Hugh Broughton. We have no evidence that Melville owned the texts produced by these men, but he makes explicit mention of both authors in a prose comment inserted halfway through the third poem, where he discusses the time elapsed between the first and second periods of Jewish exile in the Old Testament. Melville notes that some (unfortunately unspecified) authors have attempted to make a link between the period of time between the two exiles, estimated at sixty years, and the seventy weeks announced by Gabriel in Daniel (*a reditu primo exillii ad reditum usque secundum quasitum intervallum hoc inter sextennia dena exillii et septuaginta hebdomadas Gabrielis*). These authors supplemented the information found in the Old Testament

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[saying] "We are departing hence." Compare Melville (lines 23–8): 'When the whole race assembles to celebrate the solemnities of Passover in the dead of night, a very bright light seemed to shine forth for half an hour, squadrons seemed to be flying past the altars, battles seemed to be joined and mock-fights seemed to be set in motion. A divine voice was heard from the opened shrines. "Let us depart from here", it said . . . ' ('Dum gens tota coit calebrans solennia paschae./ Nocte intempesta, praeclarum effulgere lumen/ Ad semissem horae turmas volitare per aras/ Praelia misceri et belli simulachra cieri/ Visa audita aditis vox et divina recluses:/ "Hinc migremus", ait . . .')

with ‘pagan’ accounts of the period by ‘Herodotus and other Greek writers and witnesses’, an approach which Béroalde and Broughton ‘refuse to acknowledge under a charge of misinterpretation’ of the biblical timeline (*quod ratio agnoscit non ullum Brughtoniana seu Beroaldina, Herodotum Graecosque recusans scriptoresque alios testes, sub crimine falsi*).

This admittedly cryptic comment shows that Melville had clearly read the chronologies of Béroalde and Broughton, as the hallmark of this duo’s approach to history was an adherence to the Bible, to the exclusion of all other sources, as the definitive source of world chronology. Béroalde was born in Saint-Denis around 1520, and after graduating from the Collège du Cardinal Le Moine in 1543 spent his early career as a regent teaching Aristotle in Paris. At some point prior to 1562 he converted to Calvinism and then relocated to Orléans, where he was given a professorial post in Hebrew. He taught there until the beginning of the third civil war in 1568, and then took up a number of brief teaching posts at Montargis, Sancerre, and the newly established academy of Sedan before incorporation as a professor of Christian philosophy at the Genevan Academy in December 1574. He died in Geneva in July 1576.<sup>23</sup>

Broughton disseminated Béroalde’s chronology to an English-speaking audience. Born in 1549, Broughton studied at Magdalen, St John’s, and Christ’s College, Cambridge between 1569 and 1572, where he was taught Hebrew by the French Huguenot Anthony Chevallier. He moved to London in 1583 and then to Germany in 1589, but did not leave Britain before publishing a condensed and annotated translation of Béroalde’s *Chronicum*, entitled *A Short View of the Persian Monarchie, and of Daniels Weekes: Being a Peece of Beroaldus Workes: with a Censure in Some Pointes*.<sup>24</sup>

Béroalde and Broughton believed that the timeline outlined in the Bible must, as the word of God, be infallible, and thus while the works of Greco-Roman historians including Herodotus, Tacitus and Plutarch could be used to confirm it, the timeline of the Bible must be taken as the truth in areas where conclusive dating was impossible.<sup>25</sup> Taking key episodes from Pentateuch and Kings, they established seven ages that occurred within the four millennia before the birth of Christ. The first ran from the Creation to the flood, the second from the flood to Abraham accepting the covenant, the third from Abraham to Moses, the

<sup>23</sup> Emile Haag, *La France Protestante*, 5 vols (Paris, 1877–96), iii, 2–8.

<sup>24</sup> *A Short View of the Persian Monarchie, and of Daniels Weekes: Being a Peece of Beroaldus Workes: with a Censure in Some Pointes* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1590) [hereafter Béroalde, *Chronicum*].

<sup>25</sup> Haag, *La France Protestante*, iii, 2–8; Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, 268–9.

fourth from Moses to the founding of the temple, and the fifth from the foundation of the temple to the Babylonian exile. The sixth age covered the period of the exile, which lasted seventy years, and which led into a seventh age, beginning in 457 BC. Like Bucholtzer, they believed that this date corresponded to the beginning of the seventy weeks foretold by Daniel, a view with which Melville also clearly agreed.<sup>26</sup>

Does this mean that Melville, recognised as a humanist and intellectual well versed in Greco-Roman literature and history, refused to accept anything that contradicted scripture? No; in fact, quite the opposite. Melville's explication does follow Béroalde and Broughton more or less exactly in the first eighty-one lines of the third poem, which provides key dates from the beginning of Creation in 4000 BC until the beginning of the first millennium BC. However, he radically changes tack in lines 81–142, where he offers a range of possible ways of dating the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius the Mede and the Persian Artaxerxes dynasty during their supremacy over the Jews between the eighth and fifth centuries BC. The identities of the kings in this period were completely garbled: the proliferation of kings named Nabonassar, Nabopolassar and Nabuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar) in the seventh and eighth centuries BC made separating them impossible, while the king-lists for the fifth and sixth centuries BC varied wildly from source to source. Melville tackled this issue by comparing the dates given for these kings by Béroalde and Broughton with those of his old friend and colleague in Paris and Geneva, Joseph Scaliger, who also published extensively on sacred chronology but took a completely different approach to the subject.<sup>27</sup>

Scaliger was a philologist and textual emendator of the first order, and was the author of *De Emendatione Temporum* (1583), which offered a wide-ranging and erudite analysis of calendrical systems used across the known world, and a range of very different dates for the key epochs in world history. Over twenty years later he produced an edition of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea's *Thesaurus Temporum* (1606) that contained a revised world chronology in the *Isagogici Chronologiae Canones* appended to the work.<sup>28</sup> Unlike Béroalde and Broughton, Scaliger saw the Bible as merely supplementing the far more substantiated histories

<sup>26</sup> Béroalde, *Chronicum*, f.\*vii and 66–7.

<sup>27</sup> Melville mentions Scaliger at several points, first in lines 22–4 of the *Prophetiae Enarratio* where he points out a difference between Béroalde and Scaliger's interpretations of Abraham's chronology. In lines 73–5 of the final section Melville points out their different interpretations of the time from the beginning of the world to the prophet Zachariah. For what follows on Scaliger and his chronology, see Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> For the list of world eras in *De Emendatione Temporum* and *Isagogici Chronologiae Canones*, and the differences between the two works, see Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, 276–98, 662–81.

seen in Herodotus, Thucydides and other ‘pagan’ authors, rather than the other way around.<sup>29</sup>

Scaliger’s account of the Persian and Babylonian dynasties in the fifth and sixth centuries BC, which provides widely divergent dates to those of Béroalde and Broughton, is a perfect case in point of how much an incorporation of ‘pagan’ histories could affect the biblical timeline. Scaliger believed that the Bible provided no clarity on which kings ruled which empires, and indeed whether or not they were separate empires at all. He used his knowledge of Chaldean and Assyrian to argue that the roots seen in the names of the kings indicated their provenance from either the Persian or Babylonian dynasty, and produced a canon of nine kings who ruled in the era after Nebuchadnezzar. Five of these were Persian (Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius filius Hystaspis, Xerxes and Artaxerxes Longimanus) and four Babylonian (Darius Nothus, Artaxerxes Memor, Achos and Darius Codomannus). Béroalde and Broughton, on the other hand, identified only five kings from scripture different to those identified by Scaliger (Cyrus Major, Assuerus Artaxerxes, Darius Assyrius, Artaxerxes Pius and Xerxes terror Graeciae) and omitted the rest. More confusing still, to justify this they placed these kings in a span of 130 years beginning with the reign of Cyrus in 460 BC, over a century shorter than the period advocated by Scaliger.<sup>30</sup>

With this wide variance in dating between the sources Melville consulted, it would be understandable if his discussion, particularly when couched in poetic meter, would run into difficulty. However, this section of Melville’s poem is not only difficult; it is completely incoherent. Melville uses a bizarre scheme of describing dates by combinations of *saecula* (literally a ‘cycle’ or ‘generation’, usually used to denote a hundred years), *lustra* (five-year periods), and other multiples of years, rather than giving actual dates. He is also highly vague about the exact values he attributes to these words, and provides no fixed dates as a basis for his calculations, making it all but impossible to follow his logic. This heavily amended translation of lines 93–9, where Melville attempts to correlate a variation of dates for these kings with the beginning of the first Jewish exile, will suffice to show the level of vagueness apparent in this section of the third poem:

If the beginning of the exile is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar,  
but if Jehoakim[‘s reign] is [begun in] the eighth year of

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<sup>29</sup> Scaliger had a ‘hearty dislike’ of Béroalde, whom he saw as merely a plagiarist of the Catholic chronologist Gilbert Générard. Scaliger also hated the popularity that Béroalde’s work enjoyed in reformed circles, and produced a *Defensio Veterum Contra Supercilium Beroaldi* attacking his scholarship, which Isaac Casaubon strongly endorsed: Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, 70, 274–5, 310–11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 298–311. Scaliger argued that Cyrus began his reign in 560 BC.

Nebuchadnezzar, add eleven years for Cyrus after Babylon's recovery.

If the beginning [of the exile is] the eleventh year of Zechariah and the last year of Nebuchadnezzar, which [is] also his twentieth year, add twenty years for Cyrus, after Babylon's recovery, so that seventy years binds together the series of years.<sup>31</sup>

Melville offers a further range of equally confusing variants for tabulating the dates in this period before returning in the final forty lines to better established events including the battle of Marathon, the crossing of the Hellespont, the Peloponnesian War, and the battle of Actium, and concluding the chronology at AD 70. However, beyond giving the names of these events the dating system is no less clear, and the final section also gives no indication as to which of the chronological systems mentioned earlier in the course of the text that Melville is consulting. The work ends with the reader completely baffled as to the outcome and broader significance of Melville's overall discussion.

What are we to take away from this ultimately confused work, and what does it reveal about Melville as an intellectual? It does show that he read several authors on sacred chronology and world history, both ancient and contemporary, whom he is unable to reconcile in the final poem of this cycle. However, this does not necessarily mean that we have overestimated his intellectual abilities—the first two poems are largely erudite and clear, and as mentioned at the outset of this article this was clearly a draft of an unfinished work. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Melville intended to complete final revisions to the text and to resolve the confusions of the third poem, although with such little evidence for its date and Melville's circumstances at the time we have no way of knowing for sure. This issue aside, it is clear that he had a deep interest in history and chronology and read an eclectic range of viewpoints in line with this.

It is, however, worth noting another facet that the *Carmina* cycle reveals of Melville's interests, and it is a facet that intellectually binds nearly all the key sources mentioned so far—particularly Josephus, Béroalde, Broughton and Scaliger—together. Circumstantial and anecdotal evidence shows that Melville had an especial interest in Jewish history, language and scripture, and their relation to the Old Testament. His desire to learn Hebrew and the other languages of the holy

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<sup>31</sup> 'Si caput exilii est primo Nabouchodnosor anno./ Sin Joachin octavo Nabouchodnosor anno./ Adde Cyri undenos annos Babilone recepta./ Sin caput undecimus Zedechiae atque ultimus anno/ Qui Nabuchodnosoris, unde et vigesimus annus./ Bis denos Cyri adde annos Babilone recepta/ Annorum ut seriem septenna decennia nectant.'

land during his time on the continent has been well attested, and M’Crie asserted that the ‘Johannes Salignacus’ who taught Melville at Paris was not, as James Melville stated, a scholar of mathematics but actually a scholar of Hebrew with extensive interests in rabbinical history.<sup>32</sup> At the height of his intermittent feud with the royalist archbishop Patrick Adamson in the mid-1580s, after a brief respite in the opening years of the decade,<sup>33</sup> Adamson suggested in a number of public criticisms of Melville’s teaching that Melville was a ‘Caballist’ and ‘Thalmudist’ – a favourer of Jewish religious writings – who argued that in the time before the fall God had acted as catechist and teacher to Adam, in a manner not unlike that of the Presbyterian ‘doctor’ of the Church.<sup>34</sup> It is with this interest in Hebrew and Jewish history in mind that the first eight lines of the third poem of the *Carmina* have to be read:

These are words which are usually attributed to the prophet Elias:  
 ‘All the time of the world endures within six thousand years.  
 A thousand years from the first origin of the birth of the world,  
 The second fatal [age] from the death of our fathers and the cataclysm.  
 Let the third age be called “the third under tents”.  
 Let the fourth have its name from the first and second temple.  
 Let the fifth take up a name associated with the name of Christ.  
 The sixth shows the Antichrist, with his finger outstretched’ (lines  
 1–8).<sup>35</sup>

These maxims, given by the rabbinical prophet Elias in the fourth book of the Talmud, refer to a partition of the world into six ages of a millennium each. According to Elias, there would be two ages of chaos and shapelessness, two ages where man would be ruled by laws, and two ages where the Messiah would reign. This structure corresponds to the Jewish belief, particularly prevalent in the Cabala, that God made the world in six days. On the seventh day God rested, and this would

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<sup>32</sup> M’Crie, *Life of Andrew Melville* (1819 edn), i, 24–5. I have not found reference to this professor in James Veazie Skalnik’s list of professors for the Collège De France, however: Skalnik, *Ramus and Reform* (Missouri, 2002), appendix 1.

<sup>33</sup> MacDonald, ‘Best of enemies’, 271–4.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Adamson, *Assertiones Quaedam, ex Aliis Eiusmodi Innumeris Erroneae, per Andream Melvinam, Novam et Inauditam Theologiam Profitentem, in Suis Praelectionibus de Episcopatu*, in Patrick Adamson, *Opera*, ed. Thomas Wilson (London, 1620), no. 10: ‘*Assertio*: Deus, in mundi exordio, cum Adamo, doctorem et catechisten egit. Qui enim sciret ea, quae eum diebus quinque antecessant, nisi Deo docente? . . . *Censura*: Rudem hominem creatum, qui creationis beneficio haec non amplecteretur, novaque doctrina tum opus habere, Cabalisticum est, et Thalmudicum.’

<sup>35</sup> ‘Elae vatis vulgo quae dicta: / “Fert tempus mundi annorum sex millibus omne. / Mundi natalis chiliar ab origine prima. / Artera fatalis patrum a morte et catachismo. / Tertia dicatur tentis sub pellibus acta. / Quarta habeat nomen templo a primo atque secundo. / Quinta aptum Christi sumat de nomine nomen. / Sexta Antichristum digito demonstrat aperto.”’

be reflected in the temporal world when the seventh age would see a golden age of peace ushered in under the Messiah. This 'Prophecy of Elias' appears in both Augustine and the works of Joachim of Fiore, and was one of the earliest and most central components of reformed interpretations of sacred chronology. In 1532 Melanchthon published a revised version of a chronicle by the mathematician and astrologist Johannes Carion, which praised the prophecy and included it with those of Daniel. *Carion's Chronicle* would influence reformed thought on chronology well into the following century, and formed the basis of John Sleidan's *De Quatuor Summis Imperiis*, which enjoyed considerable popularity in English circles, and which Melville had read.<sup>36</sup>

Béroalde, Broughton and Scaliger all share a willingness to engage with the Prophecy of Elias, the Talmud, and the Cabala.<sup>37</sup> Béroalde outlines the 'six ages' established by Elias in book II chapter 3 of his *Chronicum*, where he stoutly defends the usage of Jewish texts to better elucidate biblical chronology. For him, Cabala not only dissolves the knotty problems of scriptural history (*Cabala non tam ad sacrae scripturae nodos dissolvendos*), but helps to 'connect' them (*implicandos*) into a unified whole, and to explain the mysteries therein (*ad scripturae sacrae sensus obscuros evolvendos et aperiendos*). Cabala also contains the ancient patristic customs and traditions (*ad veteres traditiones et sententias patrum referunt*) used by the Apostles and the early Church fathers (*ex quo traditiones Apostolicas simili modo iactarunt plerique posterioris temporis doctores*), and is why Béroalde finds value in Elias and Jewish texts generally.<sup>38</sup> Broughton too was a keen exponent of rabbinical learning. While in Germany after 1589 he had a number of public discussions and debates with Jewish scholars and rabbis, and his translations from Hebrew into English of a number of Old Testament books between 1596 and 1610 show a deep knowledge of the Talmud and Targum. In 1609 he unsuccessfully petitioned James VI for a stipend to support the creation of a translation of the New Testament into Hebrew, perhaps failing because of his temperament: he was so well known for his irascibility and intolerance of criticism that he was also excluded from the panel that produced the King James Version.<sup>39</sup> Scaliger too made the Talmud a central text in his discussion of the Jewish origins of early Christian ceremony and worship in the *De Emendatione*, arguing that the Last Supper was derived from the Jewish feast at Passover and

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<sup>36</sup> Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979), 5–6, 15–22, 74–7.

<sup>37</sup> For a sketch of the history of the Talmud and its codification from oral tradition, see Hermann L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (New York, 1969), 8–25.

<sup>38</sup> Béroalde, *Chronicum*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 152–64.

that many of Jesus' sayings were derived from the Talmud.<sup>40</sup> Until further research into Melville's extant works reveals how much he shared the sentiments of these authors, it certainly seems more than a coincidence that despite such varying opinions on chronology they agreed entirely on the relevance of Jewish texts to understanding scripture. It has often been remarked that Melville had an interest in Jewish antiquity and its impact on biblical prophecy,<sup>41</sup> and here perhaps we come closest to actual concrete proof of that interest, in Melville's own writings.

*Melville and Revelation: the Antichristus*

Besides his interest in biblical chronology, Melville was also wholly preoccupied with the rise of the Antichrist, embodied by the papacy, and the Last Judgement.<sup>42</sup> This focus on eschatology ran throughout the Scottish Calvinist mindset from the outset of the Reformation,<sup>43</sup> most notably in the work of John Napier of Merchiston, whose *A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John*, first published in 1593, was the first to apply a logical and dichotomous analysis of scripture to Revelation.<sup>44</sup> Apocalyptic imagery is rife in Melville's poetry, and Arthur Williamson and Paul McGinnis have identified several poems

<sup>40</sup> Including, for example, the proverb 'turn the other cheek': Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, 316–21, 420–4.

<sup>41</sup> Durkan and Kirk, *University of Glasgow*, 277, 316–17, 421–2; Williamson and McGinnis, *George Buchanan*, 276–97, and notes at 328–32.

<sup>42</sup> For the theological and interpretative background to the major apocalyptic texts, see Bernard McGinn, 'Early apocalypticism: the ongoing debate' and Marjorie Reeves, 'The development of apocalyptic thought: medieval attitudes', in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester, 1984), 2–73. For developments in England and Scotland, see Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 12 (Leiden, 1975), esp. 15–88; Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, *passim*; Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI* (Edinburgh, 1979; repr. Edinburgh, 2003), esp. 1–96; and S. A. Burrell, 'The apocalyptic vision of the early Covenanters', *Scottish Historical Review* 43 (1964), 1–25. For continental developments and a broader overview of the history of apocalyptic thought, see Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, 1988), esp. 13–59; Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Some uses of apocalypse in the magisterial reformers', in *Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought*, ed. Patrides and Wittreich, 74–92; Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford, 2002), xi–xx; and Arthur H. Williamson, *Apocalypse Then: Prophecy and the Making of the Modern World* (Westport, 2008), *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Goodman, John Knox, James VI and Patrick Adamson all wrote and preached on Revelation: Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 128–33; Durkan and Kirk, *University of Glasgow*, 317–18; Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness*, 40–1.

<sup>44</sup> Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 138–49; Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness*, 20–30.



where this theme is clearly at work, most notably in ‘The Birth of the Scoto-Britannic Prince’ (*Principis Scoto-Britannorum Natalia*), a work published in 1594 celebrating the birth of James VI and I’s son Henry, and the *Gathelus* (c. 1601), part of a poetic recitation of the origins of Scotland that Melville planned but never finished.<sup>45</sup> There are many other poems written by Melville that show this apocalyptic theme at work.<sup>46</sup> However, Melville’s long poetic commentary on Revelation, the *Antichristus*, is of direct concern to this article as it not only gives a historicised account of how the prophecies of Revelation should be interpreted, but also provides clues to several other authors whose work he may have consulted in its production.

The *Antichristus* exists in two printed locations, both undated. In the *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum* it is immediately followed by the poem *Classis Iberae*, a short condemnation of the Spanish Armada, which could give it a dating of around or after 1588 if they were meant to be published together.<sup>47</sup> Equally, the poems in the *Andreae Melvini Musae* are broadly chronological, and it is placed at the end of this collection after some poems from 1612.<sup>48</sup> In its final stanzas the poem makes an urgent appeal to James VI and I and to ‘Britain’ as a political entity, suggesting that it was written around the time of the Union of Crowns in 1603, but again this is pure speculation.

The first section of the poem, lines 1–65, comprises a paraphrase of Revelation 1–3, followed by an excerpt from Corinthians 3: 12–15 indicating that God’s fire will separate the wicked from the saved, and the prophecy of 2 Thessalonians 2 that the ‘son of perdition’ will occupy the temple of God. Melville expands considerably on this latter reference, identifying this figure clearly with the institution of the papacy. It is the papacy:

... which appropriates every act of worship to itself far beyond every Augustus, elevating itself above everything which has been called divine, and bragging with regards to the highest divinity, and rising up with its neck pushed high towards the sky, while it kills the articles of faith, while it dissolves the laws, and fixes and re-fixes the holy laws for a fee (lines 53–9).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Williamson and McGinnis, *George Buchanan*, 31–6, 284–97.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *Febris* (DPS, 106–7); *Musarum* (DPS, 105–6); *Daniel 2, Tyrannis Colossus*; *Apocalypse 13, Posterior Bellua Agnum Simulans*; and *Apocalypse 17, Babylon* (all in *Musae*, 7–8).

<sup>47</sup> *DPS*, 124–33.

<sup>48</sup> *Musae*, 36–44. The text of the poem is practically identical to that in *DPS*.

<sup>49</sup> *Musae*, 37: ‘... sibi quod cultum arrogat omnem/ Longè omnes supra Augustos, supra omne vocatum/ Numen se attollens, summo et pro numine jactans,/ Insurgensque polo elatis cervicibus alto:/ Dum condit fidei articulos, dum jura resolvit:/ Dum sacras figit leges pretio atque refigit.’

The second section of the text, lines 65–198, continues to identify the Antichrist with the pope through detailed interpretation of Revelation 13, 16 and 17. Melville never states explicitly where he is drawing his interpretations from, so only educated guesses can be made as to what authors he read. It seems beyond doubt that he would have seen Napier's work on the subject, and there are certainly several traces of Napier's thinking in the text, particularly in the anti-papal emphasis. However, there is little in the way of specific borrowings in the text to confirm this. Yet parts of Melville's interpretations do share a clear affinity with a somewhat unexpected source—the uniquely historicised interpretation of Revelation found in the work of the Zurich theologian, Theodore Bibliander. Most famous for publishing an early edition of the Koran, Bibliander was one of a number of commentators in Zurich following the death of Zwingli, including Leo Jud and Heinrich Bullinger, who actively defended the canonicity of Revelation. He also published a commentary on Revelation in 1545 under the title *Relatio Fidelis*, drawn from lectures he gave on the text in October 1543.<sup>50</sup>

Irena Backus has shown that Bibliander, despite having read contemporary commentaries on Revelation by Sebastian Meyer and Oswald Bär and other commentaries by Bede and Augustine, produced a commentary strikingly modern in its historical approach to explaining prophecy.<sup>51</sup> Melville clearly shares a number of Bibliander's views: his emphasis in the opening part of the text, for example, on paraphrasing the prologue of chapters 1–3 and then going on to interpret chapter 13 especially, mirrors the approach of Bibliander, who wrote extensively on these sections when most of his contemporaries focused on interpreting chapter 12. Crucially, in his interpretation of chapter thirteen, Melville closely follows Bibliander's historical account of the symbolism of the first beast with its seven heads and ten horns as the Roman empire, which will fall and give succession to the second beast, the pope. Bibliander and Melville both identify the wounding of the head of the first beast, which is miraculously healed, with that of the survival of the Roman line of emperors following the slaughter of the Julii by Nero, and the beast's seven heads are the line of emperors following him, symbolised by the seven kings of Revelation 17. The emperors from Galba to Titus were the five that had fallen, and Domitian was the one standing at the time Revelation was written by John of Patmos (c. AD 96). Nerva and Trajan were depicted jointly by Melville as the seventh king that John saw in his vision because at the time of writing they were still to come, and he argues

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<sup>50</sup> Theodore Bibliander, *Ad Omnium Ordinum Reipublicae Christianae Principes Uiros, Populumque Christianum, Relatio Fidelis* (Basle, 1545) [hereafter Bibliander, *Relatio Fidelis*]. For his chapter by chapter commentary on Revelation, see 114–61. See also Backus, *Reformation Readings*, 29–31, 94; Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 92–3.

<sup>51</sup> Backus, *Reformation Readings*, 94–103.

that they should be seen as a single king because Nerva chose Trajan as his co-emperor. The pope is the beast that will succeed as the eighth in line to these seven emperors.<sup>52</sup> Thus, like Bibliander, Melville is keen to emphasise the intrinsic links between the Antichristian papacy and the empire; like Bibliander, he gives a historical reading of the text; and like Bibliander, he singles out the exact same line of emperors from Nero to Domitian to do so. This is surely more than a coincidence, and provides fair circumstantial evidence that Melville had read his work.

There is further, but less conclusive, evidence to support this. Melville also follows Bibliander in giving the number of the second beast (the famous '666' in chapter 17) historical significance, although he takes a slightly different approach to the exact dates to be used. Melville states that it should be interpreted as the beginning of papal supremacy over the world by adding 666 years to either the birth or resurrection of Christ, or the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup> This would give a date of somewhere between AD 660 and 736. Bibliander also offered a historical interpretation of the number but insists it should be added to ninety-seven,

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<sup>52</sup> Bibliander, *Relatio Fidelis*, 141–4, 155–6. Melville's discussion is as follows (*Antichristus*, lines 98–115): 'The beast which was and is not: and from the deep abyss will emerge again, and again will go back under the waves. As his head was cut off by a lethal wound, the Julian family was cut off from the business of ruling by Nero, who was himself murdered: this lethal wound was attended to: in the same way and as if from heaven imperial rule alternated in turn, bringing new kings, changing through diverse families, and houses, one family after another succeeding to the kingdom. With this same firm body the Empire stands safe and whole. Those five Kings, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and both the two lightning-bolts of the Judaeo-Vespasian war [Titus and Vespasian], were killed: when Jerusalem was overturned and Nero had just been murdered, and John was in exile, he [Domitian] was standing who had mixed a savage poison for his brother, and with fatal fraud had provided the empire to himself, a monster cursed to both man and God. Nerva, the seventh, chose Trajan as the eighth to have the empire, to be consul with him and to be co-emperor of the empire: [thus] he himself is also the seventh.' ('Bellua quae fuit, et non est: & gurgite ab alto/ Emersura iterum, saepe & reditura sub undas./ Cujus ubi caput est lethali vulnere caesum,/ Iulia stirps caeso de regno excisa Nerone,/ Curatum hoc vulnus lethale est: haud secus ac si/ Caelitus alternante vices, Regesque novante/ Imperio, per diversas gentesque, domosque,/ Stirps alia atque alia in regnum succedit: eodem/ Imperii summa stat firmo corpore salva./ Reges quinque illi, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, ambo/ Iudaici & belli duo fulmina Vespasiani,/ Occiderant: caeso ut Solyma est eversa Nerone,/ Exule Ioanne stabat, qui triste venenum/ Miscuerat fratri, & fatali fraude pararat/ Imperium sibi, monstrum invisum hominique Deoque./ Trajanum Nerva imperio designat habendo/ Septimus octavum; quem secum consul ut esset/ Imperii & consors facit: is quoque septimus ipse est.')

<sup>53</sup> Melville, *Antichristus*, lines 194–8: 'For it [666] is a human number, presenting itself numerically, and reckoned easily by any man: either from the rise of Christ or from Christ reborn: or from Jerusalem having been destroyed, and the ruin of the race described above, six hundred and sixty years in addition.' ('Est autem humanus numerus, numeralis,/ Obvius, & cuivis homini facilis numeratu:/ Sive a Christo ortu, sive a Christo redivivo:/ Sive a deletis Solymis, gentisque ruina,/ Sexcenti, sexaginta & sex insuper anni.')

the year in which Revelation was reputedly written.<sup>54</sup> This would place the date in the year 763, which Bibliander believes is the age of the fifth seal when the Carolingian kings became closely allied with the papacy. Neither Melville nor Bibliander thus cite a specific pope in this era, but both look to a general age of papal supremacy beginning around the start of the eighth century. Here again we perhaps see further evidence that Melville had consulted Bibliander in the course of his research into history and prophecy.

Melville also seems to follow another commentator, the Genevan Nicolas Colladon, in the final section of the poem (lines 198–333) where the narrator uses a series of metaphors to castigate the pope and the Catholic Church, although this suggestion is based purely on textual evidence rather than intellectual grounds.<sup>55</sup> Colladon was rector of the Genevan Academy and professor of theology between 1564 and 1571, when he was disavowed from the Company of Pastors for financial arrears and for attacking the city magistrates from the pulpit. After a brief stay in Heidelberg he then moved to Lausanne, where he taught from 1572 until his death in 1586. Thus Melville would have been well acquainted with him, both at Geneva and in his brief visit to Lausanne to hear the French educational reformer Petrus Ramus lecture in 1572. Colladon produced a very small number of works, which included the *Life of Calvin* co-authored with Beza in 1565, an exegesis of Matthew 2: 22, and the *Methodus Facilima ad Explicationem Apocalypseos Iohannis*. This latter was published in three editions between 1581 and 1584, all of which are extremely rare today.<sup>56</sup> Colladon's interpretation of Revelation in this text differs in many fundamental ways from Bibliander's, but it shared his aim of satirising the papacy, and it is in satire that we find Melville paraphrasing him. In 1584 Colladon added a polemical preface to his commentary entitled 'Privilege of the Roman Pontiff or the Papal Alpha and Omega' (*Privilegium Romani Pontificis sive Alpha et Omega Papae*). This preface is actually a satire of a canon law entitled *Si Papa*, which affirms the divinely sanctioned power of the pope as God's agent on earth. Colladon writes:

*Decreti*, 1a pars, dist. 40, c.6: If it is discovered that the Pope neglects his salvation and that of his brethren, that he is ineffectual and remiss in his duties and that he is averse to doing good but

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<sup>54</sup> Bibliander, *Relatio Fidelis*, 147: 'Cernes anno salutis nostrae 763 adtutum iam Antichristum, victorem trium regem et regibus formidabilem et insipientibus Christianis adorabilem'. Also cited in Backus, *Reformation Readings*, 160, at n. 29.

<sup>55</sup> These include metaphors portraying the pope as an enemy who has kept himself hidden until his inherently evil nature burst forth into the world, like a ship being burst apart by floodwater, and a pox consuming a healthy man (lines 225–50).

<sup>56</sup> Backus, *Reformation Readings*, 66–85, esp. 66–71.

rather detrimental to himself and everyone else, he will nonetheless lead countless hoards of people with him to hell as his subjects, and once there will eternally whip himself and others.<sup>57</sup>

In the final section of the text, Melville condemns the pope as a 'divine hierarch' and a 'warlike monarch' before launching into a scathing invective. While it may simply be paraphrasing *Si Papa*, the text clearly reflects elements of Colladon:

The Pope is greater than Paul, greater than the ancient covenant. The Pope may make statutes contrary to the Gospel, and the writings of Paul, establishing articles of faith, and collecting together an ecumenical council, and reforming sacred commands. If he drives a chariot filled with souls to hell, along with himself, why isn't anyone able to compete against him or to say 'why do you do this?' His will stands as the reason (lines 223–9).<sup>58</sup>

Thus it seems that Melville, following the work of Bibliander in his exegesis, also read that of his colleague and teacher at Geneva, although he does not mention him by name. The fact that Colladon and Bibliander can be tentatively identified as sources suggests that despite his return to Scotland in 1574, Melville remained keyed into discussions of the apocalypse taking place in reformed Europe throughout his career, and confirms that his interest in history and prophecy spanned both the Old and New Testaments.

### Conclusion

There are no doubt a great number of sources that Melville drew upon, both in the *Carmina Danielis*, the *Antichristus* and his other works, which still remain unknown. However, this assessment of two of Melville's longest and most significant religious poems has hopefully given some insight into his interests and preoccupations as a humanist and intellectual, focused on matters of divinity. His pseudo-commentary on Daniel, though highly problematic and rough in places, provides a very rare glimpse into his analysis of a set of key prophecies in the Old Testament and their place in the framework of world history. We also get a chance to see whom he read and how he worked with their ideas. The fact that he chose to compare and contrast writers like Bucholtzer, Scaliger, Béroalde and Broughton shows a highly eclectic and broad-ranging mind

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>58</sup> 'Est major Papa Paulo: major foedere prisco./ Contra Evangelium statuat Papa, scriptaque Pauli./ Articulos fidei condens, Oecumenicumque/ Concilium cogens, decretaque sancta reformans:/ Si currus plenos animarum ad Tartara trudit/ Secum ipse, haud quisquam potis est contendere contra, aut/ Dicere; "Cur facis hoc?" Stat pro ratione voluntas.'

at work; and the fact that the majority of these authors shared an explicit interest in the Cabala, the Talmud, and other Jewish texts adds another fascinating layer to Melville's likely intellectual interests. Although he does not give exact names for whom he follows in his interpretations in the *Antichristus*, the educated guesses for potential authors given above, if correct, further evidence Melville's engagement with some of the best and brightest biblical commentators of the age. The *Antichristus* also shows that his interest in apocalypticism and the Last Judgement were also rooted in the same historical understanding of prophecy that he had developed elsewhere in his writings. While these poems are often confusing and difficult, their contents show that Melville was well-read and deeply curious about the range of meanings, theological and historical, attached to scripture. As a final thought, if this formed part of the teaching Melville passed on to his students at Glasgow and St Andrews, he must have offered a challenging, if complex, course of tuition in divinity.<sup>59</sup>

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