Chinese Chronology and Donne's Apologetic Exegesis in *Essayes in Divinity*

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For orthodox Christians in the Renaissance, "Pentateuch beginning with the first essay of Genesis . . . constituted an infallible history of the origin and initial progress of the human race."[1] In his *Essayes in Divinity* (1614), John Donne comments on the biblical account of the beginning of time and history as it is represented in Genesis and Exodus. Donne's biblical commentary has an apparent apologetic agenda. *Essayes* is usually read as an autobiography in which Donne justifies his being ordained as an Anglican priest in 1615.[2] Apart from the personal note, Donne's apologetic exegesis also arises from a desire to wage a "defensive warr" (p. 58) against sectarian religions, for

[1] C. A. Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 28. Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Old Testament, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

[2] Donne, *Essayes in Divinity: Being Several Disquisitions Interwoven with Meditations and Prayers*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), pp. xxxix-xliv. All further references to this treatise are from Raspa's edition and will be cited parenthetically by page number; italics appear in the original. My work is greatly indebted to Raspa's extensive and illuminating notes on the *Essayes*.

only when "the whole Catholick Church were reduced to such Unity and agreement," he remarks, can the Savior "allure and draw those to us, whom our dissentions, more then their own stubbornness with-hold from us" (p. 59). One purpose of this "defensive warr," I shall show in this article, is to establish a unified front within Christendom against alternative accounts of time presented by pagan annals, or as Donne puts it, to prove the "antiquity" (p. 14) of Moses against "many strong oppositions" (p. 15).

Chronological considerations obviously lie behind the apologetic agenda in Donne's *Essayes*. St. Augustine (354–430) holds that "If any, even the smallest, lie be admitted in the Scriptures, the whole authority of scripture is presently invalidated and destroyed."[3] Donne recognizes the subversive power of numbers in biblical commentary. As he puts it,

> And error in Numbring is *De substantialibus* . . . and sometimes annuls, ever vitiates any Instrument, so much, as it may not be corrected. Nothing therefore seems so much to indanger the Scriptures, and to submit and render them obnoxious to censure and calumniation, as the apparance of Error in Chronology, or other limbs and members of Arithmetick.
>
> (p. 62)

Scripture is most prone to chronological lapses because, Donne explains, "the author hath erred . . . if any number be falsely delivered" (p. 62). He uses a legal analogy to show the necessity of justifying scriptural chronology against "any profane Historie" (p. 63). Just as a defendant in a court must give protestations that can be supported by evidence from his friends and neighbors, Donne says,

> when any profane Historie rises up against any place of Scripture, accusing it to Humane Reason, and understanding . . . it is not enough that one place justify it self to say true, but

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[3]Augustine, quoted in William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture Against the Papists, Especially Bellarmine and Stapleton* (1595), trans. and ed. William Fitzgerald (rprt., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849), p. 37.

> all other places produced as handling the same matter, must be
> of the same opinion, and of one harmony.
>
> (p. 63)

"Profane" originally denoted "unholy," "heathen," or "pagan." But when used to describe history and literature, profane is a neutral term unrelated to "what is sacred or biblical." Thus "profane history" means "secular," "lay," or "civil," which distinguishes from sacred or ecclesiastical history.[4] Like evidence offered in a legal court, according to Donne, the integrity of Scripture resides in its overall doctrinal "harmony." Chronological errors tend to undermine this unity and thereby make Scripture susceptible to "accus[ations]" from pagan histories, a vulnerability that accords a topical urgency to the exegesis of the biblical timeline as it is depicted in the first two books of Moses.

Chinese antiquity was numbered among Donne's "profane" histories that rose up against Scripture. Edwin J. van Kley maintains that Chinese chronology did not "create problems" in Europe before the publication of the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini's (1614–1661) *Sinicae historiae decas prima* (1658).[5] But as is shown in Donne's *Essayes*, Chinese antiquity had already raised problems by the 1610s. According to Donne, "That then this Beginning *was*, is a matter of *faith*, and so, infallible. *When* it was, is a matter of *reason*, and therefore various and perplex'd" (p. 22). He cites eight authoritative accounts that claimed to address the "beginning" (p. 22) of the world through reason. From these eight records, he singles out the eastern annals, observing that "The Chinese vex us at this day, with irreconcilable accounts" (p. 22). Much has been written on Donne's exegesis in *Essayes*, but few have associated it with the chronology polemic, especially the debates sparked by Chinese antiquity.[6] Anthony Raspa does draw attention to Donne's reference to

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[4]S. v. "profane," adj. and n., in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford University Press, 2007), <http://oed.com>, accessed 15 June 2012. In *Essayes*, Donne uses the word "profane" to describe pagan peoples and nations, see pp. 22, 50, 54, 63.

[5]Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History," *American Historical Review* 76.2 (1971): 358–385.

[6]For Donne's biblical exegesis, see the endnotes in Raspa's edition of *Essayes in Divinity*; Don C. Allen, *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science, and Letters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), pp. 68–69; Helen

Chinese history, but he confines his consideration of the eastern background to some general remarks.[7]

This article situates Donne's allusion to Chinese annals within the context of the chronological controversy incited by the Augustinian friar González de Mendoza's (*c.* 1540–1617) *The History of Great and Mighty Kingdom of China* (1585) and Joseph Scaliger's (1540–1609) engagement with Mendoza's account in his chronological theory.[8] Mendoza's treatise

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Gardner, *The Limits of Literary Criticism*, Riddell Memorial Lectures, 28th ser. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 40–55; William R. Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 89–92; Dennis B. Quinn, "John Donne's Principles of Biblical Exegesis," *Journal of English and German Philology* 61 (1962): 313–329; Winfred Schleiner, *The Imagery of John Donne's Sermons* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1970), pp. 185–200; Chanita Goodblatt, "From 'Tav' to the Cross: John Donne's Protestant Exegesis and Polemics," in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary A. Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 221–246; and Jeanne Shami, "'Speaking Openly and Speaking First': John Donne, the Synod of Dort, and the Early Stuart Church," in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, pp. 48-51.

[7]Raspa, ed., *Essayes*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii. Raspa identifies two sources of Donne's image of China: Gerald Mercator's *Historia Mundi: Containing his Cosmographicall Description . . . of the World* (Seville, 1535); and Richard Willes's augmented edition of Richard Eden's translation of the Spanish historian Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's (1457–1526) accounts of Spanish discoveries under the title of *Decades of the New World* (1555). Willes's edition appeared under the title of *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies* (London, 1577) (p. 131). It should be noted that Raspa misplaced Eden and Willes chronologically: it is Willes who edited and augmented Eden's work, not vice versa. I add to Donne's source of Chinese history Joseph Scaliger, *De emendatione temporum* (Paris, 1583), rev. ed. (Leiden, 1598; Geneva, 1629); Scaliger, *Thesaurus temporum* (Leiden, 1606); and Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia de las cosas mas notables ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, 8 vols. (Rome, 1585; Venice, 1588). Mendoza's work was translated into Latin by Joachim Brullius and published in 4 volumes at Frankfort (1589) and Antwerp (1655). It was rendered into French by Luc de Laporte (Paris, 1589); this edition ran to 8 volumes. I quote Mendoza from *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China* (1588), trans. Robert Parke and ed. Sir George T. Staunton, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1853), vol. 1.

[8]Mendoza "was a member of an abortive Spanish embassy to China in 1584," and his work "is made up from a collation of the reports of various Augustine

was "the key European authority on China until [Nicholas] Trigault's version of Matteo Ricci's fundamental history was published in 1615,"[9] and it presented, above all, a system of time that clashed with the biblical timeline. Synthesizing various reports on China, Mendoza represented Chinese dynastic history in the form of a catalogue of 243 monarchs, spanning from Vitey or Huangdi (*c.* 2717–2599 BC) all the way to Emperor Wanli (1572–1620) of the Ming empire.[10] Mendoza's work did not deal with Chinese chronology *per se*, but his chronicling of China's imperial lineage served to bring out its deep antiquity. The historical data Mendoza set forth proved difficult to integrate into scriptural chronology. The conflict between the eastern and biblical timelines became more evident when Scaliger, founder of modern chronology, insisted on giving equal weight to profane histories and used Mendoza as a source of Chinese history in constructing a universal temporal framework. In the working version of the first edition of his *De emendatione temporum* (1583), Scaliger resorted to Mendoza's account to speculate on Chinese chronology, and in the second edition (1598) he discredited outright eastern antiquity.[11] Later in 1602, Scaliger came

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and Franciscan friars who had attempted to penetrate into China" (Geoffrey F. Hudson, *Europe and China: A Survey of their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* [London: Beacon Press, 1931], p. 242).

[9]Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Spanish Contribution to the Ethnology of Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. Daniel Carey (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 93–123, 104.

[10]For Mendoza's account of Chinese history, see the *Mighty Kingdom of China*, book 3, chap. 1, pp. 69–76. For Mendoza's various sources, see Rubiés, p. 104.

[11]Since Scaliger quoted from Mendoza in his *Emendatione* published in 1583, an earlier version of *Mighty Kingdom* should have appeared in the same year or earlier. My work is deeply indebted to Anthony Grafton's magisterial study of Scaliger and early modern chronology, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983–1993). This work is referred to henceforth by the title of its second volume: *Historical Chronology*. Also see Grafton, "Joseph Scaliger and Historical Chronology: The Rise and Fall of a Discipline," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 156–185; "From *De eie natali* to *De emendatione temporum*: The Origins and Setting of Scaliger's Chronology," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1985): 100–143; and "Dating History: The Renaissance and the Reformation of Chronology,"

across the Byzantine historian George Syncellus's (*d.* 810) *Ekloge chronographias* or *Extract of Chronography*, which records the first part of Eusebius of Caesarea's (*c.* 263–339) *Chronicle*, a section omitted in St. Jerome's translation.[12] In this long-neglected part, Eusebius lists the ancient dynasties of Egypt as documented by the third-century Egyptian historian Manetho. In his *Thesaurus temporum* (1606), Scaliger posited *pre-creation* "proleptic time" to address the Egyptian history that exceeded the scriptural timeframe. Although Scaliger discounted Chinese chronology before his encounter with Manetho's Egyptian history, his "proleptic time" nevertheless reflected back upon his previous theory, a reflection that tended to cede authority to Chinese antiquity as well.

Referring to Mendoza's account and Scaliger's problematic response, I argue that Chinese chronology, together with the Chaldean and Egyptian antiquities, played an indispensable part in motivating Donne's exegesis of Genesis and Exodus. As is shown in the works of Scaliger, the French universalist Jean Bodin (1530–1596), and the Dutch humanist J. Goropius Becanus (1519–1572),[13] of the eight popular

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Daedalus 132.2, *On Time* (2003): 74–85. In addition to Grafton's works, my study also draws upon Donald J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Don LePan, *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture* (London: Palgrave, 1989); C. A. Patrides, "Renaissance Estimates of the Year of Creation," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26.4 (1963): 315–322; Michael T. Ryan, "Assimilating New World in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (1981): 519–538; and Robert Markley, "A Brief History of Chronological Time," *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy* 44 (2009): 59–75.

[12]Eusebius's *Chronicle* consists of two parts. Part 1, "Annals," contains the unsettling accounts of Egyptian and Babylonian histories as recorded by Manetho and Berossus. Part 2, "Chronological Canons," compiles, in tabular forms, synchronized dates from Assyrian, Hebrew, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman histories. See Grafton, "Dating History," p. 83; and *Historical Chronology*, pp. 540–543.

[13]Becanus, *Origines Antwerpianae* (Antwerp, 1569); and Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (Paris, 1566). I quote Bodin from the modern translation of *Methodus*: *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans.

accounts of world history Donne cites, the problems raised by Chaldean and Egyptian chronicles were more or less resolved by the time *Essayes* was composed. By contrast, the disturbing antiquity of the Chinese remained to be grappled with. The reign of Vitey called into doubt the biblical version of the world's origin. Since Exodus features the "miracle" of numbers—"what a small Number, in how short a time, how numerous a people, through how great pressures, and straits, were by him [God] propagated and established" (p. 61), this biblical account is vulnerable to the charge of chronological errors. To defend scriptural chronology against the challenges mounted by Chinese antiquity thus constitutes an important motive behind Donne's biblical commentary. Although Donne mentions China only once in *Essaye*s, this reference is nevertheless symptomatic of a thinker who was attempting to reconcile a different system of time with an accepted view of chronology, an orthodox timeline that was putatively supported by divine authority.

Donne's apologetic arsenal comes chiefly from exegetical discourse. Since his images of profane histories are embedded within an extensive exposition of the first two books of Moses, apologetic exegesis is the predominant strategy he adopts to negotiate the chronology polemic. Donne subscribed to the traditional fourfold exegetical scheme that addressed the literal, allegorical, anagogical, and typological senses of Scripture. Following Protestant and humanist hermeneutics, he advocated the primacy of the literal sense, representing it as a matrix from which other senses derive. But to refute charges on chronological grounds, he needed, above all, to establish the historicity of Scripture by representing it as a literal and historical document whose chronology could be counted on. Nevertheless, Donne notices that despite its historical status, Genesis cannot be adequately interpreted by a chronological methodology. None of the eight authoritative accounts of the world's history can "ease us, nor afford us line enough to fathom this bottom [the world's beginning]," he asserts in *Essayes*, so "the last refuge uses to be, that prophane history cannot clear, but Scripture can" (p. 22). But "since the world in her infancy did not speak to us at all (by any Authors;) and when she began to speak by Moses, she spake not plain, but diversly to divers understandings," he argues, the infant world can

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Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). Donne mentions Scaliger and Johannes van Gorp or Goropius in *Essayes*, p. 15.

only be addressed by spiritual "faith" (p. 23). Likewise, the chronology controversy also resonates in his exposition of the "numbers" and "names" in Exodus, two major sources of chronological errors. To counteract accusations based on numerical and nominal grounds, Donne links these two double-edged concepts together. When separate, numbers and names might bolster profane histories, but once combined, they bear out a "Miraculous History" (p. 53) that has the capacity to enfold all peoples, together with their chronologies, into "One fold, and one shepherd" (p. 56).

We should differentiate between Renaissance historical exegesis and the chronological methodology advanced by Scaliger. Although, like the "metaphorical" or "anagogical," the "historical" is numbered among the "various applications and accommodations" of the literal sense,[14] historical exegesis aims to define Scripture as a verifiable document by examining some physical indicators of the Mosaic history. By comparison, the chronological framework uses dates and numbers to study the principle of time represented in *all* histories, whether sacred or profane, and thus prioritizes the numerical over other historical indexes. After Scaliger's epoch-making reform, the chronological model was widely used in historical studies, Hebrew history included. Thus, whereas historical exegesis regards Scripture as a historical rather than an allegorical text, chronological exposition focuses on the consistency of dates and numbers in the Mosaic books.

The anxiety Donne evinces over Chinese antiquity evokes the larger context of ancient and early modern debates over chronology. As Augustine's negotiation with the Egyptian history in his *City of God* shows, the primacy of scriptural chronology was already a contested point for the early fathers.[15] To denounce the claims of an Egyptian history of "more than a hundred thousand years," Augustine writes, we should "place our reliance on the inspired history belonging to our religion and consequently have no hesitation in treating as utterly false anything

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[14]Whitaker, p. 404.

[15]Arnaldo Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century AD," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Momigliano (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 79–99; and Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), pp. 11–57.

which fails to conform to it."[16] Although Augustine's monotheistic approach to chronology was followed in the Renaissance, in his edition of *City of God*, the humanist Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540) nevertheless called attention to the Chaldean history of 47,000 and the Egyptian's of over 50,000 years.[17] Not only Egyptian and Chaldean dynasties but also the lately discovered empires of Inca, Aztec, and China presented a new set of data that clashed with the biblical timeline.[18] Don C. Allen remarks that "a controversial storm over the discrepancies in the universal calendar was roaring by the end of the sixteenth century."[19] Michael T. Ryan also notes that "what really interested sixteenth-and seventeenth-century observers about exotic peoples was their past, not their present. This was especially true for the so-called high civilizations in Mexico, Peru, India, and China."[20] Early modern thinkers responded differently to the new pagan histories. The famous classical scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) dismissively declared that "I don't see how these fantasies [alternative claims of antiquity] of foolish peoples are of much use for real history."[21] Similarly, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) observes in his *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) that those "Heathen Antiquities" made up mostly of "fables and fragments" were undoubtedly "deficient."[22] In

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[16]Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 815.

[17]See Vives, *St. Augustine's "City of God"* (Basle, 1522), book 12, chap. 10. Vives made the commentary on the advice of Erasmus, and it was translated into English by John Healey in 1610.

[18]On the Aztec chronology, see Diego Durán, *The Ancient Calendar* (*c.* 1579), in *Book of the Gods and Rites and the Ancient Calendar*, trans. F. Horcasitas and D. Heyden (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), pp. 395–396. Donne mentions in *Essayes* the accounts of the Spanish Jesuits such as José de Acosta, Alphonsus Bracena, and Diego Torres-Bollo, pp. 91–92. For Scaliger's account of the Mesoamerican calendar, see *De emendatione temporum* (1629), pp. 224–226.

[19]Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1970), p. 63.

[20]Ryan, p. 531.

[21]Casaubon, quoted in Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 174.

[22]Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, in *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 180.

contrast, Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) seemed to look favorably on pagan chronicles. Bruno appeared to believe a Chinese history of "twenty thousand" years,[23] and Marlowe was accused of endorsing the doctrine that "the Indians and many Authors of antiquity haue assuredly writen of aboue 16 thousand yeares agone wheras Adam is proued to haue lived within 6 thousand years."[24]

The chronological data provided by the new worlds tended to corroborate the pre-Adamic doctrine that became popular in the latter part of the sixteenth century.[25] The antiquity of the new pagan annals seemed to place those newly discovered peoples within a non-Adamic lineage. The reputed alchemist and physician Paracelsus (1493–1541) claimed that "it cannot be believed that such newly found people in the islands are of Adam's blood," and they must have come from "a different Adam."[26] Likewise, for Bruno, "the black race / Of the Ethiopians, and the yellow offspring of America," "cannot be traced to the same descent, nor are they sprung / From the generative force of a single progenitor."[27] The French Calvinist Isaac de La Peyrère (1596–1676) was more outspoken, declaring pointedly the existence of pre-Adamites in his *Praea-Adamitae* (1655). In remarking that "an enormous pretending Wit of our nation and age undertook to frame such a language, herein exceeding *Adam*" (p. 27), Donne exhibits not only knowledge but also disapproval of the pre-Adamic thesis, a heretical doctrine that seemed

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[23]Bruno, quoted in James S. Slotkin, ed., *Readings in Early Anthropology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965), p. 43.

[24]Marlowe, quoted in Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of his Thought, Learning and Character* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1962), p. 34. On Renaissance chronological controversy, also see Ernest A. Strathmann, *Sir Walter Raleigh: A Study in Elizabethan Skepticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 199–218; and David N. Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 8-11.

[25]On the pre-Adamites, see Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*; Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676): His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 26–41; and William Poole, "Seventeenth-century Preadamism, and an Anonymous English Preadamist," *Seventeenth Century* 19 (2004): 1–35.

[26]Paracelsus, quoted in Slotkin, p. 43.

[27]Bruno, quoted in Slotkin, p. 43.

espoused by "an enormous pretending Wit" in early modern Europe. Not surprisingly, Chinese antiquity that seemed to support such a radical theory was vexatious to Donne's devout sensibility.[28]

What was at stake in the Renaissance controversy over chronology was the primacy both of the biblical timeline and the Adamic lineage, which gave most orthodox chronological studies an apologetic edge. Colin Kidd claims that the "study of universal chronology became one of the foremost disciplines of the early modern period. It tackled questions of fundamental importance to the identity of Christendom, and it attracted some of Europe's foremost minds."[29] Anthony Grafton holds that "from the late sixteenth century onward, in fact, religious dissidents regularly cited chronological evidence when they challenged the authority of the Bible."[30] For Arthur B. Ferguson, "what led protestant England to the study of chronology was, after all, not so much a disinterested desire to clarify the perspective of history as a compulsion to bring universal history into accord with the biblical narrative."[31] The challenge to scriptural chronology appeared the more striking when considering the conflicting accounts of time set out in the Latin Vulgate and Greek Septuagint bibles. In his *A Disputation on Holy Scripture against the Papists* (1588), the English Calvinist William Whitaker (1547–1595) notes that "there is the greatest difference between the Hebrew and Greek books in the account of dates and years," for "the Greek books reckon 2242 years from Adam in the beginning of the world to the flood, as we read in Augustine, Eusebius, and Nicephorus's Chronology. But in the Hebrew books we see that there were no more than 1656. Thus the Greek calculation exceeds the Hebrew by 586 years."[32] Given the contradiction in the biblical canons themselves, it is but natural that the temporal markers they represent, such as the creation and Exodus, were susceptible to charges from profane histories.

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[28]For English Preadmites, see Popkin, p. 36.

[29]Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 17.

[30]Grafton, "Dating History," p. 80.

[31]Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity: Perceptions of Prehistory in Renaissance England* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 48.

[32]Whitaker, p. 121.

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In order to understand how the discovery of Chinese chronology affected western thought, we need to examine how the West, especially early modern thinkers, imagined human origins and how they conceived of time, which is summarily captured in the two discourses of history and chronology.[33] Bodin defines the "chronological principle" as "a system of universal time" that serves as "the guide for all histories."[34] "Time," according to René Descartes (1596–1650), is "only a mode of thinking" about "duration."[35] As a special form of thinking about time intervals, chronology is widely used to calculate and establish temporal frameworks for great events in biblical, national, and universal histories. History deals with the deployment of time as well, but time means different things in history and chronology, which became two distinctive disciplines at the turn of the seventeenth century. According to the French Jesuit theologian Dionysius Petavius (1583–1652), chronology is a "pure calculation of time" that differs qualitatively from "history," for

> History has as its own to possess fully the matter of deeds and to write down their order, usually with proofs, arguments, and witnesses, whence the order of individual years is established. Chronology indeed inquires after one thing, by what signs and marks each thing may be arranged in its years and times, and

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[33]For "Renaissance search for Origins," see Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, pp. 21–82; Brian Croke, "The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle," in *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. Croke and A. Emmett (Sydney, Australia: Pergamon Press, 1983), pp. 116–131; Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," pp. 107–126; and Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 76–103, especially pp. 80–81.

[34]Bodin, pp. 303, 337. See L. F. Dean, "Bodin's *Methodius* in England before 1625," *Studies in Philology* 39 (1942): 160–166; and Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth-Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

[35]Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* (1644–1647), in *René Descartes: Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), p. 246.

is nearly always content with that. It does not extend further
than individual events. [36]

In fact, for Petavius, chronology is "one of the four sciences [physics,
astronomy, music, and civil divisions of time] which have to do with
time." [37] However, despite their distinction, chronology and history are
nevertheless closely connected. The German astronomer Erasmus
Reinhold (1511–1553) wonders, "What obscurity would there be in the
past had there been no distinction of time? What chaos would there be
in our present life if the sequence of years were unknown?" [38] In fact,
chronological dates, together with geographical locations, are veritable
indicators of historical narratives. It is on this account that Richard
Hakluyt called geography and chronology "the Sunne and the Moone,
the right eye and the left of all history." [39]

But historical and chronological studies had undergone different
stages of development by the time of the Renaissance. Compared with
the robust growth of history, chronology appeared an atrophied
discipline. The sixteenth century saw a marked development of
chronology, however, since it was during this era that people became fully
aware of the necessity of a linear and universal principle of time. [40] This
intense "chronological awareness," that is, "a consciousness of dates and
numbers," [41] was enhanced by the universal history project flourishing in

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[36]Dionysius Petavius, *Rationarium temporum* (Paris, 1633), Preface.
Rationarium is a French translation and abridgment of Petavius's *Opus de
doctrina temporum* (Paris, 1627). For Petavius's chronology, see Wilcox, *Measure
of Times Past*, p. 205; and Elias J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*,
2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 9.

[37]Petavius, Preface.

[38]Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, p. 3, cited by Scaliger on the title-page of his *De
emendatione temporum* (1583); see Grafton, "Origins and Setting," p. 100.

[39]Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the
English Nation*, 12 vols. (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1903–1905),
1:xxxix.

[40]On Renaissance chronology, see, in addition to Scaliger and Wilcox's
works, Patrides, "Renaissance Estimates"; and Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve
in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2008), pp. 82–86.

[41]LePan, pp. 113, 122.

France, an intellectual movement that sought to establish a uniform timeline by reassessing the historical sources of such disciplines as theology, jurisdiction, and history. Bodin asserts that since "the most important part of the subject [universal history] depends upon the chronological principle," "a system of universal time is needed for this method of which we treat," because "those who think they can understand histories without chronology are as much in error as those who wish to escape the windings of a labyrinth without a guide."[42] Just as cartographers tried to encompass the globe in a single grid, the Universalists attempted to comprehend the historical world within a unifying matrix. However, neither classical nor medieval chronological theories could provide the overarching temporal paradigm demanded by the universal history project. Donald J. Wilcox notes that ancient and medieval chronological theorizations tend to be "relative," "epochal," and "thematic," characteristics that render them insufficient to address the cosmic architecture of time imagined by the Universalists. The Christian chronological model represented in Eusebius's *Chronicle* also fell short of a universal scale. Since "Eusebius was more interested in a particular synchronization, that between the sacred history of the Hebrew and the profane history of the world's empires," Wilcox remarks, "the dates he chose for the synchronization were epochal and thematic rather than absolute."[43] Though medieval chronologers such as Otto of Freising (1114–1158) and Matthew Paris (1200–1259) displayed awareness of dates and numbers, chronology during this period still privileged multiple timelines and lacked a comprehensive framework. The Renaissance witnessed a broad chronological awakening, which can be glimpsed in the mushrooming of chronicles and the high prestige they enjoyed.[44] In a letter to Seth Calvisius dated 3 December 1605, Scaliger

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[42]Bodin, p. 303. For primary works on universal history, also see Philipp Melanchthon, *Sententiae veterum aliquot patrum de caena domini* (Wittenberg, 1530); Francois Baudouin, *De institutione historiae universae et eius cum jurisprudentia conjunctione* (Paris, 1561); Melchior Cano, *De locis theologicis* (Salamanca, 1563); and Henry Isaacson, *Saturni Ephemerides: Tabula Historico-chronologica* (London, 1633).

[43]Wilcox, p. 106. For Scaliger's critique of Eusebius, see *De Emendatione* (1583), p. 251.

[44]Major English chronicles include: Thomas Lanquet, *An Epitome of Chronicles* (1549); Lodowik Lloyd, *The Consent of Time* (1590); John More, *A*

said that every year the Frankfurt book fair witnessed a new crop of chronologies.[45] In the same year, Bacon remarked that among the three parts of "Just and Perfect history," that is, "Chronicles," "Lives," and "Narrations or Relations," chronicles are "the most complete and absolute kind of history, and hath most estimation and glory."[46]

Two major factors lie behind the unprecedented flourishing of universal chronicles in the Renaissance. The contradictory interpretations of scriptural chronology and the discordant sources presented by both classical antiquity and new pagan annals combined to call forth the necessity of instituting an umbrella principle that could at once locate, chart, and reconcile all histories within a uniform chronological matrix. On the one hand, Renaissance exegetes could not reach a consensus concerning the scriptural timeline. C. A. Patrides lists 29 proposals of the creation date from 108 early modern writers.[47] Iacobus Curio complained in 1557 that "you will find it easier to make the wolf agree with the lamb than to make all chronologers agree about the age of the world."[48] Likewise, the physician chronologer Thomas Allen (1608–1673) observed in 1659 that there were "very many (and some great) differences amongst *Chronologers* and in the *Computation* of *Scripture-Chronologie*."[49] On the other hand, the apparent conflict between the new pagan annals

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Table from the Beginning of the World to this Day (1593); Christian Helvetius, *Historical and Chronological Theatre* (1609); Anthony Munday, *Briefe Chronicle of the Successe of Times from Creation* (1611); and Sir Walter Raleigh, *History of the World* (1614).

[45]Scaliger to Calvisius, 3 December 1605, quoted in Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 10. For major continental chronicles, see Hartmann Schedel, *Nürnberger Chronik* (Nürnberg, 1493); Sebastian Franck, *Chronica* (Strasbourg, 1531); Guillaume Postel, *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium* (Basle, 1561); Gerald Mercator, *Chronologia* (Cologne, 1569); M. Beroaldus, *Chronicum Scripturae Sacrae* (Geneva, 1575); and F. Patrizi, *Mystica Aegyptiorum et Caldeorum* (Ferrara, 1591). For a synthesis of classical, medieval, and Renaissance universal chronicles, see Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition*, pp. 226–249.

[46]Bacon, p. 179.

[47]Patrides, "Renaissance Estimates," pp. 316–317.

[48]Curio, *Chronologicarum rerum* (Basle, 1557), lib. 2, p. 8, quoted in Grafton, "Origins and Setting," p. 102.

[49]Allen, *A Chain of Scripture Chronology* (London, 1659), p. 5.

and the biblical timeline cried out for explanation, for as Thomas Nashe (1567–1601) lamented, "impudently they persist in it that the late discouered Indians are able to shew antiquities thousands before *Adam*."[50] The inadequacy of classical and medieval chronological schemes both to address the divergent biblical commentaries and contain the new historical data impelled Renaissance chronologers to seek a universal timeline. Though acutely aware of such a necessity, Bodin did not propose a specific chronological model. It was Scaliger who undertook to construct the unifying temporal principle imagined by Bodin, establishing chronology as an independent discipline.

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In *Essayes*, Donne declares that "of such Authors as God preordained to survive all Philosophers, and all Tyrants, and all Heretics, and be the Canons of faith and manners to the worlds end, *Moses* had the primacy" (p. 15). Donne's statement reflects the undisputed priority enjoyed by scriptural chronology in the Renaissance. As van Kley notes, most early modern thinkers tended to "[test] the ancient annals or records of any people by their conformity to" the biblical timeframe.[51] The Calvinist Matthaeus Beroaldus (*d.* 1576) claimed in 1575 that "we have everywhere followed the authority of Holy Scripture, which the Lord has granted us as a sure and indubitable foundation."[52] John More, the "apostle of Norwich," asserted unequivocally that profane histories must be brought "to that account which is set down in Scriptures, from the beginning of the worlde till the suffering of Christ, most exactly, and so labour to make the times of forreigne histories to agree with that account of the holy Scripture. . . ."[53] For Bodin, "if the sacred founts of the Hebrews and the revelations of divine law bear witness that the world

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[50]Nashe, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 2:116.

[51]Van Kley, p. 360.

[52]Beroaldus, *Chronicum* (1575), quoted in Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 167.

[53]More, Preface.

had a precise beginning of creation," "to seek further would seem a crime—to doubt, seems wicked."[54]

Scaliger proved an exception in according an equal status to "profane" histories in a universal temporal framework. For Scaliger, chronology "aims not to find a moral order in the past, but simply to reconstruct that past; it employs not merely the one divinely-inspired source, but all sources."[55] In insisting on giving due weight to "all sources," Scaliger refused to regard the biblical timeline as the sole standard. Contrary to those who "babble that the authors whom they call profane did not know the events of their own time," he writes in *De emendatione*, "profane" writers do "have their own understanding of divine and human letters," and

> It is not surprising if they, to whom sacred history is one thing, and *profane* history, as they call it, another, come to conclusions different from ours. . . . Nor do we care about the fantasies of those who despise *profane* letters. No truth is *profane*. In the mouth of a *profane* man all truth is sacred.[56]

The bold statements that "no truth is *profane*" and "in the mouth of a *profane* man all truth is sacred" amount to a declaration of the independence of pagan histories. As possible carriers of "truth," Scaliger contends, profane and scriptural systems of time contribute equally to a universal timetable.

To accommodate profane histories to a single template, Scaliger invented a chronological model called the "Julian Period." In 525, to construct an Easter table for the years 532–626, Exiguus, inventor of the Anno Domini (AD) dating system, adopted the 532-year cycle (the 19-year lunar cycle times the 28-year solar cycle). Drawing upon Exiguus's Easter calendar, Scaliger managed to formulate a chronological principle by adding a third variant, that is, the "indication," a term that means "a civil cycle of fifteen years, at the end of which a census was to be taken for tax purposes." By multiplying 15 with Exiguus's 532-year cycle, Scaliger got a cycle of 7980 years, a timeline he designated as the "Julian

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[54]Bodin, p. 303.

[55]Grafton, "Rise and Fall," pp. 169–170.

[56]Scaliger, *De emendatione* (1583), pp. 398–399, quoted in Grafton, "Rise and Fall," pp. 168–169. Italics appear in the original.

Period."[57] Wilcox summarizes the significance of Scaliger's Julian model as follows:

> By multiplying the three cycles Scaliger had created a chronology that would comprehend all the events of human and divine history and would run almost 1,700 years into the future. With this instrument he could integrate all the civil and religious calendars he had collected and studied, could correlate all previous dating systems, and could locate any event or series of events completely and unambiguously on a single time line. He had devised an absolute dating system whose numbers were independent from any specific series of events.[58]

Thus for the first time in western history, there appeared a linear and absolute temporal framework that was supposed to embrace all histories, whether sacred or profane. Scaliger's innovation received international acclaim; as the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639) put it, "the Germans admire Scaliger's chronology, and many of our countrymen follow it . . . for he wished to correct the count of years from the eclipses and lunar cycles mentioned in the histories of older times . . . ."[59]

But there were disturbing exceptions that disrupted the Julian paradigm. Egyptian dynastic history as recorded by Manetho and preserved by Eusebius proved one of these exceptions—it could not be contained by the 7980-year cycle. Scaliger's famous accommodation of this anomaly in his *Thesaurus temporum* exposed the limitations of the Julian system. In Manetho's record, Egyptian history goes back to 5285 BC, a period of time that evidently exceeds the creation date (3949 BC) or the Julian Period (4713 BC) set up by Scaliger.[60] To accommodate this

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[57]For the "Julian period," see *De emendatione temporum* (1583), p. 198. For a detailed discussion of the Julian system, see Wilcox, pp. 198–199; Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 162; and *Historical Chronology*, pp. 249–250.

[58]Wilcox, p. 199.

[59]Tommaso Campanella, *De libris propriis et recta ratione studendi syntagma* (Paris, 1642), in *H. Grotii et aliorum dissertationes de studiis instituendis* (Amsterdam, 1645), p. 406, quoted in Grafton, "Origins and Setting," p. 121.

[60]Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 171.

difference, Scaliger posits "the first Julian Period of proleptic time," calling it "the postulated Julian Period." By "proleptic time," he means "that which is assumed before the Mosaic computation," which is distinct from "Historic time," that is, "that which is traced downwards from the Hebraic computation."[61] Scaliger's Julian period, which integrates the lunar, solar, and indication systems, was not novel, since it had been used by Byzantine historians.[62] But his "proleptic time" caused "the dismay of many of his Protestant friends and the delight of many of his Catholic critics" when *Thesaurus temporum* was published in 1606.[63] Even Scaliger himself was uneasy with a proleptic history beyond the biblical creation, and "tried several times to justify his own compromise procedure."[64]

China also presented a set of historical data that exceeded Scaliger's Julian framework. Before his encounter with the Egyptian history in 1602, Scaliger had already expressed disbelief in Chinese chronology, but his engagement with Mendoza's account served to corroborate rather than discount eastern antiquity and its heretical implications. On the margins of the working version of the first edition of *De emendatione* (1583), Scaliger jotted down Mendoza's catalogue of Chinese monarchs:

> The Sinese (whom the Spanish call Chinese, for reasons unfathomable to me) reckon 4,282 years from their ancient king Vitey to Honog, who ruled after the year of the Lord 1570. For they count 2,257 years from Vitey to Tzintzom, the last of the race of Vitey. He separated the Tartars from the Sinese by a continuous wall. From him to Honog, around the years of the Lord 1570, 1571, 1572, etc., they reckon 2,025 years. This sum amounts to 4,282 years, as we said before. Hence Vitey is far older than Abraham.[65]

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[61]Scaliger, *Thesaurus temporum*, *Isagogici Canones*, p. 117, quoted in Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 172. For a detailed account of Scaliger's discovery of Egyptian antiquity, see *Historical Chronology*, pp. 540–543.

[62]Wilcox, p. 208.

[63]Grafton, "Dating History," p. 84.

[64]The passages in question are Scaliger, *Thesaurus temporum, Isagogici Canones*, pp. 117, 273, 274, 309–310, 312; see Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 173.

[65]Quoted in Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 406.

Mendoza traced Chinese dynastic rule from Vitey to Boneg (Scaliger's Honog) or Emperor Longqing (1567–1572). Longqing's successor Wanli was the reigning monarch when the *Mighty Kingdom of China* was published in Rome in 1585. "Tzintzom" refers to "Qin Yingzheng," that is, Emperor Qin Shihuang (221–210 BC) who united China for the first time in 221 BC and built the Great Wall to "[separate] the Tartars from the Sinese." "Vitey" should refer to the legendary Yellow Emperor "Huangdi." Scaliger put 4282 years between Vitey and Honog, a calculation that agreed with Chinese chronology, since Huangdi is credited with having ruled in about 2717–2599 BC. Mendoza's Chinese source for Huangdi's reign was most likely *Shiji* or *The Records of the Grand Historian* written by Sima Qian (*c.* 140–86 BC), the famous historian of the Han Dynasty who composed the first Chinese biographical annals.[66] There are two different traditions of representing Huangdi in ancient China. One is the legendary tradition represented by *Shan Hai Jing* or *Books on Mountains and Seas*, a pre-Qin text of unknown authorship. Since this work was full of mythological and unbelievable figures and monsters, it was not taken seriously even in ancient times.[67] The other is the historical tradition emerging from the works of the "One Hundred Schools" during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period (770–221 BC) but formally established by Sima in *Shiji*. According to *Han Shu: Yi Wen Zhi* or *On Art and Culture* by another Han historian, Ban Gu (32–92), scholars in the "One Hundred Schools" presented about 47 different images of Huangdi. As Li-jen Lin points out, each of these schools adapted the story of Huangdi to suit their own doctrinal and political agendas in an age of constant warfare. A historical approach can be discerned from these multiple representations of ancient emperors, a methodology exemplified by *Chunqiu*, which is a historiographical work edited by Confucius for pedagogical purposes. In the preface to *Shiji*, Sima declares pointedly that he is following the

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[66]Sima Qian (司马迁), *Shiji* (史记) or *The Records of the Grand Historian*, *c.* 109–91 BC.

[67]For legendary images of Huangdi in *Shan Hai Jing* (山海经), see Li-Jen Lin, "The Intention to Begin from Huang-Ti in 'Shi-ji Biographic Sketches of Five Emperors,'" *Paper of Humanities and Social Sciences* (人文社會學報) 5 (March 2009): 39–67, 50–52.

historical methodology Confucius set up in *Chunqiu*.[68] But unlike
Confucius, who began Chinese history with King Yao (*c.* 2377–2259
BC), in "Benji"—a 12-volume annals in *Shij* that chiefly deals with
imperial biographies—Sima started Chinese history from Huangdi,
dismissing other legendary figures such as Fuxi and Shennong.[69]

Mendoza's description of Huangdi largely conforms to Sima's account
in *Shiji*. According to Sima, after becoming the supreme commander in
Zhongyuan, a region of both strategic and cultural importance for any
imperial contestant, Huangdi united and inducted all tribes under his
dominion into civilized life. To transform China from a nomadic, tribal
culture into a civil society, Huangdi "reportedly asked his wife Leizu
(嫘祖) to teach people to raise silkworms for clothing. He also ordained
Cangjie to invent characters on the basis of some practical signs common
in use, Fengning to make ceramic earthenware, Yongfu to construct tools
for grinding rice, and Gonggu and Huodi to build ships. . . ."[70] Some of
these much-cited stories of invention and civilizing policies appear in
Mendoza's work. Mendoza relates that Vitey "was the first that did
reduce the kingdome to one empire gouernment," a fact of which "their
[Chinese] histories . . . doo make particular mention." He refers to
Vitey's inventions of both "the vse of garmentes" and the "making of
shippes." In addition to organizing nomadic tribes into "cities, townes,
and villages," another policy of "great consideration" mentioned by
Mendoza is that Vitey ordained "no woman to be idle, but to worke,
either in her husbands occupation, or in sowing or spinning. This was a
law so generall amongst them, that the queene her selfe did obserue and
keepe it."[71] The Queen here refers to none other than Leizu who, for the
first time in Chinese history, raised silkworms to clothe the people or

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[68]Lin, pp. 42–44; on Huangdi in pre-Qin text, see pp. 54–58.

[69]For the historical image of Huangdi in *Shiji* see Lin, pp. 45–49.

[70]Lin Handa (林汉达) et. al., eds., *Chinese History of Five Thousand Years
from Antiquity to Modern Times* (上下五千年) (Shanghai: Children's Publisher,
2002), p. 8, my own translation. Lin's account of ancient emperors draws chiefly
from Sima and Ban Gu's works. Although a book meant for children, *Chinese
History of Five Thousand Years* is a reliable source. For Sima's account of
Huangdi, see *Twenty-four Histories of China* (二十四史), 63 vols. (Beijing,
Zhong Hua Shu Ju [中华书局], 2000), vol. 1.

[71]Mendoza, *Mighty Kingdom of China*, 1:70, 71.

"衣被天下."[72] Sima's work was authoritative throughout all the dynasties in imperial China, the Ming Empire included. When Mendoza wrote *Mighty Kingdom of China,* most Chinese, despite the legendary figure described in *Shan Hai Jing*, believed in the image of Huangdi as he is represented by Sima, an image that was reinforced by the dominance of Confucian doctrine in state policy.[73] It is only in the 1920s that the historicity of Huangdi started to be questioned by the so-called "Doubting Antiquity School" during the New Culture Movement. One central task of this school was to interrogate the authenticity of pre-Qin texts, particularly those on ancient emperors.[74] However, as Joseph Needham has noted, modern archaeological discovery, especially the excavation of "oracle bones" in Anyang Yinxu (安阳殷墟), capital of the Shang Dynasty (1600–1050 BC), proves that Sima "did have fairly reliable materials at his disposal—a fact which underlines once more the deep historical-mindedness of the Chinese."[75] Thus Huangdi was a historical figure for Ming China, and presumably for Mendoza as well, who drew upon Ming historical works for his synopsis of Chinese history. Mendoza himself says that "all" of his sources are "taken out of

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[72]For Queen Leizu, see Jiexiang Zheng (郑杰祥), *Huangdi and Leizu* (黄帝与嫘祖), and *Xinzheng, Huangdi's Hometown and Capital* (黄帝故里故都在新郑) (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Antiquity Publisher [中州古籍出版社], 2005).

[73]For the fact that Huangdi was regarded as a historical figure before the 1920s, see K. C. Chang (张光直), *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 2.

[74]The interrogation was initiated by Hu Shi (胡适) (1891–1962) and culminated in Hu's disciple Gu Jiegang (顾颉刚) (1893–1980), who is noted for his 7-volume *Gu Shi Bian* (古史辨) or *Debates on Ancient History*. See Gu, "How Yao, Shun, and Yu are Related to Each Other," in *Gu Shi Bian*, 7 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1982 [first published 1926–1941]), 1:127–132. On the doubting school, see Tze-Ki Hon, "Ethnic and Cultural Pluralism: Gu Jiegang's Vision of a New China in His Studies of Ancient History," *Modern China* 22.3 (1996): 315–339; and see doubts on Huangdi in Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 93.

[75]Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*: Volume 1, *Introductory Orientations* (rprt., Richmond: Kingprint Ltd., 1972), p. 88.

the books and histories" of the Chinese, which "were brought vnto the citie of Manilla, printed and set forth in China, and were translated into the Spanish toong, by interpreters of the saide nations." These "interpreters" were Chinese converts who "remaine as dwellers amongst vs in these islands [the Philippines]."[76]

Scaliger must have reacted strongly to the antiquity of Huangdi as it is represented by Mendoza. His conclusion that "Vitey is far older than Abraham" had greater resonance when it was rearticulated in the second edition of *De emendatione* (1598). According to Grafton, "no passage in the second *De emendatione* would have a more powerful—or unexpected—impact than the discussion of Chinese chronology that Scaliger included as a counter-weight to his assemblage of pagan reports that agreed neatly with the Bible." "His [Scaliger's] disapproval is clear enough," Grafton observes, for he thinks the Chinese's claim of an antediluvian history showing themselves as "*veris monumentis historiae destitute*," and that their antiquity was invented because of their "*temporum inscitia*" and "*vetustatis affectatio*."[77] However, despite his disapproval, the heretical suggestion of Scaliger's response to Chinese chronology can nevertheless be interpolated from his handling of Egyptian antiquity. Grafton holds that "Scaliger certainly realized that he seemed to be calling the authority of the Bible into question," for

> The prominent place of his discussions of Egypt and proleptic time in the *Thesaurus* ensured that no careful reader could miss them. Scaliger's insistence on giving equal weight to the Bible and to the pagans could only lead to disaster in a case where they disagreed so unequivocally. But he refused either to abate the rigorousness of his method or to recognize the seriousness of the conflict between his sources. He neither attacked the Bible explicitly, nor made it clear that he was not attacking it.[78]

The radical message implied by both the prominence Scaliger gives to proleptic time and his ambiguity towards "his method" and "the conflict

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[76]Mendoza, *Mighty Kingdom of China*, 1:20.

[77]Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, pp. 405–406. For Scaliger's comments on Chinese history, see *De emendatione* (1629), p. 366.

[78]Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 173.

between his sources" was aptly captured by La Peyrère to make his "attack" on "the chronological authority of the Bible."[79] La Peyrère claimed that, in addition to his study of Egyptian, Chaldean, and Amerindian antiquities, it was by resorting to Scaliger's theory of the "prodigious account of the Chinenesians" that he proposed the pre-Adamic thesis.[80]

La Peyrère's speculation was not ungrounded: it was supported by other numbers in Scaliger's chronological tables. In *De emendatione*, Scaliger puts the creation in 3949 BC, the flood in 2294 BC, Babel in 2177 BC, Abraham's migration in 1941 BC, and the Exodus in 1496 BC.[81] Vitey ruled in 2717–2599 BC, a date that challenged several numbers in Scaliger's template. Chinese antiquity called into question, above all, Abraham's status as the father of all nations. Wilcox maintains that "Scaliger's use of nonbiblical sources raised doubts about the antiquity of the Kingdom of Israel and its precedence over the pagan empires," because "as scholars came to see a single continuous time in which the events from all empires occurred, the process of synchronization made the position of Israel seem incongruous to the pious."[82] The "nonbibical sources" of the Chinese posed a direct challenge to the "precedence" of "the Kingdom of Israel." Scaliger notices that, by Mendoza's account, there are 2257 years from Vitey to Tzintzom and 2025 years from Tzintzom to Honog, which makes a total of 4282 years, a number that, Grafton says, proves "Vitey [*c.* 2717–2599 BC] is far older than Abraham [1941 BC]."[83] Not only Abraham but Noah's patriarchal status was also called into doubt, because the Chinese (2717 BC) lived about 423 years before the flood (2294 BC), a fact that came to Scaliger's mind in the second edition of *De emendatione*: "*quare Vitey fuerit longe antiquior Abrahamo, cum ea summa longe epocham diluvii post se relinquat.*"[84]

Essayes reproduces this contemporary chronological debate. Donne lists 58 alternative accounts of time in this treatise:

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[79]Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 406.

[80]La Peyrère, *Men before Adam* (London, 1656), pp. 177ff.

[81]Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 277.

[82]Wilcox, p. 209.

[83]Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, pp. 405–406.

[84]Scaliger, *De emendatione* (1629), p. 366.

> In the Epistle of *Alexander the Great* to his Mother, remembered by *Cyprian* and *Augustin*, there is mention of 8000. years. The *Chaldeans* have delivered observations of 470000 years. And the Egyptians of 100000. The *Chineses* vex us at this day, with irreconcilable accounts. And to be sure, that none shall prevent them; some have call'd themselves Aborigenes. The poor remedy of Lunary and other planetary years, the silly and contemptible escape that some Authors speak of running years, some of years expired and perfected; or that the account of dayes and monthes are neglected. . . .
>
> (p. 22)

As Raspa notes, Donne identifies eight authoritative systems of time in this passage: Cyprian and Augustine's records of Alexander's epistle to his mother; the ancient histories of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Chinese; some aboriginal annals; and the hypotheses both of "running years" and "Lunary and other planetary years."[85] Aside from these eight popular views, he mentions 50 others. The Dominican friar Sixtus Senensis (1520–1569) "reckons almost thirty several supputations of the years between the Creation, and our blessed Saviour's birth, all of accepted authors, grounded upon the Scriptures," and the Spanish Jesuit theologian and exegete Benedictus Pererius (1535–1610) claims that "he might have increased the number by 20" (p. 22). But Donne does not seem to think it necessary to engage Senensis's thirty "supputations" and the additional twenty added by Pererius.[86]

Three among the eight influential accounts of history Donne names proved especially unsettling in the Renaissance: the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Chinese. The Egyptians claimed a history of 100,000 years; "the Chaldeans were the most ancient of all peoples, by the weighty testimony of not only Moses but also Herodotus, Ctesias, and

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[85]Raspa, ed., *Essayes*, pp. 130–132. Alexander's letter came down to us through the citations made by the bishop of Carthage, St. Cyprian, in his *De idolorum vanitate liber* (247) and Augustine's *City of God*. I follow Raspa's scheme in identifying Cyprian and Augustine as two separate sources. For Donne's seventh and eighth sources, see Raspa, ed., *Essayes*, pp. 131, 132.

[86]The authorities Sixtus Senensis named appear in his *Bibliotheca Sancta* (1566), book 5. Benedictus Pererius's work means his *Commentariorum et Disputationum in Genesim* (Lyons, 1606). See Raspa, ed., *Essayes*, p. 132.

Xenophon";[87] and the hitherto unresolved chronology of the Chinese continued to "vex us at this day." But the Chaldean and Egyptian antiquities had been more or less reconciled with scriptural chronology by the 1610s. Bodin discounted both Herodotus's record of "a kingdom among the Egyptians for 13,000 years" and Cicero's account of the Chaldean history of 470,000 years, because the Hebrew writer Josephus (37–100), with "a most definite system of chronology" based on Manetho and the Phoenicians, had "openly refuted the inane stories of the Egyptians and the Greeks by adding the ages of the kings of the Egyptians and of the Phoenicians."[88] Likewise, Scaliger thought Manetho's account "more worthy of belief" than those of Herodotus, who was but a foreigner.[89] Unlike Egyptian antiquity, for most Renaissance thinkers the Chaldean history agreed with rather than contradicted scriptural chronology. Western knowledge of Babylonian history came chiefly from the Greek historian Callisthenes (360–328 BC), Aristotle's disciple who went with Alexander on his eastern expedition. According to the Greek commentator Simplicius (490–560), when requested by Aristotle "to collect the antiquities and records of the Chaldeans," Callisthenes "wrote back that he had diligently collected the Chaldean records and had found there the history of 1,903 years." "This number," Bodin observes, "fits the sacred history of Moses and Philo." In fact, for Bodin, both Callisthenes and Moses "drew the truth from the purest sources, agreed so far as concerns a universal system of time."[90] Goropius also holds that Callisthenes's report provides "remarkable evidences of agreement between the Chaldeans and those whose computations rest on the Bible."[91] Scaliger maintains that "the Chaldean computation deviates very little from the Mosaic" as well.[92]

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[87]Bodin, p. 337.

[88]Bodin, p. 320.

[89]Scaliger, *Thesaurus temporum*, *Isagogici Canones*, p. 310, quoted in Grafton, "Rise and Fall," p. 172; also see *Historical Chronology*, p. 714.

[90]Bodin, pp. 320–321.

[91]Goropius, *Origines Antwerpianae* (1569), pp. 434–435, quoted in Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 267.

[92]Scaliger, *De emendatione* (1583), p. 202, quoted in Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, p. 264; for Renaissance attempts to synchronize the biblical and Babylonian timelines as is reported by Callisthenes, see pp. 262–267 of *Historical Chronology*.

Easy as it seems to accommodate the Chaldean and Egyptian antiquities to the biblical temporal system, Donne admits that "The Chineses vex us at this day, with irreconcilable accounts." This remark raises three points. First, the eastern annals are not only singled out but also characterized by a strong verb, "vex." Second, whereas histories of other ancient civilizations are set down in exact numbers, Chinese chronicles are cast in a disconcerting phrase: "irreconcilable accounts." While the verb "vex" connotes feelings of trouble and distress after a serious engagement with some disturbing problems, the adjective "irreconcilable" signals frustrated endeavors. Together, they suggest an unsuccessful negotiation with the problematic chronology. Moreover, "vex" also implies an acute awareness that without reconciling the "irreconcilable" eastern antiquity, Scripture could not claim a universal jurisdiction. Third, the temporal phrase "at this day" indicates the topical urgency of the chronological issue around 1614 when *Essayes* was written.

Donne's attention to the chronological polemic was corroborated by his knowledge of Scaliger's innovation. That Donne knew Scaliger's chronology is supported by the presence of the 1583 edition of *De emendatione* in his library and by his annotation on its fly-leaf in the form of a Latin epigram:

> To the Author.
> Times, laws, rewards, and punishments, thou 'art fain
> To improve, friend Joseph; sure, thou'lt strive in vain;
> The zealot crew has found the task too tough;
> Leave them no worse than they are, and that's enough.
> <div align="right">J. Donne.[93]</div>

The tone expressed in this epigram is that of disapproval and friendly suggestion. The term "friend Joseph" indicates that the disagreement is directed at the work not the author. Indeed, Donne might have personally known Scaliger through his close friend Henry Wotton (1568–1639). Wotton once befriended Casaubon, who kept up a lengthy correspondence with Scaliger from 1594 onwards. Donne thinks that "friend Joseph" has certainly "[striven] in vain," because he failed to

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[93]The poem is taken from Sir Geoffrey Keynes, "Doctor Donne and Scaliger," *Times Literary Supplement* 21 February 1958: 108.

"improve" "times, laws, rewards, and punishments" through, presumably, the effort to reform chronology. In addition to commenting on the general effect, Donne's Latin epigram also alludes to contemporary responses to Scaliger's chronological reformation—"the zealot crew has found the task too tough." A possible referent of "the zealot crew" might be those committed Christians who found it hard to stomach Scaliger's proleptic time. The last sentence is a caveat: it is "enough" for Scaliger to "leave them no worse than they are." The third-person pronouns here could refer either to "the zealot crew" or to the chronologers whose works Scaliger had taken upon himself to reform. In addition to this direct pithy comment in poetic form, Sir Geoffrey Keynes says, "there is plenty of evidence in Donne's copy of the book that he was interested in Scaliger's work."[94]

<center>*   *   *   *</center>

To understand Donne's engagement with the controversy over Chinese antiquity, we should take a look at his interpretation of the scriptural system of time as it is represented in Genesis and Exodus. A chief objective of Donne's biblical commentary is to prove that Scripture is "the last refuge" in establishing a universal timeline (p. 22). To achieve this aim, he needs to justify scriptural chronology against the 58 alternative claims of time, especially the "strong oppositions" from the eight authoritative accounts. Though neither the Chinese nor any other chronology appears in Donne's actual exegesis, the challenges they pose nevertheless serve as the invisible but powerful background to which the interpreter unconsciously refers.

The biblical exegesis featured in *Essayes* was typical of Renaissance hermeneutics that prioritized the literal sense of Scripture. Ancient and medieval commentators largely followed the fourfold exegetical scheme proposed by John Cassian (*d.* 435), who divided the "spiritual *scientia*" into "three genera": "*tropologia*, *allegoria*, and *anagoge*." These three "spiritual" senses, together with the "literal," constitute the fourfold expository framework.[95] Most early and medieval commentators

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[94]Keynes, p. 108.

[95]Cassian, *De Collationes Patrum* or *The Conferences of the Fathers* (*c.* 435), quoted in James S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation*

privileged the "allegorical" sense, but Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Nicholas of Lyra (1279–1340) came to realize the importance of the "literal" meaning.[96] In the Renaissance, the literal sense was elevated to an unparalleled status by the Reformers and humanists.[97] Don C. Allen remarks that, since "the Bible was the center of Luther's theology and the literal interpretation of the text was the beginning of all his thinking,"[98] "the literal exposition was widely approved as the basic exposition by most of the exegetes of the Renaissance."[99] The interpretive principle Whitaker proposed was representative of the protestant hermeneutics, according to which "there is but one true, proper and genuine sense of scripture, arising from the words rightly understood, which we call the literal."[100] The literal sense was further promoted by the humanist "grammatical exegetes" such as Desiderius Erasmus (*c.* 1467–1536) who "applied the philological to the scriptural text to the exclusion of mysticism or spiritual apologetics," with "the exposition of accurate and literal meaning" as their typical "*modus operandi*" and "grammar and philology" as their "*apparatus criticus*."[101]

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from Augustine to the Young Luther (Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 21. For early and medieval biblical exegesis, also see James D. Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1958); and Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964).

[96]Wood, pp. 76–84; Smalley, pp. 83–106; and Preus, pp. 27–66.

[97]For Renaissance biblical exegeses, see Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis 1527–1633* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948); David C. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1994); and Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

[98]Allen, *Legend of Noah*, pp. 42–43.

[99]Allen, *Legend of Noah*, pp. 68–69.

[100]Whitaker, p. 404.

[101]George N. Conkin, *Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), pp. 17–18. For the philological approach, also see Gillian R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); and Erika Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotationes on*

Donne was quite aware of the exegetical tradition outlined above, and following the Reformers and humanists, he emphasized the primacy of the literal sense. Chanita Goodblatt rightly observes that "Donne's continuous citing of such an array of textual authority bespeaks his participation in 'a tradition of literal exposition originated in the Middle Ages and culminated in the great exegetical works of the Reformers.'"[102] Donne claims that "the sense which should ground an assurance in Doctrinall things, should be the literall sense,"[103] calling "the curious refining of the allegorical fathers" some "fine cobwebs to catch flies" or "strong cables by which we might anchor in all storms of disputation and persecution" (p. 46). He states expressly in *Essayes* that "we inherit the talents and travels of al Expositors" (p. 30), and when commenting on Genesis, he declares pointedly that he is following "the Example of our late learned Reformers" (p. 21). Although he opposes the philological practices to "excerpt and tear shapeless and insignificant rags of a word or two, from whole sentences, and make them obey their purpose in discoursing" (p. 46), his extensive exegesis of names and numbers in *Essayes* shows visible influence of the humanists.

Donne does not privilege the literal at the expense of the metaphorical, though Dennis B. Quinn claims that "all Donne had in mind was the eschewing of nonliteral senses, with which allegory, tropology, and anagogy had become synonymous."[104] In reality, rather than "eschewing . . . nonliteral senses," Donne attempts to articulate an exegetical principle that at once prioritizes and reconciles the literal with all the other senses. Since "to divers understandings there might be divers literal senses," he says in *Essayes*, to be "called literall is to distinguish it from the Morall, Allegoricall, and the other senses" (p. 46). Put differently, the other senses are but different "understandings" of the literal, an interpretation that recalls both Whitaker's expository doctrine and Lyra's theory of *duplex sensus literalis*. Whitaker maintains that

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the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian, *Erasmus Studies* 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

[102]Goodblatt, pp. 223–224.

[103]Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–1962), 7:192. Further references to the sermons are to this edition and are cited parenthetically by volume and page number; italics appear in the original.

[104]Quinn, p. 316.

"allegories, tropologies, and anagoges are not various senses, but various collections from one sense, or various applications and accommodations of that one meaning [the literal]."[105] For Lyra, a "[letter] can apply to a [second] literal sense which is just as literal as the first. In light of this, one should consider that the same letter at times has a double sense."[106] By a second literal sense, Lyra means the various derivations of the first literal sense. Thus for Donne as well as Lyra and Whitaker, the literal is the primary matrix from which other senses derive.

In addition to re-asserting the literal, the Renaissance also witnessed an attempt to re-conceptualize the "historical" sense of Scripture. Both early and medieval commentators tended to identify the historical with the mere literal or "grammatical" sense.[107] Historical exegesis assumed a new dimension in Protestant hermeneutics—it looked at biblical stories, not as allegorical and typological metaphors, but as real historical events. Debora K. Shuger remarks that when "Scaliger's *De emendatione temporum* came out in 1583, Casaubon's New Testament scholia in 1587—a new sensitivity to historical continuity developed, replacing the seamless fabric of typological time" and turning Scripture into "a historical document that both implies and elucidates late antique culture."[108] Donne noticed this "new sensitivity to historical continuity" in biblical scholarship. Patrides points out that, in the Renaissance, "the acceptance of the historicity of the Mosaic account of creation is attested by the widespread persuasion that the world was created, as William Perkins estimated late in the sixteenth century, 'between fiue thousand and six thousand yeres agoe.'"[109] Donne subscribes to this "widespread persuasion," interpreting the literal sense as the "historicity" of Scripture as well. "Because we are utterly disprovided of any history of the World's Creation," he declares, "except we defend and maintain this Book of Moses to be Historical, and therefore literarrly to be interpreted" (p. 21). To interpret Genesis "literally" is to regard it as a "historical" document.

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[105]Whitaker, p. 404.

[106]Nicholas of Lyra, *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam* (Rome, 1471), quoted in Preus, p. 66. Donne speaks of Lyra's theory of double signification in *Essayes*, p. 10.

[107]Whitaker, p. 404.

[108]Shuger, pp. 45, 23, 24.

[109]Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition*, p. 28.

To treat Scripture as a historical text necessarily subjects it to the scrutiny of the chronological methodology that emphasizes the consistency of numerical evidence. To counteract accusations of chronological errors in Scripture, Donne insists on the distinctive feature of the Mosaic history, that is, its allegorical signification, declaring that "there is then in Moses, both history and precept" (pp. 21–22). In other words, Scripture represents at once history and allegory—when literally interpreted, it features "history," and when allegorically approached, it conveys "precept." In effect, the literal sense is often expressed in precepts or "by allegories," Donne argues, so that "in many places of Scripture, a figurative sense is the literall sense" (*Sermons*, 6:62–63). Thus, he says in a sermon preached on 1 Corinthians 15:29, "We [Anglicans] have a Rule, by which that sense will be suspicious to us, which is, Not to admit figurative senses in interpretation of Scriptures, where the literall sense may well stand" (*Sermons*, 7:193). Given this necessity of the allegorical and its frequent coincidence with the literal sense, a chronological model that relies largely on numbers and dates cannot adequately account for the Mosaic history. Things would be much simpler, he says in his *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), "if the errour were onely in *Chronologie*, as to give Pope Nicholas a place in the Councell of *Carthage*, who was dead before; Or in *Arithmeticke*, as when purposely he enumerates all the *Councels*, to make the number lesse by foure."[110] But in truth, chronological lapses only indicate something superficial and the deeper allegorical meaning goes beyond mere arithmetic calculations.

As a distinctive expression of the metaphorical sense, spiritual "faith" proves the ideal model to interpret the fathomless "bottom" of the creation (p. 22). For Donne, the exegetical principle that "a figurative sense is the literall sense" is especially pertinent to the study of Genesis. On the one hand, he suggests a literal approach, for in this book "there is danger in departing from the letter" (*Sermons*, 6:62). On the other hand, a mere literal exegesis proves inadequate because "the literall interpretation of successive days cannot subsist, where there are some dayes mention'd before the Creation of these Planets which made days" (pp. 38–39). But this pre-creation time can nevertheless be interpreted allegorically and addressed by faith. Donne defines faith as, in contrast to

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[110]Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 192.

rational reasoning out of "Logick" or "Rhetorique," a "Character, and Oridinance which God hath imprinted in me" (*Sermons*, 7:95). He argues for the primacy of this divine seal in commenting on such scriptural tenets as the Resurrection and creation. To understand the Resurrection, "the roote and foundation thereof is in Faith; though Reason may chafe the wax, yet Faith imprints the seale," since "the Resurrection is not a conclusion out of actuall Reason, but it is an article of supernaturall faith" (*Sermons*, 7:95). In like manner, "it is an article of our belief, that the world began" (p. 19). So when interpreting Genesis, "we are not under the insinuations and mollifyings of perswasion, and conveniency; nor under the reach and violence of Argument, or Demonstration, or Necessity," he argues, rather, we should subject its exegesis "under the Spirituall, and peaceable Tyranny, and easie yoke of sudden and present Faith" (p. 19). The inscrutable nature of the creation dictates that its account should go beyond both rational theorization and mathematical calculation—there is no way to imagine the world's origin, never mind calculate its exact date.

Though inapplicable to Genesis, the chronological model cannot be easily refuted when used to interpret Exodus, a book in which numbers figure prominently. Since "the miracle of propagating" represented in Exodus "consists in the Number," this book is easily challenged on chronological grounds (p. 61). Faith can address pre-historical time, but it cannot account for events that happened in historical time and could be verified with physical evidence. Since the creation permits little room for our "reason" and "discourse" and "must be at once swallowed and devour'd by faith," Donne observes, it is not so "apt" to stimulate us to great "Acts of Honour" (p. 61). By comparison, we can be well affected by God's delivery of those captivated Israelites, because such "miracles" "are somewhat more submitted to reason, and exercise and entertain our disputation, and spiritual curiosity by the way" (p. 61). Thus, "though in our supreme Court in such cases" as "when profane Historie rises up against any place of Scripture, accusing it to Humane Reason, and understanding," "the last Appeal" is "Faith," Donne says, "yet Reason is her Delegate" (p. 63). So the numbers in Exodus cannot be lightly dismissed with a spiritual faith—it must be intellectually engaged with reason. Augustine holds that "an argument aroused by an adversary"

sometimes "turns out to be an opportunity for instruction."[111] Donne responds with the same rationale to those who question the "variety in Numbring" in Exodus, arguing that by this "variety" God means "his word should ensure and undergo the opinion of contradiction, or other infirmities, in the eyes of Pride (the Author of Heresie and Schism) that after all such dissections, & cribrations, and examinings of Hereticall adventures upon it, it might return from the furnace more refin'd, and gain luster and clearness by this vexation" (pp. 63–64). Engagement with charges of numerical inconsistency thus ends up only adding more "luster and clearness" to Scripture.

In addition to numbers, names constitute another major source of chronological lapses, especially in histories comprised of dynastic rules. Names are fundamental to maintaining the identity of a certain people, according to Bodin, so when they are "obliterated," confusion occurs unavoidably in their chronology. Reliable chronology should be constructed according to "certain epoch or initial point of time," Bodin asserts, and the very practice to "[define] time by the ages of kings is cause of chronological errors." For instance, because of the loss of the names of some of their monarchs, the chronological systems derived from "the kings of Assyrians, Persians, and Egyptians" remain problematic.[112] Though China did not appear in Bodin's list, its long dynastic history as recorded by Mendoza must have been viewed in the same light by early modern Europeans.[113]

Donne's strategy to address the chronological confusion caused by numbers and names is to link them together. To counteract charges on nominal grounds, he seeks to establish the "certainty and constancy" (p. 54) of the names occurring in Exodus by comparing them with those corruptible and easily perishable "ethnick" or "heathen" names (p. 51). God's concern with names is everywhere in Scripture, he writes, since "How often in the Scripture is the word *Name*, for *honour*, *fame*, *vertue*? How often doth God accurse with abolishing the Name?" (p. 50–51). In particular, God shows special care with names in the book of exile. As he puts it, "in no language are Names so significant" as in Exodus, so much

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[111]Augustine, *City of God*, p. 650.

[112]Bodin, pp. 324, 325–326.

[113]For Renaissance fascination with dynastic history see Grafton, *Historical Chronology*, pp. 70–71.

so that, "if one consider diligently the senses of the Names register'd here, he will not so soon say, That the Names are in the History, as that the History is in the Names" (p. 51). Consequently, "wheresoever these Names shall be mentioned, the Miraculous History shall be call'd to memory; And wheresoever the History is remembered, their Names shall be refreshed" (p. 53). While "ethnick" or "heathen" names "putrifie and perish," Donne says, those "honour'd with a place in this book [Exodus] cannot perish, because the Book cannot" (p. 50). He concedes that names in Exodus, just like numbers, "are diversely named" and "not always alike" (p. 54). But he argues that, although "error and variety in Names, may be pardonable in profane Histories, especially such as translated from Authors of other language," the "one Author of al these books [of Scripture], the Holy Ghost" insures the "certainty and constancy" of the names in Exodus (p. 54). By turning the tables, Donne strikes home the point that, unlike profane histories, nominal lapses are simply unpardonable in the Mosaic history. Paradoxically, the truth of names in Exodus comes from their close alliance with numbers. Since God "commands His [people] to be numbered, and to be numbered by name," Hebrew history closely follows "this Order, of being first Named, and then Numbred; or first Numbred, and then Named" (p. 60). Donne's argument is that, when separate, numbers and names might support profane histories, but once combined, they symbolize a "Miraculous History" that has the capacity to enfold all peoples in "One fold, and one shepherd." Given this unity, the new pagans such as the Chinese and Amerindians should belong to the Adamic family; accordingly, their systems of time should conform to scriptural chronology.

As the words "vex" and "irreconcilable" suggest, despite his efforts, Donne's attempt to assimilate Chinese chronology into scriptural timeframe proved to be unsuccessful. In 1662, the Bishop of Worcester, Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699), remarks in his *Origenes sacres* that "the most popular pretenses of the Atheists of our Age, have been the irreconcilableness of the account of Times in Scriptures with that of the learned and ancient Heathen Nations."[114] One of these "learned and ancient Heathen Nations" was China. In his "Histoire de la Chine," the French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) puts the question bluntly,

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[114]Stillingfleet, *Origines sacrae* (rprt., Oxford, 1797), p. xiv.

"which is the more credible of the two, Moses or China?"[115] That both Donne and Stillingfleet used the word "irreconcilable" to describe the clash between scriptural and Chinese chronologies indicates that the issue harassing thinkers in the 1610s remained unresolved in the 1660s. Although it goes beyond the scope of the present study, the chronological debate reignited by the Jesuit missionary Martini's *Sinicae historiae*—a book-length account of Chinese history with more detailed facts, precise numbers, and accurate names—indicates the effect of the solution Donne provided in his theological treatise.[116]

In addition to his awareness of the threat caused by the new pagan antiquity, Donne's negotiation with Chinese chronology in an extensive theological treatise also bespeaks his response to cultural diversities. In an undated sermon preached upon the Penitential Psalms, Donne classifies "Easterne Chineses" with such modern "Heathen men" as "Westerne Americans" (*Sermons*, 9:336). In coupling China with the western Indies, he shows recognition of its radical difference. "Heathen men" refer to people who hold religious convictions not of the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim faiths, especially those committed to beliefs of "a primitive or polytheistic nature."[117] But instead of focusing on their difference, Donne defines a "Heathen man" as "a mere naturall man, uncatechized, uninstructed in the rudiments of the Christian Religion" (*Sermons*, 3:357) or one "without any knowledge of God" (*Sermons*, 4:149). This definition of heathens as "naturall" human beings uninitiated in the Christian doctrine gestures towards a cosmopolitanism that identifies and embraces common humanity. As Donne puts it in a sermon preached on 22 April 1622: "A man is thy Neighbor, by his Humanity, not by his Divinity; by his Nature, not by his Religion" (*Sermons*, 4:110). But Donne's cosmopolitan will has a qualification:

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[115]Pascal, quoted in David Wetsel, "'Histoire de la Chine': Pascal and the Challenge to Biblical Time," *The Journal of Religion* 69.2 (1989): 199–219, quotation from p. 199. For Pascal's three other references to Chinese antiquity, see pp. 202–203, n. 12.

[116]I discuss John Milton's engagement with the chronological debate reignited by Martini's *Sinicae historiae* in *Paradise Lost* in chapter 4 of my PhD dissertation: "The Far East in Early Modern Globalization: China and the Mongols in Donne and Milton," University of Toronto, 2012.

[117]S. v. "heathen," adj. and n.1, in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1989), <http://oed.com>, accessed 15 June 2012.

instead of accepting the "other" on its own terms, he engages it with the aim to integrate it into the biblical symbolic economy. As he says in a sermon preached to "the Honorable Company of the Virginia Plantation" dated 13 November 1622: by making the new worlds, America in particular, "*Suburbs* of the old world," one "shall add persons to the Kingdome, and to the Kingdome of heaven, and adde names to the Bookes of our Chronicles, and to the Booke of Life" (*Sermons*, 4:280–281). It is this very qualification that modifies the effect of Donne's apologetic strategy on Chinese antiquity.

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