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John Lilburne, The Beast and England in the Late 1630s

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Moreover there to Gods people, I did most plainly shew
That we have been, and so are still, rul'ed by a Popish crew;
Therefore against them valiantly, we must fight in the field,
And to their Laws at any hand, not ever once to yield.
But from their Yoake without delay, we must our neckes outdraw;
If that we will true Subjects bee, unto our Saviours Law.
Therefore my Friends, if that you will, *Christ Jesus* here enjoy,
Withdraw your selves from these vile men, and every Popish toy.

John Lilburne, *A Worke of the Beast*, 1638

On April 18, 1638, the Lords sitting in the Star Chamber at Westminster passed sentence on John Lilburne, a young gentleman of Puritan persuasion who have been brought before the Court on the charge of printing and distributing unlicensed books. During a period of intense Laudian conformity and discipline, such a charge before the Star Chamber entailed seditious conduct and the need for exemplary punishment. Lilburne's refusal to take the *ex officio* oath of the Star Chamber to testify against himself further aggravated the situation. The Court proceeded against Lilburne as though he had confessed to the indictment. On the same day, Lilburne's censure was executed: he was fined five hundred pounds and then whipped from the Fleet to the pillory at the Palace Yard, Westminster, where he was pilloried for some two hours before undergoing a period of imprisonment. Whilst in jail, Lilburne wrote a relation of his arrest, censure, and punishment

which was published anonymously in the same year by an unknown printer and entitled, *A WORKE OF THE BEAST OR A Relation of a most unchristian Censure, Executed upon JOHN LILBURNE, (Now prisoner in the fleet) the 18. of April 1638. With the heavenly speech uttered by him at the time of his suffering. Printed in the yeare the Beast was Wounded 1638.*¹

¹See William Haller, ed., *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638-1647, Vol. II* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), pp. 1-34; hereafter cited as *A Worke* with page references to the original pagination as per the original document reproduced in *ibid.* On the printing and likely editorship of *A Worke*, and for Lilburne's status as a gentleman, see Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the reformation to the eve of the civil war* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 174, 168. Following Nicholas Tyacke, "puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution, in Conrad Russell, ed., *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1973), pp. 119-143, I will be using the term Puritan to refer to Protestant nonconformists — "aberrant brethren" — subsumed within Calvinist episcopalianism. See also Tyacke's, *Anti-Calvinists:*

The biblical imagery and references, and the description of the publisher's title leaf and preface to the "Tender hearted Reader" clearly place Lilburne's relation within the framework of an apocalyptic vision and interpretation of the Reformation, and in particular, an apocalyptic periodization of history concerning the spiritual warfare between God's saints and the Beast of the Revelation of John the Divine.² In my discussion of *A Worke of the Beast*, I hope to grasp some of the significant religious assumptions and traditions which informed Lilburne's relation of his censure, and consider their implications in light of Lilburne's apoca-

The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

²See further, Paul Christianson, *op. cit.*; Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); and William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-60* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969).

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lyptic interpretation of England in the 1630s. It is useful to begin such a discussion with a brief outline of Lilburne's complaint.

The Complaint

Lilburne first relates how his "soe sore La punishment" and the way that God enabled him to cheerfully accept and joyfully endure his sufferings were evidence of his assurance of election and his standing as one of God's persecuted saints.³ Lilburne then claims that he had not committed any offence "against the Law of God, against the Law of the Land, against the King or State."⁴ He then links both of these themes together to support his accusation that he suffered only "as an object of the Prelates cruelty and malice."⁵ Lilburne then outlines "The Cause of my Censure."⁶ In so doing, he draws upon a number of traditions and authorities and stresses the wicked, sinful, and unlawful nature of the accusations and proceedings taken against him. Up to this stage in his argument, Lilburne has essentially presented a counter accusation that it is the Prelates who are the real law breakers, and that his punishment is, therefore, really a cruel persecution.⁷

³See esp. *A Worke*, pp. 4-8.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵*Ibid.*, emphasis added. For the separatist apocalyptic tradition which criticized "the prelates" rather than "some and sundry prelates," see Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*, p. 146.

⁶*A Worke*, pp. 9-13.

⁷James Fitzjames Stephen's discussion on the history of indictments and "true bills" well elucidates

Lilburne then devotes the rest of his relation to a discourse on the *iure divino* claims for episcopacy and the implications of such claims for God's chosen people.

Lilburne argues that the bishop's calling is not *iure divino*, but rather *iure diabolico*: if the bishops' calling and power does not come from the king but from the Pope, as the bishops had claimed, then the bishops' calling and power must be from the Devil because the Pope's calling and power originated from the Devil.⁸ For Lilburne, it followed that all episcopal callings must also be anti-Christian and unlawful for their callings and power were derived from the bishops.⁹ If God's chosen people were to avoid endangering their souls and bodies, then they must repent, "come out," and "fight manfully" God's "spiritual battell."¹⁰ To do this, Lilburne exhorted the Godly to gird themselves as soldiers of Christ by searching diligently "those Spirituall and hidden truths that God hath enwrapped in his Sacred Booke," and by withdrawing "their obedience and subjection" from under "the idolatious and spiritual bondage of the Prelates."¹¹

A fundamental assumption that imbues Lilburne's argument is the doctrine of providence, which is associated with predestination theology. In his exhortation to "a great Multitude of people [who] came to looke upon me,"¹² Lilburne

the extent to which the prerogative courts had infringed the tradition of customary law in the case of Lilburne's censure. See further, Stephen, *A History of the Criminal Law of England*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1883), ch. IX, & esp. Ch. XI: "History of Criminal Trials in England From 1554-1760," for John Lilburne's Star Chamber case. Cf. *A Worke*, esp. P. 13: "if I had bene proceeded against by a Bill, I would have answered. . . ."

⁸See *A Worke*, pp. 14-16; and further on *iure divino* claims for episcopacy, William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule*, chs. 2 & 3.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 18-19

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 7, 9. Here it is important to not underestimate the attraction and effectiveness of Lilburne's mode of oratory at the pillory. When we consider that "a fat *Lawier*" commanded Lilburne to hold his peace and leave his preaching (p. 20), and note that Lilburne stated to the crowd that "I am the Sonne of a Gentleman, and my Friends are of ranke and quality in the Countrey where they live, which is 200 miles from this place," (p. 20) and that he was "noe Scoller, according to that which the world counts as Scollership," but rather spoke "the words of soberness and mature deliberation" (p. 19), then it is possible to catch a suggested glimpse of the cultural and social reciprocities and convivialities between "gentle" and "simple" folk at the Palace Yard, Westminster which would have enabled

explained and justified his censure and suffering in terms of this doctrine. Lilburne believe that he could speak "in the name of the Lord" because firstly, his "persecution and affliction" were concrete signs of his election — "the lott and portion of all Chosen ones;" and secondly, that "the Lord . . . by a divine providence hath brought me hither this day."¹³ Furthermore, Lilburne believed that it was imperative that he spoke to those about him, even though "a fat *Lawier* . . . commanded me to hold my peace & leave my preaching:"

being in the condition that I am in, I dare not hold my peace but speake unto you with boldness in the might and strength of my God, the things which the Lord in mercy hath made known unto my soule.¹⁴

It is important to note his emphasis on the soul, for it is closely associated with Lilburne's appeal to the Bible and a saint's conscience before God.

In order to elucidate this association, it is helpful to first consider briefly Lilburne's Biblical orientation. It is evident that Lilburne had, like many of his contemporaries, a good acquaintance with Scripture and was well versed in the imagery and framework of the apocalyptic tradition.¹⁵ Lilburne's uncited use of Biblical analogies, images and texts indicate that his audience would have been sufficiently imbued with this cultural framework of meanings to follow his argument and exhortations, and to note Lilburne's consent with, and dissent from, the orthodoxy and orthopraxies of their day.¹⁶ Furthermore, Lilburne's use of Scripture suggests clearly that the Bible was perceived as more than must a repository of God's revealed Law and truth; namely, an accurate and reasonable interpretation of past, present, and future times, and in particular, the very proof of the history of Antichrist in the 1630s. When the warden asked Lilburne to prove that the bishops' calling

Lilburne to effectively employ his mastery of the oral and extempore word that was characteristic of the world of the gentry "200 miles from this place" — a world that would appear to be distinguished from that of the fat lawyer and his contemporaries sitting in judgment on Lilburne in the Star Chamber.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 5 & 19.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 20, emphasis in original.

¹⁵Although Lilburne's argument concentrates on the ninth and thirteenth chapters of The Revelation of John the Divine, he does draw and quote from other books of the Bible: Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Matthew, Acts, I Corinthians, and Ephesians.

¹⁶See, e.g. *A Worke*, pp. 15, 21, 29.

was from the Devil, Lilburne replied:

I will prove it . . . if you please read the 9. and 13. chap. Of Rev. you shall there finde, that. . . .¹⁷

Linked to Lilburne's appeal to and use of Scripture was an emphasis on the individual saint as against the corporate body of saints; and a concomitant emphasis on the subjective experience of the Biblical text by the saint's conscience as against the predestinarian or covenantal understanding of the whole Bible as the objective, authoritative standard of righteousness and godly action for all time. Lilburne, for instance, exhorted his audience to diligently search the Bible for the "Spiritual and hidden truths" of God so that they could know in their souls "the truth of things."¹⁸ God's elect could then act boldly and courageously according to the dictates of their consciences and rest secure in the truth that God would not forsake them. What Lilburne did not exhort his audience to do was to diligently search the whole Bible as a covenant document for the Scriptural and plain truths of God so that the saints could know the object moral and legal standards to not only determine their actions and to test the fruits thereof, but also to guide them in the progressive, corporate transformation of their society.

A saint's conscience thus mediated between Biblical truth and human action, and in so doing, became the final court of appeal for those actions. Accordingly, Lilburne remarked in the summation of his argument against his censure and the unlawful and sinful *ex officio* oath:

my conscience bears me witness that I have . . . walke[d] inoffensively towards God, & man.¹⁹

Similarly, in Lilburne's vindication of his retort against "a fat *Lawier*" who would have him hold his peace, he remarks:

And for my owne part I stand this day in the place of an evill doer, but my conscience witnesseth that I am not soe.²⁰

By exhorting his audience to rely on the witness of their consciences and not take the "truth of things" upon "trust," Lilburne was publicly repudiating the authority of the episcopal Church of

England and mitigating the creedal and covenantal authority of Reformation ecclesiastical tradition. Furthermore, by arguing that the bishops' callings and power came from the Devil, Lilburne identified the English episcopacy with the Antichrist. The apocalyptic orthodoxy of Lilburne's day identified the Antichrist with the papacy — the Beast of John's Revelation — and the bishops with the locusts and scorpions of Revelation. Lilburne employed this imagery throughout his argument; but at the same time he encouraged his audience to go a step further and identify the bishops with the Beast:

And whether the Prelates as well as the Pope, do not daily the same things: let every man that hath but common reason judge.²¹

If the bishops, therefore, were the Beast, or the Beast's Image, then the Church of England could not be the true Church or England's Israel.²²

Moreover, if the bishops' calling was unlawful, so then are "all these offices that are under them & made by them," even "though the men themselves be never so good and holie." Indeed, argued Lilburne, "holiness of the minister is a Cloake to cover the unlawfulness of his calling" and the magnitude of his sin, "for by this means the people are kept off from receiving the whole truth into their soules."

Their holiness proves not their callings to be ever the truer: seeing their authority that made them ministers is false, and therefore they have more to answer for then any of the rest: by how much the more God hath bestowed grater gifts upon them than upon others, and yet they detaine the truth in unrighteousness from God's people: and do not make known to them as they ought, the whole will and counsell of God.

And againe, the greater is their sinne if their callings be unlawful, (as I verily beleieve they are) in that they still hold them and do not willingly lay them downe & renounce them, for they do but deceive the people and highly

dishonour God, and sinne against their own souls, while they preach unto the people by vertue of an *Antichristian* and unlawfull Calling. . . .²³

Whilst Lilburne affirmed with the predestinarian Calvinists and Puritans that the arena of grace and the central focus of life was godly action in the world, not the Church, he no longer looked to the Church "as the armory to prepare him for action."²⁴ His message was thus not one of ecclesiastical reform nor renewal; for it was not the episcopal church that was "at this present in a very dangerous and fearful condition"²⁵ because of some ungodly prelates bent on a programme of popish innovation to effect, *inter alia*, an apostate *iure divino* episcopacy. Rather, it was the souls and bodies of God's chosen people that were endangered for as long as they remained obedient and subject to an Antichristian church "under the idolatrous and spiritual bondage of the Prelates."²⁶ The Beast was at large and God was marshalling his soldiers towards the overthrow of all flesh that exalted itself against the Lord. From this apocalyptic conviction and perception of evil, Lilburne argued that,

it belong also to thee, or mee, or any other man, if thou beest a Souldier of Jesus Christ, whatsoever by place or Calling thy ranke or degree bee, bee if higher or lower, yet if hee call for thy service, thou art bound though others stand still, to maintaine his power and glory to the utmost of thy power and

²³ See *ibid.*, pp. 16-17, emphasis in original.

²⁴ Writing on the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and the implications of its human aspects, the preservation of the saints, Dr Rushdoony has well commented: "Given the doctrines of predestination and the preservation of the saints, the focus of the Christian is dramatically altered. Instead of concentrating all his life on saving himself, man can then concentrate on serving God with all his heart, mind, and being. Instead of being tied to the church in hopes of salvation, man can look to the church as the armory to prepare him for action. The church is no longer the central focus and the arena of life but godly action in the world is. The Christian man cannot leave the ordering of the world to the state, because it is now his duty. Man is saved by God's sovereign grace; it is entirely God's work, not man's. Man's work is now to bring all things into captivity to Christ and to exercise dominion over every sphere of life in Christ's name." Rousas John Rushdoony, "Arminian Theology," in Martin G. Selbrede *et al.*, *The Great Christian Revolution: The Myths of Paganism and Arminianism* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), Part II, pp. 16-82 at p. 76.

²⁵ A *Worke*, p. 18.

²⁶ *Idem*.

²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 15.

²² Lilburne's warning against lukewarmness and failure "to shake off that long security and formality in Religion" (*ibid.*, p. 17) suggests that he perceived the Church of England in terms of the apocalyptic tradition of Laodicea rather than that of the Whore of Babylon — the unreformed church.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

strength, yea to the shedding of the last drop of they blood. . . .²⁷

And in terms of Lilburne's apocalyptic periodization of time, which immanentized the concept of final judgment into his historic moment,²⁸ Lilburne called upon his audience to note well that "now is the time that we must shew our selves good Souldiers of *Jesus Christ*, for his truth, his cause and glorie lies at stake in a high degree,"

therefore put one couragious resolutions, and withdraw your necks and soules from all false power and worship, and fight with courage and boldness in this spiritual Battell, in which Battell the Lord before your eyes hath raised up some valiant Champions that fought up to the ears in blood, therefore be couragious Souldiers and fight it out bravely, that your God may be glorified by you, and let him onelie have the service, both of your inward and outward man, and stand to his cause, and love your owne Soules, and fear not the face of any mortall man, for God hath promised to bee with you and uphold you that they shall not prevail against you.²⁹

By appealing directly to all of God's people to search and discover the "truth of things" themselves, for "alas" they [their Ministers] are so cowardly and fearful that they dare not speake;³⁰ and by exhorting the people to act on this truth — to "Labour also to withdraw your necks from under that Spiritual and Antichristian bondage" of the diabolic

Church of England³¹ — Lilburne was rejecting the "Godly Prince" or imperial conception of the apocalyptic tradition which appealed to the king and his bishops to effect a reformation which could rescue England from the brink of Babylon.³² Instead, Lilburne advocated that it was God's people who must take the initiative and who were God's instruments in the battle "betwixt the Lamb and his Servants, and the *Dragon* (the *Devil*) and his vassals."³³

Thus, unlike the Puritans who still saw the "good" bishops and their subordinates as the ally of the godly magistrate in the Foxian tradition of war against the Antichristian, Laudian wing of the Church, Lilburne made no such distinction. He made his separatism very plain and thereby distinguished himself from Puritan nonconformists — the "aberrant brethren" who shared the predestinarian teachings of Calvinism.³⁴ Moreover, Lilburne also indicated the extent of his departure from that Calvinist heritage; for his mode of voicing his separatism also witnessed to a latent Arminianism and to an implicit antinomianism that imbued the apocalyptic vision and interpretation of England in the late 1630s.

Despite his belief in his election and a confidence in "the saving worke of grace," and "the way of his [God's] providence,"³⁵ Lilburne reduced these to the saint's "inward and outward man," his "necks and soules."³⁶ Not one of his Old Testament references refers to the covenantal cause-and-effect relationship between ethics and God's judgments in history, and in particular, to the predictable, covenantal and objective sanctions which may be legitimately enforced by God's covenant-keeping representatives in history, to which Calvinistic, predestinarian theology affirms.³⁷ Lilburne's relation speaks rather of a conspicuous absence of the continuing authority of Biblical law. Even though Lilburne initially relates how he had not committed any offence "against the Law of God, against the Law of the Land, against the King or

State,"³⁸ it is telling to note, that in Lilburne's development of his exhortation for the people to withdraw from their bondage to the Lord's adversaries, he employs the concept of "the very law of nature" and the principle of "let every man that hath but common reason judge" along with the subjective sanction and criteria of one's "privay" conscience to which we have already referred.³⁹ What Lilburne's relation does bear witness to is the influence of assumptions associated with the authority of universal reason; the formal equation of Biblical law with medieval natural law; the effects of Biblical "higher criticism"; and the autonomy of man, all of which had undermined the Calvinist conception that Biblical law, historical sanctions, and millennial eschatology are inescapably linked and mutually related.⁴⁰ Not only was Lilburne implicitly repudiating the Biblical covenant as a meaningful concept, he was also cutting millennial eschatology off from Biblical ethics and thus immanentizing it — dragging it "out of heaven and into history exclusively," and stripping it "of every trace of the transcendent," so that the only sanctions are those "historical sanctions . . . imposed by either man or nature."⁴¹

Although historians have observed the shift in appeal from the concept of a godly prince to a concept of the godly people,⁴² we should not over emphasize Lilburne's appeal to the people, for it was not novel. Richard Hooker in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594) had argued that the representatives of the "people's majesty" crown the king; and later on Samuel Rutherford in his *Lex Rex* (1644) would declare: "The power of creating a man a king is from the people." Furthermore, John Foxe in the 1563 English translation of his *Book of Martyrs*, which was admired by the Puritans of Lilburne's day, "cited from English history to claim that one essential test of a people's fidelity to God was their willingness to rebel when rulers were misled by corrupt

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23 and note also pp. 18-19.

²⁸ It is this concept of immanentization which distinguishes millenarian or apocalyptic eschatology from millennial or gradualist eschatology. Because historians have tended to subsume millenarian eschatology within Calvinist predestinarian theology, they have viewed Puritanised apocalypticism as a corollary of Calvinism and as an anti-Arminian radical movement. They have thus tended to overlook a significant tonality and distinctive characteristic of seventeenth-century culture by the late 1630s: the rise of millenarianism as a correlative of Arminianism, and as a cultural and social development of the progressive cultural and social abandonment of Calvinistic predestinarian presuppositions which linked eschatology with Biblical law and historical sanctions to form the ideas of cultural and social progress associated with Calvinistic social theory and practice. This essay is but an initial attempt to reconstruct this historic tonality of the English in the mid seventeenth-century.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22, emphasis in original.

³⁰ *Idem.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³² See further, William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule*, ch. 2: "Godly Prince."

³³ *A Worke*, p. 18, emphasis in original.

³⁴ See further, Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution."

³⁵ See *A Worke*, pp. 3, 29 and verses appended, at the fourth last line.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁷ See further, Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

³⁸ *A Worke*, p. 7.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 13, 15.

⁴⁰ See further Gary North, *op. cit.*; Gary North, *The Hoax of Higher Criticism* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989); and Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, 1984, translated by John Bowden from the 1980 German edition).

⁴¹ Gary North, *Millennialism*, p. 43.

⁴² See further, Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*; and William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule*.

advisors.⁴³ What was novel, was Lilburne's omission of the older Protestant view that it was the civil magistrate who was delegated God's sovereignty through the people.⁴⁴ By openly questioning the lawful government of the Church of England and regarding the clergy's office as not only Antichristian, but also "an unlawful Calling,"⁴⁵ Lilburne was violating the Calvinistic principle of lawful jurisdiction. Although Lilburne was addressing the sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and debating who held lawful claim to God's divine appointment to safeguard the "Elect Nation," he nevertheless invited tyranny and lawlessness. Indeed, Lilburne's apocalyptic concept of an immanent historical sanction against the Beast and its diabolical servants should be considered together with his appeal to man's conscience and reason, for they comprise a world-view which entailed an implicit acceptance of arbitrary Rule, and which invited the antinomian implications of a "godless Rule"⁴⁶ which was and is well expressed by the closing verse of the Book of Judges of the popular Genevan Bible of Lilburne's day:

In those days there was no King in Israel, but everie man did that which was good in his eyes.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Lilburne's apocalyptic interpretation of the clergy's calling as Antichristian, and his identification of the entire *iure divino* episcopal church as the Beast or its Image, indicated the divergence of the apocalyptic tradition from the Calvinistic, millennial (i.e. anti-millennarian) eschatology and social theory of his day.⁴⁸ It also indicated the extent to

which Lilburne's self-conscious religious assumptions and beliefs witnessed to an Arminianism that is usually associated as the theology of the Laudian sacerdotal episcopacy in contradistinction to the apocalyptic tradition of the Puritans. But, as Lilburne's *A Worke of the Beast* indicates, some of the hallmarks of Arminianism had already been imprinted on the apocalyptic tradition and its cultural expression in England of the 1630s. To see this mark clearly with the dim light of a humanist world, we must concentrate our historical focus on the actual historic issue: the locus of evil.

Calvinist predestinarian theology and practice confesses the total depravity of man. It refuses to posit evil in a class or group of man, or in the social externalizations of man's enacted culture; for it affirms the sinfulness of all men despite their civil or ecclesiastical office and calling. Arminian theology, on the other hand, confesses the doctrine of selective depravity which posits a necessary conflict not against sin, but between "good" men and "evil" men, between "good" institutions and "evil" institutions. In so doing, it gives rise to millenarian expectations of escapist and militaristic hues and shades which all ultimately deny the "heritage of preaching the progressive sanctification of men and institutions," and thereby abandon "the idea of Christ's progressively revealed kingdom (civilization) on earth in history."⁴⁹ Furthermore, because the Arminian view of the world presupposes a conflict of interests and man's autonomy on the stage of life there is a consequent need for Christ to be "glorified in the saint by contrast between Him and sin."⁵⁰ John Lilburne well stated his understanding of such theological distinctives:

now is the time that we must shew our selves good Soldiers of *Jesus*

The Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on Puritanism and Law, Vol. V, No. 2, Winter 178-79. Note also Terril Irwin Elniff, *The Guise of Every Graceless Heart: Human Autonomy in Puritan Thought and Experience* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1981) and David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987) esp. pp. 25-27 and ch. 20, "The Millennium and the Judgment," esp. At pp. 493-498.

⁴⁹Gary North, *Millennialism*, p. 332. See further on the locus of evil and doctrine of selective depravity with respect to apocalypticism and Calvinism, James B. Jordan, "Anti-Utopianism in Modern Conservative Thought: Some Criticisms of Thomas Molnar and Eric Voegelin," *Biblical Horizons*, (January 1991 (originally written 1978)).

⁵⁰James B. Jordan, "Anti-Utopianism. . . ." p. 13.

Christ, for his . . . glorie lies at stake in a high degree, therefore . . . withdraw your necks and soules from all false power and worship, and fight with courage and boldness in this spiritual Battell, in which . . . some valiant Champions . . . [have] fought up to the eares in blood, therefore be couragious Soldiers and fight it out bravely, that your God may be glorified by you, and let him onelie have the service, both of your inward and outward man, and stand to his cause. . . .⁵¹

The Calvinist view, on the other hand, affirms the doctrine of providence as correlative of the doctrine of creation which presupposes an essential harmony of interests in creation. Conflict is, therefore, moral, not metaphysical:

It is the rebellion of sinful men against God. The conflict is between man and God, and this conflict creates a conflict in men and between men. However, it is an *unnecessary conflict*, not a necessary one. It is a wilful, sinful conflict, a conflict by choice, not by necessity.⁵²

Hence, because Calvinism views sin as the cause of conflict in and between men, "Christ is not glorified in the saint by contrast between Him and sin, but rather Christ is glorified in the *transformation* of the sinner,"⁵³ and the subsequent transformation of the sinner's culture and society by the corporate body of saints living their godly lives in the world according to God's standards and requirements for faith and life.⁵⁴

John Lilburne's relation, *A Worke of the Beast*, thus brings into focus a significant shift in the apocalyptic tradition and its application in the England of the late 1630s. His "Relation of a most unchristian censure," enhances for us a view of

⁵¹*A Worke*, p. 22.

⁵²Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Flight From Humanity: A Study of The Effect of Neoplatonism on Christianity* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978), Appendix 2: "Neoplatonism and Economics," at p. 67.

⁵³James B. Jordan, "Anti-Utopianism. . . ." p. 13.

⁵⁴See further, Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (rev. ed., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1984); and Rousas John Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1983), *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), and *Law and Society, Volume II of the Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1986).

⁴³Otto Scott, "The Great Christian Revolution," in Martin G. Selbrede *et al.*, *op. cit.*, Part III, pp. 83-309, at p. 163.

⁴⁴Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).

⁴⁵See *A Worke*, pp. 16f.

⁴⁶See further on this concept, William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule*, ch. 6: "Godless Rule."

⁴⁷*The Geneva Bible. A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition With an Introduction by Lloyd E. Bery* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), *The Boke of Judges*, ch. XXI, v. 25, emphasis in original.

⁴⁸See further, James R. Payton, Jr., "The Emergence of Postmillennialism in English Puritanism," in *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on Puritanism and Progress*, Vol. VI, No. 1, Summer 1979, pp. 87-106 for the development of an explicitly optimistic eschatology among the English Puritans in the century between 1550 and 1650; and for their Calvinistic social theory, see also the contributors to

a shift in understanding and application of the Biblical text from the doctrine of the millennial eschatology associated with Calvinistic predestination theology and Biblical law and casuistry, which affirms both victory and historical continuity, to an implicit antinomianism, and an explicit millenarian optimism which rests on a lack of faith in the historic continuity of God's sanctions in history applied in terms of His revealed law-word. In sharp focus, it highlights a paradigmatic shift in faith from the hope of a systematic and progressive dominion of the earth by God's covenantally faithful people before Christ's Second Advent at the Last Day, to the hope of an immanent, history-transforming, discontinuous event imbued with escapist and militant hues and expectations, which when they fade, are seen for what they really are: "a firmly pessimistic view, resting on the conviction that there was no real hope of any improvement of the earthly condition."⁵⁵

Such a view of the 1630s enables us to consider the apocalyptic Puritans and their Laudian antagonists in a different light. When we consider the apocalyptic

⁵⁵J.A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), p. 241.

Puritan's latent Arminianism and their loss of faith in a covenantal conception of their times, and then view our scene again in light of the triumph of institutionalized Arminianism in the form of a sacerdotal episcopacy under Archbishop Laud in the 1620s and the 1630s, we can then expect to observe, because of their shared Arminian religiosity, that the apocalyptic, millenarian tradition also imbued, albeit less overtly, the Laudian brethren. William M. Lamont has well remarked, "it did not follow that, because Laud and his associates disliked Foxe and the martyrs, they were untouched by millenarian hopes."⁵⁶

If Arminianism did provide with the spectacles through which the two main antagonists of Lilburne's relation perceived and interpreted their world in the late 1630s — a world which Lilburne's relation indicates was still overarched by

⁵⁶William M. Lamont, *op. cit.*, p. 67. Indeed, Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*, p. 133 note 1 has boldly ventured, "Since the apocalyptic tradition formed part of the intellectual baggage of the both educated Protestant divines and tub preachers who both spread it widely through word of mouth and print, it seems safe to say that most people in Gregory King's upper half of society who took religion seriously had accepted this framework by the 1630s" Cf. notes 28 and 48 above.

a Calvinistic predestinarian theology, then the consequences would indeed be complex and far-reaching. For what we encounter in John Lilburne's *A Worke of the Beast* is a heightening of, and the widening of, a dramatization of a conflict "in the year the Beast was Wounded 1638," between on the one hand, an implicitly Arminianism episcopacy seeking to transform society by the coercive and oppressive Rule of institutionalized grace; and on the other hand, the implicit Arminianism of the apocalyptic Puritans who sought to withdraw from — and if necessary in their escape, to defy with their shed blood — the "Antichristian and unlawful" episcopal church of the "English Popish Prelates."⁵⁷

In terms of the Calvinistic predestinarian theology which provided the cultural framework, but not the content, of this conflict, this meant the approaching dawn of a red sky warning not of a counter-revolution of the saints defending the ways of God as against the revolutionary ways of autonomous man, but rather, a civil war against men and originating in man.

⁵⁷Citations from *A Worke*: title leaf; p. 17; and the publisher's preface to the "Tender hearted Reader."