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# MARRIAGE UNDER THREAT IN THE WRITING OF GEORGE SWINNOCK

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## INTRODUCTION

Little is known of the life of George Swinnock. That which is certain can be summarized as follows. He was born in Maidstone, Kent in 1627. His father is said to have been 'a most zealous Puritan'.<sup>1</sup> Swinnock studied at Cambridge, going after his graduation to Oxford as chaplain of New College until his appointment as a Fellow of Balliol College in 1648. He was vicar for a time at Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire and then again at Great Kemble in Buckinghamshire. He was deprived of his living in the Great Ejection of 1662, but served as chaplain to the family of Richard Hampden. Following the Declaration of Indulgence he returned, in 1672, to minister in his hometown of Maidstone where he died a year later. He is described as one accounted 'an eminent preacher among those of his persuasion'.<sup>2</sup> Judged by any scholarly definition, George Swinnock's persuasion was that of Puritanism. It seems difficult to be precise in stating exactly what Puritans were.<sup>3</sup> However, whether Puritans are characterized by certain personal qualities and spiritual concerns,<sup>4</sup> or

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<sup>1</sup> *The Works of George Swinnock*, volumes 1-5 (A reprint of James Nichol's edition, 1868 – Edinburgh, 1992), vol. 5, x – hereafter, *Works*. See the original editor's brief account of Swinnock's life, vol. 1, ix-xv. This essay retains the spelling and the punctuation of Nichol's edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, vol.5, xi.

<sup>3</sup> See B. Hall, 'Puritanism: the Problem of Definition' in ed. G. J. Cuming, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 2 (London, 1964), pp. 283-96; C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1966), pp. 13-29; T. de Welles, 'Sex and Sexual Attitudes in Seventeenth Century England: The Evidence from Puritan Diaries', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 12 (1988), p. 59, fn. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See Diane Willen, 'Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992), pp. 562-3; R. Buick Knox, 'Puritanism Past and Present', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19 (1966), pp. 293-305. On the significance of the Bible for both their

whether a more generic evaluation is adopted, it is clear that Swinnock was a Puritan.<sup>5</sup>

The Puritans wrote a great deal specifically on the subject of marriage and family relationships and much has been written on their views. Swinnock wrote during the mid- to late 1600s. His work was written after many marriage treatises had been published by a whole host of earlier Puritan writers. William Haller, for example, lists Henry Smith's *Preparative to Marriage* (1591), John Dod and Robert Cleaver's *Godly Forme of Householde Government* (1598), William Perkins' *Christian Oeconomie* (translated from Latin into English in 1609), William Whately's *Bridebush* (1617) and *Care-Cloth* (1624), William Gouge's *Domesticall Duties* (1622) and Daniel Roger's *Matrimoniall Honor* (1642).<sup>6</sup> Understandably, most recent studies on the subject limit their research to this earlier, more productive literary period.<sup>7</sup> Typically, in a recent essay Daniel Doriani, for example, confines himself to English Puritans before the Civil War. Others have been similarly focused. While

teaching and daily life and practice, see for example, J. R. Knott, Jr, *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 13-41; J. I. Packer, 'The Puritans as Interpreters of Scripture' in *A Goodly Heritage: Papers given at the Westminster Conference* (London, 1958), pp. 18-26; I. Murray, 'Living the Christian Life exemplified in the English Reformers', in *Living the Christian Life: Papers given at the Westminster Conference* (London, 1974), pp. 14-28.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Haywards Heath, Sussex, 1977), p. 12; B. C. Lane, 'Two Schools of Desire: Nature and Marriage in Seventeenth Century Puritanism', *Church History* 69 (2000), p. 373. See also, Willen, 'Godly Women', p. 362.

<sup>6</sup> W. Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955), p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Daniel Doriani, 'The Puritans, Sex and Pleasure', *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), pp. 125-43, which confines itself to English Puritans before the Civil War, specifically from Thomas Becon's work published in 1542 to Daniel Roger's, published in 1642. See also A. Fletcher, 'The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England', in eds A. Fletcher and P. Roberts, *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 161-81; Willen, 'Godly Women', pp. 561-80. Three notable exceptions are Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England: 1500-1720* (London, 1993); Stevie Davies, *Unbridled Spirits. Women of the English Revolution* (London, 1998), particularly ch. 9, 'Three Puritan Marriages', pp. 181-209, and, earlier, Joyce L. Irwin, *Womanhood in Radical Protestantism 1525-1675* (New York, 1979).

not suggesting that there was ever simply one distinctive Puritan theory of domestic relations, by examining a later writer we discover something of where the inherent tendency of Puritan thinking might have been leading.

That tendency did not originate with the Puritans, of course. Levin Schücking suggests that as far as marriage was concerned the Puritans continued the teaching of the continental reformers, though in reference to specifically sexual matters he singles out the teaching of Martin Luther.<sup>8</sup> Others have voiced the same opinion – the Puritans' ideal of marriage was there in the original reformers<sup>9</sup> – though some specify Calvinist principles, in particular.<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Davies, in what has become something of a seminal essay, follows William Haller's lead in pointing to the influence of Bullinger in familial matters. In this she may be right. His work *Der Christliche Ehestand* (1540) was published several times in English as *The Christian State of Matrimony*, sometimes with a preface by the Puritan Thomas Becon.<sup>11</sup> Martin Bucer is not to be entirely discounted, either. Despite Selderhuis' recent conclusion that Bucer's permanent influence was limited, it is still possible that the reformer

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<sup>8</sup> Levin L. Schücking, *The Puritan Family* (London, 1969), pp. 21-3.

<sup>9</sup> For example, J. I. Packer, 'Marriage and Family in Puritan Thought' in *Among God's Giants* (Eastbourne, Sussex, 1991), pp. 341-61.

<sup>10</sup> See R. R. Ruether, *Women and Redemption. A Theological History* (London, 1998), p. 128; O. C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London, 1972), p. 238 (see generally pp. 226-39). Certainly, it is true that the characteristic theology of English Protestant sainthood was Calvinism – N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987), p. 1; Knott, *Sword of the Spirit*, p. 3. It is interesting that Swinnock cites the reformers occasionally throughout his work: Luther (*Works* 1.69, 1.332, 1.491), Melanchthon (*Works* 1.83), Peter Martyr (*Works* 1.335), Beza (*Works* 1.473) and Erasmus (*Works* 1.473). Nevertheless, Calvin is cited most often and, sometimes, at very significant points in Swinnock's comments on marriage: *Works* 1.52, 1.86, 1.134, 1.245, 1.423 – on Genesis 24 (1.453), on Genesis 22 (1.479), on Genesis 2:18 (1.490), on Genesis 39:31 on the subject of love. He quotes these and others at less significant times throughout his work, *The Christian Man's Calling*.

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Davies, 'The Sacred condition of equality – how original were Puritan doctrines of marriage?', *Social History* 5 (1977), pp. 563-80. Davies states that Bullinger is 'clearly the source for much of the later writing' (p. 580). See also C. W. Pfeiffer, 'Heinrich Bullinger and Marriage' (doctoral thesis, St Louis University, 1981); J. T. Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God* (New York, 1970), p. 90; M. Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987).

should be considered as initiating some of the ideas that developed in Puritan thinking. Selderhuis, himself, notes the possible influence on the Puritans William Perkins, Thomas Becon and Robert Browne.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, in general terms, the reformers and the Puritans deal with many of the same questions: the purpose of marriage, the ideal form of domestic life and practical advice on how to attain that ideal.<sup>13</sup> To a point, they share common sources too, particularly the Scriptures.<sup>14</sup> The question that confronts us is 'What became of that thinking in a little over a hundred years?'

Swinnock did not produce a treatise on marriage as such. He sought to define familial relations within the wider context of godliness, as he understood it. His massive work, *The Christian Man's Calling* (1662-4),<sup>15</sup> runs to over twelve hundred pages in Nichol's edition. It is his exposition and application of the latter part of 1 Timothy 4:7, 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' Consequently, the concept of godliness is the wider context in which Swinnock grounds his views of marriage. It is this that is perhaps most significant.

The present short study discusses Swinnock's view of the relationship between the spouses. Unsurprisingly, it shows that his ideas are traditional. But, much more significantly, it argues that these orthodox views gain an almost unbearable spiritual intensity from two aspects. These aspects are the concept of godliness that Swinnock works with and elaborates, and the continual and nagging reference to threat that abounds in his work. For George Swinnock, marriage is a life under the potential threat of God. Consequently, this essay argues that however positive Swinnock appears about mutuality, the concepts of godliness and threat lock husband and wife further into a patriarchal pattern of rule and obedience. This, in turn, suggests implications for the conclusions that we might reach on Puritan thinking on mutuality in marriage.

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<sup>12</sup> See H. J. Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in the Thought of Martin Bucer* (Kirksville, Missouri, 1999). Bucer's impact in England was limited, largely because his views on divorce were considered too liberal (pp. 370-72). See also, G. Hammann, *Entre La Secte et La Cite: Le Projet d'Église du Réformateur Martin Bucer. 1491-1551* (Geneva, 1984), pp. 109-19.

<sup>13</sup> Davies, 'The sacred condition', pp. 564-5.

<sup>14</sup> See Doriani, 'The Puritans, Sex and Pleasure', pp. 137, 143.

<sup>15</sup> *The Christian Man's Calling*, first published in 1662-4. It is Swinnock's most famous work.

## GODLINESS: THE CONTEXT OF SWINNOCK'S MARITAL THEOLOGY

The wider context for Swinnock's teaching on marriage is his understanding of 'godliness' in the Christian life. The concept of godliness becomes determinative of how he defines marriage and of the way in which he employs the traditional template on marriage to focus on salvation, itself. Marriage, governed by godliness, is treated in Swinnock's exposition of the biblical exhortation, 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' Although Swinnock realizes that the text is written specifically to Timothy, as a leader of the church, he believes that its application should govern all believers in both their general call (as Christians) and their particular, vocational call.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the application of the text is almost exhaustive. The areas in which godliness is dealt with at length in *The Christian Man's Calling* are as follows. In general, they are prayer, hearing and reading the Word, receiving the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, eating and drinking, clothes and sleep, recreation. In particular, they are as a minister, in the family, as parents, children, husbands and wives, as masters and servants, in prosperity and adversity, in the choice of companions, among evil people and in good company, in solitude and, lastly, on week days. Swinnock wishes his readers to apply the truth to every conceivable area of their lives. He says, for example, that the Christian

must be holy in his closet, alone, holy among company, holy at home, holy abroad, holy in his shop, holy among his sheep, holy in church, holy in his chamber, holy at his table, holy in his travels, holy in prosperity, holy in adversity, holy in every relation and in every condition, 'in all manner of conversation'.<sup>17</sup>

According to Swinnock, 'godliness' has two components. It is defined as both the immediate worship of God and as duty towards one's neighbour. Swinnock distinguishes between 'heart-godliness' and 'life-godliness'. Their conjunction goes to make a complete Christian. Elsewhere he states that, 'Godliness is a worshipping the true God in heart and life, according to his revealed will' (1.31).<sup>18</sup> That is, to be godly is to be obedient to both

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<sup>16</sup> See *Works*, 1.49, 1.85. To reduce the number of footnotes, simple volume and page references will appear in the text in brackets wherever appropriate.

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, 1.84. A similar passage is found at 1.301.

<sup>18</sup> *Works*, 1.33. See also 1.34-5, 2.174-6, 2.187.

tables of biblical law (1.28). Consequently, godliness is defined in relation to Swinnoek's primary idea of God as lawgiver.

It is extremely significant that Swinnoek seems to view God as *primarily* one to whom duty is owed. This is a deciding factor for how he sees godliness and how he defines marriage. In what appears to be a determining image, Swinnoek says, 'God did indeed set up the admirable house of the visible world... for his own service and honour: but the *payment of this rent is expected at the hands of man*, the inhabitant. He was made and put into this house upon this very account... [to] pay into the great landlord his due and deserved praise.'<sup>19</sup> The metaphor of 'landlord' conjures the ideas of a legal contract and obligation that, for Swinnoek, is part of the imagery employed to define the essential nature of the ongoing gospel relationship. That is, though that relationship is created and sustained by love (divine primarily, and reciprocated on the human level), there has also to be a discharged obligation on the part of the believer to confirm that relationship. Notice, too, that the logic and force of an earlier remark is drawn into this image. Earlier he says,

According to the title or power which one hath over another, such must the service be. Where the right is absolute, the obedience must not be conditional; God having therefore a perfect sovereignty over his creatures, and complete right to all their services, his end and aim, his will and word, must be principally minded by them (1.46-7).

Just as others before him, Swinnoek's teaching discloses a God who is involved in human life and its relationships. This in itself is not surprising. This is part and parcel of the evangelical belief in a personal God. But whereas others had pictured God as looking on and delighting in marriage,<sup>20</sup> *The Christian Man's Calling* generally presents a different view altogether. Because God is primarily considered as the one to whom all service is due, Swinnoek is able to conclude, 'Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently' (1.55). Positively, duty has to be undertaken in a whole-hearted manner, but the implied threat and its inherent force is significant and does not elude Swinnoek's reasoning. God is present both

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<sup>19</sup> *Works*, 1.48-9 – emphasis added. Elsewhere Swinnoek says, 'Timothy must make it his trade to *pay God and men their due*' (1.28 – emphasis added). See also, 1.31, 1.85.

<sup>20</sup> This was certainly the reformers' view, in general. See, for example, Luther's assertions of the joy of marriage *coram Deo*, LW 45.39-41 [WA 10<sup>2</sup>.295-7]; LW 51.362 [WA 49.801]; *etc.*; Bullinger, *The Decades* (Cambridge, 1849-50), Decade 4, 112.

immanently and at the distance of the beginning of eternity – but neither perspective affords much comfort for those who are deficient in service. On the one hand, ‘God’s eye is all the day long upon thee.’ He takes notice and ‘will reckon with thee’ (2.488).<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, divine judgement awaits those who are negligent in godliness. Concerning this possibility Swinnock is most graphic:

Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which will help thee to comfort and confidence at a dreadful day of judgement, and cause thee to lift up thy head with joy, when thousands and millions shall weep and wail? The day of judgement will be a terrible day indeed. ... When God sends his officer, death, to arrest sinners for *the vast sums which they owe to his justice* for their breach of his laws, and this serjeant, according to command from the King of kings, executes his writ ... then, oh, then, they will wish with all their souls and strengths, again and again, that they had minded the Christian man’s calling.<sup>22</sup>

The ‘Christian man’s calling’ is that of godliness, of course. But notice the strong sense of obligation conjured by the italicized words and the threat implied in the images and the tone of the whole passage, a passage that actually continues unabated for four or five pages.

With this pervasive idea that faith makes things that are future present to the believer’s consciousness<sup>23</sup> it is hardly surprising that he emphasizes the sense of Christian life as a journey to be made or as work to be undertaken. Speaking of the Christian, he says, ‘in his whole life he walks with God’ (1.36). The Christian is to ‘walk within the view of heaven’ (2.137). ‘He doth not stand still’ (2.185). Again, Swinnock’s imagery is significant. The chief image that he employs related to godliness as work is that of trade. Christians need to be ‘always trading heavenward... an unwearied commerce... betwixt God and our souls’ (1.85); they need to ‘drive a trade in heaven’ (1.300).<sup>24</sup> If they are serious about this, believers

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<sup>21</sup> Again, Swinnock says, ‘[T]hou hast every moment of thy life to do with the great God... in every part, and passage’ (2.171 and 172).

<sup>22</sup> *Works*, 2.177, 182 – emphasis added. It is this graphic perception of reality that puts everything into eternal perspective, of course – see 2.183.

<sup>23</sup> This is explicitly stated at *Works*, 3.103, but the idea permeates Swinnock’s writing.

<sup>24</sup> See also, *Works*, 1.29, 1.44, 1.66, 1.79. In Swinnock’s work, *The Door of Salvation Opened*, he asks the rhetorical question, ‘Is it thy business and trade to do his will, thy calling and employment to finish his work?’ (5.105).

must be active and earnest in their endeavour – particularly with such great gain in store for those who succeed.<sup>25</sup> Swinnock remarks that the ‘holiness of a saint must be operative’ (1.300). This is really the key. The list of images he uses to gain the impression is quite remarkable. In just a few random pages the list includes natural phenomena like running water, consuming fire, clouds scudding across the sky, the sun shining, a spring bubbling, birds flying. These appear together with active characters like tradesmen, fishermen, sailors, merchants, runners, labourers, soldiers, watchmen, husbandmen and those rowing boats – images that imply movement, energy, industry and direction.<sup>26</sup> The following is an example of how the images are employed as vignettes to provoke action: ‘What labour and industry doth the husbandman use for profit! He riseth early, sits up late, denieth himself, loseth his sleep, rides and runs to and fro, embraceth all opportunities, is eaten up almost with cares and fears, all for earthly mammon’ (1.68).

In terms of motivation, Swinnock reminds his readers that humanity was created *for* strenuous activity (both in temporal work and in godliness).<sup>27</sup> However, there is also that teleological draw towards heaven and ultimate spiritual gain. He says, for instance, ‘The profit of godliness is invaluable above price’ (1.71). He then lists the eternal gain as favour with God, the promises of the gospel, the covenant of grace, the blood of Christ, the ‘embroidery of the Spirit’, the life of faith, hope of heaven and joy in the Holy Ghost. Later in the work the intensity of his comments is clearly perceived. He remarks, ‘So absolute is the necessity of man’s making religion his business, that *upon his diligence or negligence herein*, his eternal salvation or damnation doth depend.’<sup>28</sup> Notice the use to which he puts this idea:

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<sup>25</sup> *Works*, 1.29, 1.39-40, 1.51, 2.184.

<sup>26</sup> See *Works*, 1.25-8, 1.38, 1.41, 1.44, 1.50, 2.173. The list is incomplete. See also, 1.351. Swinnock’s stress on industry is partly because of his view of the nature of God, himself, as inherently active – *Works*, 1.378.

<sup>27</sup> He cites Job 5:7 and Genesis 2:15 (1.29). Swinnock says that, ‘man in an especial manner is predestinated and created for this purpose’ (1.48).

<sup>28</sup> *Works*, 2.186 – emphasis added. Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986), p. 49, says that Puritans insisted that every activity had to carry a purpose higher than itself. Certainly, the ultimate purpose, for Swinnock, is always to glorify God; but the penultimate purpose is salvation. See also Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, p. 451; Packer, ‘Marriage and Family’, p. 358.

Godliness is a work that relates... to the boundless, bottomless ocean of eternity indeed, and therefore calleth for all our care and diligence. ... Eternal life is promised to the diligent, eternal death is the portion of the negligent. ... Who would not labour hard to attain eternal life! Who would not work night and day to avoid eternal death, eternal woe! ... Ah, did but man know... he would do anything, were it never so hard, to arrive at heaven (1.57, 58).

Swinnock defines 'godliness' in such a way that it is largely severed from an image of God who delights in his people, *as they are*. He cements that definition to the image of lawgiver (the 'landlord') to whom Christians owe everything and by whom the performance of duty is minutely scrutinized. Because of this theological construct it is certainly appropriate for Swinnock to employ threat to motivate his readers to active godliness – appropriate, but ultimately both negative and destructive.

Three things, then, crowd the believer's consciousness. First, there remains a sense of the possibility of salvation. But the certainty of this comes *only* if the law is kept and the duty paid. Swinnock asks, 'How exact should he be in his life, who must be tried by so holy a law!' He is adamant that every thought, word and action is to be strictly revealed, examined and weighed by God (3.133-5).<sup>29</sup> Second, the believer's life is to be dominated by the consideration of his/her own death – any day might prove to be their last (2.486).<sup>30</sup> Earlier Swinnock remarks, 'None will work so hard as they who think themselves near their everlasting homes' (3.124). Third, the believer sees judgement as an awful reality. With little exaggeration, Tyacke says, generally of Puritan thinking, 'the saints needed

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<sup>29</sup> Swinnock comments, 'He had need to labour hard that would attain heaven' (1.29). See his use of Philippians 2:12 at this point. No wonder that generally the Puritans were concerned that visible evidence of present grace was necessary in the believer's life and relations, before spiritual assurance was assumed. See also, *Works*, 3.185. See R. B. Bickel, *Light and Heat: The Puritan View of the Pulpit* (Morgan, PA, 1999), pp. 141-53; Willen, 'Godly Women', p. 567.

<sup>30</sup> 'Believe it, thy death may be nearer than thou dreamest; the glass of thy life may be almost out, though thou thinkest it is but new turned' (3.125). He exhorts, 'Think often of thy dying day, and what price and value godliness will be to thee at such a time' (3.119). See also, *Works*, 1.486 and Swinnock's work, *The Fading of the Flesh*, 3.434-42.

to be on permanent alert, *for God was a jealous and a punitive creator*'.<sup>31</sup> We observe this characteristic teaching in Swinnock's work.

In summary, the overarching context for Swinnock's comments on marriage consists of the following characteristics: (a) God is primarily seen as lawgiver, (b) godliness is defined as keeping law, (c) the whole of life, and every particular involved, is directly related to salvation, (d) industry and, above all, obedience, is absolutely necessary to secure eternal life. Of course, this is somewhat oversimplified, yet it gives the dominant feel of Swinnock's teaching. And, as a defining construct, it does not appear to be a very positive or liberating context into which to place marital relations. We notice, next, how this context confines and qualifies his comments on marriage.

#### SWINNOCK'S VIEW OF A GODLY MARRIAGE

Marriage, Swinnock says, is 'a fellowship of the nearest union and dearest communion in this world'. More formally, he speaks of it as 'a lawful conjunction of one man and one woman for the terms of their natural lives'.<sup>32</sup> In a traditional way he underlines the idea that it is God and not humanity who institutes marriage – both historically, in the joining together of Adam and Eve (1.464) and presently (1.481). The form of the union is one of mutual covenant (1.464). Though not a sacrament because it does not confer grace, it is nevertheless dignified and noble in itself (1.466). The central principle that Swinnock enunciates is that marriage is thus instituted with an over-riding purpose: 'to be a help to religion' – that is, to be a help to godliness. Involved in this assertion is the conclusion that sanctification and matrimony are not incongruous. Indeed, 'Good company should make us walk the more cheerfully in the way of God's commandments' (1.465). This, according to Swinnock, is the *material* cause of marriage. It is a significant principle that permeates the whole of his understanding. Notice the bringing together of the image of walking with the primary idea of God as lawgiver.

Swinnock's perception of family is also important. His formal definition says little that is new: 'A family is a natural and simple society of certain persons, having mutual relations one to another, under the

<sup>31</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 1 – emphasis added. For Swinnock on this aspect, see his writings, *The Fading of the Flesh*, 3.442-53; *The Sinner's Last Sentence*, 5.265-461; *The Incomparableness of God*, 4.467.

<sup>32</sup> *Works*, 1.362, 464 respectively. See also, *Works*, 1.481, where he speaks of marriage as 'a relation of the sweetest and nearest communion in this world, ordained by our God'.

private government of one head or chief' (1.330). His most frequently employed image is that of the family as a little church.<sup>33</sup> This, in itself, was quite commonplace – its use goes back, at least, to Augustine.<sup>34</sup> What strikes the reader about Swinnock's use of the image, though, is the way it consciously unfolds to imply significantly heavy responsibility for family members. He says, 'Every master of a family is a priest, and his whole family should be a royal priesthood, offering at least morning and evening sacrifice to God, acceptable through Jesus Christ' (1.337). As he contemplates the image he seems to expand it. The family is a church, but it has to be more than a church. It is a tabernacle – with a new stress on it being temporary (1.360). Then the family 'should be a resemblance of heaven above' – with an implied emphasis on both responsibility and duty.<sup>35</sup> Now the husband is not merely priest, but his position and duty are considerably elevated: 'Thy duty is to resemble Christ' (1.493).<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, Swinnock speaks of husbands governing and directing the family in the same way that Christ did his disciples (3.296).

Swinnock's perception of both marriage and family underlines what I would argue is his determining principle, that of *salvific usefulness*. We have observed this in his definition of 'godliness'. Every circumstance of

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, *Works*, 1.331, 1.334, 1.354, 1.380, 1.484, 1.493, and so on. Other images are used as well, of course. The typical, reformed image of the family being a school or nursery of piety and learning is one such (1.331).

<sup>34</sup> See Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* in ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Lille, 1952), p. 18. Also, *Serm. Matt.* 25:24 in ed. P. Schaff, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, 1886), vol. 1.6.406, where he says that the husband must take on 'the office of the Episcopate'. See also, Luther, who speaks of 'the household church' (*domesticam Ecclesiam*) – *Comms Gen.* 34:1-2, LW 6.187 [WA 44.139]; 37:4, LW 6.325 [WA 44.243]; 49:4, LW 8.221 [WA 44.740] and Calvin, who writes of the family 'in the likeness of the church' (*ut sit ecclesiae imago*) – *Comm. Col.* 4:15 (CO 52.132); *Comm. Acts* 16:14-18 (CO 48.378); *Comm. I Cor.* 16:19 (CO 49.571). See Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, p. 87. It is well noted by Schücking, *The Puritan Family*, p. 56, that religion for the Puritans is essentially family religion: 'Divine worship is, not incidentally but primarily, family worship.'

<sup>35</sup> *Works*, 1.359 – emphasis added. See also, *Works*, 1.380, 1.487, 1.499.

<sup>36</sup> *Works*, 1.493. See also, *Works*, 3.231. Part of what it means to resemble Christ can be seen in the following comment from Swinnock's work, *Heaven and Hell Epitomised* (3.203-399): 'Doth it [the family] not need pitying, sanctifying, pardoning, directing, preventing mercy every day, nay, every moment? And is not all this worth a prayer?' (3.221).

life, every relationship is directly related to eternity. Marriage is no exception. At the appropriate point he will reiterate the conventional threefold purposes for marriage: procreation, companionship and the avoidance of sin; but much more significantly, Swinnock insists that marriage is actually an aid to individual salvation. Indeed, ultimately, that is its *raison d'être*. It is this that undergirds his understanding. The married couple is to fellowship together 'in the way that leads to everlasting life' (1.481), to 'be serviceable to each other's souls' (1.486).<sup>37</sup> Therefore, husbands are exhorted not to consider marriage as a hindrance to holiness, 'for by it thou hast more advantage to promote religion in thy family' (1.487). In this emphasis, Swinnock's work seems, at least, to resemble Martin Bucer's approach to the subject, perhaps more than others. Selderhuis states that, to the reformer,

Marriage is not... an emergency measure but an aid. ... Marriage is now defined in positive terms and viewed by Bucer as a means that a husband and a wife can use to help each other and themselves to attain eternal life. ... *He compares marriage to a journey to eternity*. The crucial point for us humans is that we 'end up with God'.<sup>38</sup>

This is exactly Swinnock's point and the image of journey is not insignificant, as we have already observed. Swinnock insists that marriage is founded on a common understanding of the purpose of life, itself. Within that broader understanding, the primary purpose of the family is to glorify God. Therefore, Swinnock seeks to place daily familial relationships and activities within a setting profound enough to invest them with true, spiritual and, indeed, eternal significance.<sup>39</sup> The most

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<sup>37</sup> The kingdom of heaven is 'raised or ruined' by the good or wicked management of families (1.356).

<sup>38</sup> Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce*, p. 193 – emphasis added. The final internal quote is from Bucer's *Enarrationes... in quatuor Evangelia* (Strasbourg, 1530), 154D. Elsewhere, in defining the kingdom of Christ, Bucer says that *everything* contributes to the gaining of people's salvation – and that marriage is no exception. See *De Regno Christi* in ed. W. Pauck, *Melanchthon and Bucer: Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 19 (London, 1969), p. 225. The context and determinative principle behind Luther's teaching is largely the temporal kingdom and for Calvin the concept of social *ordo* – see my forthcoming book, *Reformation Marriage: Husband and Wife Relations in Luther and Calvin* (Rutherford House, Edinburgh).

<sup>39</sup> See Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, p. 73.

intense way of doing that is to stress that the individual's salvation rests on performance of duty – an important subject to which we return below.

Swinnock is entirely conventional on the secondary purposes of marriage. The first mention lists them as follows: 'for the generation of children, the avoiding of sin, or the comfort of mutual society'. Significantly, though, as Swinnock explicates them he inverts the order of the final two, citing relevant biblical texts: procreation (Gen. 1:26), the benefit of a good companion (Gen. 2:18) and, since the Fall, the avoidance of fornication (1 Cor. 7:2). He even adds that some include a fourth, that is, to resemble Christ and his Church, though he does not specifically enlarge on this (1.464). The writer appears relatively uninterested in the first and the final causes of marriage, saying nothing at all about them.<sup>40</sup>

Swinnock's emphasis clearly lies with the concept of companionship within marriage. Indeed, scholars have singled out this aspect of Puritan thought as its distinctive contribution to defining marriage within a traditional framework. Puritan writers seem to shift the primary emphasis from both procreation and *remedium peccati* to companionship.<sup>41</sup> Joyce Irwin may well be correct in suggesting that in the beginning of the attempt to reform familial relations those advocating clerical marriage saw the chief value in being a remedy against sin. But, she continues, 'The longer the Protestant ministers lived with their wives, however, the more they realized that companionship had more than physical benefits.'<sup>42</sup> I would argue that, in fact, there is more than a hint that this shift is present in the Reformers' thinking<sup>43</sup> – but it is certainly concretized in the Puritan idea of marriage.

There is a creational logic in Swinnock's thought. God created men and women *to be* sociable, that is part of their essential nature (2.238).

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<sup>40</sup> However, Swinnock does spend considerable time in speaking of parents' responsibility. See *Works*, 1.337-40.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, p. 47; Crawford, *Religion and Women*, p. 39; Johnson, *A Society*, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Joyce Irwin, *Womanhood*, p. xxiii.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Luther, *Sermon on the Estate of Marriage*, LW 44.10-11 [WA 2.168-9]; *On Marriage Matters*, LW 46.312-14 [WA 30<sup>3</sup>242-3]; *Comm Gen* 16:6, LW 3.58 [WA 42.590]; *Comm Isa.* 56.4, LW 17.262 [WA 31<sup>2</sup>.463]; Calvin, *Serm. Deut.* 22:13-24 (CO 28.48); Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, 316-27; Bullinger, *The Decades*, 2, 393-410. See also, C. J. Blaisdell, 'The Matrix of Reform: Women in the Lutheran and Calvinist Movements', in ed. R. L. Greaves, *Triumph Over Silence* (Westport, Connecticut, 1985), pp. 13-44; Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce*, pp. 43-7; Pfeiffer, *Heinrich Bullinger*, p. 145.

Sociability is most clearly evidenced where a husband and a wife are bound together in love.<sup>44</sup> The husband is to 'enjoy his wife' (1.498). Swinnock speaks in the warmest terms of her: 'my fellow... delight of mine eyes... ravisher of my heart' (1.499). He is to be tender, sympathetic, patient, to love her as his own soul.<sup>45</sup> Likewise the wife is to cherish her husband, looking upon him and his actions 'through the spectacles of love' (1.519).<sup>46</sup> The point is underlined:

They are one body, one flesh, and so should have but one soul, one spirit; they have one bed, one board, one house, and therefore should be one in heart. ... Without the union of hearts, the union of bodies will be no benefit. ... The husband ought to love his wife, and she him, above... all others in the world (1.471-2).<sup>47</sup>

They are, as it were, 'glued together' (Swinnock's phrase). 'Their love must last whilst they live. No affliction must quench it, no flood drown it; nay, like the ark of Noah, it must rise the higher for these waters' (1.473).

Here in Swinnock, as in the Puritans generally, is an ambivalence. On the one hand, Puritans seem to exalt women (particularly *in their roles* as wives and mothers) and to lavish comments of affection upon them.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the context for that love is clearly one of unequal power-relations in the family. It is worth noting the context in which Swinnock speaks of mutual love. Four things may be observed.

### *A real (a literal) inequality between the husband and wife*

Swinnock teaches that the man is actually superior and the woman is correspondingly inferior. It is not close enough to say with Ryken that in Puritan thinking, the difference is one of function, not of worth; that it is 'a style of managing a family, not an assessment of personal value'. Nor is

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Johnson, *A Society Ordained*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Works*, 1.499-500. Elsewhere, 'Where there is love and godliness, it is a lovely, delightful conjunction' (1.470).

<sup>46</sup> See also, *Works*, 1.353, 1.484, 1.489-90, 3.360. Swinnock is well aware that there are couples who do not love each other in this way: see *Works*, 1.465. Marriage is good but it is not all sweetness – *Works*, 3.95, 1.470-71, 1.491.

<sup>47</sup> 'They are partners in the nearest degree imaginable' (1.475). Swinnock emphasizes the unity of a married couple: they are one *jure originis* – as Eve came from Adam's body; *suppositione legis* – legally; *jure conjunctionis* – by God's institution (1.474).

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, *Works*, 1.381-2.

Stevie Davies correct in her conclusion that, 'Marriage is viewed as a union of not-quite (but almost) equals, with gender-specific roles and spheres'.<sup>49</sup> Swinnock, at least, is adamant that the difference is more than social; indeed, that it is of the essence of what it means to be male and female. Notice the following remark: 'Every woman, as a woman, is inferior to man, much more as a wife; and therefore it is but natural and rational that she reverence her superior' (1.505). He speaks of this as 'the relation grace of the wife'. We note that, essentially, *as a woman* she is the man's inferior. And Swinnock then adds that *as a wife*, relationally, she is *even more so*.<sup>50</sup>

Wherein lies the man's superiority? Swinnock claims that superiority employing a conventional list: Adam was created first, Eve was made *from* the man and *for* the man, woman was the first to sin,<sup>51</sup> man is the head of woman, it is man who is the image and glory of God, and, finally, God has given this dominion to the husband over his wife.<sup>52</sup> On the basis of a simple restating of these traditional reasons, Swinnock says that, 'A commanding wife inverts the order of nature, as well as the ordinance of the Creator.'<sup>53</sup> The image that he most often employs to differentiate between the husband and wife is the traditional one of the sun and the moon. 'If the moon get the upper hand of the sun, the wife of the husband, the next thing to be expected is an eclipse of the honour of that house.'<sup>54</sup> She can take government upon herself in the absence of her husband; but 'God hath appointed that she gives place to her husband, and be willing to prefer him' (1.504).

### *Dominant ideas of control and obedience in Swinnock's teaching*

The husband is the head of his wife (1.497). Although Swinnock does not employ that particular image often, the ideas of superiority, control and domination are there throughout his work. Elsewhere, Swinnock speaks of the husband as a prophet, a priest and a king in his family. He is a prophet

<sup>49</sup> Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, p. 76; Davies, *Unbridled Spirits*, p. 183, respectively. Packer, 'Marriage and Family', 351, also asserts it to be *functional* subordination of wives.

<sup>50</sup> Notice, superiority carries with it responsibility: 'Thou art above thy wife in place, oh be above her in piety' (1.487).

<sup>51</sup> 'Since he sinned in being ruled by her, it is fit that she should be ruled by him' (1.507).

<sup>52</sup> *Works*, 1.507-8.

<sup>53</sup> *Works*, 1.509. See also, *Works*, 1.510. In fact, Swinnock says very little about order in this context, but note 1.522.

<sup>54</sup> *Works*, 1.508. See also, *Works*, 1.524, 5.261.

in his educative role. He is to guide and to direct through prayer and teaching (1.493-4). He is a priest who leads the family (including the wife) into godliness through worship and the reading of Scripture (1.340). But, significantly, too, he is king to rule and to govern.

The husband is not to rule over his wife as a master rules a slave, but rather as a soul over the body – but it clearly remains dominion. Yet, Swinnock insists that it is a dominion exercised with discretion (1.488). The husband is to use neither ‘a foolish fondness’ (presumably, an over-familiarity) that leads to contempt and scorn, nor a rigorous severity that might degenerate into cruelty and hatred. But, Swinnock is clear that God requires of wives a reverence and love for their husbands. A husband must be assertive enough to command and to gain ‘an awful fear’ in his wife (1.488). The following advice is typically given: ‘Maintain thy power and authority in thy family; a wise grave carriage will sharpen the weapon of reproof, and make it pierce the deeper. Foolish familiarity blunteth the edge of it’ (1.349).

Of course, love and genuine affection is the first specific duty of the husband. That takes priority. Husbands, Swinnock notes, are most negligent in this duty, but generally diligent in ruling their wives. His exhortation comes, then, in the context of marital love:

Thy love should make thee moderate in all thy commands; nothing should be enjoined but what is both needful to be done, and fit for her to do. Thy wife is the weaker vessel and therefore not to be put to servile labours (1.491).

Husbands are to command in love.<sup>55</sup> They are also to take into account the peculiar ‘yoke’ of the wife – that of childbearing and raising.<sup>56</sup>

Wives, on the other hand, are to obey. Swinnock is clear that the wife’s role is determined and defined by her love for and fear (or reverence) of her husband. In this she needs to acknowledge his superiority over her. She has to be unwilling to displease him in anything and to ‘dread lest she should offend him’.<sup>57</sup> This, of course, is the vocation to which God has called her (1.524), as difficult as it is.

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<sup>55</sup> *Works*, 1.381-2.

<sup>56</sup> Swinnock remarks, ‘She conceiveth with sorrow, bringeth forth with much pain, and in bringing up her children often misseth of desired pleasure. Her fears disquiet her in the night, and her cares disturb her in the day’ (1.498). See also, *Works*, 1.496.

<sup>57</sup> *Works*, 1.505. The wife needs to reverence the husband outwardly as Sarah called Abraham ‘lord’ – to know her own place: to answer her husband with

Subjection is so much against the hair, that many, like untamed heifers, kick and fling if the yoke come but near their necks; though the harder their task is, the greater is their credit if they perform it conscientiously (1.503).

Although Amanda Porterfield suggests that generally the Puritans believed that 'male dominance was inextricably linked to female willingness to accept that dominance', there is certainly no such recognition in Swinnock's writing.<sup>58</sup> Rather, he seems to reverse the argument, saying that women should not expect their husbands to love them *unless* they obey (1.503). Naturally, the sphere of the wife's station and obedience is the home (1.349-50).<sup>59</sup>

### *The wife is measured (or valued) by reference to the husband*

It is worth noting briefly that within the context of marital love in Swinnock's teaching, the wife is valued insofar as her work enables the husband to be the godly head of the household. Swinnock employs an image to convey this perspective: 'The wife to the husband, must be as the lock to the key, answerable and suitable, *or else of no use.*' Again, 'Women ought to take care of their *husband's* affairs within doors.'<sup>60</sup>

### *The overarching purpose of marital love*

Companionship is espoused *in order*, or with the purpose, that each partner might be helped in their godliness and their spiritual journey. Swinnock is quite explicit about this. He asserts that mutual care is chiefly for 'each other's eternal welfare' (1.479). He says that godliness is to be the motive of conjugal love (1.424).

How does this 'work'? Swinnock implies at least three ways. First, companionship will make the journey of life more pleasant. Swinnock

modesty; to advise him with lenity; to admonish him with humility; to speak of him respectfully and to speak to him reverently (1.506). See also, *Works*, 1.512-13, 516-19.

<sup>58</sup> A. Porterfield, 'Woman's Attraction to Puritanism', *Church History* 60 (1991), p. 209. See also p. 201.

<sup>59</sup> Swinnock says, 'She is fitly termed a housewife' and remembers that Sarah (Gen. 18:9) was 'in the tent' (1.511).

<sup>60</sup> *Works*, 1.516, 512, respectively – emphases added. See also, *Works*, 1.515. This is not to say that the wife cannot criticize her husband; but it must be done in humility and godliness. He prays, 'Lord, help me to hearken to all her holy counsels and to hear thee speaking by her' (1.501). Interestingly, he says, 'as the case *often* falls out, it may be a call from God: "Hearken to the voice of thy wife"' (1.480). See also, *Works*, 1.520-22.

uses the image of two people 'that row and labour together... to get, through God's blessing, an honest and comfortable living' (1.475). But notice, of course, that the image still implies movement towards a destination. This is not to say that this life is insignificant, of course. Swinnock is adamant that it *is* important. But he certainly prioritizes heaven and the insistence that both husband and wife attain it.<sup>61</sup> However, specifically, in hardship the spouses will be able to cheer each other up (1.486).<sup>62</sup> Second, piety itself will thrive in the context of love. Remarkably, Swinnock says that Eve was given to Adam for their joint and mutual godliness (1.479).<sup>63</sup> Third, the comfort of each other's love will cause each to 'long the more for [their] meeting in heaven' (1.485). In this sense it becomes a motive-force in their relationship.

Notice, in the following comment, the dual ideas involved. Marriage has a purpose both for the present and for heaven:

*Because* marriage is a fellowship of the nearest union and dearest communion in this world, and *because the fruits of religion will thrive much the better*, if cherished by the sweet breath and warm gale of love...; Lord let my wife be to me as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let me be ravished always with her love... (1.362 – emphasis added).

No wonder, then, that Swinnock strongly exhorts men to take exceptional care over those they marry. He gives the reason in rather stark terms, 'To err once in the choice of a wife, is usually to be undone for ever' (1.335).<sup>64</sup>

#### MARRIAGE UNDER THREAT

Despite the positive things that George Swinnock says concerning marriage and the husband-wife relationship it is remarkable that so much of his writing is in the form of threat. It is by this means that he seeks to

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<sup>61</sup> See *Works*, 1.497, 500-501. See Davies, 'The sacred condition', 571.

<sup>62</sup> See also *Works*, 1.353.

<sup>63</sup> *Works*, 1.479. See also, 1.480-81.

<sup>64</sup> Swinnock continues to use masculine examples, though he clearly intends both sexes. Earlier he says, 'Be careful who you choose as husband or wife' (1.334). See *Works*, 1.309, 1.336, 1.480-81, 1.423-4, 1.437, 1.474-5. It is invariably through the impious wife that the devil attacks the godly man. Citing Job's wife as an example, Swinnock remarks, 'Some women are the choicest arrows the devil hath in his quiver' (1.400). See *Works*, 1.336, 1.351.

motivate to godly living in this particular area, as he does in every area. At this juncture it is enough to list a few of the many examples.

### *In respect of the covenant of marriage*

Because it is God who institutes marriage, then he is sure to bring all married people to final judgement – ‘How severely doth God avenge the quarrel of his covenant!’ (1.469). He will avenge the breach of it. But Swinnock warns that God is not merely distant in that sense, but he ‘in fury is near them’ (1.470).<sup>65</sup> Swinnock stresses the awfulness of this by the use of imagery, as one would expect. If a couple is unfaithful to the covenant, then ‘the serjeant of death be ready to arrest us, and haul us to the prison of hell’. He further speaks of vengeance, curse, dreadful loss and ruin (1.483), and ‘the eternal fire of hell’ (1.477). The following comment on a family devoid of godliness gives a feel to the intense imagery. Passages like this cover multiple pages of Swinnock’s work on marriage.

The curse of God will be a moth in thy wardrobe, murrain among thy cattle, mildew in thy field, the plague to thy body, wrath to thy soul, will indeed make thy house a very hell upon earth. ... [A] place full of skulls... a churchyard full of carcasses, gilded, rotten, and golden damnation (1.333, 334).

### *In relation to the husband’s responsibility*

Of course, these more general threats are made specific as Swinnock singles out both the husband and the wife – and, again, the imagery is intense, the responsibility heavy. If the husband fails to find his delight in his partner and to love her outwardly *and* spiritually she might well become ‘the object of God’s greatest hatred and fury! ... a companion of frightful devils’(1.501). In this context God is imaged principally as the Judge before whom the husband is held accountable: ‘Thou art accountable to the judge of the quick and the dead, for all the souls in thy family’ (1.354).<sup>66</sup> But, as we have noticed earlier judgement starts in the present:

This wrath can... turn thy wife, children, and all thy comforts into amazing crosses and terrifying curses. ... If thy family be irreligious, thou mayest

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<sup>65</sup> See also, *Works*, 1.442, 1.461, 1.485.

<sup>66</sup> See also, *Works*, 1.355-357, 1.498. The husband is presented with a choice. He can instruct his family and be a good example for them, or he can ‘allow them to die eternally’ (1.341). There are only the two alternatives. See also, *Works*, 1.343.

expect this scalding wrath, not by drops, but by showers to come pouring down upon it (1.358).

*In relation to the wife's responsibility*

Significantly, Swinnock has the woman saying, 'If I resist his [God's] law, I proclaim myself a rebel' (1.525). Again, we notice a future judgement and a present one in relation to any ungodliness on the part of the wife. And again we note the intensity of the ideas.

Hath not my God told me that if I break my covenant, he will not spare me, Deut 29:20-21,<sup>67</sup> but have his full strokes at me with his almighty arm; and the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, infinitely worse than the hottest fire, shall smoke against me, and all the curses, heavier than mountains of lead, written in his book, shall lie upon me, and the Lord shall blot out my name from under heaven, cause my very remembrance to rot as an unsavoury carcass (1.524).<sup>68</sup>

Citing Michal, David's wife,<sup>69</sup> Swinnock suggests that in the present God judges those wives who refuse to be subordinate: 'God hath barren wombs for such bold, impudent women' (1.505); and, again, 'If she slight her head, God will scourge her body (1.505-6).

CONCLUSION

Diane Willen perceptively insists that, 'If intense spirituality dominated the Puritan's existence, it ought also to provide the framework for an examination of the interaction between Puritanism and gender.'<sup>70</sup> The present essay, adopting this guideline, has shown that Swinnock's teaching

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<sup>67</sup> Deuteronomy 19:20-21 reads, 'The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law' (King James Version).

<sup>68</sup> See also, *Works*, 1.511. In a similarly dogmatic fashion, the Puritan, Richard Greenham, *The Works of the Reverend Richard Greenham* (London, 1612), p. 742, says of the wife, '[I]f shee be not obedient she cannot be saved' – quoted by Willen, 'Godly Women', p. 564.

<sup>69</sup> Swinnock cites 1 Chronicles 15:29, 'Michal... saw David dancing and playing; and she despised him' (KJV).

<sup>70</sup> Willen, 'Godly Women', 563.

on marriage relations *is* integral to his understanding of spirituality (or 'godliness', in Swinnock's terminology). The fact that his concept of godliness is largely that of obedience and duty before God, imaged as lawgiver, is significant. The area that this short study has concentrated on is that of the husband-wife relationship. If spirituality ('godliness') is to have any practical effect it should certainly become evident at that point.

It was noticed above that there is an ambiguity in Puritan teaching, generally. Of course, this has been noted by scholars, some seeking to be as positive as the situation allows. For example, Ryken says that the ideal of companionate marriage, 'tended to soften the claims of male dominance and to produce an enlightened version of marital hierarchy'.<sup>71</sup> In itself, this underlines the point that there *is* male dominance. Ryken further comments that Puritan ideas of marriage 'had the effect of mitigating hierarchy in the direction of marital equality'.<sup>72</sup> Schücking insists that Puritan marriage 'primarily consists in a perfect sharing'<sup>73</sup> – though he says this while speaking of an 'enhanced authority on the part of the man'!<sup>74</sup> Among the more negative writers K. M. Rogers speaks of Puritans' misogyny and of their distrust and contempt for women. Kathleen Davies writes of the Puritan 'obsession with achieving male dominance'.<sup>75</sup>

What have we found in Swinnock's understanding? His view of marriage is entirely traditional. It is strictly hierarchical, the husband rules, the wife obeys. He bases this on what he supposes to be biblical precedent, reinforced by the notion that the woman is essentially inferior to the man. Nonetheless, there is that positive thread that suggests mutuality, care,

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<sup>71</sup> Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 53.

<sup>72</sup> Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> Schücking, *The Puritan Family*, 38. He says further, 'the cool realism of the Puritans recognized marriage as being essentially a sharing of spiritual-sensual experience'.

<sup>74</sup> Schücking, *The Puritan Family*, p. 33. He comments, 'When there is such spiritual accord the whole idea of "subjection" loses much of its practical significance' (p. 48).

<sup>75</sup> K. M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate* (Seattle, 1966), p. 159; also pp. 135-59; Davies, 'The sacred condition', p. 567. Other writers who might be listed here: B. Barker-Benfield, 'Anne Hutchinson and the Puritan Attitude Toward Women', *Feminist Studies* 1 (1973), pp. 65-96; M. Olfson Thickstun, *Fictions of the Feminine: Puritan Doctrine and the Representation of Women* (Ithaca, New York, 1988). It is important to note that in certain areas Puritan women were leaders in their own right. See for example, M. J. Westerkamp, 'Anne Hutchinson, Sectarian Mysticism, and the Puritan Order', *Church History* 59 (1990), pp. 482-96.

genuine love and 'sharing' – but *not* equality in relationship, of course. In the context of Swinnock's teaching on godliness, the traditional positions and status of husband and wife would seem to be further entrenched and fixed within a patriarchal pattern. This thinking begins with his primary image of God as lawgiver who is not only able to threaten wrongdoing, but who continually does so.<sup>76</sup> With an intense perception of God's judgement and punishment for those who stray from a very clearly defined marital pattern, there appears no real or genuine possibility of furthering any concept of true mutuality, based on equality between the spouses. As we have observed, repetition and intensity of threats dominate Swinnock's writing. They appear to be his primary method of social (and personal) control.

Interestingly, Patricia Crawford argues for an increased authority on the part of the husband and father in the Puritan family.<sup>77</sup> On the basis of our reading of Swinnock, it is quite clear that the authority the man has is certainly underlined as spiritual, as directly related to his own salvation (and that of others) and as part of what God demands of him. A similar pattern is discerned in relation to the humble submission of the wife. Given the specificity and intensity of the threats levelled at them both, and given the clear delineation of boundaries that must not be transgressed, it would be very surprising indeed if more relational-creativity in marriage were likely to develop. Such things as freedom, equality, mutual vulnerability and openness are unlikely.

Schücking suggests that,

If there is to be friendship and mutual liking, if intimate human relationships are to develop, it is essential that there should be freedom. Only where freedom exists, only where characters are strong enough not to allow their humanity to be utterly suppressed by their religion, can the Puritan family provide an opportunity for a real understanding between its members.<sup>78</sup>

In line with this conclusion, the present study has argued that marriage under threat is likely rigidly to maintain the *status quo*, at least theoretically. What happened in social practice may have been somewhat different, of course. Nevertheless, marriage under threat limits positive implications with the deadening and constraining weight of fear.

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<sup>76</sup> See Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, *The Raging Hearth* (St Louis, Missouri, 2000) for a fascinating interpretation of how concepts of family and God (and church) are thematically woven in Christian thought.

<sup>77</sup> Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 40.

<sup>78</sup> Schücking, *The Puritan Family*, p. 95.