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The Theology of Christian Joy in the Works of Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)

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Abstract

This study examines Goodwin's theology of joy in the experience of the Christian. The structure roughly follows the divisions set out in *Of the Creatures* (probably written in the mid-1650s), considering first the joy of the uncreated order, that is, the joy of God both in his essential unity, and within the relationships of the Trinity, and then the joy of the created order, in the lives of angels and human beings.

The study argues that Goodwin sees God's joy as eternal, being based on both his "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" life. That is, God rejoices in who he is and in what he does. The study will demonstrate that Goodwin considered all true joy as being fundamentally derived from God's joy, and that true Christian joy is known only to the degree in which God, in Christ, is revealed to the saint. The study will argue that Goodwin understands the saint to be on a journey of progression from nature, to grace, and on to glory which is characterised by increasingly clear visions of God; initially seeing God by faith in Christ, then seeing God in the actual presence of Christ, and ultimately in sharing the view of God that Christ himself has.

The study shows that Goodwin has some distinct views when expositing Ephesians 1:13, leading to an understanding of the sealing of the Spirit that throws some light on the immediate experience of joy in the Holy Spirit.

The study will conclude that while Goodwin is notable in the clarity of his description of the increasing joy of the saint, he is entirely consistent with the Augustinian-Calvinist view of joy which, in Goodwin's words, is simply that "God, known and enjoyed; is the supreme happiness of Man in all Conditions..."

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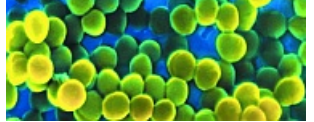
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