THE CROSS AND THE FULLNESS OF GOD: CLARIFYING THE MEANING OF DIVINE WRATH IN PENAL SUBSTITUTION

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the common concerns about the penal substitutionary construal of the atonement insists that it depicts a sub-Christian God who, like the barbaric gods of paganism, seethes with anger over the deeds of human persons and, in turn, becomes determined cruelly to vent his wrath upon them. For example, Steve Chalke contends that penal substitutionary atonement builds on pre-Christian thinking about divinity, missing the development of atonement theology within the Old Testament literature. For Chalke, while the Pentateuch does employ the notion of propitiatory sacrifice, the prophetic books indicate that Israel underwent a 'journey away from these primal practices towards a new and more enlightened understanding by way of Yahweh's self-revelation'.[1] Moreover, in Chalke's view, the wrath of God in the schema of penal substitution cannot be made to fit with Jesus' commands against retaliation (Matt. 5:38-42) or the Johannine statement that 'God is love' (1 John 4:8, 16).[2]

Such comments raise a number of worthwhile exegetical, historical, and systematic questions. Under the rubric of systematic theology, the present essay endeavours to elucidate the relationship between classical Christian theism's conception of God and consequent account of the nature of theological language and the meaning of divine wrath in the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. Leaving aside for the moment queries about the scriptural basis of the doctrine and the representation of the doctrine in the history of Protestant theology, I wish only to posit that retrieving the resources of classical Christian theism will aid proponents of penal substitution (including this writer) in answering the

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1 Steve Chalke, 'The Redemption of the Cross', in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement*, ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), p. 38.

2 Chalke, 'The Redemption of the Cross', p. 40.

charge of divine barbarism and restating the doctrine in the contemporary milieu. In order to exhibit the ontology of God in classical Christian theism, I expound certain noteworthy features of the doctrine of God in the theology of Thomas Aquinas and in the writings of John Owen. From here, I invite the help of John Calvin to signal the way in which a more traditional understanding of God and human speech about God may contribute to the task of carefully coordinating the wrath of God and the cross of Christ.

II. AQUINAS AND OWEN ON DIVINE ACTUALITY AND DIVINE BEATITUDE

A. Aquinas on Divine Actuality

In view of the teaching of Paul in Romans 1:20, Aquinas judges that by attending to the contours of created reality one can rightly infer the existence of God.[3] Unfolding the first of the 'five ways' of demonstrating the existence of God, Aquinas invokes the concepts of actuality and potentiality. He observes that the world around us displays motion and that nothing is set in motion save by another. Motion consists in the reduction of a thing's potentiality to actuality and thus is made possible only by something already in act, which alone can exert such influence on another. Moreover, with the law of non-contradiction in mind, Aquinas reasons that a thing cannot be in potentiality and actuality in the same respect and at the same time and, therefore, cannot be moved and simultaneously perform that act of movement. In other words, nothing can bring about its own motion. Insofar as the motion perceived in the world is part of a sequence of activity dependent upon the initiative of a first mover, positing an infinite regression of movers is not open to us. Therefore, Aquinas arrives at the existence of an unmoved (*contra* the caricatures, not an inert or pallid) first mover, whom he identifies as the God of Israel named in Exodus 3:14.[4]

The thread of divine actuality wends into the next question of *Summa Theologica* as Aquinas refutes in light of John 4:24 the notion that God has corporeality. He reiterates the proposition that the reduction of potentiality to actuality must be wrought by one already in act. When any entity 'passes from potentiality to actuality, the potentiality is prior in time to the actuality; nevertheless, absolutely speaking, actuality is prior to

[3] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1948), Ia, qu. 2 art. 2.

[4] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 2, art. 3.

potentiality'. Hence, the first being is necessarily in act and so, as this first being, God enjoys replete actuality, which runs contrary to the notion of divine corporeality.[5]

Aquinas proceeds then to argue that God is not composed of matter and form. Of course, the actuality of God excludes the possibility of matter in God, but the perfection and essential goodness of God reinforce this exclusion. Anything composed of matter and form possesses its goodness by virtue of its participation in its form. However, since God is the essential and primal good, he cannot possess goodness by mere participation in a form and, therefore, he is not composed of matter and form. Furthermore, an agent, Aquinas says, acts by the form of the agent and, as the first efficient cause, God is essentially and primarily an agent. God, then, is essentially and irreducibly his own self-subsisting form.[6] Because God is not composed of matter and form, his *suppositum* is not individuated by material accidents and thus God is identical to his own nature: 'He must be His own Godhead, His own Life, and whatever else is thus predicated of Him.'[7] In addition, Aquinas reasons that, not only is God identical to God's nature, but God's nature is identical to God's existence, commenting that 'whatever a thing has besides its essence must be caused either by the constituent principles of that essence... or by some exterior agent.' Nothing whose existence is caused can cause its own existence, leaving only the latter choice.[8] But, since God is the first efficient cause, this too is an illegitimate option. Therefore, God's essence is his existence.

Taking an alternative approach, Aquinas notes that existence is that which renders a form or nature actual. Inasmuch as God is fully in act from all eternity, his essence cannot be other than his existence. From yet another angle, whatever is not identical to its existence is a being by participation. Since he is identical to his essence and is the first being, God must not be participated being but instead essential, subsistent being. However, Aquinas is quick to clarify that this does not entail that God is 'universal being' or 'being in general', which is 'predicated of everything'. There is an apparent congruence between divine being and 'common being' because both are regarded as 'being without addition'. The apparent congruence proves illusory on two accounts. First, divine being is being without addition *realiter* as well as *rationaliter*, whereas universal being is being without addition only *rationaliter*. That is, universal being is nowhere present in the world without addition for individuation but

5 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 1.

6 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 2.

7 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 3.

8 In any event, God's existence is uncaused.

is only considered thus abstractly and heuristically by human knowers. Second, divine being is being without addition in reality and in thought and in both cases is without receptibility of addition. In contrast, common being includes addition for the sake of individuation. Aquinas ventures, then, that, while he is being itself, God is not common being but 'proper', subsistent being.[9]

The actuality and boundless being of God in Aquinas' theology point toward the impassibility of God. For Aquinas, the divine life includes emotions such as joy and delight, but God's immateriality and actuality preclude God suffering some lack or loss that might induce emotional pain. God's immateriality entails that he does not undergo the bodily changes bound up with human experience of sorrow, anger, and so on and his actuality and limitless perfection mean that even the formal, immaterial dimension of human experience of passions is not present in God.[10] The passions to which God is invulnerable include wrath and here we begin to encounter direct implications for our present task.

However, we first call to mind Aquinas' understanding of human speech about God. He is of the view that God may be named by us both literally and metaphorically. Literal names are those, such as life and love, whose semantic grain is not inherently creaturely and corporeal with respect to the thing signified but only with respect to the mode of signification. That is, they ascribe to God nothing that befits only the creature, though as names for God they are acquired by and annexed from the human practice of speaking about things creaturely, limited, and corporeal. Metaphorical names are those such as rock or fortress that import

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9 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 4; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 1.27.11.

10 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 20, art. 1. It is vital that we recognize the logic of Aquinas' theological move here. He has not sold his Christian birthright in favour of succumbing to an alien Hellenism. Rather, he believes that the biblical Creator, though never cold or aloof, dwells in unshakeable perfection that is not susceptive of fluctuation, ontic, moral, emotional, or otherwise. For more recent literature on divine impassibility, see, e.g., Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); David Bentley Hart, 'No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility', *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002), 184-206; Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. chaps 8 and 9.

corporeality with respect to the thing signified as well as the mode of signification.[11] These 'comparisons with material things' are justifiable on several grounds, a few of which we acknowledge here. First, by way of the senses we arrive at knowledge of truth and thus God deploys metaphor in Holy Scripture in order noetically to provide for us according to our nature. Second, metaphor enables even 'the simple' to grasp spiritual truth. Third, in Scripture, 'the ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is veiled' but its truth obtains and the metaphorical imagery prods the reader to examine the teaching for greater insight. Fourth, the veiling that accompanies the use of metaphor serves to turn away those who wish hastily and impiously to learn of divine truth.[12]

For Aquinas, our literal and metaphorical naming of God always occurs analogically. As the Creator, God has being infinitely qualitatively other than that of the creature. His simple perfection is not precisely or exhaustively mirrored in his creation and cannot be comprehended by creaturely predicates. Therefore, human speech about God is never univocal, that is, applicable to God in the same sense in which it is applicable to the creature. Yet, because knowledge of God is genuinely available to human persons, neither is human speech about God equivocal, that is, applicable to God in only a sense entirely different from the sense in which it is applicable to the creature. Instead, names are spoken of God in an analogous or proportional sense. God possesses with all excellence the perfections found in his creation and receives the predication of these perfections accordingly. When directed toward God instead of created things, our speech has neither 'one and the same sense' nor a sense 'totally diverse'.[13] Assertions about God, then, are subject to the assessment of their truthfulness (the alethic question), may be literal or metaphorical in relation to their subject matter (the referential question), and invariably abide under the banner of analogy (the denotative question).

As mentioned above, in Aquinas' thought, God is not susceptive of emotional fluctuation, including the emergence of anger or wrath.[14] However, one may still speak truthfully of divine wrath if one locates the description within the realm of metaphor and, of course, concedes

[11] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 13, art. 3.

[12] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 1, art. 9.

[13] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 13, art. 5.

[14] We mark in passing that the denial of divine impassibility cuts both ways: men and women can enhance the love of God and could perhaps overwhelm God with fury. Cf. Michael S. Horton, 'Hellenistic or Hebrew?: Open Theism and Reformed Theological Method,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002), 331 n 55.

its analogical character. Metaphorical theological description resonates with its object but only by 'similitude of effect': 'because to punish is properly the act of an angry man, God's punishment is metaphorically spoken of as His anger.'[15] 'When certain human passions are predicated of the Godhead metaphorically, this is done because of a likeness of the effect.'[16] Again: 'neither can those [passions] that even on their formal side imply perfection be attributed to Him; except metaphorically, and from likeness of effects.'[17] To speak of the wrath of God is indeed to gesture acceptably toward theological reality, but it is an instance of metaphor made possible by means of a likeness between how human persons meet evil and how God meets evil. Human persons responsible to confront evil administer punishment with an indignation about moral atrocities committed. God, the righteous Judge, administers punishment according to his wise timing and, though not liable to emotional distress, is said metaphorically to do so with a righteous indignation. To speak of divine wrath is truthfully but 'improperly' to render the holiness of God as it is suffered by the wicked.[18]

B. Owen on Divine Beatitude

In the work of John Owen one discovers a kindred approach to theological description. His *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*, a meticulous critique of Socinianism, takes up the matter of the Bible attributing bodily shape and passions to God. The Socinian catechism of John Biddle on which Owen focuses prefers to interpret literally biblical statements traditionally considered anthropomorphic, concluding that God indeed has bodily parts and shape.[19] Negatively, Owen points out the difficulty in being consistent with this exegetical tack:

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15 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 2.

16 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 19, art. 11.

17 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 20, art. 1. Before making this comment, Aquinas talks of 'certain other passions... as love and joy' which are not located under the category of metaphor. In his mind, these 'passions' are simply emotions that do not entail creaturely limitation or imperfection and are attributed to God literally and 'properly,' whereas sorrow, anger, and the like are passions in the negative sense of the word.

18 The holiness of God does not morph into the wrath of God. Rather than the relation of God to the creature being altered, it is the relation of the creature to God that is altered by the creature's rebellion. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 13, art. 7.

19 John Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, in vol. 12 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh and Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1966), pp. 98-103.

> Because the Scripture speaks of the eyes and ears, nostrils and arms of the Lord, and of man being made after his likeness, if any one shall conclude that he sees, hears, smells, and hath the shape of a man, he must, upon the same reason, conclude that he hath the shape of a lion, of an eagle, and is like a drunken man, because in Scripture he is compared to them, and so of necessity make a monster of him, and worship a chimera.[20]

Positively, Owen underscores the biblical theme of the radical difference between the Creator and his creatures (e.g., Isa. 40:18, 25). As Creator of all, God is infinite and immense (1 Kgs 8:27; Ps. 147:5; Jer. 23:24), immutable and impassible (Ps. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6). The Creator-creature distinction requires that we make space for the *via negativa*. in contemplating the divine attributes, seeking, when attempting to speak literally of God, to cleanse our descriptions of creaturely limitation and imperfection. Thus, Owen says, we are constrained to regard statements implying divine corporeality as anthropomorphic, expressing something true, but not literally so, with respect to God.[21]

Having resisted Socinian literalism in relation to bodily parts and figure, Owen turns to the ascription of 'turbulent affections and passions' to God. He submits that we cannot take issue with anthropopathism *per se*, so long as we esteem it as a species of metaphorical predication funded by a certain correspondence between 'the actings of men in whom such affections are, and under the power whereof they are in those actings' and 'the outward works and dispensations' of God. Put differently, if anthropopathic speech is utilized and interpreted under the tutelage of Aquinas' 'similitude of effect', then it is 'eminently consistent with all [God's] infinite perfections and blessedness'. Unfortunately, Owen laments, this proviso is not upheld in Biddle's catechism, prompting Owen to construct a two-stage counterargument. First, and more generally, if conceived literally, passions such as grief, anger, fury, hatred, jealousy, and so on are incompatible with the perfect, ceaseless beatitude of God (Ps. 50:8-13; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 6:15).[22] To suffer such affections is 1) to be liable to an 'incomplete, tumultuary volition', caught between 'the firm purpose of the soul and the execution of that purpose'; 2) to experience a causal dependency on that which inflamed the affection; 3) to undergo change,

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[20] Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, p. 103.

[21] Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, pp. 103-5.

[22] These are texts on which Owen elaborates, but here they are only mentioned for the sake of brevity. I would add to the list Acts 17:24-28 and the indications in John 17 of the Trinity's immanent enjoyment of glory and love.

for 'he who is affected properly is really changed'[23]; and 4) to be in some respect 'impotent', unable to accomplish that which one desires. Owen recapitulates: 'To ascribe affections properly to God is to make him weak, imperfect, dependent, changeable, and impotent.'[24]

Endeavouring to address the particulars as well, Owen comments on each of the different anthropopathisms. The responsible exegete must exercise caution in rendering divine anger and wrath, 'assigning them their truth to the utmost' and yet seeing to it that they are 'interpreted in a suitableness to divine perfection and blessedness'. Anger is 'desire joined with grief of that which appears to be revenge, for an appearing neglect or contempt', coupled with 'a kind of pleasure... arising from the vehement fancy which an angry person hath of the revenge he apprehends as future'.[25] Owen wagers,

> Ascribe this to God and you leave him nothing else. There is not one property of his nature wherewith it is consistent. If he be properly and literally angry, and furious, and wrathful, he is moved, troubled, perplexed, desires revenge, and is neither blessed nor perfect.[26]

When attributed to God, anger is 'His vindictive justice, or constant and immutable will of rendering vengeance for sin'. In Romans 1:18, for example, the 'wrath of God' is 'the vindictive justice of God against sin to be manifested in the effects of it'. In other instances, anger or wrath respects simply the effects themselves. Owen locates the 'wrath of God' in Ephesians 5:6 under this category.[27] Thus,

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[23] Strangely, in contemporary evangelical circles where divine immutability on some level is still appreciated, there is some reticence about relating it to divine emotion. See, e.g., Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 235-7. Could it be that, instead of honouring divine emotion, such a passibilism trivializes it by distancing it from the sphere of the divine nature?

[24] Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, pp. 108-10.

[25] Should we think that perhaps we can purge this definition of its uglier elements in order still to speak literally of divine wrath, we ought to note that, at least on the classical account of divine being, even a more dignified sort of anger cannot be literally in God. While it is commendable for those who might pursue a middle ground here to balk at applying this general definition to divine anger, to the extent that classical theism is correct about the actuality, aseity, and immutability of God the Creator, even a tempered 'God-kind' of anger cannot be present literally in God.

[26] Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, p. 112.

[27] Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, pp. 111-12.

> anger is not properly ascribed to God, but metaphorically, denoting partly his vindictive justice, whence all punishments flow, partly the effects of it in the punishments themselves, either threatened or inflicted, in their terror and bitterness, upon the account of what is analogous therein to our proceeding under the power of that passion.[28]

C. Conclusion

We have glimpsed in both Aquinas, a medieval Roman Catholic scholastic theologian, and Owen, a seventeenth century Protestant who believed the Roman Catholic church to be deeply flawed, a common vision of God that is mentored by the biblical motif of the Creator-creature distinction and, from this vantage point, delights in God's interminable life and everlasting felicity. To be sure, Owen is typically the more conspicuous in dealing with the pertinent biblical teaching, but both testify that, in view of the actuality and beatitude of God, human speech about God is under certain strictures that rule out literal talk of divine wrath. At the same time, the two men plainly attest the reality and severity of the outpouring of God's wrath and we leave it to a third theologian to link this to Jesus' crucifixion.

III. CALVIN ON THE WRATH OF GOD AND THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Calvin's thinking too is pervaded by the Creator-creature distinction, on account of which he reckons that God speaks to us with a 'lisp' so that anthropomorphic 'forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity.'[29] Like Aquinas and Owen, Calvin gives credence to the doctrine of divine impassibility[30] but in deference to Scripture is wont to retain in his atonement theology a place for the wrath of God. The Reformer does not mince words:

> No one can descend into himself and seriously consider what he is without feeling God's wrath and hostility toward him. Accordingly, he must anxiously seek ways and means to appease God – and this demands a satisfaction. No common assurance is required, for God's wrath and curse lie upon sinners until they are absolved of guilt. Since he is a righteous Judge, he does

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28 Owen, Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, p. 112.

29 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1.13.1.

30 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.2.

> not allow his law to be broken without punishment, but is equipped to avenge it.[31]

With the tradition's conception of divine being and human language in hand, Calvin delivers a guarded exposition of the wrath of God vis-à-vis the cross. First, he suggests that talk of divine wrath is figurative and aims at cultivating gratitude for God's mercy. Aware of an apparent tension between the love and wrath of God, Calvin addresses 'how fitting it was that God, who anticipates us by his mercy, should have been our enemy until he was reconciled to us through Christ'. He stresses the priority and magnitude of this divine anticipation, asking, 'For how could [God] have given in his only-begotten Son a singular pledge of his love to us if he had not already embraced us with his free favor?'[32] Whence, then, the biblical announcements of the wrath of God? Calvin answers,

> Expressions of this sort have been accommodated to our capacity that we may better understand how miserable and ruinous our condition is apart from Christ. For if it had not been clearly stated that the wrath and vengeance of God and eternal death rested upon us, we would scarcely have recognized how miserable we would have been without God's mercy, and we would have underestimated the benefit of liberation... since our hearts cannot, in God's mercy, either seize upon life ardently enough to accept it with the gratefulness we owe, unless our minds are first struck and overwhelmed by fear of God's wrath and by dread of eternal death, we are taught by Scripture to perceive that apart from Christ, God is, so to speak, hostile to us, and his hand is armed for our destruction; to embrace his benevolence and fatherly love in Christ alone.[33]

In short, Calvin navigates through the riddle of divine love and divine wrath as *principia* of the crucifixion by characterizing the notion of divine wrath as metaphorical and identifying its salutary effects.

In the next section of the *Institutes*, Calvin portrays the reality of God's wrath against unrighteousness but qualifies this by noting that the statement of God's wrath is 'tempered to our feeble comprehension'. All of us are 'deserving of God's hatred'. Truly, 'until Christ succors us by his death, the unrighteousness that deserves God's indignation remains in us, and is accursed and condemned before him.' In virtue of the incompatibility of righteousness and wickedness, God is unable genuinely to fellowship with sinners. Nevertheless, the love of God 'anticipates our reconciliation

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31 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.1.

32 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.2.

33 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.2.

in Christ'.[34] Divine love does not wait upon another to intervene for sinful humanity's sake and then responsively embrace us but assumes the initiative and is manifest in the freedom of the mission of God the Son. In support of the active posture of the love of God, Calvin adduces the audacity of Christ's death in Romans 5:1-11 and the gratuity of God's election in the opening blessing of Ephesians. To finish up, he quotes Augustine:

> Thus in a marvelous and divine way [God] loved us even when he hated us. For he hated us for what we were that he had not made; yet because our wickedness had not entirely consumed his handiwork, he knew how, at the same time, to hate in each one of us what we had made, and to love what he had made.[35]

Calvin's application of the Creator-creature distinction and its linguistic ramifications to his theology of the atonement supplies a glimmer of the manner in which classical Christian theism and its account of theological description have bearing on the doctrine of penal substitution. Literally speaking, God is incapable of emotional flux and suffering, but the Bible's metaphorical talk of divine wrath is not to be cast aside as naïve or irrelevant to Christian piety. The predicate of divine wrath resonates with its intended object but performs its semantic labours as an instance of figurative speech commandeered by God for our good. Calvin's clarity about God's being and the dynamics of human speech about God enables him to chart something of the inner logic of the cross. Recognizing the non-literality of divine wrath opens up space to honour the torrent of divine love in the death of Christ. God is not emotionally 'out of control' or in need of a propitiatory interlocutor to calm God and prompt God to care for us. To be sure, on supposition of his decree to save sinful men and women God is obliged to act in a manner consistent with his righteousness and, therefore, displays his wrath at Golgotha in the form of punitive justice. Nevertheless, in perfect beatitude and sovereign mercy God himself arranged for the redemptive administration of righteousness, the Father sending the Son to be the propitiation for our sin.

IV. CONCLUSION

With contributions from Aquinas and Owen, we have canvassed a portion of classical Christian theism's treatment of God and human descriptions of God, marking that speech about God's wrath is considered truthful but metaphorical. We have also traced out the way in which this theologi-

[34] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.3.

[35] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.4.

cal configuration shapes Calvin's interpretation of Christ's death. Calvin accentuates the love of God and has room for the wrath of God as a truthful but not a literal predicate. In the work of penal substitution fullness of life and constancy of emotion obtain in God just as they have from all eternity. It should be apparent by now that through the influence of this rendition of the doctrine of God a classic Protestant exposition of penal substitutionary atonement such as Calvin's is impervious to the charge of divine barbarism. Far from resembling an incensed and unprincipled sub-Christian deity, God out of his undiminished life and steadfastness prudently enacts his holiness by unveiling his wrath, that is, by punishing transgression on the cross. Far from childishly losing his temper, God lovingly forges a path along which both justice and mercy shine forth in blessed synergy.

Our observations here are not intended to answer every question raised about the viability of the doctrine of penal substitution. For example, defenders of the doctrine must respond to the assertion that in Scripture God's wrath is congruent with his allowing the wicked to persist in wickedness and must establish that Scripture depicts God personally directing his wrath, or punitive justice, toward Christ on the cross. Furthermore, the present essay does not necessarily legitimize all handlings of penal substitution. It may be that some theologians or prominent pastoral guides could sharpen their presentation of the doctrine. Nevertheless, with the support of the actuality of God and the metaphorical character of the predicate of divine wrath, penal substitution can withstand the objection of divine barbarism. God in the penal substitutionary schema is no unstable brute but graciously and judiciously respects his own righteousness as he punishes and thwarts sin on the cross.