

## God's Wrath

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. (Romans 1:18)

18. For God's wrath is being revealed. The 'For' has been variously explained. Some, feeling strongly that God's wrath and God's righteousness must be opposed to each other, have even insisted on giving to the Greek conjunction which regularly means 'for' the sense of 'but' - in certain special circumstances the Greek word can indeed acquire an adversative force, but such special circumstances do not obtain here...

The reference to God's wrath has puzzled and troubled many. So, for example, C. H. Dodd argued that Paul did not mean to indicate a personal reaction on God's part but 'an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe', on the ground that it would be objectionable to attribute to God 'the irrational passion of anger'. But even human anger is not always irrational. A man who knows, for example, about the far-reaching injustice and cruelty of apartheid and is not angry at such wickedness is not a good man: by his lack of anger he shows his lack of love. God would not be the truly loving God that He is, if He did not react to our evil with wrath.

His wrath is not something which is inconsistent with His love: on the contrary, it is an expression of His love. It is precisely because He loves us truly and seriously and faithfully that He is wroth with us in our sinfulness. But it must of course be remembered that God's wrath is not like man's only bigger and more effective. Our wrath, even at its most righteous and purest, is always compromised and more or less distorted by our own sinfulness: only God's wrath is the wrath of perfect goodness, the altogether serious wrath. Dodd's attempt to depersonalize the reality which the Bible denotes by 'God's wrath' should surely be rejected.

(C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: T&T Clark Ltd, 1985. This volume is an abridged version of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* by C.E.B. Cranfield, which was first published in two volumes by T&T Clark Ltd. in 1975 (volume I) and 1979 (volume II) in the *International Critical Commentary* series. This edition published 1985 under license from T&T Clark by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Kindle, 477 and 487 of 5620; Scriptural reference added and paragraph structure altered)