CHAPTER ONE

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF APOCALYPTIC
JUDGMENT LANGUAGE IN PAUL AND IN 1
CORINTHIANS

1. Approaches to Judgment as a Separate Theme

There are a number of studies which treat the theme of divine judgment in Paul's letters. My concern here is to review these only as they relate to the role of future judgment in 1 Corinthians.1

The majority of scholars have approached the theme of judgment in Paul out of concern with the theological issue of the apparent contradiction between judgment according to works and justification by faith. Some earlier German scholars solved the problem by speaking of justification as Paul’s real position, while his references to judgment according to works are merely a relic carried over from his former Jewish ways of thinking.2 Bultmann is sometimes accused of this view, although he says only that Paul speaks of judgment according to works “in at least seeming contradiction to his doctrine of justification by faith alone” or

1 The most important separate treatments of judgment in Paul are: Ernst Teichmann, Die paulinischen Vorstellungen von Auferstehung und Gericht und ihre Beziehung zur jüdischen Apokalyptik (Freiburg & Leipzig: Mohr [Siebeck], 1896); Ernst Kühl, Rechtfertigung auf Grund Glaubens und Gericht nach den Werken bei Paulus (Königsberg: Koch, 1904); Gillis P. Wetter, Der Vergeltungsgedanke bei Paulus: Eine Studie zur Religion des Apostels (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1912); Herbert Braun, Gerichtsgedanke und Rechtvertigungslehre bei Paulus (UNT 19; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930); Floyd V. Filson, St. Paul's Conception of Recompense (UNT 21; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1931); Georges Didier, Désintéressement du Chrétien: La rétribution dans la morale de Saint Paul (Théologie 32; Paris: Aubier, 1955); Richard Campbell Devor, “The Concept of Judgment in the Epistles of Paul” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Drew University, 1959); Lieselotte Mattern, Das Verständnis des Gerichtes bei Paulus (ATANT 47; Zürich & Stuttgart: Zwingli, 1966); Calvin J. Roetzel, Judgement in the Community: A Study of the Relationship between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Karl Paul Donfried, “Justification and Last Judgment in Paul,” ZNW 67 (1976), 90-110; Ernst Synofzik, Die Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen bei Paulus: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1977); Nigel M. Watson, “Justified by Faith, Judged by Works—an Antinomy?,” NTS 29 (1983), 209-21. Also relevant are the numerous studies on justification in Paul. For a review of earlier studies on judgment see James P. Martin, The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963). Surveys of scholarship can be found in Braun, Gerichtsgedanke, 14-31; Mattern, Verständnis, 53-58; Roetzel, Judgment in the Community, 1-13; Synofzik, Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen, 9-12.

2 See Watson, “Justified by Faith,” 211 and 220 n. 8.
“in words that sound open to misunderstanding.” It is Herbert Braun who deals with the question most extensively in these terms. On the one hand, Braun affirms the important place of judgment in the theology of Paul, not just as a parenetic motivation but also as a presupposition for his teaching on justification and grace. Yet on the other hand Braun accuses Paul of inconsistency, of an atomizing “‘Rückfall in den Tenor jüdischer Paränese,’” which Braun thinks is understandable in a man who spent the first half of his life in Judaism.

Others have simply asserted that justification and judgment stand in unresolved tension in Paul. Titius speaks of a formal, if not actual, contradiction between Paul’s teaching on justification and on recompense. Kennedy speaks of a “‘profound paradox.’” Watson has recently revived the view of Joest that, although the paradox between justification and judgment is insoluble, we can understand the tension between them as a reflection of the occasional nature of Paul’s letters.

Stuhlmacher resorts to a dualistic solution by stating that the final judgment of the Christian is a judgment only of the flesh which still clings to the believer; the salvation of the believer’s spirit is assured by the past act of the creator God, whose faithfulness outlasts the final judgment. Although Stuhlmacher does little exegesis of the texts, the pivotal passages for his view are 1 Cor 5:5 and 3:15.

In his programmatic essay Donfried takes up an emphasis of Käsemann and Stuhlmacher on obedience as a link between justification and last judgment. Donfried then stresses that it is obedience and sanctification, measured not by the number of good works but by faithfulness, which will be judged at the last day. Donfried sorts Paul’s judgment language into four functional categories: (1) universal judgment of all;

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5 Ibid., 96-97. See also Peter Stuhlmacher, Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus (FRLANT 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 51; Roetzel, Judgement in the Community, 3-5.
6 Arthur Titius, Der Paulinismus unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Seligkeit, part 2 of Die neuestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1900), 152.
9 Stuhlmacher, Gerechtigkeit Gottes, 228-36.
11 Ibid., 102. Synofzik (Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen, 152-54) accuses Donfried of synergism.