

Introduction

The theme of judgment according to works in Paul was the subject of more than ten monographs in the twentieth century. Indeed, if I had known when I became interested in this topic how many of these were written in German, I might have been tempted to find a quieter cove of Pauline theology, where the water is less turbulent. Why has so much been written on one topic? Because Paul's teaching about the final judgment is important—important for the study of Paul's letters, for the history of Christian theology, and for the practice of Christian ethics. It is important for the study of Paul's letters because it is a common theme in his writings, mentioned in many of his letters and developed extensively within the arguments of 1 Corinthians and Romans. It is important for the history of Christian theology because of the theme's relationship with justification, a doctrine at the heart of the rift between the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.¹ Finally, it is important for the practice of Christian ethics because it informs Christians on how they should think about their behavior in view of the day of the Lord.

But why write *another* study of judgment according to works in Paul? First, a study of the judgment motif in Romans will complement recent works that have examined at length the rhetorical purpose, or "function," of the motif in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. Whereas older studies focused primarily on the tension between the themes of justification by faith and judgment according to works in Paul, recent studies by David W. Kuck and by Matthias Konradt have sought to move beyond these questions by focusing on the function of the judgment motif within Paul's individual letters.² This new focus rightly emphasizes the particular contexts that shape the meaning of the judgment motif in Paul. The previous focus, however, rightly attempted to explain the

1. The doctrine of justification has also been given particular attention in recent Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. For example, see the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," available at the website of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, accessed January 26, 2013, <http://archive.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/romancatholic/jddj/index.html>.

motif coherently within Pauline theology. A study of judgment in Romans will be able to accomplish both goals—it will examine at length the rhetorical purpose of the motif within the particular argument of Romans, and it will explain the theme’s coherence with justification by faith since the latter theme figures so prominently in the letter. In fact, a careful examination of judgment in Romans will perform an even more foundational task, the task of pinpointing the exact nature of the tension between justification and judgment in Paul. Is the tension merely a concern of Western theology, as Calvin J. Roetzel has suggested?³ Or is it a tension that exists in Paul’s own theology?⁴ A study of judgment according to works in Romans will give a clearer answer to this question.

This leads to the second reason why a study of judgment in Romans is needed: Although most scholars agree that there is a tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works in Pauline theology, there has been no consensus explanation for how these themes cohere. The need for a clear explanation has become more apparent in the wake of the debates over justification arising from the new perspective on Paul. Summarizing the current state of Pauline studies, James D. G. Dunn observes that “one key issue that has emerged is the need to clarify how the present and future tenses of justification hold together, how justification by faith and not works correlates with final judgment ‘according to works’ both in Israel’s story and in Paul’s gospel. A lively debate is thus underway and will run well into the twenty-first

2. Kuck wanted to move beyond systematic theological questions and discuss the function of judgment statements in their own contexts (David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5*, NovTSup 66 [Leiden: Brill, 1992], 7). He studied only 1 Cor 3:5–4:5 in Paul and offered no explanation for the tension with justification. Konradt saw a lack of detailed analysis of the function of judgment sayings in the history of research and too much of a focus on the individual, soteriological focus of the theme (Matthias Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde: Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik im 1 Thess und 1 Kor* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003], 19). He sought to remedy this lack with his study of the meaning and function of judgment in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians.

3. Roetzel argued that the focus of judgment is corporate and Paul often speaks of judgment without mentioning justification by faith. Thus, “it is a distortion of Paul’s thought to view justification by faith and judgment in a dialectical relationship. Any attempt to reconcile these motifs may be more of a concern of the western theologian for consistency than a concern of Paul’s” (Calvin J. Roetzel, *Judgement in the Community: A Study of the Relationship Between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul* [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 177–78). No doubt Roetzel’s suggestion was influenced by his dependence on Schweitzer and Davies, who relegate justification by faith to the periphery of Paul’s thought (ibid., 10).

4. So Watson, who observes that “the problem cannot be dismissed as a Protestant one,” for it also exists in Paul (Nigel M. Watson, “Justified by Faith; Judged by Works—an Antinomy?” *NTS* 29 [1983]: 209).

century.”⁵ Simon J. Gathercole’s critique of the new perspective flags the same issue: “The relationship between final justification (Rom. 2:13) and present–past justification (Rom. 4:3) has still not been satisfactorily discussed in the secondary literature on Paul. A simple waving of the ‘now/not yet’ wand over the texts is not quite satisfactory, especially if it is correct to describe Paul as viewing the criteria for past and future justifications slightly differently.”⁶

Gathercole’s last sentence represents an important question in Pauline theology, particularly in light of the Protestant understanding of justification by faith alone. Does Paul view the criteria or the ground of present justification differently than the criteria or ground of final justification? Several Pauline scholars now explain Paul in this way. For example, N. T. Wright often speaks about justification in Paul as the verdict of the present on the basis of faith (Rom. 3:21–4:25), which corresponds with the verdict of the future on the basis of the whole life lived.⁷ Similarly, Paul A. Rainbow argues that the Protestant understanding of justification should be refined by the biblical data. Justification “unfolds for an individual in two phases, marked by conversion and the last judgment. While faith alone is required to inaugurate it, evangelical obedience becomes a subordinate part of the basis for its culmination.”⁸

The lack of a consensus even after so much has been written indicates that it is difficult to explain how justification by faith coheres with the final judgment according to works in Paul’s theology. A study of how the two themes relate to each other in the argument of one letter will shed light on this question. Romans is the ideal letter for such a study because it is Paul’s only letter in which the themes of judgment and justification are both prominent. The study of judgment in Romans will provide leverage to evaluate former solutions to the tension in Pauline theology and suggest a way forward in the justification debates. To begin, of course, former solutions to the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works must be clearly understood. What follows, therefore, is a brief history of research on the topic of

5. James D. G. Dunn, “Paul’s Theology,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 337.

6. Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 266.

7. E.g., N. T. Wright, “New Perspectives on Paul,” in *Justification in Perspective*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 253–55; Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 190, 224.

8. Paul A. Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005). See Rainbow’s similar conclusions in “Justification according to Paul’s Thessalonian Correspondence,” *BBR* 19 (2009): 273–74.

judgment in Paul. I have classified the research according to common solutions to the tension between justification and judgment, because this problem has driven most of the research.⁹

HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The history of research must begin with the Protestant understanding of justification by faith and judgment according to works, for the tension between the two themes typically arises from the Protestant reading of justification in Paul.¹⁰ This theological context is important for later exegetical works because they stand in its train. It is no accident that most studies of judgment in Paul have been undertaken by German scholars who stand in the Lutheran theological tradition. After explaining justification and judgment within Protestant theology, the history will survey the proposals of various New Testament scholars for a solution to the tension between justification and judgment in Paul.

THE CONTEXT OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

The Protestant formulation of justification has not been monolithic, but there are common features. McGrath identifies three: First, “justification is defined as the forensic *declaration* that believers are righteous, rather than the process by which they are *made* righteous, involving a change in their *status* rather than in their *nature*.” Second, “a deliberate and systematic distinction is made between *justification* (the external act by which God declares the sinner to be righteous) and *sanctification* or *regeneration* (the internal process of renewal within humans). Although the two are treated as inseparable, a notional distinction is thus drawn where none had been conceded before.” Third, the formal cause of justification “is defined as the alien righteousness of Christ, external to humans and imputed to them, rather than a righteousness which is inherent to them, located within them, or which in any sense may be said to belong to them.”¹¹

9. This history of research focuses on works devoted specifically to the topic of judgment in Paul. Readers interested in how Pauline scholars have generally solved the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works should consult Ortlund’s encyclopedic taxonomy (Dane C. Ortlund, “Justified by Faith, Judged according to Works: Another Look at a Pauline Paradox,” *JETS* 52 [2009]: 323–39).

10. Devor calls the theme “one of the perennial problems in Protestant theology” (Richard Campbell Devor, “The Concept of Judgment in the Epistles of Paul” [PhD diss., Drew University, 1959], 95). Roetzsel observes that the theme is not a problem within Roman Catholic theology (*Judgment in the Community*, 1).

Aaron Thomas O'Kelley argues that the distinguishing mark of the Protestant view of justification is this final feature, the doctrine of an alien righteousness—"the location of the legal basis of right standing with God outside of, rather than intrinsic to, the believer."¹² Luther, for example, did not make a systematic distinction between justification and sanctification, as later Protestants did, but he understood the legal basis of a right standing before God to be the alien righteousness of Christ alone.¹³ A crucial aspect of the understanding of justification promoted by Luther and the other Reformers was a distinction between the law and gospel, in contrast with the Roman Catholic synthesis of the two. O'Kelley explains: "The law demands perfect obedience, and without the hope of offering such to God, the sinner's only recourse is to the gospel. God does not offer eternal life as a reward for grace-wrought merit. He gives it freely and unconditionally through his Son, whose righteousness belongs to the sinner by faith."¹⁴ This understanding of justification created a tension with the concept of a final judgment according to works, for if believers do not stand before God's judgment on the basis of their works, then how can they be judged according to works at the final judgment? Full-blown explanations of the tension awaited twentieth-century scholars, but Protestant theologians before that time did address the topic of Christian good works and the final judgment.

In general, Protestant theologians have affirmed that the final judgment is according to works but explained these good works as something other than the ground of justification. For example, Calvin, like Luther and Melancthon, argues that Rom. 2:6-11 describes Christians to whom God will repay eternal life for doing what is good.¹⁵ However, in his *Institutes*, he explains that passages which speak of salvation as recompense do not refer to works as the ground of justification. The expression "God will render to every man according to his works" does not contradict justification by faith because "the expression indicates an order of sequence rather than the cause" of salvation.¹⁶ After being called into fellowship with Christ, God begins a good work in believers, which

11. Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 212-13.

12. Aaron Thomas O'Kelley, "A Historical-Theological Critique of the New Perspective on Paul" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 69.

13. *Ibid.*, 93-94.

14. *Ibid.*, 95.

15. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 89-94.

16. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 821 (section 3.18.1).

must then be made perfect until the day of the Lord Jesus. It is “made perfect when, resembling their Heavenly Father in righteousness and holiness, they prove themselves sons true to their nature.”¹⁷ Thus the kingdom of heaven is a son’s inheritance, not a servant’s wages (Eph. 1:18).¹⁸ Again, “holiness of life [is] the way, not indeed that gives access to the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom, but by which those chosen by their God are led to its disclosure.”¹⁹

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) contains one of the clearest affirmations of judgment according to works in Protestant theology: “God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. . . . All persons, that have lived upon the earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil. The end of God’s appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient.”²⁰ This statement affected subsequent confessions like the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration (article 32), the Baptist Confession of 1689 (article 32), and eventually the confession of my own alma mater: “God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when every one shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.”²¹

However, the Westminster Confession also explains that good works cannot be the basis of a standing at the divine judgment: Good works are the “fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.” “We can not, by our best works, merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God. . . . And as they [good works] are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they can not endure the severity of God’s judgment. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him.”²² On this point, the Westminster Confession sounds similar to the earlier Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 3.18.2.

19. Ibid., 3.18.4.

20. Westminster Confession of Faith, 33, “Of the Last Judgment.” Quoted from Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, rev. David S. Schaff (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007 [reprinted from 1931 edition published by Harper and Row]), 3:671–72.

21. “Abstract of Principles of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,” 20, *The Judgment*, Southern Seminary, accessed January 26, 2013, <http://www.sbps.edu/about/truth/abstract>.

22. Westminster Confession of Faith, 16, “Of Good Works.” Quoted from Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:633, 634–35.

the Church of England (1571). This confession speaks of good works as the “fruits of Faith” that “follow after Justification.” These works cannot “endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ.” Furthermore, “by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.”²³ Thus the Westminster Confession affirms that the final judgment is according to works, but it argues that good works cannot endure the severity of God’s judgment to be the basis of justification. They are only accepted as believers themselves are accepted—through Christ.

The Lutheran confessions do not directly speak of good works at the final judgment, but they do affirm the necessity of good works for Christians. The Augsburg Confession (1530) speaks of the necessity of good works “because it is the will of God that we should do them.”²⁴ The faith that justifies “should bring forth good fruits.” However, these works should not be done “on any confidence of meriting justification before God by their works.”²⁵ The Formula of Concord (1576) was born out of controversy, and one controversial point was Professor Georg Major’s declaration that good works are necessary for salvation. The Formula affirms that good works are “necessary” for the Christian: “Good works must certainly and without all doubt follow a true faith . . . as fruits of a good tree.” Again, “all men, indeed, but chiefly those who through the Holy Spirit are regenerated and renewed, are debtors to do good works,” so that “those words—‘necessary,’ ‘ought,’ ‘it behooves’—are rightly used even of regenerate men.”²⁶ However, following Melancthon’s suggestion, it denies that “good works are necessary *to salvation*.”²⁷ Thus Lutheran confessions affirm the necessity of good works for Christians, but they qualify that these good works cannot be the ground of salvation.

Later Protestant orthodoxy continued to affirm the concept of a divine judgment according to works. They used the theme as an incentive for Christians to do what is good,²⁸ although they argued that Christian good

23. Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 12, “Of Good Works.” Quoted from Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:494.

24. Augsburg Confession, part 1, art. 20, “Of Good Works.” Quoted from Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:24.

25. Augsburg Confession, part 1, art. 6, “Of New Obedience.” Quoted from Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:11. Augsburg Confession, part 1, art. 20, “Of Good Works.”

26. Formula of Concord, art. 4, “Of Good Works.” Quoted in Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:122–23.

27. Formula of Concord, art. 4, “Of Good Works.” Quoted from Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:125 (my emphasis). On the controversy see Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 1:274–77.

28. James Perry Martin, *The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 8–9.

works are not the ground of justification.²⁹ James Perry Martin explains that these theologians saw no contradiction between justification by faith and the judgment according to works because good works were considered the “free acts of justified persons,” which spring from faith working through love.³⁰ The modern period, however, led the heirs of Protestant theology in different directions. In theology, developments in German philosophy culminated in the rejection of the idea of God’s wrath and the final judgment in the theology of Ritschl.³¹ In New Testament studies, the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works in the letters of Paul became a topic of research for scholars who sought for a solution to the problem.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO THE TENSION

New Testament scholars have attempted to explain the problem in roughly three ways. First, many have suggested that the tension arises because Paul retains Jewish words and ideas about judgment that interfere with the content of his own theology. Second, several have suggested that Paul actually teaches Christians will be judged according to works for rewards, not for salvation or justification. Finally, some have suggested that the problem lies in the Protestant understanding of justification, a theology that does not match Paul’s own view of justification.

A REMNANT OF JEWISH THEOLOGY

In 1912, Gillis P. Wetter wrote what appears to be the first monograph on recompense in Paul, a book that became foundational to the discussion.³² He stressed the importance of background study, examining Paul against his own world and time. In the context of Hellenistic ideas like fate, Wetter argued, Judaism had reduced the idea of divine recompense to a mechanical, impersonal

29. See, e.g., Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 176–229; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 3:114–212 (see especially the section titled “Works not the Ground of Justification,” *ibid.*, 3:134–40).

30. Martin, *Last Judgment in Protestant Theology*, 14.

31. *Ibid.*, 196–208. See, e.g., Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, trans. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966), 350–67.

32. Readers should note that the words “judgment” (*Gericht* in German) and “recompense” (*Vergeltung* in German) are often used interchangeably in this discussion, as they will be in this book. A conceptual distinction can be made between the verdict (“judgment”) and its execution (“recompense”), but the two are basically synonymous in Romans (compare Rom. 2:5 with 2:6).

power.³³ Paul, a student of the Pharisees, takes over the language and theology of Judaism and speaks of recompense as a mechanical power operating in the world that causes a penalty to always follow from sin.³⁴ Although Paul sometimes associates recompense with God, his words in these contexts are only Jewish formulas (e.g., Rom. 2:6, 16),³⁵ the husk of an outer form that is blown away by the content of Paul's own religion of grace.³⁶ To Wetter, then, Paul does not actually believe in a *divine* recompense or judgment. The passages that seem to associate judgment with God are simply a remnant of early Jewish theology. Since Paul does not overcome these old concepts and words, there is an element of inconsistency between his language of recompense and his religion of grace. Thus the tension between justification and judgment in Paul is irresolvable.³⁷

In his 1930 monograph, Herbert Braun critiqued Wetter for arguing that Paul does not actually believe in the Jewish theology of judgment and that the concept is only loosely associated with God in Paul's letters.³⁸ To Braun, Paul's theology actually takes up the Jewish understanding of divine judgment and *radicalizes* it. Specifically, it radicalizes Jewish theology in terms of the object of judgment (i.e., the strict carrying out of impartiality on both Jews and Gentiles), the height of the demand (i.e., perfection, a demand that Paul does not lighten for God's people), and the nature of the divine gift (i.e., eternal life).³⁹ But although Braun disagreed with Wetter's thesis, his conclusion conceded that certain aspects of Paul's conception of judgment are simply a relapse into Jewish theology, particularly within the paraenesis of Paul's letters.⁴⁰ Thus he explained the tension between justification and judgment in the same way as Wetter.

Ernst Synofzik, in 1977, followed Braun's critique of Wetter—judgment is not simply a “Jewish remnant” that Paul fails to overcome. Further, Synofzik questioned Braun's concession that some of these Jewish remnants remain in Paul's paraenesis.⁴¹ To Synofzik, Paul can *seem* to have these remnants

33. Gillis P. Wetter, *Der Vergeltungsgedanke bei Paulus: Eine Studie zur Religion des Apostles* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1912), 10–12.

34. *Ibid.*, 18–46.

35. *Ibid.*, 46, 128.

36. “Ja eigentlich gibt es bei ihm nur die äußere Form desselben; sobald wir mehr auf den Inhalt sehen, können wir beobachten, daß er dessen Schale sprengt und uns, oft mitten durch die alte Ausdrucksweise hindurch, etwas Neues fühlen läßt” (*ibid.*, 161).

37. *Ibid.*, 128.

38. Herbert Braun, *Gerichtsgedanke und Rechtfertigungslehre bei Paulus* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1930), 41, 89. This is the published form of Braun's dissertation from the Universität Halle-Wittenburg.

39. *Ibid.*, 59, 94.

40. *Ibid.*, 95, 97.

because he absorbs traditional material, but Paul also integrates and interprets that material.⁴² Synofzik proposed a new method for studying the problem: a tradition-historical approach. His study examined all of the Pauline judgment texts and sorted them into form-critical categories.⁴³ Much of the work was simply descriptive exegesis of Paul's letters in which he constantly pointed out the traditional nature of Paul's statements. Synofzik concluded that Paul takes up the judgment and recompense sayings not as an individual theme of his theology but as an *Argumentationsmittel*, that is, as a rhetorical statement.⁴⁴ This was Synofzik's solution to the tension between justification and judgment in Paul: the apostle speaks of judgment to make certain arguments but does not take up the theme as a part of his own theology.

When one compares Wetter, Braun, and Synofzik, their respective solutions seem very close. Although Braun and Synofzik distance themselves from their predecessors, all three argue for traditional material as an explanation for the tension between justification and judgment. Wetter argues that the judgment motif is entirely a remnant of Jewish theology. Braun concedes that the motif is a relapse to Jewish theology only in certain paraenetic places in Paul's letters. And Synofzik argues that Paul does not have his own theology of judgment but simply uses this traditional motif for certain rhetorical purposes. This line of inquiry, then, suggests that the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works in Paul is simply the residue of Jewish theology that Paul continues to express, even though it is inconsistent with his own theology of justification.⁴⁵

A JUDGMENT FOR REWARDS

An alternative solution to the tension between justification and judgment was suggested by Richard Campbell Devor in his 1959 Drew University dissertation. Devor argued that the solution was not to relegate judgment to the

41. Ernst Synofzik, *Die Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen bei Paulus: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung*, Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 9–10.

42. *Ibid.*, 106.

43. *Ibid.*, 12.

44. *Ibid.*, 105.

45. The work of Travis stands somewhat outside the history of research. His thesis is that the New Testament authors use the *language* of retributive justice, but they do not have a *theology* of retributive justice (Stephen Travis, *Christ and the Judgement of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought*, 2nd ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009], 4). Thus, like Wetter, Braun, and Synofzik, he argues that Paul does not really have a theology of divine judgment. Overall, Travis seems to have forced his thesis on the material (see my evaluation on pp. [PAGES IN CHAP. 2]).

residue of Judaism but to see the good works of believers at the judgment as that which determines their degree of eternal reward. To Paul, a person is justified by faith, but his or her particular place in glory is determined by their works.⁴⁶ The scope of Devor's dissertation was very broad, and his proposed solution lacked a tight argument from the text of Paul's letters. However, this solution received a firmer exegetical grounding by Lieselotte Mattern in 1966.

Mattern investigated Paul's understanding of judgment in two parts: First, she asked whether Paul understands judgment to be possible for Christians. She answered negatively because of Paul's teaching about the Christian's freedom from ὀργή and κατάκριμα.⁴⁷ When Paul speaks about the possibility of Christians falling, he means a falling from faith: "Christians are freed from the judgment-of-destruction; this freedom is certainly theirs, however it is not assuredly theirs, because they can fall away from faith."⁴⁸ Second, Mattern considered the judgment for Christians in Paul. The judgment in Romans 2 is not merely a background for Paul's message of grace but a real judgment for Christians that separates Christians and non-Christians. This judgment determines whether someone stands fundamentally in obedience to God and proves whether faith is actually faith.⁴⁹ Moreover, for Christians the judgment not only determines *whether* someone was a Christian but also determines *how* the Christian was a Christian—that is, Paul speaks of a judgment for degrees of reward.⁵⁰ Paul therefore speaks of judgment in a narrower sense for the Christian, a judgment without grace, and a judgment for rewards.⁵¹ This judgment for rewards was Mattern's solution to the tension between justification and judgment. However, her understanding of Romans 2 did not fit this pattern, a point I will return to below.

David Kuck's dissertation, published in 1992, focused on judgment in the Corinthian correspondence.⁵² His was also the only thorough study of judgment in the Greco-Roman traditions. He concluded that judgment in these traditions has no divine agent and is not eschatological but takes place

46. Devor, "Concept of Judgment," 418–19, 496. "The judgment, hence, had nothing to do with his admission into the kingdom" (ibid., 497). Note, however, that Devor does not understand the judgment of Christians to be entirely disconnected from the question of their salvation, for he suggests that there is a possibility of the loss of salvation in Paul because of a loss of faith (ibid., 498–99).

47. Lieselotte Mattern, *Das Verständnis des Gerichtes bei Paulus* (Zürich: Zwingli, 1966), 96.

48. "Die Christen sind vom Vernichtungsgericht befreit, diese Freiheit ist ihnen gewiss, aber sie ist ihnen nicht sicher, denn sie können vom Glauben abfallen" (ibid., 118).

49. Ibid., 137–39.

50. Mattern explains the judgment for degrees of reward from 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 9:6ff.; Phil. 4:17; 1 Cor. 3:5ff.; and 1 Cor. 4:4ff. (ibid., 151–92).

51. Ibid., 214.

immediately after the death of each person.⁵³ Thus the background for the theme of judgment in Paul is essentially Jewish. Kuck distanced his conclusions about Paul from Mattern’s conclusions, because he thought she drew an “unnecessarily rigid distinction between two levels of judgment.”⁵⁴ However, his discussion fell along similar lines. There are two functions of divine judgment in Paul—judgment can either “encourage corporate confidence in a distinctive Christian identity based on a separate destiny” (i.e., a judgment for salvation),⁵⁵ or it can address specific individuals or groups within the Christian community, a judgment described more in terms of loss of reward rather than salvation (i.e., a judgment for rewards).⁵⁶ Thus, although Kuck never offered a clear explanation of the tension between justification and judgment in Paul, he implicitly endorsed this solution by describing the final judgment for Christians in terms of rewards instead of salvation.⁵⁷

52. His goal was “to shed light on the disputed question of the nature of the problems in the Corinthian congregation and on Paul’s response to the situation” (Kuck, *Judgment*, xii). This is the published form of his Yale dissertation.

53. *Ibid.*, 148–49. Braun had briefly discussed judgment in the Greco-Roman context but only to establish that the tension between justification and judgment did not grow from that context (Braun, *Gerichtsgedanke und Rechtfertigungslehre*, 2–5). Note also the helpful excursus on Greco-Roman backgrounds in Yinger, who basically follows Kuck (Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 139–40).

54. Kuck, *Judgment*, 229n26. Kuck preferred to speak of two aspects of one judgment: “It should not be concluded that Paul conceived of two separate judgments, one to divide the saved from the condemned, the other to apportion rewards to believers. Rather, Paul looks at one final judgment from two aspects, depending on the emphasis of his argument” (*ibid.*, 229).

55. *Ibid.*, 223–25.

56. *Ibid.*, 225–29.

57. The solution of a judgment for rewards was anticipated by the lecture of Kühl (D. Ernst Kühl, *Rechtfertigung auf Grund Glaubens und Gericht nach den Werken bei Paulus* [Königsberg i. Pr.: Wilh. Koch, 1904]). It is sometimes mentioned in popular-level biblical studies. See, e.g., the note on 2 Cor. 5:10 in the Scofield Study Bible (1917 ed.): “The judgment of the believer’s works, not sins, is in question here. These have been atoned for, and are ‘remembered no more forever’ . . . but every work must come into judgment. . . . The result is ‘reward’ or ‘loss’ (of the reward), ‘but he himself shall be saved.’ . . . This judgment occurs at the return of Christ.” See also Robert N. Wilkin’s essay “Christians Will Be Judged according to Their Works at the Rewards Judgment, But Not at the Final Judgment,” in *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment*, ed. Alan P. Stanley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013) (forthcoming[ED: This will likely have been released by the time the book goes to press.]). Thanks to Josh Kessler for sending me a republication copy of this book.

REVISED VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION

Scholars who endorsed the two previous solutions generally assumed that the Protestant reading of justification by faith in Paul was correct. From this assumption, they sought to explain how the theme of judgment according to works cohered with such a view of justification. However, several scholars have suggested that the tension arises from the Protestant reading of Paul rather than from Paul's theology itself.

In 1931, Floyd Filson, following the suggestion of Paul Wernle, argued that justification by faith in Paul only refers to forgiveness for prebaptismal sins.⁵⁸ The concept of divine recompense is not merely a remnant of Jewish theology but persists in Paul's own theology in three ways: First, the recompense principle persists for unbelievers, who will be condemned according to their works. Second, the recompense principle persists in Paul's teaching about the atonement in that "Jesus has accepted the punishment which according to the recompense principle men deserved." Third, the recompense principle persists in Paul for believers because Paul "never states that the benefits of the death of Christ avail for sins committed after baptism."⁵⁹ This third point explains the tension between justification and judgment in Paul: Justification by faith applies only to the Christian's life before conversion, and judgment according to works applies to the Christian's life after conversion.⁶⁰

Chris VanLandingham's recent dissertation, published in 2006, has offered a solution to the tension that is similar to Filson's.⁶¹ His book was written as a critique of E. P. Sanders's thesis; Sanders argued that the pattern of Jewish religion is one of grace—one enters the covenant through election, and obedience to the law functions only as a means of staying within the covenant. VanLandingham argued against Sanders that patterns of religion should be

58. Paul Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1897). For a concise summary of Wernle's argument, see T. L. Carter, *Paul and the Power of Sin: Redefining "Beyond the Pale,"* SNTSMS 115 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7–8. Wernle argued that after baptism, Paul expects sinless perfection among his Christian communities, but Filson did not follow Wernle on this point. Note that Wetter, Braun, and Matern had all considered and rejected Wernle's approach (Wetter, *Vergeltungsgedanke bei Paulus*, 102; Braun, *Gerichtsgedanke und Rechtfertigungslehre*, 27–28, 64, 85–87; Matern, *Gerichtes bei Paulus*, 97, 121).

59. Floyd Filson, *St. Paul's Conception of Recompense* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1931), 14–16.

60. One should note, however, that eternal life according to Filson is both grace *and* recompense, for he argues that God's grace continues after baptism in that Christ is the Christian's intercessor (Rom. 8:34; cf. 5:10) (*ibid.*, 17). Filson also argued for the idea of degrees of reward at the judgment (*ibid.*, 115), but this was not his solution to the tension.

61. Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006). This is the published form of his University of Iowa dissertation.

defined by the end point of final judgment. From this perspective, behavior determines one's eternal destiny in Second Temple Judaism. Obedience is not only the condition of salvation but also the cause of salvation.⁶² Similarly, Paul "believes that deeds not only affect one's eternal destiny, but form the ultimate criterion for determining one's eternal destiny at the Last Judgment."⁶³ To VanLandingham, justification by faith is a mistranslated phrase and a misunderstood concept—it does not mean "to declare righteous" but "to make righteous," and it is not an anticipation of the verdict of the final judgment but a making righteous at the time of conversion. Like Filson, VanLandingham argues that the death of Christ avails only for preconversion sins.

In contrast with VanLandingham, many scholars have adopted Sanders's insights on Judaism and developed what is known as the new perspective on Paul. This perspective offers a revision of the Protestant understanding of justification by faith apart from works of the law. To these scholars, works of the law focus on Jewish boundary markers, which separate Jews from Gentiles. Paul's critique of Judaism is not that it is legalistic, that Jews try to earn their salvation through obedience to the law. Rather, his critique of Judaism is that it is ethnocentric, that Jews limit salvation only to those who are circumcised, practice Sabbath, and follow the food laws.⁶⁴

Kent Yinger, in 1999, was the first to thoroughly apply the insights of Sanders to the problem of judgment in Paul.⁶⁵ His work was also the first thorough examination of the judgment motif in pre-Pauline Jewish sources, surveying the motif in the Jewish Scriptures, intertestamental literature, and then in Paul. Yinger found that the theme of judgment according to works is widespread in Judaism,⁶⁶ and he concluded that Paul's soteriological framework is very similar to Judaism—both have a unitary view of human deeds rather than an atomistic view of works; both are concerned with one's "way," not with perfect obedience.⁶⁷ Differences include the replacement of Torah with

62. *Ibid.*, 66–67.

63. *Ibid.*, 175.

64. The contours of the new perspective on Paul are now well known. For an excellent summary, see Stephen Westerholm, "The 'New Perspective' at Twenty-Five," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol.2, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 1–38.

65. Travis had earlier adopted the proposal of Sanders, but this perspective did not really have bearing upon his basic thesis (see Stephen H. Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God: Divine Retribution in the New Testament* [Basingstoke, UK: Marshall Pickering, 1986], 14, 61).

66. For a helpful summary, see the appendix, which lists every occurrence of the motif (Yinger, *Judgment According to Deeds*, 295–98).

67. *Ibid.*, 284–85, 288.

Christ as the “defining event of electing grace,” and a greater emphasis on the Spirit’s work in enabling obedience.⁶⁸ Regarding the problem of justification and judgment, Yinger found no theological tension between justification and judgment in Paul. The only tension is an existential tension when Christians encounter Paul’s warnings.⁶⁹

Yinger’s conclusion that there is no theological tension between the themes in Paul is based on the revised view of justification adopted by other new perspective scholars. He explains this view of justification in his examination of judgment in Rom. 2:6–11 and 4:4–5: To Yinger, Paul does not speak of perfect obedience to the law in either Romans or Galatians. The phrase “works of the law” in Paul does not refer to an obedience that earns righteousness but to an obedience that distinguishes Jews from Gentiles. Paul does not make a hypothetical argument in Romans 2.⁷⁰ Most fundamentally, Paul does not argue against Jewish presumption or works righteousness in Romans 2, but rather against Jewish reliance on covenantal privileges.⁷¹ Finally, Yinger argued that Paul’s “rather shocking language of belief in ‘the one who justifies the ungodly’ was not meant by Paul to overturn a fundamental biblical axiom, but to hint at Abraham’s lack of crucial law-works at the time of his believing in Genesis 15:6.” By “law-works” Yinger means “works crucial to Jewish identity.”⁷² Thus Yinger’s explanation of the tension built on the revised view of justification suggested by the new perspective on Paul, a perspective that alleviates the tension between justification by faith and judgment according to works.

TOWARD A CONSENSUS?

An interesting feature cuts across the various solutions to tension between justification and judgment in Paul. Many scholars continued to appeal to the traditional language of Protestant theology to explain the role of Christian good works and the final judgment. For example, Synofzik concluded the last page of his study by arguing that judgment and justification are integrated in Paul because faith manifests itself in works.⁷³ This conclusion was really an alternate solution to his own solution to the problem. Watson, who built on the work of

68. *Ibid.*, 288–89.

69. *Ibid.*, 291.

70. The hypothetical reading of the positive recompense in Romans 2 seems to have originated in the comments of Melancthon and Calvin on Rom. 2:13 (see ch. 8). It is adopted by many but not all scholars who follow the traditional Protestant understanding of justification.

71. Yinger, *Judgment according to Deeds*, 166–81.

72. *Ibid.*, 185–86.

Synofzik, critiqued his study at this very point: Although Synofzik claimed that justification and judgment are incoherent in Paul's thought because judgment is only a *Argumentationsmittel*, his conclusion just a few pages later argued that they are actually coherent and integrated by the relationship of faith and works.⁷⁴ This was an appeal to the explanations offered by earlier Protestant theologians.

Mattern similarly appealed to the relationship between faith and works in order to solve the tension between justification and judgment. She distinguished Romans 2 from other judgment texts addressed to Christians. Most of Paul's judgment texts speak of a judgment over *how* the Christian is a Christian, that is, a judgment for degrees of reward based upon how one lives the Christian life. But Romans 2 speaks of a judgment over *whether* the Christian is a Christian. In most of Paul's judgment texts, bad works do not lead to condemnation. However, in Romans 2 the bad work does lead to condemnation.⁷⁵ This condemnation is rooted in a loss of faith, for "if the good work is absent, then faith is also absent."⁷⁶ Thus Mattern explained the tension between justification and judgment in Romans 2, not by appealing to degrees of reward, but by appealing to the relationship between faith and works. The one who is justified by faith will do the good work. Similarly, at the end of her monograph, she speaks of the "judgment over the Christian-being of the Christian."⁷⁷ She observed that the Christian community has broken away from

73. "Doch handelt es sich hier um einen Glauben, der sich durch die Liebe als wirksam erweist (Gal 5, 6) und der die Verantwortlichkeit des Christen für sein Leben in der Rechenschaft vor dem künftigen Richter nicht überflüssig macht" (ibid., 109).

74. Watson, "Justified by Faith; Judged by Works," 212. In response, Watson suggests that the way forward is to understand that the tension between different types of discourse in Paul are due to different audiences. The warnings of a judgment according to works address only one kind of audience—"Christians whose faith has degenerated to a false security . . . those who are presuming on God's grace" (ibid., 220). Watson explains these different types of address through the dialectical nature of Christian preaching: "After the gospel the law speaks once more, but after the law the gospel speaks again anew" (This is Watson's translation of Wilfried Joest, *Gesetz und Freiheit: Das Problem des Tertius Usus Legis*, 4th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968], 185, in Watson, "Justified by Faith; Judged by Works," 219.) Watson does not conclude with Joest that the unity of justification and judgment remains a mystery of God (i.e., we cannot explain its coherence). Still, it seems difficult to maintain a coherent Pauline theology with Watson's dialectical approach. A similar dialectical approach is found in Pregeant, who uses a process hermeneutic to explain the tension through an ongoing dialectic (Russell Pregeant, "Grace and Recompense: Reflections on a Pauline Paradox," *JAR* 47 [1979]: 73–96).

75. Mattern, *Gerichtes bei Paulus*, 156–57; 179.

76. "Fehlt das gute Werk, dann fehlt auch der Glaube" (ibid., 179).

77. Ibid., 193–211. Interestingly, Synofzik criticizes Mattern for giving up on the justification of the ungodly and proposing a synergistic solution (*Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen*, 11–12).

sin and grows in doing good, a good connected with Paul's expectation of blamelessness on the last day. This blamelessness, however, is not the ground of the final judgment.⁷⁸

Finally, Yinger drew on the thesis of Heiligenthal that "*works* in the New Testament possess above all the character of a sign; that is, they reveal the inner reality of the person to others and to God. Functioning thus, they are assessed more positively in the New Testament than the traditional Protestant rejection of 'works righteousness' would lead one to assume."⁷⁹ He concludes that obedience is a condition for final justification in that it is "the *necessary manifestation* of that which has already been obtained and assured through faith."⁸⁰ While Yinger's understanding of justification was different from the traditional Protestant view, his description of works as the necessary manifestation of faith was very similar to the traditional solution. Thus, like Synofzik and Mattern, Yinger essentially adopted the traditional Protestant explanation that works are the fruit and evidence of justifying faith.

METHOD FOR THE STUDY

My study will examine each passage in Romans in which the theme of divine judgment according to works plays a prominent role in Paul's argument: 1:18–32 (chapter 2); 2:1–29 (chapter 3); 3:1–8 (chapter 4); 3:9–20 (chapter 5); and 14:1–23 (chapter 6). The meaning of the motif in each passage will be examined along four lines: the agent of judgment, the action of judgment, the ground of judgment, and the object of judgment. I will use the traditional tools of historical, grammatical, and theological exegesis, and I will interact with current scholarship on Romans as well as the history of interpretation of the letter.⁸¹

This study will also examine the rhetorical purpose, or function, of the judgment motif in each passage. It will not be a rhetorical-critical study that uses the categories of the ancient rhetorical handbooks, for this is beyond my ability. Rather, I will simply attempt to answer the question, What is Paul trying

78. Mattern, *Gerichtes bei Paulus*, 210.

79. Translated by Yinger, *Judgment According to Deeds*, 160–61. For the original, see Roman Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung der menschlichen Taten im Frühjudentum, Neuen Testament und Frühchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), preface.

80. Yinger, *Judgment According to Deeds*, 289–90.

81. All translation of the Greek New Testament, Septuagint, and Hebrew Bible will be my own. My exegesis will interact extensively with scholarship on Romans, as well as scholarship on judgment in Paul. I should note that I have made a point of understanding the classic readings of Romans through the commentaries of Origen, Aquinas, and Calvin before diving into the current discussions. Many thanks to Ron Huggins for directing me to an English translation of Aquinas's commentary on Romans.

to *do* when he speaks of divine judgment in each passage? In a series of lectures given at Oxford and Harvard, J. L. Austin observed that words can function as deeds in themselves.⁸² This insight developed into what is now known as speech-act theory. Kevin Vanhoozer explains: “The great discovery of the twentieth-century philosophy of language . . . is precisely the *speech-act*. After a century or so of detailed analysis of sense, predication, and reference, Anglo-American philosophers discovered the ‘illocution,’ namely, the notion that we *do* something in speaking. To speak is not simply to utter words but to ask questions, issue commands, make statements, express feelings, request help, and so forth. Sometimes simply saying something makes it so: ‘I now pronounce you man and wife.’”⁸³ This study will not be a technical application of speech-act theory.⁸⁴ But it will attempt to follow Austin’s fundamental insight. I will ask “what is Paul *doing* with the theme of judgment?” And I will seek to answer this question from the text of Romans itself.

Further, I will attempt to explain the function of the motif in light of the purpose of the letter. Currently, there is no consensus about “the Romans debate,” the debate over the purpose of Romans. Here I will simply state my position, which I hope to defend elsewhere.⁸⁵ I believe Paul indicates his primary purpose in the paragraph leading to what is traditionally identified as the letter’s thesis statement (Rom. 1:8-17), and in the opening words of his conclusion, which I call the letter’s purpose statement (Rom. 15:14-16). Because Paul had not yet had an opportunity to visit Rome, he wrote to remind the Roman Christians of the gospel of God, that is, to preach his gospel and its implications via a letter to Rome.⁸⁶ Behind his reminder was his vocation as the apostle to the Gentiles, a calling that included those living in the heart of the Gentile world. The reason he wrote his reminder at this particular time was likely to prepare for his future visit, to gain support for his upcoming mission

82. The William James Lectures delivered by Austin at Harvard in 1955 have been reproduced in J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

83. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 63.

84. Not all agree about how to develop the details of Austin’s argument. See David Gorman, “The Use and Abuse of Speech-Act Theory in Criticism,” *Poetics Today* 20 (1999): 93–119.

85. I have written an article on this topic, which I hope to publish soon. It is tentatively titled “Rom. 15:15-16 and the Purpose of Romans.”

86. So, L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 164; and J. A. D. Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. A. Jervis and P. Richardson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), 366.

to Spain (see 15:14–33), and to iron out disputes between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome (see 14:1–15:13). In light of this purpose, we should expect Paul to write about the final judgment both to explain his gospel and to address the implications of his gospel.

The last two chapters of the book will attempt to answer important questions about the interpretation of the judgment motif in Romans—namely, How does it relate to justification in the argument of Romans (chapter 7)? and how can we explain the Gentiles in Romans 2 who fulfill the law and receive a positive verdict at the judgment (chapter 8)? These chapters will prepare the way for my conclusion, which will attempt to synthesize the study and address some of the issues raised in this introduction.