

The Letter of Jude as a Testimony of Early Christian Prophecy of Divine Judgment and the Question of Prophetic Power in a Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue

Christian Blumenthal

Prophets exercise immense power as they claim to speak on behalf of God. At times they even go so far as to announce a judgment in the name of God. A largely neglected literary testimony of the early Christian Prophecy of Judgment is the Letter of Jude.¹ In Jude 11, for example, the author expresses a woe oracle against his opponents: οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Κάϊν ἐπορεύθησαν καὶ τῇ πλάνῃ τοῦ Βαλαάμ μισθοῦ ἐξεχύθησαν καὶ τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ τοῦ Κόρε ἀπώλοντο². This verse stands in the tradition of prophetic pronouncements of judgment and woe oracles in the Old Testament. In such oracles as in Isa. 1:4³; 10:1 or Jer. 22:13, the interjection woe functions as an announcement of doom, because

1 Luz, "Stages of Early Christian Prophetism," 161, regards early Christian Prophecy as "a complex phenomenon far from all uniformity" (more detailed *ibid.*, 161–178); as additional exemplary contributions concerning research of early Christian prophecy, see only Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie*, especially for 1 Cor. 12–14; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*; Gillespie, *The First Theologians* (with a focus on Paul) as well as the collective volume: Joseph Verheyden, Korinna Zamfir, and Tobias Nicklas, eds., *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*.

I developed the following considerations together with a previously published study on the subject of Jude's opponents: Blumenthal, "Ein prophetisches Gerichtswort." The observations in sections 1 and 2 above are essentially based on this work and my book Blumenthal, *Prophezie und Gericht*, without me identifying them always in detail. Since both the form-critical considerations and the reflections on the prophetic claim build the basis for my development of a dialogue option in this essay, I present these observations here in the required compression and do not point only to my previous works. Furthermore, it is the first time that I present them in English: I would like to thank Britta Fernandes and Lucie Schüssler (Bonn) very much for the translation of my article.

2 Bauckham, *Jude*, 77, as follows: "Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain, they plunged into Balaam's error for profit, and through the controversy of Korah they perished."

3 See also the references in Beuken, *Jesaja*, 1, 71–72. With woe oracles such as in Isa. 1:4 it can be spoken of prophetic form of speech "die das kommende Gericht mit einer Sphäre des Todes als unvermeidlicher Konsequenz unmoralischen Verhaltens umgibt" (*ibid.*, 71).

its uttering means as much as fear of death, like the proclamation of the judgment of JHWH.⁴

On this background, the woe oracle that Jude calls upon his opponents implies their condemnation in the Final Judgment. In the author's eyes they have definitely failed; they will perish (φθείρονται) and meet their death (ἀπώλοντο). Thus, Jude announces to them nothing less than their exclusion from eschatological salvation. According to Jude 13, their fate is not salvation but eternal darkness (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους εἰς αἰῶνα τετήρηται).

Those first form-critical based impressions give the impetus to pose the question of the prophetic dimension of Jude's letter in a systematic way. It becomes clear that form-critical observations alone are not sufficient for a comprehensive answer to this question.⁵ They rather provide a first important track which is to be followed in section 1. However, a complete answer to the question about the prophetic dimension of the Letter of Jude can only be achieved by broadening the perspective. This broadening is carried out in section 2 and leads beyond the Letter of Jude. In this section, I include the Pauline task outline of early Christian prophecy in 1 Cor. 14:24–25 in my considerations from a heuristic perspective. By this inclusion, it can be sounded out for the Letter of Jude to what extent Jude only receives specific prophetic form elements (e.g., woe oracle) *or* really makes a prophetic claim by adopting such form elements. Section 3 prepares the observations made on the Letter of Jude for a Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue in general and explores a starting point for a Christian-Islamic dialogue on prophetic announcements of punishment in particular. Section 4 finally addresses the overarching question of the immense and ambivalent power that is inextricably linked to the claim to anticipate divine judgments. I profile the open question of the exercise of prophetic power in the Bible and the Qur'an as a central common question of a Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

1 Thesis to the Letter of Jude and the Form-Critical Approach

My thesis on the Letter of Jude is: *through the appearance of his opponents in the fellowship meals, Jude sees the salvific integrity of his addressees as highly*

4 Cf. Zobel, s.v. "hōj," 387.

5 On this level, however, remains Frey, *The Letter of Jude and the Second Letter of Peter*, 104. He infers the prophetic claim directly from the use of the prophetic form of speech in v.11: "Judas' announces the judgment of the opponents in a prophetic style and with a prophetic claim."

endangered. This assessment of the situation causes him to settle the score so sharply with his opponents. His 'reckoning', however, is not exhausted in a massive polemic but culminates in the prophetic announcement of the exclusion of his opponents from the eschatological salvation. Jude wants this prophetic announcement to be understood as legitimate anticipation of the divine judgment. Jude sees himself legitimized, to uncover the inner self of his opponents from a divine perspective. If we follow this track, Jude fulfils with his letter the specific task which Paul sets out in 1 Cor. 14:24–25 as a task of early Christian prophecy.⁶

I begin the elaboration of this thesis with form-critical considerations: for Frank-Lothar Hossfeld there are, regardless of the individual character of each Old Testament prophet, some persistent core areas of prophetic proclamation. Among these, he counts, for example, the proclamation of judgment and the announcement of salvation.⁷ The 'bipartite word of judgment' (*zweiteiliges Gerichtswort*) could be regarded as the prophetic main form of speech, in which the analysis of the present is connected with the announcement of the future reaction of God.⁸ These two parts are internally connected by the fact that the analysis of the present (= accusation) substantiates the statement of the future (= pronouncement of judgment) and makes it comprehensible.⁹

The bipartite nature of the prophetic word of judgment with the assignment of *future proclamation* and *analysis of the present* also determines the structure of a group of prophetic woe oracles.¹⁰ Woe oracles are documented from early pre-exilic prophecy to the Jewish apocalyptic. Such oracles are often built with the interjections אִי ('ôj) and הִי (hôj)¹¹ (in the LXX: οὐαί). These two

6 Cf. already my considerations: Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*; in more detail Blumenthal, "Ein prophetisches Gerichtswort" (with special attention to the question of Jude's opponents).

7 Cf. Hossfeld, "Propheten, Prophetie," 630.

8 Cf. *ibid.*, 630; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 92. ("The most common type of prophetic oracle in the OT is the announcement of judgment") or Schmidt, *Einführung in das Alte Testament*, 191. For Schmidt, the actual prophetic speech form can be found "in der Zukunftsankündigung, sei es Drohung oder Verheißung, einschließlich deren Begründung".

9 See for the last aspect just Schmidt, *Einführung in das Alte Testament*, 191. Just because of the explanation 'the hearer can recognise damnation as a punishment for their guilt'.

10 While Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, 136–37, calls the woe oracle a "Variante" of the prophetic word of judgment, Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, 186, or Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle*, 48f., remain more sceptical: "[I]t retains at the same time a considerable formal independence from the prophetic Gerichtswort" (*ibid.*, 49); see recently (according to his own statement as a continuation of Westermann's analyses) from a linguistic perspective: Hoyt, "Discourse Analysis of Prophetic Oracles," 158–61.

11 Conversely, however, אִי ('ôj) and הִי (hôj) are not consistently translated with οὐαί (see only Ezek. 24:6 with וָאִי for אִי).

interjections are to be differentiated in their meaning. *אוי* ('ôj) often introduces a threatening or reproaching word (*Droh- oder Scheltwort*) which expresses the guilt of individuals or a community, e.g. the guilt of Jerusalem in Ezekiel:

Ezek. 16:23: After all your evil – woe, woe to you! Declares Lord YHWH – (Translation: M. Greenberg)

Ezek. 24:6: Now then, thus said Lord YHWH: Woe to the bloody city, Pot whose filth is in her, Whose filth will not be gone from her. Take her cuts out one by one; No lot has fallen on her. (Translation: M. Greenberg)

Although such threatening or reproaching words (*Droh- oder Scheltworte*) may still be specifically attached to an announcement of ill and doom (*Unheilsankündigung*), the interjection *אוי* ('ôj) already implies the idea of ill and doom:¹²

Jer. 48:46: Woe to you (*אוי לך*), O Moab! Doomed are you, the people of Chemosh; for (*כי*) your sons are taken into exile, and your daughters into captivity.

Elsewhere, “Woe” (*אוי*) can also be an expression of fear, whereas the transition between an expression of fear and of the woe oracle (*Klageruf*) can be fluent:

1 Sam. 4:8: Woe to us (*אוי לנו*)! Who can deliver us from the power of this mighty god?

Lam. 5:16: The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us (*אוי־נא לנו*), for we have sinned (*כי חטאנו*)!

The woe oracles formed with *אוי* ('ôj) must be distinguished contentwise and functionally from the oracles which are formed with *הוי* (hôj). Initially, *הוי* (hôj) is an exclamation of the lamentation for the dead (1 Kings 13:30¹³) and introduces a woe oracle in the prophecy (e.g. Amos 5:16). Syntactically, the *הוי* (hôj) is repeatedly accompanied by a participle, which is used to describe negative humane behavior:¹⁴

12 The often-added justifying sentence signals: The one to whom the *אוי* ('ôj) applies is facing 'quite generally the downfall, death, ruin' (cf. Zobel, s.v. “hôj,” 384).

13 Verbatim: He (the old prophet) buried him (that prophet who transgressed God's command) in his own grave, and it was mourned for him: Alas, my brother (*הוי אחי*)!

14 In the woe oracles constructed with *הוי* (hôj) the announcement of doom contained in the “woe” is usually substantiated by an added participle, noun or adjective. While the added participle paraphrases a negative humane behavior (see above), the assigned noun defines a group of people, whose negative behavior is at issue; see for the latter

Hab. 2:12: Woe (הוי) to him who builds (בנה) a town with blood, and founds a city on iniquity!

Because of its roots in the lamentation of the dead, the utterance of this prophetic woe (hōj) in such a syntactic construction (hōj + participle) is associated with the idea that ‘the germ of death is already inherent in a certain humane behavior’.¹⁵

Over time, the differences between אוי (’ōj) und הוי (hōj) have become partially blurred, so that אוי (’ōj) can also be found in prophetic threatening or reproaching words¹⁶ and some of the hōj-words are understood as a threat.¹⁷ Finally, the differences are completely leveled out in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Biblical text, since in the LXX both אוי (’ōj) and הוי (hōj) were translated in most cases with the same Greek interjection οὐαί.

Considering the functional diversity of the Old Testament woe oracles, the group of prophetic woe oracles mentioned at the beginning can be described more precisely. The members of this group correspond in their structure to the bipartite prophetic word of judgment: these woe oracles are composed of an interjection אוי (’ōj) or הוי (hōj) in the first member and a proof of guilt in the second member. Thereby the utterance of the woe receives ‘an announcement of calamity *in nuce*’¹⁸ and implies the idea of divine judgment.

In the light of these observations, the bipartite structure of the woe oracle in Jude 11¹⁹ becomes apparent. The οὐαί in Jude 11a is followed in Jude 11b by a sentence introduced with ὅτι (“because” / “for”). In this ὅτι-sentence Jude describes the behavior of his opponents using three Old Testament examples (Cain, Balaam, Korah).²⁰ This series of examples shows a climactic structure and runs towards the annihilation announcement ἀπώλοντο (“they have been

only Nah 3:1: Woe (הוי) to the bloody city (עיר), all full of lies and booty – no end to the plunder!

15 Cf. Wanke, “’ōj und Hōj,” 218.

16 Cf. Zobel, “s.v. ‘hōj,” 386.

17 Cf. Zobel, “s.v. ‘hōj,” 386.

18 Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, 137; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 97 speaks of the interjection woe as “an indefinite announcement of accusation that prefaces an accusation.”

19 If one wants to trace the arc from the Old Testament woe oracles to the woe oracle in Jude 11 more precisely, the woe oracles in early Jewish and early Christian literature require attention. In this regard I refer to my observations on οὐαί in the pseudepigraph scriptures in the Old Testament and the New Testament: Blumenthal, *Prophezie und Gericht*, 286–92.

20 Bauckham, *Jude*, 79–84, for example, comments in detail on the imagery in Jude 11b.

destroyed / they perished”) at the end of the verse.²¹ Despite this final chord, the ὅτι-sentence as a whole does not serve as an announcement of the future, but is primarily a description of behavior and proof of guilt. This proof of guilt substantiates (ὅτι) the woe pronounced immediately before, which represents a definite announcement of doom. Because of a behavior which, for Jude, corresponds to the way of Cain, the error of Balaam,²² and the rebellion of Korah, the opponents have been guilty before God. For them, the announcement of the οὐαί means an irrevocable announcement of doom, which, with the inclusion of the central prophecy of the Final Judgment in Jude 14–15, can be understood as an announcement of the condemnation in the Final Judgment.

If we extend the perspective of the prophetic woe oracle in Jude 11 to the entire main part of the letter in Jude 4–19,²³ we get the following impression: the interplay of present analysis and future announcement, which is characteristic of prophetic words of judgment and woe oracles, does not only determine the woe oracle in Jude 11, but the layout of Jude 4–19 as a whole. In these verses, the analysis of the present continuously alternates with a proof of guilt and an announcement of the future. This alternation determines essentially the content of the corpus of the letter. The woe oracle in Jude 11 contains *in nuce* what the surrounding verses further unfold and specify: the opponents have made themselves guilty by their denial of the divine ruling power in the sense of the accusation in the Final Judgment (cf. Jude 4b; 8–10; 11bc; 12–13; 16; 19) so that Jude can announce to them the final condemnation and eternal disaster (cf. Jude 4a;²⁴ 5–7; 11a; 11d; 13; 14–15; 17–18).²⁵

21 For Schreiner, *Jude*, 462. ἀπώλονται functions “as a prophetic aorist, communicating the certainty of the future destruction of the opponents.”

22 Cf. for Balaam in Jude 11 and especially in the Qur’an Tofigi, “The Qur’anic Reception of Balaam” (in this volume). Her observation that Balaam “becomes a character who chooses to be what he is” is in line with the Letter to Jude: Jude portrays Balaam acting on his own responsibility.

23 In these verses, the author repeatedly refers to his adversary. That is why this part of the letter is specifically mentioned here.

24 Verbatim: οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα (Bauckham, *Jude*, 28 translates: “who were long ago designated for this condemnation”; Schreiner, *Jude*, 433, reads: “whose condemnation was written about long ago”).

25 In detail: Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*, 134–45, 297–99.

2 The Letter of Jude as a Prophetic Anticipation of the Final Judgment on the Godless

An answer to the question of whether Jude merely adopted *prophetic forms of speech* in his letter or claimed to act as a prophet himself can be gained by considering early Christian prophecy. This broadening of perspective beyond the Letter of Jude to early Christian prophecy in general leads to 1 Cor. 12–14, more precisely to the Pauline determination of the relationship between prophecy and glossolalia in 1 Cor. 14:23–25.²⁶ In the following section, I include 1 Cor. from a heuristic perspective and not under the idea of any kind of literary dependence between 1Cor and the Letter of Jude.²⁷

In 1 Cor. 14:23–25 Paul seeks to prove the superiority of prophecy over glossolalia with two fictional examples, this time mainly because of the impression on externals:²⁸

Example 1 in 14:23

If then the whole church meets in one place and everyone speaks in tongues (πάντες λαλώσιν γλώσσαις) and outsiders or unbelievers (ιδιώται ἢ ἄπιστοι) come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind (ὅτι μαίνεσθε)? (Translation: J.A. Fitzmyer)

Example 2 in 14:24–25

²⁴ But if everyone prophesies (προφητεύωσιν) and some unbeliever or outsider (ἄπιστος ἢ ιδιώτης) comes in, he will be convinced by all and called to account by all (ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων):²⁵ the secrets of his heart will be laid bare (τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερά γίνονται), and so, falling down, he will worship God (προσκυνήσει τῷ θεῷ) and declare, God is truly in your midst (ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν). (Translation: J.A. Fitzmyer)

According to the first example, the glossolalia provokes a negative reaction in an uninformed or unbelieving person (ιδιώται ἢ ἄπιστοι) who joins the

²⁶ See also the note in Luz, “Die korinthische Gemeindepredigt im Kontext urchristlicher Prophetie,” 187: “Paulus unterscheidet zwar Prophetie von Zungenrede, und vor allem: er bewertet beides sehr verschieden. Trotzdem denke ich, dass *Prophetie und Zungenrede bei Paulus nicht toto coelo verschiedene Dinge* sind” (italics in original); see further as an overview of glossolalia in early Christianity: Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 433–37.

²⁷ According to Frey, *The Letter of Jude and the Second Letter of Peter*, 15, a “use of Pauline texts or other NT writings cannot be demonstrated” for Jude, “which of course does not rule out the possibility that the author or his addressees knew these texts”; cf. besides the question of literary dependence, the reflections on possible influences of Pauline theology on Jude *ibid.*, 44.

²⁸ Cf. Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 424.

meeting of the Christian communities. The one who joins expresses his negative attitude by asking about the sanity of those speaking in tongues (will they not say that you are out of your mind). The situation is quite different when externals (ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης) join such a meeting of the Christian communities in which the participants speak prophetically (πάντες προφητεύωσιν). For Paul, the prophetic speech of the community has a salutary effect²⁹ on the externals, resulting in them acclaiming God and acknowledging his presence in the assembly (ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν). Paul differentiates the process of prophetic speaking as ἐλέγχεται and ἀνακρίνεται. In research, it is disputed how offensive one should imagine these processes to be in concrete terms.³⁰ Despite different assessments on this question, the opinions mostly meet two very central basic assumptions: (a) The two process descriptions ἐλέγχεται and ἀνακρίνεται have juridical connotations.³¹ They denote convicting³² and judging. (b) In this prophetic process of conviction – Dieter Zeller speaks of a miraculous process³³ – the judgment of the *Kyrios* takes place.³⁴ This attribution of function is remarkable insofar as Paul in 1 Cor. 4:5 explicitly emphasizes the divine reservation of judgment: it is the task of the *Kyrios* at his *Parousia* to illuminate what is hidden in darkness and to manifest the resolutions of hearts (ὁς καὶ φωτίσει τὰ κρυπτὰ τοῦ σκοτόους καὶ φανερώσει τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν).³⁵ From this the admonition goes out to the Corinthians: do not judge anything before the time before the Lord comes (ὥστε μὴ πρὸ καιροῦ τι κρίνετε ἕως ἂν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος).

When the two statements in 1 Cor. 4:5 and 14:24–25 are considered together, the limited validity of 4:5 becomes clear. The call there not to judge does not

29 Cf. *ibid.*, 432.

30 For example: Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 336f., thinks in the direction of a direct confrontation between the approaching and the prophetic speakers. The prophecy “hält ihm in Form einer Gerichtsrede seine Sünden vor und fordert ihn zur Umkehr auf” (*ibid.*, 336); similarly e.g. also Sandnes, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 95, (“probably”); critical of the assumption of a direct confrontation are, for example, Merklein and Gielen, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 3, 193: “Doch wird man sich kaum vorstellen können, dass es sich um ein aktives, den Ungläubigen direkt ansprechendes Verfahrens seitens der Gemeinde gehandelt habe.”

31 See for many only: Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie*, 248; Sandnes, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 95, with note 515; Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 336, with note 515; Merklein and Gielen, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 3, 193; Li, *Paul's Teaching on the Pneumatika in 1 Corinthians 12–14*, 469.

32 Cf. for many now only Gardner, *1 Corinthians*: “‘to convict’ sees the best translation” von ἐλέγγω.

33 Cf. Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 432.

34 So e.g. also Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie*, 249; or Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 156.

35 On the theocentric foundation Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 176.

apply when such judging is carried out by a prophet. The prerequisite for a legitimate anticipation of divine judgment by prophets is the conviction that prophets participate in the divine knowledge of the heart. Because of this participation, they are able – from the overarching perspective of the *Kyrios* – to reveal the hidden things in the hearts of the externals in a real and legally effective way.³⁶

Turning to the Letter of Jude in the horizon of these reflections on prophetic judicial action, I propose the following thesis: the task of Early Christian prophecy outlined in 1 Cor. 14:24–25, namely the prophetic anticipation of divine judgment, is carried out by Jude in his letter. Here are six observations:

1. In 1 Cor. 14:25 the juridically connoted verb ἐλέγχω denotes an activity of the early Christian prophets: the Spirit-inspired prophets³⁷ can convict an unbeliever and reveal the hidden things of his heart.
2. In the Letter of Jude this verb ἐλέγχω, connected in 1 Cor. with the prophets as subject, occurs in the midst of the central judgment statement in Jude 14–15.³⁸
3. The final judicial ἐλέγχω by the *Kyrios* aims at convicting the ungodly men (ἄσεβεις) and pronouncing a fair judgment. Since the *Kyrios* himself pronounces the judgment, it is objective, just, and binding. Paul expresses a comparable expectation in 1 Cor. 4:5.
4. In the horizon of the expectation of the Final Judgment, Jude makes every effort to identify and convict his opponents as ungodly men (ἄσεβεις), for example in Jude 10.12.16.³⁹ Via this path, from Jude's perspective, he legally anticipates the final judicial ἐλέγχω and considers himself in a position to anticipate the divine judgment.
5. The aim of the prophetic process of convicting (= ἐλέγχω) differs quite seriously depending on the circle of persons to be convicted: if the ἐλέγχω in 1 Cor. aims at the conversion of the unbelievers or externals and their acclamation of God, in the Letter of Jude a conversion of the convicted is no longer at issue, but the identification of the opponents as ungodly men (ἄσεβεις).⁴⁰

36 See on the topic of the κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας (the hidden things of the heart) Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*, 307–11.

37 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 522, for instance, speaks of the “Spirit inspired preaching” of the early Christian prophets in 1 Cor. 14:24–25.

38 In comparison with 1 Cor. 14, however, a change of subject has taken place, since in the Letter of Jude the *Kyrios* himself has taken the place of the prophets in 1 Cor. 14.

39 In detail on the functional variety of nominal sentences of the form: “οὗτός ἐστιν ...” in the New Testament: Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*, 325–33, especially 332.

40 Reflections on the prophetic dimension of the exhortations in Jude 22–23 have been presented, for example, by Lockett, “Objects of Mercy in Jude.”

6. The prophetic judicial convicting action has an exhortatory function in 1 Cor. as well as in Jude (1 Cor. 14:31; Jude 3–4. 22–23).⁴¹

3 Processing the Exegetical Observations on the Letter of Jude for a Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue

Now I process my exegetical insight in the prophetic dimension of the Letter of Jude into the discussion on a *Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue*. For this purpose, I first look at the sub-area of Jewish-Christian dialogue, more precisely: at the early Jewish-Christian relationship (early Judaism – early Christianity). This focus refers back to my remarks in section 1 where I could demonstrate how seamlessly the Letter of Jude follows (early) Jewish prophecy of judgment and also formally feeds on this tradition. The linguistic form of the bipartite word of judgment with its elements of reproof and announcement of the future, so typical for Jewish Biblical prophecy, determines the content of the Letter of Jude over long stretches. Thus, in Jude 4–19, statements about the behavior of the opponents and announcements of divine judgment consistently alternate. In the (also structural) center of this section of the letter in verse 11, Jude pronounces the woe oracle against his opponents that is firmly anchored in Jewish prophecy, thus announcing their condemnation in the Final Judgment and their exclusion from salvation. He refers to the biblical figures Cain, Balaam, and Korah for the direct justification of this woe oracle.

If we now look at the sub-area of Christian-Islamic dialogue, the observations made above still require a final reappraisal in order to make them compatible with this dialogue. In this reappraisal, it would be too short-sighted to focus on the history of the reception of the Letter of Jude. Rather, it is necessary to go much further and to think from the literarily tangible form of early Christian prophecy of judgment in the sense of a prophecy of conviction (ἐλέγχω) and revelation of the hiddenness of the human heart (κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας). The Letter of Jude, so polemical and cryptic, but at the same time artful,⁴² is the practical realization of a specific task of early Christian prophecy which

41 To further secure the assumption that Jude acts as an Early Christian prophet, the perspective must be extended beyond Jude and 1 Cor. to the field of Early Christian prophecy as a whole: See Blumenthal, "Ein prophetisches Gerichtswort," 87–92; Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*, 302–70.

42 The preceding characterization of the Letter of Jude follows in parts Grünstäudl, "Jesus in Sodom," here 237.

Paul looks at theoretically in 1 Cor. 14:24–25: the decisive characteristic of this variant of early Christian prophecy consists in the claim to be able to uncover the hiddenness of the human heart and to convict people accordingly.⁴³ The condition of the possibility for this prophetic action is the selective participation of the prophets in the divine knowledge of the heart.

While conviction and disclosure can be identified equally in Paul (theoretically) and Jude (practically) as the heart of this variant of prophetic speech, the two theologians associate different objectives with this speech. For Paul, the prophetic disclosure of what is hidden in the human heart aims at praising God on the part of the convicted (1 Cor. 14:25); Jude is quite different: he identifies his opponents as ἄσεβεις and announces to them definite and irrevocable final condemnation. In his eyes, their condemnation has long been written down for condemnation and is rightfully made public through him. As a prophet, Jude knows himself legitimized to anticipate the judgment actually reserved for the *Kyrios* in his *Parousia*.

In light of this biblical background, the following questions arise for a Christian-Islamic dialogue in a Theology of Prophecy:

1. To what extent do Qur'an and Islam know variants of prophetic speech which claim a participation in the divine knowledge of the heart?
2. To what extent do Qur'anic and Islamic prophecy share the idea that a prophet can reveal what is hidden in the human heart and is capable of (judicial) conviction?
3. And, if applicable, to what extent does such prophetic conviction form the basis for the pronouncement of a divine judgment against a certain group of opponents?

Methodologically, when dealing with these questions, it is advisable to think essentially from the point of view of the matter, content, and conceptual field and less from a specific terminology. The key point is a judicially connoted, i.e., criterion-guided, righteous examination, uncovering, and conviction.⁴⁴

43 For Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 452, prophecy has the task "Verborgenes aufzudecken, ob es in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart oder Zukunft liegt" ("to uncover what is hidden, whether it is in the past, present, or future"). In this way, it seems possible for him to reconcile two seemingly different functions of early Christian prophecy: "Ansage des Bevorstehenden und Enthüllung begangener Sünden (14,24)" ('announcement of the forthcoming and revelation of sins committed').

44 The connotation of the just and righteous stems from the fact that this convicting is based on a punctual participation in the divine heart knowledge. From this, this convicting can claim to be appropriate, just and fair.

While the term ἐλέγχω in the Greek biblical text of Paul and Jude equally serves to bring up such a conviction, a random check in two early Arabic Bible translations already leads to the realization that comparably consistent terminology is found neither in Mount Sinai Arabic 151⁴⁵ nor in Vatican Arabic 13, for example.⁴⁶ This finding is hardly surprising since the Syriac tradition already follows different paths. A look at 1 Cor. 14:24 is sufficient to illustrate this ‘inconsistency’, or, to put it positively: the different translation possibilities:

ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων

He will be convicted and called to account by all.

Peshitta

ܠܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ

He will be examined by all of you and he will be rebuked by all of you.

Harclean

ܠܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢ

He will be reproved by all of them and he will be judged by all of them.

Sinai Arabic 151

فانه يفتش منكم اجمعين ويوبخ من جميعكم

He will be examined by all of you and he will be censured / rebuked by all of you.

Vatican Arabic 13

فيبتك من كلكم ويفحص من كلكم

He will be rebuked by all of you and he will be searched / explored / examined by all of you.

45 Mount Sinai Arabic 151 contains, among other things, the Arabic translation and interpretation of the Pauline Epistles. According to a colophon (ibid. f.186^v–187^r), the author of this translation and interpretation is the Syriac-speaking theologian Bišr ibn al-Sirri. There Bišr states that he completed this work in Damascus in Ramadan of the year 253 A.H. (= 867 A.D.); in detail on the extremely complex history of this ancient Arabic manuscript: Zaki, “A Dynamic History.”

46 According to the colophon at the end of the codex, Vatican Arabic 13 originally contained an Arabic translation of the Psalms, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Catholic Epistles, and the Pauline Epistles (a transcription of this colophon in Schulthess, *Les Manuscrits*, 188. Of these texts, only parts of the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles are preserved today. Taking into account palaeographical aspects, this manuscript with its “caractère unique” (ibid., 166) can be dated to the turn of the ninth century AD (according to Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 114f. and 118. A detailed overview of the working time windows and activities of the various scribes of Vatican Arabic 13 is given by Schulthess, *Les Manuscrits*, 180–196, a summary at 195f.

After determining the methodological starting point from which the questions raised above can be answered, I would like to conclude by identifying an entry point for answering these questions. If we search in the Qur'an for traces of whether the Prophet Mohammad claims to be able to selectively anticipate the divine Final Judgment,⁴⁷ we may find them in Q 111⁴⁸ and Q 85:4–6. In Q 111, the prophet announces eschatological doom in fire⁴⁹ to Abū Lahab and to his wife a rope around her neck.⁵⁰ Who this Abū Lahab is, however, is highly disputed. In Islamic exegesis, this man is repeatedly identified as Muḥammad's uncle 'Abd al-'Uzzā; for Nicolai Sinai, however, it is "by no means to be ruled out" that "the sura was not originally directed against a specific individual, but merely describes the afterlife of a prototypical damned person, a 'man of flames'".⁵¹

An announcement of ill and doom is also encountered in Q 85:4–6: "Curse the people of the ditch (قتل أصحاب الأخدود), the fiercely burning fire (النار ذات الوقود), then when they squat on it (إذ هم عليها قعود)". The reference point of this announcement is determined differently. While Islamic exegetes such as Ibn Ishāq interpret this call in a historicizing way and think of the Christian martyrs of Nadjrān in the early sixth century A.D. when speaking of those sitting in the trenches of fire, Angelika Neuwirth represents an

47 According to Ghaffar, "Muhammad as a Prophet of Late Antiquity" (in this volume), the Qur'an denies "apocalyptic prophecies", but not "the possibility of prophecies *per se*." In my view, Jude does not claim apocalyptic knowledge about times, periods and deadlines, but knowledge about the character of his opponents. According to the New Testament in general, the knowledge of the coming key moment of "salvation history", namely the timing of the *Parousia*, is restricted (solely) to God (cf. the synoptic tradition in Mark 13:32 *parr*).

48 I am grateful to Zishan Ghaffar for pointing out this sura to me at our conference in Paderborn; I also thank him for his comments on the characteristics of the Qur'an's eschatological judgment sermon in the early Meccan suras (just below in the main text).

49 For Sinai it is "wenig überzeugend, Q 111 nicht als genuine Jenseitsbeschreibung gelten zu lassen, auch wenn der Text Motive der altarabischen Schmähdichtung aufgreift" (Chronological and Literary Critical Commentary on the Koran, part 1, The Early Meccan Suras, "Sura 111: The Palm Fibers [al-Masad]," translated and analyzed by Nicolai Sinai, in cooperation with Nora K. Schmid, using preparatory work by Angelika Neuwirth, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://corpuscoranicum.de/kommentar/index/sure/111/>).

50 At the beginning of the sura, ill and doom is pointedly announced: "Perdition shall be at the hands of Abū Lahab" (تبت يدا أبي لهب وتب). The announcement of ill and doom specifically about the hands (*yadā*) implies for Neuwirth, *Der Koran*. 1, 142. the idea of 'sozialer Entrechtung'; see further on the social implications of the depiction of the woman in Q 111:4–5; Neuwirth, *Der Koran*. 1, 143f.

51 According to Sinai, "Sura 111"; the expression Abū Lahab in the sense of father of flames is for Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 88, "kein eigentlicher Name", but an "uneigentliche Kunja" which "marks the one designated by it as doomed to hell" (cf. 78).

eschatological understanding. The curse call refers 'to contemporaries who are presented in advance as punished'.⁵² If we follow this eschatological interpretation and understand the words about the fiercely burning fire in Q 85:5 (النار ذات الوقود) as a statement about an eschatological fire punishment, the prophet announces with this curse final destruction to a part of his contemporaries described as people of the ditch (أصحاب الأخدود).⁵³

Taken together, the brief look at two early Meccan suras and their interpretation has given the following basic impression: in Qur'anic exegesis, both Q 111 and Q 85:4–6 are intensely debated as to what extent these two passages constitute an anticipatory judgment sermon. At the same time, it is highly controversial to what extent the announcement of ill and doom in Q 111 and Q 85:4–6 is to be referred to concrete persons or groups at all, since the eschatological judgment sermon of the Qur'an in the early Meccan suras proves to be transcendent and individualistic in sum.⁵⁴ The eschatological knowledge of the soul (علمت نفس) is revealed only after death. Consequently, it must be reckoned that the respective addressees of the announcement of ill and doom function admonitively as a prototypical group.⁵⁵

4 Prophecy of Divine Judgment and the Question of the Exercise of Prophetic Power as a Leading Question in a Theology of Prophecy in Dialogue

Having identified a possible starting point for a Christian-Islamic exchange on the prophecy of judgment, I conclude by addressing an overarching question

52 Cf. Neuwirth, *Der Koran*. 1, 334. (verbatim: "auf Zeitgenossen, die in Vorausblende als Bestrafte präsentiert werden"). The above sketch for discussion according to *ibid.* (there also more detailed information and evidence).

53 For the "conspicuous" expression: "Leute des Grabens" ("people of the trench") see only *ibid.*, 335.

54 Cf. in detail on early Qur'anic eschatology and its tradition-historical background Sinai, "The Eschatological Kerygma," 236–42.

55 Detailed on the paraenetic character of the thematization of judgment in early Qur'anic eschatology: *ibid.*, 226–32. According to him, the following applies: "[T]he foremost objective of the early Qur'an's announcements and descriptions of the Judgment and the hereafter is quite obviously not to inform but to inspire terror"; and on the linkage of a social, eschatological, and paraenetic dimension *ibid.* 228f.: "The intertwining of religious and social vices observed above is therefore ultimately due to the fact that, from the Qur'anic perspective, it is only the existential dread to which anticipation of the Judgment gives rise that enables man to overcome his innate love of possessions and fulfil the requirements of social solidarity."

that has accompanied my investigation between the lines all along. This question is equally relevant to prophecy, especially prophecy of divine judgment, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It arises immediately when the observations on the (presumed) usage of prophetic announcements of punishment in the Bible and Qur'an are reflected in the light of the guiding idea of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies:⁵⁶ It is the question of the exercise of power and authority by the prophets and thereby the establishment of strong asymmetrical dependency. Prophets like Jude claim nothing less than the competence to act on behalf of God or Christ and to announce doom to (specific) people from a divine perspective.⁵⁷ With other words: the Prophets present themselves to be legitimized by God to proclaim divine judgement in their texts, but at the same time it is they who control which of God's utterances are to be transmitted and used in their literary works, and in which ways.⁵⁸

The question of strong asymmetric dependency can be differentiated and made even more pressing: what are the prophetic announcements aimed at? Who are the intended addressees? What functions do these announcements fulfil with regard to the intended addressees (in the literal context)? How do the condemned come into view?

It is absolutely virulent to deal with such questions, as the prophecy of judgment is extremely susceptible to abuse due to its extensive claim to judge other people from a divine perspective: doesn't this claim always involve the danger of making the unavailable God available for one's own purposes?

A decisive key for dealing adequately with questions around power and dependency could be a communication-theoretical approach, which works with the following assumption: with their announcements of punishment, the prophets enter into a negotiation process with their recipients about claimed competence and conceded interpretative sovereignty. As immense as their claim to power is, the prophets are at the same time highly reliant

56 For orientation see, for example, Winnebeck et al., "The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency."

57 Early Christian prophets claim to be able to adequately anticipate divine conviction because of their partial participation in the divine knowledge of the heart (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5 and 14:24–25); Jude regards himself as Spirit-inspired: Jude and his addressees see to live in the certainty of having received the Holy Spirit. This is supported, for example, by the fact that the letter writer denies his opponents any possession of the Spirit (Jude 19) and calls on his addressees to pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20); furthermore, the end-time consciousness that shines through behind the letter points in this direction (in detail: Blumenthal, *Prophetie und Gericht*, 346–57).

58 Partly verbatim from Blumenthal, "The Power of Biblical Authors," 8.

on the recipients accepting this claim and regarding their announcements as binding.⁵⁹

The probability that the two parties in the communication process (prophet – recipients) approach a balance of power increases with the degree of independence of the recipients. The more independent and autonomous the recipients perceive themselves and the more this autonomy is experienced by the prophet, the greater is the power of the recipients to exercise a controlling function.⁶⁰ Although the real influence of the recipients can only be roughly calculated, nonetheless it has a power-limiting function that should not be underestimated. With this structural controlling, the recipients contribute to preserving the unavailability of God.

59 More details: Blumenthal, "The Power of Biblical Authors," 9–12.

60 See for the last two sentences *ibid*, 10.