

STAGES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN PROPHECY

ULRICH LUZ

Abstract. This article is a sketch of the history of early Christian prophecy from the beginnings till ca. 200, in three stages. Unlike many other authors I do not try to give my own definition of what “prophecy” might have been, but I concentrate on those ecstatic and revelatory experiences and public pronouncements that were interpreted by the early Christian authors as “prophecy”, and that means: in continuity to the biblical prophets. It is possible that Christian prophets played a considerable role in formulating words of the risen Jesus after Easter, but it is very difficult to prove that they identified themselves with the “I” of their exalted Lord. It is not advisable to make a sharp distinction between “apocalyptic” prophecy in the Apocalypse and hortatory and “paracletic” prophecy in the Pauline Churches. Neither in the first nor in the second century can a fundamental conflict between charismatic and institutional authority be observed.