

Parrhesia: The Development of the Meaning and Its Influence on the Christian Evangelization

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Abstract

This study aims to display the development of the meaning of parrhesia Παρρησία, which heavily influenced evangelization. Parrhesia is one of the most essential concepts in ancient Greek, and it added richness to the LXX and the New Testament. Parrhesia means eloquence, frankness, articulation, and freedom of speech. In daily life, parrhesia is related to the expression of somebody's mind (action de tout declarer, tout exprimer). Greek culture also denotes parrhesia as the political right to express somebody's mind. The concept of parrhesia also contains the aspect of freedom in using the language. Indeed, the Hellenic root of parrhesia sets the course of the meaning of the word in the Scripture. This paper is divided into three parts to have a solid grasp of the meaning of parrhesia and its influence on evangelization. The first elaborates on developing the meaning of parrhesia using Foucauldian discourse analysis. The second explains how the word is used in Scriptural text (LXX and the New Testament). Finally, the scriptural meaning of parrhesia is perceived in the context of evangelization and the Church's prophetic voices throughout history.

Keywords

Parrhesia, Greek Freedom of Speech, Truth, Evangelization

PARRHESIA IN THE HELLENIST CONTEXT

The Etymology of *Parrhesia*

Parrhesia (Παρρησία) originated from the Greek language, *παν* (*pan*: everything) and *ρῆσις* (*rhesis*: to say), *rhesis* *ῥήμα* (*rhema*: utterance). Generally, *parrhesia* means the right to utter everything in the democratic context of the polis of Athena.¹ An individual who freely states his conviction and the truth can be called a *parrhesiast*. A

¹ Stanley B. Marrow, "Parrhesia and The New Testament," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (July, 1982), 433.

parrhesiast is an individual who can demonstrate in himself a close relation between his words and deeds. Everybody might speak convincingly, yet one must walk the talk.

Parrhesia initially derived from the freedom to say anything – a guaranteed right of an Athenian. Nevertheless, throughout its development, the meaning undergoes a shifting towards a kind of moral virtue, or the character of the wise – friends of the gods, as said by Diogenes. Depending on the context, *Parrhesia* as a verb or noun can have political or interpersonal meanings. Even beyond those contexts, “*parrhesia*” is used as a language of friendship. The true *parrhesia* is friendly, noble, free of arrogance, free of disdain and condescension – which is the side effect of the freedom of speech. Aristoteles, the Epicureans, the Cynics, and the moralists add a connotation to the word *parrhesia*, i.e., the boldness which resembles the critical attitude towards others, sincerity towards close friends, and sweet-talking of a flatterer.²

In Greek civilization, *parrhesia* is generally related to five meanings. First, *parrhesia* is related to the frankness of saying everything in the heart and mind. Second, *parrhesia* is related to the truth. In almost all Greek classics, *parrhesia* always has a positive meaning, i.e. telling the truth. The speaker tells the truth with a conviction that he is telling the truth. A *parrhesiast* does not doubt the truth that he expresses. The expression of the truth assumes a certain moral character, i.e., he knows the truth, and he can convey this to the hearers.³

Third, *parrhesia* conveys a sense of danger or risk. In telling the truth, a *parrhesiast* always faces risks and perils. In Greek classics, a *parrhesiast* may risk his life, especially if he criticizes the vicious rulers. Even in personal interaction, a *parrhesiast* may risk friendship when he attempts to amend a friend’s misconduct. In this context, *parrhesia* conveys the meaning of criticism, admonishment, and advice to improve somebody’s behavior.⁴

Fourth, *parrhesia* is “a form of criticism, either towards another or towards oneself, but always in a situation where the speaker or confessor is in a position of

² Marrow, “Parrhesia and The New Testament”, 434

³ Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*, (Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at Berkeley, Oct-Nov. 1983), 2-3. Stable URL: https://www.foucault.info/s/pdf/On_Parrehesia_by_Foucault_1983.pdf. See also: Konrad Kebung, “Michel Foucault: *Parrhesia* (Truth-Telling) dan Care of The Self,” *DISKURSUS* 17, no. 1, April 2018, (STF Driyarkara: Jakarta, 2018), 5.

⁴ Foucault, “Discourse and Truth,” 4.

inferiority with respect to the interlocutor.”⁵ Fifth, *parrhesia* is seen as a duty or obligation. Telling the truth is considered a moral obligation of a *parrhesiast*. He is never pressured to speak his mind when facing somebody’s wrongdoing. No coercion leads a *parrhesiast* to tell the truth, yet his moral obligation prompts his audacity.

The Application of *Parrhesia* in the Greek Life

Parrhesia is a verbal activity in which the speaker has a special relationship with the truth and expresses it honestly and frankly, though it might invite risk and danger. It also connotes criticism toward other people, which delivers a sense of moral law. *Parrhesia* has been a part of ancient Greece since the 5th century BC until the early years of Anno Domini. In Greek culture, *parrhesia* is related to three arenas: rhetoric, politics, and philosophy. Three common views about *parrhesia* have been developed based on the societal dynamic in certain eras.

First, *parrhesia* is often seen as the opposite of rhetoric. In the context of *parrhesia*, the speaker boldly expresses his opinion and conviction. On the other hand, in rhetoric, the speaker tries to convince his listener by using other’s views and opinions. Generally, rhetoric uses long sentences, while *parrhesia* uses dialogue or Questions and Answers.⁶

Second, *parrhesia* in Greek life, especially in Athena, is closely related to the dynamic of politics and democracy. The political dynamic in Athena upholds democracy (*demokratia*), equal rights of speech (*isegoria*), recognition of equal rights of every citizen before the law (*isonomia*), and *parrhesia*.⁷

Third, *parrhesia* is closely related to philosophy. *Parrhesia* is not a mere counter-narrative of rhetoric and political grammar in Athena but also demonstrates the *parrhesiastic* pattern of social interaction. This pattern not only reveals personal and political but also philosophical truth.⁸

The Development of the Meaning of *Parrhesia*

While studying Greek classics, Foucault analyzed the history of the development of *parrhesia* – which is as problematic as the development of Athena’s

⁵ Foucault, “Discourse and Truth,” 5.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983*, trans. by Graham Burchell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 105.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 34.

⁸ Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 294.

democracy. *Parrhesia*, as freedom of speech, underwent a struggle along with the history of democracy. On one hand, democratic institutions grant citizens equal rights to speak freely. On the other hand, not all citizens have good character to practice *parrhesia*. Those who are not of good repute might abuse *parrhesia* and danger the polis and the democratic system *per se*.

Foucault has a great interest in analyzing the struggle of *parrhesia* in the democratic system as an antinomy. As freedom of speech, *Parrhesia* always experiences struggle and limitation by the law and constitution. Apart from that, the democratic system has no say in deciding the standard for citizens to carry on *parrhesia*. As a result, everyone can talk about anything in a democratic atmosphere, and bad consequences are unavoidable.⁹

Besides, *parrhesia* also faced challenges of Athena's aristocratic history. Before the institutionalization of democracy in Athena, the polis had a deeply rooted aristocratic power. The aristocratic system did not easily accept the new system of democracy. When democracy was developing in Athena, it faced great challenges from aristocratic power. At that time, *parrhesia* was the freedom of speech related to the choice of existence. *Parrhesia* was seen as a personal position in Athena's political life.¹⁰

In the powerful aristocratic context, personal and public interests are opposite. Athenians would fight to advance their interest, yet they were reluctant to sacrifice themselves for public affairs. The wise, intellectuals and talented are not listened, yet the boasting orators – who hedged their bets – won people's attention.¹¹

The early development of Athenian democracy laid its foundation on freedom. Every citizen had the freedom of speech and might do anything they wished. *Parrhesia* opened the possibility to the people to influence the development of the polis. Nevertheless, according to Plato, *parrhesia* is in the democratic system that might lead to bad decisions. The polis leader might turn corrupt and tyrannical since everyone has the freedom of speech and do anything that might lead to anarchy. Everyone may live disorderly without law and regulation constraints. In this Athenian democratic context, *parrhesia* underwent a shift toward pejorative meaning.¹²

⁹ Foucault, "The Government of Self and Others," 159.

¹⁰ Kebung, "Michel Foucault: *Parrhesia*," 11.

¹¹ Kebung, "Michel Foucault: *Parrhesia*," 12.

¹² Kebung, "Michel Foucault: *Parrhesia*," 13.

Foucault observed that *parrhesia*, as freedom of speech, was closely related to existential or personal choice. *Parrhesia* became a description of a moral character and personal ethics vis-à-vis the ruling institutions. In the context of the early development of Athenian democracy, *parrhesia* faced the deeply rooted aristocratic clout. In the monarchic system, *parrhesia* relied on the moral character of the ruler and every individual in their respective political lives. Foucault attempted to see *parrhesia* as something more personal related to the care of the self.

***Parrhesia* and Care of The Self**

Previously, we outlined the trajectory of developing the meaning of “*parrhesia*” in classical Greek history. Based on this understanding, Foucault develops his idea of *parrhesia* regarding the personal quality of truth-telling. To be a *parrhesiast*, as mentioned by Socrates, is to be someone who, through his life shows the consistency between words (*logos*) and life (*bios*). *Parrhesia* in the Socratic understanding emphasizes the relationship between logos, truth and life. This relationship is very personal.¹³

The Socratic model of *parrhesia* shows a life that focuses on the relationship between truth (self) and the relationship between self and others. In its application, *parrhesia* is used in three kinds of relationships, namely, 1) the relationship of living together in the community, 2) the relationship of living in society, and 3) interpersonal relationships among people.¹⁴

Firstly, the relationships in a community can be examples from the Epicurean way of life. They emphasized the practice of *parrhesia* in community life more than any other philosopher of their time. In the Epicurean way of life, there were two ways of teaching. The first is the one-way speech method, which was seen as less respectable, and the second is a personal interview, which was seen as honourable. Through personal interviews, teachers help students discover the truth about themselves rather than just teaching the truth to others in an authoritarian manner.¹⁵

In Socratic tradition, this personal interview method is known as the midwifery method (*maieutikos techne*), where the teacher appears like a midwife who triggers questions so that the interlocutors can optimize his knowledge (birth of knowledge).

¹³ Irene Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government* (PhD Thesis; University of Warwick-Monash University, 2019), 130.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematicization of Parrhesia*, 35.

¹⁵ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 42.

With this method, students can find the truth about themselves (the relationship between logos and themselves) and find the truth in other knowledge about the world of ideas, the nature of the soul and other properties.

Second, the Cynics widely practice *parrhesia* as a relationship in public life. The Cynics emphasized the importance of the way of life because one's way of life reflects the personal relationship with the truth. The Cynics encouraged that the truth in this way of life should be proclaimed for others to know and follow. It is this public way of life that must be seen and be attractive to others. Their way of life is attractive only if they live according to the guidance of the truth that suits them. In philosophy, the Cynics make their own lives the main reference and point out that the philosopher must be a role model and a knight in his own life. For them, the absolute requirement for happiness is to take care of one's own life and not depend on others. The Cynics radically rejected any form of society, civilization, laws and social institutions if they hindered one's freedom and independence.¹⁶

Third, *parrhesia* is also relevant in individual personal/interpersonal relations context. Here, Foucault cites texts from Plutarchus and Galen that show people relate to themselves through truth. In personal life, everyone needs a friend who acts as a truth-teller. There is a predominant relation in human beings, namely the relation of "self-love," which is the illusory basis of who we are. Self-love makes us pretend or brag, and life goes against the "know thyself" maxim, which frees us from self-love. To truly know ourselves, we need a truth-teller. A truth-teller is someone who has congruence between what he says and his behaviour and actions. He must also have certainty and stability in his choices, opinions and thoughts.¹⁷

The Ascetic Way to Become A *Parrhesiast*

Foucault showed that the way to become a person who can relate to himself is through the techniques of meditation and introspection. Both techniques are means to accept oneself and to tell the truth about oneself. A person who is prevented from revealing the truth about themselves needs an ascetic practice. There are three ascetic techniques for practising self-disclosure, namely 1) examination of conscience, 2) self-diagnosis exercise, and 3) self-testing exercise.

¹⁶ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 44.

¹⁷ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 52.

The first is asceticism as a continuous practice of "examination of conscience". This exercise includes aspects of intellect, emotions and behaviour to examine the relationship between truth and self. Examining conscience is a means to train the intellect and stop anger (bad emotions); it is an opportunity to look into the depths of the self and dialogue with oneself. This exercise makes people inspectors of themselves so that they are not swayed by fickle feelings.¹⁸

Second is the exercise of self-diagnosis. This helps one become aware of one's unstable situation to further stabilize oneself towards inner peace. Self-diagnosis is useful for self-mastery and self-possession. This can be done by dialoguing with oneself to see one's situation and attachment to the material, discussing the situation of life in society and the disposition of life in the face of death and life after death.¹⁹

Third is the exercise of testing oneself by putting one's whole self on trial. The situation in the trial will train a person to distinguish what he can control (feelings, emotions and behaviour) and what cannot be controlled (external situations). To be able to control oneself well, one must always be introspective and always be in a stable state of mind.

So far, we can see that the meaning of *parrhesia* develops from understanding the true relationship between teacher and student to a personal relationship about oneself and the truth within. The ascetic practice of self-knowledge and mastery shows the emphasis on the personal aspect of *parrhesia*. The maxim "know thyself" becomes quite dominant in the development of *parrhesia*. Foucault concludes that self-righteousness encompasses rational principles based on human life, happiness, freedom, duty and general statements about the world. A *parrhesiast* is also associated with practical laws in his behaviour and actions.²⁰

The emphasis on the personal aspect of *parrhesia* shows that Foucault's analysis brings the idea of *parrhesia* into the field of ethics and individual behaviour. *Parrhesia* is understood in terms of a personal relationship with truth, as truth is not understood as beyond one's power. Power and knowledge of truth are understood to be intertwined. Truth is found in the exercise of power over oneself (it is not beyond our control). By emphasizing this personal aspect, Foucault wanted to show the formation of an individual subject that relates to itself. *Parrhesia* is a strategy used to form

¹⁸ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 55-56.

¹⁹ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 62.

²⁰ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 65.

subjects for self-mastery. Self-mastery grows if the subject can make himself an object to be mastered. To master ourselves, we must have a special relationship and recognize the truth within ourselves (who we are). Only by recognizing the truth within, we can communicate the truth to others.²¹

PARRHESIA IN THE SCRIPTURE

Parrhesia in the Septuagint (LXX)

Foucault has analyzed the meaning of *parrhesia* from Greek literature. In the Greek context, *parrhesia* and governance were two societal elements that formed citizens' good character and ethics. Furthermore, according to Foucault, in ancient Greece, democracy could not exist without *parrhesia*. Every citizen has equal rights to speak before a public forum and present his mind. *Parrhesia*, therefore, is equal to the politic of truth in which all governmental structure (*politeia*) and moral activities (*ethos*) are related to the expression of truth (*aletheia*).²²

Parrhesia has a special relation to the expression of criticism, freedom and truth amid risk and perils. This element of *parrhesia* reminds us of the prophetic activities of the Old Testament prophets. In the eyes of the *parrhesia* discourse, a prophet is a *parrhesiast* who is called to express the truth and criticize the ruler who abandoned God's holy covenant. Exercising the prophetic duties means realizing the identity as a servant of God, not to be hailed a hero.²³

The prophetic duties underwent development in the history of Israel until the emergence of Christianity. In Christianity, prophetic duties underwent an institutionalization within the Church. Executing the prophetic duties means proclaiming the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. Evangelization means proclaiming Christ the Word-made man (Jn 1:4). The incarnation of God the Son in Jesus does not merely reveal the relation between God and men but also proclaims the truth of God's Word to the establishment. The prophetic duties mean entering the religious world under the worldly power system.²⁴

²¹ Dal Poz, *Foucault and the Politics of Self-Government*, 65.

²² Isabella Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*. Theological-Political Considerations on the Present Crisis of Religious Representation", *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation*, (2018), Heft 7, 309.

²³ Lexie Harvey, "Commitment to the Truth: Parrhesiastic and Prophetic Elements of Paul's Letter to the Galatians", *Res Rhetorica* 5, 1, (2018): 22.

²⁴ Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*," 311.

The meaning of *parrhesia* in the prophetic duties can be found in the Septuagint (LXX). *Parrhesia*, identical to prophetic duties in proclaiming divine truth, has various meanings in the LXX. As explained above, in the Greek context, *parrhesia* has four meanings: truth, freedom of speech, risk/danger and moral obligation. These four meanings are also found in the use of *parrhesia* in LXX. The most common meaning in LXX for *parrhesia* is the action of God, who speaks to His people. God who speaks and acts with *parrhesia* (Lev 26:13; Ps 93:1, 11:5) reveals the truth about Himself. *Parrhesia* conveys the meaning of the true identity of God.

Furthermore, *parrhesia* also delivers meaning about freedom of publicly expressing wisdom as seen in Prv 1:20-21 (*“Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech”*). *Parrhesia*, in this context, means a bold expression of wisdom. In the Old Testament, wisdom is God’s gift that must be proclaimed openly. *Parrhesia* means the freedom of speech to utter public truth. It has not touched personal virtue.

Apart from wisdom, *parrhesia* is also about discourse on the truth. In Prv 10:10, the author highlighted the importance of delivering open criticism to reveal the truth. *“He that winks with his eyes deceitfully procures griefs for men; but he that reproves boldly is a peacemaker.”* In this verse, “reproves boldly” is understood as a *parrhesiast*’s attempt to reveal the truth.

The revelation of truth is essential since most people conceal it to avoid risks and dangers. The quality of a *parrhesiast* is tested by his boldness to hold firmly to the truth regardless of threats.²⁵ As seen in the Wisdom of Solomon 5:1: *“The righteous will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who have oppressed them and those who make light of their labours.”*²⁶ A *parrhesiast* is the confident and courageous righteous in revealing the truth before his persecutors. In this context, *parrhesia* is used to facing risks/dangers and the moral obligation of a virtuous individual.

***Parrhesia* in the New Testament**

Parrhesia in the New Testament delivers a different meaning from that of the non-Hebrew world, though it is still close to the meaning of “speaking everything freely and openly”. In LXX, *parrhesia* is attached to God, wisdom, and godly-righteous people. In general, the usage of *parrhesia* in the New Testament conveys five

²⁵ Torben Bech Dyrberg, *Foucault on The Politics of Parrhesia* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2014), 2.

²⁶ Marrow, “*Parrhesia* and The New Testament,” 437

meanings: (1) the confidence in the access to God due to Christ's sacrifice; (2) Jesus' open and direct statement without parables; (3) the gift asked from the Holy Spirit, not a moral virtue to be achieved; (4) strong confidence to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ; (5) the sure conviction on eschatological hope.²⁷

The meaning of *parrhesia* as the sure access to God due to Christ's sacrifice is evident in the First Letter of St. John 5:14, which demonstrates *parrhesia* as the quality of a Christian's prayers. The righteous speak with *parrhesia* and pray with God with *parrhesia* in joyful spirit. The strong conviction of the righteous before God in prayers has relevant meaning in the New Testament.²⁸ In correspondence with the Letter of St. John, the Letter to the Hebrews (3:6) also shows *parrhesia* as an inner disposition of a hopeful person: "*But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.*" Both verses use *parrhesia* to describe access prepared by God on the foundation of Christ's salvific action for the Christians.

In the Gospel, *Parrhesia* is used to demonstrate Jesus' open and straightforward statements without using a parable. In Jn 16:29, Jesus explained the crucifixion that preceded His victory (resurrection). In response, the disciples said: "*Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.*" In this context, *parrhesia* is Jesus's expression of a reality that He would experience.

Besides, *parrhesia* is also a gift from the Holy Spirit. As a gift, *parrhesia* is not a moral virtue achieved by human effort. *Parrhesia* is the gift of the Holy Spirit that prompts a person to express divine truth. In the Acts of the Apostles 4:13, it is stated that "*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*" In this verse, Peter and John, who were filled with the Spirit, gave answers before the public. The gift of the Holy Spirit enabled them to be *parrhesiasts* – who boldly express their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and is risen, drove the disciples to proclaim the Gospel. This conviction was manifested as *parrhesiasts*. The disciples proclaimed Christ passionately and openly due to their faith in Christ, the Truth who must be known by the world, as stated in Acts 28:31: "*He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all*

²⁷ Marrow, "Parrhesia and The New Testament," 444-445.

²⁸ Marrow, "Parrhesia and The New Testament," 440.

boldness and without hindrance!". Just as St Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians: "For *when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*" (9:16) and his first letter to Timothy: "Thus those who serve well as deacons gain good standing and *much confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus*" (3:13).

The firm faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the courage to proclaim Christ is deeply rooted in the disciples on the eschatological salvation. The faith in the risen Christ gives hope to humankind that they will be risen with Christ on the Last Day, as stated in the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians: "*In whom (Christ) we have boldness of speech and confidence of access through faith in him*" (3:12).

From the abovementioned explanation of the meaning of *parrhesia*, it is obvious that there are some meanings of *parrhesia* in ancient Greek and early Christian contexts. A new addition was included in the meaning by early Christians. *Parrhesia* in ancient Greece initially conveyed the meanings of truth, freedom of speech, risks/dangers, and moral obligation. The New Testament enriched the meaning of *parrhesia* by including the dimension of the Lord's revelation, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel as a personal virtue rooted in the faith of the risen Christ.

PARRHESIA IN THE DYNAMIC OF EVANGELIZATION

The prophetic task of proclaiming Jesus as the Good News remains connected to proclaiming truth as understood in *parrhesia*. Proclaiming Jesus means proclaiming truth, for in Luke 23:47, Jesus is declared as the truth. In that passage, the centurion who crucified Jesus upon Jesus' death concludes that Jesus is someone righteous or just (in Greek, 'δίκαιος'/'dikaïos'). Luke himself, at the very least, suggests that Jesus is not only 'innocent' but embodies a deeper and unique truth and justice.²⁹ Thus, proclaiming Jesus is part of the act of *parrhesia* and prophetic calling that is the duty and vocation of all members of the Church.

The Church must remain critical of secular world powers in their practice of wielding power in the political sphere.³⁰ The prophetic task of the Church amidst the political world is seen in Jesus' statement, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's!" (Mark 12:17, Matthew 22:21, Luke 20:25).

²⁹ Markus Bokhmuehl, "Jesus 'The Just'", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46, no. 1, (2023): 22.

³⁰ Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*," 312.

However, in its development, this passage gives meaning to a prophetic task that is more cultural and social, distancing itself from the political dimension of power. Christianity continues the dualism between the power of God in religion and the desacralized political power. This distant relationship between politics and religion continues to mark the history of the development of the early Church and the State in conflict.³¹ Because of this conflictual relationship, we understand that the birth of the early Church was marked by violence and persecution by the ruling powers.

After enduring a period of persecution, Christianity underwent a significant development in power. Christianity transformed from a persecuted minority into the dominant religion within the empire. This development was marked by the Edict of Thessalonica issued by Emperor Theodosius I in 380 AD, which declared Christianity as the official religion of the empire.³² This is the result of the proclamation of the Gospel and *parrhesia*, leading enemies to become followers of Christ.³³ As the influence of the Church strengthened, the prophetic call was side-lined from the Church's attention until the medieval period. The tradition of prophetic voices (truth) was gradually replaced by various utopian ideas and ideologies in the modern era. These utopian ideas became like a new political religion, taking over the role of criticizing various political and economic power systems. Utopian ideas are even referred to as a form of secular eschatological view.³⁴

In contemporary times, the dialectical relationship between the political and sacred orders can no longer be seen solely as the relationship between the State and the Church. Throughout history, the State and the Church have experienced crises of legitimacy and sovereignty. This has also dimmed the power of *parrhesiastic* discourse for mutual dialectics and criticism between the State and the Church. Presently, it is not just the Catholic Church experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, all modern institutions are facing similar challenges. Giorgio Agamben even views the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI from the papal throne as a sign of declining legitimacy due to the complex internal politics of the Church.³⁵

³¹ Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*," 311.

³² Carter H. Linberg, William Richey Hogg, Linwood Fredericksen, "Christianity", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Liturgy-and-the-arts-after-Constantine>

³³ Jonathan Bishop, "Parable and *Parrhesia* in Mark," *Interpretation* 40 (1):39-52 (1986), 47.

³⁴ Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*," 313.

³⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *The Mystery of Evil. Benedict XVI and the End of Days*, (Stanford University Press: Redwood City, 2017), 2.

Nevertheless, Pope Benedict XVI was succeeded by Pope Francis, whose pontifical reign opened up a prophetic dimension in an era experiencing a decline in prophetic duty. Pope Francis offers a new interpretation of the relationship between *parrhesia* in prophetic callings and institutions. He injects a socio-political horizon as a new dimension of the Church. He aims to reconstruct the prophetic task within the life breath of the Church.³⁶ This is prominently evident in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, particularly in paragraph 88:

"The Christian ideal will always demand that we transcend suspicion, habitual mistrust, and the fear of losing our privacy, all attitudes that can become ingrained in us by a society that idolises appearances. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspects of the Gospel. Just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, ... The Gospel invites us to face the risk of encounter head-on, with the physical presence of others who challenge us, with their pain and their demands, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 88)

Amidst the crisis of legitimacy and the decline of modern institutions and the Church, Pope Francis, through *Evangelii Gaudium*'s encyclical, rehabilitates the task of *parrhesiast* to continue proclaiming truth and prophetic voice. The effort to rehabilitate this element of the prophetic task is not articulated as an eschatological discourse but instead framed within simple and everyday spiritual experiences. This is Pope Francis's pastoral vision that restores the tradition of *parrhesia*/prophetic task within the life breath of the Church, which constantly engages with the faithful and the wider society. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 113).

CONCLUSION

The evolution of the word "*parrhesia*" in ancient Greek culture greatly influenced the development of its meaning in the Scriptures and the concept of proclaiming the Gospel within the Church. *Parrhesia*, in the context of ancient Greece, initially had four primary meanings related to truth, freedom of speech, risk/danger, and moral obligation within the realm of democracy and the political dynamics of Greece. Subsequently, *parrhesia* underwent a shift in meaning towards

³⁶ Guanzini, "Rethinking *Parrhesia*," 316.

the personal aspect. The emphasis on the personal aspect of *parrhesia* indicates that Foucault's analysis brings the idea of *parrhesia* into the realm of ethics and individual behaviour. *Parrhesia* is understood within the framework of a personal relationship with truth, as truth is not understood as something outside of one's power.

The trajectory of this meaning development is also reflected in the usage of the word "parrhesia" in the Septuagint and the New Testament texts. The New Testament enriches the meaning of *parrhesia* by adding the dimension of God's self-expression, the divine grace through the Holy Spirit, and the proclamation of the Gospel as a personal virtue rooted in faith in the risen Christ. This aspect of proclaiming the Gospel is further developed throughout the history of the early Church and into the Catholic Church.

In the Church, *parrhesia* as the proclamation of the Gospel has undergone institutionalization because proclaiming Jesus is part of the act of *parrhesia* and the prophetic call that is the duty and vocation of all members of the Church. The Church must remain critical of secular world powers in their practice of wielding power in the political sphere. The Church's critical power has experienced ups and downs throughout history in its relationship with authority. However, Pope Francis recently successfully rehabilitated the meaning of *parrhesia* as a daily prophetic call through *Evangelii Gaudium*, thereby ensuring that parrhesia continues to hold significant meaning in the pulsation of Gospel proclamation in the Catholic Church.

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