Special Issue Call for Paper Abstracts
Title: FAITH, FEAR AND FEARLESS SPEECH IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

[Charles-André van Loo, 'Augustine Arguing with Donatists (18th century)](#)

Schedule:
- Paper *abstract* (max. 500 words) submission deadline: 15 February 2022
- *Notification* of abstract acceptance: 18 February 2022
- Full manuscript *deadline*: 1 September 2022
- *Publisher*: *TBD* [possibility: Journal of Early Christian History]
- Publication *date*: *TBD*

Keywords: fear, faith, freedom of speech, courage, passions, emotions, *parrhesia* (παρρησία), *libertas*, Harm Principle, antiquity, history of emotions, early Christianity, philosophy of religion, contemporary issues

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Dear colleagues,

We welcome paper abstract proposals for a special issue entitled: **'Faith, Fear and Fearless Speech in Early Christianity'**.

Summary: This special issue is dedicated to the neglected study of *theology of free (fearless) speech* (*parrhesia*/*libertas*) in early Christianity. In antiquity, free speech consists in exercising the license (Van Renswoude, 4) to convey a message with boldness and

frankness. In the exercise of *parrhesia*, the **emotions** of courage and fearlessness help preserve a delicate balance between persuasive *rhetoric* and compelling *truth* (Ibid, 5). With the onset of Christianity, the understanding of emotions undergo important theological transformations, resulting in novel strategies for emotional management and, with these, unprecedented views on free speech emerged. Thus, this issue focuses on *how* the **Christianization** of emotions (Bouquet & Nagy, 9) shaped early theologies of free speech, and, consequently, we *aim* to elucidate how **the history of emotions** sheds light on related **contemporary questions**.

<u>*Question*</u>: The present special issue addresses the **question**: what are the basis, if any, for a theology of free speech, i.e., a **theology of fearless speech** in early Christianity, what are its conditions and implications, and what is at stake in speaking *fearlessly*, *then* and *today*?

<u>*Method & scope*</u>: Since free speech 'is possible only against the silent background of what cannot be said' (Fish, 104), it is therefore, some have argued, 'a cultural construct, governed by social norms, legal rules, rhetorical conventions and scripted roles' (Van Renswoude, 3). The notion of *emotional regimes* (Reddy, 129) provides a useful conceptual framework to analyze the *silent background* and *rhetorical convention* regulating the exercise of *parrhesia* in early Christianity. Since the management and transformation of emotions was at the heart of nascent Christian praxes (Knuuttila, 112), we analyze how the concept of *faith* and the management of *fear* shape, condition, form and transform classical and early Christian notions of **fearless speech** (*parrhesia*) and the resulting navigation of emotional regimes.

<u>*Objectives*</u>: We aim to assess broadly: (i) how early Christians navigated and managed the emotions of *fear/fearlessness*, (ii) whether *parrhesia/libertas* is a **social construct** and/or an **emotive** for early Christians, and (iii) how *parrhesia/libertas* can help trace early Christian **emotional regimes,** their transformations and relevance for today.

<u>*Call for contributions*</u>: We invite contributions to consider one or more of the following poles of interest: *first*, the philosophical and theological **foundations** of the concepts of faith, fear and fearless speech in antiquity and the Gospels; *second*, their **reception**, varied interpretations and transformations in early Christian writings; *third*, their **relevance** to articulate, analyze and address contemporary issues related to free speech.

<u>*Some definitions*</u>:
- *Free speech:* 'there ought to exist the fullest liberty of professing and discussing, as a matter of ethical conviction, any doctrine, however immoral it may be considered' (Mill, 15).
- *Harm Principle:* 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others' (Mill, 9).
- *Parrhesia/libertas*: 'Parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life

through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In parrhesia, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness in- stead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death insteadof life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self- interest and moral apathy' (Foucault, 19).

- *Emotive*: '[A] type of speech act different from both performative and constative utterances, which both describes (like constative utterances) and changes (like performatives) the world, because emotional expression has an exploratory and self-altering effect on the activated thought material of emotion' (Reddy, 128).
- *Emotional regime*: 'The set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime' (Reddy, 129).

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