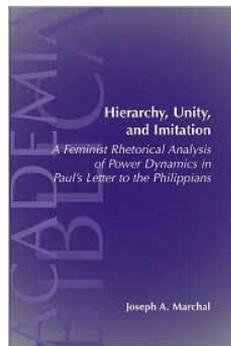


○ **REVIEW OF JOSEPH A. MARCHAL, *HIERARCHY, UNITY AND IMITATION: A FEMINIST RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF POWER DYNAMICS IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS***

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Hierarchy, Unity and Imitation is an adaptation of Marchal's GTU dissertation, written under the supervision of Antionette Wire, Mary Ann Tolbert and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. His arguments and prose, as one might suspect, are blisteringly clear, direct and forward. As one might also expect, his book reworks assumptions of both the potential of rhetorical criticism and the impact and setting of Paul's letter to the Philippians. His book, however, contains more than a few surprises, as well.

Reading his sub-title, a scholar of Pauline materials (particularly Philippians) might expect a work very similar (but addressing feminist issues) to the somewhat 'standard' commentary of Gordon Fee or Ben Witherington. Such expectations would be soon disappointed. Fee, applying 'traditional' notions of rhetorical criticism (heavily influenced by Betz and Kennedy) sought to analyze Paul's application and adaptation of the standard 'canons' of ancient rhetoric (*pathos*, *ethos*, *logos*, etc.) and ancient epistolary forms. Fee's work attempts to demonstrate the Pauline inclusion of various 'blocks' of rhetoric to construct what Fee describes as a 'hortatory letter of friendship.' Accordingly, Fee (and many, many others) regards Philippians as an intimate (perhaps final) missive from Paul to one of his most beloved congregations. For Fee, Paul is encouraging the Philippians (from a stance of pure friendship and devotion) to carry on his work. He recommends Onesemus, acknowledges a gift of funds, provides news of his coming trial, and encourages two women (Euodia and Syntyche) to get along better. Fee finds no indication of tension or animosity.

Marchal's reading is notably, surprisingly different. To begin, he notes that what has been recognized as 'rhetorical criticism' is, in the main, an attempt to highlight (largely arbitrary) 'structures' in a letter as a means of continuing historical criticism in search of authorial intention. Further, following the concerns of feminist scholars such as Fiorenza, Marchal rightly observes few scholars of Philippians are suspicious at all of any discord behind the text or attuned to how structures of rhetoric manipulatively construct relationships (often unequal relationships of power). Marchal's reading takes to heart Fiorenza's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and pursues feminist concerns of how power and 'kyerarchy' establish 'malestream' notions of order. Marchal uses techniques of 'New Rhetoric,' particularly as applied by Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca and Chaïm Perelman (*The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, 1969) to reconsider Philippians (and Philippian scholarship). Marchal's concern is how Paul's arguments and rhetorical structure betray forms of argument designed to persuade and establish power relationships. Further, he is particularly concerned about who is diminished in such power plays, and how that proportionate 'ranking' is constructed and maintained.

Marchal begins by a reconsideration of the context of Philippians that includes a brief summary of majority readings of Philippians' central 'themes' or motifs. Among conventional Pauline scholarship, there is a division about whether or not the central metaphor for Paul is one of 'friendship' or one of martial service (calling others to rededicate themselves though facing potentially physical intimidation and resistance). Marchal elegantly displays (from a careful survey of conventional classical history) that 'friendship' in the Greco-Roman world was, in no way, a designation of equivalent status nor affection. Primarily, the term designates a disproportionate relationship, often coded language for patron-client relationships. Even when not so crass, ancient friendship does demonstrate a relationship of an expected service; it is always, at best, *quid pro quo*. Paul's invocation of this status is not affective. It is, in its context, very likely a bid to establish a position of dominance or rightful 'patron' status of Paul over the Philippians.

Philippi, as is often cited, was a Roman colony. In the Roman colonial system, colony cities were the locus for the settlement of retired military personnel who had been given property in exchange for their service. Marchal notes the frequent use of martial metaphors in Paul's letters, but, unlike most other scholarship on the question, does not merely indicate Paul is 'finding his audience.' Indeed, Marchal's observations may indicate that Paul (if not being openly mean-spirited) has a rhetorical tin ear. First, he notes that the soldiers relocated to Philippi (and other remote cities) frequently expressed hostility to having received a 'second tier' retirement in the provinces. Though being given property in Macedonia, they were, in turn, missing out on property in more 'choice' locations (such as Italy). Though making up the local 'elites,' many veterans seemed to have understood such status as 'ruler of the pigs.' Notably, though, Marchal observes that the majority of those in Philippian churches were not likely among these elites. Marchal then observes that the indigenous population of Philippi would have been dispossessed of their property to make room for the newly resettled (and grumpy) veterans. Marchal does not elaborate (and I very much wish he would) as to whether or not this is an example of a rhetorical misstep by Paul or whether this is a deliberate (and still, likely, miss-thought) slap at the Philippians in the attempt of Paul to establish a dominant rhetorical voice. Though opening new possibilities to considering Paul the rhetor or how the Philippian community received Paul's words, Marchal stops short of providing new answers here.

Instead, he turns, in part two of the book, toward a close reading of Philippians that applies the principles of the New Rhetoric. Marchal surveys every major section of Philippians and then classifies each of Paul's arguments. His work is thorough and earnestly engaged. Having established by background context a reasonable basis for hermeneutic suspicion, he proceeds to the actual arguments. His conclusion is the unveiling of numerous attempts by Paul to craft a rhetorical world where Paul is the ideal, his status is affirmed and his control of the Philippian Christians increased. The over-whelming number of moments betrays any simple attempt by Paul to put a happy face on his present incarnation for the Philippians. Instead, Marchal argues that Paul is attempting to regain control over his congregation and that much more dissent may be present than scholarship has previously recognized. Far from being a 'hortatory letter of friendship,' Marchal concludes that Philippians is an all out attempt to re-establish control and silence some real dissenters. Notably, the only two figures 'called out' are both women.

Marchal's work is of interest to scholars of Paul, specialists in Philippians, and those concerned with both feminist readings of the New Testament and New Rhetorical criticism.