OUR Πολιτευμα IS IN HEAVEN:
READING PHILIPPIANS 3:20–21 IN LIGHT OF THE GRECO-ROMAN IMPERIAL CONTEXT AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore Paul's use of πολίτευμα in light of Greco–Roman Imperial context and its implication for social identity formation in Phil 3:20–21. Based on my analysis of the semantic range of πολίτευμα and the way πολίτευμα used in the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, I argue that the term πολίτευμα is primarily associated with three components, namely geographical space, ruling class (governing body) and citizen body. In addition, I contend that πολίτευμα is related to social identity formation with respect to the three categories of cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions in the context of Phil 3:17–21. Then, I conclude that by using the term πολίτευμα in relation to σωτήρ and κύριος in 3:20, Paul intends to encourage that the Philippian believers' action must be practiced based on a Christological paradigm mentioned in 2:6–11, by considering Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, heavens as their new space, and the new identity as the people of God to live under Roman-Colony Philippi.

Key Words: Citizen, governing, social identity formation, imperial context

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Introduction

Much has been written about Paul's use of the term πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20–21 in recent years. Most articles, commentaries and doctoral theses interpret πολίτευμα in relation to exhortation for ethical conduct, the heavenly governing body where the real power or authority exists, and voluntary association.[1] However, very little

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[1] See Raymond R. Brewer, "The Meaning of Politeuesthe in Philippians 1:27," *JBL* 73 (1954): 76–83; Raymond Hubert Reimer, *Our Citizenship is in Heaven: Philippians 1:27-30 and 3:20–21 as part of the Apostle Paul's Political Theology* (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1998); Gennadi A. Sergienko, "Our Politeuma is in Heaven: Paul's Polemical Engagement with the

scholarly research focuses on πολίτευμα in light of Greco-Roman imperial context and social identity formation in Philippians.[2] In this paper, therefore, I explore Paul's use of πολίτευμα in light of Greco-Roman Imperial context and its implication for social identity formation in Phil 3:20–21.

Basically, there are three different interpretations of Paul's use of the term πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20–21. The first group of scholars argues that Paul uses the term for the designation of a governing body within a *polis* to discuss his alternative vision of the heavenly πολίτευμα.[3] According to them, the real power and authority which govern the believers exist in heaven. Therefore, those who live by these ideals belong to the heavenly community πολίτευμα. The second group of scholars emphasizes the ethical behaviour aspect of πολίτευμα.[4] They interpret πολίτευμα as the colony of heaven in light of the Greco-Roman colonial context. As a result, they posit that believers should behave well and reflect the good character of their heavenly citizenship while they live here on earth. The Philippian Christians are to live out their citizenship by fulfilling their responsibilities and looking forward to the benefits of their heavenly commonwealth. Differing from these two groups, Gennadi A. Sergienko makes a new proposal regarding the term πολίτευμα in his dissertation. He argues that the term πολίτευμα is used for voluntary associations, which are famous for the social institution of the ancient world. According to Sergienko, an allusion to Roman citizenship is implausible. Thus, he concludes that

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Enemies of the Cross of Christ in Philippians 3:18-20" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2011); Samuel Guy, "A Politeuma Worth Pursuing: Philippians 3:20 in Light of Philippi's Sociological Composition," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 22 (2019): 89–100.

[2] See Samuel Guy, "A Politeuma," 89–100; Sin Pa Ho, "*Politeuma* as a Hybrid Patriotic Identity in Christ: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Philippians 3:20," *BTB* 49 (2019): 96–107.

[3] See Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC 32 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991), 144; Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1997), 233; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 269.

[4] See Raymond R. Brewer, "The Meaning of Politeuesthe in Philippians 1:27," *JBL* 73 (1954): 76–83; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 459–61; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC 43 (Dallas: Word, 2004), 231–32.

Paul uses the term πολίτευμα to refer to the Christian community in Philipp as a voluntary association in competition with other voluntary associations.[5]

When I examine these three views, the first view tends to neglect the broader Greco-Roman imperial context in which the word πολίτευμα commonly occurs. On the other hand, the second view appears to overemphasize the Christian ethical application of πολίτευμα, neglecting Paul's counter-imperial agenda and identity formation in the Philippian community. Similarly, Sergienko fails to consider πολίτευμα as the communal entity from which one derives a sense of political and social identity. Therefore, there is no scholarly consensus on the meaning of πολίτευμα and the way Paul uses it in Phil 3:20. If this is the case, three questions arise: What was the semantic domain of πολίτευμα when Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians? How would this language have resonated with the Philippian believers given their Greco-Roman socio-political context? How does this language play a significant role in Paul's identity formation of the Philippian believers? To address these questions, I will first examine the semantic range of πολίτευμα and how it used in both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts. Then, I will explore the possible meanings of πολίτευμα and analyze how it is used as counter-imperial agenda in 3:20-21. Finally, I will investigate the possible implication of Paul's use of the term πολίτευμα for social identity formation in 3:20–21.

1. The Semantic Frame of Πολίτευμα

Etymologically, the term πολίτευμα has the same root as πολίτης and πολιτεία, and the verbal forms πολιτεύω/πολιτεύομαι. *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* classifies nine cognate words for πολίτευμα. They are κωμόπολις, Νεάπολις, πόλις, πολιτάρχης, πολιτεία, πολίτευμα, πολίτης, συμπολίτης, and πολιτεύομαι.[6] The Greek word πολίτευμα is an *hapax legomenon*. It appears only in Phil 3:20. However, its related word πολιτεύομαι is mentioned in1:27 where Paul exhorts the Philippians to conduct themselves as good citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ. The imperative verb πολιτεύεσθε ("Conduct yourself as citizens") in 1:27 resonates in the noun πολίτευμα ("citizenship") in 3:20. Both

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[5] Gennadi A. Sergienko, "Our Politeuma is in Heaven," 160–69.
[6] *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2011).

πολίτευμα and πολιτεύομαι are found in contexts related to political citizenship. The word πολίτευμα exists in the large section of 3:2–4:1 where Paul deals with the false teachings in Philippi. Paul confronts his opponents by claiming that Christians have not yet reached their goal. Therefore, the Philippian Christians are encouraged to take Paul as an example in their action. The action of τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες (v. 19) is opposite from ἡμῶν γὰρ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς (v. 20).

Regarding the earliest use of πολίτευμα, Strathmann argues that it occurs first in the fifth century and derives from πολιτεύεσθαι. Thus, it carries the sense of "political acts," "dealings," or "machinations."[7] On the other hand, Ceslas Spicq mentions that πολίτευμα appears in the fourth century. It refers to "an act of administration, government, legislation, the party in power but more formally an association of soldiers in Alexandria or a community, a civic body, a political entity."[8] Although there is disagreement regarding the earliest use of πολίτευμα, it was mainly used in a political context. Regarding the meaning of πολίτευμα, Spicq identifies πολίτευμα as "an organization of citizens from the same place, with the same rights (*isonomoi*) in the midst of a foreign state."[9] Concerning Paul's use of πολίτευμα in Philippians, Spicq further argues that it does not refer to their citizenship or their status as a colony. Instead, πολίτευμα should be understood in light of "their metropolis or capital city, which lists its members among its citizens."[10] Similar to Spicq, LSJ also mentions πολίτευμα as "a corporate body of citizens resident in a foreign city."[11] Moreover, L&N describes πολίτευμα as "the place or location in which one has the right to be a citizen— 'state, commonwealth, place of citizenship.'"[12] BDAG also defines πολίτευμα as "commonwealth, state."[13] Differing from Spicq, LSJ, L&N and BDAG, Gert Lüderitz considers πολίτευμα "as a technical term for an institution within *a polis* which stands for the ruling class as a sovereign body with specific

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[7] Strathmann, "πόλις, πολίτης, πεπολίτευμαι, πολιτεία, πολίτευμα," *TDNT* 6:516–35.
[8] *TLNT*, 129–30.
[9] Ceslas Spicq, "πολιτεία, πολίτευμα, πολιτεύομαι, πολίτης," *TLNT* 3:123–31.
[10] Ibid.
[11] *LSJ*, 1434.
[12] *L&N*, 131.
[13] BDAG, 845.

rights, voting procedures, etc."[14] He further mentions that πολίτευμα was applied to the governing body within a Greek *polis;* and other social groups within a *polis,* including voluntary associations.[15] Therefore, although the term πολίτευμα has a wide range of meaning, it is primarily associated with three things: (1) a group of citizens living in the foreign land; (2) a ruling class or governing body from which the kings or governments exercise their rule upon citizens, and (3) the geographical space where a citizen lives. Social identity formation among the citizens plays a significant role in a specified geographical boundary. Therefore, studying the meaning of πολίτευμα in light of the Greco-Roman imperial context and social identity formation will help us to understand the reasons why Paul used this Hellenistic political term in his letter to the Philippians. In the next section, I will analyze the way πολίτευμα is used both in the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts.

2. Πολίτευμα in Greco-Roman Context

Although the noun πολίτευμα is a hapax legomenon in Pauline literature, it can be commonly found in the Greco-Roman context. First, the term πολίτευμα is used in association with πολιτεία (citizenship) in the Greco-Roman political context. Two inscriptions dated around the second century uses πολίτευμα as a connotation for citizenship. The first inscription mentions a treaty between the cities of Miletus and Herakleia. Due to the threat of a Milesian' invasion, Herakleia asked Miletus to make a treaty where the citizens of both cities would have the same civic rights.[16] In response to Herakleia's request, Miletus writes, "Milesians are to be πολίτας (*politas*, citizens) of Herakleia, and Herakleians [are to be citizens] of Miletus."[17] The latter part of the inscription directly employs πολίτευμα as citizenship: "If any Herakleians have not lived either in their homeland or in Miletus up to the month of Artemisios . . . they are not to be enrolled in the citizenship (πολίτευμα) of Miletus."[18]

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[14] Gert Lüderitz, "What Is Politeuma?" in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy,* ed. J. W. van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 187–88.
[15] Ibid., 185–89.
[16] *SIG,* 633.12.
[17] Ibid., 633.34.
[18] Ibid., 633.59–61.

The second inscription describes two letters of Philip V of Macedonia written to Larissa. As the war had reduced the city's population, Philip suggested to the magistrates that "until we think of others worthy of πολίτευμα with us ... I judge you vote that citizenship (πολιτεία) be given to the Thessalians."[19] Here, Philip associates πολίτευμα with citizenship (πολιτεία). Although the magistrates followed Philip's suggestion, the Larissaeans removed the names of the added citizens from the city records. When Philip heard about this, he encouraged Larissaean officials to restore the added citizens to citizenship (πολιτεία). Before he makes his exhortation, Philip mentions how Romans "grant πολίτευμα [to freed house slaves] and let them share in the ancient ways."[20] From these two inscriptions, we understand that πολίτευμα refers to citizenship, but is used in direct relation to Roman citizenship which is essential for anyone who lives in Philippi. However, Sergienko understands πολίτευμα in 3:20 as a reference both to Philippian voluntary associations and the governing body of a *polis*. According to him, an allusion to Roman citizenship is impossible.[21] In this sense, Sergienko appears to neglect the political contexts where the word is synonymously used with citizenship in the Greco-Roman context.

When we look at the political context of Philippi, Philippi was considered to be a distinctively Roman colony. It was one of only four colonies in Macedonia which had been granted the highest status of the Roman provincial municipality — the *ius Italicum* (Italian law).[22] This status ensured that the city enjoyed all the rights and privileges of being governed under the Roman form of government and was treated equally with cities in Italy.[23] The citizens of Philippi were considered as citizens of Rome with all of the rights and privileges accorded to any Roman born in the imperial city.[24] This status also provides the Roman citizens extra benefits (i.e., exemption from taxes, tributes, and duties) and protection of the Roman law.[25]

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[19] Ibid., 543.6–7.
[20] Ibid., 543.32–34.
[21] Sergienko, Gennadi A. "Our Politeuma is in Heaven," 160-169.
[22] Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC 43 (Dallas: Word, 2004), 231.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1997), 4.

Therefore, Philippi is proud to be a privileged Roman colony. Hellerman summarizes this as "the Romanness of Philippi."[26]

Sergio Nebreda also refers to a "model of Romanization," which includes "a strong pressure to conform to the 'higher' model (ideologically, culturally and socially) which provided a *new identity* for local populations as *petite Rome*"[27] and "pacific government and administration of the conquered region (whether as client or subjugated nation/city) … based on a system of punishment and reward."[28] In other words, "Romanization" refers to the change of identity and the source of honour. These two now can be found in Philippi. By having the citizenship of the Roman Empire, one can be included in the Empire's justice system.[29] Moreover, one can also be involved in loyal service to the emperor (who was the head and symbol of the state) as a soldier, governor, and good citizen caring for the state's good. Those who were faithful to the Roman emperor were rewarded by different kinds of honours (including material rewards).[30] Roman soldiers who risked their lives for the sake of the Empire, were incredibly honored.[31] Living in such a context, to be a citizen of Rome was to have a higher social status than the non-Roman citizen. With these social and economic benefits of Roman citizenship, it is possible to assume that people who live in Philippi could have desired to participate in the imperial πολίτευμα.

In addition to the use of πολίτευμα as citizenship, πολίτευμα refers to the citizen body in Greco-Roman context. In his article on πολίτευμα, Gert Lüderitz argues that "in a [Greek] democracy the politeuma consists of *all the citizens*."[32] In the same article, Lüderitz references the first-century Boule-papyrus that mentions the πολίτευμα of Alexandria. He believes this πολίτευμα "is most probably identical

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[26] Joseph H. Hellerman, "Μορφη Θεου as a Signifier of Social Status in Philippians 2:6," *JETS* 52 (2009): 778–97.
[27] Sergio Rosell Nebreda, *Christ Identity: A Social Scientific Reading of Philippians 2.5-11*, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 240 (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 149–50.
[28] Ibid., 151.
[29] Peter Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 221.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Lüderitz, "What Is Politeuma?", 188.

with the [city's] citizen body."[33] Therefore, the formation of social identity among the citizens is one of the main aspects of the term πολίτευμα in the Greco-Roman context.

Second, the term is also used as a governing body or constitution in Greco-Roman context. In his work *Politics*, Aristotle identifies πολίτευμα as a governing body that represents a city's constitution (πολιτεία).[34] Aristotle emphasizes the power of this entity stating, κύριον μὲν γὰρ πανταχοῦ τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς πόλεως, πολίτευμα δ' ἐστὶν ἡ πολιτεία.[35] ("For the government is everywhere supreme over the state, and the constitution is the government.") He then implicitly distinguishes the composition of the πολίτευμα in various city-states: "[I]n democratic states for example the people are supreme, but in oligarchies on the contrary the few are."[36] In addition, Aristotle explains "the people" as making up the πολίτευμα of a democracy.[37] According to Aristotle, πολίτευμα can also refer to the power invested in a written document, e.g., a constitution. In one of his central dictums, Aristotle equates the government and the constitution: "for the government [το πολίτευμα] is . . . supreme over the state [τῆς πόλεως] and the constitution is the government [πολίτευμα δ' ἐστιν ἡ πολιτεία]."[38] Thus, both the constitution and the government operate based on the delegated authority and have the power to influence the community's life. Aristotle uses πολίτευμα as a reference to "governing class, assembly,"[39] which applies the right to vote and thus determine the city's politics. According to Aristotle, therefore, πολίτευμα can be regarded as the governing body (i.e., the constitution and the government) which influences the people who are within the *polis*.

In the Greco-Roman context, we see that πολίτευμα is commonly used in the political context. It is a standard term for the body of citizens in a Greek city. It is primarily used in association with πολιτεία to refer to Roman citizenship, which has

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1278b.9–12.

[35] Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.1278b.10–14.

[36] Ibid., 1278b.13.

[37] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1278b. 13.

[38] Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.127 8b.

[39] Aristotle, *Pol.* 4.1297.

special privileges and freedom from tribute payments to Rome. Moreover, we see that it is also used to refer to government and the constitution, which operate based on delegated authority as the primary governing body for the people who are within the *polis*. Both meanings of πολίτευμα as "governing body" and "the citizen body" are relevant for our understanding of Phil 3:20. By borrowing the word from the Greco-Roman imperial context, Paul argues for the existence of the heavenly πολίτευμα (governing body) in allegiance to which Christians live on earth.

3. Πολίτευμα in Jewish Context

Since Philo and Josephus are Jews who demonstrate strong interaction with the Greco-Roman world in ways that parallel Paul's stance in specific ways, I will look at how Philo and Josephus understand πολίτευμα and employ it. Josephus applies πολίτευμα as a reference to political power which is anchored in the constitution. This can be found in his work, *Against Apion* where Josephus clarifies God as the primary source for this πολίτευμα:

> Some peoples have entrusted the supreme political power to monarchies, others to oligarchies, yet others to the masses. Our lawgiver, however, was attracted by none of these forms of polity, but gave to his constitution the form of what if a forced expression be permitted may be termed a "theocracy," placing all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God.[40]

In another writing, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus mentions that the Hebrew Scripture is the centre of Jewish πολίτευμα. Just as the constitution is the main foundation for Greeks, the Hebrew Scripture defines the life of Jewish πολίτευμα.[41] Regardless of the usage of the term πολίτευμα in Graeco-Roman context, Josephus referred to a community of a diaspora Jews in Alexandria as a commonwealth (πολίτευμα).[42] Although this community of diaspora Jews lived in another land, they assembled to hear instructions of the elder from Jerusalem to interpret the law. They acknowledged the final authority and power only from Jerusalem and not from

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[40] H. ST. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Life Against Apion* (London: William Heinemann, 1997), 359.
[41] Josephus, *Ant*. 1.5.
[42] Josephus, *Ant*. 12.2.108.

Alexandria.[43] This would have been significant and quite challenging for the believers in Philippi.

Unlike Josephus, Philo developed a somewhat different philosophical application of the term πολίτευμα. In *On the Creation*, Philo uses πολίτευμα and its cognate words like πόλις, πολιτεία, κοσμοπολίτη to discuss the importance of constitution for the citizens who live in the city. Interestingly, Philo connects the political idea of πολίτευμα with the heavenly realm:

> But since every city [πόλις] in which laws are properly established has a regular constitution [πολιτείαν], it became necessary for this citizen of the world [κοσμοπολίτη] to adopt the same constitution [πολιτεία] as that which prevailed in the universal world. And this constitution is the right reason of nature, which in more appropriate language is denominated law, being a divine arrangement in accordance with which everything suitable and appropriate is assigned to every individual. But of this city [πόλεως] and constitution [πολιτείας] there must have been some citizens [πολίτας] before man, who might be justly called citizens of a mighty city [μεγαλοπολῖται], having received the greatest imaginable circumference to dwell in; and having been enrolled in the largest and most perfect commonwealth [πολιτεύματι].[44]

From this, we understand that Philo used the term πολίτευμα as a reference to the heavenly realm of virtues and ideas. Those who live by these ideals belong to this heavenly state or πολίτευμα. According to Hansen, "these Jewish metaphorical applications of the term πολίτευμα may have influenced Paul's assertion that Christians belong to a heavenly community." [45] In this sense, I agree with Hansen that Paul likely uses this traditional Jewish language to refer to the Philippian community as an alternative *polis* in contrast to that earthly Roman city in which the Philippian believers reside. Paul explicitly contrasts the Philippians' earthly and

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[43] Hansen, *Philippians*, 269.
[44] C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 20.
[45] Hansen, *Philippians*, 269.

heavenly πολίτευμα (citizenship). Therefore, the term πολίτευμα carries special significance for the Philippian believers in the Roman colony of Philippi.

Since Philo and Josephus are Hellenistic Jews, the Greek concept of πολίτευμα could have influenced them. This is evident when they use πολίτευμα interchangeably as "government" and "constitution" in a political sense. However, they also have slight differences from the Roman use of the term πολίτευμα. They apply it in a spiritual sense and relate πολίτευμα with divine power, which is the primary source for a governing body.

4. Πολίτευμα and Its Implied Meaning in Phil 3:20–21

Having analyzed the use of πολίτευμα in the Greco-Roman and Jewish context, this section will look at the implied meaning of πολίτευμα when Paul uses it in 3:20–21. Based on the above analysis of semantic range and Greco-Roman and Jewish context, this study contends that the notion of πολίτευμα assumes three components in Phil 3:20–21. First, it carries a geographical space. In order for a government to exercise its domain rule, there must be a geographical boundary within which has the power to govern. Second, it assumes a ruling class or governing body from which the kings or governments exercise their rule over citizens. Third, it means the involvement of and relationship with people or citizens under its rule. These three components can be found throughout Philippians. To understand better the way Paul uses πολίτευμα in 3:20–21, I will analyze how these three components functions in Philippians in the next section.

4.1. Πολίτευμα as Geographical Space

Geographical space is one of the most important themes which run through Philippians. In 1:12–18, Paul refers to his chains and Roman "imprisonment." He also alludes to the Philippians as "citizens of heaven" (1:27; 3:20). In reference to Christ, Paul draws on the parallel language that describes the enthronement and power of Caesar and transfers that to Christ in the Carmen Christi in 2:5–11. Further on in 2:15, Paul describes the Philippians as luminaries "shining in the cosmos." In each of these descriptions, the space concerned controls Paul's argument. Yet, when

examined closely, the ideas of space in Philippians are closely related to Paul's counter-imperial agendas, which we will discuss in greater depth below.

What then is space? The definition of space provided by Annang Asumang is helpful for our understanding of the human relationship in relation to space. Asumang argues that "A space is an aspect of human reality that involves ideas of distance, directions, boundaries, orientation, location, and time that intimately interacts with human perceptions and conceptions of it and their relationships with each other."[46] While many theories discuss how humans relate to place and human movement between places, human relationship in places appears to be the most important in spatial analysis. If this is the case, there are two critical questions: How do human beings relate to each other in a given space? How would the Philippian believers relate to the Roman Empire within a Roman colony where they have a conflict of identity? In this respect, I find the spatial theories of Michel Foucault helpful. According to Foucault, there are three categories:

(1) Real places — these spaces constitute the physical and social environment of humans.
(2) Utopias — these spaces include the imagined, visionary, and virtual spaces considered perfect and often aspirational.
(3) Heterotopias would include places such as cemeteries, libraries, museums, brothels, monasteries, military camps, and theatres where real places contact utopias.[47]

Interestingly, we can find these three categories in 3:20–21. Paul writes to the Philippians while he is in chains in a Roman prison, a real place. He refers to the Philippian believers as citizens of heaven, a utopia that inspires them to live their lives worthy of the gospel. Yet the Philippian believers gather together as one community worshipping Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It is a heterotopia where real space meets with utopia. Therefore, we understand that Paul's description of the

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[46] Annang Asumang, *Unlocking The Book of Hebrews: A Spatial Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 42.
[47] Michael Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacratics 16* (1986): 22–27.

Philippian believers as citizens of heaven awaiting a Saviour from there (3:20) provides a new space for the Philippian believers.

4.2.   Πολίτευμα as Governing Body

The concept of "ruling power" is one of the three aspects of the term πολίτευμα. In order to better understand Paul's intent in using πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20, it is necessary to discuss the social environment of Philippi. Philippi was a distinctively Roman colony. As mentioned earlier, Philippi was given the highest status – the *ius Italicum* (Italian law).[48] This status ensured that the city enjoyed all the rights and privileges of being governed under the Roman form of government and was treated equally with cities in Italy.[49] Therefore, although Philippi is a relatively small provincial city, it displays its Roman character and pride in being a privileged Roman colony. This colony of citizens is now temporary relocated in Philippi, a Roman colony. Although this colony of heavenly citizens currently live under the shadow of another governing power, their ultimate loyalty is not to Caesar but to Christ.

In Phil 3:20, Paul does not say that we are a πολίτευμα of heaven. Instead, he says that "πολίτευμα is in heaven." Significantly, Paul uses it in the sense of a governing body, and this governing body is in heaven. As the city of Philippi was a colony of Rome, Rome was the Philippians' governing body (πολίτευμα). Differing from this, Paul argues that the Philippian community in a sense is a colony which is governed by the heavenly πολίτευμα. In 3:20, Paul takes the Roman imperial terminology and capitalizes on the symbolic meaning of the πολίτευμα as the "governing authority" within <u>a</u> *polis.* Remarkably, he is saying to those Philippian Christians who opposed him: "While you structure your life in accordance to the earthly πολίτευμα, we have a governing body of a different sort, and it is the πολίτευμα in heaven."[50] In trying to relate his Jewish background to a Gentile audience, Paul intends to remind the Philippian believers: The claim of these people of being followers of Christ is a false one. They betray by submitting their ultimate allegiance to a different κύριος and

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[48] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Sergienko, "Our Politeuma is in Heaven," 185.

σωτήρ, namely Caesar. On the other hand, the Philippian believers as followers of Christ, should live their lives under a different governing authority. Their new identity is already set in heaven from where they are expecting the arrival of κύριος and σωτήρ Jesus Christ.[51]

4.3. Πολίτευμα as Citizen Body

The third notion of πολίτευμα is the societal level as expressed in the unity and relationship of citizens. Paul advocates the unity of Philippian believers by employing the military imagery: (1) "standing firm and striving together as one (1:27; 3: 4:1)" in military alignment ("σκοπεῖτε" a military term also used in 3:17); "pressing toward the goal" (3:13–14); (2) "fighting together with a united disposition" (4:3–4). In the Greco-Roman context, πολίτευμα includes the relationship among the citizens. Individual citizens do not function alone. A city does not consist of one person but is a communion of citizens. Even cities could only grow together by trade for instance. The Christians in Philippi realize that they are fellow sharers, "brothers and sisters" (Phil 1:12), closely aligned with Paul, who is deeply concerned for their welfare.

It is also interesting to note the emphatic position of ἡμῶν at the beginning of the sentence. Paul's emphasis on ἡμῶν at the beginning of 3:20 is for building a communal identity for Christ-followers.[52] While the conjunction at the beginning of 3:20 is γὰρ, not δέ, I observe the sentence construction of 3:20 with the earlier verse 3:3: ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει…(v. 20) // ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή…(v. 3). Both begin with ἡμῶν/ ἡμεῖς (we) in opposition to a group mentioned before. So then, πολίτευμα bears a function similar to ἡ περιτομή (the circumcision) in 3:3, designating a group identity of Philippian community antithetical to the preceding group—"our" versus "they." Moreover, this emphasizes another sharp contrast between those enemies of the cross of Christ (τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) that Paul describes earlier in 3:18–19 and those who are citizens of heaven in 3:17.[53] Therefore, Paul seeks to challenge the Philippian believers to imitate him by using the imperative, Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε

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[51] Sergienko, "Our Politeuma is in Heaven," 212.
[52] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 231.
[53] Hansen, *Philippians*, 268.

by painting a dark and gloomy picture of the enemies of the cross who live life by setting their minds on earthly things.[54] The destruction of this group of people is inevitable.

On the other hand, Paul also paints a radiant picture of those who do not belong to the earthly πολίτευμα but whose πολίτευμα is in heaven. Their hope is secure as they eagerly await the final triumphant return of a Saviour and the transformation of their earthly bodies (3:21). As followers of Christ, the Philippian believers are also citizens of heaven (3:20). As citizens of heaven, Philippians are encouraged to agree wholeheartedly, love one another, and work together with one mind and purpose.

5. Πολίτευμα and Paul's Counter-Imperial Agenda in 3:20–21

In the previous section, I looked at the implied meaning of πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20 and how it is related to geographical space, governing body, and citizen body. In this section, I will further analyze how these three components function in Paul's counter-imperial agenda in 3:20–21.

5.1. Philippi and the Roman Empire

Philippi was a city modeled after the mother city, Rome. In Paul's time, there were roman arches, bath-houses, forums, and temples in Philippi. Although Philippi was a Greek-speaking province, Latin was the official language of Philippi.[55] Although it was predominantly Greek, there were also temples to the Phrygian, and Egyptian gods, of which the city's imperial cult was the most famous. With altars and temples dedicated to the emperor and his family members, emperor worship was at the heart of the city's religious life.[56] In Philippi, therefore, the imperial cult was an essential means of expressing loyalty to and gratitude for the *Pax Romana*.[5] Detachment from participation in the imperial cult was considered to be subversive.[57] In such a

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 2–3.

[56] Erik M. Heen, "Phil 2:6–11 and Resistance to the Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa theō* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East," in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2004), 136.

[57] Hansen, *Philippians*, 2–3.

context, Paul declares ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν[58] (for our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ). The imperial language and titles such as "Rome" or "empire" or "Caesar" are not clearly mentioned in 3:20-21. Based on Paul's use of πολίτευμα in relation to οὐρανός, σωτήρ, and κύριος, however, scholars advocate that 3:20–21 includes Paul's critique of the Roman Empire, the emperor and the imperial cult.[59] Moreover, Paul's argument reaches its climax in 3:21 where he mentions Jesus Christ as the κύριος who has the power "to subject all things to himself." If it is the case, then Paul's imperial agenda is unmissable in his use of the term πολίτευμα in 3:20–21. Therefore, the next section will look at how οὐρανός, σωτήρ, and κύριος communicate Paul's counter-imperial message in 3:20–21.

5.2. οὐρανός, σωτήρ, and κύριος Terminology

Paul's use of term πολίτευμα in conjunction with οὐρανός in 3:20 signifies the citizenship of another empire. As mentioned earlier, the Philippians could have desired Roman citizenship due to its special rights and privileges. Andrew T. Lincoln asserts, "To the Philippians the πολίτευμα was in Rome, and they would have seen a parallel as the apostle makes the claim about the πολίτευμα of Christians."[60] Thus, Paul invites the Philippians to be loyal to their heavenly πολίτευμα as opposed to their citizenship status in the Roman Empire.[61] These political references then provide the context in which the titles σωτήρ and κύριος should be read counter-imperially.

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[58] This Greek text and the rest are taken from NA 28.

[59] See N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 69–79; Mikael Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews, and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians*, ConBNT 34 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 210–78; Markus Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 235; Efrain Agosto, "Patronage and Commendation, Imperial and Anti-imperial," in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2004), 119.

[60] Andrew T. Lincoln, "Philippians and the Heavenly Commonwealth," in *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 100.

[61] Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 173.

The titles σωτήρ and κύριος mentioned in 3:20 are often ascribed to the Roman emperor.[62] Paul's description of Jesus as σωτήρ in relation to πολίτευμα in 3:20 suggests that Paul intentionally uses the term to contrast Jesus with the emperor.[63] Oakes argues that Paul's use of σωτήρ in 3:20 is a "decisive argument in favor of taking the reference to the σωτήρ, who is κύριος Ἰησοῦς, as a comparison with the emperor."[64] In agreeing with Oakes, Markus Bockmuehl describes that "[σωτήρ] was the title commonly used for Caesar in the Roman Emperor cult."[65] In this sense, by describing Jesus as σωτήρ, Paul chose a title that would have reminded the Philippian believers of the imperial cult and in that way called on the Philippians to deny the false savior and be faithful to the true one.

Similar to σωτήρ, the term κύριος[66] is also a title widely used in evoking gods and worshipping the Roman emperor.[67] Scholars identify this term as a challenge to the emperor's claims of authority over the world as its κύριος.[68] If this is the case, Roman citizens in Philippi would have been familiar with this conjoined term applied to Caesar. So, there is a parallel governing power: Jesus as σωτῆρα or Caesar as σωτῆρα in 3:20. The Philippian believers cannot serve two lords on the same level and in the same space/territory. In addition, there is only one true Savior and this title is only attributed to Jesus, not to Caesar. In a Roman colony, declaring Jesus to be Savior and Lord would be a surprising allusion to the declaration of the Roman imperial cult that Caesar is Lord. In the ideology of the imperial cult, Jupiter and the gods gave divine authority and divine names to Augustus Caesar.[69]

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[62] J. Reumann, *Philippians,* AB 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 363.

[63] Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 381.

[64] Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, SNTSMS 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140.

[65] Bockmuehl, *Philippians, 235.*

[66] In Philippians, Paul's uses of the term κύριος with reference to Jesus in 2:11 and 3:20 got the most attention for counter-imperial reading. However, Paul refers to Christ as κύριος fifteen times (1:2, 14; 2:11, 19, 24, 29; 3:1, 8, 20; 4:1–2, 4–5, 10, 23).

[67] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. by Lionel R. M. Strachan. 4th ed. (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1927), 350.

[68] See N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 72–73; Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 87; James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study in the Conflict of Ideology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 95.

[69] Hansen, *Philippians*, 163.

However, Paul replaced Rome and its ruler August Caesar with "Heaven" and "Jesus Christ." Therefore, Paul's exhortation in 3:20–21 is inevitably understood as a call for Philippian believers to stand against the imperial authorities. Furthermore, Jesus' saving action, specified as the transformation of our bodies, is said to be κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα in 3:21. According to Peter Oakes, "This strengthens the likelihood of comparison with the Emperor, whose ability to save his people is precisely in accordance with the power which enables him also to subject all things to himself."[70] In contrast with Caesar who attempts to bring all things under the control of the Roman Empire, Paul declares that Christians are eagerly waiting for their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, coming from heaven to transform their bodies by his power to bring all things under his control (3:21). Regarding this, Hansen rightly points out,

> Although a process of universal dominion often occurs in the history of the world—Caesars often seek to be saviors of the world by subjugating all things under their control—Paul does not allow the pseudo-saviors of the world to eclipse the true Savior who will come from heaven to exercise his sovereign power over all things and transform the humiliation of his people into glory. Even when we are locked in Caesar's dark prisons and bound in Caesar's chains, *we eagerly await a Savior.*[71]

In this sense, Paul highlights in 3:21 that by subjecting all things under his control, Jesus Christ deserves the universal acclamation that he alone is the Lord, far above all earthly powers.[72]

Regarding the Lordship of Jesus in 3:20-21, scholars identify the parallel words and concepts between 2:6–11 and 3:20–21 in the following ways:[73]

2:6–11	3:20–21

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[70] Peter Oakes, *Philippians*, 140–41.

[71] Hansen, *Philippians*, 276.

[72] Hansen, *Philippians*, 275.

[73] See Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 229; Hansen, *Philippians*, 276–77; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 235; Peter Oakes, *Philippians,* 147.

σύμμορφον, "having the same form" (3:21)	μορφῇ/μορφήν, "form" (2:6, 7)
ὑπάρχει, "is" (3:20)	ὑπάρχων, "being" (2:6)
μετασχηματίσει, "transform the likeness" (3:21)	σχήματι, "likeness" (2:7)
ταπεινώσεως, "humble state" (3:21)	ἐταπείνωσεν, "humbled" (2:8)
δύνασθαι … ὑποτάξαι … τὰ πάντα, "able to subject everything" (3:21)	πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ, "every knee might bow" (2:10)
κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, "the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20)	κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, "Jesus Christ is Lord" (2:11)
δόξης, "glory" (3:21)	δόξαν, "glory" (2:11)[74]

This terminological correspondence between 2:6–11 and 3:20–21 appear to confirm that 3:20–21 belongs with the Christ hymn where it emphasizes the universal Lordship of Jesus. In his dissertation, Damian S. Szepessy argues that "[the Philippian believers] having heard the exaltation and worship language in 2:9–11 would surely hear the final clause of 3:21, τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, in contrast to the Caesar's earthly rule."[75] If Paul intentionally echoes back to the Christ hymn (2:6–11) in 3:20–21, he makes a polemical parallel, contrasting Christ and Caesar to establish Christ as the one true κύριος. Therefore, Paul encourages the Philippian believers in 3:20–21 to pledge their allegiance to Christ instead of Caesar. Their final hope is not fixed on Caesar but on Christ, who holds the real ruling power. By intentionally using the imperial language πολίτευμα in relation to οὐρανός, σωτήρ and κύριος, Paul redirects the

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[74] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 229.
[75] Damian S. Szepessy, "A New Citizenship: Conversion in Roman Philippi as Reflected in the Letter to the Philippians" (PhD diss., Charles Sturt University, 2017), 322.

attention of the Philippian believers from Caesar, the bogus Saviour and Lord, to the true Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.

6. Social Identity Formation and Phil 3:17–21

The above analysis of the semantic and Greco-Roman imperial context helps us understand how the word πολίτευμα applies to both political and social relationships among the citizens. For this reason, Paul did not simply use πολίτευμα in 3:20–21 for his counter-agenda purpose, he also employed it to reconstruct the social identity of the Philippian believers. According to Henri Tajfel, the social identity process involves three main elements in establishing the ethos, values, status, and boundaries for a particular group against other groups in society. They are the cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions.[76] The cognitive dimension provides the group members with a strong sense of belonging and distinctiveness compared to other groups. The emotional dimension brings various rituals and practices to enhance the emotional ties in group dynamics to establish a strong sense of solidarity, identity, and belonging to the group. Finally, the evaluative dimension deals with how the members within the group rate themselves in relation to other groups.[77] Therefore, I will analyze how the πολίτευμα is related to social identity formation with respect to the cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions in the context of Phil 3:17–21.

6.1. Evaluative Dimension

Paul makes social group comparisons that highlight ethical behaviour differences between his opponents and Philippians at Philippi. This comparison begins in 3:17. He encourages the Philippian believers to imitate him in 3:17. The genitive personal pronoun μου is an objective genitive of the verb συμμιμηταί and stresses the 'of me' of how they are to imitate him together.[78] This is crucial for Paul because he considers the predominant Greco-Roman imperial world view, and ethical behaviours as a threat to the new social identity of the Philippian believers.

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[76] Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, European Monographs in Social Psychology 14 (London: Routledge, 1969), 28.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 217.

Moreover, this exhortation is linked to the preceding athletic metaphor and refers to "being my fellow-imitator to run the course towards the prize in Jesus Christ."[79] Paul A. Holloway provides two possible reasons for Paul's exhortation. First, enemies of the cross who reject knowing the real Lord and Saviour are present in Philippi. Second, the Philippian believers declare allegiance to the Messiah and their citizenship.[80] Paul encourages the Philippian believers to observe the behaviours of those who have self-categorized as members of the in-group (3:17). The positive evaluation of these examples provides a positive picture of prototypical members. These members belong to ἡμᾶς and include Epaphroditus, Timothy, and other associates of Paul (1:14, cf. 4:2–3).[81] The noun τύπος in 3:17 is used elsewhere in Paul's letters to signify groups of believers who are examples to others, either as negative examples (cf. Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6), or positive ones (cf. Rom 6:17; 1 Thess 1:7).[82]

Paul's social group comparison is further highlighted by positive distinction in contrasting the fate of different out-groups. Sin Pa Ho argues that "[Paul] constructed the social identity of a group with negative social identity (enemies of the cross of Christ) in 3:17–18 in tears to persuade the first readers to be detached from this group: not to be like them."[83] In this sense, it is correct that Paul's exhortation to observe those who were good examples in 3:17 came with a warning in relation to those who did not live the same life that Paul and his associates lived (3:18–19). This group contrasted with ἡμᾶς, who were citizens of heaven and awaiting a saviour. Therefore, the imperative σκοπεῖτε in 3:17 can be distinguished with the warnings mentioned in 3:2.[84] In 3:20–21, Paul highlights the Philippian believers whose citizenship is in heaven from which Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

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[79] Sin Pa Ho, "*Politeuma* as a Hybrid Patriotic Identity in Christ: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Philippians 3:20," 105.

[80] Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy,* SNTS 112 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143.

[81] A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology*, SNTSMS 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 95.

[82] Damian S. Szepessy, "A New Citizenship," 302.

[83] Sin Pa Ho, "*Politeuma*," 105.

[84] Demetrius K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians*, JSNTSup 223 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 212–213.

will come. When he comes, he will bring everything under his control and transform our lowly bodies so that we will be like his glorious body. By distinguishing from this reality, Paul mentions the enemies of the Cross of Christ (3:18) whose destiny is destruction, whose god is their stomach, whose glory is in their shame, whose mind is set on earthly things (3:19). This sharp contrast provides a very effective evaluative dimension for them to rate and compare themselves with others in the adjacent spaces in the Roman Empire.

6.2.   Emotional Dimension

In 3:19, Paul reminds the Philippian believers that the enemies of the cross are the ones who do not follow Paul's example, which had been shown to the Philippian believers.[85] Regarding the specific identity of the opponents mentioned in 3:18–19, scholars disagree.[86] Although the opponents' identity cannot be explicitly known from the context, Paul likely refers to Jewish or Gentile unbelievers. The emotional language of πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω in 3:18, would most likely have referred to those who denied the cross, and therefore, distorted the Gospel of Christ.[87] Paul's depiction further differentiates this out-group in negative terms of those ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία (3:19b). This group is the opposite of those who are mature (3:15) because they have neglected the mindset exemplified in the Messiah.[88] Paul then follows up with a further negative characterization of those of whose ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν (3:19). Craig deVos argues that "αἰσχύνη is used in the LXX as a euphemism of idolatry (Hos 9:10; Jer 3:24-25), thus gluttony, sexual immorality, and idolatry are possibilities."[89] Although this is possible, we do not find any explicit reference referring to such a group throughout Philippians. Therefore, it remains a hypothesis. However, the behaviours shown by this group were indicative of a mindset on earthly things.[90] While this out-group are distinctly citizens of earth, where their minds are set and where they find both their god and their glory, Paul and the Philippians are not oriented to and characterized by earthly

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[85] Demetrius K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*, 212-213
[86] For a short entry of the scholars' debate, see Hellerman, *Philippians*, 215–16.
[87] Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 230.
[88] Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, 371.
[89] C. S. de Vos, "Finding a Charge That Fits: the Accusation Against Paul and Silas At Philippi (Acts 16.19-21)," *JSNT* 21, no. 74 (1999): 51–63.
[90] Damian S. Szepessy, "A New Citizenship," 320.

things, but heavenly ones.[91] Therefore, Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to follow his example (3:17); to warn them with tears about the enemies of the cross of Christ (3:19), and to stand firm in the Lord (4:1). In his exhortation, Paul is essentially evoking an emotional response to establish a strong sense of solidarity, identity, and belonging to the group. This emotional dimension is further enhanced by the narrative of the humiliation-exhortation in the Christ Hymn (2:6–11) that leads to the ultimate confession and worship of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

6.3. Cognitive Dimension

The emphatic construction ἡμῶν γὰρ in 3:20 also can be found in verse 3:3, where Paul classified his in-group as the true worshippers of God. Paul's converts are the ones who are citizens of heaven (3:20a). J. Daniel Hays posits that Paul's description of the Philippian believers as citizens of heaven is part of a multi-ethnic identity being created by Paul.[92] Hays further argues that Paul is not merely attempting to break the social division between Jews and Gentiles, but that he is constructing a new ethnic identity for all who are new followers of Christ.[93] Paul's description of the Philippian believers as πολίτευμα of heaven awaiting a Saviour from there (3:20) provides the Philippian believers with a strong sense of belonging and distinctiveness as compared to other groups. More significantly, the Philippian believers belong to a new civic community, with the new governing body — Jesus Christ as its κύριος and σωτήρ. This means that the Philippians would have understood from the notion of πολίτευμα that they were a colony whose commonwealth and citizenship rights were elsewhere. Based on the Christological paradigm mentioned in 2:6–11, Paul considers Jesus Christ as the authoritative representative of the governing body and as the true σωτήρ and, not like a Roman emperor. Therefore, the Philippian believers should recognize that this governing body provides the standard of behavior. Differing from those whose god is their belly and mind set on earthly things, the Philippian believers who have this

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[91] Paul S. Cable, "We Await A Savior: Salvation in Philippians (PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2017), 281.

[92] J. D. Hays, "Paul and the Multi-Ethnic First-Century World: Ethnicity and Christian Identity" in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, eds. T. J. Burke and B. S. Rosner, LNTS 420 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 84.

[93] Ibid.

πολίτευμα in heaven must live and act according to Christological paradigm mentioned in 2:6–11, by considering Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, heaven as their new space, and their new identity as the people of God living in a Roman-colony Philip. Therefore, this cognitive dimension bonds the Philippian believers together as aliens living together in the colony place of Philippi, whose ultimate allegiance is not to their current earthly ruler but to the Saviour Jesus Christ.

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, I have studied the semantic range of πολίτευμα and how it is used in both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts. Based on this, I have argued that the term πολίτευμα in the Greco-Roman context associates with three components, namely geographical space, governing body, and citizen body. I then examined Paul's use of the term πολίτευμα in light of the Greco-Roman imperial context and social identity formation. As a result, I contend that Paul uses the term πολίτευμα for two purposes in 3:20–21. First, Paul's use of the term πολίτευμα in relation to οὐρανός signifies the citizenship of another empire. Moreover, the titles σωτήρ and κύριος mentioned in 3:20 are often ascribed to the Roman emperor. Because of this, I have concluded that πολίτευμα is used as counter-imperial agenda, replacing Caesar with Jesus, the true Saviour and Lord. Second, Paul employs the term πολίτευμα for the identity formation of the Philippian believers in 3:20–21. By using the term πολίτευμα in relation to σωτήρ and κύριος in 3:20, Paul intends to encourage the Philippian believers to base their practice on the Christological paradigm mentioned in 2:6–11, by considering Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, heavens as their new space, their new identity as the people of God as they live in the Roman-Colony Philip. Therefore, I propose that πολίτευμα in 3:20–21 should be read as Paul's counter-imperial agenda and social identity formation: Paul introduces another King (ruling power), another space/territory, and a different kind of citizenship (a new identity) in Philippians.

Reading πολίτευμα from this perspective, Paul's use of πολίτευμα as counter-imperial agenda is not simply a confrontational tool employed to subvert the Caesar's empire. It is, at the same time, a strong message of encouragement to the Philippian believers that would help them in their social identity formation of an alternative assembly called the *ekklesia* in which Jesus is the true Savior and Lord.

Thus, Fee correctly connects verse 27a to 3:20–21 in his rendering, "live in the Roman colony of Philippi as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland."[94] The basis of this encouragement is that the Philippian believers now have Jesus as their Lord and King, heavens as their new space and their new identity as the people of God.

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[94] G. D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 162.