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***THE INTERPRETATION OF
PHILIPPIANS 3:20***

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Foreword

In my Bible study publication THE WORD OF TRUTH (Vol. XIV - No.3) I had occasion to refer to Philippians Chapter 3, Verse 20, in connection with an article on "The Earth, Not Heaven, Is The Future Home of God's Redeemed." I noted that the word "conversation" in this passage is an old English word which means the whole manner of life, and I suggested that the declaration of Paul here is that "**Our manner of life already exists** (is inherent) **among the heavens.**" This incomplete and brief note was taken up by Mr. Alexander Thomson in his publication *The Differentiator* and his criticism led to further discussion in Volume XV, Number 3 and Volume XV, Number 4 of THE WORD OF TRUTH. Others entered into the discussion and wrote concerning it, and this caused me to determine to make a new and exhaustive study of each word in this passage, then to restudy the passage in the light of its context. This has been done and I now set forth my findings to this date. Those referred to who have written on this passage may rest assured that I have carefully considered all they have said, and I would like for my readers to know that I do not believe I have ever studied any single passage quite as intensely as I have this one. I believe I have found some facts that will commend themselves to all who honestly seek the truth.

However, I am inclined to feel that these facts may not be favorably received by some who have determined in advance that this passage teaches that heaven is our future home. As Mr. Thomson said in a personal letter to me defending his view that heaven is our future home: "Philippians 3: 20 is ample proof for me, by FAITH in God's Holy Word. It is up to you to disprove what the Greek makes so clear here."

Now it is not my intention to prove or to disprove anything concerning Philippians 3:20. I have been convinced from the very start that no matter how you translate it, this verse has nothing to do with the question of our future home being in heaven or upon the earth. It seems indeed strange that men having been driven from every other passage that has been used to teach our future home will be heaven, now shut themselves up in Philippians 3: 20 and summon all who disagree to an unconditional surrender. This I decline to do as I know this passage teaches nothing in regard to our future home. In the *King James Version* it reads:

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3 :20.

The task of interpreting any passage of Scripture is to discover what is meant by what is said. In doing this, every word needs to be carefully considered. The first difficult word in this passage is the word "conversation", which in former days meant "the whole manner of life, conduct, behavior", and did not mean "talk" as it usually does today. The Greek word is *politeuma*, and the idea of "the whole manner of life" only approaches its true meaning and falls short of expressing the idea contained in this Greek word. We need above all to arrive at the true meaning of this word, and all honest steps taken to arrive at this will be well pleasing to the Lord.

I doubt very much if the translation "conversation" would ever have been seriously questioned if it had not been for the occurrence of *ex hou* (singular) translated "from whence" and which means "out of which." This being singular it could not refer to *ouranois* (heavens) which is plural. It could only refer to *politeuma* which is singular. This to some demanded that a meaning be given to *politeuma* so that it could indicate a place out of which the Savior would come. Therefore such ideas as "commonwealth", "realm", and "homeland" have been put forth. Any one of these words would have solved the difficulty, each one being singular and designating a place out of which the Savior could come, but they imposed upon the interpreter a far greater problem. Not one of them is in any way related to the elements found in this Greek word, they do not translate *politeuma*, they simply rewrite the passage.

It was right here that we all went wrong and hit a derail in our thinking. I went wrong in insisting that a singular could refer to a plural. I was in error even though I could cite as great an authority as A. T. Robertson in support of my position. Others went wrong in thinking that it is the Savior who comes out of our *politeuma*. That is not what this passage says, as will be shown later. We have all missed one of the main points here altogether, and we need to back out, start over, prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.

The Meaning of *Politeuma*

I insist that taking this word apart will help us to understand it. The root is *polis* which means city. To this is added the element *eu*, which appearing between the root (*polis*) and the ending (*ma*) signifies the doing or practice of that which is indicated by the root, that is, the regular performance of the idea set forth in it. Finally we have the suffix *ma* which when added denotes the result or effect produced by practicing the idea set forth in the root. This gives us the idea of *city-practice-effect*, which may, to some, make very little sense, but to the discerning mind it speaks much truth as to the meaning of *politeuma*. This can be illustrated by two other words constructed along the same lines.

The Greek word *hiereus* means a priest. This comes from *hieron* which means sacred. The root is *bier* and when *eu* is added it would speak of *sacred-practice* and is the designation of those who did this, the priests. In the word *hierateuo* the element *eu* between the stem and the ending denotes to practice what the root signifies, that is, to exercise the priestly office, or, do the work of a priest. See Luke 1:8 where this verb is translated "executed the priest's office." If this verb is taken, and the noun forming suffix *ma* is added, which denotes result or effect, we will then have *hierateuma* which literally means *priest-practice-result*, which can be expressed in English by the word *priesthood*. It is so translated in 1 Peter 2: 5 and 9. Since our English suffix *-hood*, denotes state, condition, quality, and character (as in manhood, childhood, knighthood) we thus see in *hierateuma* the quality and character that comes from practicing the life, office, and work of a priest. However, it needs to be remembered that in Israel priests were born into a priestly tribe and were members of a priestly family. Their ancestry was priestly. They were reared to be priests, lived as priests, dressed as priests, thought as priests, talked as priests, served as priests. This produced the priesthood or priestly character. The passage in Peter's epistle speaks of a priestly character that was given to and implanted in men by God, qualifying them for the priesthood. The Greek word *hierateuma* was indeed an apt word to describe this priestly character.

Illustrated by *Strateuma*

Another word built up in this same way is *strateuma*. The word *strat* means war; add *eu* to this and we get the idea *of practicing war*. This is what men do who are training to be soldiers. When *ma* is added we get the result or *effect of practicing war*. Untrained men are a mob, but men trained in war are an army. There is a change *of character and quality* when men are trained. They change from a mob to an army. This is the meaning *of strateuma*.

Those who have studied word analysis or word building in the English language will appreciate the importance of this. For example, we start with the simple word *nation*. If to this we add the adjective forming suffix *-all* which denotes belonging to or pertaining to, we have *national*. Then if we add the verb forming suffix *ize* we add the idea of subjecting to the action or process denoted by the adjective. This gives the word *nationalize*. Thus we have gone from noun, to adjective, to verb, but we are not yet at an end. We can still add the suffix *-lion* and we have the noun which names the act. The result is *nationalization*. Then if we want to wipe out the whole business we can add the prefix *de-*, which speaks of reversing or undoing an action, and we have *denationalization*. Thus, one who never heard this word could easily arrive at its true meaning if he discovers its root then finds the significance of its various parts. With these facts before him the reader may want to try this on the word *antidisestablishmentarianism*, said to be the longest word in our language. All he needs to begin work is to know that *establishment* in this word has reference to a church or religion established and maintained by law. He will find that this word becomes guilelessly simple once it is taken apart and put back together.

However, let it be clearly understood that I do not hold that the meaning of every Greek or English word can be discovered by analyzing its elements. Words at times have a habit of soaring off into unexpected orbits. But when they do this there is some reason for it, and once this reason is discovered it will provide a clue to its present meaning. This can be seen in the word *atomic* which took off on an unexpected course within the past two decades.

The word *atom* means the smallest part that can exist of any element. This being true the word *atomic* should mean extremely minute or tiny. This is what it did mean until about thirteen years ago, when it took on a new meaning. No one today would understand atomic power to mean extremely minute power. There is a good reason for the sudden change in meaning of this word, and the reader is quite familiar with the circumstances that brought it about.

While the word *politeuma* has undergone some changes in its history, its true meaning can be discovered by taking it apart, recognizing while doing so the reasons for the changes it has undergone. It was a valuable word, and since good words are always scarce it is not strange at all to find this one used for a new purpose once the city-states began to break up and disappear.

The City-States

In order to fully understand the word *politeuma*, the student should have some knowledge of the city-states as they were in ancient times. A reading of Fustel De Coulanges classic work on *The Ancient City* will provide this knowledge, or the recent work of Arnold J. Toynbee on *Hellenism* will suffice.

In the Greek language one word, *polis*, sufficed for both city and state. These sovereign city-states had their own civic individuality, institutions, customs, morals, arts, sciences, religions and gods. Men were citizens of a certain city and felt no ties, or owed no allegiance to other cities in the same country. Since, in those days, a man born in a certain city-state lived out his entire life in that city, his language, conduct, morals, thinking, yea, his very character, all were produced and shaped by the city-state into which he was born. In fact, a man's character was predetermined by the city-state in which he was born. The life he was to live was there and being lived by others before he was born. It was there and waiting to fix its distinct character upon him. Being born into this, he conformed to it, became a part of it, and gloried in the city-state character which was his. This character with its expressions was a man's *politeuma*, his city-character, a character that was derived and developed from practicing the customs of a city.

There was very little variation in this fixity of character until about the end of the sixth century B.C. At that time men were actually worshipping their city-states as gods instead of treating them simply as public utilities. This became so burdensome to the long-suffering citizens that it provoked them into a reaction and revolt. This marked the beginning of the break-up of the city-states, although many of their features remained through the following centuries.

The city-character or *politeuma* that was stamped upon some men is clearly seen in the case of Cretans. Paul said of them that "they are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons" (Titus 1: 12). This seems to be a very harsh characterization, but it is a true one, for these words describe the typical Cretan character. This was their way of life, a way of life into which each Cretan was born and of which they became a part. This was their *politeuma*, the character they developed and the manner of life which came from practicing the ways of a city into which they happened to be born. This *politeuma* was inherent in Crete, and the character of a Cretan had its rise from this city.

There is no doubt but that the meaning of *politeuma* had undergone some changes in its history. It originally meant the acquired and developed character and manner of life that resulted from living and practicing the life and customs of one of the ancient city-states. A man spoke, thought, and worshipped according to the established customs of his city. This became his *politeuma* or his city-character. From this it came to mean simply derived, developed, or acquired character, disposition and temperament, without any thought of a city-state entering into it. It also includes the idea of the manner of life that flows out of this character. This change was probably due to the fact that the rigid barriers of the city-states were breaking down, so that a man's character might be derived from many sources. This left the word *politeuma* free to perform other service.

In the study previously presented in THE WORD OF TRUTH (Vol. XV - No.4) I tried to illustrate this by use of our words *urban*, *urbane*, and *urbanity*. In fact, I felt at that time that *urbanity* would make a good translation of *politeuma*. However, some of my fellow students feel that this word carries too much of an idea of worldly polish and sophistication; therefore, I am inclined to withdraw it as a translation. I will still use it as an illustration, for the word *urbanity* is a perfect parallel of the word *politeuma*.

It began with the word ***urb*** which always has to do with a city, as seen in the word *suburban*. Then the word *urbane* came to be used of one who had city-character and city-manners as compared to those who lived in the provinces or on the farms. Then, as life changed, and there became very little if any difference between the character and manners of one who lived in the city and one who lived in the country, the word *urbane* was freed for other service. All ideas of "city" dropped out of it, and *urbane* was applied to men who were courteous in manner, polite, refined, cultured. The word *urbanity* became the noun that named this quality in men. The word *politeuma* followed this same course, and by Paul's time there was nothing left of the idea of "city" in the word.

Other Forms

Any study of *politeuma* would be incomplete if consideration were not given to the verb *politeuo*. This is found twice in the New Testament - in Acts 23:1 where it is translated "have lived", and in Philippians 1 :27 where it is translated "conversation." Neither of these renderings are satisfactory, and other translators seem to think it better to rewrite what Luke and Paul said than to struggle to give a faithful translation. Since as we have seen the noun *politeuma* has to do with an acquired character, then the verb has to do with the expressions of character. It would be used of that which flows out of a *politeuma*, that is actions which are the outflow of an acquired character. There is no one word which expresses this idea in English. If we reconstruct the scene recorded in Acts 23 it will help us to understand it.

Many years, probably about twenty-six, have passed since Paul had last seen the Sanhedrin. Now at long last he again stands before them. A quarter century before they had appointed him inquisitor-in-chief and head persecutor of the Christians, then sent him officially on a persecuting mission from which he never returned to them. He had met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. It is little wonder that he now scrutinizes the present personnel of the Sanhedrin with special interest. It is quite likely that he knew some of them in days past and that they had known him. Now he is confronted by them as he stands charged with conduct that is hostile to the people of Israel, to the law - yes, hostile to the temple, for he is charged with having brought Greeks into it, thus polluting the holy place. In his sweeping denials of all this he declares:

Men and brethren, I have *expressed my character* before God with a perfectly clear conscience right down to this very day. Acts 23: 1.

This is Paul's succinct report to them of his conduct and actions over the past twenty-five years. In other words, he is telling them that the man whom they appointed twenty-five years ago is still the very same man in his heart so far as his feelings toward Israel, toward the law, and toward the temple are concerned. He would not have then, and he would not now teach against Israel, teach against the law, or teach against the holy place. Furthermore, he would not even think of taking a Greek such as Trophimus into these forbidden courts. He was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and his inbred and acquired character would never express itself in such ways.

To inject into this passage any ideas of "citizen" or "citizenship" is not right since the ideas of "citizenship" were Greek and Roman, not Jewish. It is quite evident that the verb speaks of the actions which flow out of one's character. Thus the *politetto* of which Paul speaks in Acts 23: 1 was the expression of his character as a Jew (Acts 22:3), a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), a Hebrew (2 Cor. 11: 22) . In Philippians 1: 27 this same verb would speak of the Philippians saints expressing their character as believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would paraphrase and expand this as follows: "Only worthily of the gospel of Christ express your character." If they walk according to this their lives will be "the fruit of righteousness which is by Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1: 11).

When all the facts concerning *politettma* have been assembled, there is no possible way that it can be made to mean commonwealth, homeland, country, or colony. Every fact related to this word cries out against any such meanings as these. The word "commonwealth" is favored by some, but it is very indefinite in meaning and hard to define. But even if taken to mean what is indicated by present day usage, namely a state, then Paul would have needed to say "God's commonwealth" or "His commonwealth", and certainly not "ours" as the Greek specifically declares. The words "commonwealth" and "homeland" are not synonymous, and if the Spirit of God had intended us to understand that our "country" is in heaven, the word *patria* would have been used. Then it would have said, "our own country is in heaven." But it does not say this, and we have no right to rewrite the Scripture.

In translating Philippians 3:20 Moffat renders it, "**But we are a colony of heaven.**" This too rewrites the words of Paul and it does not even approach what the Greek text declares. Moulton and Milligan, whose scholarship in regard to koine and papyrus Greek cannot be denied, rightly object to this rendering saying: Holding that *politeuma* sometimes denotes a settlement whose organization is modeled on that of the mother-city, many modern commentators would translate "we are a colony of

heaven." But we should like clearer evidence that *politeuma* can be used in this distinctive sense, and, further, such a translation reverses the presupposed relation between the colony and the mother-city. (*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*).

This is true. A colonist is one who has gone out from the mother-country, not one who is planning to go to it. His home is in the colony, not in the country from whence he came. If Moffatt's translation could be sustained, it would provide the strongest possible proof that our home now and our future home is the earth. Why then is this translation put forth by those who are insisting our future home is heaven?

It is my firm conviction that *politeuma* in the time of Paul had come to mean an acquired, developed, or derived character, disposition, or temperament. It could be used of the character that had come to a man from the forces that arose out of his family, his country, his training, or his religion; or it could be used of the character that he acquired as the result of having experienced from God "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3: 5).

When Paul said: "**For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,**" he was speaking of his theogenic (God - produced) *politeuma*, that is, one facet of the character or disposition that was his from God. His contentment was the outflow of a contented spirit. This state of contentment was something that Paul had "come to learn", thus it was acquired and developed. He had not always known this, having been reared in the lap of luxury, never knowing want. Yet he had acquired from God and had developed by practice, experience, and discipline a contented disposition. Every act of contentment was the outflow of a contented character.

I have searched in vain for some English word which will truly express and represent the ideas contained in the word *politeuma*. There does not seem to be one. But this does not hinder us in knowing what it means, even though we may not have a word for it.

Waiting It Out

Another word of major importance in this passage, and one that has been neglected is the word *apekdechomai* (pronounced ap-ekDECK-om-ahee), a word that has more to do with the meaning of this passage than any other word in it. This has been translated "look for" in the *King James Version* of Philippians 3: 20. This word does not mean "look" Out of twenty-one versions consulted, not one translates it "look" Sixteen render it "wait" or "await" and five translate it "expect." However, this is not the ordinary word for "wait" as it is a composite word that says much more. Rotherham has tried to express its meaning by translating it "ardently await"; Montgomery by saying "anxiously awaiting"; and Wuest by rendering it "eagerly awaiting." These are all good and they go much further toward expressing the truth than the simple word *await*.

In the *Grimm-Thayer Lexicon* this word is said to mean "assiduously and patiently to wait for", and the suggestion is made that it compares with the English phrase "wait it out." This is excellent especially so in view of the fact that *assiduous* means "constant in application or attention, devoted, attentive, unremitting." When all the facts are weighed it becomes plain that *apekdechomai* expresses the idea of patiently waiting it out, doing so without murmuring or complaining, doing so with courage, confidence, and serenity.

In Romans 8:25 we find this word used when the act of waiting it out is one that is through patience (not "with patience"), meaning "by means of patience we wait it out," as Lenski translates it. Thus the act of waiting it out is one that flows out of a patient character. Some people display patience by curbing their impatience. They are impatient in character, but are able to act patient on occasions, usually when there is nothing else they can do about it. It is only as one participates in the divine nature (2 Peter 1 :4) that he has the patient character that makes it possible for him to "wait it out" in a manner that pleases God.

In 1 Peter 3: 20 the word *apekdechomai* is used to describe the act of God as His longsuffering waited it out in the days of Noah.

In Galatians 5: 5 it is used where *apekdechomai* or the act of waiting it out is revealed to be "through the Spirit." Thus this act is seen to be something that none could do or would do apart from a disposition created by God within him.

To "wait it out" when we are called to do so is one of the most God-honoring acts that the believer can do. The glory of Job is seen in the fact that he waited it out. When in the depths of his misery his wife urged him to "Curse God, and die," when his own friends sought to explain his miserable condition by charging him with secret sin, his confident answer was: "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.**" He waited it out and the result was double fruitfulness and a higher service.

In the present dispensation, under God's present method of dealing, when the heavens are silent and men are shut up to the written Word of God, the greatest act of devotion any believer can offer to God is to "wait it out." From the time we believe it may seem that we never have one thing from God that will indicate our relationship to Him. Nothing we seek to do may ever work out as we feel it should, and it may seem at times as if God has forgotten that we are His children. Nevertheless, this very condition of things provides us with an opportunity to wait it out such as men have never had before. Some may grow restless and determine to do something, to generate something. Prayer meetings are held and men cry out for God to do something so that there will be manifest tokens of God's pleasure. They just cannot wait it out.

I will admit that it is difficult to keep talking to God when He never says one word in return to us, but since He has told us to "**continue in prayer**" (Col. 4:2), we will take Him at His word and wait it out.

It is in the matter of prayer that so many who profess faith fail to wait it out. If the answer does not come speedily, they give up. They speak to God, but since He does not speak to them, they say, "What's the use?"

In Philippians 3:20 Paul speaks of assiduously and patiently waiting it out for "a Savior." There is no definite article. However, he positively identifies this Savior as being "the Lord Jesus Christ." He then goes on to set forth the specific thing in regard to which he is waiting it out - the One who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to conform it to the body of His glory.

The Apostle Paul carried in an "earthen vessel" all the divine treasures that the Lord had committed to him. This is the figure of speech he uses to portray his body (2 Cor. 4: 7). Earthen vessels were cheap, common, used with little care, and bound sooner or later to break. Paul's own body was badly marred and scarred. The beatings, the stonings, and the imprisonments had left their mark upon him. His daily experiences were those of pain, hunger, weariness, cold, and nakedness. These things were his portion, but he never murmured. Even the miraculous healings of the Acts period were not for him. Life worked in others, but death worked in him. This was so that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of Paul (2 Cor. 4:7). When he wrote to the Philippians, he and all who followed him were assiduously waiting it out for the Savior, who would transform their humiliated bodies and conform it to the body of His glory. Such an act of waiting it out was not possible to a natural, that is, a soulish, man. An act such as this had to flow out of a character or disposition that had been created within Paul by the Spirit of God.

This matter of "waiting it out" has heretofore been passed over in dealing with this passage. This has been a mistake, as this is the key to the correct translation and interpretation of this passage, as will be shown later.

Out of Which

The next matter to be considered is the phrase *ex hou*, translated "from whence" in the *King James Version*, but which should read "out of which." In the first study of this passage (Vol. XV- No.3) I quoted the comments of Mr. Alexander Thomson who set forth the fact that *ex hou* is singular, and should refer back to the singular noun *politeuma*, not to the plural noun *ouranios* (heavens). I had been interpreting *ex hou* as if it referred to *ouranios*, and this violation of the syntax did not trouble me too much, inasmuch as both E. W. Bullinger and A. T. Robertson accepted this clash in number,

that is, a singular referring to a plural. I will readily admit. that I was uneasy about this as all other occurrences of *ex hou* positively refer to a singular noun (1 Cor. 8:6, Eph. 3:15, Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:19 and Heb. 13:10), and all occurrences of *ex hon* (plural) refer to plural nouns ('Acts 15:29, Rom. 9:5, 1 Cor. 15:6 and 1 Tim. 6:4). Furthermore, I discovered that Bullinger altered his position between writing his *Figures of Speech* and *The Companion Bible*. I now see that *ex hou* (out of which) must refer to *politeuma* (a singular noun) and not to *ouranios* (heavens) a plural noun. Mr. Alexander Thomson has been right in strongly contending for this point, but he has been wrong in insisting that because of this, *politeuma* has to mean "commonwealth," "homeland" or "country," that is, a place from which the Savior comes. Such definitions violate every fact that is known concerning the word *politeuma*, and they clash with the verb, making impossible any consistent or related rendering of verb and noun.

It is just at this point that we have all been wrong and have all missed the truth. We have all failed to see that it is the great God-honoring act of assiduously waiting it out that comes out of our *politeuma*, that is, that the act of assiduously waiting it out had its source in the character and manner of life that God had given to Paul. It is not the Savior that comes out of our *politeuma*, but it is the exceedingly precious-to-God act of waiting it out that flows out of it. This is in complete harmony with the context.

One of the constantly recurring. truths of the Bible, stated in many ways, is that acts pleasing to God flow out of a character or nature implanted by God. The figure of speech used in the Bible for one's character, disposition or temperament, whether good or bad is the "heart." Consider these passages:

Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering to the Lord. Exo. 35 :5.

Every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom. Exo. 36 :2.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Matt. 12 :34.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. Matt. 12 :35.

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Luke 8:15.

But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his

own accord he went unto you. 2 Cor. 8 :16, 17.

Doing the will of God from the heart. Eph. 6 :6.

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart. 1 Tim. 1:5.

Call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Tim. 2 :22.

These passages illustrate the idea that I wish to convey to my readers - that acts that are God-pleasing must have their source in a God-produced character. Paul's act of waiting it out had its source in his God-given character.

Among Celestials

The word "heaven" in this passage now claims our attention. It does not make sense for men to contend for something on the basis that this word is plural, then go on in their next paragraph and act as if it were positively singular.

If the whole history of New Testament interpretation were traced out, much of the failure to arrive at the truth could be attributed to the fact that insufficient consideration has been given to the Greek and Hebrew words usually translated "heaven." The traditional idea held by both the world and the church is that the word heaven is primarily the name of that blessed place where the good go when they die. This idea is read into every possible occurrence of the word in the Bible, except in the few places where it unyieldingly clashes with the context.

Anyone who attempts to make an objective study of this word may soon find himself in the same position as the men of Judah when they said to Nehemiah: "**The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall**" (Neh. 4: 10). Furthermore, if as the result of study, a single truth is uncovered and established, it will be found the moment it is presented that an emotional atmosphere surrounds the traditional meaning of this word and there is little hope of getting any serious consideration of the facts presented.

The fact that *heaven* (singular) is often a synonym for God is one that is generally admitted, yet very few are willing to put this fact to work to solve the problems of interpretation found in such passages as Luke 10: 18 and in the three occurrences of "heaven" in John 3: 13. Most students of the word persist in thinking that "heaven" must mean a place in passages such as these.

There is concrete evidence in the New Testament that the word *heaven* may also be used of a man. Some may think that if this were true it would cause great confusion, but in reality it should cause no more confusion than when the "Lord" is used of both Christ and of men, or when the title "God" is used of the Supreme and also of other beings (as in Psalm 82: 1) . Our English word *heaven* is closely related to the words *head* and *heave* and could easily be used of the head one or the heaved one, both in reference to God and to men. It may well be that the word "heaven" in Acts 2: 5 and Colossians 1: 23 refers to the head one or the most exalted one in human government at that time. In the Acts passage it would have referred to Tiberius and in the Colossian passage to Nero. However, I do not, at this time, press these points.

There is concrete evidence that the word *heavens* (plural) refers to celestial beings. In Ephesians 4: 10 which plainly reads in the Greek "ascends up over all of the heavens" there can be no question but that the reference is to celestial beings. In Hebrews 7: 26 where we read that Christ is "made higher than the heavens," the fact that "heavens" means celestial beings is apparent. However, let none think that these definitions exhaust the meaning of the word *heaven*. I recently wrote out sentences to prove that the word *air* has at least thirty definitions, and I am convinced that *heaven* has almost as many.

In Philippians 3: 20 the word *ouranois* (plural, without article) refers to beings, not to places. It means celestials.

In our studies this far we have discovered the following truths:

1. The word *politeuma* has to do with acquired character. By *character* is meant the aggregate of qualities or the individuality impressed by birth, education, habit, practice, etc. We use the term "acquired character" to define *politeuma* in order to eliminate the factors of natural birth from it.

2. We have seen that the word *apekdechomai* means to assiduously and patiently wait for a thing.

3. We are convinced that *ex hou* means "out of which", that it being singular must refer back to *politeuma* which is singular and not to *heavens* which is plural. We have also seen that it is the act of waiting it out that comes out of our *politeuma*.

4. We have noted that the word *ouranois* is plural, that it lacks the definite article, and should be understood as meaning celestial beings.

With these facts before us to guide our way we can now provide a paraphrase or expanded translation of **Philippians 3:20,21**.

For the acquired and developed character (disposition or prevailing spirit) which is ours (the one we have asked you to imitate) is existing (it is inherent, it has existed all along) among celestials; and it is out of this character (that is, an expression of it) that we assiduously and patiently wait it out for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory.

Harmonious With Context

Our next step is to show that the interpretation and understanding set forth in the above paraphrase is in harmony with the context.

The immediate context of this passage begins with the exceedingly bold statement, "**Brethren, be followers together of me.**" Phil. 3:17. This is much stronger in the Greek for it literally says: "**Brethren, be imitators together of me.**" The sense is "ever be" as you now are, and not, "become" in the sense of "get to be"; and "together" indicates that he desires them to be joined together in imitating him, to aid and support each other in it. He further exhorts them to be noting those who walk according as they have "us" for a model. This eliminates any idea of self-exaltation, and shows that many in Philippi are already walking so as to serve as an example with Paul. This is then followed by a parenthetical portion concerning some who walk otherwise. Then the theme of imitating Paul is resumed in verse twenty. Paul declares that the character and the expressions of that character he has asked them to imitate is inherent among celestials, that it has existed all along among them. The character and life that he asks them to imitate was not of "flesh and blood:" It was not forced upon him by the circumstances and influences of this world. Paul obeyed God's directives, he hearkened to His voice, he did His will and pleasure, even as do the angels of God (Psalm 103:20,21). He could say with the Psalmist, "All my springs are in Thee." (Psa. 87:7).

The Ground of Our Hope

The suggestion has recently been made that "it is out of our citizenship in heaven that we derive our hope," that is "by virtue of our citizenship in heaven or that we have a hope, an eager expectation." This is not satisfactory as it bases our hope on something besides Christ and lays another foundation for it. The expectation set forth in Philippians 3: 20 has to do with the bodies of our humiliation being changed to conform to His body of glory. This is our earnest expectation, but it must be based entirely upon our relationship to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This change will also be the portion of the twelve men who will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It will be theirs, just as it will be ours, because of their relationship to the Savior.

In Conclusion

Many ideas have been put forth in regard to the meaning of *politeuma* in Philippians 3:20. Such words as *commonwealth*, *homeland*, *colony*, *citizenship*, *polity*, *conversation*, *realm*, and *country* have all been offered as translations. When everything is considered, the *King James* translators came about as near to expressing the truth as can be done in *one* English word. They used "conversation," meaning the whole manner of life, but this fell short because it does not indicate the source from which the manner of life comes. For example, true humility must spring from what *one* is in oneself, but I do not know how we could encompass this idea in *one* word. We may say that *one* is humble, but this is not true unless acts of humility spring from a humble character. If not, then humility becomes hypocrisy.

However, no matter how we translate *politeuma* it still does not say that our future home is in heaven. This can be demonstrated. Suppose we translate it, "For our citizenship is in heaven," then ask and try to answer these two questions - What does this mean? What does it say to us and about us? Since "citizenship" means "state or quality of being a citizen, status of a citizen," it is not easy to say just what this does mean. If I should meet a man and detect from his conversation that he owes no allegiance to the United States, I might ask of what country he is a subject. If he should answer, "I am a citizen of France," I would understand him at *once*. If he said "My citizenship is in France," it would be more complex. Citizenship is not something which is left behind, so that *you* can be in *one* place and it in another. If I should go to Canada, I could no longer fully exercise my citizenship, but it would not be left behind. Our soldiers exercise their United States citizenship by voting by absentee ballots while serving in foreign countries. However, even if a man should say "My citizenship is in France," would this mean that he expected some day to go to France and live there? Not in the least. It would mean that he had once resided there, but that he is not there now. It offers no suggestion of going there.

Even so it is with the suggested translation, "**Our citizenship is in heaven.**" In Acts 21:39 Paul declared that he was a *citizen (polites)* of Tarsus. Did this mean that he expected to go there someday, settle down, take up residence? No, *it* does not. Even *if* we translate *politeuma* by citizenship as some want to do, *it* still offers no proof that our future home *is in* heaven.

If we translate *it* "homeland" we still have the same situation. This would cause *it* to say that heaven *is* our native land, our fatherland. How this can be since we have never been there, I do not know. If a man should say, "Germany *is* my homeland," I would be justified *in* reading into this the ideas that his parents had lived there, and that he was born there. But I have no right or reason to read *into it* the idea that he *is going* there someday to make his home.

If we follow Moffat and make *it* to say, "We are a colony of heaven," *it* still says not one word about *going* to the mother country. In fact, as stated before, *it* suggests the very *opposite*. A colonist *is* one who has gone *out* from the mother-country, not one who intends to go to *it*. He *is* not a tourist or a visitor in the colony. The idea that *politeuma* means a colony *is* based to a great extent upon certain ambiguous references in the papyri manuscripts like the one where the Phrygians had set up a *politeuma* in Alexandria. This was not a colony, it was a community where people of common character and likeness had set up a manner of living in this ancient *city*.

We could go on through the entire list, and the results would still be the same. No matter how you translate it, there is nothing in Philippians 3:20 to suggest that our future home *is* in heaven. Those who support this idea are certainly at their wits end when they must hang the whole tradition on this one nail.

There *is* an important lesson for all of us in Paul's words in this passage. An experience that is normal for believers is that something happens in his life that creates within him a desire for God's truth. This makes him in some measure a student. But *it is* always to be feared that men who start out to be progressive students of the word will tire of the strenuous mood that must accompany the search for the pure gold of truth. God has told us to study, to think, to divide, to make distinctions, to have a pattern of sound words. However, to do this creates tensions, and brings satanic opposition. At *times* it seems to be messing up our lives, creating turmoil within us. We are apt to grow weary of the task and question whether it is worth while. Men do tire of logic, reason, and accuracy, they tire of searching and thinking, and some give it all up saying - "What's the use?"

This should not be. Let us not become weary in well-doing. Let us wait it out and see it through. In God's own season we shall reap if we faint not.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15 :58.

The End #SS14

