

property he attributes to the mind (*Leg.* 1.23.62). In a speech in his defense, Cicero credits Milo with the conviction that there is no such thing as exile (following Socrates and Zeno, cited by Musonius, Plutarch and Seneca), except where there is no room for virtue (*Mil.* 37.101).

In agreement with Plutarch, Philo, and Seneca, Cicero describes existence on earth as a sojourn (*Sen.* 23.84; *Tusc.* 1.19.45). One day the soul will end its sojourn by being released from the shackles of the body, although those who have been defined by these chains will advance more slowly on their heavenly journey (*Tusc.* 1.31.76).

Summary

If we draw together some of our findings from across the spectrum of Greek and Roman writers, a number of commonalities emerge. Firstly, the universe is understood as one city or state (Plutarch, Cicero, Marcus, and Musonius), or fatherland (Musonius), or a commonwealth to which all belong (Plutarch, Philo, and Seneca). Some see the gods themselves as part of that united commonwealth (Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus). Philo and Dio Chrysostom each speak of the God of hospitality (although it must be acknowledged that Philo is indebted here to his Jewish faith, while Dio may be drawing on this common understanding of Zeus). Philo speaks of God as the only true citizen of the universe. Secondly, in relation to figurative or spiritual language, all the writers examined cite the claim of Socrates, that all are citizens of the universe and therefore there is no such thing as a true exile on earth (though Epictetus recognizes that people are also like strangers on earth in comparison to God). Having said that, Plutarch, Philo, Seneca, and Cicero count the virtuous person alone as a true citizen of earth, classing the wicked as merely foreigners. Both Middle Platonists like Plutarch and Philo, Stoics like Seneca and Marcus, and Skeptics like Cicero speak of life on earth as just a sojourn, since while the soul is in the body, it wanders from its true heavenly home. The one true guide through this wandering on earth is philosophy (Plutarch and Marcus). Turning briefly to the political realities of the day, many of the writers surveyed attest to the second-class status of the alien and the privileged position of the citizen, although Cicero affirms the common humanity of citizens and aliens and Plutarch speaks of situations in which worthy aliens might ascend to citizen status.

Ephesians

How might Paul's words in the wider context of Ephesians have spoken to those influenced by such ideas? Firstly, whereas the philosophers see the universe as one commonwealth of which all are members, Ephesians also has a comprehensive view of the universe. However, although it lays great stress on God working all things according to the counsel of his will, especially his plan of salvation (Eph 1:11 and more generally 1:3–14), the summing up of all things is still future in “the fullness of the times” and it is to take place specifically in Christ (1:10), who already rules over all things (1:20–22) with God (4:6) and fills all things (1:23; 4:10), a fullness potentially realized specifically in the church (1:23a; 3:19).

Secondly, whereas the philosophers speak of people as citizens of the universe, and assume the possibility of living in harmony with God by one's orientation of life (e.g., Marcus, Musonius, and Cicero), Ephesians speaks of its readers as those who were by nature in a state of alienation from God (χωρίς Χριστοῦ and ἀπαλλοτριώω without Christ; 2:12, 19). This alienation is described as death in trespasses and sins (2:1, and by implication, 5:14), and walking not in the ways of God and his Spirit, but the reverse: living under the rule of the evil spirit (2:2). To use a different image, it consisted of a darkened understanding and estrangement from the very life of God (4:18). Paul goes further, to describe their previous state as not only living in darkness but actually *being* darkness (5:8; cf. the polarities described between light and darkness in 5:8–13). Several times Paul uses the particle ποτέ (once, formerly) in juxtaposition with the adverb νῦν or νυνί (now) to contrast the former pitiful state of their readers without Christ with their present one in him (2:2, 3, 11, 13; 5:8).

Instead, only those in Christ enjoy a new type of humanity which corresponds to this transformation in God's eyes from alien to citizen (“in Christ” or “in him” language is prevalent in Ephesians).¹³ Christ has made something new by creating (κτίζω) one new humanity in himself out of the two groups that previously existed in enmity with each other (2:15).¹⁴ They are what has been made by God, created (κτίζω) again in Christ Jesus (2:10). Reconciliation to God and one another (ἀποκαταλλάσσω in 2:16; cf. also the plentiful references to εἰρήνη in e.g., 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3; 6:15) takes the place of alienation, rooted in a unity (ἐνότης) in the Spirit (4:3) with the potential to grow into the unity of the faith (4:13). Ephesians stresses the oneness that this new humanity shares (e.g., 4:4–6), which will one day be “summed up” (ἀνακεφαλαίωω) in a cosmic unity (1:10). Even now, the very existence

of a unified church consisting of previously alienated parties is a witness of God's wisdom to the spiritual powers (3:8–10).¹⁵ This unity among the new humanity and in its relationship to Christ is frequently emphasized by the conjoining of verbs and nouns with the prefix *συν-* meaning “together with,” such as *συγκληρονόμος*, *σύσσωμος* and *συμμέτοχος* (a commonality brought out by Max Turner in his translation “co-heirs, co-body members . . . co-sharers” (Turner 1995: 145) in 3:6, and significantly for our purposes, *συμπολίτης* in 2:19. These fellow citizens are saints of a new temple, a people called to holiness (e.g., 1:4; 4:19; 5:3, 5, 26–27). This new temple is being joined together (*συναρμολογέω*) and built together (*συνοικοδομέω*) into God's dwelling place (2:21–22; cf. similarly 4:16). Yet the growth of the new humanity into “the perfect man” is still to be attained (4:13–16) and involves both a “putting off” of the old person and a “putting on” of the new one (4:22, 24).

Plutarch and Philo's works are representative of the trope found throughout Hellenistic philosophical works which elevate virtue (*ἀρετή*) and wisdom to the highest good, and assume that a person can be guided by both, and choose the right path in a manner according to nature and/or in imitation of God.¹⁶ In regard to virtue, Ephesians also places a great emphasis on “walking” the right way (*περιπατέω*; e.g., 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; speaking of ethical practice in imitation of the Hebrew idiom), including the counsel to do so “not as unwise, but as wise” (5:15) and even to imitate God (5:1). The goal is to be holy and blameless before God (1:4); constituting a holy temple; an appropriate dwelling place for God's Spirit (2:21–22). Half the letter is taken up with instructions on how to live, such as the kind of vice and virtue lists found in other Greco-Roman writings (e.g., 4:17–5:21) including “household codes” (5:21–6:9) (Cohick, 2020: 342–48). Yet it is not assumed that this is possible for a person to choose without being spiritually awakened by Christ (see 5:14). The natural state of humanity without such intervention is a life lived “*ἐν σαρκί*” (2:3, 11). Far from being naturally capable of imitating God, such a person is literally “godless” (*ἄθεος* in 2:12).¹⁷ The innate condition of humanity is as “sons of disobedience” (2:2; 5:6) and “children of wrath” (2:3; here meaning deserving of wrath). Humanity in Christ is instead characterized as “beloved children” (5:1) and “children of light” (5:8). For this reason, they must not be “co-sharers” (*συμμέτοχος*) with such a one (5:7); that is not to partake (*συγκοινωνέω*) with them in the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11). Wisdom (1:8, 17; 3:10; 5:15), knowledge and understanding (1:9, 17; 3:3,

5, 10, 19; 4:13, 23; 5:17) and enlightenment (3:3–10; 5:8–14) is important for Ephesians, as it is for the Hellenistic philosophical tradition. However, wisdom is not something that can be acquired through the study (or path) of philosophy. Rather humankind is entirely dependent on God to reveal the *μυστήριον* (mystery), which was previously hidden to all, even to the “saints of former generations” (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19), but is now disclosed to the holy apostles and prophets of the church (3:5). This illumination comes by the Spirit whom they have received (1:13; 2:18, 22; 3:5; 4:3–4, 30), and the way to receive more of this wisdom is to pray for it (1:17; 3:16–20; 5:18; 6:18).

Unlike other NT writings which, like the philosophers, emphasize the pilgrim’s sojourn on this earth (e.g., 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11; Heb 11:13), the perspective of Ephesians is more obviously focused on the transformation already achieved from aliens to citizens in the present age. Like Phil 3:20, this is a heavenly citizenship, but Ephesians goes even further than Philippians in speaking not just of a future hope of transformation from heaven (Phil 3:20–21) but of a union with Christ that is *already* shared with him “ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις” (in the heavenly places). Every spiritual blessing is now available to believers there (Eph 1:3) and the experience of the believer mirrors that of Christ, who raises us and seats us there (1:20; 2:6). To be sure, the rulers and authorities are also there (3:10; 6:12), an evil day awaits (6:13) and beyond that, an age still to come (1:21; 2:7) yet nevertheless Ephesians underscores the completed nature of salvation and the blessings that can be accessed through union with Christ in the here and now (e.g., 2:5, 8–10).

Finally, on a tentative and ancillary note to the preceding discussion, the philosophers tend to stress the alienation between soul and body and a longing for bodiless existence in an afterlife. Ephesians does not accent the importance of bodily existence like, say, 1 Corinthians, but it regularly uses “body” (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30) and “head” imagery (1:22; 4:15; 5:23) for the relationship between Christ and the Church.¹⁸ Of course, this says nothing about Paul’s view of the physical body but he does speak comfortably about the church working like a physical human body (4:16) and openly of a positive delight in one’s own body (5:28). Although most modern commentators take Paul’s reference to reconciliation “in one body” (2:16) to refer to the church, it is certainly possible that it may have a dual reference to both the church and the physical body of Christ on the cross, and Paul chooses to speak of this reconciliation having taken

place through the *σῶψ* of Christ (2:14; speaking of his crucifixion), just as he speaks positively of the physical flesh of a person and the one flesh relationship of husband and wife (citing Gen 2:24) in 5:29, 31 despite using the term pejoratively in 2:3, 11 (Muddiman, 2001:135). Additionally, the reference to Christ being raised (1:20) is clearly to a physical resurrection, so it is noteworthy that believers are also said to be raised in like manner (2:6; cf. 5:14), even if, for now, this is not speaking of a physical resurrection in the present age.

Conclusion

Paul's figurative employment of aliens, strangers, and citizens language in Eph 2:12, 19 was compared to its use in Hellenistic philosophy, since his Gentile audience may well have been influenced by this worldview when living in "the flesh" (Eph 2:11). Philosophers understood the universe as one state to which all belonged, and viewed all people as citizens of the universe, not just their native land. However, many distinguished between the wicked, who live as foreigners in the world, and virtuous persons who are the only true citizens. All spoke of life on earth as a sojourn from their true heavenly home—just as long as the soul must dwell in the body—with philosophy as the only trustworthy guide through this earthly life. Ephesians also presents a comprehensive picture of a unified cosmos ruled by God, but this unity is yet to be completely realized. In their natural state, it is not the case that all or even those who live virtuously are citizens of the universe. Rather, they exist in a state of alienation from God until the estranged parties are reconciled to God and one another through Christ and his cross. Ephesians still calls for virtuous living, but this cannot be attained by the study and practice of philosophy. Instead, this wisdom or "mystery" must be revealed to them by the gospel through the Spirit. Readers are not merely sojourning as strangers and aliens on earth but enjoy a new citizenship through a union already available with Christ in the "heavenly places" with its concomitant spiritual blessings. Rather than the physical body being a hindrance to the soul, Paul uses positive imagery for both body and even (sometimes) for flesh; viewing the flesh as the place where Christ brought reconciliation and where believers may live out their lives as citizens with all of God's saints.

End Notes

¹ I add the usual caveat that the authorship and audience of Ephesians is disputed. For the sake of convenience, I shall refer to the author as Paul. Although I take the position that Paul is the author, nothing in this discussion rests on this fact nor on whether the audience are solely residents of Ephesus or a collection of churches in two or more cities in Asia Minor.

² The word can mean right of citizenship, commonwealth/state, or way of life (“πολιτεία,” BDAG, 845). Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Bible Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), 137 argues for “commonwealth”, but as Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 356–57 avers, the reference to fellow-citizens in 2:19 suggests “citizenship” as the primary referent here, with e.g., Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 241 and Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 257–58. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 155 makes a good case for relating all three possible senses to this reference.

³ Agreeing with Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 151; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 392–96; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 179.

⁴ E.g., Best, *Ephesians*, 3–4.

⁵ For a comprehensive study, see especially Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), and in shorter form: Adrian N. Sherwin-White, “The Roman Citizenship A Survey of Its Development into a World Franchise,” *ANRW* 1.2 (1972): 23–58.

⁶ See Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 47–66 and Francis Lyall, “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul—Aliens and Citizens,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 48.1 (1976): 3–14.

⁷ Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, “‘Neither *Xenoi* Nor *Paroikoi*, *Sympolitai* and *Oikeioi Tou Theou*’ (Eph 2:19): Pauline Christian Communities: Defining a New Territoriality,” in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 260–80; Dunning, “Strangers”.

⁸ See a more comprehensive explanation and basis for this approach in Philip N. Richardson, *Temple of the Living God: The Influence of Hellenistic Philosophy on Paul’s Figurative Temple Language Applied to the Corinthians* (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick, 2018), 2–3.

⁹ See more on the justification for this method in Richardson, *Temple*, 39–40, 121–23. Moses Chin, “A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.1 (1991): 96–112 at

106–108 touches on some of the references I shall cite from Philo, but is not comprehensive.

¹⁰ E.g., I also examined the works of Aelian, Aelius Aristides, Alcinous, Apollonius of Tyana, Apuleius, Arius Didymus, Galen, Aulus Gellius, Fronto, Hierocles, Lucretius, Maximus of Tyre, Petronius, Sextus Empiricus, and Valerius Maximus.

¹¹ For careful study on the meaning and use of *πάροικος*, which pertains more to the concept of an alien with right to residence see e.g., K. L. Schmidt and M. A. Schmidt, “*πάροικος*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 841–53 and John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 24–49, with special reference to 1 Peter. On *ξένος* as pertaining more to foreigner status, implying fewer rights and only temporary residency, see especially Gustav Stählin, “*ξένος*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 1–36.

¹² All translations provided in this section are taken from the respective Loeb Classical Library editions.

¹³ See e.g., Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 108–09 for examples.

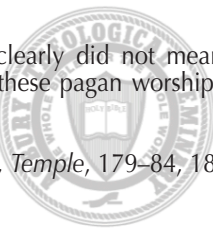
¹⁴ Without thereby eradicating all ethnic and cultural differences between them, see Lionel J. Windsor, *Reading Ephesians and Colossians After Supersessionism: Christ’s Mission Through Israel to the Nations*, New Testament After Supersessionism (Eugene, OR.: Cascade, 2017), 143–46.

¹⁵ See further on this theme in Max Turner, “Mission and Meaning in Terms of ‘Unity’ in Ephesians,” in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, eds. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 138–66. The theme of unity is recognized by commentators as central to Ephesians; e.g., Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 102–03.

¹⁶ See for example the summaries in Richardson, *Temple*, 85–86, 103–04, 108–09.

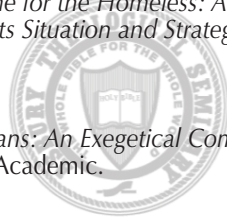
¹⁷ Although this clearly did not mean “atheist” in the modern sense. According to Paul, these pagan worshipers of many gods failed to worship the one true God.

¹⁸ See Richardson, *Temple*, 179–84, 189–92.



Works Cited

- Barth, Markus
1974 *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday.
- Bernabé Ubieta, Carmen
2001 “‘Neither *Xenoi* Nor *Paroikoi*, *Sympolitai* and *Oikeioi Tou Theou*’ (Eph 2:19): Pauline Christian Communities: Defining a New Territoriality.” In *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, edited by John J. Pilch, 260–80. Leiden: Brill.
- Best, Ernest
1998 *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Chin, Moses
1991 “A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.1: 96–112.
- Cohick, Lynn H.
2020 *The Letter to the Ephesians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Dunning, Benjamin H.
2009 *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
2006 “Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2.” *Harvard Theological Review* 1, no. 99: 1–16.
- Elliott, John H.
1981 *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Hoehner, Harold W.
2002 *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Lincoln, Andrew T.
1990 *Ephesians*. Word Bible Commentary. Dallas: Word.
- Lyll, Francis
1976 “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul—Aliens and Citizens.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 48.1: 3–14.



- 1984 *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Muddiman, John
2001 *The Epistle to the Ephesians*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. London: Continuum.
- Richardson, Philip N.
2018 *Temple of the Living God: The Influence of Hellenistic Philosophy on Paul's Figurative Temple Language Applied to the Corinthians*. Eugene, OR.: Pickwick.
- Schmidt, K. L., and M. A. Schmidt
1967 "πάροικος." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 5*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, 841–53. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Sherwin-White, Adrian N.
1972 "The Roman Citizenship A Survey of Its Development into a World Franchise." *ANRW* 1.2: 23–58.
1973 *The Roman Citizenship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stählin, Gustav
1967 "ξένος." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 5*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, 1–36. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Thielman, Frank
2010 *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Turner, Max
1995 "Mission and Meaning in Terms of 'Unity' in Ephesians." In *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, eds. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner, 138–66. Carlisle: Paternoster.
- Windsor, Lionel J.
2017 *Reading Ephesians and Colossians After Supersessionism: Christ's Mission Through Israel to the Nations*. New Testament After Supersessionism. Eugene, OR.: Cascade.
- Yarbro Collins, Adela
1985 "Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Revelation and Its Social Context." In *To See Ourselves as Others See Us': Christian Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, eds. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, 187–218. Missoula: Scholars Press.