Sanctification and Full-Preterism
~by~
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Preterist-Realism

* Introduction

Full-Preterism\(^1\) is has been called “merely an interpretive method or school of eschatology”—something not associated with soteriology.\(^2\) But Full-Preterism does more than

\(^1\) Full-Preterist Ward Fenely defines it, “Full preterism is simply the view that all eschatological events necessary to secure complete redemption for all believers, past, present, and future have been fulfilled.” (Fenley)

\(^2\) Denying any inherent connection between Full-Preterism and Universalism, Kurt Simmons writes, “Preterism is merely an interpretative method or school of eschatology, the study of ‘last things.’ Specifically, it is the position of Preterism that the events commonly associated with Christ’s second coming were fulfilled in the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Other interpretative methods or schools include Continuous-Historical, Futurism, and Idealism (allegorical). None of these interpretative methods express opinions regarding issues of soteriology (sin and salvation); their sole function is to attempt to interpret or explain biblical prophecy regarding Christ’s return. It may be that different individuals or groups bring to the particular interpretive school they have adopted certain basic assumptions about sin and salvation, but the interpretive method itself should not be identified with those assumptions. Soteriology and eschatology have no inherent connection, per se. Rather, it is what people bring to Preterism (or any other interpretative method) that determines where they come out on issues of sin and salvation.” (Simmons)
just comment on some unresolved eschatological issues; its distinctive tenets systematically affect their view on fundamental Christian doctrines.

An essential soteriological doctrine in Christian thinking is Sanctification. In the Presbyterian view, Sanctification has two major rudiments—definitive sanctification, and progressive sanctification. The Westminster Larger Catechism defines sanctification,

Sanctification is a work of God’s grace, whereby they whom God has, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life. (WLC.75)

This view, echoed from the halls of Christian history since the apostolic age, is a staple of orthodoxy. The progressive aspect of the doctrine (i.e. the increasing and strengthening of saving graces negatively: dying more-and-more unto sin, and positively: rising unto newness of life) is especially surveyed in this paper.

Purpose

This paper is written to accurately report on the Full-Preterist position and contrast it from the orthodox Christian position. This is intended to show both the aberrant and the conservative characteristics in Full-Preterist theological applications of the traditional doctrine. By showing how Full-Preterism treats the doctrine of Sanctification, 1) Full-Preterists are directed to consciously develop their theology; 2) and conservative Christians are informed about a questionable issue from the implications of Full-Preterism.

Focus

Full-Preterism, although not having formulated a systematized doctrine on sanctification, is liable to commit grievous err in its articulation of the doctrine. Based on the logical implications of its foundational precepts and based on the controversial statements of vocal proponents within the movement, this paper concludes that contemporary Full-Preterism, in the rare instances that it addresses the issue, does not conform to the orthodox elements of this sacred, soteriological, doctrine.

Method

3 It is common for Full-Preterists to reject my definition of the term “orthodox”. It will refer to Reformed orthodox dogmatics, which, from the Reformed perspective, refers to the foundational elements of the historic Christian faith concerning the Gospel.
This paper reports, dogmatically, from a Reformed-Presbyterian perspective. It first examines some distinctive from within the Full-Preterist position that help formulate the systematic groundwork for a distinctive doctrine of Sanctification. Cited quotations will be referenced to support my assertions on Full-Preterist theology to demonstrate, both, that I have a command for the subject and that I am accurately presenting the information. The survey is followed by a comparison to the orthodox position. Scripture will be resourced as the final ruling, with exegesis.

* Analysis

In the world of Full-Preterism, not much is said regarding Sanctification. Neither is there much consistency and coherence in the statements by Full-Preterists about the doctrine. For example, some Full-Preterists have overtly denied progressive sanctification but will—even in the same breath—affirm progressive aspects of Sanctification in Christian practice.

Nonetheless, there are some Full-Preterists who are vocal in their rejection of what they call “progressive sanctification”. One group, Tami Jelinek and Ward Fenley (New Creation

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4 Full-Preterist Jean-Pierre Cote ambiguously writes, “We are in Christ completely sanctified and the Law of God is written on our heart. This Law if fulfilled by and in Christ. We love the Law. It is the expression of God's perfections.” (Wilms, 2009) He does not make clear whether he means sanctification is a completed process or whether it works unto the whole of man.

5 A popular lay Full-Preterist, Charles Shank, ambiguously states, “I am not saying that just because we have been made ( rendered ) righteous by God, doesn't mean that we have no need to act, or live righteously; on the contrary, we have a duty, a privilege, really, because we have been made righteous, to live righteously, in love for God and one another.” (Shank, 2010) ; Doug (DID), writes, “This idea of '3 salvations' is one of the reasons for the invention of the idea of progressive sanctification. Sanctification is a one-time event, IMHO. That is, (sanctification), the ‘setting apart for holy use’ was what was imputed to us upon conversion. But PROGRESSIVE sanctification assumes that living our life now makes us holier and holier until, eventually, we can reach salvation because we have achieved true holiness.

I rebel against this idea because it is so in lock step with Eastern mysticism which takes us into higher and higher planes of existence so that we must go through some kind of purification process until we are truly enlightened. That is not the biblical message! Biblically, Jesus did all the sanctifying at the cross. Because of HIS holiness, we have HIS righteousness imputed to us. Saying that sanctification is progressive is like saying that Jesus' holiness imputed to us must somehow get ‘stronger’ over time so that we can become more acceptable to God.

At conversion, we are made 100% acceptable. Biblical sanctification is that initial imputation of righteousness that is 100% right out of the gate. Biblical sanctification is the life of God EXPRESSED in our mortal bodies more and more. But it doesn't mean that we are MORE holy simply because we SHOW more holiness. We SHOW more holiness as we age because, over time, we are more in touch with the will of God and humble ourselves to accept what the Holy Spirit tells us to do. In other words, we do what we do BECAUSE we have the Holy Spirit, but we don't receive MORE of the Holy Spirit because of what we do. The Holy Spirit simply flows more mightily, but we are 100% saved and sanctified at conversion!

The coming of Jesus was for judgment on those that were not His. Those who were, and are, His, whether in 70AD or supposedly later (according to futurists) received all their salvation in one shot. Any future OR past second coming does not change a saved person's salvation or standing with God.” (Scargy, 2011)

6 From my research into this subject, it is my opinion that most Full-Preterists do not demonstrate that they fully understand what the doctrine is. For example, Ward Fenley gives his personal experience with backsliding as a reason for why he rejects the doctrine of progressive sanctification. Yet, he does not acknowledge that his struggle
Ministries International), two brilliant Full-Preterist theologians who I am personally acquainted with, give persuasive reasons for their rejection of progressive sanctification. Their reasons have been influential within the Full-Preterist community. They portray the doctrine of progressive sanctification as an unbiblical view that makes redemption incomplete, and is a self-righteous view that personal performance completes redemption.

Tami describes those who she affectionately calls to position of “sovereign gracers” (Calvinists),

...the tendency that...[they] have toward self-righteousness and a lack of mercy toward others. This is because there is a conflict within their system between their view of grace, which is that faith is all the work of God, and their view of their redemption through that faith as yet incomplete (enter futurist eschatology to steal the joy of salvation). The implication inherent in this dichotomy is that God's work is incomplete. (Jelinek, 2010)

Although she offers no basis for her claims, the Westminster Confession of Faith—the statement of faith I have adopted—indeed, does state,

...the several lusts...[of the whole body of sin] are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. (WCF 13.1)

Yet these clauses are subordinate to the sentence’s independent clause,

They, who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them...

Therefore, no man shall see the Lord, except those who are effectually called, regenerated with all saving graces. John Robbins correctly assesses the Reformed position,

Contrary to Roman Catholicism, the Protestants taught that while sanctifying grace within a believer enables him to do good works, only the merits of Christ can make those good works acceptable to God. Sanctifying grace does not make us the friends of God, they said, but is rather the result of Christ’s work done wholly outside of us...

with sin is progressive sanctification, and further he never affirms that believers cannot sanctify themselves without the Holy Spirit and by the virtues of Christ’s obedience. (See addendum). Cf. “...the Reformers found a certain ground of hope. They saw that men need not look within their own experience to find something that will give them any assurance that they may stand acceptable before God.” (Robbins, 2011).
The Reformers did not deny the necessity of God’s work in the hearts of men by the power of the Holy Spirit; in fact, they insisted upon the absolute necessity of belief in the truth of the Gospel, a belief that can only be caused by God. Nor did they make light of good works. One need only compare the lives of the Puritans with the lives of the Jesuits. What they did was to get their theology straight. They understood that Christ’s work for his people earned the benefits of the Holy Spirit’s work in us, and other benefits besides, including the forgiveness of sins and our justification before God. (Robbins, 1987)

“Sovereign gracers” do not hold that it is our virtue that makes our works a pleasing sacrifice to God. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, through which we are enabled to participate by the work of God in us and Christ’s righteousness upon us. Nonetheless, we include this saving grace—something we live in with the assurance of our justification in Christ’s righteousness—among our Redemption. Thereby, according to the Reformed view, it is Full-Preterism that has an “incomplete” redemption if it does not include this blessing among the fruits of the Spirit.

But this is what Tami says, that the “sovereign gracer” crowd will reject her portrayal of the Reformed view. She continues,

But they wouldn’t actually say that. Instead, they hold to the unbiblical doctrine of "progressive sanctification," which in practical terms, is the belief that we finish God’s work of redemption by performing and conforming outwardly to certain behavioral standards, and that through this performance--through these works that we do--we conform ourselves into His image, and thus fulfill the goal of our redemption.

Again, they wouldn’t actually say this.

But this is precisely what the Reformed Standards reject. There is a clear distinction between our justification and sanctification in Reformed Theology. Again, the Westminster Confession states that Sanctification is “through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in [effectually-called-regenerates]”. We hold that our principle act of saving faith is resting upon Christ alone for all saving graces (e.g. Sanctification) by virtue of the covenant of grace (WCF 14:2). We hold that repentance is the act of God’s free grace in Christ (15:3). Further, our ability to do good works, we hold, is not at all our own, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ (WCF 16:3).

Tami goes on to quote Ward Fenley,

“If transformation into the image of Christ is a process which demands becoming closer and closer to the perfection of Christ’s thoughts and actions, then not only will none of us make it, but also complete redemption depends partly on my performance. Scary doctrine. Thank God redemption is complete.”
There is no rest in any theology which sees any part of redemption as incomplete. There is no rest under the burden of salvation by works. There is no rest in self-righteousness, also known as the doctrine of "progressive sanctification."

Full-Preterist Michael Bennett has also denied the doctrine, then, a week later, he went on to affirm it. Nonetheless, Bennett has made some contribution to the discussion; he has offered a clear definition for the theological term Sanctification. He defines it,

Sanctification: The act whereby God sets Christians apart for good works / service. (Bennett, 2008)

He says the same thing in another place,

...we are set apart to do good works (serve each other - brothers and "neighbors" etc). Personally that is all that sanctification means in my thought. Set apart. (ronnie670, 2009)

Another agrees,

There is no process of sanctification. We like to capitalize words these days and make them bigger than they are, Sanctification...Antichrist. Do a word study on sanctification and you’ll see that it simply means 'set apart'.

Here's another way to look at it. If I place a plate on the table, would you call it Placement, and say that it's constantly undergoing the process of Placement. Sanctification is God setting us apart to Him upon salvation. At that moment, God sees us as complete in Christ Jesus. I can't find any Scripture that talks of a process. (ronnie670, 2009)

With no definitive position, within Full-Preterism, on the matter, it is necessary to take a deeper look into the intricacies of it.

*Sanctification*

Although Sanctification is not a core article of the Faith, something necessary to believe unto Salvation, all Christians, of all ages, undergo sanctification. Even though the Heidelberg

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7 On June 2, 2008, Bennett writes, “…I do not hold to a ‘progressive sanctification’ per se (i.e. Christians will / may have ‘ups’ and ‘downs’).” (Bennett, 2008) ; On the 9th, just a week later, he comments on a quote, “‘The Bible uses the idea of sanctification for both a positional concept, and a progressive ‘renewing of the mind.’ I don’t think ‘preterism’ is in danger by acknowledging this fact’[…]Amen to that !!!” (Bennett, 2008)
Catechism does not include it among the expressed articles of the faith, it defines what the label “Christian” means according to its virtues. It states,

*I am a member of Christ by faith and thus share in His anointing, so that I may as prophet confess His Name, as priest present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, and as king fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter reign with Him eternally over all creatures. (Heidelberg, Q & A 32)*

Although the doctrine had not come unto maturity in the Church’s infancy, surely the universal Church has always been undergoing sanctification. If Full-Preterists hold a heterodox view of an essential point of orthodoxy, then it may be argued that they do not hold a Christian view of such matters of Faith and practice. What is at stake here is whether their conformity to Christianity is balanced enough in their soteriology to be counted as an acceptable Christian theology. A common objection from the Full-Preterist camp, on this point, is the argument that there is no orthodox view of Sanctification—that, the confessional Reformed view, like the one I subscribe to, is a radical departure from the early Church unto Augustine and Aquinas, and that there is no visible line of tradition of Sanctification, being distinguished from the doctrine of Justification, that stems from the Church in her infancy.

Although it is, essentially, an anachronistic *tu quo* argument, the objection does carry some weight. For, even though it is debatable whether the visible Church has consistently preserved a rudiment of the doctrine in its purity throughout the ages, the fact that the problem is surrounded by the cloud of controversy and debate arouses some doubt concerning the unanimity of historic Christian views on the doctrine.

One could argue that Sanctification was not a settles doctrine in the early Christian Church. Writing on the history of the doctrine of Sanctification, Berkhof says,

*In the historical unfolding of the doctrine of sanctification, the Church concerned itself primarily with three problems: (a) the relation of the grace of God in sanctification to faith; (b) the relationship of sanctification to justification; and (c) the degree of sanctification in this present life. The writings of the early Church Fathers contain very little respecting the doctrine of sanctification. (Berkhof)*

Berkhof goes on to describe the rarity and ambiguity of the doctrine in its development. The fact that the Reformed theological articulation of the doctrine had controversies to first tackle implies that it was not initially a widely accepted view. But, even if the Christian understands Sanctification as an *organic development* of the history of Church doctrine—being first realized in the Reformation—then such a view leaves the whole of Church of antiquity in the dark-ages. That would imply that the doctrine of Sanctification is not even a necessary Christian doctrine. A Full-Preterist could thereby argue that because the Church could live without a soteriological truth for ages, they could also live without an eschatological truth (i.e. contemporary Full-Preterism). This suggests that heterodoxy does not preclude verity; just as the
Reformed view of Sanctification is a novel doctrine, Full-Preterism may be acceptable without any historic precedent from within Christian orthodoxy.

Yet, all these objections make certain, erroneous, ecclesiological assumptions about the nature and development of the doctrine of Sanctification within Christian history. The Church has always taught some basic measure of moral obligation. Where legalism and Sacramentalism corrupted the basic prudence and morality of the Christian life and its foundational belief in the Grace of God, there was no Church. However, mixture and error did affect the Church in her infancy—no error grievously enough to cause the elect to be utterly ignorant of the Truth—but the progressive development of doctrine in Church history is a testament of her Sanctification.

* Exegesis

Scripture testifies,

*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

...

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

*That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:7-16)*

In this place, the Apostle explains how the gifts of God maturate the Church until there is perfect unity among believers. Sanctification has a direct correlation with the maturity of the Church and the unity of her members on doctrine. Paul describes this as a progressive development. And for the perfection of the saints, he continues:

*Ephesians 4:23-24,*

*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*
Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness...

In this passage, Paul exhorts the Christians of Ephesus, to not walk in vanity of the depraved mind as other gentiles; to be not conformed to the world as they once walked, but that they should be transformed by the renewing of their mind. In verse 19, he describes the nature of mind of the gentiles who walk according a debased understanding. He says of the lost gentiles they are being “past feeling” (apElgEkotes), apathetic. They have themselves lost touch. The perfect active participle, only occurring this once in Scripture, is a description of their ongoing loss of feeling from an action they have brought upon themselves. The accusative reflexive pronoun (heautous) describes who the nominative pronoun (hoitines) gives up unto vanity. They themselves have listlessly resorted to such nature of mind. The reflexive is all the more emphatic, indicting them as the culprit of their own miserable nature, i.e. they have surrendered in the vanity of their lasciviousness to undertake all kinds of uncleanness in greed.

Having the understanding darkened...because of the blindness of their heart

Although, verse 19 clearly explains their sinful nature is of their own vain and uncaring devices, the stem of their apathy towards the righteousness after God is rooted in the loss of the Understanding of God. In the previous verse (v. 18), the perfect passive participle “darkened” (eskotismenoi) of the adjective phrase “having the understanding darkened” describes the plural masculine pronoun “them” as their minds are darkened by another, i.e. God. The text does not explicitly say that this is a penalty, but the context suggests that the darkening of their minds and their spiritual separation from God is imposed because of their ignorance that results from their own hardness of heart. They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

But ye have not so...

In verse 20, the Apostle contrasts the gentiles of the world with the Christian gentiles. Beginning with the syntactically emphasized pronoun “you” (humeis) being contrasted though the strong adversative conjunction “but” (de), the negative particle (ouch), and the adverbial conjunction (houtOs). This is a very sharp contrast. The indicative aorist main verb “learned” (emathete) contrasts also with the verbal “having...darkened”. The Christians were at a time alienated from the life of God, without Christ, in the vanity of their mind by the wickedness of their works. But know, after hearing the Word preached unto them, they have been reconciled unto God.

...learned Christ

That which they have learned is Christ. The direct object is the unusual accusative case for Christ (ton christen). This construction requires little explanation by Paul to his understanding immediate audience—but he is compelled to justify his distinguishing them from other gentiles in the next verse (v.21). This separation from the unrepentant, beings sanctified by the Truth of God, is a picture of our definitive sanctification.8

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him...

The rare conjunction (eige) assumes certain conditions of their learning that distinguish them from other gentiles. That they have learned Christ, viz. they have indeed heard Him and

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8 In his article on Sanctification, John Robbins quotes Psalms 1:1-2, commenting, “God’s people are called to separate from fellowship with unrepentant sinners…”
have been taught by Him because the Truth of the mystery is in the actual person of Jesus Christ. If they agreed to these terms, that they did indeed learn the Truth in Christ from Him, then certain conditions were sure to follow. Notably, it is the person of Christ of whom they have thereby been instructed through the preaching of Him that reconciles them to God. His instruction causes them to learn the Truth of which they were ignorant that they would walk not after the blindness of their corruption in vice.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man

The conditions to follow the instruction of Christ through the Gospel include putting off their former conduct. The infinitive of the dependent clause of verse 22, “put off” (apotheisthai), express the conditions to follow the indicative verbs of the previous verse. There is no syntactical gap between verse 21 and 22; it is a subordinating idea, hence the colon in the Authorized Version. The condition is the putting off not only the former conduct of the old man, but the old man in his lawlessness. The phrase “the former conversation the old man” is in the accusative (tEn proteran anastrophEn ton palaion anthrOpon). The identity and the old man conduct are described by the passive participle “which is [being] corrupt[ed]” (phtheiromenon). That which it is corrupted according to is the deceitful lusts that the old man has given them in him over unto. The infinitive, although under the umbrella of the indicative mood of previous verse (thereby referring to the Christians’ definitive position in Christ in regeneration), describes the basis of the imperative for the progressive sanctification through ongoing mortification of sin (v. 26-5:7). The infinitive’s syntactical pairing with the present participle in the clause shows they have, in Christ, put off something that is a nature presently being corrupted after sin.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind

The first word of the first clause of verse 23 is “renewed” (ananeousthai), syntactically positioned for emphasis. The word is only found in this place in the New Testament. This infinitive also is under the umbrella of the same mood, showing that which follows from their hearing and learning of Christ. Still, the renewing of the mind has an ongoing operation on the present tense. The syntactical shift between verses still continues the idea that the Ephesian Christians, those who have been taught by Christ, are those who are to have renewal. The conjunction “and” (de) continues the thought by explaining the learning of the Truth in Christ in putting off the old man behavior, i.e. sinful corruption, by contrasting renewal from that which they put off by adversative force. The subordinating clause introduces a new idea, the positive aspect of the process of sanctification. The indirect object of the renewing is “the spirit” (tO pneumati). This “spirit” is the rational disposition of the mind (tou noos). The mind’s spirit to be renewed is of the Christian regenerate. Paul says, have the spirit of your (humOn) mind being renewed.

And that ye put on the new man

The next verse begins with the copulative conjunction “and” (kai). It connects not the phrase “be renewed in the spirit of your mind” with “put on the new man” as coordinately equal phrases. It too follows as a necessary condition of their learning. One Full-Preterists terribly ignores this, commenting on this passage, “We are taught to renew our minds, not our actions... but as we renew our minds from condemnation (religion), love follows which is what the Law stood for.” (Lewerenz, 2011)
The verb “put on” (endusasthai) parallels aorist middle of “put off” (apotheisthai) from verse 22. The “new man” (ton kainon anthrōpon) is contrasted from the “old man” behavior they shed. Verse 22 and 24 contrast each other.

…which after God…

The preposition translated as “which after” (kata) is joined by the accusative phrase to describe the manner the new man is according to. The depiction of a man according to God is a subtle allusion to man’s being created in the likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). The Hebrew word for “after our likeness” (kdmuthnu) has the inseparable preposition affixed to it. The preposition is comparable to the Greek “kata” in this usage.

…is created in righteousness and true holiness…

There is a comparison between the original estate of Adam and the new man with respect to their being created according to the likeness of the Creator. The likeness was not preserved by Adam, and mankind from him has been generated after his likeness. Being created in according to God is in respect to the justice and holiness of the Maker that their minds were prepared for good works. The participle “created” (ktisthenta) describes the new man’s intrinsic fashion according to God, i.e. in righteousness and true holiness.

The Reformed position holds that man, both male and female, was originally created with the Law written in their hearts. The Belgic Confession states man was formed after God’s image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy…and He made and formed him after His own His will could conform to the will of God in every respect.9 The Heidelberg Catechism states of mankind’s original estate, God created man good and in His image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that he might rightly know God His Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him.10 The regeneration of the knowledge after image and righteousness of God manifests that the knowledge renewed is the knowledge mankind had before it was corrupted from sin.

The same central ideas are found in the Epistle to the Colossians. In the third chapter, the imperative mood is used to exhort the saints of Colossae to “set [their] affection” (phroneite) on heavenly things. In contrast from those “past feeling” (apElgEkotes), from Ephesians 4:19, the regenerates are exhorted to exercise their mental sentiments on “things above” (ta anO phroneite). Paul’s audience was those already raised with Christ (3:1), yet they still were directed to seek those things which are above. They had positional holiness in God—by virtue of their definitive sanctification—there life being hid in Christ (v.3-4). But, nonetheless, the regenerates needed to mortify their members which were upon the earth (v.5). As their life is raised in heaven, that they should set their sights on heavenly things—not the sinful things of the earth.

This involves a process of having the mind renewed. Paul speaks of the regenerates as spiritually in Christ, but also of their bodily members (e.g. their mouths—v.8) on the earth, still to be quickened.11 For them to grasp their spiritual position in Christ, they needed the knowledge

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9 Belgic, Article 14
10 Heidelberg, Q & A 6
11 Cf. Romans 8:10ff.
of a renewed mind. This was sufficient Sanctification for them to be commanded to set their affections, and put off sin with mortification.

Colossians 3:10,

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*

**And have put on the new man, which is renewed**

The word “new” (*neon*) usually has a more narrow usage than the “new” (*kainon*) of Ephesians 4:24. However, it carries the same general force with the participle “renewed” (*anakainoumenon*) modifying it. This is no doubt contrasted from “the old man with his deeds” (v. 8-9). The present participle describes the continuing formation of the new one, still undergoing progressive sanctification through mortification by the established of definitive regeneration (v. 5-8). The adjective, “new”, traces continuity with the “old man” (*palaion anthrOpon*). The singular masculine adjective “new [man]” is substantive with the definite article (*ton*). The same “man” (*anthrOpon*) is depicted; regeneration simply renews the “man” to his younger estate before corruption.

The verb “put on” (*endusamenoi*) parallels with Ephesians 4 quite nicely. The difference is that Colossians 3:10’s verb is a participle, and Ephesians 4:24 has the infinitive inflection (*endusasthai*). The same root word is used; however, the infinitive form in Ephesians 4:24, as mentioned above, is used to indicate the purpose of the controlling verbs (“…ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him…”), and in Colossians 3:10, the verbal is adjective—describing believers who are exhorted to mortify their earthly members. This position in Christ (v.1-4, 11), is the basis for Paul’s exhortation to “put on” (*endusasthe*) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering (v.12). It is clear that the basis for progressive sanctification is definitive sanctification; even still, there is still a commitment to put off sins in this life.

In verse 3:10, the subject implied is the nominative plural “ye” from the context. It describes the regenerating process of assuming the renewed man, not Christ Himself (demonstrated below), more likely, the regenerative character formed according to Christ. This describes the positive aspect of sanctification, i.e. the restoration of that which was corrupted—a certain kind of knowledge.

**…in knowledge**

The preposition “in” (*eis*) specifies that end-state of that which the new man is renewed into. The regenerating man is renewed by God, implied by the passive mood of “renewed” and the verb “Him that created” (*ktisantos*), i.e. renewed into knowledge. The force of the preposition suggests a radical revolution in knowledge that firmly plants one into a certain place of knowledge. That foundation hinted at is explained by another prepositional phrase to describe the knowledge of regeneration.

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12 Invalid source specified.

13 This theme has already been established by the Apostle in the Epistle (cf. 1:5-6, 1:9-10, 1:12-13, 1:21, 1:26-28, 2:2-8).
after the image of Him that created him

The knowledge conforms according to a manner (kat). That into which the new man is renewed in knowledge after is “the image” (eikona). The Apostle already has established that Christ Himself is the image of the invisible God eternally begotten before all of creation. The accusative case attracts the preposition “eis” to complete the thought. This is a clear allusion to Genesis 1:26-27. The image is “of Him that created” (tou kisisantos), drawing a tighter allusion. The definite article in the genitive singular no doubt figures God as the Creator, the one who renews those who put on the new man. The pronoun “him” (auton) refers to the substantive “new man.” The antecedent cannot be Christ, unless Christ is a mere creature. But the new man is renewed and created by God in Christ—His very image; viz. the knowledge that regenerates are restored in is according to how they were originally created before corruption, in Christ their knowledge, with whom they will appear with in glory (Colossians 3:4).

The knowledge is that which the new man comes into, and the knowledge is conformed according to God’s image—that which Adam was originally created in. The allusion to the Genesis creation account implies that the regenerate’s knowledge is renewed in the mystery of the Gospel through sanctification. Nonetheless, the Apostle still exhorts regenerates to avoid sin and put on charity. Yet, why would a regenerate Christian need to worry about sin if they are justified and definitively sanctified?

If the Full-Preterist holds that the total redemption of the Church from sin was completed in AD 70, then it would follow that the Church has been purged from all sin. Since the Bible testifies that believers before AD 70 were liable to sin and had to mortify sin in the flesh, the Full-Preterist holds that in AD 70 all believers were delivered from the bondage of corruption, viz. from the “ethical and moral putrefaction in the heart and mind of man”.

* Conclusion

If, for any reason, a Full-Preterist does not hold that the purging of indwelling sin is of the saving graces of Redemption, then the indwelling sin that believers struggle against in their Christian walk—the same struggle that the New Testament saints struggled with—limits the extent of the cross and Christ’s sufferings. This means that such a Full-Preterism would be seriously different than the Christian view of Christ’s victory over all the works of the devil; it means that such a Full-Preterism holds believers are redeemed from condemnation and penalty, but not the sins of the flesh in this life. Conservative Christianity holds that all sin, and all enemies of God and of His Church will be totally destroyed, and believers will be redeemed.

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14 Colossians 1:15-18
15 This common view is exposed by Full-Preterist Michael Sullivan, “Christ’s Parousia in AD 70 was a redemptive and soteriological event that occurred “in” and “within” the minds, consciences and hearts of the Church, when God consumed by fire the Adamic world of Satan, Sin, Death and Condemnation, consummately purging His church of sin through the Cross of Christ (Rom. 8:18-23; 11:26-27; 13:11-12; Heb. 8-10). The “redemption” of Luke 21:28 is the “redemption of the body” in Romans 8:18-23. Both the imminence of the time texts and the spiritual nature of their fulfillment require this interpretation.” (Sullivan, 2009)
16 1 John 1:8-10
17 Even Jesus taught us to pray, “…and forgive us our trespasses…”
from all sufferings from the curse. Further, it would imply that mortification of such actual sins is not an essential experience of saving grace.

If a Full-Preterist formulated an objection to this, stating that believers do not have any sin, either because there is no Law for them to transgress in Christ, or because of the virtue of our justification\(^{18}\) and completed sanctification in Christ, then they would be knee-deep in antinomian heresy—even more so saying that mortification of such actual sins is not an essential experience of saving grace. Further, it would not be clear whether they would then believe that entire sanctification occurred before AD 70, at AD 70, or upon individual conversion or repentance.

Nonetheless, the Full-Preterists\(^ {19}\) who would argue the last objection are in the minority. Full-Preterists generally hold that believers are not perfect in this life. One Full-Preterist, who denies indwelling sin, maintains that we still “sin by knowing the good we ought do and not do it.” Yet, for the Full-Preterist, Sanctification does not include ever ceasing to sin because the glorified believer is in the highest estate of actual holiness afforded by Redemption in this life,\(^ {20}\) and yet they hold, in this case, that believers are still liable to sin. Thus, if believers are no more sanctified than their current estate on earth, then they will also be liable to sin within the gates of the city of God.\(^ {21}\)

The Reformed view teaches the Biblical doctrine of indwelling sin.\(^ {22}\) The Canons of Dort, Head of Doctrine V,

**Article 1 - The Regenerate Not Free from Indwelling Sin**

*Those whom God according to His purpose calls into the fellowship of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by His Holy Spirit, He certainly sets free from the dominion and slavery of sin, but not entirely in this life from the flesh and from the body of sin.*

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\(^{19}\) Responding to me, Jason King writes, “Vince, sin does not dwell within believers. Sin is in the world and in fact, it is of the world. And we all know that where sin increases, grace does respectively. The law makes us aware of sin but where there is no law there is no sin. What law are we under? The law of Christ which is fulfilled in loving one another. We are not under Moses’ law where we sin for not observing dates and festivals. We sin by knowing the good we ought do and not do it. And the good we ought do is made known through Jesus - not through observing the Law. Would you agree? Jesus summed up the entire law with love. We all have moments where we do not love - that is why we need grace and not law or else we WOULD be condemned.” (King, 2009); Although he does not hold that sin indwells sanctified believers, he nonetheless holds that sanctified believers still sin to support his reasoning that believers need grace.

\(^{20}\) Doug (DID) writes, “For me (and feel free to disagree) I don't see how being “sanctified” can be progressive. Sanctification is, after all, the act of making holy. How can something be made MORE holy? Holy either is or it isn't.” (Scargy, 2010)


\(^{22}\) “Whence arises the imperfection of sanctification in believers?

Answer: The imperfection of sanctification in believers arises from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lusting of the flesh against the spirit; whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.” (WLC 78)
**Article 2 - Daily Sins of Weakness**

*Therefore daily sins of weakness spring up and defects cling to even the best works of the saints. These are for them a constant reason to humble themselves before God, to flee to the crucified Christ, to put the flesh to death more and more through the Spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of godliness, and to long for the goal of perfection until at last, delivered from this body of death, they reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.*

The Reformed view teaches that the indwelling of sin is the “constant reason” for the mortification of sin. Any view that denies indwelling sin is Biblical (Romans 7:15-24ff), denies the reason why regenerated believers struggle with sin. Full-Preterists who do not hold that corruption of the flesh is a penalty for sin (e.g. that physical mortality is natural, that Adam was created mortal, and that physical suffering is not the flower of sin)—because they deny the resurrection of the body is in God’s plan of Redemption from the curse—commonly ignore that a corrupted nature was conveyed through original sin. In such cases, they also deny the doctrine of total depravity.

If the New Testament teaches that believers are to through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body (by virtue of the cross), and if Full-Preterist hold that the body has already quickened our mortal body and delivered it from the bondage of corruption, then there remains no deeds of the body to mortify. According to Full-Preterism, believers have—since AD 70—been delivered from vanity, sin, and even death. If the members of the New Covenant have the Law of God written in their hearts, as Full-Preterists commonly assert in defense of the charge of antinomianism, then how do they not fall from grace upon sinning as Adam did in the beginning? The answer is, clearly, that the Law in their inward parts has no correlation to the believer’s perfection, and that God never destroys all our sin after He forgives us.
Addendum

When asked what his position on Sanctification is—especially on progressive sanctification, Ward Fenley responds, (Fenley, 2011)

The primary text used to prove progressive-sanctification is 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. And I would like to show you something—real quick here—why this text cannot be used to refer to progressive-sanctification. It is the primary text...theologians use to try and prove it...let's look at the context of 2nd Corinthians. Here is the primary text they use to prove progressive sanctification. Last verse, verse 18:

[But] we all with our face having been unveiled are, having beheld the glory of the Lord in a mirror, are being changed—ok?—being changed, into the same image—now watch--from glory to glory [as from the Lord Spirit].

Now, let's look up here: verse 7,

But if the ministration of death, having been graved and engraved on letters of stone was with glory—that's the Old Covenant glory--so that the sons of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses because of the glory of his face; which was being done away.

That glory was being done away. It was in the process of passing away.

Shall not the ministry of the spirit be with more glory? So there are your two glories.

For if the ministration of condemnation is glorious, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

We're talking about two glories here: Old Covenant glory versus New Covenant glory.

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels. One is New Covenant, one is Old Covenant glory.

For if that which passes away—actually, the Greek there is the present tense—that which was passing away was glorious—there's your Old Covenant glory—much more, that which remains is glorious—there's your New Covenant glory.
So now, you read that, it's talking about the body of Jewish believers here who are coming to faith during the first-century.

Then, verse 12, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: we are not like Moses who put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that thing which was passing away—But now, watch!—their thoughts were blinded. For until the present time—that's important there...the present time—the same veil remains on the reading of the Old Covenant; it's not taken away. But this veil, is being done away (that's in the present tense there...it's in the present tense). This veil is being done away in Christ. And this is talking about the last of the elect Jews in the first-century who were coming to faith in Christ.

You might say, 'wait a minute, how can you prove that?” Let's go to Romans, just for a moment. And let's look at Romans chapter 11. Romans chapter 11; and this talks about the group that Paul is addressing...

Even so, at this present time, there is a Remnant according to the election of Grace. [Inaudible]...to be—right? There is a remnant—and notice he says, ‘in this present time’. [Inaudible] Paul says, ‘present...same veil remains’.

So when you get to verse 18, look what it says,

We all are being changed into His image, from glory—Old Covenant glory—to New Covenant glory. That is the body, the complete body of those believers—those Jewish believers—being changed from the Old Covenant glory to New Covenant glory. As the last of those elect of the faith in Christ before the destruction of the Temple. Ok? So, I hope that, kinda, explains that. That was the progressive-sanctification, it was of the whole body—NOT INDIVIDUAL. It was of the entire body of those Jewish believers. Ok?

When asked if he holds that progressive sanctification is unbiblical he replied,

Yes.

When asked if the Christian, in this age, has the inherent duty to mortify the deeds of the body, he replied,

Actually, we do need to mortify the deeds of the body...I don’t believe in the conventional view of Romans 6 through 8...


