

ABSOLUTISM: What does it really teach?

The following is a quote from Elder R.H. Pittman's little book of *Questions and Answers*.

“What is Absolutism? A. It is an erroneous and strained view of the doctrine of predestination. Its advocates teach that God absolutely predestinated all things that come to pass, both good and evil; that what is going on in the world now, that which has transpired in the past, and that which will come to pass in the future was all predestinated before time, and could not be otherwise from what it was, is, or will be, that all the acts of men and devils were predestinated. This doctrine is not Bible doctrine—Elder Sylvester Hassell said it was imported from Italy. It was first published among Baptists by the paper known as **Signs of the Times** in 1832. Since that time the doctrine has been made a hobby by a few Baptists, yet none of our churches were organized upon such a doctrine—it is not found in the articles of faith of any Baptist church. It is a left handed, confusing kind of predestination, and has been the cause of strife and division. Its advocates are not satisfied with predestination as Paul expressed it. They seek to prop up predestination on one side by ‘absolute,’ and on the other side they spread it over ‘all things.’ The doctrine, when run to its logical conclusion, is nothing less than fatalism, for it makes God as being the author of sin, though most of its advocates deny this.”

When Elder Hassell said *Absolutism* came out of Italy he was, no doubt, referring to an Italian Catholic-turned-Protestant theologian by the name of Jerom Zanchius. Zanchius (or Zanchy, historians spell his name different ways) was born in Italy in 1516 just before the Reformation broke out in Germany. He was contemporary with Calvin, Luther, Knox, and the other great Reformers. He taught at Strasburg and later at the university of Heidelberg. Persecution drove him from Italy to Germany, and finally to England.

He wrote the proto-Absolute document entitled *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*. That book is the clearest, the most comprehensive, and the most logically consistent book on the subject. It became the standard statement of that doctrine. If it does not prove the doctrine, it cannot be proven. The book has continued to be published until this day. My old tattered and torn copy was republished by Baker Publishing House in 1978. It only contains 170 pages, but it gives a concise and entirely adequate explanation of what the doctrine of Absolute Predestination is all about.

In order to give as brief an explanation of the doctrine as possible, and yet look at different aspects of the subject, I will limit my remarks, for the most part, to Zanchius's book and those theologians he quotes.

In order to make his point, Zanchius does what every Absoluter must do. **He spends most of his time proving points that were never in question.** Then, having proven those points beyond all possible challenge, he adds his Absolute conclusion to the argument, as if the points he has just proven have something to do with his conclusion.

When I say those points were never in question, bear in mind that I am reading the book as a Primitive Baptist, and approaching the subject from the point of view of our people. In order to give Zanchius his credit, we need to keep in mind that he was writing, primarily, for people who believed that salvation from eternal damnation depends on the merit of the sinner. They believed it was up to the sinner to earn a home in heaven. And, considering who he was writing for, the points he spends so much time proving were the very questions that were under attack. So it was proper that he should begin by showing where he was coming from.

But the fact remains that, from our Primitive Baptist point of view, those points were never the question.

Having said all that, we need to point out that, no matter how clearly, and how conclusively, you may have proven your point, you have not accomplished anything, if your premise has no connection with your conclusion.

Zanchius spends most of his time talking about the attributes of God, and it is proper that he should do that. If Bible students spent more time studying what the Bible tells us about God and his attributes, it would clear up most of the questions in religion. There is no room for a sovereign, all-wise, almighty, God of will and purpose in most of what passes for the Christian religion of our day. Let the Bible student accept the description God gives of himself, and the petty, silly notions of the religious establishment would vanish in a moment.

Zanchius deals with the attributes of God, and up until he starts talking about the predestination of sin and wickedness he does a good job of it. Then he gets completely off the track and out of the Bible.

He shows that God is almighty, all-wise, and all-knowing, but that is not the question.

There is nothing God does not know. He knows everything there is to know—past, present, and future (Isa. 46:9,10). He knows everything from the mightiest heavenly body to the tiniest insect. “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names,” (Psa. 147:4). He knows every sparrow that falls to the ground; he numbers the very hairs of your head (Matt. 10:29,30). He knows what you are going to do before you do it, and even when you are sure that is not what you are going to do (2 Kings 8:12,13). He identifies kings and calls them by name long before they are born (I Kings 13:2, Isa. 44:28, 45:1). His “eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro. 15:3). Who would dare deny any of it?

If there is a solitary atom in the farthest reaches of the universe, you can be sure that God knows everything there is to know about it. He knows where that atom is today; he knows where it was a thousand years ago; and (if time should last) he knows what its exact location will be a thousand years from now.

Long before we were born, he knew all about every member of the human family. He knew where and when we would be born, and he knew all the events and circumstances of our lives. There is not a thought that ever entered our minds, or a move that we ever made, but that he knew all about it. And he knew it from all eternity. The God we serve has never learned anything; he has never forgotten anything; he has always known everything.

But it is strange logic that thinks his knowing everything there is to know, somehow, proves that he manipulates circumstances and events in order to cause men to sin—according to a foreordained schedule.

Zanchius shows the sovereignty of God in the salvation of his people, and in his dealings with them, and with the wicked, but again, that is not the question.

Of course, God is sovereign. He states it over and over again. “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matt. 20:15). “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35). Nobody has the right to challenge God for anything he does.

There is no need to multiply proof texts. God is sovereign over all creation. It is his property; we are his property; and he has the right to do with us what he will.

But that is a far cry from pretending that God gave man a law, irresistibly causes him to

break the law, and then punishes him for doing what he could not keep from doing.

He shows that God exercises his almighty power in creation, and in his government of the world.

That is exactly what the Bible teaches. “The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God,” (Psa. 104:21). There is not an animal in the forest, nor an insect in the grass, but that God feeds it, and provides for it.

Men can build accurate timepieces, but, no matter if their timepiece may be accurate to the thousandth of a second, they still correct it by the movement of the stars through the heavens. Who could doubt there is a God in heaven, who keeps every star on course—and on time?

He “upholds all things by the word of his power,” (Heb. 1:3). It is by his power that every tiny electron is held in its orbit around the nucleus of its atom. His power holds every planet in its orbit around the sun, and every mighty galaxy in its course through the heavens. That power holds sway from the inner workings of the nucleus of the tiniest atom to the farthest reaches of creation, and holds it all together.

What we call *Physical Law* is nothing more than God’s usual way of sustaining the created universe, and causing to operate in a consistent manner.

Zanchius talks about the providence of God as it protects and provides for his people, and for every other creature. He proves that the providence of God embraces the mightiest angel and the tiniest insect. He proves that God numbers and names every star in the sky. He shows that God feeds every animal in the forest. He shows that there is no place in the universe beyond the power, the wisdom, and the surveillance of our all-wise, all-powerful God. He makes all those arguments, and he provides indisputable proof texts to prove his point.

But, again, all of that is a far cry from saying that God causes men to sin according to some prearranged program.

It does not make any difference how well you may prove your points; it does not accomplish anything, if those points have nothing to do with the subject in question.

The question is: did God by one eternal decree absolutely and unchangeably predetermine everything that will ever happen in time and eternity? Did God predestinate all the good—and all the evil—in the world? Emphasizing the attributes of God does not prove that point.

No matter how brilliant you may be, when you study about God and his attributes, there comes a point at which you are left in wide-eyed, slack-jawed amazement. At that point our learning must give way to wonder.

God is all-wise; he knows everything there is to know. You and I are not all-wise; we do not know everything, and we never will. God will always be the creator, and we will always be the creature. We will always stand in wonder and in awe of him. There are some things we will never be able to fully explain.

We should be wary of any system that tries to explain the unexplainable—any system that tries to bring God down to our level. We should beware of any system that charges God with conduct that is contrary to his own nature and attributes. The Bible tells us all we need to know about the nature and attributes of God. We do not need to add our own philosophy. We can spend the rest of our lives studying and contemplating what we are told, and it will be the delight of our lives, if we do just that. Consider, if you will, some of what the Bible does tell us, and it will remove much of the difficulty.

First, God is infinite; he is not bound by time nor space, but you and I cannot comprehend infinity. He is eternal, but we cannot comprehend eternity.

The nearest we can come to understanding eternity is to think of it as unending time. He is (at one and the same time) the beginning and the end, the first and the last. That is not the same as saying he is the beginning, and he will be the end. He is both—at the same time. We cannot comprehend that.

Brilliant though he was, when John Newton wrote that beautiful old hymn *Amazing Grace*, the best he could do was, “When we’ve been there ten thousand years.” We know what he was trying to say, and we rejoice in the thought. But days and years are the opposite of eternity. There is coming a time when days and years will end, and we will be eternally with the Lord.

One of the names of God is *I AM*. All is *one eternal now* with him. You and I are creatures of time; we are bound in time, and bound by time, but not so with God.

You and I are locked into time, and traveling through time one moment after another. That does not apply to God. He is the unchangeable one. If God were bound by time the way we are—to say the least—he would become one day older every twenty-four hours. But he does not become any older; he does not change.

Time does not encompass God the way it encompasses us. He is the “high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity” (Isa 57:15). He is not bound by time; it is the other way around; he encompasses time.

What tiny, tiny little creatures of time we all are. Think about it for a moment. Each of us occupies such a tiny little spot in the universe. We are such little things that if some-body backs off more than a few hundred yards he will have trouble even seeing us. If he could back off somewhat farther, he would have trouble spotting the earth we live on, and if he backed off far enough he would have trouble seeing our sun as anything more than a tiny speck away out yonder in the night sky.

That does not apply to God; he is everywhere at one and the same time. If you could build the largest hydraulic press, you still could not compress God into the tiny little space you and I occupy.

In much the same way that we are locked into one tiny little spot in the vastness of the universe, we are also locked into one tiny instant in time. With us there is a past, a present, and a future; but we can never possess any of it except the present. The future is always on its way; the past is forever gone; and the present lasts for such a brief instant that we can never know it until it is gone.

You may have thought about how brief a moment the present is. If you have not, do think about it for a moment.

If the present lasted for a full minute, you would never have a car wreck. You could avoid most any accident, if you had a full sixty seconds to react. If the present lasted for as much as a second you could never have a prize fight. Given a full second, any third rate boxer could get out of the way of his opponent's fist. If the present lasted the thousandth part of a second, we could not have computers. If a computer could not split every second into a million parts and beyond, it would be so slow you could never get anything done.

But as brief a moment as the present is, that is all you and I have.

But not so with God; he inhabits eternity. You could as easily compress God into the little spot you and I occupy as you could confine him to the tiny instant we call the present. He is the *I AM*. All is one eternal now with him. Being the eternal one, past, present, and future are all the same with him.

We can never entirely explain God, and there is nothing with which to compare him.

“To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him,” (Isa. 40:18). All we can do is adore, and wonder, and worship.

We need to realize that there are some things the Bible teaches about God and his work—without explaining how he does what he does.

Much of the *how* of what God does is so far beyond our ability to comprehend, that we could not understand it—no matter how well it was explained.

Suppose some rocket scientist should take the next six months to explain to somebody like myself how they managed to build the space shuttle. Suppose he writes out every complex mathematical formula involved, and explains every intricate step. Suppose he explains all the scientific principles that must be taken into consideration. Do you suppose I could understand all he said, so I could explain it to the next person. No, of course not. He would lose me just after he said, “Now here is the way we did it....” His entire presentation would be beyond my comprehension. But even that is a very lame illustration compared to the thought of understanding some of the things God does. **The Bible tells of any number of things God does without explaining how he does it.**

We are told that in the very morning of time—by the word of his power—God created the world out of nothing. He simply spoke the word, and vast worlds sprang into existence. We are convinced it is so, but it is beyond our comprehension to understand how he did it.

By the same power he speaks the word, and one dead in trespasses and sins is made alive in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of God takes up its abode in the heart of the sinner, and he is born again. Again, we are told what he does, with no explanation of how the Spirit does its mighty work.

We are told that at God’s appointed time the Son of God became man. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us”(John 1:14). If the very heaven of heavens cannot contain him, it is beyond our ability to understand how he could become a tiny baby his mother could hold in her arms. Not only does the Bible not explain how he did it, it goes on to say it is a *mystery* (1 Tim. 3:16). If it is a mystery, we could not understand it, even if it was explained. It would no longer be a mystery.

The most central message of the gospel is the resurrection of our Lord. He rose from the dead, and one day he will raise us, and fashion our bodies like unto his own glorious body. How will he put our sleeping dust together again, and rejoin it to our departed spirit? Again, we are told it is a *mystery* (1 Cor. 15:51). Raising the dead is

not part of our job description, so we do not need to be concerned that we cannot explain how he will do it.

But that is not good enough for the theologian; he feels a need to explain everything. And if he cannot find his explanation in the Bible, he has a world of philosophy at his disposal.

Paul had some less than flattering things to say about philosophy (Col. 2:8). The earnest Bible student is convinced the Bible provides every explanation we need. If the Bible does not provide it, we do not need it; but that does not deter our theologian friend. He finds in pagan philosophy a principle called *fate*, and it exactly fills the need. By searching the pagan philosophers he finds an explanation the Bible does not provide.

By stripping *fate* of some of its most objectionable features, and dressing it up in a *Christian* garb, he is able to remove the *mystery*. He can now explain how God can foretell the future.

The pagan doctrine teaches that everything that happens in time was predetermined long ago by a blind *fate*. Everything, right down to the tiniest gyration and pirouette of a falling snowflake, was determined long ago, and nothing can be changed. Almost a thousand years before Jerom Zanchius was born, a pagan prophet named Mohammed taught that, "Whatever is written is written." Nothing can be changed; we are swept along by our *fate*.

The Absoluter strips *fate* of its *blind fate* stigma by bundling it with the omniscience of God. Hence *fate* is no longer *blind*.

He strips it of its *random* nature by bundling it with the will and purpose of God. Hence, for the Absoluter, God is able to foretell the future, because he has determined to manipulate, and orchestrate everything that happens so that everything takes place just the way he determined to make it happen. It is still a pagan doctrine; but he has made it more acceptable to an inquiring (and bewildered) student of the Bible.

The Absoluter is able to remove the *mystery* from God's ability to foretell the future, but what a price he pays in the transaction.

By the time he gets through explaining God, he is left with a deity that does not correspond to the God of the Bible. He is left with a deity that looks, for all the world, like the gods of the pagans.

1. My first objection to Absolutism is that it teaches that God is unable to know about sin in advance, unless he has determined to manipulate and orchestrate circumstances in order to bring about the sin.

You need to be very careful when you talk about what God cannot do. The Bible only lists three things God cannot do: he cannot lie (Heb. 6:18); he cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13); and he cannot swear by one greater than himself (Heb. 6:13). In other words, he cannot do anything that is contrary to his own nature and attributes.

But he can foretell what is going to happen in the future without in any way predestinating man's sin. The fact that he can foretell the future is one of the proofs that he is God.

But listen to what our proto-Absoluter, Jerom Zanchius says about it, and bear in mind that he is their standard bearer.

“Therefore, His determinate plan, counsel and purpose (i.e. His own predestination of causes and effects) is the only basis of His foreknowledge, which foreknowledge could neither be certain nor independent, but as founded on his own antecedent decree.” (*page 135*) That is an exact quote; you can look it up.

Notice that Zanchius is sure God could not be certain about what was going to happen in the future except for “his own antecedent decree.” In other words, the only way he can know about the sin is for him to *decree* the sin. That sounds like dangerous reasoning to me.

But there is more; he says this “predestination of causes and effects,” this predestination of sin and wickedness, is “the only basis of his foreknowledge.” **Can you believe that anybody in his right mind would argue that God has to prop up one of his own attributes by predestinating sin?** God's foreknowledge (his prescience if you want to be precise) is one of his attributes, and his attributes do not need to be propped up. But Zanchius is sure *the only basis* of God's foreknowledge is “His predestination of causes and effects.” In other words, according to Zanchius, if God did not predestinate everything that is going to happen, his foreknowledge would come crashing to the ground.

But I did tell you that Zanchius borrowed this doctrine from the pagan philosophers.

But, lest anybody might think we misunderstood him, listen to him again in the same paragraph. “Again, we cannot suppose him to have foreknown anything which He had not previously decreed.” He is sure God could not have fore-known it, if he had not decreed it.

Allow me one more quote. “Now, if God foreknew this, He must have predetermined it, because His own will is the foundation of His decrees, and His decrees are the foundation of His prescience” (*page 91*). I believe that should remove all doubt about what he was saying. Zanchius was sure that God’s ability to predict sin has no foundation except his own willingness to predestinate sin.

These brilliant Absoluter theologians are so determined to explain everything about God, that they are willing to charge him with predestinating sin, in order to explain how he can foretell the future.

The Absoluter is convinced that he presents the attributes of God in a way that puts all other systems to shame. He magnifies God as no one else does. The fact is that he envisions God as having to prop up his own attributes.

He presents this imagined predestination of sin and wickedness as a crutch for his omniscience to lean on.

According to him, if omniscience did not have this crutch, it would stumble and fall. That is not the way my Bible describes God.

Isa 46:9,10, “Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.”

I realize the Absoluter claims that text, but before he can prove ownership, he will have to prove his notion that God is *pleased* with sin and wickedness. The things God has decreed to do are his *pleasure*.

But the Absoluter insists that God does not predestinate sin; he simply removes his restraining hand, and man sins according to his own sinful nature. He restrains the man, and keeps him from sinning, or he removes his hand, and allows him to work out his own sinful impulses. And so he goes through all of time, either restraining or permitting sin, and he does it to such a degree that all that happens takes place according to his preconceived plan.

At first glance, there seems to be some logic to the answer. Who could deny that when God's removes his restraint from the sinner, he runs into every sinful excess. And who could deny that God does prevent man from being as wicked as he could be. The Absoluter is convinced that in this way he can explain everything that has happened, or will ever happen.

But when we look a little closer, we discover that the explanation falls far short of the goal. For one thing, most of what happens in time has no moral dimension at all. There is nothing either good or evil about a snowflake falling in one spot or another. There is nothing either good or evil about a bird lighting on one limb rather than another. Even if we would accept the Absoluter's premise, it would fall far short of providing a foundation for the foreknow-ledge of God. It would fall far short of showing how God knows ahead of time every gyration and pirouette of every falling snowflake.

The foreknowledge of God does not need a prop, and even if it did, the Absoluter has not found a prop sufficient to carry the load.

2. My second objection to Absolutism is that it teaches that the sin of Adam was the result of God's irresistible will.

Before he transgressed, Adam did not have a sinful nature to motivate and control him. So we come back to the question: if, as our Absoluter friend tell us, every sin happens, because God removes his restraining power, and man simply acts out his own sinful impulses, what about the sin of Adam?

If I might repeat myself, when the Absoluter explains how it is that God can foretell every little detail about every sin that will ever be committed—without being the cause of the sin—he will tell you that God simply leaves the sinner to his own nature, and his own devices, and the nature of the sinner works its way in exactly the way God predestinated that it would.

There can be no doubt that God often gives people over to work their own destruction, but to use that explanation to show that God, somehow, predestinated every sin is simply a dodge.

For one thing, the explanation breaks down, when you apply it to the sin of Adam. There can be no question that God knew beforehand what Adam would do. He provided the Lord Jesus Christ as the remedy for sin, before that first sin was committed. But until he sinned, Adam did not have a sinful, corrupt nature to

motivate and control him.

When it comes to the original sin of Adam, the Absoluter has no choice—**if he is going to save his pagan philosophy**—and that is to trace the sin of Adam to God himself. That is exactly what our friend Zanchius does. Listen to his explanation:

“On the whole, if God was not unwilling that Adam should fall, He must have been willing that he should, since between God’s willing and nilling there is no medium. And is it not highly rational as well as scriptural, nay, is it not absolutely necessary to suppose that the fall was not contrary to the will and determination of God? Since, if it was, His will (which the apostle represents as being irresistible, Rom. ix. 19) was apparently frustrated and His determination rendered of worse than none effect.” (*page 89*)

Notice two things: first, he points out that the will of God is *irresistible*. He is right about that; but he goes on to claim that God (irresistibly) willed that Adam should sin.

Hear him again: “Surely, if God had not willed the fall, He could, and no doubt would, have prevented it; but he did not prevent it; ergo, He willed it. And if he willed it, He certainly decreed it, for the decree of God is nothing else but the seal and ratification of His will.” (*page 88*) Again, notice that he ultimately traces the sin of Adam, not to rebellion on the part of Adam, but to the decree of God himself. According to Zanchius, Adam sinned, because God irresistibly willed for him to sin.

Again, “and Luther observes that ‘God permitted Adam to fall into sin because he willed that he should so fall,’” (*page 46*). I doubt that needs any explanation.

He goes on, “From what has been laid down, it follows that Augustine, Luther, Bucer, the scholastic divines, and other learned writers are not to be blamed for asserting that ‘God may in some sense be said to will the being and commission of sin,’” (*page 54*). In this statement he is sure that nobody should *be blamed* for tracing every sin on the part of every person to the will of God.

Let me say again that Absolutism is the result of bund-dling the pagan philosophy of fatalism with the Bible doctrines of the power, and wisdom, and purpose of God—to the great scandal of those doctrines.

By doing that it removes the stigma of being *blind* and *random* from the notion of an irresistible, unchangeable *fate*. And it explains God’s ability to know the future in a way the carnal mind can comprehend.

In other words, God is able to tell what is going to happen from the first to the last moment of time, because that is the way he is going to orchestrate and manipulate all things and make them happen. In order to do that, he finds it necessary to argue that Adam sinned, because God irresistibly willed for him to sin.

But Bible truth does not need pagan philosophy to prop it up, and any time you call on pagan philosophy to explain God and his work, you will find yourself explaining God in a way that is much more compatible to the pagan way of thinking than it is to the description he gives of himself in the Bible. That will become abundantly apparent as we look further at this Absoluter's arguments.

3. My third objection to Absolutism is that it teaches God causes men to sin.

The Absoluter bristles at that statement, and he insists that he does not believe God causes anybody to sin. He explains that God uses something he calls *second cause*, whereby he so manipulates, and orchestrates circumstances that man simply acts out his own sinful nature by reacting to those circumstances. He has a real problem when he tries to apply that notion to the sin of Adam, but we have already talked about that.

Here is what Zanchius says about *second cause*. "That God often lets the wicked go on to more ungodliness, which He does (a) negatively by withholding that grace which alone can restrain them from evil; (b) remotely, by the providential concurrence and mediation of *second causes*, which *second causes*, meeting and acting in concert with the corruption of the reprobate's unregenerate nature, *produce sinful effects*; (c) judicially, or in a way of judgment," (page 64). He allows that these *second causes*, which are themselves *providential* (provided by God) *produce sinful effects*. He thinks God provides the *second causes* that *produce sinful effects*, and he is sure this, somehow, exonerates God from causing the sin and perversion the wicked do.

But, in spite of this lame dodge, Zanchius makes it abundantly clear that he thinks God is the sole cause of everything that happens—good, bad, and indifferent.

Listen to these direct quotes. Keep in mind that we have provided the italics to point up what he is saying.

"*Whatever comes to pass*, comes to pass by virtue of this absolute omnipotent will of God," (page 50).

"The will of God is so *the cause of all things*, as to be itself without cause, for nothing

can be the cause of that which is *the cause of everything*,” (page 50).

He appeals to Luther for support, “God worketh all things in all men, *even wickedness in the wicked*,” (page 65).

“*He produces actions* by his power alone, which actions, as neither issuing from faith, nor being wrought with a view to the divine glory, nor done in the manner prescribed by the Divine word, are on these accounts *properly denominated evil*,” (page 66).

“Every work performed, *whether good or evil*, is done in strength, and by the power derived immediately from God himself,” (page 66).

Again, he appeals to Luther, “God would not be a respect-able Being if He were not almighty, and *the doer of all things that are done*, or if anything could come to pass in which He had no hand,” (page 68).

If, in those quotes, Zanchius and Luther do not clearly and unambiguously charge God with being the *cause of all things, whether good or evil*, I confess I do not know any way words could express that doctrine. These Absoluters are so determined to provide an explanation of how God can foretell the future that they are perfectly willing to charge him with causing sin—in order to prop up their lame doctrine.

At first glance, Absolutism, like its sister doctrine, Calvin-ism, can be very beguiling. It seems to be a system that explains and organizes all things from the beginning to the end of time. It teaches that God is totally in charge, that nothing is beyond his control, that every motion, from the rise and fall of mighty empires to the fluctuation of every falling snowflake is according to one unchangeable master plan.

But when you scratch it just a little, you discover just below the surface, notions that are diametrically opposed to all the Bible teaches us about God and his attributes. It presents us with a god who must prop up his own attributes. It presents us with a god who is very much like us, a god who can only know the future, because he manipulates and orchestrates the future.

We can be sure that God does know everything that will ever come to pass, and he knows it down to the tiniest detail. But he knows that because he inhabits eternity. He is not bound by time the way we mortals are. That is a point the Absoluter readily acknowledges; but he never allows that fact to interfere with his system.

God is in charge; nothing is beyond his control. His power reaches to the mightiest

heavenly bodies, and to the tiniest subatomic particle. But that does not mean he manipulates moral creatures and causes them to sin.

Our second article of faith says, “We believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, and the *ONLY* rule of faith and practice.” Pagan philosophy can be interesting to study, and I have spent my fair share of time studying it. But we should be cautious about supplementing the Bible with men’s philosophy.

We must always keep in mind that is what Absolutism is. It is the pagan doctrine of *fate* dressed up in a Christian garb and made to look like Christian doctrine.

It has been said that, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,” and, unwilling to stand in wide-eyed wonder at the majesty of his Maker—the Absoluter rushes in with his book of pagan philosophy in hand.

Rather than simply acknowledge that God is God, and we are not—he traces all the sin and wickedness of the world to the decrees of God, and (either overtly or covertly) charges God with being the cause of every sin. He explains God in a way that is entirely different from the pure and thrice holy God of the Bible.

To end where we began, there comes a time when we must acknowledge that no matter how brilliant you may be, when you study about God and his attributes, there comes a point at which you are left in wide-eyed, slack-jawed amazement. At that point our learning must give way to wonder.

Isa. 55:9, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.