

FROM THE SCRIPTURES TO THE SERMON

II. THE PROBLEM OF PARADIGMS

By J. I. Packer*

The word *paradigm* has become something of a technical term in modern academic discussion.¹ It is used to mean what we would once have called an overall frame of reference, or a controlling point of view. A paradigm is a large-scale hypothesis about reality that is presupposed and taken for granted as a basis for interpreting data and determining values, goals and procedures. One's paradigm determines one's mind-set, shaping one's thinking by giving it direction and establishing boundaries and limits beyond which belief may not go. Paradigms thus exert control, and usually without our realising what is happening; who, under ordinary circumstances, reflects on how much he or she is taking for granted? So our paradigms of reality determine how we process informational data — what we make of it, to speak in everyday terms — for processing data is essentially a matter of fitting the bits into our overall frame of reference. Thus paradigms become the pathway to understanding, if the paradigm is a good one, or to misunderstanding if it is not.

Paradigms are always present with us, even if they go unnoticed. The human mind abhors incoherence and demands to fit everything into a single frame of reference, so that it can see how things relate. You, I and everyone else do in fact fit incoming data into categories of thought and judgment provided by our paradigms, which are regularly those of thought and judgment provided by our paradigms, with which we identify — our family, school, club, gang, firm, church or whatever. The paradigms thus operate in our minds like colored spectacles, or sunglasses, which filter out glare and cause us to see objects as having a color that the glasses themselves have imparted. There is, for instance, a marxist paradigm for viewing reality, also a secular humanist paradigm, also a New Age paradigm, also a Jewish paradigm, also a Muslim paradigm, and alongside these and others stands the Christian paradigm. Each paradigm yields a distinctive mind-set and colors perceptions in a distinctive way, and communication between the adherents of different paradigms is stultified if the reality and potency of the paradigms themselves is overlooked and ignored.

Our present concern is with preaching — preaching viewed as Christian communication, that is, the communication of Christianity. The point I want to develop is that in a post-Christian culture like ours the preacher of the gospel needs to be aware that the paradigms that currently possess people's minds

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rarely match the Christian paradigm that controls his own thinking. What they take for granted is not identical with what he takes for granted, nor vice versa. Once, in the Christendom era, a broadly Christian paradigm could be assumed in all Western minds, but in today's world that is no longer so. So the effective Christian communicator will be the person who can bring into consciousness and challenge, in terms of God's revelation, the secular paradigms that control modern society and the people who make it up. He needs to understand how these paradigms work, and the best way to do that is to see where they came from and how they developed. My point, in other words, is that preachers for our time need to appreciate the *paradigm shifts* that have taken place in our culture with regard to God, man and religion, and to equip themselves for the task of reversing them.

I.

Let me illustrate what I mean by a paradigm shift. Here are two examples.

The first is the paradigm of the universe, the physical order of reality to which we belong. Here there have been several shifts over the centuries. First came the shift from the earth-centered Ptolemaic world-view, which supposed that the universe consisted of spheres within spheres circling round this planet, to the Copernican heliocentric concept of planets revolving round the sun. Newton then amplified Copernicus by explaining the movements of the planets in terms of universal gravitation, and Einstein amplified Newton by his theory of relativity and curved space. In each era speculative and experimental physicists have fitted their proposed explanations of puzzling phenomena into the currently accepted paradigm.

A second example is the shift from accepting to rejecting external authority as a guide for living, which came about through the European Enlightenment. Starting in England in the 17th century, gathering strength on the continent of Europe in the 18th century, and carrying all before it in the Western world in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Enlightenment was the watershed between the Christendom era and the post-Christian modern world. To characterize it as anti-clerical, as its French exponents did at the time of the Revolution, is not to say enough; at deepest motivational level, the Enlightenment was an abandoning of all forms of external authority in favor of intellectual and moral individualism. The self-directed, self-affirming individualism that is commonly traced to the Romantic movement rode in on the Enlightenment's back. The effect of this individualism was that one's own personal reason, rather than the church or the community or the cultural tradition, became one's definer of reality; it was for each thinking person to work out for him- or herself a personal solution to the riddles of life. In the 19th century artists and philosophers did this and the guardians of conventional values clucked their tongues, wondering how long it would be before society fell apart. In the 20th century most people have done it, and society today holds together mainly through a shared embrace of materialist values projected by the press and media. For all except conservative Roman Catholics and adherents of some sects the idea of having one's thought-life and conduct controlled by official church pro-

nouncements, accepted without question because questioning the church is not right, now seems utterly strange and unconvincing. That, we feel, is certainly not the way to go! Intellectually and morally, it nowadays has to be every man for himself, for no external authority can be fully trusted. Every particular problem must now be dealt with as a matter about which one makes up one's own mind. This modern mind-set evidences a major paradigm shift from the willingness to trust authorities in matters of truth and right that was there before.

This second example of a paradigm shift brings us right up to our present task, which is to focus the post-Christian outlooks of the West in their characteristic form as they relate to the older, Christian understanding of God, man and religion. In this regard, as we shall see, it is possible to generalize about them without being unduly simplistic, even though in terms of positive commitment they fan out, and end up as far away from each other as each is from historic Christianity. But in the terms in which they distance themselves from their Christian heritage they stand pretty much together, and their stance is reinforced by the media, the schools, the world of literature, the news industry and just about every opinion-making institution in North America and Europe, apart from the church itself. And to say "apart from the church itself" is, alas, something of an overstatement, for significant bodies of opinion within the Christian constituency have themselves accepted from the drifting culture post-Christian attitudes to Christian realities and now seek to define the faith in these terms. Ever since Schleiermacher the liberal Protestant way has been to keep in step with secular philosophy and adjust Christian belief accordingly, so that it has operated as something of a Trojan horse, or fifth column, in the institutional churches, and many (not all of them Protestants, be it said) are treading this path today.

The result of the shift from Christian trust in external authority (church or Bible) to post-Christian mistrust of both is, so far as the United States is concerned, rather curious. Americans, as de Toqueville noted long ago, are remarkably religious people, and most of them, it seems, still want to have a Christian veneer on their lives. But when they use Christian words to make Christian-sounding affirmations, it is apparent that many of the words have been redefined and their biblical meaning has been largely forgotten. What is said about God and Christianity in popular religious talk is not what used to be said, and what used to be said (about holiness, self-denial and judgment, for instance) is hardly heard any more. So Christian spokespersons — preachers and teachers, I mean — in North America nowadays have to be alert to the problem created for them by the prevalence in their hearers' minds of alien paradigms, just as cross-cultural missionaries have to be. The problem is to ensure that the gospel heard verbally will be understood substantively. That requires both a return to authentic biblical definitions of Christian key words and a corrective interaction with the new paradigms to make room again in people's minds for authentic Christian thoughts. The title of one of Carl Henry's early books, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, aptly sums up the task. One may tackle it by head-on encounter, as Francis Schaeffer for instance did, or in-

directly and in a sense incidentally, as Billy Graham for example does; but, one way or another, it must be tackled, or our preaching and teaching will achieve little.

We look now at three themes — God, man and religion, or godliness, to see how at paradigm level minds have changed, and how they need to be changed back again.

II.

With regard to *God*, I ask you to take note that we stand at the end of four centuries of God-shrinking. In the era of the Reformation the biblical faith in God as one who rules, judges and saves, the source, sustainer and end of all things, took possession of people's minds in a vivid, clear, compelling way. But by the start of the 17th century Lutherans and Arminians were already denying God's human creatures, and were thus dethroning him at a crucial point. By the end of the 17th century deism, the concept of God as the mighty mechanic who, having made the world, now sits back and watches it go without involving himself in it in any way, was well-established, and thus God was in effect being barred out of his world. At the end of the 18th century Immanuel Kant, the most influential philosopher for the next 100 years, silenced God by denying all possibility of God communicating with us in words. Inevitably, therefore, with no word from God to check man's thoughts by, 19th century thinkers equated God with their own feelings and fancies about God, thus in effect absorbing him into themselves in a way that prompted the atheist Feuerbach to comment that when men talked of God they were really talking about themselves in a loud and solemn voice. It was this God, God-in-the-mind as we may call him, whom Nietzsche pronounced dead, and whom Marxists, Darwinists and Freudians decided in due course that they could get on better without.

With that history behind us, it is no wonder that concepts of God current today display a drastic diminishing of Reformation faith. Outside conservative Christendom, the man in the street thinks of God in one of two ways. The first concept is of a God who is personal but limited in power, so that he cannot always do what he wants to do or prevent what he would like to prevent. He is prepared to overlook the sins of people who are not in the social sense vicious; he makes no claims, is infinitely kind and tolerant and behaves like Father Christmas, seeking to show benevolence and practice beneficence towards everybody. Process theology draws the profile of this finite, well-meaning, struggling, unipersonal deity. The second concept is of God as an immanent cosmic principle rather than a sovereign person, an animating and energizing aspect of the universe rather than its Maker and its Lord. The latest expression of this concept is found in the New Age movement, in the teaching of people like Shirley MacLaine; it has much in common with the monism of Hindu philosophy, which is known to be one of the main sources of New Age thought.

Neither concept corresponds at all closely to the God of Scripture; each is a misconceived paradigm, needing correction. Here, briefly, is a Bible-based

theological grid for the purpose.

The God in whom biblical Christians believe is not a product of human speculation and guesswork, but a self-announcing, self-defining deity who takes the initiative to tell mankind who and what he is. The Bible, which from one standpoint is the interpretative record of God's self-revelation in history, is from another standpoint revelation in its own right, the word of God testifying to himself in the words of men; and in the Bible God shows us four fundamental facts about himself, which we may conveniently alliterate in order to make them memorable.

First, God is *plural*. He is essentially tripersonal, one in three; he is they, a society, Father, Son and Holy Spirit united in a oneness of being that finds expression in an eternal fellowship of love. Jesus, the incarnate Son, reveals by his words and life a relationship between himself and the Father, between the Father and the Spirit, and between the Spirit and himself, in which each seeks honor and glory for the other (see especially Jn. 14-16): this is the true nature of love, and the ultimate, eternal truth about God's being. God, self-named as Yahweh in the Old Testament, is one in the sense of being the only creator, the only Lord, the only guide of history, the only source of hope for the future; but he is, and always was, triune, though this fact was not revealed until Jesus made it known. Fact it was, however, and it is properly read back into the Old Testament, as indeed the New Testament writers actually do.

The answer given, therefore, to the question *who and what is God?* must be trinitarian. The world's religions and philosophies are ignorant of the trinity; only those who know about the one who made demands on his disciples that only God has a right to make, who called himself the Son and prayed to one whom he called Father, and who promised, when he left this world, to send one whom he called the Holy Spirit in order to secure a continuance of his presence with his disciples and his ministry to them, knows anything about it. The rationalistic and relativized Protestant theology that calls itself liberal has been characteristically unipersonal in its view of God, and has often represented the trinity as no more than a way of saying that through the God-filled man Jesus we experience God as above us, beside us, and within us, but there is more to it than that. The Father above us, the Son beside us and the Spirit within us are not one person playing three roles (as if God were like the late Peter Sellers, who could play three roles in the same film!), but one God whose nature it is to be three persons in the fullest sense of that word.

Second, God is *powerful*. Scripture answers the question, *how does God exist?*, by pointing to the reality of a self-sustaining, self-determining, infinite life that has neither beginning nor end. The mystery of God's *aseity* (derivation of life and energy from himself unendingly) is central to the biblical revelation. All created things are limited one way and another, and sooner or later run out of steam, or decay, but not God! He is like the burning bush, constantly using energy yet remaining just as energetic and potent as before. Created things only continue to exist as he, their creator, actively upholds them in being, but we do not sustain God; God sustains himself.

So Paul, explaining basic theism to the polytheistic Athenians in Acts 17, takes pains to state that God draws life from himself and does not need anything we can give him to keep him going. He gives us life and health and everything that we have; we can give him nothing save our worship. He is not limited by time or space or any power, agency or dimension found in the world that he made. He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is Spirit (that is, personal power and energy, unrestricted). He has life in himself; he is the living God. We cannot direct him, control him or thwart him. He is the sovereign God, the Lord who reigns, God on the throne.

Third, God is *perfect*, in the moral sense of that word. Scripture answers the question, *how does God behave?* by saying, in effect: *gloriously*, from every point of view. Observe the revelation of God's *name* (i.e., his nature and character) in Exodus (it is one of the book's main themes). At the burning bush, the first level of meaning in the name Yahweh is blocked in: it means that God is self-sustaining and self-determining, and makes sovereign covenant commitments (Ex. 3:13-15). Then, after the episode of the golden calf, when Moses, having interceded successfully for the people, says very boldly, "Now show me your glory" (33:18), God allows Moses to see what he mysteriously calls his back and passes before him, proclaiming: "Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (34:6 f.). Here is God declaring his moral glory, his goodness, love, mercy, grace, faithfulness and trustworthiness, patience, forbearance, and readiness to pardon the penitent, alongside his holiness and purity and righteousness, which express themselves in awesome retributive judgment on the impenitent.² This is moral majesty, the perfection of a God committed in covenant love, and whose "name is Jealous" (34:14) — that is, who, like any lover, presses an exclusive claim on the affection and loyalty of the people he loves and blesses. This is the second level of meaning in the name, Yahweh.

Elsewhere, Scripture rounds off its presentation of God as morally perfect by celebrating his wisdom (Rom. 11:33, 16:27; Eph. 3:10; etc.). Wisdom means choosing in each situation the best goal at which to aim and the best means for attaining it; God's wisdom means this, as well as man's. The climactic thought about God's moral perfection in the Bible is that all the qualities mentioned — goodness, wisdom, justice — find supreme expression in the redemption of the world through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, where heaven's love, heaven's justice and heaven's wisdom met together for our salvation. Blood atonement by penal substitution is looked on askance in some quarters, as if it were an embarrassingly barbaric idea; but the truth is that none of God's doings displays his moral perfection as a covenant God so overwhelmingly. And this leads on to the final point.

Fourth, God is *praiseworthy*. His works of creation, providence and grace have displayed his glory; now it is for mankind to give him glory in response

to this demonstration of his glory. "Glory" in both Testaments is systematically ambiguous, signifying both God's demonstration of his praiseworthiness and man's responsive offering of the praise that is due. Giving God glory for what we see of his glory will be the life of heaven, and we should be practising for it here on earth. So Paul, a praising man if ever there was one, breaks out repeatedly into doxology in the course of his theological arguments and admonitions (Rom. 1:25, 9:5, 11:33-36, 16:25-27; etc.). So the book of Revelation pictures heaven as a place of praise (chs. 4, 5, 7, 19:1-10, etc.). And the book of Psalms models glory-giving as the central activity of one's life.

Some have queried the creator's requirement of worship as if it were dishonorably self-centered. Should a human being make such a requirement, it would be dishonorable and vicious — that we grant. But the creator is not a human being, and his requirement of us that we focus on him, honor and love him, and show our appreciation of his love for us by praise and adoration is ennobling to our nature; it is entirely appropriate in a love-relationship (yes, the Christian life is meant to be a love affair); and God has so made us that glorifying him is the way of supreme fulfilment for our humanness. When we discover by experience that giving glory and worship to our lover-God brings supreme joy, delight, happiness and inner contentment, our doubts and hesitations about the divine demand for glory-giving melt away.

Here, then, are the central truths about God that the post-Christian paradigms — the God who is Father Christmas, and the God who is Shirley MacLaine — lose sight of. Our task is to detect and dispel these degenerate and unworthy notions, challenging them wherever they are found, in the churches as well as outside them, and reintroducing those who have been embracing these ideas to the God who is plural, powerful, perfect and praiseworthy in ways that at present they have not begun to conceive. The new paradigm needs correction by the old one; in this case, at any rate, the old is indeed better.

III.

With regard, now, to *man*, what we face in the modern world is less a coherent paradigm than an incoherent pose, a grandiose self-image produced by wishful thinking that we find impossible to sustain consistently. For the past two centuries, egged on by the Enlightenment, Western man has been playing the role of Wizard of Oz. We have set up for ourselves a magnificent facade of technological competence and mastery, power and glory, and our official claim, if I may put it that way, is that man is the measure of all things and the monarch of all he surveys. Behind that facade, however, over the same two centuries Western man has increasingly found himself unable to avoid feeling that real life is desperately dreadful. Our optimistic triumphalism masks deep pessimism and anxious fear, and we oscillate constantly between the two moods. Politicians, journalists and media people labor to maintain in us the feeling that our society is going somewhere good and that they themselves are helping to lead us there. But writers and artists, who mirror the sensitivities of the culture around them, have long been saying, and with increasing vehemence, that man is not so much the master as the maniac, and that his

madness is making for unutterable misery. Dostoevsky and Camus among writers, and Francis Bacon among painters, come to mind as exponents of this theme, who inexorably map modern nihilism and pin-point the guilt, anxiety, loneliness and disgust that it engenders. Publicly, we continue as optimists, talking as if utopia is just round the corner; privately, we have become pessimists, feeling more and more with Thomas Hobbes that human life is nasty and with the early Eliot that as individuals we are bankrupt and empty. In our moments of truth we see ourselves as pathetic little persons lurking, Wizard of Oz style, behind our facade of fantastic technology, knowing that our supposed magic is a sham. There is an inward failure of hope, of vision and of nerve. We feel lost — as in truth we are.

What must be said to correct this post-Christian, split-minded perception of ourselves, with its unattainable purpose of re-erecting the broken-down paradigm of man the master? Three things.

First, the human individual's true *dignity* derives from being made as God's image, steward and partner (Gn. 1:26-28). Exegetically, the basic understanding of God's image in man is to be drawn from Gn. 1:1-25, where God appears as rational, forming and fulfilling purposes; as creative, calling into being what previously did not exist; as managerial, establishing and maintaining order in place of chaos; and as a value-producer, whose achievements are "very good." Add to these qualities God's capacity for personal relationships and the moral perfection of his dealings — facets of the divine life already apparent by the end of Gn. 3 — and you have the fulness of the image that man was made to express. Older theology in the Thomist tradition construed the statement that God made man in his own image statically, as if the image consisted in abstract rationality and conscious selfhood as such. But the statement should in fact be understood dynamically, as telling us that God made man upright (Eccl. 7:29), so that he images God more or less according to how far he uses his natural endowments for obedience, love, and righteousness, and how far he does not. It is this perspective that explains how Scripture can affirm both the continuance of the image-relationship after the fall (Gn. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9) and its restoration in Christ by new creation (Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:9); our human powers as such do indeed image God to some degree, but God-like righteousness is a dimension of the image too, and here it is a matter of less in our natural fallenness and more through the moral transformation that flows from supernatural saving grace (Mt. 12:33; Eph. 2:10). The call to express God's image in our lives remains, however, the basic and universal human vocation.

A further element in human dignity is that as God is eternal and everlasting, so each human being has been created for eternity, and the choices and commitments made in this life have unending significance, since they determine what sort of experience the eternity that follows our leaving this world will be. This world is a vestibule and rehearsal-room for that which is to come, and our doings here will determine our destiny there. (See Rom. 2:6-10; 2 Cor. 5:10). The biblical answer to the feeling that life is trivial and mean-

ingless is that through saving knowledge and steady service of God in Christ we may lay hold of unimaginable glory, whereas failure at this point will result in unimaginable loss. The everlastingness of the individual, and the momentousness of present life as determining future life, are the twin themes to which the Puritan phrase, "the greatness of the soul," refers, and this destiny-making significance of the present is an aspect of the dignity of man that we need to hear more about from present-day pulpits than we do.

But now, second, each human individual's life has become a *tragedy* — that is, a story of goodness wasted, potential squandered, and value lost. Each of us has fallen from the image of God, and all that is natural to us now is what Scripture calls sin — egocentricity (always looking after number one), pride (always seeking to be on top, in the know and in control), sensuality, exploitation, indifference to evil, carelessness about truth, and a lifelong quest for whatever forms of self-indulgence appeal to us most. Much of this, in our post-Christian culture, is thought of as admirable and ideal, but it all appears vicious and demeaning when measured by the call and law of God and the example of Jesus. It is in fact ruinous folly, and folly of which we are quite unable by our own resources to shake free, for we are by nature slaves of sin. This, the inescapable bad news with which the gospel starts, must be affirmed against all ideas of the natural goodness and perfectibility of man (which ideas are themselves products of egocentric pride).

And now, third, restoration by grace to life in God's image is the glory and *felicity* — the only true glory, and the only lasting felicity — of sinful human beings. Granted, to the self-seeking eye of the natural man the path of faith, love, and obedience, of repentance, conversion, self-denial and cross-bearing does not look like either glory or felicity, but the way of life is in truth to die to self in order to live to God. One loses to gain; one gives up in order to receive; one repudiates and negates the life of self-serving in order to experience new life with Christ in Christ, his resurrection life lived out in and through our own living.

This is the baptismal paradigm: dying to live. "Remember always," says the classic Anglican Prayer Book, "that Baptism represents unto us our profession; which is, to follow our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all evil desires, and daily increasing in all virtue and godliness of living." To fulfil this pattern is a life's task; laying hold of God's salvation, which in itself costs nothing, costs everything. Yet those who take this road are rich beyond all telling, for God himself is their shield and their great reward.

The pride, self-sufficiency, proclaimed independence and lurking despair of the post-Christian paradigm of human fulfilment must be challenged antithetically by appeal to the baptismal paradigm of humility, self-denial, acknowledged dependence and happy hope in Christ. Each view of man is a direct negation of the other, and the gospel cannot be grasped where the secular view holds sway.

IV.

With regard to religion, little need be added to what has already been said. The secular assumption is that religion would be seen as a hobby; if practised at all, it will be a venture in self-fulfilment, a quest of a crutch of transcendent help and support. Presentations of Christianity as a recovery of self-esteem (Schuller) or a discovery of health and wealth (Hagin and Copeland) appear to endorse this. But Scripture conceives religion as the living of a life of God-esteem and self-abasement, and of faith in Jesus Christ that blossoms into a love affair of doxology and devotion, and insists that without such religion life is inescapably maimed. The secular paradigm must be repudiated; the biblical paradigm must be affirmed.

V.

Ladling Tabasco sauce into a frying pan is not the way to start preparing a meal, and I do not suggest that orchestrating a paradigm clash in the pulpit is the way to start preparing a sermon. But I do suggest that if Christ's messengers fail to realise how much of the application of sermons an alien mind-set in the audience regarding God, man and religion will filter out, they will preach much less effectively than they might do.

Further, I suggest that preachers who pander to these secular paradigms and try to fit their message into the frames that the modern mind-set provides cannot but be unfaithful to God at a deep level, and put their labor into a bag with holes. Fragments of truth and wisdom will no doubt get across, but overall the story of their ministry will be one of qualified failure due to the distortions involved in their frame of reference.

So, finally, I do suggest that in preaching and teaching each gospel truth we should regularly call attention to the difference between God's viewpoint about himself and ourselves and the contrasting mind-set of our culture on the same subject. This task can be looked at picturesquely in the manner of the late G. K. Chesterton, out of whose book Thomas Howard and I took a leaf when we titled the last chapter of *Christianity the True Humanism*³ "Upside-Down is Right Way Up." Through his journalism, apologetics, novels and Father Brown stories, Chesterton projected a consistent vision of the human race as intellectually inverted through sin, so that mankind now naturally lives and thinks upside-down in relation to the truth that should lead and guide us. It is commonplace to say that the gospel message, and the Christ who comes to us in and through that message, turns us upside-down in relation to what we were before. What is not so common is to see with Chesterton that to turn upside-down those who are inverted already is to set them right way up, and so in a real sense restore them from craziness to sanity.⁴ But that is in fact what the authentic message of Christ will do when set within the authentic paradigms of biblical faith. The pastoral and evangelistic preaching of evangelicals, I believe, desperately needs this emphasis on the proper paradigms in these confused and confusing days, and that is why I have spoken about it so strongly and at such length.

NOTES

¹Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. 1970, has done more than anyone to give the word technical status, and to focus the idea of a *paradigm shift* (the replacement of one frame of reference by another, due to some kind of pressure). I make free use of this idea in the present article.

²Punishment for parental sin to the third and fourth generation does not imply the injustice of penalizing innocent parties. There is a back reference to Ex. 20:5, “. . . punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation *of those who hate me.*” The assumption is that children will follow in their parents’ footsteps, and the divine form of words is intended to alert parents to the damage they may do to their families, and to children yet unborn, by sinning, over and above the damage they will do to themselves by provoking their God to be angry with them. It remains a stubborn fact that children will do what they see their parents doing.

³J. I. Packer and Thomas Howard, *Christianity the True Humanism*, Word, Waco, 1985, pp. 231 ff.

⁴The title of Alzina Stone Dale’s study of Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, catches this idea, though there is more to it than Dale brings out.

