

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PARADIGM SHIFTS AS A CREDIBLE EXPLANATION  
FOR THE NASCENT OF NEW WORLD RELIGIONS

SUBMITTED TO PROFESSOR DR. WENTZEL VAN HUYSSTEEN  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
PH330 – PARADIGMS AND PROGRESS

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JANUARY 13, 2005

## PARADIGM SHIFTS IN EXTRA-CHRISTIAN CONTEXTS

In the past century, the application of methods found in the philosophy of science to systematic theology produced a set of questions that were not considered in systematic theology beforehand. The movement away from a logical positivistic approach in the philosophy of science opened the door for considering additional variables in seeking truth. In a similar manner, additional variables became available in the seeking of truth in theology when the theologian utilized non-positivistic methods of survey. One of the patterns of study from the philosophy of science that applies to systematic theology is Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift.

Systematic theology gives a rational explanation of how to know God and is subject to the same paradigmatic shifts as science.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this paper is to show that the patterns of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift that account for the creation of new theologies within Christianity also provide credible reasons for the nascent of extra-Christian religions such as Islam and Mormonism. In particular, the role of puzzles, reformation or restoration themes, and religious leaders in initiating and carrying out the paradigm shift will be considered. We will begin with a discussion of Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift and then move to the application in Christian theologies and other world religions. The discussion will not be an exhaustive analysis of the two world religions but, instead, will focus on specifically on the role of paradigm shifts in their inception.

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<sup>1</sup> Wentzel van Huyssteen, Theology and the Justification of Faith (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 62.

## PARADIGMS

### **Brief History of Thomas Kuhn's Paradigms**

An initial discussion of the history of Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift must be given before moving on to specific Christian and extra-Christian examples. A general definition of a paradigm is a reference to a coherent body of basic convictions, models, and theories functioning as a comprehensive interpretative framework.<sup>2</sup> The application of a paradigm to studies in the philosophy of science and, subsequently, systematic theology primarily came through the ideas of Thomas Kuhn in his work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. His notion of a paradigm stands in contrast to the views of logical positivism that dominated scientific study in the first half of the twentieth century. A positivistic approach to the philosophy of science presupposed the ability to determine neutral, objective truth using neutral, objective methods and the ability to assess supposed neutral, objective truth using neutral, objective methods. The assumption of one truth with one most accurate method of discovering that truth is inherent in this approach. The detailed movement from this positivistic approach to Thomas Kuhn's notion will not be discussed here but the main difference will be considered.<sup>3</sup>

The main difference between a logical positivistic approach and a paradigm approach is the degree of incorporating social and historical aspects. In review, the logical positivist attempts to use a neutral, objective study in order to locate neutral,

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<sup>2</sup> van Huyssteen, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> For full discussion see chapters 1-5 of *Theology and the Justification of Faith*

objective information. Kuhn rejects the notion that the selection of scientific theories and even the means of the study itself can be carried out without considering the social and historical setting.<sup>4</sup> He goes further, however, and surmises that science is a paradigm-based discipline where a paradigm is a conceptual model or interpretative framework used to solve puzzles in that specific context. The reality of changing contexts and the inevitable rise of new problems leads to a point where the paradigm no longer effectively solves the given problems. More specifically, Kuhn's paradigms shift through shocks as a result of changing problems and, subsequently, the need for new solutions.<sup>5</sup>

This approach to science is accounts for the historical, social, and psychological backgrounds and future-pointing agenda of the scientists. Furthermore, the newly proposed paradigm is not arrived at by logic but by a major shift in puzzles and the promise of the puzzle-solving aspect of the paradigm.<sup>6</sup> The puzzle-solving context introduces a new set of variables that the logical positivist did not have available beforehand. In addition, Kuhn's theory supposes multiple methods, as evidenced by different paradigms, of discovering truth as a function of the specific problems that the scientist is attempting to solve.

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<sup>4</sup> van Huyssteen, 49.

<sup>5</sup> van Huyssteen, 49.

<sup>6</sup> van Huyssteen, 52.

### **Three Phases Of A Paradigm Shift**

Kuhn's paradigm shift is a revolutionary process and not a development by accumulation.<sup>7</sup> The shocks referred to earlier occur in three phases. The first phase is the preparadigmatic period that is marked by a stage of conflicting ideas.<sup>8</sup> The successful paradigm rises above the rest when a set of tangible problems is identified answered by a set of workable solutions. In review, the decision is influenced by the social and historical context. The second phase is the normal science phase.<sup>9</sup> This phase is marked by a stable time period where the people utilizing the specific conceptual framework refine their worldview, associated theories, and ability to solve puzzles. The final phase described by Kuhn as a scientific revolution.<sup>10</sup> This occurs when a set of puzzles becomes insoluble and its users call the promise of the current paradigm into question. At this point, the group may switch to a new paradigm that offers the promise of solving the new puzzles.

### **Role of the Leader**

In many cases, a specific leader plays a significant role in executing the paradigm shift. The leader contributes to the change in four ways. One way the leader factors into the change is he or she senses the current paradigm's failure in solving the existing set of puzzles. Another role that the leader plays is he or she locates and recruits others who

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<sup>7</sup> van Huyssteen, 50.

<sup>8</sup> van Huyssteen, 51.

<sup>9</sup> van Huyssteen, 51.

<sup>10</sup> van Huyssteen, 53.

sense the same breakdown. In addition, the leader further collaborates with the group to identify the deficiencies in the current paradigm, establish a new set of puzzles, and begin to formulate new theories to answer the updated puzzles. Finally, the leader moves the group through the shift from the preparadigmatic phase to the normal science phase. There is not a prescribed order of events. The leader at some point in the transition, however, makes these contributions.

### **Application to Christian Theology**

Thomas Kuhn's notions of paradigms and paradigm shifts were developed in the arena of philosophy of science but they also apply to Christian theology. Christian groups throughout the history of the church have sought to explain their faith rationally to others who question their beliefs. Even moreso, Christians have required a rational explanation of faith for themselves. The initial worldview developed as a rational explanation, however, is required to shift in order to accommodate changing puzzles. In particular, the movements can be traced to specific leaders who initiated and completed the shift. Furthermore, the patterns that explain these shifts in Christian theology can also be utilized to describe the rise of other world religions from Christianity.

### **Theme of Restoration**

There is one major difference in the nature of the extra-Christian shifts as opposed to shifts within Christianity. More specifically, the shift that occurs within Christianity is

described as a movement of reform. The most notable example is the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. On the other hand, the religions that have their foundation, either directly or indirectly, in Christianity are viewed as a restoration of Christianity. At first glance, the theme of restoration appears to differ from Kuhn's description of a paradigm shift in that the puzzles associated with restoration would seem to remain the same. However, the example that will be considered in depth in this paper, Islam, shows that this is not the case. This case will show that a new set of puzzles is addressed while they claim to be a restoration of Christianity.

We will now consider two cases. The first case is the Protestant Reformation as the example within Christianity. The second illustration is Islam as an extra-Christian example. The preparadigmatic phase, new puzzles, the reformation or restoration theme, the shift, the leader's role, and the results will be considered. These cases will show that the patterns of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift that account for the creation of new theologies within Christianity also provide credible reasons for the nascent of extra-Christian religions such as Islam.

## INTRA-CHRISTIAN EXAMPLE – PROTESTANT REFORMATION

### **Pre-Reformation**

The history of the Christian church demonstrates the corruption that results from aligning the church with political power. The paradigm shaped by the Christian leadership at the beginning of the sixteenth-century favored the laity's dependence on the clergy for

salvation in its present and eternal forms. This worldview was greatly influenced by the social, political, and historical context. There are four main influences on the interpretative framework used by Christians at that time. First, a social influence that contributed to the paradigm was a food shortage that led to a great struggle for survival. This shortage led to instances where the powerful inflated prices and people toiled heavily to access the food. Second, another social influence was the low status of peasants who represented unfair treatment in the given social structure. Third, another social influence was the education of the laity. The increase in number of universities provided a sub-community for students and confidence for people to make informed decisions. In addition, disputation, the form that Martin Luther used for his Ninety-Five Theses, was taught in the universities. Finally, a political and social influence that deeply shaped the Christian paradigm was the people's strong dependence on the ecclesial intercessions for their spiritual security. Each of these factors shaped the worldview of the Christians at the beginning of the sixteenth-century.

### **Puzzles**

There were numerous puzzles that Christians faced at that time but the main problem that required an answer was the condition for salvation. The time period was marked by sense of anxiety due to famines, diseases, and war. Furthermore, the laity's angst was further fueled by an ever-increasing chasm between their actions and the requirements for salvation. As mentioned above, a wide array of practices and exercises



were developed by the church leadership to supposedly help the laity achieve salvation. The opportunity to work for salvation only served to increase the problem because the laity did not know the required level to avoid damnation. The paradigm utilized by Christians at that time provided a theoretical solution the puzzle but the solution was nearly impossible to attain.

### **Execution of Paradigm Shift**

Martin Luther suffered from the same personal anxiety regarding his salvation that was widespread throughout Europe. His initial attempt of solving the salvation puzzle was to utilize a method in the paradigm of that time period. He entered the Black cloister of the Observant Augustinians in an effort to earn his salvation.<sup>11</sup> His meditation on Romans 1:17, however, opened his eyes to the faults of the current paradigm and he began to question the associated theories and solutions. In particular, the phrase “righteousness from God” challenged his notion of acceptance from God. Luther subsequently utilized new tools to develop his paradigm. These tools were an intensive study of the Bible and linguistic tools provided by Renaissance humanists.<sup>12</sup> His conclusion was that the righteousness from God was a gift. This conviction freed him from dependence on good works. A new paradigm was formed.

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<sup>11</sup> Howard Clark Kee et al., Christianity – A Social and Cultural History (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1998), 264.

<sup>12</sup> Kee et al., 265.

Luther's movement toward action was further spurred on by his observations of the works-based paradigm enslaving the people of Wittenberg. The people of Wittenberg going out to buy indulgences from Johann Tetzel in order to fulfill their obligations for confession, penance, and Mass appalled Luther.<sup>13</sup> This impelled him to take action in the form of posting the Ninety-five Theses. Luther, as the leader of the paradigm shift, initiated the move and then recruited others assist him.

## **Results**

The outcome of Luther's analysis was a new paradigm for solving the puzzle of salvation. Multiple other paradigms spawned from Luther's initial questioning but his initial proposed solution of the gift of the righteousness from God applied to the new theories. Overall, Luther recognized the deficiency of the current paradigm while in the midst of the logic employed by that worldview and took steps that led to a shock in the Christian church.

The Protestant Reformation followed the pattern of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift. Luther's experiences in the preparadigmatic phase were similar to a scientist who recognizes that new puzzles, or existing puzzles in a new light, are unsolvable with the current paradigm. The movement to the equivalent of the normal science phase required the identification of the new puzzle and the creation of a new set of theories to solve it. Furthermore, other groups who saw Luther as not going far enough, such as the Radical

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<sup>13</sup> Kee et al., 265.

Reformers, quickly moved to a revolutionary science phase where many additional puzzles were identified. Luther's paradigm provided answers to the puzzles confronting him and the model offered a strong, future-directing promise for those who would adopt it. In conclusion, the Protestant Revolution is an example of the application of Kuhn's paradigm shift to an example within Christianity.

## EXTRA-CHRISTIAN EXAMPLE – ISLAM

### **Pre-Islam**

The patterns seen in Kuhn's paradigm shift as applied to the Reformation provide a credible explanation for the inception of Islam in a context outside of Christian theology. First, we will examine the social and historical context of pre-Islam Arabia. Arabia, in the time of Muhammad's birth, was a desert land that was mostly bypassed by the influences of the powerful centers of the world such as Constantinople and Persia.<sup>14</sup> The setting and people were shaped by this sense of remoteness, tribal affiliations, the polytheistic religion, and confusion about Christianity and other religions.

The Arab people had a vibrant culture that was marked by the intersection of the Bedouin and urban peoples. Mecca, the city where Muhammad was born, was a meeting place of caravans along a trading route that brought many diverse ideas and goods. The comparative disunity of the people due to tribal associations and economic competition greatly inhibited their impact as a culture in the rest of the world.

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<sup>14</sup> Marston R. Speight. God is One – The Way of Islam (New York: Friendship Press, 2001), 13.

Pre-Islam Arabia was ordered according to tribes. These groups provided protection and solidarity within each tribe. Ira Zepp Jr describes the tribal interactions in *A Muslim Primer* with the following description:

Out of economic necessity, tribes would regularly raid each other. Once a tribe was attacked, members were obligated by a rule of honor to avenge the attack. And, conversely, when one person was violated, the entire tribe was wounded and would come to the defense of the hurt individual. This human response-a natural one-was the precursor of blood revenge and eye-for-an-eye ethics and the justification of defensive war. Primary allegiance to the tribe was the test of one's character and trustworthiness. Betrayal of tribal honor and patriotism was tantamount to treason in Bedouin etiquette. Without the tribe one had neither hope nor safety.

(8)

The economic competition in Mecca was divided along tribal lines and served to exacerbate the hatred amongst the groups.

Another social influence on the people of Mecca was the polytheistic religion. The Kaaba was the center of worship of many gods in Mecca before Muhammad removed the idols. Allah was considered to be the high god of the many gods that were worshiped there.<sup>15</sup> The worship center also served as an economic center for the

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<sup>15</sup> Speight, 18.

caravans that came through Mecca. Overall, the Kaaba was an icon of the diversity in beliefs, economic interests, and people groups in Arabia.

Lastly, a similar social influence was the confusion regarding other world religions. In particular, the view of Christianity was shaped by the influence the combination of visiting missionaries, the Greek Orthodox Church, Monophysite churches, and Nestorian churches. In addition, numerous Arab Jews left the polytheistic faith of Mecca to follow Christianity because of its claims of monotheism. Another group was present named the hanifs worshiped one God and was not Jewish, Muslim, or Christian. Each of these formed the social, historical, and political context of the birth of Islam.

### **Puzzles**

Muhammad was born in Mecca and was raised in this complex social and religious environment. His frustration with the disunity of the Arabian people and polytheism grew out of his experiences with the economy, the Kaaba, and other religions. His family was the custodian of the Kaaba and he witnessed the social upheaval that resulted from the wide-ranging economic and religious pulls. Muhammad, however, was known to have a religious sensitivity that outgrew the typical practices of the Meccan people.<sup>16</sup> In addition, he was also ashamed of the ancestor cults found among the tribes.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, he witnessed the lack of social justice for the poor due to the material

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<sup>16</sup> Speight, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ira G. Zepp, A Muslim Primer (Fayetteville, A.K.: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 12.

welfare of the people. This particularly bothered him due to his background as an orphan.

Muhammad's response to these issues was to visit a cave, starting in his thirties, called Hira near the top of Mount Noor for solitude and reflection.<sup>18</sup> Muhammad did not have an obvious starting point like Luther who had the current Christian church to assess. He did have the religious and social traditions of the tribes with whom he observed his whole life. His conclusion before starting this process of contemplation was that the problems he and his people faced were not being solved by the current leaders and environment.

### **Executing the Paradigm Shift**

Muhammad, as far as we can tell, attempted to utilize the theories, logic, and practices, of the current paradigm in Mecca before starting his practice of solitude. The answer he was seeking, however, did not come from within his worldview. He began to hear voices during his times of meditation in the cave on Mount Noor. The origin and legitimacy of the voices will not be considered in this paper. Regardless of the nature of the voices, Muhammad initiated a movement that lived according to an interpretative framework that provided answers to the problems he identified in Mecca.

Muhammad's movement forced three changes. First, the beliefs and theories of the new paradigm replaced polytheism and idol worship with a monotheistic worship of

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<sup>18</sup> Zepp, 18.

God focused only on Allah. Muhammad initially identified and preached about ingratitude to God as his primary message.<sup>19</sup> He accompanied this preaching with his renouncing of idols and he called the people who followed him to do the same. He established Allah as the god above all other gods and chose to ignore the deities present in Mecca.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Muhammad claimed that Islam was not a result of an evolutionary process but, instead, a return to the original intention of Allah to the world as given Abraham.<sup>21</sup> Later on, Muslims claim that Islam is a restoration of the true worship of Allah as it was given to Abraham. Ira G. Zepp describes this in her analysis of the three major world's religions:

There is a sense in which the three religions are epigenetic, that is, in which they build on each other. Just as Christians believe that Jesus' view of God as love is a fuller understanding of God than the Jewish one of justice, so Muslims believe that the Quran's claim that God is radically One is a more complete revelation than that of Christianity. (See 2:113.) There is some stereotyping in such claims by each religion. A clearer, more accurate understanding of the relationship between Islam's monotheism to Judaism and Christianity is that Islam is a return to the revelation of Abraham received from Allah. The Abrahamic revelation was repeated without error in the words Muhammad received

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<sup>19</sup> Speight, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Speight, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Zepp, 14.

The restoration theory is also evident in the Islam view of God's revelation through the Quran in relation to other revelations. Gerhard Nehls and Walter Eric in *Islam, As It Sees Itself, As Others See It, As It Is* state "According to contemporary Islam the Qur'an is now replacing all former revelations which were lost or corrupted. All 'former revelations', including the Bible, are thought to have been originally synonymous with the Qur'an, which is believed to exist eternally, uncreated in heaven."<sup>22</sup> Both of these quotes show that Muhammad viewed his paradigm not as a new interpretive framework, but, instead as a restored one.

The second change implemented by following the suppositions of the new paradigm was the creation of a single community as opposed to the separation of people along tribal lines. The disparate tribes up to this point did not have any central religion or economic interest to unify them. In contrast, the economic system and polytheistic religious atmosphere worked against unity. Muhammad called all the people to shift their primary kinship from the tribe to the Muslim community (or *umma*).<sup>23</sup>

Lastly, Muhammad's new worldview elevated the role of social justice in community. In particular, the care orphans and widows took a prominent place. The goal of each of these changes was to address the issues found not only in Mecca but also in all of Arabia and beyond to other countries.

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<sup>22</sup> Gerhard Nehls and Walter Eric, *Islam, As It Sees Itself, As Others See It, As It Is*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Life Challenge Africa, 1996), 85.

<sup>23</sup> Zepp, 20.



## **Results**

R. Marston Speight summarizes the impact of Muhammad's new paradigm in his description of the transformation to Arabia in the following:

The birth of Islam considerably changed political and social conditions for the Arabs. Tribes united in loyalty to the new faith and organized their lives around the code of behavior that Islam prescribed. All political and economic activities were considered to be integrated and given direction by the faith. This new unity set the stage for Islam to become, over the following few centuries, a world religion. The Muslims- not the Arabs alone, but the many peoples who composed the new community of faith- were soon to become a "superpower" themselves.

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The outcome of Muhammad's leadership was a new paradigm for solving the puzzles of polytheism and idol worship, tribal disunity, and social justice. Furthermore, the issue of Arabia being bypassed by the Byzantine Empire and Persian Empire was solved by the military and social conquests during the spread of Islam. Overall, Muhammad recognized the deficiency of the current paradigm while in the midst of the logic employed by that worldview and he took steps that led to a shock in the Arab community as well as the entire world.

The inception of Islam followed the pattern of Kuhn's paradigm shift.

Muhammad's experiences in the preparadigmatic phase were similar to a scientist who

recognizes that new puzzles are unsolvable with the current paradigm. The movement to the equivalent of the normal science phase required the identification of the new puzzle and the creation of a new set of theories to solve it. Muhammad's paradigm provided answers to the puzzles confronting him and the model offered a strong, future-directing promise for those who would adopt it. In conclusion, the birth of Islam is an example of how the patterns of Kuhn's paradigm shift can be applied to an example outside of Christianity.

#### ADDITIONAL PARADIGM SHIFTS

The two examples discussed in this paper demonstrate how the Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift relate, in terms of applying it to theology, to examples within Christianity and outside of Christianity. Two additional examples that cannot be covered in detail in this paper, due to the prescribed length, are Christian fundamentalism and Mormonism. Both of these examples follow similar patterns to the Reformation and Islam respectively.

#### **Christian Fundamentalism**

Christian fundamentalism, as manifested in extreme dispensationalist theology, follows a similar pattern as the Reformation. More specifically, the pattern of the identification of a new puzzle followed by a paradigm shift to solve that puzzle is present. One of the puzzles raised in response to the Reformation's doctrine of salvation by grace is the puzzle of unfaithful Christians and eternal security. In the view of many

fundamentalists, the teaching of eternal security has led to a problem of Christians living unfaithful lives. Some fundamentalists state that the two main theological approaches to eternal security, Arminianism and Calvinism, do not lead to mature Christians. The proposed paradigm shift includes a third theological approach that includes a literal interpretation of apocalyptic literature in order to solve the problem. According to Joseph C. Dillow in *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, “The Partaker is the Christian who perseveres in good works to the end of life. He is the faithful Christian who will reign with Christ in the coming messianic kingdom. He will be one of the servant kings.” In summary, the new paradigm, Dillow’s third theological approach, views the post-conversion obedience of God as a means to reign with Christ and the promise of this reward should be more effective in challenging Christians to obedience. This is another example of a paradigm shift within Christianity.

### **Mormonism**

An additional example of a paradigm shift with Christian roots that lies outside of Christianity is the beginning of Mormonism. Mormonism mirrors Islam’s paradigm shift in three ways. First, the setting of the origin of Mormonism, in 1838, included unrest with a large degree of uncertainty surrounding religious commitments. The Second Great Awakening generated innumerable religious options and the confusion frustrated Joseph Smith. The account of Smith’s First Vision describes a young boy in the midst of the “war of words and tumult of opinions associated with the religious excitement in western

New York.<sup>24</sup> Second, a leader has a supernatural experience that leads to a new interpretative framework that claims to be the restored and true faith in God. In Joseph Smith's case, the restoration focused on the church instead of the restoration of true Abrahamic monotheism. In both cases, an extra-Biblical reference, the Qu'ran and the Book of Mormon, and traditions resulted from the formation of theories and practices of the new paradigm. Lastly, the result of the paradigm shift was a new world religion that suffered early persecution but continued on to acquire millions of followers. Both Islam and Mormonism follow these three patterns.

### **Christianity Itself As A Paradigm Shift?**

The examples considered in this paper accounted for paradigm shifts involving Christianity where the results changed theology within Christianity and views of God outside of Christianity. The examples considered outside of Christianity demonstrate the application of Kuhn's paradigm shift from Christianity to other world religions. Both viewed Christianity, in varying degrees, as the starting point. The remaining question is can Kuhn's paradigm shift provide plausible grounds for the beginning of Christianity itself?

The full analysis of this possible explanation is beyond the scope of this paper but the initial points will be considered. The shift from Judaism to Christianity can be explained using Kuhn's paradigm shift in three ways. Surprisingly, the apostle Paul will

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<sup>24</sup> Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 6.

be the focus of the analysis and not Jesus. First, the setting of the change included religious unrest that resulted from Roman rule in Palestine as well as the killing and resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, the Pharisees had formalized a system of laws in order to gain and maintain Jewish covenantal identity in the midst of Roman rule.<sup>25</sup> The formulation of precise rules and rigorous invoking of them with strong conviction is a sign of a faltering paradigm.<sup>26</sup> Second, the apostle Paul was a leader who experienced a supernatural visionary experience that challenged his current Jewish paradigm. In particular, he promulgated a new paradigm that solved his puzzles with the Jewish law by pointing to the role of God's grace as opposed to the law. In addition, Paul also addressed the puzzles associated with Jesus not fulfilling the Jewish notion of a Messiah as well as other apocalyptic questions. Finally, Paul helped initiate a new world religion that included a new set of scriptures and traditions. His letters to the churches served as the texts. These patterns are similar to the inception of other world religions. This explanation, however, does not take into account the role of Jesus as the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, and the other apostles.

## CONCLUSION

The use of methods found in the philosophy of science to systematic theology can lead to rational explanations of faith in God. The application of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift to movements in religion provides additional views that were not available in a logical

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<sup>25</sup> Kee et al., 14.

<sup>26</sup> van Huyssteen, 63.

positivistic environment. The social and historical contexts reveal specific problems that challenged the current paradigms utilized by the people in that time period.

The patterns of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift that account for the creation of new theologies within Christianity also provide credible reasons for the nascent of extra-Christian religions. Unresolved puzzles, reformation or restoration themes, and religious leaders drove the shifts within Christianity as seen in the Reformation and fundamentalism as well as shifts outside of Christianity as seen in Islam and Mormonism. The application of Kuhn's analysis raises more questions than provides answers but the patterns seen in each of these shifts provides ample material to study and further understand in the area of religious change.

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