

A knowable God? How God reveals Himself through His Word, character and deeds

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PREFACE

I want to take this time to thank my mother Sarieta (deceased 5 July 2020) for always cheering me on. I know she is still proud of me although she is no longer with us.

To my children, Cayla and Joshua, thank you for praying for me. You are truly a blessing to the world. God is going to use both of you mightily in His kingdom.

Thank you to my Supervisor, Dr. Kobus de Beer and my Co-Supervisor, Dr. Manitza Kotzé for walking this road with me. May all of your future endeavours be blessed.

To the most important Person in my life: Thank You God for faithfully guiding me and leading me. All glory to You Who was and is and is to come!

ABSTRACT

In this study, the predominant venture is to illustrate how an appropriate view of God and a solid foundational understanding of His predictability as theologically and dogmatically described in His Word are of paramount importance in our search for truth. The centre of interest will be God in His relationship with humankind. This includes investigating God's Word, character and deeds in order to answer the question of whether God can be said to be knowable and predictable. In this study, I attend to God's provision of His Word, the believer's source of authority from which we derive "dogma", a study into His actions as revealed in history (past, present and future), as well as His character (God's goodness and God's greatness, God's transcendence and God's immanence). In answering the question on whether God is knowable and predictable, I conclude that God is simultaneously revealed and hidden, predictable and unpredictable at the same time.

Key terms: Doctrine of God; general revelation; special revelation; God's goodness; God's greatness; God's immanence; God's transcendence.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie studie is die oorheersende onderneming om te illustreer hoe 'n gepaste siening van God en 'n deeglike grondbegrip van Sy voorspelbaarheid, soos teologies en dogmaties in Sy Woord beskryf, van die grootste belang is in ons soeke na waarheid. Die middelpunt van belang sal God wees in sy verhouding met die mensdom. Dit sluit die ondersoek van God se Woord, karakter en daede in om die vraag te beantwoord of daar gesê kan word dat God kenbaar en voorspelbaar is. In hierdie studie gee ek aandag aan God se verskaffing van sy Woord, die bron van gesag van die gelowige waaruit ons 'dogma' verkry, 'n studie van sy optrede soos geopenbaar in die geskiedenis (verlede, hede en toekoms), asook sy karakter (God se goedheid en God se grootheid, God se transendensie en God se immanensie). In die beantwoording van die vraag of God kenbaar en voorspelbaar is, kom ek tot die gevolgtrekking dat God terselfdertyd geopenbaar en verborge, voorspelbaar en onvoorspelbaar is.

Sleuteltermes: Godsleer; algemene openbaring; spesiale openbaring; God se goedheid; God se grootheid; God se immanensie; God se transendensie.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the believers' search for truth, the study of God, the explication of His Word, as well as an in-depth study of His relationship with humankind is mandatory. The hermeneutical concern of theologians would place strong focus on God's conduct throughout history (past); His current actions in the world (present), as well as predictions in the Bible of the future. Research regarding the general revelation and special revelation of God is employed to get a legitimate view of what God is disclosing to humankind through these two general avenues. The Bible is saturated with references to eschatological events that will take place. A sound conception of dogma makes it possible for these events to be understood in light of events that are described in the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation. God's grand narrative is culminating towards the promised dramatic end as illustrated in the Bible. God's goodness and greatness must be investigated in terms of His immanence and transcendence and could point to God being knowable; whether God is predictable or not. Scholars maintain that God's image within humankind is unique. The image of God is described as that which "distinguishes humans from all other creatures" (Erickson 2001:172). Biblically, we have been set apart. This puts a burden on humankind to apply God's principles in their lives as part of their existence. Theologically and dogmatically, the body of Christ is admonished to be dedicated to seeking God's face continually (Acts 17:28). In the Pentecostal tradition, Christians are generally described as being part of an eschatological community. From my Pentecostal point of view, believers' current actions will invariably carry great significance in the very end. It is my belief that theological and scientific theories mostly indicate that our reality is spiralling towards a devastating end. Not only is humankind facing issues such as global warming and pollution, but radical shifts are taking place in the sciences and technology that is currently being developed (for instance the threat of AI) and radical changes are witnessed through changing politics, culture and societal beliefs. Pressure is being added to our existence. More and more authors are writing about topics in the Book of Revelation and are discussing their viewpoints. These authors include, among others, Du Rand (2013), Grudem (1994) and Ma (2017). "Pentecostals are urgently called" to return to "their eschatological heritage" so that it can "reformulate" and be "applied to" their "daily life and mission" (Ma 2017:236). A positive approach to these adversities will facilitate a platform from which knowledge can be derived.

1.2 Definition of keywords

God's **transcendence** points to His **Greatness** as the God that cannot be measured or placed at any specific time or place. God's Greatness places Him above all that has ever existed and poses a lesson to humankind of His infinite nature and Being. I believe that God's **immanence** is illustrative of the fact that His **Goodness** has made it possible for humankind to experience Him as being near (although He is infinite) through His Son Jesus Christ. God's immanence can be experienced by each human individual due to the fact that His image resides. God's Spirit Who indwells believers is the source of **revelation**. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is the Trinity. Thus, the Trinity is both transcendent and immanent; both Good and Great and renders continuous revelation as history unfolds.

In my opinion, the **Pentecostal** movement places heavy focus on the experience of the believer in his/her approach to the relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Worship services focus more on the worship itself than on literature reviews and exegesis. I also believe that the Reformed movement places heavy focus on the exegesis of the Bible and on preaching the sound Word of God. I believe that the **Reformed** tradition has impacted my preaching and ministry positively in this regard. In my opinion, the Pentecostal tradition and the Reformed tradition can draw valuable principles from each other.¹

1.3 Background and problem statement

The predominant venture of this study is to illustrate how an appropriate view of God and a solid foundational understanding of His predictability as theologically and dogmatically described in His Word are of paramount importance in our search for truth. The centre of interest will be God in His relationship with humankind; His provision of His Word (the believer's source of authority from which we derive "dogma") and a study into His actions as revealed in history (past, present and future). An atheistic view would argue that "literature, not scripture, sustains the mind and – since there is no other metaphor – also the soul" (Hitchens 2007:4). For the Christian, the Bible is authoritative, but for the atheist "literature" holds the authority. In the Pentecostal tradition,

¹ In my opinion, the Pentecostal approach focuses much on the believer and his/her insights into the Word of God. The insights of the believer are seen as paramount and can often lead to disruption of the true meaning of the Biblical text. In my opinion, the Reformed approach focuses on the explication of the Word of God as well as explains the contemporary message of the specific text to believers. In my opinion, Hitchens' scientific approach refutes the existence of God and is an atheistic view. It is not that Hitchens doesn't read the Bible, it is that he doesn't believe in it. Three different opinions on the same Document (the Bible) shows us once again that the human derivation of the scriptures are fallible yet, God's revelation through His Holy Spirit is infallible. It is my opinion that for this very reason, religious traditions must make a point of it to draw from each other in research as well as doctrine.

“religion” is described as a unique relationship through which God is worshipped and experienced. Contrary to the Christians’ view that religion is invaluable in the believer’s walk of faith, atheists believe that “the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for real happiness” (Hitchens 2007:5). I argue that it is a well-known fact that “atheism” is every bit as much a “religion” as Christianity and thus it secretly holds its own “theologies”. Atheists are known for holding fast to their own central tenets of faith. This general view is countered by statements that atheism “is not a belief” (Hitchens 2007:4). The frequently alternating views on theologies coupled with false teachings regarding the potential danger the problem of evil holds in the world could most likely facilitate vast areas of social degeneration.

One standpoint is that a “characteristic of our time is the relatively short life spans of theologies (Erickson 2001:204).” Erickson continues to provide some examples, such as “Augustine” that “lasted approximately eight centuries...”; “Thomas Aquinas” that “endured for two and-a-half centuries”; “John Calvin” whose “theology prevailed for almost three centuries”, and many more (2001:24). Interestingly, in pathology the action of “degeneration” is described as “a process by which tissue deteriorates, loses functional activity, and may be converted into or replaced by other kinds of tissue” (dictionary.com; no date). Therefore, I ask: Could physical phenomena be manifesting itself in the spirit? We should note that a lack of substantial dogmatic truth poses a real and imminent threat to our Christian belief system and the very fabric of our existence. Our reality has greatly been influenced by a “whole host of natural evils” that “may also have resulted from the sin of humankind”. “The fall” in Genesis 3 is connected hereto (Erickson 2001:151). I would add that the Fall negatively impacted creation and humankind on both a “natural” level and has distorted thinking patterns and belief systems (spiritual deterioration). This can be referred to as forming part of the “structural evil in society” (Erickson 2001:151). I argue that “structural evil” is an example of the original sin that rages on today more intensely. Negative aspects in the fields of science, technology and quite feasibly false doctrines could be causing societal and moral degradation. Theologically, the effects of unnerving societal issues that are generally experienced are described in the context of the Second Coming of Christ. Although the Pentecostal movement has “recently” started to develop a “social concern”, it is believed that “in order to have a staying power” there will have to be much development and “support from the theology of the movement” (Dempster 1993:22-23). It is reported that “social concern” forms an “integral part” in the “holistic vision of salvation” within the Pentecostal tradition (Kärkkäinen 2018:15). “In theology” the usage and meaning of the word “dogma” hasn’t been uniform (Berkhof 1996:19). It is evident that scholarly references to the word “dogma” have come to adopt different meanings in different times of history. Careful consideration must be taken to note in which manner “dogma” is utilized in each setting it is employed.

“The early Church Fathers” referred to “dogmata” as “the truths of the Christian faith” (Berkhof 1996:19). We must take care to remember that therefore their reference differed from our own in the 21st Century. On the contrary, an atheistic view reports that “the early church fathers of faith ... were living in abysmal ignorance and fear” (Hitchens 2007:24). “Dogma” therefore has no value to this movement. Atheism teaches that “an ethical life can be lived without religion” (Hitchens 2007:5). This is in contrast to Erickson’s view. I argue that a life “without religion” of any sort would be empty and worthless. It seems evident that the current lack of recognition regarding the importance of and practice of dogma may be contributing to a decrease of Biblical morals and values in society. The problem of evil is as old as creation itself. It might even be a part of the “structural evil” that Erickson (2001:151) perceives in society. This “structural” or organized “evil” could result in a process by which Biblical principles are systematically being replaced with modern ideas and concepts. I argue that “atheism” could be classified as one of these problematic ideas / concepts. The sciences of theology (focused on spiritual phenomena) and general science (focused on physical phenomena) make use of much the same approaches, yet employ different criteria. Atheism “distrusts anything that contradicts science and outrages reason” (Hitchens 2007:4). Hitchens admits that he adheres to the authority of “science”. Intelligence (reason) and belief systems (faith) are being compared by theologians and scientists within the process of theory making and must be visited in order to discern if and how God is knowable or predictable. The question to me here is: Why is Christian dogma important? And why has it been developed for so many centuries (even though it has recently declined)?

Conflicting views on science have had a negative effect on how theology is perceived. A possible reason for the lack of scientific respect regarding the value of theological research could be the use of spiritual data and not physical data. All sciences include the act of theory making. This process is described as a “connectedness” that exists between “different kinds of properties and laws” (Clouser 2005:191). Contrary to conventional belief, I propose a theory that there is a possibility of detecting a connection between science, theology in general, and dogma more particularly, taking the shape of a “collaborative approach” of sorts (Brunsdon 2014:1). I believe that all three of these fields involve the act of “studying” and “reasoning”. Theology studies “God and His attributes” in relation to the “universe” and “humankind; “science” is the gathering of “systematic knowledge of the physical or material world”; whilst “dogma” investigates the “principles of faith, morals and behaviour” (dictionary.com; no date). Knowledge of God’s attributes and behavior will indicate to us if He is knowable and/or predictable. A link could possibly be established between “God”, the “material world” He created, and the “faith” He calls us to via His Word. This sort of “connectedness” must be further investigated. Information derived could help us discern whether God is knowable and if God is predictable. This will be done from a theological point of view and will inevitably enrich our scientific and dogmatic approaches.

It is reported that “Early Pentecostals came mostly from the ranks of the marginalized and disenfranchised”. This has “lead researchers” to believe that “Pentecostalism is some form of” a “Social Deprivation theory” (Nel 2019:1). Generally, Christians believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. The “authority” of “Revelation’s apocalyptic horizon” is described as forming part of “an implicit Pentecostal reading”, which is inevitably fixed within the “Pentecostal identity” and “worldview” (Yong 2017:141). It is also important to note that “Pentecostals and evangelicals share conservative views regarding the authority of the Bible” (Kärkkäinen 2018:9). The authority of God’s Word will be discussed in Chapter 2, whilst giving attention to aspects such as dogma and whether God’s Word is objective or subjective. With regard to God’s Person and conduct, scholars such as Erickson (2001) and Berkhof (1996) indicate that God reveals Himself in a dualistic way. Erickson (2001) terms these as “God’s Universal revelation” as well as “God’s Particular Revelation”, whilst Berkhof (1996) terms these as “General revelation” and “Special revelation”. Berkhof also makes a connection between “Special revelation and Scripture”. This topic will be further discussed in Chapter 3, along with a focus on God’s Person and conduct throughout history (past, present and future). The question arises if any part of God’s “revelation” of Himself to humankind can indicate to us if He is predictable in any way. I briefly note that in opposition to the views of Erickson and Berkhof, scholars such as Jenson maintain that God is not a “revealed” God but a “hidden God” whose “hiddenness” is “being exercised through the Trinity” (Jenson 2001:1). On the contrary, I report that the Bible refers to all Three of these Persons in the Trinity extensively. In the quest to discern God’s predictability we can briefly ask: Is God hidden? Or is God revealed? Jenson’s view clearly stands opposed to that of Berkhof and Erickson. I believe that Jenson holds a general scientific view. He perceives God to be hidden because he cannot use natural phenomena to test / prove his theory. I add that God reveals Himself through creation “generally” and that “special revelation” occurs through salvation. I deduct that God’s greatest act was to send His Son to die for the sins of humankind. Throughout the Bible we note God’s social concern for the nations. To what lengths will God go to reveal the truth? The mere fact that we are pondering on such a question leads me to believe that God can at times be quite unpredictable. In Chapter 4, a closer investigation will be launched regarding the attributes that display God’s goodness and greatness and whether these attributes can give us a better comprehension on whether He is knowable, predictable or unpredictable. I argue that it is possible that His goodness makes Him predictable and His greatness could refer to His unpredictability. Can God be both of these at once? I argue that yes, He can be predictable and unpredictable at the same time. In Chapter 5, God’s immanence and transcendence will be investigated whilst discerning if these aspects of God makes Him predictable or not. I believe that because God is both transcendent and immanent simultaneously, Jesus was able as the Son of God also incarnate as the Son of Man. God’s transcendence blessed us with His image, which is spiritual. God’s immanence blessed us through the cross of Christ by activating that spiritual

image through salvation. In Chapter 6, His predictability will be discerned by probing characteristics of God such as His salvific plan and His grand narrative. Any conclusions drawn regarding God's predictability will assist scholars in all possible scientific fields to realize that everything is inextricably linked in some way.

1.3.1 Problem statement

As a full-time pastor of a congregation in a Pentecostal denomination, I have noticed a severe lack of interest in dogma that facilitates a framework of thinking that is too unshackled for comfort. Many believers who I have ministered to have often wondered if God will act in exactly the same manner each time a particular situation presents itself (i.e. Is He predictable?). This question often confronts believers as they face daily challenges and societal struggles. It is the desperate believer that in a crisis tries to fit God into their framework of understanding in order to feed their need for "instant gratification", which desires a quick fix to many of life's problems. One view is that this phenomenon stems from changing "culture" and that the promotion of this type of "elixir" is curbed by "illustrations" in "the biblical narrative" that there are "promises" of "ongoing presence and actions" from God (Blomberg 2012:38). Death and destruction, the suffering of innocent individuals and terminal illnesses have often led believers to question the Word of God, as well as His character. This study does not question the validity of the dogma and doctrines of the Bible. Instead it wishes to draw a clear delineation between the possible interpretations of Scripture, as opposed to false doctrines that oppose the Body of Christ and distort the Biblical view of God. The Christian's greatest journey in life is time spent with the God Who created the heavens and the earth (Ps 121).

The Bible teaches that when difficult situations arise in a believer's life it is indicative of the fact that a) either it is an attack from the enemy, or b) it is a time of pruning for the believer. In both cases, the goodness of God must never be questioned because He is the ultimate Ruler and Judge of all existence. God cannot be explained in human language; He is too complex for our understanding. Basic principles arise from the Bible to assist the believer during difficult times. God is always willing to help His creation and created beings, of which humankind is the crown. Suffering within a broken world is not indicative of a God that doesn't care; it is an indication of the fact that the effects of the "original sin" are more devastating than we care to admit (i.e. the world is broken). Jesus said in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world" (NKJV). Societal challenges have indicated that the contemporary Church must find new means to minister to the diverse audience. It has been noted that "physical problems can both contribute to and proceed from spiritual problems" (McArthur & Mack

1994:212). It has been noted that “just as we do not entirely understand the natural processes” that form a part of when we “act intuitively”, so also “spiritual processes” through which “God directs ... believers” can also be puzzling (Koessler 2019:57). It has also been stated that “pastoral care has benefitted from various fields of analysis” such as “race and gender, sociology and cultural studies”. This has led to “strategic participation in the community” (McClure 2012:275). From these deductions I propose that scholars follow an “integration – like” approach and move “towards an integration theory” (Anderson & Zuehlke 2000:1). “The acceleration of change and the explosion and fragmentation of information have made doing theology more difficult” (Erickson 2001:23).

From my Pentecostal point of view, scholars have had to adapt their theory making and the way they approach the ministry. I perceived that this could be due to the astounding inflow of information in the 21st Century. It is affirmed that there exist a “decline of great theological schools of thought” (Erickson 2001:24). I argue that this has negatively influenced the compilation of dogma and doctrine. It has left a serious rupture in dogmatic continuation and development. It is the determination of “schools of thought” to generate new knowledge, which includes the explication and development of “dogma” and “doctrine”. It could be noted here that our knowledge is limited. Some relevant examples of current research include: “creation” by Leithart (2017); “God” by Abrams (2015); “God’s love” by Murphy (2018); “the cosmos and evolution” by Schaab (2017); the theologies of Karl Barth and Emile Brunner by scholars such as Erickson (2001) and Berkhof (1996), as well as McFarland (2017). These are clearly all inter-related and could be tied to the question of whether God is knowable and/or predictable. All are connected with the existence of humankind and they can be intertwined with the themes of each of the chapters that will be presented in this study. A brief explanation of these topics will follow.

From a purely scientific model of research, the predictability of certain elements helps scientists to draw conclusions in the process of their theory making. They use the predictability of certain elements to construct a theory on how their experiment will most likely play out. For example: Because element “A” has these specific qualities, when added to element “B” it will most likely do the following. The predictability of element “A” provides the basis for the theory of the scientist and provides a point of departure. Science, as mentioned previously, relies on physical phenomena, whilst theology relies on spiritual phenomena. Although the “data” used in scientific research differs from “data” in theological science, some principles harvested from each field might stay the same prove to be viable. Some principles may be applicable to theology and should be kept in mind such as logical conclusions derived from research. Yet, I note that God is an empirical force. Theologians understand that we cannot “discover” God, but that He “reveals” Himself. Knowing if God is predictable or not and to what extent will prove invaluable in our

dogmatic search for truth as it will help the researcher to draw conclusions regarding God and His actions. Most importantly, however, it will give the believer a point of departure for further study. Great care must be taken by the theologian to remember that all theories that are constructed here are merely theoretical and suggestive in the search for truth regarding God's predictability. We should take care to remember that the human race is error-prone. An authentic theological account of God must be presented as delineated in the Scriptures. John Webster wrote that "dogmatic reasoning" ultimately "enlarges the scriptural res" (Leithart 2017:35). Readers thus believe that it has the function of edifying the believers spiritually. Believers are able to develop "dogmatic reasoning" in order to gain knowledge and understanding.

Theologians affirm that there exist theological and dogmatically cohesiveness amongst the characteristics, attributes and acts of God, as explained in the entirety of His Word. In order to illustrate the necessity of having knowledge regarding dogma and God's predictability or lack thereof, here follows a few examples of the negative impact false assumptions can have on a belief system. These are used purely as illustrations:

"Creation": A scientific view is that "Evolutionary understandings of the cosmos have frequently been perceived as threatening to a Christian cosmology ... the Genesis narrative ..." (Schaab 2017:91). The Bible illustrates that God created by speaking (Genesis 1) within the span seven days and not over millions of years as theorized by general scientific thought. He did this through the speaking of His Word (John 1:14), whilst the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters. God's first act was to create. The creation is a testimony of God's expression of Himself. God created with love and out of His love. He created for the same reason He sent His Son (John 3:16). This gives believers an indication of the link between God's character and His conduct.

"God": Whether God is knowable and God's predictability is the focus of this study. A variety of findings must thus be obtained to get a clear view of the Person of God. To some, God is merely "an emergent phenomenon" (Abrams 2015:376), but to the believer God is the Creator of all reality. When discussions of God ensue, religion often becomes a topic of interest. It is interesting here to briefly list two opposing views from scientific scholars regarding religion. Some believe that "religion is challenging society" (Hitchens 2007:11). Others are of the opinion that "religion" is "embedded in society" via "conviction and values" (Clouser 2001:9). This indicates religion is an important part of our existence and a mode through which we can discern the predictability of God. It is clear in society that "religious" tendencies are unavoidable. I argue that Hitchens errs in all his opinions for one reason and that is that he perceives "God" to be "religion" itself (i.e. God = "religion"). This equation should be viewed as a desired "truth". Instead, the equation for the believer should state that "religion" exists today because of God's impact on humankind in their

search for the “truth”. Thus “religion” is because of God (i.e. “religion” = because of God / “religion” = a product of God).

“God’s love”: Believers have often made bold statements. One is that “God’s love” is a type of guarantee that “all will be ultimately well for him or her” (Murphy 2018:211). God’s love has been extensively investigated in all spheres. Still, it seems more than plausible that scholars haven’t even scratched the surface thereof. This could make God unpredictable. Murphy displays a somewhat scientific view seemingly coupled with elements of the New Age religion. This view is however contrary to theological beliefs as found in Scripture. The Bible describes clearly in John 3:16 that God sent His Son to the world because of His great love for all that He created. The Pentecostal tradition teaches that through the cross of Christ salvation can be achieved. Theologically, it can be discerned that “God’s love” leans more towards predictability (He is faithful). But does His love describe Him or is it only one of His multitude of qualities?

The views of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner: It is well known that Barth and Brunner held opposing views with regard to God’s self-revelation. Both views could give us an insight into the predictability of God. Yet it must be noted here that the Pentecostal tradition leans more toward the views of Barth. In this search for the predictability of God I propose that instead of keeping to the celebrated structures of science, we should combine the efforts of general scientific endeavours with that of theological science. It is noteworthy to realize that “there are exciting and exhilarating developments that point to the transformation of Christian pneumatology” (Kärkkäinen 2014:183). God’s active “self-revelation” holds infinite worth into research regarding His predictability. I argue that God reveals Himself through creation (natural phenomena), through His Word (spiritual phenomena), and through practical application (His acts in history). God is actively participating in our existence – this in itself makes Him predictable. How He participates and when is entirely up to Him – this makes Him unpredictable. Brunner believes in “natural revelation and denies that the image of God was utterly defaced...” whilst Barth believes that “it is only by faith that the knowledge of God becomes possible” (Berkhof 1996:130). Brunner believed in “natural revelation” and created his dogma from this point of departure. Barth, on the other hand, believed in revelation within the spiritual realm i.e. God reveals Himself in His Word. I add that scientists have often worked alongside each other and have held completely different views whilst researching the same topic. Some believe that “scientists have sometimes been religious or at any rate superstitious” (Hitchens 2007:24). I believe that God is predictable in the sense that He created all humanity in His image and that every single human being is able to experience God. In the Pentecostal tradition there is a heavy focus on the “experience” of the believer’s relationship with God. This has often generated great criticism against the Pentecostal tradition. The “essential” aspect of “dogma” is to “Christianity” the following; “a. Scripture

represents the truth as essential to Christianity; b. The unity of the Church demands doctrinal agreement; c. The duty of the Church requires unity in doctrine; d. The position of the Church in the world calls for a united testimony; e. Experience teaches that dogmas are indispensable” (Berkhof 1996:28-31).

I argue that Berkhof’s statements reaffirm some of the general yet essential beliefs of Christianity. A more detailed view on these aspects will be rendered in Chapter 2. I note that God’s expression of Himself are manifested in in “general” and “specific” ways (Romans 1:18-31) and that there is a progression from the “general revelation” of God in “creation” through salvation to “specific revelation” in His Word. Currently, countless Christian denominations have formulated various doctrines from the Bible. These are not likely to be revisited in the near future, yet basic doctrinal beliefs amongst denominations must be established. There needs to be “unity in doctrinal agreement” as explained by Berkhof (1996:28-31). This principle also applies to dogma. Dogmas are a part of the fabric of the church worldwide. A renewed focus must be given to dogmatic research and development. Due to the limitations of a Masters study, this topic will not be discussed in-depth².

Due to the adversities that humankind face on a daily basis (death; destruction; terminal illness; Covid-19 pandemic; natural disasters), at times, believers have started to question the Word of God, as well as His Character. Increasing changes in cultural thought, not only in society, but also in the church, have in many instances led to a lack of interest in dogma as well as the pursuit of sound interpretation of the Word of God. In a human effort to make sense of it all, humankind in most cases refer back to history from where they draw clues and make calculations on what to believe and what action to take next. Scientific thought is released in many scientific fields with great results, yet, the question of God has never completely been answered. This is due to the fact, in my opinion, that His Goodness and His Greatness make Him an inexplicable and multi-faceted God. A God that is too complex to ever be understood. Thus, in my opinion, God cannot be explained in human language and through human reason. This brings the following question to mind: **Will God act in the exact same manner each time a scenario presents itself? Put differently, is God predictable (knowable) or unpredictable (mysterious)?** The answer to these questions, keep humankind hungry for new knowledge and insight into the Character, Word and deeds of God.

² For more information on this topic, see Mcfarland (2017).

1.4 Research problem, aim and objectives

1.4.1 Research problem

Whilst briefly researching the belief systems of major churches such as Bethel and Hillsong (whose music and teachings are very popular worldwide) from a Pentecostal point of view, I have observed shocking dogmatic errors in their teachings such as the emergence of a variety of views on the theory of “kenosis”; the intermitted use of tarot cards and psychic readings, as well as practices such as “grave sucking” under the flag of Christianity - and have realized that part of the explanation why these teachings came into existence could be because of (in my opinion) a decline in the interest toward formulating and practicing sound dogma³.

Instead of serving God in the prescribed Biblical manner, these false teachers and churches promote the use of evil devices and teach their followers about “grave sucking” and other atrocities. The theory of “kenosis” is “the doctrine that Christ relinquished His divine attributes so as to experience human suffering” (dictionary.com; no date). From the Pentecostal point of view, “kenosis” is not viable. This stems from the belief that Jesus is the Son of God (the Second Person of the Trinity) who came to die on a lonely cross in order to save humankind from eternal death and damnation through sin. He did so in a human body and out of His own will. It did not make Him any less divine as part of the Godhead. Jesus was the Son of God and the Son of Man simultaneously⁴. Whereas false teachings on the concept of “kenosis” state that Jesus was only a normal human whilst on earth and that He had given up all divinity. If that was the case, I would argue that He wouldn’t then have been able to die for the sins of humankind and yet He did. This topic has been debated since the 1st Century. I agree that “Jesus Christ” in Person “as part of the Trinity” was sent to “communicate” not only the “character of God” but also “His will for humankind” (Grudem 1994:29). Another issue of concern is the fact that there have been major shifts in how believers view the necessity of Church attendance, the paying of tithes, as well as the phenomenon where believers “church hop” between congregations. I report that “prosperity preaching” is partly to blame for this new undercurrent. Current surveys illustrate how “authors,

³ Some of the videos to consult on this matter include: “Why our church no longer plays Bethel or Hillsong music”, “Pastor explains false teachings – Pastor David Henneke – Firstkingsland.com”; “False Teachers exposed – A Biblical critique of the Word of Faith Prosperity Gospel and more”; “Ex-Bethel Student Tells All: Lindsay Davis Testimony”. This URL’s are available in the Bibliography.

⁴ Jesus is in my opinion the encapsulation of the Greatness (Transcendence – He holds the universe in His hands) and Goodness (Immanence – through His image in us we could identify with the teachings and ministry of Jesus. It is also His image in us which made the impartation of the Holy Spirit possible). Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. I could have taken a Christological approach and the study could have gone in another direction, but I chose to take another approach.

theologians, academicians and laypeople” are of opinion that “Christianity cannot survive in anything like its present form” (Bill Dahl Surveys Barna 2005:64).

The global Church of God is in a crisis. Leaders and congregations who follow false doctrines have lost their Godly morals and values and are practicing idolatry as the Israelites did every time that they strayed from God. Hosea 4:6 states: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priests for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” Other scholars are also recognizing the potential, dangerous shifts that are taking place in the world, but perhaps even more so in the Church. “Nothing’s changing and the change that we see is not for the better” (Barna 2002:34). Worldly changes via false teachings and practices have negatively impacted the Church.

Firstly, worldly approaches to ministry have raised questions about the role of the prophet. A fragile attempt to make a difference in the contemporary audience and setting has included changing the “ambiance, the music, the lightning” (Bill Dahl Surveys Barna 2005:63). These actions by many religious teachers have brought the ministry of God’s prophet and the work of the Church in question. Biblically, a “prophet” is a person “who sees into the future” and who refrains from “stargazing” and the use of “crystal balls”. It is rather a person who “warns what will happen in the future if we don’t mend our ways” (Barna 1990:137).

Barna speaks out against the futile attempts of the Church and wishes to usher the true prophets of God back into their seat of powerful Holy Spirit led ministry, yet I’m afraid that his manner of doing so could cause even more problems for the Church.

Problems in the Church have manifested in the practices of religion and have interfered with the preaching of pure doctrine due to confusion about the role of the Body of Christ in the kingdom of God. To curb false teachings and superficial worship, Barna (2005) proposes a “revolution” of saints to depart from the institution of the Church⁵. Yet some believe that “the intersection of separation with the motivation of greater holiness” is “potentially detrimental to the unity of Christ’s body” (Stanglin 2008:59). Barna (2005) believes that the “revolution” will “shape” and “renew the future of Christ’s body”. (Stanglin 2008:59). I argue that it could have the opposite effect and could cast the Church into greater turmoil. These views by Stanglin and Barna are from research done regarding the American Church, but I am led to say that it has manifested in South Africa as well.

⁵ There is more research on all of these topics, yet due to the restrictions of a Masters study I could not use all of the resources. Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960); Arthur W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), pp. 256-60.

Different modern trends have infiltrated the Church of the 21st Century. Barna (2005) refers to “religious practices” such as going to church as an “obligation” (Stanglin 2008:61). Whilst I applaud Barna’s attempts to revive the Church of God, but I also criticize his approach, because he protects and vouches for the “remnant” of “revolutionists” who believe in separating themselves from the rest of the flock (Stanglin 2008:60). The “revolutionists” promote the idea that the sheep will be better off with no shepherd at all (gather the deeply spiritual Christians and start a mushroom fellowships) or in some cases, that various shepherds are applicable and more promising than one shepherd per designated flock (i.e. hopping from denomination to denomination). A hippy-like religion is proposed. This can facilitate a phenomenon where the doctrines that are exchanged may confuse individuals who start to visit not only various congregations, but move between denominations that follow very different dogmas, teachings and practices. Is God predictable in this matter? Yes, pertaining to His model for the Church He is predictable. He delineates His structure for the Church clearly in the Bible. God is holy and will not tolerate sin, especially not the wilful straying of the flock. Is God unpredictable in this matter? Yes, He is unpredictable as well, seeing that we do not know when the Second Coming will take place and who will be affected by the Tribulation and other end time events. All denominations have their own view on this with supporting Scriptures; I note that they are all but theories and interpretations.

I report that the world is in a crisis period with Covid-19 that is raging on, but even more than that, the Church is also in a crisis. What happens in the world inevitably affects the Church due to the fact that worldly practices are spilling over into the Church through its congregants. We have to now in this time and going forward stick to what we know and leaders must develop into mature Christians. Barna shows “bias throughout his work” (Stanglin 2008:63). It becomes clear that Barna is fully convinced of his new model, yet I fear that his approach could bring division into the Church and with that will steal the Church’s joy, strength (Neh 8: 10b) and blessing (Psalm 133:1). The Bible teaches that believers must become mature Christians. This, of course, facilitates a platform for “self-replication” i.e. the making of new disciples. Erickson (2001:26) states the Church is still effective due to the fact that it is an “institution”. “Other experts” state that “the Church of the future will be shaped from the bottom up rather than the top down” (Barna 2005:86). He states that if the Church is to survive it must be de-institutionalized.

Contrary to Barna’s view, we read that “the rhythmic participation” of God’s people is “essential and central to the life of the church” (Stanglin 2008:65). I argue that if there is no “rhythm” and no “participation”, believers will inevitably become out of sync. I believe that launching an investigation on whether God is predictable or unpredictable could spur researchers on towards showing a renewed interest in the forming, shaping, understanding, and practice of the dogma in

the Bible. This will facilitate a deeper understanding about the coherent whole of the Bible and the role of the Body of Christ. What is discovered must be implemented and developed. This could be done by using the coherence of God's attributes, characteristics and actions as displayed in His Word and combining them with scientific information. Christian scholars such as Erickson (2001), Berkhof (1996) and Leithart (2017) have attempted to examine whether or not God as a Person can be separated from His actions. Scholars must attempt to discern what God thinks about the changes in the Church and how He will deal with them. In contrast to Christian belief, atheism purports that "religion" is a waste of time. This is the opinion of Hitchens (2007:27). Theologically, the Bible portrays God the Father as Creator (Ps19; Rom 1; Gen 1). Dogmatically, the Bible portrays Him also as Saviour (God the Son) and as Guide and Comforter (God the Holy Spirit). From a scientific point of view, Albert Einstein believed that "God does not play dice with the universe". He spoke out against "quantum theory" (Schaab 2017:93). Ford, on the other hand, believed that "God plays dice with the universe" but that "the dice are loaded" (Schaab 2017:93). The magnitude of the answers to this question of predictability facilitates a need for research to be done from a theological, scientific and dogmatic point of view.

I believe that history has proved that whenever humanity cannot understand what they perceive, they wish to attribute it to some cosmological force. There are others who purport that "science" can quite possibly be "grounded in theistic metaphysics" (Clark 2016:9). We learn from Clark's statement that "theism" and "theistic metaphysics" have assisted science in advancing and expanding. Yes, I agree that God can at times be unpredictable and that that in itself is not necessarily a negative attribute. I argue that Clark renders a more apt description of the God in the Bible than Einstein and Ford. "Like Calvin, Eagleton insists that creation" came into being only for God's "pleasure, joy and love" (Long 2017:20). I argue that this view is biased and anti-Biblical. God also has a definite plan that has been unfolding over the centuries and that is culminating to a specific end (Revelation 22:13; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Revelation 1:8). The Pentecostal doctrine of eschatology attests to the fact that everything is predictably coming to a close.

Physicists investigate quantum fields; "evolutionary biologists" value "diversification and selection over eons of self-replication" (England 2015:27). I don't propose that any findings retrieved in a certain field should replace another field's findings. What I do propose is that we research multiple fields in order to form a solid view of the predictability of God. I agree with England that in theology all conclusions drawn from theories must be understood in the complete scope of the Bible. Scientifically, all conclusions drawn from theories are normally understood and explicated in the scientific frame of reference as known and established by humankind. I propose that all sciences known to man are secretly interwoven to form the complete sketch of God's revelation of Himself as the physical and spiritual phenomena forms a coherent whole. Biblically, The Bible is also a

dogmatic and eschatological book. The one aspect cannot function without the other. Different themes are interwoven as God's "grand narrative" plays out. The dogmas in the Bible help us on our journey toward the eschatological end that it predicts. These "eschatological events" contain a Biblical, scientific and dogmatic aspect. "There are ... reasons for the current attention to eschatology". Some reasons listed are "technology ... and changes in our culture" therefore we must "predict and prepare for the future" (Erickson 2001:373). Here is the point that scholars often miss; eschatology cannot be studied without taking dogma and science into consideration. In the earnest search for knowledge, scholars have to employ the use of predictions in order to successfully create theories that polish their standpoints. This is true for both theology and science and must become a reality for dogma as well. A 21st century approach would be to discern within the "dogma" of the Bible if God is predictable or not. Another aspect of reality that cannot be separated from each other is world history and Bible history. They are interwoven.

The Bible, as God's revealed Word serves as the foundation for exegesis. The employment of the "grammatical – historical method" facilitates an integrated platform between the grammatical features, as well as historical characteristics of the text. A sound view of the true meaning of the text is derived by the amalgamation of grammatical details (such as language, style, idiom and literary genre), as well as the historical context of the believer (both for Biblical times as well as for our contemporary setting). The organic inspiration of the Bible is the predominant ingredient here. From a hermeneutical point of view, both the Old Testament and New Testament combines to form the Word of God. God's Word has a contemporary message. This message can be discerned by employing the "grammatical – historical" method of exegesis. This hermeneutical process is led by the continuous inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The hermeneutical process also forms a part of the journey of the believer as a good steward of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15) (Jordaan & Janse Van Rensburg 2011:225-258).

1.4.2 Research aim

Can it be discerned through studying different fields of science (including theology and dogma) whether God is knowable (predictable) or mysterious (unpredictable)?

1.4.3 Research objective

To discern and evaluate if God is knowable, predictable or unpredictable.

1.5 Central theoretical argument

God, the Creator of the universe, has revealed Himself dogmatically in His Word, through His acts in history and through His character as being unpredictable yet constant (predictable); this topic needs further study.

1.6 Research methodology

This study conforms to the Pentecostal perspective.

A literature review on historical views on dogma will be conducted in order to render a sound interpretation of the dogma that is evident in the Bible.

The Bible, as God's revealed Word serves as the foundation for exegesis. The employment of the "grammatical-historical" method facilitates an integrated platform between the grammatical features as well as the historical characteristics of the text. A sound view of the true meaning of the text is derived by the amalgamation of grammatical details (such as language, style, idiom and literary genre) as well as the historical context of the believer (for both the Biblical times as well as our contemporary time). The organic inspiration of the Bible is the predominant ingredient here. From a hermeneutical point of view, both the Old Testament and the New Testament combine to form the Word of God. God's Word has a contemporary message that must be understood. This contemporary message can be discerned by employing the "grammatical-historical" method of exegesis. This hermeneutical process is led by the continuous inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The hermeneutical process can also be described as forming a part of the journey of the believer as he/she grows in the knowledge and skill of being a good steward of the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15) (Jordaan & Janse Van Rensburg 2011:225-258).

A clear distinction is to be drawn between God (Creator), humankind (created beings), the inspiration of the Bible, and the views on faith and reason. The authority of the Bible is to be discerned whether objective or subjective. An investigation is to be done regarding the dogma and doctrines of the Bible.

God's conduct (as an expression of Himself) is to be considered: past, present and future. The image of God in humanity is to be explored. Important concepts of eschatology will also be discussed as described in the Bible. General revelation and special revelation are to be investigated.

God's attributes (goodness and greatness) are to be inspected in order to discern if He is unpredictable or predictable.

Further, the question of "Where is God?" is to be scrutinized: God's immanence and God's transcendence. This will be linked with the issue of whether God is predictable or unpredictable. In the culmination of all these aspects, we will be able to learn more of the whereabouts of God.

Finally, a study is to be done on God's predictability. God's plan for humankind and the salvation that He has freely made available will be in calculated and discussed with regard to the potential spiritual growth it promises believers.

1.7 Ethical considerations

The methodology that will be employed is in the form of a literature study. This study poses no ethical risk. It has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University.

1.8 Overview

Humankind has proven itself to be a religious being of note. The Bible continuously renders dogma, which humankind formulates and applies within set out religious belief systems. "Dogmatics" refers to the "accepted doctrines of the Church" (Berkhof 1996:18). Thus, foundational aspects of the Bible are uncovered and studied as part of the religious experience. Dogmas that are "accepted" become a part of the very fibre of a religious community. Religion is described as "the search for the ultimate" (Horton 1994:40). It is discerned that religion involves more aspects than we perceive in the natural world. Religion and theology are connected. Theology is referred to as the "science of religion" (Berkhof 1996:98). Theology in its study of religious truth and divinity forms part of the religious experience. Religion is thus the "relationship between man and ... God". It involves a "life of worship, fellowship and service" (Berkhof 1996:98). Religion and dogma undeniably form a part of Christianity. Different trends of religious belief have surfaced over the centuries. Often a struggle between faith and reason has become evident. Discerning the predictability of God could delineate different approaches of faith and reason as utilized by theological, as well as scientific scholars and how when combined they can add another, more enhanced appreciation to our understanding of God's cosmos. God's predictability or unpredictability could possibly establish a link between "religion", "science" and "theology" or could prove otherwise. Kaiser and Silva (2007:270) report the different religious trends that have surfaced over the centuries. Amongst these are the "Reformation period" in the "16th century" with

its forerunners Martin Luther and John Calvin. Within the context of the 21st century, “one’s view of God” can become a “philosophy of life” (Erickson 1996:85). Rightly so, according to the Bible believers experience God through faith life. Erickson (2001:94) continues “God is unlimited and unlimitable in terms of space, time, knowledge and power.” God’s predictability or unpredictability could be closely linked to the topics in each of the chapters that will be presented in this document, namely: The Authority of God’s Word (Chapter 2); God’s conduct as an expression of Himself, past, present and future (Chapter 3); God’s goodness and His greatness (Chapter 4); God’s immanence and His transcendence (Chapter 5); and lastly, the question whether God is predictable (Chapter 6)? We could possibly arrive at a conclusion whether God will act in exactly the same manner in any given situation. God’s predictability or unpredictability presents a theological, dogmatic, as well as scientific matter and it should be investigated further. “Exegetical abilities” facilitate understanding of the Bible in our world in what “we have heard or read” (Hayes & Holladay 2007:1). Inevitably, “religious belief” is the “most powerful and influential belief in the world” (Clouser 2005:1). It becomes our steering wheel. It shapes us on our journey. It changes us. According to (Clouser 2005:1), our “worldview” affects our “religious belief” and we can therefore never be completely “neutral” in theory and decision making. It is clear that through faith and reason God enables us to do research in our search for religious truth. The truth liberates, it sets free and it renders an understanding of the revelation of God. On the other hand, John Stuart Mill states that “religion kills” (Hitchens 2007:7). Hitchens believes that “religion” is itself a “moral evil”. Erickson (2001) believes that to live a life without religion is to become a part of “structural evil” in society. I side with Erickson. Religion is not a “moral evil”. From a Pentecostal point of view, religion curbs “moral evil” and lays the foundation for Biblical values and morals in people’s lives.

Chapter 2: The Authority of God’s Word. The authority of God’s Word indicates to its readers that it is one of the sources to consult when discerning the predictability of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and contain His testimony of Who He is and how He will act. Thus, we denote that holy inspired men of God penned down what they experienced through the Holy Spirit and the Bible is the ultimate rule of faith. Theories of inspiration include: “1. The intuition theory; 2. The illumination theory; 3. The dynamic theory; 4. The verbal theory; 5. The dictation theory...” (Erickson 2001:63-64). It has also been investigated as “The Nature of Inspiration”, namely “a. Mechanical inspiration; b. Dynamical inspiration; c. Organic inspiration” (Berkhof 1996:151). Generally, “in Christian theology the word ‘inspiration’ is typically used in reference to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit during the inspiration of the Bible” (Felix-Jager 2014:86-87). A study of these views will be done in Chapter 2. It has previously been mentioned that the study of “dogma” is very important and must be ongoing. Hence, according to Berkhof (1996:21) religious dogmas can possess three characteristics; these are “their subject-matter is derived from Scripture; they

are the fruit of the reflection of the Church on the truth, as it is revealed in the Bible; and they are officially adopted by some competent ecclesiastical body.” These aspects are evident when a dogma has been accepted and employed within the doctrine of the Church. Ultimately, “the objective Word, the written, inspired Scripture, constitutes the authority for the Christian” (Erickson 2001:79). What is important to a Christian might not be important to an atheist, but knowledge will inevitably still be generated. I agree that “in many ways, much of our culture is very Athenian” (Driscoll 2008:7). Many individuals are indecisive on what to believe. In response to this standpoint of theirs, let us render an apt Biblical view on the authority of God’s Word. In this chapter, the Authority of God’s Word will be linked to the predictability or unpredictability of God and how it affects our realm of reference, as well as the future that awaits humankind. A contemporary question is “how the Holy Spirit influences human imaginations through experience and how inspirations are derived from these experiences” (Felix-Jager 2014:84). This is an apt description of one of the central motifs of the thought life of the Pentecostal tradition (i.e. heavy focus on the “experience” of the believer).

Chapter 3: God’s conduct as an expression of Himself: past, present and future. God’s conduct is an expression of Himself as seen in the past, present and future and could give an indication of whether He is predictable or not. God’s general and special revelation will also be taken into account. God’s first act was to create in Genesis 1:26-27. It states: “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” Theologically, we understand that we were created in God’s image. Dogmatically, we understand that the image endowed by God is spiritual. An interesting view is that God created us with the capacity to be “capable of unbounding thought” (Hall 2020:53). Another view is that God’s “image” gives “humankind ... dignity” (Erickson 2001 & Berkhof 1996). I report that from my point of view, that God’s acts of creating humankind and implanting His image inside of us will inevitably affect our acts as believers and as His Church who form a part of the Body of Christ. I note briefly that Clouser (2005:246) establishes a connection between God’s image in humankind and ethics as the “one aspect whose order includes the norm and obligations of human love-life.” As opposed to Erickson and Berkhof, who see the image as dignity, his view on the image of God resonates with the ethical capabilities of humankind. Clouser forms a scientific view that resonates with many dogmatic truths in the Scriptures. I argue that God expresses Himself in all of these fields of sciences and through many of His characteristics. God’s creation of humankind is but one aspect of God’s conduct. When researching God’s predictability, one has to investigate God’s conduct. This includes His conduct towards humankind in the Bible, as well as during the shaping of world history. God’s conduct towards humankind has inevitably shaped and moulded reality. When using the term God’s conduct here it will refer to God’s acts in different variables and settings. God’s first act was to create. Significant events are: In the Old Testament God creates (Genesis

1); The Fall takes place (Genesis 3); followed by the Noah narrative (Genesis 5-9) where sin has increased on the earth and God makes an end to civilizations; Jesus pre-incarnate makes His appearances throughout the Old Testament (Genesis 16:11-17; 22: 11-15; Exodus 3:2; Numbers 22:22-35 to name a few); God uses His prophets to prophecy about the coming Messiah (for instance, Isaiah and Jeremiah); after the Old Testament prophets there is a 400 year silence period where God doesn't speak to the people via any means of communication (no prophets, no signs, no angels); The people continue in the religious practices that they know and surely enough some of their human traits creep into their religious practices and the worship of God becomes something it was never meant to be; in the New Testament we find the Gospels that teach us of the incarnation of Christ and His work on the Cross. He makes salvation possible for all believers (John 3:16) through the resurrection; the ascension of Jesus into heaven (Acts 1: 9-11) is a prelude to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This is referred to "the re-creational work of Christ" (Vorster 2004: 83); in the Pentecostal tradition the Church is celebrated as the eschatological community of God who await the Second Coming of Christ. Salvation is the second great act of God. In the past, God created and this was His first great act. In the present, we have a hope because of what Jesus did on the Cross. In the future, we look forward to the Second Coming. The "Full Gospel" describes the five-fold work of Jesus Christ as "Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptizer with the Spirit, Healer and soon-coming King" (Kärkkäinen 2018:11). God has actively been busy with creation and humankind through history. Pentecostals, Lutherans, Reformed, and other Protestants preach the gospel of sanctification for the believer is mandatory (Kärkkäinen 2018:155). God's conduct has forever been to walk with humankind from creation to what will come in the future. Salvation is the beginning of the life-long process of sanctification for the believer. "The ultimate goal of divine revelation" is to start to "know God in a real and personal way" (Horton 1984:62).

Chapter 4: God's goodness and God's greatness. A possible link could be established between the exact nature of God's image that was transferred to humankind and could establish His predictability or the lack thereof. In human terms, we worship God for His greatness and His goodness (Erickson 2001:91-104). God's goodness and greatness has bearing on His predictability and will be evaluated from a theological, dogmatic and scientific point of view. "The study of God's nature" should facilitate "a closer personal relationship with him" (Erickson 2001:87). God's attributes can scientifically assist the theologian in determining the presence or lack of predictability when it comes to God's Person and His acts. Personally, these attributes of God present a huge platform of interest into the essence and acts of God. God's goodness and His greatness both form a part of Him, yet they represent different qualities that could assist the scholar to discern if He is predictable or unpredictable. It is possible that they are diverse yet connected. I do not intend to say that God's greatness and God's goodness oppose each other,

but rather that they both offer a colourful expression of Who God is. I believe that they amalgamate to form one whole and perfect portrayal of the Person of God. The recurring question comes to mind: Will God act in exactly the same manner when a situation presents itself? What dictates His behaviour? Is it His greatness or His goodness? “The Greatness of God” is described as “Spirituality; Life; Personality; Infinity (Space, Time, Knowledge and Power); and Constancy”, whilst the “Goodness of God” is described as “Moral qualities (Holiness; Righteousness; Justice); Integrity (Genuineness, Veracity, Faithfulness); Love (Benevolence, Grace, Mercy, Persistence)” (Erickson 2001:91-98). Each one of these attributes will be briefly researched and explicated in the hope of attaining information regarding God’s predictability or unpredictability. These elements of God must also be evaluated in connection with the image of God within humankind. It must be recognized that God is simultaneously great and good and that a theory regarding predictability can be derived from this fact. “Since God’s moral character does not change” we understand “that there will be similarities and overlaps between God’s natural and supernatural revelations.” A clear distinction is made between “God’s natural law for all people” and the “divine law for believers” (Geisler 2010:15). The extent of God’s image inside of humankind will be linked with His goodness and greatness and could possibly also be connected with a formulation of whether God is predictable or not. I believe that God’s greatness is fixed and cannot be altered. Like a mountain that is set in its place; although the weather around the mountain might change, the mountain itself is immovable. No force of nature can move the mountain from its place. Rain, sun, fog, seasons, fire, snow can rage on and around the mountain but the mountain will stand (Psalm 121). I perceive in my own walk of faith that God’s goodness is unending. God’s “goodness” can be seen in His acts towards humankind as well as human conduct among believers. God’s “goodness” carries us through the Covid-19 virus attack, it helps us through pain, suffering; it touches those with terminal illness. My personal opinion is that:

- From God’s greatness stem miracles that no human is capable of doing.
- From God’s goodness support is received in the earthly realm through God’s “moral qualities”. God’s goodness can be likened to the seasons that He put in place in creation. They will inevitably change but through all of it God will shape believers. Humankind can mimic an applicable version of Biblical “morals”.
- God’s greatness overrides God’s goodness, depending on the situation.

Chapter 5: Immanence and Transcendence: Where is God? “Science qua science cannot furnish an argument for God’s existence”. This statement is strengthened with “Three items of evidence”, They are: “the laws of nature ... life with its teleological organization” and “the existence of the universe” as evidence that God exists (Flew 2007:155). The aspects of God’s being such as His immanence and transcendence will be investigated and information retrieved

could be utilized to discern if He is predictable or not. *I have experienced where God resides must give an indication of His intentions (acts) toward humankind.* “The central point” of “theology” must be “the doctrine of God”, as well as the “doctrine of His Word” (Erickson 2001:86). A Scripturally apt view of God is the foundation of the Christian faith. There are problems that cause difficulties in a “correct understanding of God” such as the belief that “God is a celestial police officer” or that He is “grandfatherly” (Erickson 2001:86). This is a superficial view. It attacks the Biblical view of God as a loving Creator who wants to save all of humankind from death and destruction. Theologically, God is described as “Light”, “Love” and “Life” (Ps 119:105; 1 John 4:7-21; Ps 30:11). In this errant view, God is described as being passive. The immanence, as well as the transcendence of God has often been evaluated and applied to prove certain theories about Him. I argue that it is not a clinical issue, but rather a matter of faith. Spiritual matters cannot be physically measured but they can be likened to physical phenomena in an illustrative manner. Some have stated that “God is an old man” (Boritzer 1989:8). Macmillan (2005:57) writes: “Both science and religion are interested in the beginning of the universe...” In this chapter, God’s immanence and transcendence will be scrutinized in order to provide a clear delineation as proposed by the Scriptures.

Chapter 6: Is God predictable? The focus in this study is to establish whether God is predictable or unpredictable. A sound conception of God is necessary in order to discern if He is predictable or unpredictable. Erickson (2001:87) provides a solution to the problem that he has identified previously with regard to “misconceptions” that have been formulated of God. I briefly note that “God’s compassion embraces the nations also” (Bosch 2014:18). “The new world order will ... not imply a uniform culture ... but a variety of reformed Christian cultures ... absolute truth coexists with diversity of expression” (Newton 2015:309). Contemporary problems in society that have affected the Church negatively are ushering in the “signs of the times” (Erickson 2001:87). Whilst Erickson (2001) promotes the “institutional” aspect of the Church, Barna (2005) opposes it and follows the “remnant” among the “revolutionists”. Are we as Christians falling into the trap of the Anti-Christ? The Bible says there is strength in unity (Eph 1:10). How can the Body of Christ function if its scattered? Barna’s (2005) argument stems from the fact that believers want to separate themselves from believers that they perceive to be less holy. They wish to separate themselves from the “spiritually immature” and surround themselves with those who want to move to “the next level” (Stanglin 2008:60). “Vertikale versoening... is hoog op die agenda van die kerk” maar “God se liefde” sal eers “realiseer” wanneer “versoening tussen mense bewerkstellig” word (Nel 2019: 188). I suggest this equation: Natural phenomena (cosmos) + spiritual phenomena (Bible) = practical application (living as the true Body of Christ). This chapter will also contain a culmination of deductions made in the previous chapters.

Chapter 7: Conclusion This study researches if God is predictable or unpredictable. God has revealed Himself in His acts throughout history. His acts are an expression of Himself through a) His authoritative Word, general revelation in the world leads to special revelation (i.e. a personal relationship with Him); b) His acts in the past have been to create; His acts in the present involves His saving of people through salvation and His acts in the future will include the Second Coming of Jesus; c) His goodness shows that He will deliver the saints whilst His greatness shows that His mysterious ways are miraculous; d) His transcendence is far above our understanding and His immanence can reside in us through the Holy Spirit; e) God's relationship with His children is eternal. God's relationship with humankind is unique and is instituted by God for a specific purpose. God has proven Himself to be unpredictable at times yet He has forever been faithful to His people (predictable). God's acts are not in contradiction with His Person. Instead, it seems possible that it is His will to act. Humankind has searched for God extensively. It is asked "how the *Pentecostal* readings of the Bible make a contribution to the broader ecumenical Church and theological academy..." (Yong 2017:140). I comment that in the Pentecostal tradition, the act of "prediction" inevitably focuses on eschatological events and this might spur on research regarding the Book of Revelation and can have a great impact on evidence regarding the predictability of God via the "experience" of the believer. Believers have pondered on the issue if God acts in exactly the same manner each time a situation presents itself. God has anticipated this exploration and has revealed Himself to humankind. It has become clear from sources that in the search for knowledge, humankind has had different opinions regarding the aspects of faith and reason. These two outlooks have stood in opposition with each other for centuries. So also the truth of God's Word has been challenged from the 1st Century by false doctrines. Societal degeneration is taking place in our contemporary setting. Massive Churches such as Bethel and Hillsong are making themselves guilty of religious atrocities such as teaching false doctrines, reading tarot cards, as well as guilty of the practice of grave sucking. The dogma employed here are neither pure nor Biblical. Although the Pentecostal tradition has been accused of being overly focused on the experience, it has to be acknowledged that it is one of the emergent traditions that is putting a new, yet Biblical perspective on dogma. Where the Reformed movement is focused mainly on the Word of God, the Pentecostal movement focuses on the experience of the believer. It is clear to see that these two movements can make a great impact should their efforts be employed to complement each other. The Charismatic modern movement, on the other hand, has not formulated its theology yet and this raises a concern for the global Church. The study and formation of dogma has recently dwindled and this poses a dreadful concern for theologians worldwide. Two other issues of concern are the fact that a) man's knowledge is limited as suggested by Berkhof (1996:96), and this automatically influences his thinking and theory making, as well as; b) the speed at which technology is advancing as proposed by Erickson (2001:23). The dogmatic concern of this study must not only be viewed from the field of theology, however,

but also from a scientific point of view. I agree with Erickson (2001:76-81) and Berkhof (1996:18-20) that the dogma of the Bible is objective in nature rather than subjective as suggested by scholars such as “Schleiermacher and the Ritschlian view”. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (The Trinity) has consistently been working behind the scenes of reality to accomplish the unfolding of the grand narrative written specifically for humankind and all of creation. God’s goodness and God’s greatness are invaluable attributes that explain to humankind who God is and how He acts and for what reason (Erickson 2001:91-104). I propose that God’s goodness is predictable and that His greatness is unpredictable. The Bible explains that God’s image was imparted into humankind (Genesis 1:26). Because human beings are a finite race and God is the only infinite Being, it is possible that only certain spiritual aspects of God’s image were imparted to humankind (of which only a certain amount remains after the “Fall”). Theologically and eschatologically, the Body of Christ awaits the return of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming. The cross of Christ made salvation (and thus eternal life) possible to humankind. As God has acted in history, and is currently busy unfolding the grand narrative; He will also (according to the Bible) bring everything into completion in the end. As history is moving to a close (past, present and future) so salvation is also moving along “stages”. Erickson (2001:306) writes that there exist a “beginning, continuation, and completion” of salvation. We Biblically discern that the Creator (God) and everything that was created (creation) have an eternal bond (covenant). In some traditions including generic theology it is taught that God the Father sent God the Son (Jesus Christ) to the cross because of His great love for humankind (John 3:16). The reason for God’s acts and the manner in which it has been accomplished has been scrutinized by many. The authority of God’s Word stands unchanged as voiced by the Scriptures themselves (2 Timothy 3:16).

It is a part of humanity’s nature to study others through their words and actions. This aspect is no different when humankind searches for the truth of God and a deeper meaning of their existence; hence, the interest in physical and spiritual phenomena. We do it within our frame of reference. Humankind will inevitably look to God’s actions as an indication of who God is as a Person. I argue that God has always simultaneously been good and great. I propose that God’s greatness supersedes His goodness and in this greatness of God, God cannot be completely predictable to humankind because humankind is fallible and God is infallible. Humankind is finite and God is infinite. I propose that the image of God that was into man’s spiritual body possibly forms part of God’s attributes regarding His goodness. None of God’s attributes regarding His greatness were able to be transferred (imparted) to humans. Humankind simply doesn’t have the capacity to hold these qualities. Only God is God. God is unpredictable yet certain aspects of His actions as a Person can be predicted. This can be noted in the past, present and future events of history. I propose that God’s goodness is predictable and that God’s greatness is unpredictable. Therefore,

I deduct that God is predictable and unpredictable at the same time. I also suggest that God's greatness supersedes God's goodness. God is therefore more unpredictable than He is predictable. He is the unpredictable God of predictability; past, present and future.

I am of the opinion that Grudem (1994), Erickson (2001) and Berkhof (1996) have views that amalgamate to give a clear indication of what this field of study encapsulates. These three scholars are from different traditions, yet their theories, in my opinion, inevitably overlap. Clouser (2005) extensively teaches us that "religious neutrality" is a "myth". Grudem's Pentecostal view, Berkhof's Reformed view, as well as Erickson's Baptist, yet Evangelical approach blends to bring beautiful insight into the knowability of God. Due to the constraints of a Masters study I could not use all of the sources available,⁶ and while I do utilize other sources as well, these three theologians feature prominently for this reason.

⁶ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 40 – 45; Nels Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 227 – 28; Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 9, n. 5.

CHAPTER 2: THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

2.1 Introduction

This thesis investigates whether God is knowable. In my opinion, the Bible is the chief source to consult in the attempt to form a human understanding of God. As an adherent to the Pentecostal tradition, I consider the Bible to be God's revelation of Himself. Matters regarding the authority and divinity of the Scriptures have been extensively discussed over the centuries by scholars from various traditions (Driscoll 2008; Erickson 2001; Berkhof 1996; Felix-Jager 2014; Flew 2007; Grudem 1994; Horton 1994). Most Christian religious traditions adhere to the Bible as the ultimate rule of faith because they believe it to be authoritative. Thousands, if not millions, of dedicated believers flock to Christian churches on a Sunday morning with expectant hearts that are ready to receive from the Lord. Yet, not all scholars share the same sentiments on the authority of the Bible. It is mentioned from various sources that over the span of history the church has "witnessed the rise of a variety of movements" and that these "movements" have "focused on moral and spiritual renewal" as dogmas were practised in separate religious traditions (Stanglin 2008:59). The Pentecostal view reports that "Pentecostalism represents an expression of conservative Christian protest against modern theological trends" because inevitably these "trends" mostly "deny ... the divinity of Christ" as well as the "authority of Scripture" (Nel 2017:57). In order to determine whether God is knowable, a brief discussion on inspiration, inerrancy, and dogma will follow.

The Bible testifies to its divinity and claims to be the ultimate source of revelation from God (2 Peter 1:21). However, there exist conflicting views not only on the authority of the Word of God, but also regarding if it is "inspired" and "inerrant". A.T.B. McGowan's view for instance promotes "an 'infallibist' view", which states that there are "discrepancies" in the Bible but that they should be viewed as "minor human imperfections" (Scott 2009:185). Grudem (1994:40) adds that "Christians today should have no worry that anything needed has been left out or that anything that is not God's words has been included". It is noted here that topics up for discussion on the authority of the Bible range from "discrepancies" to "truthfulness". Hence, the focus on the "inspiration" and "inerrancy" of the Word of God. Further debates ensue with regard to the necessity of religion; adherence to dogma; and the faith life experience of the Christian believer. Religious faith (and all it entails) is often referred to by unbelievers as "the beginning ... of all disputes about the good life and the just city" (Hitchens 2007:6). Dogma is referred to as "established truths" which are instituted by "the body of Christians which formulated them" (Berkhof 1996:19).

From another point of view, it is also believed that dogma must focus on the “religious experiences” of the believer as proposed by Schleiermacher (Berkhof 1996:19). It is discussed that the Biblical canon is “the standard referent of theological formulations”. It is proposed that the works of “authors such as George Lindbeck, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Bernard Lonergan” be visited in order to “shift the discussion of Spirit baptism from its biblical warrant to its function. This is done for the sake of the “development of doctrine” (Clifton 2009:5). These abovementioned scholars work span across the Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic theological fields. I am of the opinion that all believers are called to be actively involved with God (in their faith relationship) and with His Word (as part of their spiritual growth). To my mind, “primarily through the means of reading Scripture for themselves, Christians should...be enabled by God to understand the teachings of Scripture clearly” (Grudem 1994:84). I believe that the Bible’s inspiration will last for all eternity.

Nelson and Wawire (2004:11) go as far as to making a doctrinal statement regarding the discussion of inspiration. They write “The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired of God; the revelation of God to man; infallible; the authoritative rule of faith and conduct (1 Th 2:13; 2 Ti 3:15-17; 2 Pe 1:21).”

To my mind, this view (of Nelson & Wawire 2004:11) is correct, clear and concise. I make this statement because in my experience as a Pentecostal pastor, there is a heavy focus on the movement of the Holy Spirit in services and through the Word of God. This can be ascribed to the fact that the Bible is the authentic product of the Holy Spirit’s work. Hence, it could be assumed that the Word of God is a valuable source to consult when researching whether God is knowable. In the Pentecostal tradition, we accept both the Old Testament and the New Testament as the true and authoritative Word of God. Religion and the relationship that each believer shares with God is highlighted in the spiritual walk of the Christian believer.

Berkhof (1996:19) focuses on dogma as being the chief focus of the believer. To my mind, and in my religious tradition, the experience of the believer forms a dominant section of the religious faith life and is viewed as being paramount. I am of opinion that various traditions can learn from each other and can benefit from an experiment of collaboration or integration. I am inspired by the work of Brunsdon (2014:1), who refers to such a venture as a “three musketeering approach” as in his context “collaboration” is attempted between “pastoral care, narrative therapy and positive psychology.” This method inevitably ushers in a challenge, due to the fact that “an innate tension” exists “between revelation and experience in pastoral theology as well as the philosophical migration from modernism to postmodernism” (Brunsdon 2014:1). It could in my opinion present the makings of a remarkable journey for those who have the courage to embark on uncharted territories. I perceive God to be knowable due to the notion that He ministers to

humankind in a holistic manner and across various fields of science, as well as through many religious traditions. In my opinion the “three musketeering approach” (Brunsdon 2014:1) could quite feasibly be employed in other arenas of study as well. One of the contributing factors to the authoritative and unique nature of Scripture is its inspiration.

2.2 Inspiration

When discussing the “inspiration” of the Bible, reference is made to the view that the Bible is the Holy Spirit “inspired” Word of God. I believe that God not only speaks through His Word, He is His Word also (John 1:14). Hence, I am led to believe that “God’s faithfulness to his people convinces us that there is nothing missing from Scripture that God thinks we need to know for obeying him and trusting him fully” (Grudem 1994:49). Often flowing from the topic of the “inspiration” the Bible is also referred to as an “inerrant” source. Higgins’ definition of inspiration is that: “God has revealed himself to his creation”: Thus, stating that “inspiration offers to the recording; or writing down, of this divine revelation” (Higgins, cited by Horton 1994:93). This promotes the idea that God has made knowledge regarding Himself available to humankind through His Word. In order to establish any data on what or who we are going to research we have to be able to identify various sources from which we can derive possible information. I present the theory that our principle dogmatic source of knowledge about God is the Bible. It has to be stated early on that in my opinion, the Bible addresses the spirituality of humankind. Other sources that we will draw upon include creation itself (scientific source i.e. physical phenomena), as well as humankind who was formed, created and shaped in the image of God (Gen 1:26). I perceive humankind to serve as a living example of God’s self-revelation. Humankind’s search for knowledge has led to the formation of theological science and it will therefore be employed in this fashion during the research process. For Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93), the “inspiration” of the Bible is directly linked with the “revelation” God manifests about Himself. Inspiration is described by Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) as an existent truth that has been made known and of which humankind is now aware. Another striking view on “inspiration” is that of Nelson and Wawire (2004:12), who state: “Inspiration is the process by which God ‘breathed’ His message into the original writers of Scripture.” Whereas Higgins’s view (cited by Horton 1994:93) on inspiration focused mainly on the complete product of the Scriptures themselves, Nelson and Wawire’s (2014:12) interpretation of inspiration is focused on the process which took place whilst the “inspiration” was given, that of having been “breathed” into the authors. Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) therefore sees the final product, whilst Nelson and Wawire (2014:12) are interested in how the product was woven together. I am of the opinion that these are both very important perspectives.

I add here that God is knowable through His Word. He is knowable through the process He uses to communicate with humankind (inspiration of the Bible) and He is also known by the mystery of His divine product (i.e. the Bible). Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:61) offers his unique view, which creates a link between theology and inspiration. He writes: "Theology, in its attempt to know God and to make Him known, presupposes that knowledge about God has been revealed." Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:61) therefore states that the theories researched in theology are thus founded on revelations as received directly from God. Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:63) notes: "The absolutely and eternally self-conscious God took the initiative to make Himself known to His creation." To Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:63), what stands out about the presence and act of inspiration is the fact that God took the time to put His Word together so as to make sure that His created beings would gain a better understanding of Him. Higgins' view (cited by Horton 1994:93) focuses more on the physical phenomena (the written Word of God i.e. physical product) whilst Nelson and Wawire (2014:12) are fascinated by the process through which the Holy Spirit inspired the authors (spiritual phenomena i.e. process of inspiration). I specifically find Higgins' view (cited by Horton 1994:63) and mention of the kindness of God intriguing. To my mind the miracle is in the fact that the infallible God of the universe took the time to reveal Himself to mere human beings.

This view is in essence the amalgamation of Higgins' view (cited by Horton 1994:93) and Nelson and Wawire's (2014:12) view. I am of opinion that should these views "collaborate" their efforts, all the scholars involved will inevitably benefit a great deal. Inspiration forms a "bridge" between the Holy Spirit and aesthetics (Sherry, cited by Felix-Jager 2014:85). I enquire: Could collaboration be viewed as building a "bridge" between various religious traditions and could the same principle apply when using general science and theological science in conjunction with each other? I comment that such a process can be both interesting and rewarding as it could benefit both fields of science. Personally, I perceive God to be the distributor of all types of knowledge. He is therefore knowable via various fields of study. I believe we need to use the process of "collaboration" when we attempt to discern the knowability of God. I agree that the "inspiration of Scripture" is also described as a "supernatural influence" instigated and performed by the Holy Spirit, which resulted in the formation of "an accurate record of revelation" (Erikson 2001:61). Erickson refers to God's Word as a "record" of the truth. Erickson takes Higgins's view (cited by Horton 1994:63) of result and the view of Nelson and Wawire (2014:12) of process and combines these views to discern that together they form a "record of revelation". Thus, where Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) focused mainly on the result of inspiration (which is the Bible itself) and Nelson and Wawire (2014:12) focused on the process of inspiration (the labour of the authors of the Bible), Erickson (2001:61) clearly takes it a step further and formulates a view that encapsulates both of these aspects of inspiration. He names it a "record of revelation".

Erickson (2001:61) has constructed his own “bridge” definition of inspiration. It seems plausible to state here that this is due to the collaboration he formed between the view of Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) and that of Nelson and Wawire (2001:12). In a way, these views are not in opposition to each other, but rather complement each other instead. It becomes clear that the “act of theory-making” will inevitably vary from individual to individual due to “differing world views” (Clouser 2005:3). To my mind, God is knowable through the “act of theory-making” because I believe He still inspires believers today. I perceive God to be active in our contemporary setting. The mere fact that scholars suggest that the Bible is the holy inspired Word of God has of course generated some opposition over the centuries. I believe that if inspiration is proven, it automatically provides the Bible with the authoritative status of a truly divine Book (i.e. inerrancy). I am of the opinion that God is knowable through the consistent assemblage of the manifold extremes that embodies the existence of humankind as a species both in their complexity and intensity. Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:80) elaborates: “Debate often ensues over whether the Bible is the Word of God or merely contains the Word of God. Actually, both ideas are true, only from different perspectives.” In the process of research, it is important to weigh and investigate various views in order to arrive at a calculated decision. I report that if both were true, they would have to have been true simultaneously. I believe that the Bible is a product of God that is holy and divine whilst also personalizing God’s voice to humankind. Hebrews 4:12 states: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (NKJV). Although I am from the Pentecostal tradition myself, I personally view the “written” Word of God as inspired. It is the purest dogmatic source available to humankind because it was provided by God Himself. In my opinion, the human interpreted Word of God can contain numerous errors (i.e. “experience” of individual believer).

For example, I personally perceive the theory of kenosis to be anti-Biblical. I believe that the Bible illustrates dogmatically that “Jesus is and was and is to come” and that He is simultaneously the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man. The supporting Scriptures that I list for my theory are John 3:16, Mark 8:31 and 1 Corinthians 15: 28. Traditionally, the theory of kenosis is described as “the doctrine that Christ relinquished His divine attributes so as to experience human suffering” (dictionary.com: no date). I refer to the fact that “a tragic lack of familiarity with the historical development of classical Christology has resulted in the acceptance of unbiblical views of Christ’s self-emptying” (Riccardi 2019:103). This “self-emptying” is the central gist of the kenosis theory and insists that Christ was only human when He came to earth. I include this section here because I want to illustrate that the inspired Word of God describes Jesus as the Son of God. as well as the Son of Man. Yet this Biblical doctrinal fact about Jesus Christ of Nazareth is interpreted differently by different scholars. There are those who believe in the theory of kenosis and there

are those who oppose it. Together with Bertschmann, I “reject the reading of Phil 3: 7-8 as Paul’s kenotic gesture” and realise that it was “triggered by the ‘knowledge of Christ’” (Bertschmann 2019:253). I argue that the kenosis theory must be abolished due to the fact that Jesus did not need a revelation of Himself. He Himself is the epitome of revelation and the Author of it. I add that “we must continually remember that we have in the Bible God’s very words, and we must not try to “improve” on them in some way, for this cannot be done” (Grudem 1994:63).

Yet the kenosis theory of Christ states that His deity was “circumscribed by His humanity during His earthly ministry” (Riccardi 2019:103). The Bible describes His role as Son of God and Son of Man differently. The Bible testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man simultaneously (Mark 8:38; John 3:16). Biblically, His superiority is undeniably rooted in His infinite nature and is an element of existence that humankind will never grasp. The inspiration of the Bible is confirmed by various religious traditions who differ between themselves regarding the interpretations of portions of Scripture. To my mind, this human shortcoming does not affect the divinity of the Bible or the infinite nature of Christ. In my opinion, the inspiration of the Bible is not influenced by the wrongful interpretations that often span across various religious traditions. The fact remains that the Bible describes “His divine attributes or prerogatives” as being “in the veiling of the rightful expression of His divine glory” (Riccardi 2019:103). I perceive God to be knowable through His Word. His Word stipulates that Jesus wilfully came to earth to save humankind (John 14:1,7,10). In my opinion, the very fact that Jesus was incarnated is indicative of the fact that there has never existed any other person on this earth who is similar in any way to Jesus (1 Timothy 3:16). To my mind, “the incarnation of Christ helps us to build a better model for the inspiration of Scripture” (Enns 2005:123).

For example, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is of the opinion that Pentecostalism and Catholicism, which normally operate “as opposite extremes” have seemed to place a “similar emphasis on authority” Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:83). Although the doctrines (interpretations of Scripture) of these two traditions differ greatly, they agree that the Bible is authoritative (i.e. inspired). “Present day opposition to Scripture”, as well as its “inspiration” is believed to be “not merely scientific” but also “ethical”. Many “objections”, however, are “not factual” but rather based on “faulty assumptions”. Often “objections” are “greatly exaggerated” (Berkhof 1996:161-162). The recognition of this problematic phenomenon causes the scholar to wonder how it came into existence. A brief look into the matter reveals the following: “Cultural and religious plurality” as well as “the rise of postmodern philosophies” coupled with “transformations in scientific paradigms” all facilitate a “change of outlook” (Kärkkäinen 2014:183). It is affirmed that these new insights could either be an indication of “transformation of Christian pneumatology” or it could point to the fact that “mainline Christian pneumatology” is currently “imprisoned” in “a paradigm of ‘unitive

pneumatology” (Kärkkäinen 2014:183). It is believed that the “unitive pneumatology” places restrictions on the changing theologies. The “enlightenment ... epistemology” states that anything non-natural in religion must be discarded. Yet this view is in contrast to “the worldview of the ancients”, who believed that “supernatural” phenomena was of paramount importance (Kärkkäinen 2014:184). I argue that God uses both the natural (i.e. general revelation [Berkhof 1996:128-132]) and supernatural (i.e. special revelation [Berkhof 1996:133-137]) not only to reveal His existence to humankind, but also employed both phenomena in order to form and shape His Word.

Personally, I believe this proves that the Bible is authoritative and inspired. To my mind, God is knowable through the universe that He created. Modern liberalism suggests that theology must largely be derived from “science and philosophy” and not necessarily from “the Bible as the Word of God” (Berkhof 1996:166). It is thus promoting an unethical approach to the Scriptures and their reading. In my opinion, this notion must be rejected and opposed. I agree that God intended for science and philosophy to become part of the believer’s experience in order to enhance the interpretation of God’s Word but I believe that the “Christian consciousness” (i.e. proficiency in interpretation) of humankind is lacking as opposed to God’s Word that is inspired and inerrant and therefore, in my opinion, stands unchallenged. I believe that scholars must be able to “teach Scripture clearly” (Grudem 1994:84). I believe God uses the physical phenomena to lead the believer into a revelation of Himself (spiritual phenomena/enlightenment). I believe that God is knowable through various types of phenomena since He is the creator and designer of them all. Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:98) directs his attention to “Formulating a view of inspiration” and writes:

“As one examines the data of Scripture, a number of elements involved in the act of inspiring are clearly presented. (1) “All Scripture is God-breathed... (2 Tim3:16); (2) The writers of Scripture were “carried along [or ‘led along’] by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). (3) The writers did not speak from their own will, but from God’s (2 Pet. 1:21). (4) Yet the writers did speak for themselves (Luke 20:42; John 12:39; Acts 3:22).”

From this we deduct that God communicated with the authors when He directly transferred His message into their hearts and minds. His divine message was breathed into the authors and transformed their lives. Each author has a personal connection to what he was writing about. This Pentecostal view on inspiration is Biblically sound (Higgins, cited by Horton 1994:98). His focus is on God who sent us His Word via inspiration. In my opinion, God is knowable due to the reality that He is a personal God with a personal message. There is no other literature on earth that can compare to its divinity. Nelson and Wawire (2004:13-16) argue the following: Jesus quoted the Scriptures implying that “A. Jesus Approved of the Old Testament”; “B. the Bible is the product of

One Master Mind”; “C. The types, symbols and ceremonies are evidences” of the prophecies of the Bible; “D. The Bible therefore stamp it as divine”; E. It’s “moral standards prove that it is divine”; F. “the Bible reveals man to himself”; it is “G. the only way of salvation”; “H. The world recognizes the Bible as divine”. In adherence with the Pentecostal tradition, it is taught that, “I. The Bible’s fruit” is undeniable; “J. The Bible has survived all the attacks of its enemies” and therefore “the world recognizes the Bible as divine” and timeless. It “will outlast the universe” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:16-18). In my view, I add that the persecution of the Church is currently more severe than at any other point in history. Biblically (theologically and dogmatically) and according to my personal belief, this points in eschatological terms to the Second Coming of Christ. Nelson and Wawire’s (2003:13-16) view is reminiscent of the very process of inspiration through which the product of the Bible was received by humankind. Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:98) focuses on God extensively, whilst Nelson and Wawire (2003:13-16) make deductions on what we find within the Bible. Again, we find that their collaborative findings provide Erickson (2001:63) with his own theory.

Erickson (2001:63-64) lists five “theories of inspiration” that is helpful to the believer in discerning in which process the inspiration took place. His writes:

- “The intuition theory makes inspiration ... insight”. I add that the process of inspiration is said to have been similar to a prophetic impartation of some sort;
- “The illumination theory maintains that the Holy Spirit” in a way “heightened” the author’s “normal power”. Thus, in my opinion, it reports that a new level of understanding was reached;
- “The dynamic theory emphasizes the combination of divine and human elements” (Erickson 2001:64). God’s divine story was penned down in human terms;
- “The verbal theory maintains that the influence of the Holy Spirit extended beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words used to convey the message” (Erickson 2001:64). I deduct that the Holy Spirit suggested specific words;
- “The didaction theory is the teaching that God actually dictated the Bible to the writers” (Erickson 2001:64). Some believe that the Holy Spirit operated in an instructive manner.

In a sense, Erickson (2001:64) and Berkhof (1996:152) focus on the act of inspiring, much like Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:98). I agree that what grips me the most as a believer is God’s wilful act to choose and decide to inspire the authors via the Holy Spirit (The Third Person of the Trinity). The fact that the process was even possible is astounding. I believe that God’s image made it possible for humankind to receive these spiritual messages from the Holy Spirit. A further description of inspiration is conducted in an effort to draw a conclusion. Berkhof (1996:151-152) displays three alternative views on inspiration, which are listed as “mechanical”; “dynamic” and

“organic inspiration”. When investigating these types of inspiration, it becomes clear that Berkhof’s findings can be described as overlapping with that of Erickson (2001:63-64). The main thought that is put across is that the Holy Spirit was involved in the process of inspiration; He initiated and He acted as the Inspirer, as well as the catalyst for the inspiration process. I argue that due to the fact that the Bible testifies to the fact that It was written by men who received inspiration from the Holy Spirit, it is worthy of our respect and obedience. God is knowable in my opinion, through His Word because God wove It together for His purposes and according to His will. Determining the knowability of God is most likely initiated by a deep investigation of His Word. I am convinced that “when the Bible speaks, God speaks” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:35). The inspiration of Scripture means that it is trustworthy, it is inerrant.

2.3 Inerrancy

The special revelation from God in the Bible should be viewed separately from inspiration (Berkhof 1996:144). It could be stated here that the presence of inspiration and revelation are not only linked, but they collaborate their efforts to guide the believer to understanding God’s Word. It could further be deduced that the inspiration of God’s Word plus the revelation that is received by the believer proves that the Bible is inerrant. I make this statement because I believe that both of these processes are Holy Spirit led. “God’s being” that “proceeds” teaches that believers should start by looking first at “God” as a “being” who reveals “Himself” before moving on to the “doctrine of God” Barth (cited by Jüngel 2001:1). In a sense this would entail an initial and primary acknowledgement that He in fact exists. I report that the Word of God is inerrant. In my opinion, I believe that not only did Jesus become incarnated and saved humankind on the cross of Calvary, God the Father also sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost Who made the formation of the Bible possible. Some terms were not used by the “early church fathers”, the “Roman Catholic theologians” or even the “Protestant Reformers”, not even to mention the “Modern evangelicals” (i.e. “Pentecostals”), yet all of these traditions have “affirmed” that the “Bible is entirely true” (Higgins, cited by Horton 1994:101). To my mind, proof of these many different traditions that unite on this topic could be considered as proof of the Bible’s inerrancy.

The proof of the inerrancy of the Bible automatically sets the stage for believers to partake in a life-long journey of knowing God. I believe that the divine nature of the Bible points to a divine, magnificent yet, knowable God who is both infinite yet personal. In my opinion, it’s a union of the knowable yet mysterious existence of hidden knowledge. The Bible is the perfect application of God’s impartation of divine wisdom into the hearts and minds of humankind. The Holy Spirit is knowable through the relationship the believer frequents with God.

I am of opinion that a clear Biblical view on inerrancy strengthens and supports views on the inspiration of the Bible and vice versa. I also believe that a combination of inspiration and inerrancy culminates into revelation. It is also mentioned that inerrancy means “different things to different people” (Erickson 2001:69). For instance, one view is that “if inerrancy is denied” a “serious moral problem confronts us ...”. It is also noted that such a refutation formulates a view where the believer “denies God’s trust” (Grudem 1994:76). Another view explains that “inerrancy is a doctrine”. It is stipulated that we live in a “scientific age” where “doctrines” are “viewed as facts” or “as theories about biblical facts” and that “inerrancy is located within the doctrine of Holy Scripture” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:6-9). I believe that although there are different views on inerrancy, the Scriptures are all portrayed Biblically as completely “sufficient, authoritative and prime” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:9).

A swift view of the types of inerrancy as listed by Erickson (2001:69) will now ensue. In my opinion the difference between “absolute inerrancy”; “full inerrancy” and “limited inerrancy” are based on the perception of the individual. “Absolute inerrancy” holds that the “Bible ... is fully true”; “Full inerrancy” describes the Bible as “the divine Word of God”; “Limited inerrancy”, on the other hand, stipulates that the Bible is both “errant” and “inerrant” depending on the portion of Scripture that is being read. In my opinion, the Bible is the complete and authentic inspired Word of God. Because it is inspired, I believe it to be inerrant. Therefore, inspiration proves undeniable inerrancy. From my point of view, I argue that misconceptions arise with regard to certain portions of Scripture due to the fact that semantic changes in words over the course of history have altered the meaning of sentences. In my opinion, the Scriptures are still relevant and contemporary, which makes them applicable to humankind. I believe God to be knowable in all sections of Scripture and that His message must be discerned by believers to carry an all-encompassing message. I agree that “the difficult passages of scripture are part of the whole counsel of God” (Hodge 2009:65).

Canale (2005:465-466) explains how “Achtemeier affirms Scripture contains biological and botanical errors because it says the rabbit chews (Leviticus 11:6), and the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds (Mark 4:31). Yet it is discussed that “even if Achtemeier is right, the historical-cognitive model would view these examples as minor details, because their deletion would leave the message of the texts untouched” (Canale 2005:468). This clearly stipulates that the portions of Scripture that are under question are not relevant to the overall message of the Bible with regard to authoritative and inspired matters. Examples of some of these discrepancies are listed: “1. Errors in natural science”; “2. Wrong attributions” where there are “quotations in the New Testament ... to the wrong Old Testament book”; “3. Statistical discrepancies” such as “inconsistent figures”; “4. Reporting historical facts,” for instance “Mark 6: 8-9”, which states “take

nothing 'except' a staff and sandals" whilst in "Mark 10: 9-10" it states that they are "not to take" the "staff or sandals"; "5. Inner theological inconsistencies". The "presuppositions" of humankind are described here as the originating source of the "issue" of "inerrancy" (Canale 2005:466-470). Clearly, the differences that are noted as minute in nature and do not bring the inspiration or the inerrancy of the message of the Bible into question.

Helm (2010:32), on the other hand, states that there are "other modes of revelation". Helm (2010:32) speaks out against McGowen's claims that Warfield and the Princetonians have planned an "inerrantist account of inspiration that is 'mechanical', or provides any pre-text for a mechanical view, has no support." I agree with Hodge (2009:209) that every part of Scripture is divine and inerrant, even the sections that seem to be irrelevant for our contemporary setting has an importance for believers. Warfield (cited by Helm 2010:32) states that inspiration is not necessary for revelation. I reject this statement due to the fact that I believe the Word of God to be a product of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it renders revelation according to the movement of the Holy Spirit even unto this contemporary time. To my mind, inspiration and revelation are eternal processes created by God for the believer.

I argue that the "mechanical view" [the view that the Holy Spirit's "guidance" resulted in the "choice of words" (Berkhof 1996:151)] and the "organic view" [the view that the "authors" were "not passive but active" (Berkhof 1996:152)] are very closely related and each view might find favour with different believers. I contend that the Bible is the inspired Word of God because it is a product from God the Holy Spirit. I argue that inerrancy results from the proof of inspiration and not necessarily knowledge of the exact method that took place. Theological scholars can but theorize about how the process took place but on one point they are not divided and that is that the Bible is the divine message from God given to humankind through His Holy Spirit. I theorize that the authority and inerrancy of the Bible points to God's knowability, as well as the fact that it has become clear that it is His will to be known. Based on the arguments that I have presented I conclude that the Bible is proof that God is knowable and that He longs to be known. I report that the Word of God is inerrant.

2.4 The relevance of dogma

Now that inspiration and inerrancy have been confirmed, a brief study concerning the necessity for the development and adherence to dogma must be done into the dogma of the Bible and its contemporary relevance for the Church of the 21st Century. I believe that the adherence to dogma helps believers to stay rooted in the truthful teachings of the Bible. It assists believers to avoid the

various false teachings that have arisen since the days of the early church. This will facilitate a clear understanding of the truthful message of God's Word. General knowledge regarding the dogmatical points in different traditions teach us that the Reformed tradition is "derived from the Word" (Berkhof 1996:19-20); the Pentecostal tradition is mostly based on "personal experience" (Horton 1994:21), whilst the Evangelical tradition is based on "salvation" (Erickson 2001:292). Frey and Levison (2014:1) report that Pentecostal theology and "exegesis provide a challenge and inspiration for other theological school and arenas of biblical scholarship, not just with respect to biblical hermeneutics, but certainly with their focus upon claims to human experience of the divine". I report that these different approaches could possibly assist scholars in future collaboration. Kärkkäinen uses "his method" as an "integrative" model "of diverse disciplines (religious, cultural, and natural-scientific studies" (John Wiley & Sons 2014:529). It is believed that "as a scientist examines nature and formulates theories to explain its consistent behaviour, so the theologian formulates doctrine that explains the data of Scripture" (Merrick & Garrett 2013:6). To my mind, God is knowable due to the fact that His presence can be discerned in all the fields of science.

I will now briefly look at the Reformed tradition and the Pentecostal tradition, as well as their views on inspiration and inerrancy as my spiritual shaping is due to both these wonderful and insightful traditions.

2.4.1 The Reformed position

I have been a pastor in the Pentecostal tradition for thirteen years. I started my theological studies first at the Full Gospel Church College in Irene (Berea) in 2012. Whilst I was doing their theological diploma programme, the North West University approached various tertiary institutions and gave the students the opportunity to move over to the NWU B.Th. programme. I leaped at the opportunity! It is here that my Pentecostal view was shaped, as well as challenged in some aspects of study, of which I am very thankful for today. In 2014 my thoughts ventured to the idea that an amalgamation between different theological traditions are possible and, in my opinion, necessary. Due to my exposure in my studies at NWU to the Reformed tradition and my work as a pastor in the Pentecostal tradition, I believe that God has blessed me with a unique view that can contribute to the theological arena. Never before was I exposed to such a scenario. It taught me for the first time why I believed what I believed and it gave me the freedom to explore and to theorize about the religious life and application thereof across the planes of other religious traditions.

It has taught me that “the Church must live by the Word of God, or it will depend upon some human authority as a substitute for God’s Word” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:26). It has taught me that “if the Bible is not the very Word of God, bearing his full authority and trustworthiness, we do not know what Christianity is” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:26). But most of all, it has taught me obedience in the sense that the voice of Scripture must always in my life and ministry overpower the voice of the religious tradition because traditions are made by human beings and are fallible. I believe that the “dogma” of the Bible is pure and true, yet I believe that the interpretation of dogma can often be erroneous (manmade).

I believe that dogma must “always lead back to the verba of Scripture...” (Leithart 2017:36). I make this statement because I am convinced that dogma has to lead back to its source. I realise that this statement can be questioned by some scholars whose “religious belief” influences their “theory-making” via the “interpretation” of elements (Clouser 2005:3). I have learned in the ministry that worldviews influence beliefs as it shapes and forms religious beliefs and practices. I point out that it is the reason for the various denominations in existence today. I believe that God is knowable in the sense that He will make known what is true and what is false in the very end of time. To my mind, He is the God of the past, present and future. God is mysterious in the sense that as believers we have to realise that God is holy and we will never get to a place in our reasoning stages where we can fully understand Him. He is knowable, yet only to a limited and human extent.

“Barth distinguishes between ‘dogma’ in the singular and ‘dogmas’ in the plural.” The “singular” aspect of “dogma” generally refers to the “proclamation” of the “Church” as illustrated in the “Bible”: (Berkhof 1996:20). I perceive that Barth therefore believed that dogma is the combination of the “proclaiming of God’s Word” (i.e. evangelism) coupled with “revelation” from God. The combination of these two aspects could inevitably form the goal of the faith life of the believer. We find an overlap here: this could indicate that collaboration between the Reformed tradition (“Word based”) and the Pentecostal tradition (“experience based”) is possible. I believe that the same principle can be applied using the process of collaboration between general science and theological science. “Plural dogmas” are described as the “doctrinal propositions” that are “acknowledged” and “confessed” by “the Church” and they are reported to contain “relative authority” (Berkhof 1996:20). Dogmas, according to Barth, who is a Reformed theologian (Berkhof 1996:20), are the “symbols” that “man” derives from the “Word of God”. I deduct that Barth feels that it is not about the dogma itself, but rather the expression thereof.

I report that the act of interpretation, experience and expression can all be linked here and supports a possible connection thus between Barth’s Reformed paradigm and the Pentecostal paradigm. Likewise, the very essence of the Bible teaches that it is inspired, as well as inerrant

and that it can minister to all who reads it. From my Pentecostal perspective I note that the experience of each believer in his/her setting and culture provides a rich illustration of the message of the Word of God. We all have something we have to offer in the kingdom of God. I notice two inextricable links between humans: a) All humans are religious beings (Clouser 2005:9) and b) whatever the differences between the religious traditions are, the foundational aspect is recognised as the belief amongst all of them that God's Word is inspired and inerrant (Horton 2014:65). I perceive that the "single dogmas" create a platform for the amalgamation of effort between traditions whilst the "plural dogmas" facilitate the "act" of sharing amongst them. In the Reformed tradition, "Three characteristics" of "religious dogmas" are respectively "subject-matter" comes exclusively from "Scripture"; dogmas are the "fruit of reflection" harvested after reading the Bible and it also forms "adopted" truths (Berkhof 1996:21). Therefore, it can be deduced that dogmas are a product of Scriptures; dogmas are reproductive in nature and dogmas are acceptable in nature. I perceive God to be knowable through the continuous revelation that the Bible renders to believers. Berkhof (1996:22) is of the opinion that the "Ritschlian view" is "objective" as it is rooted "in the revelation of God given in Jesus Christ". Yet upon further investigation, dogmas are "not the object", but rather function as "the expression of faith" (Berkhof 1996:22). In my opinion as a pastor in a Pentecostal denomination, I believe that the Word and the experience of the believer should enjoy equal focus. I do however view the Word as the "object" of our enquiry and the believer's experience as "subjective". This could be out of the ordinary within the Pentecostal tradition. Harnack believes dogma contains a "social element". "Sabatier" states that dogma is formed when the "religious society" focuses not on their "civil" responsibilities but realise that they are a "moral society" (Berkhof 1996:32). McGiffert adds that "beliefs" are illustrated by Schleiermacher as "social products". In these "modern times" we reflect and note that "history and psychology of religion" has made this "evident" (Berkhof 1996:32). Schleiermacher views "dogmas" as "religious experiences", whilst Ritschl focuses on Jesus Christ and views faith as "subjective" (Berkhof 1996:34). Different worldviews and beliefs make for some pretty interesting doctrinal clashes. They are often referred to as "long-drawn controversies" (Berkhof 1996:23). This is not an option for this study as the question at hand is God's knowability. Yet it does carry significance for the topic. We know God by what He reveals to humankind through His Word and others.

Lastly, it would be a wise decision to study the "Elements of Dogma" as set out by Berkhof. When discussing the "nature of dogmas", Berkhof (1996:31) writes that the "elements involved in Dogmas" are "the social element; the traditional element; the element of authority." According to Berkhof (1996:31) "the social element" proclaims that "religious dogmas" are not from "individuals" but stem from the "Church" itself. Berkhof believes that these dogmas become communal. Berkhof (1996:31) writes: "The communal or social character, which the dogmas thus acquire,

may not be regarded as something accidental and of only relative importance, but should be thought of as something that is absolutely essential." God's Word is given to us as an example. We deduct from Berkhof that the dogmas that the church construct, become accepted in the church and these dogmas are then projected onto the individuals in the community, thereby infiltrating society. "The social element" proclaims that "religious dogmas" are not from individuals, but stem from the Church. "The communal or social character" of the dogmas must be viewed as "something essential" (Berkhof 1996:31). In my experience, the adherence to dogmatic precepts that have existed for centuries should be promoted in the search for the knowability of God. God is knowable not only through His Word but also through His Church and in the community at large.

It would be an opportune moment to reflect the Pentecostal view regarding dogma before an argument is made for the authority of the Bible as an indicator of the knowability of God.

2.4.2 The Pentecostal position

As a pastor in the Full Gospel Church, I note that in my opinion, the "Full Gospel Message" refers to the adherence of the believer to the entire Word of God, which includes being part of the eschatological community of God who keep themselves busy with the Great Commission as well as social upliftment.

Central to the Pentecostal tradition is the fact that its "identity was established by the preaching of the full gospel message". This was done in a "restorationist – revivalistic manner" and included "ecstatic charismatic experiences" as well as "the expectation that miracles would occur" (Archer 2009:32). In "Pentecostal groups" the model of "the early church is followed as a "role-model" signifying the choice to be "in the world but not of the world" (Nel 2015:141). Kreider (cited by Nel 2014:143) comments that in the "early church" there were a few "distinctives" worth mentioning: "membership ... was ... voluntary"; there was "freedom of worship"; believers lived "moral lives" and most importantly they "witnessed" (Nel 2014:143). Yet we find that "in the Christendom era" (the times of the early church until now), shifts of focus have occurred such as; "churches became elaborate buildings" with the aim to "impress the world". This brought a limited focus to the "people" as "being the Church". Now membership is mostly "compulsory" and has mainly become "institutionalized" (Zimmerman 2012:90). Nel (2014:1) introduces information regarding the Pentecostal tradition. He writes: "Every religion has a belief component or a series of doctrinal essentials (Kellstedt et al, 1998:175)." It is what singles out the different religious beliefs and practices from each other. Nel explains that the "Pentecostal movement" currently could be "suffering" from "the emphasis on glossolalia". It is mostly discussed as the "most important

distinctive” of this movement. Yet it shouldn’t be singled out. The doctrine of “glossolalia” is unique yet it isn’t the only important difference from other traditions. Nel (2014:3) then notes that “the motif of the Latter Rain was interpreted by the Pentecostal people as a stable framework of God’s involvement with human history and provided the framework in which they constructed their world-view (Faupel 1996:32-36)”. The Pentecostal movement therefore places great significance on “revival”. The phenomenon of “revival” and the recurring thereof can give us important data regarding the question if God is knowable or mysterious. In most Pentecostal churches, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a vital component of each worship service since the Day of Pentecost. Pentecostal Churches don’t believe that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was only an isolated event. They preach that is a continual phenomenon that is ushered in through prayer and fasting, as well as praise, worship, and very importantly, the preaching of the Word of God. Nel (2014:3-4) reports: “Pentecostals read the accounts in Acts in terms of their concept of the Latter Rain and interpret it as the general pattern of the early church’s reception of the Spirit that needs to be replicated in the life of each individual believer (Archer 2009:140-1560).” I have found that in the Pentecostal tradition the approach to the dogma of the Bible is hermeneutical, as well as exegetical in nature. Thus, it is admonished that the Scriptures are to be read within a modern-day context. The believer relies heavily on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the contents of the Bible.

“Pentecostals read” in the New Testament that “the modern believer” must become “a disciple of Christ”. In the Pentecostal tradition, the “fullness of the Spirit” is received in a “baptism of fire and power” (Nel 2014:4). The movement of the Holy Spirit is a definite point of importance within the Pentecostal tradition. Again, we are reminded that discipleship is propagated because it is a part of the Great commission in Matthew 28:16-20. Salvation is viewed as a dynamic life-changing and edifying event. Nel (2014:5) continues:

“Pentecostal denominations and groups define viewpoints on issues such as foot washing, fasting, participation in secret societies and labour unions, and usefulness of conferences and camp meetings in different ways. In most cases these statements do not reflect the distinctive, the *gestalt* of the Pentecostal movement.”

I personally believe that not all Pentecostal churches display all of the aspects listed above. What Nel is describing is a general view regarding the Pentecostal movement. A definite characteristic of the Pentecostal Churches is the importance that is placed on the movement of the Holy Spirit in services and revivals. I agree with Nel that the Pentecostal tradition has largely been misunderstood. I add that not all Pentecostal movements are saturated with “secret societies” and the like. Nel (2014:6) lists the “the five strands or themes of the “whole” or “full” as explicated in the statement are: “conversion, sanctification, baptism in the Spirit with the evidence of tongues, divine healing, and Jesus’ second coming. This constellation of themes recurs throughout the

whole Pentecostal movement, and throughout the world (Dayton, 1987:20).” When looking closely at these “strands” as listed by Nel, I notice that they are steps of the same process that play out in the salvation process. I note that it is possible that of the dogma of the Full Gospel (Pentecostal) Church applied these strands that have been formulated in order to explain to new converts what the next step will be as far as the Full Gospel Church’s interpretation of the Bible conveys. “The Pentecostal movement” is of opinion that “the modern church” must as “part of the post-Pentecost experience” function and flow in the Holy Spirit much like the early church in Acts (Nel 2014:4). This is noteworthy due to the fact that it sums up a vital point of the Pentecostal tradition. Pentecostal worship services are known for their “signs”, “miracles” and “wonders” that take place and the prayers that accompany them. Nel (2014:5) elaborates: “It is possible to divide Pentecostal churches and movements into three groups as Faupel (1972) demonstrates: “churches emphasizing a doctrine of sanctification in the Wesleyan Holiness tradition” with its ‘three works of grace’ consisting of conversion, ‘entire sanctification; as a distinct and subsequent experience, and a baptism with the Spirit empowering the believer for service and witness and evidenced by speaking in tongues...” I report that the first group regards the first aspect of salvation to be “conversion” then it purports that “sanctification” takes place in an instant after which the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” follows. Nel (2014:5) continues to teach on the second group “churches proclaiming two works of grace by collapsing the first two into one ‘finished work’ supplemented by a process of gradual sanctification...”

I report that the second group combines the aspects of conversion and sanctification, stating the sanctification happens in the moment of conversion. This view states that the sanctification process is a continuous process and it happens throughout the life of the believer. Nel (2014:6) further states of the third group of individuals “and those holding a “Oneness” or “Jesus Only” view of the Godhead, proclaiming a Unitarianism of the Second Person of the Godhead, and supporting the notion of two works of grace.” I report that the third view is quite extreme, as it only places importance on Jesus within the Godhead, whilst the Bible describes the Godhead to be the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit, Three-in-one. I perceive God to be knowable through the processes of “conversion, salvation and sanctification” regardless of their timespan.

Next, Nel discusses the “Distinctives of Worship” in the Pentecostal Tradition. He (Nel 2014:8) writes: “Pentecostals’ most distinctive characteristic is not their theological deliberations but their worship services (Cartledge, 2010: 29-30). The Catholic service has the altar where the Mass is offered dominating the centre of the church and the Reformed service has the pulpit in the centre with its strong emphasis on the preaching of the Word based on a thorough theological basis, while the worship service of Pentecostals is determined and dominated by the experiential, a product of the Pentecostal hermeneutic” (Nel 2014:8). I would like to differ with Nel on this point

as the Pentecostal Churches in which I have worked have also (in my experience), much like the “Reformed services” had the “pulpit in the centre with its strong emphasis on preaching”. This is noteworthy because in my experience, not all “Pentecostal” churches are *only* interested in worship. I am delighted to report that solid teachings do make it to the altar and are preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and in His anointing. Nel illustrates the second “distinctive”. He (Nel 2014:8) continues: “The second element of Pentecostal theological distinctive has to do with Jesus as Sanctifier of believers and Pentecostals are encouraged in a life of prayer, seeking daily after the Spirit that sanctifies them.” I report that a personal walk with God is definitely encouraged at all times. A devoted life of prayer is paramount in the Pentecostal tradition. An emphasis is placed on the personal and spiritual growth and development of the believer. Nel (2014:9) indicates the third point: “Sanctification is seen as preparation for Spirit baptism: the purpose and goal of sanctification is to be filled with the Spirit.” I report that Pentecostals also believe that the infilling with the Holy Spirit is a continuous process, just like the process of sanctification is continuous. The fourth point is also illustrated by Nel (2014:9), who states: “Most Pentecostals affirm that tongues speech as the initial evidence of the Spirit baptism is normative.” The “evidence of tongues” is seen as the necessary proof that the person is truly saved and in filled by the Holy Spirit. Nel (2014:10) continues to the next point: “Pentecostals insist they must be associated with the modern Spirit-filled church.” I comment that the Pentecostal movement does maintain that it originated from the early church and the work and ministry of the apostles. Being “Spirit-filled” is very important in the Pentecostal tradition and this has contributed to the major focus on the experience of the believer. I have to note from my own personal view, however, that there has been a movement amongst the Pentecostal Christians where attention has been focused on the Word of God. Nel (2014:10) continues “the last distinctive proposed for the Pentecostal movement is its eschatological expectation.” I report that the Pentecostal church believes that it is part of an eschatological community that is waiting for the return of Christ. The Pentecostal Church has many strong points and like other denominations, it also has its shortcomings, but what is very important to note at this point is that the Pentecostal Church believes in the inspired Word of God and it sees the Bible as the authoritative revelation straight from God’s heart. From a Pentecostal perspective – determining God’s knowability is necessary in order to experience a personal walk with God.

“In the Pentecostal academic journal of *Pneuma* and *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* a few scholars who write on ecclesiological issues present fresh insights into developing the

Pentecostal thought and framework. They are; Simon Chan⁷, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen⁸, Steven Lord, Frank Macchia⁹, Clark Pinnace and Amos Yong¹⁰ (Lord 2012:66). These scholars suggest a “networking approach” (Lord 2012:3) for the Pentecostal believer, which I believe can have invigorating results on scholarly growth and development. Their innovative remarks have given me insight into the knowability of God and strengthen my belief that collaboration is viable.

Yet “a consideration of partnership has been neglected by Pentecostal studies”. The “theme of sharing partnership” has been overseen until now (Lord 2012:162) and is actually “related to the term *koinōnia*”. This indicates that the principle of collaboration could quite possibly be viewed as a Biblical principal. I believe that as the authoritative source of God’s revelation of Himself the Bible must be viewed by believers as inspired and inerrant. It is the key to unlocking knowledge about God. I believe it is the Source from which the children of God derive revelation through the leading of the Holy Spirit. I argue that networks could contribute to a well-researched view of the knowability of God. I report that general science and theological science should collaborate their findings (macro level) and that religious traditions should investigate points of overlap in order to streamline views on God’s knowability (micro level).

In my opinion, God has provided humankind with dogma in order to not only hold believers accountable, but also to steer religious notions and beliefs clear of the negative influences of false doctrines. Whether there be “singular” or “plural dogmas” (Berkhof 1996:20), the fact remains that it forms an important part of the faith life and development of the believer. I believe that “instead of allowing differences between passages to challenge our faith in the Bible, we should allow them to challenge our previously held theological ideas” (Canale 2005:470-471). In my opinion, it has become clear that dogma not only gives direction, but it also inspires and equips (Nel 2014:143) as it ushers in “freedom of worship”. I deduct that dogma in a sense participates in the “discipleship” (Nel 2014:4) of the believer as it enlightens the mind of new converts. To my mind, God is knowable through the dynamic nature of dogma. I believe that “whatever words Christians employ to speak of the Bible (inerrant, infallible, authoritative, revelational, inspired), either today or in the past, must be seen as attempts to describe what can never be fully understood” (Enns 2005:123). To my mind, “the incarnate written Word (Scripture) is, like Christ, beyond our ability

⁷ Simon Chan is challenging the “Pentecostal tendency to adopt” a “very meek, sociological concept of the Church”. He “experiences” the “triune God” in “worship” (Lord 2012:75).

⁸ “Kärkkäinen, like Volf, has an inherently ecumenical approach ... his “experiences” of the Spirit” have “moved him” from “Pentecostalism to embrace wider ecumenical insights” (Lord 201:70).

⁹ Frank Macchia believes that the “baptism” makes believer a “living flame” who becomes a “witness” (Lord 2012:75):

¹⁰ Amos Yong holds “an ecumenical and world – embracing understanding of the work of the Spirit” (Lord 2012 71). He longs for “congregations and denominations to be brought “together”.

to grasp exclusively” (Enns 2005:123). I therefore choose to accept by faith the validity and authority of God’s Word and the dogma it contains therein.

2.5 Summary

It has been noted that Reformed scholars place focus on the “Word of God” (Berkhof 1996:19-20), whilst Pentecostal scholars choose to draw from “experience” (Horton 1994:21). I propose that the Reformed tradition and the Pentecostal tradition should collaborate in order to facilitate a platform for learning that both the objective and subjective (Horton 1994:85) aspects of the Bible will form a coherent whole for scholars. Erikson (2001:77) describes “the objective Word” to be the “written, inspired scripture” and the “subjective word” to be a part of the “inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit”, which when used in union “constitutes the authority for the Christian”. Erickson (2001:77) has thus inspired me to take this view. Additionally, I report that different fields of science (uses physical phenomena in theory-making) as well as theology as a science (uses spiritual phenomena in theory-making) should collaborate in the search for God’s knowability. I am of opinion that God employs “general revelation” (Berkhof 1996:128-132) within creation, as well as “special revelation” (Berkhof 1996:133-137) within the Bible to give humankind a description of Who He is (to make Himself knowable). This topic will be further discussed in Chapter 3. I therefore argue that from my Pentecostal point of view, God’s Word is authoritative because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Trinity). Personally, I believe that its inspirational value proves that it is inerrant. The Bible will thus in this study be consulted with regard to the doctrine of God, as well as the doctrine of His Word. Findings will be weighed against scientific discoveries and will be employed to form an opinion on whether God is knowable or entirely mysterious.

2.6 New insights

The first mistake scholars in past centuries have made was to believe that other traditions that differed from their own were inevitably inferior or that they possessed only partial aspects of the “truth” (Youngs 2015:91). The Pentecostal tradition has indeed arisen from humble yet promising roots and has acted as the pioneer in facilitating ecumenism. It is “one of the fastest growing movements of the last century” (Lord 2012:1). It is described as “a diverse and divergent countercultural paramodern movement” that is not only powerful but that works extensively amongst the “margin of society” (Archer 2009:38). “How, if at all, might specifically *Pentecostal* readings of the Bible make a contribution to the broader ecumenical church and theological

academy?” (Yong 2017:140). “Three possible types of contribution” are described as “the authorial, the particularist, and the hybridic” “Authorial” refers here to an “implicit reading...within the authors Pentecostal identity. The “particular perspective” refers to the “Pentecostal worldview”. The phrase “hybridic” is used to refer to “ways they attempt to communicate their Pentecostal predispositions amidst a wider ecumenical audience” (Yong 2017:140).

2.7 Conclusion

In order to establish a steadfast interpretation of God’s knowability, I have suggested that general science (which employs the use of natural phenomena) in theories and theology as a science (which employs the use of spiritual phenomena) should find a way to collaborate in order to generate knowledge on the topic at hand (macro approach). I believe that the findings retrieved will inevitably cipher through to our theological research and will create a platform where theological traditions (denominations) can apply the same principle which would lead to a collaboration and integration of knowledge, wisdom and skill amongst scholars (micro approach). There seems to be a new movement within theological scholarship that is moving and progressing along these lines. They are of the opinion that “there is a need for research projects” that will “build on such scholarship” in order “to develop Pentecostal ecclesiologies” that will not only “interact” but also contribute to “systematic reflections” from “outside the Pentecostal tradition” (Lord 2012:1). In my opinion, it is the transformational aspect of the Pentecostal tradition that has made it so popular.

The contemporary Church differs much from the early Church. This is due to a) changing societal morals and values (i.e. communal decline) has affected the Church), as well as b) false doctrines that have poisoned the clear waters of God’s Word (the authority of the Bible has been brought into question). This process quite possibly already started with Karl Barth who suggested a “new theology” (Clarke 2005:123). It is noted that contemporary scholars such as “Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has distinguished himself among the new breed.” Other such scholars include Amos Yong and Jürgen Moltmann (Clarke 2005:123-124). Some diverse views were generated in this process and time of upheaval. Viola and Barna argue that “today’s church practices” were “in essence adopted from ‘pagan’ culture”, which has led to churches “departing from the radical vision of church life” (Nouwen, Longman & Todd 2008:153). Humankind as a species exist in much the same manner. Humankind has realised that it has to be flexible, adaptable and open to transformation in order to survive and grow. Leading contemporary scholars in the Pentecostal tradition are currently acting as pioneers in order to lead the Pentecostal thought into a period of

time where the Word of God, as well as the experience of the believer is seen as the chief focus of dogma simultaneously.

I believe that God is knowable in the sense that His Word never returns void (Isaiah 55:11). He has sent the Holy Spirit to guide and lead the Church and He is doing so. He is taking the Church into a time of greater revelation than any other time in history. God is also mysterious because none of the scholars in previous centuries even considered that such a model could be viable. God never ceases to amaze the human mind. It has been shown that “adaptation” and the “resulting diversity” has been “vital to its growth” (Lord 2012:2). An “interaction between disciplines” is reminiscent of “Pentecostal ecclesial life: church is seen to draw experience, Scripture and tradition together within a missionary movement (Lord 2012:3). In such a venture, integration and collaboration can only promise satisfying results to any scholar investigating religious truth. Especially in this turbulent time in history as humanity faces the Covid-19 pandemic, I perceive God to be knowable in every season and every circumstance. In my opinion, it has become clear that God’s Word is undeniably inspired due to the fact that the Holy Spirit initiated and was involved in its forming and shaping. Due to the fact that it is inspired, I believe it also to be inerrant and valuable. I perceive that the dogma contained therein offers a clear guide on how Christians should study and be in relationship with God. God is knowable in my opinion, through His inspired and inerrant Word as it is holy and irreplaceable.

CHAPTER 3: GOD'S PERSON AND CONDUCT

3.1 Introduction

I believe that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are One. I believe that God is a dynamic, eternal, Spirit Being who moves in miraculous ways. Due to the complexity of God's nature, I believe that when discerning the knowability of God, research must be conducted with regards to God's Person as well as God's Conduct.

3.2 God's Person

In my opinion, God's Person is made known through general revelation in creation. "The return of the God-question is a particular mark of systematic theological reflection since the mid-20th century" (Venter 2019:1). To a Christian believer, God is a personal Being. For the purpose of investigating the knowability of God, it would be fitting to do an initial probing of God's Person before studying His conduct in the past of humankind, as well as His acts in the present and information that He renders about what can be expected in the future. In my opinion, the "God question" refers to the enquiry humankind has about God due to the fact that they experience Him not only through general revelation in creation, but also through special revelation in the Bible. The logic of humankind creates a platform for an inquisitive nature in all that is done.

God's Person and God's conduct are two areas of study that humankind searches via exegetical behaviour. The reasoning capabilities of humankind believe that God's conduct is a product of Who God is as a Person. This statement does not imply that believers should view God separately from His conduct, it merely intends to lay a foundation of understanding with regard to how God is perceived through the human experience and how His acts are perceived and acknowledged. I believe that God cannot be separated from His acts. I believe God is what He does. I make this statement because we come to know God by His exploits. He also makes Himself known through various avenues to humankind such as creation, the Bible, His Holy Spirit and His acts in history. From my Pentecostal perspective, I believe that because God is alive, it is His will to act and express Himself to humankind, thus making Him a God of relationship. Yet, all of the aspects that humankind perceive of God are embedded into His character and cannot be detached from His Person. His acts are only one of the means in which believers experience Him. I believe that God develops whatever He creates in His creation. This includes humankind on a spiritual, physical and emotional level (hence the reference to the past, present and future of humankind). This is referred to as sanctification in theological circles. Spiritually, He has offered humankind salvation,

which is accompanied with the ability to converse with God in the spiritual realm; physically, God has blessed man with an innate ability to adapt to life's circumstances; emotionally, God's Spirit has equipped humans to live according to certain morals and ethics. All of these aspects of humankind's existence form a part of God's grand narrative. Personally, it signifies that God's Person, God's conduct and God's narrative are all intertwined. The acts of God progressively make His narrative unfold. I believe that His acts serve as a divine catalyst that is moving the events along. In order to establish who God is from a Christian perspective, we need to discern what the Scriptures testify about Him; what His relationship with humankind is like and what His character displays through His presence in the universe. Human beings have the tendency to not only study themselves and their environment, but also the actions of those with whom they come into contact with. This is a type of hermeneutic-like behaviour, which I perceive to be embedded in our DNA. This phenomenon suggests that when believers attempt to study God, they will approach this task in the same fashion. Human beings are curious and want to determine if God is knowable.

It is reported that "God is unlimited and unlimitable" (Erickson 2001:94). Any knowledge we possess is that which "God desires that we should have" (Berkhof 1996:96). Researchers have to therefore constructively use the data that is available to them in order to make calculated decisions regarding the questions that are asked. Our first and foremost method of attaining knowledge about God is to firstly study and experience creation (a term coined as "general revelation" by Berkhof 1996:128-132 and "universal revelation" by Erickson 2001:41-49 as mentioned previously) and secondly, to read and learn from God's Word (a term coined as "special revelation" by Berkhof 1996:133-137 and "particular revelation" by Erickson 2001:51-58 as stated earlier). It is common knowledge that the world seems different to a physicist than it does to an evolutionary biologist (England 2015:27). I add this statement because I believe that different frameworks of understanding reside within different groups of people much in the same fashion as culture and religion. I believe that God has created everything to work well together as it is inevitably intertwined. So much so that only God in His omniscience can perceive and comprehend the universe's magnificence. I am of the opinion that all sciences (including theology, general science and dogma) are proportionally linked, whilst also overlapping in some divine manner. All three of the abovementioned fields of science study human behaviour. Upon closer investigation, I can now add to my report that when we study God theologically we consult the Bible because believing in God is a matter of "faith"; when we study God scientifically, we employ our "reasoning capabilities" in order to make sense of what we perceive and understand in "creation"; lastly we can discern from previous investigation done that when we study God "dogmatically", it dictates that in this process both our faith and reason must be involved. "Prophetic testimony" coupled with "the aid of the Spirit's sanctifying grace" and "theological

reason” give us a “conceptual account” of God’s Person in order to “elaborate” on who God is from a human perspective (Leithart 2017:35).

Normally, scholars from different fields of study would describe the same phenomenon which they are confronted with in various ways and according to their own perception (frame of reference). Still, I feel the need to stress the fact that although reason can be conducted in countless ways, the Bible calls us to one steadfast faith that is superior to reason. A very important quality of God’s Person surfaces here, He is always the same, He is consistent. God does not change the rules of engagement. Through the different modes of revelation made available to humankind by God, God is displaying His personality and grandeur. I perceive God to be knowable in many ways. An evangelical account of the “modes of revelation” is described alternatively as “God’s Universal Revelation” and “God’s Particular Revelation” (Erickson 2001: 42-58). The “modes of revelation” are described as “General revelation” and “Special revelation” (Berkhof 1996:93-97; 117-143). Berkhof goes further to establish a connection between “special revelation” and “Scripture”. To which I add a Pentecostal view on the “modes of revelation” which illustrate God’s Person to humanity: “It is...inevitable that experiences of God would come first” after which “theological explanations would follow” (Pinnock 2000:3). I believe that God is knowable because God’s Person is in fact the Trinity (Three-in-One).

Theologically, it is discerned that God created, upholds and will consummate all that exists (Gen 2:7; Job 33:4; John 1: 3-4; 1 Tim 6:13; Neh 9:6; Acts 17:25); Scientifically, some scholars such as Long (2017:20) believe that God created simply to enjoy the beauty of what was formed. Dogmatically, however, believers discern from the Bible that God created with the higher purpose of establishing His kingdom here on earth. At first glance it would seem that these three derivations have nothing in common, but a closer look could possibly make known that God is a Creator, who loves the beauty in all that He has created, has also created humankind with a higher purpose. I perceive that God is knowable through His existence as the Creator. His existence inextricably speaks to humankind through their faith, their senses, as well as their reasoning abilities. There are many who wish to discredit the existence of God. However, believers know that “faith in religion is a form of insight” and exercises it as “seeing” the “reality behind the appearance” (Crawford 3005:34). I believe that faith goes beyond reason and it generates the type of knowledge that runs much deeper than what can physically be perceived. In my experience, I perceive that believers generally vest their faith in an unseen Being and a higher purpose whilst most scientists feel comfortable to vest their faith rather in themselves and their abilities.

3.2.1 God the Trinity

Barth (cited by Jüngel 2001:16) describes how the “Trinity provides an answer to the question of the God who reveals Himself in revelation”.

The Bible renders continuous revelation about God. I perceive the Trinity to render an apt description of God’s Person and God’s Conduct combined. “It is concerned with who God is, what he is like, how he works, and how he is to be approached” (Erickson 2001:107). The “Trinity is woven into the Sacred Record, and cannot be removed without abusing the entire Word of God” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:24). The Trinity is clearly visible in Scriptures such as Genesis 1; Matthew 3 as well as Acts 2. Not only did God send His Son (incarnation) and later the Holy Spirit (Day of Pentecost), He is the Father, the Son and the Spirit. I perceive that God is knowable due to the fact that He constructs strategies and plans for humankind of which He is ultimately the fulfilment. Ultimately, I believe that this presents me with a description of God’s Person. Scriptural basis of God the Father as Creator, God the Son as Saviour and the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Comforter have become a part of the very fabric of my personal belief system. I add that in my frame of reference, God’s narrative is playing itself out due to the fact that God’s Person (Father, Son and Spirit) is forever in unity. I perceive God to be knowable through His Person and His conduct. The Bible describes His pure nature and His sound judgement. In my opinion, society is faced with many false assumptions and belief systems due to false teachers who spread lies and confusion. Earthly governments have proven to be corrupt and sinister on a global scale yet God’s counsel and government is described as being holy (Psalm 33:4) and His government is righteous (Isaiah 9: 6). I am convinced that He will be truthful in His Person and in His conduct. “The Persons of the Trinity have separate, though never conflicting wills (Luke 22: 42; 1 Cor. 12: 11)” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:152). Barth (cited by Jüngel 2001:21-22) states that the focus should be on “*vestigial trinitatis*”, which propagates “revelation over reason”

It is interesting to find that Biblically, “the unity of God was revealed to Israel at several different times and in various ways”. The Ten Commandments are referred to: ‘You shall have no other gods before me’ (Erickson 2001:107-108). I report that the concept of monotheism gives us insight into God’s Person. God is illustrated as a jealous God in Exodus 34:14. This quality would make Him knowable in the sense that if believers are deceived by worldly propagandas, He will act in accordance to save what is His. The “oneness of God...” the “*Shema of Deuteronomy 6*” is highlighted (Erickson 2001:108). Personally, I perceive that monotheism places sharp focus on Yahweh as Supreme God. In my opinion, this makes Him mysterious because He is the only One who can truly act and save the lost and has acted in history in surprising ways. I refer to an incident in 1 Samuel 5 where God acted mysteriously and kept causing the idol statue of Dagon to fall down and break. Here God’s presence was manifested in the Ark. Through Deuteronomy 6 God

is described as being unrelenting, which could make Him knowable due to the fact that He won't stop working through His acts until His will has been accomplished.

To some, that which makes God unique and different from normal finite beings and “emerges into human consciousness” might be “a question-mark, an unanswered and unanswerable question”. “What exactly it is” definitely “lies outside of our comprehension” (Clark 2016:5). It must be highlighted here that philosophies are theories that originate within their own field of science. “Then there is the charge that in philosophy it is never possible to prove that you are right and he or she is wrong” (Flew 2007:41). Scholars often believe that God can never be understood. I argue that although God is divine and humankind can never fully understand Him, humans can through His image that resides attempt to understand Him to the degree that He reveals Himself to humankind through different avenues of revelation. Different methods speak to different people, yet we have to remember that “a person can be persuaded by an abominable argument and remain unconvinced by one that ought to be accepted” (Flew 2007:41). I perceive that philosophy and science are processes of discovery. In my opinion, the life of the believer resembles this process. To me this signifies the phenomenon which is referred to as sanctification (the process of life-long development for the believer in his/her walk with God). In my understanding, the Trinity is involved in the entire sanctification process of the believer.

The “deity of the first, the Father, is scarcely in dispute” (Erickson 2001:108). In the Old Testament, the term “Yahweh” refers to God the Father. “Somewhat more problematic is the status of Jesus as deity...” (Erickson 2001:108). This was proven by the fact that Jesus was rejected by His own people (Isaiah 53: 3-5). Yet, Jesus “the Mediator” is described as “both God and man” who “experienced ... darkness” and “through his human nature, a nature that always operated according to its own characteristic principles” saved humankind. Christ’s “Person and mediatory work are inseparable” (Owen & Spence 2007:20) “Biblical references” do “identify the Holy Spirit as God”. There are “references” to the Holy Spirit that occur interchangeably with references to God”. “God must be understood as ... triune” (Erickson 2001:109). “The Father communicates Himself to His creatures through the Son as the Logos and in the Holy Spirit” (Berkhof 1996:97). I comment that God is an expression of Himself. God does more than act. God is His acts. I believe that God moves through the “grace of the lord Jesus Christ”; the “love of God” and the “communion” believers have with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). “The Lord is one (Deut 6:4)” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:146). The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures and displays “God’s holiness and goodness” that “go far beyond infinitely beyond ours”. This signifies and is truly is the epitome of “knowledge and power” (Erickson 2001:88). Biblically, it is through the Spirit that the believer experiences God. I perceive God to be knowable through the unified working of the Trinity in various areas of the believer’s life. God is knowable to me as a Father

who nurtures, cares and upholds; as a Saviour (Jesus) who intercedes when necessary, as well as Holy Spirit who walks with me daily and who acts as my Mentor and Teacher.

I note that this is true for both the individual as well as the Church (Jung 2005:838). "It is not possible to consider Pentecostal experience or doctrine without realising the central importance of the story of Pentecost in Acts" (Lord 2012:8). The Day of Pentecost illustrates the unity of the Trinity to me: God the Father sent His Son, Jesus died on the cross, after His resurrection and ascension the Holy Spirit was sent to humankind. All Three of the Persons of the Trinity is involved in the lives of humankind. Kärkkäinen (as cited by Jung 2005 838) discusses the view of Gavin D'Costa that stipulates how "the presence of the Spirit implies ... the presence of the triune God".

"Despite the attention to the Holy Spirit" that is "at the very heart of Pentecostal/Charismatic movements" the "focus of the Spirit-baptized assembly is on Jesus" (Del Colle 1997:87). This could possibly be an indicator of why the Pentecostal tradition has been criticized for its excessive focus on the future.

Ockham (as cited by Hitchens 2007:26) describes his "principle of economy (also known as Ockham's razor)", which purports that one should not "multiply entities beyond necessity. The main point being that it is "possible to know created things" without acknowledging "a creator". I reject this view due to the fact that as a believer I trust that God is knowable through what humankind experiences of Him.

Theologically, we note that God is a divine Spirit Being who created all. Dogmatically, believers come to know Him as Three-in-One; the Trinity. I believe that there is a greater hand at work in the universe. Pannenberg (cited by Lord 2012:86) states that "movement" is "central to understanding the Trinity" because they are "from and to the Father". This leads me to believe that movements manifests into acts from God. I perceive that the Trinity is actively working behind the scenes of reality in unpredictable and unconventional (supernatural ways).

This indicates that God can be mysterious. "The Father **uncreated** ... the Son **uncreated** ... the Holy Spirit **uncreated** ... the Father eternal, the Son eternal; the Holy Spirit eternal ... not three eternals: but one eternal" (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:145). He thus agrees with Erickson (2001:107-108) that God is "Three-in-One". The fact that God will forever exist makes God knowable. The Bible testifies that He is forever the same (Heb 13:8) and this signifies to me personally that believers can therefore count on God's Person to act (God's conduct) when necessary. The Trinity does not call for "an abandonment or reason". "Christianity" is a "revealed religion" that relies on revelation, which makes "manifest rather than concealing" (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:145). God is knowable in the sense that He will provide revelation when it

is needed. The doctrine of the Trinity must be accepted as a matter of faith, as well as reason by the believer as an individual, as well as by the Church.

I recognize that Volf discerns the Trinity as working in a “hierarchical” manner and he perceives this footprint also in the life of the Church. I perceive that God is knowable through the conduct of the Body of Christ.

“In contrast, Yong understands the *perichoretic* nature of the Trinity in terms of “autonomy of relationality” that is seen in Word and Spirit as they “somehow commonly [originate] in the mystery of the Father” (Lord 2012:121). In this light, God is knowable through His faithfulness as Father, Son and Spirit. “More recently he prefers the term *coherence* to *perichoresis*, but maintains that this requires us to think of the Trinity as “distinctions between the persons... understood in terms of their relationships” (Lord 2012:121). I perceive that God is knowable in diverse ways. “Rather than have two ways of understanding how the church reflects the perichoretic nature of the Trinity, it seems more appropriate for our purposes to define perichoresis consistently” as a description of “the three persons” as being “distinct” but always in “relationship” (Lord 2012:121). God is knowable through the Trinity, which is representative of His Person, but He is also knowable through the acts of each Person of the Trinity.

It seems to me that Volf focuses more on the Persons of the Trinity than on their functions. Yong focuses on the unity of the Trinity because of the relationship that they stand in. I prefer to think of the Trinity as the perfect example of integration, collaboration (Brunsdon 2014:1) and networking (Lord 2012:70-75). It becomes clear that divinity cannot be measured by any physical phenomena.

3.2.2 God’s “general revelation”

In my opinion, God’s general revelation is the revelation of God’s Person and existence. “The word ‘revelation’ is derived from the Latin ‘*revelatio*’, which denotes an unveiling, a revealing”. This includes the “revealing of God” to humankind via “communication” and “activity” (Berkhof 1996:117). I am convinced that God is knowable because it seems that He longs to convey information about Himself to humankind on a constant basis. I add that He does this through His actions.

The “scriptures clearly portray God as a purposeful Being ... Proverbs 19:21” (Macchia, cited by Horton 1994:215). It seems that God is knowable because He acts deliberately in certain settings and times. “God created the universe with a view toward an everlasting relationship with

humankind” (Berkhof 1996:235). I perceive that God is knowable because true to His infinite nature, He has created humans with eternity in their hearts (Ecc 3:11).

“Most Christian writers believe that revelation takes place in nature in conscience, through the prophets and apostles, in the acts of God to deliver Israel and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (Crawford 2005:26-27). Here God uses not only general revelation, but also His relationship with believers to testify of Him on an ongoing basis. I recognize God as being knowable because He is innovative and His actions inevitably have purpose. We learn that God reveals Himself in a voluntary and intentional manner (Berkhof 1996:117). God is also portrayed in the universe as being knowable when it is discerned that when He acts it is to benefit the believer. I believe that God is also mysterious. To my mind God is Sovereign and believers can only theorize on how the events in His narrative will unfold.

Nelson and Wawire (2004:23) state that scholars who agree with this statement are Berkhof (1996:165), Erickson (2001:122) and Railey and Aker (cited by Horton 1994:39). Although these scholars represent different religious traditions, they understand God to be consistent in His appearance and companionship. Theologically and dogmatically, I perceive this to be a sound interpretation of God’s Person which displays His dependability. Nelson and Wawire (2004:24) list various Scriptures testify to God’s all-encompassing presence. These are: Isaiah 57:15; Acts 17:28; Psalm 139:7; Exodus 33:14; Psalm 16:11; Genesis 3:8; Exodus 3:2; John 15; Matthew 5:8; Acts 3: 20-21; 1 John 4:12; Jeremiah 29:13 and many more. “B. God is Perfect” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:24). This reiterates McRoberts’s view (cited by Horton 1994:145) that God is uncreated. I perceive this to signify that at times God can also be mysterious to a certain degree due to the fact that humankind has no knowledge of what it means to be unlimited or perfect. I perceive these aspects of God as being important illustrations within general revelation of the existence of a God that is not only majestic but all-powerful.

“C. God is Trinity” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:24). I deduct that there exists no other being like God. God is mysterious as He does not fit into the mould (Crawford 2007:27) of humankind. Quite surprisingly “D. God can be known personally” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:25). God is therefore knowable (as far as humankind’s understanding reaches) because He reveals Himself genuinely for those who wish to seek Him (James 1:5), whilst experiencing what general revelation displays a revelation of God as Creator.

Hence, I agree that general revelation cannot be forced into one type of mould (Crawford 2005:27). God’s display of His existence is too extensive to be captured in one frame of human experience.

The “general revelation of God has also been found in three areas: nature, history, and humanity”. “On the one hand, general revelation is God’s communication of himself to all persons at all times and in all places” (Erickson 2001:41). God has consistently been present in all of these “areas” during the course of history. “In nature the heavens are telling the glory of God (Ps 19:1); If God is at work ... it should be possible to detect the trend of his work in events that occur as part of history; Sometimes God’s general revelation is seen in the physical structure and mental capacities of humans ... in their moral and spiritual qualities that God’s character is best perceived” (Erickson 2001:43). These areas that have been listed, cover the full extent of human existence. I believe God is knowable because He imprinted Himself in all three of these areas. I believe that humans can sense God’s existence in nature; they can recognize His acts in history and they experience His image inside of our spiritual bodies.

Berkhof (1996:124-125) adds that the “Proper Conception of the Nature of Revelation” include “The historical method” and the “The theological method” (Berkhof 1996:124-125). In the “historical method”, the “investigator should approach the study of the subject with an unbiased mind”. Yet I believe with Clouser (2005:185) that “theories” are “regulated by competing ideas of the basic nature of reality” amongst researchers in any field. In the “theological method” the “Christian can derive revelation” from “special revelation from God” (Berkhof 1996:124-125). Indicating to researchers that “general revelation” is not sufficient to explain God’s Person or His conduct. General revelation is the introduction to the believer of the revelation of the fullness of God. Different types of reasoning will render different results. “The Insufficiency of General Revelation” are “a. It does not acquaint man with the only way to salvation; b. it does not convey to man any absolute reliable knowledge of God and spiritual things; c. it does not furnish an adequate basis for religion” (Berkhof 1996:132-133). This leads us to believe that only a close relationship with Jesus can render higher revelation.

Other views concur that general revelation is mostly viewed as a manner to prove God’s existence. Yet some argue that “God did not create man in his own image” but that “humankind” fabricated “God’s existence” (Hitchens 2007:5). The reason for this statement by Hitchens is that there have been past, as well as “present religious atrocities” and so because of the occurrence of evil, God is said to not exist. An argument is also made that humans are “biologically, only partly rational” (Hitchens 2007:5). Yet, through this argument it becomes crystal clear that God is knowable and as a result thereof, He gave humankind a free will with which to rationalize His being and reality. Personally, I perceive that the Scriptures make it clear that God wants humankind to succeed. I reject the statement by Hitchens that humankind is only “partially rational”. Instead I argue that faith, coupled with reason, equals rationality. An anthropological view from Immanuel Kant (as cited by Erickson 2001:44) describes that “we all possess a moral

impulse or a categorical imperative". I believe that general revelation was created especially for humankind who are rational and live by morals and that the "moral order (as contrasted with the natural order) requires the existence of God" (Erickson 2001:44).

Personally, I believe that all scientific fields are linked by the Person of God (the Trinity). God is knowable in the manner that He has actively revealed Himself through history to believers and unbelievers alike. This reinforces the idea that God is involved and that His creation is significant and noteworthy in the universe. God is also mysterious at the same time because His methods have simultaneously appealed to and have stunned humankind's protocol. In effect it has challenged humankind's reason altogether. I deduct that humankind has been created to be receptive to God's different avenues of revelation via His image in human beings. It moves from a general acknowledgement of His existence (general revelation) to an inner special knowing which is facilitated by faith (special revelation). I believe that general revelation is not sufficient to explain God's Person and is thus elevated to special revelation when an individual becomes a believer. I distinguish that God is mysterious through His eternal and humanly undefined and inexplicable existence. In my opinion, general revelation appeals to the believers most basic senses, yet inspires a sense of awe through the reasoning capabilities given by God.

Ultimately, I perceive that general revelation indicates that God exists as Creator and this designation progresses to special revelation that facilitates a relationship with Him (this will form part of the discussion on God's conduct). To my mind, it is sensible to note that the "existence of God as creator" is "a necessary condition for revelation to occur" in the life of the believer (Clavier 2013:13). It is illustrated that revelation is not a physical phenomenon and must be generated by an external force. "Epistemically, no revelation is to be admitted except on the assumption that the world depends for its existence and operation, on a supernatural, agent" (Clavier 2013:13). Here, God's supernatural abilities are seen both in creation, as well as revelation. The revelation to be found in general revelation is thus limited. I would state here that the search for God starts with general revelation. Although general revelation does not reveal God's fullness to believers, it does indicate to them that there is a higher Person that determines the fate of humankind. Churches and believers alike are called to be accountable to God's Person in reaction to the existence that He has blessed them with.

Pentecostals have often been viewed as "other-worldly in their soteriology" and this has caused many to believe that "the care for creation in the present" might "find little currency in their mission in the world" (Lamp 2014:65). I agree that this has been the case in previous decades. I personally perceive that "creation care" is an important part of the existence of humankind. Yet it must be

noted here that “creation care” must form a part of the appreciation of humankind for God’s communication through general revelation. To my mind, general revelation thus functions as a doorway to deeper knowledge regarding the existence of the universe. As part of creation itself, humankind has Biblically been identified as the tenders and keepers of the earth (Genesis 2:15). Another term used in similar discussions is “creation care”. I believe that God is knowable through day-to-day life events. I also believe that the acts of believers in the present will affect their future outcomes in all areas of their lives. Biblically, I understand that God is shaping humans to be able to spend eternity with Him (Phil 1:6). If God carries a burden for the well-being of creation, so should the believer. Many “current Pentecostals”, however, have “put a significant focus on creation care” by “joining two themes as a paradigm”. (Lamp 2014:73-74). They believe “the destiny of creation” is attained through the Spirit. There therefore exists a lack of appreciation for general revelation and an over-emphasized focus on special revelation. Yet, in my opinion, general revelation and special revelation are both important in the life of the believer. I therefore believe that an integration or collaboration model is viable on various platforms. “Macchia redefines the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism ...” as the liberation of “creation from within history toward new possibilities for free eschatological existence ...” (Lamp 2014:73-74). I believe that creation (general revelation) can be linked here to eschatology (special revelation). In my opinion, general science investigates creation, whilst theology investigates eschatology. A link can therefore be established between these two fields of science. This link can be utilized to create a platform of understanding the knowability of God.

In my opinion, God’s Person and God’s conduct are displayed in both of these avenues of revelation. A.J. Swoboda (cited by Lamp 2014:74) uses the term “eco-glossolalia” to describe “the pneumatological metaphor of the Spirit-baptized creation” and “Pentecostal ... ecotheology”. The link here is “eco” (which I believe is referring to environment that is studied by general science) and “theology” (study of the Bible). “Moreover, Pentecostals have frequently been suspicious of scientific disciplines that are part of the identification of and solution to environmental problems” (Lamp 2014:66). Matthew Tallman (cited by Lamp 2014:75) adds that “a traditional paradigm from Pentecostal circles”, which states that “Jesus” is “Saviour, Spirit-baptizer, Healer, and Coming King” thus “describes” that “creation care is important”.

There is therefore consensus that general revelation and special revelation must be treated with equal respect. I believe this to be true as they both stem from God and are overlapping in nature. In my opinion, general revelation and special revelation render unique insights pertaining to the knowability of God. Pinnock (cited by Lamp 2014:74) describes how the Spirit’s work expands from the present and future foci to include the Spirit’s past connection to the creation of the cosmos (cf. Genesis 1:2). The Holy Spirit is described as being involved from “it’s beginning to

its consummation". Yong (cited by Lamp 2014:74) uses "passages from the "Old Testament" such as "(Genesis 1:2-3; Psalm 104:29-30; Job 34:14)" and states that "creation is the theatre of the Spirit's presence and activity". Clifton (cited by Lamp 2014:75) suggests a "dynamic ... paradigm" in which "the whole world" is seen as "filled with the Spirit", thereby being able to "overcome divisions between "human beings" and "other-than-human creation". This indicates to me strength in collaboration and integration. I assess that God is knowable through His presence in all of creation. "Yong sees coherence, correspondence, and pragmatism as compatible criteria for truth claims" (Stephenson 2016:141). If we are to investigate "truth", we must do so in a wide arena of knowledge, which would include different fields of science. This must be done in the methodology of integration and collaboration in order to harness the power of coherence between different aspects of creation and the God who created it.

Yong displays an "elaborate theological method" in "different areas of religious studies". In his "quest for truth" he looks at "Pentecostal systematic theologians" coupled with "more popular evangelical or Pentecostal practices" and even probes into "natural sciences" (Stephenson 2016:142). It is my experience that Pentecostals should rather work towards an integration model, which creates a platform for collaboration between different fields of science. This will also facilitate a state of mind where general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) and special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137) are both appreciated in the study of God's Person. Due to an overemphasis on spiritual aspects of humanity's existence, there have manifested many false teachings with regard to God's Person and God's Conduct. Many denominations have dabbled in this new wave of sensationalism, which includes doctrines such as kenosis and grave sucking. In my opinion, the act of collaboration between various fields of science (of which theology is a part) will make it easier for believers to delineate between what is true (Scripturally correct) and what is false. This applies not only to the Person of God, but also to God's Conduct.

3.3 God's Conduct

In my opinion, God's conduct is made known through special revelation in His Word. It must be established early in this thesis that no human can act in the same manner as God. It is interesting to note that the "personhood of the Trinity" is described as being primary, whilst the community is viewed as secondary (Lord 2012:109). As a result, believers are admonished to "look to the kingdom of God as a primary symbol".

For the purposes of investigating God's conduct in the past, present and future, we will look at the Old Testament, the New Testament and future events as described in the Bible. I propose

that the past refers hereto as the implantation of God's image in humankind at creation; the present as the state that believers and the Church enjoy now whilst waiting for the Second Coming; and the future as events described in the Bible that will transpire as our current reality comes to an end. This study has made me aware that God speaks to and acts in the lives of believers through events in general, special and historical revelation. It is interesting to me that God's conduct stayed completely in sync with His personhood throughout all the different stages of history.

I believe that God is the only Being in the universe that is not moved by the will of humans (Romans 9:15). God is therefore to me mysterious in a sense because there is no external force that influences Him. Scholars such as Erickson (2001:119-154), Berkhof (1996:128-141) and Leithart (2017:35-46) have investigated if God can be separated from His actions. Their findings support the position that God displays His Person through His acts and vice versa. To my mind, God cannot be separated from His actions. Personally, I find Jesus to be proof of this view (Col 1:15). I perceive the determining factor of how God acts to be what it is that His will determines. In my opinion, God is true to His will for humankind. He is also good and constant, which inevitably makes Him knowable. In addition, God is great which means that He is also mysterious in a sense, as He can act in supernatural ways. A miracle is described as "a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself" (Grudem 1994:305). God remains unchanged in His Person and His conduct in the sense that He is the only one who decides what His will dictates. Still, God is knowable because the Bible teaches us that He will act, yet how exactly He acts is up to Him entirely. From my point of view, God acted in three significant ways: a) He created; b) He sent His Son; and c) He gave believers the Book of Revelations, which illustrate to believers what eternity they can expect through salvation.

"Both Jesus' and Paul's teaching on preservation is the inseparability of God's children from his love and keeping" generally indicates to me that God is unconditionally "loving" and "caring" (Erickson 2001:139). Yet, in a world that is facing a new kind of normal due to the destructive force of the Covid-19 pandemic, questions have arisen with regards to God's love and kindness towards creation.

Another fresh approach to the question is to "consider the following "Christianly" advice: a. God is a God of love ... he respects you and your desires"; "much of the future hasn't been planned"; "b. when tragedy intrudes into your life, please don't think that God had anything to do with it!"; "c. creating ... moral creatures" that have the capability to practise "horrific evil" and "untold pain" was a "huge risk" (Ware 2003:11-12). Ware discusses points of God's Person and especially His conduct that have been widely debated and severely questioned over the centuries.

I personally teach and believe these three characteristics of God in my own ministry. To me, God's love is illustrated through His acts that are performed as He walks with believers (John 3: 16) and the rest of humankind. Biblically, His will is for humankind to be established and to thrive. I believe that God's Person (the fact that He exists and what He is like) is displayed in creation (general revelation). I also believe that God's conduct (His acts throughout history and in the Bible) is reminiscent of God's special revelation. To my mind, God is mysterious because He is infinite. God is knowable due to the fact that He created humans with a free will and they therefore possess dignity which gives them the right to a choice of how they want to live. God is also mysterious because He knows that humankind will sin and become as evil as they were in the "days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37-39), yet He still gives them a choice to choose. One of the main questions asked about God's conduct is why He allows for evil to exist in the world if the Bible portrays Him as all-powerful and all-knowing (Rom 11:36)? I report that these qualities of God operate above any kind of human reasoning and must be accepted as such. Yet, God does not leave humankind without viable answers. The Scriptures are illustrative of the fact that there exist righteous and evil human beings (Psalm 1). The Scriptures also indicate what will happen prospectively with each group of individuals as they are left to the consequences of their decision making.

Some are of the opinion that "given the evil that exist in the world, it is argued" that "as "a person ... God's record of actions is akin" and "resembles that of a negligent parent" (Meister 2019:119). "One way of responding" to this "argument from neglect" is to include the "not-even-once-principle" that states that "God never responds to evil" (Meister 2019:119). But to follow this view would be to refute the truth in the Bible as the Bible illustrates how God intervenes and fights against evil. I reject this statement of Meister due to the fact that I perceive God to act and fight not only for His glory, but also for His children. God is knowable to all believers because He is loving; He has given humankind reasoning capabilities with which the difficult questions in life can be pondered upon. Yet, due to His omniscience, omnipotence and infinite nature, God is also mysterious. The Bible describes how God is all in all (Romans 11:36). God has made faith-life of the believer a journey of enquiry which transforms not only the very conduct of the believer, but also his/her thinking patterns. The existence of evil in the world illustrates to me that a personal relationship with God is often lacking in the life of the believer; hence the negative assumptions that are displayed regarding the existence of evil. The source of evil cannot be linked to a holy God. Instead evil must be associated with the inadequacy of humankind (Rom 5:12) to rule the earth (Gen 1). "Certainly, the existence of evil and suffering must be faced. However, philosophically speaking, that is a separate issue from the question of God's existence" (Flew 2007:56). I agree with Flew. The fact that evil exists in the world does not discredit or deny God's existence as a Person who lives and who displays Godly conduct in all that He does. In my mind,

God is knowable, this indicates that He addresses our questions in His Word in order for us to learn and develop.

Another view is that the “problem of evil” in the world is the Church (Hitchens 2007:7). Not only has God in His Person been blamed for the existence of evil, but His conduct has also been scrutinized, especially His formation of the Church. Hitchens has a purely scientific approach when he writes of the “atrocities” that churches have committed. In my response and opinion many churches and denominations have over the centuries made themselves guilty of misconduct and evil. Yet, these incidences must be viewed as a product of the evil nature of humankind and must not be associated with God’s Person or His conduct (1 Pet 1:16). I note that human nature is lacking, whilst God’s nature is perfect. To my mind, God’s Person and God’s conduct should not be compared to that of humankind.

I argue that God’s definition of love, justice and risk is not necessarily concurrent with our own. It must be acknowledged that God holds the whole world in His hands and directs it as such (Psalm 95:4). A close relationship with God should facilitate a platform of trust between the believer and God. Evil, pain and risk are human terms which we use to describe events. Yet God might describe these events otherwise. God is mysterious due to the fact that He exists on incomparable level to humans.

3.3.1 God’s “special revelation”

In my opinion, God’s special revelation is His self-revelation, which is rooted in His Word and His conduct through history. It is stated that Barth could possibly through his views have made God seem “absent from creation” and therefore “his intimate connection” to “creation” was lost (Michener 2019:40-41). Sallie McFague argues that theology has a “special responsibility for the symbols, images and language” in the Bible to facilitate a “relationship between God and the world in every age” (Michener 2019:40-41). Amos Yong argues that humans “are moral beings with moral obligations and liabilities” that apply to the “relationship” we have with “God as the creator ... and one another” (Michener 2019:4).

I am of the opinion that special revelation ministers to the believer in the form of revelation and inspiration. It is highly acclaimed; many individuals have in times past referred to the leading of the Holy Spirit as some sort of feeling of intuition or conscience. It is believed that believers “can’t just live by ... intuition”. The reason given for this statement is that “the heart is deceitful above all things (Jer 17:9)” (Koessler 2019:56). Some Pentecostal circles promote the idea that a stark focus on the experience of the believer keeps him/her in close personal contact with God at all

times. As part of this tradition, I have fashioned my own faith-life in this manner and have developed a deeper sense of revelation and intuition as my relationship with God has progressed. I believe that God reveals matters in general before illuminating them in a more specific manner via the Holy Spirit. "Our confidence is not in our own infallibility but in God's sovereignty" (Koessler 2019:58).

The image of God in humankind was disfigured during the fall. "In a very real sense, the only true human beings were Adam and Eve before the fall, and Jesus" (Erickson 2001:171). I therefore deduct that special revelation is needed to convey God's heart to humankind. God is known in general revelation through His revelation of Himself in creation and this makes Him knowable. Yet God is also mysterious because He is too complicated for humans to understand in their fallen state. Humans therefore need special revelation in the form of His Word to stand in steadfast relationship with Him. God is also mysterious because humans are given the opportunity to experience him in a wide array of manners and not only through general revelation. To my mind, God can only be understood up to a certain level of knowledge through general revelation and special revelation. God is so great, infinite and inexplicable sometimes that my finite nature finds it hard to understand His grandeur. My faith is rooted in this wonderful, knowable, majestic God (and experienced through general revelation) who is faithful: Yet, I simultaneously experience God as diverse and dynamic. He often does miraculous deeds according to His will as believers clearly discern in His Word (special revelation). God's Person and His conduct inspire awe and astonishment simultaneously. We note that "God has entered repeatedly into covenantal relationships with particular men" (Robertson 1980:3). God is therefore knowable in this sense because He has used the same format of negotiation on various occasions. He reveals Himself as a "covenantal God" who will honour His commitments. God is mysterious and infinite because only He knows whom He will choose for specific tasks and covenants. Further to this statement we learn that "Christ, the revelation of God ... is not continuous with history but discontinuous" (Berkhof 1996:122). Signifying to me here that God the Father utilizes Jesus Christ's divinity continuously in the unfolding of His narrative, yet He does so in a discontinuous manner through different circumstances and events that are disruptive to the storyline of history. To my mind, God is mysterious because He has done marvellous deeds that humankind has not even thought is possible, for instance the fact that the incarnation of Jesus was even feasible (John 3). Humans need a more personal understanding of God than is available through nature and general history. "God has provided particular revelation of himself" (Erickson 2001:51). Berkhof (1996:133-137) agrees that general revelation is insufficient to provide humankind with the necessary information regarding God. I agree that nature testifies to God but it cannot communicate like God. God communicates through the following modalities, namely; "historical events, divine speech, and the incarnation of God in Christ" (Erickson 2001:51). In my theory, God is definitely knowable due

to the fact that He reveals that He wishes to communicate and explain who He is. This invitation is extended to all who are willing to listen. The “revelation of God is... the person of Jesus Christ” (Driscoll 2008:54). For this reason, I believe that theories such as that of kenosis must be rejected. God is knowable for the reason that His efforts always bear fruit of redemption in the end. The Bible describes that “the incarnate Christ is the embodied *Logos*” (Gregersen 2015:2).

Other means of special revelation listed here are; “a. *Theopanies*; b. *Communications*; c. *Miracles*”. “Theopanies” indicate that God is on a superior level to humankind; b. Communications... inner communication of the truth...; c. Miracles... special intervention...” (Berkhof 1996:134-135). A “theophany” is a “visible manifestation to humankind of God or a god” (dictionary.com; no date). From my personally shaped view, I derive that God is knowable as I believe that He will use any means necessary to reveal Himself to humankind. God is additionally mysterious to me due to the fact that He is the only living Being that can formulate so many “modes” of “revelation”. I deduct that general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) is employed as a form of introduction to more pressing matters contained in and addressed by special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137). I believe that general revelation points to God’s all-encompassing “goodness” (i.e. He sustains and protects the world and humans) and that special revelation points to God’s “greatness” (i.e. He intervenes in divine ways when necessary).

It is my conviction that the believer, as well as the Church (the Body of Christ), is responsible for the sound interpretation of the special revelation that God extends to humankind through His Word and His Spirit. This is, however, not always the case due to an “emphasis on prosperity teachings among some Pentecostals”. It is noted that this has often created a “view toward wealth creation and affluence” (Lamp 2014:66). God is knowable to me because I notice how He reveals Himself through the controversies of this world. I would like to add here that controversies cannot be discerned or resolved through what we perceive in general revelation (creation). Controversies in my mind are formulations of spiritual aspects of reality and they can only be addressed by what the believer finds through God’s special revelation.

3.3.2 Revelations of God in the past, present and future

I report that history is continuous, therefore the past, present and future of humankind must be viewed as times in history that overlap in the unfolding of God’s grand narrative. God’s acts work toward the same end: that of the culmination of God’s storyline for humankind. Due to the restrictions of a Master’s thesis these will only be discussed briefly.

Moltmann refers to creation as unfolding in “three phases” namely “*creatio originalis*”, “*creatio continua*” and “*creatio nova*” ... “all of which are directed as a process of eschaton” (Hausoul 2013:139). “In our current historical time, Moltmann does recognize a *Vorher* and *Nachher*, which distinguish future and past by the present” (Hausoul 2013:139). I agree with this statement as it reflects the Biblical account of time. “So, the future and the past are times of not-being, because the earlier is *no-more* and the later is *not-yet*. Only the present is, and Moltmann holds this in great esteem” (Hausoul 2013:140-141). I don’t agree with this statement. In my opinion, the eschatological community of God focuses on events that will transpire in times to come as stipulated by the Bible (especially in the Book of Revelation), whilst here Moltmann chooses to put exaggerated focus on the present. I believe the present exists because of what has happened in history (past) and that the future depends on what believers are occupied with in the present. In my opinion, the future must be greatly valued, yet in terms of the everlasting benefits it offers and not in opposition to the past or the present. I believe that all times of history inevitably overlap and work towards the same cause. God is knowable through all three of these avenues of reality. We find information about Him in the past, present and future.

The most significant event for the believer in the past in my opinion is that the image of God that God was implanted in humankind at creation (Gen 1:26). This significant event truly established the way forward for humankind in their relationship with God. God is knowable to my mind due to the fact that history shows that God has sustained and protected what He created. Yet, God adamantly reveals Himself as mysterious in my judgement as He is accountable to no one.

The most significant event for the believer in the present that happened in the past but that still has an effect on the present is the incarnation of Jesus Christ into this world. This event miraculously took place and is still averteedly affecting humankind in contemporary times. The image of God in humankind was activated by the incarnation – crucifixion – resurrection and ascension of Jesus (the Second Person of the Trinity) and resulted in the Day of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers (Acts 2:17). The image of God in humankind has facilitated a vacuum where the Holy Spirit can reside in each believer whilst standing in relationship with Him. “According to Macquirrie (1990:392), incarnation is a process that starts with the creation, and which progresses in the presence and is self-revealing of the *Logos* in the ‘physical and historical world’” (Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:3).

I take an approach of integration between the Evangelistic and Pentecostal approach in how I view the life of the believer is impacted by God’s image that is embedded in humans: “The Substantive view” refers to the image as “the quality or capacity” that is “resident in nature” (Erickson 2001:172-173). The “Relational view” refers to the image as “the experience which is present when a relationship is active”, whilst the “Functional view” of the image refers to the

“exercise of dominion” (Erickson 2001:172-173). I incorporate all three of these views into my personal view of the image of God in humankind in a collaborative manner. I believe that humankind was created with an inherent ability to receive God’s image; I believe that the image is manifested in “relationship” and that the image can be described as the quality of humankind’s experience of God. I am convinced that this makes it possible for humankind to mimic God’s actions in their faith-life (1 Pet 2:21). The “first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (Erickson 2001:248). It is clear that God sent Jesus to “re-create”. In my opinion, God is knowable due to the fact that He acts like a Father towards His children.

It is discussed here that “incarnation establishes a ‘re-union between God and human beings, in which the differences between divinity and humanity are retained in the flow of exchange between Jesus Christ and his sisters and brothers’” (Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:2). “On a time line, the cross is but a point in the sweep of redemptive history from creation to the new creation. But exactly in the sweep of redemptive history, the cross is such a pivotal point that its impact echoes ... back to the fall of humanity ... even while it thrusts kingdom history forward to its full perfection” (Greidanus 1999:6). Next I add, “Volf (1996:47-48) correctly refers to the New Testament writer Paul’s understanding of the Christian community (e.g. 1 Cor 10:17) as the one body in the Spirit with many discrete members, but there is more to say if one reads this not through an ecclesiastical hermeneutical lens, but rather, at face value, as a result of Jesus’ bodily crucifixion” (Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:6). I perceive the Church to be an eschatological community awaiting Christ’s return. I believe that the image of God in humankind prompts believers to find ways to prepare for Jesus’ return. It forms a part of our reality here and now. But with what does the Church occupy itself at this very moment? We read that “every scripture that we examine should be studied with a heart toward worship, service and obedience” (Joyner, cited by Horton 1994:117). I agree that the “Church’s mission” is “1. Evangelism; 2. Edification; 3. Worship” (Nelson & Wawire 2004:110). I believe that it is for the very mission statement that the devil has employed evil into the world: he wants to stop all “evangelism”, “edification” and “worship” via “false doctrines”. In my opinion, the most significant developments for the believer in the future according to the Bible is that in the past God created; He then re-created through sending Jesus Christ (i.e. the present as we still enjoy the benefits of Jesus’ work on the cross. We have attained salvation and are part of the Church); the future points to the end of His narrative. Erickson states that the “Second Coming” is “indispensable to eschatology”. It is the basis of the Christian’s hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God’s plan” (Erickson 2001:384).

Stephens traces “New Creation in the Hebrew Bible” as “the eschatological visions of (Isa 65: 17-25 and Ezek 47: 1-12)” and “the theme of cosmic catastrophe in the prophets”. He states that “the Hebrew Bible” inevitably invokes that Yahweh will “remain committed to the fulfilment of his

creation project” (Sweeney 2011:456). It has been delineated that God uses various methods to reveal and to create the desirable effect He wishes. “One of the most prominent theologians within the Charismatic movement is John Rodman Williams” (Lewis 2011:272-280). “Williams emphasized that without the Holy Spirit and the scripture, the interpretation and the comprehension of eschatology is impossible”. “From his earliest writings, Williams was strongly bound to Reformed subjects and sources.” (Lewis 2011:272-280).

Theologically and dogmatically, it is established that the future holds the consummation of all time (reality). Through Jesus we have received eternal life (John 3:16; Eph 2: 810; 1 John 5:13-14). Jesus’ Name is the Name above every other name (Phil 2:9). He is described by the Bible as our Redeemer and Saviour (Ps 18:1-2; Gal 5: 1; John 8:36). The Holy Spirit is the Gift that indwells (John 7: 38-39; Eph 1: 16-17; 1 Peter 4:14).

3.4 Conclusion

I perceive a clearly delineated overlap here between general revelation and special revelation. Having probed through the views of the Person of God and God’s conduct in various traditions, we can deduct that a) All traditions have some form of understanding of the fact that God reveals Himself through creation – this term is coined general revelation by Berkhof (1996:128-132) and b) most traditions agree that God’s general revelation switches over to special revelation (the term used by Berkhof 1996:133-137), which is contained in God’s Word and is accessed through salvation. “God ... as a loving trinity of perichoresis, a sacred choreography of self-giving, other-receiving; honouring, being honoured; fully seeing the other, fully revealing the self. Imagine an eternal one-anotherness...”. “Clearly, then, this Trinitarian vision of God helps us imagine a relational universe of one-anotherness” (Mclaren 2012:56). I deduct that general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) and special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137) is an illustration of God’s “one-anotherness” (Mclaren 2012:56).

“Evangelicals and Pentecostals” share my opinion that “common grace” boils down to the belief that “a person can participate fully in common grace and revelation but never touch special revelation and grace”. (Studebaker 2008:945). I am therefore more convinced than ever the general revelation is employed as an introductory measure through which special revelation is explained. It was therefore necessary for the cross to take place. God is knowable because: “Jesus Christ made God human and understandable” (Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:1).

God gives God’s self the ‘identity of the human Jesus’” (Bauckham 2015:33). “Speaking of Jesus as being simultaneously ‘human’ and ‘divine’, ‘true man’ and ‘true God’, is the appropriate

dogmatic expression of our faith in “Jesus” as the “Christ” (Nipclow 2001:38). I perceive that common grace is experienced by all humans, yet special grace are only tasted by believers. “God’s intervention through the ages in the history of the world, and God’s care and maintenance of the world, reaches a climax with this dramatic incarnation” (Naude 2004:188). I perceive that God’s acts towards humankind have not only been guiding them towards the promised end, but that as time has progressed, they have become more personal and illustrative. Scholars note that “Traditional Pentecostal theology for the most part mirrors traditional evangelical theology with respect to its assumptions and understanding of common grace and general revelation and special grace and revelation (Harr [1999] 2005:42-49; Higgins [1994] 1995:69-81; Menzies and Horton 1993:20-26)” (Studebaker 2008:944). “The distinction between common grace and special grace parallels the distinction between the doctrines of general and special revelation.” (Studebaker 2008:944). I note that general revelation and special revelation are still being researched by scholars but under the phrases “common grace” and “special grace”. “Special revelation (in evangelical and Pentecostal theology) gives the knowledge of God necessary for salvation, which usually has a specific and detailed Christological content (Demarest 1982, 13-14, 228, 233, 250; 1992, 199,205)” (Studebaker 2008:944). “Because special revelation occurs through supernatural acts, such as the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of scripture, it is not universal but limited, at least initially, to the target community of faith – for example, Israel and the Christian church” (Studebaker 2008:944). In my theory making process and search for the knowability of God, it becomes clear to me that God’s general revelation is available to all as a sign of His goodness and His special revelation is distributed to those who believe in Jesus Christ through the supernatural event of salvation that takes place (God’s greatness”). Special revelation speaks to me personally of God’s greatness as He is the only Being alive that can facilitate eternal salvation to humans. Being part of the Pentecostal tradition, I express my view that it is a special movement. It is often perceived the Pentecostals “deal with a God who is free and personal” and “responds to them in surprising and unpredictable ways” (Pinnock 2000:10) and thus in my opinion it can be deduced that God is mysterious. I understand and agree that “every Christian reading the Bible is in a position to make this contribution to the doctrine of God, but Pentecostals (it seems to me) are in a particularly strong position to do so” (Pinnock 2000:10). It can also be deduced the God is knowable through His ongoing communication with humankind. “The Pentecostal community is not a sacramental institution like Rome or a doctrinal academy like Geneva, but a people baptized in the Holy Spirit, continually interacting with God” (Pinnock 2000:10). God is knowable yet mysterious in the application of His will and it is for this reason that much focus is placed on having and developing a relationship with the Trinity. I do perceive that history has moved into a very critical stage and that more focus must be placed by the Pentecostal tradition on the Word of God in an attempt to curb the false doctrines that are rampant amongst most congregations and denominations. In my opinion, a strong relationship with God will

increase His knowability in the life of the believer but not every detail about God will ever be discovered because He is ultimately infinite and mysterious.

The divinity of the Trinity has combined into a perfect network through which God's Person and God's conduct come full circle. I believe that general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) calls us to "creation care" (Lamp 2014:73-74) [macro level] and that special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137) calls us to "soul care" (Lamp 2014:73-74) [micro level]. I accept that it is ironic how that which humans are experiencing on the macro level is temporary (creation) and that which humans are experiencing on the micro level is permanent (eternity). To me, God's divinity is too great for the human mind to digest and God had to therefore minister to humankind on their level. I trust that God's Person (God as Creator) assists humans to experience Him in nature through creation. I further trust that God's conduct (through sending Jesus Christ and at this moment the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) has facilitated an experience for believers of a relationship with God (the Trinity).

CHAPTER 4: GOD'S 'GOODNESS' AND GOD'S 'GREATNESS'

4.1 Introduction

Erickson (2001:91-96) probes extensively into the aspects of "God's goodness" and "God's greatness" (Erickson 2001:98-104). I am of the opinion that a clear understanding of God's "goodness" and God's "greatness" could give us an indication of His knowability. Scholars research various topics in their fields of study due to the innate impulse to gather more knowledge on a frequent basis. From a theological point of view, the "Bible's depiction of humanity" differs greatly from what is perceived in "human society" in our present day as "people today are actually in an abnormal condition" (Erickson 2001:171). The Fall of humankind has to a certain degree adjusted the "image" of God within humans (Gen 1:26; Gen 3). Still, I believe that humankind possess an inherent knowing that there is more to God's image within us than what can be accessed at this point in time. The relentless search for knowledge continues and often renders humankind with a false sense of comfort.

It has been established that general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) and special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137) render a complete message of God. It has been established that God's Person and God's conduct (acts) cannot be separated due to the overlap that exists between these two aspects of God. Interestingly enough, it has been established that "because God created the entire universe out of nothing there is no matter in the universe that is eternal" (Grudem 1994:220). I therefore add that general revelation exists because of God's initiative and that it is temporary. I deduct that due to the fact that God is an eternal Being, He has also fashioned means of communicating special revelation (to my mind eternal truths about God) through His Word and His Spirit. Likewise, I perceive that God's goodness (Erickson 2001:91-96) and God's greatness (Erickson 2001:98-104) both form a part of who He is. It is my opinion that humankind experience God's qualities daily, whilst simultaneously trying to achieve them on a personal level. It seems plausible to suggest that humankind was blessed with the desire to attain a certain level of greatness. Yet, God's infinite qualities are out of our reach. I discern that humankind displays (to a certain degree) some of God's qualities through the empowerment of His image. I am of the belief that these qualities will unfortunately never be perfected due to the finite nature of humans. God is a complex Being and humankind will never come to a full knowledge of Him, yet His image compels us to keep searching.

4.2 God's "goodness"

God's Person is "present; perfect; Triune and personal" and "Jesus is the full and final revelation of God" (Nelson & Wawire 2004:25). I personally perceive the Bible to be a perfect example of God's goodness and greatness. It is a divine (great and supernatural) book written by human authors (finite human beings) who were inspired by the Holy Spirit as a result of God's goodness. Because God is good, He blessed humankind with His divine (great) revelation. A Scripture that encapsulates God's goodness and God's greatness is John 3:16. It reads: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God's love thus acted as a catalyst to send Jesus Christ to the cross so He could grant humankind a way to attain everlasting life.

I believe that John 3:16 illustrates God's goodness and God's greatness in one verse. God's goodness is representative of His love for humankind. The Bible lists it as the reason that Jesus was sent (incarnated) to die on the cross for the sins of humankind. I perceive that God's greatness is displayed through the resurrection of Jesus and the eternal freedom He has attained for believers. In short, my theory is that God's goodness is in His great love for humankind and God's greatness resides in His power to bless believers with eternal life through Jesus Christ. Believers confess that through His sacrifice Jesus made eternal life possible. Personally, I note that God's goodness (love) and God's greatness (life) are both illustrated in the Person of Jesus. I recognize that much like God's Person and God's conduct form a unit likewise God's love and life amalgamate to bless and empower the believer.

I am of the opinion that any human being has the capacity to love: here a level of God's goodness has been reached. Yet only God can bless humans with eternal life: God's greatness is unattainable. Humankind can to a certain degree shape their reality through their choices in life yet only God can design and enforce eternal life.

4.2.1 Love and the image of God

God's goodness is described as "Moral purity (Holiness; Righteousness; Justice); Integrity (Genuineness; Veracity; Faithfulness); Love (Benevolence; Grace; Mercy; Persistence)" (Erickson 2001:98).

When we study the Word of God the qualities listed above all form part and parcel of the development of the believers' spiritual life as an individual, as well as part of the Body of Christ. Believers are encouraged to embrace these qualities in order to stand in better relationship with

God and their fellow man. If the Word of God admonishes believers to live in this manner, and to allow these qualities to develop within them until they become a part of them, it can safely be deducted that a certain level of these qualities can be reached albeit within a human spectrum and never in full capacity. John 3:16 states that Jesus is the “only begotten Son of God”. Jesus is therefore unrepeated. There is only one Son of the Father. There is only one Being in the entire universe that could fulfil the role of the Son of Man and the Son of God: that Person is - Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I propose that the qualities of the goodness of God are attainable for believers but to a certain degree. I believe that the essence of God’s Person and God’s conduct (acts) are amalgamated in His image within humankind. It is because of God’s love that human beings can through the residing image of God experience God’s goodness. For instance, I note that when God made covenants with the Patriarchs Abraham (Gen 12: 1-3), Isaac (Gen 26:3) and Jacob (Gen 28:13) He took a concept of Himself and He made it relatable to humankind so as to reveal His intentions to them. Likewise, when God created man with reasoning capabilities (Gen 1:26), God took a concept of Himself (the ability to understand through methods of communication) and He made it relatable to humankind.

I believe that God created faith (which is a spiritual ability) to work in unison with reason (which is a mental ability). Another example would be when God inspired the authors of the Bible; God actively used human language to produce His divine Word into a product that humankind could read, understand and relate to, all for the benefit of their souls (2 Pet 1:21). Another example would be the fact that humans are religious beings. Following a religion calls upon the believer to show faithfulness and devotion to the deity that is worshipped. Through religion humans can experience what it is to be faithful to a belief system. Religion seems to be the dress rehearsal for what awaits humankind in eternity after life here on earth has ceased. God is faithful to His children not only in the religious sphere but in all walks of life. Believers can experience religion through the image of God within them. It seems plausible that God is knowable: God equips the believer to reach the promised and desired spiritual level of development as set out by His perfect will. I believe that God gave humans a touch of His grace when He transferred His image into them at creation. 2 Corinthians 12:9 reads: “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’”. To this I add that the human state in itself is weak, unprepared and worldly. We learn that “most commonly the image of God is conceived of as humanity’s power of reason. Attention has also been directed to other human capacities such as emotion and will” (Charette 2006:3). Although inexplicable to some, the Pentecostal believer who stands in secure relationship with God realises that God uses the emotional realm of the individual believer to adjust and tune his/her sense of experience of God. Simply put – God moves the heart of the believer to feel compelled to speak and act in a certain way individually and in the Church setting. I believe that God can move the heart of the believer and unbeliever alike through His

image that resides and His Spirit that indwells. The difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that the believer will grow spiritually and has attained eternal life whereas the unbeliever cannot enjoy these options. Still, Jesus came to save all humankind. The image of God within humans make it possible for them to be kind and gentle humans yet there is a distinction between the level of spiritual growth in a believer and an unbeliever. "It is noted in scripture that one cannot see God's face and live" Yet, "the goal of redemption is that we will one day see his face". The "Spirit of God" is "transforming us" into "His likeness" (Charette 2006:6). I would like to add that He is doing so not only with the individual believer but also with the community of God. God is restoring and shaping each individual and is simultaneously at work in His Church.

"Paul combines "his teaching on the image of God" with "other major theological concerns (such as Christology, soteriology, eschatology)". This process "ultimately ends in the restoration of the divine image" (Charette 2006:4).

I experience that God's "Love (Benevolence; Grace; Mercy; Persistence)" (Erickson 2001:98) is not only for the benefit of the individual believer, but for the greater Christian community at large whether it be within the Church structure (eschatological community) or on social level.

I believe that humankind can experience and express God's love in their relationship with God as well as amongst each other. I believe that this is only possible due to the fact that humans have been created in the image of God. The goodness of God is experienced on a tangible level through the image of God that resides. In my opinion, this love of God acts as a catalyst to bring unity in the Body of Christ which forms an eschatological community.

4.2.2 The eschatological community's work at hand: The Great Commission

In theological circles, the eschatological community is representative of the religious community. "At its core authentic religious experience is divine encounter" which includes an "ineffable awe in God's presence" and is described in the religious tradition to which I belong as "Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues" as well as "other spiritual gifts or experiences". These include "private prayer and public worship" (Richie 2005:99). Different religious traditions describe the eschatological community in various ways.

From a Pentecostal point of view, I agree that the eschatological community "needs theology and morality" as well as "spirituality", not forgetting that "we still need the experienced presence of God in religion today" (Richie 2005:110). I perceive the eschatological community's function is

firstly a sincere approach to the development of the image of God within each believer and secondly serves as an example of God's image to a broken and lost world. Unfortunately, the experience of God's presence as translated in certain gatherings is not always interpreted as is Biblically correct and has given rise to many problems and disagreements within the religious community. One of these problems is the rise of the Prosperity Gospel.

I also add that "God did not create human beings to be isolated persons, but in making us in his image, he made us in such a way that we can attain interpersonal unity of various sorts in all forms of human society" (Grudem 1994:392). Therefore, I deduct that the image of God was not only implanted in humans for personal benefit but also for the benefit of the larger community. The knowability of God is not exclusively limited to what the individual learns about God but about what it can offer the eschatological community as it awaits the return of Jesus. Grudem (1994:383) writes that the "Hebrew word for 'image' and 'likeness' simply informed the original readers that man was like God, and would in many ways *represent* God". Not only in our worship and experience, but in our conduct on a social level. I add hereto that as believers who form part of the eschatological community (Body of Christ), we are ambassadors of God's kingdom.

I believe that a lack of focus on the correction of negative influences on the eschatological community inhibits the true knowability of God. In my opinion and experience in the ministry, the Prosperity Gospel has distorted the true meaning of the Scriptures. A common misconception (in my opinion) is the false teaching that God's grace is sufficient (almost over-sufficient) for the believer so if the believer continues in that specific sin as he/she has to do is ask God for forgiveness and start over again. The Scripture commonly used for this false teaching is (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Wonsuk Ma refers to it as the result of the "human cost of development" in humankind's search for "a better quality of life" (Ma 2013:231). He continues to illustrate that on the one hand the Prosperity Gospel has caused "a horrible religious industrial waste" which has resulted in "a great deal of damage". Whilst on the other hand the Prosperity Gospel has made a "critical contribution to the expansion of Christianity throughout the world". He believes that it has "with its many problems" rendered "a worthy message" of "hope for today and tomorrow" with regard to the entire span of "human needs" such as "health and prosperity" (Ma 2013:231-232). I wholeheartedly agree that the Prosperity Gospel has generated both positive as well as negative changes in the religious sphere. Personally, I believe the Prosperity Gospel to have been birthed from many a Pentecostal, as well as Charismatic movement. Yet from a personal point of view, I agree that in general a theologian in the Pentecostal tradition often sincerely wishes to illustrate the Pentecostal distinctiveness whilst employing the believers' experience to create a better "understanding of God" (Cross 2009:9). Unfortunately, there have been various negative reports

on the Pentecostal tradition experience. “We have encountered many theological maps that do not have the land of ‘Pentecost’ located on them at all, let alone the city ‘Experience’” (Cross 2009:8). This, on the other hand, shows that “theology can be wrong and thereby preclude an openness to the meaning of God’s presence among us”. A “lack of openness can easily limit or skew the results entirely” (Cross 2009:8). There needs to reside a flexibility within the eschatological community whereby room is made for all individuals seeking to hone their skills of the image of God in order to facilitate a proper image of God through the community. Such a flexibility will enable the eschatological community to reach across religious borders as various methods are employed into generating more knowledge about God. I believe that the combined efforts of various scientific fields could shed light on God’s knowability. Personally, I perceive God to be knowable through each religious tradition due to the fact that He is flexible in His approach to humankind and always reaches His desired end as established by His will.

On the other hand, “Clark Pinnock has warned us” that “religious experience needs good theology the way a traveler needs a reliable map” (Cross 2009:8). Note here that flexibility is a positive addition to the religious disposition of the individual, yet it must be practised within a healthy perimeter. I agree that “rather than starting anew with our theological reflection, it would be beneficial to us and to the church at large to engage our theological past, but with an eye to our experience of God as reflected in these doctrinal discussions” (Cross: 2009:9). In his own manner, Wonsuk Ma recognizes an overlap between various religious traditions. He is of the opinion that “if we welcome the God of Creation with wide openness, we will have to realize the presence of the Spirit in God’s creation, in every human being, and in each church tradition” (Ma 2013:243). I perceive God to be knowable: His image most likely acts as a compass to believers on how to proceed as a religious community whilst functioning in an eschatological context as the end times approach. I perceive that the image of God can be described as the believers’ map to wholesome living.

I believe that regardless of varying opinions on worship and experience within the religious community the fact remains that God must receive honour and glory through the worship of the believer. In the Pentecostal tradition it is taught that worship is deeply intertwined with experience. This tradition is characterized by its willingness to accept a move of God’s Spirit regardless of the set-out program and liturgy.

A particularly important part of Pentecostal theology is the worship of God. In the Pentecostal circles which I have frequented, it is believed that worship is a tool for spiritual warfare. It is also viewed as an elixir for well-being which lifts the individual to new spiritual heights of victory and edification. Worship is an especially important part of Pentecostal Church services, as

Pentecostals believe that it ushers the believer into the very throne-room of God where prayer, supplications and petitions are released.

“A Pentecostal theology of worship is still in the making... Because of the Pentecostal movement’s roots in the Wesleyan tradition ... the theological emphasis” is placed on “holiness” and “not orthodox, liturgical praxis” (Alvarado 2012:135). I am of the opinion that worship is an inextricable part of the Christian relationship experience of the believer, yet I am also inclined to believe that the liturgical aspects of the Church service are equally important as it involves the expounding, reading and understanding of the Word of God. Quite favourable however, there has arisen a “hunger for genuine spirituality in secular society”, which includes “theologians and liturgiologists” alike. This is of course because “many people seek deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives” (Alvarado 2012:136). I perceive this to be the case due to the uncertainty that humanity is facing at the moment. The Covid-19 pandemic has catapulted human thinking into new realms of belief and understanding. Old credence has been challenged whilst traditional religious formulas are disputed. Another aspect to consider is the fact that “there is ... a prevailing challenge within many churches today” where churches are trying to discern “how to strike the delicate balance in worship between order and ardour” (Alvarado 2012:136). We also find “many Pentecostal churches” that are “so spontaneous” that they “loose” the “necessary liturgical structures” belonging to the Church service (Alvarado 2012:136). The Pentecostal tradition can most assuredly address this longing of a more intimate relationship with God through their practices within the worship service. Although theologians come from various traditions, I believe that each tradition works towards the same end: each tradition strives for more knowledge of God, as well as a higher level of intimacy with Him. In my opinion, Pentecostals often do tend to get carried away during the worship service. Many a service has often turned into a worship session without ever reaching the sermon on the portion of Scripture that the pastor prepared for teaching. Yet, the fact remains that Pentecostals do bring a significant positive contribution to the relationship that believers have with God.

“For Pentecostals, worship means” to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit within the Church setting. Such an encounter is viewed as transformational or lasting as it is believed that like the “Moses’ experience” on “the mountain” so “the worshipper who beholds the image of God” will be “transformed” from “one glory to the next” (Alvarado 2012:139). Of course, it has to be remembered that “God’s presence in the worship service” is “not” to “entertain” but to “engage” with “the worshippers in acts of love”. Clayton J. Schmidt states that the congregation coupled with “liturgical leadership, and God” is necessary for this to happen (Alvarado 2012:141-142). Thus, the Prosperity Gospel has somehow commercialised the church and excessive worship is unfortunately now frowned upon.

I perceive God to be knowable through the worship and experience of the believer. In my opinion, He has given humans an innate ability to develop and grow as individuals, as well as a community of believers. Not only do changes occur automatically in these spheres, but as the processes continue new thought patterns are willed into being. God has programmed humankind to be sensitive to their physical, emotional and even religious needs. If there is knowledge to be generated, they will surely meet the mark. The individual does not worship God individually, he/she also worships and experiences God in a corporate setting. This in-depth relationship that I refer to is to my mind rooted in the relationship that God has with the community; the relationship God has with the believer and the relationship believers have between each other.

In my opinion, as an eschatological community of believers, we are fanning the flame of revival and are all partaking in the Great Commission by way of spreading the Gospel through our daily conduct. I believe that mutual understanding is generated through in-depth relationship. Ultimately, (even amidst the Covid-19 pandemic) believers are called to be true to the eschatological community.

In my opinion, the Great Commission is the mission of the eschatological community of God. It is the shaping and teaching of the believer, as well as the open invitation into God's kingdom to those who are still searching for Him. Matthew 28:16-20 states: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NKJV).

We know that "the modern church" has "been divided" and places focus on "two mission emphases", namely "eternal life after death" and "present life before death" (Ma 2013:229). In my opinion, many divisions in the church are in existence because of a) differences in doctrinal beliefs (therefore the existence of so many religious traditions); and b) the false teachings that have infiltrated the church (of which the "Prosperity Gospel" is an example).

It is important to note that "the laws of nature" are "basic actions of God" that "usher in the patterns and habits of the coming world" (Yong 2008:982). I report that it seems plausible that love can be described as an instinct to humans and can be described as a "natural law of nature" as well. The human being does not only experience a love for self, but also for others and in the framework of a community. More importantly, it must be acknowledged that both the "natural laws of nature", as well as supernatural phenomena stem from God and assist the believer in his/her mission in

the kingdom of God. For instance, “glossolalia” is considered to be “an evidential sign of the speaker’s ... gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit” (McGee, cited by Yong 2008:961-962).

In the Pentecostal tradition, close relationship values are established between the believer and God. “Spiritual or charismatic gifts of the Spirit” are “prevalent in PC worship: tongues and prophecies, healings, and miracles” (Yong 2008:981-982). In the Church setting, “most PC Christians” (Pentecostal Christians) expect God’s ongoing intervention in the same manner as divine action was displayed in the lives of the earliest Christians” (Yong 2008:981-982). I am of the opinion that the relationship between God and the believer is active through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) who equips (through God’s image in humans) the believer for service in the kingdom of God. “It is the commitment to a robust theology of divine action that has motivated our laborious explorations of the concept of natural law from scientific, philosophical, and theological perspectives” (Yong 2008:981-982). I am convinced that the overlap in different fields of study must be recognized with the help of various concepts and laws in nature itself. An “authentic Pentecostal charismatic witness” is introduced here whilst proposing a “more plausible and coherent account of divine action for Pentecostal charismatic piety and Christian practise in the twenty-first century.” Yong hopes to generate “fresh insights on the topic of divine action” (2008:961). He points out that there exist “alternative readings of the canonical narratives”, which render “different understandings” on the topic of “divine action” that are possibly “not conflicted in the world of modern science” (Yong 2008:962). I add to this statement from Yong that though the different religious traditions have been developing their unique and separate religious practices, dogmas, theologies and codes of conduct, these traditions have lost sight of the fact that there are many concepts that overlap amongst their theologies. Scholars should take care to remember that all believers (that includes also all religious traditions) form part of God’s eschatological community. I agree that “Pentecostal worship” and theology can “be far more” efficient should it choose to “expand its thinking and practices” (Alvarado 2012:151). I believe that this development is possible and that it will be perfected within the active participation of the believer in the Great Commission as part of the eschatological community of God. God is knowable to my mind because He has given all the religious traditions the same overarching mission: the mission of saving the lost. It remains to be seen if different religious traditions would be willing to participate in such a venture. I believe that history has shown that in order to progress in life and in knowledge it is often necessary to employ unconventional thinking and methods. This, in my opinion, calls upon the faith of the believer, irrespective of which religious tradition he/she belongs to.

Hence, my great enjoyment in the following statement: “It can be a little intimidating in a Reformed context to admit that one is Pentecostal. It’s a bit like being at a ballet and letting it slip that you’re partial to NASCAR and country music. Both claims tend to clear a room. And yet I happily define

myself as a Reformed charismatic, a Pentecostal Calvinist” (Smith 2008:42). As a Pentecostal adherent I have a similar experience with the Reformed tradition in the sense that I value many approaches to the study of the Word of God that the Reformed tradition employ. In my opinion, the concept of collaboration between different fields is not only applicable to each human being but also the eschatological community.

Siang-Yong Tan prominently “describes an implicit and explicit integration model” that suggest a “blending of scriptural and psychological theories and methodologies” (Anderson Zuehlke & Zuehlke 2000:69). I deduct that humans are not only all religious gifted beings, but they are also subjected to psychological processes: in life as part of their humanity. Hence, they face the same challenges in life whether they are believers or unbelievers.

It is possible that different religious traditions have silently admired some aspects of other traditions, but have kept quiet out of the fear of the unknown results of collaboration. Much to the loss exposition of the derivation of knowledge gathered by humankind. In my personal capacity, I adore the focus on worship and experience in the Pentecostal tradition, yet when it comes to the exposition of the Word of God, I tend to lean toward the Reformed methods of conduct. By applying the strong points of both religious traditions, I have grown not only closer to God but also in relationship with my fellow believers who inevitably form a part of the Body of Christ. Do I (like Smith) feel like I “inhibit two different space-time continuums?” (Smith 2008:42). My answer is: Not really. It has made for a hermeneutical approach to life. As a believer I have tried to amalgamate my humanity with my perception of humans in general. When comparing my findings with the Biblical truth of what humans represent in the grand scheme of things, I have noted that all humans are basically the same, the only aspect that divides them is what they believe. I have met and befriended many people in life who choose to remain unbelievers (for their own specific reasons) and ultimately it has taught me to never judge others for their beliefs but to silently and purposefully shine God’s light in their daily lives. I do not condone willing sinful behaviour and stay far from it. The Bible is clear about what sins are an abomination to the Lord. I have felt that collaboration does not have to be a word that must be feared amongst theologians, but rather a concept that must be embraced. I believe that scholars are able to collaborate without compromising their beliefs. Other scholars also recognize an overlap between various religious traditions in the social context of being the Church (Ma 2013:243). Being a part of the eschatological community does not only include the aspects of worship and experience, but also indicates that the community of God must partake in the Great Commission as the united Body of Christ. I am of the opinion that in order to be effective in an ever-changing world, all religious traditions must stand together and formulate fresh new ways of spreading the Gospel. This is pressed by the issue that the entire span of humanity is currently facing life-threatening matters

due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. I experience the collaboration should be at the top of the agenda.

I conclude this section with the following statements: To my mind, God is knowable to each believer individually and as a part of the Body of Christ. Therefore, God is knowable to the believer: I believe that this is possible via the image of God in the believer (i.e. God is knowable within the believer). God is also knowable in and through the eschatological community: God is knowable through the conduct of the believer (as a part of the Body of Christ). God is knowable through His goodness. However, God is not only good, but also great. This will be examined further in the following section.

4.3 God's "greatness"

Whilst pursuing a clear view of the knowability of God, God's goodness and God's greatness have to be taken into consideration. In my opinion, these aspects of God include information with regard to His attributes and how they relate to us as humans. In my ministry I preach from John 1:1-18 to illustrate that God is the Author, Giver and Pillar of all life. In my opinion, humans are a product of God's life and His life-giving capabilities (God the Father Creator, the First Person of the Trinity). Similarly, to my mind, the Church is a product of God's life and manifestation through Jesus Christ (God the Son who is our Saviour and the Second Person of the Trinity). I further believe that the eschatological community is a product of the movement of the Holy Spirit since the Day of Pentecost (God the Holy Spirit who is our Guide and Comforter, the Third Person of the Trinity). I experience that humans are a product of God's life whilst likewise eternal life is a product of God's life and power. In my frame of reference, all living beings in the universe are intertwined via the life that God gives; that is the one thing they have in common. God is knowable because through Him we are united. God is also in a sense mysterious to me because I believe that humans have no idea how God come to exist and how He creates life. I generally connect the life God has blessed humans with, with the greatness of God because in my opinion, it is a miracle in itself that God a) is able to create life, as well as eternal life (which I do not perceive we even understand in full scope) and existence to beings that He designs b) that humans have the opportunity to experience Him through His inherent image. To me, God is simply magnificent!

4.3.1 Life and the image of God

“The overall theme of the assembly is definitely ‘life’. God’s Spirit from the very beginning, is the Spirit of creation and is life-giving. God’s continual involvement” is “life-giving, life-sustaining, and life-restoring” (Ma 2013:228). The assembly referred to here is the church. Humanity is “distinguished from the rest of the whole creation” and “given God’s breath (Gen 2:7). Human beings are also “created to be carrier of God’s something.” To theologians, the “God’s something” refers to God’s image, to which Wonsuk Ma (2013:228) adds “as Spirit-bearers – this is the beginning of our Christian life and missionary call”. I deduct that God’s image coupled with God’s life within us a) presents believers with a meaning for existence; and b) equips believers for their task as stewards of the kingdom of God. I admonish humans to remember that human life is secondary to God’s life and His perfect existence. It is noted that “no one has ever seen God (John 1:18) and therefore the Almighty God cannot be fully comprehended by humanity (Job 11:7), yet He has shown himself at different times and in various ways in history, indicating that it is His will for us to know Him and to be in right relationship with Him (John 1:18; 5; 20; 17:3; Acts 14:17; Rom 1:18-20). This does not mean, however, that we can “completely and exhaustively” know “all about God’s character and nature (Rom 1: 18-20; 2: 14-15)” (Joyner, cited by Horton 1984:121). I deduct that God is knowable due to the fact that He provides all humans with the necessary skillset in order to complete their life purpose.

I believe that the image of God gives humans the ability to mimic God’s goodness to a certain measure. I am of the opinion that Galatians 6:9 indicates that for all work there is a harvest waiting. This indicates that the blessing comes when the work is finished. Galatians 5:22-23 reads: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” These characteristics should form part and parcel of the God-given life of the believer, which demands the bearing of the image of God. I believe that humans can mimic some of these qualities, but humans cannot generate life except through human birth. Only God can create and only God can give eternal life. To my mind, this is a sign of His greatness. To my mind, we cannot mimic life, we can but enjoy the life God gives humankind through His image.

4.3.2 The empowerment of the believer (miracles through evangelism)

God’s faithfulness refers to God’s promises. God’s freedom thus refers to “God’s freedom to choose how and when and whether to act” (Knight 1993:65). My personal view is that God’s faithfulness refers to God’s goodness and kindness. God’s freedom, on the other hand, most

probably refers to God's greatness. No being in the universe will ever be as free and as powerful as God. Human beings have the capacity to love and to enjoy life, but never to God's extent. I believe that only God can effect changes both in the universe (macro) and in the individual (micro).

One example of God's greatness is the fact that He is the only one that can perform miracles. Unfortunately, the world has attempted to make sensationalism a part of the Gospel. This has led to many a false religious movement and doctrine regarding the manifestation of what Biblical evangelism entails. The church and the Gospel have been commercialized by many and in the process the Great Commission has been misrepresented. A topic of interest is the healing in faith doctrine¹¹ that is often preached through the mode of the Prosperity Gospel.

Personally, I believe this to be a false doctrine because it indirectly teaches that healing bows at the will of man, which is not true and not scripturally apt. History has proven that God heals some whilst He doesn't heal others. It is only up to God to decide who receives His mercy and compassion (Rom 9:5) and in which manner. Whilst "Pentecostal spirituality" is "decidedly pneumatological" (Alvarado 2012:139), it is noticed and described as "passionate praise, emotional release, and spiritual gifts in operation". Simon Chan calls it "free worship" that "interchanges" with "spontaneity". It's a "moving encounter with the divine" (Alvarado 2012:139). These descriptions of "Spirit-filled worship" is reminiscent to me of the worship and adoration of the Pentecostal believer for the wonderful manifestation of God's greatness. I comfortably promote such manifestations of the Holy Spirit amongst believers in my congregation. Biblically, believers are renewed and encouraged to share the Gospel with others and in my opinion, miracles are a result of effective evangelism, which is part of the compliance of the believer to the Great Commission. The Church is directed to make disciples and to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). Through these actions of the believer (in faith) God becomes knowable to the believer, as well as to those souls who are receiving the true testimony of the love and the life of God through Christ. I believe that the Pentecostal Church is doing its part in the social realm of society with regard to charity and discipleship as they support the community in the form of food, clothes and counselling. What I have found lacking in some instances is the lack of focus on the Word of God and an absence of enough inherent hermeneutical knowledge of God's Word. Discipleship could be hindered by this phenomenon. It is a reality that relevant topics have been avoided or even side-stepped due to their controversial nature. Instead of inviting sensationalism into the church by being passive about it, the church should focus on aspects of the religious life such as discipleship.

¹¹ The following preachers can be identified as promoters of this movement: "Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Fred Price Charles Capps, Robert Tilton, Jerry Savelle and Kenneth Hagin Jr" believe and preach that if "one first believes one is healed then the healing follows" (Knight 1993:66).

The issue of the “discussion between theology and science” takes a new twist as “Pentecostals and charismatic” enter with “their emphasis on divine intervention and miracles” (Yong 2008:961). Personally, I believe that general revelation is reminiscent of God’s goodness, whilst special revelation illustrates God’s greatness (miracles that can only be performed by God Himself).

The historical conduct of humankind has taught us that any new movement, theory or approach is in danger of inviting criticism. As a theological insight I want to add that “in the past few decades Pentecostal theology has seen such a rise in academic endeavour that differing trends of thought are emerging with the conflict that is inevitable in any field of study” (D-Davidson 2013:61). In this case, I believe that conflict will bring about positive changes to the approach scholars take in their study of God. It is through academic” endeavours that God is discerned to be knowable or mysterious. Investigation of God’s love and life indicate just how open God is to sharing His existence, His narrative and His future plans with humankind.

An indirect reference to the fact that Pentecostals focus much attention on experience in their application of dogma is suggested here. In the ministry I find that the “Pentecostalism’s Holy Spirit in-filling” is an empowerment for witness that has placed “unhelpful emphases on the doing” instead of the “being in relationship with God” (D-Davidson 2013:61). To me, God is knowable because I find that He challenges manmade doctrines and urges individuals on to discovering a greater revelation of Him.

From my Pentecostal point of view, I want to discuss the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” because I feel that this phenomenon urges the believer on to partake in the love of God by making a difference in the lives of others. I also perceive that this phenomenon helps the believer to realise the unique character of the life God gives so freely and this in turn urges the believer on to have a desire to partake in the Great Commission. It also sets the stage for the believer to experience the knowability of God on a personal level. I perceive that faith through experience has assisted me to achieve a greater level of spiritual maturity. D-Davidson does “not advocate the Pentecostalism’s Baptism in the Holy Spirit” as “a mark of spiritual maturity or a badge of holiness” (D-Davidson 2013:61). I disagree with the first half of his statement, yet I agree with the latter half. Personally, I perceive the gift of the Holy Spirit to be a sign of spiritual maturity, but I do not think a believer has the right to think of himself/herself as having attained any type of level of holiness (Phil 1:6). Instead, D-Davidson is of the opinion that there develops a “greater intimacy with God” through the “Holy Spirit Baptism” that “motivates Christians in both a more vibrant witness to Him as well as socially-concerned service” (D-Davidson 2013:62). There is no doubt in my mind that Acts 1:8 refers to the enablement of the believer to be an effective witness. It must be mentioned here that “the exact phrase ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ is not found in the Bible” (Wyckoff, cited by

Horton 1984:425). It is a term that describes God's miraculous intervention in the life of the believer through His love.

"Dunn's respected thesis" reports that the Spirit baptism is a "conversion-initiation experience" that has long yet been "challenged with" a theory that "the purpose of Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is an action for the edification and "empowering for witness" of the believer" (D-Davidson 2013:63). This is exactly the standpoint from which I preach and live the Pentecostal experience. Personally, I perceive it to be a transformational force that changes the spiritual anatomy of each believer from a worldly approach to a Biblical approach.

"Wonsuk Ma sees 'the primary role' of the Spirit in the believer's life as empowering them for service" (D-Davidson 2013:63). Clearly, Ma incorporates his view of the baptism in the Spirit with the Great Commission as the central drive of Pentecostalism. In my opinion, many variations of a theory will emerge once it comes into existence. "Pentecostal scholars disagree among themselves on crucial points of this argument" (D-Davidson 2013:63).

A list of disagreements ensues: Turner prefers that "For Luke, the Spirit is the charismatic dimension of all Christian life and mission, not merely of the one or the other". Roger Stranstad states "full of the Holy Spirit" means the "enabling of the Spirit for ministry" whilst "filled with the Holy Spirit" refers to "prophetic office and inspiration (D-Davidson 2013:64). It stands out that the entire function of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is intertwined with the believers' personal disposition. Any of the variations as discussed above can be true for the believer individually. God is knowable in my opinion because I believe that there is more than one shoe of empowerment that fits. God is also mysterious to me and diverse in His nature and as a result, He has created humankind as such.

I believe that human beings can only experience what God allows them to experience. I believe that the witness of a miracle empowers the ministry and message of a believer who is actively partaking in the Great Commission. Although the believer might not know everything about the God of the miracle, the believer can through the miracle come to know God better. I believe that God uses miracles in the same fashion as Jesus used parables to teach. I believe that miracles are there to teach us of the greatness of God. In my opinion, God makes Himself available to be known (God is knowable). Yet He reveals Himself to a certain degree: I believe that through His infinite nature He is still mysterious in certain ways.

"Occasionally, ecstatic experiences are accompanied by visions or revelations which are described as encounters with God or visitations from beyond (Cox 1995: 68-70; Castelo, 2017:

126)” (Cely 2019:179-180). Encounters with the supernatural and divine occurrences that are instigated by God strengthens the faith of the believer.

“These experiences can be understood by the external observer as ‘hallucinations’ (Goodman, 1973)” (D-Davidson 2019:180). Some scholars would deduce that supernatural events are but figments of an individual’s imagination. Others report that “emotive experiences” are said to “culminate in religious ecstasy (see, for example, Lalive d’Epinay, 1968; Miller, 1980; Weskmeier, 1986; Martin, 1990; Corton, 1995; Bastian, 1997; Freston, 1998; Pew Research Center, 2006)” (D-Davidson 2019:180). I suggest that an additional view could be added here; even though some report these manifestations to be “hallucinations”, it still refers to supernatural phenomenon. In these events, both the individual and the Church are made spiritually whole (edified). They develop a sense of belonging and peace as they seek the face of the Lord through miracles. Some are of the opinion that an individual can “routinize” his experience of ecstasy so that it can develop into a “personal competence that may be active at any time” in the “process of learning (Huber and Huber, 2010:138; see also Spanos et al. 1986). Supernatural phenomena, is controlled by the will of the individual (Weber 2014:626). It is plausible to deduct that the individual will develop to the degree that he/she thinks can be achieved. Some individuals are more open to the supernatural than others. In my opinion, there are many factors that contribute to such views. These include superstitions and various worldviews. Pentecostals with “religious virtuosity” are said to be in a “stable ‘emotional state’ (Cox, 1995: 116)” (Cely 2019:193). Others purport that Pentecostals give “emotive experiences” a “central role in their relationship with God” (Cely 2019:195). It is important to note that in Pentecostalism, importance is not only placed on “dogmas and rites” but also on emotions, which “take a central role” (Cely 2019:195). This can be considered a strongpoint for this religious tradition, but it can also become a weakness. A healthy balanced approach could prove to work in the believers’ favour in the journey of his/her God-given life. I find God to be knowable because life in itself is a miracle and is expressive of the divine nature of God; it points to the greatness of God. Where miracles take place, God’s presence resides. It must be understood that miracles are not possible without God and cannot be fabricated by humankind.

“Through euphoric prayer, emotive singing, dance and glossolalia, Pentecostals experience the divine: they touch God, or are filled with the Holy Spirit (Blumshofer, 1986; Anderson, 2004; Cox, 1995; Hollenweger, 1997; Castelo, 2017)” (Cely 2019:179). I believe that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer is a miracle and that it was affected in order to enhance the knowability of God.

Cely describes the Pentecostal approach to worship as an emotional response to the experience of God. Pentecostals “experience God” through the means of intimate relationship with Him. I

would like to add that the qualities and attributes of God's goodness are available to humankind through their emotions and experience of Him. I believe that integrity, moral qualities and love are all connected to a human being's sense experience. Although humans experience that we are alive and that we have been given life, it is not because of a decision that we made, however, but according to God's will that we have life. God's greatness is at His disposal only.

Yet we have a choice through our free will of what we will do and how we will act in the circumstances that we experience. Often situations arise that test our integrity, moral qualities and love. In the Bible, God admonishes humankind to develop their integrity faithfully (Prov 11:3). The Bible admonishes believers to choose what is right (Prov 9); to never lie (Ex 20:16); and to not deceive (1 Peter 2:1). Moral qualities such as holiness are mentioned as featuring in the believers' life (1 Pet 1:16); righteousness is a quality that must be attained (Prov 21:21). Believers are admonished to live justly and love mercy ("justice" – Prov 21:15; Micah 6:8). Believers are admonished to walk in the spirit and not in the flesh (Gal 5), signifying that to some degree it is attainable. With regard to love (benevolence; grace; mercy and persistence), we note that these qualities are to be extended between brethren in a sincere fashion (Deut 15: 7-15; James 4:6; Heb 4:16; James 1:3). God is the developer of what He has created. God does not admonish us to be in control of our spirituality, life, personality. These aspects are all put in place through God's image within us. Only God is infinite. God is the Giver; He is the creator of supernatural events. Human beings do not choose to have a spiritual body; they are created with one. Human beings do not decide when they are born and through which parents we will be birthed – God chooses. Humans also do not give themselves unique personalities. God does all the above because He is the only One who is infinite.

I perceive that God's goodness can be experienced by humankind to a certain degree through the empowering of the Holy Spirit and God's image that resides in us. God's greatness, on the other hand, is unique only to God. I perceive God to be knowable due to the fact that He has blessed humankind with astounding capabilities. To my mind, God is mysterious through His goodness and His greatness. He has given humankind the choice to decide how they will speak and act via their free will. After viewing some general views on topics discussed, I am convinced that aspects such as the fact that humans possess a free will is indicative of the greatness of God. To my mind, the manifestations of God's Spirit within humankind as well as through humankind, point to God's greatness. What I find most appealing of God's greatness is the fact that He is the only infinite Being in the universe. He is also the only one who can give life. Furthermore, it should be noted here that He is the only Being that has control over life and death and this to me, proves His greatness. Not only does God's greatness, in my opinion, give life to our physical and spiritual

bodies, it also transforms and equips the Body of Christ to give life to the community through the means of social transformation.

4.3.3 The Pentecostal Social Transformation

I believe that leaders lead by example and that this principle applies to all spheres of life. Believers also lead by example, not only in their personal lives, but also in the greater community.

I report a) that it would be odd if it hasn't progressed into such forms of ministry and b) it has become a reality in the Pentecostal circles that I am familiar with. I am of the opinion that the Pentecostal tradition is engulfed in an experience, as well as a perception driven purpose. Pentecostals like to think of their faith-life as something pragmatic.

The "explosive growth of Pentecostalism among the destitute provides a large-scale laboratory for us to examine their hermeneutical process" thus creates a struggle to find solutions to the needs that confront them on a daily basis" (Petersen 2013:51).

I am of the opinion that Pentecostalism's focus on experience has facilitated a platform where the believer's perception of life with God has been adjusted to an applicable tool which must be used to the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom. This attitude spills over into the social platform as the Church ministers to the community and social transformation begins to take place. God's love as an initial and personal experience also moves the heart of the believer. God is knowable through His love and His life, which is extended to humans. I believe He is knowable because His kingdom language speaks across different religious traditions and secretly unites humankind.

"Regardless of their diversity", Peterson believes that "all Pentecostals tend to address ... their spiritual and physical needs" and this causes them to "adopt a more-or-less common hermeneutical methodology" which is realised through their "supernatural / Pentecostal worldview" (Petersen 2013:51- 52).

In my ministry, there is heavy focus on social transformation and engagement as I believe that this movement facilitates a close and personal view of God's love and life through the believer. To my mind, social transformation is part of the spiritual growth of the believer and assists the believer in honing his/her skills within God's church. This hermeneutic integrates the "concrete historical reality of context with the biblical text" (Petersen 2013: 52). I believe whereas the focus on experience has created a solid relationship with God, supernaturalism on the other hand, has negatively impacted the Pentecostal Word-based study and application. In my opinion, it is the

responsibility of the Pentecostal believer to find balance between the experience of our supernatural God and the adherence to the precepts of His Word. The level of knowability of God is in itself a marker and guide to navigate the believer through this process.

“Pentecostals have at their core a supernatural worldview perspective that is both overtly expressed and instilled in teachings and sermons” (Petersen 2013:52).

4.4 Conclusion

It must be discerned that God’s goodness and God’s greatness must not be underestimated in the life of the believer. An apt description to my mind would be that in the love and life of the Pentecostal believer there are certain elements that illustrate to me that there exists a “pre-understanding that they are participants in God’s unfolding drama” (Petersen 2013:52). This standpoint gives the Pentecostal believer a sense of purpose and appeals to their intuition and spiritual growth. It’s almost as if Pentecostals have a deep knowing that their lives were created for a special assignment which could in the world be interpreted as a belief in a God-given destiny of sorts.

I agree that “When Pentecostals read the Bible (a common reading)” they “link” their “Pentecostal worldview of spirituality (pre-understanding)” with their “daily circumstances to the biblical narratives”, which leads them to be able to execute a form of “practical application” (Petersen 2013:52).

In the Pentecostal tradition, the Biblical narratives are expounded and viewed not only in light of the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament in order to reach a contextual, as well as contemporary diagnostic of the Scripture for believers. This is how exegesis is approached from my own exegetic application. I perceive it to be almost as if other religious traditions are more focused on the present, which to me represent God’s goodness (the day-by-day care and guidance and constant provision and care). This is often referred to as “creation care” (Lamp 2014:65). Whilst as a Pentecostal I experience a deeper insight with regard to God’s greatness that is unmatched in the universe and therefore the inevitable focus on the future in my chosen religious tradition. I agree that “environmental sustainability” is “the most crucial problem in our time”, because it is “the one on which the future of the race depends” (Richie 2014:217).

I believe that if we don’t focus on the here and now, there won’t be a field for the harvest of souls according to what the Great Commission dictates. In reality, creation is just as important as the spiritual world. In my opinion, God is knowable to humans because a human being needs to be

ministered to in a holistic fashion should he/she be recruited for God's kingdom (1 Thessalonians 5:23). I experience that God deals with humans in such a manner and on each individuals' spiritual level. To my mind, God is knowable through His love for humankind, which is rooted in His goodness and faithfulness. Yet I also experience God to be even more mysterious through the life He provides through His greatness that stands unmatched in the universe.

I agree with Ma that we live life and we do this "together in love: For a common future" (Ma 2013:226) This is a universal truth that stretches above and beyond all countries, religious traditions and nations. I recognize the same "'dividedness' as a nation, a society, and within" the "Christian population" in South Africa, much like Wonsuk Ma (2013:226) experiences in South Korea. Like the Korean church and in my personal capacity as a pastor in the Full Gospel Church, I hope to also "contribute to the worldwide church" and in the process work towards "unity among diverse church families" (Ma 2013:226). I believe that this can be achieved through pro-active collaboration or integration between not only different religious traditions, but also between different scientific fields of study. In my opinion, God is knowable because He has birthed in humankind the longing to unite.

I believe that humankind is united through God's love and His life that flows through all and benefits each of us. God is also mysterious because history shows how He moves in unconventional ways in order to affect His will for humankind. In my opinion, the Great Commission is a catalyst of God's love and life. It assists believer to express their reciprocal love to God and to believers. It also assists believers to thank God for their life and to discover their life purpose. As believers we can never be of the opinion that "only a small group of saints" were "baptized in the Holy Spirit" and that only they "were the true saints of the latter days" (Ma 2013:227). This would be a dysfunctional view and not a true rendition of God's heart towards His church, as well as the unsaved. Ultimately, God gives grace and mercy to all humans. He is in control of the universe. To my mind, "Evangelism through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Ma 2013:227) encapsulates the spreading of the love of God (which stems from His goodness) and gives purpose to the life received from God (which stems from God's greatness). Through it all believers have the opportunity to gain wisdom from God regarding His goodness and greatness in this ever-changing world.¹²

¹² The Covid-19 pandemic and the diagnosis my mother received of stage 4 brain cancer in 2020 (she passed away on 5 July 2020) have forced me to re-evaluate my belief system. I have realised that God cares for all humankind and that He is ultimately in control of the entire universe. His will, will be done (Isaiah 55:8-9). Believers should appreciate His "love" and His "life". He is the Creator of it all (Romans 11:36).

CHAPTER 5: TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

5.1 Introduction

There is no question in my mind that the God of the Bible is and will remain to be a very complex and inexplicable, eternal Being. From my own perspective, the transcendence of God signifies the macro cosmos (which is found in general creation), whilst the immanence of God is found in micro cosmos (which I perceive to be the human being). This I perceive to be due to the fact that a) God created the universe and the earth (macro), before b) creating its inhabitants (micro). Human beings are described in the Bible as having been called “according to God’s purpose” (Romans 8:28). I perceive God’s image within humankind to be the catalyst in the God-given purpose and life of every person in history, as well as those that will still be born. God has placed certain aspects of His character within each of us. Through our physical senses we can experience God in creation (which is governed by natural laws) and through His Spirit we can experience God within ourselves (with our spiritual senses) as He guides and leads every believer on His paths of righteousness. There are also physiological laws at work within the human body that form a part of human existence and these have an effect on our emotions and beliefs. Both our macro (body in relation to creation which is governed by natural laws) and our micro (soul/spirit in relation to our spiritual humanness) sides of existence are connected to God.

Personally, I perceive that our bodies are not the only aspect that makes us human as it functions only as a temporary dwelling (2 Corinthians 5:1). I believe that what really makes us human is exactly that which differentiates us from the rest of creation, namely our capability to reason as well as our soul/spirit body. I am of the opinion that a collaboration takes place between our humanness and the Holy Spirit as natural laws and physiological laws interact in an external and internal manner. We exist in a physical body, but we live and breathe and have our being through our spiritual body which will live on for all eternity (Acts 17:28). Actions and reactions to external (creation – human body) and internal (image of God – soul/spirit) impulses form an undeniable part of our existence. I am therefore of the opinion that God is both transcendent and immanent simultaneously due to the fact that we need Him to be present in all aspects of our existence. Hence my expressed opinion that science and religion effectively collaborates in much the same fashion that reason and faith does. Both are necessary for full revelation in the exact manner that inspiration and interpretation often complement each other. Transcendence and immanence constantly keeps humankind engaged with God for effective illustrations and teachings of who God is. I therefore believe that God is knowable through many avenues of existence. If spiritual nourishment has not been ingested a dose of God is administered through creation, which reminds the believer that he/she serves a living God and that we are never alone. God constantly

reveals, teaches and shapes. Although approaches differ, to me, God's omnipotence describes His complete and utter supernatural intensity.

Omnipotence is described as "almighty or infinite in power, as God"; "having very great or unlimited authority or power" (dictionary.com), whereas omnicausality or causality is described as "the relation of cause and effect" or "causal quality or agency" (dictionary.com).

Du Toit (2013:36) investigates "the development of causality" within "physical science" and how it functions in theology, which naturally dictates a "different approach" to power, mostly with regard to God's omnipotence and omnicausality. I am convinced that collaboration between science and theology is in no way far-fetched but can render valuable insight into the knowability of God. Yet Du Toit (2013:58) notes that opinions regarding this matter on the "concept of causality", as well as God's omnipotence that originated from "scientific circles" and philosophers still has to be "digested theologically". I propose that having a deeper discernment of the knowability of God could facilitate such a platform, regardless of which scientific field is consulted. For instance, in the search for "diagrammatic immanence", Gangle (2016:251) writes that his essay "follows two largely independent lines of thought" namely the one is philosophical, whilst the other one is mathematical. He proceeds to discuss that "the overall proposal of diagrammatic immanence is meant to chart their possible long-term convergence". When researching the word convergence, we learn that it means where aspects "meet", "link up or cross" (dictionary.com). Surely, if Christians believe that God is omnipotent it could not necessarily exclude certain fields of science. God's omnipotence speaks to me personally of God's all-encompassing transcendent majesty and power. God's omnicausality represents God's immanence within my spirit through His image, in which I was formed. Personally, I perceive transcendence to be connected to creation in the form of general revelation whilst Immanence is reminiscent to me of the greater revelation that is found in special revelation. Transcendence and immanence in my opinion cannot be studied apart from each other, as they are inextricably linked. Likewise, in a similar fashion, God's Person and His acts are linked. His Word is both inspired, as well as divine. God is transcendent and immanent at the same time in my worldview. My view includes the standpoint that general science and theology are linked on a certain level as both testify of the existence, goodness and greatness of God in their own unique ways.

Many scholars are not convinced of this view. "Anthony Flew's parable states that God is a hypothesis that cannot be verified scientifically" (Benz 2019:16). After which the question is then asked: "So what has theology to do with reality?" Benz and Anthony Flew do not share my sentiments about studying God's Person and humankind whilst in search for knowledge and in an effort to introduce effective collaboration between the different fields of study. Benz (2019:16) is of the opinion that in order "to make theology understandable in a modern worldview, the

emphasis needs to change from discussing the nature of God to examining how humans experience God.” In my opinion, human beings perceive through our nature what it means to experience life and the act of living. I add that as believers we experience God’s nature in creation and through His Spirit Who resides in us. Benz believes that the chasm between science and religion is too wide to be compatible. Whereas I am of the opinion that these fields act in a cohesive manner. I apply the same principle here to God’s transcendence and God’s immanence. Benz (2019:16) writes that “science and theology start from different perspectives and experiences”. This is a solid and verified statement indeed, yet in my opinion science and theology describe the same phenomenon whilst using different measures.

According to Benz (2019:16), the “current dialogue” inevitably “falls short in two ways”, which he lists as “(1) it is simply physicalist” and “(2) it ignores the roots of religion”. Whereas I am of the opinion that scholars have to include both the physical aspects of reality, as well as the spiritual (which include religious) aspects of reality in order to establish if God is knowable and to form a way forward for the theological field of scientific development. I perceive that the main difference between Benz’ opinion and my own is embodied in the fact that Benz differentiates between religion and science in a clinical manner, whilst I perceive all fields of science to be inextricably linked on some level. To Benz (2019:16), “religion ultimately originates from religious perceptions that require participation and are holistic, including embodied cognitions integral sensations, emotions and feelings.” He describes “such perceptions” as “non-scientific because they are not objective”. I concur that the data used in different fields of science differ, yet I do experience that the act of theory making is initiated for the same purposes and ultimately investigate the same topics. My question is: Is it not through our physical senses that human beings perceive what is emotional, as well as what is objective? Perception in my opinion originates from the physical and continues to a spiritual level in the same fashion as general revelation paves the way for the entrance of special revelation from God. Benz (2019:22) renders from his personal point of view that “as science starts out from a limited part of reality and religious perceptions are not objective and thus not part of science, religion has no part in scientific models and explanations”. Benz (2019:22) is rather of the opinion that “the orientation provided by religion can be the starting point for ethics.” In the end, Benz (2019:23) believes that “it is better to be not understood at all, than to be misunderstood.” I oppose this view due to the fact that it inhibits the start of new ventures and studies into the knowability of God in all spheres of scientific research. I believe that if scholars start to box off what we perceive of God, they will inevitably inhibit their own personal growth as well as their research. The universe is meant to be explored.

Yong, on the other hand, “considers that theological interpretation” is “a dynamic process in which Spirit, Word and Community are always involved” (Olivero 2009:303). Thus, when employing such

“a theological hermeneutic” it evolves into “interpreting the totality of human experience – and that includes God and God’s relationship with human selves and the world as a whole.” This standpoint is fashioned quite like my own and encapsulates a theory which is all-inclusive to any data needed to arrive at a solid conclusion with regards to the knowability of God. “Yong considers doing a theology as entailing a manner of interpreting the world since it is a strictly second-order affair that proceeds in abstraction from first-hand experience” (Olivero 2009:303). I discern that humans can determine the knowability of God both from what they perceive in creation, as well as what they notice within themselves through the Holy Spirit that abides. “Yong ... notes that this is not the only way of cognitively reflecting upon one’s world since other disciplines also legitimately approach reality from their own respective starting points...” (Olivero 2009:303). These abovementioned facts delineate three of the most important aspects of what I believe forms part and parcel of the life of the believer in general. Although Yong could be opening himself up to various criticisms, Yong expresses the need for “philosophical theology”, “theological hermeneutics” and a “holistic approach” to interpreting the world (Olivero 2009:303). I stand in agreement that it is important for scholars to take into account their worldviews (“philosophies”), their approaches to the Word of God (“theology”) and their very selves as a body, soul/spirit (“holistic approach”) when studying reality.

Yong employs the metaphysics of the “philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce” and correlates it with “his reading of biblical pneumatology” and “Trinitarian ontology” (Olivero 2009:304). The result is that the “Father” is the “qualitative source of efficacy” the “Son” is the “decisive sign or image of the Father through who the Godhead is embodied and efficaciously interacts with the world”, whilst “the Spirit” is the “divine relationality both ad intra and ad extra”. Already here I discern that there is an external (creation) and internal (God’s image and Spirit within) relationship between humankind and God. To me this signifies communication and collaboration between God’s transcendence and His immanence.

Yong is a constructive theologian who uses “biblical tradition, systematic theology, the Christian tradition, hermeneutic theory and philosophy” to put together a “consensual hermeneutic” (Olivero 2009:309). I find Yong’s approach refreshing and I find that his approach is enforcing a sense of collaboration between fields of science, much like my own. Yong also renders a “sensible account of human understanding” since it is both “hermeneutical and realist” (Olivero 2009:309). In light of an illustration of Yong’s approach to research, I find that a system of collaboration is not only possible, but also necessary for new developments in research.

Discussing hermeneutics is included in the way preachers construct and deliver sermons. In my opinion, God’s universe is a sermon in its own right, as it renders an explanation of His existence. Likewise, God’s Word is illustrative of His inspiration and its infallibility. It is noted here that

humankind model everything it does according to what they've learned from their environment and from others. Yet, human interpretation is fallible in many ways due to differing worldviews and opinions. Many a sermon engage with rhetoric devices as a manner of illustration of the message. Adebayo (2018:40) explains: "Rhetoric is an age-old phenomenon rooted in the ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman empires". My point being that God is knowable through many different tools due to the fact that a) His creation has spoken to various civilization through history (i.e. Transcendence); and b) Jesus used rhetoric devices when He preached via parables to the masses. His Word contains many rhetoric pieces, which illustrate His will to humankind (immanence). I believe that God's knowability reaches across different civilizations and times in history, as well as covers different texts and worldviews. Thus, in my opinion, one field of science is not efficient to explicate all the available data regarding God's transcendence and immanence effectively.

5.2 Macro view of reality: Natural laws

Personally, I perceive that a macro view of reality encapsulates the general revelation that is given by God in creation and in the universe (transcendence), which are discernible via the natural laws He has put into place. Transcendence represents God's majestic display of Himself through creation (Psalm 19:1).

The laws of nature are generally described as being "habitual, dynamic and general" (Yong 2008:961). Yet Yong explains that he perceives them as being "tendencies through which the Holy Spirit invites the world to inhabit the kingdom of God." Here, I personally find a direct connotation between what I perceive the macro cosmos (creation i.e. God's display of transcendence) and the micro cosmos (the image of God within the human being which converses with the Holy Spirit i.e. God's display of His true immanence). I perceive that the lack of collaboration between scientific fields has obscured revelation of how intertwined God's transcendence and immanence are in their purest essence. Yong (2008:961-962) discusses many topics in the "theology-and-science arena" in his effort to illustrate that "work in theology and science stands to gain from the contributions of specific (rather than generic) Christian perspectives heretofore absent from the dialogue".

"With the help of" the "triadic metaphysics" of Charles Sanders Peirce, Yong (2008:982) has "suggested that the PC imagination invites a rethinking of the laws of nature and divine action". This he labels as "pneumato-eschatological framework". His main argument is that "the laws of nature" are in fact "amendable to the basic actions of God" and are "sufficiently flexible", hence

God uses them to “miraculously ... usher in the patterns and habits of the coming world” (Yong 2008:982). This in itself signifies an intervention to me.

God is the “infinite self-conscious subject”, but also “the absolute” and the “ultimate ground of all beings”. For this reason, he interprets that God is the “creator of natural laws” (Tetens, cited by Muller 2017:468). By the term “the absolute”, he means “something that is absolved or detached from anything else” (Muller 2017:471). The notion is thus promoted that “the world should be seen as a necessary interrelationship of its components” as “expressed by natural laws”. This standpoint is believed to have been “probably inspired by the enormous success of natural sciences and the ensuing ability to manipulate nature by technology” (Muller 2017:472). Although this may be the case, as a theologian I certainly believe that all aspects of creation are interrelated and undeniably connected on subtle levels that are not always seen plainly. I am also of the opinion that all the fields of science are joined and that they were created this way in order to complement and strengthen each other.

Muller (2017:472) explains that due to “the reproducibility of the experimental situations in each branch of science” it is suggested that “a necessary relation between the causal factors studied in the experiments” are discerned. It is once again evident that action and reaction is suggested here between the different strands of science. It can be theologically noted that God acts towards and within His creation to which humankind reacts. It can also be formulated that there is a human response that is rendered within a finite framework, whilst the Bible suggests a perfect response according to the will of God. Muller (2017:472) notes that physics has been a leading discipline within natural science, as it has “provided a fundamental ontology to the world”. I perceive that natural science employs the use of various ontological elements that act and react with each other. Physical factors which are “described by physics” were “supposed to be sufficient to determine necessarily not just the course of fundamental physical event but also more complex phenomena” (Muller 2017:472). In my opinion, there is a place for “more complex phenomena” to which I add that if humans as fleshly beings have the capacity to work with natural elements and verify theories accordingly, they can, as beings created in God’s image also verify theories by combining the natural and “more complex” spiritual aspects of creation to discern the knowability of God.

Stephens (2011:455) coins the term for “new creation” as “the place of the nonhuman material order in its eschatological scenario.” I disagree with Stephens as I do not consider this to be an apt description of the “new creation” yet; I consider the creation coupled with its natural laws as configuring “the place of nonhuman material order in its eschatological scenario.” I make this statement because I perceive that creation, as well as life of humankind on this earth has an expiration date. Eschatology to me points to something that foretells what will happen in the future

and during which time it will come to an end. Personally, I believe that eschatology thus points to the fulfilment of something temporary. When creation (coupled with its natural laws) is separated from the human beings that inhabit the earth, we are left with material order, which I perceive to be illustrative of natural laws. I perceive that natural laws are mechanisms that make it possible for creation and humans to co-exist in general and that the relationship is mutually important. Humankind was created to “tend and keep” the earth and the earth provides for humankind (Genesis 2:15). Likewise, God’s transcendence cares for and encourages humankind, whilst His immanence edifies, leads and establishes purpose.

“With regard to *meaning*” there is the “question of continuity and discontinuity” in effect “between the present creation and the new creation to come” (Stephens 2011:455). On this point, I perceive Jesus Christ to have been employed to earth in order to usher creation over to new creation. I believe that His sacrifice on the cross moved from general continuity to proving that God (who is knowable through His faithfulness) can use discontinuity (Jesus Christ’s incarnation) in order to establish His will. Meaning here comes to signify to me personally that continuity (that which is generally found) can move to or become discontinuity (that which is extraordinary) without losing itself in the process. Like transcendence and immanence, both continuity and discontinuity play a valuable role in creation.

The continuity of God thus personally signifies or illustrates God’s knowability (stability). God has always been good to His people and reveals Himself as being stable and dependable through general revelation (i.e. a display of His transcendence). The discontinuity of God personally signifies or illustrates to me God’s mysterious side (divine interventions throughout history such as the incarnation). Personally, I perceive that special revelation (i.e. a display of His immanence through His image within humankind) often surprises humankind with mighty acts, events and exploits from God.

Stephens (2011:456) “examines the pragmatic function of new creation within the rhetorical strategy of Revelation (p.2).” I deduct that the developments in the Book of Revelation is interpretative of the practical purpose of the life of the believer who is inevitably headed towards the arrival of the new creation. This is where eschatology comes in; I believe that humankind is heading towards the end of the beginning *per se*.

Frederick (2013:269) writes that “the existence of natural laws, whether deterministic or indeterministic, and whether exceptionless or *ceteris paribus*, seems puzzling because it implies that mindless bits of matter behave in a consistent and co-ordinated way.” To a believer like myself, this fact indirectly affirms God’s prevailing faithfulness and knowability. This of course is only possible if it is accepted that “natural laws are a manifestation of God’s activity” (Frederick

2013:269), which Biblically believers are generally inclined to believe. According to Frederick (2013:270), “the existence” of “natural laws” is “something inherently puzzling”. He states that this is because it seems that “unthinking pieces of matter, merely mindless lumps of stuff, behave in an orderly way”. This specifies to me that God is mysterious: As the creator (Biblically) of all that exists, He has chosen to reveal a certain amount of data via His creation (general revelation – transcendence) and other parts of information and deeper knowledge (in narrative form) via His Word (special revelation – immanence). The rest is a mystery. This I believe to be so because God is knowable only to a certain degree (because He is infinite and ultimately incalculable).

Stephens (2011:456) contends that the Hebrew Bible illustrates an “eschatological future” and stipulates that Yahweh will “remain committed to the fulfilment of his creation project.” He adds that “the end” includes “radical transformation of present circumstances as well as “catastrophic material”. I note here that this “radical transformation” of the present as discussed is to a certain degree knowable via God’s Word, which illustrates what is to come. Yet, the “catastrophic material” he mentions (and of which believers are all aware) gives God an element of mystery, which cannot necessarily be discerned. Thus, in my macro view of reality God in His powerful transcendence bends and shapes the natural laws in creation in order to often disrupt the continuity thereof with acts of discontinuity, such as for instance when Jesus was incarnated as the Saviour of the world (immanence).

5.3 Micro view of reality: Physiological laws within humans

It has been my expressed opinion that in my micro view of reality God’s image within humankind is an illustration of His immanence. As a combined being (body, soul and spirit), physiological laws within the human body (which can include emotions) are indicative of the intricate processes that God put into place when He designed humankind.

As a part of the humans’ existence, religion is practised on a daily basis. Generally, it is known that due to differing worldviews, different religions are adhered to for different reasons. This thesis is written from a Pentecostal point of view and therefore expresses views which are in line with this tradition. Richie (2005:121) states that “in Pentecostalism” the “salvific, transformative, charismatic, and liturgical” in fact meet under the “overarching umbrella” of “numinous experience of the divine presence”. This is representative to me of a model of collaboration of all these aspects, which assist the believer to form a correct view of the message of God. In discerning the knowability of God I suggest a collaboration between different fields of science. The main reason I agree with Richie’s (2005:121) opinion is due to the following statement: “Spirit baptism is about

God's empowering presence, not elation or ecstasy that may or may not accompany it." I perceive that the presence of the Holy Spirit has been given to believers not only for personal direction and fulfillment but also for the edification of the Body of Christ.

Richie (2005:99) notes that "at its core religious experience is divine encounter characterized by ineffable awe in God's presence." I have noted that general revelation proves to move into special revelation. I hold this position because I believe that the body and its natural senses is first confronted with God's existence after which the body and spirit (especially due to God's spiritual image that is implanted in each human) receives a greater revelation of who God is. I discern that creational aspects are rooted in fields of science such as "ontology, epistemology, and anthropology". The "articulation of experience" are areas that are "enhanced and articulated" in the "Pentecostal theology and spirituality" (Lewis, cited by Richie 2005:99). I agree with Richie (2005:99), who promotes the thought that the "centrality for Pentecostal" who "encounters God's presence" lies in "Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts or experiences, as well as in private prayer and public worship". This is reminiscent to me of the body - soul/spirit rendezvous of the believer with the special revelation (intimate experience) with God as not only Creator of humankind, but ultimate Redeemer of all creation. "Pentecostals consider personal experience the arena of true religion" (Lewis, cited by Richie 2005:99). Also, "At the core of the Pentecostal worldview is affective experience of God" (Johns, cited by Richie 2005:99). What stands out to me here is the fact that there is an emotional attachment that is formed between God and the believer via the Holy Spirit. God is knowable in each aspect of our lives, even more so the areas that interest us and which we are passionate about. I agree that "conversion involved moving from a mere intellectual approach to theism to a more vital and joyous experience of the living God" (Richie 2005:100). This I find to be a very apt (and probably the most concise) description of the Pentecostal hermeneutic. This phenomenon might be described as being similar to the development from understanding the inspired Word of God to moving to the interpretation of it. I find that God is knowable in the journey of self-discovery.

"Today's postmodern context provides Pentecostals with a special opportunity to share" their "experiences and theology" not only "with others" but also "in that of others" (Richie 2005:100). This clearly indicates that Richie would be open to a model of collaboration between various fields of science in the search for fresh knowledge and in the case of this study, the knowability of God.

Furthermore, Richie (2005:121) expresses to have had a "spiritual experience" quite like my own. He writes: "Personally, although I have had extraordinary or exceptional experiences, more often in my Pentecostal spirituality I have simply experienced a heightened sense of the Lord's awesome presence, his leadership, and loving strength, especially during private prayer or meditation, public worship, preaching, and ministering in the altar." I believe that experience must

never overthrow the seat of God's presence in our lives. I am reminded of the Scripture in Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I deduce that God's Word (inspiration) is the chief source of authority for the believer and that the interpretation thereof must be conducted by the believer. Scholars, pastors and prophets have received the calling to dedicate their lives in pursuit of the correct interpretation of God's Word, especially because the message and crux of experiences differ greatly between individuals. Humankind is a fallible race (Jeremiah 17:9) and therefore I am of the opinion that experience is important, but His presence is key to correct interpretation. God's immanence is therefore of immeasurable worth, seeing as He speaks to us personally through His Spirit.

"If one fails to perceive" the theological "emphasis on the particularity and norming power" of "divine revelation centred in Christ and attested in Holy Scripture", it creates an opinion that "Karl Barth's Church *Dogmatics* becomes unintelligible" (Duby 2013:196). Duby is also of the opinion that it is important to "do theology" with "the guidance of special revelation" because it contains a "particular conception of God" that must not be missed. I agree wholeheartedly with this statement. In my opinion, if focus doesn't develop from perceiving natural laws and receiving a general revelation of God into inspiration and interpretation of His Word (a manifestation of special revelation), then the believer is not following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Believers are not only called to be saved but are called to transform and change the world. Moltmann in effect broadly really suggests that "the fruit of a 'trinitarian theology of the cross' will manage a way between theism and atheism". This is done in order to "address the difficulties of the modern world" (Duby 2013:197). I argue that if this is the case, surely theology and science can find themselves in a position to facilitate a platform which would generate answers to the societal problematic questions that humankind as a species is facing?

"The inference from creation ex nihilo to divine actuality is rooted in distinctively biblical teaching and commends the unwavering concreteness of the biblical God" (Duby 2013:214). Believers argue God's transcendence and immanence from this vantage point that the foundational view is in the fact that the God of the Bible is a reality and that He lives. I believe that God is knowable through His very existence. "God's transcendence of the category of genus verifies the decisiveness of God's self-revelation in Christ and scripture as well as the scriptural emphasis on God's singularity" (Duby 2013:214). I argue that God's transcendence is in a way connected to general revelation, where the believer comes to know of God through His creation, whilst the believer learns more of God's immanence through His Word. Yet I also argue that God's transcendence continues to be mysterious in His splendour and majesty due to the fact that

various aspects of God's creation such as natural laws still baffle scholars when on occasion they act out of the ordinary (indicating that they are wielded by Higher Hand). I further argue that God's immanence is to a degree knowable to humankind due to His presence and His image that resides in all of humankind. In my mind, God's faithfulness is evident in both His transcendence (natural care for creation, which includes humankind - body) and His immanence (special care for humankind – soul/spirit). I argue that humankind is more aware of His movement in their lives (immanence) than they are necessarily of the fact that creation is literally upheld by His mighty hand (transcendence).

“The classical Christian theism on display in Aquinas and some representatives of the Reformed tradition” arrives at the conclusion that “there is still much to learn from Aquinas” (Duby 2013:214). Be that as it may, what is most striking about Duby's investigation is the fact that he longs to discover a “many-sidedness” of “the majesty of God”, which could “guide the church away” from conceptions that inevitably “come short of the fulness of the biblical God” (Duby 2013:214). Firstly, I perceive Duby's opinion of “Christian theism” to be quite suitable considering the ¹³challenges that not only society, but the global Church is focusing on. I add that it is important for believers to approach “many-sidedness” of God by discussing His knowability, which is manifested in His transcendence and immanence. Secondly, I argue that through His transcendence, God is knowable through His “majesty” that is displayed in the grandeur of creation. I also am of the opinion that God is knowable through His immanence, even when considering the complexity of the architecture of the human body. Lastly, I add that collaboration between various fields of science will assist scholars to discern not only the many-sidedness of God, but also His knowability. This in turn will assist the Church globally to render void any and all misconceptions and false teachings that have been pestering the Church for centuries.

5.4 Natural human application of data vs Biblical human application of data

In my estimation believers will know how to better represent God's kingdom if they have a better conception of God's knowability. “The Church is called to share a timeless message with a changing world (Mt. 28.16-20); Mk 16. 15-16)” (Johnson 2014:108). Therefore, “whereas *institution* refers to an identifiable social system, *institutional value system* describes that set of values, expectations, and symbol that define an institution” (Johnson 2014:108). If we view the transcendence and the immanence of God, we find examples of these structural issues in the

¹³ Some of the challenges facing the global Church was discussed in Chapter 1 and include false teachings; clashes between reason and faith; differences between theology and science; theories such as that of “kenosis; the act of conducting tarot readings in mainstream churches and “grave sucking”.

Church also in creation. In my view, I formulate that the earth is in fact its own social system that exists between God's created beings. It holds within its existence inherent systems that can be interpreted as indicative of invisible values and symbols and even expectations set by natural laws. I illustrate my view by using the sun as an example: Human beings can expect the sun to rise tomorrow morning (expectations). The sun forms a huge part of the social system of which animals are a part. The fact remains that humans tend to apply the data that they are confronted with in a human way, whilst losing sight of the way in which the Bible intended it to be interpreted. I believe that this happens when symbols and values are misaligned.

Prakash (2010:65) places his focus on the social concern of the Church, which I perceive to be intricately important in the life and development of the Church. "We live in a world full of social oppression, poverty, injustice, war, caste/racial, sexual discrimination and so on. The list can go on and on, but as Christians we need to pause and ask ourselves about our responsibility" (Prakash 2010:65). In answer to his statement, I note that it is the responsibility of Christians to discern the knowability of God in order to facilitate a platform where Christians react in a Biblical manner to the challenges of life after having had access to any and all knowledge available to humankind. I perceive that God's transcendence explains that He is a caring God and His immanence likewise illustrates this point due to the fact that God cares for humans on all levels i.e. body as well as soul/spirit. "The doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus has often been criticised for its negative influence on the ministry of social concern" (Prakash 2010:88). Yet, I don't perceive this to always be the case. In my experience in the Pentecostal tradition, the fact that Jesus is going to return is used as a catalyst for doing work in the community at large. Basically "two views" are held about the "eschatological future" (Volf, cited by Prakash 2010:89). They are that of "radical discontinuity between present and future orders" or "postulated continuity between the two" (Volf, cited by Prakash 2010:89). Be that as it may, the fact still remains that God has given an effective illustration of His transcendence (through creation) as well as through His immanence (through His image) and both these aspects of Him are provided in order for the believer to understand and correctly interpret God's message to humankind. Therefore, I tend to lean towards Prakash's (2010:89) "postulated continuity between the two". I make this statement because I understand God to be continually working on the unfolding of His grand narrative. The life of the believer must be practically lived according to the morals and values that the Bible teaches. Pentecostals have "taken great interest in society" and that "this newfound interest for social concern, as Sepulveda calls it" must "find a proper channel through theological reflections" (Prakash 2010:96). I agree with Prakash that what knowledge is derived has to be applied. I am of the opinion though that a greater level of knowledge could be generated if scientific fields collaborate their finds with regard to God's transcendence and His immanence. I do not consider God's transcendence and immanence to be removed from each other, rather I believe they work

together towards the same cause. To me, God is knowable through His fullness and His grace towards all that exists.

5.5 Transcendence and immanence

Klaus Nürnberger writes about “understanding God” in the “context of the science-religion conversation” (Bentley 2018:1). He touches on the story that “is told of a systematic theology professor” whose opinion emanated that Christian theology struggles due to the fact that scholars often try to “locate God” whilst “God does not exist; God is” (Bentley 2018:1). I find that the approach that Christians often take falls within the perimeters of their personal realm of reference. This is a human approach which is applied in order to generate a clearer discernment of a divine God. I reject this statement due to the fact that I believe that God both “exists” and “is” simultaneously. History illustrates quite clearly that humankind has not even scratched the surface of the knowledge regarding the majesty and power of God.

The question remains (Bentley 2018:1): “Is God immanent or is God transcendent?” I answer that God is both because God is all powerful. I add that He is both transcendent and immanent due to the fact that His permanence stands unchallenged. God is described as being “uncreated” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1984:145). It is also noted that “the Bible does not attempt to prove God’s existence” (Horton 1984:119, citing Russell E Joyner). Bentley (2018:1) writes: “It comes as no surprise that claims are made, proposing that the old knowledge of religion (and metaphysics) should be exchanged for the new knowledge unearthed by empirical science (see Dawkins 2006: 309-340; Durand 2017).” Still, Bentley (2018:2) believes that “even in this quote, God is positioned.” Different standpoints create a quite extensive playfield for scientist and theologian alike. Nürnberger is of opinion that “science and religion” are “mutually exclusive” and “cannot converse as equals” due to dissimilar focuses (Bentley 2018:2). I strongly disagree. My disagreement lies in the fact that theology has been described previously as a field of science in its own right. I believe that God created both science and theology and that they intersect. I ask: are we not limiting God if we decide to exclude one or the other in our studies? In my mind, scholars should be after a true rendition of revelation and for that to be manifested, *all* data must be taken into account. God is knowable through creation and through His Spirit to a certain extent, yet His Being is spiritual and will remain mysterious to humankind. 1 Corinthians 2:10 teaches: “The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God...” Humans do not possess the capacity to understand everything about God and that includes where, when, how and why He resides. God’s presence cannot be pinpointed. Bentley (2018:2) makes a good point when he

states that science may not be made to “rubbish” and likewise, religion may not be “excluded” from discussions.

Science and technology have shaped our lives (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). He discusses that “although science” informs about “physical reality”, it falls short due to the fact that “it cannot answer” most “questions of meaning” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). On the other hand, he states that “religion may tell us about meaning” but if it is not used within “context” it may not be “relevant” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). Next, Bentley (2018:2) discusses “Conradie (2012) and Nürnbergger (2011a)”, who are of the opinion that “Science is about immanence” whilst “faith is about transcendence... (p.129; p.47).” I understand how “Conradie (2012) and Nürnbergger (2011a)” can hold this view because natural science (which includes theories and formulas) work with physical phenomena (that which can be seen), whilst faith works with the belief in the unseen (spiritual phenomena – that which cannot be physically seen). I refer here to Hebrews 11:1 that reads: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” I disagree with Conradie and Nürnbergger because I believe that both science and faith investigate immanence and transcendence. Faith is also not uncommon to the field of science in my opinion, because I believe that a scientist has to display a certain degree of faith in his/her theory, which convinces him/her to conduct the experiment at hand. Science is also not uncommon in theology because theology has been classified in previous centuries as a field of science although it has since lost that classification. Immanence and transcendence can also not be clearly delineated as far as I’m concerned because no human has a formula that can discern where the one ends and where the other begins. In my opinion, the content of many 21st Century theories is divided by a thin line of differentiation between various aspects of reality. It is stated that “science is about knowledge; faith is about commitment.... p. 129; p.47)” (Conradie and Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). Were this to be true, the claims of infallibility and divinity of the Bible would be refuted, as it is the chief source of information for the believer. I argue that both science and faith develop new knowledge. I also argue that both science and faith require a certain level of commitment in order to progress and grow. I do not believe that knowledge and faith can be mutually exclusive. Instead I believe that they harness the power of development and they must be employed as such.

The theory of Nürnbergger progresses and moves forward to “place both science and religion in one context, in what he calls ‘experiential realism’” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). This I find delightful and refreshing as suddenly “it is in this context of experiential realism that science and religion operate in tandem to address the questions of life comprehensively” (Bentley 2018:2). This movement clearly indicates a model of collaboration and integration, which could positively set the stage for greater understanding of the knowability of God. Where at first “it may appear as

if Nürnberger is suggesting a similar model to that of Gould's non-overlapping magisterial (NOMA) (Gould 2002)", this in fact, "is not the case" (Bentley 2018:2). Nürnberger (cited by Bentley 2018:2) and I aim at facilitating a model of collaboration, whilst Gould (cited by Bentley 2018:2) does not stand in agreement with us. Instead, he separate's science and religion as non-interesting tools. Through "experiential realism ... Nürnberger (2016a)" places both science and religion in one context as if to indicate that they can overhang. It is expressed by Nürnberger that "science and religion" both "operate within the context" of "lived reality" (Bentley 2018:2). Next, he asks: "Where is God in science?" and "Where is God in religion?". Scholars should take note to remember that "Whenever there is immanence, transcendence is sure to be either overly claimed or subtly assumed" (Bentley 2018:2). Another way of putting it would be to say "our experience of the transcendent is always immanent (Conradie 2013: 41; Hick 1997: 57), located within the context of Nürnberger's experiential realism" (Bentley 2018:2). I add that although humans are in effect religious beings, they are scientific products of God's creative exploits. General knowledge affirms that there exist within the human body thousands of explosive scientific processes that replicate themselves on a daily basis (i.e. essence of life). I believe that the only difference between religion and science is the way a phenomenon is described. To a theologian, "God is life" (John 1:3-4), whilst to a scientist, life represents the physiological processes within the human body.

Interestingly, we find that life in general in nature and in animals are represented by "the basic processes of life which include organization, metabolism responsiveness, movements, and reproduction" (dictionary.com). The more intricate processes within the human body "which are a more complex form of life" are "growth, differentiation, respiration, digestion and secretion" (dictionary.com). These two different fields represent an example on my view of the relation between transcendence and immanence. I believe that the basic processes of life overlap with the human processes of life. It cannot be discerned where they end and where they begin. Likewise, transcendence speaks to me of the general processes in nature, whilst immanence speaks to me of the more intricate functions of the human body. I am of the opinion that as a result of God's majesty and power He can move between His transcendence and immanence at will. "Nürnberger agrees that a God located squarely in the transcendent is problematic. He gives the following reasons (Nürnberger 2011b:3)". The belief that "God" is "up there" so He cannot be "here below" is problematic; "There is no evidence for the so-called transcendent space that God occupies"; "Our experience of reality is dependent, it is believed, on the will and plans of a *personal* God" (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:2-3). Another important point presents itself: "If God is to be reduced to the material or to the subjective experiences of humanity", it would imply that immanence is the "only source" of "experiential realism" (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018: 2-3). I deduct that such a standpoint would be unbiblical as the Word of God stipulates that God is both transcendent and immanent simultaneously. I verify my position with the following:

“Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things – to whom be glory forever” (NKJV). It is asked by Nürnberger (2011b:1) that if experience (which I connotate to immanence) is a “self-sustaining” force, is it thus dependent on that which is “transcendent”? (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:3). I argue that it must be because God existed before creation did. I am of the opinion that immanence is a product of transcendence. I perceive God to be firstly mysterious in His infinite existence (transcendent), after which through His image in humankind God becomes immanent (knowable). Yet it is argued that “this is untenable from a scientific perspective” because according to science it is understood that “God is neither locked in the immanent nor is God to be found only in the transcendent” (Bentley 2018:3). My argument about God’s transcendence and immanence rests on the fact that I perceive (from a viewpoint that stems from theological science) that God is both transcendent and immanent simultaneously and that He is therefore also simultaneously both mysterious and knowable.

“Experiential realism” is a string where “the *ultimate* Source” is classified as the “beginning” and “an ultimate destiny” is classified as “the end” (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:3). To my mind, transcendence would therefore be eternal, whilst immanence (through God’s image) as far as I discern would be temporary in the sense that it expires/changes into another phenomenon at the end of time (which point to the believer’s spirit that lives eternally with God). In essence, the worldly existence we live in now will not always be this way but God will forever be the same.

“Experiential realism exists because God *is*” (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:3). I believe that Nürnberger proves my theory via the help of science when he writes: “God is not locked in only one level of complexity, namely, that of human consciousness and awareness, but ... God (or Kauffman’s ‘the sacred’) permeates through the fine balance of integration between different levels of complexity” (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:3). If God is thus “the ultimate Source” (“the beginning”), which I connect to His transcendence (which is infinite) and He is also “the ultimate Destiny” (“the end”), which I connect to His immanence (which is rooted in His image in humankind and which is temporary/finite) then the string indicates that the transcendence of God is connected to His immanence. I would like to add that seeing as “God *is*” (Bentley 2018:1), I perceive Him to be more transcendent than immanent because He first “was” before He created. I propose that He is therefore mysterious through His transcendence, as well as knowable through His immanence. To me He is more transcendent than immanent, which would make Him more mysterious (infinite) than knowable through His image within humankind. Nürnberger is of the opinion that God “doesn’t exist” but that “God” simply “is” (Bentley 2018:1). As a pastor in the Pentecostal tradition I believe that Hebrews 11:6 teaches us that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those

who diligently seek Him". Nürnberger (Bentley 2018:1) indirectly quotes a principle found in the Bible, whilst Joyner (cited by Horton 1984:119) explains that "God's existence" is never "defended" by the Bible but is accepted at face value.

"God is not only the origin as the source of the creative activity of the universe but also the destiny of the universe by drawing all things to Godself" (Moltmann, cited by Bentley 2018:4). Therefore, my opinion remains that God is "all in all" (Romans 11:36). I believe that Nürnberger and Gregersen confirm my theory (cited by Bentley 2018:4).

"As Gregersen suggests, it is this transcendent God who manifests *as a human* in the person of Jesus Christ" (Gregersen, cited by Bentley 2018:4). I deduct that God was therefore transcendent before He became immanent. I believe that God uses general revelation before He employs special revelation.

"God's self-disclosure does not come as a metaphysical proposition (Nürnberger 2016a:3); instead God manifests and reveals Godself in human experienced reality (Nürnberger 2016a:4) as a human" (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:4). Therefore, I believe that His immanence does not only spring forth from His transcendence, but that it is the very essence of it. I state this because Jesus Christ is God (the Second Person of the Trinity).

5.6 Conclusion

I believe that Nürnberger has established that viewing God as the "ultimate Source and ultimate Destiny" (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:4) of a complex universe (of which humankind is a miniscule part), emphasises the wonder of such a God making Himself known in a language that is understood by humankind. "God makes Godself understandable in human language" (Nürnberger, cited by Bentley 2018:4).

I believe that God is both transcendent (mysterious), as well as immanent (knowable). To my mind, God was transcendent before He became immanent (knowable). God revealed Himself to humankind first through His transcendence (i.e. general revelation in creation, Psalm 19) before He revealed Himself to humankind through His immanence (i.e. special revelation, His image in humankind and the manifestation of Jesus Christ when He was incarnated, Colossians 1:15). God is therefore knowable through His Spirit Who indwells (immanent) but even more than that, He is mysterious because He is transcendent and we cannot pinpoint His location or control Him.

My conclusion here is quite simply that if we want to discover more of God's transcendence and immanence, we need to study God's Word. It is my opinion that science and the knowledge that

humans generate from their theories and philosophies around them can only take the human race so far. The Bible is and will always be the perfect description of God. I am therefore delighted to have found that a suitable answer to my question regarding God's transcendence and immanence was not found solely in a scientific journal or a deep theological theory but in the praises of God's people who construct and weave together hymns via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I will illustrate why I hold this position shortly.

Andrews (2013:28) writes the "it has been said that hymnals are the theological textbooks of the 'people in the pews'" This view quite simply stems from the fact that many believe that "present doctrine and theological teaching" finds its place through "the unique and memorable means of music" (Andrews 2013:28). Due to the fact that believers know that "the doctrine of God's transcendence and immanence is important", they make sure that "children begin learning these dual-attributes" in the foundational teachings that teach that "God is *great*" and that "God is *good*" (Andrews 2013:28).

It is further stipulated by Andrews that "God's transcendence describes God's resplendent existence that is beyond all human understanding." I deduct that God's transcendence is explanatory of His greatness (in my opinion), which represents the side of God (His mysterious transcendence) that humankind cannot fully comprehend due to finite human limitations.

Andrews (2013:28) continues to stipulate that "God's immanence is God's goodness, love for creation, and ability to draw near in time, space and history.". I agree that God's immanence is explanatory of His goodness and in my opinion can be experienced to a certain extent by humankind via the spiritual image of God that resides.

"On the one hand, God is self-sufficient apart from world, coming to the world from some incomprehensible beyond" (Andrews 2013:28). In other words, God is transcendent and mysterious. God is bigger and greater than humans can explain. God is more than what fits into human referencing. God is infinitely higher, further and deeper than we may know. "On the other hand, God is present and active in creation and in the process of human history" (Andrews 2013:28). In other words, God is immanent and faithful. God is personally known by believers through His Spirit. God is experienced in daily life. God is present and known on a daily basis.

Yet, "this paradox has not been easy for Christians to affirm" (Andrews 2013:28). The Bible testifies to this paradox as being a part of God's nature. God is described as transcendent and mysterious in Isaiah 55:8-9. God is also described as immanent and knowable in 2 Corinthians 13: 5.

It has often happened that “theologians have emphasized one part of God’s nature to the neglect or denial of the other” (Andrews 2013:28). Might I add that this is still happening due to the fact that scientists and theologians are not always favourable toward the idea of working together to generate more knowledge. In my opinion, this approach must be rejected as God is both transcendent and immanent. He is both great and good. Determining the knowability of God includes investigating both His transcendence and His immanence as far as possible. To my mind, scientists and theologians have to leave no stone unturned in the search for the knowability of God.

“God is transcendent in that God is above the created order” (Andrews 2013:28). I agree that this aspect of God can thus not fully be discussed by humankind because it is utterly incomprehensible. “This interpretation of God’s transcendence further protects God’s goodness and loving character, since Christ is then the full revelation of God” (Andrews 2013:28). I agree that God’s transcendence displays His love through Christ, yet I do not experience it to speak of God’s goodness, but rather of God’s greatness. I make this statement because I tie God’s transcendence and His infinity together in light of the fact that He has forever existed and He will continue to do so. “God’s transcendence held by many theologians include self-sufficiency, eternity (or everlasting-ness), omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience and immutability” (Andrews 2013:28). I link God’s transcendence in my theory to His greatness rather than to His goodness. I make this statement due to the fact that I stand in agreement with (Erickson 2001:91) who lists God’s greatness as being “Spirituality; Life; Personality; Infinity”, which includes “space, time, knowledge and power” and “constancy”. I believe that God is constant in His transcendence because He cares for creation continually. I experience that those are aspects which only God has control over and humans cannot replicate them. I believe that humans have a greater capacity to try and replicate that which is immanent or personal because they experience it first-hand.

“Commonly held attributes of God’s immanence include love, faithfulness, mercy, justice and wisdom” (Andrews 2013:28). I link God’s immanence to God’s goodness. I agree with (Erickson 2001:98) that God’s “goodness” includes “moral purity (holiness, righteousness, justice); integrity (genuineness, veracity, faithfulness); love (benevolence, grace, mercy, persistence).” I am of the opinion that humankind can to a certain degree replicate some of these attributes.

Karl Barth described God’s immanence as a “perfection of love” (Andrews 2013:28). This I stand in agreement with because Jesus Christ within us signifies to me personally the epitome of the love of God. With every new venture there are bound to be obstacles that arise. I find the greatest challenge that the Church faces in discerning the knowability of God is the fact that false teachings run rampant in every single country and denomination. If we try to convince ourselves otherwise, we are making fools of ourselves and of our beliefs. Andrews (2013:33) shares my sentiments

regarding this phenomenon: “At no time in its 2000-year history has the church had to deal with faster cultural and religious changes than in the last century” (Andrews 2013:33). I would like to add that the Covid-19 pandemic has made these matters worse as many are questioning their traditional faith models. Also “technology, globalization, and rapidly evolving views have made understanding faith in today’s world a harder task than ever” (Andrews 2013:33). I perceive in the world around me and in the current state of the church that everything is changing at an alarming rate and the “new normal” doesn’t necessarily appeal to all believers.

I propose that discerning the knowability of God must be the top priority for believers because “making the Christian faith understandable and genuine in an ever-changing world is a constant work-in-progress” (Andrews 2013:33). I suggest that the act of collaboration must be employed between different fields of science and that this will promote a clear view on the knowability of God. To my mind the church is the earthly manifestation of what God’s transcendence represents but within the immanent reach of the believers’ grasp. The morals and values that the Bible teaches are in no way worldly and often contradict what the norm in society dictates. I agree that “God can at once be magnificent, beyond our comprehension, yet also intimately near and familiar” (Andrews 2013:33). What he writes is nearly impossible and yet it is possible. All because the God that is at work through His transcendence and immanence can move in ways humankind will never be able to move.

Firstly, I agree that God uses many structures in His church to make Himself knowable. He can do so even through the hymns that believers sing. The whole earth is a testimony of His majesty. Secondly, I perceive that an appreciation of God’s transcendence is situated in believers’ subconscious, whilst a remarkable clarity of His immanence is rooted in believers’ conscious minds through His spiritual image within us that impacts every arena of our lives.

“God’s immanence is illustrated supremely through Christ and secondly through Christ’s presence in the life of the active believer of the world” (Andrews 2013:33). Also, it is interesting to find that “none of the hymnwriters surveyed present the same view of God” (Andrews 2013:33). I understand this to be the case because their worldviews (and thus I also add their understanding of God) differ.

“Perhaps like so many truths, the side we focus on and identify with most readily has much more to do with where we are in our journey than that which most completely describes God” (Andrews 2013:33). This is of course a manifestation of differing worldviews, points of interest and focus, as well as the individual importance believers place on the varying elements of their existence. In my opinion, I believe that God is transcendent and immanent simultaneously. I also perceive God’s transcendence to be mysterious and unique due to the fact that He is infinite. I perceive

God's immanence to be knowable through His image within humankind and through His Spirit who is at work in the hearts of believers. I perceive His transcendence to be connected to His greatness due to the fact that it displays qualities that cannot be replicated by humankind. I perceive that His immanence is directly linked to His goodness due to the fact that it is much more accessible and closely related to the existence of humankind. God's transcendence thus overshadows God's immanence in my opinion, much like His greatness proves to surpass His goodness.

CHAPTER 6: IS GOD KNOWABLE?

6.1 Introduction

From my religious perspective, general revelation and special revelation is God's curriculum to humans. It serves not only as an introduction of Him (general revelation i.e. creation) but also as a living and evolving syllabus (special revelation i.e. the Word of God; His image inside of humankind; the Holy Spirit who indwells) to the believer in his/her lifelong journey of discovering God. From a scientific perspective, God has been in one instance described as a manifestation of the "God module"¹⁴ in the human brain (Albright 2000:735). In this theory, religious experience and spiritual formation are described as taking place when there is an integration between the "prehuman ... evolutionary history" of the human being and that which is "characteristically human". In other words, the "human brain" can be described as the platform of the "God module" (Albright 2000:735). It is thus noted that the "human brain" is identified as being so complex due to the extensive "interlinked and significant connections" it contains, that it facilitates "both personal growth and spiritual growth", which builds "character". I add that the human brain can thus be described as the central console of development of the human through which individual perception and worldviews are formulated as a result of what the human experiences during his/her lifetime. That, in my opinion, is why although all humans are presented with the display of God's existence on a general and specific platform, some individuals choose to believe in God and serve Him whilst others deny His existence. My point here being that God is knowable to all, yet, to my mind, some have the spiritual inclination to perceive Him whilst others don't.

It is stated that the "wiring of the brain" is different from "person to person" (Albright 2000:739). Authors in *Phantoms in the Brain* claim that "there are circuits in the human brain that are specifically involved in religious experience (1998:188)" (Albright 2000:736). Their theory stems from the "neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran" who did research regarding "the God module" in the brain (Albright 2000:736). I find it interesting that the universe is described as being not only "undeniably complex", but simultaneously complex, yet in an "*organized variety*" (Albright 2000:736). This is reminiscent to me of the brain itself, which is balanced so intricately and is so diverse yet it is programmed to think and make the human body act in a certain way within a certain scenario. It is fantastic to note that the universe is a massive entity, whilst the brain is about the size of an individuals' fist and yet they are programmed in exactly the same manner.

¹⁴ Read "The 'God Module' and the complexifying brain" by Carol Rausch Albright. Albright (2000: 736) states that "the niche" of the "God module" is said to "have a specific location, in the left temporal lobe, ear the left ear."

This leads me to believe that the “God module” (Albright 2000:735), which is described as a specific, designated place for God in the brain is possible. Yet, there are in society believers as well as unbelievers and opinions increase on the reason for the phenomenon that religion is important to some and not to others. It is said that “efforts and experiences may discourage or promote personal integration, and these may involve thoughts, decisions, and feelings and/or interactions with the environment” (Damasio, cited by Albright 2000:740).

“A healthy science-theology dialogue is heavily dependent on both the quality of the science and the quality of theological thinking” (Peterson 2000:881). In “finding ... the grand metaphysical key” to “unite the religion-and-science dialogue” we should focus on a “dynamic” theory which “embraces mutual criticism” (Peterson 2000:889). It is believed that “the journey is as important as the destination”. I concur with this line of thought. I believe that instead of formulating a specific way to get science and theology to work together, scholars should try different variations of integration, which in my opinion, give will provide a solid foundational understanding of how the universe as well as the brain works and why. These two aspects are both integral to our search for the knowability of God.

A short explanation will follow to illustrate that as a human race we share stages of development whether we are believers or unbelievers. This in itself should indicate to us that collaboration between different humans and their various fields of study is viable and in the best interest of humankind in order to establish the knowability of God. It is discussed that “fifty years ago it was generally accepted in psychology that early experience had little predictive power ... today we know that early life does leave a lasting legacy” (Cassidy & Shaver 2016:1030). It is clear now that we know that both “early experience” and “later experience” is important as they “work together to shape development” (Cassidy & Shaver 2016:1030).

In a similar fashion, I believe that all knowledge made available to humankind inevitably shapes our view of the knowability of God. God is knowable through the psychological processes that He implanted in all of humankind. In my view, all scientific fields are not mutually exclusive but should be amalgamated for a comprehensive explosion of knowledge and application. “Religion provide various ways of enhancing perceptions about the proximity of God” (Cassidy & Shaver 2016:941).

6.2 Integration of perception: Employing reason with faith

It is my opinion that in order to discern the knowability of God, we as created humans need to integrate our perception of what we discern with our reasoning capabilities with what we perceive through our faith. “Western thinkers from Augustine forward have progressively” been the cause of reductionism, from which “an unavoidable ... theological method” has “resulted” in “identifying”

the “knowledge of God with rational certainty” (Yannaras, cited by Louth 2005:302). Thus, the “climax of such an approach is Nietzsche’s proclamation of the ‘death of God’ which gave witness to the irrelevancy of the particular ‘Western’ conception of God in European society” (Yannaras, cited by Louth 2005:302). It is general knowledge that the Western way of thinking differs tremendously from what is believed and practised in the East. The reason for this is not only in their geographical status, but can be attributed to different cultures, beliefs and ways of reasoning. There is no measure known to humankind that can ultimately prove any of these views right or wrong. In the world, in society and in the Church, there is room for us to “agree to disagree”. Yet, believers as a part of the Body of Christ, experience adapted thinking patterns as God’s Word and Spirit saturates their lives. It is my belief that reasoning forms only a part of the experience a human undergoes in life. The other part of the experience of the individual I liken to the faith such an individual vest in a certain decision he/she makes before attempting to carry out said decision. This does not have to be interpreted spiritually at first and in my opinion is applicable to all spheres of life. Our reasoning capabilities assist us as humans in formulating plans and completing our work goals. I am of the opinion that an individual has to have faith in his/her plan in order to have enough courage to execute said plan in the first place. I make this statement because I believe that through theory-making, both the theologian and the scientist aims to achieve. No human being, to my knowledge, wants to fail in his/her attempt to generate new knowledge and insights.

It is believed the “God, at least as an active agent” has been excluded altogether from “today’s scientific worldview” and this has caused “a gulf” between “godless science” and “believers in God’s active presence in the world” which some believe to be “unbridgeable” (Farland 2008:483). Farland here, in my opinion, subconsciously, confirms that theological data is not calculated into scientific research seeing as these two fields are believed to be far removed from each other. Farland does not believe that an act of collaboration can ever be viable between science and religion. He does however admit that there are “many historians and natural scientists” who “privately” believe in “supernatural entities” but who as “*qua* professional members of the scientific community” choose to “subscribe to metaphysical naturalism” in their “quest for science” (Farland 2008:483). An interesting point emerges here: not all scientific scholars are unbelievers; they simply do not choose to include the phenomenon of the supernatural in their theories and research. I believe this is because they do not have a measure with which they can take stock of their findings. This is of course due to the fact that, that which is supernatural does not fit into the framework of their reasoning capabilities of humankind.

It is stated that “as long as” the “supernatural realm” is “excluded from the scientific worldview” it is viable that “historians’ explanations of miracles will differ fundamentally from the explanations professed by believers” (Farland 2008:483). I believe this is the tenet because of the fact that the

worldview of a scientist differs greatly from that of a believer. Scientists and theologians are confronted with the same phenomenon in creation, yet they interpret it differently. It is my opinion that having one rigid view limits the opportunity for advancement and inhibits growth and development. Should scientists and theologians decide to share their opinions with each other in a collective manner, I believe that it will result in transformational development in humankind's search for the knowability of God. I believe that humankind has to overcome the perception that in the "scientific worldview" there is "no room for God or other supernatural entities" (Farland 2008:484).

In "most religious worldviews" it is believed that "God or some other supernatural entity" has the "ability to affect matter and matters" which gives "the supernatural" a "role in religious explanations of how the world works". The idea develops that "being unscientific is not equivalent to being false" and therefore, it "explains why so many scientists are religious". It is referred to "multiple partaking" (Farland 2008:484). This phenomenon is named as such due to the fact that it refers to the act of "being part of several plural subjects ... without feeling torn into pieces" even if the "different subjects oppose each other" (Farland 2008:484).

Ultimately, two aspects come into my focus here. Firstly, the brain is so intricately balanced that humankind is yet to discover the host of its capabilities. Hence, some individuals can fulfil different life roles in different settings because they are adaptable. These are the individuals in my opinion that reach their goals because they are flexible. Secondly, how we as humans approach learning does not always align with how we approach living. This is, in my opinion, due to the varying principles that are instigated on different platforms.

I believe that it is possible for an individual to have a diverse life and to display paradoxical behaviour as a situation dictates. I find scientists who "believe in the supernatural" to display paradoxical behaviour. If Covid-19 has taught us anything, it is that we should be flexible, if we wish to survive and excel in an ever-changing world. I thus believe that it is possible for theologians who display faith in their approach to theory-making and scientists who rely on reason, to share their views comfortably without intruding into each other's fields and without forcing each other to accept individualistic views. I believe that at the end of the day, we are all human and that dictates that we face the same challenges on our most natural level of existence; life in itself.

I agree that "perspective is everything!" (Einstein, cited by Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:3). One of "Einstein's perspectives" was that of the phenomenon of relating. From that perspective, there "should be" a "unifying, universal formula for creation". This formula "merges the human and natural forces of the universe" and is "anchored" in the process of "relating" between the forces

on a “social” level, which in turn explains that “they can exist at the same cosmic span of time” where they are “overlapping without merging” (Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:3). This principle, could in my opinion be an example of collaboration where entities work together whilst keeping to their own individualistic footprints. This process can, as I see it, result in positive outcomes, whilst continuously being careful not to intrude into the other’s foundational standpoints.

In the “human experience”, the phenomenon of union is described as being similar to the “performance of a symphony orchestra” (Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:3). In my opinion, clearly, we can discern that they work together to create a masterpiece yet they stay unique in their own way. “Nature” is described as working in a similar fashion as it is “always putting different systems together” of which the “possibilities are endless” (Berenson & Carkhuff 2001 3). This description relates, in my view, to the act of collaboration and its powerful effects. Perhaps “most exciting are the discoveries to be found in the unequal companionships between, order and disorder, and between expanding degrees of freedom” (Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:157). To my mind, a collaboration between general science and theology would result in an “unequal companionship”. This is due to the fact that these fields of science use different types of data in their theories and formulations. Yet, contrary to traditional belief, such a partnership could result in “expanding degrees of freedom” which in my view signifies, possible generating bursts of knowledge formation.

An example of my theory ensues:

It is stated that “the Jesuits posed not as priests but as ‘scholars from the West’. The available scholarship seems to agree that their strategy consisted in employing mathematics, cartography, astronomy, and other parts of Western learning as the chief missionary instruments, and in presenting these as a kind of ‘Heavenly studies’ into which their basic religious doctrines concerning the Heavenly Lord could, as it were, conveniently be smuggled in” (Zhang 1999:4).

I believe that in order for them to have been able to make these studies and lectures possible, there had to have been points of overlap from which they could draw reference in order to amalgamate and teach their findings. In a sense, this could on the one hand be seen as the way they formulated dogma. I believe that God intended for the act of collaboration to flow between all genres of knowledge, but humankind has allowed pride to get in the way of learning and discovery.

It is noted that the calculated advertisements of the Chinese converts can be traced back to the Jesuits. The Jesuits did not use the “discourse about God, demons and miracles” to “convert” the

Chinese, instead, it “occupied a central role” in their “daily encounters with the Chinese” and in their “scholarly publications” (Zhang 1999:5). Because there was a mutual impartation of knowledge between the Jesuits and the Chinese, the Jesuits fell into the trap of “introducing double standards” and “contradictions into their scientific writings” (Zhang 1999:6). This I believe happened because they lost their foundational footing whilst investigating new knowledge from the Chinese. I suggest that when collaboration is pursued, a clear indication must be given of the fact that whatever knowledge is derived, must be either be utilised to build upon the foundational belief systems or must be discarded if found to be inept. It becomes clear that as effective as mutual impartation can be, in believe that, it has the possibility to create a platform for utterly devastating combinations which are less desirable. Examples of these type of undesirable mutual impartations would for instance be the new scientific endeavours by scientists to bring about transhumanism. Transhumanism seems, from my theological perspective, to be a less desirable technological advancement. Although science promotes it as a step forward for humankind, I believe that it will invoke the wrath of God. Due to its unique application and astounding results, I believe that transhumanism has gained quite a following across the world.

6.3 Transhumanism: Signs of the times

Many questions on the influence of the image of God in humans have been discussed over the centuries. From a scientific point of view, I believe that major scientific breakthroughs, have in a sense created the idea that humans were blessed with the amazing power of reason and that is must hence be employed excessively in order to develop the human race to an elevated state of existence. These advancements are viewed as being an ideal cure which could possible ensure the safety and future of humankind. On the other hand, such advancements are to my mind, and from my theological perspective, dangerous not only to the physical but also to the spiritual well-being of humankind. I draw this principle from a portion of Scripture where God did all but smile on the creativity of humankind in Genesis 11: 1-9. I refer here to the formidable nature of human reason and the fact that knowledge can be used to rebellious acts against God.

Transhumanism is defined as “a philosophy that explores human transcendence above or beyond organic, corporeal limitations through technological and philosophical evolution” (dictionary.com. date accessed 10 Nov 2020). In other words, “transhumanism” is a movement that aims to magnify the human existence and experience as we know it. In my personal opinion, it is a movement that is attempting to re-create the human body. This movement is reminiscent of the “common interpretation of Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus” (Parks 2019:174).

Secular news and media are currently reporting how the world is in constant disarray, especially now with the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequences and changes that it has ushered in. Economies and governments have been affected and the economic standstill has caused many retrenchments and lay-offs. To my mind, the effects of the pandemic have not only been felt in the world at large (in general) but the Church has been undergoing a transformation of its own (specifically) with regard to the attendance and commitment of their members. It is general knowledge that depression and anxiety is on the rise whilst the fear of the future holds is increasing on a daily basis. It seems to me that the world is in total disorder. Technology is advancing at such an astounding pace that it often holds negative implications for those who are affected by its results. The advancements of technology, on the other hand, has brought about positive results in the sense that it has made life more comfortable for the human race. To my mind, these comforts have come with a price as the numbers of employees necessary to operate these technological developments has lowered and has resulted in a decrease of job creation.

“We continue to live in the ontological” view of the “scientific-technological-industrial world set up by this cosmogony, as evidenced by the rise of transhumanists. So long as the created world is seen as the transhumanists see it, as something to be contended with, we will continue to be the modern Prometheus: spurning the gift of the created world – especially our bodies thinking that we will ‘be like god’, and as Waldman tells Frankenstein, ‘ascend to the heavens’ by our own power” (Parks 2019:293).

The exact scientific method that transhumanists pursue are greatly varied and thus can become extremely complicated.

In my opinion, it has occurred that scientists have been using methods and theories that they feel are appropriate in order to search for God in order to become more like Him (or should I say they have been looking for a shortcut to a type of godliness). Humankind, in my opinion, wants to take reality into their own hands. I agree that as part of the “natural human condition” there exists a “rational fear of death” which facilitates “longings for immortality” (Ahrens Dorf 2000:579).

“As conscious, and more importantly, self-conscious beings, we are aware of our own mortality” and “few of us want to die” (Herzfeld 2017:285). I believe that most humans fear death because they do not know when or how it will end. The finality of death, in my opinion, instils anxiety in humankind due to the fact they fear having to be removed from that which they are familiar with (surroundings, family and loved ones). “How to deal with the anxiety and fear this awareness brings has long been considered the purview of religion” (Herzfeld 2017:285).

From my religious approach, I believe that “religion and philosophy are no longer alone in addressing the question of the death” (Herzfeld 2017:286). I believe that individuals accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour for different reasons and that different individuals are convinced by different methods.

From a scientific approach, “for transhumanists, these technologies provide a new and nonreligious route for overcoming illness, aging, and ultimately death” (Herzfeld 2017:286). Some individuals simply do not want to yield or submit to God and thus try to console themselves in another manner. The same questions regarding life are asked in quite a different manner and from a different perspective.

Many have asked: “Can technology make us masters of our own future, able to evade the natural processes of aging, illness, suffering, and death?” (Herzfeld 2017:286). The “central aim of technology is to control the physical world in order to improve the human condition” (Herzfeld 2017:294). This, in my opinion, is contrary to God’s mandate to humankind right there in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1:28). I believe that God’s rendition of “subdue” did not mean that humankind was to exploit the earth, but rather that they were to nurture it for the generations to come. It is astonishing to find that some human beings actually believe that they will be able to achieve this and that the results will be of a lasting manner. All of these human attempts find their origin in the fact that humans realise that as a “part of that world, we share finiteness and its limitations” (Herzfeld 2017:295). It is clear to me that “our condition would remain bounded by our creaturely finiteness, our limited knowledge, and moral failings” (Herzfeld 2017:295). It seems ridiculous to me personally that humans would think that they can become gods and be able to control their own existence, future and destiny. These are the three areas of existence which humans are often fearful they will not attain/achieve. Some are fearful for when the time comes for their earthly existence to cease. Others are fearful of what the future holds (the immediate future and eternal future). Then there are those that fear that they will die before they reach their destiny or the fulfilment of their earthly purpose. It all seems very illogical to me. To my mind, it is clear that God’s code for creation cannot be re-written no matter which human or advanced technological system tries to do so. There will always exist unanswerable anomalies that humankind cannot solve. I believe that these attempts are employed by those who want to thwart the purposes of God and whom are delusional enough to think that such an act is even possible. We find a similar approach in the religious sphere where the messages of the Bible are twisted to suit the needs of the majority. In science however, technology is employed in quite a similar fashion.

“Transhumanism differs in its approach from most of the world religions”. To some “transhumanism seems like a new religion”. It is noted that “transhumanism” is “not like Buddhism

and Hinduism” (Herzfeld 2017:293). I believe that transhumanism is a scientific rendition of a false type of religion. Some believe it is “more like Christianity” yet it proves to be ultimately “closer to magic” due to the fact that it promotes the idea that “salvation” is not necessary through “Christ” but can be “accomplished” through “our own efforts” (Herzfeld 2017:293). It is promoted that “we are the one creature with the mental abilities to transcend but the mind itself, through self-contemplation, and the natural world, through technology” (Niebuhr, cited by Herzfeld 2017:293).

Yet, I agree that having such a view, makes it clear that “man is ignorant and involve in the limitations of the finite mind” although “he pretends that he is not limited” (Niebuhr, cited by Herzfeld 2017:294). It is expressed that “hope of the consummation of life and history [in eternity] is less absurd than alternate doctrines which seek to comprehend and to effect the completion of life by some power or capacity inherent in man and his history” (Niebuhr, cited by Herzfeld 2017:294). What humankind is attempting is unnatural and reminiscent of the Fall in Genesis 3. It becomes clear that humankind uses the free will God gave in good measure as a catalyst for achieving fleshly desires. Transhumanists want to “continue living forever” but Niebuhr believes that “immortality must lie beyond the limitations of our current space” (Herzfeld 2017:294). I believe that transhumanists fear, in my opinion, that which they do not understand. They claim to want knowledge, but they use their findings as a means of control. In my view, that is not a truthful pursuit of knowledge but displays pure ignorance. To me, transhumanists fear the future and thus try to override God’s order for the universe. As a believer, I know that these scientists will never be able to crack the full code to God’s design because it is above their span of knowledge. Life, here on earth, with its scientific breakthroughs and formulas will all prove to be temporary. To my mind, transhumanism is unnatural and is certainly not Biblical. It shall thus be rejected in my frame of reference. “If we are truly persuaded that ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,’ it may dissuade men from the idolatrous pursuit of false securities and redemptions in life and history”¹⁶ (Herzfeld 2017:296).

I do not believe that this will be an easy process due to strong convictions of scholars in both the fields of science and theology. Yet, I believe that viewpoints can be adjusted and enhanced through collaboration, at least in the search for the knowability of God. History shows that “anarchy will return over and over again” due to the fact that “human hopes for immortality are more powerful than the fear of violent death” (Ahrens Dorf 2000:579). It is described in another view that “the fault is not in men, as they are the *matter*; but as they are the *makers*, and adherers

¹⁶ “Realistic and Interactive Robot Gaze” visit <https://youtu.be/D8VmWWRJgE>.

to them” (Hobbes, cited by Ahrens Dorf 2000:580). In my opinion, everything that is wrong with the world and in the Church, is because of humankind and its corrupt nature. Humankind is corrupt, their systems are corrupt and the outcome of what they do is corrupt. Their “fear of death” is rooted in their own ignorance and pride of which they cannot be saved except through acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Hobbes believes that human beings can escape this “natural condition” of “war of all against all” if “erroneous opinions” are to be adjusted (Ahrens Dorf 2000:580). It seems to me that this could be spiritually interpreted as a description of what happens in the life of the believer when he/she accepts salvation. I agree with Hobbes that “human nature” will never be “escaped”, but “the state of war” will be alternated with “periods of peace” (Ahrens Dorf 2000:582). In my opinion, those that are busy with these advancements are building in silence and are waiting for an opportune time to make their findings known to the world. In my opinion, in their initial search for God, their focus was directed in knowing more about God but due to a lack of spiritual understanding they have been led down a path of destruction. It is my belief that it is the mandate of the Church to import religious truths to scholars in all fields of science, whilst learning from them as well. In my view, an act of collaboration could educate the Church in general scientific matters and how they influence society. Science can be directed to an honourable path in which they use their findings for the good of humankind and not for the destruction thereof.

Due to the “recognition that death is an unconquerable part of nature”, it should “lead human beings” to hope and “strive to live on” in “some fashion, after they die” (Ahrens Dorf 2000:585). The fact that transhumanism and splicing is even possible, leads me to believe that God is knowable to all humankind through various fields of science. I make this statement because I believe that God is the Giver of all inspiration and revelation, which includes theory-making. To my mind, humankind would never have come this far if God had not gifted them with reason and the capabilities to make great technological advancements.

6.4 Why does fear exist? The phenomenon of chance

In my opinion, humankind has drawn much knowledge from research conducted and have become acquainted with the fact there exist in the universe anomalies and scenarios of chance. I perceive that not only do humans try to understand their environment, themselves and others, but they try to control that which they come into contact with. To my mind, the phenomenon of chance is something that has escaped their grasp since the beginning of time and might I add has frustrated researchers to an extensive degree. I make this statement because however well

an experiment is planned, there is always a possibility that something can go wrong. I use a very simple illustration of baking a cake. It has been my experience that using the same trusted recipe for baking a family favourite cake does not necessarily indicate that the result will be favourable. Various factors are at play when baking a cake, such as if a person is rushed or if they are using a different type of sugar or larger eggs. The chances are that it is possible that the perfect recipe does not necessarily deliver the perfect result. In my opinion, many factors are at play in the universe and present challenges to humankind. Being knowledgeable of this very fact, can possibly create fear of the unknown. My answer to the question of why fear is experienced is simply because humans have realised that chance in fact exists.

This principle is as old as the Biblical writings itself. I add that from my purely theological view, Ecclesiastes 9:2 gives an explanation and verification of the existence and the impartation of the phenomenon of chance. It reads: "All things come alike to all to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath" (NKJV). This indicates in my opinion that fact that there is a Biblical rendition of what happens when chance manifests itself in the physical realm. Ecclesiastes 9:5 continues "for the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten" (NKJV). These verses make it clear, in my opinion, that these events can happen to any human at any point in time. Thus, indicating that chance can happen to all humankind and this fact drives fear in the heart of man. Humankind has become a dictating and controlling species that sometimes act in an unforgiveable and unethical manner in order to complete given plans and projects. Let me add here that I am firmly convinced that different individuals want to discern the knowability of God for different reasons and agendas.

Further to the rude awakening of human reality, the author states in Ecclesiastes 9:11-12: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor the bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to the all. For man does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them" (NKJV). From my religious perception, I believe that humans have a fear of the future, as well as of when death will occur because these are two aspects of our existence that simply cannot be controlled. As illustrated above there are different types of fear that grip us all individually from time to time. Certain aspects of our human reality that pose challenges for us whether we are believers or unbelievers. If we did not encounter these challenges, in my opinion, we would simply not know what it means to be human. I am convinced that all humans share to some degree the fear of the unknown and therefore we search for knowledge on how to remedy this fear from our own worldview. The Bible's message, in my opinion, is a universal message for all humankind (John 3:16). Furthermore, in my opinion, God's

grace and mercy is open to all humankind due to His great love for what He created (John 3:16). Irrespective of the fact that beliefs and approaches differ, I believe that because humans all share the same foundational fears they should collaborate in their search for knowledge of the knowability of God. I refer to these fears as foundational due to the fact that I perceive them to be generally found in our raw humanness (this will be further illustrated later in the chapter).

From a scientific point of view, chance is described in a different fashion. “Scientific accounts of existence give chance a central role. At the smallest level, quantum theory involves uncertainty, and evolution is driven by chance and necessity (Bartholomew 2004:1). Yet, this approach differs tremendously from the theological standpoint I explained as “these ideas do not fit easily with theology, in which chance has been seen as the enemy of purpose” (Bartholomew 2004:1). From my point of view, chance is the catalyst for fear in the life of a human due to the fact that it creates questions that are often mysterious when asked in its timeframe. Approaches, theories and methods stem from a wide array of worldviews and preconceptions and complicates matters for those scholars who do not agree on central issues. For instance, two views present themselves regarding “chance”: “One option is to argue, as proponent of Intelligent Design do, that chance is not real and can be replaced by the work of a Designer (Bartholomew 2004:1), whilst the second opinion is that “God is in total control” (Bartholomew 2004:1). I have to state that if I had to choose between the two, I would decide upon the second view that ¹⁷“God is in total control”, so much so that He is even in control of chance. Yet, I agree that “neither of these views ... does justice to the complexity of nature or the greatness of God” (Bartholomew 2004:1). I make this statement because I agree that “God is in total control” (Bartholomew 2004:1), but even more than that, to my mind, God as scripturally stated¹⁸, God “makes all things work together for the those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 NKJV). I agree that “chance is neither unreal nor non-existent but an integral part of God’s creation” (Bartholomew 2004:1). This statement stands in accordance with my view that because of the fact that chance exists, and is operative in our reality (Ecclesiastes 9:2; 5;11-12) God admonishes humankind to be ready for what is to come.

Ecclesiastes 11:1 state: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earthy” (NKJV). This indicates that the human race should be ready at all times. It also indicates to me that we should prepare in many ways, which would in my opinion encourage us to search in

¹⁷ Marcel Sternberger leaving the White House, Washington, D.C., 1939: <https://consciousnessnotincluded.wordpress.com/2016/08/11/marcel-sternberger-actual-events-as-retold-in-readers-digest>.

¹⁸ God, Chance and Purpose. God can have it both ways. Bartholomew (2004: 14-17). God’s chance, changing perspectives, what is chance, why the question matters.

manners that we haven't attempted before (i.e. collaboration). I am convinced that collaboration between theology and science could assist humankind to develop a deeper knowledge about the knowability of God and thus we can better prepare for the future that lies ahead. The Bible gives an explanation of why we should prepare accordingly. See Ecclesiastes 11:5: "As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything" (NKJV).

To my mind, I perceive that theologians and scientists approach research in a different manner. I perceive that God is knowable through the phenomenon of chance, but even more so, I perceive God to be mysterious due to the fact that He is the only living Being that, in my opinion, has control over chance. In my opinion, the true greatness of God will never be discovered by humankind and that in itself leaves humankind with fear of the unknown. Even in Biblical times fear was a concept of the daily living and legacy of humankind. Theologically, I discern that Psalm 23 is an example of a prophetic text that addresses not only the fear of its contemporary readers, but for all humankind. I illustrate that: Psalm 23:1 addresses the fear of physical needs not being met; verse 2 addresses the fear of being completely alone and isolated; verse 3 addresses the fear of being in the wrong and receiving punishment for evil actions; verse 4 addresses the fear of death and evil; verse 5 addresses the fear of enemies and defeat; and verse 6 addresses the fear of the future and the unknown. I ask again: Why does fear exist? I perceive it to exist because deep down in the depth of our souls, we realise that anything can happen at any time and it will according to God's will transpire in our lives. "Not only is the presence of chance an integral part of the created order but it actually offers possibilities of variety, flexibility and interest which would not be available in a deterministic universe" (Bartholomew 2004:28). To my mind, God is knowable through His all-encompassing will for humankind to excel and learn as well as to master the art of working together. I perceive God to be knowable through the phenomenon of fear. It is to my mind, in the times of trials and tribulations that the human becomes more inclined to search for the existence of the divine in an attempt to relieve distress that could be generated by an event of chance.

6.5 Is God knowable?

This is the ultimate question and the research question of this study. Is God knowable? If indeed He is, to what degree? How will we discern if He is knowable or completely mysterious? What will we do with our findings and the information we have gathered? Clearly these questions will be answered by either reason or faith, which is why we will look at both approaches briefly.

The question is “God knowable”, is “neither settled nor outworn” in “our age” (Ten Broeke 2014:372). I agree the “religious consciousness” is not our “only source of our knowledge of God” and “it is equally an error to regard the theoretical argument for or against the existence and nature of God as the only trustworthy source of knowledge” (Ten Broeke 2014:372-373). Here, I suggest an integration of these two views and principles for a comprehensive view of God. I make this statement because I believe that “the mind is trying to form its unity of knowledge out of the unorganized total of experience, and to maintain its integrity when formed” (Ten Broeke 2014:373). I believe that in order to change preconceptions about the knowability of God, we have to feed the mind of the individual with all the facts it needs to formulate a conclusion. This can be challenging for some due to the fact that it is contrary to the traditional approach. Yet, I find a footprint of the knowability of God not only in science and creation but also in the religious sphere, which includes the Bible, the image of God in humankind and ultimately, the presence of the Holy Spirit in all believers. I further believe that should integration between various fields of science take place, it would assist the mind of the individual to piece together a conceptual view of the knowability of God, which will prove to be more advanced than initially discerned. Traditionally, “we have both in popular and in scientific religious thinking a tendency to separate between the speculative and the realm of faith” (Ten Broeke 2014:373). I believe that its time that we take all data into calculation for the benefit of the entire human race. “Professor Flint rightly shows that we must not make such a separation between belief and knowledge. They go together” (Ten Broeke 2014:380). To my mind, God is knowable through both religion and scientific thought.

6.5.1 Considerations as formulated by human reason (science)

Let us consider the following theory in the form of a calculation. “NC” dictates that in order for “ $1+1+2$ ” to be true, “ $1+1=2$ ” must also be correct (Leftow 2012:1). How reason works in essence: “If a fully rational person doubts it, the most reasonable explanation is that he or she does not fully understand it?” (Leftow 2012:1). “The general claim: for no proposition P is it the case that both P and that not P is a thesis of formal logic, and (NC) instances it. So, if true, both are in a minimal sense of the term logical truths” (Leftow 2012:1). In other words, theoretically, the proposition is to my mind, that the one calculation can only be true if the other calculation is also true. Thus, according to this theory, for the calculation to be true, both calculations have to be true simultaneously.

History, however, has from my theological point of view proven that there are anomalies in many instances. This indicates to me that there is the phenomenon of natural and supernatural occurrences. This all again points to the fact that natural laws are programmed (much like the

universe and the brain) in the certain manner which they act and react. I perceive that miracles are instances where natural laws are bent and stretched and thus supernatural events transpire. My example of such a supernatural occurrence remains the birth of Jesus. Within the natural capacity of a human body, a woman would conceive only if there is a human mother and father involved in the process. Yet, in the case of Jesus' birth (Mary's pregnancy) the Holy Spirit came over Mary (who was a virgin) and she became pregnant with Jesus (the Son of God and the Son of Man). The incarnation was all but natural. It was a supernatural event (Luke 1:35-36).

In the human reasoning process, I perceive that humans either count a statement to be true or false. Therefore, there is a gap in their foundational theory, because to my mind they are unprepared for anomalies that present themselves. What if there are instances where a can only be true if b is true, for instance. Life is not either/or, I find that it is not only reduced to black/white and that grey areas are increasing. To my mind, humankind needs to adopt an attitude of flexibility in order to discern and discover existent truths in the universe. Advancement, to my mind, will dictate the stretching of the normally accepted reasonable framework and worldview of the individual.

"Modal words indicate ways or modes in which propositions are true: they are necessarily true, contingently true, possible true. They also indicate ways or modes in which items have properties: the wallpaper may be necessarily, contingently, or possibly red" (Leftow 2012:29). From my point of view, in order to apply this principle in the theological sphere, I propose that the incarnation if viewed in light of the calculation "1+1=2" and "1+1=2" did not align with human logic and was therefore dismissed by unbelievers. I would say that "modal basics" does not allow for the incarnation to be true because the phrase "can" might not be associated with the incarnation. Simply because it is not "necessarily, contingently, or possibly" true.

I believe this to be the case possibly because human reasoning reacts to what it can see in the physical world. Let us consider for a moment that since the wallpaper can be observed it can be itemized, categorized and studied, it is in fact physically observable to the human. God, on the other hand, is Spirit and cannot be physically seen, making Him unobservable in the physical realm and thus more difficult to study. In my opinion, and as an example, the incarnation was to my mind, only possible because in the Spirit "1+1=2", as well as "1+1=2" was true simultaneously. I back my theory and make this statement because Jesus was (and is) both the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man simultaneously, making Him the only possible Candidate to save humankind through His work on the cross. In the study of God (Who is Spirit) the calculations that are applied to physical phenomena have to in my opinion be adjusted in order to be itemized, categorized and studied, from a spiritual point of view. Thus the theory, "1+1=2" and "1+1=2" is still applied, but where "1+1=2" and "1+1=2" might involve the counting of apples or other fruit, in

the Spirit “1+1=2” and “1+1=2” will also apply just by different criteria such as “1 body + 1 soul/spirit” = a human being (general view of dichotomy) and “1body + 1 soul/spirit = 2 parts of the human being” = a human being is also true (general view of dichotomy). I deduct that for a human being to be in fact, a human being, he/she has to possess a physical body as well as a spirit/soul simultaneously, otherwise he/she would just be a fleshly shell. Thus, for these calculations to be true they have to be true simultaneously and thus they are. I believe that God is knowable through the scientific, as well as through the spiritual illustration.

Yet, there seems to be “conflicts between the existence of necessary truths not about God and theses that Western theists have reason to believe” (Leftow 2012:48). It is my belief that faith also involves the reasoning capabilities of man. Which brings us to the argument of theological scholars and the truth of God’s knowability.

6.5.2 Consideration as formulated by faith in God (theology)

Various opinions regarding the existence of God ensue: “As Descartes and Bayle see it, either God is ultimate or ‘eternal truths’ are” (Leftow 2012:72). Leibniz, on the other hand, held that God includes the sky: “This so-called *fatum*, which binds even the Divinity, is nothing but God’s own nature, his own understanding” (Leftow 2012:72).

“In the Aristotelian logic Descartes inherited, universally quantified conditionals have existential import” and it is possible that “God was free to make the geometric truth untrue” (Leftow 2012:73). In other words, “existential import” relies on the participants being convinced that something, in this case Someone (God) exists. Already here I can sense that logic, reason and faith are at play when “existential import” is considered. Whether it be a theory or formulation from a theologian or a scientist, the fact remains that “God’s existence” has impacted both fields of science and has spurred research on into the study of the magnitude of His knowability. The word divinity has thus been employed to illustrate God’s magnificent nature. It has further been deducted that God is free to such a degree that He is even able to make “geometric truth untrue”. This type of existential import has convincingly proved that God indeed exists. In my opinion, God is knowable in various forms of reasoning which scientists and theologians alike need to visit and re-visit in order for humankind to grow in unity as a species.

“A world-power is a power to will – to will to bring about what other powers are powers to bring about. By willing to bring these things about, God ‘fires’ those other powers” (Leftow 2012:445). Within the research of both the theologian and the scientist, there is a longing, to my mind, to discover more as well to become more. This longing, I believe, is seated within the free will of

humankind. It is also my belief that this longing overpowered Adam and Eve and resulted in the original sin in Genesis 3.

Leftow's (2012:536) "God-involving modal metaphysics" involve the theory that "modal metaphysics" can and "should provide for the truth of claims employing modal locutions." In other words, "relatable" phrases and forms of "expression" will differ between various scientific fields. Certain phrases or utterances must therefore be employed in accordance to the type of questions that are being asked. In theology, the data that is processed will be different from that which is used in the scientific but take care to remember that the data from these fields are in no way unrelated.

When discussing "world-powers", Leftow (2012:444) expresses his view that "possible – world accounts commit themselves existentially to things which do not exist" and are "false". It seems that Leftow (2012:444) believes that, that which cannot be seen is in fact not real. He further states that "there is not an abstract, necessarily existing God-independent possible world representing that some pigs have wings, but there is a divine power to produce winged pigs which some world-powers recruit" (Leftow 2012:445). In other words, Leftow (2012:445) is stating that there are through the Godly powers of God things that are yet to come into existence and which have the possibility to exist in our human world if God deems it necessary. Fifty years ago, the idea of transhumanism or a vaccine which contains ¹⁹nanotechnology and animal DNA would have sounded impossible, yet today they are looming possibilities in our ever-changing world. I have always been a firm believer that God has placed within humankind the capacity to achieve great feats but I do believe that He wants humans to attempt it in the manner He sees fit. God is, in my opinion, knowable through the inventions of humankind, be it in the scientific, theological, philosophical or technological fields of development. In my opinion, it all stems from God who is the source of all inventions. It becomes clear that each scientific field whether it be theological or scientific has searched for God (in an effort to discern His knowability) in their own unique ways, yet to my mind, some of their excursions have done (and probably will do) more harm than good.

Some have even believed that humankind is only "related to God" by way of only "reason" (Aquinas, cited by Williams 1969:1). This is one of the reasons, in my opinion, why science has been exploding because there was an extreme focus on reason and absolutely no attention has been given to faith that can also add value to the discussions.

Whilst Leftow (2012:536) believes that "realists about possible worlds should become theists", I propose that realists should include their findings with that of theists in order to not only grow in

¹⁹ View: <https://www.facebook.com/TheActivistsToolbox2020/videos/dr-Christine-Northrup-interview/389382725429607>; <https://drnorthrup.com/about/credentials>.

their own field of science, but to grow in character as human beings. I perceive God to be knowable through the character of humankind. I am not suggesting the surrender of any possible fields of science, I am suggesting collaboration between various fields of science.

Theologically, I discern from a Biblical perspective that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37) and that He offers wisdom freely to all (James 1:5) yet He does require accountability (Exodus 20). If we as humans do not want to be held accountable for our actions, it means that we refute the power and superiority of God. Scientific findings are only held accountable to human reasoning. Theologically, each believer is held accountable for his/her actions in this world, as well as the eternal consequences those actions will hold. Technological advancements have progressed so rapidly because in my opinion, scientists are not held accountable for their actions. I believe that accountability builds character. God is knowable in my opinion through the dynamic character of the human race as each type of personality dictates new insights into the world of investigating the knowability of God.

There are some statements that I want to make in general that I perceive are about aspects of humanity which unites us all. I experience that these statements might subconsciously make it clear that scientists could very well collaborate with theologians in the search of the knowability of God for the good of the human race:

- We might differ in opinion and focus, yet we are all inherently human.
- We all have the same physical needs.
- We all live within a temporary body (2 Cor 5:1).
- We all possess a body as well as a spirit/soul (simultaneously I might add).

Therefore, I believe that in our basic humanness we all ask the same questions regarding the span of our existence (now and in the future); the difference only comes with regard to the way we approach our task of discovery.

If the answers are yes, then I want to enquire why it is that some focus then on the physical world only and not on the spiritual. To my mind, we obviously all enjoy various natural human emotions. I suggest that scholars should share their focus on the knowability of God. To my mind, God can be discerned within the physical human body through the complex systems of the brain, but God can also be discerned through the soul/spirit of humans because each person has a certain personality and certain unique traits. It is that which makes us all different that unites us as a human race as far as I'm concerned. God is, in my opinion, knowable through all types of phenomena such as inherent notions of humans (personality; worldviews; interests), as well as external phenomena such as genes, social behaviour and manners (language can also be included). If scientists did not subconsciously believe in a higher power at work in the majestic

universe in which we carry out our existence, why would they attempt to successfully complete projects such as transhumanism? I find that they are trying to adapt the natural flow of life and switch it to something unnatural. In other words, I believe that they are attempting that which is inherently supernatural. I believe that they are attempting to do this in a manner that is dishonourable to God and creation. Science and religion can in my opinion learn from each other and by doing so, will make the world a better place where humans can enjoy peace and serenity as the end of all time is approaching. I realize that this view might be criticized due to the fact that it is of course urgent to note that only some scholars will be open to the act of collaboration. I believe that, if we make a positive impact, let us do so without looking back. The world needs more of the Church and the Church must learn the ways of the world (not be co-sinners) but in order to identify and deal with problematic areas that human society is facing. Building human robots (transhumanism) is not going to fix the problem as it might result in even bigger problems. Collaboration, which in my opinion, will lead to unity will have a positive result on the problems that humankind is facing. If we are to attempt this act of collaboration, I would from my platform in life, spur believers on to have faith that God can reveal Himself through science as much as He can reveal Himself through theology. Scholars and the human race for that matter can not put limitations on God through their research.

6.6 The Greatness of God: The God of the mysterious

The greatness of God is still a mystery to humankind. The indescribable existence of God that instils such awe is bound to generate related questions regarding the dynamics of His Being. Therefore, “the question of God can be asked because there is an unconditional element in the very act of asking any question. The question of God must be asked because the threat of nonbeing, which man experiences as anxiety, drives him to the question of being conquering nonbeing and of courage conquering anxiety” (Paul Tillich, cited by Burrill 1967:1). In other words, the “question of God” here indicates to me a reference to the question of the measure of the knowability of God. The term “nonbeing” indicates to me the state of death of the human being, whilst the words “threat” and “anxiety” are reminiscent of the fear of humankind regarding aspects of reality itself. This, I discern, is what propels and drives humans to attempt to conquer their reality and circumstances. Humankind discerns that God is a) eternal and thus powerful, and b) the ultimate Source of knowledge. Due to the finite nature of humankind, as well as the inner need to survive, the human being (whether believer or unbeliever) longs to draw knowledge from God.

I ask the question: How many of us have heard before that we should not argue against traditional beliefs, but that we should rather “be realistic about it”? This is the tendency and the norm within

society today. We are admonished to accept what we do not understand or along similar lines of thought. Yet, I have a different view of a realist per say. To my mind, a realist is someone who forms a personal opinion only after he/she has gathered and studied all the facts. The human being, when faced with aspects of their temporary existence such as aging and different types of illnesses, realistically assumes (or formulates) that an answer to these problems must be found. I am of the opinion that a part of the human's reasoning capabilities involves the act of problem-solving and this function can be conducted in various ways and from many angles.

Epistemologically, the "realist holds that reality can be (approximately) known as it is and not just as it appears to us to be (as empiricism holds)" (Moore 2003:1). Furthermore, "*semantically*, the realist holds that it is possible to refer successfully to, and so make (approximately) true statements about reality" (Moore 2003:1). This indicates to me that a realist is someone who will stop at nothing to discover the real truth of a matter and does so in a conscious manner. A realist also comes across as a person who is not only driven by a desire to fulfil some personal need, it seems to me that such a person wants to know the truth for the greater good of humankind. To my mind, scientists in general rely on their reasoning capabilities whilst employing realism to formulate and test their theories whilst theologians display a more positivist approach due to the fact, in my opinion, that they rely on their faith in the Scriptures whilst they formulate and test their theories. In my opinion, the greatness of God is astounding. His manner, of weaving information together and His ability to address all human needs whether it is physical, emotional, spiritual or even intellectual is truly limitless.

"Thus, when Christian faith is subjected to philosophical scrutiny, typical realist claims are that (1) God exists independently of our awareness of him and of our will, but that (2) despite this, we can know him and that (3) human language is not an inadequate or inappropriate medium for truthful speech about God" (Moore 2002:1-2).

My comments to these statements are as follows:

(1) I believe that God is not influenced by anything or anyone outside of Himself. In my opinion, God is completely free and able to shape reality in whichever form He wishes to do so. I add that God ministers to both the scientist (i.e. possible realist) and the theologian (i.e. possible positivist/optimist). God's decisions are entirely up to Himself and so is the way He acts upon them.

(2) Because of God's image within the human being, it is possible for humans to learn about Him to a certain degree because they are connected to Him through a) the life that He has given freely to all believers who are connected to Him also through the Holy Spirit (who ministers both to believers as well as unbelievers).

(3) I am of the opinion that human language was the facilitator God used to make His Word known to humankind and I do believe that the writers were Holy Spirit inspired which, from my point of view, makes the Bible authoritative and thus inerrant.

I look at the limitations of humankind and I can but thank God for His eternal plan, wisdom and qualities which remain the light of humankind. The life and the love of God has blessed us with is meant to ultimately be explored. From my viewpoint, it is a process of reasoning coupled with faith. I ask: Why would God give us these abilities individually if they were not meant to be explored in unison? My answer quite simply is that they are given to be used in an integrated manner. Our reasoning capabilities sets us apart from the rest of creation. Our faith takes us beyond that which is physical and temporary and ushers us into the realization that one day when all creation ends, we still have a home with God. In my opinion, God is knowable through our reasoning capabilities (physical existence) and He is also knowable through our faith life (our spiritual existence). We have control over our daily living to a certain degree but other than accepting salvation, we know only what is described in the Bible about the eternity that we face. In my opinion, God is also mysterious due to the fact that humankind will never be able to know all there is to know about Him. Due to this fact, I perceive that in God's infinity, He is more mysterious than knowable in His majesty. I make this statement because ultimately, we only know and relate to that which is conceivable to us (Moore 2003:193). I believe that God is simultaneously great and good. In my opinion, God is all-knowing yet knowable through His image within humankind. This makes Him, to my mind, mysterious.

“St Anselm famously tells us that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. But he also says that God is greater than anything that we *can* conceive” (Davies 2009:1). “So is God beyond reason?” It has been “suggested that in one sense he is and that in another sense, the verdict” is “that he “cannot be established in advance” (Davies 2009:1). I discern that God is above human reasoning capabilities and thus His greatness is mysterious. In my opinion, the Bible (special revelation); creation (general revelation); and the Holy Spirit, as well as science can take humankind only so far. It is explained that “attempts to demonstrate the way that the question of God is utterly transformed by the transformation of the very selves who ask” the question “Who is God” (Needleman, cited by Tarcher & Penguin 2009:2). I add that the search for the knowability of God will alter traditional belief systems of both theologians and scientists when the act of collaboration between these fields is employed. Whereas a scientist would traditionally be employing only realistically viable theories, there would have to be an instance where room is made for the addition of more spiritual matters such as faith in the project and prayer that it would have a positive outcome. From the theological side, scholars would have to look at a more clinical

manner of conducting research and would have to take a realistic approach to theory-making by using physically calculated data.

“Where belief in God might rightly appear foolish or wilfully reckless to one person, to another whose thinking has been transformed” it might seem “dynamic” (Needleman, cited by Tarcher & Penguin 2009:451-452). Those who have embarked on this journey has had their knowledge not only adapted but stretched and enhanced and therefore they are more likely to be adaptable to new approaches of study. In my opinion, the knowability of God will come full circle when He is viewed from all possible angles known to humankind. I believe that we have always studied the same topics and thus I experience that our approaches to the studies that scholars pursue should be adapted and renewed to be suitable to the current scholarship needs that are expressed. We have asked “who” now we need to ask about “what” we should pursue.

Haught (1986:2) discusses “theoretical consciousness”. This is the “type of cognition in which we step back from the immediacy of an experience and place that experience in a conceptual framework.” In other words, we can put our feet in other’s shoes and see their viewpoint for a moment.

Many theories have been employed and investigated as time has passed, yet, I believe that “once we have placed our immediate experiences in such a network of ideas the original experience can be mediated to us in a way that allows us to relate it to other experiences and ideas” (Haught 1986:2). To my mind, collaboration in a sense would require such a process. I believe that the whole purpose of attempting this is to broaden our span of knowledge collectively in the search for the knowability of God. I am of the opinion that God is knowable in all conceptual frameworks. I further add that if only one angle/approach is taken in an attempt to know God, the result would be unsatisfactory. If, however, scholars decide to be flexible in their theorizing and investigations, they can take hands and discover so much more about the knowability of God.

See for instance how Haught (1986:1) compares the questions “Who is God?” with “What is God?”. He illustrates that it is more natural for theists to ask “who God is” than to ask “what is God?”. I add that due to the nature of scientific research scientists in general would be more comfortable to approach the question of the knowability of God by asking “what is God?” question rather than the “who is God?” question as is popular with theists. I argue that we need to be able to ask both these questions in our search for the knowability of God, which in my opinion, will help scholars to discern the meaning of life. Knowing only “who” God is will leave the theological scholar, in my opinion, with only a portion of the knowability of God. Likewise, knowing only “what” God is will leave the scientist with a void of the full knowability of God. From my theological perspective, disclosing information to the scientist regarding “who” God is would be the start of

facilitating a relationship between the scientist and God. Collaboration is therefore at the order of the day. “Without denying that our images of a personal God always have a projective aspect to them or that these images do not exhaustively represent the mystery of our lives, we may still view “divine personality” as an indispensable symbol of the proximity to us of mystery” (Haught 1986:129). Indicating to us here that because we perceive others through what their personalities display, we attempt to describe God in a likewise manner. “Because of mystery’s unavailability we cannot discuss it directly or literally” (Haught 1986:129).

This is because God is Spirit. We struggle to describe God as we cannot physically see Him. We can read the body language of others, but we cannot do the same with God. Our criteria are creation, God’s Word, His Spirit and His image within. That is how we come to know Him. We know of Him what we know through these modes, yet we discern that there is so much more to discover. I believe that we can only describe God’s greatness as being mysterious. We can but recognize that God is divine but we are a loss for words when we have to describe in full what divinity means. We use the word “divine” often as a description of something that we love to taste or experience, but in the context of God it actually points to the fact that although there exist many theories and propositions, the fact remains that ultimately, we are stunned by the greatness of God. I agree that “to remove the personal face of mystery is to lose access to it” (Haught 1986:130). His greatness surpasses, to my mind, all of our knowledge about Him.

6.7 Conclusion

The fact that “God is beyond and in a sense above time ... does not diminish His efficacy within it” (Leftow 1991:361). In the search for the knowability of God, it become clear that God is knowable but even more so He is mysterious. To my mind, God is an eternal Being who ministers to all humankind on their level of understanding. This dynamic of God’s existence makes His thus mysterious as well unpredictable. To my mind, history has shown how God can change reality within an instant should it be in line with His will. I believe that no scientific or theological theory can ever encapsulate the greatness of God. Humankind will, in my opinion, keep on discovering more sides of God as time progresses. Yet, they will never fully understand Him (Revelation 7:11). I concur with this scientific view from my theological perspective that the God that is “depicted” here “can have the greatness of both of the philosophers’ transcendent source of all and of the believers’ living Lord” (Leftow 1991:361). In my opinion, God is all in all (Romans 11:36). In the end, I believe it does not matter how many inventions humankind formulates and executes (transhumanism; vaccines; robotic advancements; space travel) or how many theological theories are proposed (false doctrines include, in my opinion, “grave sucking” for more anointing and

“kenosis”). I believe that all of these efforts will come to an end the day God deems it necessary (Mark 13:32). Clearly, this is one detail that only God the Father (the First Person of the Trinity) knows and to my mind, this makes God ultimately more mysterious than knowable.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

God holds the universal office of Creator and as such I perceive that there exists a relationship between Creator, creation and created beings. Both the fields of theology and that of general science are, in my opinion, aware of the fact that the world as we know it is only residing in a temporary state and that change is imminent. The changes that are witnessed in creation (i.e. global warming; naturalistic catastrophes such as floods), as well as the Biblical writings (especially in the Book of Revelation) testify of how life as we know it, is culminating to a promised end. As beings with reasoning capabilities, humans have for centuries attempted to predict the future. Massive scores of knowledge on various fields of science have been gathered resulting in many technological advancements. To the religious individual the signs of the times are indicative of the “return of Jesus Christ” (Du Rand 2013:1; Matthew 24:3-31). To the non-believer, in my opinion, it is the confirmation that humankind is in fact destroying its very own habitat. Scientists have therefore dedicated much time and effort to finding a way to prolong the span of human life here on earth. This has created a platform for the development of movements such as transhumanism²⁰ and Artificial Intelligence in the scientific arena. In the religious faculties, the development of doctrine and tradition has been greatly pestered by false doctrines that are accompanied with false religious practices such as ²¹“grave sucking” and the belief in “kenosis” (Riccardi 2019:103), as well as other anti-Biblical theories. I have witnessed from my personal standpoint, how society has been stripped of its moral values and have been degraded to a less desirable state. As predicted, in the Bible, evil in the form of crime and other human atrocities is on the rise (“as in the days of Noah” Matthew 24:37-39). These are referred to as a “whole host of natural evils” (Erickson 2001:151). I stand in agreement with this view as I have witnessed (from my office as a full-time minister) how evil the world has become.

To my mind, all sciences include the act of theory-making. I have thus explicitly delineated that I believe that a collaborative approach to our quest in the search of God’s knowability is at the order of the day. I draw reference from a “theory of collaboration” by Brunson (2014:1). Yet, in the same breath, I propose that the same principle is used but only with scores of other types of data such as an instance where theology and science effectively collaborate their finds to create a well-rounded view of the knowability of God.

²⁰ “Realistic and Interactive Robot Gaze” visit <https://youtu.be/D8VmWWRJgE>.

²¹ Ex-Bethel Student Tells All. 2019. 3 Jun. Lindsay Davies Testimony. [YouTube video] <https://youtu.be/winCHM9yuY4>. Date of access 28 Dec 2019.

In my opinion, truth is the knowability of God because I believe that God is the Giver of all knowledge (Berkhof 1996:96). The focus on the source of knowledge, in my opinion, is to be derived from dogmatic (Berkhof 1996:19; Kärkkäinen 2018:15; Dempster 1993:22-23), as well as scientific (Hitchens 2007: 5; Clouser 2005: 191) sources, which in effect have seemed to have differed greatly over the centuries. I perceive a definite overlap between these scientific fields and it is my opinion that it is this road less travelled that will bring us to a beautiful destination of discovery.

To some scholars, God is revealed (Erickson 2001 i.e. “God’s universal revelation” and “God’s Particular Revelation”; Berkhof 1996 i.e. “God’s General revelation” and “God’s Special Revelation”), whilst to other scholars God remains “hidden” (Jenson 2001:1). I believe that God is both simultaneously, as I believe there are parts of Him that He reveals to us through general revelation and also through special revelation, yet I am convinced that there are certain pieces of information about Him that humans will never be able to attain. Still, whilst on this journey of human discovery, I believe that God is present (Blomberg 2012:38), be it in the physical or in the spiritual realm through our “intuition” (Koessler 2019:57). The integration or collaboration (Anderson & Zuehlke 2000:1) as discussed by Brunson (2014:1) leads me to make a suggestion of the same principle being utilized between theology and science. It is much more advanced, in my opinion, than just the act of coming together as scientific fields; it is in essence illustrative of and encapsulates the essence of our humanness as having the image of God within both our physical body, as well as our soul/spirit. I am, for instance, of the opinion that the incarnation was an act of collaboration between that which God created in the heavens and on the earth as well as the Trinity. Jesus as our Saviour (The Son of God as well as the Son of Man) came to earth on a rescue mission and for His mission to be successful He had to be incarnated into a human body.

Through the incarnation the “character of God” was communicated to humankind (Grudem 1994:29). I believe that God has always wanted humankind to live in unity as we witness in the dynamic of the Trinity and for that reason, I reject religious movements such as the “revolution” (Barna 2005) because I experience it to bring division and a type of a spiritual classification module into the Church. I believe that the Word of God teaches us that we “all fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Stanglin (2008:59) affirms that such a movement is “detrimental to the unity of Christ’s body”. In my opinion, and through my personal experience, the only way to combat false teachings, is for the congregation to not only trust and follow God’s Word but in addition to that, stand together as brother and sisters in Christ. As a believer, I profess and proclaim God’s Word is inspired due to the fact that it was given by the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Trinity) who worked closely with the authors of the Bible. Therefore, I believe it to

be the inspired Word of God and further than that it is thus inerrant. I am of the opinion that when matters of dogmatical truth are discussed, both the faith as well as the reason of the human being is automatically challenged. Contrary to traditional beliefs, I do not perceive these two aspects of humankind to work exclusively or separately, but they seem to work in an integrative manner. Further, I believe that if we are to as theologians and scientists discern the knowability of God, we need to amalgamate our faith and reasoning capabilities in order to understand our findings more clearly. I perceive that our innate “exegetical abilities” (Hayes & Holladay 2017:1) work in much the same fashion. Many theories on the authority of God’s Word have presented themselves (Erickson 2001:63-64; Berkhof 1996:151). There exists no real consensus, in my opinion, as to which theory is acceptable and I prescribe this to be due to a diverse and emerging “Athenian culture” (Dricoll 2008:7), which has slowly but surely been presenting itself within society. In my opinion, doctrines in the church are being stretched beyond bounds with incoming false doctrines and an influx of worldly practices are present due to changing values and morals worldwide.

I do, however, find it interesting that although there exist many religious denominations who adhere to different religious doctrines, there is general consensus among them that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. I add that inspiration to me, proves inerrancy. This was discussed in Chapter 2.

I agree that humans were created with the capacity to exercise “unbounding thought” (Hall 2020:53) and it is for this reason that I believe humans have for centuries erred in attempting to describe God in a similar fashion as they would describe fellow humans. Although humans possess these incredible capabilities, I do believe that they often get stuck in a state of tunnel vision where they attempt upcoming challenges and tasks in traditional ways. I believe that each situation and subject must be uniquely approached and I make this statement because I do not perceive that God’s Person and God’s acts can be studied within a human framework of understanding. He is God and He is Spirit (John 4: 24) and therefore, He should be studied as such.

I believe God to be both transcendent and immanent simultaneously, as examined in Chapter 3. In my opinion, His transcendence is manifested through the majesty of the universe and His immanence I perceive to manifest within and through His image in humankind. I believe that His transcendence (as seen in the cosmos), coupled with His immanence (as experienced in the hearts of believers and as expressed in His Word) show us how to live and have our being with Him (Acts 17:28) as we wait for Jesus’ return as an eschatological community.

I believe that God's Person and God's acts are intertwined much like the dynamic inner-workings of the Trinity. I believe that God is true to Himself and His Word and therefore, in my opinion, God's Person = God's acts. These two aspects of God, in my opinion, cannot be separated from each other. Clouser (2005:246) connects God's image in humans with a tendency to yearn for a life of "ethics" whilst Erickson (2001) and Berkhof (1996) connects God's image with the dignity that all humans possess.

Personally, I perceive that the "re-creational work of Christ" (Vorster 2004:83) points both to "ethics", as well as "dignity" within humankind. I agree that salvation is a "life-long process of sanctification" (Horton 1984:62) and that sanctification is mandatory (Kärkkäinen 2018:155). Erickson (2001:91-104) discusses God's goodness and God's greatness. I perceive that God's goodness is experienced by the human being to a certain degree due to the inherent image of God. I also believe that humans are never going to be able to attain any level of God's greatness whatsoever, because only God is divine and infinite.

I do not believe that God's goodness and God's greatness oppose each other, rather I believe that these characteristics work together to bring about the will of God effectively. I firmly believe that both theology and science have to collaborate in order to discern the full knowability of God by investigating God's goodness as well as God's greatness. Erickson (2001:91-104) lists God's "greatness" as "Spirituality; Life; Personality; Infinity (Space, Time, Knowledge and Power)" as well as "constancy". God's "goodness" is described as "Moral qualities (Holiness; Righteousness; Justice); Integrity (Genuineness; Veracity; Faithfulness; Love (Benevolence; Grace; Mercy; Persistence)". I believe that God is simultaneously great and good. I do perceive that God's greatness surpasses His goodness and I make this statement due to the fact that I perceive that humans can attempt (through His inherent image) to replicate some of the characteristics of His goodness but they will never be able to replicate any aspects, characteristics of His greatness. I believe that God's goodness makes Him knowable (predictable) and His greatness makes Him mysterious (unpredictable). I believe that His greatness surpasses His goodness through His infinite and majestic nature. I perceive that God's "goodness" is illustrated through His constant care for creation, nature as well as humankind. I perceive that God's greatness is illustrated through supernatural events such as miracles.

To my mind, God's goodness makes Him knowable and trustworthy in the eyes of every believer and His greatness makes Him mysterious due to the fact that He can intervene in a situation when and how He wants to without having to consult anything or anyone outside of Himself (the Bible testifies to this very fact, for instance, in Isaiah 55:8-9). Erickson (2001:306) writes that there is a "beginning, continuation, and completion" of "salvation". Likewise, I believe this process to also have bearing on creation itself and the fate of humankind.

7.2 The authority of God's Word (dogma)

In my opinion, the Bible is humankind's most valuable asset to understanding and knowing God. In general, most Christian traditions adhere to the Bible as God's anointed and divine Word (Driscoll 2008; Erickson 2001; Berkhof 1996; Felix-Jager 2014; Flew 2007; Grudem 1994; Horton 1994). It has been noted that there have been "modern theological trends" that have attempted to "deny ... the divinity of Christ" (Nel 2017:57).

An "infallibist view" has been built on "minor human imperfections" perceived in the Bible (Scott 2009:185), yet, Christians are recommended to remember that God has "not left out" any important "words" (Grudem 1994: 40). Berkhof (1996:19) reminds that dogmas are viewed by the Church as "established truths" from the Word of God, although non-believers (Hitchens 2007:6) perceive it as "the beginning ... of all disputes". Nelson and Wawire (2004:11) refer to God's Word as "the infallible, the authoritative rule of faith and conduct (1Th 2:13; 2 Ti 3: 15-17; 2 Pe 1:21)". According to Brunsdon (2014:1) collaboration must be established between "pastoral care, narrative theory and positive psychology". I not only propose that this principle be employed between theology and science but also between the experience of the believer as well as the dogma of the Bible (Berkhof 1996:19).

Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) describes the "inspiration" of the Bible as linked to revelation. Nelson and Wawire (2004:12) believe that inspiration is the act through which "God 'breathed' His message into the original writers of Scripture". I perceive that Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:93) placed focus on the final product of inspiration (i.e. the Bible), whilst Nelson and Wawire (2004:12) focused on the process of inspiration as led by the Holy Spirit.

I perceive that collaboration can be established between various religious traditions, as well as different phases of the process of "inspiration" of the Bible. Erickson (2001:61) refers to God's Word as a "record" of the truth. He has thus successfully used the view of Higgins (cited by Horton 1994:63) of result with that of Nelson and Wawire (2004:12) of process to combine them into a "record of revelation". I perceive that Erickson (2001:1) has effectively constructed a "bridge" of collaboration here.

To my mind, God is knowable through the "act of theory-making" (Clouser 2005:3) because I believe He still inspires believers today who are filled with the Holy Spirit. In my opinion, the authoritative status of God's Word is built upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and this automatically indicates undeniable inerrancy (Hebrews 4:12). Various "theories of inspiration" have been listed by Erickson (2001:63-64) and Berkhof (1996:152). What strikes me the most is the fact that God actively placed a divine message, His divine message into human language for

humankind to understand. I am convinced that “when the Bible speaks, God speaks” (Merrick & Garrett 2013:35). I further believe that inspiration coupled with inerrancy forms revelation (Erickson 2001:69). I agree that if the inerrancy of the Bible is denied, it avertedly “denies God’s trust” (Grudem 1994:76). This, in my opinion, must be avoided at all cost.

Canale (2005:465-466) teaches that “biological and botanical errors” in the Bible do not indicate that the Bible is not inerrant because these are but “minor details” that have no influence on the central message of the Bible. To my mind, God is knowable due to the fact that His footprint can be seen in all scientific fields. Thus, I believe that “dogma” must “always lead back to the verba of Scripture” (Leithart 2017:36). I agree that believers are to be “in the world but not of the world” (Nel 2015:141). In my opinion, the Holy Spirit guides believers in this process. Within my religious tradition Pentecostals have a “most distinctive characteristic”, which is a focus not on “theological deliberations” but on “worship services” (Cartledge, cited by Nel 2014:8).

Through God’s Word as the authoritative source of his Being, I deduct that:

- God is knowable inside and outside of the human religious mould whether the focus be on the dogma, the experience or the worship.
- Thus, God is knowable through every religious tradition.
- God is simultaneously knowable through the inner working of the Holy Spirit as He is knowable through His Word and His creation.
- God is knowable through the believer’s social conduct towards others.

These findings indicate an overlap between both the micro (within the creation), as well as the macro (within creation) levels of human understanding as well as human existence.

7.3 God’s Person and God’s conduct

I believe that God’s Person is displayed to humankind through general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132; Erickson 2001:41-49) and God’s conduct are canvassed through special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137; Erickson 2001:51-58). In my opinion, God’s acts (according to my human reasoning) are indicative of who God is as a Person. I believe that God is what He does, because I believe that God is true to Himself and to His Word. I believe that it is God’s will to act. I further believe that God develops what He creates. Personally, I believe that God’s Person, God’s conduct (acts) and His narrative for humankind are all intertwined. This is because, to my mind, “God is unlimited and unlimitable” (Erickson 2001:94) and all “knowledge” belongs to Him (Berkhof 1996:96).

I believe that different frameworks of understanding reside in different groups of people and result in various religious and cultural views. In my opinion, the world seems different to a physicist than it does to an evolutionary biologist (England 2015:27). When God is studied from a position of faith, the Bible is consulted, yet when God is studied from a scientific point of view, the reasoning capabilities of humankind are employed.

I agree that prophetic testimony coupled with the “Spirit’s sanctifying grace” and “theological reason” leaves us with a “conceptual account” of God’s Person (Leithart 2017:35). Theology teaches that God created and upholds His creation (Gen 2:7; Job 33:4; John 1:3-4; 1 Tim 6:13; Neh 9:6; Acts 17: 25). Science teaches that God “created for beauty” (Long 2017:20). Dogma teaches that God created in order to stand in relationship with humankind and to establish His kingdom here on earth. Although these views seem to oppose each other, I formulate that in my opinion; God is the Creator, who loves the beauty of all that He created and has created humankind for a greater purpose than just to exist. I believe that God’s existence (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) appeals both to human faith, as well as human reason.

I believe that the term Trinity encapsulates God’s Person and that the acts of all Three Persons of God illustrate God’s conduct (acts) in the culmination of His narrative. God the Father is described as the Creator of the universe (John 1:14); God the Son is described as the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14); God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:4; John 14:26) is the believer’s Guide and Comforter. “The Person of the Trinity have separate, though never conflicting wills (Luke 22: 42; 1 Cor 12:11)” (McRobert, cited by Horton 1994:152). Indicating that God’s Person and God’s conduct are intertwined, as well as in sync. I add that God’s existence is pure hence we can rely on His truth as a Being and through His actions.

Believers are called to be true to God. I believe that through the “*Shema of Deuteronomy 6*” (Erickson 2001:108) there is sharp focus placed on “monotheism”. The “deity of ... the Father, is scarcely in dispute”. It is widely accepted that “the Lord is one (Deut 6:4)” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:146). It must be noted that “the Father communicates Himself to His creatures through the Son as the Logos and in the Holy Spirit” (Berkhof 1996:97). I deduct that both God’s Person as well as God’s conduct (acts) is rooted in the fact that God is the Trinity. Therefore, I agree that “God’s holiness and goodness” definitely “go far beyond infinitely beyond ours” (Erickson 2001:88).

Ockham (cited by Hitchens 2007:26) is not convinced on the matter. He believes that “one should not ‘multiply entities beyond necessity’”. Yet, this view must, in my opinion, be rejected due to the fact that there is nothing in the earthly realm that can be built or compared to the essence,

characteristics and power of the Trinity. God is therefore, in my opinion, knowable through the Trinity and is discerned not only through the Bible but also through history.

Believers confess and live according to the knowing that “the Father” is “**uncreated**” the “Son” is “**uncreated**” and the “Holy Spirit” is “**uncreated**” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:145). It is refreshing to note that belief in the Trinity in no way calls for “an abandonment of reason” (McRoberts, cited by Horton 1994:145). The Trinity is described as being “perichoretic” in “nature” (Yong, cited by Lord 2012:121). In this light, God is knowable through His faithfulness as Father, Son and Spirit. I discern that God is knowable through each Person of the Trinity as well as His Conduct (acts) through all Three Persons.

Nelson and Wawire (2004:23); Berkhof (1996:156); Erickson (2001:122) and Railey and Aker (cited by Horton 1994:39) all agree that God is consistent in His appearance and companionship. God has revealed Himself in “all times and in all places” (Erickson 2001:41). This refers to God’s visibility in “nature, history and humanity”. Personally, I perceive all of the above to be linked in and through the Trinity. I believe that general revelation is employed as an introductory measure to God as the Creator of humankind.

There is consensus that general revelation and special revelation must be treated with equal respect. They both stem from God and are overlapping in nature. I perceive that both general revelation and special revelation indicate to humans that God is knowable. This “dynamic paradigm” is in place due to the “whole world” being “filled with the Spirit” (Clifton, cited by Lamp 2014: 75), and indicates to me personally successful collaboration and integration. To my mind, there exist a coherence between different aspects of God’s Person and God’s conduct.

God’s conduct is made known through special revelation, in His Word. I believe that no human can act in the same manner as God. the Trinity is described as “primary” whilst the “community” is described as “secondary” (Lord 2012:109). To my mind, the “past” refers to God’s image that was implanted in humankind; the “present” as the eschatological community of believers awaiting the return of Jesus Christ and the “future” as events to come as described in the Book of Revelation. To my mind, there are no external forces that dictate God’s Person or His Conduct (Romans 9:15).

Erickson (2001:119-154), Berkhof (1996:128-141), and Leithart (2017:35-46) have investigated if God can be separated from His actions. Like them, I discern that God = His actions. His actions (conduct) are illustrative who He is. I perceive the determining factor of how God “acts” (His conduct) to be what it is His will dictates. I believe that God is true to Himself and His will. I believe that God’s goodness makes Him constant, thus He is knowable. I believe that God’s greatness

surpasses all human understanding and makes Him mysterious. I perceive God to be more mysterious than knowable.

God's Conduct (acts) are significant in three ways:

- a) He created everything that is in existence today.
- b) He sent His only Son to save that which He created.
- c) He gave humankind the Book of Revelation.

In this study, it has been shown that God is good. God's Person is illustrated in different parts of the Trinity:

- a) God the Father created (Genesis 1).
- b) He did so by speaking His Word (God the Son) – the Saviour of the world (John 1:14).
- c) God the Holy Spirit inspired the Biblical writings.

This study has also indicated that God is great. God's greatness surpasses His goodness because His miracles cannot be replaced. The incarnation is to my mind, the greatest miracle of all time.

The presence of evil in the world does not in any way point to an "absent" God (Meister 2019:119), it illustrates the fact that the world is broken. To assume that God is "absent" (Meister 2019:119), in my opinion, points to the fact that a solid relationship with God is lacking in the life of the individual. Flew (2007:56) states that "the existence of evil" is a "separate issue" from the "question of God's existence".

I believe that God's special revelation is His revelation of Himself through history. I am of the opinion, that special revelation ministers to the believer in the form of revelation and inspiration. Pentecostal circles ascribe a steadfast relationship with God as a result of the focus on the experience of the believer. Special revelation in my opinion, comes alive through Jesus' incarnation. "Christ, the revelation of God ... is not continuous with history but discontinuous" (Berkhof 1996:122; Driscoll 2008:54). To my mind, Christ's divinity continuously unfolds in God's narrative, yet He does so in a discontinuous manner (the incarnation as unnatural and no one knows when He will return).

"God has provided a particular revelation of himself" (Erickson 2001:51) due to the fact that general revelation is not sufficient to explicate to humankind the Person and conduct (acts) of God. Special revelation is rooted in "a. Theopanies; b. Communications; c. Miracles" (Berkhof 1996:134-135). I believe that special revelation points to God's miracles in history. I report that

history is continuous, therefore the past, present and future of humankind, in my opinion, must be viewed as times in history that overlap within God's grand narrative.

I report, that the incarnation is a display of God's greatness and that it is a timeless event. I believe it was and is a continuous event that was introduced in a discontinuous manner. "The process of incarnation" as "a process that starts with the creation, and which progresses in the presence and is self-revealing of the Logos in the 'physical and historical world'" (Macquire, cited by Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:3).

Erickson (2001:172-173) lists various views of the "image" of God in humankind. These are the "substantive view"; the "relational view" and the "functional view". The "incarnation" establishes a 're-union between God and human beings'" (Van Niekerk & Niemandt 2019:2). I believe that the "image of God" within humankind is activated through salvation. As the "eschatological" community (Erickson 2001:384), we need to occupy ourselves as believers and as the "Church" with "1. Evangelism; 2. Edification; 3. Worship" (Joyner, cited by Horton 1994:117) in order to be an example to the world of the extent of impartation that God's Person and His Conduct has on believers.

7.4 God's "goodness" and God's "greatness"

When collaborating and working in unison, general revelation (Berkhof 1996:128-132) and special revelation (Berkhof 1996:133-137) render an apt description of God's Person, as well as God's conduct.

I experience general revelation to indicate the span of God's greatness as displayed in nature (the cosmos). I further experience special revelation to indicate the span of God's goodness. I make this statement due to the fact that humankind can to a certain degree imitate some traits of God's goodness through His image within them. Yet, humankind will never be able to attempt to achieve the greatness of God due to the fact that it is out of our reach. I believe that God's goodness (Erickson 2001:91-96), as well as God's greatness (Erickson 2001:98-104) both form a part of who He is. History has made it clear that God's infinite qualities will never be attained by humans.

God's goodness, in my opinion, works in our lives through His image, which I am convinced was activated by the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His work that followed here on earth. Through Jesus I experience God to be "present; perfect; Triune and personal" (Nelson & Wawire 2004:25). I perceive the Bible to be both a product of God's greatness (His Word) and God's goodness

(made available to humans in their language). I perceive that John 3:16 encapsulates both God's goodness and God's greatness. Through God's goodness I believe God's love flows for humankind and because of God's greatness, life and eternal life for that matter, has flowed forth. I perceive that God's goodness (as rooted in His love) and God's greatness (as rooted in His life-giving properties) are both found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

To my mind, God's Person and God's conduct are amalgamated in His image within humankind. I believe that the faith we are given (which is a spiritual ability) works in unison with our reasoning capabilities (which is a mental ability). I believe that God is faithful to humankind in all spheres of existence. I am of the opinion that believers experience religion through the image of God within them. "Most commonly the image of God is conceived of as humanity's power of reason" (Charette 2006:3). In our walk with God, the "Spirit of God" is "transforming us" into "His likeness" (Charette 2006:6).

I believe that God sent Jesus (John 3:16) to show His "love" to the world and that believers must, as an eschatological community share God's love with the world. The eschatological community "needs theology and morality" (Richie 2005:110) in order to facilitate and "attain interpersonal unity of various sorts in all forms of human society" (Grudem 1994:392). Negative influences on the eschatological community came in the form of the "Prosperity Gospel". Wonsuk Ma names this as the result of the "human cost of development" in humankind's search for "a better quality of life" (Ma 2013:231). On the other hand, a positive result surfaces in the notion that "human needs" such as "health and prosperity" have emerged from the "Prosperity Gospel" (Ma 2013:231-232) and have instilled "hope" once again.

Cross (2009:9) believes that the Pentecostal "distinctiveness" of the "experience" of the believer, creates a better "understanding" of God. This is due to the eschatological community that shows flexibility and that is willing to adapt to an ever-changing world. It is my opinion, that whatever religion is involved, the point will always be that God must receive all the honour and glory. "For Pentecostals, worship means" to have "fellowship" with the "Holy Spirit" within the Church setting (Alvarado 2012:139).

It is my belief that God requires of the eschatological community to show His love by partaking in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). The Church has been divided into "two mission emphases" and these are discerned as being "eternal life after death" and "present life before death" (Ma 2013:229). I believe this to be true due to various religious traditions and false teaching in the Churches that are rampant. The Bible teaches us that all of the aspects listed, "usher in the patterns and habits of the coming world" (Yong 2008:982).

To deal with these challenges within the eschatological community, Siang-Yong Tan prominently “describes an implicit and explicit integration model” that suggest a “blending of scriptural and psychological theories and methodologies” (Anderson Zuehlke & Zuehlke 2000:69). Ma (2013:243) recognizes an overlap between various religious traditions in the social context of being the Church of God. I suggest that when collaboration is attempted, it has to be done without compromising one’s morals and values.

I especially suggest collaboration between religious traditions due to fact that I perceive that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) was tasked to the entire Body of Christ and also because of the Covid-19 pandemic which has threatened the lives of many individuals across the globe.

To my mind, God is knowable individually to the believer through His image and God is also knowable through the practices and social actions of the eschatological community. I believe that humans are a product of God’s life and His life-giving capabilities (God created humankind). Similarly, the Church is also a product of God’s life and manifestation through Jesus Christ (the Saviour of the world). I further believe that the eschatological community is a product of the movement of the Holy Spirit since the Day of Pentecost. I experience that humans are a product of God’s life whilst likewise eternal life is a product and demonstration of God’s ultimate power. In my frame of reference, all living beings, in the universe are intertwined via the life that God gives, and it is the one aspect that all humans have in common. God is knowable to me because through Him we are united as the human race. The greatness of God is, in my opinion, rooted in the fact that He created life, as well as eternal life, and that He has given humans access to this experience of life and eternal life through His image that resides within them.

God’s continual involvement” is described as “life-giving, life-sustaining, and life-restoring” (Ma 2013:228). To theologians the “God’s something” refers to God’s image, to which Wonsuk Ma adds “as Spirit-bearers” this is the beginning of our Christian life and missionary call” (Ma 2013:228). I believe that God’s image, coupled with God’s life within us presents believers with a meaning for existence and equips believers for their task as stewards of the kingdom of God.

I admonish humans to remember that human life is secondary to God’s life and His perfect existence. I believe that the image of God gives humans the ability to mimic God’s goodness to a certain extent. To my mind, “God’s faithfulness” refers to “God’s promises”. “God’s freedom” thus refers to “God’s freedom to choose how and when and whether to act” (Knight 1993:65). My personal view is that God’s faithfulness refers to God’s goodness and kindness. God’s freedom, on the other hand, refers to God’s greatness in my opinion. I make this statement because I believe that no being in the universe will ever be as free and as powerful as God. Humans have the capacity to love and enjoy life but never to God’s extent.

I believe that through actions of faith God becomes knowable to the believer on a spiritual level. “Pentecostals and charismatics” put “focus” on “divine intervention and miracles” and therefore impact the “discussion between theology and science” (Yong 2008:961). The historical conduct of humankind has taught us that any new movement, theory or approach is in danger of inviting criticism. D-Davidson (2013:61) points to this as “inevitable”.

God is knowable, in my opinion, because He challenges manmade doctrines²² and urges individuals to discover a greater revelation²³ of Him. I perceive the gift of the Holy Spirit to be a sign of “spiritual maturity” (D-Davidson 2013:61) but I do not think a believer has the right to think of himself/herself as having attained an elevated spirituality. The primary role of the Spirit is to “empower” believers (D-Davidson 2013:63). Some refer to these experiences as “hallucinations” (D-Davidson 2013:180). Yet, Pentecostals give “emotive experiences” a “central role” in “their relationship with God” (Cely 2019:195).

I find God to be knowable because life in itself is a miracle and is expressive of the divine nature of God and to me that points to the greatness of God. To my mind, where miracles take place and are witnessed²⁴, God’s presence resides. I believe that God’s greatness is at His disposal only. Therefore, God’s goodness (aspects thereof) can be attained to a certain degree through God’s image, but His greatness is unique to Himself (He is the only infinite Being in the universe).

I am of the opinion that Pentecostalism’s focus on experience has facilitated a platform where the believers’ perception of life with God has been adjusted to an applicable tool which must be used to the glory of God for the expansion of His kingdom. I believe that God’s goodness and greatness play a vital role in the life of the believer. In the love and life of the Pentecostal believer there are certain actions²⁵ that illustrate a “pre-understanding that they are participants in God’s unfolding drama” (Petersen 2013:52). God’s goodness is referred to in our contemporary times as “creation care” (Lamp 2014:65), whilst God’s greatness, even amidst the huge technological advancements through science, stand unmatched. I agree with Ma that we live life and we do this “together in love: For a common future” (Ma 2013:226). God is knowable because, to my mind, He has birthed

²² <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=agRu8SZRMME>.

²³ Matthew 10: 28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (NKJV)

²⁴ In Sept 2011 I prayed for a brain cancer patient named Thomas Arnoldus Horn Born 26 June 1988 and deceased 5 Sept 2011 “Tommy” in CANSA Care Polokwane . I felt the Lord urging me on to pray for clarity of his mind in order to have a window to forgive someone. I prayed and Tommy had clarity of speech and mind for 10 minutes in which he successfully forgave his wife for cheating on him with his best friend. We prayed, and I led him to the Lord before he became delusional again. He passed away later that night. He was 23 years old. God’s presence was tangible in the room as this miracle occurred.

²⁵ The Great Commission is a task with eternal consequences in the kingdom of God (Matthew 28:16-20).

a subconscious longing within humankind to “unite”. I have witnessed the anointing of the Lord bringing peace amongst the worst of enemies. I believe this is not a once-off occurrence.

7.5 God’s Transcendence and Immanence

From my own perspective, the transcendence of God signifies the macro cosmos (which is found in general creation), whilst the immanence of God is found in micro cosmos (which I perceive to be the human being). This I perceive to be due to the fact that God created the universe and the earth (macro) before creating its inhabitants (micro). God’s image to my mind, is the catalyst to assisting the believer in fulfilling his/her God-given purpose.

To my mind, through our physical senses we can experience God in creation (which is governed by natural laws) and through His Spirit we can experience God within ourselves (with our spiritual senses). There are also physiological laws at work within the human body that form a part of human existence and these have an effect on our emotions and beliefs. I believe that both macro (body in relation to creation, which is governed by natural laws) and our micro (soul/spirit in relation to our spiritual humanness) sides of existence are connected to God.

According to the Bible, our bodies are a temporary dwelling (2 Cor 5:1) and are not the only thing that makes us human. The humans’ reasoning capabilities separate it (as a race) from the rest of creation. I am of the opinion that collaboration takes place between our humanness and the Holy Spirit as natural laws and physiological laws interact in an external and internal manner. Although we exist in a physical body, the spirit/soul part of us will live on for all eternity (Acts 17:28).

Our existence is a unique combination of actions and reactions to external (creation – human body) and the internal (image of God soul/spirit). God is both transcendent and immanent simultaneously, due to the fact that we need Him to be present in all aspects of our existence. Hence my expressed opinion that science and religion must collaborate in a similar fashion that faith and reason do. Both God’s transcendence and His immanence teach humankind that He exists and that His power knows no boundaries. God’s “omnipotence” as originated from “scientific circles” and “philosophies” still have to be “digested theologically” (Du Toit 2013:58).

I believe that transcendence and immanence need to be studied in unison because both of the aspects of God are intertwined. God’s existence is so magnificent and unique that the “hypothesis” of “God cannot be verified scientifically” (Benz 2019:16). We discern that “religious perceptions” rely on “emotions and feelings” and are therefore “non-scientific because they are

not objective” (Benz 2019:16). Be that as it may, both general science and theological research rely on theory-making and work on the same principle, yet make use of different forms of data.

God is knowable, to my mind both through what is perceived in creation, as well as that which is revealed through the Holy Spirit. I believe that the macro view of reality is delivered through general revelation in the cosmos (creation) and which is a display of God’s transcendence. The micro view of reality, is in my opinion, delivered through special revelation within the human being (who carries the “image” of God) and which is a display of God’s immanence.

I perceive that a lack of collaboration between scientific fields have kept humankind from discovering all there is to discover regarding the transcendence and immanence of God. Yong (2008:961-962) agrees that “contributions” could be “gained” through combined discussions on certain topics. Muller (2017:472) discerns a “necessary relation between the causal factors studied in the experiments”. Stephens (2011:455) finds an overlap between “the present and the new creation to come”. He finds “meaning” in the “question of continuity and discontinuity” (Stephens 2011:455).

To my mind, the continuity of God signifies God’s knowability (He is stable). God is perceived as being dependable through His creation (general revelation). The discontinuity of God signifies God’s mysterious side (divine intervention). To my mind, special revelation is a display of His immanence (i.e. miracles; and mighty acts of intervention). It would, in my opinion, be unwise to limit God’s transcendence and immanence only to the spheres of general revelation (creation) and special revelation (deep inner knowing). God’s goodness is to my mind connected to God’s special revelation through His image. God’s greatness is to my mind connected to God’s unmatched power as history has shown that miracles can happen in nature and can often not be explained by religion (theology/faith) or by science (human reason).

Not only, in my opinion is God’s transcendence and immanence simultaneous, but they overlap and integrate and collaborate according to what God’s will dictates in a specific moment/situation. I believe that our earthly existence will end and we will as finite beings move into an eternal state of being but we must remember that God’s transcendence and immanence are in no way affected by aspects and stages of our existence. I find that God’s greatness (i.e. transcendence) outweighs His goodness (i.e. immanence), which we temporarily experience during our life here on earth. I believe that Yahweh will “remain committed to the fulfilment of his creation project” (Stephens 2011:456), which I do not perceive to be understood fully by humankind.

The paradoxical nature of God’s existence only strengthens my belief that although He is knowable and good, even more so He is mysterious and great. The “many-sidedness” of the

“majesty of God” which could “guide the church away” from “conceptions” that inevitably “came short of the fullness of the biblical God” (Duby 2013:214). Although scholars from various scientific fields can formulate theories and make predictions, all their knowledge will in my opinion amount to nothing when we are one day confronted with the true greatness of God. Until then, I believe human studies are all but speculation.

The “many-sidedness” of God leads me to believe that whilst God is good, He is also great and whilst He is transcendent, He is also immanent. There is no limit to where He can be and what He can do in any given moment. In our contemporary time, “the Church is called to share a timeless message with a changing world (Mt. 28: 16-20; Mk 16: 15-16)” (Johnson 2014:108).

Human beings can only describe what they sense, experience, formulae and believe they know: ultimately, we will never discern God’s majestic and mysterious existence. It simply cannot be done. Only God knows all truth. 1 Corinthians 2:10 teaches that “The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God...” (NKJV). Yet, God has blessed humankind with “science and technology” that have “shaped our lives” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). “Physical reality” falls short due to the fact that it “cannot answer” most “questions of meaning” and “religion may tell us about meaning” but if it is not used within “context” it might “not be relevant” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2).

I believe that both “science and faith” investigates “immanence” and “transcendence” (Conradie and Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:2). I add that although humans are in effect religious beings, they are scientific products of God’s creative and supernatural exploits. Transcendence and immanence cannot be clearly delineated because it cannot be established where the one ends and the other begins. “Experiential realism” is a “string” where the “ultimate Source” is classified as the “beginning” and “an ultimate destiny” is classified as “the end” (Nürnbergger, cited by Bentley 2018:3). To my mind, transcendence would therefore be eternal, whilst immanence (through God’s image) as far as I discern would be temporary in the sense that it expires/changes into another phenomenon at the end of time as we know it. Our earthly way of existence will change form at some point but God’s existence will forever be the same.

God is both transcendent (mysterious) and immanent (knowable). To my mind, God was transcendent (mysterious) before He became immanent (knowable through Jesus Christ). God revealed Himself to humankind first through His transcendence (i.e. general revelation in creation, Psalm 19) before He revealed Himself to humankind through His immanence (i.e. special revelation, His image in humankind and in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; Colossians 1:15). God is therefore, to my mind, knowable through His Spirit who indwells (immanence) but even more so, He is mysterious because He is transcendent and we cannot

pinpoint His location or control Him. "God is transcendent in that God is above the created order..." (Andrews 2013:28).

7.6 Is God knowable?

From a scientific perspective, God's presence has been in one instance described as a manifestation of the "God module" in the "brain" of the "human" (Albright 2000:735). This same presence of God also described as the "God's something" and is explained as being the "image" of God in humans (Ma 2013:228). The image of God has further been likened to human reason i.e. "humanity's power of reason" (Charette 2006:6).

I deduct from my religious perspective that if God is present in this inherent manner, God is most likely knowable. The "human brain" can be described as the platform that houses the "God module" (Albright 2000:735). The "human brain" is described as being complex and contains an intricate system of "wiring" which differs from "person to person". That being said, it is noteworthy to discern that the "universe" is also "undeniably complex" (Albright 2000:735) and leads me to believe that their design is connected and originated from the same Source (God).

We must take care to remember that "a healthy science – theology dialogue is heavily dependent on both the quality of the science and the quality of theological thinking" (Peterson 2000:881). I perceive that God is knowable through the psychological processes that He implanted in all of humankind. I believe that all fields of science amalgamate to give information regarding the knowability of God. From my theological perspective, "religion provide various ways of enhancing perceptions about the proximity of God" (Cassidy & Shaver 2016:941). I perceive that an integration of what we experience in our hearts (faith) and that which we perceive with our brain (reason) is at the order of the day.

I note that although the Western and Eastern conceptions on religious matters differ greatly from each other, there is not ultimate way of knowing which cultures, beliefs and traditions are correct. Both these positions "identify" the "knowledge" that they derive with "rational certainty" (Yannaras, cited by Louth 2005:302). This I ascribe to the fact that humans are bound to employ the function of their reasoning capabilities especially when approaching religious matters which they believe should make sense. I have therefore expressed my opinion that faith and reason must collaborate in the mind of the believer in the search of the knowability of God. Practising faith is mostly approached from a theological perspective whilst reason is mostly approached from a scientific perspective. To my mind, as bearers of the image of God we are all scientists (believers as well as unbelievers) who employ different forms of data in our search to know God.

Unfortunately, it is noted that “God, at least as an active agent” has been “excluded” altogether from “today’s scientific worldview” and this has caused a “gulf” between “godless science” and “believers in God’s active presence in the world” which some believe to be “unbridgeable” (Farland 2008:483). Yet, I do not agree with this view as I am convinced that theology is indeed a science in its own right. I add that “being unscientific is not equivalent to being false” (Farland 2008:484). I believe that the human brain is intricately balanced and gives rise to a host of capabilities in the individual. As there are different types of personalities that reside within individuals, so also there are various approaches to learning and development within the human race. Naturally, the human race is very complex and there resides various forms of focus and perspective within the individual.

To my mind, “perspective is everything!” (Einstein, cited by Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:3). Einstein’s perspective was that the phenomenon of “relating” exists as it is a “unifying, universal formula for creation” and in essence suggests an “overlapping without merging” (Berenson & Carkhuff 2001:3). To my mind, this is another way of describing the act of collaboration which I deem possible between general science and theology.

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only negatively influenced the world in general, but has, in my opinion, has delivered a hard blow specifically to the Church. Coupled with the shifts in the world that are taking place at the moment, the advancement of technology has placed even more pressure on the human race. One imminent threat that I perceive lies in transhumanism and I believe that this enhancement of the human race was born out of the “rational fear of death” within humankind and has inevitably birthed “longings for immortality” (Ahrens Dorf 2000:579). This is due to the fact that “few of us want to die” (Herzfeld 2017:285). From my religious point of view, I agree that “religion and philosophy are no longer alone in addressing the question of death” (Herzfeld 2017:286). In effect, science is doing the same type of research as theologians although their approach to the problem of death is different.

Theologically, scholars do research regarding matters of salvation and deliverance in order to prepare for the inevitable death that awaits all human beings. Yet, science aims to “overcome illness, aging and ultimately death” (Herzfeld 2017:286). I perceive that various aspects of God becomes knowable through dynamic research platforms. In my opinion, different approaches have been employed in order to understand the knowability of God due to the inherent knowing of the human mind that there exist, anomalies and the phenomenon of chance in the universe which are in fact not within the control of either human science or theology. “Scientific” accounts of existence give chance a central role” (Bartholomew 2004:1).

The question if “God is knowable” is “neither settled nor outworn” (Ten Broeke 2014:372). To my mind, miracles are natural laws that are bent and stretched in order to make God’s will come to pass. The supernatural point to the greatness of God and will always leave humankind with questions regarding how these events manifested. The goodness of God can be seen in the lives of humankind on a daily basis as He upholds the universe and cares for all that He created.

“Modal basics” does not allow for the incarnation to be true because the phrase “can” might not be associated with the incarnation, because it is not “necessarily contingent, or possibly” true (Leftow 2012:29). Where some have believed that humankind is only “related to God” by way of “reason” (Aquinas, cited by Williams 1969:1) yet, theologically I believe that not only is reason involved but also faith. I perceive that God is knowable through both reason as well as faith.

I note that collaboration is possible due to the fact that as a human race: We are all human; we have the same physical needs; we all live within a temporary body; we all have a body as well as a soul/spirit. To claim that God is only knowable through science or theology would be to insult God as the ultimate Being that has ever existed. The God that we are investigating is not limited to one field of research and as such must, in my opinion, not be investigated in isolation. In my opinion God is knowable through any and all phenomena in the universe. He is known through the “complex systems of the brain” (Albright 2000:735) which I deem to be through His Immanence, and He is also knowable through the magnificence of the “undeniably complex ... universe” (Albright 2000:735) that He created, which I deem to be a display of His transcendence.

To my mind, God is knowable through all platforms of research. Yet, I perceive that God’s greatness and mysterious Being, as well as His existence is not within the grasp of either human faith or reason. Therefore, God, to my mind, is always going to be more mysterious than knowable because He is God and there is none other like Him.

Humankind can make “epistemological” and “semantic” deductions which will lead them to “true statements about reality” (Moore 2003:1) yet, there will always be more questions that need to be answered and thus, the search continues. To my mind, God is not influenced by anything or anyone outside of Himself. God is completely free and able to shape reality according to His will. God is good and God is great simultaneously. In my opinion, God’s greatness overshadows His goodness. God as an infinite Being is, in my opinion, more mysterious than knowable.

7.7 Conclusion

The research question of this study focused on the question of whether God is knowable. The answer then would be both yes and no. Some aspects of God are knowable (that which He reveals to humankind) and which we can understand in our earthly existence. God is also mysterious because human beings will never be able to completely understand Him (His nature is infinite).

How is God knowable? I believe that God is knowable through creation, which communicates His existence through general revelation, as well as through His image within humankind which I connect to special revelation. I believe that God is knowable through His Word, which I perceive is inspired and inerrant.

Why is God knowable? I believe He is knowable because He makes Himself knowable through the universe so as to display His majestic and infinite nature. When is God knowable? He has always been knowable, to my mind, and He will continue to be known (to a certain degree of course).

General revelation, which I connect with nature (creation) shows humans that there is a God. Special revelation, in my opinion, relates to the Bible; Holy Spirit and God's image within humankind which facilitates a relationship with God. God's Person is connected to general revelation (a display of who God is, the Giver of life to the natural world). God's conduct (acts) are connected to special revelation (displays of God illustrate who He is; God gives eternal life through Jesus).

God's transcendence is connected to creation and thus includes general revelation. God's immanence, on the other hand, is connected to His image within human beings and is connected further to special revelation. God's transcendence is also connected to God's greatness (His mighty supernatural acts in nature and through history), which is unattainable and inexplicable to humankind. God's immanence is also connected to God's goodness and through His image we can attain some of His attributes to a certain degree.

Is God knowable? Yes, God is knowable (to a certain degree) through the collaboration of faith and reason, as well as science and theology. Is God always knowable? No, because humankind is limited and finite, whilst God is unlimited and infinite.

Why did humans start to search for the knowability of God in the first place? I believe that is because of their fear of anomalies and chance; our fear of death and our fear of the unknown. We should remember however that an individual created in the image of God, in my opinion, is more than the sum of his/her capabilities and fears (1 Corinthians 15:56; 1 John 4: 18; Romans

8: 31-39). God's greatness overshadows in my personal opinion God's goodness and God's goodness will always be constant.

The fact remains that through God there are supernatural events that manifest in the natural world that a) we cannot predict; b) we cannot time; and c) we can only accept and deal with. This, in my opinion, is a display of God's greatness. It is that which puts God far above the heavens, the earth and the knowledge of humankind.

To my mind, science and theology both rely on theory-making. In the scientific realm, theories are made through calculations and formulas in order to predict a certain outcome. Yet, to my mind, in the theological field of science prophecy is utilized to do just that – to predict the future. Both of these fields of science are left to the anomalies of the universe as there always exists a chance that a theory might not work out the way it was intended to due to the fact that there exists a supernatural side to the universe. That in itself proves that God is supernatural and thus more great than good in my opinion.

Matthew 24:36 teaches that “no one knows the hour” only God the Father knows when Jesus will come back. This illustrates to me that God is ultimately more great than good, more mysterious than knowable.

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