



God's holiness: A comparative dialogue between Reformed Christianity and Sunni Islam

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any other module for which I have gained credit. I have acknowledged all other sources used in the research of this paper.

Signed: Shamoun Khagan

Date: 11 August 2021

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ABSTRACT

The church's missions to the Muslim community has become predictable. When engaging with the Muslim community the age old tactic has either been to befriend the Muslim and hope that he/she will see the truth through slow and subtle exposure to the biblical Christ, or to do tract drives, whereby the Christian missionary hands out little tracts with Christian messages, hoping to initiate conversations or that in the private time the Muslim would read the tract. Not only has the Christian church been predictable in its methods or approach to the Muslim community when in missions, but has also been predictable to a large extent in the topics that are spoken about with the Muslim community. Is Jesus God? Is the Bible corrupt and has it been changed? Does the Bible teach the doctrine of the Trinity? Does the doctrine of the Trinity make sense? And so, due to the repetitive nature of methods and conversation topics the church has used over decades and even centuries when engaging the Muslim community, the Muslim community now stands prepared and educated on how to respond to and deal with the Christian missionary. This has then also occurred within the context of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland.

Therefore, in light of the steady growth of the Muslim community, this dissertation provides an additional point of contact when engaging the Sunni Muslim community. This study endeavours to strengthen the Christian church's missions initiatives, specifically in the area of apologetics and elenctics. This was achieved by exploring the theological concept of the *holiness of God* in and from two perspectives, namely: Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. The findings reveal that when properly engaging the doctrine of God comparatively in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity and specifically the doctrine of God's holiness, Reformed Christianity displays a much stronger case for God than Sunni Islam. It is then on this theological strength that the researcher aims to boost the Christian church's missions initiative.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction & Background

In Terdiman (2013), a Muslim scholar wrote an article informing readers about the history, development, current state, and future possibilities for the Muslim community in Swaziland. Terdiman (2013) reports that Islam has grown exponentially in the country and plans to further its religious cause within the nation. Although not the primary religion of Swaziland, Terdiman (2013) dates its first appearance in the country to the year 1963. Since then, the Islamic population has increased significantly, and its influence has been far felt (Terdiman 2013). The researcher has also experienced increased interaction with the religion of Islam in the country of Swaziland. Due to this burgeoning reality, the church is faced with the theological challenge of defending its doctrinal integrity, while missionally engaging with the Muslim community.

Therefore, since all theistic religions begin with the presupposition that God exists, Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity too share this presupposition. Thus, it is the view of the researcher that one of the most meaningful points of missional engagement a Christian can make with a Muslim is on the topic of God, and more specifically, on the topic of *God's holiness*. The reason the researcher views the topic of God's holiness as one holding significant weight in missions is due to its salvific impact. How one understands the doctrine of God's holiness is how one relates, and therefore, experiences God. In the discussion between Christians and Muslims, it is then crucial to identify that both religions define and understand God's holiness in different ways. This will be the focus of this study.

From the Reformed Christian perspective, Berkhof (1941:73) discusses the nature of God's holiness to not simply be a moral attribute, but that which extends beyond all moral attributes of God "such as love, grace and mercy". It is an attribute that when negatively studied presents itself to be that by which God cannot be present, nor have any communion with any form with sin. Furthermore, due to the negative implication of God's holiness, the positive idea of God's holiness is impacted; since God abhors sin and cannot have communion with anything involving sin, therefore He positively requires absolute perfection and purity within His environment as a prerequisite to Him having communion (Berkhof 1941:74). Lastly, from the Reformed Christian perspective, God's holiness must be understood to be that which compels God to perfectly conform to His own attributes at all times (Bridges 2006:24). It is due to God's absolute self-conformity that then leads to the coming and the dying of Christ for the perfect appeasement

of God's wrath against sin and the display of God's perfect love for the elect sinners, thus it is to no surprise that Berkhof (1941:74) recognises Christ as the greatest and the perfect demonstration of God's holiness. God is holy and therefore unable to entertain nor be in the presence of sin. God is a righteous judge, thus He both wraths against sin and punishes it. God is love and mercy, and therefore one who cannot be anything else besides gracious to sinners. It is in the view of the Reformed Christian perspective that God does not abandon justice over mercy, or vice versa, at any time, but fulfils all personal attributes simultaneously in the person of Christ due to the nature of His holiness.

On the other hand, the Sunni Muslim, while agreeing with some of what the Reformed perspective has to say on the issue of God's holiness, would end the discussion of the term "God's holiness" at that which points to God's purity and strength over creation (ed. Talal 2007:660, 665). Moreover, Shakfeh (2009) ascribes transcendence to God's holiness. Shakfeh (2009) further understands God's transcendence to be that which keeps Him above everything at all times. God is above intellect, sight, hearing, space, time, imperfection, etc. (Shakfeh 2009). Talal (2007) and Shekfeh (2009) agree with one another in their understanding of God's holiness, that He is pure, above all, and strong above all. It is an attribute that identifies God as one who is a perfectly moral being who has no weaknesses within Himself. Furthermore, Saleh (2011:185) gives a brief definition of the term "Al-Quddus" (The Holy), and in agreement with Talal (2007) and Shakfeh (2009), Saleh (2011) adds to the language in defining the concept of God's holiness as one who is blemishless.

Both religious systems identify God as being holy, the difference in understanding is on how God Himself relates with His own holiness. From the Reformed Christian perspective, God is one who has accomplished His justice and satisfied His wrath, whilst simultaneously showing mercy in the person and work of Christ. Therefore, the Reformed Christian perspective sees God's holiness as a unique attribute that is above other attributes, in that it compels God to always perfectly conform to His own attributes. On the other hand, the Muslim discussion on God's holiness seems to be devoid of how God regulates and functions within His moral attributes, and points one to God's absoluteness over creation. The Muslim sees God as one that is above all things, thus seemingly God's holiness is something by which God deals with humanity. It is due to the identified difference in perspective between the two religious systems that has drawn the researcher to conduct a comparative discussion in order to fill the knowledge gap for the benefit of the Christian church.

1.2 The Research Problem & Research Questions

The focus of this enquiry is the holiness of God. After extensive investigation, the researcher discovered multiple works discussing God and His attributes amongst Muslim and Christian scholars. Scholars such as Ali (2016), Gorder (2003), Dodds (2019), among others, have addressed the issue of God's nature. However, what has gripped the researcher's attention is the lack of discussion specifically on God's holiness done in comparison between Christianity and Islam. The discussion on the topic is arbitrary and lacks specific academic focus.

In light of the knowledge gap discovered in a comparative discussion done specifically on God's holiness in Islam and Christianity, the question that needs to be answered is: How can a comparative dialogue on God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity apologetically and missionally strengthen the church? This is the main problem of the research.

The subsidiary research questions of this study were:

- 1) How does Reformed Christianity and Sunni Islam define and understand the doctrine of God's holiness?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences between the Sunni Islamic view and the Reformed Christian view of God's holiness?
- 3) What are the implications for missions of having a proper understanding of God's holiness?
- 4) How to engage Sunni Muslims using the comparative study of God's holiness?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.3.1. Aim

The aim of this study was to comparatively study the doctrine of God's holiness from the perspectives of Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity, in order to strengthen and equip the church toward apologetics and missions amongst the Sunni Muslims in Swaziland.

1.3.2. Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) Define the doctrine of God's holiness from a Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian/biblical perspective.
- 2) Evaluate and identify similarities and differences between Reformed Christianity and Sunni Islam when discussing the doctrine of God's holiness.

- 3) Inform the church of the importance of this study on God's holiness from a Reformed perspective for evangelism.
- 4) Apologetically equip the church for a dialogue with Sunni Muslims.

1.4 Central Theoretical Argument

The central theoretical argument of this dissertation rests upon an evaluative study done on the doctrine of God's holiness in order that differences and similarities between the two positions may be clarified and employed to apologetically strengthen the church. The study may also inform the church of the Islamic perspective on the main topic, thus assisting the church in developing an effective method when missionally engaging the Sunni Muslim.

1.5 Methodology

After having searched the online library at North-West University (NWU), the researcher discovered a gap in the body of knowledge on God's holiness. The research gap is not so much in the independent study of the topic in each religion (Sunni Islam and reformed Christianity), but rather in the comparative study on the topic. Furthermore, the researcher also failed to find a clear comparative discussion on the topic outside the NWU library. Identification of this research gap prompted the researcher to explore this topic further.

A comparative literary analysis was employed to answer the research question. Available literature from Muslim and Reformed Christian authors were consulted to represent and define their own position. A comparison was then made of the differences between the two positions. These insights helped the researcher answer the problem question using the data gathered from the comparative study.

This is a missiological study, conducted from the Reformed perspective that takes the Bible as the source of all theological truth, as sufficient, and understands the Bible as the only Word of God that must be held to. Since the primary objective of the study is to strengthen the church in defending its doctrinal integrity and be equipped for missions to the Sunni Muslims in Swaziland, this study therefore must be understood as missiological. Furthermore, since it is true that the biblical God is a God with a mission, therefore "All human mission, in this perspective, is seen as a participation in and extension of this divine sending" (Wright 2006:63).

While the study is in essence missiological, it employed elenctics and an apologetical perspective in order to substantiate the central theoretical argument. The importance of

elenctics and apologetics in missions is found in the very purpose of biblical missions. From the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20, which explain the purpose of missions, to the words of Paul in Romans 10:9-17, which clarify the characteristics of missions, it then becomes clear that elenctics and apologetics functions as a part of biblical missions (Bavink 1960:232).

The following methods were used to answer the various research questions:

- 1) In order to define the concept of *God's holiness* from a Sunni Islamic and the Reformed Christian perspective, a literary study was conducted. The research defined the dedicated concept using literature from each faith, and allowed each faith to determine its theology on the doctrine of God's holiness. The researcher mainly used Islamic theologians to define the doctrine from a Sunni Islamic perspective. Islamic Tafsir's played a supplementary role in constructing a definition of God's holiness from the Islamic perspective. When defining the doctrine of God's holiness from a Reformed Christian perspective, the researcher primarily focused on the viewpoints of two Dutch Reformed scholars: Herman Bavinck (2004) and Louis Berkhof (1941). The use of Reformed commentaries, such as John Calvin (n.d) and Matthew Henry (ed. Uyl 2012), were supplementary to the works of the mentioned Dutch Reformed theologians in defining God's holiness. In addition to the mentioned Dutch Reformed theologians, the researcher also used Stephen Charnock (2001) to provide an in-depth understanding of the doctrine of God's holiness. The reason for the selected theologians is the depth and the length in which these theologians discuss the doctrine of God's holiness. The researcher found a satisfactory amount of data on the works of the above-mentioned theologians.
- 2) To explore the *similarities* and *differences* in the doctrine of God's holiness between Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity, Islamic Scholars and Reformed theologians played a major role (al-Jalalayn, John Calvin, Matthew Henry, to name a few.).
- 3) The results of gaining a proper understanding of the biblical notion of God's holiness using journal articles were explained. Authors such as Wilson in *Doctrine and Holiness* discusses the importance of learning and having a proper language and understanding of the biblical notion of God's holiness. In addition, Armstrong (1995) explores the biblical emphasis of God's holiness in the article What Makes God So Totally Different? This article helps the reader develop a high regard for God's holiness whilst creating a sense of urgency to learn about this concept.
- 4) In order to develop a missional strategy for Muslims using the doctrine of God's holiness, the researcher conducted a literary study of missiological works with a focus on the *missio Dei*. The researcher proposed to develop a synergism between the *missio Dei* and the doctrine of God's holiness in order to use the study for the purpose of missions amongst Sunni Muslims.

- 5) The resources that were used to answer the main research question and the subsidiary research questions were gathered through local libraries, online journals, NWU's online library, and through local bookstores.

All the mentioned avenues are the main sources used for conducting this research.

1.6 Clarification of Key Concepts

This section defines the key concepts used in this study.

1.6.1 Holiness

The term “holiness” is used to discuss the character of God from two perspectives, namely: Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. Both perspectives identify the term to mean God as being transcendent and pure. And both perspectives will agree with Elwell’s (ed. 2001:561) definition of God’s holiness as being “par excellence”. It is a term that refers not only to something that is greater than all, but also adds divinity to the object of discussion. “In the New Testament, the Greek word *hagiasmos* means ‘holiness’ and denotes ‘separation from everything ceremonially impure’” (Carpenter & Comfort 2000). In the Old Testament, the term “holiness”, when discussing the character of God, identifies Him as being separate. God is seen as a being who separates Himself from any and all uncleanness (ed. Elwell 1988). Holiness is a communicable attribute of God which speaks on the nature of God (ed. Elwell 1988).

1.6.2 Tafsir

The *Tafsir* is an exegetical work done on the Quran. This commentary was used to guide the researcher in discovering the Sunni Islamic perspective on the doctrine of God’s holiness (Saleh 2011).

1.6.3 Apologetics

The term “apologetics” refers to an attempt a Christian makes to give a persuasive argument to all contemporary individuals. The target audience of apologetics are the believers of the Christian faith as well as unbelievers. For both these audiences, apologetics fulfils the role of forming as well as strengthening one’s faith (ed. Elwell 2001:82).

1.6.4 Reformed

In this study, the term “Reformed” is used to identify a specific Christian theology which is appealed to when approaching the subject matter. Reformed theology is briefly defined as a “theological tradition that emerged from the work of John Calvin ... and other reformers such

as Huldrych Zwingli ... and Heinrich Bullinger ..., in contrast to Lutheran theology. Key aspects include God's initiative in salvation, and election, and union with Christ" (McKim 1996:234). Since Reformed dogma remains diversified, the study will primarily focus on "Dutch Reformed" theology (this is not a subscription to the denomination, but to the theological tradition). The study will reflect on the viewpoints of primary Dutch Reformed theologians, such as Herman Bavink (2004) and Louis Berkhof (1941), to answer the research question of the study.

1.6.5 Sunni

Chancellor (in eds. Moreau, Netland & Engen 2000:918) defines the term "Sunni", firstly, by pointing out that from amongst the two major Muslim divisions, the Sunni's are a majority, and the Shiites are a minority. Secondly, Sunni's are an Islamic group that hold to the Sunnah's (the traditions of the prophet Muhammad). Thirdly, this is a specific Islamic group that holds firmly to the belief that the first chief successors and rulers of the Islamic community (Caliph) after the prophet Muhammad were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali. Lastly, Chancellor (in eds. Moreau et al., 2000) identifies the specific traditions that the Sunni's adhere to: Muhammad as the ultimate example for Muslim living, Quran and Hadith as the scripture, the Five Pillars of Islam as necessary Islamic practice, and the Law of Allah as the guide for human activity on earth.

1.6.6 Elenctics

When defining "elenctics" and its practice, Bavink (1960) assists the researcher by clarifying two related aspects. Bavink (1960:226) states that, "[I]ts primary meaning refers to the conviction and unmasking of sin, and to the call to responsibility". Thus, the researcher understands elenctics to be a practice that confronts the sin of humankind manifested, which seeks to further undermine the sovereignty of God. Moreover, elenctics then calls the individual to right standing with God in Christ. In this study, elenctics plays a crucial role as it approaches the theology of Sunni Islam on the doctrine of God's holiness.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

The study used a comparative literary style in order to answer the main research question. Using this method of study, the researcher avoided biases when conducting the comparative discussion between Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. Since the study is a comparative

literary analysis that is qualitative in nature, there are no potential risk factors. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from NWU.

1.8 Data Collection

Data was collected from books, journal articles, and reliable Internet sources. The researcher consulted books on systematic theology and the Trinity, as well as journal articles and Internet sources on the subject matter. The researcher made use of the Galaxie website¹ for information, and also reflected on other scholarly works on the topic. The data that was collected for analysis was contextually relevant.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

This study consisted of the following five chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction & Background

Chapter 2: Defining and discussing the theology of God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity

Chapter 3: God's holiness: A comparative dialogue between Reformed Christianity and Sunni Islam

Chapter 4: Utilising the knowledge of God's holiness in Christian missiology

Chapter 5: Summary & Conclusion

1.10 Conclusion

This introductory chapter described the topic under investigation that focused on God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity, and presented the main elements of the research process, namely: Introduction and background; description of the research problem; research questions, aim and objectives; general theoretical argument; methodology; clarification of key concepts; ethical considerations; data collection; and outline of the forthcoming chapters. A

¹ Galaxie Software Electronic Publishing. Available at: <https://www.galaxie.com/>

brief conclusion summarised the chapter. The following chapter presents a discussion on the theology of God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING AND DISCUSSING THE THEOLOGY OF GOD’S HOLINESS IN SUNNI ISLAM AND REFORMED CHRISTIANITY

2.1 Introduction

It is a matter of common knowledge that the primary difference between Islamic theology and Christian theology is their *view on God*. Abdul-Rahman (2007:113) discusses the importance of viewing God as one in being and in person (Tawheed)². Abdul-Rahman (2007:113) stresses the point that rejecting the doctrine of God’s unity is an act damnable by eternal punishment in hell. On the other hand, Calvin, a sixteenth century reformer, notes that true knowledge of God is in knowing that He exists in three persons (Calvin 2008:67). The difference between Islamic theology and Christian theology is that God is not limited to Tawheed and Trinity, but extends to His attributes. Much can be explored when discussing the attributes of God from an Islamic and Christian perspective; however, the focus of this research is to discuss the attribute of God’s holiness. The research will compare and contrast the two positions on the doctrine of God’s holiness in order to show the extent to which the two perspectives differ on theology proper. Before comparatively discussing and exploring the subject, it is crucial that each position is allowed to define and submit a systematic theology on the subject of God’s holiness. Therefore, the focus of Chapter 2 is to allow each perspective to define and submit a systematic theology on the subject of God’s holiness.

What does it mean when Sunni Muslims such as Yahya (2004), UI-Husna (2012), Kidwai (2015), and others, including the Quranic tafsirs, say that Allah is holy? What does it mean when Reformed Christians say that the biblical God is holy? How do tafsirs use surah 59:23 and 62:1 to discuss the holiness of God? How do Reformed Christian commentators discuss the holiness of God from key passages in the Bible? Holiness is an attribute shared by both the

² Dr. Philips (2005:11), a noted Sunni Islamic scholar, defines Tawheed firstly by emphasising a common understanding that, the doctrine of Tawheed is the foundation and the basis of the Islamic religion. What Philips means by the idea that Tawheed is foundational to Islam, is that, without the doctrine of Tawheed, the religion can no longer qualify as the Quranic Islam. According to Philips (2005:11), belief in Islam begins by one’s attestation to the doctrine of Tawheed. Moreover, Philips (2005:11) adds that Tawheed is the belief in one unitarian God. It is also in the opinion of the Sunni Scholar that in comparison to the Islamic doctrine of Tawheed, Christianity fails as a true monotheistic religion (Philips 2005:11). Thus, it is insinuated by Philips (2005:11) that when it comes to the perspective of monotheism, Islamic teaching of Tawheed stands above the Christian perspective, due to its commitment to Unitarianism. Gathering from Philips, the researcher understands the doctrine of Tawheed to be one type or interpretation of monotheism. To the Sunni Muslim, monotheism is understood to be Unitarian, that God has one essence and one person. Such a view of monotheism stands antithetically to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Islamic God and by the Christian/biblical God. An attribute that both perspectives see as being His name and that which defines Him. This attribute has been studied and discussed by Muslim scholars to provide a clear definition of the attribute. Moreover, the discussion of God's holiness is one that has been of concern also to Reformed Christian scholars. This chapter will discuss definitions, commentaries, as well as scholarly works to understand both the Sunni Islamic and the Reformed perspective on the doctrine of God's holiness.

2.2 Discussing the Theology of God's Holiness from a Sunni Islamic Perspective

This section focuses on the Sunni Islamic definition and theology of God's holiness. Since there are two verses in the Quran that name Allah as being holy, this section will discuss the two verses using Islamic tafsirs, namely: surah 59:23 and 62:1. Furthermore, in order that a proper understanding of God's holiness be developed, scholarly works will be consulted. Both, Islamic tafsirs and scholar's play a key role in exploring the meaning of the Quranic God's holiness.

2.2.1 Allah's names and attribute of holiness

Does the Quran clearly name God as holy? Yes, the Quran names God as holy in two specific places: surah 59:23 and 62:1. These two Quranic verses are the only places where God is called holy by name. Specifically looking at the mentioned Quranic verses, the Islamic God is called "Quddus" in Arabic. UI-Husna (2012:46), in acknowledging Allah's attribute of holiness, enjoins it to the 99 names of Allah. To see Allah's attribute of holiness being one of His Quranic names is not only a view held by UI-Husna (2012), but a view widely held by Sunni Muslims. It is common to find a definition of God's holiness in sources that discuss Allah's 99 names.

Therefore, in order to begin defining the doctrine of God's holiness, the author starts by looking at the attribute of holiness in the 99 names of Allah. However, before exploring the Quranic God's specific name and attribute of holiness, it is crucial to understand the nature and the use of the names ascribed to the Quranic God (UI-Husna 2012:36). In assisting readers to answer the question of why the Quranic God has 99 names, UI-Husna (2012) begins by discussing the usage of a name and/or names. UI-Husna (2012:35) observes two primary uses of names: to identify an object, or a quality. In the case of the Quranic God, UI-Husna (2012:39) clarifies that the names used to identify God speak of His qualities. These qualities of the Quranic God are not to be understood as mere external modes of function, but are to be seen as those that describe the very essence of the Quranic God (UI-Husna 2012:35-68). Moreover, UI-Husna (2012:19) suggests that the names of the Quranic God are those to which creation and its

sustaining is due. Yahya (2004:10), a Sunni Muslim scholar, adds to the discussion by directing the reader's attention to the fact that the names of the Quranic God further speak of His abilities. These abilities are understood to be those by which the Quranic God performs all of His works. Additionally, Islamic scholar Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:17), states that the names ascribed to the Quranic God "are proper Names with respect to their refereeing to the Essence or Person of the Allah and description with respect to the meaning they carry". Lastly, Naude (1971:85) observes that the 99 names of Allah are not only important to recent Muslims, but their importance stretches to the time of Mohammed when propagating the Quranic God. For Mohammed, the usage of the 99 names of the Quranic God served to create a distinction between the Quranic theology of God and all other theologies of God (Naude 1971:85). After showing a distinction, Mohammed then used the 99 names of the Quranic God to direct his followers to the specific God of the Quran (Naude 1971:85).

After taking a brief look at the importance of names given to the Quranic God, it has become clear that the names of Allah exist in order that man may begin to understand the person of God. The names of the Quranic God are used to identify the Quranic God's ability, nature, essence, and level of involvement in all aspects of creation. Moreover, the names of the Quranic God do not only speak of His own being but are there to inform the Muslim on issues of proper worship and piety; it is through the names of the Quranic God that the Muslim benefits (Nasir as-Sa'di 2008:15). Therefore, after shedding light on the importance Islamic theology places on the names of Allah, discussing the specific attribute of holiness in the name Quddus becomes clearer.

As previously noted, when discussing the Quranic God's attribute of holiness, the word ascribed to Him is "Al-Quddus" (Yahya 2004:110). Like all names, as previously discussed, this name too identifies the Quranic God's ability, nature, essence, and level of involvement in all aspects of creation. One scholar, Yahya (2004:110), when defining the name al-Quddus, begins by looking at the Quranic God as the creator. Furthermore, Yahya (2004:110) imposes the sole responsibility of existence upon the Quranic God. The purpose of Yahya for doing this, is to create a distinction between the creator and the creation, and then to look at the Quranic God's holiness in this distinction. The distinction shows that al-Quddus means that the Quranic God is greater in all respect since He is the creator. As creator, the Quranic God does not share in the weaknesses of creation, specifically humans (Yahya 2004:110). The Quranic God has no need to depend on external sources for His sustenance, He has no need to perform hygienic routines to keep Himself clean (Yahya 2004:110). The distinction drawn by Yahya (2004:110) between creator and creation helps one to understand that the Quranic God is absolutely separate from humans by the kind of being He is.

Another Muslim scholar, Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:53), while agreeing with Yahya (2004), adds to the discussion of the Quranic God's holiness by ascribing perfection to Him. Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:53) suggests that the perfection of the Quranic God is due to Him being "far removed" from any imperfection. Though Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:53) paints a grand picture of the Quranic God and His holiness, it is however unclear how the Quranic God is "far removed" from imperfection. Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:53) simply states the issue and continues discussing al-Quddus without providing a pretext to what it meant that the Quranic God is "far removed" from imperfection. However, the Muslim scholar further adds that, the Quranic God maintains His perfection due to Him not resembling any of His creation (Nasir as-Sa'di 2008:53). The idea behind the Quranic God not resembling any of His creation is to show that, since the creation is weak, as identified by Yahya (2004:110), and dependent upon the creator for its sustaining, therefore, the creation is of an inferior being to God. The Quranic God is perfect, not in need of anything from external sources, but is complete within Himself. Nasir as-Sa'di proves the idea of the Quranic God being complete by discussing the experience the Quranic God has of His perfection (2008:53). His perfection is seen to be perpetual in all aspects of His being, thus the argument leads one to conclude that there is never a time when the Quranic God is in need of anything (Nasir as-Sa'di 2008:54). The idea of perfection emphasised by Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:54) leaves the Quranic God to either be a being who is not in need of anything because He finds all things in Himself, or He is a being who is not in need, due to Him being devoid of all needs all together. In either case, the Quranic God is a superior being to humans and to all creation.

It has become clear, that to begin understanding the Quranic God's attribute of holiness, one ought to first see Him as the creator, and then one who is perfect in all areas of being. After one begins the discussion of the Quranic God's holiness as the creator and the perfect One, further discoveries can be made. Al-Jibouri (2012) assists by making further discoveries of al-Quddus. Al-Jibouri's (2012:53) definition of the Quranic God's attribute of holiness begins with the incomprehensiveness of the Quranic God. Seemingly, the purpose of Al-Jibouri (2012) to begin the discussion with the in-comprehensiveness of the Quranic God alludes to the definition Yahya (2004) and Nasir as-Sa'di (2008) provides. The Quranic God is the creator of humankind, and is superior to humans and all creation in all areas of being. Therefore, since the Quranic God is superior to humans in all areas, He would then be superior also in intellect (Jibouri 2012). The Quranic God's intellectual superiority is due to His unique ability to create. Since creation at a cosmic level can only be attributed to the Quranic God and not to humans, it then leads one to conclude that human's inability to create at a cosmic level is due to their overall inferiority. In comparing God's ability with that of human's ability in creation, it becomes clear that, humans are inferior beings to God, and therefore, inferior intellectually as well. Having discussed

human's intellectual inferiority to the Quranic God, it then is substantiated to consider Al-Jibouri's (2012) observation of God being inconceivable by humans. In the final analysis of the three scholars: Yahya (2004), Nasir as-Sa'di (2008), and Al-Jibouri (2012), it is the Quranic God's holy nature that makes Him the perfect creator, and consequently, makes Him One whose ultimate perfection is far beyond the grasp of human intellect and imagination.

After briefly discussing the idea of the Quranic God's being as One who is above human intellect, Al-Jibouri (2012) continues to define the Quranic God's attribute of holiness as pure. Without much mystery, Al-Jibouri's (2012:53) usage of the word "pure" simply alludes to the Quranic God's sinlessness. However, Al-Jibouri's (2012:53) usage of the term "pure" when referring to the Quranic God does not end in simply identifying His nature, but Al-Jibouri (2012) uses the word to describe the Quranic God's relationship with the wicked. The Quranic God, due to His pure nature, goes on to purify the one who sins (Al-Jibouri 2012). It is unsure what Al-Jibouri (2012:54) means when suggesting that the Quranic God "purifies the soul" of the one who sins. The researcher can assume three things that are meant by Al-Jibouri (2012): the Quranic God holds the ultimate authority to forgive sins; the Quranic God removes the ability to sin; and lastly, the Quranic God ignores the sins of sinners and brings them to Himself by force. In all three suggestions made by the researcher, what seems most probable is the first assumption, that the Quranic God holds the ultimate authority to forgive sins. The pretext for such thinking is found in the Quranic texts: Surah 3:135; 7:153; 39:53; 40:3; 4:110. Furthermore, this thinking is supported by one of the other 99 names of the Quranic God, "Al-Ghafur" (Al-Jibouri 2012:98).

Therefore, to continue with the assertion that the Quranic God is the only forgiver of sins, leads one to see the Quranic God's attribute of holiness as that by which He is qualified to forgive sins. Al-Jibouri (2012) refers to the Quranic God as being pure, and since the Quranic God is viewed as the only one as pure as He is, therefore as the pure creator of the cosmos, He alone holds the power and authority to forgive sins. It should be understood that the type of purity ascribed to the Quranic God is uniquely found in Him, and no other created reality shares in such type of purity (Yahya 2004:110). Ul-Husna (2012:46), adding to the discussion on al-Quddus and its purity, briefly points out the extent of the purity. According to Ul-Husna (2012:46), the Quranic God's purity is another reason why God cannot be defined. Though Ul-Husna (2012:46) does not clarify the statement made on the Quranic God's purity, the researcher can only assume what Ul-Husna means. The researcher assumes that when discussing the Quranic God's purity in regard to His holiness, it does not simply point to His sinlessness, but incorporates all aspects of God's being. The Quranic God is pure: without sin,

without need, without blemish, without limits, and without everything that may reduce Him in any way from who He truly is.

Al-Quddus, the name of the Quranic God, does not merely speak of the grand nature of God, but also speaks of the position of the Quranic God in relation to human beings. Roushdy (n.d.:26) observes that al-Quddus identifies the Quranic God as being exalted. The idea of the exalted God is further developed by discussing it in comparison to humans. Roushdy (n.d.:26) suggests that for humans to understand the holiness of the Quranic God, one must see Him as a being whose nature exceeds all understandings of perfection. It is in the view of Roushdy (n.d.:26) that al-Quddus communicates the idea, that, if anything is perfect in the created reality, the Quranic God's perfection undeniably exceeds it. It is in the view of the researcher that, Roushdy (n.d.:26) does not believe any human to be perfect, nor that any human can at any time obtain perfection; instead, Roushdy (n.d.:26) provides a hypothetical scenario to exalt the Quranic God. Roushdy's (n.d.:26) point is that, even if perfection had to exist, it could not have compared to the perfection of the Quranic God. Though such an idea is merely a play on words, one can still understand the point Roushdy (n.d.:26) makes. The Quranic God's perfection and purity defeats any idea of perfection and purity in the minds and theology of man, this is a similar argument made by Ul-Husna (2012:46).

As previously observed, the specific idea of perfection in al-Quddus is one spoken by many scholars: the extent of perfection, the effect of perfection, and the incomprehensive nature of perfection in the Quranic God. However, Naude (1971:98) furthers the discussion of the Quranic God's perfection by using the term "separate". When discussing the doctrine of the Quranic God's holiness, Naude has no problem adopting the Semitic understanding of the word. The Semitic world sees holiness as a distinct quality reserved for God, moreover, a quality that separates God from all profanity (1971:98). It is a quality that places God on the highest order of existence, above all created things. The usage of the word "profane" by Naude (1971) is presumably being used to identify humans and their ways. Another Muslim source recognises that humans and their ways are sinful, and thus profane before the sight of the Quranic God (Samat, Bresson, and Abdullah 2001:19). The idea of perfection in al-Quddus has been further communicated to be that by which the Quranic God has previously not committed any sins, is currently not committing any sins, nor will He commit any sins in the future (Samat et al., 2001:19). Therefore, the idea of the Quranic God being separate from all profanity can be understood in light of what Samat et al., (2001:19) has to say about humanity and their sin. In comparison to the created human, Samat et al., (2001:19) seem to add to the idea of the Quranic God's holiness by suggesting that the Quranic God is not simply devoid of sin, but also devoid from making mistakes. Other than the ordinary man, kings, and rulers, God makes no

mistake (Samat et al., 2001:19). The Quranic God's idea of perfection has been taught to be that which makes the Quranic God holy, and moreover maintains His holy essence. The maintenance of the Quranic God's holiness is then seen in his perfect adherence to righteousness. The uninterrupted righteousness of God is seen in the fact that God commits no sins and makes no mistakes, and therefore is separate from all that is profane (Samat et al., 2001:19).

2.2.2 Discussing Islamic theology of God's holiness in Quranic tafsirs

It is clear that scholarly discussion on the Quranic God's holiness is rooted in the text of the Islamic scripture and literatures. As previously seen, the idea of the Quranic God's attribute of holiness is not birthed by mere practice of logical academics amongst Muslim scholars, instead, God's holiness is directly spoken of in the Islamic scripture. In the Quran, God's holiness is clearly identified in two places: surah 59:23 and surah 62:1. In order to understand the exegetical meaning of the two surah's, the researcher consults Islamic tafsirs. The Islamic tafsirs assist in providing an interaction with the subject, and in developing the idea of the Quranic God as holy.

Surah 59:23 states that, "He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him". Tafsir Jalalayn by al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) provides a brief exegesis on the stated surah 59:23. To begin with, the exegesis provided in tafsir al-Jalalayn looks at God's holiness in light of other positive statements made about the Quranic God in surah 59:23 (al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). The tafsir starts with the identification of the one spoken about, "He is God" (al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). The importance of identifying the Quranic God as a starting point in exegesis of the surah, is in the fact that no other possesses such qualities. The mentioned qualities are uniquely located in the being of the Quranic God. Moreover, when discussing such grand attributes, it becomes a matter of necessity to clarify who is being spoken of, and in this case, the Quranic God alone (al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). Additionally, it is well noted that Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:61) also begin their exegetical work on surah 59:23 by identifying the one who is being spoken of, "He is Allah". Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) make a simple and yet a pregnant identification of the Quranic God, that He is "the Sovereign Lord".

It is the view of the researcher that Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) begin by identifying the Quranic God as Sovereign due to an exegetical perspective. The exegetical perspective views the whole of surah 59:23 in light of sovereignty. The researcher justifies the assumption by simply observing Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) coupling within the parenthesis

“He is Allah” with “the Sovereign Lord”. The Muslim commentators care not to mention any other grand idea of the Quranic God in parenthesis with Him, but instead simply note Him to be the God who is Sovereign (Ibn 'Abbās & al-Fīrūzabādī 2007:661). In order to understand al-Quddus from the perspective of classical commentators, one needs to understand that they viewed the Quranic God’s holiness as sovereignty manifested (Ibn 'Abbās & al-Fīrūzabādī 2007:661). Therefore, this understanding provides the discussion further direction. It is, however, noteworthy to observe that Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) do not provide a direct definition of sovereignty, but instead, they seemingly use all of surah 59:23 as a demonstration of the Quranic God’s sovereignty. It is possible that Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) meant to use surah 59:23, not only as a demonstration of the Quranic God’s sovereignty, but also as a definition for the term sovereign; however, this ought not be taken as factual, but as mere speculation due to observation from the researcher.

Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007) further assist in developing a proper understanding of the Quranic God’s attribute of holiness. “The Holy, the One sanctified from what does not befit Him” (Al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). The idea communicated by the commentators is the idea of the Quranic God being separate. It is crucial at this point to understand that the commentators do not allude to the Quranic God the idea of absolute separation from all creation and in every way. The commentators are careful to qualify the idea of the Quranic God being separate. The Quranic God is separate specifically from things that do not “befit Him” (Al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). As previously discussed by various scholars such as Yahya (2004), Nasir as-Sa’di (2008), and Samat et al., (2001), things that do not befit the Quranic God are things that seek to diminish His perfection (see section 2.2.1). Anything that is sinful or may have something to do with a limitation of some sort, are things that do not befit the holy Quranic God. Furthermore, it is in the view of the researcher that Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) speak of the Quranic God’s separation in terms of ontology and category of God, and not in terms of relationship with His creation. A further reading of the exegetical work provided by Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) demonstrates that the Quranic God is indeed in relationship with His creation. The Quranic God is the one who confirms “His messengers”, creates miracles, and is “the Guardian” over His servants (Al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). The language used by the commentators in discussing God’s activity within the human community clearly communicates the idea of the Quranic God being involved within the human community. Such use of language cannot be understood to be that which communicates the idea of God having moved away from His creation. Therefore, what the idea of separation communicates is that God is simply separate from all creation as a unique being, who is sovereign, as stated by Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661). The Quranic God’s being is understood to be separate in category as a creator

who is not a part of the creation; consequently, God being separate does not communicate the idea that God is away from His creation.

After clarifying the idea of separation and what it means, the researcher observes the use and structure of the language used by Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660). Firstly, the commentators Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) seemingly apply logic at this stage of exegesis. Since the Quranic God is holy, and none amongst the creation share in the same type of holiness as that of the Quranic God, it must be that the Quranic God is separate in category and being. Secondly, the researcher observes Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) using language that strongly suggests absolutes. Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) state that the Quranic God is “the Holy, the One sanctified from what does not befit Him”. It is not that the Quranic God simply chooses to be separate from all that “does not befit Him”, but is separate by nature altogether (Al-Mahalli & al-Suyuti 2007:660). The researcher understands Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) as saying that the Quranic God is a being that is separate not only as a being, but is separate also in His ways. The Quranic God functions differently than creation, He relates differently to creation. The Quranic God is understood to be One who is perfectly and consistently different from creation, thus the use of the term “separate” is seen being used by the commentators Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660).

Another noted Islamic commentator, Abdul-Rahman (2012:57), observes three different simple ideas that are taken from the Quranic God's attribute of holiness (al-Quddus): the pure, blessed One, and “He whom the honourable angels glorify”. As observed by Abdul-Rahman (2012:57), al-Quddus has been known to address three aspects of the Quranic God. Since the researcher has already discussed the Quranic God being pure as a result of His holiness, it is necessary to discuss the other two aspects of al-Quddus that Abdul-Rahman (2012:57) observes.

The second observation made by Abdul-Rahman (2012:57) on the Quranic God being holy in surah 59:23 is “The Blessed”. In reading the work of Abdul-Rahman (2012:57), the researcher finds no clear discussion of what is meant by the Quranic God who is holy, is blessed. However, a further reading of Abdul-Rahman's (2012:58) commentary on surah 59:23-24 may lead one to understand the meaning of the holy God as blessed. The researcher gathers three ideas that may be understood when reading all of Abdul-Rahman's (2012:58) comments on surah 59:23. The three ideas gathered by the researcher on the idea of God's holiness as blessed may be understood individually and collectively as a unit. Firstly, the Quranic God is categorically a blessed being that needs no acts of worship in order to be blessed. God is a blessed being due to the fact that He is an exalted being, and is exalted by the very fact that He is God who is Holy. Secondly, the Quranic God is the only One who holds all blessings within Him; blessings

come from nowhere but besides from the being of the holy God. The logic of this follows from the fact that Abdul-Rahman (2012:58) notes that the Quranic God is the creator of all things, therefore if anything exists, it does so due to His creative will. Since the Quranic God is the creator, the generator of all things, it is simple to view blessings as something created and generated from within the Quranic God. Third and lastly, the Quranic God is the One who blesses people, and people cannot bless the Quranic God. Since the Quranic God is an exalted being from whom blessings come, it could not be that the originator and the bestower of blessings would be dependent upon creation for blessings. These three observations gathered by the researcher is not clearly found in the reading of Abdul-Rahman (2012), however, these three observations are made due to what is said by the commentators on the nature of the Quranic God. The researcher makes the three observations due to a logical reading of the commentators on surah 59:23.

The third observation made by Abdul-Rahman (2012:57) on the Quranic God's holiness is that God is "He whom the honourable angels glorify". When discussing the idea that the Quranic God is a being who is glorified by honourable angels, Abdul-Rahman (2012:59) unifies the Quranic God's glory with His might and greatness. Therefore, if by holiness is meant that the Quranic God is glorified, this is then due to the fact that He is almighty and great. The researcher observes and thus concludes that the purpose behind Abdul-Rahman (2012:59) pointing out that the angels glorify the Quranic God, was simply to demonstrate the might and greatness of God. Thus, the Quranic God's holiness may be further understood as that which identifies the Quranic God as almighty and great (Abdul-Rahman 2012:59).

Before drawing a conclusion on the Islamic idea of the Quranic God's holiness, the researcher adds a last observation made on the Quranic God's holiness. Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) note that the Quranic God, who is "the Holy One" is One "Who has no son or partner". This is another place where the Islamic commentators have simply made an observation without providing a justification. Though the commentators do not clarify the connection between the Quranic God's holiness and Him being without a partner or a son, it does, however, shed further light on the subject (Ibn 'Abbās & al-Fīrūzabādī 2007:661). The commentators, Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī's (2007:661) mention of the unique dichotomy of the Quranic God's holiness and Him being without a partner or a son, assists the researcher in developing a definition of God's holiness. The researcher understands that, according to Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661), the Quranic God's holiness is that which necessitates the idea of God being singular. The Quranic God, since He is sovereign and the only creator of all things, is not in need of a partner ('Abbās & al-Fīrūzabādī 2007:661). The Quranic God is not only singular in being, but is united in His essence. In the researcher's view, the purpose of

Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) in uniting the Quranic God's holiness with His singularity is due to their view of holiness. If the Quranic God is the holy One, it then cannot be that there is another who shares in God's holiness, since the Quranic God's holiness is unique to Him (as previously discussed). The attribute of holiness is unique to the Quranic God since He is the creator with all power and authority, and since it is a well-established fact that God is the only creator, holiness belongs to Him alone. Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) are careful to clarify that the Muslim position does not recognise any other God, nor does it believe any other God to exist. Since the Muslim position denies the existence of any other God, the attribute of holiness must uniquely belong to the Quranic God. Furthermore, it is clear by now that the attribute of holiness is a unique and a peculiar attribute that cannot belong to anyone inferior to God, by whom all things exist. Therefore, it is a plausible dichotomy created by the commentators, that since the Quranic God is holy, it cannot be that God has a partner or that He would need a partner. If the Quranic God has a partner, it is reasonable to conclude that, it is because the Quranic God is in need of a partner. The idea that God would be in need of assistance defeats the Muslim idea of holiness, since holiness speaks of God's self-sufficiency (Yahya 2004:110).

2.2.3 Conclusion of this section

The doctrine of God's holiness in Islamic theology does not seem to interest many Muslim theologians; however, there has been sufficient amount of discussion on the Quranic God's holiness for one to construct a definition. It is clear that the Quranic God is holy; not only can one find this attribute of God in the Quran, but one can also find it in the Islamic compilation of the Quranic God's names. The Quranic God has been ascribed 99 names, all of which expose His attributes, of which holiness is one. Al-Quddus is one of the 99 names of Allah that translates to, "the holy One".

The Quranic God's attribute of holiness has been discussed as a grandeur attribute. Islamic theologians have developed the idea of the Quranic God's holiness to be understood as that which is absolute. The Quranic God's holiness is seen to describe His ability, nature, essence, and level of involvement in all aspects of creation. The ability, nature, and essence of God in Islamic theology is seen as absolute. Holiness is that because of which the Quranic God is God, and holiness is that which is claimed by God simply on the basis of Him being the only God. Holiness is that which makes and gives the Quranic God absolute ability. Within the nature of God, holiness functions to provide God with power and authority to create out of nothing and sustain creation with nothing besides His power. Holiness further speaks of the fact that the Quranic God is in no need of anything for His sustenance, and moreover, in no need for any

external assistance in carrying out any task determined. The Quranic God is holy, and this attribute speaks of His ultimate ability and lack of any weakness.

Furthermore, holiness of the Quranic God speaks of His nature and essence/being, which is perfect. The Quranic God is perfect in nature and in His own piety. The Quranic God has not committed any sin, since He is removed from such possibilities. Not only is the Quranic God removed from sin, but He is also devoid of making mistakes. The Quranic God's wisdom and power is perfect, thus there remains no possibility to make any mistake. Islamic theologians observe the idea that, the reason why the Quranic God does not sin, nor make any mistake, is because He cannot sin or make any mistakes. Holiness is an attribute which completely separates the Quranic God from anything that does not comply with the standard of holiness. Since sin and mistakes go against that which is holy, it is understood that the holy God of the Quran cannot sin nor make mistakes.

In the final analysis, the attribute of the holiness of God from the Sunni Islamic perspective simply speaks of God's perfection. Though the idea of the Quranic God's perfection is simple to understand, Islamic theologians have laboured to provide an in-depth study of the extent to which the Quranic God is perfect. The Quranic God is perfect in many ways, and the aim of the section is to provide an Islamic construction of God's holiness as perfection.

2.3 Discussing the Theology of God's Holiness from the Reformed Christian Perspective

After having briefly discussed the attribute of God's holiness from an Islamic perspective, the researcher now investigates the Reformed Christian perspective on God's holiness. This section discusses the doctrine of God in order to construct a Reformed Christian understanding of God's holiness. To achieve the set out goal, the researcher divides the discussion into two: (a) God's holiness in theological works, and (b) God's holiness in Reformed biblical commentaries. The researcher then uses the discussion of God's holiness in Reformed theological works and Reformed commentaries to construct a definition of God's holiness from a Reformed Christian perspective. This section will not perform biblical exegesis to arrive at a conclusion on the subject matter; however, the researcher uses Reformed biblical commentaries to supplement the works of Reformed theologians on God's attribute of holiness.

To perform biblical exegesis in order to construct a Reformed Christian idea of God's holiness is a valuable task, and one that would require an independent study of its own. The researcher does not engage in biblical exegesis when constructing the doctrine of God's holiness due to

the limited scope of this study. In order to accomplish the set out task, this study employs trusted Reformed theologians in order to construct the doctrine of God's holiness. The researcher assumes that the Reformed theologians who are used in this section to construct the doctrine of God's holiness, have developed their discussion of God's holiness with careful exegesis of the Christian Scripture. Thus, in this study, the researcher seeks value for the subject matter from specific Reformed theologians. The study constructs its definition of God's holiness primarily from Dutch Reformed theologians such as Herman Bavinck (2004) and Louis Berkhof (1941). Though the researcher primarily employs the works of two specific Dutch Reformed theologians as mentioned, other reformed theologians such as Stephen Charnock (2001), John Calvin (2003), Matthew Henry (in ed. Uyl 2012), and R.C. Sproul (2010) will be consulted. The additional theologians are used as supplementary to the works of Herman Bavinck (2004) and Louis Berkhof (1941) on the discussion of God's holiness.

2.3.1 God's holiness: A Reformed Christian perspective

Since the doctrine of God's holiness is to be developed from a Reformed Christian perspective, and more specifically Dutch Reformed perspective, the researcher sees it fitting to begin the discussion with Berkhof (1941) and Bavinck (2004), the primary sources for the study. Before starting a discussion on the doctrine of God's holiness, Berkhof (1941:44-46:) clarifies how he views all of God's attributes. Berkhof (1941:45) observes that a common practice in theology is to view God's attributes as God Himself. While it is true that God's attributes do not make up the being of God, the attributes do however show who God is. It is further noted by Berkhof (1941:45) that confusion amongst some theologians on the subject of God's attributes have led to the forming of dangerous theologies. The mistake some theologians make is to see no distinction within the attributes of God when discussing the doctrine of God (Berkhof 1941:45). For Berkhof (1941:45), it is important to identify each attribute distinctly that speaks of God and His being. It is not suggested by Berkhof (1941:45) to see God's attributes as parts of God, but as distinct realities that describe God's being in different ways. Berkhof's (1941:45) view could simplistically be summarised in the words of Shedd that Berkhof notes, "The whole essence is in each attribute, and the attribute in the essence". Therefore, God's attributes are distinct realities of the essence of God, each one simply speaks of God's essence and being. The doctrine of God's holiness too is to be understood as that which speaks distinctly from other attributes of God, but speaks of the same essence of the biblical God.

Bavinck (2004:120) adds to the discussion by using the church fathers. He states of the church fathers that, "in their attempt to determine the nature of God's being, started with the name YHWH and described him as 'Being,' they had in mind not God's being apart from his attributes, but the total fullness of God's being as it exists and is revealed in his attributes". Even to

Bavinck (2004:118), who is in agreement with the church fathers, God's attributes are not something that are to be understood as parts of God, but as realities that reveal God's being. Furthermore, Bavinck (2004:125) obligates the reader to think of God's attributes as that which speak of God's identity. While God's attributes are to be understood as His divine epithets, both Bavinck (2004:120) and Berkhof (1941:45) emphasise the fact that, attributes are to never be seen as God's parts, but simply as God's realities revealed and classified by theologians. An example of God's attributes which reveal His identity, and yet differ from one another, are holiness and mercy. Bavinck (2004:128) notes that both attributes – holiness and mercy – although they may be “the same in essence” and always function together, clearly differ in definition. The distinction between the two attributes (holiness and mercy) is a logical one. The logical distinction is seen in the testimony of the biblical Scriptures that identify holiness and mercy as attributes that characteristically stand alone. Thus, the distinction of attributes is not found in the being of God as different parts, but the distinction is seen in definitions of each attribute of God.

The brief discussion describing the relationship between God's attributes and His being strengthens the foundation on which the study develops a definition of God's holiness. Since the study has gathered from Berkhof (1941) and Bavinck (2004) that all God's attributes are verbalised expressions of His being and essence, holiness too is understood in the same light. Since the attribute of holiness is understood as that which describes God, the study, in order to construct a definition of God's holiness, begins with Berkhof (1941). In the discussion of God's attribute of holiness, Berkhof (1941:73) begins by observing that the attribute of holiness is taken from the phrase “to be holy”, which is a translation of the Hebrew word “*qudash*” in the Old Testament and Greek words “*hagiazō*” and “*hagios*” in the New Testament. Berkhof (1941:73) states that the Hebrew and Greek words for holiness found in the Old and New Testaments communicate the idea of being separate. At the first read, the idea of the biblical God being separate arouses suspicion and concern; this is because the biblical God has revealed Himself not as being separate but as being involved in the lives of people. Furthermore, it cannot be true that the biblical God is separate in the sense of being non-relational, since God the Father becomes the father of those who believe in His Son, and the believing men and women become His children (John 1:12). Therefore, it cannot be that Berkhof (1941:73) is suggesting the biblical God's holiness to be understood as that which causes Him to be non-relational with the human race. Berkhof (1941:73) understands the idea of God's separateness to fundamentally communicate the uniqueness of God's position and the uniqueness of God's relationship with persons.

Berkhof (1941:73) observes that God's holy separateness speaks of God in two ways: *positionally* and *relationally* to His creatures. Berkhof (1941:73) explains that God's holy separateness in His position describes God to be exalted above creation. It is the view of the researcher that when Berkhof (1941:73) speaks of God's exalted position, he does so on the basis of God being the only creator. God being exalted over creation speaks of God being above creation. Berkhof (1941:73) assists in substantiating the researcher's view by further denoting the idea of infinite majesty to God. By denoting infinite majesty to God, Berkhof (1941:73) automatically sets God apart as a unique being, since there is no other existence that could claim such a title. Moreover, by denoting infinite majesty to God, Berkhof (1941:73) does not simply set God apart as a unique being, but places God on a position above all creation. Observably, there is nothing in creation that claims such unique majesty besides the creator. Additionally, God being exalted and infinitely magisterial cannot simply point to God's position, but also to His power and authority over creation. On God's holiness as an expression of His authority over creation, Dixon (2000:57-58) observes that,

God is holy. Holiness is God's uniqueness, His sacredness, His separateness. Exodus 15:11 asks, 'Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?'

Though Dixon does not explicitly appeal to the idea of God's holiness as His absolute authority over creation, his assertion does indeed leave a strong impression upon the reader of the idea, therefore A.W. Tozer declared, "Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard" (in Dixon 2000:57-58). It is argued by the researcher that, God's holy separateness within the context of discussion leads one to no other conclusion besides that God's separateness speaks of God as one who is above all creatures in position, power, and authority. Moreover, the idea that God's absolute authority is directly related to His holiness is more clearly seen when Dixon (2000:58) observes Tozer to discuss God and His responsibility toward conformity. The fact that God is free from conformity, and yet not only free from it but is the very source from where standards of conformity come, clearly identifies God as One who is other than creation in position and authority.

A great observation made by Berkhof (1941:73) and Bavinck (2004:217) is that God's attribute of holiness first speaks of His position, power, and authority over all creation; however, theologians do not limit the discussion of God's holiness to His position, power, and authority, but further it to greater extents. Berkhof (1941:73), when furthering his theological exposition on the doctrine of God's holiness, observes that the specific attribute of God's holiness seems to be given more attention in the Christian Scriptures than other attributes. The reason for the

scriptural emphasis upon God's attribute of holiness is because it is "co-extensive" in nature. Holiness is an attribute of God that is applicable to everything "predicted of God" (Berkhof 1941:73). Therefore, God's holiness is not to be understood as an attribute that is separate and isolated in function from all other attributes, but is to be understood as an attribute that reveals His perfection in the function of all God's attributes (Berkhof 1941:73). God's goodness is perfect because God is holy, God's mercy is perfect because God is holy, God's justice is perfect because God is holy, and thus God's holiness is seen in all areas of God's perfections. "It is this holiness of God which Otto, in his important work on *Das Heilige*, regards as that which is most essential in God" (Berkhof 1941:73). The importance given to God's holiness is simply because it is one specific attribute which penetrates all God's attributes and seemingly maintains their perfection. Berkhof (1941) has not yet discussed what would happen if God ceases to be holy; however, one can simply use reason to arrive at a response. Since God's holiness maintains God's perfections, it is reasonable to think that God would cease to be God, since He has lost His perfections. Secondly, it is reasonable to think that God could possibly lose His power and authority to humans, giving humans a small, yet a possible chance to defeat God. It is therefore not only imperative that God be God over creation, moreover, it is imperative that God be holy to be God over creation.

"But the holiness of God also has a specifically ethical aspect in Scripture" (Berkhof 1941:73). The ethical considerations of God's attribute of holiness is primarily described as that which makes God separate from sin (Berkhof 1941:73). The implication of Berkhof's (1941:73) observations leads the researcher to develop the idea that God is a being that has no sin within, and moreover, a being who can commit no sin. It is due to the virtue of God's holiness that God can have no communion with sin (Berkhof 1941:73). The ethical aspect of God's holiness is taught negatively and positively as observed by Berkhof (1941:73). The negative teaching of God's holy ethics teaches one of what God cannot do and what God is not: God cannot sin, God cannot commune with sin, and God has no sin within Him. On the other hand, the positive teaching of God's holy ethics teaches one of what God is and what God does due to Him being ethically holy: God is morally excellent, God is ethically perfect, and God does all things right since all the works of His hands are holy good (Berkhof 1941:73).

Charnock (2001) adds to the discourse set by Berkhof (1941:73) on the ethical aspect of the biblical God's holiness. Charnock (2001:449) suggests that "the notion of a God cannot be entertained without separating from him whatsoever is impure and bespotting ..." According to Charnock (2001:449), God's attribute of holiness is absolutely crucial to His essence. God's holiness is the reason that He has been contained from committing sins and mirroring Satan in all his epithets. To Charnock (2001:449), God's attribute of holiness is that without which he

cannot even rationally think of God. Holiness is the very attribute that maintains the absolute goodness of God; holiness is the very attribute that maintains the perfections of God. Charnock (2001:449), in his discussion of God, goes beyond God's holiness and compares it with light. To Charnock (2001:449), to suggest that God is without holiness is to also say that God is without light, moreover that God is not light altogether. A God without light then is seen as nothing more than a being of darkness, and when discussing God and His being, it is contradictory to God's nature to have Him being represented with darkness (Charnock 2001:449). Therefore, it can be understood that the reason why God is devoid of the nature of any sin and acts of sin, and is thus perfect in all His deeds and works is due to the fact that God is holy. Regarding the importance of God's holiness, Charnock (2001:449) states that, "[I]t is less injury to him to deny his being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable God".

Moreover, Charnock (2001:450) continues to define God's attribute of holiness as God's life. Charnock (2001:450) justifies this epithet ascribed to holiness by performing an exegetical observation on Ephesians 4:18. It is the sinner, one who is darkened in understanding, ignorant of the truth, and with a hard heart that is said to have been alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18). Charnock (2001:450) comments and sheds meaningful exegetical light on the verse, by suggesting that, since people are called to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16), and that this is the only way by which men/women will see God and enjoy His life (Heb. 12:14), then it is reasonable to think that the life which is spoken of in Ephesians 4:18, is nothing less than God's holiness. The reason why men/women must achieve and obtain holiness is because God is holy, thus it is His very holy nature that requires holiness in the men/women who would commune with God.

As one may comprehend the idea that God's holiness is the very life of God, Charnock (2001:451) adds that holiness is not only His life but is also the beauty of all God's attributes. As previously discussed by Berkhof (1941:73) that God's holiness is the reason for the perfect functioning of all God's attributes, Charnock (2001:451) goes further than Berkhof (1941) in describing holiness in such regard. Charnock (2001:451) suggests that holiness is not only the means by which God maintains a perfect order and function of all His attributes, but holiness is that by which all His attributes are seen as beautiful. Charnock's (2001:451) assertion could be understood to mean that, since God's holiness is what beautifies all attributes, holiness then becomes a reason in which God takes pleasure from the functioning of His attributes. Willis (2002:114) articulates the idea of God taking pleasure in holiness by stating that,

God delights in holiness. It is God's delight in something that makes it beautiful. *Beauty is in the eye of the Creator before it is in the eye of the creature.* A thing's or action's or person's beauty is grounded in this divine acceptance – a parallel in aesthetics to the imputation in which new creation is grounded in justification. Its inherent beauty consists in the fact that it is well pleasing to God. It is in God's seeing it that it is good. Holiness is not an addition to beauty. Holiness is God's operative delight in and for another which constitutes the beauty of the other (italics in the original).

It is clear that God's holiness is beautiful, and by it God takes pleasure. In order to describe God's experience of His holiness, Willis uses the word "delight" (Willis 2002:114). Furthermore, Willis' (2002:114) observation adds to the discussion of God's delight in His own holiness. God delights in His own holiness because it is perfect in nature; however, Willis (2002:114) points out that God's holiness is beautiful simply because God delights in it. Using Willis (2002) and Charnock (2001) it can be understood that God's holiness is beautiful due to two truths: firstly, because God's holiness makes all attributes perfect and beautiful in function, and secondly, simply because God actively sees it and accepts holiness as beautiful.

Moreover, Charnock's (2001:451) assertion may also speak to the human experience of God's holiness that beautifies all His attributes. Since all God's attributes function perfectly, which is due to His holiness, this may then become a reason by which humans may take joy. The human experience of joy is due to the fact the God would love the elect, but do so perfectly and do so consistently, not dependant on human works. Such an idea may prove to bring an ecstatic experience to the elect. Such an assertion made by the researcher on the human experience due to God's holiness is also observed by Bavinck (2004:220). Bavinck (2004:220) acknowledges that God's holiness is an attribute which does not merely remain in effect within God, but affects creation externally to God. It is due to God's holiness in all His attributes that the elect may be assured of the perfect work of salvation done for the elect. If God were absent of such holy attribute, the human race would have much reason to doubt the work of salvation done for it, since it would lack perfection. It is God's holiness that gives the elect assurance that work done has been done perfectly. Thus, observing the human experience of God's holiness, it is then reasonable to conclude that God's holiness is a type of attribute that functions within God and externally to God. The external effect of God's attribute of holiness is discussed at length by Bavinck (2004:216-221).

2.3.2 Discussing the theology of God's holiness from Christian commentaries

This far the research has consulted theological works in order to construct a definition of God's attribute of holiness from a Reformed Christian/biblical perspective. The researcher will now

explore two specific biblical commentaries to provide a definition of God's holiness which expands on existing theological works. The two biblical commentaries are of John Calvin (2003) and Matthew Henry (in ed. Uyl 2012). Furthermore, it is important to note that it is Matthew Henry (in ed. Uyl 2012) who provides a lengthier discussion on God's holiness than John Calvin (2003), who simply touches on the subject, and thereby provides some pertinent insights.

Matthew Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) begins the discussion of God's holiness with Isaiah 6:3 by acknowledging that God's holiness is a type of attribute which is given the highest regard by angels. Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) further answers the researcher's question of, why do the angels identify God's holiness as the most important attribute? The answer being that holiness is an attribute without which God could not be God. Henry's (ed. Uyl 2012:48) whole discussion on God's holiness is developed from the fact that the angels place great importance on it. Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) further observes that the angels do not simply point out the holiness of God and move to another attribute of God, but the primary focus and theme of the praise given to God is His holiness. It is the angels' particular pleasure to speak of God's holiness, and speak of it with emphasis. The angels can do nothing else besides contemplate the holiness of God and, moreover, make this the central theme to their worship of God (Henry, in ed. Uyl 2012:48).

Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) points out that God's attribute of holiness is not only important because angels sing such praises to the biblical God, but that "None of all the divine attributes is so celebrated in scripture as this is". Holiness is an attribute which seems to be above the power of God in Henry's mind. Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) justifies his assertion by identifying the number of times each attribute was repeated. The specific attribute of God's power has been spoken of twice in the Holy Scriptures, whilst God's holiness is a specific attribute that has been given special attention to in Scripture by being thrice repeated (Henry, in ed. Uyl 2012:48). Seemingly, for Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48), the fact that God's holiness has been thrice repeated is enough to conclude on the importance of God's holiness. There is no other attribute of God that has been repeated thrice in one Scripture. From Henry's (ed. Uyl 2012:48) observations, the researcher gathers that it is not only the angels who see God's holiness as the most important attribute of God, but it is God who sees this attribute as most important.

Furthermore, from Henry's (ed. Uyl 2012:48) discussion on the importance of God's holiness, the researcher finds it reasonable to conclude that it is God's own emphasis upon His holiness which has been communicated by the angels in Isaiah 6:3. This raises a question on the angels' knowledge of God; how do angels know to place such emphasis upon God's holiness? Since God's holiness communicates the idea of an eternal God, perfect in all things, the angels do not share in these qualities. The angels have received all things they possess, and if so, then

there is good reason to conclude that the knowledge on the importance of God's holiness too was communicated to the angels. God's holiness is an attribute eternally important to God, which He has communicated to the angels by God and to the church in the Scripture (Henry, in ed. Uyl 2012:48).

The importance given by God to His attribute of holiness is also seen in the fact that He requires holiness from all that would have fellowship with Him (1 Peter 1:16). Henry (n.d.:1360) comments on 1 Peter 1:16 that, "God makes those holy whom he saves". The comment from Henry's (n.d.:1360) exegetical work on 1 Peter 1:16 suggests that, though God has required humans to be holy, it is God who fulfils His own requirement within the one it applies to. The researcher takes assistance from Henry's (n.d.:1360) exegetical work on 1 Peter 1:16 to support the idea that God's holiness is indeed eternally important to Him. Since God is holy in nature, and as discussed by theologians such as Bavinck (2004), Berkhof (1941), and Charnock (2001) that, His whole being is holy, there is nothing in God that is left unattended by His holiness. If such is the case, it is reasonable to conclude that God then cares for His own holiness and the holiness of all who will be in fellowship with Him. In accordance with Henry (n.d.:1360), God is the one who makes one holy; such an assertion may be supported by simply looking at the nature of God's holiness and the nature of humans. God's holiness simplistically refers to all His perfections which are established from eternity past, such type of holiness is unique to God and thus makes God uniquely distinct from all creation (eds. MacArthur & Mayhue 2017:183). Since God's holiness is unique to God, a type of holiness which suits only the being of God, thus it is reasonable to think that it cannot be achieved by humans. Humans are sin stained and, according to Berkhof (1941:225), depraved, nothing like the biblical God, lacking all perfections of God. It is due to the fact that God only is holy, and humans are not, nor can they be holy even after much labour, therefore it must be then that God takes the initiative to make the one who He saves holy, as observed by Henry (n.d.:1360). God's active involvement in the making of people holy then further substantiates the idea of holiness being eternally important to God as presented by Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48) in the exegetical work done on Isaiah 6:3.

Additionally, the idea that holiness is important to God is in the discussion made by Calvin (2003.:323) in his exegetical work on Leviticus 10:1-20. Leviticus 10:1-20 narrates an event in which two brothers are judged and destroyed by God due to His holy standard in worship of Him. Holiness is an attribute that describes who God is and the works He performs. Since the research has provided sufficient proof for the internal holiness of God being eternally important to God; now, Calvin's (2003.:323) exegesis of Leviticus 10:1-20 provides the researcher with ample proof that substantiates the idea that God's holiness compels God to take all His works

as important. Calvin (2003) begins by observing that the reason why Nadab and Abihu were destroyed is because “God abominates all the sins whereby the purity of religion is corrupted”. Since God is holy, and primarily, His holiness compels Him to be separate from any form of sin, it is then reasonable that any worship of God that is done contrary to His requirement is first of all sin, and then, secondly, rejected by God due to His holy nature (Berkhof 1941:73). In presenting an offering contrary to the requirements of God, Nadab and Abihu marred the purity of God’s religion (Calvin, 2003). The researcher further asserts that the destroying of Nadab and Abihu was an act of consistency on God’s part. God is holy, and holiness affirms perfections, and if so, then God’s requirements do not change. Calvin (2003) confirms the fact that the manner of worship was prescribed by God, therefore His holy nature requires the fulfilment of His prescription.

[I]t was necessary that their religion should be sanctioned at its very commencement; for if God had suffered the sons of Aaron to transgress with impunity, they would have afterwards carelessly neglected the whole Law. This, therefore, was the reason of such great severity, that the priests should anxiously watch against all profanation (Calvin, 2003.:324).

There is sufficient proof in the discussion provided above, that God not only sees His internal perfections of holiness as eternally important, but, due to His holy nature, God sees all the works of His hands as holy, and therefore, important. The works of His hands are perfect as He is perfect, this is why God has dealt with Nadab and Abihu with such severity at the sight of any distortion of His works (Calvin, 2003). On the issue of corrupting God’s command in His worship, Calvin (2003) asserts that it is imperative to the well-being of men to abide by God’s holy law. Calvin’s (2003) continuous emphasis on adhering to the law of God leads the researcher to no other conclusion that God is holy, and His works are holy, therefore God deals with His works with utmost care.

In essence, the researcher observes from Calvin’s (2003) discussion the idea that God does not change His requirements, nor does He overlook any corruption of His requirements in His works. Calvin’s (2003) discussion on Leviticus 10:1-20 provides the researcher with an added aspect to the holiness of God. God’s holiness is that which is important to Him as discussed by Henry (ed. Uyl 2012:48), therefore He communicates this to His angels, who then verbally proclaim God’s holiness with emphasis. Moreover, God’s holiness is a type of attribute which compels God to consider His works as perfect and therefore His requirements from creation ought to be upheld. Both commentators, Henry (in ed. Uyl 2012) and Calvin (2003), teach that God is a holy God and that the works of His hands are holy. It is due to the holy nature of God and His works

that then compel God to consider His works with such importance. In the final analysis, the research gathers that it is viewed by the commentators that God is holy, in which God delights, and His works are important, in which He delights (Pink 2016:143).

2.4 Conclusion

Due to the limited focus and nature of this research, the primary objective of the study is to answer the question of how a comparative dialogue on God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity can apologetically strengthen the church. In order to answer this research question, a chapter simply constructing the different doctrines of God's holiness was essential. Therefore, this chapter was designed to briefly, yet sufficiently, provide the reader with a definition of God's holiness from both perspectives: Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. It is worth noting that much more can be said when defining the doctrine of God's holiness, and more research in this area will benefit scholastic considerations.

After having presented the reader with a definition of God's holiness from both Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian perspectives, one thing has become clearer, both perspectives pay high regard to God and His holiness. However, the researcher has also observed that God's holiness is a much more explored doctrine amongst the Reformed Christian theologians. In comparison to the Reformed Christian perspective, Sunni Muslims have paid less attention to the doctrine of God's holiness. Both perspectives have primarily attributed perfection to God's holiness, however the discussion of God's perfections has varied in both perspectives. Noticeably, in theological works, it is the Reformed Christian perspective that provides a much lengthier discussion on God's perfections than the theological works of Sunni Muslim theologians. Furthermore, the mention of God's attribute of holiness in each religious texts vary. In the Islamic text, the Quran, God is mentioned as holy twice: surah 59:23 and surah 62:1. In the Christian text, the Bible, God is mentioned as holy so many times that Sproul (2010:16) suggests God's holiness to be the central idea, the central teaching, and the central theme of the Christian Scriptures.

As the study of God's holiness progresses to answer the main research question, the observations made in this chapter play a key role. In Chapter 3, the study provides a comparative dialogue between the two perspectives: Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity, on the issue of God's holiness. The considerations made in Chapter 2 will provide substance to the comparative dialogue in order to answer the research question.

CHAPTER 3

GOD’S HOLINESS: A COMPARATIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN REFORMED CHRISTIANITY AND SUNNI ISLAM

3.1 Introduction

The doctrine of God’s holiness is one that both Islamic scholars and Reformed Christian scholars have given a high regard to. Theologians from both perspectives have rendered God’s holiness as the doctrine that fundamentally defines God. The level of similarities in the doctrinal constructions found in both Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christianity is overwhelming. However, as observed in the conclusion of the previous chapter, there is more room for discovery on the subject of God’s holiness, it is no less significant than the work already put in by both perspectives.

Theologians from both perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – acknowledge and ascribe the word “perfection” when discussing God’s holiness. When looking at the similarities between the two perspectives on the issue of God’s holiness, the list of similarities overlap to such an extent that one could possibly conclude that there are no differences between the two perspectives. Furthermore, one could possibly deduce that the God of Islam and the God of Christianity are not different, but the same being. Philip C. Almond (2017), a professor in the History of Religious Thought at The University of Queensland too has fallen victim to such thinking.

Almond (2017) reasons that, since Islam inherited its theology from Judaism and Christianity, it therefore must be that Christians, Muslims, and Jews worship the same God. Almond (2017:n.p.) further substantiates his assertion of the three religions worshipping the same God by providing an observation that,

it is not surprising that the God of Muhammad, Jesus³ and Moses has a similarly complex and ambivalent character – a blend of benevolence and compassion, combined with wrath and anger. If you were obedient to his commands, he could be all sweetness and light.

³ Almond (2017), while adding value to the research in displaying the various theological perspectives regarding comparative issues on Islam, Christianity, and Judaism within the academic sphere, makes a fundamental error. It is important to note that Almond’s (2017) conclusion as well as his argument are false. Almond’s (2017) conclusion that Judaism, Islam and Christianity worship the same God, rests on the idea that the prophets of each mentioned religion (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed) have the same

Almond's (2017) comment, though not directly, may be used by many to see the doctrine of God's holiness in the same light. Almond draws his conclusion based on the similar attributes shared among the three religions, and accordingly concludes that these are the same God. In the previous chapter, both Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian theologians, when discussing God's holiness, include God's love and wrath. Both perspectives talk of God's holiness as an attribute by which He also deals with humanity. Almond's (2017) assumption then, is that all three mentioned theological perspectives paint God in the same light, therefore it must be the same God. According to Almond (2017), in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, the only observable difference is in the way God is worshipped, which is not significant enough to draw theological lines between the gods that are being worshipped.

Seeing no meaningful difference in the Quranic God and the biblical God is not only a practice of professor Almond (2017), but is also a view held by some Muslim scholars. Kazemi (2012:83) boldly claims that,

The logical consequence of the assertion of the unique source of revelation for all three traditions is the Quran's categorical affirmation that the God worshipped by the Christians and the Jews ('the people of the Book') is the selfsame God worshipped by Muslims.

Kazemi's (2012) assertion and logical consequence of seeing the God of Christianity, Judaism and Islam as the same being, is substantiated by the Quranic testimony of the beginning of religion. To Kazemi (2012), if the Quran is a product of the true God that is spoken of in previous monotheistic religions, it cannot then be that the God spoken of in the Quran is a different God from the God of Christianity and Judaism. Though Kazemi's (2012) conclusion is not substantiated by a theological comparative discourse on the doctrine of God, it is reasonable for Kazemi to make such an assertion because he worships no other God.

It is clear that Kazemi (2012) answers the question of whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God with a presupposition provided in the Quranic scriptures. Thus, Kazemi's (2012) presupposition does not allow him to see the clear distinctions provided in the biblical Scriptures on the issue of theology proper. Furthermore, from Kazemi's (2012) presuppositional perspective, he would not merely reason toward the God of the biblical Scriptures to simply be

God. However, Almond (2017) seems to ignore Christian theology when comparing Christian religion with Islam and Judaism. Within the dimensions of Christian/biblical theology, the person of Jesus does simply have a God, but is Himself thought of as truly God (Horton 2006:133). Therefore, while Almond (2017) labours to support the claim that all mentioned religions worship the same God, the fundamental issue seems to have been missed, that the theological articulations around the being and essence of God between Christianity and Islam or Judaism significantly differ as discovered within this chapter.

the same God of the Quran; instead, his presupposition would extend to him seeing the attributes of the biblical God being a perfect replication of the God in the Quranic scriptures. The differences would then simply be in the formations of theologians and not in the Scriptures. In that, it is the theologians who force upon the Scripture's differences of theology proper without proper scriptural support.

However, from the perspective of Christian theologians, the God of the Bible is incomparable (Edens 2008:149). Edens (2008:149) addresses what the Islamic teachings are on the Christian faith. Edens (2008:149) simply clarifies what Islam teaches and where Islamic teachings on Christianity create misnomers on the true teachings of biblical Christianity. Therefore, as pointed out by Edens (2008:149), the God of the Bible is incomparable, in that He does not share in the same theological foundations as Islam. The question that arises then is, what and where are the distinctions between the Islamic doctrine of God and the Christian doctrine of God, if any?

The researcher will proceed to answer the above question within the selected context of Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. The insights obtained will shed light on the main question of this thesis. In order for the researcher to answer the main problem of the research, it becomes essential to understand the differences and similarities in the doctrine of God's holiness from both selected theological perspectives. As briefly observed, some non-Christian and Muslim scholars believe that there is no distinction in theology proper between Islam and Christianity, therefore the main problem of the entire research is defeated. However, it is the task of the researcher to first construct theology proper, and more specifically the doctrine of God's holiness from the Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian perspective, and then draw a line of distinction and explore similarities. This is done to show that the main problem question of the research should not be taken as a non-issue, but as means to further healthy and proper theological discourse amongst Sunni Muslims and Reformed Christians.

In order to answer the main problem question of the research, this chapter does not simply draw lines of distinction and explore similarities; instead, it will also compare and contrast the doctrine of God's holiness from the two mentioned perspectives. Since the researcher has not found any resources that directly discuss God's holiness comparatively from the two selected perspectives, he will use similar resources from Chapter 2. Firstly, the resources are used to provide meaningful clarity on the issue of differences and similarities between the two selected perspectives on the doctrine of God's holiness. Secondly, the chapter will provide a comparative dialogue on the doctrine of God's holiness from the Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian perspective. Lastly, the chapter provides a brief sectional discussion on the apologetical strength

that the church gains from the comparative dialogue on the doctrine of God's holiness between the two religions.

3.2 God's Holiness: Theological Similarities and Distinctions

To find a valid and an academically appropriate answer to the main problem of the research, it has been said that drawing lines of distinction and similarities becomes essential. Moreover, as observed in the introductory section of Chapter 3, there are non-Christian and Muslim scholars that condone and propagate the idea that the God of the Christian Scriptures is no different to the Quranic God. Such an assertion not only de-constructs the current research, but also robs the Christian church from the opportunity to apologetically respond to the theological challenge posed by the Islamic community. This section explores and discusses the similarities as well as the differences between the Sunni Islamic theology of God's holiness and the Reformed Christian theology of God's holiness.

3.2.1 God's holiness: Theological similarities

3.2.1.1 God's holiness, an attribute

To begin the discussion of similarities and differences within the theologies of Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity on the issue of God's holiness, the researcher sees it fitting to first point out that both perspectives see holiness as an attribute of God. Muslim scholars, such as Ul-Husna (2012), Nasir as-Sa'di (2008), Yahya (2004), and Al-Jibouri (2012) stand in agreement that holiness is an attribute of God. Moreover, the mentioned Muslim scholars do not simply identify holiness as an attribute, but identify holiness as an essential attribute of God. In like manner, Reformed Christian theologians, such as Bavinck (2004), Berkhof (1941), and Charnock (2001) stand in agreement with Muslim theologians that holiness is an essential attribute of God.

Yahya (2004:9), not specifically on the attribute of the holiness of God, but on all 99 communicated attributes of the Quranic God, suggests that these inform humanity of who God is. Kidwai (2015:ix) concurs with Yahya that all of the names mentioned for God in the Quran are divine names that "provide a graphic account of Allah's attributes". Kidwai (2015:ix) furthers the discussion by appealing to the uniqueness of God's names mentioned in the Quranic scripture. The attributes of the Quranic God are such, that by a deep study and memorisation of them in the Quran, facilitates one into paradise. And so holiness, one of the names of the Quranic God, that stands true by nature of His own deity, is an attribute by which God's one most important attribute is discovered, His perfection (Kidwai 2015). According to Kidwai

(2015:ix), the whole of the being of the Quranic God is perfect, and as discovered in the previous chapter, the Quranic God is perfect due to His attribute of holiness. Thus, it is reasonable to deduce holiness to be an attribute within the Islamic tradition which holds all perfections within the Quranic God.

Furthermore, Ul-Husna (2012:36) adds that the attributes, or the names ascribed to the Quranic God, help people to discover God's qualities. Though not clearly, however, Ul-Husna (2012:37) seems to further clarify that the 99 names of the Quranic God are communicable attributes. Ul-Husna (2012) rejects the idea that the mind of God can be known, therefore, the attributes found within the 99 names in the Quranic scripture are attributes that can be known of God and therefore ought to be studied by all people. The names that are found in the Quranic scriptures speak of God's being and the manner in which He relates with His creation. Thus, according to conclusions made by Ul-Husna (2012:39), the attribute of holiness too is an attribute of God which is communicated for the sake of people's understanding and study of the being of God. Holiness is therefore enlisted amongst the "the most beautiful names" that belong to the Quranic God.

In like manner, Reformed theologians, such as Berkhof (1941), Bavinck (2004), and Charnock (2001) too see holiness, firstly, as an attribute of God, and secondly, as an attribute of essential value. To Berkhof (1941:73), the attribute of holiness is a type of attribute which could possibly qualify as an attribute which is central to the being of God. Bavinck (2004:217), while focussing on the function of God's attribute of holiness, points to theologians who observe holiness to be an essential inner attribute of God. Moreover, Bavinck's (2004:217) discussion on the function of God's attribute of holiness leads the researcher to see nothing but the grand nature of this attribute. Edwards (in Armstrong 1995:9) observes that, "Holiness is more than a mere attribute of God—it is the sum of all His attributes, the outshining of all that God is". Armstrong (1995:9), in noting the words of Edwards, gives special attention to God's attribute of holiness. Armstrong's justification of giving special attention to God's holiness is found in the biblical Scriptures. The word "holy" is used 900 times within the biblical Scriptures (Armstrong 1995). God is holy, but more so, all things associated with God are holy due to God's unique attribute of holiness. Such a discovery in the biblical Scriptures, as observed by Armstrong, hold no superstitious pretext, besides the fact that God's attribute of holiness is of special value.

Beeke (1995:82), a known Reformed theologian and scholar, on God's attribute of holiness, writes that, "God's holiness is the very essence of His being". Beeke (1995:82) further elaborates, suggesting that holiness is a type of attribute that extends and affects all other attributes of God. Holiness, an attribute whose reality is not merely recognised and taught in

the biblical Scriptures, but also celebrated (Beeke 1995). Though Beeke (1995:82) does not spend much time speaking about the majesty and the glory of God's attribute of holiness, it is however clear to Beeke (1995) that God's holiness is a matter of serious consideration. Thus, it has become clear this far that theologians from both perspectives – Islamic and Christian – consider holiness an attribute of God that holds significant weight for theological discourses on God. It can be deduced that both perspectives view God's attribute of holiness in a similar light.

3.2.1.2 God's holiness as perfection

The second similarity between Islamic and Christian theologians on the issue of God's holiness is that both sides see God's holiness as that which communicates His perfection. In Chapter 2, the researcher primarily uses Nasir as-Sa'di (2008) to discuss the perfection of the Quranic God as interpreted in light of His attribute of holiness. On the other hand, both primary theologians – Bavinck (2004) and Berkhof (1941) – agree on the issue of holiness being God's perfection. Moreover, in support of Bavinck (2004) and Berkhof (1941), the researcher uses Charnock (2001) to supplement the construction of the doctrine of God's holiness by specifically speaking of God's perfection as a result of His holiness. In regard to God's perfection as a result of His holiness, this is an issue that theologians from both perspectives (Islamic and Christian) once again display an astounding level of agreement.

Nasir as-Sa'di (2008) speaks of God's holiness as a type of attribute because of which there is a unique wholeness in God. This wholeness due to the perfection of God is further discussed by Nasir as-Sa'di (2008:53) to be that which is maintained by the Quranic God Himself. For Nasir as-Sa'di, the discussion of God's perfection takes off whilst looking upon His attribute of holiness. Holiness is an attribute which makes God separate in perfection of being and doing. This perfection that pours out of the Quranic God's holiness is that which affects His being and foreshadows all other attributes. Philips (2005:225), a Sunni Muslim scholar, while discussing the creation of humans, makes an important observation of the Quranic God and His perfection. Since Nasir as-Sa'di (2008) observes that perfection is a quality that bursts forth from the Quranic God's holiness, and Philips (2005) then applies the quality of perfection to all God's attributes, it is reasonable to conclude that perfection is a quality that, whilst simply defines the being of God, also affects the function of all other attributes. Such a view of God's holiness is not unique to Islamic theologians, but is one shared by Christian theologians as well.

In comparison to Berkhof (1941), Bavinck (2004) does not necessarily use the term "perfect", but the terms "pure", "clean", or "distinguished" to communicate the same idea. It is Berkhof (1941:74) that then stands in agreement with Charnock (2001:449) on the perfection of God, not only in idea but also in language. It is not to say that Bavinck (2004) is in disagreement with

Berkhof (1941) and Charnock (2001) when discussing God's perfection, but that Bavinck (2004:217-221) simply differs in the language he uses to identify the same idea of God's perfection. All three mentioned Christian theologians see perfection as a quality that bursts forth from the attribute of holiness. To summarise Bavinck (2004), Berkhof (1941) and Charnock's (2001) idea of God's perfection due to His holiness, the words of Dolezal (2011) seem fitting: "[N]othing that is not God can sufficiently account for God. He exists in all his perfection entirely in and through himself". For Dolezal (2011), discussing the perfection of God comes forth while defending the doctrine of divine simplicity. And, as previously noted by Beeke (1995:82), since holiness is that attribute which is on the backdrop of all other attributes, to talk about God without making mention of His perfection is to talk of God incompletely. Therefore, like the Islamic theologians, Christian theologians share in the definitions of God's perfection in His holiness, and moreover share in their attitude and care of the topic of God's perfection in His holiness.

3.2.1.3 God's holiness as separateness from creation

The discussion of God being separate from His own creation is one that is a nuanced discussion. Before one makes an umbrella statement and simply suggests that both the Sunni Islamic and the Reformed Christian perspective share the same view, or differ from one another, it is important to note that such a conclusion is false. Due to the varied nuances surrounding the separateness of God from humanity, theologians come to different conclusions, one example being Schlorff (1980), who suggests that the Islamic God is separate from humanity for a different reason than the biblical God. According to Schlorff (1980:341) and his study, the Quranic God is separate from humanity simply because He is great and not because of moral reasons, which he assumes is different from the Christian view. Schlorff's (1980:341) conclusion is different from that of the researcher and his study of the Islamic resources. What the researcher has found is that classic commentators/theologians are explicit that the Quranic God is separate from humanity not only due to His majesty over creation, but also that the Quranic God is separate from humanity due to moral reasons (Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti 2007:660). The view of Al-Jalalain (2007), translated by Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007), clarifies that there are Sunni Muslim theologians whose view of God and his 'separateness' correspond with that of Reformed Christian theologians such as Berkhof (1941).

The point of this section is by no means to explore the nuances of this specific similarity, but is simply to point out the similarity found in the resources consulted on this specific issue. One classic Muslim commentator/theologian observes that the Quranic God is to be separate from all that does not "befit Him" (Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti 2007:660). Furthermore, in the findings of the researcher, the Quranic God is simply separate morally from mankind but is also separate

majestically as a unique being, as observed by Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661). When gathering an understanding of the practical implications of God's separateness from humankind, one thing that stands out is the similarity between the Sunni Muslim theologians and the Reformed Christian theologians. At this point, the researcher draws on the discussion provided in Chapter 2 section 2.3.1, where Bavinck (2004) and Berkhof (1941) are in agreement with the Muslim theologians. Bavinck (2004:217), on the one hand, uses different theologians to clarify that they viewed the biblical God's holiness as that by which He is to be viewed separate from creation as a unique being, transcendent, powerful, and authoritative over creation. Whilst seeing the similarity between Bavinck (2004) and the Muslim theologians, Berkhof's (1941:73) view of God's holy separateness corresponds with that of Muslim theologians, in that God is separate from humankind morally. Furthermore, it is not only Berkhof (1941) and Bavinck (2004) who agree with Muslim theologians on this issue, Christian theologians like McCabe (2002) are also found to be in agreement. Commenting on Isaiah, McCabe (2008:8) states that, "Isaiah's description pictures a God who is majestically separate from his creation". This once again allows the researcher to see the similarity between Muslim and Christian theologians on the separateness of God due to His holiness. McCabe (2008:10) is not simply similar in his understanding of God's holiness and His separateness as being majestic and unique, but also analogous when viewing God's holiness as that which separates Him from humankind morally. As seen within the specific works of theologians consulted, when it comes to the issue of God's separateness to His creation due to holiness, both Muslim and Christian theologians agree.

3.2.1.4 God's holiness as creator

A further similarity seen between Reformed Christian and Sunni Muslim theologians on the theology of God's holiness is that both recognise God as creator. Yahya (2004:110) maintains that since the Quranic God is distinctly holy, it so on the grounds of His creative sovereignty. It is the Quranic God's holiness that communicates the wholeness of Himself, and this wholeness then is demonstrated in all creation. Yahya (2004:110) employs the idea of the wholeness of God when discussing His holiness, pointing out that God, who is holy, is the creator. The Muslim perspective on holiness then extends above simply understanding God as being perfect, to one who can be none other than perfect since He is the creator. The Quranic God is holy due to the fact that as the creator there is no one like Him, and He is creator due to His perfections communicated in the attribute of holiness.

Similar to the Muslim idea that the Quranic God's attribute of holiness communicates His kingship and confirms Him as the creator, so too is this idea shared by the Reformed Christian theologians. Harbin (2018) observes the work of Gentry, in which Gentry argues from Isaiah 6 "that Isaiah reacted to the majesty of the sovereign King. Specifically, Isaiah recognized that

Yahweh was the real king behind the human king” (Gentry, in Harbin 2018:25). The emphasis upon the sovereignty and the kingship of God is the first thing recognised by Isaiah (Gentry, in Harbin 2018). Furthermore, the bold proclamation of the angels followed in Isaiah 6:3 is primarily a title of the creator who is also “altogether righteous, faultless, and pure” (Gentry, in Harbin 2018:27).

When it comes to the view of God and His specific attribute of holiness, Bavinck (2004:217) observes three theologians who state,

Baudissin ... believed it was rather God’s utter transcendence and power over all creatures that was expressed in God’s holiness, and was supported in this view by Ritschl and others, who appealed to Numbers 20:12; Ezekiel 20:41; 28:25; and 36:20-24, and to the linkage between glory and holiness in texts like Isaiah 63:15; 64:11; Jeremiah 17:12; Ezekiel 20:40; and so forth. Closely related to this is the view of Shultz, who, based on Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; 6:20; Isaiah 6:3; 8:13; and 10:17, associates God’s holiness with his flaming majesty, his inapproachability, the infinite distance that separates him from all creatures.

Thus, what is seen in the comments made by Baudissin, Ritschl, and Shultz (in, Bavinck 2004:217) is that they have drawn out from the reality of God’s holiness the idea of God’s transcendence as the creator. The argument may extend to that, God is the creator due to the fact that He is holy which simply communicates His power and transcendence, and that God is holy, therefore it is that He is the creator.

At this point, the similarity in this is seen in the language theologians from both perspectives employ. From the Muslim perspective, holiness of God is that which communicates wholeness, by which God is creator, and without which God could not have been the creator. Thus, the title of being the creator bursts forth due to holiness, is one that follows as a matter of logical thought. And from the Christian perspective, holiness communicates power and transcendence, that which is paramount in the creation process, without which creation could not have been possible. Thus, the title of being the creator is then established due to the reality of holiness within the being of God. At this point, to view God’s holiness as an attribute that qualifies God as the creator is shared between both the Sunni Muslim theologians and the Reformed Christian theologians.

3.2.1.5 God’s holiness is incomprehensible

The incomprehensible God is One who cannot be fully discovered. When looking at the specific attribute of the holiness of God, it is gathered from the works of the Muslim theologian Al-Jibouri

(2012), that such an attribute creates a separation of intellect between humans and God. God, being the creator, stands above creation in all regards, and in complete ontological distinction rules over humans. Though, at this point the researcher does not appeal to the works of Bavink (2004) or Berkhof (1941), it still remains factual that Reformed Christian theologians such as John Calvin are found in agreement with the Muslim conclusion of the in-comprehensiveness of God (in Muller 2018:203).

Of further significance is that both Muslim and Christian theologians do not only see God as a being who is incomprehensible, but also understand the term in a similar light. Muller, a Christian theologian, commenting on Calvin's assertion of God's in-comprehensiveness, clarifies that Calvin's repeated mention of God's incomprehensibility is not to be understood as that by which humans can have no grasp of the God they serve (in Muller 2018:204). Instead, God's incomprehensibility communicates that God can be understood within a limit set by God Himself. In simpler terms, God cannot be fully understood or comprehended by humans.

At this point it is of great importance to note the similarities between the theologians from both perspectives, in that both Muslim and Christian theologians make similar recognition about God's nature. The similarity begins as soon as both Al-Jibouri (2012) and Calvin (in Muller 2018) arrive at the same conclusion that God is fully inconceivable. Additionally, both Al-Jibouri (2012) and Calvin's (in Muller 2018) conclusion is based on their separate and independent study of the being of God in His attributes; thus, though God is incomprehensible, He is comprehensive enough to communicate such a vital truth. Moreover, both Al-Jibouri (2012) and Calvin (in Muller 2018) arrive at similar conclusions while studying the attributes of God. While AL-Jibouri (2012) explicitly makes the connection between God's holiness and His incomprehensibility, Calvin (in Muller 2018:203), on the other hand, simply notes God's incomprehensibility to be an attribute of its own, distinct from holiness. However, the researcher has discovered in the works of Berkhof (1941:73) that from a Reformed Christian perspective, God's attribute of holiness is one specific attribute that affects everything that reveals God. Therefore, it is plausible then, when the researcher concludes that Calvin's (Calvin, in Muller 2018) observation of God's incomprehensibility is not outside the influence of His holiness, but is due to His own holiness. This view of God's holiness and its effect upon the relationship between humans and God is shared by both Muslim and Christian theologians.

3.2.1.6 God's holiness as sovereignty

Whilst researching the similarities between the concept of God's holiness in the two perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – it also comes forth definitionally that both perspectives share in the view of God's sovereignty as being displayed in holiness. Both

perspectives observe an undeniable relationship between holiness and sovereignty. Beeke (2010:79) observes that,

What did Calvin mean by God's sovereignty? The word sovereignty means 'rule'; hence, God's sovereignty means that God rules. God's sovereignty implies His supremacy, His kingship, and His deity. His sovereignty declares Him to be God, the incomprehensible Trinity who is nevertheless knowable insofar as He chooses to reveal Himself. God's sovereignty is exercised in all of His attributes, declaring Him to be perfect in all respects and possessor of all righteousness and holiness.

The reason for using the words of Beeke (2010) for Calvin's view of sovereignty is to immediately find a real relationship between God's holiness and sovereignty. From the Reformed Christian perspective, not only does Calvin identify the relationship between sovereignty and holiness, but this relationship is also found to be implicitly observed by Berkhof (1941:73) when defining the nature of God's holiness. Berkhof's (1941:73) use of language when discussing God's attribute of holiness leads one to draw a strong relationship with Calvin's (in Beeke 2010) discussion of God's sovereignty. On the one hand, Beeke (2010) notes Calvin's definition of God's sovereignty to mean the rule of God, the kingship of God, the supremacy of God. And, on the other hand, one finds Berkhof (1941) stating that God's holiness is that which, more simplistically put, is His "absolute overpoweringness", His "awful majesty". When comparing Berkhof's (2004) definition of holiness and Beeke (2010) on Calvin's definition of sovereignty, one finds that there is a unmistakable parallel between the two definitions, one for sovereignty and one for holiness. Therefore, the researcher finds reason to conclude that when discussing God's attribute of holiness or His sovereignty, one ought to point out the strong relationship between the two concepts.

At this point in the research, it has been discovered that like the Christian theologians, Muslim theologians too see a relationship between God's holiness and His sovereignty (Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī 2007:661). To further understand the relationship between the Quranic God's sovereignty and His holiness in the mind of Muslim theologians Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661), the researcher pays particular attention to language usage. When paying close attention to these two theologians, what is immediately made known is that the Quranic God is viewed in light of His sovereignty. According to Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661), the Quranic God's sovereignty is to not be understood in simple terms, but is to be understood with a certain quality, the quality of being "perpetual" and "never-ending". Furthermore, in the discussion of surah 59 verse 23, Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) identify the same God who is sovereign as being pure. When defining the being of the Quranic God, Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007:661) observe the two terms "sovereign" and "pure" together. Grammatically,

the Muslim theologians create no distinction between the two concepts that define the Quranic God. A simple reading of the definition then leads the researcher to arrive at the same conclusion proclaimed by the Christian theologians, that within the minds and language of the Muslim theologians, there is a strong relationship between the doctrine of God's holiness and His sovereignty.

Furthermore, it is crucial to clarify that the researcher is not suggesting that the similarity between the two perspectives (Reformed Christian and Sunni Muslim) is found within the definition of sovereignty. Instead, there is a correlation in the language used for God's sovereignty and His holiness by theologians from both perspectives. The researcher has not provided any study on God's sovereignty from any given perspective; therefore, this section ought not be taken as definitional to God's sovereignty. This section simply labours to show how both Muslim theologians and Christian theologians view God's holiness in relation to His sovereignty.

3.2.1.7 The peculiarity of God's holiness

Having briefly studied the works of theologians from both perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – another concept that similarly develops out of the doctrine of God's holiness, is God's holiness and its peculiar nature. Theologians such as Berkhof (1941) and Bavinck (2004), though not in the same manner of verbal expression, but in thought, seem to be in agreement with Muslim theologians al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007). The researcher has found the similarity to be in the ascribing of holiness as an attribute that uniquely originates from God. Having observed the commentary provided by Al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) on surah 59:23, it becomes difficult to maintain that the Muslim theologians do not view holiness as an attribute unique to God. Moreover, such an observation is also made within the works of Berkhof (1941:73).

On the one hand, al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007:660) begin their commentary on surah 59:23 by identifying the Quranic God as the one to whom all the mentioned attributes are ascribed to, of which, one being holiness. Samat et al., (2001:1) further clarifies that all the names of the Quranic God are unique in nature, and that "Allah is the One who possesses all the attributes of greatness, of uniqueness and of power". On the other hand, Reformed theologians, such as Berkhof (1941:73), who use phrases such as "absolute overpoweringness" to describe the attribute of God's holiness, and Bavinck (2004:217) who then notes theologians who viewed God's holiness as His "utter transcendence". When discussing God's attribute of holiness, the grand language within the works of Berkhof (1941) and Bavinck (2004) leads the researcher to conclude that in the minds of the two theologians, holiness of God is an attribute which is unique

to God. W. Still (1995), a Christian theologian, further provides scriptural proof to establish the uniqueness and the peculiarity of God's attribute of holiness. Still (1995:21) uses Exodus 15:11-12 to justify the assertion that indeed within the minds of Christian theologians, the biblical God ought to be "incomparable". The idea of incomparability is then understood by the researcher in the manner of uniqueness and peculiarity.

Having briefly provided an analytic observation of theologians from both perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – it is now safe to assert that theologians from both perspectives share some definitional characteristics. The Muslim theologians perceive the attributes of God as being unique to God, and as being found perfectly and completely in God alone. A comparative analysis between Muslim theologians' and Christian theologians' views of the doctrine of God's holiness and its unique position (which is within God), leads one onto similar definitional ground.

3.2.1.8 Concluding thoughts on definitional similarities

After a brief study within the works of theologians from both perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – it is clear that there are multiple points of definitional similarities. A proper student of comparative theology then should acknowledge this key reality between Islamic theology of God and the Christian theology of God. The researcher finds it unhelpful when Christian theologians simply create a complete theological separation between the Quranic God and the God of the Bible. Hanegraaff (n.d.), a Christian apologist, when answering the question "is the Allah of Islam the God of the Bible?", provides a one-sided answer when responding, "the Allah of Islam, however, is definitely not the God of the Bible". Though on face value this answer is appreciated, the answer provided by Hanegraaff (n.d.) does not acknowledge definitional similarities between the Islamic and Christian theology of God. Though the researcher shares in the theological assertion of Hanegraaff (n.d.), that indeed the biblical God is not the same as the Quranic God, it is a helpful insight for the Christian church to know that there are multiple points of definitional similarities between the Islamic and Christian theology of God.

At this point, the immediate task of the researcher is to demonstrate that there are indeed similarities between the Muslim conception and the Christian conception of God. The similarity between the two systems of the theology of God are definitional in nature, as observed. This discovery is by no means suggestive that the Islamic God and the biblical God are identical, but that there are observable similarities between the two religious schools of thought on the subject. The researcher arrived at this conclusion by carrying out an in-depth study on one aspect of God – His attribute of holiness.

3.2.2 God's holiness: Theological distinctions

After having explored multiple points of definitional agreements between the Islamic and Christian theologians on the subject of God's holiness, the researcher now proceeds to explore the distinctions between the two perspectives. So, when Bavinck (2004:220) states about the biblical God that, "among the gods he is incomparable: the Holy One", it is also to be understood in relation to the Quranic God. Bavinck's (2004:220) statement then is understood as one that draws a fundamental distinction in the way Muslim and Christian theologians view the entire character of God. When conducting a comparative study on the works of Islamic and Christian theologians on the subject of God's holiness, despite many definitional similarities, one immediately discovers a primary distinction between the two perspectives. The one distinction that then sets the Quranic God and the biblical God apart, is the way each one's holiness is applied.

Before discussing the manner in which the Islamic theologians understand God's holiness and its application, the researcher deems it crucial to clarify what the researcher means by "God's holiness applied". What is meant by the application of God's holiness is that, how does God's holiness regulate His character? How is it that God who is holy, separate from sin and evil, has a relationship with His creation, if any? How is it that God perfectly forgives all sins whilst maintaining His perfect justice? Such are questions that are answered and prioritised when looking at God's holiness and its application. In simpler terms, Islamic theology as presented by the selected Muslim theologians, lacks an understanding of holiness in moral terms. Muslim theologians have acknowledged God's natural perfections, but have completely missed God's moral perfection due to His holiness.

3.2.2.1 God's holiness applied

In as far as the researcher's study of the works of Islamic theologians takes him, one thing that becomes clear is that the Quranic God is indeed holy. When refereeing to the Quranic God and His holiness, one term that stands out in the minds of Muslim theologians is "perfection". The idea of perfection discussed by Muslim theologians as seen in Chapter 2 is one that extends to the sinlessness of the Quranic God and His separation from His creation. The Quranic God being sinless is seen as Him being One who does not commit sin. Furthermore, the idea of the Quranic God being separate from creation is one that is widely accepted by Muslim theologians, as seen in previous chapter.

However, though there is an appropriate measure of discussion on the Quranic God's holiness, there seems to be a lack in theological articulation on how His holiness is applied. When it comes to the function of the Quranic God's holiness, the researcher has gathered that, holiness

manifests natural perfection within the Quranic God. According to Philips (2005:225), the perfection that is manifest is then imposed upon all the attributes of the Quranic God. Though the idea of perfection due to holiness is helpful definitionally to the subject matter, the researcher still lacks clarity on the moral perfection of the Quranic God and its application. After much study and scrutiny of the Islamic theologians: Philips (2005), al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti (2007), Samat et al., (2001), Nasir as-Sa'di (2008), Ul-Husna (2012), Kidwai (2015), Yahya (2004) Abdul-Rahman (2007), AL-Jibouri (2012), Ibn 'Abbās and al-Fīrūzabādī (2007), and the rest, the researcher has not found any articulation on how God's specific attribute of holiness is applied in terms of moral perfection. Within the works of Islamic theologians, what is spoken of is the idea that the Quranic God's holiness is seen as His natural perfection, and that His perfection is understood definitionally in various ways. This far, from within the selected Islamic sources, the researcher has found a lack in the attempt to morally apply the Quranic God's attribute of holiness to Himself.

On the other hand, when it comes to the specific study of the attribute of God's holiness, the researcher has found a keen interest within Christian theologians to pay attention to both the natural perfections of God and the moral perfection of God. Edwards (in Delattre, 2006:123) provides a clear distinction between the moral and natural perfection of God; this kind of distinction and clarity lacks within Islamic theological discourses on the Quranic God's holiness. Like Berkhof (1941), Edwards (in Delattre, 2006:123) shows it to be a common practice to apply God's perfection in two ways, namely: *God's being* and *God's exercises*. In the articulations of Edwards (in Delattre 2006:123), the researcher discovers God's natural perfection to be that which is used when thinking about the being of God, which is His greatness, His omniscience, His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His eternity, His majesty, etc. Edwards (in Delattre 2006:123) then provides an exposition on the moral perfections of God which has to do with God's moral exercises. This is understood by Edwards (in Delattre 2006:123) to be that which deals with the manner in which God shows and practices His goodness, righteousness, truthfulness, faithfulness, and wrath. While agreeing with Edward (in Delattre 2006:123), Fuller (in Hoselton 2014:125), when discussing the specific attribute of God's holiness, sees it in terms of God's moral perfections.

Within the minds of Christian theologians such as Edwards (in Delattre 2006:124), drawing the distinction between the two types of perfections within God's holiness becomes important for the simple reason that God's moral perfection affirms God's natural perfection. According to Fuller (in Hoselton 2014:125), what affirms God's glory better is not His natural perfections, but His moral perfections. From the Christian perspective, God's holiness as seen in its moral perfections within God is then not merely understood theoretically, but is seen operating in the

“precepts of the gospel” (Fuller, in Hoselton 2014:126). What is meant by Fuller (in Hoselton 2014:126) is that God’s holiness is such that it works to preserve the perfection of all attributes at the same time. No attribute of God functions at the cost of another attribute; instead, they are reconciled in the gospel due to the moral perfection of God in His holiness. To talk about God’s natural perfection without paying any attention to God’s moral perfection and its function is a futile practice. Edwards (in Delattre 2006:124) at this point is intentional in the usage of language when he points out that it is God’s moral perfection that qualify God’s natural perfection. Such a distinction helps the researcher in thinking holistically about the holiness of God. Not only is such a definitional distinction provided by Edwards (in Delattre 2006:123-124) and Fuller (in Hoselton 2014) helpful to the researcher, but it has also created an appreciation for the subject matter. After providing a brief evaluation of Edwards (in Delattre 2006:123-124) and Fuller’s (in Hoselton 2014) definition, the researcher finds it reasonable to agree with the definition and observation of Edwards and Fuller on the subject matter. For God to be labelled as perfect in His holiness, it would lead one to two conclusions: firstly, seeing a strong case for the need to draw a distinction between the natural and the moral perfection of God in His holiness. Secondly, assessing God’s complete perfection by both categories, moral and natural perfection is a more reliable means of discovering one’s theology of God’s entire perfection.

According to the researcher, this is the main difference between Islamic theology and Christian theology of God’s holiness. In the process of this study, the researcher has on the one hand provided a thorough discussion of God’s natural and moral perfection by reflecting on the works of Christian theologians. On the other hand, he found a significant amount of information on God’s natural perfection, and almost none on God’s moral perfection within the writings of Sunni Islamic theologians. If the observation of Edwards (in Delattre 2006:124) and Fuller (in Hoselton 2014:126) is applied to the Sunni Islamic theology of God’s perfection, one could reasonably conclude that the Quranic God fails the test of perfection. The view of God’s categorical discussion of perfection in His holiness and its function is one that becomes a striking difference between Islamic theology and Christian theology of God’s holiness.

3.3 God’s Holiness: Comparative Analysis

So far, it has been well established that indeed there are some definitional similarities in the minds of Muslim and Christian theologians on the doctrine of God’s holiness. Furthermore, not only are there similarities, but there are theological distinctions between the two perspectives on the subject matter. After having made such pertinent discoveries, a comparative dialogue between the two perspectives focusing specifically on their theological distinctions further strengthens the research. Both perspectives acknowledge God’s holiness as that which

describes God's natural and ontological perfections and greatness; however, from the two mentioned perspectives, it is only the Christian perspective that applies the doctrine of God's holiness to God's moral perfections. Islamic theologians are fairly quiet on the subject of God's moral perfections. This section comparatively explores this discovered distinction in order to educate the Christian church on its theological consistencies when discussing the doctrine of God with a Sunni Muslim.

According to the researcher, the Reformed Christian theology of God's holiness is one that displays a superior consistency than that found within the theology of Sunni Muslim theologians. Christian theologians understand God's holiness manifested in perfections to extend beyond God's natural and ontological perfections. Berkhof (1941:73) further assists in adding to the Christian theology of God's holiness by using the term "ethical". In the mind of Berkhof (1941:73), what makes the biblical God truly holy and confirms His holiness is the fact that the biblical God is perfectly ethical. And in order to justify Berkhof's (1941:73) observation of God's ethical perfection, Boettner (2011) provides some helpful insights. Boettner (2011:36) informs the research that the ethical and the moral perfection of God is seen in the perfect satisfaction of God's justice and mercy on the cross. What is meant by this view is that due to God's holiness, to simply allow sin to be ignored, in that it may go unpunished at the hands of God's mercy, is to ignore the moral character of the biblical God. Boettner's (2011:36) solution to the reconciliation of God's mercy and justice is His holiness. On the other hand, what is found in the Islamic theology of God's holiness is a claim of His attributes being perfect, according to Philips (2005:225), but no solution is provided in an attempt to reconcile God's justice and mercy.

Comparatively, what is discovered is that, between Islamic theology and Christian theology, the difference is found in how each perspective sees God's holiness being manifested and/or demonstrated. For the Reformed Christian theologians, God's holiness is better demonstrated in His moral excellence (Boettner 2011:39); however, for the Sunni Muslim theologians, God's holiness is demonstrated in His ontological greatness, in His majesty, and absolute uniqueness, in that He is completely other than every contingent existence. Moreover, the difference between the two perspectives is not only in their view of how God's holiness is demonstrated, but also in how each perspective views God's perfection due to His holiness.

It is gathered from the Reformed Christian perspective, that if God is perfect, His perfection is understood to apply to not only His being, but also to the way in which He functions. On the other hand, the Sunni Muslim theologians simply apply God's perfection to His being and therefore provide no meaningful understanding of how the Quranic God's perfection dictates to

His function. And as indicated by Boettner (2011:37), a perfect example of God's holiness is seen demonstrated in the manner in which justice and mercy operate in God. In the biblical God, justice and mercy/forgiveness of sins is reconciled in such a way that "mercy does not cheat justice". On the other hand, the Sunni Muslim theology of God's holiness, although upholds the Quranic God in great esteem, fails to apply the standard of holiness in the way the Quranic God exercises His forgiveness and justice.

The Qur'an teaches believers to repent for whatever wrongs they have done and to seek Allah's forgiveness immediately before it is too late ... Thus, Islam advises people that the moment they realise their mistake, they should be truly sorry and mend their ways. With Allah, it is the turning of the heart towards Him that is sufficient to receive His Forgiveness (Kadir 2016:117).

And so, when properly scrutinised, the Quranic God does that which the biblical God cannot. As noted by Boettner (2011:37), the biblical God cannot give *more* attention to one attribute like mercy whilst giving less attention to another attribute like justice. In the language of Boettner (2011:37), this would be cheating one attribute over the other. Yet, it seems like the Quranic God is well able to favour one attribute over the other circumstantially.

3.3.1 The idea of perfection

Since it is collectively understood that God's holiness is simply and properly understood by His perfection; in order to further comparatively analyse the two aforementioned perspectives on God's holiness, a discussion on perfection is imperative. After having identified how holiness is demonstrated in both perspectives – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – the study comparatively examines the idea of perfection in God from both perspectives. This comparative examination of the idea of perfection in the study of God's holiness further provides apologetical strength to the church.

If God is holy, then He is perfect, and if He is perfect, then His being as well as His ways are perfect; this far, such a trail of thought has been well established. However, the researcher has found a distinction in the way both aforementioned perspectives understand and apply perfection to the doctrine of God. In order to explore this specific distinction, the researcher reflects on secular resources to define perfection and then examines the term against the theology of God's holiness from each mentioned perspective. The reason for utilising secular resources at this point is to avoid biases toward each perspective and its idea of perfection.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (ed. Mayor 2009:1290) defines the word “perfect” as that of “not having any mistakes, faults”. After a close consideration of the term perfect, the researcher cannot but conclude that the idea of perfection demands faultlessness. What is meant by faultlessness, is that the subject to which perfection is ascribed too, cannot be at fault, moreover, lack the ability to be at fault. Faultlessness should not be understood as something that prevents one from being blamed, but that whoever and whatever is perfect cannot do anything that is blameworthy. Such an idea can be further thought of in terms of consistency. In the words of the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (ed. Mayor 2009:1290), perfect is that which is devoid of “any mistakes”, such an idea creates a harsh standard for the subject of perfection. To one whom perfection is ascribed, he/she not only lacks the ability to make mistakes, but when at fault, immediately falls short of perfection, and then is no longer considered perfect. Additionally, one to whom perfection is ascribed, such an existence cannot fall short of consistency, for in keeping consistency can one then uphold the character of perfection? At this point both mentioned Muslim theologians and mentioned Christian theologians would quickly embrace such an idea of perfection and use it to identify their respective theologies of God. The question now raised is, from which perspective do theologians better and more consistently apply the idea of perfection when discussing the doctrine of God’s holiness?

After having studied the selected resources from both Islamic theologians and Christian theologians on the doctrine of God’s holiness, it is in the findings of the researcher that the standard of perfection is properly used by Christian theologians. As previously observed, when looking at the doctrine of God’s holiness and what it means to the moral/ethical aspect of God, Christian theologians provide an answer whilst Muslim theologians are found to be silent on the matter. Reformed Christian theology acknowledges that the biblical God is perfect, pure “in his essence, nature, and operation” (Charnock 2001:448). Whilst a Muslim theologian would agree on the matter, there remains a lack in theological articulations on what is meant by “God is pure”, specifically in operation. The researcher in particular takes issue with the way Muslim theologians think about the function of God’s justice and mercy in light of His perfection. According to the Muslim author, Kadir (2016:117), the Quranic God’s mercy is obtained by a simple act of repentance. Though a noble thought, what stands out more to the researcher is the way God works in His own mercy. Seemingly, for the Quranic God, mercy is given without the satisfaction of His own justice. The Quranic God can simply ignore His need for justice in order that the repentant may be forgiven and freed from the burden of sin.

Comparatively, Christian theologians such as Charnock (2001:467) state that “divine holiness is the root of divine justice, and divine justice is the triumph of divine holiness”. Furthermore,

Charnock (2001:467) develops his statement by noting that the biblical God desires justice due to His perfection which can be further understood by His righteousness. God's holiness develops into His perfect righteousness, and God's perfect righteousness demands righteousness of all creation and consequently hates all unrighteousness (Charnock 2001). Moreover, due to the moral perfection of God, it has been established that He cannot simply ignore sin. "When men will not own the holiness of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment" (Charnock 2001:468). It is well understood that Reformed Christian theology then views the justice and the punishment of God as a necessary element that comes forth from His holiness. And due to God's perfection of holiness, God's justice is not only necessary, but also irreversible (Charnock 2001:469). However, the perfection of the biblical God is not only seen in His justice, but also in His mercy.

The necessity of perfection is that, to whomever it is attributed, such an existence cannot display any manner of compromise, nor have any room for manipulation. Such a standard is well upheld in the theology of the biblical God. While upholding the perfect and uncompromising justice of God, what Charnock (2001) recognises at the same time is that the same standard of perfection needs to be applied to God's mercy. The same holy God that demands justice and cannot ignore sin, is the same God who is further known as love (1 Jhn. 4:8). Therefore, for love to triumph, the mercy of God operates, that the subject of God's love may have an experience of God's love. However, this is the ethical dilemma that the perfection of God in His holiness solves. Whilst the biblical God remains seeking and working towards justice in punishment for all and any sin, the mercy of God works alongside hand in hand within the being of God (Charnock 2001:472). The dilemma of justice and mercy is further solved in the person of Christ (Charnock 2001:471). The reason for this solution is the divine attribute of God's holiness which dictates to the perfect ethics of God. Without compromising any aspect of God, justice or mercy, God satisfies these in the person and work of Christ. Therefore, the beauty of the Christian idea of perfection is seen in this very idea that, two seemingly opposite attributes and functions of God (justice and mercy) are fulfilled without compromising any other operations within the being of God.

The researcher has found that when compared, Islamic theology of God's perfection is demonstrably inconsistent to the standard of perfection. Seemingly, the Quranic God operates within the confines of one attribute at a time, therefore quieting down other functions and attributes. On the other hand, Christian theology of God's perfection is demonstrably more consistent to the standard of perfection. The biblical God, when in operation, does so in consideration and harmony of all other functions and attributes.

3.3.2 God's holiness and immutability

After having considered the idea of perfection in the two selected systems of religion – Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity – the researcher has found the discussion of holiness and perfection to also extend to God's *immutability*. For the Christian theologian, Berkhof (1941:58), immutability directly relates to God's perfection. Thus, it is reasonable then to conclude that God's immutability has a working relationship with His specific attribute of holiness. The researcher arrives at this conclusion by observing God's holiness, which is more clearly demonstrated in God's perfections (Berkhof 1941:73). Then, what is seen is Berkhof (1941:58) using the idea of perfection in order to provide and develop an exposition of God's immutability. Since God is perfect, God "is devoid of all change" (Berkhof 1941). At this point, the researcher understands Berkhof's (1941) reasoning. When Berkhof (1941) appeals to the idea of perfection within the discussion of divine immutability, he does so in order to justify divine immutability. The biblical God's perfection encourages a positive discussion and a negative one too. On the one hand, God is perfect, a being who has everything within Him; this is why Berkhof (1941) recognises that all things with God remain the same. The biblical God positively possesses all things within Himself. On the other hand, when speaking of God's perfection, one could extend the discussion toward the fact that God lacks nothing, and not only that God lacks nothing, but that He can lack nothing. Moreover, it is not only that the biblical God has all things within Himself and that He lacks nothing, but that the idea of perfection strongly guards against the idea of a mutable God. Berkhof (1941:73) states that, "[I]n God, as the absolute perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible".

Having understood Berkhof's (1941) view on divine immutability and its relationship to divine perfection, the researcher finds that the biblical God is suitably considered as immutable. The biblical God is one who does not change – not only does He not change, He simply cannot change. Due to the comparative nature of this section, when the research analyses the doctrine of divine immutability and its relationship to God's holiness against the Muslim theology of God's holiness, inconsistency is found. The researcher concludes that the inconsistency is found within the theology of Muslim scholars Philipps (2005) and Kadir (2016). The observed inconsistency is that, though the Quranic God is properly understood as holy, He fails the test of perfection (as seen in section 3.3.1.), and moreover, the Quranic God fails the test of immutability. The researcher arrives at this conclusion by primarily looking at the manner in which theologians from both perspectives articulate God's operations in mercy and justice.

Since the idea of immutability teaches changelessness and insinuates a strict and unhindered commitment and function within a certain framework, the Quranic God cannot be immutable. A careful look at Kadir's (2016:117) observation of the Quranic God's approach toward His own

justice and mercy clarifies this issue. According to Kadir (2016), the Quranic God's mercy is demonstrated toward the Muslim when the Muslim simply seeks repentance. At this point, it is understood that the Quranic God's mercy does not require justice, but that when the Muslim seeks repentance, the Quranic God moves His attention from justice and punishment to His mercy. This view is not unique to Kadir (2016), but is one that is shared with Umarji, Elwan, and Umar (2020). When discussing the issue of mercy and the Quranic God's punishment, Umarji et al., (2020) provide a simple mechanism for Muslims to follow. In order to gain mercy and escape the Quranic God's justice and punishment, Umarji et al., (2020) provide two ways: simply repent, and in order to prove repentance perform charity. Therefore, what is seen in the Quranic God is that He is able to mutably deal with His own attributes. Demonstrably, the Quranic God requires no satisfaction of previous crimes committed by His subjects, but easily disregards them due to His *perfect* mercy. The mutability of the Quranic God is therefore seen in this idea of Him simply ignoring His justice which is also supposed to be *perfect*. An immutable being does not change, however the Quranic God changes when He personally chooses to not practice His own justice perfectly. The Quranic God seems to exercise mercy and justice with great inconsistency and bias. There seems to be no clear or strict standard by which mercy and justice are exercised without compromising the idea of perfection within the *holy* Quranic God. Therefore, a comparative study on the subject of immutability shows the Quranic God to be less consistently adherent to the standards of immutability than the biblical God.

3.4 Conclusion

When studying to gain apologetical strength in any given theological matter, a comparative dialogue plays a key role. This chapter not only provides a brief comparative analysis of the doctrine of holiness espoused by Sunni Muslim and Reformed Christian theologians, but also aims to give an unbiased theology of the attribute of holiness from each perspective. Furthermore, the study does not simply inform theological views on the attribute of holiness, nor has it limited itself to simply discover differences and similarities between the perspectives; instead, the chapter goes further and discusses the weaknesses and strengths of each perspective and its theology of God's attribute of holiness.

To sum up, what has been academically realised is that the theology of Sunni Muslim scholars on the subject of God and His holiness is lacking in consistency, insight, and theologically developed articulations, and lastly, presents with many challenges. On the other hand, the Reformed Christian theologians have been able to provide all that lacks in the theological articulations of Muslim scholars on the subject of God and His specific attribute of holiness.

The researcher also recognises that this is a relatively undeveloped field of study that requires further inquiry. The issue of God and His specific attribute of holiness is a subject that has come across to be one of much complexity and applicability. Its complexity is such that prevents the human mind to discover God fully, and its applicability is of such nature that it transcends all other aspects of God. Since this study specifically focuses on defining holiness and comparing the subject within two major religious systems, it is beyond the scope to explore other facets of holiness. However, in the brief study of the attribute of God's holiness, it has been established that the Christian church can and should take apologetical and missional strength in order to accomplish the Great Commission. This chapter, if studied well provides one with the necessary apologetical and elenctic strength to accomplish the Great Commission.

The next chapter looks at methods and approaches to the Sunni Muslim community toward the fulfilment of the Great Commission and uses the doctrine of God's holiness as the central theme.

CHAPTER 4

UTILISING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S HOLINESS IN CHRISTIAN MISSIOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Like many theological discourses, this study too must have practical bearing upon the student, and human living in the larger context. The researcher appreciates the observation made by Keyser (1931) on the subject. Keyser (1931:302) discredits all theological knowledge and study which is limited to mere theoretics and speculation, and furthermore sees such knowledge and study as superfluous. At this point, Keyser (1931:302) draws a distinction between a helpful theological study and an unhelpful theological study. Both kinds of theological discourses are identified by specific characteristics. Keyser (1931:302) identifies the characteristics of helpful theological discourses, and by opposite implication, the researcher identifies the characteristics of an unhelpful theological study for the reader. The primary characteristic of a helpful theological study is that it prepares “men [and women] for the ministry of the Word” (Keyser 1931:302). By implication, an unhelpful theological study is one which adds no ministerial or spiritual value to the minister.

To think of theology as necessary and primary for the equipping of ministry is not unique to Keyser (1931); in fact, more contemporary theologians such as Hendricks (2004:9) agree with the idea that theology is always coupled with ministry. According to Hendricks (2004:9), theology is not only something that is used for ministry, but is by very nature ministerial, and more specifically missional. What is observed in Hendricks (2004:9) is this idea that the very essence of theology, as well as the aim and existence of theology, are essentially missional. Therefore, to separate theology from its ministerial, missional dimension is to take the life out of the study, and thus never capture its true substance. Kirk (1999:11) further adds to the discussion, that “there can be no theology without mission – or, to put it another way, no theology which is not missionary. This is partly a matter of observation in that theology is, by its nature, about fundamental concerns which affect life at all levels”. The observation made by Kirk (1999:11) pushes the border of the speculative nature of theology into the dimension of practical life, as affirmed by the stance of Hendricks (2004) and McGraw (2012).

This is why theological study becomes necessary, in order that the church might appropriately accomplish the task of missions and ministry in general. Keyser (1931:302) emphasises that

within the Christian community, the history of theological education has shown to have had a fruitful effect in progressing the work of God. Therefore, it is understood that the problem is not that theological study in itself is ineffective, but rather that there is a lack of application of theological study/knowledge in the equipping of ministers and the church at large. McGraw (2012:311) further assists by observing that what ministers need in many spheres of ministry is “sound” theological study/knowledge. The researcher understands that the usage of the word “sound” by McGraw (2012:311) is not merely limited to good, or biblically balanced theoretical knowledge, but also knowledge that contains within it the capacity to effect Christian ministry. For the four theologians, Keyser (1931), Hendricks (2004), Kirk (1999), and McGraw (2012), sound and biblical theological study/knowledge aims at practically elevating Christian living and ministry. Without the aim to elevate Christian living and ministry, theological study/knowledge is viewed as superfluous and pointless. It is also important to note that in accordance with the four mentioned theologians, “sound” Christian/biblical theological knowledge must indeed include within it the ministerial/missional dimension.

Therefore, while agreeing with Keyser (1931), Hendricks (2004), Kirk (1999), and McGraw (2012), the researcher delineates the direction of this study. More specifically, the comparative study of God’s holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity is meant to elevate Christian ministry in the area of missions to Sunni Muslims. The study is utilised to inform and equip Christian ministers and the church at large in the area of apologetics and elenctics in missions. Since the primary task of Chapter 4 is to utilise the study in missions, the chapter begins with a definition of “missions” and explores a few methods of missions in order to apply the study to one specific definition and method. Secondly, the chapter explores how apologetics and dialectical elenctics may be an essential part of missions. The primary sources that are used to discuss the place of elenctics and apologetics in missions are Bavinck (1960) and Knudsen (1986). Bavinck (1960) assists in identifying the role of elenctics in missions, and further provides a discussion on the method of elenctics. In addition to Bavinck’s (1960) contribution to missions and elenctics, the chapter reflects on Knudsen (1986) who explores how Christian apologetics should be understood and what connection there is between apologetics and missions. Lastly, the chapter shows how the study subject in specific elevates mission initiatives. This discussion provides the reader with key insights on the practical importance of the subject matter and the quality it adds to mission initiatives.

Keeping the purpose of this chapter in mind, not too much attention will be given to missiology per se, but rather the focus will be on mission initiatives. The researcher endeavours to show the significant role that this study can play in missional initiatives, and therefore promotes the utilisation thereof.

4.2 Christian Missiology

4.2.1 Defining missions

Before looking at the role of the study in apologetics and elenctics for Christian mission, it is necessary to define what is meant by Christian missions and explain the importance thereof for the church. The urgency to define Christian missions before dealing with the subject of the chapter is because of the great diversity surrounding missiological thinking and methods. Garrett (2008:106), when defining missions, notes that,

The precise focus of mission trips runs across a wide spectrum of creative activities. Some focus on sports, on disaster relief, on cultural interchange, on AIDS prevention, on work with orphans, on agricultural assistance, on many forms of community development, on teaching courses to local Christians, on simple relationship building, on prayer-walking, on scripture distribution or on direct evangelism, or even on a building project. The list could go on and on.

In light of Garrett's (2008:106) definition, there is a wide range of missiological understandings. Though writing on the fairly modern phenomena, the short-term mission trip, Garrett (2008:106) provides insight into contemporary missiological thinking. Firstly, according to Garrett (2008), *missions* is understood to be a kind of ministry for which a trip becomes an important element. Moreover, in regard to the trip, Garrett (2008) makes a distinction between a long-term mission trip and a short-term mission trip. Garrett (2008:105) suggests that the primary difference between long- and short-term mission trips is the longevity of the trip.

Long-term mission trips are such as seen in the life of William Carey (Garrett 2008:105). According to Garrett (2008), the traditional practice of long-term mission trips required a life-time commitment. On the other hand, Garrett (2008) notes that short-term mission trips allowed one to engage in missions for short periods of time. Short term mission trips can extend over a couple years or even a few weeks (Garrett 2008). Additional to the definitional distinctive between long-term and short-term mission trips, Garrett (2008:106) suggests that the contemporary understanding of missions involves "creative activities". It is worth noting that, within the definition provided by Garrett (2008), not all activities include a verbal communication of the gospel⁴. In fact, a closer look at the list of "creative activities" provided by Garrett (2008) in his

⁴ The gospel is a subject mainly committed to communicating the life, the ministry, and the person of Christ (Bavinck 2006:423-424). In the gospel exposition of Bavinck (2006:423-424), one finds a sole focus on everything Jesus Christ. Bavinck's (2006:423-424) exposition, while committed to elevating Christ, provides practical application of the gospel to the human experience. In the human experience, Christ's death becomes a matter of necessity, so that Christ might become saviour (Bavinck 2006:423).

definition of missions leads one to notice that the majority of the activities do not include a verbal communication of the gospel. According to the definition provided by Garrett (2008), within the minds of the contemporary church, missions seems to be more about activities of social welfare within certain groups than a clear communication of the gospel.

Reading Garrett's (2008) observation of contemporary missiological thinking, one may easily be convinced of the diversity and wholeness it expresses about missions today. However, missions has been subject to further elaboration and thinking. Rick and Kay Warren (2009) propose a different perspective of missions called the "social gospel". The researcher gathers that according to Warren and Warren (2009:620) the social gospel is nothing less than a holistic approach to missions. Warren and Warren (2009:620) justify their perspective by using an experiential illustration, the story of David Miller. In the experience of Warren and Warren (2009:620), David came to faith in Christ as a result of him witnessing Warren and Warren involved practically in social reform and welfare programmes.

Though Warren and Warren (2009) do not provide actual biblical or even an academic argument for the said missiological perspective, they remain a proponent of it due to what they have experienced. It is not that they suggest a "no gospel" missiological approach and perspective, but it, of course, puts the communicating of the gospel in missions as a step that comes after social welfare programmes. The perspective seems to be motivated by a desire to make God "visible" (Warren and Warren 2009:621) to the unbelieving world. The method in which God is made "visible" is by simply showing the love of God in actions such as expressed in social welfare programmes. Seemingly, according to Warren and Warren (2009), a simple and clear communication and articulation of the gospel is not enough to prove the existence of God and, moreover, the love of God. According to the perspective shared by Warren and Warren (2009), it is of imperative value for all Christians to first engage in social welfare programmes, so that men/women would witness the truth of God's love in the proclaimer, additionally so that men/women would be more open to the gospel. The job of the socially motivated missions is

Within the human experience the need of a saviour is due to the sins of humans (Bavinck 2006:447). Humanity is now in need of a saviour who provides deliverance from the bondage of sin and its eternal consequence, which is in Christ (Bavinck 2006:447). Within the exposition of the gospel, Bavinck (2006) seems to be drawing a relationship between sin and salvation. Sin is that reality which has set humans on a progressively negative course of which the end is judgement. On the other end of the discussion within Bavinck (2006:447), though the human experience is riddled with sin and its effects and motivations, there is provision for salvation and deliverance. Moreover, the researcher finds Bavinck (2006:447) to not neglect the reality of the eternal. When discussing the effect and consequence of sin, Bavinck (2006:447) makes sure to clearly point out the nature of the consequence, it is eternal. Such language creates an impression of urgency in the mind of the reader. Therefore, the gospel is that, which communicates the dire need of all men for salvation from eternal wrath, death, and destruction, and this is found in the person of Christ as a result of His glorious also yet sacrificial life.

not only to make God and His love visible, but also to draw men/women out, in order that they may hear the gospel.

It is important to note that, following a quick read of Warren and Warren (2009) and Garrett (2008) it may appear that both methods are the same. However, despite a number of overlaps, they are distinguished by several nuances. While Garrett (2008) includes social welfare programmes within the missiological definition and method, he does not make the social welfare programme a must in missions. For Garrett (2008), social programmes are only one way the contemporary church understands missions. On the other hand, in the definitional perspective of Warren and Warren (2009), social welfare programmes play a more significant role, without which the gospel message would be ineffective.

Another missiological perspective and approach which develops its own definition for missions is called “power encounter” (Kraft 2009:445). Power encounter in missions is such that it focuses not only on the communication of the gospel, but is an approach dedicated to proving the power of the Christian God (Kraft 2009:445). According to Kraft (2009:445), missionaries and evangelists committed to the power encounter method are usually interested in demonstrating God’s power by concurrence of miracles, such as deliverances from satanic spirits, and the witnessing of physical healing amongst those who are being ministered to. Kraft (2009:446) goes as far as to say that, “gospel messages about faith, love, forgiveness and other facts of Christianity are not likely to have nearly the impact on such people as the demonstration of spiritual power”. It mildly occurs to the researcher that in the mind of Kraft (2009), the power of God is not demonstrated in the gospel narrative. In the final analyses of Kraft (2009), within the approach and definitional structure of missions, the idea of a power encounter exists to fulfil that which lacks in the gospel message. This missiological perspective, though not directly but indirectly shares in the sentiments of the social gospel propagated by Warren and Warren (2009). The similarity between the perspective of Kraft (2009) of a “power encounter” and Warren and Warren (2009) of the “social gospel” is simply this: that the simple articulation of the gospel message on its own lacks missiological effectiveness, therefore the gospel message is in need of additional characteristics.

Though the researcher has not provided all missiological perspectives and definitions (keeping in mind that discussing missiological definitions is not the purpose behind this chapter), the amount of discussion provided is sufficient to make the point. The point behind providing various missiological definitions and perspective is to show the diversity inherent in missiological thinking. Therefore, in order to accomplish the set out missiological task of this chapter, it is crucial to clarify what the researcher means by missions and what the researcher does not mean

by missions. This far, the missiological perspectives and definitions provided express what the researcher *does not* mean by the term missions. In order to appropriately understand the usage of the terms mission in this chapter, the researcher reflects on Bavinck.

Missions is that activity of the church – in essence it is nothing else than an activity of Christ, exercised through the church – through which the church, in this interim period, in which the end is postponed, calls the people of the earth to repentance and to faith in Christ, so that they may be made his disciples and through baptism be incorporated into the fellowship of those who await the coming of the Kingdom (Bavinck 1975:11).

A closer look at Bavinck's (1975:11) definition leads one to no other conclusion that Bavinck's understanding and commitment in missions is purely to the communication of the gospel. According to Bavinck (1975:11), the priority of missions is to call people to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ. Contrary to Garrett (2008), Warren and Warren (2009), and Kraft (2009), Bavinck (1975:11) is not primarily concerned with the social welfare of communities. In fact, it could be appropriate to assert that in the mind of Bavinck (1975), there is no greater social work than to call men/women to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. A similar sentiment is expressed by Calvin (in Calvin 2008). Calvin (2008:5) notes that the knowledge of God is such that it illumines the mind and converts men/women to live a holier life. Calvin (2008:5) further discusses the reality and the nature of learning about God, saying that in the past patriarchy was greatly affected by the true knowledge of God that it produced amongst them holiness, and thus led to social benefits and good. Therefore, within the church, the ministry and department of social welfare and societal justice must not be neglected. What is deduced from Calvin (2008:5) and Kirk (1999:53) is that there is a theological distinction between (2008), Warren and Warren (2009), and Kraft (2009), who on the one side see social welfare and justice programmes as a necessary addition to the preaching of the gospel, while Calvin (2008:5), Kirk (1999:53) and Bavinck (1975), on the other side, see the gospel itself as intrinsically a message with social welfare and justice in it. Therefore, there is no need to, firstly, separate the gospel ministry with the aim of social welfare and justice, presenting them as separate, and then, secondly, there is no need to add the two separate proponents back to each other.

The issue foregrounded is that the preaching of the gospel is central and primary to any and all mission initiatives. Where the gospel's focus and aim is on mission, the researcher understands Christian mission as having evolved out of being Christian mission to being missions alien to the Christian mandate of missions. Therefore, in accordance with Bavinck (1975), the researcher defines mission as *a ministry that is purely focused on the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing of people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.*

Furthermore, the term “mission”, at least within the context of this study, is used inclusively. De Jong (1975:11), while commenting on Bavinck, states that,

Bavinck allows room in his definition for both the professional missionary and the missionary role of every believer, that is, for the role of the church as institute and the church as organism. Further, he emphasizes the task of mission as witness to the kingdom and proclamation of the gospel unto repentance and faith, discipleship and incorporation into Christian fellowship. He minimizes a geographic dimension as normative for defining mission, referring only to ‘the peoples of the earth,’ and thus allows for both foreign missions and home missions, both mission and evangelism.

When discussing mission, the researcher finds it of value to clarify that mission is a kind of ministry that is mandated to all believers within the church, as learnt from De Jong (1975:11). This is an important observation for the research because it is on this premise that the research is then to be utilised broadly. Additionally, an important aspect of mission is the false criteria of travel. Like in the definition of Garrett (2008) and Kraft (2009), De Jong (1975:11), commenting on Bavinck, does not implicate the minister with the need to travel to foreign countries for missions. Though the need to travel is not explicit within the definitional structures of Garrett (2008) and Kraft (2009), it is reasonable to suggest that the idea of travel for mission is indeed implicit within their definitional structures. Therefore, the research looks past all definitional discussions regarding mission and rests agreeable with Bavinck (in De Jong 1975:11), that Christian mission is primarily gospel centric.

After having explored the centrality of the gospel in Christian mission, another crucial tenet that must be given proper heed to is its relationship with theology. According to Kirk (1999:20), theological disciplines and their respective subject matter are intrinsically missionary. What is meant by theology being intrinsically missionary is that the task of theology is to explore truth and to then expose truth to men/women in attempt to knowing God. Therefore, what is seen in the implications of mission is “a deep commitment to truth of a particular message, interpreted as good news for all people” (Kirk 1999:20). To think in terms of the task and aim of mission and theology, one cannot but see the striking resemblance between the two. Therefore, it is important to note that mission without theology loses substance, and theology without mission loses its aim and purpose.

Taking into consideration the discussion around the definitional structures of mission in contemporary theological discourses, the researcher briefly concludes that, firstly, mission is evangelistic in nature, and the sole responsibility of the ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Within this gospel-focused ministry, one cannot help but be theological in nature and

method, therefore the proper utilising of apologetics and elenctics within the mission and theological dimension further enlarges the mission scope and its effect. Secondly, mission is a ministry to which all believers are called, no believer in Christ is excused from it regardless of one's credentials. Kirk (1999:30) remarks:

Mission is so much at the heart of the Church's life that, rather than think of it as one aspect of its existence, it is better to think of it as defining its essence. The Church is by nature missionary to the extent that, if it ceases to be missionary, it has not just failed in one of its tasks, it has ceased being Church.

It is important to note regarding Kirk's (1999:30) observation that, mission is not to be understood as one limb of the body, which is used and unused in time; instead, the entire body is called by the name *missionary*. The relationship of the church and mission is one by which the church can be properly assessed to either be the Christian *church* or not. According to Kirk (1999:30), mission is a necessary clause to the existence of the church; the church exists to function as a missionary. Thirdly, mission is a ministry not limited to those who can travel. Christians from the local church can engage in mission locally as well as in foreign countries.

4.3 The Role of Apologetics and Elenctics in Missions

The uniqueness of the study is seen in its primary focus to inform and straighten mission initiatives apologetically and elenctically. Since the study design primarily accommodates mission initiatives, it is necessary to note that apologetics and elenctics are viewed as assisting pillars to missions. Therefore, this section provides insights on the role of apologetics and elenctics in missions. The reader can expect to discover an independent discussion and its link to missions of each assisting pillar: *apologetics* and *elenctics*.

4.3.1 Apologetics in mission

The need to discuss the role of apologetics in missions is due to a widely accepted false perspective on apologetics and its involvement in missions. "It may surprise one that apologetics was also downgraded among Reformed thinkers. Apologetics seemed to require a defensive posture. Its history could be interpreted as a series of retreats" (Knudsen 1986:224). When Knudsen (1986:224) makes the observation on the common perspective Reformed thinkers have of apologetics, he does so to identify a problem. The purpose of Knudsen (1986) is not to encourage and further condone the false perspective, but it is to identify and to then bring a reform in the way churches ought to think about apologetics.

Though it is true that the etymology of the term “apologetics” presents the reader with a defensive characteristic (The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, 2021), the practice of it within the Christian context should not always be thought of as defensive. Knudsen (1986:229) points out that the function and existence of apologetics is due to the proclamation of the gospel; therefore, since proclaiming the gospel requires pro-activity, apologetics then comfortably exists within an active offensive posture in the proclamation of the gospel, and this does not support a purely defensive and a retrieval understanding of apologetics. In fact, it could be gathered from Knudsen (1986) that the proper place of apologetics is in mission and gospel preaching, which then affirms Knudsen’s (1986) perspective of apologetics. To have apologetics exist outside the mission mandate to preach the gospel may leave apologetics to manifest merely as a defensive mechanism to contemporary religions and cultures. Therefore, though apologetics provides a defensive stance in dialogue, it is not understood as retrieval, rather a mechanism that provides defence during an ongoing offensive proclamation of the gospel. Here we may think of Scriptures like 1 Pet. 3:15 and 2 Tim. 3:16.

Knudsen (1986) seeing apologetics and its role as properly fitting within mission is one that is shared and can be linked to more contemporary scholars such as van den Toren (2011). Within the definitional structure of apologetics, van den Toren (2011:27) is found making provision for evangelistic work as one key proponent of apologetics. According to van den Toren (2011:28), within the operations of apologetics, making the Christian faith relevant is an important facet. By showing the relevance of the Christian faith, what van den Toren (2001:28) means is that, by means of apologetics, the apologist/evangelist needs to show the listener their need for the biblical Christ. After establishing within the definitional structure the concept of “making the Christian faith relevant”, van den Toren (2011:28) goes on to expand upon the manner in which the apologist/evangelist can make the Christian faith relevant to the listener. At this point, Toren (2011:28) goes beyond engagements with the rhetorics of apologetics, and calls the apologist/evangelist to a more personal presentation when engaged in apologetics. Van den Toren (2011:28) states that, “[T]o reach them, we need both to show that this faith is highly relevant to their lives, and in our own lives we need both to show its relevance and to give it at least some plausibility”. Van den Toren (2011:28) further develops his argument by pointing to the life of Jesus. Van den Toren (2011:28) couples the apologetical agenda with the gospel agenda and then reverts to the manner in which Christ Jesus ministered the gospel. The argument of relevance within the apologetical agenda is one that discredits a mere articulation of some truth, while disinterested with the individual who is being ministered to. According to van den Toren (2011:28), Jesus was methodologically more concerned with answering “the deepest needs of those who were lost (Mt. 4:23; Ac 17:18)”. Therefore, the perspective now being argued for is that the student of apologetics is more personal than simply intellectual.

Having understood and corrected the false perspective of apologetics, the researcher now directs the attention of the reader to the indispensable role of apologetics in mission (The SBJT Forum 2005:93). As previously observed in the writing of Knudsen (1986), the existence of apologetics is most appropriate in mission initiatives; however, in a later journal article entitled Being Missions-Minded (The SBJT Forum 2005:93) he further adds that the discussion about mission cannot take place without apologetics.

No one who evangelizes does so without apologetics because apologetics comes into play whenever an unbeliever disobeys the gospel in an evangelistic encounter. As soon as the unbeliever provides a reason for rejecting the good news, a missionary also becomes an apologist (The SBJT Forum 2005:93).

The observation made in the above-mentioned article (The SBJT Forum 2005:93) expresses a perspective from realism. Actually, when the gospel of Christ is delivered and repentance is required of the hearer, through the gospel process, it is natural for many to oppose the gospel. The apologetical pillar then functions to press upon the necessities and the reality of the gospel through the opposition of the hearer. Therefore, the view that apologetics plays an indispensable role in mission is justified by practical observations of missions to an unbelieving and disobedient world.

Additionally, unbelievers are considered as such due to their conscious unbelief, for which they have reasons (The SBJT Forum 2005:93). Thus, the mandate of the minister is to engage with the reasons for unbelief and attempt to show a different perspective. A simple neglect from the minister of apologetical issues when in missions “is careless in handling the gospel” (The SBJT Forum 2005:93). The researcher gathers from the above-mentioned article (The SBJT Forum 2005) that the minister in missions does not disqualify or qualify opposing reasons from the hearers, and then selects those worth engaging, but that with the gospel mandate comes the responsibility to clearly communicate the gospel through all kinds of reasons.

It can be further elaborated that the connection and necessity of apologetics in missions is due to the importance placed on clearly communicating the gospel. The SBJT Forum (2005:94) further notes in their article that Jesus and His apologist shared in the unique ability to make the communicating of the gospel agile and clear. If the focus of the gospel mandate is to inform the conscience of the “unbeliever” of his/her need for repentance, then clear communication is imperative. It could then be argued that apologetics exists in clear communication while being faithful “in seeking to undermine reasons for unbelief” (The SBJT Forum 2005:94).

The need and link of apologetics and missions is a practical one. The SBJT Forum (2005:94) elaborates that,

The divine means of salvation is the good news, and the divine means for responding to its rejection is apologetics. Apologetics saves no one, but its truth is the necessary corollary to the gospel. Apologetics should not serve to call attention to the missionary, but to unmask the unbeliever's trust in Satan's lie. No one can be intellectually arm-twisted into the kingdom, but God intends to deal with unbelief in the head and heart.

At this point it is crucial to understand that it is not within the purpose of the journal article (The SBJT Forum 2005) to mix the categories: gospel preaching and apologetics. There is a recognition of the fact that the preaching of the gospel does and can exist on its own, without the involvement of apologetics. The SBJT Forum (2005) recognises that the success of mission work is dependent upon the gospel and its proclamation alone. Apologetics is therefore understood as that which adds more value to the mission initiative and not the message of the gospel.

Both Knudsen (1986) and The SBJT Forum (2005) portray apologetics as a pillar that does best when it exists within mission as an element that responds to the anti-claims made against the gospel. The existence of apologetics is not to replace the importance of the preaching of the gospel, but it heavily depends upon it. The SBJT Forum (2005:94) clarifies the issue by pointing to the fact that saving faith is accomplished by the Good News alone. The Good News, also known as the gospel, is given the front seat in missions work, there is no confusion about this. The apologetical pillar is then understood to be standing one step behind the gospel preaching in missions initiatives. Knudsen (1986:230) further assists in suggesting that apologetics in itself is not mission, but is "adjunct to missions". Though there may be an important and yet a necessary apologetical element required in missions, the primary focus of missions is viewed as gospel preaching. Howe (1978:309), while acknowledging the importance of apologetics, highlights that the uniqueness of the relationship between apologetics and evangelism is their individual ability to exist with and without each other. On the one hand, one cannot but notice the different aims and results of evangelism and apologetics as identified by Howe (1978:309), while noticing how apologetics functions appropriately under evangelism in missions. While the primary objective of Howe (1978) remains to draw necessary distinctions between the system of apologetics and evangelism, the reality of overlap between apologetics and evangelism is not ignored.

Howe (1978:303) further adds to the discussion by suggesting that apologetics is a kind of element that clarifies truth from error. Though it is observed in the writing of Howe (1978), the stated claim that apologetics is a system which functions to clarify truth from error and therefore different in nature and function from evangelism; the research agrees with Howe (1978) while adding to the understanding the necessity Knudsen (1986:229) places of clarifying truth from error in the process of evangelism.

Christian apologetics arises in an attempt to answer the challenges to the faith that emerge as the faith is proclaimed and has effective contact with its cultural milieu. Thus, apologetics certainly has in mind the promulgation of the gospel, in answer to the great commission, and it may indeed serve as an important adjunct to missions.

In accordance with Knudsen's (1986:229) observation, one cannot help but firstly think of missions as a practical ministry that seeks to deal with actual people who have pre-existing anti-gospel beliefs. Therefore, it can be understood from Knudsen (1986:229) that in the face of mission work, it should not come as a surprise that the "unbelievers" remain unbelieving not only because they have not heard the gospel, but because they may have a false perception of the Christian faith. Knudsen (1986:229), when discussing apologetics and its importance in missions, seems to draw the attention of one to the fact that people have anti gospel beliefs, and when challenged by the true gospel, one ought to expect push back. This is why Knudsen (1986:230) then rightly states that, "Christian apologetics arises in an attempt to answer the challenges to the faith".

It is not the opinion of the researcher that Howe (1978) attempts to discredit any and all relationships between apologetics and evangelism, rather Howe (1978:310) acknowledges a working relationship between apologetics and evangelism. The challenge that the researcher has with Howe (1978) on the subject is regarding the measure of correlation Howe identifies between apologetics and evangelism. While the language of Howe (1978:310) suggests that the correlation between apologetics and evangelism is little; Knudsen (1986) and The SBJT Forum (2005) seem to suggest a higher correlation between apologetics and evangelism in missions.

Now the purpose of the researcher is not to discredit or credit perspectives on the correlation between missions and apologetics but is simply to point out the view propagated in this study. The view assumed by the study is that apologetics is not merely a kind of exercise that can potentially be utilised in missions but is a kind of ministry that plays an imperative role in missions. Moreover, the researcher finds it of value to clarify that this section is not designed

to discuss the measure of “overlap” between mission and apologetics, but simply to point out the existence of the overlap. Therefore, in accordance with the works used: Knudsen (1986), The SBJT Forum (2005), Van den Toren (2001), and Howe (1978), one thing which strikingly stands out is that apologetics and Christian mission definitely have a functional relationship. One may argue the degree to which apologetics involves itself in mission, but one thing not contested is the idea that apologetics does, must, and can function in mission. Additionally, the conclusion arrived at by the study on the issue of relationship between apologetics and mission is in no way an attempt to ignore the independence in existence and function of apologetics and mission. The discussion here has been particularly concerned with the realised idea by the mentioned article and theologians that there is a link and a working relationship between apologetics and the Christian mission.

4.3.2 Elenctics in missions

The involvement of elenctics in the study is due to the emphasis Bavinck (1960) places on elenctics in missions. Furthermore, it was Haak (2009:40) who realises that Bavinck’s (1960) emphasis on elenctics in missions plays a key role in keeping the two mentioned aspects of Christian theology intact. In fact, Haak (2009:41) observes that “unmasking unbelievers as opposing Christian truth is the core issue of all missional work” and this is the core function of elenctics. It is drawn from Bavinck (1960) and Haak (2009) that the relationship between elenctics and missions may be one of an imperative nature in missional methods. Therefore, the study design includes the discussion on elenctics in missions.

In order to understand elenctics in missions, this section makes definitional provision to the term elenctics. The definition and the etymological structure of the term then provides direction to the reader in thinking about elenctics. This section further expands on elenctics as an independent dialectic science and its accomplishment. Lastly, the section concludes by providing an integrative perspective on missions using evangelism and elenctics.

When discussing elenctics definitionally, Bavinck (1960:221) begins by identifying two primary concepts that develop out of the term: “to bring to shame” and “conviction of guilt”. Historically, “the term “elenctic” is derived from the Greek verb *elengchein*. In Homer, the verb has the meaning of “to bring to shame” (Bavinck 1960:221). However, Bavinck (1960:221) notes that the term elenctics and its significance to Christian theology has to do more with “conviction of guilt”. Haak (2009:39), while commenting on Bavinck (1960), expands on the definition of elenctics in Christian theology by stating that,

The meaning of this word is seen throughout the whole Bible, but its actual wording can be found in John 16:8-11: 'When he [Holy Spirit, Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment': in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Both authors, Haak (2009) and Bavinck (1960), agree that within the dimension of Christian theology, the focus of elenctics remains to convict. Haak's (2009:39) reasoning develops out of a key passage, John 16:8-11. Haak (2009:39) seems to suggest that the reason the Holy Spirit arrives is to fulfil tasks, and one of them being the task of elenctics, which is to convict. Therefore, the reasoning may develop as one thinks of the implications of Haak (2009:39), that the task of elenctics and its importance is observed in the involvement and the accomplishments made by the Holy Spirit as He engages with men/women.

Additionally, Bavinck's (1960:221) view of elenctics in the Christian context develops from multiple scriptures, and in each scripture, Bavinck (1960) finds a new aspect to Christian elenctics. According to Bavinck (1960:221), he begins identifying elements of elenctics in Jude verses 14 and 15, whereby judgement is proclaimed upon all the ungodly. Secondly, Revelation 3:19 is used to identify the element of rebuke in elenctics. Thirdly, like in the case of Haak (2009:39), Bavinck (1960:221) too uses John 16:8, in which the element of conviction and or reprove is added. Lastly, Bavinck (1960:221) makes a simple observation of 1 Timothy 5:20 in which elders practice elenctics by rebuking sin publicly before the church congregation, and the assumption would be that this is done with two motives, to dismember one and/or to restore one to righteous living (Matt.18:15).

Noticeably, from all the mentioned scriptures seen in Bavinck (1960:221) and Haak (2009:39), one thing becomes clear, that both authors find elenctics to be normative within Christian Scriptures, and consequently, Christian theology. According to Bavinck (1960:222), elenctics and its involvement in the New Testament can be observed by its usual appearance mostly in the translated word "rebuking". Within the writing of Bavinck (1960), a great deal of conviction is observed on the issue. What is highlighted is that elenctics is normative in theological discourses only as a scriptural consequence. It is almost as if Bavinck (1960:222) stresses the idea that one cannot read the Christian Scriptures without regularly coming across the idea of elenctics in the Bible. Furthermore, it seems that in the mind of Bavinck (1960:223), elenctics is an aspect deeply intertwined with Christian living. Since Christian missions is a part of Christian living, and Christian missions is primarily a call to repentance as observed by Bavinck (1960:223), this is

once again seen as elenctics. Therefore, the researcher can fairly assert from Bavinck (1960) that elenctics is an important aspect in the Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

After having briefly discussed the etymological structure of the term *elenctics*, this section finds it necessary to clarify the accomplishment of elenctics. Bavinck (1960:226) qualifies that, “*elengchein* does not in the first place refer to arguments which show the absurdity of heathendom. Its primary meaning refers to the conviction and unmasking of sin, and to the call to responsibility”. The point that Bavinck (1960:226) is emphasising is that elenctics has its accomplishments without which elenctics fails. According to Bavinck (1960:226), the accomplishment of elenctics is seen when the evangelist/missionary calls the audience to responsibility. At this stage, a simple but complex intellectual interlocking with heathen ideologies, without a call to repentance is not Christian elenctics. The task of elenctics as observed by Bavinck (1960:226) is to show the sin of the hearer and then a call to repentance. And by the manner Bavinck (1960:226) identifies the task and accomplishment of elenctics, the researcher finds a high level of similarities between missions and elenctics.

In accordance with Bavinck’s (1960:226) statement, there are two primary steps in elenctics that are to be accomplished to the fulfilment of the task set by elenctics and consequently Christian missions. The first primary step is to “unmask sin”, and the second primary focus is to “call to responsibility” (Bavinck 1960:226). At this stage of the study, it should be obvious that according to Bavinck (1960), these two steps are pivotal in achieving the task of elenctics and consequently of missions/evangelism.

Both steps of elenctics, though focused on one goal, each play an independent role. The first step is focused on revealing the sin of men. Haak (2009:42) clarifies which sin is committed that needs unmasking, as suggested by Bavinck (1960:226). In order to better understand what Bavinck (1960:226) means by sin, Haak (2009:42) appeals to Jesus and His ministry. Haak (2009:42) suggests that the sin which is spoken of, is the sin of rejecting Jesus. Both Bavinck (1960:222) and Haak (2009:41) agree that the unmasking of sin is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit. However, it is worth noting that both Bavinck (1960:225) and Haak (2009:44) simultaneously stress the importance of engaging with the hearers using reason. What is gathered is the idea that, the task of “unmasking sin” (Bavinck 1960:226) is not placed upon human shoulders, but is left upon divine prerogative; however, the means by which the divine person, the Holy Spirit, has chosen to bring about the process of unmasking, is by the exposing of one to the truth, which is communicated by men/women. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that philosophical and theological engagement is not a part of elenctics, but rather that it is secondary in the process, as appropriately noted by Bavinck (1960:226):

The 'coming to the light' is never yielding to philosophical argumentation, it is rather becoming convinced of the sin hidden behind unbelief, the sin of fleeing from God. And yet it is also true that the prophets of the Old Testament, in their elenctic attack on idolatry, now and then make use of rational argument.

The second step in the process of elenctics as mentioned by Bavinck (1960:226) is the call to responsibility. Haak (2009:44) agrees that, for Christian elenctics to function, the call to responsibility must necessarily exist. Though Bavinck (1960:226) uses the phrase "call to responsibility" and Haak (2009:44) uses the term "salvation", it must be noted that both authors appeal to the same thing whilst using different expressions. Furthermore, it is important to note that calling one to responsibility is not merely calling one to rejecting pseudo religions, but it is at the same time an embracing of the true religion and its God (Haak 2009:44). It is also important to note that the primary presupposition for calling one to responsibility, remains the idea that there is "only one religion [which] can guide humans to salvation; the others do not and cannot" (Haak 2009:44). Without the mentioned presupposition, Christian elenctics and Christian missions will not only fail but also become obsolete.

In order for the Christian missionary to apply elenctics to missions, the mentioned presupposition becomes vitally significant. This does not automatically qualify other religions as bad or good, since this is not the purpose of Christian elenctics, but rather Christian elenctics and its presupposition illegitimises any alien religion to the Christian faith (Haak 2009:44). Additionally, Haak (2009:44) contributes to the discussion by pointing out that,

Such a view was based on the Christian conviction that only the Christian religion is the true religion because only the religion revealed in Scripture and in Christ can join people to God. The other religions might seem attractive and might seem to have much in common with Christianity, but, upon exploration, it becomes clear that the gap between the two types of religion is wide.

Haak (2009:44) highlights the idea that, in order to properly illegitimise alien religions as pseudo religion, one needs to equally emphasise the legitimacy of the Christian religion and its epithets. Moreover, according to Haak (2009:44), the Christian elencticist must treat other religions and their status as pseudo religion carefully, since on the surface one may find similarities between the Christian religion and foreign religions. The care suggested by Haak (2009:44) is with regards to *exploring* and *exposing* the alleged similarities and the certain differences. Thus, it can be understood in the work of Haak (2009:44) that the practice of elenctics demands care, in that the one practicing elenctics ought to apply intellectual effort in order to clarify "that the

gap between the two types of religion is wide". In order to better understand this dilemma of having similarities, Bavinck (1960:228) provides some insight,

that in nearly all religions, God, or the gods, occupy a position can itself be called a moment or an element of truth. That they believe in a God is an element of truth, but what they say and think of him is entirely different from what God has revealed of himself in his word.

The point Bavinck (1960:228) makes is an important one; calling one to responsibility should not be understood as an exercise that simply points one to the existence of God, instead it is a task that requires specificity. As noted by Bavinck (1960:228), nearly all, if not all religions agree on the fundamental idea that creation is a product of a necessary existence, and that this necessary existence is God. Religions may even agree to the extent that since God is, and that He created, He did so with a certain purpose. However, the contention between religions may not be seen in the idea of the existence of God, but in the definitional sphere of the discussion. Religions then primarily deal with the questions: who is God and how humanity is to relate with Him? From the Christian perspective, as noted by Haak (2009:44), the answer provided by Christian theology to these questions and more are the true answers, and that all alien religions in their answers are illegitimate. Then it is on these grounds that the calling of one to responsibility becomes effective.

As seen in both levels of elenctics as provided by Bavinck (1960:226): exposing of sin and calling one to responsibility, the Holy Spirit takes precedence in the achievement of the two levels; however, in both levels, the idea of intellectual engagement is not absence. Haak (2009:44) therefore adds to the structure of elenctics the idea of rebuttal. "Elenchchos" or rebuttal is key in the process of elenctics (Haak 2009:45). However, the idea of rebuttal in elenctics has nothing to do with mere theological and philosophical speculations but is a process that cuts "into the unbeliever's convictions" (Haak 2009:45). More than rebutting philosophical objections, the process of elengchos is concerned with answering and rebutting the issues of the unbeliever's heart. Questions such as "why does he or she refuse? What keeps him or her from overcoming his objections?" (Haak 2009:45).

Haak (2009:45) observes that the art of elengchos in elenctics behaves like "the scalpel that will cut" with the purpose of exposing one's hidden falsehoods and makes them bare before the unbeliever. Therefore, this is where the intellectual effort to rebut falsehood is focused. Within the process of elenctics, rebuttal of falsehood remains an important element; however, it is here where one may misunderstand what is meant by rebuttal. According to Haak (2009:45), rebuttal

in elenctics should focus on the deep issues that cause the unbeliever to reject Christian reasoning and theology (the gospel). In Haak's study (2009), the concern does not seem to be on winning a philosophical and theological dialogue, but on winning the unbeliever to Christ.

It is important to Haak (2009:45) that "the evangelist does not try to overrule with bare facts; he invites the unbeliever to come face to face with the crucified and resurrected Christ". It is easy for the student of elenctics to misplace the aim of elenctics to be a dialectic art that is concerned with argumentation, instead of winning unbelievers to Christ. Therefore, it is normative within the works of both Bavinck (1960) and Haak (2009) to emphasise upon the idea that Christian elenctics is aimed at the proclaiming of the gospel so that the unbeliever's sin might be exposed and that he/she might be called unto repentance in Christ.

In essence, elenctics as seen in this section is an aspect of Christian living that is primarily concerned with the proclamation of the gospel. Since it is true of the gospel to identify the sin of humans and then provide the solution to the problem of sin, the operation of elenctics is naturally involved in the proclamation of the gospel. From within the works of Bavinck (1960) and Haak (2009), it is further observed that elenctics most necessarily exists within the dimensions of Christian mission. For elenctics to exist outside the dimension of mission, it does so improperly and may yet be outside the sphere of Christian thought altogether.

4.4 Benefits of the Study for Missions

Before applying and utilising the research topic in missions, the researcher sees it fitting to identify the importance of the primary theme of the study for missions. The central theme of the study is God, as seen from the title. Though attention is given to a specific epithet of God, it is nonetheless a study that focuses on the theology of God from two distinct perspectives: Reformed Christianity and Sunni Islam. The reason for such a tight focus on the study of God is simply because, as Verkuyl (2009:42) points out, that in the dimension of the missionary mandate, there remains within the mechanism of mission a universal motif. According to Verkuyl (2009:42), the universal motif is simply to point the nations to the true God. Now to apply the idea of the universal motif as observed by Verkuyl (2009:42) to this section of the study, one can say that within the mechanism of the missionary mandate there remains a significant need to reveal the true God of the universe to the people.

At this point it is well understood that the mechanism of mission is concerned primarily with accomplishing the one goal, which is to make the true God of the universe known to all men. Wright (2006:31) argues that God has always been concerned with missions, and that mission

is not a new institute within the covenant of God. Wright (2006:31) demonstrates that, from the very establishment of Israel, one can discover that the mission of Israel was “bringing the redemptive blessing of God to all the nations of the world, as originally promised in the title deeds of the covenant with Abraham”. The academic aim of Wright (2006) is clear, which is to promote the idea that the biblical God is a missionary God. Wright (2006:62-63) further adds the perspective of Barth and Hartenstein, which attempts to enhance missiology by leaning upon the idea of the Trinity. Not only the missional aim of God clearly communicated in the Old and the New Testament covenants, but the missional reality is seen in the doctrine of the trinity. Within the theology of mission, the doctrine of the trinity contributes as one sees “the Father's sending of the Son and their sending of the Holy Spirit” (Wright 2006:63). In simple terms, when discussing mission, its aim and its mechanism, what should surface at the forefront is this idea that, mission is an idea promoted by the biblical God, in that it originates from Him and that He is in Himself missional; and since the primary aim of missions is to make the biblical God, the creator of the world known to all men, this idea should remain central to all missional efforts and paradigm.

Moreover, the idea of presenting the God of the Scriptures as the true God of the universe is not unique to Verkuyl but is one shared with Wright (2009). Wright (2009:32) asserts that in the face of false religions, “the Church in its mission must bear witness to the great biblical claim that the earth is the Lord's”. The point made by Wright (2009:32) is not simply that the God of the Bible has absolute ownership of the earth but is to affirm the idea that the God of the Bible is the only God in existence, who then has absolute ownership of the earth. At this point, Wright (2009:32) is drawing attention to the idea that to elevate any other theology and philosophy of deity alien to the Bible is a mistake, in that it does not correspond with reality altogether. Taking from both Verkuyl (2009) and Wright (2009), one thing that stands out is the idea that the missionary mandate includes a strong compelling toward the idea that the biblical God is the true God, and all other gods of foreign religions are false.

Therefore, seeing the importance both Verkuyl (2009) and Wright (2009) place on speaking about God in missions, it is then affirmed that the study topic too can be, and is applied to a missionary mandate. It must be noted that, it is not the intention of this section to discredit other motifs within the missions mandate; however, in the view of the researcher, missions must begin with a discussion about God: who He is, and what He has done, and then move toward the theological dimension of human response and worship of God.

4.4.1 A consideration of the study in light of apologetics and elenctics in missions

Having provided a perspective on the usage of the terms “missions”, “apologetics”, and “elenctics”, attention now shifts to the application of the study in light of apologetics and elenctics in missions. It has been established that the study is designed to promote theological confidence in the church and to give apologetical and elenctic strength to the missionary activity of the church. Therefore, this section demonstrates how the study topic is utilised in accomplishing the set out aim – *to promote theological confidence and give strength to missionary activity*.

4.4.1.1 The comparative study of God’s holiness in elenctics for missions

Since there is already a section dedicated to discussing the science of elenctics and its function in missions, this section will not repeat what has been said but simply provide an application of elenctics in the context of the study. Though this may be an oversimplification of Bavinck (1960) and Haak (2009), however, what is immediately gathered on elenctics is that Christian elenctics is a science most concerned with the exposure of false theologies and then the refocus of perspectives toward the truth. Therefore, it must be emphasised that, like in the case of elenctics, the aim of this study is to provide a comparative discussion to demonstrate the theological strengths of the Christian doctrine of God’s holiness in order that the church may engage in missions confidently.

In light of the designed purpose of this section, the researcher begins with noting McDowell and Gilchrist (1983:182) as an important start to the discussion. McDowell and Gilchrist (1983:182) observe that,

Allah appears to be deficient in such attributes as love, holiness and grace. One reason is that to a Muslim God is above description. For the most part Allah is defined by a series of negatives, i.e., He is not this, not that, etc. Many of the above characteristics are involved in the Muslims’ 99 names for God. For the Christian, these attributes, such as grace, are rooted in the very character of God (Ephesians 2).

Though the observation made by McDowell and Gilchrist (1983:182) in its context does not show a specific focus on the doctrine of holiness as this research, it does however include the issue. A close analysis of McDowell and Gilchrist (1983:182) may inform one’s elenctics in missions; a key word which is used for the Quranic God is that He is *deficient*. Furthermore, it must be noted that McDowell and Gilchrist’s (1983:182) observation is not a result of a vague academic and/or philosophical standard by which the Quranic God is demonstrated to be

deficient; instead, the Quranic God is viewed as deficient as a result of a comparative work done between the biblical God and the Quranic God. Thus, it is gathered that the point McDowell and Gilchrist (1983:182) are emphasising is that the theology of the Quranic God presents itself as inferior to that of the biblical Christian God. And, as observed in the previous chapter, the researcher discovered a lack in two primary areas of the theology of the Quranic God: *in His perfection* and *in His immutability*.

The specific discovery made in the Islamic theology of God was the result of a thorough analyses of the doctrine of God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity. Amongst a few key epithets of the doctrine of God's holiness, the research presented two primary epithets in Chapter 3 (section 3.3) that properly demonstrate the theological deficiency of the Quranic God in the area of perfection and mutability under the doctrine of holiness. Barton (1918:141) properly states in favour of Christian theology of God's holiness that,

on the lips of the prophets it came to denote moral qualities. Jehovah was pure; Jehovah was just. This thought echoes through all the later Jewish literature, and, as we shall see, became a potent thought in Christianity. This attribute of deity Mohammed failed almost, if not altogether, to perceive.

The observation made by Barton (1918:141) is a result of a study performed in the Quranic scriptures. The argument for the Christian theology of God's holiness is seen when one simply numerically compares the word "holy" in regard to God in the two respective scriptures: the Quran and the Bible. Barton (1918:141) notes that in the Islamic scriptures, when referring to the Quranic God, the Quran takes very little notice of His holiness; and within the Christian Scriptures, God is properly and most importantly identified as being holy far more times than the Quranic God. Therefore, in the mind of Barton (1918:154), it is one of the primary tasks of a Christian missionary to demonstrate to Muslims the complete, consistent, and applicable theology of God found within Christian conceptions. It is further reasonable to then add that, not only is it reasonable for Christian missionaries to show the comparative strengths of the Christian conception of God and His holiness, but it is upon this theological strength that Christian missionaries practice elenctics with Muslims as defined within this chapter.

It is upon such conceptions of God then that the Christian missionary begins to exercise elenctic strength. The primary questions to ask then are: is the Quranic God always loving? Is the Quranic God always just? Is the Quranic God accountable to any standard of morals? And, at this stage, Barton (1918:143) properly notes that the Quranic God, in accordance with the Islamic and Quranic theological conceptions, is not always loving, is not always just, and is a-

moral. Barton (1918:143), in discussing the Quranic God and His love, justice and morality, goes as far as to say that the Quranic God is not at all a loving being. The argument for this position is developed out of the fact that the Quranic God is selective of who He shows love and when He shows love. Barton (1918:143) argues that within the Islamic conception of the Quranic God's love, there has been a confusion of terms; what Islamic theology thinks of as *love* is more appropriately known as *approval*. The Quranic God simply approves men/women to "salvation" and this does not necessitate His love for His subjects.

Furthermore, in the opinion of the researcher, Barton's (1918:143) observation about the Quranic God and His moral inconsistency is directly related to the subject of holiness and is then a helpful idea to develop comparatively for the purpose of Christian missions. Schlorff (1980:340) makes an important observation regarding the Quranic God and His relationship with morality. He states that,

God is absolutely free, and unrestricted even in the realm of truth and morality. He is free to 'abrogate' the truth or obligations of earlier revelations by subsequently revealed truths and obligations. He is free to judge the same act to be 'good' in one circumstance and 'evil' in another according to the situation, although in principle acts are 'good' or 'evil' according to whether they are commanded or forbidden in the Qur'an. The criteria by which God judges and assigns man his destiny are unknowable to man. He is free to forgive the sinner or to condemn him. He is free to do opposites as He pleases.

Schlorff's (1980:143) observation of the Quranic God being "unrestricted" to morals and truth, is the very grounds on which the researcher makes the bold claim that the Quranic God is then "a-moral". According to Schlorff (1980:143), the Quranic God, though may be considered as the author of truth and morality, but He is by no means bound by the very moral institute He prescribes. Such an idea should not lead one to think the idea behind the Quranic God being unrestricted by any moral structure is a reference to His greatness (though the Muslim might think in such terms), instead it is a reference to the fact that the Quranic God is presented as an unknowable. What is meant by the term unknowable in regard to the Quranic God is that, though the Quranic God may provide a standard by which one may understand the difference between good and evil, this standard is not absolute. In accordance with Schlorff (1980:340), the Quranic God's standard of morality changes in accordance with circumstances and His biases in the mentioned circumstances. In consideration to the above mentioned, it is then enough cause to the researcher to view the Quranic God as *a-moral*. It could be further understood that the Quranic God is not simply "unrestricted" by a moral structure but may even work against the very moral structure created by Himself. This adds confidence to the view that the Quranic God

is a-moral, since it is observed that the Quranic God is unrestricted, anti, and additionally unconcerned with the moral structure that He created.

Therefore, for the Christian missionary/church, it is a point of strength to note that the observations made by Barton (1918) and Schlorff (1980) are firstly a result of a proper analyses of Islamic theologians and commentators. Second of all, the Christian church takes strength from the fact that comparatively to the Sunni Islamic perspective, the Christian conception and theology of God is without deficiency, and on the contrary, this cannot be said of the Islamic theology of God. In this study, it is not for the church to simply take strength, but to then apply such a strength in the work of missions to the Sunni Muslims. The idea that the Islamic theology of God lacks in appropriating love, justice, and morality is simply to say that the Quranic God lacks in properly demonstrating His holiness, as seen in the Christian theology of God. To the Christian missionary then, this is a good and an effective entry point as one then brings the message of Christ (Barton 1918:154).

4.4.1.2 The comparative study of God's holiness in apologetics for missions

It is worth noting that within the context of the study, it has been identified that the comparative study of God's holiness strengthens Christian missions within two dimensions: *elenctics* and *apologetics*. While *elenctics* in missions might function as the one responsible for exposing theological holes within Islamic theology of God's holiness, *apologetics* prepares one's missions initiative toward a more defensive stance. Furthermore, in order that one might understand the term "defensive" and then appropriately apply the principle regarding apologetics, it is important to clarify the perspective the research employs in understanding the term *defensive*. In accordance with the discussion in section 4.3.1, a simpler perspective regarding the defensive posture of apologetics is gathered from the works of Knudsen (1986), Howe (1978), and The SBJT Forum (2005). It is then formulated from the works of the aforementioned authors that apologetics, as it exists within missions, is a biblical dimension that focuses on preparing the missionary, minister, and the Christian toward providing and giving an answer for one's own faith in the God of the Bible.

Therefore, to use the term "defensive" in regard to apologetics, is not to suggest that the Christian apologist finds oneself in an *unwanted* and an *undesirable* circumstance within the courts of the unbeliever, as the Christian apologist works tirelessly and attentively to escape and find refuge away from the current affair with the unbeliever. In fact, the implications of Christian apologetics lead one to view the affair in a different light. In accordance with the works of Knudsen (1986), Howe (1978), and The SBJT Forum (2005), the picture painted in regard to apologetics and its "defensive" posture has to do more with the unbeliever being in the courts

of the Christian apologist and not the other way around. The Christian apologist takes the role of a messenger whose mission is to actively proclaim the message of the biblical God, and during this process be ready to answer any questions posed by the listener/unbeliever.

After having clarified the specific application the research makes to the defensive art of apologetics in missions and evangelism, the researcher now performs a synthesis of the comparative study of God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity and apologetics. The importance and need of such a synthesis is properly observed when one comes across polemic works of Islamic scholars such as Ayoub (ed. Omar 2007) and Deedat (1995). As a Christian missionary/evangelist prepares him/herself for the task of missions/evangelism, he/she must familiarise themselves with the apologetical and polemical preparations of the Muslim community. Within the works of Ayoub (ed. Omar 2007) and Deedat (1995), one finds defensive and polemical tactics especially prepared against Christian missions/evangelism. Therefore, it is in the interest of Christian missions/evangelism that this study dedicates a section to a synthesis of the comparative study of God's holiness and apologetics in Christian missions. This section assists Christian missions by apologetically engaging with Ayoub (ed. Omar 2007) and Deedat (1995) and their objections to the Christian faith. By engaging with Ayoub (ed. Omar 2007) and Deedat (1995), the researcher aims to provide one practical structure to apologetics in missions to the Muslim using the comparative study of God's holiness.

At this point, it is of great significance to answer a key question before proceeding any further: why does the study of God's holiness matter? Gathering from the work of Armstrong (1995:11), one's understanding of God's holiness would properly determine one's devotion to God. What is meant is that, at this point of the study, the researcher has discovered that the doctrine of God's holiness in both Islamic theology and Reformed Christianity directly leads to the question of how God deals with humankind's sin, His own judgement of humankind's sin, and His mercy toward humankind. In more simpler terms, the doctrine of God's holiness has displayed itself to have affected the idea of redemption. On the one hand, Christian theologians such as Armstrong (1995:11-12) suggest that God's holiness is such that it absolutely compels God to judge any and all acts of sin and disobedience, even in the face of mercy, God's judgement toward sin must manifest, and even in the face of God's judgement toward sin and disobedience, God's mercy must manifest. At face value, such an idea leaves one with nothing less than an unanswerable conundrum; however, Armstrong (1995:12) then properly suggests that "in Christ God judges sin on behalf of those who believe. Only when we recover the necessity of God's punishment of sin in the last Adam will we be moved with utter amazement at redemption as we ought". The idea of involving Christ at this point becomes a necessary one, for as seen

in Armstrong (1995:12) that, within reformed Christian theology, God's holiness is perfectly preserved and exercised both in judgement and mercy.

In Reformed Christian theology, God's judgement is appeased in Christ as demonstrated by the death of Christ on the cross, and mercy practiced as demonstrated by the death of Christ on the cross. On the other hand, Islamic theology insists that,

The Qur'an speaks not of ransom by sacrifice, even though Muslims do a commemorative sacrifice at the time of the hajj to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham, but the Qur'an insists that then neither the fat nor the blood of the animals reaches God. What reaches him is our piety or righteousness. So expiation, or takfir, of sin must be done by the individual himself, and here, then, redemption is what men and women do with their own sin through repentance and through expiation through prayers, fasts, sharing their wealth with the poor, and so on (Ayoub, cited in ed. Omar 2007:94).

Therefore, in accordance with Ayoub (in ed. Omar 2007), it can be properly concluded that the Quranic God's holiness functions differently than the God of the Bible. The Quranic God practices mercy toward His subjects while silencing His justice and judgement toward sin. However, to be fair, the idea of the Quranic God's holiness and how it relates to the practice of God's justice/judgement and mercy simultaneously, is an idea that Muslim theologians have not ventured in much. Therefore, to this day, there remains a great deal of uncertainty on how the Quranic God manifests His perfection in the area of mercy and humankind's sin and the need for judgement. What is known, is simply that the Quranic God is indeed merciful, and that for the Quranic God, repentance and redemption from sin can be obtained by covering the sin by acts of devotion to the Quranic God.

At this stage what is further gathered is that the concern for Muslim theologians regarding obtaining God's mercy, seems to primarily lean toward: the materialising of repentance and devotion, and secondly, an attempt to make God seem less barbaric in His need for justice. Deedat (1995:213) says that "salvation is cheap in Christianity", by which Deedat insinuates that salvation requires no affirmation from the one who is being saved. Deedat (1995:213) goes on to promote the Islamic view of salvation which is works based. To the Quranic God, one who is deserving of salvation is the one who has demonstrated his/her own worthiness, and on this premise then the holy (Quddus) Allah pronounces fair judgement. The judgement of Allah is based on what is demonstrated and not on an immaterial faith. Secondly, in the work of Ayoub (in ed. Omar 2007), the Quranic God is not one who requires blood, or any kind of violence performed on a living being, in order that the Quranic God might exercise mercy toward sinners. Instead, the mercy of the Quranic God is granted by simple means of human

performance and worthiness. This far, what is gathered is this idea that the Islamic theologians have properly been able to create a distinction between the function of the Quranic God's mercy and justice. This is where the researcher finds strength for Christian missionaries in missions and strength in Christian theology specifically in the doctrine of God's holiness.

In the words of Craig (2021:n.p.), "[T]he Muslim concept of God is, by contrast, rationally objectionable because the God of Islam is morally deficient and therefore not the greatest conceivable being". Though Craig's (2021) observation is based on the Quranic God's hate as expressed in the Quran, the observation is well applied to the discussion in the context of this research as well. The researcher applies moral deficiency to the Quranic God on the premise that the Quranic God is observably (as seen in the previous chapter) unable to perfectly function within his specific criterion: justice and mercy in regard to human folly and sin. Seemingly, the Quranic God must either abandon mercy in order that justice might prevail or abandon justice that mercy might be granted. This is where the greatest discovery has been made, that, whilst the Quranic God has claimed holiness for Himself, He has yet failed the standard of perfection in holiness, in that He struggles to always function in His attributes. Moreover, Armstrong (1995:11) describes the holiness of God as that by which God is compelled to do that which is right, and this does not seem to be the case with the Quranic God.

Therefore, a good place to begin the discussion is with the gospel and its relation to Christian missions. In accordance with the employed definition of the gospel in this study as taken from Bavinck (1975), the missionary ought not entertain any other idea besides the gospel and all its facets. And as the discussion progresses, the missionary then takes advantage of the research and exposes the discoveries made in regard to the theological inconsistency and deficiency of the Quranic God in comparison to the biblical God. Comparatively, what the gospel provides for the Christian minister is a harmony of God's attributes within the doctrine of the biblical God's holiness. The Christian missionary at this stage of the gospel interaction might point out that holiness by Christian definition means that God is separate; God is morally perfect; God does not and cannot sin; God always does that which is right and is not moved to reactions circumstantially, and instead, the biblical God is dictated by the standards of perfection in holiness (Armstrong 1995:11). It is in keeping with the mentioned definitional facets of holiness and further discoveries as presented in Chapter 3, that the Christian minister provides comparative insights into the doctrine of God's holiness in Sunni Islamic theology and Reformed Christian theology. And in doing so, the Christian minister finds opportunity to share the gospel as it presents the biblical God's holiness perfectly preserved and functioned in the person and work of Christ.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The academic verdict (as seen in this chapter) of the theological discoveries that are without any meaningful application for the Christian church is that these are nothing more than mere speculations. Though there is great truth found within such efforts, they remain with no benefit to the missiological effort of the church. Since the primary aim of the research is to promote theological confidence and missiological efforts, it is then keeping with this set aim that Chapter 4 is designed. In order to accomplish the set out goal, Chapter 4 explores various definitions of missions and settles on one most agreeable with Bavinck's Dutch Reformed theology. Secondly, the chapter provides scholastic insights into the subject of elenctics and apologetics and the involvement of these methods within the missiological dimension. Lastly, the chapter briefly provides a dialectical structure for the missiological initiative, specifically to accomplish the aim of elenctics and apologetics in missions. This is done by means of engaging with Islamic polemics and apologetics against Christian dogma, in the works of Ayoub (in ed. Omar 2007) and Deedat (1995).

Based on the insights of this research, the following chapter provides a summary, conclusion, and suggestion for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents the reader with a summary of the study's findings. Each chapter is summarised below to recap the main points of the study. This chapter accomplished the goal of summarising by restating the research problem; presenting the main points of each chapter; discussing the findings; and reviewing the desired results of the research in the life of the church. The chapter closes with an exhortation for further research on the topic.

Before proceeding with the chapter, it is necessary to disclose the primary presupposition of the study. The entire study was conducted with a Christian presupposition, more specifically, the Dutch Reformed Christianity to which Bavinck (2004) and Berkhof (1941) subscribe. The reader may also find that the primary theological influencers of the study were Bavinck (2004), Berkhof (1941), and Charnock (2001). This is not to reduce the work of other theologians in the study, but to emphasise the fact that, although there remains a great emphasis on various theological resources and authors in the study, it is Bavinck (2004), Berkhof (1941), and Charnock (2001) that informed the researcher's presupposition of the study.

5.2 Restating the Research Problem

The primary issue of the study was God's holiness and how Reformed Christian theology comparatively fares against Sunni Islamic theology on the subject. The study was motivated by Terdiman's (2013) observation on the increase of the Muslim population within the context of Swaziland (now properly known as Eswatini). Then it is to no surprise that, with the growth of the Muslim population, the religious climate of the country is affected. Terdiman (2013) clearly expressed that, not only does Islam seek to make its influence known to the Swazi population with the increase of the Muslim community, but the mission of Islam is also to win as many converts as possible. Islam's missionary nature is not something which the church is ignorant of, in fact, Braswell Jr. (1994:64) states that, "the early years of Islam demonstrated its nature as missionary, mobile, migratory, and sometimes militant". In light of this statement, one can conclude that Muslim communities will continue to expand and grow as a result of Islamic mission and establishment.

At this point, the concern has not simply been that Islam is on the rise within the context of Swaziland, but that this demonstrates a greater need and passion for mission. Wright (1999:135) states that,

Wherever we scratch the Bible, it bleeds with the missionary passion of God. And as we meditate on the Gospels, unless our sensibilities are thoroughly blunted, we cannot help but note the connection between the willingness of Christ to face the cross and His missionary heartbeat.

Therefore, in the face of the rise of Islam, and the great Christian mandate, the researcher endeavoured to answer the following question: “How can a comparative dialogue on God’s holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity apologetically and missionally strengthen the church?”

5.3 Main Points of Chapters 2 – 4

This section summarises the main points of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Although no new information is provided, some personal reflections and concluding thoughts are added to assist in understanding the schematic progression of the study. Furthermore, each chapter is designed to answer the main problem of the research, as was restated in section 5.2.

5.3.1 Chapter 2

The primary focus of Chapter 2 was to explore the definition of God’s holiness in Reformed theology and Sunni Islam. This chapter was particularly designed to provide comparative direction in answering the research question: how can a comparative dialogue on God’s holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity apologetically and missionally strengthen the church? To comparatively scrutinise the doctrine of God’s holiness from the mentioned theological structures (Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity), the chapter commenced by defining key concepts from both perspectives to conduct a comparative analysis. At this point it is important to note that the researcher is well aware of the various schools of thought within Reformed theology and Sunni Islam, and thus does not assume total uniformity within the different schools of thought. However, the definition of “God’s holiness” from each theological perspective is formed from a general consensus amongst theologians from each identified perspective (Reformed theology and Sunni Islam), despite their subtle theological variations.

The chapter was successfully able to construct functional definitions from both mentioned perspectives. From the Sunni Islamic perspective, the primary source of the definition remained

the Quranic surah 59:23 and 62:1 and the Islamic commentaries around these two surahs (verses). It is also interesting to see how even the works of Islamic scholars used to define the Quranic God's holiness is significantly influenced by the Quranic revelation, and specifically surah 59:23 and 62:1. Therefore, after a proper study of the Islamic sources, the researcher concluded that the Sunni Islamic definition of the Quranic God's holiness primarily speaks of the Quranic God's perfections. Sunni Islamic scholars have done good work to properly define the term "perfection" in relation to the Quranic God's holiness. It has been gathered that, when the Sunni Muslim speaks of God being holy (Quddus), it refers to His "otherness". The Quranic God is purely and completely other in nature and in function; is fully transcendent; and far removed from any creaturely weaknesses and dependence.

The chapter proceeded to define the Reformed Christian definition of the biblical God's holiness. From the Reformed Christian perspective, the holiness of God, like the Sunni Islamic conception, speaks primarily of the biblical God's perfections. These perfections of the biblical God are then used to construct a view of the doctrine of God's holiness: that He is without fault, without flaw, without the capacity to err, and that by necessity He is limited to do that which is perfect and good always. The Reformed Christian perspective of the doctrine of the biblical God's holiness is one that extends His perfections not only to His being and essence (that is above all, completely transcendent), but furthermore to His moral ethics. The biblical God, on the basis of His holiness, is by nature and functions perfectly without any inconsistency, for if there were any inconsistencies, this would blemish His holiness.

Furthermore, what stands out when discussing the definitional structures of God's holiness in each perspective, is that within the Sunni Islamic perspective, the subject of the Quranic God's holiness is not understood as a primary, nor an independent doctrine. The Sunni Islamic theologians have simply coupled the Quranic God's holiness within the larger category of His official 99 names. Though Sunni Muslim theologians discuss the attributes of the Quranic God using different terms, the term "holiness" is something that is not given primary attention. On the contrary, within the Reformed Christian theologians, discussions and studies around the biblical God's holiness is, firstly, recognised as an official doctrine, and secondly, is a doctrine that has been given special attention.

5.3.2 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is where most of the research emphasis was placed. The reason for a greater research emphasis in this chapter was not because the other chapters are less important, but because Chapter 3 provided the foundation for the rest of the study. Chapter 3 is by design a comparative chapter, in which the similarities (of which there are many) and differences

between the Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian conceptions of God's holiness are unpacked, along with a comparative evaluation of the findings in and from both perspectives. Chapter 3 was specifically designed to accomplish the central theoretical argument of the study provided in the introduction.

The chapter discovered that, while there are similarities between the Sunni Islamic and Reformed Christian conceptions of God's holiness, they are primarily superficial. In fact, what has been properly discovered is a fundamental difference between the two perspectives on the subject matter. While both perspectives promote their God to be Holy, meaning perfect and completely transcendental, the Reformed Christian perspective holds the biblical God's holiness accountable in more ways than the Sunni Islamic perspective. The Reformed Christian conception speaks of God's holiness as an attribute by which the biblical God is not only perfect in nature and essence, but is perfect in His moral behaviours as well. On the contrary, the Sunni Islamic perspective has not provided the study with the same level of theological accountability. In the Sunni Islamic perspective, the Quranic God is holy, meaning perfect and wholly transcendental, but only in nature and essence; no further discussion was provided on His moral behaviours.

Chapter 3 further revealed that, the Quranic God, though asserted to be perfect, is indeed not perfect. This statement may require an entire study of its own, but to remain within the scope of this study, this section simply arrives at this conclusion by analysing Sunni Islamic conceptions of the Quranic God's holiness. The claim is arrived at by observing an inconsistent standard by which the Quranic God deals with humanity. There seems to be no valid, nor an immutable scale by which one is assessed as righteous or wicked. This has not been in the case of the biblical God and His conceptions amongst the Reformed Christian theologians. In fact, what is realised in the study is that, within the conceptions of Reformed Christian theologians, the holiness of the biblical God is perfectly preserved in His nature, in His moral behaviours, and in His dealings with humanity. There is a standard that is never changed and can be intellectually apprehended.

5.3.3 Chapter 4

After having constructed the theological concept of the doctrine of God's holiness from both theological perspectives, and providing a comparative dialogue to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective, Chapter 4 utilised the insights of the study in order to strengthen and expand on the work of the Reformed Christian church. Specific attention was given to the work of missions. The chapter indulged in a definitional discussion in order that the reader might understand what is meant by missions. A few methods and examples were

provided in order to clarify and distinguish between what is accepted as missions and what is dismissed as being missional.

As the chapter progressed, the Reformed Christian perspective of missions was explored and further expanded upon. During the research, it became apparent that there is great theological significance attached to the concept of missions amongst Reformed Christian academics. Missions is not understood simplistically but is seen as a category in Christian living that requires much consideration. The research discovered that missions is multifaceted. Missions functions with its existing 'limbs', elenctics and apologetics. This is where one finds the significance of the missional discussion within the context of the entire research. The study aims to strengthen the Reformed Christian church in its missional work, and more specifically within the area of apologetics and elenctics. Therefore, Chapter 4 informed the study, and these insights will be utilised for the equipping of the Reformed Christian church.

5.4 Findings

The primary aim of the study was to answer the question of "how a comparative dialogue on God's holiness in Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity can apologetically and missionally strengthen the church?" At this point, the researcher invites the reader to focus on three primary facets of the research question, namely: 1) a study of a very specific doctrine is in view, God's holiness; 2) the study is conducted in and from two different theological structures, Sunni Islam and Reformed Christianity; and 3) the study is conducted with a specific aim as seen in the research question, to strengthen the Christian church.

Therefore, in accordance with the aim found within the research question, the findings of the study do indeed accomplish the task. Firstly, the study presents the reader with the fact that the doctrine of the biblical God's holiness is one area of study in which Christian theologians have spent much time conceptualising. Thus, it is fair to state that the doctrine of God's holiness is much stronger and presented with much more depth amongst the Reformed Christian theologians than by the Sunni Muslim theologians. Secondly, as the study progresses to compare the data gathered from both perspectives on the doctrine of God's holiness, it is discovered that the Sunni Islamic concept of God's holiness presents with more theological weaknesses, while the Reformed Christian perspective presents with more theological strengths than found within the Sunni Islamic conception of the doctrine being investigated.

5.5 Result of the Research

The purpose of this study was to strengthen and equip Christians in the sphere of apologetics and missions. The study elucidates the theological concept that is crucial for firstly understanding God, worshipping Him, relating with Him, and finally verbally sharing these truths about Him with the rest of the world. The urgency of the study grows from the reasons provided in the introduction, that there is a growing scepticism of the Christian faith, therefore having a good grasp of the issue as presented will assist the church to grow in confidence when answering the sceptics and presenting the truth.

5.6 Further Research

The study of any biblical topic carries the potential for a lengthy research project, especially for the scriptural topic to be completely grasped. If this is the case, then such an idea is more so when applied to God. This study attempts to comparatively understand the truth of God's holiness; however, realising the vastness of the topic, the researcher encourages the reader to explore this subject further.

Some concluding remarks follow next.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter recapped the research problem and summarised the main findings of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. In addition to expressing the desired results of the study, a short motivation for further research on the topic was provided. No new information was discussed, but overall, the chapter provided clarification for the reader and brought the study to a close.

To conclude this study, I leave you with these few words by Roderick Davis (2016: n.p.):

*"Love is the root of missions;
sacrifice is the fruit of missions".*

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**God's holiness: A comparative dialogue between Reformed Christianity and
Sunni Islam**

**By
MSK Khaqan**

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux