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Preface

This research has been very difficult to me. This accomplishment is the result of the help I received from others who shared with me their skills, knowledge, patience, love, encouragement, prayers, and time.

This journey started when I received the Lord Jesus Christ as a teenager. I found myself in a family of believers who acted as a seedbed for my early spiritual formations.

Glory, honour, and praise go first and foremost to my Lord, life, joy, friend, and guide, Jesus Christ. Gratitude to my promoter, father, and mentor Prof Dr DG van der Merwe who always believed that I have what it takes to embark on this project, even when days were dark. Thank you, my Professor.

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To my editor, Dr WH Oliver, who has gone all out to help and assist in the polishing of this research: His patience and skill is unmatched. To the VIPs, Dr Togarasai (UB), Mr and Mrs Tlhoolebe, Bro Lucky, Mrs Monyeki, Mrs T Ntau, Ms A.T. Letang, and UNISA Library staff a special word of thanks.

Samuel Letang

Commitment to avoid plagiarism

Student Number: 45830401

I hereby declare that this thesis, which is based on my research on *The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' according to 1 John 3:2* is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I have committed myself to avoid plagiarism on every level of my research and have fully cited, according to the Harvard Method, every source that I used, including books, articles, internet sources and images.

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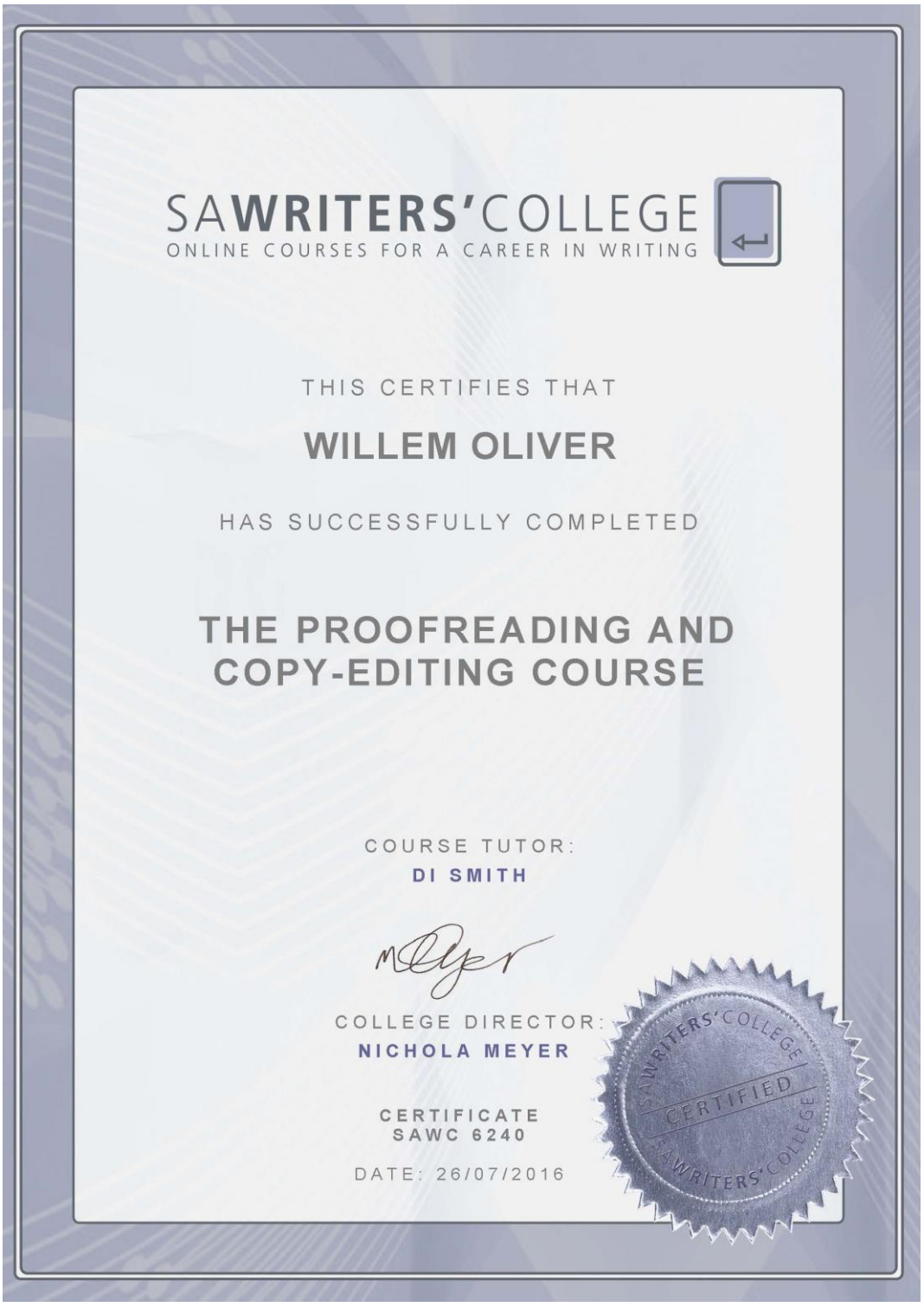

Abbreviations

Some references within the research are written in full, while others are abbreviated. Those abbreviated include both biblical books and journals – they are indicated as follows:

Am	Amos
1 Chr	1 Chronicles
1 Co	1 Corinthians
1 Ki	1 Kings
1 Sa	1 Samuel
2 Ch	2 Chronicles
2 Co	2 Corinthians
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel

Dead Sea Scrolls

- 1 QS Qumran Rule of the Community (Manual of Disciple)
- 4 Q Qumran Sefer Ha-Milhamah
- 1 QH Qumran Thanksgiving Hymns

De Isis	Isis and Osiris
Dt	Deuteronomy
Est	Esther
Ex	Exodus
Eze	Ezekiel
FRCL	French common language version
Gn	Genesis
Heb	Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jdg	Judges
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John
Job	Job

Josephus

- *Ag Ap* Against Apion
- *Ant* Jewish Antiquities

Kiddishim

- *ABR* Australian Biblical Review
- *JW* Jewish War
- Tg Targum

Lev Leviticus

LXX Septuagint

M Mishnah

MFT Moffat Translation

Midr Midrash

- *Abot Rab Nat* Abot de Rabbi Nathan (recensions A and B)
- *BT Hag* Babylonian Talmud Hagigah
- *Exod Rab* Exodus Rabbah
- *Gen Rab* Genesis Rabbah
- *Lev Rab* Leviticus Rabbah
- *M Hag 2:1* Mishnah, Hagigah 2:1
- *Mek Rab Ish* Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael
- *Midr Rab Nat* Midrash Rabbi Nathan
- *PT Hag* Palestinian Talmud Hagigah
- *Pesiq Rab Kah* Pesiqta de Rabbah Kahana
- *Pesiq Rab* Pesiqta Rabbati
- *Rab Ak* Rabbah Akiba
- *Rab Mat Her* Rabbi Mattiah ben Heresh
- *Rab* Rabbah
- *Son of Son Rabbah* Song of Sons Rabbah
- *T Hag* Tosefta Hagigah
- *T Isaiah* Testament of Isaiah

Mishrashim

- *Aelius Aristides* Oration to Rome
- *Apoc Mos* Apocalypse of Moses
- *Aristot Nic Eth* The Nicomachean Ethics

- *Mar Ascen Isa* Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah
- *Syb Or* Sibylline oracles

Mt Matthew

NIV New International Version

NLT New Living Translation

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

- *1 En* 1 Enoch (the secrets of Enoch)
- *2 En* 2 Enoch (the secrets of Enoch)
- *4 Ez* 4 Ezra

Ovid

- *Her* Heroids
- *Metam* Metamorphoses

Php Philippians

Philo

- *Abr* On Abraham
- *Det* The Worse attacks the Better
- *Ebr* On Drunkenness
- *Fug* On Flight and Finding
- *Mut* On the Change of Names
- *Post* On the Posterity and Exile of Cain
- *Praem* On Rewards and Punishment
- *Quest in Gen* Questions and Answers on Genesis
- *Spec Leg* On the Special Laws

Ps Psalms

Rm Romans

Ru Ruth

Testament of the twelve Patriarchs

- *T Benj* Testament of Benjamin
- *T Dan* Testament of Dan
- *T Jos* Testament of Joseph
- *Tulm* Tulmud

Tob Tobit

Zec Zechariah

Abstract

Using a text-immanent multi-dimensional methodology that combines impulses from both synchronic and diachronic reading of a text, this study focuses on understanding the spirituality embedded in 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. Discourse analysis has provided the structure of the entire research by identifying the different semantic networks that enhance better understanding and dynamic interaction between text and reader.it has also helped in determining the argument and rhetoric of the Elder, assisting in constructing the bigger picture by means of semantic networks that create coherent mind maps and also relating what has been read with what is still to be read.

The environs of the pericope under investigation have been used as a backdrop in order to arrive at an understanding of this envisaged eschatological phenomenon. These environs include the window provided by Judaism through the Old Testament, Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism, extra-biblical literature, the Graeco-Roman world, mystery religions, philosophies, and the New Testament. These environs have pointed to the use of intermediaries in the *visio-Dei*.

While 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 involves both the Father and the Son, this eschatological expectation is weaved into a matrix of discourse that the Elder used to cushion the adherents in view of the pending apostasy. The adherents' status as 'children of God' is the axis from which the Elder builds his entire discourse. They will experience love (1 Jn 4:16), his purity (1 Jn 3:3), his righteousness (1 Jn 2:1), his truth (1 Jn 5:20), and his glory (Jn 17:24). Although the adherents were already experiencing all these, it would be experienced completely after the *Parousia*, when they 'see him as he is'.

This study contributes towards a Johannine understanding of perceiving the divine, and reveals the climactic involvement of the Son in both the past and future perceptions including 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. This study has identified the object of the *visio-Dei* as Christ. It is He through whom believers will see the Father.

Keywords

Spirituality, *visio Dei*, integrated approach methodology, discourse analysis, contemplative reading, 1 John, mystery religions, Earlier and Later Judaism, New Testament, Extra-biblical, God, and orality.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The title and its explanation

The title of the research is: **The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' according to 1 John 3:2**. This title has semantic units that need to be explained in order to understand it better, as well as to demarcate this academic research. These units are 'Christian spirituality', 'seeing him as he is', and 'First Epistle of John'.

1.1.1 Christian spirituality[1]

The term 'spirituality', together with the text reference in the title of the thesis, creates the environment for the interpretation of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is', and helps to demarcate the research.

Spirituality deals with lived experiences of faith. Edwards elaborates much on spirituality. He notes that human affections are the inclinations of their soul to approve (desire/seek/choose/love) one thing and to disapprove (loathe/flee/hate) another (Edwards 2000:252). Humans have affections about many things, but the most important of their affections has to do with religion. He further states that proper religion, in great part, consists in the affections, because a heart/soul/will, inclined

[1] This research will also be done from an early Christian spirituality point of view, because most scholars will agree that Christianity goes back to certain deeply significant experiences of the first disciples – experiences in which they saw the 'incarnated' and 'resurrected' Jesus. This investigation will help to better understand the experiences and faith which gave Christianity its distinctive character (Dunn 1975:2). The investigation of religious experiences has not altogether been ignored in recent years. Systems of classifications of these religious experiences have been proposed. These range from an initial confirming experience in which the individual simply notes or senses the existence of the Divine, to responsive experiences in which there is a mutual acknowledgement of presence. This level is followed by the ecstatic experience where an affectionate relationship is formed between the individual and the Divine. The fourth and most intimate level is characterised by the revelation experience (cf. Moehle 1983:9-10). A sympathetic study of the language with which Jesus and the first Christians articulated their religious experiences should therefore enable this research to gain some insight into the understanding and evaluation of their religious experiences. Obviously, religious experience is, as is commonly known, ambiguous. However, if it can be detected what it was in the experience of the first-generation Christians that caused them to refer to God or the Spirit or Jesus, then this evaluation of their experience will become that much more feasible (Dunn 1975:3). This research is conducted within the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology. In this thesis spirituality will be used to denote a 'lived experience'. The focus of the research will be on the spirituality of the early Johannine Christians in 'seeing him as he is' according to the First Epistle of John 3:2.

towards God and away from the world, can only be produced by an act of the Holy Spirit in genuine conversion.

Schneiders (2005:16) defines spirituality as 'the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence towards the horizon of ultimate value one perceives'. This general definition fits well inside this study of spirituality.

The spirituality espoused in this research is Christian spirituality. Schneiders (2002:134) delineates Christian spirituality as the 'lived experiences of the Christian faith'. This is crucial because she states that Christian spirituality is basically biblical, and is adequate only to the degree that it is engrained in and cognizant with the Word of God. For her, 'Christian spirituality is a self-transcending faith in which union with God and Jesus Christ through the Spirit articulates itself in the service of the neighbour and participation in the realisation of the reign of God in the world' (Schneiders 2002:134). The research on the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' fits well into the periphery of this definition, while the combination of spirituality with a biblical text is positioned to benefit from the already established framework.

This stance of Schneiders on spirituality is further clarified by the chapter of Donahue (2006) on *The Quest for Biblical Spirituality*. Besides echoing and concurring with Schneiders' views on spirituality, he further discusses how Schneiders guards biblical spirituality against the reproach of reading one's ideas into the text and eisegesis. He expounds on the guidelines that counter such a charge, which include respect for the text as it stands, an interpretation that explains anomalies, an interpretation that uses proper methods, one that is compatible with what is known from other sources, and the fruitfulness of the interpretation (Donahue 2006:83-86).

The scope of Christian spirituality is Christian religious experience[2]. This experience is related to the spiritual enterprise of the human race. Christian spirituality encompasses both socio-cultural and temporal settings, because all religious

[2] See McNulty (1980), Cohen (2009), Wildman (2011), Healy (2009), Ahern (1990), Johnson (1999), Forney and Higginbotham (2013), and Bird (2012).

experiences happen in a particular historical setting. Christian spirituality approaches its religious experiences from a theological point of view, also because they are engrained in the theological tradition of Christianity (Schneiders 2005:28).

In her chapter on *The turn to spirituality,* Kourie presents the contours of the contemporary interest in the phenomenon of spirituality, not only among religious people, but also from all quarters of society including 'medical doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, political scientists, business women and men, ecologists, sociologists, human rights activists, anthropologists, literature scholars, artists, as well as religionists and theologians' (Kourie 2006:19). She concludes that there is a growing interest in the spirituality from all these walks of life as evidenced by the vast literature available. She also laments the lack of a consensus as to the unequivocal definition of spirituality among these different fields which has left the very meaning of spirituality 'fluid'. This is evidenced by the different meanings spirituality stands for: To some it means 'escapism', 'inactivity', and 'irrelevance', while to others it refers to 'full human maturation' (Kourie 2006:19).

Waaijman cautions about this casual and undefined use of 'experience'. He states that it is often 'naive, vague and extremely ambiguous' (Waaijman 2007:103), and defines spirituality in terms of the divine-human relational process as 'transformation' (Waaijman 2002:305-591). His definition includes keywords in Scripture such as 'mercy', 'fear of God', 'holiness', 'perfection', and Hellenistic terms such as 'gnosis', 'asceticism', 'contemplation', 'devotion' and 'piety', and contemporary designations such as 'kabbala', 'mysticism', 'inner life', and 'spirituality'. Central to his contribution on spirituality is the fact that he has disseminated problems encountered in the study of spirituality taking place in many academic disciplines, as concerning the basic concepts and its relation to the Jewish-Christian tradition. His conclusion to this dilemma is that 'up to now the study of spirituality is a multi-disciplinary enterprise; the challenge is that it will become an interdisciplinary network' (Waaijman 2007:103).

The issues of spirituality need more research and investigation. The researcher comes from the Pentecostal tradition which was founded on an experience with God, and currently elevates experience above all. He agrees with Edwards that when someone

has affections[3] that are religious, it does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit is the source of these affections. In his endeavour to bring objectivity to the study of these affections, Edwards (1996:256) postulates twelve reliable signs[4].

1.1.2 'Seeing him as he is'

This clause has not yet been clearly defined. Scholars are not unanimous in their interpretation thereof (discussed later in more detail). It is the intention of this research to reach an understanding of this clause.

1.1.3 The First Epistle of John

This study endeavours to reach a legitimate understanding of the First Epistle of John – referring to the correspondence of John the Elder[5] in 1 John. This guards the research from imposing Pauline, Lucan and other understandings on this specific text.

1.2 Hypothesis

In order to keep the early Christians[6] from a pending apostasy, championed by the arrival of the 'last hour' and the 'antichrist(s)' (1 Jn 2:18), the Elder appeals to them, by referring to the ultimate hope of experiencing and interacting with the Deity, to remain in Christ (1 Jn 2:24) in order to 'see him as he is'. This experience will take place at the *Parousia*. Those who have resisted the antichrist, will stand before God

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[3] These unreliable signs can be divided into three sectors: 1) Those involving religious experiences, like intense religious affections, much religious affection at the same time, a certain sequence in the affections, affections not produced by the self, while Scripture comes miraculously to mind, together with physical manifestations of the affections; 2) Those involving religious behaviour like constant or eloquent talk about God and religion, frequent and passionate praise for God, the appearance of love, and zealous or time-consuming devotion to religious activities; and 3) Those involving assurance of salvation, being convinced that one is saved.

[4] In short they are: 1) A divine and supernatural source; 2) attraction to God and his ways for their own sake; 3) seeing the beauty of holiness; 4) a new knowing; 5) Deep-seated conviction; 6) humility; 7) a change of nature; 8) a Christ-like spirit; 9) fear of God; 10) balance, 11) hunger for God; and 12) Christian practice (suffering and obedience).

[5] In this thesis the author of the First Epistle of John will be referred to as 'the Elder'. This is in agreement with most scholars who believe that the three Johannine Epistles were written by the same person, referred to in all Johannine corpuses as the πρεσβύτερος (Elder cf. 3 Jn 1) (cf. Brown 1997:398; Culpepper 1998:251; Kenny 2000:12).

[6] In this research the term 'Christian(s)' is used to refer to Christ's early followers, as groups or as an individual. In the earliest years of the Christian era, when the church was unified, no denominational names (such as Baptist or Roman Catholic) existed. Local churches did not have names, but were known by their locations (such as 'the church at Ephesus'). There was also no single official name for the new Christian movement. Many designations were used for the followers of Christ, and these changed as the historical situation changed. Many Christians considered themselves simply as Jews were following Jesus (Elwell & Betzel 1998:431).

with confidence and will be transformed into his likeness. On the other hand, those who did not resist the antichrist, will have fear and will be put to shame. The term ‘early Christians’ in this research refers to first- and second-generation Christians – these are Jewish Christians, proselytes, Hellenistic Christians, and apocalyptic Christians (Dunn 1977:20).

1.3 Problem statement of the research (purpose)

1.3.1 Objectives

In this research the spirituality of ‘seeing him as he is’ is discussed with reference to the Elder in 1 John 3:2. The following objectives shed light on the direction of this research:

- To critically investigate the understanding of the Johannine community regarding ‘seeing him as he is’ within an eschatological perspective.
- To critically investigate and understand the Johannine community’s experience of God.
- To critically compare the understanding of ‘seeing him as he is’ in the Johannine community with ‘seeing God’ in the Old Testament, New Testament, Graeco-Roman world (with reference to mystic religions), and other religions.
- To text-critically examine 1 John 3:2 in order to settle an argument on identifying the appearing object and the meaning of ‘seeing him as he is’.
- To make a contribution to Johannine literature (and also help the researcher self) to understand the concept of the spirituality of ‘seeing him as he is’.

The researcher agrees with Martin (1978:1) that ‘one of the most vexing problems in modern biblical study today is what is gently called the “hermeneutical gap”’. There is an ever-widening space separating the exegete’s attempt to understand the text in itself, and their capacity to show their contemporaries the meaning of that text within the context of its actual experiences. This research endeavours to close that gap, by arguing that the spiritualities of the recipients are not locked up in history, but can be accessed in the present, because of the nature of the Scriptures.

1.3.2 Research problem

The research problem delineates the intriguing problems that underlie the current study, and are worthy of consideration in order to undertake this study. The following questions are relevant to this study:

- How did the original recipients and writer(s) understand the concept of 'seeing him as he is'?
- What past experiences did the recipients have when they heard or read that they will 'see him as he is'?
- How would a comprehensive investigation of the clause 'seeing him as he is' contribute towards a theological discourse about its spirituality in 1 John 3:2?

1.3.2.1 Textual problem

The textual problem to be discussed is the intended meaning of the Elder when he writes in 1 John 3:2, 'for we shall see him as he is'. This is achieved by dealing with the object represented by the two personal pronouns, αὐτῷ and αὐτόν (him) in 1 John 3:2. The question to be addressed, is: To whom does the personal pronouns αὐτῷ and αὐτόν refer: To Jesus, the Son of God, or to God the Father? Scholars differ on who exactly 'will be seen' – the Father or Jesus. The object of the vision is not clearly stated in 1 John 3:2.

Scholars who favour 'the Father' have their case anchored on the fact that in 1 John the character of the children of God is paralleled with the character of God, and not of Jesus ('God is light, righteous, love'), although in 1 John 2:6 the children of God are called to live as Jesus lived. Van der Merwe (2015a:1-2) categorises scholars who favour the object of the *visio Dei* espoused as either 'the Father' or 'the Son': He notes that scholars who favour 'the Father' include, but are not limited to, Westcott (1902:99), Michaelis (1981:366), Klauck (1991:182), Loader (1992:34-35), Bratcher and Hatton (1993:313), Haas, De Jonge and Swellengrebel (1994:83), Strecker (1996:88-89), Painter (2002:221), and Brown (2006:395). Scholars who favour 'the Son' as the object of this vision include, but are not limited to, Law (1909:387), Dodd (1953a:70-71), Marshall (1978:173), Grayston (1984:103-104), Johnson (1993:68), Walls and Anders (1999:190), Kruse (2000:116), Kistemaker and Hendriksen (2001:295), Akin (2001:137), Thomas (2004:151), and Van der Merwe (2015a:1-2).

This research intends to unveil the dynamics of the relationship between the Father and the Son in order not only to understand the identity of the object of the vision, but also to converge the understanding of this relationship from the Fourth Gospel and other Johannine literature.

There is also a query as to what the last ὅτι-clause of 1 John 3:2 refers: Does the clause qualify οἴδαμεν (we know)? This means that 'seeing him' gives proof to the children of God that they will be 'like him' (see Bultmann 1973:48). Some scholars suggest that the clause qualifies ἐσόμεθα (we shall be). In this case being 'like him' becomes the direct result or outcome of 'seeing him' (see Brooke 1912:83; Plummer 1080:122; Law 1979:388; and Marshall 1978:172). The spirituality of 'seeing him' is studied in this thesis in order to establish the 'kind of sight' meant by the Elder, and also the impact of this expectation on the piety of the adherents. The research gives a window into the use of this spirituality as a deterrent to the adherents' apostasy posed by the opponents:

- Does that which will be manifested refer to God the Father, or to Christ?
- What does 'seeing him as he is' mean in the eschatological orientation?

1.3.2.2 Methodological problem

The questions for methodological considerations in spirituality emanate from the dialogue between spirituality and exegesis. This dialogue is made necessary by the fact that 'the object of exegesis is formed by the canonised source of the Jewish-Christian text tradition while that of spirituality is the divine human relational process' (Welzen 2011:50-51). There is a working model that recognises these different kinds of materiality, as the object of exegesis is the text of the Bible, while that of spirituality is processes. There is a need for an integrated methodology which comprises an exegetical competence, competence in the study of spirituality, and a competence to integrate exegesis and spirituality (cf. Welzen 2011:54).

Hermeneutics has developed from single methodological approaches to more integrated approaches in interpreting biblical texts. The socio-rhetorical approach of Robbins (1996a) has demonstrated itself to be one of the most appropriate multi-dimensional and very comprehensive approaches the researcher is aware of.

However, the researcher will only use its terminology, as it clearly defines the thickly textured tapestry nature of texts (Robbins 1996a:2). The researcher is guided by the textures Robbins uses to give direction to his own research. Therefore, this research is benefiting from these multi-dimensional approaches. The possibility of merging earlier and later methodologies is well demonstrated by Egger (1996): In his methodology he has attempted to link a sample of recent methods derived from linguistics with the analytical procedures of historical-critical exegesis. He marries the synchronic and diachronic reading of a text and also deals with reading a text historically and hermeneutically.

The reading and interpretation of texts normally deal with the historical, textual and theological issues of a text, but in order to study the 'experiences' (spiritualities) of the text, there is a need for an in-depth analysis of the experiences of the recipients. This is achieved through a careful study of how they experienced God through contemplative reading of Scripture in the inner texture, and the dynamics of hearing Scripture in the socio-historical texture. In the inner texture, the claims made by Robbins to determine the rhetoric of the author, are in this research substituted by a discourse analysis.

1.3.2.3 Theological problem

To the researcher's mind, no research has been conducted on 'seeing him as he is' with reference to the *Eschaton* – this conclusion is endorsed by the literature review in Chapter 2. The children of God have experienced God and seen some of his glory, but none of these encounters can constitute a clear notion which can be conclusively labelled as having 'seen him as he is'. It is against this background that the words of the Elder in 1 John 3:2, 'for we shall see him as he is', are critically investigated. The Elder promises the recipients something that has never happened before – it will only happen in the *Eschaton.*

The hypothetical proposition mentioned above has suscitated one question which will shed light on the direction of this study: What would the original audience (adherents) have understood when they heard the clause 'seeing him as he is' in view of their 1st -century Judeo-Hellenistic world? This will help understand the Elder's dynamic rhetoric in view of the adherents' continual faith and the opponents' probing.

1.3.2.4 The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is'

The spirituality evoked in the life of the recipients as they interacted with this clause is of paramount importance in this research. In order to unpack these spiritualities, the following questions are addressed:

- What kind of experience/excitement/expectation was created when the Elder used the clause 'seeing him as he is'?
- What would the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' entail to the adherents in view of the 1st-century Judeo-Hellenistic world?

1.4 Academic contribution

This study endeavours to contribute to the Johannine scholarship by studying the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 as the researcher could not find any publication or study on this specific topic. This entails early Christian spirituality, focusing on the lived experiences[7] of the 1st-century community to whom the Elder writes these words. In dealing with the topic of experiencing God, different aspects of this phenomenon have been researched[8].

In this research 'spirituality' refers to 'living a life of transformation and self-transcendence that resonates with the lived experiences of God' (Van der Merwe 2015a:1). Research was done on individual verses in 1 John, such as 1 John 3:9 and 1 John 1:8-10 (cf. the literature review in Chapter 2), but no research could be found on 1 John 3:2 with a spirituality predisposition, and the spirituality evoked in the recipients of the Epistle when they read this verse in relation to other themes. The spirituality embedded in this clause is realised by subjecting its pericope to a

[7] 'Experience' is a slippery term, especially when used in relation to 'deity'. Cauthen (1986:39) argues extensively that religion is not primarily a matter of cognitive knowledge of God, or of ethics, or of action, but a matter of feeling. In particular, God is immediately known or apprehended in the 'feeling of absolute dependence'. Cauthen (1986:33) defines this experience as 'what happens to us and in us'. It refers to what we ourselves have decided, done, felt, seen, touched, and known for ourselves. He further points out that it may also refer to 'what has happened to and within the community of faith in its own first-hand encounter with realities temporal or eternal. Experience is what we perceive, feel, choose, intuit, grasp, and otherwise come to know on the basis of particular occasions of being in touch with the real and the ideal, with being, goodness, and beauty, with the world and God' (Cauthen 1986:33). It is in this respect that the lived experience of God is a first-hand essential part of the biblical story of the individual, Israel and the early Church.

[8] These aspects include hearing and touching God (cf. Willard 2012; Levine 2000; Oduyoye 1986; Martin 2006; Alston 1993; Hybels 2010; Lai 2004; Blackaby & King 2008; Anderson 2010; Burgess 1972).

comprehensive methodology that is responsive to the connection of the themes therein.

The Socio-rhetorical Method of interpretation as espoused by Robbins (1996a; 1996b) is implemented to investigate various verses in 1 John – this method has proved to be comprehensive. However, in this study it is not used in its entirety, as it is merged with impulses from linguistics and other fields to arrive at a well-rounded meaning of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. The inner textual investigation consists of the discourse analysis. By employing a discourse analysis, the relationship and coherence of words/phrases/clauses as they are repeated in a section, are detected. As the research resonates with the semantic relations clarified by these repetitions, it aims to understand the relationship between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication. The discourse analysis gives the entire research its outline and also guides it in avoiding repetition.

The researcher uses 'seeing God' in the Old and New Testament, Graeco-Roman Pantheon, cults and statues, mystery religions, Eleusian mysteries, Egyptian mystic religions, worship of the occult, and philosophies, as a backdrop from which the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 can be understood and, subsequently, the spirituality embedded therein.

An understanding of the spirituality of 'seeing' in 1 John 3:2 cannot be achieved through semantics only. This verse is part of texts that are future-eschatological. Therefore, it is examined within its future-eschatological setting as well as its micro- and macro-linguistic contexts. Future eschatology in 1 John is closely related to realised eschatology – they, in fact, form a continuum. Future eschatology is described as a culmination of the present fellowship in the *familia Dei*, referring to the children of God who, metaphorically speaking, enter the house of their Father (Jn 14:1-3); they will be like him, for they will see him as he is (1 Jn 3:2b) (Van der Merwe 2006:1045-1076).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:
HISTORICAL SURVEY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

As pointed out in Chapter 1, 'seeing' is embedded in a pericope that is future-eschatological in nature. The departure point is to define eschatology, then review publications on the eschatology of 1 John. Defining eschatology and situating the 'seeing him as he is' within the eschatology of 1 John, then serves as a milieu for the interpretation of this clause. The envisaged *visio Dei* also takes place after the *Parousia* – therefore a survey of the literature dealing with 'events after the *Parousia*' is also necessary. The last part of this chapter surveys the literature that deals with the clause ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν. This chapter follows the following framework:

- Defining eschatology.
- Publications on the eschatology of 1 John.
- Publications that deal with the 'events after the *Parousia'*.
- Publications dealing with ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν (for we shall see him as he is) in 1 John 3:2.

The findings in this survey lead to defining a problem statement and demonstrating the legitimacy of the research[9].

2.2 Defining eschatology

The term 'eschatology' is clouded with various meanings, and has been used loosely to mean different things to different scholars. Van der Merwe, in his article, *Eschatology in the First Epistle of John:* κοινωνία in the *Familia Dei*, explicitly portrays the confusion and ambiguity that entangle eschatology (Van der Merwe 2006:1045-

[9] The researcher has generated resources from libraries (UNISA Library and its subsidiaries), internet, catalogues, electronic databases (ATLA; New Testament Abstracts; Google Books; Google Scholar; keywords and key phrases/clauses – like 'seeing him as he is', and 'seeing God' – and the Catholic search engines) to resonate with the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

1076). He observes that '[i]n the theological reflection on eschatology, the "semantics" became problematic and muddled. Theologians discussing eschatology were using the same word, but meant different things (Van der Merwe 2006:1046). This is the result of the theological turmoil[10] that characterised the 19th century.

The quest to define eschatology resulted in a wide range of positions[11]. In order to define and understand eschatology, Schmidt (2014:12) makes a sweeping generalisation of most contemporary eschatologies, dividing them into four broad categories: Personal, spiritual, socio-political, and cosmic eschatologies. Although he generalises these eschatologies, he laments the fact that none of them can stand on their own, nor serve as a centre in the study of eschatology. Some of the definitions that scholars propose for eschatology are discussed below.

Walvoord states that the *Eschaton*, as it is described in both the Old and New Testament, primarily concerns God's intervening act in history in order to transform it. Therefore, eschatology relates to the transformation of reality as we know it; it involves the presence of two distinct eras. This overlapping of two eras gives eschatology its texture of dealing with both the present and the future. Eschatology, therefore, follows and deals with the acts of God in both the present and future eras. Interestingly, the dynamic that takes place when God acts is such that, whenever he has acted in a way to transform reality and to inaugurate the beginning of a new era – one that cannot be reversed – it should be perceived as an eschatological act. According to Walvoort (1970:317), '[t]his aspect of eschatology came to be called "realised eschatology", and

[10] Erickson (1985) notes that the orthodox synthesis, while varying from Lutheran to Reform and even to Roman Catholic, maintained a basic understanding of the nature of theology and had held forth for some time. Now, however, new conceptions of the very nature of religion are breaking upon the Church, producing more radical transformations of the fundamental nature of theology than had perhaps occurred in all the previous centuries since the time of the New Testament. In a large part, these alterations result from new developments in the world of knowledge, which affect traditional doctrines of Christianity. In philosophy the critiques of Immanuel Kant (Rohlf 2016) called into question the possibility of proving the existence of God, and in natural sciences Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (Darwin 2001) challenges the Christian doctrine of the special creation of man.

[11] For the earlier definitions of eschatology, see Frost (1952), who defined eschatology as a form of expectation that is characterised by finality. The *Eschaton* is the goal of the time process after which nothing further can occur. Eschatology is seen as the climax of theological history. Kaufman (1960) defines eschatology as the expectation for a final and eternal order. Eichrodt (1961) defines it as the certainty that history will be finally broken-off and abolished in a new age. Clements (1965) concludes that eschatology is the study of ideas and beliefs concerning the end of the present world order, and the introduction of the new world order.

views history and eschatology converging at the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Accordingly, eschatology is now realised rather than futuristic'.

In his discussion of the end times, Mowinckel defines eschatology as a doctrine of complex ideas about the last things which is more or less organically coherent and developed. Consistent with Walvoord, he promotes the dualistic nature of eschatology that should be considered in any endeavour of explaining it. He states that 'eschatology includes in some form or other a dualistic conception of the course of history and implies that the present state of things and the present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superseded by another of an essentially different kind' (Mowinckel 2005:125).

Barton emphasises the personal transformation that is an aspect of the eschatological framework. That the intervention of God in time will have a direct impact on people is an important aspect in this study, as the Elder states that 'when he appears' we shall be like him, for 'we shall see him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2). This transformation is captured well in his definition of eschatology which I am in total agreement with. He defines eschatology as

> that aspect of belief that concerns the transformations and transitions in space, time, and person consequent upon the drawing near of God in Christ and the Spirit to redeem, sanctify, and glorify. It is a recognition of that act of God, climaxing in the death and resurrection of God's Son, that brings into being a 'new creation' whose *telos* is participation in divine glory (Barton 2011:581).

It can therefore be derived that eschatology does not only deal with the acts of God, but also the transformation of people – a statement that becomes evident in this research. This dualistic nature is also true in relation to time. Although most definitions of eschatology leverage on its futuristic character, there are temporal aspects that are equally important. Mihalios (2009:17) examines eschatology and deals with its resonation with 'ecclesiastic and temporal aspects', stating that eschatology must be defined in terms that merely reflect the very end of history. This quest to define eschatology in relation to the very end is also echoed by Dewick, who laments the complexity and vastness of the themes covered under eschatology. He observes that the destiny of the individual human soul and the destiny of the whole world are the

distinct subjects covered by eschatology, and refers to them as ‘individual eschatology and cosmic eschatology’ (Dewick 2011:34).

Resembling many of his predecessors who define eschatology leaning to a specific vantage point, Menn extensively deals with what he terms ‘biblical eschatology’. He analyses all the major eschatological passages, issues, and positions in a clear and thorough way, and situates eschatology in the context of the overall biblical story, he correctly notes that

> God created a beautiful world and human beings to live joyful, fulfilled lives in fellowship with Him. Through our sins we lost that fellowship and brought evil and death in the world. By means of a grand plan God prepared a way for the redeemer to come; Jesus Christ. He came to destroy sin and bring forgiveness of sins and restore fellowship with Him. He is coming again to utterly destroy sin and death without destroying us. He will consummate our restoration and our relationship with Him. His goal is to live in a perfect, holy, loving, familial relationship with humanity. God is both the author in this story and its main character (Menn 2013:1-2).

Despite the fact that scholars are wrestling to formulate a clear definition of eschatology, Turincev (2013) argues from an orthodox point of view. He states that eschatology cannot and must not be defined because it takes us beyond the limits of this world and it cannot be objectified (Turincev 2013:65). Since it is spiritual, the Church has no eschatological doctrine. Unlike Turincev, who despairs and argues for an eschatology without definition, Slater discusses the relationship between eschatology and apocalypticism: Eschatology, he states, deals with the ‘end of this world and a theological forecast of reward and punishment in the next world while apocalypticism envisions a reversal of the social orders’ (Slater 2013:8). His focus is on social location and power.

The definition adopted in this research belongs to Mihalios (2009:20), who defines eschatology as the ‘transforming act of God in history towards a progression that leads to the final consummation of all things’. The progression towards consummation is critical in this study, because it defines a real moment in the future. This approach is

referred to as a progressively realising eschatology (cf. Van der Watt 2000) that includes a future eschatological consummation.

2.2.1 Conclusion to this section

A survey of the definition of eschatology by certain scholars is necessary, because it forms the bedrock on which the entire discussion of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' is discussed. There are also other definitions of eschatology[12] but in this research the definition being adopted, is that one which espouses an act of intervention by God, and which alters the *status quo* and progresses towards a consummation of all things.

This research has a task of discerning these eschatological elements in a text. In order to discern whether a text or theme is eschatological, one must also observe elements of a future final goal and a universal perspective; however, this future goal and universal perspective may have their origin in history. Eschatological texts then are those texts containing either eschatological language or discussing some of the eschatological subjects.

2.3 Publications on the eschatology of 1 John

Even though the eschatology of 1 John does not fit exactly into the framework of 'realised eschatology' as advocated by Dodd (1961:35), there are many areas of similarity. Realised eschatology as presented by Dodd differs from the eschatology of 1 John in that, while it views the 'day of the Lord' as synonymous to eschatology, and standing for the summation of all eschatological purposes, the eschatology of 1 John realises that there are other aspects of the eschatology which are yet to be fulfilled.

The eschatology of 1 John and realised eschatology are in agreement about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as they form a major component (hermeneutical tool) or the 'focal point for the construal of time' in 1 John (Van der Merwe 2008:294). 1 John has a futuristic dimension, implying that after the realisation and fulfilment of the day of the Lord, events which might have imaginably followed it are not allowed to

[12] Examples are Marshall (1978:45-56), Gowan (2000:97-103), Odendaal (1970:23-49), Mowinckel (2005:54-75), Vos (2001:34-89), Hoffman (1997:122-128), Link (1997:98-110), and Reventlow (1997:98-124).

transpire; the eternal meaning which gives reality to history is now drained, and to 'conceive any further event on the plane of history would be like drawing a cheque on a closed account' (Walvoord 1970:317). Therefore, the eschatology of 1 John stands poised with the notion of a futuristic dimension. This future involves the fate of both believers and unbelievers. The recipients of the clause 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 are believers, and they have a stake in the futuristic realisation of eschatology. However, the nucleus of this research is not their involvement, but the manner in which their involvement will occur, and their disposition in relation to that end.

Johannine eschatology expands the concerns of eschatology from not just dealing with the fate of believers, but also with the fate of the world (unbelievers). The Johannine presentation of the 'world' differs from that of the Synoptic Gospels: The Gospels are broadening the concept of the 'world' to include not only the human society but also its physical environment, while John narrows the concept to the 'human society' (Pamment 1982:82). This distinctive aspect of Johannine eschatology provides it with a unique shape, like in 1 John. The community of believers are paired against unbelievers; believers are associated with light and unbelievers with darkness, and there are children of God and children of the devil. The interaction of these societies has a bearing on the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

Distinctive and unique to the Johannine theology[13] is the development of the theme/theology of 'seeing', which can be expressed by a number of categories or levels of seeing i.e. 'non-seeing, sensory seeing, relational seeing, perceptive seeing, comprehensive seeing, eschatological seeing and memorial seeing' (Farrell 1992a:2). In her dealing with these different facets of seeing, Farrell (1992a) notes that eschatological seeing involves an experience of the end-time, in rising from the dead to eternal life with the Father. Jesus is already living in the end-time, and the disciples who see the risen One, enter into an experience of this new life. The view she expresses (Farrell 1992c:313) about eschatological seeing is crucial to this research,

[13] By Johannine theology reference is made to the theology of the three epistles written by the Elder as noted in footnote 5 in this thesis.

because she defines this seeing as experiential: The disciples sharing in that same life which Jesus received from the Father.

Eschatological seeing as experiential is envisaged by the Johannine passion narrative – a presentation of the man Jesus having an eschatological vision of the Father during his historical lifetime. It was this vision that enabled Jesus to confront and overcome evil and even death itself. The future tense of 'seeing' which makes use of this eschatological seeing framework deals with both eternal life (Jn 3:36) and universal salvation (Jn 19:37) Farrell (1992c:321). Therefore, eschatological seeing embraces both realised and futuristic aspects of eschatology. This experiential seeing is explored further in this research, because spirituality deals primarily with 'experiences'.

In 1 John the Elder has weaved important themes that connect directly to eschatology in his rhetoric. One of these crucial themes is time. Van der Merwe deals with the reflection on and definition of time in trying to understand how the Elder used his time references to make sense of his experiences in the Johannine community. He refers to time in terms of the past, present and future, and merges his perceptions to actualise time. His starting point is that 'Jesus Christ has been made the hermeneutical tool that enables us to understand time in the past, present and future' (Van der Merwe 2008:12). Time in Antiquity is compared with time in the New Testament. His research is very important, because eschatology has to do with time, and understanding time in the Epistle of 1 John will help in interpreting any eschatological passage. The overlapping and interrelatedness of tenses in time is such that 'the future expectations have been revised and qualified by the assertions of the present and the past. Alongside the present, the future still stands. 1 John teaches both that the present fulfils the promises of God and that the future holds in other dimensions of the fulfilment of these promises' (Van der Merwe 2008:30). The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' is 1 John 3:2 is therefore placed in the future eschatological time. These time sectors can be seen as the Elder used them in 1 John 3:2:

3.2.1	νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν	**NOW**
3.2.2	καὶ οὔπω *ἐφανερώθη* τί ἐσόμεθα	**NOT YET**
3.2.3	οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν *φανερωθῇ*	**WHEN**

↳ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα

↳ ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν

The time sectors that the Elder uses summarise the way he viewed time and its relation to the children of God and the *Parousia.* The 'now, present time' is crucial in that it is the sphere in which the children of God live. The fact of being children of God is established in the 'now, present time' and more accurately this sets the stage for the distinction between the known and the unknown. This present knowledge about the position of being children of God qualifies one to say that 'our future will be something even more wonderful' (Marshall 1978:171).

The second time factor deals with the temporal time between the 'now' and the 'when'. In this 'not yet' the children of God must wait for their intended status. Life in both the 'now' and the 'not yet' must be lived with the 'when he appears' in constant view. Van der Merwe (2006:1057) refers to this life as a 'new life and κοινωνία in Christ, which believers experience corporately'.

The third time factor deals with 'when'. This is the futuristic aspect and it is referred to as the *Parousia.* It is at this point that the Elder states that 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'. The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is enhanced by the awareness and juxtaposition of these time factors as they relate to the children of God.

Van der Merwe has contributed immensely to the definition of eschatology as well as unearthing the rhetoric of the Elder as he persuades the adherents towards continuing in the course they have been on, and to resist the antichrist(s). The Elder 'reinterprets the schism that occurred in the Johannine community as the marking of the "final hour" which marks an eschatological moment' (Van der Merwe 2006:1051). The purpose of this eschatological stimulation to the community was to make them aware that they are living in the eschatological time, which at a certain time in future will come to an end. In this research Van der Merwe has identified the following eschatological texts in 1 John: 1 John 2:28-3:10, 4:1-6, and 4:16-18. His research is of paramount importance because it is specific not only to 1 John but also to the eschatology thereof. The eschatology of 1 John is labelled as a progressively realising eschatology that embraces a future eschatological consummation. The revelation of the Son of God as a transitional eschatological event that will end the present eschatological time and start a new one, is key to understanding 1 John's eschatology.

The researcher has chosen to approach this study from a realised eschatology perspective, because there seems to be a consensus among scholars on this. Van der Merwe (2008:292) defines realised eschatology as the 'powers of the future world being gradually realised, made real in Jesus' action'. 1 John teaches both that the present fulfils the promises of God and that the future holds in other proportions of the fulfilment of these promises.

2.3.1 Conclusion to this section

In 1 John the Elder espouses a realised eschatology as the powers of the future world being progressively realised, are made real in Jesus' actions. 1 John teaches both that the present fulfils the promises of God and that the future holds in other magnitudes of the fulfilment of these promises. The emphasis on the eschatology of 1 John is not exclusively future or exclusively present; it rather embraces the 'now', the 'not yet' and the 'when'. While the past is still seen and heard in the present, the 'not yet' remains a certainty.

Having defined eschatology as it is used in this research which forms the context through which the *visio Dei* is advocated, and also having situated the eschatology of 1 John[14] within an array of eschatological orientations, this survey will now narrow its periphery to the literature that transacts with seeing God after the *Parousia*. 'Seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 happens after the *Parousia* – therefore an understanding of this phenomenon will be fragmented if it is not seen through its immediate context.

2.4 The 'events after the *Parousia*'

Five publications on eschatology were consulted to determine what happens after the *Parousia* has taken place. This gives the research an opportunity to closely see the events which create the context of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 – it gives guidance to the 'spirituality' found in this context.

In 1977 Erickson has written a book titled *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium*. He has gone into detail to explain various views held by

[14] On the eschatology of 1 John, see also Mills (2001:97-111), Carson (1994:216-232), and Schmidt (1994:45-98).

different scholars pertaining to eschatology. The view which delegates more space to the time after the *Parousia* is Premillennialism (Erickson 1977:91). The first major feature of this system is an earthly reign of Christ that is established by his second coming. The essential point of this system is that Christ will reign on earth for an extended period. Furthermore, this earthly reign will not come into reality through gradual progressive growth; it will rather be 'dramatically or cataclysmically inaugurated by the second coming of Jesus Christ' (Erickson 1977:91). This second coming will bring the devil and his kingdom under control for a thousand years. The time after the *Parousia* is not discussed in detail, and the issue of 'seeing God' is not clarified in this scheme of events.

In his book published in 1979, called *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Thiessen discusses issues pertaining to the end times. In the end he only deals with the final judgement, the final kingdom and the new creation. In the new creation there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem will have the Son and the Father to dwell with them or frequently visit them. 'His servants will serve him, having his name in their foreheads; that they will see his face; and they will reign with him for ever and ever' (Thiessen 1979:403). Although this discussion illuminates the important issue of the state of believers after the *Parousia*, not much is brought to light in terms of the meaning or experience of these believers.

Another publication, published in 1995 is called *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, done by Grudem. In this book he deals with the doctrine of the future, covering the return of Christ, the Millennium, the final judgement and eternal punishment, as well as the new heaven and the new earth. He details events in every section. According to him, dead bodies return to dust and see corruption, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal substance, immediately return to God who gave them to the body. The souls of the righteous being made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they 'behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies' (Grudem 1995:1091). There is no in-depth dealing with the experiences of believers, except that they will be changed.

In his book *Theology of the New Testament* published in 2009, Schnelle discusses the eschatology of the New Testament in depth. He reasons that '[e]arly Christianity did not think of eschatology as merely the consummation of world history. The early Christians reworked conceptions of time, built on an all-encompassing understanding of God, interpreted world history and the present from the point of view of the coming end' (Schnelle 2009:58). When Schnelle explains this coming end, he sees it already present in the form of the kingdom of God. He sees the clue to this kingdom in the proclamation of John the Baptist, when he said, *The time has come…The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news* (Mk 1:15). He interprets this announcement to mean that 'because the kingdom of God is coming, the time is fulfilled, which means that the announcement of the present kingdom of God and the promise of the future eschatological kingdom cannot be regarded as alternatives' (Schnelle 2009:98). To him Jesus did not picture the kingdom of God primarily in terms of territory, but dynamically and functionally.

He further argues that God's future approaches the present in such a way that it can already be seen. God rules, and the powers of this world, including human beings, already stand under his Lordship. The present is qualified as Jesus' own present, as the eschatological present, because God's ultimate saving act is already pressing into this world, inevitably and overwhelmingly, and will continue to do so until the rule of God, which will finally not tolerate any resistance from the powers of evil, becomes the solitary reality that defines the universe and history. God's new world is now hidden in the present. Seeing God is already happening as Christians experience the kingdom of God.

In his book, *The Christian Theological Reader* published in 2001, McGrath refers to an old document that is worth mentioning here, because it has a specific title: *Pope Benedict XII on Seeing God in Heaven* (McGrath 2001:543). This document was published in 1336 and was also known as *De visione Dei*. Seeing God is understood as happening to all the saints who die before they take up their heavenly bodies, and before judgement, because

> since the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven the souls of all the saints are purified and will be in heaven in the heavenly kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, and are joined with the angels. Since the passion

> and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature (McGrath 2001:623).

According to this perspective, seeing God does not happen only after the *Parousia,* but to all the saints who have died. There is a direct apprehension of God, without the need for any intermediary. The weakness of human nature to behold God is abolished by the resurrection, allowing those who have been raised to see God face-to-face. Even in this discussion nothing has been mentioned about the Johannine understanding of the clause 'for we shall see him as he is'.

2.4.1 Conclusion to this section

The events after the *Parousia* are crucial to the understanding of 'seeing him as he is', because it forms its context. There is a gap in scholarship as to the meaning of 'seeing him as he is', because there is not much written about the time after the *Parousia*. As it is most important to understanding the spirituality of the clause 'seeing him as he is' within the context of 1 John 3:2, the literature dealing with this clause are discussed in the next section.

2.5 Literature dealing with ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν (for we shall see him as he is)

The researcher was restricted to English and Setswana literature, since he does not understand any other language. The internet, libraries, periodicals, journals, New Testament abstracts, e-books, articles, monographs, and e-journals were the main sources used, without much success. The only references found on this clause were in commentaries – therefore the commentaries containing the clause 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 are discussed here.

Stott (1988:84) is reluctant in his dealing with this clause and only comments that the 'seeing God' is preceding the 'being like him'. Actually the 'being like him' is caused by the seeing: '[V]ision becomes assimilation' (Stott 1988:84). The only remarks that he makes in terms of seeing God is that we will see him with 'unveiled faces' as we all 'reflect the Lord's glory according to 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 2:6' (Stott 1988:84). It is disappointing to note that he not only gives little attention to the clause, but that

he also discourages any probing into the future revelations of God. He gives no attention to the implication of this important phenomenon for the early Christians and the dynamics it could have created in their life in relation to their faith. Stott (1988:85) envisions the major activity after the *Parousia* as involving the consummation of the course that began before the *Parousia* i.e. being made like Christ. After the *Parousia* the *imago Dei* in the children of God will be fully re-established.

Brown reaches the same findings as Stott. In his discussion on this clause he focuses on the transformation that will happen to the children of God. He also reiterates Stott's position: 'At the return of Jesus, the only natural Son, when the children see God as he is, the resemblance will be even closer' (Brown 1988:114). He further states that this resemblance is ongoing in the present life of the children of God, although in the *Eschaton* it will be enhanced by the 'seeing him as he is'.

Schnackenburg discusses different possibilities of meaning of the *visio Dei* advocated in this verse. In his reference to the 'seeing him' he first deals with the meaning of the first clause that 'we shall be like him' (1 Jn 3:2a). He rightly states that this 'being like him' must not be mistaken as 'equality with God': 'This is never promised in the New Testament, even the rabbis in their writings had no intention of placing human beings on the same level with God, even in the future garden of Eden' (Schnackenburg 1992:158). Although Schnackenburg espouses this *visio Dei* as taking place after the *Parousia* and happening to the children of God, he cautions that there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding this phenomenon.

The relationship between these two clauses are such that the 'basis of this likeness to God which will then be unveiled, lies, according to the Elder, in our seeing him' (Schnackenburg 1992:158). The *visio Dei* then becomes the denominator for an understanding of subsequent transformations after the *Parousia*. In his analysis of the *visio Dei* in relation to the relationship between 'being like him' and 'seeing him as he is', Schnackenburg (1992:159) asks some questions that are worth noting, i.e. 'whether to see God as He is, requires immediate proximity to him, or whether the consequence to this is an assimilation to God granted by grace. Or does seeing God presuppose a communication of the divine glory, on the grounds that only one transformed into God can see Him?'

Schnackenburg concludes that proximity to God and transfiguration into glory belongs together. The *visio Dei* is the unveiling of the glory of the hidden status of the present children of God. Although he constantly appeals to both Hellenistic and Judaist notions of both 'seeing God' and 'likeness to God', he does not clearly integrate the contribution of these backgrounds to the experiences of those who hope to see the divine; neither does he clearly spell out what this phenomenon promised to the children of God in the *Eschaton*. This is also true of Dodd (1953c), who refers to the frequent enunciation by Hellenistic religious writers, but does not further deal with their experiences, or use them as a backdrop against which this phenomenon can be studied. Bultmann is in agreement with Schnackenburg when referring to the glory. He notes that 'the likeness of those beholding with the one beheld consists in the former participating in his glorification, or in their being glorified themselves' (Bultmann 1973:49).

In his comment on this clause (Haas *et al.* 1994:83) argues that '"*For we shall see him as he is"* gives the motivation why *we* know that "we shall be like him"'. He argues that the Greek conjunction may also be taken as demonstrating the cause of 'we shall be like him', hence, 'because (or as the result of the fact that) we shall see him as he is' (Haas *et al.* 1994:83). This would mean that the 'seeing him as he is' is the denominator in the entire transformation equation at the *Parousia*. Haas *et al.* gives an alternative interpretation to introduce a further explanation which mentions another aspect of what precedes: Hence, 'yes, we shall see' (Haas *et al.*1994:83). Of these three interpretations the first seems to be unlikely and the third the most likely, though the second one is not to be excluded entirely. Regarding 'him'/'he', the reference is to Christ (cf. Jn 17:24) or to God (cf. Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4). The latter is in line with the interpretation preferred above.

The clause 'as he is' has been added 'to show that what they will see is not an illusion or unreal but is true to the essential character of the one seen' (Haas *et al*. 1994:50). They further clarified their position on the meaning of 'seeing him as he is' by providing different shades of this clause. They state that it means 'as he really is', 'in his true being (or nature)', 'what he-looks-like in-person (lit. his life)', 'the very God completely', 'his person (lit. his totality)', 'just as he (is) God'; or 'face-to-face, a rendering that calls to mind (cf. 1 Cor 13:12)' (Haas *et al*. 1994:84).

Unlike Haas *et al.* (1994) who see the transformations after the *Parousia* as pertaining to our spiritual side, Wuest notes that likeness in this context has to do with a physical likeness, not a spiritual one. Saints are spiritually like the Lord Jesus now in a relative sense, and through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, are 'being conformed more and more to His spiritual likeness' (Wuest 1997:54). He further equates the physical likeness achieved at the transformation and brought in at the *Parousia* to what Paul says in Philippians 3:20-21: *For the commonwealth of which we are citizens has its fixed abode in heaven, out from which also the Saviour, we with our attention withdrawn from all else, are eagerly waiting to welcome, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to receive him to ourselves; who shall change the outward appearance of the body of our humiliation so as to conform it to an outward expression like to the body of his glory*.

According to Wuest (1997:55), the Greek term being translated here as 'change', can also be translated with 'to change the outward appearance by assuming one put on from the outside'. The verb 'be fashioned like' depicts 'an outward expression which comes from within, and is truly representative of one's inner character'. Therefore, both terms refer to an outward, and not an inward change.

Burge argues that the state of the children of God in the present condition referred by the 'now' in 1 John 3:2 establishes the fact that God is in control both now and in the future. The consequences of God's control in the future are highlighted, and should be seen by his control in the present. Burge further clarifies this by noting that 'if now we have a glimpse of what it means to have the presence of the Father within us, when Christ comes there will be yet more overwhelming experiences for us' (Burge 1996:146). According to Burge, the 'seeing him as he is' means immediate and unmistakable unity between us and the Father. We will share in the glory of the Father after the *Parousia*.

Marshall (1978:173) argues that the 'effect of seeing Jesus is to make us like him, just as a mirror reflects the image of the person in front of it' – we, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory (2 Cor 3:18). Wuest (1997:78) suggests that this verse could be translated as follows: 'Divinely-loved ones, new born-ones of God we are. And not yet has it been made visible what we shall be. We know absolutely that when it is made visible, like ones to

Him we shall be, because we shall see Him just as He is'. To Wuest the saints are first transformed in order to 'see him as he is' – this means 'seeing him with our glorified eyes in his glorified state' (Wuest 1997:78). He differs with Haas *et al*., because they (Haas *et al.* 1994:84) identify the one seen as God the Father, while Wuest identifies him as the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Jamieson *et al.* (1997:531) 'seeing him' does not mean seeing him in his innermost Godhead, 'but as manifested in Christ. None but the pure can see the infinitely Pure One'. In all the passages in 1 John the Greek verb is the same and does not denote the action of seeing, but the state of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented. That is why the Greek verb is always in the middle/reflexive voice, to perceive and inwardly appreciate. Our spiritual bodies will appreciate and recognise spiritual beings hereafter, as our natural bodies now do natural objects. Jamieson *et al.* are in agreement with Wuest, but differs from Haas *et al.* in relation to the object seen at the *Parousia*, and the nature of seeing.

Although Culpepper has dealt in depth with various themes in the Johannine corpus, he does not discuss the clause 'seeing him as he is', except to note the tension of the children of God as they live in the 'now' and the 'not yet'. He rightly points out that this is a clear sign that God's work in the life of his children is not yet complete; therefore they must have the assurance that 'if they know God and abide in Christ, when He appears they shall see that they are like him' (Culpepper 1998:263).

Thomas anchors his discussion about future uncertainties of the *Parousia* on certain aspects that the Elder espouses. He states that the 'readers experienced new life as children of God in the present, but they also learn that there is a dimension of their lives as God's children which is future' (Thomas 2004:151). It is this future dimension of their life that has both certainty and uncertainty. The certainty is leveraged on the Elder's notion that 'we know' (1 Jn 3:2). Thomas argues that this uncertainty will be cleared up when 'he' appears. At the *Parousia* there will be a transformation in the life of God's children: This transformation will be evoked by the moment they 'see him as he is'.

As to the object of this *visio Dei*, Thomas (2004:151) states that 'although there is no doubt, at least a secondary reference to God in the pronoun "him"; the primary reference seems to be to Jesus, who will be manifested at his return and whom the believer will be like'. When it comes to the meaning of 'seeing him as he is', Thomas states that it can only be arrived at as a Johannine theme of 'seeing God and/or Jesus' is developed. The meaning of 'seeing him as he is', according to Thomas (2004:151), is embedded in the Johannine understanding. Hints of this phenomenon can be gleaned from the vision(s) of Jesus given to John in the Apocalypse. As to exactly what is 'seeing him as he is', Thomas (2004:152) espouses the idea of a 'direct and immediate access' where the saints in the presence of God and the Lamb will see the face of God and have his Name written upon their foreheads. To Thomas this envisaged *visio Dei* is literal. What is lacking in Thomas' reasoning is the resonation with the immediate context of the early Christians which includes both Hellenistic and Judaist heritage. He also does not emphasise the impact that this expectation could have had on the early Christians.

Kruse shares the position and impact of the envisaged *visio Dei* with Thomas. The present state of the children of God stands in contrast with what they will be in the future. In the present the children of God experience some degrees of change, but 'the nature of our likeness to Christ will be a likeness in respect to ethical purity' (Kruse 2000:116). According to Kruse, and in agreement with Thomas, this change will be a result of the moment when we 'see him as he is'.

Kruse (2000:143) also discusses the manner in which the Greek verb for 'seeing' is used in a variety of ways in the Johannine corpus. He states that sometimes it is used in reference to an eye-witness' encounter with Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:1-3) and denies that those who commit sin have ever 'seen' Jesus Christ, who came to take away their sins (1 Jn 3:6). This dual use of 'seeing' may involve the physical eye, whereas the failure to see him could have reference to the 'eyes of faith'. It can be literal or figurative. Thomas relates that the future 'seeing' where we shall 'see him as he is' is of a different order than those previously experienced. This means that the

> future seeing will not be like he was seen in the days of his earthly ministry, nor seeing him with the eyes of faith, but seeing him as he now is in heavenly glory;

and the sight of him, the Elder says, will be enough to make us pure like him (Thomas 2004:116).

2.5.1 Conclusion to this section

This survey has demonstrated various meanings and implications to the early Christians of the clause 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. Scholars disagree on a number of issues relating to this clause. The only consensus among scholars is that this *visio Dei* will take place after the *Parousia* and that it holds other dimensions of being children of God. This investigation has revealed that there are scholars who side with a literal 'seeing', while others view it as seeing the glory of God in Christ and through Christ.

This transformation into God's likeness is evoked in and by the radical transforming moment when 'we shall see him just as he is'. Although there is no doubt about the secondary reference to God in the pronoun 'him', the primary reference seems to be to Jesus, who will be manifested at his return and whom the believer will be like. Hints to whom will be seen, may be discerned in part by the development of the theme of seeing God and/or Jesus in the Johannine literature – in the Fourth Gospel the theologically-rich idea of seeing God is very much tied to Jesus. Though the prologue states that 'no one has seen God at any time', it quickly goes on to qualify this with the words 'the only begotten of God, the one in the bosom of the Father, that one has made him known' (Jn 1:18). Such language suggests that Jesus, the *Logos* and only begotten Son of the Father, has a special knowledge of and communion with the Father. The suspicions that the Son has seen the Father are confirmed in the Fourth Gospel when Jesus reveals that those who have seen the Son have seen the Father as well (Jn 14:9).

Sometimes the 'seeing' may hint at the visions of Jesus given to John in the Apocalypse, where John is drawn further and further into the very presence of Jesus. This 'seeing' involves experiencing Jesus, which has a definite effect on the apostle. The clause 'to see him [just] as he is', conveys an idea of direct and immediate access. In the Johannine literature the culmination of the desire for direct and immediate access to Jesus comes in Revelation 21:22, where the reader learns that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is its temple,

and in Revelation 22:4 where the saints in the presence of God and the Lamb will see the face of God and have his Name written upon their foreheads. While all these ideas may not be present in 1 John 3:2, the idea of seeing God as he is, at least points in this direction.

2.6 A need for further research

The review in the previous section demonstrates that Johannine scholarship has not yet seriously considered the wide range of implications of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, although some work has been done in relation to 'seeing God'. This is the research gap that has been discovered by the researcher, and which is dealt with in this thesis:

- First, there is no comprehensive explanation of experiencing God through sight with specific reference to 1 John 3:2.
- Second, there are no comprehensive explanation of 'seeing God' in relation to the *Eschaton*. This is crucial as pointed out in the literature review that this 'seeing' of God happens after the *Parousia.*
- Third, scholars differ as to the object being seen at the *Parousia*: Some identify 'him' as God the Father, while others have the conviction that it is the Son.
- There is also no consensus as to what it means to 'see him as he is'. In their endeavour to explain the meaning of this crucial clause, scholars have not integrated the intertextual evidence with the socio-cultural understanding in their analysis.

A major gap in the research on the Johannine Epistles is the failure to incorporate and consider the worldview of the Jewish and proselyte believers within a Hellenistic setting. Adequate resonation with this clause will definitely have to deal with the intended meaning – what the original readers understood when they heard or read it, and as they interacted with it.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: THE APPROACH OF THIS RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to locate the hermeneutics of the researcher in the midst of the vast subject of biblical interpretation. Instead of presenting a historical survey of biblical interpretation, this chapter will rather state its understanding of hermeneutics and how it relates to the methodological approach to this study. Hermeneutics is the science and art of biblical interpretation: It is a 'science because it is guided by rules within a system, and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation' (Ramm 1970:1)[15]. These two facets must be equally applied to a text in order to enhance interpretation.

3.2 Contemporary scene

The contemporary academic scene in hermeneutics is characterised by a wealth of varying approaches to the biblical text. These varying approaches are represented adequately in Dockery's (1992) three primary models among contemporary approaches. These models are discussed below.

3.2.1 Author-oriented perspective

This view has been known as either the 'literal-grammatical', 'historical-contextual' or 'historical-critical' method of interpretation. This approach to interpretation is defined as determining the meaning intended by the human author and understood by the original readers. It considers the 'meaning of texts to be stable and univocal, and its meaning in the original setting is where meaning is located' (Dockery 1992:170).

During the previous century this stance is echoed by Stendahl (1958:33-38) who notes that 'to reconstruct the transaction of the author to the original audience by way of the

[15] Dockery cautions against the blatant affirmation of interpretation as a science by noting that there are elements which are 'not scientific in the sense that an observer free from presuppositions and prejudices can simply analyse the biblical texts and produce a startling new and true hypothesis to explain them' (Dockery 1992:170). Such a hypothesis could hardly be new in view of the multiplicity of hypotheses produced during the last 200 years; it could also hardly be true, in view of the shakiness of those hypotheses when their fundamental bases are questioned.

text is the task of interpretation'. This position is supported by Grant and Tracy (1984:134) who note that 'it would appear that the primary task of the modern interpreter is historical, in the sense that what he is endeavouring to discover is what the texts and contexts he is interpreting meant to their authors in their relationship with their readers'. This interrelatedness is highlighted through some areas of interest which will now be discussed.

The critical areas belonging to the Author-oriented perspective include

- an examination of the text of the documents under study in order to find out how the texts were transmitted and what the process of transmission involved in relation to the original document, that is no longer extant;
- a consideration of the literary form of the documents and the forms employed within them. The language and style used by the author must also be taken into consideration;
- the historical setting within which the documents originated which were later included in the New Testament, including the Graeco-Roman world with its variety of literature, the world related to Judaism, and the community of the early Christian Church.

In this dynamic interpretation the author is at the centre of the investigation, and therefore a deliberate attempt is made to see the world through the window provided by the author.

3.2.2 Reader-oriented perspective

The departure point of this perspective is the fundamental presupposition that all texts have a fullness of meaning, which by its very nature can never be exhausted. Thus it is not only possible, but it is always the case, that the meaning which is communicated to the reader exceeds and is broader than the meaning that the author intended to convey (Dockery 1992)[16].

This hermeneutics stresses the distance that separates interpreters from the original author(s) of a text in terms of time, culture and language which makes the authorial

[16] See also Iser (1978:89).

intent almost impossible to achieve[17]. The goal of interpretation, therefore, is to come to a common understanding about something of interest to both reader and author (Dockery 1992:173). The reader plays a crucial role in interpreting a text.

3.2.3 Text-oriented perspective

This approach has been expounded sufficiently by Ricoeur[18]. He notes that 'the goal of a text-oriented approach is not so much to discover the "author's intention", but the "author's results"' (Ricoeur 1976:1-3). This is in contrast with the view supported by Nicholson who argues that 'authorial meaning may be judged to be identical with textual meaning' (Nicholson 1984:82). Despite this difference between Ricoeur and Nicholson, the former agrees that it is possible to reach a valid interpretation of a text. He emphatically stresses that when 'one reads a text, the author is not present to be questioned about ambiguous meaning in the text but maintains that a text's meaning is intelligible across historical and cultural distance' (Ricoeur 1976:1-26).

This approach also realises that, because of the nature of the writing, the text opens up a possible world to the interpreter (the text-world); the interpreter may enter into that world and appropriate the possibilities which it offers. When that occurs, the meaning of the text is actualised in the interpreter's understanding. What is understood or appropriated then, is not essentially the 'author's intended meaning or the historical situation of the original author or readers, but the text itself' (Ricoeur 1976:142-150).

When a text is disclosed to the reader, then a convergence takes place so that understanding seems to occur on a variety of levels, including that of the author (following Hirsch), reader (following Gadamer), and text (following Ricoeur). This model has been appropriated in biblical interpretation by newer fields in 'linguistics, structuralism, and the new narrative and literary approaches' to the biblical text (Dockery 1992:175).

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[17] See Hoy (1978). The classic contribution on this matter published prior to Hirsch's writings is the chapter by Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954).

[18] Ricoeur (1976) deals primarily with language at work. He resonates with the conflict caused by explanation and understanding. This conflict is dealt with when the threshold beyond which language stands as discourse is crossed. In this book he deals with language as discourse, but, to the extent that only written language fully displays the criteria of discourse. He also deals with the amplitude of the changes that affect discourse when it is no longer spoken, but written.

3.2.4 Conclusion to this section, and the way forward

This was a brief survey of the historical developments of biblical interpretation up to its present modern form, and indicated that scholars belonging to different eras are emphasising different areas of interest in biblical interpretation.

Two things are essential to move toward a hermeneutical synthesis. First, there should be a merger between author-oriented, reader-oriented and text-oriented perspectives, because meaning is found in the author's achievement and identified as the text itself, though of course the background to the text is extremely informative. Though there is a strong annotation that distance, tradition, and perspective are preventing the reader from a purely objective interpretation, there is also the plausibility of determining a text's normative meaning. This meaning can be validated by linguistic and literary keys in the text – thus the author's meaning is available only in the text, not by making contact with the author's mental patterns (Dockery 1992:175).

Second, it must be recognised that several far-reaching disciplines should be incorporated in biblical interpretation, like history, philosophy, theology, language and linguistic studies, literature, rhetoric, sociology, and anthropology. It is true that biblical interpretation should remain the primary focus and concern of the communities of faith, although the Bible's interpretation should not be shielded from the broader inter-disciplinary questions raised by the perspectives of the various disciplines.

This synthesis is crucial to this research because it demands a multi-dimensional approach that will address its dual nature. The approach much first be able to deal with 'spirituality', and also resonate with understanding what the Elder is trying to convey with the clause 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. There is a need for a merge because the two semantic units of the topic at hand demand a comprehensive approach.

The researcher is aware of the 'socio-rhetoric' method[19] of interpretation by Robbins (1996a:2-3), but will not use the method, because it has been academically developed into a science of methodology, in which the researcher does not want to get entangled.

[19] Cf. Robbins 1992, 1994,1996a, 1996b; Porter and Olbricht 1993; Jasper and Ledbetter 1994.

His terminology will nonetheless be utilised in this thesis, because it makes sense and is easy to work with. Its categorisation of textures makes a lot of sense and will aid this research in performing a scientific investigation. With textures like an intricately interlaced tapestry, a text contains complex patterns and images. Considered from one angle a text exhibits a very limited range of its textures. By changing the interpreter's slant a number of times, the method enables the interpreter to bring multiple textures of the text into view.

3.3 The methodology applied in this research

This research utilises various integrated methodological terms from the works of Robbins (1996a; 1996b). Even though his socio-rhetoric methodology is not used in its entirety, nor followed in every step, this research uses his vocabulary of 'textures' in order to arrive at a well-rounded meaning of the envisaged *visio Dei* in 1 John 3:2, and its implications for the early Christians.

3.3.1 Inner texture

The exegetical approach in this research will start with an analysis of the inner texture of the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10. The quest to get inside the text is broadly referred to as the inner texture. This texture approach covers areas such as word studies, lexical analysis, textual criticism, form criticism, and source criticism. Inner textual analysis is used for 'merging literary approaches that are attentive to all kinds of aspects of "the text itself" with an emphasis on exegesis – reading out from the text what is in it' (Robbins 1992:95). Robbins describes this texture as it resides in the language of the text itself, like repetition of words and use of dialogue between two persons to communicate the information (Robbins 1996a:7). This is the texture of the medium of communication. This texture is the written text itself. It is the purpose of this texture to gain the intimate knowledge of the word, word patterns, voice structures, devices, and modes in the text. Linguistic patterns within the text, the structural elements in the texts, and particular mechanisms in the texts which an author uses to persuade the readers are also dealt with. Recent studies as evidenced in this particular study have added discourse analysis to the inner texture, resulting in the creation of semantic networks in the text which are useful in determining the rhetoric of an author.

With regard to exegesis Stuart (1980:15) states that to do a proper job of exegesis, one would have to be 'involved with functions and meanings of words (linguistics), the analysis of literature and speech (philology), theology, history, the transmission of the biblical writings (textual criticism), stylistics, grammar, vocabulary analysis'. The Christian alternative to *a priori* speculative systems is an orderly exegesis of revelatory truth (Henry 1999:241).

Exegesis can be defined as an explanation and exposition of a text, with attention to such matters as determination of text, translation and paraphrase, and interpretation of structure, setting, and purpose. Concern for clarification of meaning, prompted in part by cultural and historical separation of author and reader, has necessitated exegesis of the Scriptures since biblical times (cf. Myers 1987:361). The emphasis on exegesis is to get the meaning out of the text as opposed to the interpreter bringing into or reading into a text what they wish to hear from a text.

In addition to all of these, the inner texture may include recent forms of literary criticism such as rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, linguistic and discourse analysis, and specific genre studies such as analysis of parables and epistles[20]. In this research, the inner texture is adapted to deal with the discourse analysis[21] of 1 John 2:28-3:10 – the pericope in which the clause 'for we shall see him as he is' appears. The inner texture will also look at the experiences the readers could have had as they contemplatively read the text.

3.3.1.1 Discourse analysis of 1 John 2:28-3:10[22]

Discourse analysis is a primarily linguistic study examining the use of language by its native population whose major concern is investigating language functions along with

[20] Cf. Ratzinger 1994.

[21] This research is aware of different approaches to discourse analysis. This is not a conclusive and exhaustive review of discourse analysis but a statement of approaches:
- Nida (1999) – The role of context;
- Porter (1999) – Critical discourse analysis;
- O'Donnell (1999) – Use of annotated *corpora.*

[22] On the structure of the pericope this research follows closely the criteria espoused by Van der Merwe (2008:290-328) in constructing a structural analysis:
- The division of the text into cola.
- The structure markers.
- Syntactic and semantic relationships.
- Grouping of cola into clusters and blocks.

its forms, produced both orally and in writing. This is a part of applied linguistics that deals with the examination of discourse attempting to find patterns in communicative products as well as in their correlation with the circumstances in which they occur, which are not explainable at the grammatical level (cf. Carter 1993:23).

Discourse analysis is undeniably the highest level of interpretation for a particular text and is also the linguistic level that comes closest to the basic non-linguistic questions of sender, receptor, place, time, external circumstances, etc. – questions most appropriate if one wishes to pursue a historical understanding of a text (Porter 1992:300). This is an interdisciplinary approach to language and human communication and endeavours to understand the relationship between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication.

Olsson (1999:370) has identified discernible aims of discourse analysis and these include, but are not limited to the following:

- Show how the text first came to be or how it was redacted.
- Show how the text cohere as a unity of some kind.
- Identify the reading instructions given in the text itself.
- Describe how the text functions.
- Grasp the author's intention or purpose.
- Determine the text's genre.
- Describe the text's argument.
- Show how the text reflects non-textual conditions.
- Summarise the text's theme or fundamental thought.
- Demonstrate the text's relevance for readers of later times.
- Draw up an interpretation of the text for others.

The list of Olsson is, to a great extent, exhaustive and brings to the surface different angles that discourse analysis must encompass. Olsson also rightly observes that in spite of the upsetting multiplicity of senses for discourse analysis, which some people consider for avoiding any serious analyses of texts as wholes, 'discourse analysis is and will continue to be decisive for how we interpret many text-types' (Olsson

1999:371). Discourse analysis and interpretation are closely linked and ought to be critically inspected much more than has been the case till now.

In this research the spirituality of 'seeing God' is understood from the immediate pericope. The analysis and rhetoric of this discourse gives the research its structure and tone. The researcher will not comprehensively endeavour to answer all the questions that Olsson subjects the text to, but will choose those areas which narrow the periphery to the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. This is necessitated by the fact that most of these questions about the pericope have already been dealt with extensively. Therefore, in the latter stage of this research the structure, cohesiveness, and non-textual conditions are dealt with.

The structure of 1 John[23] as a whole has been adequately and extensively debated. This research has adopted Brown's structure which terms the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10 as 'in face of the coming encounter with Christ and God, the contrast between God's children and the devil's children' (Brown 1982:765).

Discourse analysis deals closely with words and phrases. This creates linguistic cohesiveness[24]. An analysis of these words and phrases adds to the understanding of segmented units and will help to understand the Elder's argumentative construct. An understanding of these and other rhetorical inner textual techniques like linguistic-syntactic analysis, semantic analysis, and pragmatic analysis will assist in the interpretation of this pericope by highlighting those themes the Elder considered most important and wanted his recipients to understand and act upon.

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[23] For the discussion of the structure of 1 John, see Marshall (1978:71), Miehle (1981), Brown (1982), and Klauck (1991). In the following pages I consider a few commentaries, particularly Brown (1982) and Klauck (1991), an instructive example from the so-called Rome school (Malatesta 1978), a comprehensive analysis from South Africa (Du Rand 1981), two discourse analyses from scholars affiliated with Wycliffe Bible Translators (Miehle 1981; Longacre 1992), and several rhetorical descriptions (Vouga 1990; Watson 1989; 1993).

[24] Cohesiveness according to Reed (1999:87) refers to the means by which an immediate linguistic context meaningfully relates to a preceding context and/or a context of situation (i.e. meaningful relationship between text, co-text, and context). Linguistic cohesiveness provides speakers with the means to produce a message (i.e. theme) from individual and sometimes unrelated words and phrases. This is made possible by making explicit the external relationship between one clause or clause complex and another, and in a way which is not dependent on grammatical structure. A discourse gets its cohesive quality by means of semantic relations involving elements of any extent, both smaller and larger than clauses, from single words to a lengthy passage of text which may hold across gaps of any extent. Cohesiveness of any text must be viewed as a continuum.

Applied to 1 John 2:28-3:10, discourse analysis is done in this research to (i) help the researcher to identify the different semantic networks (semantically-related words or phrases or concepts) that enhance a better understanding and dynamic interaction between the text and the reader; (ii) help the researcher to determine the argument and rhetoric of the Elder; (iii) assist the researcher in constructing the bigger picture by means of semantic networks that create coherent mind maps; and (iv) help to relate what has been read and what is still to be read (Van der Merwe 2015a:2).

The related texts as produced by the semantic relations are grouped together, designating the relationship between the different themes. These related texts are not studied in the inner texture, but are dealt with in their appropriate textures.

3.3.1.2 Contemplative reading

Under this section the research focuses on spirituality and embodiment. It is an investigation into the spirituality that could have been evoked by 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 among both the readers and hearers of the Epistle. This is achieved through a careful analysis of the mechanisms used by the Elder in the text against the oral culture of the ancient world to create spiritualities in the readers and hearers[25]. Schneiders, a Catholic New Testament scholar, defines Christian spirituality as 'that particular actualisation of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within the believing community' (Schneiders 1986:266)[26].

The experience of the Johannine community when they read that 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is under scrutiny in this section. This investigation will help to better understand the experiences and the faith, which gave Christianity its distinctive character (cf. Dunn 1975:2). Christian spirituality as rooted in 'experience' is also noted by Sheldrake (1998:33) who states that 'there has been a shift in the general approach

[25] For a further discussion on various concepts of Christian spirituality see Holder (2012), Holder (2013:130-131), Frank (2013:132-133), Dunnington (2012:219-220), Van der Merwe (2014; 2015a:1-11), Aleshire (1989:209-214), Nassif, Hahn, Driskill and Howard (2012:234-243), Kimble (2014:377-378), Hartog (2015:158-161), Martos (2013:526-527), Peters (2009:139-141), Hinson (2005:325-326), and Demarest and Raup (1989:321-326).

[26] On the definition of Christian spirituality see also Breton (1988), Collins (1996), Cousins (1985; 1990; 2000), McGrath (1999), Sheldrake (1991), and Principe (2000).

to theology towards a greater reflection on human experience as an authentic source of divine revelation'.

In dealing with these early Christian 'experiences', this research is relying on and guided by two articles of Van der Merwe (2015b; 2015c): *Reading the Bible in the 21st Century: Some Hermeneutical Principles (Part 1 & 2)*. In these articles he proposes that the aspects of spirituality and embodiment must be added to supplement and complement the hermeneutical process: 'A few remarks on the idiosyncrasy of texts pave the way for the legitimate exploitation of spiritualities (lived experiences) embedded in biblical texts which should be regarded as an addition to biblical hermeneutics and which have to serve as a catalyst for the embodiment of the reading text' (Van der Merwe 2015c:1). Under this section, the research deals with the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' experienced through both contemplative reading and hearing of the text.

3.3.1.3 Conclusion to this section

In view of the above discussion, the inner texture adequately allows this research to get inside the text for interpretation purposes and also guides the subsequent textures. The discourse analysis helps to point out the semantic relations and networks. These networks then facilitate the structure for the entire exegetical investigation.

3.3.2 An intertextual reading of 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God

Intertextual analysis of a text takes the work of the interpreter a step beyond the confines of the text itself, to its environs. In other words, it is not enough to only look at meanings and meaning effects of the words used in the text, but it is important to realise that the text does not exist in a vacuum. Robbins (1996a:40) explains the inter-texture as 'the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical "objects", historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions, and systems'. This texture includes text citations, allusions, and reconfigurations of particular texts, events, objects, and institutions, as well as the interaction with any extratextual contexts (cf. Robbins 1996b).

Robbins (1996a:6-56) has identified four different textures of the intertexture of a text: Oral-scribal intertexture, cultural intertexture, social intertexture, and historical

intertexture. In the oral-scribal intertexture the interpreter looks at how a text uses language from other texts. A text may recite, recontextualise, reconfigure, narrative-amplify, and theme-elaborate from other texts. Oral-scribal intertexture involves a text's use of any other text outside of itself, whether it is an inscription, the work of a Greek poet, non-canonical apocalyptic material, or the Hebrew Bible. 1 John 2:28-3:10 is rich in languages from other texts in both the Old and New Testament. The 'seeing' or 'not seeing' of God will be fragmented if these texts are not incorporated in this study, because they will help clarify the Elder's concepts.

The cultural intertexture deals with word and concept patterns and configurations of values, scripts, codes, or systems (e.g. purity; law; covenant) and myths (e.g. wisdom; Oedipus; Hermes). Cultural intertexture appears in a text either through allusion or echo. Allusions make reference without necessarily reciting the actual text but simply point to a personage, concept or traditions, while echo uses words and phrases that evoke a concept from cultural tradition. Both the Elder and the recipients were familiar with the Old Testament references to 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God and they were also familiar with views of Judaism in reference to 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God. They were also part of the Graeco-Roman world with its rich culture of religion that they adopted into their world.

The notion of 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God is discussed in view of the 'seeing' and 'not seeing' of God in Judaism, the New Testament, the Graeco-Roman world, and other cultures. In this research that texture is adapted so as to analyse[27] 'seeing' or 'not seeing' God in distinct worlds, as is discussed below.

3.3.2.1 The Graeco-Roman world

A major role of intertexture is to ascertain the nature and result of processes of 'configuration and reconfiguration of phenomena in the environs of a given text' (Robbins 1996b:40). The Graeco-Roman world is the overall context in which the

[27] Robbins (1996a) identifies two ways to perform this analysis: First, it could be done through reference which entails the occurrence of a term, phrase or clause that refers to a personage or tradition known to people in a culture, and second, through echo in the texts which occurs when a term or phrase/clause evokes, or potentially evokes, a cultural tradition (cf. also Malherbe 1995).

'seeing God' or 'not seeing God' must be investigated. Fairweather (1977:134) rightly notes that

> by the broadcasting of Greek culture, the bringing together of the east and the west, the removal of national barriers and the obliteration of racial distinctions, Alexander the Great inaugurated a worldwide movement towards that recognition of the brotherhood of man which culminated in the *pax Romana* and the closing of the Temple of Janus under Augustus. One of the major components of the Roman world was its rich religious heritage.

Under this section an investigation is conducted with a narrowed periphery to 1) paganism as represented by the Greek religious thought, with special interest in their perceptions of 'seeing' or 'not seeing' a deity; 2) paganism as represented by the Roman religion; 3) paganism as represented by the mystery religions; and 4) paganism as represented by the *Parsi* religion. There is a special interest in how 'seeing' the deity is experienced.

3.3.2.2 Judaism

'Seeing God' in 1 John 3:2 is embedded in early primitive Christianity which has Inter-testamental Judaism[28] as its world. Scott (1995:20) rightly notes that an

[28] Scott (1995:45-89) reviews some points of consensus among scholars regarding the definition of Intertest-amental Judaism:

- Intertestamental Judaism is a descendant of the Old Testament Hebrew religion and culture, but is not identical with it. At the same time, it must be distinguished from Rabbinic Judaism, which developed after the Romans' destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish state in 70 CE.
- The society, culture, and faith of Intertestamental Judaism were not a monolithic whole but a con-glomerate. They contained diverse elements which both individually and together must be taken into account in attempting to understand this era.
- The traditional ways of distinguishing between Jewish (or Hebraic) and Hellenistic elements in the Intertestamental Jewish life are too simplistic. These elements (as they appear, e.g., in Ac 6:1) refer to more than linguistic preferences. It is also incorrect to equate Hebraic culture exclusively to Palestine, and Hellenism to the form of Intertestamental Judaism found among Jews in the Dispersion.
- The four-sect division of Judaism (Pharisees; Sadducees; Essenes; the fourth philosophy) of the 1st-century historian, Josephus, is an inadequate description of the diversities of the time. There were divisions within each of these sects. There were also the average Jews who were contemporaries of Jesus, but did not belong to any of these sects or parties.
- The apocalyptic movement and eschatology of the time are important for understanding the outlook of significant numbers of people within Intertestamental Judaism. While eschatology and apocalyptic are closely related, they are not identical, nor can it be assumed that all eschatology is apocalyptic, nor that apocalyptic is always primarily eschatological.
- There was no separation between Church and state in Intertestamental Judaism. Nationalistic and religious thinking, actions, and aspirations were usually inseparable.

'understanding of the major tensions and trajectories within Intertestamental Judaism is essential for understanding properly the literature and nature of both Early Rabbinic Judaism and primitive Christianity'. Under this section, an investigation into the Jewish religious life with special interest in 'seeing' or 'not seeing' God is conducted. The works of both Flavius Josephus and Philo Judaeus provide primary information leading to a glimpse into the life of Jews with the focus on 'seeing God'.

A major investigation is launched into 'seeing' or 'not seeing' God in the Post-Canonical literature. This includes both the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Apart from the question of canonicity, these books are valuable in shedding light on Jewish history and aspirations during the period between the two Testaments. They also reflect more on the internal conditions and religious standpoints of post-exilic Judaism, therefore, 'seeing' or 'not seeing' God will not be complete until studied with this background in mind.

3.3.2.3 The Old and New Testament

Both the Old and New Testament have a lot to deliver in terms of 'seeing God' and 'not seeing God'. These texts are studied with special interest in how they help the researcher understand how the Elder configures past episodes to build a case as he persuades the community towards a certain direction. These episodes are contained in a number of texts that are investigated.

'Seeing him as he is' in the pericope at hand is apocalyptic in nature. The Elder appeals to an event envisaged in the future. The Elder's reference to 'seeing him as he is' is also viewed as part of an apocalyptic discourse. Carey and Bloomquist (1999:21) define this discourse as the 'constellation of apocalyptic topics as they function in a larger early Jewish Christian literary and social context'. Thus, apocalyptic discourse should be treated as a flexible set of resources that early Jews and

- Intertestamental Judaism was a dynamic civilisation which faced and responded to genuine tensions arising from political, cultural, sociological, existential, and religious situations and issues. It was shaped by both commitments to its nationalistic-religious heritage – as then understood – and the need to face realistically the changing circumstances of the world.
- The diverse cultures, groups, concerns, ways of life, and aspirations of the Intertestamental Judaism, its customs and controversies, played a significant part in the formative period of the two major groups which emerged from it. Early Rabbinic Judaism is essential for understanding properly the literature and nature of both groups (Tenney 1985:176).

Christians could employ to a variety of persuasive tasks. Whenever early Jews and Christians appealed to such topics as visions, revelations, heavenly journeys, final catastrophes, and the like, they were using apocalyptic discourse. In the context of 'seeing God' the Elder is pursuing the community towards a certain direction. This notion is thoroughly investigated.

3.3.3 The socio-historical circumstances in the Johannine community

An investigation of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' is not adequately addressed until an in-depth analysis of the socio-religious circumstances of the recipients is brought in full view. The circumstances of the community to whom the Elder writes, is illuminated through specific social topics, common social and cultural topics[29], and the lived experiences of the community. Robbins (1996b:71) notes that 'specific social topics in the text reveal the religious responses to the world in its discourse'. The situation in the community is discussed here. It is obvious that the Elder appeals to the community in a number of ways including the notion of 'seeing him as he is'.

In the social texture an investigation of the social and cultural worlds that this pericope creates and presents to its readers is studied. The Elder's view of the world is investigated here: He notes that there is a degree of parallelism between the community and the world: 'The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him' (1 Jn 3:1). This relationship is discussed to see how the Elder advises the community to live in the world without participating in it. The schism in the community is investigated in order to shed some light on the appeal or argument of the Elder.

Common social topics dialectically expressed with honour and shame, patron and client, etc. are described together with their bearing on the Elder's appeal to the recipients with their relation to 'seeing God'. Under this section an investigation is done of the pastoral approach of the Elder to address the problems beforehand.

In order to uncover the meaning of 'seeing' or 'not seeing' God, the situation (i.e. schism) in the community, and the pastoral approach of the Elder to address the

[29] Robbins (1996b:71) notes them as: 1) honour, guilt, and rights cultures; 2) dyadic and individualist personalities; 3) dyadic and legal contracts and agreements; and 4) challenge-response (*reposte*).

problems are thoroughly considered. An in-depth analysis of the lived experiences in the Johannine community is done in order to appreciate the impact of the Elder's address and use of specific social topics, e.g. 'unashamed', 'confidence', and 'lawlessness'.

The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' is also investigated under this section. Spirituality deals with the lived experiences which can be studied within historical, theological or anthropological dimensions. This research integrates all these approaches under spirituality because all Christian experiences are human and related to the spiritual enterprise of all human races, historically situated to a particular socio-cultural and temporal setting, and rooted in the theological tradition of Christianity. They are not mutually exclusive or competing. Contemporary spirituality is by nature interdisciplinary and fundamentally inductive and hermeneutical in nature (cf. Schneiders 2005:12-34). This research investigates the spirituality evoked by the Elder in the community when he refers to 'seeing him as he is'. Robbins (1996a:130) rightfully notes that all 'these aspects of a text are embedded deeply in the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture of a text'.

3.3.3.1 The 'lived experiences' of the community

The 'lived experiences' of the Johannine community is investigated in order to create a window into the life of the community and to analyse the 'lived experiences' of the community. These lived experiences or spiritualities of the Johannine community help this study to discover the impact of the notion of 'seeing him as he is', and how the Elder means either to encourage them in a course they were in, or divert them into a different course. The social, historical and cultural circumstances in this community are the context in which the notion of 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God is discussed by the Elder. This context is very important to resonate with, because it answers the question of 'what kind of a social and cultural person would anyone be who lives in the "world" of a particular text' (Robbins 1996a:71).

Spirituality deals with lived experiences. It is the actualisation of the basic human capacity for transcendence, and the experience of conscious involvement in the

project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives (Schneiders 2005:16)[30].

Subsequently, this research resonates with the religious community and ethics. The Elder seems to be making a distinction between the 'children of God', 'dear children', 'dear friends', 'those born of God' on the one hand, and 'the children of the devil' – those who keep on sinning, and the world, on the other. An investigation of how these two communities are reacting at 'seeing God' and how the Elder envisages them in their relationship before 'seeing God', is done. In this realm of ecclesiology, the Elder appeals to the Johannine community to unite through love, and unite against the dominant community. A convergence of the research done so far is done here before focusing on the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is'.

3.3.4 Theological texture

This texture concentrates on the Divine in the text – insight into the nature of the relation between human life and the Divine is sought after. This texture has to do with a relationship between humans and the Divine (transcendent). Under this texture Robbins (1996a:130) distinguishes eight textures (deity; holy persons; spirit-being; divine history; human redemption; human commitment; religious community; ethics). He further reveals that 'these aspects of a text are embedded deeply in the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture of a text' (Robbins 1996a:130). The themes that have been yielded by the discourse analysis are discussed in depth in this section. These themes are important to the Elder, and an investigation of them enhances their bearing on understanding the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

The basic co-ordinates of the life of faith are found in the early Christian believing community (i.e. Church) in which the faith is practised. Christian spirituality is a self-transcending faith in which union with God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit expresses itself in service of other members in the Johannine community, and participation in the realisation of the reign of God in the world (Van der Merwe 2014:4). There are various

[30] Edwards (1986:24) cautions that just because someone has affections that are religious, it does not necessarily mean that the source of these affections is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is against this background that Edwards came up with the twelve reliable signs noted under footnote 4.

ways in which the Elder arouses a response from his readers in order to evoke a lived experience from them: He addresses specific themes like ‘spiritual senses’, ‘physical senses’, ‘family life’, ‘sin and forgiveness’, ‘shame’, ‘perception of Jesus as Word of Life’, ‘eternal life’, and ‘Son of God’ (cf. Van der Merwe 2014:4-8).

This research thoroughly explores the nature of the relationship with the Divine. This section concerns itself with ‘aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics’ (Robbins 1996a:130). These themes are found in abundance in the pericope in view and enhance the understanding of ‘seeing God’ in 1 John 3:2.

The research applies some of these facets to the pericope in view: First, the research deals with aspects concerning the Deity (God). God is described as ‘light’, ‘love’, and ‘righteous’. These designations are discussed for both the Father and the Son.

The Elder’s engagement with the Johannine community has God as its denominator. They have already experienced the Deity in a certain dimension when the Elder stated, *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God* (1 Jn 3:1). This shared position seems to be compromised, and therefore the Elder urges them to continue, and evokes a certain spirituality in them by referring to the fact that they will ‘see him as he is’.

The next step deals with the holy Persons, where clarity is reached as to who the personal pronoun ‘he’ refers to in the pericope. Jesus, as a holy Person, is discussed in relation to his past appearing, with the motif of ‘seeing him’. The divine history that also makes up the context of ‘seeing him as he is’ is discussed. The themes that emanate from this history with relationship to the ‘seeing’ e.g. ‘children of God’, ‘judgement’, ‘the devil’, ‘sin’, and ‘children of the devil’ are investigated and used as a backdrop through which the ‘seeing’ is understood. Human commitment is investigated, because it seems to be a determinant in either confidence or shame at the holy Person’s appearance. The recipients are encouraged to ‘continue in him’ (1 Jn 2:28) and warned about the peril of ‘continuing to sin’ (1 Jn 3:6, 9).

3.3.5 Conclusion to this section

This survey indicates that the hermeneutical direction of the 21st century is skewed in the direction of a multi-dimensional slant to reading and interpreting biblical texts. The integration process allows the text to be studied from multiple dimensions. This multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach is deemed to rightly replace the one-dimensional approach. This approach has been developed by Robbins with his socio-rhetoric method which has been viewed by the researcher as outstanding and commendable, because of its integrated, advanced analytical character, coherency, praxis, clear epistemology of what socio-rhetorical criticism comprises, and its continuous dynamic academic development.

Interpretation should never stop at only a suppositious explication or even the ecclesiological application of biblical texts. It must rather be a step ahead of the interpretation debate. Interpretation should come to its full in the embodiment of the analysed text in the life of believers, while the Christian principles embedded in the text should become a way of life for the readers. This embodiment can become true when the 'lived experiences' ensue from the contemplative reading of the biblical texts. At this stage understanding becomes an illumination which should consequently become application, culminating in the embodiment of the text in order to result in a way of life. The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' is decrypted entirely while using this methodology.

3.4 Special features

The conventions followed in the writing of this thesis are as follows:

3.4.1 Main sources

The main sources are as follows:

- For the English text of the Bible: NIV (2011).
- For the Greek Text of the New Testament: Nestle *et al.* (1993).

3.4.2 Footnotes and references

This thesis uses footnotes and references with quotations. The footnotes are indicated by an Arabic numeral written above the line directly after the relevant word/term. They

are used to both substantiate arguments and discuss different viewpoints regarding issues discussed in the body of the thesis.

This research also follows the Harvard reference system. In text quotations the text is followed either by the source in parenthesis at the end of the quotation or immediately after the name of the author before the quotation.

CHAPTER 4

INNER TEXTURE

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the inner-textual reading of this pericope is to get inside the text for interpretation purposes. This helps in gaining an intimate knowledge of 'words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text' (Robbins 1996a:7), which form the framework for meanings and meaning effects that an interpreter investigates and compares with other readings of the text. In this texture the primary tool used to get inside the text is a discourse analysis followed by an investigation into the spiritualities evoked in the life of the adherents as they contemplatively read the text. This research is aware of the debate concerning the structural description of the entire Epistle of 1 John[31]. The boundaries of the pericope under investigation have also been a bone of contention, being discussed before the discourse analysis.

4.2 The structure of 1 John 2:28-3:10

Among Bible translators 'it is widely known that versions and commentators often do not agree with each other in the matter of boundaries' (Callow 1999:392). This is true of this pericope. The diagram below is not comprehensive but gives a sampling of different translations in order to see the difference in demarcation:

[31] The structural descriptions of 1 John are distressingly many. Among these descriptions, the pericope under investigation is in line with Brown (1982:54) who demarcates it as 1 John 2:28-3:10. He identifies it as dealing with '*in face with the encounter with Christ and God, the contrast between God's children and the devil's children'* (Brown 1982:54*)*. For a further discussion of the structure of 1 John, see Marshall (1978), Miehle (1981), Brown (1982), Klauck (1991), Longacre (1992), and Hansford (1992) who sees 1 John as a type of structured poetry, showing obvious affinities with Hebrew poetry, such as the use of parallelism and chiasmus. He has also divided 1 John into eighteen strophes and the pericope.

Ref.	GNB	PH	RSV	NLT	ESV	NIV	NKJV	LEB	SBL	NA27
2:28 2:29										
3:1 3:2 3:3										
3:4 3:5 3:6 3:7 3:8										
3:9										
3:10 3:11										
3:12										

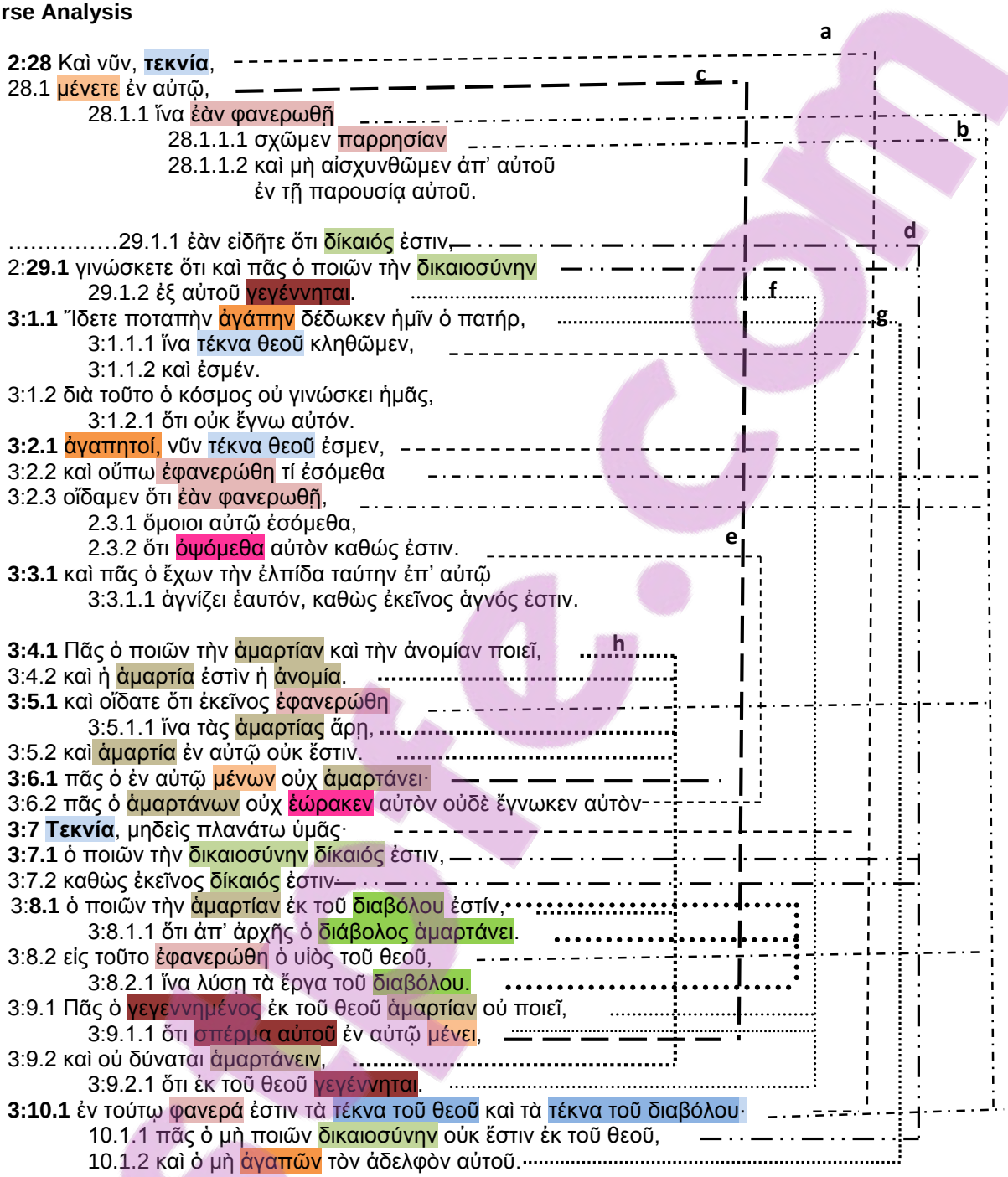
The horizontal lines mark the paragraph boundaries.

4.2.1 Discourse analysis of the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10

Discourse analysis at present is a result of a long history that started with focussing on the word and phrase, to a focus on the clause. From the clause the attention was shifted to the larger units, and finally to the whole document itself (Olsson 1999:369). Thiselton (1992:55-79) concurs with Olsson and notes that ‘reflections on what actually constitutes a text has influenced biblical interpretation in our time perhaps more than any other consideration’.

Discourse analysis enhances a better understanding of the text and the dynamic interaction between the text and the reader by means of semantic relations. In this pericope it also highlights the argument and rhetoric of the Elder. It will help relate what has been read with what is to be read, and also assist in the formation of coherent mind maps by means of semantic networks (Van der Merwe 2015a:8).

Discourse Analysis



4.2.2 Semantic relations (a; b; c; d; e; f; g; h) of 1 John 2:28-3:10

Semantic relation	Greek Term	Verses in 1 John	Occur-rence	Translation
a	Τεκνία	2:28; 3:1; 3:2; 3:7; 3:10	6	children
b	φανερωθῇ	2:28; 3:2; 3:8; 3:10	7	appear
c	μένει/μένων	3:6; 3:9	2	continue/remain
d	Δικαιοσύνην	2:29; 3:7; 3:10	6	righteousness
e	ὀψόμεθα/ἑώρακεν	3:2; 3:6	2	see
f	Γεγέννηται	2:29; 3:9	3	to become the parent of/born
g	ἀγάπην	3:1; 3:2; 3:10	3	love
h	ἁμαρτίαν	3:4; 3:5; 3:6; 3:8; 3:9	9	sin

4.2.3 Explanation of the analysis

The explanation of the analysis groups the related themes in line with the above semantic relations. These themes are discussed briefly here, and in more detail as they appear in different textures.

4.2.3.1 'Children of God' (cluster a)

This section investigates the close semantic relation between 1 John 2:28, 3:1, 3:2, 3:7, and 3:10. The relationship between the children of God and children of the devil is examined to see how both are related to 'seeing God'.

4.2.3.1.1 Semantic relations

2:28	Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία
3:1.1.1	ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν
3:2.1	ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν
3:7	Τεκνία, μηδεὶς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς
3:10.1a	τέκνα τοῦ *θεοῦ*
3:10.1b	τέκνα τοῦ *διαβόλου*

The semantic relations in the first cluster are created by repeating the noun τεκνία. In this cluster the 'children' are both related to God and the devil. This association governs the entire section. Its presence in all major sections of the pericope also links it to all the embedded subjects, especially that of 'seeing him as he is'. The focus is not only the object of 'seeing', but also on the subject thereof. Only a specific person

can see ‘him’ for who ‘he’ is. As the children of the devil will not be able ‘to see him as he is’, it is the special relationship with God in the present (‘now’) that will make the envisaged seeing possible.

4.2.3.1.2 Interpretation of related texts

Akin (2001:126) notes correctly that ‘dear children’ forms an *inclusio* to this pericope, and it also serves as a transition to a new subject: The *parousia* of Christ. 1 John 2:28 acts as a hinge or overlapping verse between the previous and the coming pericope. The verb (imperative) that forms the transition between the two mentioned pericopes is μένετε, which is also found in semantic links with 1 John 2:28, 3:6 and 3:9 (all part of this pericope) as demonstrated in the discourse analysis. ‘Abiding in him’ prepares believers for his appearing: ‘Abiding’ gives his children’s confidence, and his appearing is their motivation. The children of God have a dual nature of identity and responsibility: Their identity is illuminated by their confidence and being unashamed at his appearing, concurrently stressed with their responsibility of ‘continuing’ and ‘abiding’ in him.

The identity of being called ‘children of God’ is presented as a pivotal experience that sets his children apart and makes them special. Since there is a distinction between ‘children of God’ and ‘children of the devil’, this distinction is brought about by

> entry into the eschatological family of God as a new birth, being begotten by God, having the seed of God implanted in his child’s inner being (2.29; 3.9; 4.7; 5.1; 4, 18). Here the Elder employs language commonly referring to family life in order to express the Christian’s new eschatological existence (Van der Merwe 2006:1059).

The children of God have now found a new orientation which empowers them to remain in him and also prepares them for the event of ‘seeing him as he is’. They are called ‘children of God’ because of the love the Father has lavished on them. After the introduction of the children of God, the Elder goes back to the very nature of God being responsible for this wonderful privilege. This nature is referred to as the love of God: This love has transformative power, and makes the children of God share in Christ’s identity. They not only share his identity, but also the response the world had to Christ: *The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him* (1 Jn 3:1). This

identity of being children of God in the present is the reason for any future hope and encounter with God referred to in ‘we shall see him as he is’ in 1 John 3:2.

The Elder also warns the children of God of the possibility of being led astray by people who practise ἁμαρτίαν (cf. 1 Jn 3:4, etc.). The children of God must be on guard against those who practise sin and are on the course to lead them astray. Bruce (1970:377) explains: ‘The false teachers with their sophistry were capable not merely of condoning sin, but of making it seem virtuous’. The Elder also makes them aware that the devil is very influential in this process of leading astray.

This can be countered by children of God practising δικαιοσύνην (1 Jn 2:29, etc.). In this pericope these themes are diametrically opposed: They both deal with the children of God, and the outcome of this tug of war has tremendous implications for the children of God being able to ‘see God as he is’. Hiebert (1991:144-145) asserts, ‘The present tense participle makes clear that the test is not the performance of an occasional righteous deed but rather the habitual practice of “righteousness”’. Furthermore, this ‘righteousness’ indicates that a particular righteousness is in view: It emphasises the completeness and unity of this righteous quality. Obviously the reference is to the ‘righteousness’ that is characteristic of Christ. It is a distinguishing trait of God’s family and is a product of regeneration. However, the practice of righteousness is not what makes the individual ‘righteous’, but it reveals the inner nature of the one who is practising this righteousness.

The children of the devil and the children of God present members of two opposing families. In the discussion of the children of God, it is important to note that those who do not do what is right and those who do not love their brothers/sisters cannot be included in being ‘children of God’. The children of the devil have been clearly labelled as opposite to the children of God. It is clear that children in both these families imitate, embody, and have distinguishing marks of their families. The children of the devil are therefore like their father, the devil, and this is evidenced in their deeds.

4.2.3.1.3 Conclusion to this section

'Children of God' is a major theme in this pericope, and is heavily linked with the notion of 'seeing him as he is'. An understanding of 'seeing him as he is', therefore, will not be complete without a resonation with this major theme. The 'children of God' are linked to God's nature: They demonstrate God's nature through their works and they have God's nature inside them; therefore, they will 'see him as he is'. On the other hand, the children of the devil are linked to the devil's nature: They demonstrate the devil's character through their works and they have the devil's nature inside them; therefore, they have no confidence and they will not 'see him as he is'.

4.2.3.2 The theme of 'appearing' (cluster b)

This section examines the theme of 'appearing' as it relates to 'seeing him as he is' in this pericope. This examination is guided by the close semantic relations of 1 John 2:28, 2:29, 3:2, 3:5, and 3:8 connected by the verb φανερωθῇ. Louw and Nida (1996:279; cf. also Danker 2000:1048) note that this term carries the meaning of 'to cause to become visible – to make appear, to make visible, to cause to be seen'. The Elder uses this verb as a *terminus technicus* for the revelation of Christ in the past (1 Jn 1:2; 3:5, 8; 4:9) and the Elder's expectation of the future (1 Jn 3:2). Strecker (1996:79) also notes that

> this verb carries the meaning of something hidden, which implies that it already exists, is revealed. If it refers to the revelation of Christ in the past, then it infers that he already existed before he was revealed. If it refers to his revelation in future, then it infers that he must exist now beyond time.

4.2.3.2.1 Semantic relations

2:28.1.1	ἵνα ἐὰν <u>φανερωθῇ</u>
2:28.1.1.1	σχῶμεν <u>παρρησίαν</u>
3:2.2	καὶ οὔπω <u>ἐφανερώθη</u> τί ἐσόμεθα
3:2.3	οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν <u>φανερωθῇ</u>
3:5.1	καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος <u>ἐφανερώθη</u>
3:8.2	εἰς τοῦτο <u>ἐφανερώθη</u> ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ
3:10.1	ἐν τούτῳ <u>φανερά</u> ἐστιν

The semantic relations in this cluster are created by multiple occurrences of the subjunctive φανερωθῇ. As evidenced in these semantic relations, this verb is closely related to the subject who is referred to in the second person singular and is also referred to in another instance as the 'Son of God' in this section.

4.2.3.2.2 Interpretation of related texts

φανερωθῇ forms an inclusion in this pericope (28.1.1; 3.10.1), indicating a unit boundary of the pericope. Where 'appearing' occurs, there seems to be a pattern that seeks to answer questions dealing with who, what, and why, implicating the effects of 'appearing'.

In the first 'appearing' (1 Jn 2:28), the Elder deals with the state of the children of God envisaged and preferred at 'his appearing'. They are to abide (μένετε – 1 Jn 2:28) in him so that they may be confident and not ashamed at 'his appearing'. With the verb σχῶμεν (1 Jn 2:28) the Elder also includes himself in this eschatological event. With reference to the twofold benefit of abiding in Christ in relation to his appearing i.e. confidence, Akin (2001:129-130) notes that 'confidence connotes the absence of fear when speaking. It carries the idea of boldness, openness, freedom, assurance and courage'[32] and not being ashamed before him at his appearing. Akin (2001:129-130) adds that 'negatively, abiding in Christ is encouraged so that one will not be ashamed at the time of his coming'. The verb αἰσχυνθῶμεν (ashamed) appears only here in John's writings. It carries the idea of shrinking back or being separated from God through guilt or shame. One is reminded of the words of Jesus in Mark 8:38: *For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels* (NASB). Those who remain faithful to Christ will not have to withdraw from the Judge in shame or fear. Instead, they can stand with confidence before him at his coming (Heb 9:24-28).

[32] The term referring to the believer's confidence at the return of Christ is used twice – here and in 1 John 4:17 – while the Elder also uses the term to refer to the confidence and freedom by which the believer can approach God in prayer twice – 1 John 3:21 and 5:14. In the immediate context the term describes 'standing before Christ' at the time of his second coming without fear or shame. It is a confidence that stems from a personal, obedient, abiding relationship with the coming One.

The Elder connects φανερωθῇ with παρρησίαν in this section. A closer look at these two terms will shed more light into the appearing that results in the children 'seeing him as he is'. The Elder also affirms that the exact nature and state of the children of God after Christ's return has not been revealed to him.

The reasons for Christ's past appearances are dealt with in the following semantic sections:

3:5.1 καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη

3:8.2 εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

These two statements give specific reasons for the appearance of the Son of God. First, he appeared to bring salvation (1 Jn 4:9-10, 14), to reveal the Father, and also to take away sin. The fact that the Elder does not restrict the act of taking away sin to an act in Jesus' earthly life like his death, suffering or resurrection, but refers to his 'appearing' is noteworthy. Akin (2001:141-142) notes that this implies his pre-existence even before incarnation, and that the Elder uses this term to refer to both the incarnation of Christ and his manifestation at the *Parousia.* This observation is also made by Smalley (1984:156) when he argues that 'the self-disclosure of God in his Son, for the purpose of dealing with human sin, stretches from the pre-existence of Christ to his exaltation in glory'.

Second, he appeared to destroy the works of the devil. The intent of Christ's past appearing is made clear in this segment. The Elder has once again chosen 'appearing' as opposed to 'was born', 'died', 'resurrected' or 'crucified' in order to portray the work of Jesus. Akin (2001:147) notes that 'as in v. 5, John's selection of "appeared" (was manifested, KJV) as opposed to "was born" points to both the pre-existence of the Son of God and the historical reality of his incarnation'.

'Seeing him as he is' in the *Eschaton* can only be understood inside the cosmic battle that has been raging from the 'beginning'. The Son of God's purpose was to destroy the devil's works, while the children of God participate in the ongoing destruction of the devil's works.

3:2.2 καὶ οὔπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα

3:10.1 ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστι

The Elder depicts two states for the children of God: Their present state, which is clear, and their future state, which is not that clear. This clear present state of the children of God is in the 'now': *Dear friends, now we are children of God* (1 Jn 3:2). The Elder then moves in time to the future with the verb ἐσόμεθα (we will be). It is in this future that the state of the children of God is ambiguous to the Elder. Therefore, in this instance ἐφανερώθη could be translated with 'make clear', 'to manifest' or 'to reveal' (cf. Rogers, Rogers & Rienecker 1998:595).

The second phrase acts as both a summary and conclusion to the entire pericope. As to the antecedent of the phrase ἐν τούτῳ, Burdick (1985:248) correctly notes that 'it makes little difference since both the preceding and the following context speak of the same fact: The family of God is marked by the practice of righteousness'. Φανερά can here be translated with 'clear', 'evident' or 'conspicuous'. It is noteworthy that the same verb that has been used to depict the Son's past appearances is also used in relation to his appearing in the *Eschaton* (1 Jn 3:2).

4.2.3.2.3 Conclusion to this section

The theme of 'appearing' is a major theme in this pericope. Different shades of meaning contained in the varying but semantically-related terms need to be further investigated in order to arrive at a comprehensive meaning of 'seeing him as he is'. This has prospects of aiding the identification of the appearing subject and the manner in which comprehension will be achieved.

4.2.3.3 Abide/Remain (cluster c)

The pericope starts with an encouragement to 'abide/remain in him'. The Elder ties this 'abiding in him' to the entire pericope by spreading this notion evenly throughout the pericope with verses 1 John 2:28, 3:6 and 3:9. This section investigates the close semantic relationship between these verses to see how 'abiding in him' is foundational to 'seeing God'.

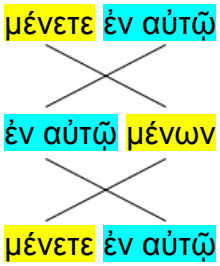
4.2.3.3.1 Semantic relations

2:28.1 μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ

3:6.1 πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει

3:9.1.1 ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ

The parts of 1 John 2:28 and 3:6 form a chiasm, while John 3:6 forms a chiasm with 3:9:



The semantic relations in this cluster are made by the repeated use of the verb μένετε. Louw and Nida (1996:728) define this verb as to 'remain in the same place over a period of time – "to remain, to stay"'. This section investigates the relationship between 'remaining in him' and 'seeing him'. The chiasm carries emphasis, being used close to the beginning and end of the pericope.

4.2.3.3.2 Interpretation of related texts

The admonition of 'abiding in him' is the foundation upon which the Elder builds the expectations of 'seeing him as he is'. Akin (2001:128) argues that the Elder 'demands a continual, deepening relationship with Christ as a direct duty of their status as "dear children"'. In light of the false teachings confronting the Elder's audience, it is a necessity that the children of God remain vibrant in their personal relationship with Christ. The Elder advances two options: Those who abide in him will be confident at his coming, while those who do not abide in him will be ashamed.

After the Elder has dealt with the relationship of 'abiding in him' to his (Christ's) παρρησίαν (1 Jn 2:28), he then focuses on the relationship of this clause with the children of God. The children of God can abide in him because of their position with regard to sin i.e. they do not continue sinning. The debate about the meaning of the

Elder in regard to sin and the children of God has been ongoing[33]. The Elder seems to be speaking of a habitual lifestyle as opposed to a single sinful act.
The Elder further discusses the 'abiding in him' and 'not continuing in sin' by giving the reason for his position: *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God* (1 Jn 3:6). The Elder sees the remaining of this seed as an answer to sin and subsequently the children of God will be in a position to 'see him'. Because God's seed is in his children, they will see 'him' as he is. Who the 'him' might be is discussed later.

In dealing with the 'abiding' the Elder employs a common literary device which was mainly used for oral presentations i.e. chiasm. This literary device was commonly known among the Jewish and Graeco-Roman audience of the 1st century. It served as a memory aid to the listeners, while insights from it enabled the interpreter to understand the author's use of words better and focus on the climax of the literary work (Snodderly 2008:47). The 'seeing him as he is' is closely linked to the children of God 'abiding in'/ 'remaining connected to' God.

4.2.3.4 Righteousness (cluster d)

God's children are performing righteous deeds that illustrate God's righteous character in them. God is referred to as 'righteous' and his children are also seen as practising righteousness just like their Father. The terms δίκαιός and δικαιοσύνην in 1 John 2:29 form an inclusion with δικαιοσύνην in 1 John 3:10, further confirming the boundary of this pericope. This is diametrically opposed to the children of the devil who practise

[33] Thomas (1984:238) surveys nine possible interpretations and states both the pros and the cons of each view before offering his own interpretation: 1) The perfectionist view: The Christian does not commit acts of sin; 2) The limited view of sin: The Christian does not commit certain sins; 3) The Christian does not sin because what is sin in the life of the unbeliever is not so regarded by God for a believer; 4) The Christian by nature does not sin; 5) The Epistle of the Elder describes a theoretical or ideal situation, and not reality. The ideal is, to a limited extent, true; 6) The Epistle is using exaggeration in this extremely controversial issue; 7) The Christian does not commit willful and deliberate sin; 8) The Christian does not commit habitual or consistent sin. Sin does not characterise their life; 9) The Christian who abides in Christ does not commit sin. When (or if) they sin, they are not abiding in Christ. In his conclusion Thomas offers a somewhat unique interpretation adapted from Robertson. According to him, ἁμαρτάνει is a 'progressive present tense': Simply put, this use depicts past action still in progress at the present time; in other words, the Elder is saying 'that an unbroken state of sinful behavior from the past into the present and continuing in the present, such as characterises the children of the devil (cf. 3.10), is impossible for the one who has been begotten by God' (Thomas 1984:247). Kruse 2000:117) provides a fine overview, but fails to provide a 'satisfactory resolution of the tension between 2.1 and 3.6-9'. For further discussions, see Bogart (1977), Kotzé (1979), Kubo (1969), Inman (1977), and Swadling (1982).

unrighteousness just like their father. The pericope is saturated with this theme of 'righteousness' which is found in 1 John 2:29a, 29b, 7a, 7b, and 10.

4.2.3.4.1 Semantic relations

2:29.1.1	ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι <u>δίκαιός</u> ἐστιν
2:29.1	γινώσκετε ὅτι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν <u>δικαιοσύνην</u>
3:7.1	ὁ ποιῶν τὴν <u>δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός</u> ἐστιν
3:7.2	καθὼς ἐκεῖνος <u>δίκαιός</u> ἐστιν
3:10.1.1	πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν <u>δικαιοσύνην</u> οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ

The semantic relations in this cluster are created by the multiple occurrences of the noun δικαιοσύνην and its adjective δίκαιος. God is 'righteous' and his children are 'righteous'.

4.2.3.4.2 Interpretation of related texts

29.1.1	ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν
7.2	καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν

These two subsections are discussed together, since both of them refer to God's 'righteousness'. They show the relationship between God as Father, and those who are born of him – his children – who demonstrate 'righteousness' just like their Father. 'Righteousness' is God's nature and those who do righteousness are born of him. It is against this notion that the Elder notes that even in the *Eschaton* or at the *Parousia* 'we shall be like him'. 'Seeing him as he is' is therefore understood in concert with his 'righteousness', and the children of God are also expected to do 'righteous deeds' as they wait for him.

The second aspect of 'righteousness' concerns itself with God's children. They are to demonstrate God's 'righteous character' through their works and way of living. These deeds state that God's children are like him. 'Seeing God' is understood in relation to the 'righteous acts' of his children that reveal his character. God's children are able to do righteous deeds because they bear within them God's nature. This nature abides in them and causes them not to sin. This scenario is also prevalent in the negative

sense: In this aspect, the devil is unrighteous – that is his character. His children show this character with the unrighteous deeds that they do – this is made possible by the nature of the devil abiding in them. They will be shamed at the *Parousia* and their 'seeing God' will not be the same as that of the righteous ones.

4.2.3.5 'See' (cluster e)

'Seeing him as he is' is alluded to both in the affirmation and the negation of the act. In the pericope the Elder notes both in relation to those who 'abide in him' and those who 'abide in sin'.

4.2.3.5.1 Semantic relations

3:2.3.2 ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν

3:6.2 πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν

The semantic relations in this cluster are created by the repeated use of the verb ὀψόμεθα which is a future middle indicative form of ὁράω, and ἑώρακεν which is a perfect active indicative form of the same verb.

4.2.3.5.2 Interpretation of related texts

Stott comments on 'seeing God' as preceding the 'being like him'. Actually the 'being like him' is caused by 'seeing' – 'vision becomes assimilation' (Stott 1988:124). The only explanation that he gives in terms of 'seeing God' is that we will see him with 'unveiled faces' as we all 'reflect the Lord's glory' according to 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 2:6.

4.2.3.6 To become the parent of/born (cluster f)

The theme of 'becoming the parent of/born' is investigated by taking a close look at the semantic relation between 1 John 2:29 and 3:9 of the pericope. This theme is examined with special care to how it relates to 'seeing him as he is'.

4.2.3.6.1 Semantic relations

2:29.1.2 ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται

3:9.1 Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ

3:9.2.1 ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται

The semantic relations in this cluster are created by the repeated use of the verb γεγέννηται. This phenomenon is presented as a standard which results in a special relationship between God and those who have experienced it. Those who experience it are also expected to behave in a certain, distinct way towards God, each other, and sin.

4.2.3.6.2 Interpretation of related texts

In 1 John 2:29 the Elder introduces a concept that repeats itself throughout this Epistle – 'being born of God' – of a spiritual new birth. The Elder 'describes the believer's new relationship with God as being analogous to that of a child to a father. This spiritual metaphor, which is common throughout the New Testament, has its roots in the Old Testament, where God's special people are viewed frequently as being in relationship with him' (Akin 2001:131-132). Those who have been 'born of God' have a privileged position of knowing God in a certain way i.e. he is righteous. They also practise righteousness.

Being born of God compels one not to continue in sin: *No one who is born of God will continue to sin* (1 Jn 3:9). The regenerative power of God gives power over sin. The word order in this phrase suggests that the emphasis is on 'being born of God'. Westcott (1905:107) notes the importance of this order by affirming that the child of God cannot sin, because they are of God, and of no other.

The discontinuity in sin is a result of God's seed that remains in the child of God. Akin (2001:148) notes that the 'indwelling "seed" enables and motivates the sin-free living of the child of God'. The metaphorical designation of 'seed' has been interpreted in various ways[34]. Brown (1982:411) has rightly noted that 'the exact identification is not

[34] Du Perez (1975:105-112), in his comment on 1 John 3:9, lists six different interpretations of 'seed', namely Christ, children of God, the proclaimed word, the Holy Spirit, new life from God, and the new nature. He defends 'new life from God' as the best view, though he incorporates some facets of the other views into this

so important, so long as we recognise that the author is talking about a divine agency for begetting God's children, which not only brings us into being, but also remains and keeps us his children'. This theme is intertwined with other themes in the pericope, especially those of 'seeing God'. The Elder maintains an inclusive language throughout this pericope, as he identifies with those born of God who will 'see God'.

4.2.3.7 Love (cluster g)

Close semantic relations between 1 John 3:1, 2 and 10 of the pericope is investigated under this section. 'Love' as the connection between God and his children, and also among his children is discussed.

4.2.3.7.1 Semantic relations

3:1.1	ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ
3:2.1	ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν
3:10.1.2	καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ

Semantic relations in this cluster are created by the repetition of ἀγάπην. In this cluster 'love' is discussed as it is given by God – a unifying principle among children of God, and as evidence of being a child of God.

4.2.3.7.2 Interpretation of related texts

Having identified believers as the children of God, and also having identified himself with them, the Elder then explores the agent of this wonderful relationship. The position of being children of God is the result of God's love. This special kind of love has been experienced by the Elder too. Stott (1988:122) rightly notes about this unique love that 'the Father's love is so unearthly, so foreign to this world, that he [the Elder – my addition] wonders from what country it may come'. Reflecting upon this kind of love leaves one amazed and in wonder.

The Elder also uses 'love' to describe the relationship between the children of God. They are a community bound together by love – love is their core identity. This notion

definition. Thomas (2004) also lists six possibilities of interpreting 'the seed': Besides those mentioned above, he includes 'the gospel message'.

is further developed and clarified by the Elder in 1 John 3:10. Loving one another becomes the litmus which is used to identify someone as either the child of God or the child of the devil. Plummer (1980:128) rightly observes that '[l]ove is righteousness in relation to others'. This theme is significant in understanding the notion of 'seeing God' because it resonates with the subjects of the envisaged seeing.

4.2.3.8 Sin (cluster h)

This section investigates the close semantic relations between 1 John 3:4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. The theme of sin is addressed in depth in this pericope. The relation between 'sin' and 'seeing God' is also investigated.

4.2.3.8.1 Semantic relations

3:4.1	Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ
3:4.2	καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία
3:5.1.1	ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ
3:6.1	πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει
3:6.2	πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν
3:8.1	ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν
3:9.1	Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ
3:9.2	καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν

The semantic relations in this last cluster are created by the repetition of the term ἁμαρτίαν in its various forms. Here sin is explained and related to those who practise it, how Jesus dealt with it, its relation to the devil, and the children of God. 'Seeing God' can be understood in relation to what can hinder one to that effect, namely sin.

4.2.3.8.2 Interpretation of related texts

The first sub-cluster deals with an explanation of what 'sinners' and 'sin' are according to this pericope, and why children of God cannot continue to 'sin'.

3:4.1	Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ
3:4.2	καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία
3:5.1.1	ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ

Before he explicitly explains sinners and sin, the Elder deals with the scope of sin. He aligns sin with everyone who practises it and is termed a sinner. Akin (2001:139) argues that the Elder uses the all-inclusive πᾶς (everyone) to accentuate that there is no elite group that is above God's moral standards. As there was a group of people who had left the Church and could have the conviction that they are above accountability, the Elder emphasises that no one is excluded from the following rule (literally translated): Everyone doing sin, also does lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4) – this is a universal truth, with no exceptions. Having made this clear, the Elder then moves to the definition of sin.

The Elder equates 'sin' to 'lawlessness'. His choice of ἀνομία to define sin is significant. Marshall (1978:176) states that 'sin was associated with the final outbreak of evil against Christ and that it signifies rebellion against the will of God'. This gives sin a different tone, because it puts one who practises sin on the same level as the devil and the antichrist, and in conscious opposition to Christ. The Elder has earlier noted the presence of the antichrist(s), so when one sins he simply joins them. Such a person will have a different outcome when others 'see God'.

The Elder further gives the reason why children of God should not sin. He appeals to the appearing of Jesus and notes that he 'took away our sins' (1 Jn 3:5). This means that the one who took away sins was and still is against sin. Marshall (1978:177) rightly notes that 'not only so, but his opposition to sin is further indicated by his own lack of sin'. He is righteous and holy and his people should be so too.

In the section that follows, the Elder revisits the issue of sin. In the previous section he dealt with it as lawlessness, but now he focuses his attention on the instigator, that is the devil. The sinner belongs to the devil or draws his courage and inspiration from him. Referring to the verb ποιῶν, Akin (2001:149) observes that it refers to a continual state of sin – this person's life is a life of sin. The Elder therefore refers here to a habitual life of sin, not just individual acts of sin (even though the individual acts reveal the inner character).

3:8.1 ὁ ποιῶν τὴν <u>ἁμαρτίαν</u> ἐκ τοῦ <u>διαβόλου</u> ἐστίν

The devil is identified with sin, as he is both its origin and instigator. He has been sinning ('he was a murderer') from the beginning (cf. Jn 8:44). The reason why Christ appeared was to destroy the works of the devil, which are tantamount to sin. The contrast is clear that he who does righteousness is of Christ (3.6.1; 3.9.1; 3.9.2), and the one who sins is of the devil (3.6.2). The conduct and character of the children reveal all about their masters respectively:

3:6.1	πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει
3:6.2	πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν
3:9.1	Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ
3:9.2	καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν

This last cluster sets forth one of the difficult notions to explain. The Elder boldly claims that, *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning* (1 Jn 3:6a). He reinforces this statement with a further antithesis: *No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him* (1 Jn 3:6b). He clearly and repeatedly puts the one who is born of God – the children of God – diametrically opposite to sinning. The Elder seems to be stating that children of God are to be sinless. This is contradictory to what he asserts in 1 John 2:1, and to a lesser extent in 1 John 2:15, 29, 3:12, 18, and 5:21. Marshall (1990:182-183) states that these 'texts mention the possibility which is placed before each believer, the possibility of a life free from sin'. This can be viewed as a practical summary to what the Elder has been teaching in the previous verses i.e. sin is incompatible with those born of God, and God's plan is that his children should be free from sin: 'Consequently, it can be said that if a person does continue in sin, it is a sign that he is lacking in true Christian experience' (Marshall 1990:195).

It has already been stated that those who sin, have not seen God and this may imply that they may not even see him in the *Eschaton.* In this cluster (specifically 1 Jn 3:6) the Elder has already related sin to 'not seeing God'. This relatedness is further examined in relation to 'seeing God' in the *Eschaton* when 'we shall see him as he is'.

Now that the discourse analysis has exposed and highlighted the rhetorical transitions of the pericope in view, the flow of thought of the Elder has been established. The themes closely related and intertwined to 'seeing him as he is', have also been highlighted and interpreted. The next section of the inner texture deals with the

experiences of the recipients when they hear/read the text. This is crucial because the embodiment of what they were hearing/reading would contribute to how they understood it.

4.3 Experiencing him through contemplative reading of Scripture

The dynamics of the texture of spirituality are embedded in the text itself and can be unpacked through both formal and informal aspects. As the reader interacts with the text, they shape the portrayal of texts in their imaginations and effectively participate in the text. It is during this dynamic interaction that the reader is being pulled into the text and *vice versa* (Waaijman 2002:742; cf. Van der Merwe 2015a:4). This discussion deals with informal devices within the texture (that draw the reader inside the text), as well as formal devices.

4.3.1 Informal devices in the text

Under the informal devices, the dynamics of a texture of spirituality as embedded in the text can be dealt with as spiritualities created through 1) a dynamic interaction between text and reader; 2) the composition of images; and 3) a dialectic of retention and pretention effects of a text. These effects help to make sense of the reading of a text as well as to determine some of the lived experiences evoked when the early Christians read the text (Van der Merwe 2015a:5).

4.3.1.1 Dynamic interaction between text and reader

The departure point here is to investigate the dynamic interaction between text and reader that resonates with the structure of the text. The relationship between the text and the reader holds the key to unlocking some spirituality embedded in the text. Waaijman (2002:748) notes that the implied historical readers are actively involved in imagining the field of meaning and trying to view the text as a whole. Van der Merwe (2015a:9) argues that the reading of a text creates not only pictures but also 'lived experiences' of the identity, ethics and character of the people in the text, and these become prolific when the (reading) text informs and allows them to bring their own faculties and experiences into play (Iser 1978:108). The end result is that the rhetoric of the author influences the 'lived experiences' of the reader.

4.3.1.1.1 Linguistic features

In the pericope the Elder utilises a repetitive chiastic structure. Bailey and Vander Broek (1992:49) define a chiasm as a literary form that has at its most obvious feature a reverse parallelism, which includes two or more phrases or ideas that are repeated in reverse order. The value of this literary device is that it helps the reader/hearer to delineate units of thought, thereby signalling the beginning and ending of a topic.

This narrowed and close-up view of the text reveals the intended focus of the passage as well as a rhetorical appeal which results in the use of an aural effect, or for purposes of memory (Bailey & Vander Broek 1992:149-153; cf. Snodderly 2008:46). The thought pattern of the ancient people is related well by Bailey and VanderBroek (1992:182), stating that these people were relatively unconcerned about a linear and logical flow of ideas. These communities relished sayings and stories that were memorable, and they therefore appreciated repetition that one might consider redundant. The chiasm served both the pedagogical and liturgical purposes[35].

In 1 John (specifically 1 Jn 2:28; 2:29; 3:1-2; 3:6; 3:8; 3:9) the Elder uses the chiasm to keep certain theses in the mind of his readers, and thereby helping them to comply with the text. These themes include ‘righteous’ (1 Jn 1:28-29), ‘children of God’ (1 Jn 3:1-2), ‘sin’ (1 Jn 3:6), ‘the devil’ (1 Jn 3:8), and ‘born of God’ (1 Jn 3:8). ‘Seeing him as he is’ in 1 John 3:2 is embedded in these themes, and therefore the Elder repeats them so that they form a backdrop from which the ‘seeing him as he is’ must be understood.

The Elder also employs the use of the parallelism in order to create spiritualities. Longman (1988:105) refers to parallelism as dealing with similarities and differences between phrases/clauses. The similarities cause the reader to read the two phrases/clauses together, while the variation found in the second phrase/clause carries the intended meaning forward. Grammatical parallelism charts the similarities and differences between the parts of speech used in related phrases/clauses (morphology) and also in the word order (syntax).

[35] On the value of the chiasm, see Lund (1942), Man (1984), Martin and Martin (1983), and Welch (1981).

In his Epistle the Elder has employed the use of the grammatical parallelism in 1 John 3:2-3, 3:4, 3:5, 3:7, and 3:8. In all these texts he develops the notion of 'appearing' to include both the past appearing and (in that view draws attention to) the pending 'appearing' when 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

The Elder also uses cyclic reasoning in different themes in 1 John in order to help his readers to comply with the text: 'Abide' (1 Jn 2:28; 3:6), 'righteous' (1 Jn 2:29; 3:7, 10), 'revealed' (1 Jn 2:28; 3:2), 'love' (1 Jn 3:1, 10), 'children of God' (1 Jn 3:1, 2, 10), 'born of God' (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9), and 'children of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8, 10). These features pull the reader into the text and the text into the reader. This dynamic interaction between text and reader also helps the readers to comply with the text (cf. Van der Merwe 2015:34).

4.3.1.1.2 Intimate form of address

In order to draw the readers into the text, the Elder employs the use of terms that connect him to the readers and also the readers to each other. Van der Merwe (2015a:12) notes that the use of intimate address attracts the attention of the readers, both present and future, as the author of the Epistle identifies personally with them. In John 3:2 he refers to his readers as 'beloved' or 'dear friends', and throughout the Epistle he constantly refers to them as such, like in 1 John 2:7, 3:21, 4:1, 7, and 11. He also refers to them as '(my) children' in 1 John 2:1, 18, and 28.

Akin (2001:135) postulates that the address of the Elder to the adherents as ἀγαπητοί 'emphasises the bonding love of the Father for his children'. By using the first person plural ('we'), the Elder also identifies himself with them as one of the beloved of God. He has an intense love for his readers, because of their shared love towards the Father. Smalley (1989:144) adds that by referring to the adherents as ἀγαπητοί the Elder puts into practice 'his own ethical demand of love within the brotherhood'.

The Elder refers to his readers as 'children of God' in 1 John 3:1, 2, and 10, because through the love of God true believers can be called children of God, also because they do what is right – this emphasises the present reality of the status of the readers with the Father. Any future status of being children of God is leveraged against this present reality (Van der Merwe 2015a:11). The readers could feel the joy and security

in knowing that they are one with both the Elder and the Father. The Elder further makes an impression on them by contextualizing the intimate address – he identifies the context as eschatological.

4.3.1.1.3 Eschatological climate

The Elder wraps in his rhetoric the eschatological climate by using terms that his readers can associate with. By using 'reveal'[36] in 1 John 2:28, he appeals to a phenomenon that the adherents (his readers) can associate with – both for the present and the end time. Bailey and Vander Broek (1992:127) explain that

> apocalyptic language and forms help the interpreter to recognise their evocative character. This is stretched language which evokes images and memories from Israel's past and above all a response to their present loss of meaning, creating a picture of reality that transcends the everyday and historical circumstances of the audience to whom it is directed.

In relation to the παρουσίᾳ (1 Jn 2:28), the adherents are expected to have παρρησίαν. With this the Elder prepares in the present readers' experience a confidence through the Father-child relationship (1 Jn 3:1), and in future by being 'the same as' him (1 Jn 3:2). The certainty of the readers is thus based on the future adoption of God (Van der Merwe 2015b:45). The present is closely related to the future, and the adherents therefore must be aware and live in this tension.

4.3.1.1.4 Prominent themes

Van der Merwe (2015b:31) identifies two prominent themes that relate to the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, namely the 'coming of Jesus', and 'conforming to the identity of Jesus'. These themes are important structural markers, and they run parallel

[36] Kittel and Friedrich (1964:117). are dealing extensively with the varied use and expectation both in the Judaist and Hellenistic sources of the use of 'Parousia'. Concerning the coming of the Messiah they note that the anointed One sent by Yahweh was understood as an expectation of a hero and a prince of peace. The discipline of Yahweh religion prevents the hope of salvation from becoming a selfish fantasy. The 'coming' is in the first instance regarded as a coming in history, though not without eschatological impulses. Daniel 7:13 is the starting point of a new development. In contrast to the beasts (the world empires) from the abyss, we have the man (the people of God). The reference is not yet to the personal pre-existence and historical *Parousia* of the Messiah. It is understandable, however, that the ensuing age should put the personal interpretation to the forefront and take from the text both the concept of pre-existence and the colours in which to portray the *Parousia*. One should not overestimate the significance of the Messiah in the Old Testament and the later periods.

through the pericope and cause inherent cohesion. They are also responsible for the spirituality embedded in the clause ’for we shall see him as he is’. Their expectation (awaiting) of the parousia and their way of life (1 Jn 2:6) that should resonate with the life of Jesus constituted an awareness of ‘the divine’.

Two dimensions referring to the ‘coming of Jesus’ are discussed by the Elder in the paragraph where the ‘seeing him as he is’ is situated (1 Jn 2:28-3:3). The first dimension deals with ‘coming’ (παρουσίᾳ) and the second one deals with ‘revelation’ (φανερωθῇ). These two semantically related terms are prominent in the pericope and carry the idea of ‘seeing him as he is’ through the present into the future. The ‘seeing him as he is’ is wrapped in this theme.

The second theme, namely ‘conformity to the identity of Jesus’, has a present and a future implication: The present implication for being a child of God is achieved by the reference to νῦν (now) in 1 John 2:28, while the future implication is achieved by the reference to ἐὰν φανερωθῇ (when he is revealed) in 1 John 3:2. The state of the children of God in both these times is summarised by the table below:

νῦν (now) in 1 John 3:2		**ἐὰν φανερωθῇ (when he is revealed) in 1 John 3:2**	
Greek	**Translation**	**Greek**	**Translation**
Τεκνία	(Little) children	ἐὰν φανερωθῇ	When he is revealed
γινώσκετε ὅτι…ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται	You know that (we) are born of him	σχῶμεν παρρησίαν	That we may have confidence
ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν	That we should be called children of God	μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν	That we should not be put to shame
νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν	Now we are children of God	οὔπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα	Where we will be, has not yet been revealed
οἴδαμεν ὅτι	We know that	ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα	We shall be like him
ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην	Who has this hope	ὀψόμεθα	We shall see

This diagram can be summarised as follows: In the present the children of God are those who are born of God, and the world does not know them. They also have hope

which is based on their knowledge, but in the future God will be revealed, and they need to have confidence and not shame. The children of God do not have a clear view of how they will be, but they know that when he appears they will be like him because they will see him as he is (cf. Van der Merwe 2015a:11; Thomas 2004:150-151).

From this diagram it is clear that ‘seeing him as he is’ is intertwined with these themes. The manner in which the children of God are to wait for the future ‘seeing him as he is’ is that they must abide in him (μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ – 1 Jn 2:28), do what is right (ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην – 1 Jn 2:29), purify themselves (ἁγνίζει ἑαυτόν – 1 Jn 3:3), and love one another (ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ – 1 Jn 3:10).

4.3.1.1.5 Semantic relations

The semantic relations guide the reader and strengthen their expectation of the future appearing where ‘we shall see him as he is’ (1 Jn 3:2). The future expectation of the coming of Christ (ἐὰν φανερωθῇ – 1 Jn 3:2) is closely related to the present (νῦν – 1 Jn 2:28; 3:2). This relationship has implications for the children of God. The identity and conduct in the present is crucially important for the future (Van der Merwe 2015a:11).

The semantic network also reveals groups of semantically related terms: The first group includes the terms τεκνία and ἀγαπητοί (1 Jn 2:28; 3:2). With these terms the Elder indicates the intimate relationship that exists between him and the adherents. The second group of semantically related terms refers to the *Parousia* of Jesus, where 1 John 2:28, 3:2, and 4:17 are semantically related and refer to the ‘day of judgement’. The third group refers to two virtues, ‘righteousness’ and ‘purity’ (1 Jn 2:29; 3:3); added to these is a third virtue, ‘love’, in 1 John 3:10. These virtues are achieved when the adherents are abiding in him. The last group refers to a family metaphor, as it occurs in 1 John 3:1, 2, and 4-10 (Van der Merwe 2015a:12).

4.3.1.2 Composition of images in 1 John 2:28-3:10

The composition of images occurs as the text is read. Reading becomes a catalyst for the passive synthesis through which the meaning of the text and experiences are constituted in the mind of the reader. The reader subjectively and selectively composes the images out of the multifarious aspects of the text as well as the

metaphors, symbols and imagery embedded in the text. These images described in the text are then experienced (Van der Merwe 2015a:8).

The first image that the Elder writes about in this pericope is that of a family. Van der Merwe (2015a:8) notes the extensive use of metaphorical language concerning the family in this pericope. He further notes that by using this metaphor, the Elder not only explains to the reader the character of the relationship between God and his children, but also succeeds in pulling the reader into the text to experience the world, characters and events described inside the text. God is referred to here as the Father (1 Jn 3:1) – an image that is persistent throughout Scripture. The Elder here describes the Father as having 'great love', and also as 'lavishing' this love on his people (1 Jn 3:1). The result is that the believers are referred to as 'children of God' (1 Jn 3:1), 'God's seed' (1 Jn 3:9), 'children' (1 Jn 3:10), and 'brothers' (1 Jn 3:10). The Elder further reinforces the family image by describing the conduct within this family by referring to 'doing what is right' (1 Jn 2:29), 'living pure' (1 Jn 3:3), and 'loving your brothers' (1 Jn 3:10). The climax of creating these images, which the readers are very familiar with, allows them to experience this life, and also generates hope of seeing the members (God the Father and Jesus, the Son who is also their brother) of this divine family one day after the *Parousia.*

There are many aspects of the family that the first readers were familiar with, and had actually already experienced, and this Epistle encourages them to look forward to this big reunion. This could also work as a deterrent to backsliding. The family metaphor presents many aspects that the Elder could be communicating through the shared knowledge with the readers i.e. confidence, common good, protection, common vision, and goodwill.

The Elder also reinforces the adherence to his course by making reference to another family which is an adversary to this one. The leader in the opposing family is referred to as 'having been sinning from the beginning' (1 Jn 3:8), his adherents are referred to as 'children of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8), and they 'do not do what is right' (1 Jn 3:10). The Elder creates a picture of the opposite family, depicting the image of tension which the readers are already aware of and most likely have experienced. This tension is the

context of ‘seeing God’ and could help the adherents to endure the present trials and tribulations coming from the rival family.

4.3.1.3 Dialectic of retention and pretention

The need for a reflection on the understanding which every reader brings to the text, since a naive reception of a text makes understanding thereof more difficult, or actually prevents that text from being understood, is brought forward by Egger (1996:200). The dialectic of retention and pretention acknowledges that the reader of a text is not passive while reading that text, but rather extremely active. The ‘lived experiences’ are created when the text unfolds during every moment of reading. When reading a text, the passage evokes in the reader an image that appears against a background of what has already been read and also against what still remains to be read. What has been read creates the background of memory and expectation. What has already been read is referred to as retention, and that which is expected is called pretention (Waaijman 2002:744).

This effect deals with the activity of the reader when reading a text. When reading a text, the reader does not come ‘empty-handed’, but rather comes with a rich background, being saturated with prior readings. Memory and expectation become the background against which reading occurs, and ‘lived experiences’ are created as the text unfolds during reading (Waaijman 2002:744). In the reading therefore, the past and the future converge in the present moment, and through reading a text the reader synthesises and experiences an expanding network of connections in the mind (Iser 1978:116).

As has already been said, the remembered background that the reader of a text brings to the reading is referred to as the ‘retention’ and the anticipated background as ‘pretention’. Retention encompasses the past, and the text being recaptured in every reading, constitutes the projection surface against the background against which the images take shape (Waaijman 2002:177).

Pretention deals with the future in reading i.e. the anticipated background: This deals with what is potentially to come to fruition. In reading a text there is a network occurring. The tension created between retention and pretention controls the reading

experience of the reader, while every text reading moment involves a change of perspective. In the reading event, past and future constantly converge in the present moment (Van der Merwe 2015a:12).

The dialectic of retention and pretention is applied below to 1 John 3:2, which is the core of this thesis. It constitutes the centre point from which the dialectic of retention and pretention is conducted.

- **3.2** ἀγαπητοί
- 3.2.1 νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν **NOW**
- 3.2.2 καὶ οὔπω *ἐφανερώθη* τί ἐσόμεθα **NOT YET**
- 3.2.3 οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν *φανερωθῇ* **WHEN**

↳ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα

↳ ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν

The arrow on the left indicates the rhetorical flow and reasoning of the Elder where all the different aspects referred to in this verse culminate in the understanding of the theme of this research; every texture builds towards this climax by contributing something towards the understanding of 'seeing him as he is'. This text can be divided into the five sub-phrases of retention and pretention mentioned below.

4.3.1.3.1 'Beloved'

The dialectic of retention and pretention as applied to the beloved (ἀγαπητοί), when used to refer to the adherents in 1 John 2:7, 3:21, 4:1, 7, and 11, emphasises both the bonding love of the Father to his children, and the bonding love between the Elder and the adherents (by using the first person plural 'we') (cf. Akin 2001:135). Here the Elder appeals to the ties that bind the community/family together, and unites them to himself under this declaration that they are 'beloved'. When they read that they are the 'beloved' of the Elder, it must have created the spirituality of unity and joy among them.

Akin (2001:137) also brings to the surface the condition brought by the reference to 'now'. He argues that it uncovers a stark contrast between the present and the future, the known and the unknown. The Elder intends to accentuate the fact that 'we' are children of God here and now, and at the same time, while the retention of the children

of God implies aspects of them that are yet to be revealed. Although the present status of being children of God is wonderful, the future state will even be more extraordinary (Akin 2001:137).

4.3.1.3.2 'We are now children of God'

The Elder uses this dialectic and rhetoric to mobilise his readers to purify themselves in the present. He creates 'spiritualities' by highlighting the present state of the adherents telling them, *Dear friends, now we are children of God* (1 Jn 3:2). The Elder makes them aware, or brings their experience of divine childhood to the front. Bultmann (1973:48) 'accentuates the meaning of the idea: being children of God is a present affair: νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν [we are God's children now], but sonship finds its fulfilment in the future'. This must have created a 'lived experience' of consecration to God, and determination to follow God despite the circumstances. Being a child of God must have reinforced unity amongst themselves in view of the common enemy.

The present state of being children of God is understood in relation to how the adherents became children of God in the first place. They have experienced both the Father and the Son. The close bond between Jesus as Son, and God as Father is such that for the believer the experience of one carries with it the experience of the other (1 Jn 2:24) (cf. Lieu 1997:72). They have experienced righteousness and love in their union, and are currently still experiencing it. The 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2) is also understood in relation to what they are experiencing, but it carries some excitement, as it promises greater experience to come (cf. Akin 2001:137).

To the adherents, the future 'seeing him as he is' brings a promise of a deeper fellowship with the Father and the Son. As the Johannine soteriology also includes the truth and aid of the Spirit, the note of the Elder that 'we shall see him as he is' brings to a climax the truth that they have been living for, and also greater dimensions of the Spirit.

Through their faith they have obtained their salvation (1 Jn 3:23), and they are abiding because of this faith. Therefore, any future state of being children of God is also understood in relation to this faith. This must have created the spirituality of steadfastness, because the 'seeing him as he is' called upon them to continue in their

current state as ‘children of God’. These adherents are bringing their vast history of being God’s children to the reading of the Epistle of the Elder. Through this Epistle they should have been strengthened and overjoyed, while developing further confidence in the face of adversity, which would make them persevere to the end.

4.3.1.3.3 ‘When he appears’

In dealing with the retention of the adherents, the Elder states that, in relation to both the past appearing (ἐφανερώθη – 1 Jn 3:5) and the future appearing (φανερωθῇ – 1 Jn 3:2) they have some knowledge. The interest of this section is the knowledge the readers have about the past appearance, and how it creates some ‘lived experiences’ in them and helps them to view the future appearing. The Elder notes that *you know that he appeared to take away your sins* (1 Jn 3:5).

This knowledge they possess forms the background from which they understand the future appearing. Bultmann (1973:50) states that this verse appeals to the ‘Christian tradition’. Akin (2001:141) concurs: ‘The apostle appeals to the common knowledge his readers possess by virtue of the spiritual “anointing” they have received (cf. 2.27). Implicit in this appeal to his hearers’ basic Christian knowledge is an encouragement for them to conform their lives to the truth they already know’ (cf. Stott 1988:127).

Of paramount significance to the adherents concerning the past appearing, is the incarnation of Christ. However, the Elder does not say that Jesus ‘was born’, but that he ‘appeared’ or ‘was made visible’ (cf. 1 Jn 1:2; 2:19, 28; 3:2), which implies his pre-existence even before the incarnation. It is important to note that the Elder uses this term to refer to both the incarnation of Christ (1 Jn 1:2; 3:5, 8) and his manifestation at the *Parousia* (1 Jn 2:28; 3:2; cf. Akin 2001:141). The self-disclosure of God in his Son, for the purpose of dealing with human sin, stretches from the pre-existence of Christ to his exaltation in glory (cf. Smalley 1989:156).

The Elder supplies specific reasons for this past appearing:

3:5.1	καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος <u>ἐφανερώθη</u>
3:8:2	εἰς τοῦτο <u>ἐφανερώθη</u> ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

Retention encompasses the past, and pretention deals with that which is still not occupied i.e. what is potentially to come to fruition (Van der Merwe 2015b:6). In this pericope the Elder espouses a future appearing (*Parousia*) which is semantically linked to the past appearing (incarnation). The past appearances depicted by 1 John 3:5 and 8, were to 'take away our sins' and 'to destroy the devil's work'. 'Seeing him as he is' in the *Eschaton* cannot be understood outside the cosmic battle that has been raging from the 'beginning'. The Son of God's purpose was to destroy the devil's works, while the children of God are participating in the ongoing destruction of the devil's work. This retention effect creates certain spiritualities in the adherents' life. First and foremost, they must have realised the certainty of the pending appearing, and also the implications of the fulfilled promises. This past appearance and its accomplishments have given them faith, joy, and courage to continue hoping in the midst of opposition.

The effect of pretention which conveys what is potentially to come, is also utilised by the Elder. The discourse analysis of 1 John 3:2 shows the tension that the Elder uses in relation to time to create spiritualities in the life of the adherents. He utilises the two terms φανερωθῇ and παρρησίαν in 1 John 1:28 as synonyms. A closer look at these two terms sheds more light on the appearing of the results in the adherents' 'seeing him as he is'. The Elder also affirms that the exact nature and state of the children of God after Christ's return have not been revealed to him. The semantic relation between 'children of God' and 'appearing' is clearly attested by this analysis.

This futuristic appearing is declared by the Elder's use of a time factor i.e. 'when he appears' (1 Jn 3:20): When Jesus appears, the present eschatological time will come to an end with the future eschatological event of the *Parousia* and day of judgement. This will introduce a new future or final eschatological time (Van der Merwe 2006:1054). 'When he is revealed' is semantically connected to 'we shall see him', and this should have created a spirituality of hope and expectation to the adherents. Jesus was manifested and he will again be manifested in the future at the *Parousia.* His first manifestation made certain things clear and left others a mystery (1 Jn 3:5, 8). The *Parousia* will therefore be a time when Jesus will remove that mystery. These revelations do not make known to the children of God what they will be, instead they show that the limitations of the present mode of existence will be removed in the future

(Van der Merwe 2015b:34). The references to his future appearing and the uncertainty about what believers will be, creates a spirituality of curiosity and prepares the reader for what is to follow i.e. 'being like him', and 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2).

4.3.1.3.4 'We shall be like him'

The transformation of believers at the *Parousia* into being like Christ is certainly pivotal to the discussion of the future reunion. Bultmann (1973:49) rightly notes that the promised likeness with Christ will be effected by the community of the believers 'seeing him', more specifically 'seeing him as he is'. This future transformation is an extension of the present status achieved by the adherents: *Dear friends, now we are children of God*' (1 Jn 3:2). What they have seen of the Christ incarnate has raised them to the position of 'children of God'. However, when he is fully revealed, those who 'see him as he is' will be consummated in his divine likeness, as that is the divine purpose that they should attain. This present dignity is nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed at the *Parousia*. The exact conditions of their future state have not yet been made clear, but the *Parousia* holds the key to clarifying all (cf. Brooke 1912:81).

This promise of ultimately being transformed to be like Christ, should have created the spiritualities of excitement and endurance in the adherents. Their present sufferings are being dwarfed in view of the pending exultation and transformation. They must have set themselves apart for this great promise, because sanctity is the best preparation for being like God, and for seeing him (Brown 1988:115).

Schnackenburg (1992:158) clarifies this issue of 'being like Christ' as a matter of similarity rather than equality. Equality to God has never been promised to believers in the New Testament. This similarity is different from the Hellenistic mysteries or gnostic idea of deification. This particular likeness to God seems to be the consequence of glory, the radiant light of divine glory.

The spirituality of hopeful expectation would also have been created when the adherents understand that their transformation could possibly mean that as a result of Jesus' manifestation, the believer will have a body that is no longer confined by earthly limitations – like Jesus who, after the resurrection in John 20 appears to enter rooms despite doors being locked (cf. Thomas 2004:151).

4.3.1.3.5 'For we shall see him as he is'

'Seeing him as he is' appears to be the major factor in the pericope. Even the 'being like him' is a result of 'seeing him as he is'. Thomas (2004:151) agrees that the transformation into 'being like him' is evoked in and by the radical transforming moment when 'we shall see him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2). Many facets of this phenomenon are investigated further in this chapter and the following ones.

In summary, the transforming experience of 'seeing him as he is' results in the believer's transformation into his likeness. Once again it should be stated that the first person plural language ('we') appears consistently throughout 1 John 3:2, underscoring the communal aspect of this experience.

4.3.1.3.6 Conclusion to this section

The *visio Dei* espoused by the Elder in the *Parousia* builds on what believers are already experiencing in the 'now'. What is significant about the *visio Dei* in the *Parousia* is that 'more change, more experience' will be accorded to the believers (Van der Merwe 2015a:6). This experience will be different from what the believers experience in the 'now'. This mystery is a 'lived experience' on its own (cf. Painter 2002:221; Michaelis 1981:365-366). Van der Merwe (2015a:9) argues that the verb 'seeing' is therefore used metaphorically for experience: 'Seeing God' means that the believers will see (experience) the Divine in his heavenly glory, while the sight (experience) of him, according to the Elder, will be enough to make the believer pure like him. According to the Elder, the adherents will experience 'love' (1 Jn 4:16), his 'purity' (1 Jn 3:3), his 'righteousness' (1 Jn 2:1), his 'truth' (1 Jn 5:20), his 'glory' (Jn 17:24), and much more. Although the adherents have already experienced all of these, they would experience it in full dose after the *Parousia*.

In order to further investigate the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, this research now investigates the strategies the Elder used in the text. These strategies are employed to create certain spiritualities in the readers and hearers. As part of the inner textual reading, this research narrows in this section its periphery to spiritualities provoked when the text is read, and later on the dynamics of hearing are investigated. Below the formal devices are investigated.

4.3.2 Formal devices (embodiment)

The Elder has weaved some formal strategies in the text in order to generate particular spiritualities and conduct in the readers. Van der Merwe (2015a:5-8) has identified these strategies as detachment, participation, and transformation.

4.3.2.1 Detachment

This dimension of the texture is the transmission of benefit from the Divine to humans as a result of events, rituals, or practices. As a result of things that happen or could happen if people do them, the divine power will transform human lives and take them into a higher level of existence (Robbins 1996b:125). One of those acts that the Divine/God already did in order to transform his people, was to deal with the issue of sin. There is a close link between sin and being able to 'see him as he is'.

4.3.2.1.1 Sin

The theme of sin has been repeated immensely in this pericope in 1 John 3:4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. The Elder aligns sin with everyone who practises it, whom he calls sinners. He is clear in his definition of sin i.e. ἀνομία (lawlessness). Marshall (1978:176) explains that 'this and other references suggest that the word was associated with the final outbreak of evil against Christ and that it signifies rebellion against the will of God'. As has already been said, this gives sin a different tone as it now aligns a sinner with the devil and the antichrist, who stand in conscious opposition to Christ.

4.3.2.1.1.1 Remaining in sin

The danger of abiding or remaining in sin is connected to the Gospel of John. According to John 15:2-6, the vinedresser wields his pruning knife against both fruitful and unfruitful branches, but to different ends. The purpose of the vine is to bear fruit, and fruitless plants are useless. The cutting (Jn 15:2) and burning (Jn 15:6) of unfruitful branches repeat the vital warning against falling away (Jn 2:23-25; 8:30-31). This image made sense in the ancient Mediterranean context: The fate of the unfruitful was sealed i.e. burning, in line with an apt early Jewish description of the fate of the wicked, especially in *Gehenna* (Keener 2003b:1001).

From this image it is evident that the Johannine hamartiology refers to a life different from that of the children of God. It suggests a living opposite to the life in (with) God.

It is living in darkness, not living in love or righteousness. Those who live this sinful life will be ashamed before him at his *Parousia*, while those who live in the light – righteously and lovingly – will 'see him as he is' in confidence (1 Jn 2:28). The desired commitment from the adherents is discussed below.

4.3.2.1.1.2 The role of the Son in forgiving sins

The role of the Son in forgiving sins, with the focus on the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10, is part of a double scheme set by the Elder: The Father is the one who takes the initiative and forgives sins, while the Son is the mediator. The deletion and forgiveness of sins is already a reality for believers (Van der Merwe 2005:560). Concerning the past role of the Son to forgive sins by his expiatory work, the Elder has noted at the beginning of his Epistle that *the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin* (1 Jn 1:7).

The role of the Son in forgiving sins in view of the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is captured not by what he did in the past but also what he continues to do. In 1 John 2:1, the Elder says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence* i.e. 'intercedes for us'. In this intercession, Jesus is the advocate before the Father for the 'dear children' when they sin, because he is close to the Father. The forensic meaning of παράκλητον (1 Jn 2:1; cf. Jn 15:26) is overshadowed by Christ's high-priestly role (Schnackenburg 1992:87): Therefore, in him and through him the Father continues to forgive sins (1 Jn 1:9), *not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world* (1 Jn 2:2). The Elder's hamartiology has to be understood and interpreted from the perspective of the Johannine dualism of light/darkness, love/hate, and righteous/unrighteous which occur throughout his Epistle; for the Elder, the Son in his continual advocacy, ensures that the children of God continue to walk in the light, righteousness and love. This will guarantee that when he appears, they will 'see him as he is'.

4.3.2.2 Human redemption

As the socio-religious circumstances that influenced the theological doctrines and ethical behaviour of the community have been discussed, this section focuses on those aspects of the Johannine soteriology that have a link to the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. The Johannine soteriology is so intricately interwoven with other themes that a discussion of its different aspects cannot escape repetition (Van der Merwe 2004:534). In this section a close-up view of the approach to Johannine soteriology focuses on those elements that are closely tied to the 'seeing him as he is'.

Foundational to Johannine soteriology is the orientation of 'life' in the family of God. This life – eternal life – 'that appeared' (1 Jn 1:2), becomes the basis for and the goal of the remaining faithful (1 Jn 2:25). The role of the Son in this life is the precondition to the new life, and is received by believing (1 Jn 3:23; 5:1, 5, 10, 13). Eternal life is secured through faith in the Son of God (1 Jn 5:13). Johannine soteriology therefore is Christocentric in nature. From a Theocentric perspective, 'to be saved' means to be a 'child of God' because you are 'born of God', 'abide in God', and 'God abides in you'. This perspective does not contradict the Christocentric one but rather complements it (Van der Merwe 2004:535).

Johannine soteriology therefore can be described in terms of both Christocentric and Theocentric perspectives: 'Believers can know for certain that they have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and also they can know that they are children of God through their birth from God and consequently have fellowship with him' (Van der Merwe 2004:536). Both human and divine responsibility is included in the Johannine soteriology.

'Seeing him as he is' must be understood from this soteriological orientation. Therefore, in order for adherents to have hope in partaking in the 'seeing him as he is' in the *Eschaton*, they must first be children of God (believers in the Son) in the present. Adherents are referred to as 'children of God' (1 Jn 3:1-2, 10; 5:2), 'righteous' (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18), they call God their 'Father' (1 Jn 1:2; 2:1, 14-15, 22-24; 3:1; 2 Jn 4), and the Elder also refers to them as 'dear children' (1 Jn 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7) and 'beloved' (1 Jn 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; cf. 3 Jn 1, 2, 5, 11). Johannine soteriology places emphasis on faith as the means to obtain salvation.

4.3.2.2.1 Participation

In his strategy of participation, the Elder seeks to keep the text and lived experiences of the text alive by repetition or imitation. In the pericope of 1 Jn 2:28-3:10 he repeats a number of concepts to keep them clear in the memories of the readers and to thereby create spiritualities. These repetitions are revealed in the inner textual discourse analysis and they include 'remaining in him' and 'love', which is discussed below.

4.3.2.2.1.1 'Remaining in him'

The Elder ties 'remaining in him' to the entire pericope by spreading this notion evenly throughout the pericope i.e. in 1 John 2:28, as well as in 1 John 3:6 and 9. The children of God can abide in him because of their position with regard to sin i.e. they do not continue sinning. The Elder further discusses the 'remaining in him' and not continuing in sin by giving the reason for his position: *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God* (1 Jn 3:9). The Elder sees the remaining of this seed as an answer to sin, which will subsequently cause the children of God to be in a position to 'see God'.

4.3.2.2.1.2 'Love'

'Love' as the connection between God and his children, and also among his children, occurs in 1 John 3:1, 2 and 2:10 of the pericope. The Children of God participate in a vertical relationship between them and God. this relationship is fundamental and foundational to all others. It is this relationship that makes it possible for them to have a horizontal relationship amongst themselves.

4.3.2.3 Transformation

The repetition of transformational experiences also helps to create desired spiritualities. The Elder repeats some family metaphors of 'being born of God' (1 Jn 3:9), 'having the seed of God' (1 Jn 3:9), 'becoming the children of God' (1 Jn 3:10), 'become pure' (1 Jn 3:3), and 'abide in Christ' (1 Jn 2:28). These repetitions help the reader to identify with the Father and the Son in order to cause a continuous transformation and lived experience in the reader.

4.3.2.3.1 'Righteousness'

This theme of righteousness occurs in 1 John 2:29a, 29b, 3:7a, 7b, and 10 respectively. In this repetition the Elder depicts the relationship between God as Father, and those who are born of him – his children – who demonstrate righteousness just like their Father. Righteousness is God's nature, and those who do righteousness are born of him. It is in line with this notion that the Elder notes that even in the *Eschaton* or at the *Parousia* 'we shall be like him'. Seeing God is understood in concert with his righteousness – therefore the children of God are expected to do righteous deeds as they wait for him.

4.3.2.3.2 'Children of God'

The theme of 'children of God' is repeated in 1 John 2:28, 3:1, 3:2, 3:7, and 3:10. In this section the relationship between the children of God and children of the devil is examined to investigate how both are related to 'seeing God'. The children of God, metaphorically speaking, enjoy a relationship with God that can be compared to a family relationship between a father and his child. This means that a 'new dynamic, a new power, has entered the human personality, which is confirmed by a change of conduct' (Ladd 1998:664). A child of God has found a new orientation which empowers them to remain in him and also prepares them for the event of 'seeing him'.

4.3.2.4 The kind of sight meant by the Elder in 'seeing him as he is'

The kind of sight envisaged by the Elder in the *Parousia* is a phenomenon of great interest, mainly because of the impact it is intended to have on the adherents, possibly because of the rich background of its connotations and denotations. The background to a *visio Dei* that could have been in the back of the mind of both the Elder and the adherents, originates from the Scriptures and the Graeco-Roman environment within which they lived.

As the Old Testament texts were obviously one of the major backgrounds to consider for both the Elder and the adherents, Terrien (1978:65) has correctly noted that in the Hebrew Bible expressions such as 'the face of Yahweh' or 'face of Elohim' were used to denote the 'innermost being of God', which was inaccessible even to people like Moses. Such expressions were used to denote a sense of immediate proximity. The

coming of God would mean more than a simple revelation, but an expectation of fulfilment, and the wait for a final manifestation.

A more immediate context for the Elder and adherents would be the Fourth Gospel itself. Snodderly (2008:39) resonates with the relationship of the Fourth Gospel to 1 John, and notes that there are numerous echoes of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine Epistles[37]. That implies that the Fourth Gospel and 1 John could both be written or edited by a person or group loyal to the Johannine tradition. Kruse (2000:7) also acknowledges the relationship between the two writings, but cautions against an assumption that the two pose a one-to-one equivalence of usage. He correctly realises the fact that interpreters often refer to the Fourth Gospel to seek elucidation concerning terms and ideas found in the Epistle.

'Seeing God' in 1 John – ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν (seeing him as he is) – is much in unison with the Forth Gospel's references to 'seeing God'. According to the Fourth Gospel, the theological idea of 'seeing God' is associated with 'seeing Jesus'. This is evidenced in the fact that the Fourth Gospel deals with both the fact that 'no one can see God' and the 'condition of seeing God'. The Gospel asserts that 'no one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known' (Jn 1:18). It is clear that the Son, who is the *Logos* (Jn 1:1, 14) as well as the only Son of the Father (Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) has seen the Father, because of the special relationship between them. Jesus later claims in the Gospel that 'anyone who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9).

Exactly what 'seeing him as he is' contains, remains a mystery, since it will happen in the *Eschaton*, but what seems to be the desire of the Elder is that, through reference to this rich notion, the adherents must expect a certain experience in eternity that far

[37] Although there is evidence of similar traits between the Fourth Gospel and the letters of John (Lingad 2001:12; cf. Hengel 1989:34) e.g dualistic language (love-hate; of God, and of the devil; light-darkness), the question of common authorship remains. The quest to establish whether the same person authored both the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles was done by Brown (1982:19). He hypothesizes that 1 John was written to better explain the theology of the Gospel. Edwards (1996) contradicts this claim by Brown. He reasons that 'the idea that 1 John was written to accompany the Gospel or as an explicit refutation of misunderstandings of it seems unlikely in view of the shortage of clear citations from it' (Edwards 1996:55; cf. Lingad 2001:12). Despite the clear citations of the Fouth Gospel by the Epistles, a 'close theological relation' between the two is espoused by Schnackenburg (1992:38; cf. Kruse 2000:7).

outshines all that humanity had ever experienced with God so far. Van der Merwe (2015a:7) laments the lack of clear guidance on the exact meaning of the kind of sight espoused by the Elder, as he notes that unfortunately nothing in the referred texts on seeing in the Gospel of John, nor the research done on the eschatological use of the verb ὁράω in the Gospel of John, nor the excellent article of Michaelis on ὁράω (Michaelis 1981:315-367) in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* can cast any light on what the Elder could have meant by 'seeing'.

4.4 Summary of insights from the inner texture

The discourse analysis has exposed and highlighted the rhetorical transitions of the pericope in view. This has enabled the research to trace and clarify the Elder's flow of thought in the entire pericope. It has also helped to construct the direction of the entire research done here.

A focus on the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in John 3:2 calls for attention to the fact that this clause is intertwined with other themes in this pericope. Therefore, an understanding of this phenomenon calls for a resonation with these themes. These themes highlighted by the discourse analyses are:

- 'Children of God': From the analysis it is evident that this theme plays a major role in the pericope because the children of God are the recipients of the envisaged *visio Dei.* They have God's nature in them and their works demonstrate this nature. The continual demonstration of this nature guarantees that when he appears they will 'see him as he is'. This theme is diametrically opposite to the children of the devil who possess the devil's nature, and they will not 'see him as he is' as their evil works are displayed.
- 'Appearing': This theme protrudes as a major theme in the analysis. The future appearing/appearance is directly connected to the past appearing/appearance. At the onset, the difference between these appearances is their purpose. The first appearance was to deal with sin and to destroy the works of the devil, while the pending one is meant to transform the children of God further or completely.
- 'Remain': The intermediary time between the two appearances must be marked by an attitude of 'remaining' by the children of God. This remaining or abiding will guarantee that they will 'see him as he is' in the second appearance.

- ‘Righteousness’: Righteousness has to do with deeds that the children of God practise at they wait for the ‘seeing him as he is’. These deeds must emulate God, because his nature is that of good (righteous) deeds. The nature of God in his children compels them to reveal his character by practising good deeds. When he appears, they will not be ashamed because of their deeds – therefore they will have joy in ‘seeing him as he is’.
- ‘See’: The meaning of the kind of this sight is illusive at this stage. ‘Seeing’ is a major theme in this pericope, and this research is anchored on understanding the meaning thereof. In this analysis seeing is rather ambiguous as it is related to all the major themes. At the onset, it entails a spiritual vision that is a product of the personal, saving relationship with God in the present.
- ‘Born of’: The discourse analysis has established that this is also a very important theme. This spiritual birth describes an entry into the new relationship with God. The relationship is dynamic and ensures that one has power over sin. This new birth makes it possible for people to become children of God, and candidates of ‘seeing him as he is’.
- ‘Love’: In the analysis love has emerged as an adhesive between God and his children. It also serves as an adhesive between the children of God among themselves.
- ‘Sin’: The analysis has observed the specific definition that the Elder gives to sin: He refers to it as ‘lawlessness’, which is an outbreak of evil against Christ, and a rebellion against God. Therefore, those who practise sin, stand in opposition to God and in alignment with the devil, and they have not seen God in the present, and they will not see him when his children ‘see him as he is’.
- The spirituality of ‘seeing him as he is’ (ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν) is experienced through contemplative reading. This spirituality lies embedded in the experience induced in the life of the adherents when this text is continuously read to them. They will not be passive hearers of the text, but they will experience it when they understand it and the embodiment of the text takes place. Reading becomes a catalyst for the passive synthesis through which the meaning of the text and experiences are constituted in the mind of the reader.

  As the adherents read this text, they have to resonate with its teachings and implications for their life. They read the text and resonate with the notion

that they will ‘see him as he is’. This leads them to composed images of a family where they will ultimately have a deeper, clearer, and fulfilling experience of their Father. There are many aspects of the family that the readers are familiar with, that they have actually already experienced, which would encourage them to look forward to this big reunion. This could also work as a deterrent to backsliding. The family metaphor presents many aspects that the Elder could be communicating through the shared knowledge with the readers i.e. confidence, common good, protection, common vision, and goodwill.

The language features and rhetoric of the Elder must have pulled them into the text and the text into them, in order to constitute a dynamic interaction between reader/hearer and text. The Elder does this by weaving quite a few themes together, and repeating those that he deems important. He repeats themes like ‘children of God’, ‘remain’, ‘righteousness’, ‘sin’, ‘love’, and ‘appearing’. He has also created a dialectic which they would experience as they deal with the ‘not yet’ versus the ‘will be’, the ‘now’ versus the ‘then’, and ‘here’ versus ‘there’. The retention and pretention of being children of God and looking forward to his appearance must have created lived experiences of hope and anticipation among them.

The spirituality embedded in the declaration of the Elder that ‘for we shall see him as he is’, was for the adherents an expectation that lies in the future, but also had an existential experience in the present. These adherents had already experienced the past and future of time in the present, as they read/heard the text and lived according to it. As they read/heard the text over and over again, they would already have an embryonic experience of what will be fully experienced in the *Parousia* when they will ‘see him as he is’. The culmination of their identity and character in the *Parousia* is that they would ‘be like him’ (1 Jn 3:2). The ‘lived experience’ that these promises generate, do not only keep their faith intact, but also strengthen their desire to be with Christ (Van der Merwe 2015a:19).

In the next chapter, the intertextual reading of the spirituality of ‘seeing him as he is’ in 1 John 3:2 is investigated.

CHAPTER 5

INTERTEXTUAL READING

5.1 Introduction

The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' has commenced with the inner-textual reading based on the discourse analysis of the pericope. Now the research moves into the exploration of other texts that form part of the environs of this pericope. The contribution of the different aspects of the intertextual reading are dealt with to a better understanding of 'seeing him as he is'. Robbins (1996a:40) explains the intertexture as 'the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical "objects", historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions, and systems. This texture includes text citations, allusions and reconfigurations of particular texts, events, objects and institutions as well as the interaction with any extra textual contexts'.

In this chapter the research will deal with 'seeing God' and 'not seeing God' within the contexts of Judaism, the Graeco-Roman world, and the New Testament.

5.2 'Seeing God' and 'not seeing God' in Judaism

The sub-divisions of the intertextual reading include the window offered by Judaism as presented by the Old Testament, by Hellenistic Judaism as presented by Philo and Josephus, both early and later Palestinian Judaism as presented by the Rabbinic literature, and Qumran respectively.

5.2.1 The Old Testament

The Old Testament is rich in its record of the visible manifestations of God. These manifestations do not only happen to selected individuals, but also to groups. These appearances are consistent and spread within the biblical revelation. Their occurrence to both individuals and groups and even the nation of Israel at large suggests an objective phenomenon.

There are different Hebrew terms that can be translated with 'see' in relation to God. These terms are discussed briefly in order to unravel this notion of God's visibility (Kohlenberger & Swanson 1988:1990[38] have identified these terms).

Ra'ah: This verb occurs 342 times in the Old Testament. It can be used literally, figuratively, as direct and indirect applications, transitive, intransitive and causative. It is translated with 'advise', 'appear', 'approve', 'behold', 'ascertain', 'peruse', 'seeing of others', 'spy', 'stare', 'think', 'view', and 'envision'. The Old Testament narratives that use this verb (in its *Nifal*-stem) refer to Yahweh who appears to Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Samuel, and Jeremiah (Gn 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; 48:3; Ex 3:16; 4:1, 5; Dt 31:15; 2 Chr 3:1; 1 Sa 3:21; Jer 31:3). The *Qal*-stem of the same verb claims that Hagar, Jacob, Samson's parents, Micah, Isaiah, and Amos 'saw' God (Gn 16:13; 32:30; Jdg 13:22; 1 Ki 22:19; Isa 6:1, 5; Am 9:1).

Hinneh: This is the second most used term in the Old Testament, appearing 81 times. It is translated with 'behold', 'see', 'look', 'here', 'there', 'saw', 'now', 'if', 'surely', 'found', 'yes', 'how', 'indeed', etc.

Haza: This term occurs 14 times on the Old Testament and is translated with 'gaze upon', 'dream', 'behold', 'have a vision of', 'look', 'prophesy', 'provide', etc.

The rest of the terms[39] occur less than 10 times in the Old Testament.

This brief survey demonstrates that the Old Testament intentionally applies verbs of human sensation and motion to 'seeing God'. The visibility of God is claimed even though there are debatable issues that deal with identifying the 'Angel of the Lord' and what essence of God is really visible. These questions are addressed later as this study looks at these texts separately. Key to this debate is Exodus 33:20, because it can be used in favour of both who contemplate that God is invisible, and those who allow conditional appearances, discussed below.

[38] See also Strong (1999) and Goodrick and Kohlenberger (1990).

[39] This is not a comprehensive list, as *hen, sur, yada, haza, nabat, samar, eka*, and *naka* can also be added.

5.2.1.1 Exodus 33:20-23

> *'But', he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live'.*
> *Then the Lord said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand*
> *on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock*
> *and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.*
> *Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back;*
> *but my face must not be seen'.*

This is one of the explicit texts where 'seeing God' is dealt with in the Old Testament. Smith (1993:32) refers to Moses, who, emboldened by the divine response, makes a request to God: 'Show me your glory'. If God would grant this request, Moses' faith in the promise of God's guiding presence would be fortified. A man, however, cannot bear the full vision of divine radiance. God promises to make his 'goodness', i.e. a part of his glory, pass before Moses. He would be shielded in the cleft of the rock, where he would see the back parts of God, but not his face. Apparently the theophany would be in human form (Ex 33:18-23). Although an in-depth study of what was seen, is not attempted by Smith, he notes that Moses saw 'something' of God. Stuart (2006:709) concurs by stating, 'Here God helped Moses to understand that his theophany, however extraordinary and impressive, would nevertheless be limited'.

In regard to God's response to the request of Moses, 'You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live'[40], Osborn and Hatton (1999:232) have extensively argued that 'this text must be taken literally'. This suggests that Moses would simply be unable to endure looking at the face of God[41].

This expectation of death or doom at the sight of God is echoed in other texts[42]. It is vital to note this experience, because in 1 John 3:2 the audience of the Elder is

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[40] The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Ex 33:20).

[41] TOT translates this part of Exodus 33:20 with 'You must not look at my face', and Durham with 'You cannot stand to see my Presence'. The TEV interprets 'you cannot see' as 'I will not let you see'. A good alternative translation model for many translators is: 'For man shall not see me and live', literally stating, 'for the man shall not see me and live'. This is a prohibitive statement following the form of the Ten Commandments, which may be understood either as 'I will not permit it' or as 'One look will kill you'. The TEV rearranges these ideas in a more natural order: 'I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive', and the CEV has 'anyone who sees my face will die'.

[42] See Genesis 32:30, Deuteronomy 5:24, Judges 6:22-23, 13.22, Isaiah 6:5, and Revelation 1:17.

promised an experience with God that is referred to as 'seeing him as he is'. Their hopes are kindled towards this experience, although it is ambiguous in essence.

Interestingly, God somehow has to shield Moses from seeing him in full view. God tells Moses that he will cover him with his hand until he has passed by[43]. This scenario suggests the picture of Yahweh reaching ahead to cover Moses with his hand, then keeping his hand over the cleft of the rock as he walks on by, and then reaching back until he is at a safe distance before removing his hand. This description is very 'anthropomorphic', meaning that God describes himself as though he were human. This text provides a glimpse into how God shielded himself to save Moses from instant death.

Stuart (1980:323) examines this text and to him 'seeing God' means that Moses would 'receive some sense of the glory of God departing', moving away from him ('you will see my back'), so that he would realise he had actually perceived something of God's factual, visible manifestation of himself, even if not of his full essence, but only the back, that is, not much at all. Moses is allowed to sense what God causes him to recognise as the 'back' of God's visibly manifested glory, moving away from him. In this way he would understand that he had perceived God's true, though not at all complete presence as a reassurance for his great task ahead – that of leading the people from Sinai to the promised land. In the Hebrew idiom, however, to see only the back and not to see the face, means in effect 'to see nothing' or 'to see virtually nothing'[44].

Although Moses saw something of God in this passage, it is important to see it within the context, as Exodus 33:20 states: *You cannot see my face, for no one can see me*

[43] 'And I will cover you with my hand' is literally 'and I will hold [cover] my palm over you [singular]'. The Hebrew term for 'cover' can be translated with 'shield' (NJB) or 'screen' (Durham).

[44] In the Hebrew idiom, if you do not 'see the face' of someone, you do not have actual contact with that person at all, e.g. when David said that Absalom could not have any further contact with him, he said, 'He must go to his own house; he must not see my face', and the text confirms, 'So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king' (2 Sa 14:24). The same idiom appears in Genesis 43:3, 5, 44:23, and Exodus 10:28. Accordingly, to 'see (only) the back' is idiomatic for 'seeing virtually nothing': As God says in Jeremiah 18:17, 'Like a wind from the east, I will scatter them before their enemies; I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their disaster', this does not mean that the Israelites would look at Yahweh and actually see him turned in another direction from them, but that they would not find him around when they needed him; in other words, they would not see him at all (Stuart 2006:23).

and live. Malone (2012:30-31) rightly concludes that a detailed investigation of this verse does not categorically deny the visibility of the Divine. He advances four reasons to that effect:

- We should observe that the dialogue about 'seeing God' expresses a central concern of the wider section of Exodus 32-34 (if not the whole book). These chapters focus on the experience and revelation of God, and encountering him visually is a core aspect of this wider issue.
- The prohibition of Exodus 33:20 is precisely that Moses is not permitted to look at God – not that he is physically unable to do so.
- The reference to God's 'face' being unseeable, refers in this context to God himself[45].
- The verb 'see' is viewed as emphasising the cognitive rather than the physical component of 'seeing'. This may be an indication that the experience of God being discussed and prohibited here, extends beyond a mere visual sighting of some semblance of God.

The declaration 'my face must not be seen' reflects not only God's protection of his presence, but also a gracious act of protection of Moses' life. Were he to see God completely, it would be beyond his capacity to endure as a sinful human, and he would die as God already warned him (Ex 33:20). This is yet another reference to the beneficent partial withholding of God's presence. The descriptions 'cover you with my hand' and 'remove my hand' do not mean that God is a very large human-shaped being with a giant human-sort of hand, capable of sheltering a person's entire body; rather, these are the kind of necessary anthropomorphisms without which little of God can be described[46]. To Moses the hand of God would seem a gentle, caring thing as opposed to, for instance, a lightning bolt, as the means of placing him in the rock's cleft. It is a way of saying to Moses, not that God has a huge hand, but that he would personally protect Moses from what otherwise would kill him.

[45] Contrary to footnote 6, Malone (2012) notes that in court language, 'to see the face' of a ruler is formulaic for entering into his presence, as depicted in Genesis 43:3, 5, 44:23, 26, Exodus 10:28-29, 2 Samuel 3:13, 14:24, 28, 32, 2 Kings 25:19, Esther 1:14, Job 33:26, Psalm 42:2, and Jeremiah 52:25.

[46] See Stuart (1964).

The conclusion of Malone (2012:30) attests that Moses is 'forbidden from seeing God, not because a physical sighting is forever impossible, but because a full, unmediated exposure to the intimacy of God's essence (however we choose to describe this) is fatal'. Exodus 33:18-23 is therefore not a categorical denial of divine visibility.

5.2.1.2 Genesis 16:13-14

> *She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her:*
> *'You are the God who sees me', for she said,*
> *'I have now seen the One who sees me'.*
> *That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi;*
> *it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.*

The encounter with God in Genesis 16:13-14 happens as Hagar is running away from Sarai. She is able to converse with and see the 'angel of the Lord'. Smith states that Hagar is responding with faith to the command and promise of the angel. To demonstrate her faith, she does three things:

> Firstly, she expressed her gratitude for the appearance of the Lord in a special name for God. *'el roi*, she called him, the God who sees. Here commenced a custom of memorialising each appearance of God with a new name for him. She rejoiced that God had seen her in the barren wilderness; she marvelled that she had been permitted to see Him as well. Secondly, she marked the spot of the visitation, and thirdly, she returned to the camp of Abram (Smith 1993:232).

Unfortunately, Smith only deals with the effect of this encounter and not the issue of 'seeing'. Reyburn and Fry (1997:359-361) shed some light on this text – especially from the translation side. They state that 'translators will note that Hagar's statement in the first part of the verse is addressed to God as "thou art", but her question here is in the third person' (Fry 1997:359). Such a change from second person to third person creates difficulties in some languages, and so it may be necessary to retain the second person in the question, 'Have I really seen you, God, and remained alive after seeing you?' (Reyburn & Fry 1997:361). Alternatively, the statement may be shifted to the third person, and the question kept in the third person. This struggle is evidenced in

the disparities suggested for the translation of this verse[47]. It is disappointing to note that, like Smith, they choose to deal with the translation, but do not resonate with the issue of 'seeing God' that Hagar espouses. They rightly note that she has seen God, but they fall short of explaining this phenomenon.

The quest to comment on this text is later on answered by Mathew, who discusses important features of this text. He notes that Hagar 'learns that the Lord both "hears" (v. 11) and "sees" (v. 13) her sorrow' (Mathew 2007:191). To memorialise the event Hagar acknowledges the Lord by giving him the name, 'You are *El-roi*', meaning either 'a God of seeing' (ESV) or 'the God who sees me' (NIV).

When dealing with the notion of seeing God implied in this text, Mathew (2007:191) states that 'Hagar's explanation also has been variously construed, some interpreting it as a mere acknowledgment of having seen the Lord (NIV, NLT), others reading it as a rhetorical question expressing wonder at surviving the theophany', that is, 'Have I even remained alive here after seeing him?' The idea is also found in Exodus 33:20, Judges 6:22, 13:22, and Isaiah 6:5. Perhaps the concept of 'seeing' also plays on Hagar's original misdoing when she 'saw' (NIV 'knew') that she was pregnant, and consequently despised Sarai (Ex 16:4).

Hagar marvels at the grace of the One who took pity on her, although she was a person of low standing. In the mentioned commentaries, the notion of seeing God is discussed without any evidence of substituting the seen one as either the Son (christophanies) or the Spirit. God is seen, but not in total.

5.2.1.3 Job 19:26-27

> *And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;*
> *I myself will see him*
> *with my own eyes – I, and not another.*
> *How my heart yearns within me!*

[47] Reyburn and Fry (1998:360) provide two translations:

- Hagar asked herself this question: 'Have I really seen God and am still alive?' She decided to call on the Lord who had spoken to her by the Name, 'A God Who Sees'.
- Hagar asked: 'God, have I really seen you and I am still alive to tell it?' So she decided to call on God who had talked to her by the Name, 'You are God Who Sees Me'.

This text is very important for the discussion of 'seeing God', because it deals with the future eschatology of seeing God. Reyburn (1992:342) notes that Job's reckoning that after his skin has been destroyed, the text in Job 19:26 offers 'even more scope for textual changes, conjectures, and outright guesses'. While the individual words are fairly clear, the clause as a whole is far from clear[48].

Job's overpowering desire so often repeated is to come to court face-to-face with God (Job 13:15, 20, 24). He wants to meet God as a living human being, not as a spirit, and in Job 13:27 he anticipates to see God with his eyes[49]. Smith (1996:223) examines this text and he identifies this 'seeing' as a future event, stating that

> the term redeemer (*go'el*) is frequently used of God as the deliverer of his people out of captivity (e.g. Isa 49.7, 26), and as the deliverer of individuals from distress (e.g. Ge 48.16). Among men, the *go'el* was the nearest blood relation, who had certain duties to perform in connection with the deceased. Those duties included buying back lost property, caring for the widow of the

[48] Modern translations seem to fall into three groups regarding the meaning of this line: 1) Those like the NEB, that put 'Hebrew unintelligible' in the footnote and then embark on changes which give renderings that bear no relation to the Hebrew; 2) those that try to keep the Hebrew text, but adjust the translation with some conjecture, such as the TEV, 'Even after my skin is eaten by disease', and FRCL, 'When they have finished tearing off my skin'; and 3) those like MFT, which switch from 'skin' to 'body': 'This body may break up…'. Translators can follow the Hebrew in cases 2) and 3) by following some model such as that of the TEV or FRCL. The TEV's translation may need to be expressed as an active construction, for example, 'When disease has eaten away my skin'. Then 'from my flesh I shall see God' could be understood as 'without my flesh,' as in the RSV footnote or the TEV footnote, 'although not in this body'. The question most argued is the manner of Job's 'seeing God'.

[49] The KJV states: 'In my flesh shall I see God', and the TEV translates: 'While still in this body I will see God'. In some languages it may be necessary to transpose the two lines of Job 13:26 to say, for example, 'While I still have my physical body, I will see God, even though disease has eaten away my skin'. Job 13:27 continues with this idea when Job says, '…whom I shall see on my side'. This 'on my side' translates the Hebrew 'for myself', as in the RSV footnote. The RSV and others interpret Job to mean that he will see God taking his part, being on his side in the argument, as the NJB translates, 'He whom I shall see will take my part'. This rendering implies that God is Job's defender and not his enemy. The FRCL translates this line more naturally with 'I will see him myself, with my own eyes', which is essentially the meaning of the TEV. The renderings of the TEV and FRCL are preferred and may be followed by translators: 'And my eyes shall behold', and not another. The RSV, like the Hebrew, has no object for 'behold'. The object must be derived from the previous line. The term translated with 'another', is translated with 'stranger' in Proverbs 27:2, and is taken in that sense here by the TEV: '…and he will not be a stranger'. The FRCL also translates the term with 'stranger', but with a different meaning: 'I am the one who will see him, and not a stranger'. The NJB is like the TEC: 'My eyes will be gazing on no stranger'. The thought of the line could be that Job's struggle with God as his enemy is over, and that God will no longer be an enemy or stranger to him – therefore the TEV serves as a good model. This line may also be expressed with '…and God will not be a stranger to me', or '…and he will not be a foreigner'. It may also be rendered positively: '…and I will see him as a friend' or 'I will see him as one whom I know'. Job's desire to see God is displayed abundantly.

deceased, and insuring justice be done if the relative had been unjustly slain (cf. Ru 2.20; Nu 35.19).

Job here classifies God as his *go'el*. This divine *go'el* should support his rights against the wrong done to him by both men and God. This passage is closely related to Job 16:19 where Job alludes to a heavenly 'witness' and 'advocate' or representative.

Concerning his redeemer (God) Job is confident of three facts. First, his redeemer will *arise*, i.e. he will appear or come forward. Heaven's inactivity will end in that great moment when God intervenes in human history. Second, his redeemer will arise *upon the dust*. The context here speaks of Job's body. The idea seems to be that there will be a coming of God to the soil in which Job's body lies buried. Third, his redeemer will appear on the earth as the *last*. The God of the Bible is the first and the last (Isa 44:6; 48:12) – he existed before all things, and he will still exist after the present order has been swept away (Job 19:25).

Job also expresses a strong confidence in himself. First, he is confident that he will survive death. After death, he has the hope that in the condition of a genuine human being he will have a favourable meeting with God. He will see God 'after[50] my awakening'[51]. Even though his body is destroyed, Job is confident that he will see God in that human body[52]. Second, Job is confident that he will see God – the need to see God is the focal point of Job in this text. This is evidenced in the repetition of 'seeing God' in Job 19:26f. By referring to physical entities like 'skin', 'eyes', and 'flesh', he reiterates his expectation of the experience of 'seeing God' as a human would see him, not in a vision or as a disembodied spirit. Third, Job is confident that in that blessed day of sight, he will not see God as a stranger, i.e. God would no longer act as a stranger toward him (Job 19:26-27).

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[50] 'After' is another possible translation of the term 'in the end' in Job 19:25. 'My skin', even with no adjustment of vowels, can also be translated with 'I awake/arise'. That option, however, would leave no subject for the verb 'has been destroyed'. 'In my flesh' ordinarily would be 'from my flesh' or even 'without my flesh' (AB).

[51] According to Payne (1980:255), *ʿori* (my skin) can also be understood as an infinitive (*ʿuri*) that can be translated with 'my awakening'.

[52] The Hebrew preposition *min* (from) in Job 19:26 could signify 'without my flesh' as in the ASV. This would indicate 'spiritual immortality' rather than 'bodily resurrection'. However, the resurrection concept better accords with the previous 'awakening' and with Job's thought about hope for his body (cf. Job 14:12-17).

Alden (2001:208-210) notes that Job 19:26 has the 'most problems of any in this section'. The translators, however, appeal to a less common but occasional use of the preposition, and render it as if from Job's viewpoint, that is, 'from within', partly because of the emphasis in Job 19:27 on his bodily identity. This is the first of three statements affirming his anticipation of seeing God. Davidson points out that Job's main distress is his feeling of God's hiding his face from him, so 'his redemption must come through his again beholding God in peace' (Davidson 1951:188).

The second and third verbs for 'see' are in the first two lines of this tri-colon, with the additional emphasis on 'my eyes'. 'Not another' can be understood to mean either that 'I and not another will see' or 'I will see God and not another'. The latter is more likely, that is, 'God will not be a stranger'. It is unclear whether Job expects this experience to occur following a bodily resurrection, in a conscious state following his death, or even before his death. (Alden 2001:11) argues convincingly that, 'while admitting that the passage falls short of a full statement of faith in personal bodily resurrection, find in it the hope of a favourable meeting with God after death as a genuine human being'. In this relatively brief presentation, the emphasis falls on the text as it exists (rather than as it can be edited). The most likely interpretation in consideration is the way the keywords are generally used in the Old Testament, and in Job in particular. Like the other passages expressing hope, it stands in sharp contrast to the surrounding gloom and doom, but that background also serves to emphasise the astonishing character of these passages. The expectation of Job and the experience he portrays give us an earlier window into the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is', because of its eschatological orientation.

5.2.1.4 Psalm 17:15

> *As for me, I will be vindicated and will <u>see your face</u>;*
> *when I awake, I will be satisfied with <u>seeing your likeness</u>.*

The Psalmist portrays confidence in God for his final salvation. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991:158-159) note that this verse echoes, typically, a 'statement of serene

confidence'[53]. The experience of God that the Psalmist envisions either in the present or future is undergirded by confidence. This confidence in view of a *visio Dei* is important because in 1 John 3:2 the children of God are also encouraged to have this confidence in him when they will 'see him as he is'.

Smith (1996:221) articulates that David has 'higher aspirations than his attackers do'. Their affluence is no problem to him, because his blessings are superior. To 'behold' the face of God in worship is for him an incomparable joy. The clause 'when I awake' does not refer to his resurrection from death, but to a daily renewal of his personal communion with God. interestingly, confidence is a virtue that must be prevalent in the daily relationship with God, and also plays a crucial part in the future encounter (this theme is investigated and integrated in the spirituality and embodiment texture in section 8.4.2).

5.2.1.5 Isaiah 6:1

> *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord,*
> *high and exalted, seated on a throne;*
> *and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

Isaiah had an encounter with God in the year that King Uzziah died (740 BCE). In that encounter he claimed to have seen the Lord. Clendenen briefly examines the notion of 'seeing God'. He argues that the claim that 'Isaiah saw the Lord (6:1) does not

[53] The RSV takes the Hebrew first person pronoun to be emphatic, establishing a sharp difference between the wicked and their fate, and the psalmist's own future. If the translator follows this interpretation, a possible translation is: 'But I, on my part', or 'But my own situation is this'. 'I shall behold thy face' (TEV 'I will see you') may be rendered in some languages more effectively as 'I will be in your presence' or 'I will be where you are', but the choice of translation may depend on the translator's interpretation of 'when I awake'. It is difficult to decide what is meant by 'in righteousness', which modifies 'I shall behold thy face'. The NEB has 'my plea is just', the NJV, 'Then I, justified (will behold your face)', and the SPCL, 'But I, in truth, will be satisfied (to see you face to face)'. Also possible is 'when I am acquitted'. The TEV has taken the term to be the basis for the psalmist's confidence that he will see Yahweh, 'because I have done no wrong'. Similarly, the GECL translates it, 'I have no fault', and the NJB, 'But I in my uprightness will see your face'. *Thy form* recalls Numbers 12:8, where Yahweh states that Moses has spoken to him face-to-face, and Moses seen his 'form'. It is doubtful that the psalmist thought of Yahweh as having a material body; so the TEV translates it with 'your presence', the NEB with 'a vision of thee', and the NJV 'the vision of you'. The Septuagint translates it with 'and I shall be filled at the appearance of your glory'. The TEV's 'your presence' may need to be rendered 'where you are'. Psalm 17:15b may be rendered idiomatically as 'When I awake, my heart will sit cool because I am in the place where you are', or figuratively, 'When I awake, I will be happy because I am near you'.

contradict statements that it is impossible to see God[54] (Clendenen 2007:186-199). Because of God's majesty, it is impossible for the human eye to behold him in full. This was a limited manifestation that was adapted to a finite mental comprehension and human observation – probably in a vision. Isaiah's report says nothing about God's face or nose; instead, he describes where God was, what was happening around him, and what was being said.

Isaiah gives the briefest account of the marvellous scene before him:

- A glorious divine king was sitting on a throne that was highly elevated.
- The hem of his robe filled the temple.
- Winged seraphs were praising God.
- The building was shaking and filling with smoke.

Although this is a marvellous description of what Isaiah has seen, it does not relate much, but the mystery of the divine majesty in the vision was probably so otherworldly that it was difficult to find adequate words to describe God's glory in human terms. This description of God reaffirms the point made in Isaiah 2:11 and 17 that God is 'high and lifted up', that he should be exalted, and that mankind should humble themselves before God.

The central feature of this revelation is the appearance of God, sitting as a king on a highly elevated 'royal throne'. Not surprising, a description of God's own appearance is missing; he is simply compared to a great king (Isa 6:5). Smith has further explored and adapted the 'earthly king' metaphor of God, and concludes that

> [t]he earthly king of an empire was the most powerful ruling authority in the world, so it is natural that God would reveal Himself as the great sovereign king over the whole earth. Kingship is a concept that synthesises in human terms God's many functions. God's roles as creator, protector, saviour, lawgiver, warrior in chief, and judge were perceived as comparable to the roles of earthly kings (Ps 24; 47; 95-99), so kingship terminology provided an appropriate

[54] Clendenen refers to Genesis 32:30, Exodus 19:21, 33:20, and Judges 13:22. The Bible refers to several people 'seeing' manifestations of God that reveal various levels of his glory, like in Genesis 16:9-13, 28:13-15, Exodus 24:9-11, 34:5-10, and 1 Kings 22:19.

> metaphor to summarise God's various relationships to humankind (Smith 2007:187).

Smith (1992:432) points out that Isaiah saw 'the Lord (*Adonai*) the sovereign one' as an exalted king on the throne of his temple. The train of his robe filled the whole place (Isa 6:1). According to the Apostle John, Isaiah saw Jesus' glory (Jn 12:41). According to Isaiah 6:2-4, smoky clouds of incense filled the entire temple and shielded the eyes of the prophet from looking directly upon the glory of God.

Chisholm states that in the first five chapters of Isaiah, the prophet describes how God's people have rejected their 'Holy One' (Isa 1:4; 5:24). In Isaiah 6 'the prophet tells of his face-to-face encounter with this Holy God' (Chisholm 1998:264), seated on his throne. Seraphs surround him, chanting, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty'. Overwhelmed by God's splendour, Isaiah acknowledges his and his people's sinful condition. After he is symbolically purified, the Lord commissions him as a messenger to his spiritually insensitive people. He has to preach until judgement sweeps through the land, carrying the people into exile, leaving only a remnant behind.

Keil and Delitzsch relate that when the prophet says, 'I saw the Lord of all sitting upon a high and exalted throne, and his borders filling the temple', he 'saw God' and was not

> asleep and dreaming; but God gave him, when awake, an insight into the invisible world, by opening an inner sense for the super sensuous, whilst the action of the outer senses was suspended, and by condensing the super sensuous into a sensuous form, on account of the composite nature of man and the limits of his present state (Keil & Delitzsch 2006:124).

This is the mode of revelation peculiar to an ecstatic vision. Isaiah is here taken to heaven, although in other instances (cf. Am 9:1; Ez 8:3; 10:4-5; Ac 22:17) it is undoubtedly the earthly temple which is presented to the prophet. In this passage the description clearly depicts the 'high and exalted throne' as the heavenly antitype of the earthly throne which is formed by the ark of the covenant in the temple (cf. Ps 11:4; 18:7; 29:9).

The prophet sees the Sovereign Ruler, seated on a throne (cf. Ez 1:26), as is proven by the robe with a train, whose graceful ends or edges fill the temple. Keil and Delitzsch (2006:34) note that the Septuagint, Targum, Vulgate, etc., have dropped the figure of the robe and train, as too anthropomorphic. However, in his Gospel, John is bold enough to say that it was Jesus whose glory Isaiah saw (Jn 12:41), and truly so, for 'the incarnation of God is the truth embodied in all the scriptural anthropomorphisms, and the name of Jesus is the manifested mystery of the name Jehovah [*sic.*]' (Keil & Delitzsch 2006:34).

They further argue that the heavenly temple is that super terrestrial place, which Yahweh transforms into heaven and a temple, by manifesting himself there to angels and saints. However, while he manifests his glory there, he is obliged also to veil it, because created beings are unable to bear it. But that which veils his glory is no less splendid than that portion of it that is revealed. And this is the truth embodied for Isaiah in the long robe and train. He saw the Lord, and what more he saw, was the all-filling robe of the indescribable One. As far as the eye of the seer could look at first, the ground was covered by this splendid robe. There was consequently no room for anyone to stand.

Jamieson *et al*. (1871:453) note that in John 12:41 'Adonai' (Isa 6:5) is replaced by 'Jesus', and conclude: 'Isaiah could only have "seen" *the Son,* not the divine essence (Jn 1.18)'. The words in Isaiah 6:10 are attributed by Paul (Ac 28:25-26) to the 'Holy Spirit'. Taking all these readings together, the Trinity is implied in the end, resonating with the 'Holy, holy, holy' in Isaiah 6:3. Isaiah mentions the robe, the temple and the seraphim, but not the form of God himself.

The Old Testament is consistent in its affirmation that God can be seen, though with the threat of fatal consequences. This has been expressed in the theophanies of Hagar (Gn 16:13), Jacob (Gn 32:30), the seventy-four elders on Sinai (Ex 24:9-10), and Samson's parents (Jdg 13:22). Malone (2012:31) rightly notes that '[t]he surprise is not that God has been sighted but that the experience has been survived'. The issue is always a matter of life and death for the human beings involved, and not God's visibility. The Old Testament certainly maps out the visibility of God, though limited.

From this discussion it is evident that the prophet saw something of God. The identification of Jesus (by John) in this theophany, and the sparing of the prophet's life are themes that form the window through which the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 must be done. The allusion to the involvement of the Trinity is of paramount importance since it provides alternatives to the invisibility of God, while the fluidity of the Godhead in revelation is carried to the interpretation of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is'.

Having discussed the different texts as they relate to a *visio Dei*, this research now investigates how different articles and monographs are contributing to the understanding of this phenomenon.

5.2.1.6 Articles and monographs

In this section some of the articles and monographs related to the above texts are discussed. The first and significant monograph is a thesis by Staton (1988), in which he examines the use of the motifs of 'seeing God' and 'God's appearing' in the Old Testament narratives. He examines the semantic field of terms being translated with 'see' in the Old Testament, with special reference to 'seeing with reference to God'. The frequency, distribution and form of these terms are presented. He also examines the significance of these motifs for Old Testament narratives, which are 1) the Patriarchal traditions of Genesis; 2) the Moses, Sinai, and wilderness traditions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; and 3) the historical writings of the Old Testament. Although this work covers a lot of important ground, it is worth noting that it has left out a significant part of the Old Testament, which is equally important to this motif, i.e. poetical literature, wisdom literature, as well as prophetic and apocalyptic portions of the Old Testament.

A debatable article written by Shelly (1993), is titled *Hagar and the God-Who-Sees: Reflections on Genesis 16:3-13*. In this article Shelly draws the attention to the experiences of Hagar before and after meeting the angel of the Lord. She highlights the experiences of Hager in relation to the treatment she received from both Abram and Sarai. In this episode Hagar's 'theological voice' is stimulated: She not only speaks, but takes bold action in responding to the God who has spoken to her. She names God as 'You are the God who sees me', and wonders, 'Have I really seen the God who sees, after God's seeing me?' Here Hagar realises the seeing is in some sense

reciprocal. God has seen her and she has seen God and lives. However, even more than that, Hagar's name for God has all the intimacy of a direct address: ‘You are the God who sees me’. This is a new name for God born out of a woman's experience. Hagar is not calling on the Name of God – she is naming God. She is the only person in the Bible who is recorded as having named God.

Shelley has not addressed the critical issues in this encounter: She has not identified the angel of the Lord, as well as the meaning of this motif of both ‘being seen by God’ and ‘seeing God’; she has also not compared this encounter with others, save only to note that Hagar is the only person to name God.

Howard examines the issue of the angel of the Lord and the angel of God. He notes that the ‘appearances of these Angels seem synonymous’ (Howard 1993:54). Their appearances also seem to be sudden, and are representations of the Lord. This is evidenced in Judges 2:1-5, 5:23, 6:11-24, and 13:1-25. He also notes that in the last two mentioned passages, when the angel vanished, the human response was similar: Both Gideon and Manoah feared for their life. In relation to this fear, Howard (1993:131) states that ‘such a reaction of fear appears to have been rooted in the Pentateuch structure against humans seeing God’.

When trying to identify the angel, Howard (1993:131) notes that there are three opinions on this matter: 1) He is a true angel with a special commission; 2) he may be a momentary descent of God himself into visibility; or 3) he may be the *Logos* himself (i.e. Christ) – a kind of temporary incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity.

There are traits that are worth noting about this angel: 1) In Exodus 23:20-23 the angel carries the Lord’s character and authority; 2) in Exodus 23:21 it is shown that the angel has authority to forgive sins; and 3) the angel has authority to speak for God. Although these traits are compelling and favour the view that the angel of the Lord could be God himself, one needs to realise that the passage of Exodus 23:20-23 points to a contrary conclusion i.e. the angel of the Lord, and God are two different entities. Actually the angel of the Lord does God’s bidding; he is sent on errands.

Although the New Testament has many Old Testament links to Christ, with terms such as ‘King’ (Zech 9:9; Lk 19:38), ‘Messiah’ (Dan 9:25; Jn 1:41), ‘Priest’ (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6), and ‘Word’ (Gn 1:1; Jn 1:1), it is not done in terms of the angel of the Lord. Howard notes that evangelical scholars have compared the angel of the Lord with Daniel 10:6 and Ezekiel 1:26-28, and the fact that ‘in the New Testament this Angel of the Lord is not mentioned when Christ was on earth to conclude that the Angel of the Lord was indeed the pre-incarnate second person of the Trinity’ (Howard 1993:19). This research does not subscribe to this identity of the angel of the Lord, because it is not based on textual evidence, but most of the time on doctrinal assumptions. An exegetical and synthesised examination of this angel could give a more objective perspective.

Savran (2009:32) has written an article titled, *Seeing is believing: On the relative priority of visual perception of the Divine*, in which he compares the modes of perception of the Divine in the Bible. He argues that although it seems that in the Bible preference is given to hearing above sight, in the theophany narratives of Exodus 24:1-11, Numbers 22, and Job 42:5 seeing is presented as the preferred one. This is true in cases where hearing and seeing are present in one narrative.

5.2.1.7 Conclusion to this section

From this discussion it can be derived that there are dispersed references to ‘seeing God’ in the Old Testament. For this purpose, the Pentateuch, historical books, poetic and prophetic books, and fragmented references to this phenomenon have been discussed. The data strongly suggest that God can manifest a visible presence. As far as the Old Testament is concerned, there is nothing permanently invisible about God. There is also no evidence that supports these appearances as fantasy or hallucinations; rather they are real, although partial, because not all details are revealed about the encounters. This review has also mapped out the reactions of persons who saw God: They were fearful, and surprised that they are alive, because according to their expectations seeing God should have resulted in their immediate death.

Interestingly, there is a lingering ambiguity about the exact object of all these references to *visio Dei*. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are actively involved,

but distinguishing who specifically is seen in the episodes remain unclear. The experiences of different people in relation to either expecting or experiencing a *visio Dei* remain the focal point of these encounters. The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 greatly benefits from these experiences. It is evident that what the Elder promises the adherents is not out of bounds, but needs careful and sober anticipation, because of the danger involved. It is a sacred encounter, and those who hope for it or anticipate it must do more with utmost reverence and care.

5.2.2 The Hellenistic Judaism window

Tenney argues that among the religions of the Roman Empire in the 1st century, Judaism held a unique place. It originated with the Jewish people, yet it was not confined to them. It was unique in that it was exclusively monotheistic. Its adherents were not allowed to worship or even admit the existence of any other god or gods. Unlike most ethnic religions of the day that were founded on tradition or on mystic intuition, Judaism was 'based on a revelation from God recorded in the sacred Scriptures of the law and the prophets, which claimed to be a reproduction of the words of God himself as He spoke to his chosen servants' (Tenney 1985:80; cf. Porter 2013:20).

The study of 'seeing God' or 'not seeing God' cannot be complete without a scrutiny of the Judaist background. This background is indispensable to the study of 'seeing God' or 'not seeing God', because 'Christianity is the child of Judaism' (Tenney 1985:80 cf. Fresse 2015:626-628). Central to the faith of Judaism was its tenacious belief in the unity and transcendence of God. A personal relationship to God was achieved by relating to God as a Father as espoused by Isaiah: 'But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name' (Isa 63:16). In Judaism God is depersonalised: 'God thus becomes an actual but vague and shadowy being concerning whose character and attitude no definite assertions can be made' (Tenney 1985:84; cf. Grafton 2014:169). There was a great level of uncertainty about the nature of God.

This section narrows its periphery to the Jewish background from 200 BCE to 200 CE[55]. This window opens up to a unique form of Judaism that does not duplicate the 'seeing of God' in the Old Testament. Of particular interest and importance is the question of the basic characteristics of the Jewish literature of this period, together with the developing oral traditions, and their relations to the New Testament. In particular, this complex literature includes works such as the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and writings of Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus. Although this literature does not 'hold sacred status they were…based on Scripture, yet incorporating into those revealed truths many Jewish speculations, together with ideas also found in Persian and Greek religion' (Tenney 1985:117; cf. Mirguet 2014:169-180). Under this section the research investigates the works of Philo and Josephus.

5.2.2.1 Philo[56]

An understanding of 'seeing him as he is' is enhanced by the investigation of Philo's *visio Dei*, because 'he was educated in all disciplines of ancient Graeco-Roman culture and, as his writings show, he was familiar with most of the literary and philosophical works of his time' (Yonge 1995:23). The culture of the Hellenistic environment (Hellenism) spurred him on in a decisive manner to counter the profound Hellenization process of the Jewish Diaspora, and to put forward a synthesis of Greek philosophy and Jewish tradition. In this, the focal point of his philosophical and exegetical speculations is the Torah, so that his entire work may be described as a commentary on the Pentateuch. The starting point is to discuss Philo's view of God, in order to have

[55] It is difficult to name this period. Jewish writers seem to prefer 'Second Temple' or 'Second Commonwealth Judaism'. At times names such as 'Early Judaism', 'Middle Judaism', 'Graeco-Roman Judaism' and 'Judaism of the Late Hellenistic Period' are employed. In this thesis it is called 'Intertestamental Judaism', because this is more likely to have a familiar ring to most readers. This term is used with apologies to Jewish scholars who may find it difficult, because they do not recognise the legitimacy of a New or second Testament. See also Fn 27 for some points of consensus among scholars regarding the definition of Intertestamental Judaism.

[56] Philo Alexandrinus or Philo Judaeus lived between 20/10 BCE and approximately 45 CE. He was best-known and most influential as a philosopher and exegete in ancient Judaism. Scarcely anything is known of his life. According to the historian, Flavius Josephus, Philo belonged to one of the leading families of Alexandria. The only certain fact about his life is that he took part in a legation to the Roman emperor Caligula in 39/40 CE (Jos *Ant* XVIII 259f). From the fact that he was already of advanced age when he undertook this journey, it is assumed that he was born between 20 and 10 BCE. The other certain, but not datable, report is of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem that he mentions in *De Providentia* (frg. 2, 64). There is no doubt that he played a leading part in Alexandrian Judaism (Yonge 1995:23).

a glimpse into his theology about God. This is crucial because God is the object of the envisaged *visio Dei.*

5.2.2.1.1 Philo's view of God

Philo's doctrine of God is drawn from the Old Testament. For him 'God is One, the uncreated Author of creation, and utterly transcendent' (cf. Hagner 1971:82). His first reference is to Deuteronomy 6:4, where God has commanded Moses to tell the nation: 'Hear, o Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one'[57]. This embodies the initial spiritual formations among the children of Israel about who God is.

Merrill notes the two most common renderings of this clause: It either stresses the uniqueness and exclusivity of Yahweh as Israel's God, or it stresses the unity and wholeness of God, 'the self-consistency of the Lord, who is not ambivalent and who has a single purpose or objective for creation and history. The ideas clearly overlap to provide an unmistakable basis for monotheistic faith. The Lord is indeed a unity, but beyond that He is the only God' (Merrill 1994:163).

Philo did not only believe in God as transcendent, but he also believed in God as the God of creation. He notes that Genesis is the first book of the Bible and that it begins in the following manner: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was invisible and without form' (cf. Yonge 1995:709). The transcendence of God was well attested by Philo, as he reasons: 'For even this, which is better than good, and more ancient than the unit, and more simple than one, cannot possibly be contemplated by any other being; because, in fact, it is not possible for God to be comprehended by any being but himself' (*Praem* 40).

Hagner (1971:81-93) rightly concludes that for Philo, God is the God of the Old Testament and at the same time the Absolute of Hellenistic philosophy. He is far removed from mankind, and his nature cannot be apprehended: 'Man cannot come to know what God is, but only that God is; God is ultimately unknowable to man; the gulf between the two is too wide to be bridged' (Hagner 1971:85). God is, according to Philo, the Absolute in Hellenistic philosophy, which does not completely align to the

[57] Merrill (1984:4) relates to a known Jewish tradition as the *Shema* (after the first word of Dt 6:4, the imperative of the verb *šāmaʿ*, 'to hear'). This statement, like the Decalogue, is prefaced by its description as 'commands, decrees, and laws' (or the like), and by injunctions to obey them.

true identity of the Jewish God. Keil and Delitzsch (1996:884) state that 'Jehovah [*sic*.], although the absolute One, is not an abstract notion like "absolute being" or "the absolute idea", but the absolutely living God, as He made himself known in His deeds in Israel for the salvation of the whole world'.

Despite the seemingly absolute transcendence of God, according to Philo, concomitant to that is a seemingly desirable relationship between God and mankind. God is referred to as Father (*Op* 77) and mankind is regarded as the most resembling himself, dearest to him, and God desiring them to lack nothing. The identification of God as Father in Philo is crucial in the understanding of 'seeing him as he is', because God is also referred to as Father in 1 John 3:1.

5.2.2.1.2 Philo's view of 'seeing God'

'Seeing God' is not initially clearly stated as Philo seems to imply both the impossibility of 'seeing God', and also implies a possibility in other places. This is obvious from his comment on Exodus 33:23 where God refers Moses to seeing his back only (*Mut* 9). He elaborates:

> For it is said unto him, 'Thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be beheld by thee. As if it were meant to answer him: Those bodies and things which are beneath the living God may come within thy comprehension, even though everything would not be at once comprehended by thee, since that one being is not by his nature capable of being beheld by man.

That mankind is incapable of beholding God is also found in *De Posteritate Caini* 15 where Philo negates the possibility of a *visio Dei* and further argues that God is actually invisible:

> When, therefore, the soul that loves God seeks to know what the one living God is according to his essence, it is entertaining upon an obscure and dark subject of investigation, from which the greatest benefit that arises to it is to comprehend that God, as to his essence, is utterly incomprehensible to any being, and also to be aware that He is invisible.

In regard to the invisibility of God, Philo argues that it is not correct to say that the living God is visible. That is rather an abuse of language, arising from referring God

himself to his separate acts of power; for even in the passage cited above, he does not say, 'Behold Me' for it is totally impossible that God, according to his essence, should be perceived or beheld by any creature; he rather says, 'Behold! it is I', that is to say, behold my existence; for it is sufficient for the reasoning powers of mankind to advance so far as to learn that there is, and actually exists, the great cause of all things. To attempt to proceed further, so as to pursue investigations into the essence or distinctive qualities of God, is an absolute piece of folly (*Post* 168), as Philo notes:

> He said that the Creator made no soul in any body capable of seeing its Creator by its own intrinsic powers. But having considered that the knowledge of the Creator and the proper understanding of the work of creation, would be of great advantage to the creature (for such knowledge is the boundary of happiness and blessedness), He breathed into him from above something of his own divine nature. And his divine nature stamped her own impression in an invisible manner on the invisible soul, in order that even the earth might not be destitute of the image of God (*Det* 86).

Philo also cautions: 'Do not, however, think that the living God, He who is truly living, is ever seen so as to be comprehended by any human being; for we have no power in ourselves to see anything, by which we may be able to conceive any adequate notion of him' (*Mut* 7-9). This seemingly blatant notion of the invisibility of God is, however, parallel to the notion of the possibility of God being seen, although it is through intermediaries. His understanding of the expression, 'The Lord was seen by Abraham' (Gn 17:1), does not means that the cause of all things had shone forth and become visible, for what human mind is able to contain the greatness of his appearance? It means that his kingly power has presented itself to the sight, for the appellation 'Lord' belongs to the authority and sovereignty (cf. *Mut* 15-24).

Regardless of this seemingly occasional claim of God's entire invisibility, to Philo 'seeing God' is the pinnacle of human experience. On his comment on Israel he notes that 'when the name is translated into the Greek language it is called "the seeing nation" which appellation appears to me to be the most honourable of all things in the world, whether private or public' (*Leg All 4*). The vision of God is not only attested by Philo, but he also claims it himself: 'In many passages Philo accords the contemplative

vision of God himself, the Existent One' (Mackie 2012:148). This is true of *Legum Allegoriae* 111.100 where he holds:

> There is also a more perfect and more highly purified kind which has been initiated into the great mysteries, and which does not distinguish the cause from the things created as it would distinguish an abiding body from a shadow; but which, having emerged from all created objects, receives a clear and manifest notion of the great uncreated, so that it comprehends Him through Himself, and comprehends his shadow, too, so as to understand what it is, and his reason, too, and this universal world.

'Seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2) is further clarified by its resonation with Philo's *visio Dei*, because both Philo and the Elder are discussing relations with (the same) God. Philo deals with the phenomenon of 'seeing God' from a number of postures. In order to resonate orderly with Philo's *visio Dei* this section is guided by Mackie's (2012:148) order. Three components are discussed here, being 1) the effectual means of the vision of God; 2) the methods evoking the *visio Dei*; and 3) the function and influence of the mysticism of Philo in the *visio Dei.*

5.2.2.1.3 Divine agency, human effort and co-operation

Philo depicts a *visio Dei* in which the divine and human effort both have a role to play. Mackie (2012:149) elaborates on this dual engagement: 'The nature and extent of divine involvement in human affairs was in both the Graeco-Roman philosophy as well as the traditions of Second Temple Judaism, the relationship of divine causation and human free will is a recurring topic of inquiry, appearing in a variety of forms and contexts'.

Philo argues that it is entirely dependent on God to reveal himself, 'For which reason it is said, not that the wise man saw God but that God appeared to the wise man; for it was impossible for anyone to comprehend by his own unassisted power the true living God, unless he himself displayed and revealed himself to him' (*Abr* 80). *Legum Allegoriae* 1.38 echoes the same sentiments that God had to decide to reveal himself for a *visio Dei* to occur:

> Since how could the soul have perceived God, if He had not inspired it, and touched it according to his power? For human intellect would not have dared to

> mount up to such a height as to lay claim to the nature of God, if God had not drawn it up to Himself, as far as it was possible for the mind of man to be drawn up, and if He had not formed it according to those powers which can be comprehended.

A *visio Dei* is not possible without the assistance of God. Philo explains this notion:

> Take the sun, which is perceptible by our outward senses, do we see it by any other means than by the aid of the sun? And do we see the stars by any other light than that of the stars? And, in short, is not all light seen in consequence of light? And in the same manner, God, being his own light, is perceived by himself alone, nothing and no other being co-operating with or assisting him, or being at all able to contribute to the pure comprehension of his existence (*Praem* 45).

Philo therefore emphatically notes that a *visio Dei* is only possible when God is involved and when he permits it. He argues that when the Divine (God) empowers one to be able to see him, grace fills the soul and there are transformations that take place in the physical realms that make that possible. This transformation is referred to as 'grace'. When the soul reaches a place where it can see God it would have

> broken all the chains by which it was formerly bound, which all the empty anxieties of mortal life fastened around it, and having led it forth and emancipated it from them, he has stretched, and extended, and diffused it to such a degree that it reaches even the extreme boundaries of the universe, and is borne onwards to the beautiful and glorious sight of the uncreated God (*Ebr* 152).

To Philo the human mind has a connection with the Divine that cannot be severed, and this connection makes it possible for the interaction referred to as the *visio Dei*:

> For nothing which belongs to the divinity can be cut off from it so as to be separated from it, but it is only extended. On which account the being which has had imparted to it a share of the perfection which is in the universe, when it arrives at a proper comprehension of the world, is extended in width simultaneously with the boundaries of the universe, and is incapable of being broken or divided; for its power is ductile and capable of extension (*Det* 90).

A *visio Dei* is not only possible when God permits and empowers it, but equally important is the role of human effort and co-operation. Philo argues that a *visio Dei* is a reward for a person who is a 'meditator on and practitioner of virtue' and such person is considered to have

> had experience of all the things which can occur in human life, and as he has attained to a most intimate understanding of them, and has shrunk from no labour and from no danger which might enable him to track out and overtake that most desirable thing, truth, he has found in connection with human life and with the human race a great deal of darkness both by land and sea, and in the air, and in the atmosphere (*Praem* 36).

In his works Philo elaborates on the idea of the Deity (God) appearing as a result of synergistic balance of both the deity and human (*Mut* 81-88[58]; *Praem* 36-40).

The human effort is further seen as demanding one who desires a *visio Dei*, not to be distracted by the affairs of this world (*Spec* 3:3-4), but requires full dedication of one knowledgeable in contemplation[59] of the universe, philosophy, and biblical interpretation (*Spec* 3.1-60).

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[58] Philo notes here with interest the struggling of Jacob with God, which actually culminates in him being re-named. The name 'Jacob' means 'supplanter', but the name 'Israel' that God gave him, signifies 'the man who sees God'. It is therefore the employment of a supplanter, who practises virtue, to move, and disturb, and upset the foundations of passion on which it is established, and whatever there is of any strength which is founded on them. But these things are not brought about without a struggle or without severe labour, but only when anyone, having gone through all the labours of prudence, then proceeds to practise themselves in the exercises of the soul, and to wrestle against the reasoning which are hostile to it, and which seek to torment it. However, it is the part of him who sees God not to depart from the sacred contest without the crown of victory, but rather to carry off the price of triumph. This price of triumph is 'seeing God'.

[59] Mackie (2012:147-149) notes that Philo is somewhat ambiguous about his mystical praxis, particularly the circumstances and methods that evoke or attend the noetic ascent. Both platonic contemplative philosophy and the allegorical interpretation of the Mosaic Scriptures are obviously connected with the contemplative ascent, though a deliberate application of either is never explicitly spelled out. These two practices seem to be somewhat fused in a few passages used in discussing the *visio Dei*. Philo's platonic contemplation is evidenced by his notion that 'the witnesses of this fact are those who have not merely tasted philosophy with their outermost lips, but who have abundantly feasted on its reasoning and its doctrines; for the reasoning of these men, being raised on high far above the earth, roams in the air, and soaring aloft with the sun and moon, and all the firmament of heaven, being eager to behold all the things that exist therein, finds its power of vision somewhat indistinct from a vast quantity of unalloyed light being poured over it, so that the eye of his soul becomes dazzled and confused by the splendour' (*Spec 1.37*). Platonic contemplation is accompanied by Philo's pursuit and practice of a victorious life: 'And what can be more perfect among all the virtues than the sight of the only living God? Accordingly, he who hath seen these good things is confessed to be good by both his parents, having attained to strength in God and power both before the Lord and before men' (*Ebr 83*). The *visio Dei* is therefore attributed to a virtuous life.

The role of human reason in the *visio Dei* is of paramount importance to Philo. From the above discussion it is evident that the human mind is the locus of the *visio Dei*, while the crucial part played by both cognitive and contemplative faculties in evoking a *visio Dei* has been demonstrated. The object of the *visio Dei*, according to Philo, is 'God's existence, and not his essence' (*Praem* 39; *Post* 15-16, 167-179; *Fug* 141, 164-165; *Spec* 1.40).

5.2.2.1.4 Conclusion to this section

Philo's mystical spirituality is appealing and promising as evidenced in the texts examined in this section. Although there is an ambiguity about 'seeing God' or 'not seeing God' by Philo, a *visio Dei* can be achieved through philosophical contemplation and practice of virtue. The significance of philosophical meditation and the practice of virtue stand out as the main variables in Philo's *visio Dei*. 'Seeing God', referred to as 'most glorious and loveliest of visions' (*Ebr* 152), is really the 'crowning point of happiness' (*Abr* 58). The theme of 'seeing God' is covered broadly by Philo, stating that it is God's existence that is apprehensible, and not his essence. Goodenough (1963:93) rightly concludes that Philo was a man with a divided loyalty between Jewish and Hellenistic ways of living, as well as their different religious motivations. The result of his quest to combine the two in his heart remains remote to him.

5.2.2.2 Josephus[60]

The works of Josephus[61] are of great value in investigating the 'seeing of God' or 'not seeing of God' in the Intertestamental times. Josephus had little to say about seeing

[60] For Christianity the works of Flavius Josephus (1987:543) have perhaps become one of the most significant extra-biblical writings of the 1st century. His works are the principal source for the history of the Jews from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) to the fall of Masada in 73 CE, and therefore, are of incomparable value for determining the setting of late intertestamental and New Testament times. Josephus, born as the son of a priest, was named Joseph ben Matthias (Joseph, son of Matthias). Being of a priestly family and a descendant of the Hasmoneans, he was well educated and rose to a respectable position in the Jewish community. After a short association with the Essenes and a somewhat longer period as a disciple of an ascetic hermit named Banus, he decided, at the age of nineteen, to join the Pharisees. When he was twenty-six (63 CE), he travelled to Rome and successfully pleaded for the release of some fellow priests who had been sent there to be tried by Nero. As a result of that visit, he returned, profoundly impressed by the power of the Empire and strongly opposed the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 CE, being convinced of its ultimate futility and fearing the consequences for his nation.

[61] His first work, *The Wars of the Jews*, was written to give a general history of the wars from the time of the Maccabees to the Great War with Rome which resulted in the final demise of the nation of Israel. Josephus' eyewitness account of the last years of resistance and particularly of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, are

God. In *The Antiquities of the Jews* 1.255-266 'seeing the gods' is referred to as 'no better than a ridiculous thing'. In this fiction, the king wanted to see the gods but it was impossible even though the mediator of this experience, referred to as the prophet, did not straight away tell the king of the impossibility to his demise. This text is crucial, because seeing the gods as visible creatures was possible 'if he meant the gods whom their laws ordained to be worshipped, the ox, the goat, the crocodile, and the baboon, he saw them already' (*Ant* 1.154). It was impossible to see the gods who were referred to as 'heavenly gods'.

Nevertheless, seeing the gods from above was impossible. In was even impossible for the king to see these gods, despite the role of a medium referred to as a prophet. The prophet did not know that 'his desire was impossible to be accomplished' (*Ant* 1.256). The result was that the prophet committed suicide. Although reference to maimed bodies as a deterrent to 'seeing the gods' was later discarded by the king out of fear, it was clearly noted that the gods 'are not angry at the imperfections of bodies but at the wicked practices' (*Ant* 1.156). Perhaps the danger of seeing the gods was well represented by the ultimate state of the king who desired it: He lost his kingdom and ran away from his domain.

The other text in Josephus that deals with 'seeing the gods', is his *Antiquities* 1.294-300. Although this is a continuation of the previous story, the expelling of maimed bodies from Egypt, because of the desire of the king to see the gods, continued. This fictitious story's moral seems to surround the danger and peril of the desire to see the gods.

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most valuable for a proper understanding of those events. Josephus' other major work and his most extensive one is *The Antiquities of the Jews*, published some twenty years after *The Wars of the Jews*. It was written primarily for the benefit of the non-Jewish world, and is a history of the Jewish nation from earliest times (he begins with an account of the biblical creation narrative) to Josephus' own time; it was intended to demonstrate that the Jews enjoyed an even greater antiquity than did the Greeks. This work draws heavily from the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) and extra-biblical traditions, as well as the writings of Greek and Roman historians. His autobiography, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, was published as an appendix to the *Antiquities*, and was written primarily to defend himself and his war record against the unflattering portrayal given in the work of another Jewish historian, Justus of Tiberias. *Against Apion* is a short and eloquent apologetic work for the Jewish faith in contrast with various aspects of Greek thought (Flavius Josephus 1987:543).

The issue of 'agency' in achieving a *visio Dei* is in this story tied to a prophet. Mackie (2012:150) has summarised Josephus' views of the main school of thought among the Jews in relation to the issue of 'agency'[62]:

> The Pharisees say that certain events are the work of Fate, while other occurrences depend on ourselves. Occupying opposing extremes are the Essenes, who believe God works without any human co-operation, and the Sadducees, who think 'all things lie within our power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our wellbeing' (Mackie 2012:150).

5.2.2.3 Conclusion to this section

Josephus does not espouse 'seeing God' as a phenomenon to be desired or achieved by humans. The consequences of such a desire fall on both the one who desires and everyone who wants to help that person achieve the desire.

5.2.3 Earlier Palestinian Judaism[63]: Rabbinic literature

The research in this section is guided by the work of Keener (2003a:247-251). The language of 'seeing God' was prevalent in Palestinian Judaism and they continued to

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[62] This agency is found in *Antiquities* 13.171-173 and 18.12-18.

[63] According to Maier, 'Josephus mentions three kinds or "sects" of Palestinian Jews in his day: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He devotes his longest description to the Essenes, and, even though what is learned from the Qumran community does not agree in every detail with this description, most modern scholars have accepted the identification of the Qumran community with the Essenes (or some branch of them). Thus, the Qumran scrolls would represent the library of this sect. The sectarian writings in the Qumran literature provide an almost complete copy of the Essene rule book (*Manual of Discipline*) and ten fragmentary copies of it from Cave Four (not yet published). This text differs from another, previously known rule book of the sect, the Damascus Document, found in the Cairo Genisah, extensive copies of which came to light in Caves Four, Five, and Six. How to relate these two rule books is a major problem of interpretation and of understanding the sect. From Cave One have also come a copy of the community's prayer book (*Thanksgiving Hymns*) and a text describing an eschatological war in which God and his angels will join the 'sons of light' (the sect) in wiping out all evil and their enemies (*War Scroll*). Further fragmentary copies of both texts were found in Cave Four but are only partially published. From Cave Eleven have come the community's psalter (or possibly another form of prayer book), containing biblical psalms in a different order mixed with non-biblical writings and the lengthy Temple Scroll, which recasts much of the pentateuchal legislation in a new form put on the lips of God himself and gives elaborate details about the building of the Jerusalem temple. Lastly, light has been shed on this sect's mode of interpreting Scripture, not only in their *pesharim* (verse-by-verse "commentaries" on passages from the Prophets and Psalms) but also in isolated quotations from the OT in their sectarian writings. This mode is quite different from anything in the later writings of the rabbis (3rd-5th century CE). We also learn of the messianic expectations of this sect: their expectation of a prophet like Moses (cf. Dt 18:15-18), a Messiah of Israel (Davidic), and a Messiah of Aaron (priestly)' (Maier 1999:236).

use it. In the *Midrash*[64] the language of 'seeing God' and 'not seeing God' can be found in Jacob's prophetic sight (*Gen Rab* 97).

The *visio Dei* which appeared in Judaism was rooted in the Old Testament images in texts like Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 6:9-10, 29:9-10, 35:5, 42:7, 16, 18-20, 43:8, 44:18, Jeremiah 5:21, Ezekiel 12:2, and also Daniel 5:23. During these times rabbis had to explain these biblical texts to Israel concerning 'seeing God'. These explanations form the Rabbinic literature[65].

Pivotal to the passages[66] that the rabbis tried to explain, is the encounter between God and Moses recoded in Exodus. In this book 'there are two occasions when all the Israelites of Moses' generation saw God: At the sea and at Sinai. At least for the theophany at the sea, women should have been present for the divine appearance' (Pettis 2013:171). This notion that God appeared to all Israel at the sea is expounded by the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (*MRI*) *Shirta* song:

> The Lord is a man of war. Why is it said, 'The Lord is his Name?' For at the sea he revealed himself as a warrior making battle, as it is said, 'The Lord is a man of war', (while) at Sinai he revealed himself as an elder full of compassion, as it is said, 'And they saw the God of Israel' etc. (Ex 24:10) – As for the time when they were redeemed, what does it say? 'And the like of the very heaven for clearness' – and it says, 'I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was

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[64] This is a transliteration into English of a Hebrew term that occurs twice in 2 Chronicles: 2 Chronicles 13:22 refers to the literary source which was used for the reign of King Abijah of Judah (913-910 BCE) as the 'midrash' of the prophet Iddo; 2 Chronicles 24:27 mentions, in connection with the reign of King Joash of Judah (835-796 BCE), the 'midrash' of the book of the kings. Some commentators consider that these references were invented by the author of Chronicles in order to claim authenticity for his work, but most accept them as real works of literature. Although these are the only times that 'midrash' is mentioned in Chronicles, they do fall into a pattern of appeals to literary sources. For instance, Chronicles often cites 'the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah' or the like (e.g. 2 Chr 16:11; 20:34; 27:7; 33:18). It is probable that the title in 2 Chronicles 24:27 incorporating the term 'midrash' is just a variant title of a main source. Again, Chronicles often alludes to various prophetic sources: The otherwise unknown prophet Iddo features also in a work called 'The visions of Iddo the seer', in connection with the reign of Jeroboam 1 of Israel (930-909 BCE; 2 Chr 9:29), and also 'The chronicles of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer', with reference to King Rehoboam of Judah (930-913 BCE; 2 Chr 12:15). Here too it is probable that a single prophetic work is labelled with different names (Elwell & Beitzel 1988:189).

[65] The Rabbinic Literature is the corpus of writing produced in the first seven centuries CE by sages who claimed to stand in the chain of tradition from Sinai, and who possessed the oral part of the Torah, revealed by God to Moses at Sinai for oral formulation and transmission, in addition to the written part of the Torah possessed by all Israel (Neusner 1994:8).

[66] Other passages are *Pesiqta de Rab Kahuna* 26.9 and *Pesiqta Rabbati* 15.8.

> ancient of days did sit' (Dan 7:9); but it also says, 'A fiery stream' (Dan 7:10). Now, in order to give no opening to the Nations of the world to say, 'There are two powers, scripture reads, 'The Lord is a man of war, "the Lord" is his Name'.

This interpretation of Exodus 15:3 is a proof that though the manifestations are different in form and style, they are manifestations of the same God. He manifests himself at the sea as a warrior and on the mountain as an old man. This appearance seems to be with no qualifications or restrictions on the vision (Calaway 2013:171-172)[67].

Many aspects of this encounter have been resonated with e.g. Exodus 24:16, [*A*]*nd the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud*. The *Midrash Rabbi Nathan* and *Rabbi Mattiah ben Heresh* resonate with the six-day waiting of Moses before God speaks to him. Rabbi Nathan says that it was 'so that he might be purged of all food and drink in his bowels, before he was sanctified and became like the ministering angels' (*Abot R Nat* 1B). *Rabbi Mattiah ben Heresh* on the other hand, argues that 'this waiting was intended only to fill him with awe, with fear, with dread, and with trembling' (*Abot R Nat* 1B). These Rabbis depicted a transformation on the human agent in order for a *visio Dei* to occur.

The exodus generation is believed to have attained a privileged visionary status in comparison to later generations. Moses is also believed to have retained a more privileged status than the rest of Israel. In the explanation of this *visio Dei*, the Rabbis combine a set of contradictory verses to tease out their meaning:

- Exodus 3:6, where Moses hides his face.
- Exodus 24:9-11, where the elders, Nadab and Abihu, saw God.
- Exodus 33:20, where God says, 'No one can see God and live'.
- Numbers 12:8, where God says that only Moses has seen God's form.

[67] That all Israel saw God at the sea and on Sinai has been alluded to in a number of sources: MRI Shirta 4, *Song at the Sea* 124, 126-129, and *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21 (100b-101a; 33; 155b) (cf. Wilson 2015:34).

The Rabbis use a combination of these verses to create a flirtatious interplay between hiding and revealing: Moses hides and God reveals, and Moses seeks and God hides (cf. Calaway 2013:173).

The Rabbinic commentaries explain the 'seeing God' and 'not seeing God' of Moses in a number of ways. The hiding and seeking is explained as Moses' demonstration of humility in Exodus (*Rab* 45:5); another explanation (*Rab* 23:15) is that 'seeing God' here is 'symbolic', and yet another explanation exalts Moses above all other prophets, because he is thought to have had a clearer vision while other prophets have seen dark visions (*Lev Rab* 1:14). The relationship between 'seeing God' and the disposition of those who claim it, is escalated to blindness representing straying from following God.

5.2.3.1 Spiritual blindness and sight

'Spiritual blindness and sight' is represented in this literature by 'straying from God' or 'following God' and compared to the relationship between the 'sheep's sight' and 'blindness' as they follow the shepherd: 'And the Lord of the sheep was extremely angry with them, and that sheep knew, and went down from the summit of the rock, and came to the sheep, and found the majority of them, with their eyes blinded, and going astray from his path' (1 *En* 89:33). Added to this passage is 1 Enoch 89:41: 'And sometimes their eyes were opened, and sometimes blinded, until another sheep rose up, led them, and brought them all back. And their eyes were opened'. Spiritual sight was granted as the sheep follow their Lord, but blindness came on them as they strayed from their master.

The punishment with blindness and even death when people strayed from God is captured very well in 1 Enoch 89:54-55: 'And after this, I saw how when they left the house of the Lord of the sheep, and his tower, they went astray in everything, and their eyes were blinded. And I saw how the Lord of the sheep wrought much slaughter among them, in their pastures, until those sheep invited that slaughter, and betrayed his place. And he gave them into the hands of the lions, and the tigers, and the wolves, and the hyenas, and into the hands of the foxes, and to all the animals. And those wild

animals began to tear those sheep in pieces'. Spiritual blindness[68] was also a punishment for false worship (worshipping impure spirits and demons, and all kinds of Idols): 'And they worship stone, and some carve images of gold and of silver, and of wood and of clay. And some, with no knowledge, worship unclean spirits and demons, and every kind of error. But no help will be obtained from them. And they will sink into impiety because of the folly of their hearts, and their eyes will be blinded through the fear of their hearts, and through the vision of their ambitions' (1 *En* 99:7-8).

It is noteworthy that spiritual sight and illumination was related to a *visio Dei*. Enoch's enlightenment is described as follows: 'I, Enoch, according to that which appeared to me in the Heavenly vision, and that which I know from the words of the Holy Angels, and understanding from the Tablets of Heaven…' (1 *En* 93:2). In another instance, being in the tenth heaven, Enoch claims to have seen the appearance of the Lord's face. He describes it as iron made to glow in fire, and brought out, emitting sparks, and it burned. He claims to have seen the ineffable, marvellous and very awful, and very terrible face of the Lord (2 *En* 21:6-22). It is noteworthy that in these texts Enoch differentiates between the Lord and the Lord God, and while he saw the face of the Lord he noted he could not see the face of the Lord God (2 *En* 22:4). This depicts a *visio Dei* representing spiritual insight into God's character and mysteries. Earlier Palestinian Judaism did not only concern itself with a *visio Dei* in the present, but also in other dimensions. One of these dimensions was a *visio Dei* in the eschatological framework, which is discussed below.

5.2.3.2 Eschatological *visio Dei* motif

A window into the *visio Dei* espoused in the eschatological orientation in the earlier Palestinian Judaism is found in the *Pseudepigrapha* of the Old Testament books. This *visio Dei* happens after death. In 4 Ezra 7:98, dealing with the state of the soul after death and before judgement, it is stated: 'Their seventh joy, the greatest joy of all, will be the confident and exultant assurance which will be theirs, free from all fear and shame, as they press forward to see face-to-face the One whom they served in their lifetime, and from whom they are now to receive their reward in glory'.

[68] Spiritual blindness was also regarded to be a result of sin (T *Jos* 7:5), or anger (T *Dan* 2:2, 4; cf. T *Benj* 4:2).

Similar to the ability of the resurrected to behold the face of God is the notion of the opening of the eyes noted in 1 Enoch 90:35, 'And the eyes of all of them were opened, and they saw well, and there was not one among them that did not see'. In the eschatological framework the *visio Dei* is discussed, even though not in much detail, without making a distinction between the Father and the Son.

5.2.3.3 Conclusion to this section

Concerning the explanation of biblical texts about a *visio Dei* in the Rabbinic literature, it is noteworthy that Rabbis did not have a consensus on the nature of the *visio Dei*. They maintained that the manifestations of God were different in form and style. The experience of these manifestations was mainly discussed in relation to the preparedness of those experiencing them. They postulate that if someone wants to 'see God', they have to clean and humble themselves. Even though some classified this phenomenon as 'symbolic', it was generally thought to be real and sometimes referred to as enlightenment. Although there was a level of punishment, even by blindness for those whose worship was deemed unholy, 'seeing God' represented a spiritual sight into God's character.

5.2.4 Later Palestinian Judaism: Qumran[69]

The Dead Sea Scrolls supply much information about the life of the Qumran society. For this study, it is crucial to note that one of the highest goals of the Qumran society seems to have been to participate in the heavenly angelic liturgy and to see the great throne-chariot of God enter the heavenly temple (Evans & Flint 1997:103). Despite the fact that this occasion could have provided a possibility for a *visio Dei*, the interest

[69] The texts from Qumran are dated roughly between the end of the 3rd century BCE and 70 CE. These Hebrew and Aramaic documents were written in four basic scripts, which permit their palaeographic dating within a fifty-year margin of error: 1) Archaic scripts (end of the 3rd century to 150 BCE); 2) Hasmonean scripts (150-50 BCE); 3) Herodian scripts (50 BCE to 40 CE); and 4) Ornamental texts (mid-1st century CE onwards) – a form also used in the *Murabba'at* texts. The majority of the Qumran texts are in the Hasmonean and Herodian scripts, as are those of Masada. The Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of *Murabba'at* date roughly from between the two Jewish revolts against Rome (66-70 and 132-135 CE). According to preliminary reports, the texts from *Ḥever*, *Ṣe'elim*, and *Mihras* apparently date from that same period, but they have not yet been published. The texts from *Khirbet Mird* are of later date (roughly between the 5th and 8th century CE). The Arabic texts and a few Christian Palestinian Aramaic fragments found there have already been published. The Qumran texts, are important for the light they shed on three areas: Palestinian Judaism before and at the beginning of the Christian era, the transmission of the Old Testament texts in the same period, and the Palestinian background of the New Testament.

seems to be on this divine chariot, having its roots in the chariot that Ezekiel the prophet saw (Ez 1:10-13). The vision of Ezekiel is referred to as divine in (*4Q385)*[70].

The quest of the community for participation in the heavenly angelic liturgy has been captured well in the Dead Sea Scrolls (*1QS* 11:7-8): 'He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the community and a foundation for the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages'. *4Q405* contains a description of the divine *Merkabah*, where the appearance of the *Merkabah* is greeted with praise and blessings from angels. It contains a large number of manuscripts of Angelic Liturgy (*4Q 400-407*) and Thanksgiving Hymns (*1QH* 3:21-23; 11:13)[71]. According to Evans and Flint (1997:1050), 'The worshipper who hears the songs has the sense of being in the heavenly sanctuary and in the presence of the angelic priest. Recitation of these songs was a major vehicle for the experience of communion with the angels'.

The throne in Ezekiel's vision, referred to as the *Merkabah*, is discussed in a number of the Rabbinic texts (*Talmud*)[72]. Primary to the passages that support a restriction to the *Merkabah* (*M Hag* 2:1), are the following:

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[70] *4Q385:*25-28 explains that this living vehicle with wheels represents the throne and the glory of God. Passages in the Bible that refer to God sitting on a throne, are 1 Kings 22:19, Daniel 7:9, 1 Chronicles 28:18, and Isaiah 6:1-9. The idea of a mobile throne is not unique to the Old Testament, and also appears elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern literature (Zimmerli 1983:127-128). The vision in Ezekiel 1 gave rise to a whole body of Jewish thought known as *merkabah* (Cohn-Sherbok 1992:332).

[71] *Merkabah/Merkavah* mysticism (or *Chariot* mysticism) as a school of early Jewish mysticism (c. between 100 BCE and 1000 CE), centred on visions such as those found in Ezekiel 1, and in the *hekhalot* (palaces) literature – concerning stories of ascents to the heavenly places and the throne of God. The main corpus of the *Merkabah* literature was composed in Israel from 200 to 700 CE. Later references to the *Chariot* tradition can also be found in the literature of the *Chassidei Ashkenaz* in the Middle Ages. A major text in this tradition is the *Maaseh Merkabah* (*Works of the Chariot*) (Vermes 1987; Martinez & Tigchelaar 1998).

[72] The *Talmud* is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. It is traditionally referred to as *Shas* (ש״ס) – a Hebrew abbreviation of *shisha sedarim*, the 'six orders'. The term '*Talmud*' normally refers to the Babylonian *Talmud*, though there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem *Talmud*. The *Talmud* has two components: The first part is the *Mishnah* (Hebrew: משנה, c. 200 CE), which is the written compendium of Rabbinic Judaism's Oral Torah (Torah meaning 'Instruction' or 'Teaching' in Hebrew); the second part is the *Gemara* (c. 500 CE), which is an elucidation of the *Mishnah* and related *Tannaitic* writings that often venture onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible. The term '*Talmud*' can refer either to the *Gemara* alone, or to the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara* together. The whole Talmud consists of 63 tractates, and in standard print is over 6,200 pages long. It is written in Tannaitic Hebrew and Aramaic. The *Talmud* contains the teachings and opinions of thousands of Rabbis on a variety of subjects, including *Halakha* (law), Jewish ethics, philosophy, customs, history, lore, and many other topics. The *Talmud* is the basis for all codes of Jewish law and is much quoted in Rabbinic Literature, like the Mishnah (*Meg* 4.10), Tosefta (*Meg* 3[4]:28, 34, 24b, 31a), and the *Sukk* 28° (B.B. 134a) (Halperin 1980).

- *Arayot* may not be expounded by three, nor *maaseh berith* by two, nor *Merkabah* by an individual, unless he is a scholar or wise person and has understood his own.
- Anybody who gazes at four things, it would be merciful to him if he had not come into the world: What is above and what is below, what is before and what is after.
- Anyone who has a concern for the honour of his Creator, it would be merciful to him if he had not come into the world (cf. Halperin 1980:11-12).

This passage, together with *Merkabah and Hekhalot* 4:10, restrict involvement with the *Merkabah*, as they teach that the *Merkabah* may not be expounded except under special circumstances. The *Merkabah* may also not be used as a prophetic lection in the synagogue (Halperin 1980:19). Halperin (1980:19-62) argues for the reasons of the restrictions as a response to a potentially dangerous synagogue practice and seems directed against potential speculation. Aristides (1986:469) notes that 'whoever takes no thought for the glory of his creator is plausibly taken as a reference to an improper exercise in transformational mysticism, and we have seen that this is implicated in the ideology of military power and messianic leadership'. This is implicit evidence that some restrictions were in place regarding involvement with the *Merkabah.*

The dichotomy that existed in relation to the (un)involvement with the *Merkabah* in the Rabbinic writings is further sustained by varying views in the exposition of *Merkabah and Hekhalot* 2:1. These views are attached by the *Tosefta* to *Merkabah and Hekhalot* 2:1 and are referred to as 'mystical collections'[73].

A *visio Dei* in Qumran represents a spiritual insight into God's character and mysteries (*1QS* 10:10-11; 11:5-6).

[73] These mystical collections are from varied sources. The primary mystical collections are *T Hag* 2:1-7, *PT Hag* 2.1, and *BT Hag* 11b, 14b-15a.

5.2.4.1 A *visio Dei*: Circumcision, gentiles, and women

While some Rabbis deny the possibility of a *visio Dei*, there are some general trends that developed among those who allow a *visio Dei*, but under certain conditions. In an increasingly gendered and phallocentric discourse, the primary requirement to a safe *visio Dei* is circumcision, excluding women and gentiles (Calaway 2013:165). Even Abraham could not stand in the divine presence until he was circumcised (see below). A revelation is not totally hidden from gentiles and women, but it is wrought indirectly through intermediary figures or dark visions, incomplete speech, or dreams (Calaway 2013:165-166).

That circumcision[74] made it possible for Abraham to see God is captured well in (*Gen Rab* 47:10 and 48:2):

> Abraham said: 'When I was uncircumcised, travellers would visit me; now being circumcised, they may not visit me'. The Holy One, blessed be he, said to him: 'When you were uncircumcised, humans visited you'. Thus it is written, 'And the Lord appeared to him'. And Abraham said, 'After I circumcised myself, many proselytes came to cleave to his covenant – 'from my flesh I shall see God' – if I had not done so, why would the Holy One, blessed be he, be revealed to me? And the Lord appeared to him.

These passages clearly take circumcision as a requirement for a *visio Dei* as demonstrated in the life of Abraham. Because the males were circumcised, they were able to see the divine presence entering the tabernacle. Because they had 'removed the blemish of the foreskin and had become whole, they were able to endure the sight of the divine presence' as Abraham did after he was circumcised (Gn 17:3) (Calaway 2013:169-170).

Women were repeatedly excluded from divine contact by reasoning that God never spoke to a woman, except Sarah and Hagar. Sarah is depicted as a unique and

[74] The necessity of circumcision for a *visio Dei* is described in *Gen Rab* 48:1, 3-7, 42:8, and 49:9. Some traditions that indicate the exceptionality of Abraham, because God would come to him in a vision and speech combined, is found in *Gen Rab* 44:.6 and *Lev Rab* 1:4 cf. *Song of Sons Rab* 1:14.3. Other traditions that include David and Moses among those who had a *visio Dei* are found in *Lev Rab* 1:4.

righteous woman (*Gen Rab* 20:6, 45:10, 48:20 and 63:6), while Hagar has seen an angel (*Gen Rab* 45:10; 45:7).

Gentiles were also excluded from a *visio Dei*, as their involvement with a *visio Dei* was relegated to an indirect revelation. (*Lev Rab* 1:13) notes that God has revealed himself to gentiles and spoke to them 'from far off, comes only in stealth, and at night', while to Israel he 'speaks to their prophets in complete speech, near, and pulls the curtain back to see fully and directly'. Any reference to a gentile seeing God is explained away e.g. why God appeared to Abimelech in a dream. *Genesis Rabbah* 52:5 notes that God only appeared to gentiles 'in half speech rather than a full vision or speech'.

According to the *Midrashim Genesis Rabbah* 47:10 and 48:2, circumcision is the major requirement for a *visio Dei*. Women and gentiles or foreigners are excluded, while a window of opportunity for a *visio Dei* is only possible, as has already been noted, indirectly through intermediaries or dark vision, incomplete speech, dreams and humility.

5.2.4.2 'Not seeing God' in Palestinian Judaism

The 'invisibility'[75] of God in Judaism is captured well in the Sibylline oracles 1:7-12. The impossibility of beholding God is compared with the impossibility of staring at the sun's rays: 'There is one God, sole Sovereign, excellent in power, unbegotten, almighty, invisible, yet seeing all himself. Yet he himself is beheld by no mortal flesh. For what flesh can see visibly the heavenly and true God, the Immortal, whose abode is the heaven?' (*Syb Or* 1:7-8).

That God could and should not be seen, is well noted in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* (3:1-12). One of the greatest accusations levelled against Isaiah was his claim to have seen God in this epic: 'And Isaiah himself hath said: "I see more than Moses the prophet". But Moses said: "No man can see God and live"; and Isaiah hath said: "I have seen God and behold I live". Know, therefore, o king, that he is lying' (*Mart Ascen Isa* 3:8).

[75] Other sources referring to 'invisibility' are *Apoc Mos* 35:3, *En* 108:4, *Sib Or Fra* 1:8, *Sib Or* 5:427, and *2 En* 67:3.

The invisibility of God is also captured in the *Apocalypse of Moses* (34-35.4). In this epic Eve invited her son, Seth, to see what happens to the body of his father, Adam. She said, 'Look up and see with thine eyes the seven heavens opened, and see how the soul of thy father lies on its face and all the holy angels are praying on his behalf and saying, "Pardon him, Father of All, for he is Thine image". Pray, my child, Seth, what shall this mean? And will he one day be delivered into the hands of the Invisible Father, even our God?' In this epic God is directly declared to be invisible, except for the possibility of seeing him in heaven itself.

5.2.5 Conclusion to this section

This discussion has revealed that there is a general dichotomy within the Judaist sources in relation to a *visio Dei*. The Old Testament has widespread references to 'seeing God' and notes that God can manifest a visible presence, in fact the invisibility of God is not supported by the Old Testament. Philo supports a philosophic contemplation and practice of virtue as a means to a *visio Dei*, while Josephus argues that 'seeing God' must not be desired or attempted to be achieved by humans. Josephus in fact has the conviction that there will be consequences for both the person who aspires a *visio Dei*, and the one who assists the aspirant. The earlier Palestinian sources reckon that it is impossible to 'see God' and liken it to staring at the sun, while in the later Palestinian Judaist sources represented by the Qumran scrolls, desiring participation in the heavenly angelic liturgy and circumstances of a *visio Dei* are supported – 'seeing God' was reserved for after death.

5.3 'Seeing a Deity' and 'not seeing a Deity' in the Graeco-Roman world

5.3.1 Introduction to this section

Religiously, the Hellenistic culture was characterised by freedom and tolerance that did not distinguish between races or individuals. It was content that all should contribute their quota to human knowledge and happiness. The only condition that seemed to be exacted was that everything should be done in Greek. 'Offences against the State religion, such as blaspheming the gods or desecrating what was accounted sacred, were usually punishable by death' (Fairweather 1977:7-8). The interaction with a deity that can to some extent, be equated to 'seeing God', is investigated in the

Graeco-Roman religious world[76] under distinct religious stances that were then prevalent.

5.3.2 The Graeco-Roman pantheon

Animism was the primitive religion of Rome. Each small farmer worshipped the gods of his own farm and fireside, which personified for him the forces with which he had to deal in his daily life. The gods of the forest and field, the gods of the sky and stream, the gods of sowing and of the harvest, all received his worship in their proper places and their proper seasons (Tenney 1985:65). Ovid notes:

> Give incense to the family gods, the virtuous ones (on that day above all others Concord is said to lend her gentle presence); and offer food, that the Lares, in their girt-up robes, may feed at the platter presented to them as a pledge of the homage that they love. And now, when dark night invites to slumber calm, fill high with wine cup for the prayer and say, 'Hail to you! Hail to thee, father of my country, Caesar the good!' and let good speech attend the pouring wine (More 1922:637-638).

The fusion between Greek and Roman religious influences is housed under the Greek pantheon, with gods like Jupiter – the god of the sky who was identified with the Greek Zeus, Jano, his wife, with Hera, Neptune, the god of the sea, with Poseidon, Pluto, the god of the underworld, with Hades, and so on. Greek religion was this-worldly, dominated by superhuman deities. It developed from the Minoan religion, which focused on the Great (or Earth) Mother (later known as Hellotis or Demeter), and featured an extensive pantheon introduced during the second-millennium immigrations (Tenney 1985:65).

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[76] Pivotal to the Graeco-Roman world is the conquests of Alexander the Great which marked a new dispensation in the ancient world: 'By the broadcasting of Greek culture, the bringing together of East and West, the removal of national barriers and the obliteration of racial distinctions, he inaugurated a worldwide movement towards that recognition of the brotherhood of man which culminated in the *Pax Romana* and the closing of the temple of Janus under Augustus' (Fairweather 1977:3). It is in this context that 'seeing God' is investigated here. The influence of Hellenistic thought on New Testament authors, especially the Elder, is noted by Brown (2003:127) who argues that 'there was a strong Hellenistic element already present in biblical Judaism that served as background for NT times, both in Palestine and Alexandria'. The Greeks and the Romans influenced the New Testament authors, while their contribution to circular and religious thought can never be underestimated. The Greeks contributed a wealth of ideas to specifically the scientific spirit, as well as the intensive study of the nature of man and the importance of character. The Romans made an immense contribution with their epoch-making system of law, and their lessons in the political and practical administration of affairs (Fairweather 1977:3).

Among the most important Greek deities was the father and creator, Zeus, the god of weather, his wife Hera, the goddess of the hearth, the sea-god Poseidon, Ares, the god of war, the sun-god Apollo, Hermes, the god of thieves and merchants, Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, Athena, the patron of arts, crafts, and sciences, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love. The major deities served as patrons of the city-states and, with numerous minor deities, were worshipped in various local manifestations. Over time, often as a result of changed political circumstances, some deities experienced transformation, and new cults arose. For example, the law-giver Apollo gained prominence through the popularity of his oracle at Delphi. The cult of Dionysus, the god of wine, became an important focus of orgiastic worship and drama. Of later significance was the cult of Asclepius, the god of medicine, the syncretistic cult of Sarapis (from the Egyptian Osiris and Apis), and the mystery cults of Demeter at Eleusis, and of Orphism. On a popular level Greek religion also featured family (ancestral) cults and theurgy – a form of sorcery (Myers 1987:443).

Under the Graeco-Roman pantheon, people could get in touch with the gods in various ways. Foundational to the experience with the gods was the importance of the visual and of the place:

> Place is understood as architectural space in conjunction with the rules that governed the pilgrims' collective movement and mental state within. This emphasis on the common space and rituals engendered a sense of *communitas* and was the starting point, the framework in which therapeutic competition and individual experiences of contact with the divine were then located and interpreted (Petsalis-Diomidis 2005:217).

'Seeing the gods' played a major role in the contact between the gods and the worshippers. This was demonstrated by Aelius Aristides who was sent by the god *Asklepios* on a pilgrimage to Chios for bodily healing. The narrative culminates in the author's physical and mental healing and ease, and his experience of the intense presence of the god (Petsalis-Diomidis 2005:183-184): 'Seeing plays an important part in the structure of the pilgrimage narrative: the mini-pilgrimage to the river is signalled by a dream vision in which the god appeared to Aristides, who considers it important to record the appearance of the god, and his similarity to particular cult statues' (Petsalis-Diomidis 2005:184).

Contact with the divine in this context, which was equated to ‘seeing the gods’, was achieved through dreams. Petsalis-Diomidis (2005:206) note that ‘within the regulated space of the sanctuary and the regulated bodies of pilgrims there was scope for an infinite variety of experiences of contact with the divine, especially in visions during the night’.

One of the practices of the worshippers which sheds some light on their contact with the divine, is the testimonies they left behind. These are referred to as thank-offerings which describe aspects of those experiences through image and text. The display of collections of offerings are stretching back generations. They contain specific kinds of offerings the god wanted and they often explicitly narrate the moment of contact between the worshipper and the god. Inscriptions and sculptural thank-offerings on display in the sanctuary could thus function as gateways into the experience of past pilgrims and into a realm of visionary contact with *Asklepios*. The understanding of visuality in the Graeco-Roman culture and in particular in the context of religious spaces, was foundational to the interpretation thereof (Petsalis-Diomidis 2005:206-207). Descriptions of art and sculpture in the Graeco-Roman texts suggest that viewers expected to read out themes and narratives from images.

The gods of ancient Greece, most of whom were adopted by the ancient Romans, were generally described as human in form, unaging, nearly immune to all wounds and sickness, capable of becoming invisible, able to travel vast distances almost instantly, and able to speak through human beings with or without their knowledge. In Greek mythology, the gods were presented as a large, multi-generational family, the oldest members of which created the world as we know it. Each Graeco-Roman divinity had his or her own specific appearance, genealogy, interests, personality, and area of expertise, subject to significant local variants. When the gods were called upon in poetry or prayer, they were referred to by a combination of their name and epithets, the latter serving to distinguish them from other gods (Tenney 1985:65).

5.3.3 The role of cult statues in 'seeing the gods'

The gods in the temples and in statue form are in actual fact an extension of the human psyche, anima and animus archetypes being projected and concretised in stone, wood, and clay. Fox (1980:29) rightly argues:

> The identification of the god and image was very strong at all levels of society, and on some of their statue basis, the gods are made to answer the old forms of prayers which had 'summoned' them. 'I am come,' they say, 'standing always beside' the citizens, the Emperor or the people in the city gymnasium. We can understand why ambassadors, when they left their cities, took images of their gods to assist them, shipping them from Alexandria to Rome or from Miletus to Syria.

The carving of images was a result of the raw desire of people to see the living god in a way which is immediate and tangible. These statues that ranged in sizes, helped the ancients to perceive their gods literally. They were seen in public processions, temples and private homes, and sometimes chained so that they could not escape (Pettis 2013:29).

5.3.4 Emperor worship

Although the worship of local deities persisted, the growing cosmopolitan consciousness in the Empire prepared the way for a new type of religion: The worship of the emperor/state (Tenney 1985:67; cf. Jones 1979:34-44). 'Seeing God' is also important during this time of religious metamorphosis, because worship is an expression aimed at a deity. Tenney (1985:67) states that 'for many years the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies had exalted their kings to the position of deity and had applied to them such titles as Lord (*Kyrios*), Saviour (*Soter*), or Manifest Deity (*Epiphanes*)'. This observation is crucial in this study because the same titles have been used to refer to Jesus Christ[77].

[77] The Hellenistic title 'Lord' was also used to refer to Jesus Christ: 1) White (1988:287) note that 'Lord' is used of Jesus as a customary title of respect ('sir' in Mt 8:2; 15:25); it also retains its Septuagint associations of faith, reverence, and worship (Mt 3:3; Lk 7:13; Ac 5:14; 9:10; 1 Cor 6:13, 14; Heb 2:3; Jas 5:7); it appears in phrases like 'the Lord Jesus', 'the Lord's day', 'the Lord's table', 'the Spirit of the Lord' (who is also 'Lord,' 2 Cor 3:17), 'in the Lord' (inheritance), 'from the Lord', 'light in the Lord', and 'boast in the Lord'. Sometimes it is not clear whether God or Christ is intended, e.g. in Acts 9:31 and 2 Corinthians 8:21. The title is attributed to Jesus himself in John 13:13-14. In John 20:28 Jesus is titled 'My Lord and my God'. In the first Christian sermon, Jesus' Lordship is made central to salvation (Ac 2:21, 36). It appears that the public confession of Jesus as Lord

One of the noticeable features of the Hellenistic world is that 'seeing the god' was also equalled to seeing war heroes and emperors. This deification was evidenced by Julius Caesar 'who never ruled as emperor but was later pronounced divine by the Roman Senate' (Easley 1998:318). The military heroes who entered the city of Rome did so through the Triumphal Gate. This feature was demonstrated well in the triumphal procession of Aemilius Paulus after his victory over King Perseus of Macedon. On his return, every temple was open and filled with garlands and incense, and all the people dressed in white clothes to watch the procession (Pettis 2013:21). Titus Quinctius Flamininus was also deified for upholding the freedom of Greece against the claims of Philip V of Macedon. This was evidenced by the fact that his name appeared alongside the gods, Heracles and Apollo, and libations, sacrifice, and a hymn of praise were offered to him (Pettis 2013:24).

The practice of emperor worship developed gradually until it became a powerful instrument of state policy. And in the process it brought Christians into conflict with the state, as the policy polarised people according to the ultimate loyalty: Christ or Caesar (Moon 2004:33). Under this system, 'seeing god' was possible because all one had to do, was to see the emperor.

5.3.5 Mystery religions

The inner vacuum created by the insufficiency of both the state religion and the emperor worship would be filled by the mystery religions, which were mostly of oriental origin. The state religion and emperor worship were both maintained collectively rather than individually; both sought protection by the deity rather than fellowship with the deity, and neither offered any personal solace or strength for times of stress and trouble. According to Tenney (1985:68), 'People were seeking a more personal faith

was the approved focus and expression of Christian faith and the basis of church membership in the apostolic Church (Ac 16:31; Rm 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Php 2:11). Thus it could become more of a formal statement than a sincere expression of belief – hence the warnings in Matthew 7:21 and Luke 6:46. From the first use of this title, its confession was fraught with meaning. In common usage 'Lord' reflected the slave system, and implied the absolute power exercised by the master over the purchased slave. In this concern Paul unhesitatingly expounds the moral implications of Christian redemption (1 Cor 6:19-20; 7:22-23). To the Jewish mind the title had messianic overtones of kingship and authority (Lk 20:41-44), offending both Jews and Romans. Politically 'Lord' was a title claimed by Caesar. It is significant that the emphatic, insistent form of it, 'King of kings and Lord of lords', belongs to the age of Domitian and of the demand for Caesar worship (Rev 17:14; 19:16) (White 1988:287).

that would bring them into immediate contact with the deity, and they were ready for any sort of experience that would promise them that contact'.

These mystery religions were centred around a god who died and who was resuscitated. They had a ritual of formulas and lustrations, of symbols and of secret dramatic representations of the experience of the god and so bestowed immortality upon that god. In this way they satisfied their desire for personal immortality and for social equality, because each region maintained a brotherhood in which slave and master, rich and poor, high and low, could meet on the same footing (Tenney 1985:65; cf. William 2014:131-145).

These religions included the Eleusian mystery, the cult of Cybele – the great mother who came from Ashia, Isis and Osiris or Serapis from Egypt, and Mithraism originating in Persia. Although these religions had different origins and details, they shared some general characteristics (Tenney 1985:68).

5.3.5.1 Eleusian mystery

The temple of Demeter at Eleusis in Attica was the scene of the celebrated Greek mysteries, in which the devotee associated themselves with the trials of the goddess in her quest for the lost Persephone. At the annual celebrations these were presented in the form of a passion play. Only the initiated, clothed in white, could share in the rites. This was only possible after undergoing certain purifications and a preliminary admission to the Lesser Mysteries at Athens. Words of exhortation, based perhaps on the significance of the mystic programme enacted, were followed by a sacred vision which raised them to the rank of *epoptae* (Fairweather 1977:259).

These Eleusian mystery expressions espoused a possibility of 'seeing the gods'. Visibility played a significant role in the possibility of seeing the gods, as it was evidenced in the Eleusian sacred acts[78]. Mylonas (1961:239) relates that the

[78] These sacred acts covered a period of nine days, with the climax on the eighth day. Mylonas (1961:323) details these days:
Day 1. The Archon Basileus, the magistrate of Athens who had the supreme direction of the celebration, called the people to a festive assembly at the Stoa Poikile, or Painted Stoa, in the famous Agora of Athens. This was an invitation for anyone who wanted to be initiated.

‘Mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis contained but three stages or degrees: the preliminary initiation into the Lesser Mysteries, the initiation proper into the Greater Mysteries, known as the *telete*, and the *epopteia*, or highest degree of initiation’. It was in the context of these sacred acts that the possibility of ‘seeing the gods’ was espoused. Much about these expressions remains a secret to this day, but the fulfilment that the initiates and worshippers showed, reveal the satisfaction they got from these sacred acts.

5.3.5.2 Egyptian mystic religions

The rites around Isis are based on the myth, depicting how

> after the murder and dismemberment of *Osiris* by his brother *Tryphon*, his consort Isis discovered his mangled members, except a single part which had been thrown into the sea. Having avenged her husband’s death, she distributed wax statues containing sections of his body among the priests of several deities within her kingdom, and exacted an oath that they would shew their appreciation of this favour by installing a form of worship in which divine honors would be accorded to their mutilated prince and consolation provided “for men and women who would fall into like misfortunes” (Fairweather 1977:262).

Seeing Isis therefore was possible by beholding the statues. This was evidenced by the assertion about Osiris that ‘at Philae his body is depicted with sprouting corn and an inscription: “This is the form of him whom one may not name, Osiris of the mysteries, who springs from the returning waters”’ (Fairweather 1977:263). Apuleius relates his experience with the goddess, Isis:

Day 2. This was the day where participants were ordered to cleanse themselves in the sea and the shout ‘to the sea, oh *mystai*’ would fill the city. The sea was considered immaculate and it was thought to cleanse and purify everybody from evil.
Day 3. On this day the Archon Basileus, aided by his *paredros* and four *epimeletai*, and in the presence of the representatives of the other cities and of the people of Athens, offered the great sacrifice to the goddess of Eleusis in the Eleusinion, and prayed for the *Boule* and the *Demos* of Athens, as well as the women and children of the commonwealth in accordance with the ancestral custom, the *Patria*.
Day 4. This day saw a repletion of what was done so far. It was a day set aside for those who came late.
Day 5. This was the day of rites and festivities in Athens.
Day 6. This day was spent in rest, fasting, purification, and sacrificing.
Day 7. This day was also spent in rest, in preparation for the final night in the *Telesterion*.
Day 8. This day was devoted mainly to libations and rites for the dead.
Day 9. This was the day for returning.

> About the first watch of the night I awoke in a sudden fright and saw, just emerging from the waves of the sea, the full circle of the moon glittering with extraordinary brilliance. Surrounded by the silent mysteries of the dark night, I realised that the supreme goddess now exercised the fullness of her power, that human affairs were wholly governed by her providence; that not only flocks and wild beasts but even lifeless things were quickened by the divine favour of her light and might (*Apuleius Met* 11.1).

Apuleius gives further detailed descriptions of what appears to be a *visio of Isis* whom he saw rising 'out of the scattered deep' (*Apuleius Met* 11.3): She has an abundance of hair, a crown of interlaced wreaths and varying flowers, and just above her brow two vipers hold a mirror emitting a soft clear light. Her garment is multi-coloured and her pitch-black cloak enfolds her, sprinkled with burning stars and shining 'with a dark glow'. 'Behold, Lucius', she says, 'moved by your prayer I come to you – I the natural mother of all life, the mistress of the elements, the first child of time, the supreme divinity, I who govern by my nod the crests of light in the sky' (Pettis 2013:26).

Fairweather (1977:265) concurs that fellowship with Isis evolved with time, later on taking the form of a passion play in which, for ten days, *Osiris* was sorrowfully sought. Then the grief of Isis and her devotees is turned into joy, and the cry raised: 'We have found him, we rejoice together'. The nature and extent of closeness or visibility to Isis is captured well by the account in which Apuleius gives the initiation of the candidate Lucius. The writer represents him and describes the ecstatic experience:

> I penetrated to the boundaries of death; I trod the threshold of Prosperine, and after being borne through all the elements I returned to earth; at midnight I beheld the sun radiating white light: I came into the presence of the gods below and the gods above, and did them reverence at close hand (*Meta* 11:23-24).

Fairweather (1977:264-265) also correctly notes that

> on the one hand there are the prescribed abstinences, the solemn baptism, the communication of mystic formulae, and the overpowering scenes which formed the climax of initiation. On the other hand, there is presented to us the preparation of heart, the symbol of cleansing, the concept of regeneration, and finally identification with deity.

This picture is of extraordinary significance to understanding 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, because it is identical to it in many respects.

5.3.6 Worship of the occult

One of the ways the Graeco-Roman world interacted with the unseen world was through the occult: 'For them the entire world was inhabited by spirits and demons who could be invoked or commanded to do one's bidding if only one knew the correct rite or formula to use' (Tenney 1985:69). A *visio Dei* in the Graeco-Roman world at grassroots level was the quest of the ancient world. This yearning is evident in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (c. 2nd century BCE to 5th century CE), supplying further insight into the notion of the divine encounter in the Hellenistic world. These collections reveal the plethora and variety of Hellenistic magico-religious rituals and practices, rooted in religious experience[79] (Pettis 2013:30).

A detailed encounter with a god, as well as the process to achieve that, is depicted in *PMG* III.187-195[80] where it is recorded that one should:

> pound up the dry fruit with a pestle and mix it sufficiency with honey and (oil of) a date palm. Grind up the magnet, boil all together and pulverise it. Make little rounds as many as you wish, but put an ounce of each element of the mixture into each of these, and proceed thus, singing a hymn of praise to the god. Then the deity will come, shaking the whole house and the tripod before him. Then he will bring about your enquiry into the future, being clear in his intercourse

[79] According to Preisendanz (1928), the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* display an elaborate syncretism of Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, and even Babylonian and Christian religious influences engendered by the unique milieu of Graeco-Roman Egypt. This syncretism occurs in the *Papyri* in a variety of ways: Often the Olympians are given attributes of their Egyptian counterparts; alternatively, they are Egyptian deities being referred to by Greek names, e.g. the name Aphrodite (who was associated with the Egyptian Hathor), is given the epithet *Neferie'ri,* from the Egyptian *Nfr-iry.t*, 'nice eyes' (PGM IV. 1266). Within this commotion of cultural influences, the classical Greek material is evident, and even aspects of a more accessible 'folk-religion' was preserved in the mainstream literary texts. Sometimes the Greek gods are presented in a new light: They can be demonic, bestial deities, much more Chthonic (earthly) than the Olympians, and part of a darker, discomfiting tradition to which today's people are not used. No doubt this is partly the influence of Egyptian religion, in which bestial cult and the terror of the divine are familiar elements, while the context of magical texts makes these sinister deities appropriate.

[80] These encounters vary: In *PGM* IV.71 the god is 'threatening you with weapons'. *PGM* IV.72 states that, upon the arrival of the god, suppliants are to be calm. The time frame for an encounter with a deity is displayed in *PGM* III.697, while *PGM* XIVa.11 reveals the communication with a deity (cf. also *PGM* IV.70; *PGM* IV.1085-1101; *PGM* II.79; *PGM* II.11-13; *PGM* III.699; *PGM* V.57; *PGM* XII.159; *PGM* IV.1054-1056; *PGM* V.56; *PGM* IV.930-1114; *PGM* VII.319-334; *PGM* III.633-731; *PGM* V.54-69; *PGM* V.65-69; *PGM* IV.71; *PGM* IV.76).

> with you, as long as you wish and then dismiss the god with thanks (Betz 1992:23).

Reliance on magic was prevalent from early times. The Romans practised augury or foretelling the future by the examination of the entrails of slaughtered animals or by observing the flight patterns of birds since the founding of Rome. The Greeks were familiar with the oracles where the gods were supposed to communicate their will to men through priests or priestesses whom they possessed (Tenney 1985:70).

Under the worship of the occult the norm was to use magical formulas and incantations to control the spirits rather than 'seeing the gods'. One major trait of this form of engagement with the gods was its syncretistic nature. It could combine pagan, Jewish and even Christian phraseology to achieve the desired results. A Greek *papyrus* extract clearly depicts this:

> A notable spell for driving out demons. Invocation to be uttered over the head (of the possessed one). Place before him branches of olive, and standing behind him say: Hail, spirit of Abraham; hail, spirit of Isaac; hail, of Jacob. Jesus the Christ, the holy one, the spirit (here follows a series of apparently meaningless words), drive forth the demon from this man, until this unclean demon of satan shall flee before thee. I adjure thee, o demon, whoever thou art, by the God Sabarbarbathioth Sabarbarbathiuth Sabarbarbathoneth Sabarbarbaphai. Come forth, o demon, whoever thou art, and depart from so and so at once, at once, now! Come forth, o demon, for I shall chain thee with adamantine chains not to be loosed, and I shall give you over to black chaos in utter destruction (Millan 1910:112).

'Seeing God' is not a sought-after experience for the occult, but rather using the power of anything that works to further one's cause seems to be the general quest of the occult. Tenney (1985:69) defines it as 'the superstitious observance and regard of the masses for the powers of the universe, which they could not understand but which they could vaguely feel'. Pettis (2013:35) indicates that in all the spells there is no detailed and personal account of the suppliant's immediate, face-to-face experience of a god. The chants and mixing of ingredients prepare one for seeing a god. It is only in dreams that the suppliants could keep a closer company to the gods.

Dreams espousing a *visio Dei* in the Graeco-Roman world are found in excess in the works of Aristides[81], who conveys one of his dreams:

> I thought that I stood within the entrance of the temple…just as when purification takes place, and that they were clad in white and otherwise too in suitable fashion. It (sc. the remedy) was in the clearest way possible, just as countless other things also made the presence of the god manifest. For I seemed almost to touch him and to perceive that he himself was coming, and to be halfway between sleep and waking and to want to get the power of vision and to be anxious lest he depart beforehand, and to have tuned my ears to listen, sometimes as in a dream, sometimes in a waking vision, and my hair was standing on end and tears of joy came forth, and the weight of knowledge was no burden – what person could even set these things forth in words? But if he is one of the initiates, then he knows and has understanding. After these things had been seen, when it was dawn…he marvelled at how divine they were, and was at loss as to what he should do, since he feared the excessive weakness of my body in winter time. For I lay indoors during many successive months (Aristides, *Oratio* 48:31-35, in Aristides 1986:404-407).

5.3.7 The philosophies

The leading thought of the Greek philosophers in pre-Socratic natural philosophy was that, underlying all special forms of existence, there is an absolute principle of permanent unity. Greek mythology was assailed as an anthropomorphic usurpation by some form of a finite being from a position attributable only to the Absolute. This idea was related by Xenophanes (550-475 BCE) and later echoed by Heraclitus (576-480

[81] Aristides of Athens (2nd century), was a Christian philosopher and apologist. Until recent times the only knowledge of him came from brief references by Eusebius and St Jerome. In 1878, however, part of his *Apology* in an Armenian translation was published at Venice by the Mechitarists, and, in spite of the incredulity of E Renan and others, its authenticity was established. In 1891 a Syriac translation of the whole work, discovered in 1889 on Mt Sinai, was edited by Harris, and in an appendix, Robinson gave reasons for believing that the original Greek, somewhat modified and expanded, was to be found in the *Apology* for Christianity in the 'Lives of Barlaam and Josaphat'. According to Eusebius, Aristides delivered his *Apology* to the Emperor Hadrian at the same time as another apologist, Quadratus in 124 CE. Harris, however, argued that these *Apologies* were in fact both addressed to Antoninus Pius (161 CE). Early during his reign Aristides sought to defend the existence and eternity of God, and to show that Christians had a fuller understanding of his nature than the barbarians, the Greeks, or the Jews, and that they alone live according to his precepts. Like Justin and Tatian, he retained the status and garb of a philosopher after his conversion (Aristides 1986).

BC) who championed the ceaseless change of matter along with the unchangeable equality of general relations. There is no essential opposition between the two as both of them advocated a pantheistic unity which is inconceivable as a spiritual idea (Fairweather 1977:217).

An understanding of 'seeing the gods' or 'not seeing the gods' among the philosophers can also be enhanced by the way they viewed deities. In the philosophy of Socrates[82] God is conceived as the Reason that dwells in and rules over the world, and nature as being in its manifold aspects the unmistakeable impress of design. By 'knowledge' Socrates does not mean a wide acquaintance with facts, but a principle which, through the intellect, dominates the whole personality. For him 'knowledge' is inseparable from life and character, and a vicious person simply does not possess it. The important thing in worship, according to him, is not outward form, but the animating spirit (Fairweather 1977:220). The reasoning of Socrates, according to Korteweg (1979:64-67) is that the gods were invisible to humans, and could only be contemplated though their works.

Plato[83] taught that 'the world consisted of an infinite number of particular things, each of which is a more or less imperfect copy of a real idea' (Tenney 1985:73). The world of senses is perceptible or visible, but the world of ideas – the true reality – is only accessible to the mind. For him the mind

> employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom (*Plat Phae* 66A).

[82] Socrates (469-399 BCE) was the son of Sophroniscus, a statutory of Athens. Whether or not himself a believer of the gods of Greece, he taught that men should express their sense of the divine goodness by worshipping a god according to the use of their country or city, as prescribed by the Delphic oracle (Fairweather 1977:219).

[83] Plato (427-347BCE), although belonging to an aristocratic family of Athens, was the intimate friend and devoted admirer of the humbly-born Socrates. The central theme of his philosophy is the theory of Ideas. Plato became increasingly engrossed with the question as to 'the significance of our conceptualised knowledge' (Fairweather 1977:222). He was the student of Socrates and a teacher of Aristotle.

The world of sense perception is therefore seen in definite antithesis to the spiritual world. Although the perception of both 'seeing' and 'hearing' are regarded as important instruments (*Plato Phaedrus* 250d), seeing is regarded as the noblest of the two senses. 'Seeing the gods' would therefore not be an idea he would neglect.

According to Aristotle, a student of Plato, the idea of God is a

> pure bodiless energy. Now, only thought answers to this description: God is thought, however, can have no other object but the highest and best, that is, itself, and therein consists the perfection and self-conscious blessedness of the life of God – a perpetual blessedness of which our highest moods can give us only a faint indication or passing glimpse. Thus the Aristotelian philosophy conducts us over the world of being to God as the highest moving and telic cause of the whole (Fairweather 1977:233).

Aristotle[84] reduces philosophy to science, and in the process that fine Platonic glow of devotion and enthusiasm which forms no inconsiderable element in the preparation of Christianity, disappears. The God proffered by Aristotle may be an object of reverence, but between him and mankind there can be no mutual fellowship, and thus no adequate provision is made for the religious needs of the race. To contemplate God is for Aristotle the way in which mankind should seek, as far as possible, to be like the immortals (*Aristot Nic Eth* 10.7:1177b.33).

Aristotle also denies any happiness to the dead, allowing the rational soul (the highest element in mankind) only an impersonal existence. Death is dissolution of personality. The best life one is encouraged to live, is a harmless life, avoiding any suffering and pursuing what pleasure one can.

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[84] Aristotle (384-322 BCE), the son of Nicomachus, was born at Stageira in Thrace. For twenty years he sat at the feet of Plato, who called him 'the mind of his school'. After the death of his master he was entrusted by Philip of Macedon with the education of his remarkable son, Alexander. On the ascension of Alexander to the throne, Aristotle went back to Athens, where he founded the Peripatetic school as a rival to the academy. While at that school for the last thirteen years of his life, he seems to have written all his extant works. Falsely araigned before the Areopagus for 'impiety', he fled to Chalcis, remarking in allusion to the death of Socrates that he was averse to giving the Athenians another opportunity of singing against philosophy. Sadly he died a year later (Fairweather 1977:230-231).

Later philosophical developments continue on the premise of the impossibility of 'seeing the gods', by 'seeing God' as distinct from his creation. This is equally true of the Stoics who base their philosophy upon pantheistic materialism, regarding the conception of the universe as a living being, and God as fiery ether, the finest part of matter. He is identical with Nature, Providence, and Destiny, and is in short one with the world. The soul of a human in its nature corporeal, forms part of the universe, and is subject to the law of destiny (Fairweather 1977:238). They restrict their idea of a soul to the ethereal body, the carrier of vital energy which a human shares with the animal and even the vegetable kingdom. They hold that the soul of a human being does not long survive bodily death, but decomposes along with the physical body, and returns to its own 'dust' – the ether – without rising above the sphere of the moon.

5.3.8 Dreamers

Dreamers submit themselves to the inner chamber specifically designed to facilitate unconscious life. The initiates know this process through personal experience although the details of the experience differ from initiate to initiate. In a dream, Aristides is ultimately alone in his encounter with the god, and one hears his attempt to share his experience of 'seeing the god' with the waking world, as much as he can (Pettis 2013:36). The dream experience that Aristides is referring to, has a personal connotation, in that a divine secret is given to him and brought to conscious awareness within him. This experience happened in 'the clearest possible way' (Pettis 2013:37). This clear perception connotes the impressionable quality of his 'seeing the god', as the god shared information with him as an initiate.

5.3.9 'Not seeing God/gods' in the Graeco-Roman world

In the Graeco-Roman world there were also expressions in the mystery religions about the impossibility of seeing the gods. This view was forwarded by Plutarch[85]: When referring to the god Osiris he notes that

> he himself is at the remotest distance from the earth unimaginable, being unstained and unpolluted, and clean from every substance that is liable to corruption and death. But men's souls encompassed here with bodies and passions, have no communication with God, except that they can reach in

[85] Plutarch (45-120 CE) was a Greek historian, biographer, and essayist (Goodwin 1874).

> conception only, by means of philosophy, as by a kind of an obscure dream, but when they are loosed from the body, and removed onto the unseen, invisible, impassive and pure regions' (*Plutarch, De Isis* 78).

This view of the impossibility of seeing the gods is also reflected by Aune (1998:1179) who summarises his view by stating that 'seeing the face of God is a metaphor in Judaism and early Christianity for a full awareness of the presence and power of God'. Ovid also supports the view of the relationship with the gods as something in a distance and not possible through seeing. He refers to Pythagoras who was a Samian by birth, who had fled Samos and its rulers and, hating their tyranny, was living in voluntary exile. Though the gods were far away, he visited their region of the sky in his mind, and what nature denied to human vision he enjoyed with his inner eye (*Ov Met* 15.60).

The fate of one who tries to see the gods is well captured by Ovid in the epic where Semele asked to see the full majesty of Zeus which resulted in her death:

> …even though he groans, since she cannot un-wish it or he un-swear it. So, most sorrowfully, he climbs the heights of heaven and, with a look, gathered the trailing clouds, and then added their vapours to lightning mixed with stormwinds, and thunder and fateful lightning bolts. Still, he tries to reduce his power in whatever way he can, and does not arm himself with that lightning with which he deposed hundred-handed Typhoeus: it is too savage in his grasp. There is a lighter dart to which the Cyclops' hands gave a less violent fire, a lesser anger. The gods call these his secondary weapons. Taking these he enters Agenor's house. But still Semele's mortal body could not endure the storm, and she was consumed by the fire of her nuptial gift (More 1922:253-315).

5.3.10 Conclusion to this section

This investigation reveals a dual stance in relation to the visibility and invisibility of the gods. In the Graeco-Roman world, some sources emphasise the fact that the gods are visible while other sources remain adamant that the gods are invisible. The notion of seeing the divine face-to-face is only supported by Apuleius, while Plutarch is the only one who alludes to a form of beholding the gods after death.

5.4 'Seeing God' and 'not seeing God' in the New Testament

5.4.1 Introduction to this section

Texts in the New Testament affirming that God can be seen, are Matthew 5:8, John 14:8-11, Revelation 22:4, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 12:1, Hebrews 12:14, and 1 John 3:2.

Text that negate this experience are John 1:8, 1 John 4:12, John 5:37, 6:46, Colossians 1:5, 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:16, and Hebrews 11:27. It is imperative to first deal with the view of the New Testament that God cannot be seen.

5.4.2 Invisibility of God in the New Testament

A casual reading of some New Testament texts can lead one to conclude that they teach that God cannot be seen. However, an in-depth study of the same texts could yield otherwise. The texts being discussed here, are already mentioned above: John 1:8, 1 John 4:12, John 5:37, 6:46, Colossians 1:5, 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:16, and Hebrews 11:27. Foundational to the study of these texts is an awareness of the terms used for 'seeing' in the New Testament. Kittel *et al.* (1964b:316) have also noted this and have the conviction that

> the individual words for seeing are not, of course, simple synonyms, but denote different forms of seeing. On the other hand, in the course of time these words interchanged in meaning, so that different verbs which originally denoted specific actions and were related to specific tenses were combined into a single system of conjugation (ὁράω, ὄψομαι, εἶδον).

The Greek terms in the New Testament that are usually translated with 'see' are discussed here. Kohlenberger and Swanson (1988:1990)[86] note that the primary verb βλέπω can be translated with 'behold', 'beware', 'look', 'perceive', 'regard', 'see', 'sight', and 'take heed' (both literally or figuratively). Kittel *et al.* (1964b:216) note that βλέπω has a stronger emphasis on the function of the eye than in ὁράω. In that sense, 'seeing' implies the opposite of 'be blind'. Although the sensual aspect has priority, βλέπω adopts in large part the other senses of ὁράω. With reference to 'note

[86] See also Strong (1999), and Goodrick and Kohlenberger (1990).

something', and 'be intent on', βλέπω can also be used for conceptual perception, like 'perceive', and even in the absolute sense of 'have insight'.

Dahl (1978:511) notes that 'already by Homer's time ὁράω had the meaning of to conceive or experience, and even to be present at or participate. In a fig. sense it means to understand, recognise, consider, and attend to'.

Kohlenberger and Swanson (1988:1990) acknowledge ἰδεῖν as another primary verb, which can be translated with 'know', 'be aware', 'behold', 'consider', 'knowledge', 'look on', 'perceive', 'see', 'be sure', 'understand', and 'wish'. Kittel *et al.* (1964b:216) also note that ἰδεῖν has the implication of 'seeing as sense-perception', just as ὁράω, hence 'eye-witness'. As 'seeing' implies being there and participating, the verb can also be translated with 'perceive', 'note', 'grasp', and 'consider'.

Kohlenberger and Swanson (1988:1990) discuss θεάομαι that can be translated with 'look closely at', 'perceive', 'visit', 'behold', and 'look upon'. According to Kittel *et al.* (1964b:216) θεάομαι has the implication of 'astonished or attentive seeing', and can be translated with 'look (at or upon)', and 'behold' (cf. οἱ θεώμενοι – 'spectators'). The term has a certain loftiness and even solemnity, and can be used for visionary seeing. This verb is used in the Hermet writings, where the reference is usually to a spiritual and even visionary apprehension of higher reality. Another verb is ὀπτάνομαι, which can be translated with 'gaze' (with wide open eyes, at something remarkable). This verb differs from βλέπω, as βλέπω simply refers to voluntary observation; it also differs from εἶδον, as εἶδον refers to mere mechanical, passive or casual vision; it also differs from θεάομαι, as θεάομαι refers to earnest but more continued inspiration.

It is from this understanding of the variety of ways in which these verbs can be translated, that this research has to deal with the texts that presumably deny the visibility of God in the New Testament.

5.4.2.1 John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12

> *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son,*
> *who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father,*
> *has made him known* (Jn 1:18).

No one has ever <u>seen</u> God; but if we love one another,
God lives in us and his love is made complete in us (1 Jn 4:12).

These two verses can be studied together, because their translations correspond with each other. Sproston (1992:50) adds to the closeness of these two texts, stating that 'conservative commentators typically presume the Epistles' dependence on the Gospel, e.g. Marshall (1978:216), and Kruse (2000:161-162)'.

On the surface these verses are clearly impressing the invisibility of God. The two verbs used in these verses for 'see' are ὁράω in John 1:18 and θεάομαι in 1 John 4:12. A closer study of these two verbs show that they are used in contexts denoting more than physical sight. This is illustrated by John 1:18 and 14:9 where the same verb, ἑώρακεν, is used, and the only way to avoid contradiction is to acknowledge that this verb refers to more than physical sight in both these contexts. Malone (2012:47) makes remarkable observations about a broader understanding of ὁράω:

- Verbs of seeing are regularly collocated with verbs of knowing or understanding. This is demonstrated in John 14:7 and 9: 'Seeing', or 'not seeing' God is primarily about understanding and accepting both the Father and the Son. Plenty lay eyes on Jesus without getting the point. To this end, Thomson (1993:194) concurs by noting that 'in John, God is not so much invisible as unrecognised'.
- It is a fact that, beyond the verbs themselves, John's contexts are concerned with the revelation and certitude of knowing God.
- There is a possibility that John's primary concern is to exalt the Son, rather than to exhaustively enumerate those who have not seen God. Is John's repeated statement in John 1:18 and John 4:12 more qualitative than quantitative?
- Having acknowledged the parallels between John 1:14-18 and Exodus 33-34, these encourage one to affirm that John is promoting the inestimable value of the Son's revelation without denying what Moses revealed and what he may have seen. This once more establishes John's concern with understanding God, rather than with mere physical interaction.

From this discussion one can derive that contrary to the popular belief that these texts teach the invisibility of God[87], they are actually emphasising understanding. We mis-understand and misuse these texts if we base the invisibility of God on them.

5.4.2.2 John 5:37

> *And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.*
> *You have never heard his voice nor seen his form.*

This verse forms part of Jesus' teaching about his witness. He includes the Father as his witness and comments at length on their relationship (Jn 5:30-47). At the pivotal time of this discourse he makes the statement: 'You have never heard his voice nor seen his form' (Jn 5:37). Malone (2012:239) states that

> if this claim is taken literally and used to deny the visibility of God, it is a contradiction and perhaps mockery of regular audible encounters with God in the Old Testament, the tangibility of which few would contest – let alone the Father's audible manifestation in the NT. Given that God's inaudibility can be misconstrued from this verse, we must equally scrutinise what it defines of God's invisibility.

The Old Testament is rich in encounters referring to God being heard (Ex 19-20; Dt 4-5), and this has not been disputed.

Contrary to the notion that Jesus is condemning his listeners for an event that took place centuries before them, Malone (2012:50) notes that 'the rhetorical point being made is that they are failing in the present to believe the one sent by the Father'. This is in accordance with the developing conflict of belief and unbelief in the Gospel of John in general. Pancaro (1975:219) notes that

> fact and principle need not both be affirmed. To say that his listeners have never heard God's voice, etc., needs not imply that God has no voice that can be heard, etc. It completely disregards many Old Testament passages which affirm not only that God has a voice, but that it can be heard and was heard by a privileged and representative few.

[87] See Kruse (2003:73).

It can be derived from this discussion that God can be seen and heard, even though those whom Jesus was presently addressing had not experienced such an encounter. This statement was never intended to teach God's permanent invisibility, but to reveal the problem of the audience, being their unwillingness to believe the One who was sent by the Father (Jn 5:38).

5.4.2.3 John 6:46

> *No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God;*
> *only he has seen the Father.*

The context of this claim 'no one has seen the Father' is very important in understanding the meaning thereof. The context is dealing with a common notion that the incarnate Son is the ultimate means of experiencing the Father (cf. Jn 6:44). The key to understanding this idea lies in unlocking the diverse shades of 'seeing'. Thompson (2001:221) confirms that

> John's rendering of seeing both as a means of knowing God and as descriptive of the ultimate human encounter with God, it is not that God is 'invisible', making sight physically impossible. Rather God's holiness and majesty cannot be seen in their fullness by human beings. God may be seen in part or indirectly.

This idea of a mediated perception of God is also found in John 5:19 and 12:45.

Malone (2012:54) summarised this well by observing that '[u]ltimately this brings us full circle to 1.18. There, the claim that "no one has ever seen the Father" is further explicated by the declaration that the μονογενής, uniquely related to the Father, has made (him) known'. This verse does not confine God/Father, Son or Spirit to permanent invisibility.

5.4.2.4 Colossians 1:15

> *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

This Pauline passage also deals with the issue of God's visibility. Dunn (1996:87) relates that 'it is important to note the description of God as 'invisible' (ἀόρατος)'. This

adjective occurs five times in the New Testament, and four times it is denoting to God (Col. 1:15; Rm 1:20; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27). These texts are discussed later. The issue of the Son being the representative of the Father quickly tempts one to think of the Old Testament appearings as christophanies. This idea is echoed by Dunn (1996:87) when he concedes that 'it is, of course, a central Jewish theologoumenon that God cannot be seen' – hence the figure of the 'angel of the Lord' in the patriarchal narratives (e.g. Gn 16:7-12; 22:11-12; Ex 3:2-6; 14:19-20) and the importance of the commandment against idolatry (Ex 20:4-6; Dt 5:8-10). The researcher does not agree with this interpretation that all Old Testament appearances are christophanies. This discussion is continued in the section dealing with the 'angel of the Lord'.

The idea of 'representation' is one of the main issues in this text when trying to understand the issue of God's invisibility or visibility. Regarding this idea, Kleinknecht (1964:389) has the conviction that

> the particularity of the expression is related to that of the ancient concept, which does not limit image to a functional representation present to human sense but also thinks of it in terms of an emanation, of a revelation of the being with a substantial participation in the object, it has a share in the reality. Indeed, it is reality.

The key to this issue once more lies in the understanding of the verbs and adjectives used to describe the invisibility of God. Just like all the previous verses where invisibility is the most likely conclusion, this verse cannot be the basis for teaching God's invisibility like commonly thought. The emphasis is rather on both the glory and the power of God, whom no human eye and no living person can withstand, unless God himself provides special protection. This verse therefore deals with the image of God who is not seen – not necessarily that he cannot be seen.

5.4.2.5 1 Timothy 1:17

> *Now to the King eternal, immortal, <u>invisible</u>, the only God,*
> *be honour and glory for ever and ever.*

Once again, a casual reading of this verse could lead to the conclusion that God is permanently or totally invisible – yet a closer look may suggest otherwise. The debate

about the background from which Paul is writing, makes no difference to this issue. Malone (2012:40) states that if this doxology finds its background in Greek philosophy, it could have adopted and generalised the philosophical idea of God's inaccessibility. Alternatively, as perhaps a majority of conservative scholars would favour, the doxology develops Jewish ideas, as the language here echoes Exodus 33:20 that does not proscribe some form of visibility of God.

This verse, like others that seem to attest to God's invisibility, deals with 'inapproachability' rather than with invisibility, as Neyrey (2006:83-84) confirms: 'Predicates such as *aoratos* and *aphrositos* have to do with God's unknowability, indicating that the most noble faculty of humans cannot approach, much less comprehend the deity'. These terms refer to the 'inability of the human mind to grasp or circumscribe him' (Neyrey 2006:84).

5.4.2.6 Hebrews 11:27

> *By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger;*
> *he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.*

In his deliberation on faith, the author of Hebrews uses Moses as an example. In this verse Moses is credited with 'seeing the invisible One' – therefore implying that God is in fact invisible. Malone rightly concludes that in this verse ὁράω is unlikely to describe physical sight. The author is speaking of Moses' 'spiritual perception' (Malone 2012:63). This is consistent with the way the adjective ἀόρατος has been used in 1 Timothy 1:17, narrating a particular contrast rather than declaring God's invisibility. Malone (2012:31) argues that in all respects Moses' experience that must be emulated by the audience, is nothing more and nothing less than can be expected by any believer.

5.4.2.7 Conclusion to this section

From the above references in the New Testament, it is clear that God's incarnation can only be derived from a thorough study of each context. It is important to note that the incarnation in itself is described as an objective encounter with God (e.g. Jn 12:45; 14:9). The incarnation, though objective, is not exclusive, because Jesus at times states that the disciples have not seen the complete glory of God (Jn 17:24). This is

also evidenced in the fact that Jesus could be transfigured at times, that is a clear indication that he was more than what the disciples were seeing (Mk 9:2-3; Lk 24:16; Jn 20:14; 21:4). The issue is consistent with the Judaic presupposition about the relativity of access to God. This is further enhanced by specific New Testament texts like 1 Corinthians 13:12 and 2 Corinthians 12:1, where the possibility of 'seeing God' is hinted at, though under exceptional circumstances.

5.4.3 The visibility of God in the New Testament

The discussion above has revealed that God the Father is not constrained to permanent invisibility. Malone (2012:123) asserts that

> granted, God is not regularly seen; even the physical manifestation of Son and Spirit which is undebated has been witnessed by only a selected few throughout history. If God is unseen, it is because he chooses to be – not least for the welfare of those who might sight him unprepared (cf. Ex 33:20).

These words are very crucial for any study of the phenomenon of 'seeing God' and acts as a strong foundation and possibility of seeing God in the *Eschaton*.

The texts from the New Testament, already being mentioned, which confirm blatantly that it is possible to see God, and on which this research focuses, are Matthew 5:8, John 14:8-11, Revelation 22:4, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 12:1, Hebrews 12:14, and 1 John 3:2. In relation to these passages, Malone (2012:66) notes that 'the consistent message of many NT authors is that an eschatological "seeing" of God yet to come will surpass present limitations'. Three of these significant New Testament texts, presenting God as visible, are now discussed, namely Matthew 5:8, John 14:8-11, and Revelation 22:4.

5.4.3.1 Matthew 5:8

> *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

Jesus said this as he was teaching his disciples and the crowd that came to listen to him. This verse forms part of a discourse that is generally referred to as the *beatitudes*. In this sermon Jesus provides the audience with a possibility to see God. Incidental as this promise is, it is regarded as one of the clear teachings from Jesus about 'seeing

God'. Boring (1995:786) argues that this expression is derived from 'usages of oriental courts, where kings live in great seclusion, and it is a rare and distinguished privilege to be admitted into the very presence of the monarch, and see him face to face'[88]. Concerning seeing God as the King, Robertson explains that without holiness no man will see the Lord in heaven (Heb 12.14). The *Beatific Vision* is only possible on earth to those with pure hearts – no other person will/can see the King now: 'Sin befogs and beclouds the heart so that one cannot see God. Purity has here its widest sense and includes everything' (Robertson 1997:212).

Jamieson *et al*. (1871:342) argue that this verse is based in the Old Testament. There the difference between outward and inward purity, and the acceptableness of the latter only in the sight of God, are everywhere taught. The 'vision of God' is no strange phenomenon in the Old Testament, though it was understood that this was not possible in the present life (Ex 33:20; cf. also Job 19:26-27; Isa 6:5), yet spiritually it was known and felt to be the privilege of the saints[89]. There, in great fundamental truth it is expressed with grand simplicity, brevity, and power. It is in the Old Testament 'in which exclusive attention was paid to ceremonial purification and external morality. This heart purity begins in a "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience", or a "conscience purged from dead works"' (Jamieson *et al*. 1871:343)[90].

Concerning Matthew 5:8, Webber (2000:27) argues that the term used can be translated with 'pure' or 'clean'. It can denote to literally of physical cleanness, although Scripture often uses it for moral cleanness and purity. A simple but helpful way of looking at the term is to realise that it implies the absence of impurity or filth; it implies a singleness of purpose, without distraction to the concept of 'holiness', being set apart for a special purpose (Jas 4:8). Any distracting or corrupting influence a kingdom servant allows into his/her heart makes that person less effective as a servant. The kingdom servant has a heart that is undivided and unalloyed.

This quality is a natural by-product of the preceding blessings and character qualities. Purity of heart is not manufactured by the believer, but is granted by the God of mercy

[88] See also 1 Kings 10:8, Esther 1:14, Hebrews 12:14, Revelation 22:4, and Matthew 18:10.

[89] See also Genesis 5:24, 6:9, 17:1, 48:15, Psalm 27:4, 36:9, 63:2, and Isaiah 38:3, 11.

[90] See also Hebrews 10:22, 9:14, and Acts 15:9, based on Old Testament verses such as Psalm 32:1-2 and Isaiah 6:5-8.

(Mt 5:7) to those who mourn their spiritual bankruptcy (Mt 5:3-4) and who seek his righteousness (Mt 5:6). When the king grants purity of heart, he gives not only judicial purity (forgiveness and absolution from guilt), but also the actual removal of corrupting impurities from the heart. This comes about through the empowerment of the believer to grow into holiness and out of these impurities.

Jesus may have had a dual meaning behind the clause 'see God'. First, the pure heart is unhindered in its ability to understand the heart and person of God in this life on earth, and, in this sense, is better able to see God. Moreover, only the pure (forgiven) heart is able to enter heaven to enjoy the presence of God for eternity.

According to Blomberg (2001:85), 'purity in heart' refers to moral uprightness and not just ritual cleanliness. The Pauline theme of the impossibility of perfect purity in this life should not be imported here. Rather, in line with what this Gospel depicts about 'righteousness' in general, Jesus requires of his disciples a lifestyle characterised by pleasing God. 'Pure in heart' exhibits a single-minded devotion to God that stems from the internal cleansing created by following Jesus. Holiness is a prerequisite for entering God's presence. The pure in heart passes this test, and will therefore see God and experience intimate fellowship with him. This *Beatitude* closely relates to Psalm 24:3-4.

Nolland (2005:65) states that only in this *Beatitude* there is no specific hint of a situation of need, although it must be read against the background of its context, which depicts the pressures of deprivation and oppression. A specific link with Psalm 24 is likely, where Matthew 5:3-4 states that a pure heart is one of the conditions for ascending the hill of the Lord (to go into the temple); this forms part of what is involved in 'seeking the face of the God of Jacob' (Ps 24:6). Psalm 24:7-10 portrays the king of glory entering the gates, and should probably be understood as referring to God's arrival in the temple and by implication as pointing to the fruition of seeing God's face.

Purity of heart connotes integrity and stands opposed to deviousness. There is purity of heart when the motives behind the (mostly apparently good, but on occasion apparently bad) actions can stand up under open scrutiny. The 'heart' locates the core

of a person, that place from which one feels, thinks, and determines their actions[56]. The idea, however, does not have the degree of introspective focus that develops in Christian tradition and in modern times, that psychological studies have tended to impose on it. In contexts of deprivation and oppression, the temptations for the kind of integrity involved here to lapse are huge; it is so much easier to serve one's own interests by hiding behind a false front (Nolland 2005:68).

The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is a promise to the children of God. They are by virtue God's children and are expected to be pure. The state of those who will experience the espoused *visio Dei* is of paramount importance in this New Testament text. The Elder has a great deal to caution those who want to 'see God'; this is consistent with this text, which is discussed under the section dealing with this pericope.

5.4.3.2 John 14:8-11

> *Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us'. Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?" Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves*'.

This conversation takes place during a crucial time in the life of Jesus and his disciples. After spending a fulfilling and eventful time with his disciples, Jesus comforts them in relation to his pending departure to be with the Father. Philip's request to see the Father follows Thomas' disclosure of his ignorance about where Jesus was going.

Philip has already been introduced in John 1:43-48 as being from Bethsaida. He is the one who brought Nathaniel to Jesus. In John 6:5-7 he offers his logical inferences concerning the unfeasibility of feeding the multitude with more than half a year's

[56] See Genesis 27:41, Deuteronomy 28:47, Judges 5:16, Proverbs 6:18, 27:11, Isaiah 35:4, Jeremiah 3:17, 23:20, and Daniel 1:8.

wages. In John 12:20-22, after Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Greeks wanted Philip to assist them in their endeavour to see Jesus. In the verses that follow, Philip is 'portrayed as trying to make sense out of what must have seemed to him as Jesus' ethereal talk about himself and God' (Borchert 2003:384). This is why he asked Jesus to get practical and show the Father to the disciples. If Jesus did that, they could dispense with any further discussion on the subject.

Philip's words here are easy to understand because it represents the universal human longing to gain a first-hand personal and practical confirmation of theological ideas and assertions. The problem is that he does not realise what he is asking. He wants to see the Father, to see God[91]. In several passages the Old Testament indicates that people saw God, like Exodus 24:9-11, where Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel beheld God and ate and drank, and Isaiah 33:20-21, where the Lord will be in Zion. However, for the most part Israel took seriously the dictum that 'man shall not see me and live' (Ex 33:20). Accordingly, Gideon was quite convinced that he was in great danger because he had seen the angel of the Lord (who was identified with God), and he begged the angel not to leave him until he had prepared the appropriate offering (Jdg 6:18). Likewise, Isaiah was sure he was in desperate straits of woe because in the temple he had seen a vision merely of God's trailing gown (Isa 6:1-5).

In John 14:9 the ill-informed response of Philip elicits from Jesus a rather sharp and yet somewhat grief-stricken reply. Jesus could not understand this response of one of his disciples. Interestingly every Gospel depicts the disciples as being dull, slow-learning humans. In responding here to Philip's plea to see the Father, Jesus emphatically states that seeing him (Jesus) is the equivalent of seeing the Father; that means that, in effect, they have already seen the Father. Even before the resurrection the disciples had incredible difficulty imagining that Jesus could truly have been a divine-human agent of God. However, that is not surprising, as even today scholars (and others) are continually debating the question of the identity of Jesus[92].

[91] See Korteweg (1979:40-102) for a thorough discussion on this.

[92] Scholars seem to be continually seeking to discover a historical (human) Jesus between the lines of the Gospel texts, like Strauss (1972), Wrede (1971), Schweitzer (1954), Robinson (1959), Funk, Hoover and The Jesus Seminar (1993; 1998), Witherington (1995), Wilkins and Moreland (1995), Borg and Wright (1999), and Charlesworth (2001:45-63).

As is explained above, the people of Israel were clearly warned about the likely fatal consequences of seeing God. Despite that, many people, even today, have a strong desire for a direct contact with God; they long to have a confirmation of the reality of God; they want to 'see' God. At the outset of his first Epistle, the Elder clearly states that this is exactly what happened when Jesus was physically on earth: The early witnesses both saw and touched him – they touched the reality of God, who was there from the beginning (1 Jn 1:1-3).

Borchert (2003:342) categorises this dual 'in-ness' of Jesus and the Father as a 'reciprocal formula of immanence'. This close interdependent assertion is an affirmation of a close unity between the Father and the Son, without assuming that the unity implies absolute identity (cf. Jn 10:38). However, such interdependent unity is far more than a mere example of the Rabbinic idea of agency, where the agent is an obedient servant/envoy of the master in order for the servant to act as or become an alter ego of the master. Jesus certainly fulfils this role of agency, but he is much more than a functioning servant. The reason is that, concerning Jesus and his Father, one soon realises that this reciprocal 'in-ness' represents a kind of interpenetration of natures. Still, for John, Jesus is said to be obedient to the Father and not the reverse (cf. Jn 5:30; 8:29; 14:10).

Accordingly, the works/miracles that Jesus did, are in fact the works of the Father, and in this passage Jesus tells his disciples that if they have difficulty in believing his 'words', they will have to believe because of his 'works'. Jesus earlier offered this same pattern of testing his words by his works to the Jews, who were ready to stone him (cf. Jn 10:37-38). However, the stone throwers had already rejected works as a confirmation for or against what they considered to be heretical words (Jn 10:32). For the Apostle John, the works of Jesus were signs pointing to the reality of who Jesus was (cf. Jn 5:20; 9:3-4; 10:25).

Jamieson *et al.* (1871:234) point out that the substance of this passage is that the Son is the ordained and perfect manifestation of the Father, that his own word for this ought to be enough to his disciples; that if any doubts remain, his works ought to remove these (cf. Jn 10:37). These works of Jesus were designed to aid weak faith, and would be repeated, in fact exceeded by his disciples, in virtue of the power he would confer

on them after his departure. They did the same miracles he did, in his Name and by his power, and they did 'greater' works – not in degree, but in kind – because his Spirit accompanied them.

Gangel (2000:132) has the conviction that Philip either did not understand the Old Testament writings well, or he failed to link the Father to the Son. If Jesus could produce physical evidence of the Father, Philip claimed the disciples would finally be satisfied. Jesus' response was clear: There is no difference between the Father and the Son; they are both God – equally powerful. Here (again) the theme 'believing is seeing' surfaces (Jn 11:40). Notice Jesus' emphasis on both words and work in John 14:10. Jesus' words reflect his deity much more than his work does. The disciples have been fascinated by his work, but they have not listened carefully enough to his words. Almost in frustration, the Lord says, [*A*]*t least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves* (Jn 14:11).

Tenney (1985:145) argues that if a person is employed to represent God, that person cannot be less than God to do him justice, nor can that person be too far above humanity that it cannot communicate God perfectly to them. For this reason, John says that *the one and only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known* (Jn 1:18). The way Jesus revealed the character and reality of the Father was by his words and works. The truth of God filled Jesus' words; the power of God produced his works.

5.4.3.3 Revelation 22.4

> *They will see his face,*
> *and his Name will be on their foreheads.*

In this passage the promise of seeing God's face is given to the victors. Robertson (1997:30) notes that this vision of God was withheld from Moses in Exodus 33:20, 23, but promised by Jesus to the pure of heart in Matthew 5:8; it was also mentioned in Hebrews 12:14 as possible only to the holy, and promised in Psalm 17:15. 2 Corinthians 4:6 declares that God is displayed (visible) in the face of Christ, while 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29 and 1 John 3:2 announce that mankind is transformed into God's image. This is anthropomorphic language, but it touches the essential

reality of religion: ‘The supreme felicity is reached, immediate presence with God and the Lamb’ (Robertson 1997:32).

Easley (1998:759) declares that this promise originates from one of the truths embedded almost from the beginning of biblical revelation that no human can see God face-to-face. Moses’ experience with the Lord is the model: *You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live* (Ex 33:20). Further the Lord said to Moses, *You will see my back; but my face must not be seen* (Ex 33:23). In the Christian era, God’s face is glimpsed through Christ. Sometimes, however, God’s face has appeared hidden even to the greatest of saints. In eternity, with the curse removed, all God’s servants will see him face-to-face. Again, we cannot imagine what this means; only that it surpasses the most wonderful spiritual experience of God that anyone can ever have. The second blessing is *immediate divine presence*.

Beale, Grand, Cubria and Eerdmans (1999:543) add that in the era before Christ, God’s presence was primarily located in the temple of Israel, but during the post-resurrection era the location moved to heaven. Christians had access to the Spirit’s presence, but the eschatological fullness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was not yet revealed to them. Now the divine presence fully permeates the eternal temple and dwelling place of the saints, since ‘they will see his face’ – a hope expressed by the Old Testament saints (Ps 11:4-7; 27:4; 4 Ezr 7:98; cf. Ps 42:2). The whole community of the redeemed is considered priests serving in the temple and privileged to see God’s face in the new holy of holies, which now encompasses the entire temple-city. Whether this refers to God or the Lamb is unclear, but the Godly will be in the presence of both.

5.4.4 Articles and monographs

This section deals with the ‘seeing of God’ espoused by different articles and monographs in order to form a backdrop from which the ‘seeing him as he is’ in 1 John 3:2 can be understood. These scholarly works unpack different aspects of ‘seeing God’. McDermott has dealt with this issue. He explains this ‘seeing’ with the experience he had when a mental image of Jesus hanging on the cross, offering his body for his salvation, blew him away. What had been an ‘intellectual notion suddenly became a new supernatural knowledge’ (McDermott 1995:126-127). This experience convinced him that Jesus was real and true, and he was also overwhelmed by the

realisation that Jesus had been patient and loving towards him. He 'saw' God in this way.

He further refers to this 'seeing' as the time he received the light like in 2 Corinthians 4:6: *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ*. This is the light that makes it possible for someone to 'see' God, something the unbelievers do not have – this is the reason why they cannot 'see' God. This thought is captured well in 2 Corinthians 4:4: *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*.

According to McDermott (1995:127), believers are able to 'see' God because 'the scriptures often describe the knowing of the regenerate as a kind of seeing'. He backs his position by the words of John, stating that *No one who sins has either seen him or known him* (1 Jn 3:6) and *Whoever does evil has not seen God* (3 Jn 11).

In his paper on *The reality of the invisible,* Korteweg argues that 'seeing the Father' in the Johannine writings is always the prerogative of the Son alone; whenever it is said of others that they have 'seen God' or 'seen the Father', it denotes to 'not seeing in any literal sense of the word, but rather faith in somebody or even something that has been offered by God as a kind of substitute for himself' (Korteweg 1979:171). In this case, it could refer to Jesus. Vermaseren (1963:59) relates that since God is invisible and out of reach of our love and sight, the only way to 'see God' is by 'doing good [which] in some way makes up for seeing God in a proper sense'.

Muderhwa (2008:295-299) discusses the idea of 'seeing' in one section of his thesis, *A Comprehensive reading of John 9: A Socio-Rhetorical perspective of Discipleship in the Gospel of John*. He has dealt with the semantics of 'seeing'/'looking' related to the specific Greek verbs: 1) βλέπω: He argues that the most basic kind of seeing is referring to eyesight. It is the simple act of perceiving through the eyes adequately for negotiating the everyday realities of life, but not for comprehension of deep spiritual truths; 2) θεωρέω – to look at something with concentration, but without a very high perception of the significance of what is contemplated. This kind of 'seeing' was

evidenced by those who witnessed Jesus' 'signs without grasping the deeper meaning to which they point'; and 3) ὁράω – the intellectual content of what has been seen, has come to dominate the physical act of seeing. In 1 John 3:2 the Elder has used ὀψόμεθα, which is the future form of ὁράω. It is important to note that Muderhwa's conclusion is that seeing has shades of meaning consistent with this research.

Shepherd has written an interesting article titled *The Face of God* (*Jn 1:1-9, 10-18*), in which he reflects on the assertion that no one has seen God. He states that, in a 'quest to imagine the face of God, Christians are left with metaphor, simile and symbol' (Shepherd 2009:16). He adds that Christians can see God through other people and see godliness through the people God has touched and transformed. He emphasises that people like John the Baptist has given Christians the insight and inspiration they need to see God. The Elder echoes the same sentiment when he writes, *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us* (1 Jn 4:11-12).

Hollander (2010) analyses 1 Corinthians 13:22 and deals with the implications of Paul in relation to seeing God 'in a riddle' or 'face to face'. He concludes that 'man's present vision or knowledge of God is partial and incomplete once more by the words "(seeing) in a riddle". The apostle contrasts this with our future, eschatological and perfect vision of God which will be "face to face"' (Hollander 2010:401). The implications of the phrase 'face to face' according to him, is that the eschatological 'seeing' will be like the direct access that Moses had with God. As once the great prophet and servant of God, Moses, communicated with God[93] in an absolutely unique and direct way, so one day the believers in Jesus Christ will see and know God: Not indirectly, not 'in a mirror', nor 'in a riddle', but directly – 'face to face'.

5.4.5 Conclusion to this section

All the quoted New Testament texts accord well with Old Testament evidence that God is able to render himself visually/sensible to his creation, and is also willing to do so on occasions. This survey demonstrates that the New Testament does not teach

[93] See Numbers 12:8 and Deuteronomy 34:10.

God's invisibility – it rather portrays the manner in which he renders himself visible, and the impact such an encounter has on the recipients. Old Testament saints responded in fear and expectation of death, but New Testament saints are supposed to have confidence and no shame (1 Jn 2:28-3:10). There are different shades to the notion of 'seeing', which can be solved through semantics and proper theological research. It has also been evident that there is no tension, nor contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament in regard to seeing God or God's visibility.

5.4.6 New Testament orientation

Malone has interestingly noted that some interpreters of Scripture have deliberately construed Old Testament theophanies as christophanies:

> Everyone concurs that the OT readily and regularly speaks of Yahweh 'appearing' to people, while the NT repeatedly describes God as 'invisible' and the Son as his 'image' or 'representation'. This forms the base for the christophanists' emphasis on this discord. The alternative they offer is an interpretation that presumes that OT appearances of 'Yahweh' are actually appearances of the Son. The invisibility of the Father remains a core principle for credibly interpreting the OT theophanies as christophanies (Malone 2012:22).

A number of New Testament texts depicting an activity by the Son in the Old Testament are now discussed in order to further understand the New Testament orientation on christophanies. The following texts are selected because of their projection on some activity of the Son in the Old Testament: John 8:56-58, 12:41, 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9, and Jude 5.

5.4.6.1 John 8:56-58

> *(Jesus replied:) 'Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad'.*
>
> *'You are not yet fifty years old,' the Jews said to him, 'and you have seen Abraham!'*
>
> *I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'*

In his exchange with the Jews, Jesus blatantly declared to them that *your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day: and he saw it, and was glad*. According to Kittel *et al.* (1964a:116-117) the Greek verb οἶδα 'refers to "have realised", "perceived", "to know". It often replaces ἔγνωκα: "to have experienced", "learned to know"'. This is in line with Augustine of Hippo (1912:402) who states that 'if those rejoiced whose bodily eyes were opened by the Lord, what joy was his who saw with the eyes of his soul the light ineffable, the abiding Word, the brilliance that dazzles the minds of the pious, the unfailing Wisdom'. In the Rabbinic standpoint, Abraham's 'seeing' was in a vision recorded in *2* Esdras 3:14 (cf. *Gen Rab* 44:22-28) where Rabbah Akiba held that Abraham was given a vision of 'both this age/world and the age to come, and thou didst love him, and to him only didst thou reveal the end of the times, secretly by night' (Jamieson *et al*. 1871:456).

In this verse Jesus claims to have been the object of Abraham's yearning. This baffled the Jews who responded, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!' To this Jesus adds another perspective to the christophanies: 'I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!'. This is a clear claim of a christophany and it brought a lot of contention between Jesus and the Jews.

5.4.6.2 John 12:41

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

In this discourse on the unbelief of the Jews, referred to as blindness (Jn 12:40), John claims that what Isaiah saw, was actually the pre-incarnate Christ in his glory. Here he utilises the same verb as in John 8:56 (above) for 'seeing' i.e. οἶδα. Utley (1999:115) claims that 'this is an assertion that OT prophets were informed about the Messiah'. It is worth noting that in both incidents John seems to have an extended meaning of 'seeing' that involves 'experiencing', 'knowing', 'perceiving', and 'realising'.

5.4.6.3 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, 9

They (our ancestors) all ate the same spiritual food
and drank the same spiritual drink;
for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them,
and that rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:3-4).

We should not test Christ, as some of them did –
and were killed by snakes (1 Cor 10:9).

In his correspondence to the Corinthians, Paul uses Israel's history to warn them as he sets forth his premise that *these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come* (1 Cor 10:11). Paul espouses a christophanic Theology as he expounds on the history of Israel. Scholars differ as to what it actually means that 'that rock was Christ'[94].

The Christ in the Old Testament, depicted by Paul in this text, has wisdom as his context: *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption* (1 Cor 1:30). Witherington (1995:318) rightly notes: 'Nevertheless, Paul could take for granted a background about the role of divine Wisdom as protector, guide, and nourisher of Israel in the wilderness which could readily be applied to the pre-existent Christ, while this background, which was the stock-in-trade of Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora synagogue sermons[95], has become unfamiliar now to most modern readers'. Thiselton (2000:728) expresses this forcefully: 'Christ himself, the pre-existent Christ, was present with the Israelites in their wilderness journey'. Christ was 'as much the source of the spiritual food and drink of the Israelites as he is the one present in the Lord's Supper at Corinth' (Thiselton 2000:728).

5.4.6.4 Jude 5

Though you already know all this,
I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt,
but later destroyed those who did not believe.

[94] It is not the scope of this research to make an analytical survey of the argument, but Thiselton (2000:727) has summarised the different possibilities as '(a) the *realistic*, the Rock *is* the pre-existent Christ; (b) they are *identical events*; (c) the symbolic: the rock stands for Christ; (d) they are parallel but not the same; (e) typological interpretation, i.e. it points to the Christian reality'.

[95] For further resonation with the background theme of wisdom from both the Old Testament and Rabbinic literature, see Deuteronomy 8:15, 32:13, Nehemiah 9:15, Psalm 78:15-20, 81:16, Isaiah 48:21, and Proverbs 8, as well as Isaiah 7:22-8:1, 11:20-12:18, and 19:7-8.

The point that Jude makes in comparing Christians to Israel, is identifying the One who delivered Israel from Egypt as the Lord. κύριος[96] is here translated with 'Lord' by some English translations, while others prefer 'Jesus'[97]. The contention among scholars is perhaps evidenced by the preference of translation for either 'Lord' or 'Jesus'. The connection that Jude achieves here is that he manages to connect the Christ to the Old Testament activities. Therefore, this Old Testament theophany is characterised by Jude as a christophany.

5.4.6.5 Conclusion to this section

All the New Testament writers discussed above have a clear association with the Son in the Old Testament theophanies. Although this association is not explicitly revealed and also does not make any bearing in regard to the Father's (in)visibility, nor to the extent of his involvement therein, these texts cannot stand alone, but must be interpreted *in loci* with other New Testament texts that deal with a *visio Dei*.

5.4.7 Epiphanic 'seeing' in New Testament narratives

This section is guided by the work of Pettis (2013:105-144), whose work is outstanding in dealing with 'seeing God' in Gospel narratives. The first narratives being discussed, albeit not exhaustively, are those which are didactic, depicting some of the more dramatic 'seeing' narratives:

- The demon at the Capernaum synagogue – Mark 1:21-28;
- The baptism of Jesus – Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34;
- The blind man – John 9:1-41.

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[96] Generally, the term refers to one who has power or authority (Ellenburg 2003:1046). It also refers to 'one who possesses and exercises power and authority and to whom respect is thus ascribed' (Myers 1987:661). White (1988:1346) notes that it the 'rendering of the Hebrew *'ădōnāy* or of the Greek *kurios*. In Israel both piety and fear (of transgressing, Ex 20:7) inhibited the correct pronunciation of the sacred consonants of the divine name (probably Yahweh). Instead, the vowel sounds of *'ēlōhîm* ("God") or *'ădōnāy* ("Lord," from *'ādōn*, ruler, lord, master, husband) were combined with yhwh. The resulting frequent reminder of God's rule and authority rests ultimately upon his creation and ownership of all things and people (Ps 24:1, 2); but as the following verses (7-10) recall, a military application is evident in "the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel"'.

[97] Schreiner (2003) has argued that the reading Ἰησοῦς is supported by A, B, 33, 81, 1241, 1739, 1881, 2344. $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$ has the reading θεός Χριστός, which is certainly a corruption. Some scholars support κύριος (Bauckham 2004:308-309; Landon 1996:75-76), especially on internal grounds. Supporting Ἰησοῦς are (Wikgren 1967:147-152; Osburn 1981:107-115; Bigg 1901:328; Bauckham 1988:303-317).

In these narratives there is a thread of revelation knowledge that takes place in the midst of a *didache.*

Mark 1:21-28 records the power encounter between Jesus and the demon at the synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus was teaching in such a special way that it is recorded that *the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law* (Mk 1:22). The revelation came with the demon in Mark 1:24, saying, *What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God*. In this exchange with the demon (unseen world) Mark opens up that world to the readers to 'see' inside it. A synopsis for this encounter is given by Pettis (2013:112):

> Mortal vision, mortal capacity of hearing, is less even than that of a dog. The range of seeing and hearing necessary for other-worldly events is beyond the normal capacity. Ordinary seeing and ordinary hearing are not to be classed alongside *epiphanic* seeing and hearing. It is an important and an early lesson Mark underscores in his opening folio.

Another epiphanic seeing occurs in the baptism narrative recorded in all four Gospels (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21, 22; Jn 1:29-34). The baptismal epiphany recorded in John serves as one of his most dramatic seeing and hearing stories, where 'neither seeing nor hearing actually takes place simply on the page, but which are the categories around which the whole narrative unquestionably revolves' (Pettis 3013:113).

In John 1:34 John the Baptist says: *I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God*. This conclusion follows an array of seeing motifs concentrated in John 1:29-34: 'John *saw* Jesus coming to him', '*Look* the Lamb of God', 'I *saw* the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him', and 'the man on whom you *see* the Spirit come down'. This conclusion is also followed by an array of seeing motifs connected to the disciples in John 1:35-42: 'When he *saw* Jesus passing by', he said, '*Look*, the Lamb of God', 'Jesus *saw* them following', 'Come, he replied, and you *will see'*, and 'so they went and *saw*'. There is a massive amount of seeing going on here that is not visible, or rather phenomenological. It is actually mystical, and involves becoming a *mystes, an initiate.* John has provided his readers with sacred symbols to inner sight.

He passes before their comprehension, bilingual *midrashim* that they should know, and in recognising, should confess. ‘Seeing’ here is, once again, underlined as not being ordinary looking, but rather a question of being mystically initiated (Pettis 2013:116).

John 9:1-41 relates the story of the blind man, where ‘seeing’ is, once again, the focal point. In John 9:39 Jesus sets forth the conclusion of this story as noting that, ‘For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind’. The ‘coming to vision’, or ‘remaining unseeing’, is far from a neutral category. It is an issue of eschatological judgement. Those who see are the elect; those who do not see are those who cannot or refuse to see – in this they have passed into judgement. This moment has become a moment of the *Eschaton* for them. Seeing is therefore a seeing of the Son of Man coming in glory, whether or not that sight is one of liberation or terror. The ‘seeing’ nevertheless is at the core, and once again it is not a ‘seeing’ that is given easily or uncomplicatedly (Pettis 2013:117).

5.4.8 New Testament extended theological narratives

Extended narratives are those which are related to the experience of the glorification of Jesus. How different people experienced the glorified Messiah is a window into the *visio Dei.*

5.4.8.1 Seeing Jesus in his post-resurrection state

In the Matthaean account of the post-resurrection (Mt 28:1-20) physical seeing is communicated to the readers. In this narrative the angel shows the women the empty tomb where the Lord was laid, and instructs them to go and tell the disciples, with a promise that [*h*]*e has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him* (Mt 28:7). As the women were on their way following this command, [*s*]*uddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings’, he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me*’ (Mt 28:9-10).

Pettis (2013:120) reckons that this dual promise of seeing firstly by angels and reiterated by Jesus himself would be received with mixed outcomes by the disciples: *When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted* (Mt 28:17). Even so, at

the very moment of the climactic vision there are troubles. It is in their going away from the ambivalent seeing into the simple obedience to the Word, where the Lord will truly be with his disciples. Faith thus, at the end of the narrative, is shown to be a matter of hearing and obeying; a matter of the performance of the kerygmatic command in fidelity across the generations; not a matter of seeing (which can evidently, even then, be doubtful). We have here a refusal to prioritise actual seeing, and instead witness the elevation of spiritual *pistis* (trust or faith) in its place. The gospel then becomes a matter of seeing in the heart and spirit, a matter of the present *kairos* of God's grace, rather than a matter accessible only to history and the original 'seeing' witness (cf. Pettis 2013:120-121).

In the Markan account of the resurrection the promises of seeing him are reiterated by the words of the angel, *But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him*' (Mk 16:7). The Lukan account takes the resurrection narrative beyond the environs of the tomb and unbelieving disciples to the road to Emmaus. Two men, belonging to the bigger group of Jesus' disciples, are walking and conversing with the risen Lord without recognising him (Lk 24:16). He continually explains the Scriptures to them, revealing what they say about him, but these men still did not recognise him until after the breaking of the bread when *their eyes were opened and they recognised him* (Lk 24:31).

Following the Emmaus experience and the subsequent disclosure after the breaking of the bread where the eyes of the disciples were opened, two epiphanies of the *Anastasis* occur: In Luke 24:36 (within the context of Lk 24:36-49), Jesus appears to his disciples while they were talking about him. Once again the mind, as was the case with the heart, serves as a better organ for seeing what is transpiring there. The second epiphany occurs when Jesus bids his disciples farewell in Luke 24:51. The Gospel ends with the note that they worshipped him (when they could no longer see him, presumably), and returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised descent of the Spirit (Pettis 2013:119).

5.4.8.2 The metamorphosis

That faith's perception is birthed by the revealed Word and seen in the spirit, and that simply hearing the Word and virtually seeing phenomenal events are not enough, is

the doctrine espoused by the Gospels. Metamorphosis is the radical fusion, the editing of a story with a theme of brilliant heavenly glory (such as manifested in the radiance of the heavenly visitors in the post-resurrection appearances), conveying that the Son of Man must suffer and be rejected. Foundational to these narratives is that 'seeing' has evaporated when the voice of God reveals the truth, and the disciples are told to listen to the Son (Pettis 2013:122).

The theme that relates the superiority of spiritual insight over seeing historical events, is manifested throughout the Markan narrative and elsewhere in the New Testament[98]. In Mark 8:29 Jesus commends Peter for the insight or deeper understanding he showed by noting, 'You are the Christ', while, minutes later, Peter is rebuked for not being able to have insight about the suffering and rejection envisaged by Jesus: *'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns'* (Mk 8:33).

The transfiguration narrative (Mk 9:2-8) is another example of a metamorphosis episode in the Gospels. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain. *There he was transfigured before them, his clothes became dazzling*[99] *white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them, and there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus* (Mk 9:3-4). Peter's wrong solution to this episode reveals the fact that he needed to learn that his 'seeing' is defectively focused. He must learn to see with his ears and heart more accurately than with his eyes and mouth (Pettis 2013:122).

5.4.8.3 The *Pneuma* narratives

The *Pneuma* narratives are those that articulate the glorification of the Lord by resonating with post-resurrection experiences of the *Pneuma.* The Holy Spirit falls on the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus as a direct result of the glorification of their master. Seeing God is intricately woven into these *Pneuma* narratives. The following Lukan passages are discussed: Luke 24:49-51, Acts 1:6-11, and 2:1-4.

[98] See e.g. 2 Corinthians 4:18 and John 20:29.

[99] The appearance of heavenly beings is connected with white dazzling clothes in e.g. 1 Enoch 14:20, 2 Enoch 22:8-9, 3 Enoch 12:1, and Test Job 46:7-9 (cf. also Ps 104:1-2).

In Luke 24:49-51 Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, who must stay in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high. A detailed episode unfolds in Acts 1:6-11 when the disciples ask Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom whereupon he replies to them that *it is not for you to know the times and dates the Father has set by his own authority* (Ac 1:7). Acts 1:10-11 follows: *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee', they said, 'Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'*.

'Seeing' plays a major role in this section; actually the ascension is a prelude to the eschatological return of the Son of Man. This ascension, although depicting a physically vertical concept, is also a term connoting 'glorification'. As the disciples are 'looking on', 'a cloud takes him out of their sight'. This cloud symbolises the biblical reference to the *Shekinah* of God. In short, Luke basically tells his hearers that the disciples saw something that could not be really seen; it was promised in the past as being a future vision that falters in the fuller roundness of the experience of the multiple aspects of the mysterious glorification, that so confounds categories of time and space (Pettis 2013:126).

'Seeing' is also evident in the descending of the *Pneuma* at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4, specifically verse 3: *They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them*. Polhill (1992:98) notes that Luke knew that 'he was dealing with the transcendent, that which is beyond ordinary human experience and can only be expressed in earthly analogies'. This is evident as Luke uses metaphorical language in his description of this episode – *a sound like the blowing of a violent wind* (Ac 2:2), *what seemed to be tongues of fire* (Ac 2:3).

5.4.8.4 'Seeing God' in the writings of Paul

The thread that runs through Pauline texts – as well as Acts – around Paul's 'seeing God' is the religio-spiritual relationship between the internal and external change and manifesting: Internally, through personal experience with the divine, Paul develops an authentic relationship with the God who appeared to him; externally, because of, and through the inherent force of his visions, Paul experiences himself to be in the process

of changing outwardly into a spiritual body, culminating at the raising of the bodies at the sound of the trumpet (Pettis 2013:143-144). Perhaps the departure point is an elaboration on the experiences themselves as depicted in Acts 9:3-8: *As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting', he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do'. The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything*.

What emerges from this episode is that Paul experiences the Divine by 'not seeing'. This temporary blindness is brought about by a light out of heaven that he sees. Although there is no clear narration of seeing Jesus by Paul, he converses with the Deity, while those who were with him did not see anything, but only heard: *The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone* (Ac 9:7).

The second part of this encounter is when the Lord speaks and directs Ananias to Paul (Ac 9:10-12): *In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord', he answered. The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight*.

In this vision Ananias at first resisted to follow through with the directions, because of the reputation Paul had (Ac 9:13-14): '*Lord', Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your Name*'.

'Seeing God' has a price tag. For Paul, there are definite repercussions when 'seeing God'. There is a loss of sight and overall breaking 'down to the earth' (Ac 9:4). The

men who were with Paul also become compromised: They seemed to be paralysed and speechless. They would later lead Paul by hand to Damascus. The regaining of sight after Ananias' prayer for Paul gives a glimpse into this episode. Luke notes that λεπίδες[100], *something like scales fell from Saul's eyes* (Ac 9:18). This opening of eyes with scales falling is similar to the epic where Tobit's blindness was cured by Tobias in Tobit 11:10-15 (RSV):

> Tobit started toward the door, and stumbled. But his son ran to him and took hold of his father, and he sprinkled the gall upon his father's eyes, saying, 'Be of good cheer, father'. And when his eyes began to smart he rubbed them, and the white films scaled off from the corners of his eyes. Then he saw his son and embraced him, and he wept and said, 'Blessed art thou, o God, and blessed is thy Name for ever, and blessed are all thy holy angels. For thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias!' And his son went in rejoicing, and he reported to his father the great things that had happened to him in Media.

This experience would later become a reference point for Paul on many occasions[101]. He refers to it as a ἀποκαλύψις (revelation). In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul notes: *I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ*. This revelation mentioned by Paul was a result of the encounter in which certain information was downloaded from God to Paul. Through this kind of intimacy with Christ, risen from the dead, Paul is imparted certain knowing about the resurrection and the transfiguring from a mortal to an immortal body raised in glory. This process of transforming has to do with changing into a different kind of body, one which is not absent of material form and shape it would seem (Pettis 2013:132-133). Paul would later write about the resurrection as he argues: *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the*

[100] Polhill (1992:43) notes that this term can refer to any small, flaky substance, like thinly sliced vegetables or the scales of a fish. It is used in both Tobit and Acts to describe healing from blindness.

[101] See Menoud (1953:131-141) and Dupont (1981:90).

last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality (1 Cor 15:42-53).

This understanding relates Paul's reflection on the kind of change envisaged; Paul has come to divine knowledge by 'seeing God'. This personal encounter between Paul and God would later on resurface in 2 Corinthians 12:1-5, albeit in a different encounter: *I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses*.

This encounter leaves Paul in a state of uncertainty and disproportion. The paradoxical nature of this encounter, 'the between' of the event being either in-body or out-of-body experience is made clear. In this encounter there is a sensate, auditory experience, specifically of hearing 'words too wonderful to tell' (cf. Pettis 2013:136). This encounter has some similarities with the part played by visions in the Gentile world of magical rites, and as initiation into mystery cults. A fragment of the Mithras liturgy depicts a visionary ascent into heaven (*PGM* IV:539-585 in Garland 1999:509):

> You will see yourself being lifted up and ascending to the height, so that you seem to be in midair…you will see all immortal things, for in that day and hour you will see the divine order of the skies: the presiding gods will appear through the disk of God…And you will see the gods staring intently at you and rushing

> at you…Then you will see the gods looking graciously upon you and no longer rushing at you, but rather going about in their own order of affairs. So when you see that the world above is clear and circling, and that none of the gods or angels is threatening you, expect to hear a great crash of thunder, so as to shock you…and [after you have said the second prayer] you will see many five-pronged stars coming forth from the disk and filling all the air. Then say again: 'Silence! Silence!' And when the disk is open, you will see the fireless circle, and the fiery doors shut tight.

The later Apocalypse of Paul expands these narrative details of Paul's journey into the heavens and gives a description of what he saw in the fifth heaven. He claims to have seen a great angel holding an iron rod in his hand (*Apoc Paul* 22:2-5; cf. Rev 19:15). In the seventh heaven Paul sees an old man, a light and a throne 'brighter than the sun by seven times' (*Apoc Paul* 22:23-23:1; cf. Dan 7:9, 13). This Pauline journey of being translocated into the realms of the gods is similar to what 1 Enoch 14:8-17 recounts:

> And the vision was shown to me thus: Behold, in the vision clouds invited me and a mist summoned me, and the course of the stars and the lightning speed, and hastened me, and the winds in the vision caused me to fly and lifted me upward, and bore me into heaven. And I went in till I drew nigh to a wall which is built of crystals and surrounded by tongues of fire: And it began to affright me. And I entered into that house, and it was hot as fire and cold as ice: There were no delights of life therein: Fear covered me, and trembling gat hold upon me. And as I quaked and trembled, I fell upon my face. And I beheld a vision, and lo! there was a second house, greater than the former, and the entire portal stood open before me, and it was built of flames of fire. And in every respect it was so excelled in splendour and magnificence and extent that I cannot describe to you its splendour and its extent. And its floor was of fire, and above it was lightning and the path of the stars, and its ceiling also was flaming fire.

Paul's translocation seems to have yielded a lot to him, although he only comments that *he heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell* (1 Cor 12:4b). Perhaps those things were seen and expressed by Enoch who further describes in details what he saw (1 *En* 14:18-25):

> And I looked and saw a throne: its appearance was as crystal, and the wheels thereof as the shining sun, and there was the vision of cherubim. And from underneath the throne came streams of flaming fire so that I could not look thereon. And the Great Glory sat thereon, and His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow. None of the angels could enter and could behold His face by reason of the magnificence and glory, and no flesh could behold Him. And until then I had been prostrate on my face, trembling: and the Lord called me with His own mouth, and said to me: 'Come hither, Enoch, and hear my word'. And one of the holy ones came to me and waked me, and He made me rise up and approach the door: and I bowed my face downwards.

Although 1 Corinthians 12:1-5 resonates with Paul's individual transliteration, in other correspondences he extends this phenomenon to believers in general. He notes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words*.

Paul states that this encounter will be at the παρουσία. Believers who are alive and those resurrected will have an encounter with the Lord, though he does not give details of this meeting. With these words Paul encourages other believers, with the implication that a form of a future *visio Dei* would be an encouragement to others. In the midst of distress, comfort often comes in the form of the presence of one who cares. The one who cares may not be able to solve the problem afflicting the one suffering, any more than Paul could end persecution, vanquish death, or eliminate loss (Martin 1995:156). This part of Pauline thought is similar to 1 John 3:1-4 in its pastoral tone.

5.4.9 New Testament extended theological narratives

The initial resonation with John 12:41 had in its interest the christophanic allusion therein, but a closer look reveals more than meets the eye. A further investigation looks more intensely at the object of the Isaiah vision which John identifies as 'Jesus' glory'. This reorientation of Isaiah's *visio Dei* by John, who identifies it as 'seeing the glory' is considered below.

Attempts to interpret the Fourth Gospel in the light of Jewish apocalyptic and early mystical traditions have dealt with various materials relating to the so-called heavenly ascent and visions. Less attention has been given to the role of Isaiah's ascent, partly because there are few explicit references to this heavenly ascent and/or vision in Jewish traditions that can be dated to the 1st century BCE or earlier (Williams 2010:190).

The modification that somewhat shows a move to soften the anthropomorphic connotation of the Hebrew text, that the Lord, enrobed in a garment, possesses a physical form, is firstly evidenced in the Septuagint (Isa 6:1): *And it happened that in the year that King Ozeas died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and raised up. The house was full of his glory*.

Even the assertion that Isaiah saw 'the Lord' in the above Septuagint quotation is modified in the *Targum* of Isaiah, where the prophet sees 'the glory of the Lord resting upon the throne'. The reference to Isaiah having seen the Lord with his own eyes now becomes a more indirect vision of 'the glory of the *Shekhinah* of the eternal King, the Lord of hosts' (*T Isa* 6:5; cf. *T Isa* 6:3). The term 'glory' resonates in the immediate context of the seen object. The *Targumic* renderings state explicitly that the object of Isaiah's vision is 'the glory of the Lord' and 'the glory of the *Shekhinah*'. The reason for the choice of 'glory' is that the manifestation of the 'glory of the Lord' serves to conceal God and, at the same time, to reveal him. Although the reference to 'glory' in John 12:41 shares the *Targumic* emphasis upon 'glory' as the means of God's manifestation, it identifies Jesus as the human-like glory seen by the prophet (Williams 2010:195).

The *Merkabah* also focuses on the glory of the Lord. Halperin (1980:182) states that 'the expositions of the synagogue merely described the Glory'. Any claim to experiencing the glory was, however, opposed by certain Rabbis who feared potential sinister inferences which might be drawn from Ezekiel's fantastic symbolism. The relationship between the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah has been dealt with. The numerous points of contact between these two prophetic visions mean that they were often subtly coalesced in apocalyptic and mystical depictions of the appearance of God's glory upon the throne; this was an indication that both Isaiah and Ezekiel were thought to have experienced the same vision (Williams 2010:196).

Whether Isaiah's vision was of the pre-existent or incarnate Christ, has been a subject of much debate. There is no distinction between Jesus' pre-existent and incarnate glory, but it rather includes the earthly glory of Jesus[102]. The truthfulness of Isaiah's visions as coming from a prophet who sees the future, was also attested by Ben Sira (48:22-25):

> For Hezekiah did that which was good,
> – And was strong in the ways of David –
> Which Isaiah the prophet commanded him,
> Who was great and faithful in his vision.
> In his days the sun went backward,
> And he added life unto the king.
> By a spirit of might he saw the future,
> And comforted the mourners of Zion
> Unto eternity he declared the things that shall be,
> And hidden things before they came to pass (RSV).

An interpretation of 'seeing the glory' in John 12:41b will not be complete without considering the broader connotation of 'seeing the glory of Jesus' according to John. 'Seeing the glory of Jesus' is understood also to mean that although a sensory

[102] Some of the reasons used to advance the view that John 12:42b i.e. the glory that Isaiah saw, was both the pre-existent and incarnate glory of Jesus, are that the perception of Isaiah as a prophet who saw the future was well established (4Q174, *Ant* 10:35; cf. 9:276; 11:5-6; 13:64, 68, 71; *War* 7:432). The futuristic element in Isaiah's vision seeing Christ in that future, is similar to what John relates about Abraham in John 8:56: *Your Ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day: and he saw it and was glad*. The Patriarch is presented as a visionary figure that bears witness to Jesus.

experience of signs can prepare the way for an adequate response, John states that people's inability to believe in Jesus, is because the signs have not been 'seen' with real insight, due to the blinding of the eyes and the hardening of their hearts, because the signs, for John, serve as a vehicle for the disclosure of Jesus' divine glory (Williams 2010:198). This notion is also echoed in John 2:11: *This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him*.

On his comment about the glory, Borchert (1996:167-168) notes that this Cana story provides an epiphany, a manifestation of Jesus' glory. The theme of glory introduced in John 1:14 does not merely include ideas of bright lights, which is a common way for people to describe glory, but glory in John is derived from the Old Testament idea of God's glory, which implies the mighty power of God evidenced in epiphanies or perceived manifestations of that power (e.g. Ex 16:6-10; 24:15-17; 33:18-23; 40:34). In John the mighty God is to be perceived as acting in Jesus. The signs therefore point the reader to the reality that the God of the Old Testament has acted anew in Christ Jesus. The other Johannine texts that identify glory with works are John 11:4 and 40: *When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it'…Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'*

The death of Lazarus was for the glory of God, because his death was not the end of the story, as the glory of God would be evidenced in the fact that Jesus was about to bring him back from the dead. In this sense the statement parallels the words of Jesus to his disciples before healing the blind man (cf. Jn 9:3). The events of this story would also lead inevitably to the Passover plot and the glorification of Jesus himself – his death and resurrection, but at each level the text should be interpreted to mean 'on behalf' of 'the glory of God' (Jn 11:4) (Borchert 1996:350).

5.4.10 Conclusions from the intertextual reading

This intertextual investigation has yielded insights in the question of this thesis, which is, What would the original audience (adherents) have understood under the notion of 'seeing him as he is' in view of their 1st century Judeo-Hellenistic world? In this

intertextual investigation, this chapter discussed ‘seeing God’ from a number of perspectives which are Judeo-Hellenistic in nature, including the following:

- Judaism as revealed through the Old Testament window:
  This discussion has revealed that there are dispersed references to seeing God in the Old Testament. From the Pentateuch, historical books, poetic and prophetic books, fragmented references to this phenomenon have been recorded. The data strongly suggest that God can manifest a visible presence. As far as the Old Testament is concerned, there is nothing permanently invisible about God. There is also no evidence that supports these appearances as fantasy or hallucinations; rather they are real, although partial. This review has also mapped out the reactions of persons who saw God; they were fearful and surprised that they remained alive, because according to their expectations, seeing God should have resulted in their immediate death.
- ‘Seeing’ and ‘not seeing’ God in Judaism as revealed through the Hellenistic Judaism window as revealed through Philo and Josephus:
  Philo’s mystical spirituality is engaging and promising as evidenced in many of the texts examined in this section. Although there is an ambiguity about the ‘seeing’ or ‘not seeing’ God in Philo, a *Visio Dei* can be achieved through philosophical contemplation and practice of virtue. The significance of philosophical contemplation and the practice of virtue stand out as Philo’s *Visio Dei* main variables. Seeing God referred to as ‘most glorious and loveliest of visions’ (*Ebr* 152) is really the ‘crowning point of happiness’ (*Abr* 58). The theme of ‘seeing God’ is covered broadly by Philo and it is God’s existence that is apprehensible, and not his essence. Josephus does not espouse ‘seeing God’ as a phenomenon to be desired or achieved by humans. The consequences of such a desire fall on both the one who desires and everyone who wants to help him achieve the desire.
- ‘Seeing’ and ‘not seeing’ God in Judaism as provided by both the earlier and later Palestinian Judaism window:
  The earlier Palestinian window was provided by the Rabbinic literature and the Pseudepigrapha while that of the later window was presented by a view into the life of the Qumran society as recorded in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Talmud,

and the *Merkabah* literature. A dichotomy exists in which some Rabbis espoused the possibility of a *visio Dei* while others denied it.

- Seeing God in the Graeco-Roman world was studied in this section as provided by the emperor worship, worship of statues, mystery religions, worship of the occults, and philosophers. This investigation reveals a dual stance in relation to the visibility and invisibility of the gods. In the Graeco-Roman world, some sources emphasise the fact that the gods are visible while other sources remain adamant that the gods are invisible. The notion of seeing the divine face to face is only espoused by Apuleius, while Plutarch is the only one who alludes to a form of beholding the gods after death.
- All the New Testament texts accord well with the Old Testament evidence that God is able to render himself visually sensible to his creation and is also willing to do so on occasion. This survey has also demonstrated that the New Testament does not teach God's invisibility – rather it is the manner in which he renders himself visible, and the impact such an encounter has on the recipients that is yet to be clarified. Old Testament saints responded in fear and expectation of death, while New Testament saints are supposed to have confidence and no shame (1 Jn 2:28-3:10). There are different shades to the notion of 'seeing', and this can be solved through semantics and good Theology. It has also been evident that there is no tension nor contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament in regard to 'seeing God' or God's visibility.

  From the perspective of these New Testament writers noted above, there is a clear involvement of the Son in the Old Testament theophanies. Although this involvement is not explicitly revealed and does not make any bearing in regard to the Father's (in)visibility nor the extent of his involvement therein, these texts cannot stand alone but must be interpreted *in loci* with other New Testament texts that deal with a *visio Dei*.

This brings to a conclusion the investigation into the environs of the 'seeing him as he is' phenomenon. Next the investigation is done in view of the socio-historical situation in the community. This yields new insights into the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' according to 1 John 3:2.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 'SEEING HIM AS HE IS'

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the understanding of the socio-historical backdrop from which the Epistle of 1 John originates, in order to understand the notion of 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2), as related by the Elder. To achieve this, insights gained through research done in the previous chapters, are linked with one another in order to interrelate with the author's ideological agenda for his original audience. The previous chapters investigated the terms, phrases and clauses in the text itself, and constructed a discourse analysis; all these brought certain themes to the surface that the authors used, known as inner texture. The inter texture deals with the environs of the text, which actually investigate the representation of the text in relation to historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions, and systems (Robbins 1996a:40).

This chapter is more related to the inner texture than the inter texture – the focus is therefore on people. In order to objectively unearth the Elder's ideological purpose, this investigation encompasses the conversation between the current and past interpreter(s) of the text, and the author's rhetorical approach to bringing about changes. The Elder's rhetoric explains both his position and that of the opponents. The points of view of certain interpreters are compared, noting agreement and disagreement. Robbins (1996a:39) analyses the interrelatedness of the 20th-century reader and the authors, and readers of the 1st century, when he asks:

> What is the relation of our reading of the New Testament text to the way in which a first century person might have written or read a text? The answer is that all people choose ways to write and read a text. For this reason, socio-rhetoric criticism interprets not only the text under consideration but ways people read texts both in the past and in different contexts in our modern world.

In the next section the presuppositions of both the past and present interpreters are located. A comparison and dialogue between these presuppositions are done in order

to see how they supplement each other, and how they add extra dimensions to understanding the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is'.

6.2 Individual locations

Robbins (1996a:95) rightly states that 'a person's ideology concerns his or her conscious or unconscious enactment of presuppositions, dispositions, and values held in common with other people'. In this section therefore, a concert of presuppositions is discussed.

6.2.1 The past interpreter's presuppositions

As the research so far has revealed, the meaning of the envisaged *visio Dei* is elusive. The Elder's intention when he postulates that 'we shall see him as he is' revolves around the kind of 'seeing' and the object that 'is seen'. The consensus around this 'seeing' is notable that it will take place after the *Parousia*. In relation to the kind of 'seeing', some scholars choose for a literal seeing while others argue that it relates to the glory of God, in Christ, and through Christ.

In the literature review, there is an evident dichotomy as to the object of the *visio Dei*. Scholars who prefer the object to be God the Father were paired against those who prefer it to be the Son. As it is revealed in the literature review, comparisons of these scholars' viewpoints demonstrate a wide range of ideological presuppositions, albeit they do not deal with the possibility of what the 1st-century believers understood this notion to mean, and the bearing of the Elder's ideology in the interpretation thereof.

6.2.2 The present interpreter's presuppositions

Presuppositions are shaped by the group(s) to which one belongs (Robbins 1996a). This is true of the presuppositions of the present researcher, whose presuppositions, dispositions and values in relation to 'seeing God' are discussed within the membership of his organisation, the Assemblies of God in Botswana. He was born and raised in a remote village in the north-western part of Botswana, called Rakops. The village has different tribes living together (Sobea, Herero, Kalanga, Ha-Mbukushu, and Khoi-san). The main source of income and communal pride is cattle rearing and partly ploughing. This community was constantly experiencing strife and contentions which were solved through supernatural means, i.e. casting spells, sending curses

and incantations. Therefore, exposure to the power, rage and anger of supernatural entities was done at an early stage of his life. The gods of this village could talk, kill, be appeased, curse, and redeem from danger. They were an active part of the society. Then the Pentecostal Churches began to make outreaches to this area. These outreaches were always confrontational on a spiritual level. They were mostly a dramatic display of power as the preachers would be challenged by our ancestral priests. The preachers always came out victorious and this drew the researcher's attention to the new faith.

The breakaway came when the researcher had to leave the village and go to the district centre for his senior school where he was introduced to Christianity. He converted and joined the Assemblies of God in Botswana. This group displayed conversionistic views which were engraved in the researcher's ideological posture early in his Christian formative years. He knew that he needed a greater power to rescue him from the power of the gods. The group he belonged to, prayed, fasted, and fellowshipped together to seek supernatural transformation. The dominant view of this Church is to change people by the preaching of the gospel, and encourage people to follow Christ. The group also believes in an experience subsequent to salvation where believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and they speak in new tongues. This experience gives believers power to overcome personal problems and also enhances their testimony about Christ.

One of the fundamental teachings that the congregants received, was the second coming of Jesus and 'our seeing him'. This expectation was intricately weaved into almost all teaching done, so much that it permeated all areas of the life of the congregants. They were able to ease all present fears (both individual and corporately) by constantly being reminded that the time may be closer and that they will escape to 'see God'. This Gnostic-manipulatory orientation provided a way for them to cope with evil.

All success in life is deemed as emanating from conversion. This group also portrayed introverted elements, in that the entire world around the Church was conceived as irredeemably evil. Salvation was therefore distancing oneself from the world (including marital matters) and being absorbed in one's personal purity and holiness.

It is this shadowy Pentecostal teaching, based on a shallow biblical interpretation, which elevated 'experiencing God' above everything else, that led this researcher to the decision of undertaking this study on the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is'. He embarked on a quest to understand more of biblical interpretation, and in his research he has discovered and loved the multi-dimensional methodology of interpreting texts. Interaction with the world inside and outside the text ensures a well-rounded resonation with a biblical text. He still maintains some of the presuppositions of his Church, but has refined and revised some. He is now content with placing his hope on the future that has both sure and unclear details. It has always been clear that Christ is the centre of everything, so even in the future when we 'see him as he is', Christ will still be the centre. There are other similarities between the Assemblies of God Church and the Johannine community:

- There is a distinction and clear guidelines for identifying those who belong to the Church and those who do not.
- Traits of being a member are clearly stated, together with the expectation in relation to both the members and the outsiders (world).
- There is a clear and persistent expectation of the *Parousia*, which is coupled with an expectation of relief and vindication when it happens.
- In the present, relationships are considered to be well-knit by the bond of love.

These apparent similarities in belief and practices stimulate the way the present interpreter (researcher) views and explains the Johannine community group dynamics.

6.3 The characteristics of the schism in the Johannine community

The history of the Johannine community is one of the blossoming areas of interest in Johannine studies[103]. Muderhwa (2008:72) rightly states that 'today it is impossible to fully re-enact the history of the community from which the gospel originated by means of external data. The internal evidence must be taken into consideration and is no less

[103] The following publications are selected for an extensive study of the Johannine community: De Jonge (2000), O'Day (1995), Von Wahlde (1997), Reinhardz (1998), Rensberger (1997), Draper (2000), Coloe (2001), Tomson (2001), Culpepper (2001), Conway (2002), Dunderberg (2002), Kabongo-Mbaya (2002), Kysar (2005), Klauck (2005), and Moloney (2005).

important'. In other words, the text must be used to build a theoretical community which then unlocks the meaning of the text for one's understanding.

The internal climate portrayed by the text is that of controversy and hostility within the community. Van der Merwe (2007) has comprehensively noted the language used by the Elder to refer to specific members of this community: Some are referred to as deceivers (1 Jn 2:26, 3:7; 2 Jn 7), antichrists (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 8), liars (1 Jn 2:22), false prophets (1 Jn 4:1), murderers (1 Jn 3:12, 15), people who do not love a brother (1 Jn 4:20; 2:11; 3:15), children of the devil (1 Jn 3:8, 10), and anti-language, such as 'not from God' (1 Jn 3:10; 4:3, 6), 'do not know him' (1 Jn 3:1), 'do not have fellowship with him' (1 Jn 1:6), 'they are in the world' (1 Jn 4:5), 'they are blind' (1 Jn 2:11), 'they do not have life' (1 Jn 5:12; 3:15), and 'they abide in death' (1 Jn 3:14).

This controversial and highly hostile community deteriorated further. It reflects a community torn apart by theological and ethical differences. Culpepper (1998:48) concludes on this unrest: 'By the time 1 Jn was written the differences had precipitated a schism'. 1 John 2:18-27 records the Elder's lengthy resonation with those who left, while in 1 John 2:19 he states: *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us*.

This schism separated those who remained (adherents) from those who left (opponents). In order to determine the experience of the adherents when they will 'see him as he is', a resonation with the opponents is necessary. As the Elder engages the opponents, the adherents are characterised. The differences between the two clarify the ideology of the Elder as he uses the text to encourage the adherents and fortify them against the opponents.

An understanding of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is enhanced by the examination of the elements that caused a schism in the Johannine community. Both doctrinal and ethical issues are illuminated as part of the conversation of the Elder through the text. The Elder gives a glimpse into the doctrinal and ethical issues when he refers to the opponents. Most of these references are contrasted with the characteristics of the adherents.

6.3.1 Doctrinal and ethical issues in the Elder's address to the adherents

Kenny (2000:116) postulates that the adherents can be 'identified and categorised on the basis of explicit and implicit references to names, labels, descriptions of status, or behavioural traits'. Orientations are linked by networks which are apparent from the compositional distinctiveness of each text. 1 John, however, poses many problems because of its uniqueness. It provides no names and no location, either for sender or recipients; it appeals to no events identified by shared referential knowledge which might be provided by the credible foundation of the epistolary rhetoric. This letter 'lacks all the generic qualifiers that mark a letter – no greeting formula, no opening health wish or thanksgiving, no direct requests, no messages to or from third parties' (Culpepper & Anderson 2014:130). It is an exhortation interpreting the same main themes as the Fourth Gospel, in light of secessionists' propaganda which had certain plausibility and continued to attract followers (Brown 1998:107). Brown (1998:106) relates:

> The identity of the recipients does not support them being 'Jews' who are the chief adversaries in the Gospel, but rather all attention is given to deceivers who have seceded from the community (1 Jn 2.19; 2 Jn 7) and they have displayed a lack of love for their former brethren.

These people referred to as 'antichrists' (see above) were seducing the adherents of the community on several issues. The identity of the adherents can be seen through the window offered by 1 John 1:6-2:9. The claims that are evident in this pericope have been used by Jensen to deal with the recipients. He argues that 'they could be Jewish, that the negative behaviour could be associated with faithless Judaism, and that the desired behaviour and results could be for faithful Israel' (Jensen 2012:73). This reading grid is of great help when interpreting the rest of 1 John.

6.3.2 Opponents of the Elder

The opponents are a significant variable in the investigation of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, because their close proximity to the adherents ensured that the Elder wrote with them in the back of his mind. That they will 'see him as he is' depends on the outcome of their composure in view of the ensuing interaction with these opponents. A close examination of the Elder's reference to the opponents opens a way to work

out their claims of true divine knowledge, as well as the framework of their doctrines and subsequently their ethics.

6.3.2.1 Christological issues: Denial that 'the Christ came in the flesh'

An understanding of the Christological framework of the opponents in 1 John is made possible by studying the confessional formulas that are wrought against them. These opponents and false teachers 'denied that Jesus is the Christ' (1 Jn 2:22), and did not acknowledge that 'Jesus is from God' (1 Jn 4:3). Most likely, these false teachers were influenced by early Gnostic ideas as Akin notes that Gnosticism was a heretical movement that became prominent in the 2nd century CE. Although Gnosticism assumed many forms, it usually emphasised the 'essential goodness of spirit and the inherent evil or inferiority of all matter' (Akin 2001:29). Influenced by this type of understanding, these false teachers may have viewed Christ as some type of spirit, perhaps a spirit who had come upon the man Jesus during part of his ministry (from his baptism until his crucifixion; cf. 1 Jn 5:6-8). They refused, however, to directly associate 'the Christ' with the human Jesus: 'This refusal led to a rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the unique God-man. Combined with this faulty view of the person of Christ was a deficient view of his death. First John contains specific statements that emphasise the atoning results of Christ's death (2.2; 4.10)' (Akin 2001:29).

The fact that the Elder continually issue warnings against these opponents implies that they 'constituted a present danger to the congregation, and their position was that they understood themselves as legitimate members of the congregation' (Bultmann 1973:36). This claim emanates from 1 John 2:19: *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us*. This pericope is important in the unpacking of the notion of 'seeing him as he is', because it forms the immediate context of the Elder's address which has at its climax the promise of 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2). Akin (2001:30) also notes that 'morally, the false teachers minimised the seriousness of sin (1.6-10). They claimed that it was possible to have fellowship with God regardless of one's behavior (1.6)'. In contrast, the Elder insists that one's relationship to God has serious ethical implications (cf. 1 Jn 2:3-4). A genuine knowledge of and love for God demands obedience (1 Jn 2:3-6; 5:3). Socially, these heretics failed, because their spiritual pride resulted in a lack of brotherly love (1 Jn 2:9, 11). The Elder argues that love for other

believers is a manifestation of genuine Christianity (1 Jn 3:14; 4:7-21) (cf. Akin 2001:30).

The relationship between the Johannine community, Christology, and the conflict wrought by Christology is captured well by Painter (2000:231) who states that 'it is the development of Christology that led to a conflict out of which the Johannine community was born'. In the Jewish context of the 1st century where Christology was developed, it was inevitable for it to become a bone of contention.

First, central to the teaching on Johannine Christology is the recognition of the unity of the Father and the Son. According to the Elder, almost everything about God is in relation to Jesus, specifically focused on the Father-Son relationship. Christology is the Elder's way of 'speaking of God at those points where the understanding of God is being transformed' (Painter 2000:234). This Father-Son relationship was recognised by Jesus as he replied to the Jews after healing a man on the Sabbath: *My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working* (Jn 5:17; see also Jn 10:30-33). Second, the unity of the believer with the Father through the Son is the base for Johannine Christology: *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me* (Jn 17:20-23). Borchert (2002:207) notes that 'this oneness with the Godhead is not to be viewed as a mystical flight of the hermit to be alone with God or to be mystically absorbed into the divine but that this relationship of believers with God is premised on a community who together experience a oneness with God'.

Both the birth of, and the conflict within the Johannine community followed a process. The birth of the community also provided resources for the further development of the Johannine Christology. It is in this 'development that Christology again became a point of contention dividing the community' (Painter 2000:232). Van der Merwe (2014:10) echoes the same sentiments, noting that

> the deceivers claimed a special illumination by the Spirit (2.20, 27) that imparted to them the true knowledge of God. Through this special illumination, these heretics claimed to have attained a state beyond ordinary Christian morality in which they had no more sin and had attained moral perfection (1 Jn). The group also taught that all believers have been delivered from sin and had already crossed from death to life (1 Jn 1.8, 10; 3.14). This emphasis on realised eschatology led to a disregard for the need to continue to resist the temptation to sin.

The point of contention between the Elder and the opponents can be derived from 1 John 4:2: *This is how we can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God*. The question may well be asked: Why is the phrase 'in the flesh' added in 1 and 2 John, when it is not present in the Gospel? To put the matter baldly, it appears that at the time the Epistles were written, it was not sufficient to only believe that Jesus is the Christ, but also to believe that he had come 'in the flesh'. Consequently, some Johannine Christians confessed that 'Jesus was the Messiah but did not believe that he had come in flesh' (Culpepper 1998:50). This is exactly what the false teachers disputed; it is also captured in 1 John 2:22: *Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist – denying the Father and the Son*. Bultmann (1973:62) puts it this way:

> They deny that the Christ, whom they also revere as the bringer of salvation, has appeared in the historical Jesus. It involves nothing other than that He has come ἐν σαρκί (in the flesh). It therefore appears to be a question of Docetism in the case of the heretical doctrine. Of the one who makes the right confession it can be said: ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν (he is of God). This confession therefore asserts the paradoxical identity of the historical and the eschatological figure of Jesus Christ.

This 'higher' Christology had to resonate with the issue of the death of Jesus. The opponents' denial of the incarnation was probably also coupled with a view of the death of Jesus that the Elder found inadequate and dangerous. He asserts: *This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood* (1 Jn 5:6). Culpepper (1998:51-52) states that 'this allusion to

water may refer either to Jesus' human birth or more likely his baptism, and the reference to blood is most certainly an allusion to his death'. To the opponents, Jesus' saving work was not his death but his revelation of the Father.

'Seeing him as he is', seen through the engagement between the Elder and the opponents reveal that the relationship between Jesus and the Father is so intricately interwoven that the one to be 'seen' is possibly the Son, because he is one with the Father and he has been revealing the Father throughout.

6.3.2.2 Pneumatology issue: True and divine knowledge through the Spirit

In his dealing with the Holy Spirit, the Elder interweaves the pneumatical theme with knowledge. In 1 John 2:20 he refers to the adherents, stating καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες (But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth). The same sentiments are also echoes in 1 John 2:27 but with an extension of the application and scope of the influence of the anointing i.e. it abides, it is true and not a lie, it has been active from the past and its impact is sure (1 Jn 2:27).

The Elder's compressed resonation with this theme is in relation to the opponents. According to Van der Merwe these opponents claimed a special illumination by the Spirit which made them conversant to the true understanding of God. It seems as if they believed that they had been given a new and higher comprehension of God. They also believed that they had a more advanced fellowship with God than the Johannine community. It is this 'higher spiritual status that justified the savouring of ties' (Van der Merwe 2007:1157) with the rest of the community. They were convinced that they had gone far beyond the level of understanding than those they abandoned (Brown 1982:52; cf. also Van der Merwe 2007:1157).

In response to this stance by the opponents, the Elder contrasts the opponents' claim to knowledge with the knowledge that can only be derived from the Christian practice (1 Jn 2:4) and the Spirit of God (1 Jn 4:2; 5:6). According to the Elder, the knowledge that Jesus Christ has come in flesh and that he is of God, is a result of the Spirit of God. Therefore he refers to the opponents as liars (1 Jn 2:22), because they 'denied that Jesus is the Christ'. Bultmann (1973:62) adds that when the Elder emphatically

relates the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh to the fact that he is coming from God, he 'asserts the paradoxical identity of the historical and eschatological figure of Jesus Christ'.

The role of the Spirit of God is further referred to in relation to its testimony about Jesus, as depicted in 1 John 5:6: *This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth*.

The claim that true and vital divine knowledge is received through the Spirit of God is further attested here, and also expanded. The testimony of the Spirit of God which is truth, states that Jesus not only came with water but with blood too. Bultmann (1973:80) reasons that this dual emphasis 'obviously contradicts the Gnosticizing view that the heavenly Christ descended into Jesus at his baptism, and then abandoned Jesus again before his death'.

6.3.2.3 Ethical issues

Even though references to ethical issues are scattered throughout the Epistle, it is evident that they encompass doctrinal issues as well. The claimants are referred to as murderers (1 Jn 3:15), and that they do not love a brother (1 Jn 4:20; cf. also 2:11; 3:15).

The difficulty of resonating with the claimants has been noted by Jensen (2012:75) who argues that the 'identity of the claimant is difficult to locate'. It is not clear if the claimant is the author or the audience, as the first person plural of 1 John 1:6, 8, 10, and the pronouns of 1 John 1:8 would seemingly imply. If so, should the claims then be understood in a historical or literary sense? On the other hand, the claims seem to report actual speech in 1 John 1:6, 8, 10, and possibly 2:4. Are they therefore more than a literary device, and do they reflect the situation behind 1 John?

The identification of the claimants has been a bone of contention among Johannine scholarship. The Historical Critical School[104] uses the claims to describe the opponents, and views the claims as serious quotations from the conversation between them and the Elder. On the other hand, the Literary School[105] prefers to understand these claims as rhetoric devices, although they do not rule out that there could be a historical referent. However, this research adopts Jensen's position that views and understands the claims as made by the author and audience with a historical referent. This position suggests that the common feature that allows the use of the first person plural is Christianity's early understanding of itself as 'the true Israel, so that the claims could flow from a Jewish self-identity' (Jensen 2012:85). In this research, these slogans are used as assertions that characterise 'the conduct of the opponents which add to the tension experienced in the community. These assertions seem to encapsulate their true ethical claims' (Van der Merwe 2007:1162).

Although the claims are expressed differently, they have three topics which are used to delineate them in the section. First, there are those who deal with a special relationship to God: 'To have fellowship with God' (1 Jn 1:6), 'to know God' (1 Jn 2:4), 'to remain in God' (1 Jn 2:6), and 'being in the light' (1 Jn 1:7; 2:9). Second, there are those who deal with sin: 'To have sin' (1 Jn 1:8), and 'to not have sin' (1 Jn 1:10). Third, there are those who deal with lifestyle: 'To love one another' (1 Jn 4:20). These claims are being studied below, as they inhibit the flow of Jewish identity thought. 'Seeing him as he is' is clarified by the identification of those whom the Elder is addressing, because it provides a window into their background. This background could be rich in the past dealing with the Deity, especially with reference to a *visio Dei*.

[104] This school understands the claims to reflect the sentiments of the opponents (or secessionists) and as such uses them to reconstruct their ethical teaching. The level to which the claim reflects the opponents' teaching is disputed within this school. Brown (1982:104) argues that the claim is not a quotation, but the author's summary of the secessionists' teaching. The conditional form indicates that it represents the opponents' words rather than quoting them. He concludes that these statements may have been secessionist-inspired, but rephrased in the author's wording (cf. Jensen 2012:44).

[105] Moved by the deficiencies of the Historical Critical School, this School does not seek to understand these claims as historical, but pays more attention to literary and rhetoric effects of the claims. Griffith (2006:48) for example claims that there is nothing in this pericope that indicates that John is concerned about issues or threats that come from outside the community. He argues that it is the influence of reading 1 John with an assumption of a polemical purpose that leads scholars to identify the claims with the opponents (Jensen 2012:45).

An understanding of that background broadens and helps the understanding of the meaning of ‘seeing him as he is’ by the Elder.

6.3.2.3.1 Claims referring to a special relationship with God

The first claim, based on references like ‘having fellowship with him’ (1 Jn 2:6), saying ‘I know him’ (1 Jn 2:4) and ‘claiming to live in him’ (1 Jn 2:6) is reflective of the Jewish people regarding themselves as having a special relationship with God, and echoes the words of Jeremiah the prophet where God notes that, *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people* (Jer 31:33). This special relationship between God and his people, based on their knowledge of him, was the subject when Jesus said, *If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word* (Jn 8:54-55). This theme of the Jews claiming to know God, and Jesus refuting the claim runs throughout the Gospel narratives. The latter part of these verses that negates the knowledge of God is dealt with later in this section.

This Jewish stance of having a special relationship with God is also described by Paul, when he states in Romans 2:17-20: *Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship with God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide to the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth*. The similarity of this verse to 1 John 2:6 (the first claim as noted above) is striking. Paul describes the 1st-century Jews as considering themselves to have a special relationship with God, just like the claim for fellowship with God in 1 John 1:6. This special relationship is based on their possession and knowledge of the law (1 Jn 2:19-20), just like they claim to know God (1 Jn 2:4). The Jews argued that they have a special relationship with God, because God adopted them as sons and gave them the covenant, the law and promises, and a means to worship him. Therefore, the 1st-century Jews thought of themselves as possessing a special relationship with God (Jensen 2012:87).

This fellowship that the claimants express, but the Elder negates, seems to be a desired position for true relationship. The κοινωνία[106] which was supposed to be experienced corporately was described by the Elder within the paradigm of the *familia Dei.* The motif for this is that in the ancient Mediterranean world, the society consisted of groups. Being part of a group was important. The in-group of the Johannine community, and how the common life was lived within that group, was what mattered to the Elder, and this is the focus of his doctrine and ethics (Van der Merwe 2013:1286).

It is not only these claims that have a Jewish character, but also the negative behaviour that has echoes of how faithless Israel is described in the Old Testament 'walking in darkness'. Psalm 82:5 describes the faithless Israel: *They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken* (cf. Jensen 2012:90). Whether they were Jewish or not, the most important thing is that 'those who make such claims must show through the way they live that they are speaking truth. By implication it may be concluded that his opponents made precisely these claims but did not maintain a pattern of life consistent with their claims' (Van der Merwe 2007:1165).

These people were therefore not following God's commandments and consequently did not imitate the life of Christ. The Elder refers to them as 'liars' and that they are living in 'darkness'.

6.3.2.3.2 Claims dealing with sin

This second claim is reflective of the Jewish people, as the theme of sin was one of the major themes Jewish people resonated with on a daily basis. The claims on sin are different, like 'having no sin' (ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν – 1 Jn 1:8) and 'to not sin' (ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν – 1 Jn 1:10) respectively. First, the claim of the Jewish people of having no sin, can be found in other parts of Scripture like John 5:22 and 24. In both these verses Jesus uses the same phrase as the Elder in 1 John 1:8: ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ

[106] Kittel *et al*. (1964b:216) state that κοινωνία, originating from the same stem as κοινωνός and κοινωνέω, denotes 'participation' and 'fellowship', with a close bond. It expresses a two-sided relation (κοινωνία πρὸς ἀλλήλους: οὐκοῦν ἡ μὲν ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης κοινωνία συνδεῖ). As with κοινωνέω, emphasis may be on either the giving or the receiving. It can therefore be translated with 'participation', 'impartation', and 'fellowship'.

ἔχομεν. The claim of the Jews to having no sin was deliberately targeted by Jesus in this text and he refers to them as the 'world' (ὁ κόσμος – cf. Jn 3:19) to denote the fact that they do have sin and live contrary to him and his ways.

The Jewish people's thought of having no sin also comes to the fore in the story of the blind man in John 9:34: *To this they* [the Pharisees] *replied, 'You* [the man who was blind] *were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!' And they threw him out*. The Pharisees' answer and action imply that they regarded themselves to be without sin. Jesus once again dealt with the claim of not having sin: *If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin* (οὐκ ἂν εἴχετε ἁμαρτίαν) *but now that you claim that you can see, your guilt remains* (ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει) (Jn 9:41). This notion of the Jewish thinking was later on reiterated by Paul in Romans 2:19-23: *If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth – you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?*

These examples reveal the Jewish thought in relation to sin: They thought of themselves as having no sin, believing that if they follow the rules of the temple, offering the sacrifices for sin, then they can expect God to forgive them whatever they did wrong. This stance could never have ruled out the fact that they have sinned[107], it rather affirms the fact that they thought that they have no sin left in them once the sacrifices were made (Jensen 2012:88).

The second claim that deals with sin, i.e. 'to not sin' (ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν – 1 Jn 1:10), takes the argument to the next level. It would result from overstressing the elective purposes of God and his forgiveness to the point where it does not matter what someone does; it seems possible that some Jewish people took the implication of their election this far (Jensen 2012:88).

[107] Evidence of Jewish people acknowledging that they have sinned are found in Ezra 9:6-15, Nehemiah 9:5-37, Psalm 51, and Daniel 9:4-19.

These two claims in regard to sin seem to have emanated from God's promises[108] to his people e.g. Jeremiah 50:20: *In those days, at that time, declares the Lord, search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare*.

It is not only these claims that have a Jewish texture, but the inconsistent behaviour of 'not keeping God's commands'. The notion of 'not keeping God's commands' is embedded in the Jewish relationship with God e.g. Saul did not keep God's commands (1 Sa 13:13), and Israel did not keep the commands (2 Ki 17:18-20).

The ethical implication of this claim rests on the notion that 'God is light'. Since there is no darkness in God, this must be true of his followers as well. Unlike the opponents who seemed to deny 'as a way of conduct, both human sinfulness ([1 Jn] 1.8), and the practice of sin ([1 Jn] 1.10) in one's life' (Van der Merwe 2007:1164), the Elder deems this wrong. Such a claim would suggest falsehood on God's part; it portrays him to be a liar (1 Jn 1:10). This stance would cut fellowship between God and other believers in the community. This would entail walking in darkness and not practicing truth (1 Jn 1:6).

6.3.2.3.3 Claims dealing with lifestyle

The claim to be in the light has a deep-seated Jewish heritage with ties to the story of creation itself. God created the light and separated it from darkness by calling it 'day' and the darkness 'night' (Gn 1:2-5). Any mixture of light and darkness cannot be presupposed (Noort 2005:7). Muderhwa (2008:159) notes that a constant in all references to light in the Old Testament is the depiction of God as the light or the source of life for humanity in the light. Therefore the 1st-century Jewish people thought about themselves as not only belonging to God, but also walking in him as light, or in his light[109].

Walking in light is equivalent to walking in love: 'I love God' (1 Jn 4:20) will be empty and meaningless if that person does not walk in the light, and is therefore exposed by

[108] Other texts include Israel being depicted as 'holy and righteous' (Isa 4:3; 26:2; 45:25; 60:21), 'doing no wrong' and 'speaking no lie' (Zep 3:13), and 'God removing their sin' (Isa 38:17; 43:25; 44:22).

[109] Other texts include Micah 7:9, Isaiah 42:16, 60:1, 19-20, 42:6, and 60:3.

the absence of brotherly love. The inconsistent behaviour that parallels this claim is that of 'hating his brother' (1 Jn 1:9). This behaviour also bears a Jewish shade (Lev 19:17-18): *Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord*.

The Father is the source of love (1 Jn 4:8, 16), and this love is related to his love for his children. The children of God must therefore emulate their Father and walk in the light or love. They must not 'hate'.

6.3.2.4 Conclusion to this section

This section establishes a framework or grid for interpreting the texts that follow, especially in the context of 'seeing him as he is'. This clause is understood in the context of both Jewish inclination and early Christian thought, as early Christian thought is evident of a deep-seated Jewish heritage. In this orientation God can be experienced in fellowship. Sin alienates one from this fellowship as the fellowship is with God in the light.

What is at stake here is the fellowship between the Elder and the adherents. This fellowship simultaneously means fellowship with the Father and his Son. This fellowship is hampered by the opponents who advocate a different fellowship which does not include the Son and one another.

The portrayal of this community so far is satirical, and the controversy and schism reflect a battered community with both internal and external pressures. This community is also depicted as being torn apart and struggling for survival. Worn-out by the schism, the community has collapsed (Culpepper 1985:287; 1998:61; Van der Merwe 2007:1167). The adherents were probably integrated into other streams of Christianity during the early 2nd century, while the opponents found their way into Gnosticism.

6.4 The *Parousia* as the ideological context used by the Elder to address the conflict

In 1 John 2:18 the Elder wrote: *Dear Children, this is the last hour; as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour*. The pericope of 1 John 2:18-27 sheds some light on the opponents the Elder is dealing with. It is noteworthy that the Elder first and foremost reinterprets the situation eschatologically and make reference to the 'last hour'. He interprets time eschatologically in order to understand and make sense of his circumstances. He describes eschatological time not from a time perspective, but from a person's perspective (Van der Merwe 2008:292). Therefore, the Elder's time is the focal point. This personal inclined interpretation of time by the Elder is also rightly stated by Schnackenburg (1992:133), who notes that the 'last hour' does not mean the entire period since the coming of Christ or since his resurrection. Neither is it a phase or a particular period within time as it draws to its close – it is rather the Elder's eschatological reinterpretation.

According to the Elder, the final and decisive period in the history of mankind has been enacted as evidenced by the presence of the antichrist(s). In the identification of his opponents, the Elder therefore first connects them to the antichrist. Bultmann (1997:35-36) observes that 'with this designation the author takes up a term of Jewish apocalyptic, while reinterpreting it in typically Johannine fashion'. He refers to the traditional apocalyptic expectation καθὼς ἠκούσατε (as you have heard) that the antichrist will appear at the end of time. The arrival of the antichrist, which marks the arrival of the 'last hour', is reshaped by the Elder due to the circumstances of the schism (Schnackenburg 1992:134). The appearance of the antichrist was to be used by the community as a litmus for recognizing the arrival of the last hour which demanded them to prepare for the end – this 'end time' is then described by the Elder as the *Parousia* (1 Jn 2:28, 3:2, 4:17).

The eschatological event happens as the Elder notes, that 'seeing him as he is' is understood in relation to the *Parousia*. This experience is deeply embedded in the closely-knit verses of 1 John 2:28, 3:2, and 4:17, where the *Parousia* is envisioned. Van der Merwe, who has dealt with the relationship and implication of these verses, argues that they are connected because they form a parallelism. This parallelism helps

to relate the coming of Christ with the day of judgement. While the '*Parousia* is the reference to a future eschatological event, the day of judgement refers to the nature of this event. It also depicts the revelation of Jesus and the day of judgement' (Van der Merwe 2006:1055).

While the 'last hour' has revealed the antichrist, the *Parousia* will reveal the Christ. Therefore, the three texts referring to the future eschatological events are forming a context that the Elder uses to spur his adherents to prepare themselves for the *Parousia* and the day of judgement. When they are prepared, they will have confidence in the *Parousia*. They will also be like him (God), for they will 'see him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2). The rhetoric of the Elder is not only using the *Parousia* as his ideological context to spur the adherents to remain in God and escape the schism, but he has also clearly and blatantly penned the purpose of writing this Epistle to that effect.

6.4.1 The purpose of the Epistle as the Elder's polemical rhetoric writing

The departure point for a closer view at the situation in the community is to resonate with the purpose of 1 John. 'Seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is part of the rhetoric that the Elder uses to steer the adherents towards a certain direction in their faith. This highlights the purpose of his writing and helps in the understanding of the meaning of this notion. The Elder purposes the following:

- *We write this to make our joy complete* (1 Jn 1:4).
- *I write this to you so that you will not sin* (1 Jn 2:1).
- *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray* (1 Jn 2:26).
- *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life* (1 Jn 5:13).

Akin (2001:28-31) notes that it is popular and appropriate to see 1 John 5:13 as the governing purpose statement, but not the exclusive purpose statement. The parallel of 1 John 5:13 with the purpose statement of John's Gospel (Jn 20:31) is too apparent to be merely coincidental. 1 John 5:13 brings together the other purpose statements in a unified theme. Whereas the Gospel of John is written with an evangelistic purpose,

1 John is penned to provide avenues of assurance whereby a believer can know that he/she has eternal life through the Son. Derickson (1993:90) provides an excellent analysis of the overarching purpose of 1 John. He gives special attention to the debate concerning whether 1 John was written to provide 'Tests of Life' (the traditional view) or 'Tests of Fellowship' (Derickson 1993:91). Following Smalley, he argues that one should give equal weight to the purpose statements of 1 John 1:4 and 5:13 (Derickson 1993:91). Though this research does not agree with his conclusion, his treatment of the issue is worth consulting. The paramount importance of resonating with the purpose of the Epistle in order to understand the notion of 'seeing him as he is' is further restated by Hiebert (1991:20) who has the conviction that 'the contents of the epistle, we believe, are most advantageously studied in the light of the writer's purpose as stated in 5.13'.

The Elder has also named 'complete joy' (1 Jn 1:4) as one of his purposes for writing. This joy is different from human happiness, because it involves 'the conscious possession of eternal life, daily enrichment of personal fellowship with the living God, [and] the deepening awareness of oneness with all God's people everywhere' (Stott 1988:240). The promise of joy is also a prevalent theme in the ministry of Jesus as seen in John 16:20, 22, and 25. This joy would be complete and indestructible. Thomas (2004:71) has the view that the use of the plural 'we' by the Elder in relation to the anticipated joy, is an indication that this joy is meant to be a result of the thriving relationship between oneself and the other community members. He argues for this position because the envisaged joy in 1 John 1:4 follows an emphasis upon 'our fellowship' which is also a fellowship with the Father.

The relationship between 'fellowship' and 'joy' is further researched by Culpepper (1998:255). He notes that 'where fellowship is only partial, joy can never be complete. Jesus left joy for his followers but that joy can never be complete so long as his redemptive work is still unfinished'. This line of thought is also followed by Kruse (2000:58-59) who states:

> The author recognises that his own joy in Christ cannot be complete if fellow believers for whom he feels some responsibility are in danger of departing from the truth by becoming involved in another fellowship, one which will soon prove to be bogus because it does not involve the Father and the Son.

The Elder's joy comes from his knowledge about the prudent walk of faith of other believers. The prevalence and continued desire to make the Elder proud, and the persistence for looking forward to sharing joy, play an important role in the expectation of the *Parousia*, when 'we see him as he is'. The continued fellowship with both the Father and the Son that the Elder encourages them to abide in, will be culminated when they will 'see him as he is'.

The relationship that the Elder espouses with the adherents is further noted in the way he addresses them in 1 John 1:2a, where he calls them 'my dear children'. This mirrors the love he has for them, and his more senior position in relation to them (Kruse 2000:71). This positional relationship is further depicted in the way the Elder introduces the adherents in 1 John 3:2, where he refers to them as 'dear friends'.

The fellowship between the Elder, the adherents, and the Father and Son can be disturbed by sin. Therefore, the Elder points the adherents to 1 John 2:1 as the way in which this should be taken care of: *But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, that is Jesus Christ, the Righteous One*. This way is both surprising and encouraging, because the Elder, while he cautions against sin, is also providing a remedy for this malady. This purity provided by the Son is echoed in relation to 'seeing him as he is', because the Elder emphatically notes in 1 John 3:3 that, *All who have this hope* [*of seeing him as he is*] *in him* [*must*] *purify themselves, just as he is pure*. The hope acts as a preservative in the community, and guarantees that the expected experience is the focal point in their life.

The Elder's purpose also includes *those who are trying to lead you astray* (1 Jn 2:26). He has a lot to say about the influence of the opposite force. In 1 John 3:2 he cautions about them and refers to them as the 'world'. The world and those who are trying to lead them astray are on a mission to make sure that at the *Parousia* the adherents 'don't see him as he is', but are rather ashamed.

6.4.2 Conclusion to this section

The purpose of the Elder is intertwined with themes relating to 'seeing him as he is'. These themes are embedded in the purpose set forth by the Elder. Seemingly the Elder is saying: 'I write to you so that you know that you have eternal life, which will

bring complete joy when we *see him as he is.* You will not *see him as he is* if you allow both sin and those who want to lead you astray to rule you'.

The internal devices used by the Elder to address the conflict depicted in the Epistle, are discussed in the next section. 'Seeing him as he is' forms part (in fact the climax) of the Elder's milieu in this correspondence. Here it becomes clear how the Elder guides the adherents polemically in this environment that he has created i.e. the *Parousia*. He guides them on how they should act in view of the ensuing difficult moments.

6.5 The rhetoric in the Epistle to convince the adherents to embrace 'seeing him as he is' as a climatic experience wedged against a normative practice

In this section an investigation into the Elder's rhetorical configuration of different shared 'lived experiences' is discussed. The Elder states that 'he' (the Divine) can be experienced through physical senses, spiritual senses, and family life, as well as cognitively through doctrine. This experience silhouettes the envisaged One of 1 John 3:2. The Elder uses a text in a profound way in his quest to address the adherents and also to encourage and cushion them against the impending apostasy.

Interaction with a biblical text has 'appropriation of meaning' as a major goal. This appropriation of meaning or understanding is a result of the 'theological spiritual sensitivity' of the reader, and it leads to the embodiment of the said text (Schneiders 1982:68). Although meaning of a text can never be entirely divorced from its author, it is, however, not limited to the intent of the author. Meaning is such that 'whatever it means when validly interpreted and whether or not the author intended such a meaning' (cf. Schneiders 2003:185).

Interpretation, therefore, calls for the total involvement of the reader. Although a text is a literary engagement between an author and the reader, 'it operates in such a way as to engage them cognitively and affectively, it is a strategy for total reader involvement with the subject matter' (Schneiders 1982:59). Thompson (2001:204) adds that the 'imaginative activity of the reader seeks to create coherence while reading progressively through the imaginatively composed biblical text'. This process

of reader involvement opens a way for a creation of lived experiences in the reader. These experiences are referred to as 'spiritualities'.

6.5.1 Spirituality

Schneiders (2002:134) defines 'Christian spirituality' as the 'lived experiences of the Christian faith'. This is crucial as she argues that Christian spirituality is biblically necessary and adequate only to the degree that it is rooted in and informed by the Word of God. For her, 'Christian spirituality is a self-transcending faith in which union with God and Jesus Christ through the Spirit expresses itself in the service of the neighbour and participation in the realisation of the reign of God in the world' (Schneiders 2002:134). Schneiders (2005:16) defines 'spirituality' as 'the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence towards the horizon of ultimate value one perceives'. This general definition works well for the study of spirituality as a field. As has been stated in this research[110], the spirituality researched in this thesis is early Christian spirituality.

The basic co-ordinates of the life of faith would be found in the early Christian believing community (i.e. Church) in which the faith is practised. Christian spirituality is a self-transcending faith in which union with the Father in Jesus Christ through the Spirit expresses itself in service of other members in the Johannine community, and participation in the realisation of the reign of God in the world (Van der Merwe 2014:4).

In order to address the problems of the community, the Elder reconfigures some lived experiences in the opening lines of his Epistle: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete* (1 Jn 1:1-4).

[110] See footnote 1 from page 1.

The Elder digs deep into what he has experienced and offers the same experience to his readers. This would establish unity of experience and purpose, and in so doing, encourage them to behave and live like he does. The dialectical illumination and spirituality would be achieved, because the Elder states that his proclamation is *so that <u>you also may have</u> fellowship with us*' (1 Jn 1:3). Akin (2001:56-57) relates: 'It is through the proclamation of the incarnate Word of life that John envisions the accomplishment of his purpose of bringing his readers to fellowship with him and other eyewitnesses'.

Van Der Merwe (2014:4-8) notes different ways that the Elder uses to evoke the lived experience of his readers, i.e. 'spiritual senses, physical senses, family life, and through reading the text'. These are discussed below in order to highlight their bearing, and common experience for both the Elder and the readers.

6.5.2 Experiencing[111] him through physical senses (1 Jn 1:1-3)

The experience that the Elder depicts, is linked to the physical senses. In this short passage he notes that 'we have heard', 'we have seen with our eyes', 'we have looked at', and 'our hands have touched'. His excitement about these lived experiences is evidenced by the repetitions in this text. Thrice he refers to 'what they have heard' (1 Jn 1:1, 3, 5); thrice he refers to 'what they have seen' (1 Jn 1:1, 2, 3), and once to 'what they have touched with their hands' (1 Jn 1:1). The climax of this excitement culminates in the 'Word of life', 'life', 'eternal life', and Jesus Christ being identified (Van der Merwe 2015a:8).

De Silva relates that, by its nature, encomia or epideictic speeches which praise some figure(s) from the past, were intended to strengthen the commitment of the audience to the values embodied in those figures. Hearing people being praised, they would be 'stirred to emulation of the behaviours which led to such esteem in the hopes of augmenting their own honor in the eyes of their group' (De Silva 1999:37). The Elder intends to recreate spirituality inside the readers, and he deems it authentic and similar to what they have experienced earlier. Those who hear this proclamation, experience

[111] On experiencing God, see also Hamby (1988), Beck (1986), Woodward (1986), Hinson (1986; 2005), Gelpi (1987), Dittberner (1978), Lefneski (1993), Smalley (2004), Kelly and Moloney (2003), and Masson (1983).

the Word of life or eternal life in totality, i.e. with their minds, thoughts, and feelings. This transformative power of the word was also experienced in other places (Ac 2:37-41; 8.26-39; cf. Van der Merwe 2014:8). The Elder intentionally uses this experience to build to a climactic experience when they will 'see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

In 1 John 3:2, the Elder promises the adherents a special kind of what was already experienced, in that now in the *Parousia* they will 'see him as he is'. Although 'seeing' is now on a different dimension and scope, they have already experienced the initial dimension and it was great, but the future one holds even greater possibilities.

6.5.3 Experiencing him through spiritual senses (1 Jn 1:2)

In 1 John 1:2 the Elder further illuminates his experience with the clause [*t*]*he life appeared*. This life is designated as 'eternal life' (1 Jn 1:2), which is the desire of both the Elder and his recipients. The Elder exposes his experience with this life as he claims that he has 'seen' it. According to Bultmann (1973:8-9), 'This experience refers to an event, and therefore to the historical appearance of the logos [in John 1:1]'. The Elder's experience with this 'life that appeared' was not only to see it as a past event, but as an event which has implications for the Johannine community. They can also share in this life in a relationship termed as 'fellowship'. In 1 John 1:3 the Elder elaborates: *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ*.

This fellowship (κοινωνία) is a special form of relationship. Dodd (1953b:6) defines it as 'persons who hold property in common, partners or shareholders in a common concern'. He further notes that if the blessings of Christianity are thought of as inheritance, then believers are joint-heirs, joint-shareholders with fellow Christians. The importance of this collectiveness can be further clarified by the nature of the 1st-century Mediterranean people: They were 'strongly group-embedded and collectivistic, they were social minded, familial to the values, attitudes and beliefs of their in-group' (Malina 1996:64).

This experience of God that the Elder promises to the adherents is also to make their joy complete (1 Jn 1:4). The notion that they could spiritually participate in God just in

line with Elder's initial experience, must have had a great impact on these adherents. Van der Merwe (2014:8) notes correctly that after the physical experience of Jesus, they would come to a further spiritual experience of him. Now they experience him as the 'Word of life', 'eternal life', and 'Son of God'. This lived experience open the window for them to experience the Divine – the new life in God. This new life is what the Elder is proclaiming, and what he wants his adherents to share with him in κοινωνία.

The 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2) that will take place at the *Eschaton* is a continuation of life in the family of God that has been experienced in the now. In this respect 'seeing him as he is' will bring more spiritual dimensions with it, and will be a continuation of what the adherents have already been experiencing on a limited level.

6.5.4 Experiencing him through family life (1 Jn 1:3, 6-7)

De Silva reckons that over the past two decades, students of both Old and New Testament studies have begun to excavate the insights of cultural anthropology for interpreting biblical texts. Cultural anthropology seeks to understand how the people within a given culture give symbolic structure to their perceptions of reality, how they arrange their social interactions into recognizable and predictable patterns, and how they construct systems of values, and maintain those values through mechanisms of social control. The Mediterranean society was a complex society – they were group-oriented. A person 'knows and values himself or herself only in connection with a social group and the status or reputation it ascribes to him or her' (De Silva 1999:1). Because of the complexities of this society where consensus is not uniform, the individual's worth is not the same in the view of one group as in that of another (De Silva 1999:1-3).

One of these social dynamics found in the Mediterranean world is 'family'. In 1 John this fellowship constitutes the socio-structure core (1 Jn 1:3, 6, 7). The language used for referring to the readers of the Elder is familial, while the Elder portrays life in the Christian community as life in the family of God, with God the Father as head. The adherents are addressed by using familial language:

- 'Born of God' (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).
- 'Children of God' (1 Jn 3:1-2, 10; 5:2).

- ‘God as Father’ (1 Jn 1:2; 2:1,14-15, 22-24; 3:1).
- They are constantly addresses as ‘children’ (1 Jn 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7), and ‘dear friends’ (1 Jn 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11).

Participation in the family is to be made possible as believers experience κοινωνία (1 Jn 1:6-7). This fellowship is a special form of relationship (mentioned above) in which a lived experience becomes a shared experience, and *vice versa*. The nature of what is shared moulds the character of the group. In this context the shared experience is the ‘new life’ (1 Jn 1:1-2; 2:25; 5:11-13). The believers share this new life with Christ and God, and with one another. This new life in the family creates and stimulates the desire for such fellowship and calls for active participation in the new life together with other believers (Van der Merwe 2004:20).

According to the Elder, this fellowship is both horizontal and vertical in nature. Horisontally it takes place among Christians, because the indwelling Christ lives in their hearts: *…so that you also may have fellowship with us* (1 Jn 1:3b)[112]. Schnackenburg (1980:66) emphasises correctly that ‘in 1 John fellowship with God is, in its essence, connected with ethics’. The vertical fellowship is that which involves both Christians and God (1 Jn 1:3c): *And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ*. The vertical lived experience of fellowship is essential for true horizontal fellowship. The term κοινωνία is encountered only here and in 1 John 1:6 (*If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true*), but the motif runs throughout the whole Epistle in a series of different expressions that speak of ‘being in God’ (1 Jn 2:5 [5:20]) or of ‘remaining in God’ (1 Jn 2:6, 24), and in the reciprocal formula: ‘We in God and he in us’ (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). All these expressions characterise the believers’ relationship to God, not as mysticism, but rather as a mode of life. For as 1 John 2:5 immediately indicates, the relationship to God involves the keeping of God’s commandments (Bultmann 1973:13).

[112] Schnackenburg (1980:66-72), in an extensive excursus, has informatively articulated the peculiarity of the Johannine idea of the fellowship with God in distinction from the Old Testament view, and similarly from the philosophical (Stoic), fanatical, and Gnostic views. His notion that one can speak of a ‘mysticism of being’ appears to be off the mark.

Christian fellowship is essentially a 'lived experience' of, and a sharing experience with the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3). Both the vertical and horizontal fellowship is deemed important by the Elder. God can be experienced through spiritual and physical senses as well as in the family of God. The experience of God is made possible by the availability of the text which is read over and over to the adherents and thereby creating certain spiritualities in their life.

6.5.5 Experiencing him through hearing the text

Davis postulates that the entire New Testament was heavily influenced by the oral culture of the day. Not only the reading, but also the writing of a text was normally accompanied by vocalisation. This overly oral-inclined culture has formed a silhouette in the structure of the text which is 'marked by aural rather than visual indicators' (Davis 1999:11)[113]. In the oral-oriented culture of the New Testament, 'artistry with words is highly valued. Language is considered as a mode of action and words are seen to have great power' (Davis 1999:15). This means that controlling words brings authority, while rhetorical skill is respected. This was the climate in 1 John 3:2, where the Elder states that they will 'see him as he is'.

These words of the Elder must have been intricately interwoven into the very fabric of the community, because of their nature. Goody and Watt (1968:30-31) note to this effect:

> The social function of memory – and of forgetting – can thus be seen as the final stage of what may be called the homeostatic organisation of the cultural tradition in non-literate society. The language is developed in intimate association with the experience of the community, and it is learned by the individual in face-to-face contact with the other members. What continues to be of social relevance is stored in the memory while the rest is usually forgotten.

The individual functionality in the oral culture was also based in its literacy level. The extent of the literacy in the Johannine community can be estimated from various

[113] Botha (2012) has extensively resonated with the oral cultural dimensions of early Christianity. He concurs with Davis that the 'scribal culture of Antiquity exhibits a strong bias towards orality, with even literates often expressing little confidence in the writing. There was a prevailing preference for the "living voice", and a strong belief that distinct bodies of knowledge which were never written down, and could not be written down, distinguished the insiders from the outsiders'.

sociological theories regarding the social make-up of the early Church[114]. Davis (1999:25) argues that the general principle in the New Testament was that 'reading throughout the society was for a group to gather and listen while someone reads aloud, therefore the New Testament documents were written with hearing audience in mind'.

In its inception, this research notes a discourse analysis which approaches the text as a literary product. That section resonates with the oral cultural backdrop that forms the contexts where the Elder echoes that 'we shall see him as he is'. This demands that the research should

> recognise that from the beginning the material is, fundamentally, an oral product which has been written down. Oral biblical critics look for aural thematic and structural markers and mnemonic pegs which have been used by the composer not mainly because a large amount of analytical thought has been given to the material but because such makers are a sub-conscious tool which is used in all forms of communication in an oral society (Davis 1999:60).

The New Testament documents were composed primarily by authors who have learnt to write for real-world reasons and had little if any preparation in aesthetics. They viewed literature as a means of communication with others

> when they were absent but saw it inferior to the spoken word. They expected their compositions to be read aloud to a gathered community who would in turn, use that material to establish a dialogue among themselves and, especially in the case of a letter, with the reader, who was often the writer's representative (Davis 1999:61-62).

Interestingly, the oral[115] biblical criticism does not focus solely on oral/aural clues to composition while ignoring features common to both oral and literary material. Botha has also related orality to literacy, arguing that 'oral culture shared the stage with

[114] There are various theories concerning the extent of literacy in the New Testament. Scholars like Deissmann (1926), Gager (1975), and Troeltsch (1992) postulate that the early Church consisted of illiterate poor people, while others like Judge (1960) state that the early Church consisted of high social status members. Others like Meeks (1983) portray the early Church as comprising of a wide range of social statuses.

[115] Botha (2012:10) has cautioned well that orality does not necessarily confine itself to spoken discourse, but rather refers to the 'experience of words (and speech) in the habitat of sound'. Verbalisation in the context of orality cannot be an object in itself.

written culture even though written texts at that time would have been readable only in the vocal act of reading aloud' (Botha 2012:15). This description captures clearly the 1st-century Mediterranean culture as an 'overlap between oral and manuscript culture' (Botha 2012:15). Botha (2012:20) also reasons:

> It is the insight that writing and speech are culturally embedded phenomena, similar to other social conventions, that we need to facilitate in a comprehensive approach to our texts. We need to avoid anachronistic terminology and conceptualizations and uncritical ethnocentrism when it comes to authorship, literacy, tradition, writing, and other aspects of ancient communication.

In view of this special kind of relationship between oral and written texts, it was fitting for this research to start with those devices within the text that the Elder used to create certain spiritualities in the community. Below the equally significant oral devices are investigated, albeit with a realisation that both the written and oral aspects form a continuum – they complement each other. An understanding of 'seeing him as he is' is enhanced by a referral to the oral/aural clues, building on the already done work of literary devises. The communal reading only breeds communal discussion.

The following section does not claim to exhaustively deal with the oral aspects of 1 John, but with those aspects that enhance understanding the clause 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. The rhetoric that the Elder uses to convince the adherents, comprises of various rhetorical figures of speech, repetition, rare words chosen because of aural and rhetorical considerations, and oral formulas.

6.5.5.1 Various aural rhetorical devices used by the Elder to generate spiritualities

Davis (1999:71) points out that 'figures of speech are widely used in all forms of communication, both oral and literal'. The importance of these figures of speech is that they are uttered in order to bring freshness or emphasis, while the connotations they create, bring impulses to one's mind that help one to see beyond mere surface denotations (Kennedy & Gioia 1995:677). The effect of these figures of speech on those who hear them is such that they create 'visual scenes which in turn create rhetoric or rhetograph that affects the audience and that can serve to create

understanding, even to bring out new or changed social views and behaviors' (Jeal 2007:2).

This section does not utilise all the figures of speech used by the Elder in 1 John, but only those that contribute to the understanding of the Elder's hope that when Christ appears 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

6.5.5.1.1 Antithesis

Through a sequence of antithetical tags throughout the Epistle, the Elder urges the believing community to separate themselves from those who are trying to mislead them. 'Seeing him as he is' will only be possible by living a life of purity in the present, and this must involve constantly separating oneself from the deceivers and their way of life. These deceivers are living in the sphere of darkness, not knowing where they are going, while they 'hate a brother or sister' (1 Jn 2:11), because the darkness has blinded their eyes. This is in contrast with the adherents who live in the light, because God is light and in him is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5). Unlike those walking in darkness and 'hate', they walk in the light and have fellowship with one another in love (1 Jn 1:7; 4:20).

The Elder pairs the adherents diametrically opposite to the deceivers. He states that the adherents keep the commandments (1 Jn 2:3), while the opponents do not, and are therefore 'liars and the truth is not in them' (1 Jn 2:4). The adherents keep his word and they abide in him (1 Jn 2:6).

It is evident that as the Epistle was heard regularly, the antithetical labels would clearly form patterns in the minds of the hearers. This could have encouraged them to remain faithful to both the community and Christ, thereby releasing them from the hypnotist pull of the opponents. They would have seen the hope of 'seeing him as he is' as a reason to continue in faith. This must have created determination, excitement, hope, and resilience in the face of adversity.

6.5.5.1.2 Metaphorical language

The power of metaphorical language is unearthed by Osborn (1967:116) who states that, with its 'attachment to basic commonly shared motives, the speaker can expect

such metaphors to touch the greater part of his audience'. It generates a force that impacts the audience. In the 'hearing of the text', metaphorical language 'is particularly effective because of it use of imagery' (Davis 1999:77). The nature of metaphorical terms is such that they maintain 'the individual meaning of both "words" at the same time that it combines them to form a new meaning. This new meaning is metaphor in a sense, each metaphor is a new word, which encourages the exploration of free meanings without giving up the tied meaning of its constituent parts' (Van der Watt 2000:6).

The underlying purpose of the Elder, which is to confirm to (the minds of) his readers that they are children of God, has some obligations. It takes obedience and abiding in God, which would bring the readers eternal life (1 Jn 2:17). The Elder employs the metaphor of 'abiding' or 'remaining'. This 'abiding' or 'remaining' is directly connected to 'seeing him as he is' because the former guarantees the latter. This rhetorical effect of imagery is meant to persuade them of the desirability and possibility of 'seeing him as he is'. The metaphor of 'abiding' is used to describe those in the right relationship with God as

- walking like Jesus walked (1 Jn 2:6);
- abiding in the light and loving the fellow-believers (1 Jn 2:10);
- having the Word of God that lives in them (1 Jn 2:14);
- receiving eternal life by abiding in the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:24-25);
- having God's seed in them (1 Jn 3:9);
- abiding in love, and in God, and God in them (1 Jn 4:16).

The Elder reinforces the metaphor of 'abiding in God' with providing a negative and opposite metaphor of 'abiding in death' (1 Jn 3:14). This 'abiding in death' is a result of the absence of love: 'On the other hand, the absence of Christian love indicates that one has not passed into the state of spiritual life but remains in the realm of spiritual death. They walk in the darkness, not in the light' (Akin 2001:157). This absence of Christian love has far reaching implications. The Elder earlier on noted that it means one is walking in 'darkness' (1 Jn 2:11), and worse still, this walking in darkness brings 'blindness to the eyes' (1 Jn 2:11). The final state of the opponents in metaphorical language is that they 'do not have life' (1 Jn 5:15; cf. 3:15).

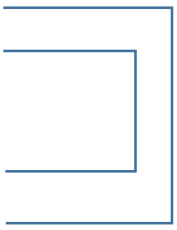
The Elder has clearly employed metaphorical language to depict the undesirable state of those who cannot 'see him [God] as he is' and uses it to clarify and elevate the state of those who will. They are in the present 'abiding in light' not 'blinded by walking in darkness'.

6.5.5.1.3 Chiasm

Snodderly has mapped the chiastic structure on the entire Epistle of 1 John. Although the Elder was most probably Jewish, he wrote from a Greco-Roman literary background within an oral culture. Chiasm is employed to 'serve as a memory aid in the 1st century world for those listening to a text being read or recited. In 1 John chiasm was used apparently as a means of organizing a set of antithetical statements for his readers or listeners' (Snodderly 2008:46).

Man (1984:146-157) concurs with Snodderly about the use of chiasm in helping communication, adding that 'artistry in the use of structure was not an end in itself; it was a means towards more effective communication of their messages. In case of chiasm, this is accomplished by underlining the central emphasis or clarifying correspondences in the text' (Man 1984:146). 'Seeing him as he is' is embedded in this type of structure. In the pericope which contains the clause 'seeing him as he is', the Elder employs a chiastic structure to aid memory and help the hearers to see the 'seeing him as he is' in relation to other themes. Although the entire Epistle is abundant with chiasms, the pericope containing 'seeing him as he is' has a chiastic structure that plays a crucial role in the life of those waiting for the 'seeing him as he is':

9.1	Πᾶς ὁ *γεγεννημένος* ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
9.1.1	ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ
9.1.2	ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει
9.2	καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν
9.2.1	ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ *γεγέννηται*



In this structure the Elder explains to his hearers what God requires from them (the 'state' that they must be in) in order to 'see him as he is'. They are to be without any sin, because they have the 'seed' of God in them. This should cause them to consecrate themselves, intentionally separate them from those who could lead them to sin (the 'opponents'), and encourage them to continue in their faith. By clearly

painting an ideal follower as someone far from sin and born of God, who is ready to 'see him as he is', having God's seed in them, the Elder intentionally employs this chiasm to reinforce this truth in the memory of the adherents.

6.5.5.1.4 Rare words chosen on aural and rhetorical considerations

With reference to the preservation of speech in an oral culture, Havelock argues that 'because of its commitment to preservation and therefore to the past, oral composition uses a vocabulary which is itself in varying degrees archaic-ritualistic, remote, and venerable' (Havelock 1963:175). One of the inclinations of this vocabulary is the use of rare words: 'Rare words are more significant than common words and they can be used for rhetorical effect' (Clark 1975:65).

In 1 John the Elder employs this aural and rhetorical device as he refers to the 'complete' (πεπληρωμένη) joy enjoyed by both the author and the adherents (1 Jn 1:4). Bultmann (1973:14) has the view that the 'completeness of joy' is referring to 'the fellowship that already exists between the author and the readers in conjunction with the Father and the Son'. This envisaged completeness could have further excited the adherents and build up to the climatic experience when they will 'see him as he is'.

Schnackenburg further distinguishes the 'completeness of joy' that the adherents would receive when they interact with the glorified Christ. He argues that this 'completeness of joy' elevates, and he distinguishes it as a 'special joy' (Schnackenburg 1992:63). The special nature of this joy is that it is experienced by the 'proclaimers as they enlarge and strengthen the circle of those who are brought into fellowship with God' (Schnackenburg 1992:63). By hearing that they could bring joy to those who have presented the gospel to them by means of their continual fellowship, the adherents would be determined to do their part. The sharing of this joy between the adherents, the Elder, the Father, and the Son must have brought a lot of determination for them, in order for them to experience the strength to move on to the point where they would 'see him as he is'.

6.5.5.1.5 Conclusion to this section

'Seeing him as he is' should be understood as part of the rhetoric the Elder used to address the adherents. By appealing to this future climactic event that holds

dimensions of God's revelation that both the Elder and the adherents can only wait for, he has achieved his goal of unifying them.

6.6 The disintegration of the Johannine community

Although elements of Johannine thought were forever engrafted into the believing community as evidenced in their presence even in the 2nd century (Brown 1982), the impact of the Elder's rhetoric on the adherents did not translate into an affluent and progressive community. Culpepper postulates that 1 and 2 John reflected a community that was torn apart by theological differences. By the time 1 John was written, the 'differences had precipitated a schism' (Culpepper 1998:48). It is evident that the effects of the schism that the Elder has addressed, were such that after the Epistles were written, 'there is no further trace of a distinct Johannine community' (Brown 1982:103). Brown elaborates:

> One cannot deny the possibility that the author's adherents and/or the secessionists[116] (or the communities descended from both) did survive but left no traces in history; but it is far more likely that the authors adherents were swallowed up by the Great Church while the secessionists drifted off into various heretical movements (Brown 1982:103-104).

Although there is no clear external proof of the trace of the secessionists, Brown believes that 'after ostracism by the author of 1 John and his adherents, the secessionists, carrying GJohn with them, would have offered a marvelous catalyst to docetic and gnostic strains of Christian thought' (Brown 1982:104).

The high Christology of the adherents had to be a determining factor for the path they took. Although they ceased to exist as a community, the 'ultimate victory of the original

[116] Scholars refer to them differently. Schnackenburg (1982:18) refers to them as 'heretical teachers', while Brown (1982:415, 574, 618) refers to them as secessionists, adversaries, opponents and deceivers, and propagandists (1982:429). For more detailed treatments and theories concerning the secessionists, see Painter (1986), Klauck (1988), Hengel (1989), and Brown (1982). Kruse's (2000:151) treatment of this issue is also clear and concise, and his conclusion is worth considering: 'The exact influence which led the secessionists to formulate their understanding of Christianity, whether it was the influence of their background in mystery religions (Painter, 1986), their particular interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Brown 1982:415), a pagan Hellenistic background involving dualistic ideas, or their experience of the Spirit (Klauck, 1988), will continue to be debated. But it does seem clear that whatever the influences that affected them were, they all led to a de-emphasising of the incarnation and vicarious death of Christ and a concomitant de-emphasising of the commands of Christ, especially the command to love one another'.

Johannine community was to have its preexistence Christology accepted by the Great Church and become Christian orthodoxy' (Brown 1982:112). It would seem that some of the adherents joined the other Christian groups, being accepted with their developed Christology. They 'accommodated themselves to ecclesiology and structure of the Great Church, and that Church was accommodating itself to the Johannine Christians' (Brown 1982:112). Interestingly, although the Johannine community collapsed, the adherents addressed by the Elder were probably assimilated into other streams of Christianity. This resilience and mutation can be safely related to the hope they had that they would 'see him as he is', as the Elder has promised. This hope must have been an anchor to their life, and since the *Parousia* was not exclusively a Johannine doctrine but also held by other adherents, it must have been the common denominator in their integration.

6.7 Conclusion

This socio-historical context has opened up a window to look into the situation of the community for whom the Elder projects the notion of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. The purpose of the Elder is intertwined with themes related to 'seeing him as he is' (themes that would help in the understanding of this clause), namely 'complete joy', 'those who lead one astray', '(not) committing sin', and 'believing so that one will have eternal life'.

In this chapter a resonation with both the adherents and the claimants has concluded that, though their identity would be a continued quest, their behaviour would reveal if they were faithless or faithful people. The claimants could be identified as mainly 1st-century Jews – both the earliest Christians who thought of themselves as the true Israel, and ethnic Jews. This background establishes a framework for the interpretation of the texts that follow especially the notion of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. 'Seeing him as he is' is therefore understood with both Jewish inclination and early Christian thought, or early Christian thought espousing a deep-seated Jewish heritage.

CHAPTER 7

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON 'SEEING HIM AS HE IS' IN 1 JOHN 3:2

7.1 Introduction

The theological perspectives on 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 are investigated in this chapter. The theological orientation of the Johannine community in relation to their understanding of who God is, as well as their view of Jesus as the holy One, and how they were to live in view of 'seeing him as he is', are also investigated. Robbins (1996a:120) refers to this as 'the sacred texture' which deals with 'aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics'. The nature of God or the divine Being may exist either in the background or in a direct position of action and speech in a text. This is the realm of theology *par excellence*.

In this chapter an understanding of the meaning of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, is enhanced by an understanding of God as espoused in this community. The theological orientation of the adherents which forms the backdrop against which they understand the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, their idea of God, as well as their envoy and life within the family of God, enhances the understanding of this clause.

7.2 The image of God in 1 John

Although this chapter discusses the image of God in 1 John, it will incorporate both the Son and the children of God in the discussions, because they relate to, and are part of the family of God. Should these concepts be studied separately, it could not be done with the familial backdrop in view, and this will hamper the full spectrum presented by the original concept of the *familia Dei.*

Robbins (1996a:120) notes that God, or the divine Being, may exist either in the background or in the direct position of action and speech in a text. These 1st-century Christians displayed a deep-seated understanding of the God of the Old Testament.

Their understanding of God is crucial to the understanding of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

The existence of God is never debated in the New Testament – it is a presupposed maxim, with the central theme being the 'nature of revelation' (Ashton 1991:62). An understanding of God in 1 John is based on the Old Testament Jewish Scriptures; this was the understanding of both the Elder and the adherents. The reliance of the Elder on describing God in terms of his Old Testament orientation, can be traced back to the prologue in the Fourth Gospel where the author refers to God as having 'grace and truth' (Jn 1:15). Kuyper elaborates on this and reasons that the Gospel

> makes reference to the beginning and creation and to Moses and the Law, as well as allusion to seeing God – or rather to the fact that no one has seen God at any time. When, therefore, John declares that the incarnate Word is full of grace and truth he is telling his readers to look for the meaning of this expression in the Old Testament, where it is descriptive of God (Kuyper 1964:3).

Moses wrote about Yahweh, stating, *The Lord, The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to a thousand generations* (Ex 34:6). In John 1:18 'abounding in love and faithfulness' becomes 'full of grace and truth'. The fact that God is transcendent, is mentioned in this verse (Jn 1:18): *No one has ever seen God*. Although no one has ever seen God, the Gospel advocates a personal God; however, even though God is personal, there is always a need for a mediator between God and his subjects, in the Person of Jesus Christ[117].

The role of the Son as mediator[118] is clear in the Johannine corpus. John 1:14 notes that [*t*]*he Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father full of grace and truth*. This mediatory role of the Son is portrayed clearly and authoritatively by the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, where the Son is identified as the *Logos* who was pre-

[117] For other references to the Johannine view of God, see Hopkins (1970:421), Juel and Keifert (1990:39-60), Labahn (2006:1008-1010), Richey (2010:139-140), and Sadananda (2014:121).

[118] See also John 1:18 and 14:19.

existent in creation. The Son (*Logos*) is seen in light of his origin with God, his role in creation, the incarnation, and his mission to reveal the Father (Culpepper 1998:119). This mediatory role is in such a way that to see the Son is to see the Father (Jn 14:9), and to know the Son is to know the Father (Jn 14:7).

7.2.1 God as Father[119] of his household

In this section God as Father is discussed, in order to enhance the understanding of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, which has a possibility of referring to either the Father or the Son. The designation of God as Father[120] is espoused by the Elder, as he exclaims, *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us* (1 Jn 3:1). This image of God as Father in 1 John accords well with the Mediterranean world's societal dynamics. Malina (1982; 1986; 1993) and Robbins (1996a:101) deal in depth with the importance of group identity, real kinship and fictive kinship relations prevalent in the 1st-century Mediterranean world. According to them, the group fully determined the identities of individuals; they were not individualistic in their orientation but rather socially minded, preferring the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the group to have pre-eminence over individual ones. They were strongly group-embedded and this was evidenced in their behaviours which were controlled by strong social inhibitions.

In 1 John the Elder persistently regulates the behaviour of the adherents by appealing to this fictive kinship of their common identity (1 Jn 2:9-10; 3:10, 12b-13, 15, 17; 4:20b-21; 5:16). In these instances he refers to them with the term ἀδελφός. He also refers to the intimate relationship between brothers (and sisters) as having fellowship with one another, with the term ἀλλήλων (1 Jn 1:7; 3:11, 14, 16, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 Jn 5). Van der Merwe (2006:1057) also notes that this new life and κοινωνία in Christ which

[119] The notion of God as Father was also prevalent in Rabbinic Judaism. Goshen-Gottstein (2001:470) states that 'rabbinic sources take biblical usage for granted and thus continue to refer to God as Father only in the context of Israel's special relationship with God. As an extension of the collective use of fatherhood we also find individuals referring to God as their Father. This is found in biblical sources, and rabbinic linguistic patterns equally permit the individual to refer to God as one's Father'. Although the Rabbinic reference to God as Father is patterned against the biblical sources, there is a particular way in which they further espouse God as Father: 'The image of the Father is used to a large extent, though not exclusively, in order to express filial responsibility to the Father. As the earthly son has obligations toward his father, so, too, Israel has obligations toward its heavenly Father. The obligations are expressed in its way of life, in faithfulness to the Torah' (Goshen-Gottstein 2001:482).

[120] See also Swartley (1990:12-15), Barrick (2010:268-270), Weinrich (2011:27-42), and Chan (2013:48-51).

believers experience corporately, are described by the Elder within the paradigm of the *familia Dei* (family of God).

An understanding of God in 1 John has to be located in its socio-religious background, because it forms the backdrop through which the adherents understand the Elder when he reckons that 'we shall see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. In 1 John 1:3b the Elder states that *our fellowship* [*κοινωνία*] *is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ*. The Elder employs the use of metaphors[121] in order to define God in the κοινωνία, identifying both God's being and nature. The use of language communicating about God is explained by Wainwright (1983:314), who relates the poem of Sissons which reveal the fundamental role of language:

> Christ is a language in which we speak to God and also God, so that we speak in truth; He in us, we in him, speaking to one another, to him, the City of God.

In relation to the metaphorical use of language in worship, Wainwright (1983:314) relates that metaphorical language is in nature a transferral, in that it transfers those who speak it 'because it is capable of carrying the necessary cosmic dimensions'. He argues that the establishment of one's relationship with God as their Father must compel them to prove that they are his children by being transformed to be like him in godliness.

The Elder advocates a κοινωνία which involves God as Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the children of God. It is in this *familia Dei* that God is understood by the adherents.

7.2.2 God, the Son, and children of God as light in 1 John

The Elder refers to God as 'light', 'righteous' and 'love'. These metaphors are used in relation to both the Son and the children of God. Under this section these metaphors are investigated as they relate to each entity (Father, Son, and children of God).

[121] On works that deal with the use of metaphorical language in relation to God, see also Mickelsen (1975:346-354), Pyles (1983:82-91), Wainwright (1983:309-321), Marshall (1983:302-317), Chryssides (1985:145-153), Rowett (1993:148-170), Reesor (1994:209-218), Walker (1998:214-224), Vos (2005:303-312), Sumney (2006:778-779), Jokiranta and Wassen (2009:173-203), Mahlangu (2010:397-413), and Nielsen (2010:197-207).

The dualism of light/darkness figures heavily in Gnosticism, as well as in other early sources. Philosophers spoke of true knowledge as providing the light, while early Palestinian sources like Philo regarded God as light; it was also common to contrast good and evil with the metaphors of light and darkness (Keener 2003a:382-383). This is also true of the Old Testament, where God the Father has been referred to as the light in different ways. DeWolf (1960:45) notes that

> [i]n Exodus we are told of God's appearing to Moses in the brightness of a burning bush. Here the light represents God himself. The accounts of Israel in the wilderness tell of God's guiding them by a pillar of cloud in the daytime 'and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light' (Ex 13.21).

Presumably, the light is to reassure the hearers/readers of God's presence, and so to give renewed hope, as well as to guide them – again the light is a sign of God himself. This idea also appears in the *Targums*: In the doctrine of the *Shekinah* the light shines over the Ark of the Covenant, and wherever else God's presence is locally perceived.

The New Testament also attests to the God who is light: Matthew 4:15-16 records: *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned*.

Nolland (2005:174) reasons that 'darkness readily connotes hardship, deprivation, and perhaps lack of clarity about direction. Light is the opposite of darkness and is a universally recognised image of salvation'. Paul also alludes in 2 Corinthians 4:6 to light, but more specifically in relation to the light that the gospel brings. Harris (2005:333-334) adds that

> here Paul states the reason that he preached Christ and was devoted to the Corinthians. It was because God had dispelled his darkness by illuminating his heart and had given him knowledge of Christ that he wished to share. The spiritual principle is this: the person who has light is responsible to share that light.

It is the Gospel of John that presents most of the New Testament passages in which Christ is compared to light. In line with the Gospel, the Epistle notes that **'**God is

light[122], and in him is no darkness at all' (1 Jn 1:5). In this passage the nature of God is in view. The first implication from this declaration is that 'God is fullness of life itself without even a trace of deficiency' (Akin 2001:60). John 1:4-5 depicts Jesus as the light of all mankind, which is a statement of purpose, defining 'the qualifications necessary for fellowship with God. The fact that the ultimate purpose of John's proclamation and writing is that his audience may participate in the Christian (apostolic) fellowship (and joy) with the Father and with his Son (1.1-4) obliged him to set forth the conditions of this fellowship' (Akin 2001:62-3). The same nature of God is also ascribed to the Son.

It is interesting to note that, just as the Father is referred to as the light, the same is true of the Son. John 1:6-9 states: *There came a man who was sent from God…he came as a witness to testify concerning that light…the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world*. Keener (2003a:393) notes that 'in contrast to Jn 1.8…Jesus was the true light itself'. This is a clear reference to the Son as the light. In line with this, the Elder notes in 1 John 2:8: *Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining*. This true light that, according to the Elder, is already shining, is a reference to the Son. Thomas (2004:104) rightly notes that this light 'clearly draws on the language of the fourth Gospel prologue where the preincarnate Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overtake it'.

In 1 John the Elder's referral to God as light is embedded in a familial orientation: In 1 John 1:5 God is referred to as light – ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν. Brooke (1912:12) states that in this context, and as a description of the nature of God, φῶς suggests 'illumination' as the primary idea when referring to God. He further states that 'it is of the nature of the light that it is and makes visible, God's nature is such that he must make himself known, and that knowledge reveals everything else in its true nature' Brooke (1912:12). Brooke (1912:12; cf. also Van der Merwe 2014:3) further argues that in view of the metaphorical use of φῶς, it is impossible to exclude the ethical

[122] For more references to 'God as light', see Shaw (1994:6-18), Rowett (1993:148-170), Durand (2011:1-42), Knight (1998:1212-1214), and Miner (2007:112-122).

meaning from the signification of this term. In this respect it suggests ‘holiness’, ‘truthfulness’ and ‘purity’ as essential to God’s nature.

The purity of God is further clarified and illuminated by the Elder when he states in 1 John 1:5b: καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία (in him there is no darkness at all). Although complete knowledge of God is not possible, the Elder refers to the absence of darkness in God in relation to him being ‘truly known’ here and now. Under the conditions and limitations of human life his nature is ‘light’, which communicates itself to mankind, made in the *imago Dei,* till they are transformed into his likeness (cf. Brooke 1912:12). This metaphor has ethical implications in that those ‘in whom there is no darkness’ must exclude themselves from the fellowship of them who ‘walk in darkness’.

Schnackenburg (1992:76-78) connects ‘light’ with the ethical life of the adherents. He notes that by referring to the absence of darkness in God, the Elder also has in mind the moral attitudes and consequent behaviour of those antagonistic to God (cf. 1 Jn 1:8, 10; 2:4, 9). Van der Merwe (2014:3) also notes that darkness, metaphorically speaking, has a moral quality reflecting the absence of salvation and God, and it stands in direct antithesis to all that characterises God as ‘light’.

As has already been referred to, this purity of God is also sustained by the Son. Just like the Father who is pure, the Son also contains that purity. The Elder advocates that ‘in him there is no sin’ (1 Jn 3:5). The purity of the Son was such that he

> demonstrated it in a hostile world in which his children are also called to develop theirs. He set himself always to do the Father’s will even though he knew that it would frequently and ultimately be a path of suffering. God’s law was written on his heart, and to that law the human Jesus was always loyal and true (Stott 1988:86).

Bultmann (1973:51) argues that ‘no sin’ is equivalent to ‘he is righteous’ and ‘he is pure’, which refers to the fact that as One who is sinless, the Son is the One who takes away sins. Just as the Father is pure and holy, so is the Son. In 1 John 3:3 the Elder continues with the purity of God in relation to the Son and the children of God, stating: *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure*. This life of purity

and holiness clearly demonstrated by the Son was also to be translated into the life of the ‘children of God’.

The language that the Elder uses to identify the adherents in their soteriological orientation is worth noting: He refers to them as ‘children of God’ (1 Jn 3:1-2, 10; 5:2), and ‘God has become their parent’ (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18); they confess that ‘God is their Father’ (1 Jn 1:2; 2:1, 14-15, 22-24; 3:1; 2 Jn 4); they are both ‘children’ (1 Jn 2:1,12, 28; 3:7) and ‘beloved’ (1 Jn 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; cf. 3 Jn 1, 2, 5, 11) respectively.

The theme of believers being God’s children is rooted in early Christian soteriology. John the Baptist’s mission was to lead others to ‘believe’ in Jesus (Jn 1:7), including revealing Jesus to Israel (Jn 1:31) (Keener 2003a:399). To become a member of this family a person has to be born into it. This happens through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is necessary, for the child of God has to adopt the same life as the Father, which means to walk in the light or, otherwise expressed, ‘to walk as Jesus walked’ (Van der Merwe 2004:538). A child of God has now found a new orientation which empowers them to remain in him, and also prepares them for the event of ‘seeing him as he is’. The reality of the salvation as it relates to both Jesus and the followers is well netted by Akin (2001:63) who notes that

> in 1 Jn (2.8, 9, 11) all relate to Jesus. The message of 2.8 is that the fulfilment of the love commandment is now a reality not only in Jesus but in John’s Christian readers (cf. Jn 15.12–14). John writes to his readers this new commandment, which is now a reality in them, because ‘the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining’ (1 Jn 2.8b).

This means that the children of God must ‘walk in the light’ as Jesus ‘walked in the light’ and ‘purify themselves’, just as he is pure (1 Jn 3:3) (cf. Van der Merwe 2006:1061).

The fellowship of God the Father, the Son, and the children of God ‘in light’ hinges on the fact that ‘light’ is regarded as a quality of the divine character, and that the holiness or goodness of God is intended, and those who have fellowship with God and his Son

must not walk in darkness. The tests of walking in this light are pointed out by the Elder in regard to having this fellowship 'in the light' (Van der Merwe 2004:549):

> The danger of denying sin: their relationship to sin was very crucial because sin is regarded as walking in darkness and they were not supposed to walk therein but in the light. Sin was a reality that they experienced and they had to converge their walking in the light as envisaged and the reality that they often found themselves sinning. In relation to sin, the Elder encouraged them to confess their sins when they do sin instead of denying its existence or effect (Van der Merwe 2004:549; cf also Von Wahlde 1997:222-33; and Kenny 2000:21). Life in the light also translated into the children of God obeying God's commands; love for the Father versus love for the world, and this would result in the children of God participating with God in combating heresies. The Elder states that the children of God will be enhanced in their fighting heresies because they 'have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth' (1 Jn 2.20).

This anointing that they have, together with the Spirit, would be the aids that the children of God have at their disposal in combating heresies (Van der Merwe 2004:550). The children of God live together with their Father and his Son in the light, but the children of the devil live in darkness.

7.2.2.1 Children of the devil live in darkness

The children of the devil and the children of God present members of two opposing families. The children of God have already been dealt with, and it has been noted that those who do not do what is right and do not love their brothers and sisters cannot be included in being children of God. The children of the devil have been clearly labelled as opposite to the children of God. The Elder depicts the opponents as existing outside the family. It is clear that children in both families imitate, embody and have distinguishing marks of their families. The children of the devil are therefore like their father, the devil, and this is evidenced in their deeds (Van der Merwe 2004:538).

7.2.2.2 Conclusion to this section

The Father, Son, and children of God are referred to as the light. This notion is embedded in both Old and New Testament writings even though much of it is found elsewhere (like Philo and the Palestinian Judaism). Walking in the light is opposite to

walking in darkness in that the light signifies the good, right, and godly, while the darkness portrays walking away from God. If the children of God are to 'see him as he is' in the *Eschaton*, they must walk with God, through the Son, in the present light.

7.2.3 God, the Son, and children of God as righteous

One of the characteristics of God that the Elder highlights is him being righteous. The Elder relays this in 1 John 1:9 and 2:29. Schnackenburg (1992:83) correctly notes that righteousness is the nature of God as enumerated clearly by Moses in his farewell discourse in Deuteronomy 32:4. In this farewell discourse Moses states that, *He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he*.

In this farewell discourse Moses appears as a character witness, and he does this on the Lord's behalf. In this address he further includes both the heavens and the earth as he praises the greatness of the Lord by publicly proclaiming his Name. While he extols the Lord, Moses reveals his character as 'righteous'. Moses compares the Lord to a 'Rock', that is 'perfect and 'upright'. Merrill (1994:410) comments that 'in the context of self-defence these attributes speak most particularly to the Lord's own character. Thus he is also faithful in the sense that he is dependable'.

That the Lord is the 'Rock' relates well to his character. Jamieson *et al*. (1871:140-141), by comparing the Lord to a 'Rock', characterise him as one with power and stability. They further state that

> the application of it in this passage is to declare that God had been true to His covenant with their fathers and them. Nothing that He had promised had failed; so that if their national experience had been painfully checkered by severe and protracted trials, notwithstanding the brightest promises, that result was traceable to their own undutiful and perverse conduct; not to any vacillation or unfaithfulness on the part of God'.

In 1 John being righteous relates to what God does. Van der Merwe (2006:1062) argues that metaphorically speaking, in relation to God being righteous, 'serves to express that God is always doing what is in accordance to his own will, which is good

and to be merciful towards humankind'. In 1 John 1:9 the goodness and mercy of God is depicted in relation to his role (acts) in forgiving sins.

It is not only the Father who is deemed righteous by the Elder; the same characteristic is used to describe the Son. In 1 John 2:1 and 3:7 the Son is referred to as being righteous. The righteousness of the Son is in relation to his mediatory work. The role of the risen One before the throne of God is consistent with what Jesus did for his disciples while he was on earth. At that time, he had been their protector (Jn 17:12), and before his departure he asked the Father to preserve them from the evil one (Jn 17:15). Now, when they fall into the sins of infirmity, he prays for the believers before the throne of God (Schnackenburg 1992:86).

The characteristic of being 'righteous'[123] has been allotted to the Father, his Son, and also his children. Jesus has demonstrated that 'righteousness' is a quality of God (1 Jn 2:1); the children of God are also called 'righteous' when they do what is right (see Van der Merwe 2006:1062).

Van der Merwe (2004:550) has set forth what he termed 'benchmarks' or 'standards' that will ensure that the children of God continue to do right. First, the children of God are to avoid sin. The life of those who abide in the *familia Dei* are characterised by their righteousness instead of abiding in sin. Culpepper (1998:263) states that sin exposes the inner nature of those it claims, but for the children of God, the death of Jesus cleanses them from sin (1 Jn 1:7), because he is their expiation (1 Jn 2:2). The underlying truth is that 'if Christ came to remove sin and was sinless himself, then those who have been born of God and abide in Christ cannot continue to sin since sin and righteousness are incompatible' (Culpepper 1998:263).

[123] In the Graeco-Roman world which was influenced by Roman philosophy, good people could be viewed as the offspring of God, or speak of God's fatherhood of humanity or the universe in terms of creation. This idea of the image of the supreme Deity as Father of his creation was also much broader than among the philosophers, filling classical Greek literature as well as sources closer to early Christianity (Keener 2003a:400-401). Among these sources is Philo who concurs that God is the Father of humanity by virtue of creation. Yonge (1995:249) who discussed the works of Philo, notes that 'for it is clear from the necessity of things that there must be one creator, and one father, and one master of the one universe. According to *Moses* 2.238 this God who is also Father is active in the lives of his subjects in many ways. See also *Spec. Laws* 1.14, 22, 32, 41, 96; 2.6, 165; 3. 178, 189; *Virtues* 64, 77, 218; *Embassy* 115, 293; *Reward* 24; *Confusion* 41; and *Life* 90'.

Second, in order for the children of God to continue portraying the righteousness of God in the family, they must love one another. This love was demonstrated by one member of the *familia Dei* i.e. the Son. This love is special and the Elder reiterates this by noting in 1 John 3:16-18: *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*.

In order for the Elder to further resonate with love in the *familia Dei*, he contrasts it with a represented figure from the other family, namely Cain (Gn 4 – cf. 1 Jn 3:12). Instead of loving his brother Abel, Cain's attitude was dominated by a hatred which eventually drove him to kill his brother. At the root of Cain's hatred laid not only a personal dislike for his brother, but a moral battle which Cain lost (Stott 1988:98).

The last standard has to do with testing the spirits in 1 John 4:1-6. The Elder warns the adherents about the spirits that intend to disrupt the peace of the family. These are spirits 'not from God', the 'spirit of the antichrist', 'already in the world' and speaking 'from the viewpoint of the world', and they don't listen to God. The Elder provides two criteria for distinguishing the true prophets from the false ones: The content of the message, and their reception by the world (Van der Merwe 2004:551). This is the righteous life that those who are waiting to 'see him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 are to live while waiting. This righteousness in the family of God is made possible by the new birth that brought about the transformation of being children of God.

7.2.3.1 Children are righteous because of a 'new birth'

This new birth is foundational to being 'children of God'. In his response to Nicodemus, Jesus refers him to this phenomenon of being 'born again' or 'born from above' (Jn 3:3 as part of 3:1-36). Keener (2003a:537) states that 'it is also clear that being "born from above" refers not to Jesus, but to the community regenerated through him who is from above'.

In 1 John 5:1 the Elder states that 'everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God'. πιστεύων (also referred to in 1 Jn 5:4-5) is the characteristics of those

who are ‘born again’. Schnackenburg (1992:231) resonates with the role of true faith as he argues that pure faith is to lead the adherents to victory in view of the heretical teachings from inside, and not martyrdom or tribulations coming from outside. This pure faith believes that ‘Jesus is the Christ’ (1 Jn 2:22; 5:1). The antithesis to this belief has already been stated by the Elder in 1 John 2:22, as *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ, such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son* (see also Brown 1988:113).

7.2.4 God, the Son, and children of God as love

In 1 John 4:8 and 16 the Elder depicts God as ‘love’. Volf (2010:29) says that, ‘properly understood, this text sums up the whole of the Christian faith’. The Elder is not necessarily identifying the quality which God possesses, but he is rather making a statement about the essence of God’s being. Although the full meaning of the Trinity will never be understood before the *Parousia*, perhaps it can aid one’s understanding of this love, because the Trinity displays a dynamic interrelationship of love. ‘Love’ flows between the three Persons in a constant interaction, so that this ever-enduring activity expresses the ‘love’ which is God’s divine nature: The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, the Spirit loves the Son, and so on (Stott 1988:118).

In order to understand the true meaning of ‘love’, the Elder elaborates on this notion: In 1 John 4:10b he relates that God has demonstrated his ‘love’ in that he has *sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. This is the way through which God revealed and demonstrated the quality of his love. Jamieson *et al.* (1871:534) further note that ‘it is the grand *proof* of God’s love, his having sent “*his only-begotten Son, that we might live through him*”, who is *the Life,* and who has redeemed our forfeited life, and it is also the grand *motive* to our mutual love’. God has demonstrated that real love is selfless; it is not a mere response to a need but the outcome of the very essence of God.

Concerning this kind of giving, Akin (2001:133) correctly points out that

> the perfect tense verb ‘has lavished’ is significant here and further accentuates the permanent results of this divine love. It is a gift from God the Father that cannot be earned or bought; it is given freely and cannot be withdrawn. Furthermore, God has not just shown his love to humans, but he has given it to

> them in such a way that it becomes part of them. He lavishes, or imparts, permanent and abiding love to his children.

This gift of love renders the recipients as children of God. Bultmann (1973:43) elaborates on the stature of being children of God, by noting that this is a present affair (we are now God's children). The Elder identifies the recipients of this love as ἀγαπητοί. According to Louw and Nida (1996:293), this term is pertaining to one who, or that which is loved – 'object of one's affection', 'one who is loved', 'beloved', 'dear'. This love that the Elder uses to connect himself to the adherents is also the subject of Jesus' preaching as he deliberated on how disciples are to live with one another. Jesus blatantly reveals to the disciples that they should love each other as he has loved them (Jn 15:12) – he calls it a command. The manifestation of this life should be that *greater love has no one than this, that he lays down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13).

Borchert (2002:148-149) has argued that John has clothed ancient ideas concerning true "friendship in biblical speech" and applied them to Jesus in the giving of a model for the disciples. From this it is clear that self-sacrifice as understood by John did not arise from a philosophical ideal but from the actual self-giving death of Jesus. Such a death is the ultimate measure of love, and therefore Jesus has indicated that no other love surpasses this love: *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?* (1 Jn 3:16-17).

The Son had demonstrated his love for us by laying down his life. This is profound because this

> reference is thus to the passion of Christ, and since it is a historical event out of which this knowledge grows, the perfect tense is employed rather than the present tense, customary elsewhere for the most part. The phrase 'on our behalf' contains the insight that active love is based on experienced love: from his love for us we learn what love is (Bultmann 1973:55).

The Elder continues to deliberate on love in relation to the children of God. God has shown his love by sending his only Son, and the Son has demonstrated and illustrated

love by laying down his life. Plummer (1980:128) rightly observed that '[l]ove is righteousness in relation to others'. The children of God are also encouraged to imitate the Son by laying down their life for others (1 Jn 3:16b). The Elder defines love by giving an example of what he means: It indicates that one is prepared to give up one's own life in order that others may live – it means negating one's own life so that somebody else may live. The implication is that the laying down of one's life is solely done for the benefit of the other person (Marshall 1978:193).

In 1 John love is depicted as coming from the Father, and rooted in faith. This dynamic interaction between faith and love is such that *this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us*' (1 Jn 3:23-24). One's life is a response to God's love, while the Son is not only an example, but an active member of the family who brings the ability to be imitated; this also enables not only the individual but the entire community to practice loving one another (Kenny 2000:32; cf. Van der Merwe 2004:551).

The Elder further portrays the family dynamics and implications of love in the *familia Dei* by connecting faith to the Son as the root of love: *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith* (1 Jn 5:1-4).

In this context the Elder has cemented the relationship between faith and the imperative of love. The person who lives in fellowship with God (*familia Dei*) will inevitably love the other members of this fellowship. The confession of love for God can only be true when it is accompanied by obedience to God's commands (Van der Merwe 2004:551). The strong family ties in 1 John are on par with the bonds espoused in the immediate context of 1 John i.e. the Graeco-Roman world. These ties could be evidenced in the friendships that existed then.

7.2.4.1 Kinship ties: Friendship

One of the ways to define kinship in Antiquity was through friendship. Friendship could signify a relationship of dependence or of equality, of impersonal alliances or of personal bonds of affection. This position of honour was applied to tyrants of the classical period, to the intimate circle of Alexander of Macedonia, to a high office of Hellenistic Syria, to friendship with Caesar in the Roman imperial period, and to other rulers. Friendship with rulers made provision for subjects to be able to have freedom to speak frankly with tyrants, as opposed to the flatterers with which tyrants surrounded themselves (Keener 2003b:1006).

Among the people who resonated with the concept of friendship was Plato (*Laws* 8:837b*)* who notes that friendship 'based on similarity is gentle and reciprocal throughout life', and that, when these feelings are getting intense, it is called 'love'. Plato also deals with the complexities of friendship, when he notes that the friendship which occurs between opposites is terrible and fierce and seldom reciprocal among men.

Aristotle also resonates with the notion of friendship, although he treats it mostly in political terms. He defines friendship as an equality of reciprocal goodwill, included under either friendship of kinsmen, or that of lovers, adding a third kind of friendship, namely that between host and guests (Brad & Raphael 2012:124). An example of friendship on an equal basis is when a leader honours a special friend more than his other companions, regarding him as equal to himself (see Keener 2003b:1009). This idea is also espoused by Jewish writers in Antiquity like Aristeas who

> dealt with the issue of friendship and weighed it almost equal to the relationship to one's parents. He noted that 'having expressed his agreement with the answer, the king asked the sixth to reply to the question, To who ought we to exhibit gratitude? And he replied, 'To our parents continually, for God has given us a most important commandment with regard to the honor due to parents'. In the next place he reckons the attitude of friend towards friend for he speaks of 'a friend which is as thine own soul'. You do well in trying to bring all men into friendship with yourself' (Charles 1913:228).

Hellenistic ideals of friendship have put more emphasis on the loyalty attached to friendship. In his letter to Demonicus, Isocrates[124] notes that friendship has praise as its base. He argues that to ensure loyalty in a friendship, one must make no man a friend before inquiring how he has treated his former friends, and then expect him to behave to you as he has behaved to them. He also states that loyalty can be demonstrated and perceived in friendship when you have a misfortune in your life and your friend voluntarily shares your burden with you. This would be a proof of friendship: As gold is proved by fire, friendship is proved by loyalty when one is in distress and affliction (Keener 2003b:1000).

In Antiquity loyalty was always a trademark of friendship. This loyalty was mostly experiences as a result of the confidence which has developed from the friendship. It was this confidence that allowed friends to share not only secrets, but ideally, everything they possess. This view was so pervasive that even in rural areas it could be used to justify the traditional code of reciprocity or sharing among friends. Being a friend of the gods therefore entitled one to share in whatever was theirs (Keener 2003b:1011). Philo has also noted the elevation of friendship enhanced by sharing:

> But what has happened to them was better than their most sanguine prayers, since, in addition to having no false accusations laid against them, they had also been admitted to the bread and salt of the governor, which among all men is a token of genuine friendship, and had also recovered their brother without having received any injury, without having had recourse to the intercession and entreaty of any mediator, and were also taking back their youngest brother in safety to their father, having escaped all suspicion of being spies, and bearing with them an abundant quantity of food, and having good and well-founded hopes for the future, for they thought that even if necessary food was repeatedly to fail them, they should never again themselves be in exceeding want as before, but might return joyfully to the governor of the country as to a friend and not a stranger (Yonge 1995:453).

[124] Isocrates was an ancient Greek rhetorician and orator. He was highly influential through his teachings and writings on rhetoric.

Philo further laments the behaviour of some people which in no way enhances friendship. He states that the natural relationship of all people (men) to one another has been thrown into disorder by these people, by designing covetousness, continually wishing to surpass others in good fortune, which has therefore engendered alienation instead of affection, and hatred instead of friendship (Yonge 1995:453).

7.2.5 Truth: The fibre of κοινωνία in the *familia Dei*

The idea of truth is used absolutely to denote a reality which is to be regarded as 'firm', and therefore 'solid', 'valid', or 'binding'. When used of people, it sometimes expresses that which predominantly characterises their speech, actions or thoughts. The 'man of truth' is one whose conduct falls under the norm of truth, and he is therefore a man of integrity (Kittel *et al.* 1964b:232-233).

God as truth[125], as narrated in the Torah (Ex 34:6), reflects the character of God as the One who liberates his people. In the Johannine community the resurrected Christ offered the adherents the opportunity of experiencing God's glory, God's mercy, and God's grace (Van der Merwe 2015b:34). The Johannine community had to resonate with this character of God as it was to permeate every aspect of their life in the *familia Dei*, characterised by κοινωνία.

The diagram below displays the verses in 1 John containing truth, as well as the antitheses:

TRUTH	PASSAGE	ANTITHESIS TO TRUTH
Truth is practised	1 Jn 1:6	The lie is practised
The truth is not in us	1 Jn 1:8	We deceive ourselves
The truth is not in him	1 Jn 2:4	He does not do what God commands
Love with actions and in truth, set hearts at rest	1 Jn 3:18-19	Love with words only are empty

[125] See also Boring (2002:17-26), Meagher (1992:42-60), Peterson (1995:342-360), Stewart (1995:40-43), Schul (2013:26-27), Chapman (2011:48-57), Deinhardt and Rochon (2000:1-24), Sheard (1988:45-54), Jenson (2012:51-55), Keller (2010:55-71), Mahn (2012:95-98), Robinson (1977:67-70), Gaebelein (1954:63-74), White (1996:41-49), Stockton (2007:169-178), and Wood (1980:219-227).

TRUTH	PASSAGE	ANTITHESIS TO TRUTH
Whoever is from God, listens to the adherents	1 Jn 4:6	If someone is not from God, they will not listen
A complete testimony	1 Jn 5:6	An incomplete testimony
Walking in truth	2 Jn 4	Not walking in the truth
The adherents are walking in the truth – worshipping	3 Jn 4	The others are not worshipping

ἀλήθεια (truth) is regarded as the fibre that holds the community of believers together. Meagher (1992:42-60) deals with truth in relation to God, and states that in this regard, truth essentially refers to the power of truth, or the power that makes reality true. Truth is the power that holds the real together in coherent, ordered, and intelligible relatedness, and the power that brings one into harmony and a right relationship with it.

7.2.6 Life: Existence in the *familia Dei*

Although the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 happens in the *Eschaton*, it has emerged in this research that the themes the Elder deals with are intertwined. One of the themes that has a great bearing on the espoused 'seeing' is its view of life. In 1 John new life is experienced within the *familia Dei.* This new life in the family, depicted as 'eternal life' (1 Jn 1:2) is intricately connected to the Son, because *the life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us* (1 Jn 1:2).

Life in the family of God therefore is seen as life in the spiritual family that involves adherents with each other, and also with the Father and the Son. This spiritual family supersedes, existentially and ethically, the physical family to which a person belongs (Van der Merwe 2004:546). The new existence in this *familia Dei* presents a new experience to the members, because now God lives with and in his children by way of the Spirit (1 Jn 3:24).

In 1 John life in the family of God is embedded in its group orientation which constitutes the socio-structural core. Therefore, the existence of obedient family members is

totally dependent on their group adherence (Van der Merwe 2004:545; cf. Van der Watt 1999:491). The experience of this new life in the family of God is made possible by the multi-dimensional role played by the Spirit of God within the family.

7.2.7 The role of the Spirit in the *familia Dei*

The Elder had a great deal to say in relation to the third Person of the Trinity i.e. the Holy Spirit. The role of the Spirit in 1 John appears to be related to 'knowledge' or 'knowing' in one way or another, as evidenced in its four-dimensional role, proposed by Thomas (2004:13): First the Spirit enabling believers to know all things (1 Jn 2:20, 27); then the Spirit assuring believers of their relationship with God (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13); third the Spirit's role in distinguishing between 'the spirit of truth' and 'the spirit of deception' (1 Jn 4:1-6); and last the Spirit's role as witness to Jesus (1 Jn 5:6, 8).

The Spirit has an educating role in the *familia Dei* as he supplies knowledge to, or teaches the adherents (1 Jn 2:20, 27; 4:2; 5:6; cf. Hurtado 2003:415; Grayston 1984:20). He gives the children of God the 'anointing' (χρῖσμα). Generally, this term refers to 'rub the body or parts of it', 'to stroke it', 'to rub or stroke oneself'. When used with oils or fats it means 'to smear', 'to anoint', 'to anoint oneself' (Kittel *et al.* 1964a:493-494). In 1 John, with its socio-structural core of the family, anointing refers to the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in their life, who continues to impart knowledge of the truth (1 Jn 2:21), and also 'teaches them about all things' (1 Jn 2:27b) (Schnackenburg 1992:141).

As an assurer, the Holy Spirit makes the believer to know that he lives in them (1 Jn 3:24) and also that they live in him (1 Jn 4:13). This mutual existence where the Father lives in the children and the children in the Father, is made possible by the continuing indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There is a Johannine realism that for one to be a child of God something of the divine nature (1 Jn 3:9 'his seed'; 1 Jn 3:15 'eternal life') must has entered into them. This fellowship with the Divine is made possible by the Spirit, although the Johannine pneumatology focuses on the internal revelations of the Spirit, rather than external charismatic manifestations (Schnackenburg 1992:190-191).

The role of the Spirit in the *familia Dei* is also to guide the children of God (1 Jn 4:1-6). They are warned about the *many false prophets who have gone into the world* (1

Jn 4:1). The distinction between the false prophets and the Spirit of God is paramount to a continued existence in the *familia Dei*. The Spirit also witnesses to Jesus: [*I*]*t is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth* (1 Jn 5:6). The life of Jesus that the Spirit bears witness to includes his incarnation, as well as his atoning death as a soteriological event with cosmic dimensions i.e. the breaking of the Divine into the cosmos which was under the thrall of death (Schnackenburg 1992:232).

7.2.8 Conclusion to this section

In order to come to a comprehensive understanding of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, this research had to investigate the understanding of the Divine (God). There is a matrix that develops as the God of 1 John emerges. God is light and so are both the Son and the children of God. God is righteous and so are both the Son and the children of God. God is also love and so are both the Son and the children of God. The table below summarises this fellowship matrix in which God is viewed as the Father in his family:

God, the Father	is light	is righteous	is love	is truth
Jesus, the Son	is, and lives in the light	is righteous and lives in righteousness	is love and does love	is truth and lives a life of truth
Believers, as children	have to live in the light	have to live in righteousness	have to love	have to live a life of truth

To achieve this faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, plays a crucial role, also to remain in God through the Spirit. In order for the children of God to 'see him as he is' in the *Eschaton*, they need to be 'righteous', 'light' and 'love' in the present, and they need to continue in the 'truth' of the Spirit of God. The Divine in 1 John reveals an interrelatedness that can, in human terms, best be described and understood as a family. The God of 1 John is not far removed from his children and is not only to be experienced in the future, but rather in the present, leading to a future culmination where the present partial experiences will be fully enjoyed. The deposit and payment of the future 'seeing him as he is' is already experienced in the present reality.

7.3 The holy Trinity

Many sacred texts feature one or more people who have a special relationship with God or with other divine powers. In the case of the New Testament texts, the special relationship is mostly with the holy Person *par excellence* – Jesus Christ (Robbins 1996a:121). Although a great deal of the Johannine Christology has been dealt with in the previous section where the Father, the Son, and the children of God exist in the *familia Dei,* there are other features about the Son that are dealt with in this section. These aspects are crucial to an understanding of 'seeing him as he is' (1 Jn 3:2), because the past appearing and the envisaged appearing seems to resonate more with the Son.

An understanding of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is enhanced by an understanding of other aspects of the Johannine Christology that are discussed below. The Johannine community was a result of the works of the Son in the past, and their future hope also had the Son in the centre. Therefore, an understanding of how the community viewed the Son of God will help in formulating the expectation they had in the *Eschaton*. These aspects include the Son's past appearances (incarnation), his intercessory role which makes 'seeing the Father' possible to the children of God, and his role in forgiving the sins of the children of God.

7.3.1 Johannine Christology[126]

Christianity has always honoured Jesus Christ as its historical and theological focal point (centre). The teachings on the Person and work of Christ have always been a determinative factor in theology. One's faith in and understanding of Jesus Christ involves the most important theological issues anyone can face (Walvoord 1969:110).

Although the entire New Testament has Christology as its main theme, there is a particular Johannine Christology which is characteristic of a community (or group of communities) which, to a considerable extent, derive its identity from the general Christology espoused elsewhere (De Jonge 2000:209). This communal orientation of the Johannine community sets it apart from other Christologies. The Johannine community sees itself as a continuation of the group of intimate friends of Jesus, who

[126] See also Anderson (1997), Brown (1979), De Boer (1996), and Martyn (1979).

were selected and instructed repeatedly and intensively, who also received the promise that when Jesus returns to the Father, they will be guided by the Holy Spirit. They were instructed in the true understanding of Jesus' identity, led by the Spirit, and sent out into the hostile world (De Jonge 2000:209-210).

The Johannine Christology encompasses issues relating to Christ that were developed as a particular and radical Christology, through a number of stories recording the interaction of Jesus with different people. Generally, at the centre of Christology is the notion that Jesus, the Son, was sent by the Father as his final envoy, as Jesus the Christ (Jn 1:17; 17:3), as Prophet and King (Jn 7:40-43), as Son of God, and Son of Man (Gal 4:4-7; Rm 8:3-4; Mk 16:1-9).

The Johannine Christology was meant to function within a particular 'Johannine community'. In the Christology of the community a sharp contrast existed between those who were disciples and those who remained outside:

> This Johannine community views itself as standing alone in true allegiance to God and to Jesus Christ, his Son, and it experiences the hostility of the world which is said to hate Jesus' disciples as they hated him. This is a Christology of a particular community, shaped over a long period of time by different issues, among other things its debate with others (De Jonge 2000:227-228).

'Seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is understood with this Christology in view. In the pericope under investigation Christ is discussed in relation to his different appearances, being discussed below.

7.3.2 Conclusion to this section

In view of the Johannine Christology where the Father is seen through the Son, and the Son is seen in the Father, 'seeing him as he is' gets a clearer understanding. The community's fellowship has been with both the Father and the Son (1 Jn 1:4, 6, 7) in the present time. The future will bring clearer dimensions of both the Father and the Son: So the One who appears in the *Eschaton* would be the Son, who will obviously bring with him the appearance of the Father.

‘Seeing him as he is’ revolves around the past appearing of the Son, where he both came to take away sins and destroyed the works of the devil. The children of God continue this cosmic battle for the Son, which will culminate in them ‘seeing him as he is’. The role of the children of God in view of his *Parousia*, when they will ‘see him as he is’ is to now abide/remain in him.

7.4 Human commitment

The actions of the adherents here and now in the form of human commitment form the other side of the coin for the actions of the holy Trinity. These adherents are faithful followers of God, as well as supporters of people who play a special role in revealing the ways of God to humans, which is often referred to as discipleship (Robbins 1996b:126). The Elder therefore encourages and appeals to the adherents to continue (abide) in their piety. The ‘seeing him as he is’ in 1 John 3:2 is closely related to this ‘abiding’.

7.4.1 The *sine quo non* of adherents, and continue/remain/abide *en route* to commitment

The pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10 starts with an encouragement to ‘remain in him’. The Elder ties this ‘remaining in him’ to the entire pericope by spreading this notion evenly throughout the pericope, i.e. in 1 John 2:28, and 1 John 3:6 and 9.

The verb μένετε can be translated with ‘remaining’ or ‘abiding’ in him. The semantic relations connect this concept to God and to sin. Remaining in God is made possible by his seed that remains in the believer, while continuing to sin is portrayed as a sign that negates either ‘having seen him’ or ‘having known him’. This section investigates the interrelatedness between ‘remaining in him’/‘abiding in him’ in relation to ‘seeing him as he is’.

7.4.2 Abiding in Christ

The theme of ‘abiding in Christ’ or ‘remaining in him’ has been discussed in section 4.2.3.3.2. Noteworthy to this notion is the fact that in the Gospel of John, certain adherents had already experienced a foretaste of staying or being with him during his ministry (Jn 1:38-39; 4:40; 7:33; 11:54; 13:33; 14:17, 25; 16:4). Prior to his departure Jesus had already explained dimensions of their ‘abiding in him’: It was to be through

the Spirit that the disciples would dwell with him and he with them in a more intimate manner (see Jn 1, 6:56; 14:17; 15:4-10).

In his Gospel, John depicts a form of 'inter-abiding' where the Father abides/dwells in Jesus (Jn 14:10), and the Spirit of truth dwells in the disciples (Jn 14:17). Therefore, the disciples are commanded to abide in the Son (the vine – Jn 15:1-17). A branch is not a self-contained entity, and neither is the Christian disciple. Also, as a branch being separated from the supply of nourishment cannot produce fruit, neither can the Christian. Fruit-bearing for the disciple is totally dependent on a direct connection to Jesus. Attachment to Jesus or abiding in him is therefore the foundation of Christian discipleship (Borchert 2002:142).

John has already developed this notion of 'remaining' with the image of organic union, and it works well for the idea of intimate relationship between God and his adherents: *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit* (Jn 15:5). There are a number of benefits that John ties to this 'remaining in him': The disciples would know Jesus better (Jn 15:15; 16:13-15), and they would reflect the fruit of his character (Jn 15:8-9). This 'abiding' would lead to one keeping God's commandments, and the result would be a permanent dwelling in God's love (Jn 14:23; 15:9-10) (Keener 2003b:999-1000).

Keener (2003b:1000) further explains the 'abiding' referred to by John. He states that the Evangelist does not simply refer to the moment of entering God's presence in Christ (Jn 14:6), but to a continued dependence on him, as one might continue to dwell in a shelter or tabernacle, or as the branch continues to depend on the vine. This dwelling means to continue persevering in keeping Jesus' commandments. The notion of perseverance plays a central role because it signifies not only 'dwell' (Jn 14:10, 17) but also 'remain'. Those who abide in Christ, bear fruit and hence prove to be his disciples, but those who do not abide in him are ultimately destroyed (Jn 15:6). That those who initially embrace Jesus' message would persevere in fruitfulness to salvation (Mk 4:7-8), and that the unfruitful will perish (Mt 3:10, 12; 7:19; Lk 3:9, 17; 13:7-9) is indeed consistent with the synoptic tradition.

In 1 John the 'abiding in' is to be sustained by confession and obedience. Confession is intricately intertwined with believing, in that the adherents had to believe in the Son (1 Jn 3:23; 5:1, 5, 10, 13) and also confess him (1 Jn 2:22-23). The Elder states that, *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever confesses the Son has the Father also* (1 Jn 2:23). Schnackenburg (1992:147) states that when the Elder relates to the confession of the adherents, he is basically appealing to the orthodox hearers/readers, and seeks to impress upon them how fortunate they are in what they confess.

The 'abiding in' is also related to obedience. Obedience is based on the fact that the children of God have been reborn; they have entered into a new relationship with God which resulted in them being children of God (1 Jn 3:1-2, 10; 5:2). In the new birth and the implanting of the divine seed, the Elder clearly sees something more than a new relationship: The child of God now has a new orientation of his will and obeying God becomes a norm (Van der Merwe 2005:549; cf. Ladd 1998:664).

7.4.2.1 Consequence of commitment: Confident before him at his appearing

In 1 John the Elder argues that the continuation in sin is a sign that one has never seen God nor known him. He also argues that the reason for abiding in him is *so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming* (1 Jn 2:28). παρρησία (confidence) is a 'state of boldness and confidence, sometimes implying intimidating circumstances – 'boldness, courage' (Louw & Nida 1996:306).

The incidents surrounding the παρουσία that can shed light on the life of both adherents and claimants have its window in the parable of sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46. In this parable the Lord has at his right those who were faithful, represented by the sheep. This happens [*w*]*hen the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left* (Mt 25:31-33). What is of paramount importance is his response to the sheep on his right: *Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'* (Mt 25:34). This response dispels shame on the part of those who are on the right. The other response given to the goats on the left is: *Then he will say to those*

on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41).

7.4.2.2 Consequence of commitment: Shame at his appearing

The other possible emotion at the coming of Christ described by the Elder is shame:

> Both classicists and cultural anthropologists[127] have contributed to the development of a picture of the Mediterranean world as an honor-shame culture. Anthropologists of the Mediterranean world have found that the concepts of honor and shame are central to the value system of the culture of the people occupying that region, and that the people evaluate, make decisions, and approach social interactions in terms of honor and dishonor' (De Silva 1999:2).

The basic model of this approach is well elaborated by Pitt-Rivers (1965:27). He notes:

> Social groups possess a collective honor in which their members participate. The head is responsible for the honor of all its members. Public opinion forms a tribunal before which the claimants to honor are brought, the court of reputation as it has been called judges without redress. It is in this group dynamics that honor plays an important role. It is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognised by society.

Honour and shame also play an important role in the deliberative oratory milieu – the genre of rhetoric devoted to persuasion and dissuasion with regard to a particular course of action. Deliberative orators not only appealed to the mind (*logos*) but also to the emotions of the hearers (*pathos*) (De Silva 1999:11). People evaluate opinions and make decisions differently under the sway of different emotions. Shame is one of those emotions that could be aroused to motivate the audience to adopt the course of action being recommended, or desist from the course of action being recommended,

[127] Cultural anthropologists seek to understand how the people within a given culture give symbolic structure to their perceptions of reality, how they arrange their social interactions into recognisable and predictable patterns, and how they contract systems of values, and maintain those values through a mechanism of social control (De Silva 1999).

by making the addressees feel that their preservation of a good reputation or reparation of an ailing reputation depends on it (De Silva 1999:12).

It is evident that the power of shame in the address of the Elder to the adherents is in consistence with its contextual use: *And now, dear children we must continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming* (1 Jn 2:28). The impact of this statement could have been deep in view of the role shame played in this society. It is evident that the Elder seeks to desensitise the adherents to the disgrace and reproach which they experience in view of the claimants, and sets forth what would lead to honour before God. He puts the adherents before the court of God and his Son, who will bestow an eternal grant of honour on those who remain loyal to their obligations to the divine Patron and the people of God. Persevering in living out the values of God will lead the adherents to more, greater and lasting honour, which the Elder refers to as 'confidence before God' (1 Jn 3:21), 'confidence on the day of judgement' (1 Jn 4:17), and 'the confidence we have in approaching God' (1 Jn 5:14). On the other hand, the violation of 'abiding in him' will bring upon the adherents greater and more lasting disgrace than the society could ever have heaped upon someone (De Silva 1999:18-20). The Elder also encourages their 'continuation/abiding' in God by referring to a state that they have achieved in Christ – righteousness (1 Jn 3:7).

7.5 Conclusion: Sacred texture

In this texture God has been referred to as the Father who so loves the adherents, that he has lavished his love on them, so that they could become his children. The present fellowship with God the Father is also a fellowship with the Son who will appear again in the future. Before this appearing, the adherents are to live in the *familia Dei* with God the Father and the Son as 'light', 'righteous' and 'love' in this family, because their sins have been forgiven. This forgiveness of sins prepares them for the actual event when they will 'see him as he is' in the *Parousia.*

'Abiding in' is related to the 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2, because it has consequences that are directly linked to it. Those who 'abide in' will be confident before him at the *Parousia*, while those who did not 'abide in' will experience shame at the *Parousia.* While the children of God are waiting for the *Parousia* when they will 'see

him as he is', they must abhor sin, confess it, and live in the light in fellowship with the Father and the Son. They must not live in darkness. The Elder has clearly linked the present life to the *familia Dei.* A continued fellowship with the Father and the Son in the light will surely result in the adherents having confidence at the *Parousia*, while a life in darkness, constituting of 'sin', 'no love', and 'no righteousness' will result in shame at the *Parousia*.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUDING REMARKS: SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the *modus operandi* of the entire research by presenting the findings. These findings are the insights that contribute to Johannine literature as they are synthesised to the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. This synthesis is an addition to the conclusions that have already been done at the end of every chapter. These conclusions are directly related to the research questions. This chapter accords this research an opportunity for the piercing together of the quilt being constructed through the investigation of 'seeing him as he is'.

Section 8.4 refers to the limitations of the present study, followed by recommendations and suggestions regarding further investigations.

8.2 The methodology employed in this study

The spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 has demanded an integrated methodology which requires competence in exegesis and spirituality. This integration was made possible by the understanding of the nature of spirituality and the methods used to study it. In his book on spirituality, Waaijman (2002:593-594) proposes and discusses four methods of studying spirituality: Form descriptive, hermeneutic, systematic, and mystagogical. This research made use of the hermeneutical research, because it proved to be the most relevant approach. In general, the model of spiritual hermeneutics deals with composition, depth structure, intertextual relations, contextual reconstruction, the reality of the text, and the religious fields of meaning (cf. Waaijman 2002:746-755; Welzen 2011:51-60).

The integration of methodologies used in this research merged the author-oriented, reader-oriented and text-oriented perspectives, because

> meaning is found in the author's achievement, identified as the text itself, though of course the background behind the text is extremely informative. Though there is a strong note that distance, tradition, and perspective hinder

> the possibility of purely objective interpretation, there is also the plausibility of determining a text's normative meaning. This meaning can be validated by linguistic and literary keys in the text, thus the author's meaning is available only in the text, not by making contact with authors mental patterns (Dockery 1992:182).

This synthesis was crucial to this research because it demanded a multi-dimensional approach, since it deals with Christian spirituality. This approach was championed by the socio-rhetoric method of interpretation by Robbins (1996a; 1996b), because of its holistic and integration processes.

8.2.1 Insights from the methodology to the understanding of a *visio Dei*

The inner textual investigation of this research took off with a discourse analysis of the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10, with the 'seeing him as he is' being espoused by the Elder. The discourse analysis highlighted and exposed the rhetorical transitions of this pericope, thereby enabling the research to effectively trace and clarify the flow of thought inherent in the text. Several themes that were coherent to one another and closely related to 'seeing him as he is' were highlighted and their semantic relation investigated.

Also, in the inner textual investigation, the dynamics of a texture of spirituality as embedded in the text has been dealt with as spiritualities created through 1) the composition of images; 2) a dynamic interaction between text and reader, and 3) a dialectic of retention and pretention effects of the text being studied. These effects helped to make sense of the reading of the text, as well as the determining of some of the lived experiences evoked when the early Christians have read the text (Van der Merwe 2015a:5).

This texture was followed by an intertextual investigation which included a survey of the *visio Dei* in the Old Testament, Hellenistic Judaism, Palestinian Judaism, Graeco-Roman world, mystery religions, philosophers, and the New Testament.

In the socio-historical texture, the world of the Elder and the adherents whom he addressed, was researched. The opponents were dealt with as they provided a

silhouette through which the adherents were further investigated. This background revealed a literary culture that paid attention to both what is being read as well as heard. The Elder knitted the text for the eye (reading) and the ear (hearing). The last section in this methodology dealt with the sacred texture, which unveiled the theological orientation of the adherents. Their theological orientation of who God is, their view of the Son, and how they were to live in view of 'seeing him as he is' was discussed.

8.3 Contribution to the understanding of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' gleaned through different textures

8.3.1 Insights from the inner texture

A discourse analysis has revealed a web in interrelatedness between 'seeing him as he is' and other themes that the Elder wrapped around this notion in the pericope being studied. The rhetoric of the Elder could be followed closely, because of the results of the discourse analysis. The texts yielded results without repeating various themes. Themes that were of importance to the Elder were highlighted and discussed to bring clarity to a better understanding of the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2.

Also under this section, the images that were evoked in the adherents when they read and heard the text of 1 John, especially that they will 'see him as he is', have been highlighted. The first thing that they could have recalled when they heard about this future event would have been what they had already seen, heard, and experienced in the past. The Elder has already provided a clue at the beginning of the Epistle (1 Jn 1:1-4) when he mentioned that they had seen, touched, and heard him. 'Seeing him as he is' therefore had the implication that they have experienced Jesus before, and also that they have experienced his love, righteousness, and living in the light. In this context 'seeing him as he is' was not used to imply 'seeing God' or his essence, but seeing God through experiencing Christ.

The dialectic between retention and pretention opened a window into the adherents' view of 'seeing him as he is' in relation to the *Parousia*. In the retention, it took them back to 1 John 2:28 as they realised that, in relation to the *Parousia*, they were to purify themselves so that they would not be ashamed. The pretention took them to 1 John 4:17 where they would have confidence at the *Parousia*, because they were 'like

him' in the present. These verses helped them to experience what they were reading in the present, that they will 'see him as he is'. The role that they had to play as they wait for this 'seeing him as he is' was such that they had to detach themselves from sin, and experience a transformation which would see them living in righteousness, in the light, in truth, and love for one another as the 'children of God'.

Although there are references to the children of God elsewhere, this texture has connected them to Jesus. The dynamics that occur in relation to the relationships among the children of God are complemented by their relationship to Jesus as they will 'see him as he is' in the *Parousia.* The present way of living of the children of God in connection with Jesus is such that they must live in righteousness, light, truth, and love. Their way of living is important for the 'seeing him as he is', because this entails seeing his truth, righteousness, light, and love. This life, although lived in the present, prepares the children of God for the future seeing where they will see in him the same qualities in a more elaborate measure.

8.3.2 Insights from the intertexture

In this section, an in-depth investigation into the phenomenon of 'seeing God' was done in the world outside the text. All the intertextual readings point towards an undecided position in relation to 'seeing' and 'not seeing' God. The contribution of the intertextual reading is that 'nobody will ever see God'. The reference to 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2 is in relation to Christ and not to God the Father. God can never be seen, except through intermediaries, and in this case through Christ. God can only be experienced through people and other mediums.

The Old Testament relates to the appearances of God, neither as fantasies nor hallucinations. The appearances are real although partial. God cannot be seen in his fullness. This notion is supported by the fear and expectation of death on those who realised that they may have seen God. Hellenistic Judaism sources also relegated 'seeing God' to ecstasy or by means of an agency who is mostly a prophet. Palestinian Judaist sources also record the Rabbis who explained away the claims of 'seeing God' as either symbolic, or they confined it to Moses. Seeing God was sometimes only reserved for the afterlife or through mysticism. Furthermore, contact with God was provided for through dreams and curved statues. Even philosophers explained away

the possibility of seeing God by confining reality to the mind, and thus only the mind can comprehend God.

The impossibility of 'seeing God' in full view is further noted by sources that state that the closest possible view that one can have of God is when God renders something about himself visible. The encounter after the *Parousia* holds other dimensions of 'seeing God' but never promises an unhindered sight.

The intertextual texture has helped the research to understand and realise that God cannot be seen, while 'as he is' in 1 John 3:2 does not refer to his essence. Intermediaries play a critical role in the *visio Dei*. This premise reinforced the understanding of the research that the object of the *visio Dei* is Christ himself. He is the intermediary that will be seen even in the *Parousia*.

8.3.3 Insights from the socio-historical texture

The researcher's ideology was highlighted as conversionistic in that the preaching or proclamation of the gospel played a principal role in his life. The researcher also displayed Gnostic-manipulationistic tendencies and also an array of introversionistic elements. An awareness of the impending *Parousia*, intricately weaved into the researcher's orientation, made this research more meaningful. The interrelatedness of the present way of life and future promises also invigorated the researcher to undertake this research.

Drawing from the socio-historical survey, this research revealed that the Elder addressed the circumstances that caused the schism in the believing community in his Epistle. This community was torn apart by theological, ethical, Christological, and pneumatological issues.

The opponents were investigated in relation to their points of contention with the Elder. On a Christological level they denied that Christ came in the flesh, pneumatologically they claimed true and divine knowledge, and ethically they were referred to as murderers who did not have love. In this research the opponents and their stance that labelled them to be 'children of the devil' have been used and explained in order to emphasise and point out the characteristics of the children of God, who they are, and

how they must live, because only they can experience the Divine. The children of God are to live contrary to the children of the devil.

'Seeing him as he is' formed part of the Elder's rhetoric as he addressed the adherents. In an oral culture, the Elder weaved some aural devices in the text in order to reinforce comprehension. The impact of this hope, and the resilience it produced in the adherents, were evidenced by the fact that although the Johannine community disintegrated later, they survived, and were absorbed into other mainstreams of Christendom. The opponents were, on the other hand, scattered and joined heretical groups by the end of the 1st century. 'Seeing him as he is' was a preserving theme anchored on hope.

8.3.4 Insights from the sacred texture

The sacred texture helped to determine the identity of the One ('he') in 1 John 3:2. Who is Jesus? The opponents perceived him in his humanity, while the Elder perceived him as the Son of God, the Christ, the One who was incarnated (1 John 1:1-3) to reveal God, the Father. Therefore, the sight of 'him' in 1 John 3:2 is the sight of the One through whom believers will see the Father – not the nature of the Father, but the character of the Father. After the *Parousia* the believers will 'see' (and experience) the love, purity (light), truth, and righteousness of God in all glory in Christ. This is what John refers to in John 17:5 when Jesus prayed: *So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed* and in John 17:4, *Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me*.

As the Christ was identified to be the object of the *visio Dei*, a matrix was developed displaying that the same qualities that are in Christ are also in the Father and in the children of God respectively. The matrix is given here in a slightly adjusted form:

The Father	The Son	The adherents (children)
God is light (pure) (1 Jn 1:5)	The Son is light (pure) (1 Jn 3:5)	The children of God are light (1 Jn 3:3)
God is righteous (1 Jn 1:9; 2:29)	The Son is righteous (1 Jn 3:7; 2:1)	The children of God are righteous (1 Jn 5:1; 2:29)
God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16)	The Son is love (1 Jn 3:16-17; 4:9-14)	The children of God are love (1 Jn 3:16; 4:12)

8.4 Limitations and recommendations for further studies

8.4.1 Limitations

This study focused on 'seeing God' in 1 John 3:2, although it has alluded to other passages in both the Old and New Testament in order to resonate with this phenomenon holistically and come to an understanding thereof. The phenomenon of a *visio Dei* has been espoused not only in the Old and New Testament, but also in extra-biblical sources, e.g. according to the mystery religions, it could be achieved through observing certain rules. However, in spite of even this comprehensive study of this phenomenon, having used a multidimensional approach in methodology, it is clear that this topic has not been exhausted.

All the other passages studied in both the Old and New Testament, when situated in their own literary, theological, social, and historic contexts, could yield a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

8.4.2 Recommendations

The following areas are suggested for further study because of the limitations already forwarded: First, this research has used the multidimensional approach methodology in studying the spirituality of 'seeing him as he is' in the pericope of 1 John 2:28-3:10. It is suggested that the same approach be applied to other passages, not only in 1 John as a whole, but the entire Johannine literature. Second, as the texture of spirituality and embodiment is a relatively new approach. It is suggested that when supplementing other textures, new understandings can be reached in both Johannine literature and other texts. Third, of paramount importance to the study of spirituality texture and embodiment in relation to 'seeing him as he is' would be a comparative

study between Johannine and Pauline spiritualities. This could be further extended to contemporary spiritual entities like African indigenous religions.

8.5 Conclusion

In this research the researcher has come to the conclusion that the original audience of the Elder was a community of believers who were living in turbulent times in history. The community was torn apart by both ethical and doctrinal issues, as some members had already left the group and then posed a threat to the very existence of the community. This community also existed as part of the 1st century Mediterranean world with its distinct literary milieu. Most people were not literate, and letters were therefore written both to be read and heard.

1 John, therefore, is the Elder's letter to the community in order to shield them from the impending apostasy. In order to cushion them against the forces at work and currents of thoughts, he first reinterprets time eschatologically to make them aware that they are living at the verge of the *Parousia* and therefore they must guard themselves against things that can deny them the opportunity to share in this great event.

At the climax of his rhetoric, the Elder appeals to the hope of 'seeing him as he is' in 1 John 3:2. Although the Elder has wired both written and oral devices in the text so that when it is both read and heard the text would have maximum impact and form patterns in the mind of the hearers, he was building towards this climactic event: Those who want to be able to 'see him as he is' at the *Parousia* must purify themselves and reject the probing of the opponents; they have to maintain fellowship with each other, which is actually fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus (1 Jn 1:3, 6-7).

When the adherents heard that they will 'see him as he is', they were filled with joy, hope, courage, resilience, and faith. This is evidenced in the fact that although the Johannine community later on disintegrated, the adherents joined other strains of Christianity as opposed to the opponents who drifted into heretics.

As to the object of the *visio Dei* this analysis and discussion of the intertexture proved that it refers to the Son, Jesus Christ, and not the Father. The Father will never

(according to his nature) be totally seen, except through and in the Son. In this research the object of the *visio Dei* is identified as Christ, even though the researcher still regards it as an open-ended discussion.

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