A hermeneutical approach to the formation of doctrine, based on the writings of Rowan Williams

Master Thesis – AVH502 (55 ECTS)

Supervisor: Jan-Olav Henriksen

Thomas Lund - Spring 2011

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To my family, for being just that: family.

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A. Thomas Lund

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Theme

"'Arianism' has often been regarded as the archetypal Christian deviation, something aimed at the very heart of the Christian confession (Williams 2005:1)." With these words archbishop Rowan Williams (1950 -) begins his *magnum opus: Arius – heresy and tradition*. The first edition of this book was published in 1987, and has since then been published in a second edition (2001), and a third impression (2005). While the book deals with the Arian heresy, what made it stand out was how it portrayed Arius as someone who perhaps had been given an unjustly bad rap. As he began saying, this event strikes at the heart of the Christian confession – and thus any re-presentation of Arius is a touchy one. So why do it? Why not let the past be the past? The answer to this is also found in that first phrase: this has to do with the heart of the Christianity.

What is the heart of Christianity? Well, to paraphrase, it has to do with the core of what Christianity is believed to be. However, this statement only serves to provoke a new question: Who is to say what that core is? The term 'Christian' can be used quite widely, and it has no copyright. Any group can claim to be Christian. By lacking a distinct marker to separate between what the word can and cannot mean, it in essence revokes the word of any meaning. It thus appears the meaning of 'Christian' is constructed by consensus. Fortunately, this does not hold up to closer scrutiny. The church has since the term 'Christians' was first used worked towards a defining identity – a *symbolum*. Even theology can be said to be an attempt to make sense of the church's *persona* in light of its worship and tradition. Williams deals with these questions in his book *why study the past?* from 2005. "Some of what we have just been thinking about opens up the question of authority on the church – not so much the actual executive structures of the community as the criteria to which appeal can be made in identifying the boundaries of what counts as Christian" (Williams 2005: 104). He later adds to this by stating that one cannot be a Christian without the bible or the history of its reading (105). Nothing is suspended in thin air. The heart of Christianity is based on the church's tradition of trying to define itself, and this is verbalized in its doctrines.

Rowan Williams, in the same book, draws upon examples from church history to illustrate the role history plays in the formation of a Christian identity. For instance, there seems to have been a great emphasis on heroes and villains in the struggles and confrontations

leading up to the reformation - the church had been hijacked and the theologians had to sort through the debris to uncover the truth. Eventually protestant radicals in Italy and Poland asked how we could know that the major themes of theology – like the trinity and the incarnation – had not been corrupted. (Williams 2005:21). How one understood the story of the church had a huge impact on how one viewed the role of theology. History, doctrine and identity are, according to Williams, closely tied together – as will soon become apparent. And if that is the case, then this will have ramifications on how we deal with doctrine.

How such factors – history, doctrine and identity – influenced the formation of the Christological doctrine is what Williams addresses in *Arius*. By demonstrating how doctrine cannot be regarded as separate from other factors, but rather must be viewed as the result of a complex set of circumstances, he also draws attention to how doctrinal theology needs to tackle these issues; issues pertaining to what doctrines can be said to be. To understand a doctrine one has to come to terms with the hermeneutics of that doctrine: how this doctrine came to be and to what questions it attempts to present an answer. One has to interact with the doctrine – to allow it to speak. It needs to speak in its own voice, being different, as well as communicating in the present, being same. Just how the development of the Christological doctrine can do just this – engage us yet again - is what I believe can be clarified by tackling the Arian struggle, as Rowan Williams presents it.

1.2 Thesis problem

This thesis will try to tackle some of the issues brought to attention by an investigation into how Rowan Williams deals with doctrine – more specifically how he deals with the Arian controversy surrounding the formation of the Christological doctrine. This is interesting because it appears that he addresses this issue from a slightly different angle than what has traditionally been employed. That is; he attempts to present a picture of Arius not distorted by the polemic of Athanasius (Williams 2005a:234). By getting a more accurate picture of what the conflict was actually about, we are better equipped to see how we have been influenced by it, and perhaps how we should be influenced in the future. This in turn might help doctrinal theology to be more than a commentary on past statements. If all that needs to be said *is* said, then the critical theologian has little room for manoeuvring when trying to make old doctrine speak with a new voice. At the same time the critical theologian cannot extract any meaning from the doctrines as he sees fit. That would reduce Christian theology to nothing more than empty statements of a subjective nature. Theology must be based on a foundation that makes it meaningful to speak of a theology as 'Christian'.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give an all-encompassing answer to these concerns, I hope shedding light on a few relevant issues might reveal something as to how this undertaking can enrich and renew doctrinal theology.

1.2.1 Problem statement

In what way can Rowan Williams' dealings with the Arian controversy, and the subsequent formation of the Christological doctrine, give greater understanding to the process surrounding the formation of doctrine?

This thesis attempts to use Rowan Williams as a platform for dealing with issues pertaining to doctrinal theology. Williams is chosen for this task in part because of his reputation as a renowned scholar, and in part because of the way he addresses the topic. *Arius* proposed not just a fresh perspective on the person of Arius, it also interacted with certain modern concerns pertaining to doctrinal validity. Thus, by examining how Williams dealt with all of this, it might be possible to get a constructive dialogue going as to how doctrines are to be viewed.

This thesis has a hermeneutical agenda. It will attempt to deconstruct concepts that are felt as limiting when trying to make sense of a modern 'Christian' identity. It might appear that this is an attempt to have the doctrine say something it never did – and never meant to. The danger of opening up a doctrine is that one is in acute danger of reading oneself into the text, instead of having the text speak with it's own voice. Be that as it may, an equally dangerous view is to think that a text is speaking with it's own voice when in fact it is speaking with the voice of the first reader. Critical theology is trying to meet these and other concerns by giving a greater attention to hermeneutics. That is also what this thesis is trying to do: allow hermeneutics to open the understanding of doctrine, so that, hopefully, it can speak with something closer to its own voice.

From this original problem statement additional questions can be drawn. These questions will help clarify the scope of this thesis, and will help bring clarity both to methodology and structure. The first question to arise is of course regarding Rowan Williams – the subjective element in the presentation of Arius. Next it is natural to ask more specifically about the event in question, and about what factors can be said to have influenced doctrine. Lastly it is interesting to see how all of this relates to where we are today, standing

in the junction between the greater society and the church. With this in mind, the questions are:

1. *What kind of hermeneutical platform does Williams build in his dealings with the material?*

The way Williams presents his dealings with Arius also follows a specific set of hermeneutical presuppositions. These presuppositions relate to history, identity, and theological intention. In regards to history, Williams has a distinct way of viewing its role, which is closely linked to identity. This again ties in with Williams' own identity, and how he understands his role as a theologian. Talking about a theologian you quickly start to address that theologians agenda – or his intention if you will. These presuppositions is commented on by Williams' himself in the introduction to his book from 2000; *On Christian Theology* and will be presented later.

2. *What does the material, as presented by Rowan Williams, say about the formation of doctrine?*

As Williams points out, Arius is in many ways considered the arch-heretic; a prime example of theology gone bad. Proverbially speaking, he was hung from the city walls by his neck as a prime example of what happens to those who dare oppose established doctrine. He is, in fact, the reason why we need an established doctrine. It follows therefore that a closer look at what he said, and why he said it, is in order. To distinguish what Arius said it is also necessary to view it against what he didn't say; that is, the case his opponents argued. By looking at what they said, and why they said it, the hermeneutical influences in the formation of a Christological doctrine will become more apparent. This is all done in Williams' book *Arius – heresy and tradition*. Again, this thesis is not on the Arian controversy but on Williams' dealings with this event, and what can be learned from it. It follows therefore that the material in question is only interesting as far as it reveals something about this specific topic.

3. *What kind of implications can be drawn from this view on doctrine as it relates to current hermeneutical issues?*

The current issues that will be dealt with are those of a historicist nature. Doctrines present themselves as truth claims, but how can this be merited considering the historical nature of doctrine? If we cannot say anything true, then can we say anything at all? Is

Christianity, and truth, simply a matter of consensus? Do we, in our world constructing, make truth an impossible concept? These are some of the concerns that need to be addressed.

If a case has been made for the influence of hermeneutics in the formation of doctrine, then a very interesting question can be posed: *can we deduce a relevant Christological understanding by employing the intellectual constraints of that era?* By intellectual constraints I mean that the way they thought regarding certain issues were connected with their time and place in history. They spoke to the limit of their understanding, the same as we do today. The question is if their understanding has any prerogative over how we now see things. If all we do is try to think as they did, within their hermeneutical framework, will we then be able to let doctrine speak with a voice closer to our own – or will we simply repeat what they said? The natural conclusion to this question if of course that we cannot stop at what was once said. The past had its limitations, same as the present – and it is these limitations we must move beyond.

This thesis is not written with the intention of juxtaposing heresy and orthodoxy *per se*. The intention is to investigate into the possibility of opening up "the message" for fresh interpretations. It's not to discard what is already there, but to reveal more of it – to shake the box and see what falls out. It is my conviction that what falls out will be the good news.

1.3 Material

The primary material chosen to form the base for this thesis will of course be found in the writings of Rowan Williams himself. To narrow the scope even further, it follows that only the material that reveals something about how Williams deals with doctrine are relevant. Seeing as it is Williams' presentation of the Christological event that is in questions, the primary material will not include historical sources pertaining to the event. While the full bibliography can be found at the end of this thesis, some of the material used deserves to be highlighted due to the weight it receives in this thesis. The foundation for this whole thesis is of course *Arius – Heresy and Tradition* (2005a). This book is treated extensively, and so holds a position not comparable to the remaining material. Another book of Williams treated in its entirety is *Why study the past?: the quest for the historical church* (2005b). This forms a basis for how I present Williams' view on history as relating to identity.

The secondary material used to analyse Williams comes from a variety of sources. I use, to a large extent, articles found in peer-reviewed journals throughout this thesis, relevant to the topic being treated. When dealing with Williams I also sometimes lean on Mike

Higton's *Difficult gospel: the theology of Rowan Williams*, but I do this sparingly. I do, however, attempt to use more of Williams' own writings, like *On Christian Theology* (2000), or *Wrestling with angels* (2007), edited by Mike Higton, when attempting to clarify Williams' position. Also, some of Williams' sermons are employed, though this is done with a specific agenda in mind; it is accessed once again for the purpose of clarifying Williams' position when dealing with a specific topic. Even though the writings of Williams are primary sources – of the authors hand – I define them as secondary material because of the limited treatment they receive. I might have done them injustice in not allowing them to have their full say, though hopefully I have not distorted their voice.

What is also deserving of attention is the use of other sources, not directly dealing with Williams, which I employ when doing a comparative analysis regarding his position viewed against contemporary concerns. These sources may not have been given the complete attention they deserve, but I hope I have dealt with them respectfully. When dealing with Williams and linguistic approach to doctrine, I access George A. Lindbeck and his book *The nature of doctrine: religion and theology in a postliberal age* (1984). In this respect I also consult Alister E. McGrath, and how he treats Lindbeck, in *The Genesis of doctrine: a study in the foundations of doctrinal criticism* (1997). When presenting the challenge of historicism I do this, in part, by way of Sheila Greeve Davaney and her *Pragmatic historicism: a theology for the twenty first century* (2000). These authors serve as backbone in presenting the challenges towards doctrinal theology. In attempting to answer these challenges I receive help from Anthony C. Thiselton and his *The hermeneutics of doctrine* (2007). For a full bibliography I once again invite the reader to the complete listing at the end of this thesis.

1.4 Method

This thesis is written in the field of systematic theology, and it follows a systematic / hermeneutical approach in dealing with the theme. By this it follows that I will analyse the material in question in a systematic fashion, and by this analysis develop an answer to the thesis problem. The hermeneutical aspect is evident in that I will study and discuss the role of interpretation in dealing with the material. First I will analyse how Williams interprets not only the material, but also the role of history itself. Then I will analyse how, according to Williams, the fourth century theologian interpreted the Christ event (in relation to the Trinitarian doctrine). The analysis of intention then stretches to doctrines in general, and how

they are to be understood. At the end of this thesis I present my interpretation of how one might position oneself in relation to the findings in this thesis.

Williams makes uses of a historical/cultural analysis, as well as a contextual analysis, in *Arius*. He discusses how Arius' historical situation influenced Arius' theology, as well as his supporters and opponents. Arius writings, which by and large are only accessible through his enemies, are attempted restored and analysed with the intention of revealing his interpretive framework – his hermeneutical position so to speak. This is also what is done with Williams.

1.5 Structure

The structure of this thesis is as follows: In *chapter two* Williams' own hermeneutical presuppositions will be dealt with. This chapter will analyze how he views history as connected to identity, and what ramifications this has on how doctrines are to be understood. *Chapter three* and *four* analyses how Williams presents the historical events surrounding the Arian controversy. While the initial chapter presents Arius' less controversial notions - that is, Arius as a conservative - the latter deals with what made him thought of as a heretic – his radicalness, so to speak. In *chapter five* some of the current doctrinal concerns will be presented, and Williams will be discussed in relation to these. The result of this aims to reveal some of the concerns that needs to be dealt with for the theologian who wishes to deal respectably with doctrine. This leads to *chapter six*, where a summary is presented, as well as an attempted proposal of how the concerns of chapter five can be met. The final chapter - *seven* - aims to answer the questions posed in the introduction to this thesis, as well as presenting suggestions for further study.

I will not be venturing in on a discussion of Williams' use of sources, and his interpretations of them. This would be too momentous a task for a thesis of this size. The theories presented by Williams will, to an extent, be taken at face value and discussed accordingly. This thesis deals with issues relating to hermeneutics and will not enter in on topics related to church history.

1.6 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate into what influenced the formation the Christological doctrine, from the perspective of Rowan Williams. This is done in order to see if it is possible to open up the message to reveal more of what is already there. Several

doctrines are today being questioned, both from within and from outside the church. How can the truth claims in doctrines be respected, while at the same time acknowledging that truth is, ontologically speaking, inaccessible? Also, is it possible to give critique of the content of a doctrine while not necessarily attacking the truth they are said to contain? Is there a difference between the words and the content? Further, is what is being question not 'the doctrine', but rather the interpretation of this doctrine – an interpretation intermingled with the presentation of what it is said to contain? Are the challenges a threat to the heart of Christianity, or are they a positive aid in helping to open up the claims of Christianity? It just might be that answering all of these questions might help separate between the content of doctrine, and the hermeneutical tools used to make sense of this content.

One of theology's primary tasks is to self-scrutinize – to make sure the orthopraxis aligns with orthodoxy. It is an occupation directed towards uncovering the truth. This is especially true when talking about Christ, and the revelation he is said to reveal. Now, it might just be that the doctrine of Christ is not dependent upon the hermeneutical factors of times past. The purpose of this thesis is not to discuss the validity of the Christological doctrine, but rather to investigate into how the truth within the doctrines can be dealt with – to uncover what is covered, reveal what is hidden – in order to do justice to the truth theology is claiming to uphold.

1.7 To the reader

An introduction is always in order when meeting someone for the first time, and as Rowan Williams might not be known to every reader, it might be a good idea to do just that. Rowan Douglas Williams (1950) is the Archbishop of Canterbury, a position he has held since 2003. Before taking on this office he has been a lecturer in divinity at the University of Cambridge (1983), and was later appointed to the Lady Margaret Professorship of Divinity and Canon of Christ Church at the University of Oxford. His Doctor of divinity was awarded him in 1989.[1]

Rowan Williams is not always an easy writer to access, and this is also true of his book *Arius.* The late Lloyd G. Patterson of Cambridge wrote in his review of *Arius* that

> …one of the difficulties which a reviewer encounters in dealing with the work is that Dr. Williams' views so regularly emerge out of his judicious criticisms of the views of others that

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[1] LAMBETH-PALACE. *About Rowan Williams: Biography* [Online]. Available: http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/73 [Accessed 11.04 2011].

it is difficult to extract them without oversimplification, if not distortion. But then, this is not an easy book, either to read or to review. It is simply a very good book, and a very important one. (Patterson 1989)

I have attempted in this thesis to simplify the complexity of this book, and present the major arguments as I see them. I do, however, by this realise that I might be in danger of doing just what Patterson warns about. I hope I have not oversimplified too much, or that I am guilty of too much distortion, but in this I call for reader awareness. In any case I hope that the reader, as well as myself, shall come out from the experience with a greater sense of maturity.

Chapter 2: The hermeneutics of Rowan Williams

2.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis, after presenting the problem statement, three questions were asked. The first of these was: *What kind of hermeneutical platform does Williams build in his dealings with the material?* To answer this question additional clarifications might be helpful. It was stated that Williams presents his dealings with Arius in accordance with a specific set of hermeneutical presuppositions relating to history, identity, and theological intention. This statement needs to be investigated. I will first deal with these interlocking issues, before moving on to tackle how Williams views the role of tradition, and what his theological intention is. The final section will be on what part doctrines play in his theology.

2.2 History

Rowan Williams views history as a construction. It is a construction because it is based on decisions of judgement; judgements made based on how the writers of this history view the world. As Williams says: "We don't have a single grid for history; we construct it when we want to resolve certain problems about who we are now" (Williams 2005b:5). This construction is a world construction – it is the framework making it possible to organize events into a sensible whole. For example, by writing 2010 on the front page of this thesis I have revealed several judgement calls – like using a Christian timeline instead of a Chinese one. Davaney states that Gordon Kaufman calls humans *world creators* in that we evidently interpret the world on a grander scale; we do not interpret reality locally (Davaney 2000:83). Humans need an overarching narrative they can relate to, and this narrative is in the continual process of being constructed.

This construction is closely related to identity. 'We' construct history so that it makes sense even speaking about a 'we'. The writers of the New Testament needed such a 'construction' – or re-construction - in order to make sense of the apparent conflict between a Hebrew history, the Christ event, and the role of the gentiles. According to Williams it is at times like these that you begin to write history – when you no longer can take for granted that things are the same. A crisis event can create a rupture in identity for a group, which then needs to be mended, and this will spur on the writing of history (Williams 2005b:8). It is a

question of how to make sense of the way one perceives himself when taking into consideration the other events taking place on this constructed grid.

I believe a helpful illustration can be found in *cognitive dissonance theory,* which I borrow from psychology.[2] Cognitive dissonance theory says that a crucial factor in determining our behaviour, or motivation, is our need to reduce a feeling of dissonance. Holding two or more incompatible beliefs simultaneously is what causes this dissonance. The need to see oneself as consistent will make the individual take steps in order to remove the discord, or enhance the consistency.[3] In other words, if you have a notion of God as exclusive (Hebrew God) and need to make that fit with a notion of God as inclusive (Gentile Christians), then the way to go about it is to write a history unifying the two. One example can be seen with Marcion, another with Origen, and, of course, as should soon be evident, Arius. The problem with using cognitive dissonance theory in theology is that it does not make value judgments – nor does it claim to. It cannot say that one theory is more *truthful* than the next. All it can say is that it removed some of the tension. Thus, Marcion and Origen are equally justified in their attempts to write theology out of history. Is, then, this approach to history flawed? Not necessarily, because history does not record truth, as such, but events. That the event happened might be true, but the meaning of the event is left open. In returning to Williams, this view of history as open will be of paramount importance.

Openness is important for Williams, because this is what makes learning possible – which is the foundation for growth, or maturity. There is a need for an historical awareness that incorporates the strangeness of the past, while at the same time not treat it as if it was beyond our grasp (Williams 2005:11). Good history is meant to provoke thought by re-presenting what one thought one knew. Because it is different, we are able to learn from it. Williams wants to keep it open by challenging its familiarity– to avoid closing it by making it *the same.* Strangeness is needed to learn, as learning, by definition, is having something previously not part of ones world, become part of that world.

To elaborate on this, I will briefly look closer at the phenomenon 'learning'. Learning is only possible where something outside of me, something not me, has been presented to me

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[2] McGrath points out that a cognitive psychological understanding of doctrine might have important, insights into a cognitive understanding of doctrine MCGRATH, A. E. 1997. *The Genesis of doctrine: a study in the foundations of doctrinal criticism,* Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans., although there is not time to develop this here.

[3] For further treatment I refer to PRATKANIS, A. R. 2007. *The Science of social influence: advances and future progress,* New York, Psychology Press..

in a manner I can grasp. The unknown must be made known. This encounter results in a change in me that could not have occurred by my own hand. It had to be presented to me - to show me what I did not have or could not be. Seeing as this was completely outside me – was an Other to me – I could only experience the change by having it accepted as a gift. How then is this gift to be presented? Well, an answer that would be in accordance with what has already been stated - and in line with what Williams is driving at - is that history is the medium for this change, or ex-change, to take place. History is what presents the unknown to me, and by so doing it forces me to remain open towards the world. This openness is only possible by the unknown being similar enough for me to recognize it as what it is. Christ is the unknown made into known flesh. By living within this duality of strangeness and similarity theology is forced to remain open. Williams might well be justified in stressing strangeness if we want theology to be something other than archaeology.

In returning to the crisis event that opens up the old history by rupturing it, and thus creating the need for a new one, Williams says:

> Thus what we read in the New Testament is not a simple record of what happened, but also a hugely creative and innovative attempt to make one story out of a set of memories that covers events of great disruptive force. Jesus brings the earlier history to a climax, yet in such a way that the history is seen quite differently; what matters in the earlier story will be different depending on the point of view of the telling, and passages and incidents that did not necessarily occupy the foreground now take on fresh significance. (Williams 2005b:7)

There is now a new key for interpreting God's history – The Christ event. This event made it necessary to review and reinterpret the existing story of Gods dealings with 'his people.' Even that phrase, 'his people', took on a radical new meaning as the news of the Christ event spread. Williams ties this up to heresy, and states that because of Christ the world has been broken up, and reassembled. The greatest danger now is for something to disrupt this new balance by "driving wedges between what has been carefully stitched together by way of much paradox and skilful redefinition" (Williams 2005b:8). Heresy is by this definition: an act of rebellion against the currently accepted narrative that can threaten the identity of the church.

The interesting aspect of what Williams describes is that he appears to view heresy as something beneficial – perhaps even necessary – for the growth of the church. A crisis event disrupts the current accepted paradigm and from this crisis a new identity structure forms.

This change leads to greater maturity, but it does not happen without conflict. The main objective for the people who are making the current paradigm the accepted one is peace. Nobody is to rock the boat, and if they do they will be ostracized and given the identity of heretics. By this view it appears the heretic is actually the hero of the story.

The 'heretic hero' is a danger Williams is well aware of. He addresses the issue in his introduction to *Arius* when describing the difficulty in reconstructing the life of Arius. Arius has been 'demonized' for so long that one might be tempted to correct the balance by turning Arius into a theological hero (Williams 2005a:2). This temptation is further dealt with by Williams in *why study the past?*, where he reflects on how the reformed church saw the persecuted minority as the true church, *vis-à-vis* the false Catholic Church. Arius is no hero, because Williams' primary focus when dealing with the event is not a man – the hero can never be 'a man' – the 'hero' is 'difference'; thus it is every man, at every time.

History is, for Williams, the 'heroic difference' allowing identity to develop. It enables the process of maturity. As he states it:

> We begin with a sense of identity that is in some way fragile or questionable, and we embark on the enterprise of history to make it clearer and more secure. In the process, of course, definitions may change a good deal, but the aim is to merge with some fuller sense of who we are. (Williams 2005b:23)

An identity develops because by encountering the strangeness of the past "we are set free from the crippling imprisonment of what we can grasp and take for granted, the ultimate trivialising of our identity" (24). Openness to what we don't fully understand is key. Good historical writing, according to Williams, deals with who we are by engaging with the strangeness of the past; it is different from us, and part of us. Bad history avoids the difficulty either by making the past a poor version of the present (making the different the same), or by defining it as incomprehensible and out of reach (the other as closed off from us).

For Williams history is instrumental in the formation of identity, and it has this role as long as it is not made into more of the same. He advocates, quite successfully, that openness and conflict is necessary for good historical writing to take place. This means that when dealing with historical sources they must be allowed to have their say, even if that means disrupting the current identity forming myth. For the sake of this paper it is expected that when Williams deals with the Arian Heresy he will not be afraid to open the story up, and to

make it strange. Arius will not be the hero, per se, but Williams' ideal of keeping the narrative open will take centre stage.

2.3 Identity

As has become apparent, Williams connects history to identity. What has not yet been so apparent is where this identity originates. In anticipation of what is to come later, in chapter 6, the critique of Lindbeck and postliberalism is just this; that the system has no origin. It is just there, and thus it is impossible to critically assess its formation. Williams differs in that he has a distinct origin for the system. In the introduction to his book *why study the past?* he makes three points:

> (a) History is a set of stories we tell in order to understand better who we are and the world we're now in… (b) For someone trying to write the history of the Church as a Christian believer, the challenge is to trace the ways in which the Church has demonstrated *it's divine origin*… (c) The Christian believes that Christian past and present (and future for that matter) are all bound up together in the Body of Christ. […] There will be an element of expectation: *we shall emerge from the study of the past with some greater fullness of Christian maturity* (Williams 2005b:1-3) (edited, and italics, by me)

Identity is formed through the story we live by; a Christian identity is connected to a Christian history. This history has a starting point: *a divine origin*. This origin makes it possible to speak of *body of Christ*, and it is this body that is meant to grow into greater maturity. Something came in, a fundamental - *a given*. Without this *given* there would be no event to make sense of, and thus no identity forming myth – no history to tell us how this identity has been expressed.

I mean by 'a given' something that has the character of being presented to us as a gift. It comes to the recipient from outside him - although he is unable to se it coming, or from whence it came. The gift presented does not appear to be a gift, but the recipient still has something he did not have before the encounter. Something he was not, or had not, came to him and made him have more, be more. He now *is* something new. This new '*is*' is '*the given*'; that which is taken for granted; the source from whence a sense of identity flows. Now, seeing as there is this group seeking an identity, and that this group do claim a history, it follows that this group deals with history, and the event, with a specific agenda: it should help bring greater clarity as to who they are and should become.

In what was stated above, the importance of openness became apparent. Williams demonstrates the connection between openness and the formation of identity by bringing attention to the need amongst the early Christians for new self-defining words. Identity is defined by what it is not, and so are words: it is 'this', not 'that'. That means that a change in identity will also result in a change in the language one uses about oneself. Williams focuses upon three new words used when they talk about themselves: They were *hagioi*: a holy and sacred people. Their group is called *ekklesiai, 'civic assemblies'*. And they describe themselves as *paroikoi* or *paroikountes*, 'resident aliens' or 'settled migrants' (Williams 2005b:33). In these terms lies the notion that the Christians are not primarily answerable to the rulers of society, but that they, first and foremost, have to answer to God.

This focus on the church as an assembly of people set aside from what can offhandedly be called this world deserves emphasis. There was in the early church a primary motivator – a factor that made talk about a new identity as a Christian meaningful. They were no longer residents on this earth, but had been 'teleported' to heaven. This is why martyrdom was such an ideal. They testified in blood the allegiance to this new kingdom they now were citizens of. As Williams goes on to say:

> Out of this matrix (the allegiance to the divine, and the identity of being a conduit of divine presence) the debates about doctrine arise. Once again, we misunderstand the early Church if we suppose that these debates were fuelled by a general concern for verbal precision or by intellectual interests alone. The controversies about Christ in the fourth and fifth centuries are in their own way debates about what it is to be citizens of that city whose supreme court is that of the Divine Word […]. Doctrine, in this environment, is profoundly to do with the actual possibilities of the alien citizenship we have been examining. (Williams 2005b:40)

The formation of early doctrine has, according to Williams, a deeply practical aspect: How can we make sense of our identity as alien to this world, and what role did Christ play in this? The fourth century theological debate had, from this point of view, as much to do with defining an identity as it had to do with 'talking truthfully about God' – for the sake of truth as a virtue.

The fourth century is perhaps the climactic point for Christianity's attempt, with Williams' words, "to put Humpty-Dumpty together again" (Williams 2005b:41). The Christ event had also been a chaos event, and it became important to re-establish order in the universe. There was a need for one story, one system, that didn't divide God the creator from

God the redeemer. The church was faced with several paradoxical issues regarding God and Jesus that it had to make sense of *"in the light of specific practices of worship and corporate behaviour" (42).* Williams emphasizes this last sentence, which again reveals his focus on the practical aspect of the process leading up to the formation of doctrine. This process takes on a dialectical shape, of hypothesis followed by critique. Williams exemplifies this by the issues surrounding the divinity of Jesus: As some form of angelic power he fits neatly into the cosmology of both Greek and Jewish belief, but leaves open the question if it is God's power we're dealing with (43). At the beginning of the fourth century one of the best attempts to settle the issue is presented. It sparks a violent reaction that will shape the church for all posterity. The man responsible was an Alexandrian priest whose name would become synonymous with heresy: Arius.

2.4 Intention

Williams presents his theological intention in the introduction to his systematic theological work, *On Christian Theology (2000).* Here he states that he regards theology as a *communicative* enterprise; it's supposed to speak to those who are addressed by it regardless of their cultural environment. That being said, Williams does not by that say that it should communicate by being more of the same. Its power to communicate, to teach, to mature, is found in its strangeness. This is connected to a *celebratory* view of theology, where the intention is to reveal the vision, the flavour and the substance of what theology is trying to describe. This description might take the form of *critical* theology. Williams presents critical theology as an enterprise that tries to answer if what is emerging is actually the same as what was originally believed – or at least in line with (2000:xv). This ties in with history, which is what the theologian use for data, and identity. Williams says in *Why study the past* that we must "allow critical scholarship to suspect and turn inside out what is before us, to do its worst; but we cannot lost sight of the fact that, if this history is indeed ours, to examine it is to examine our own identity (2005b:102). The greatest danger to this examination of own identity is closing theology off by regarding one notion as the true paradigm. By holding one paradigm to be the truth, one in the same instance closes off oneself from history, thus one is no longer able to grow.

Rowan Williams' theological intention, when dealing with history, is to have history provoke the mind into change. This process of change is key. We must recognize that we are part of this continual process, or as he himself says it:

Our minds engage with what is other… We acquire not so much a confidence in our solutions as a capacity to continue, a trust in the process. [One needs to engage with the past, because] to engage with the Church's past is to see something of the Church's future. If we relate to the past as something that settles everything for us, […] it is to treat the text of the past as closing off history. […] If we dismiss the past as unintelligible, […] we refuse to see how we have ourselves been formed from history; we pretend that history has not yet begun. And in the specifically theological contest, we shall on either count be denying that we can only grow in company, can only develop because summoned by a word that is not ours. That the word is made concrete and immediate for us in the human responses that have constituted the Church's history; all of this has made our present believing selves possible. (Williams 2005b:90+94)

The reason it even makes sense to talk about an *us* is because there have been those who have gone before *us*, and to whom we are in debt. Our lives, our understanding of religion, are based on their lives, and how they understood it. Something outside of us came to us, and our response to this encounter is recorded as history. Again Williams shows his strong conviction that history must be purposeful: We wrestle with the rights and wrongs of those who have gone before us in order to reach a greater sense of maturity. Examples of this, drawn from the church's past, can be how the church viewed slavery and women's rights. We can learn from them, and become better, more mature, because of them. We can interact with what has been, to become more than what was; like with Aquinas, Barth and Kierkegaard – we are not them, because of them (Williams 2005b:98). The past makes us who we are, but also holds promise of who we one day shall become, as stated above; "*we shall emerge from the study of the past with some greater fullness of Christian maturity*".

To Williams the identity of the church is an evolving identity; all was not said that needed to be said in the event itself. There is more to the event than what has been uncovered thus far. It progresses towards something. The openness, and the process, is so imperative to Williams because it is part of his soteriology, as will soon be revealed. If so, the question begging to be asked is if Williams' views are connected to his position in the Anglican Church? Is this thesis trying to tackle a concern that is primarily Anglican in nature, and will the result of this thesis be primarily of interest to this community? To answer this, this thesis will look briefly at his position within the Anglican tradition.

2.5 Anglican Tradition

Rowan Williams is now the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he holds this position because his views were deemed appropriate for this office. He was ordained priest in 1978, while writing *Arius* in 1987, so he already had a long standing with the Anglican Church at the time of publication. Is this something that has influenced Williams to the degree that his concerns are of an Anglican nature? To answer this question a presentation of the role of tradition in the Anglican Church might be helpful - which immediately leads to one problem: What does Anglican mean? For instance, when trying to answer, "what is this strange world-wide body called the Anglican Communion?" author Stephen Neill concludes by saying that there is no particular Anglican theology (Neill 1977:7+417). The Anglican Church is really the Catholic Church of Britain. However, when former bishop of London, J. W. C. Wand, deals with this issue he presents Anglican theology as an attempt to reconcile Roman Catholic and Evangelical teachings. Anglicanism believes that they are two aspects of the same platform (Wand 1972:26). Douglas J. Davies, when attempting to account for an Anglican Soteriology faces many of these difficulties, and others, like the party tension within the Anglicanism. He tries to account for the development of the church, and its view of salvation, before concluding with: "Times change, and so may the ethos of a church" (Davies 2005). While the limitations of this thesis do not allow for a complete investigation into Anglican theology, it is interesting to note how there is an acute awareness of an actual *development* taking place. This reflects what has been presented above.

One who does advocate a distinct Anglican theology is Rowan Williams. In his book Anglican Identities he writes: "it is not true that there is no distinctive Anglican doctrine. But the discovery of it may require some patience in reading and attending to a number of historical strands, in order to watch the way in which distinctiveness shows itself" (Williams 2003:1). This is what he attempts in this book, even though he is tempted to add that 'the Anglican tradition is tantalisingly hard to pigeonhole" (page 55). What is of interest to this thesis is found in the chapter dealing with an *Anglican approach to st. Johns gospel*, where several of the aspects already touched upon in this thesis are brought to light. History must be seen as 'an other' to us because "our selfhood is made real in the face of the other – a divine other […]" (Williams 2003:136). Mike Higton builds upon this when presenting Williams in *Difficult gospel*, and he says that although we receive identity by encountering an-other, we are in jeopardy of loosing ourselves in the process by being overtaken by their interests. If we are to be free we need to receive ourselves from God. He needs to be our ultimate

conversation partner, and he does this by means of Bible, tradition and each other (Higton 2004:101). The evolving identity of the church mentioned above, and the goal of the process, is the believers growth into life – the process of learning the truth about oneself. Williams' soteriology is connected to growth, based on an event. When Williams himself comments on atonement, he tries to avoid using the word 'forgiveness' and instead opts for 'new creation' and 'relationship' (2008). There is thus, with Williams, and the Anglican Church a distinct emphasis on the process in terms of salvation – though not necessarily equating the two.

Are, then, the concerns presented of an Anglican nature? It seems that by presenting Williams I in essence address a denominational challenge. As is evident, Williams is closely linked to Anglicanism, if not by position as head of the Anglican Church, than in sympathies to the importance of process and development. However, I would argue, it might just as well be that as an open and developmental oriented denomination, they are more adapt to address some concerns of a universal nature. Williams' view of tradition as conversation partner, for instance, is not a result of his Anglican background, per se. It does not take on the form of 'Sacred Tradition'. Tradition is viewed historically, and not as an authority. Williams does have distinct Anglican elements, like the importance of interpreting the Christ event within the community of the church, however the issues and concerns presented in this thesis are not of an Anglican nature. Rather, Williams is trying to meet challenges presented to 'The Church', which include the Anglican. These challenges are related to doctrinal theology – namely hermeneutics and doctrine, as well as historicism and doctrine.

2.6 Doctrine

Now that Williams hermeneutical presuppositions regarding history has been presented, it is time to look closer at how he views doctrines. The first step in this will be taken by investigating his methodological starting point. He presents his methodology, before presenting his theological essays, in *On Christian Theology*. He begins by stating that a theologian will begin by talking about what is already there – the common life and practice that make up the word God. When the actions of the church interfere with the image of God it is meant to portray, the theologian is the one who is supposed to straighten it all out. This cleaning process is painful, because by cleaning – by giving it a new language – you inevitable loose something in the process (Williams 2000:xii). Theology as an organized entity is thus created out of a heterogeneous pool of practices that try to embody the word God by relating to the content of that word.

When Jeffrey McCurry makes his case for a move "towards a poetics of theological creativity" he uses Rowan Williams reading of Augustine's *de doctrina* in light of Derrida as a case study (McCurry 2007). By so doing he also reveals some key aspects on how Williams views doctrine. He states that a good metaphor to understand Williams can be that of a script to a play. The meaning in text of scripture, creed and tradition might be reinterpreted in much the same way as Shakespeare might be reinterpreted. The play can be true to its words without being equated with the original authors intention. An example, parallel to that of McCurry, can be found in the movie Romeo and Juliet from 1996, where guns replaced swords, while at the same time preserving the language, and hopefully the message, of the play. McCurry uses the phrase "texts unlimited" to describe this view of dealing with the sources. The "text" is never exhausted because there is always a possibility for the present world to be written into the text. This is not to say that it is devoid of content – you cannot have Romeo use the words of Prince Hamlet and still call it Romeo and Juliet. It is possible to respect the otherness of the text at the same time as they are inflected into new situations. This is what McCurry calls "poetics of theological creativity" (McCurry 2007: 415-417). He then goes on to verbalise some of the aspects mentioned above, like how we are what we are because of those who went before us – we read with their glasses. McCurry demonstrates how Williams does this by showing how Derrida has influenced Williams' reading of Augustine. I will not follow him on this trail, but the observant reader, who has prior knowledge of the topic, will already have noticed how Derrida has influenced Williams, and myself, by what has already been stated in the preceding paragraphs.

Once again, the importance of openness is presented. McCurry states that: "Williams warns against closure in reading scripture" (422). He then goes on to say that "the meaning of the Bible always remains difficult, […] and the meaning of the Bible is always different from the meaning we believe it to possess in the present moment" (423). This reflects Williams' doctrine of the being of God as the complete other – and hence if we possessed the final meaning of scripture, we would also possess the final meaning of God. By reading the text with a new language we are again surprised by the text, at the same time as it is still the text speaking to us. This is theology within the context of the Church.

Additional clues to Williams' view of doctrines can be found in Geoffrey Wainwright's review article in *Scottish Journal of Theology* (Wainwright 2003). Although the article is on specific doctrines as outlined by Williams in his *on Christian Theology*, it still has some helpful insights. Like how Wainwright is tempted to call this book "an open system

of theology" (74). I'll leapfrog over the critique Wainwright makes on Williams theology, and instead focus on his underlying concern. Wainwright is not at ease with Williams' Abelardian view of atonement (80). It does, however, explain why maturing is so important for Williams', and why doctrines must be viewed as tools to open up the message, by being spoken in a new language. With a moral influence view of the atonement it is not the intrinsic truth in the doctrine that is of greatest importance, but how this doctrine can help the Christian live the life Jesus exemplified – a relationship with the father. Wainwright also mentions why Williams points out "the need for a diachronic awareness of the factors that go into dogmatic decision" (81) – why Williams ties in time and history with doctrine. He describes the event as "the long-drawn out dogmatic crisis of the fourth century in the Christian Church" (Williams 2000:139); a quote that reveals yet again how Williams regards the formation of doctrine as a process – a process that has not ended. It has only begun, and to this beginning this thesis will now turn.

2.7 Conclusion

Williams' hermeneutical platform approaches history from a highly practical standpoint. History is the teacher that defines the pupil. By being different, being other, it provokes an opening of the 'what is' by facing it with 'what isn't'. In this way history is kept open, as well as opening up the viewer of history. This conflict, or this crisis, which ruptures the old, forces an act of mending to take place. The conflict is healed by writing history; a story that accounts for the event, written to confirm identity. Identity is derived from history, but also is the motive behind writing history. This circle is what keeps a person moving forward – maturing – growing in the relationship.

Doctrines, to Williams, are symbols to be interpreted. They do not contain truth as such, but they lead towards the truth. Truth cannot be contained in the symbols, because the symbols are a reflection of how the writers of the symbol tried to make sense of the event, based on their identity. The identity is not given, it is formed; it is a process. The Nicene crisis was an identity crisis, as well as a theological crisis. It was necessary to avoid further ruptures, so those who disrupted the new identity were considered heretics.

Williams' hermeneutical platform is the result of contemporary concerns within the field of doctrinal theology – how to deal with truth claims considering their historic origin. This is what this thesis will continue to investigate: In what way can Rowan Williams'

dealings with the Arian controversy, and the subsequent formation of the Christological doctrine, give greater understanding to the process surrounding the formation of doctrine?

Chapter 3: Arius the Conservative

3.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to begin an investigation into factors Rowan Williams deem influential in the formation of the Christological doctrine. These factors will be based on what he writes in his book *Arius – heresy and tradition* (2005a). He divides this book into three sections: *Arius and the Nicene Crisis*, *Arius and Theology*, *Arius and Philosophy*. Based on this I have divided the influencing factors into three categories: Socio-political, theological, and philosophical issues. Of these the first two will be dealt with in this chapter, while the philosophical will be the topic for the following. Also, Williams presents the first two as position that can be seen as conservative Alexandrian, while the latter touches more on the essence of his controversy. And so I have called this chapter *Arius the conservative*, while the next is called *Arius the radical.*

Regarding the socio-political influences, I will focus on how Williams presents concerns relating to the problems of authority in the church, and how this is related to a plurality in church views. There is not a ready-made church present, nor is there, in postliberal terms, a finished language. The idea of an ideal "Catholic church" over against a "heretical" one does not, according to Williams, hold up to closer scrutiny. There is a distinct need for an identity, and this identity develops as a result of a process. This again is, in part, what leads Williams to present the formation of the Christological doctrine as a process - as a result of conflict. How he substantiates this will be investigated more closely.

Regarding the theological factors, I will focus on how Williams presents the theology of Arius as influenced by contemporary concerns. As stated in the last chapter, Williams will not present Arius as a hero, but he will present him as a serious conversation partner. The seriousness of Arius will be demonstrated by showing how he tried to deal with themes like Gods immutability, transcendence, unknowability and free will. These themes, part of the *Via Negativa,* were not only Arian concerns; how should one understand scriptural verses that emphasize the union between Father and Son, while other emphasized their individual distinction? The Christ event forced the need for a new way of explaining God; the Son needed to be incorporated into the divine *economia.* Soon the Son was the medium the Father used to connect with this tangible world. But how could this be? First of all there is only one God, so where does this place the Son? Is he a creation? If so, how can he reveal God, and,

even more so, be worshiped as God in the church? There is no room for multiple deities within a monotheistic framework. These are some of the question Arius, according to Williams, attempts to give a serious answer to.

Regarding modern concerns, I will save those for a later chapter. When dealing with how events in the past were influenced by other events in the past, it is hard to avoid the concerns from historicism and the like. However, to avoid making this chapter too cluttered, I will address those concerns later, in chapter 5. How postliberalism, historicism, and pragmatic historicism relate to Rowan Williams will be dealt with at that point. The same goes for a debate into the uniqueness of how Williams presents Arius. This chapter will merely lay the foundation.

3.2 Prologue

What, then, is Williams' methodology in dealing with the material? The essence of this has already been touched upon in the last chapter. However, this issue will be well served by further elaboration. Williams starts off his presentation of a suitable methodology by using an example from anthropology, more specific Johannes Fabian's book *Time and Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects*. The essential issue here is how the observer, or scholar, stands in what he believes is a 'normative' time – a place in time where all other events are judged – as opposed to 'other' time – the time where the object of study is found. "If Fabian is right, the creation and imposition of 'normative' time is a device for avoiding the relativization of one's own position" (Williams 2005a:23). By this Williams is afraid of closing off history by making it irrelevant – removing its power to change us. Fabian goes on to say that it is not tradition and modernity that are opposed; it's not same societies at different developmental stages, but different societies at the same time (23). What Williams is getting at here, by way of Fabian, is what was touched upon in the last chapter: how to make history open up our world so that we can mature. Envisioning a 'normative' time for the development of doctrine does not do this – nor does it help to label the 'other' time as an undeveloped form of 'now'.

> We need to see how 'Arian' and 'Catholic' were coeval as Christians engaged in the definition of the very idea of normative faith, and to see how diffuse this struggle was and (often) how unclear its boundaries. We need to grasp how deeply Arius' agenda […] entered into what was to become orthodoxy in the process of the controversy. And if this can to some extent be achieved, we shall be clearer about what in our supposedly straightforward doctrinal 'present' is owed, negatively an positively to Arius. (Williams 2005a:24)

The past needs to be taken seriously as a voice in its own right. It's not an other in terms of simply being what we are not; it's an other by confronting us with what we are. By understanding the complexity of how orthodox theology became orthodox, by borrowing terms and images from dissidents, we are faced with an understanding of the doctrinal process as just that; a process. As Williams states it, this "is to experience the orthodoxy as something still future… There is no absolute *locus standi* above the struggle… Orthodoxy continues to be *made*" (2005a:25). A sound methodology, according to Williams, when studying history of doctrine is then to deal with it *as history*: present the past as something that challenges the present, and do this by making sense of its strangeness. By reducing heresy to an undeveloped stage – or a distant point on the time line – one marks the heresy as an 'other' that is of no consequence to the present. It is separated from us, and by that is unable to influence us in any way. What is suggested is to allow the heresy to challenge us to avoid a sterile dialogue. It thus appear that doctrine is created out of conflict.

3.3 Socio-political factors

Identity and Authority are, according to Williams, two major factors influencing the players leading up to the Nicene crisis. There is no homogenous entity called the church*, per se*, and the question of who has final authority in questions regarding faith is still unresolved. What there is, on the other hand, is tradition. There have been certain ways of dealing with these issues, but contemporary issues challenge these former methods. The church has to adapt to the situations in the first half of the fourth century, which is what will now be presented.

3.3.1 Identity

The church that had to adapt to new set of circumstances was not a homogenous entity, according to Williams. The circumstances in question are Constantine's victory, and the freedom this gave the church. Williams starts by presenting the persecution started by Diocletian in 303, which continued until Constantine assumed power in 313. This resulted in the imprisonment, or worse, of many bishops that would otherwise be overseeing their diocese. This created a need for 'substitute bishops' to perform the responsibilities of those otherwise incapacitated. On this stage Melitius enters, and, as many of his peers sees it, performs a *coup d'etat* (Williams 2005a:32-36). From this the two factors in question appear. The first is in regards to authority: Who has the right to perform the rite of baptism, the distribution of the sacraments, or to ordain new presbyters? And what do you do when there is no bishop available? In addition to questions of authority, there is also the question of

identity. Melitius was not the only dissident at the time (41). The persecution had made it even more difficult than normal to keep tabs on all the different fractions.

The idea of the church as a homogenous entity belongs to a post-Nicene vantage point. As Williams states: "The church of which Alexander became bishop in 313 does not seem to have been a particularly harmonious body" (2005a:41). It was possible for a group not far from Alexandria to implement traditions and teaching not all too congruent with the 'Catholic' teaching. Even within Alexandria, whose bishop had the character of an archbishop, you would find distinct fractions.

There never was, as Williams argues, an 'Arian Church' *vis-à-vis* a 'Catholic Church." The *milieu* in Alexandria consisted of a plurality of churches. One does not find the harmonious single entity called 'the church', but rather several distinct fractions. Williams presents several of these before stating:

> The plurality of churches in Alexandria suggests that the beginnings of Christianity in the city were piecemeal and various – no single primitive congregation under a catholic bishop. This picture is reinforced by such evidence as we have of the prevalence in and around the city of Gnostic influences and the survival in 'respectable' circles of extracanonical literature. (Williams 2005a:44)Williams 2005a:44)

The plurality of churches makes it hard to define who is one 'the inside', and who is on 'the outside'. As such it is hard to present Arius as one who is outside of what could be deemed the 'Catholic church'. "'Arianism' as a coherent system," says Williams, "founded by a single great figure and sustained by his disciples, is a fantasy – more exactly a fantasy based on the polemic of Nicene writers, above all Athanasius" (2005a:82). Although there were many who were sympathetic to Arius' cause, they did not pledge allegiance to a man. When Athanasius gives his four creeds at the council of Antioch in 341, he accounts for the events surrounding the Council, and so refers to a comment by the Arian sympathizers:

> We have not been followers of Arius, - how could Bishops, such as we, follow a Presbyter? - nor did we receive any other faith beside that which has been handed down from the beginning. But, after taking on ourselves to examine and to verify his faith, we admitted him rather than followed him; as you will understand from our present avowals. (Maguire 2007)

The identity and boundaries of a 'Catholic' church was not there before, as Williams points out (2005a:83). The identity of the church was not solidified, but rather in the process of being made, and Arius was part of this process.

The difficulty of portraying Arius as the leader of a dissenter fraction challenging 'the true church' can be illustrated by an example. Williams describes the process and turmoil leading up to Arius' death in 336. During an array of complicated events, including several synods, Constantine's sick sister, and an impromptus comment on the emperors mother, Arius was invited to present himself before the regent in November of 327 (Williams 2005a:74). The result of this meeting was a letter reinstating Arius and a following synod, held by Eusebius, confirming his restoration. This is where Athanasius makes a stand, against Constantine and Eusebius. Having Alexandria closed off for him, Arius writes a letter to Constantine, resulting in his own condemnation (77). He is later welcomed to present his case, which he does successfully, and so is again in good standing with the emperor in 335. What reverts the situation back in Athanasius favour is Arius' untimely death about a year later (being "smitten by God" can easily turn advocates into adversaries)[4] (81). This means that the 'Catholic' church and the 'Arian' church both were regarded as the official church of the empire at different times. The struggle between the two was really a struggle of identity, and this identity was related to questions of authority.

3.3.2 Authority

When Williams presents the problem of authority in the church, he presents two fractions: those who believe that the bishop has the final say, and those who believe in the authority of the inspired teacher. The *melitian schism*, presented above, also begged the question of who has authority over the teachings of the church. As presented, there were different fractions at the time, with a diverse set of ideas (Williams 2005a:41). Who could decide if these ideas were harmonious with the church teaching or not? Alexander, bishop from 313-328, tried to "consolidate the church around the bishop" (45). Opposing him - rejecting the bishop's authority - is Arius, who himself is a presbyter. "The beginnings of Arianism lie, as much as anything, in the struggles of the Alexandrian episcopate to control and unify a spectacularly fissiparous Christian body" (2005a:46). The presbyters were members of a collegiate body (44), and they had a tradition of opposing bishops running back to the time of Origen.

To resolve conflict between a teacher and a bishop, it was for Origen important to look at the spirituality aspect. Williams relates how *ordo* in the church was for Origen a spiritual issue (2005a:83). Institutional authority and spiritual stature are interconnected; a spiritual

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[4] Arius is said to die while occupying a public lavatory as a result of fervent intersession on the side of his adversaries. (Williams 2005:81)

man with low rank trumps a higher-ranking clergy who might be thought of as less spiritual. Rank can be the result of ambition. The teacher has to rely on his own authority when accosted by an unspiritual cleric. As Williams goes on to say, "Episcopal authority had emerged originally as something closely bound up with the role of the charismatic teacher…" (84). On the flip side of this, there was also the question of who could correct a teacher if he began to stray too far off in his teaching. In Alexandria this problem became a major one. The presbyter was licensed to expound scripture, much like a bishop; he even belonged to a group who consecrated the bishop. He had his authority in his own right, and not dependent upon another. Alexander threatens Origens view of parallel hierarchies by making the presbyter answerable to the bishop. This is what Arius opposes, and it also explains why Eusebius and others support Arius; they revered the tradition of the 'school' and its teachers – like Origen (85). Eusebius supports Arius because of his conviction that the church is kept going by the succession of faithful teachers. He is a little apprehensive of bishops when they are not associated with true teachers (2005b:14). Arius conflict with Alexander is thus a conflict of tradition.

One difference between the time of Origen and that of Arius was that by the start of the fourth century it became increasingly important with a unified and harmonious church. Williams comments on this, and says that Constantine in essence resolved this struggle between a 'Catholic and Academic' approach. His newfound empire needed stability and unity, for obvious reasons. This also applied for the church. "The Church's new 'visibility' meant that the wrong sort of Christian group was regarded pretty much as the Church itself had been regarded by the pagan empire, as something subversive of the sacred character of social life" (2005a:90). There was a major shift in authority leading up to the council of Nicaea. This shift plays a big role in the need for a unanimous support at the council; it results in a black or white rhetoric: 'you are either with us, or against us.'

The process leading up to the council of Nicaea is marked by conflicts of authority. There is a tradition for a dual understanding of authority: spiritual and institutional - a monarchical episcopal authority over against the presbyterial college. As this evolves there is an increased polarization, with the teacher and the 'schools' on one side, and the bishop and the 'Catholic' on the other. Parallel with this polarization there is also a move from a plurality of churches – tied in with the authority of the teacher – to an increased attention to harmonization. There is in essence no defined 'Catholic' identity. What is to become 'Catholic' is a hierarchal power structure with a God ordained individual on top, his bishops,

and then the presbyters. The content of 'Catholic' varies according to what the ruler has deemed correct – whether it be Arius or Athanasius.

3.4 Theology

Piecing together a theology of Arius is not an easy undertaking. The foremost problem is lack of sources that can be attributed to Arius with any confidence. As Williams says: "we have only a handful of texts that can confidently be treated as giving Arius' own thinking in his own records; apart from these we are wholly dependent upon the reports of his enemies" (2005a:95). To uncover a theology of Arius one needs to approach it by way of literary- and source criticism. This thesis will not follow Williams in this undertaking, but rather focus on what Williams presents as a proposition to a theology of Arius.

The theology of Arius, according to Williams, revolves around one key element: the freedom of God (2005a:98). Because of His free will, God chose to have a Son – to create *ex nihilo* according to his own free will. Because God's will cannot be restricted, he must pre-exist the son. If not the Son is self-subsistent, but "God alone is *anarchos*, and the Son has an *arche*" (97). But if the Son is created as separate from God, how then can he know God in any meaningful sense? If the Son is a creature – the same as other creatures (what other kind is there?) – how can he reveal anything about God? Does 'the Revealer' need revelation? How about self-revelation? If Jesus is the image of the father, then he should have complete access to that image. Williams propose that the best reading of Arius leads to the bestowal of some sort of participation in the divine intellect (106). The Son is exalted, but not because of virtue; he is exalted from the beginning because of his love of righteousness. The Father knows he will always be worthy of this, and so he gives from what is his; a transfiguring grace. Seeing as God is a self-revealing being, he reveals what he can within the limits of the creature/creator difference. Still, if God bestows revelation, or grace, on the Son, does this mean that the Son is exalted into sonship? This again reverts back to will, and it seems that Arius argued for a pre-incarnate voluntary love of righteousness, and contemplation on the praise of God (114). The unique sonship of the Logos is a result of his endless love of righteousness and not to be taken literally. He is a product of Gods will, a metaphor, and his position is a result of God's will (109).

The controversy was one of biblical hermeneutics. From what Williams says "Arius presented himself as essentially a *biblical* theologian" (2005a:107). The controversy actually started as a scriptural dispute. For Arius the 'Son' is a metaphor for the second hypostasis –

drawing upon other sonship sayings in scripture that is not directed to 'the Son' (Is 1:2, Deut 32:18, Job 38:28). The problem for Arius is that his teaching goes against the practice of the church. Athanasius advocates *Lex orandi lex interpretandi,* while Arius adheres to a belief in the authority of the teacher to reinterpret the practices of the church. This is the 'catholic' versus 'academic' tradition already addressed. This leads Williams to state that "Those who have insisted that the Arian controversy is essentially about hermeneutics are right…" (Williams 2005a:108). Both sides of the controversy tried to make sense of the scriptural material along with the *praxis* of the church. Add to that some fundamental theological concerns, like the immutability and free will of God, and you have set the stage for conflict. Being slightly reductive, you can say that the conflict revolves around one specific way of interpreting the material; one key notion that must be given the right of way when making sense of it all. Arius' hermeneutical key was the teaching of God's unique and immaterial nature. "All that is said about the begetting of the Son must be interpreted in the light of this central belief (Williams 2005a:111). This point is of central importance to this thesis. Behind the language, before the doctrine, there is a hermeneutical key.

3.4.1 Theological influences

Arius was not an original theologian, per se. The church had a longstanding tradition of dealing with certain issues relating to the freedom of God, the inaccessibility of God, and the *hypostasis* of God – issues of importance for Arius. Williams presents Arius as a "committed theological conservative; more specifically, a conservative *Alexandrian*" (2005a:175). His role as a conservative Alexandrian was the result of dealing with theological issues derived from his Jewish and Christian predecessors. The source for his ideas can be better understood by looking at his intellectual context. "It might be said," according to Williams, "that there were tensions and loose ends enough in third-century theology to make it predictable that the fourth would produce some sort of doctrinal crisis (2005a:178). Some of these tensions will now be brought to attention.

3.4.1.1 Philo

Arius' attempt to make sense of conflicting notions between the freedom of God, and his position as the creator of a rationally ordered universe, can be led back to Philo of Alexandria (20 BC – 50 AD). Philo designated the creation of the world of ideas to God; nothing outside God has any role in creation – or any motive in so doing. God did not create the world as a manifestation of the *kosmos noetos*; "the *kosmos noetos* is the 'shadow' image of God, reflecting what is eternally in him, not the product of an *arbitrary* act of will

unrelated to the divine nature" (Williams 2005a:118). God created the world of ideas by choice, while at the same time having this creation reflect him and his reason. This world of ideas and reason is what Philo identifies with the Logos.

The Logos is again what makes a transcendent God accessible to the *nous.* Creation only has access to God through the Logos; he is what he is in virtue of being that which we can begin to know God; the mediating principle, the instrument of grace. He offers knowledge of God, and participation in his gifts. "It is God himself turned towards what is not God" (Williams 2005a:119). Philo presents the Logos as boundary between God and creation; he is not *agenetos* nor *genetos*. This means that to be 'in' the Logos is almost like being in a mystical union with God, but with the exception that it is not really God one is in union with. Rather, one is now in a position to grasp the incomprehensibility of God. As the astute reader might have picked up on by now, the theology of Philo is by and large affected by Hellenistic philosophy. As presented above, his ties with Platonism is made apparent. In addition Williams mentions how he "seem to share the Neopythagorean distinction between two kinds primal unity; […] the unity of transcendence and self-subsistence, and the unity of all things in ultimate rational harmony, the reducibility of things to formal dependence upon a single principle" (121). Arius' emphasis on the immutability and free will of God is closely connected with Philo's dealing with the different levels of cosmic unity in *Parmenides* and from the Neopythagoreans.

Arius and Philo shared three concerns. First the insistence on divine freedom; the mind had to be raised up by God to God. Second, The Logos is a mediator of God's gifts. Third, knowing God by his gifts is not the same as knowing God as he truly is (Williams 2005a:122). While Arius might not have been a student of Philo, he did find himself immersed in a tradition which had two modes of saving knowledge; by the stripping away of the illusions, or by God's self revelation. There is a paradox already present, affecting Arius; the way God becomes known both is and is not God – to complicate this further this instrument that both is and is not God is given an identity. He is not *genetos*, nor *agenetos*. Not temporal, nor eternal; part of the divine life, yet existing for the sake of creation – *theos* but not *ho theos* (124). Trying to make sense of these contradictions created by inserting a person into the equation is Arius' theological agenda.

By presenting Philos influence on Arius, Williams also presents Arius as a theological conservative. He is attempting to tie up already underlying concerns. His theology is not 'the

other' to an established church, but a result of dealing with questions already present in the church. This will become more apparent as this thesis proceeds to deal with Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

3.4.1.2 Clement

Clement of Alexandria influenced Arius by the way he stresses the inaccessibility of God. The transcendent is removed from the immanent by its very nature. He can draw near to us, but it is a one-way street. The only way for *gennetos* to acquire a notion of the *agennetos* is through the Logos. He is the teacher (*didaskalos)* of wisdom – even more so; he is Wisdom. Williams goes on to quote a beautiful section of Clement's *Protreptikos*:

> I [the high priest] long, I long to endow you with this grace, granting you the blessed heritage of immortality; and I freely give you reason (*logos)*, knowledge of God, I freely give you what I myself perfectly am. This is what I am, this is what God wills, this is *sumphonia*, this is the *harmonia* of the Father, this Son, this Christ, this Word of God, the arm of the Lord, the power of all things, the Father's will. For all you who are images (*eikones)* yet not all true likenesses (*emphereis*), my wish is to bring you to your right form, to the archetype, so that you too may become like me. (2005a:125)

The Son gives knowledge, because he is knowledge – a transforming knowledge (*gnosis*). There is a difference between knowing God, and seeing the Logos. It is the Logos that is knowable - the *eikon* of God. The Father is still beyond the grasp of man – beyond the *monas*. Whether the Logos is a subsistent being or not is not an intelligible question, because we cannot help seeing the Logos as distinct from 'that which we cannot grasp'. How we are to know God's essence, through the Logos, while at the same time being unable to know the essence of God – the difference between first and second principle – is problematic. And this again leads up to some of what Arius is trying to resolve.

Arius is connected with Clement – as can be seen in the formers use of the latter's vocabulary (130) – and finds himself both in a tradition that emphasise the free will of the Father (chose to reveal himself), and an 'academic' form of Christianity. The influence might be predominantly about an ethos about an unseen, indescribable God, and a refusal to corrupt this by "the admission *into the divine substance* of a second principle, with its implications of a continuous *scala naturae* from the world to God" (Williams 2005a:131). Arius is not willing to corrupt God's self-subsistence by incorporating emanation into the godhead. The Son is not an accident of the Father, nor is he a result of God being Father. There is nothing

automatic in the Son coming into being. The Son, the Logos, the *eikon* is the result of God's will.

3.4.1.3 Origen

Origen was another major influence on Arius. He advocated two *hypostasis* in God: "Father and Son are 'two things (*pragmata*) in subsistence (*hypostasis*), but are one in likemindedness, harmony (*sumphonia)* and identity of will" (Williams 2005a:132). They are separate in more than just names; they have separate *ousia* – which also applies to the Spirit. They are numerically different, while still one in will. The Son receives all that he is from the Father and has kinship with the Father. He is thus worthy of the title *theos* – though using *ho theos* might be straining it. Origen turns to emanation metaphors in order to resolve this apparent contradiction between sameness and difference: the Son is the breath of the power of God, not of God himself. Their relation is like that of the will and the mind. Still it is emphasized that the Son is not generated out of the Father's *ousia*. God has no corporeality, no defining characteristics. He is immaterial and indivisible. The Father timelessly generated the Son; the word does not have an *arche* in time, just in origin. Seeing as God is unchangeable, he must always have been what he is: a Father. They are consubstantial not in materiality, but by doing what God does - operation, not essence. As with Philo and Clement: the Logos is how God is revealed to us (137). Still, there is no automatic creation. God first *wills* – even if this point is a bit ambiguous in Origen – and this is what the Son reveals.

Arius view of Son as separate from Father can be linked to Origen. That is not to say that they see eye to eye on the theological conclusions. Williams states that:

> Arius stands in the tradition of Origen in so far as he holds to the transcendence of the Father, the impossibility of believing in two co-ordinate *agenn(n)eta*, self-sufficient first principles, and the substantive and distinct reality of three divine *hupostais* or *ousia*; and he probably has Origen on his side in repudiating the *homoousios* and the idea that the Son is 'out of' the Father's substance. (Williams 2005a:143)

Arius goes further than Origen in terms of the consequences of these notions: God is un-reachable; he is one alone; the other divine substances are derived from this one. From this Arius emphasizes the separation of Father and Son. While Origen is adamant regarding the *persona* of the Son, he does not believe there can be any meaningful objectification of him apart from his relationship with the Father. "He is the soil on which we grow, the eyes with which we see" (144). Origen does not come to the same conclusion as Arius. They differ, for

one, on issues like the eternity of the Son. The legacy of Origen is not on the theological doctrines, per se, but on how one is to substantiate the doctrines in question. "It might be more accurate to see Origen's legacy to Arius in relation to exegetical method (148)" It's a question of methodology.

Origen, as well as Clement, is representative for a tradition that strongly emphasizes exegesis. Origen's theological standpoint came from exegeting the scriptures - even the conflicting ones (especially the conflicting ones). He attempted to harmonize passages that describe the superiority of the Father, while at the same time doing justice to the language of oneness. As stated above, the Arian conflict is really a conflict over hermeneutics – how to make sense of the material in the scripture while also trying to take seriously some key philosophical concerns regarding God. Origen is trying to rationally interpret the bible, at the same time as defending it's claim of divine inspiration. Arius does not represent an 'Origenist school' in terms of theology; he does so in terms of methodology. He is, as Williams states, an "exponent of 'learned', rationally coherent, catechesis […] reflecting the ideology of the charismatic teacher and his circle of initiates" (148). In this respect, Arius is not a radical, but a conservative.

3.4.2 Summary

Williams portray Arius as one who is set on resolving longstanding conflicting notions already present within the church's tradition. To resolve these conflicting notions he uses a methodology that has a longstanding history in Alexandria. This leads Williams to state that "Arius was a committed theological conservative; more specifically, a conservative *Alexandrian*" (2005a:175). His apophaticism and his interpretation of how the eternal can communicate with the contingent are not new. Neither is his emphasis on illumination, the inspired *gnosis*, or the charismatic teaching tradition. He believes in the unknowability of the Father; a Word voluntarily produced by this Father to mirror and manifest his glory. This Word is a distinct spiritual individual. God creates this word, not out of necessity, but out of choice. Even if Arius' theology might be labelled heretic – although it is not within the scope of this thesis to make judgements on this – he has his feet on solid ground when performing it.

Williams shows how Arius was a theological conservative by showing how there is little in his theology that is new. He is radical in that he structures these traditional ideas in new ways, and reaches new conclusions: "God is free, the world need not exist, the Word is other than God, the Word is part of the world, so the Word has been formed *ex nihilo*"

(Williams 2005a:177). To substantiate these claims, Arius had to present them from an exegetical standpoint. He has to demonstrate hermeneutical priority in terms of certain text, and he does this by showing the flexibility of the sonship language. While he might have been a diligent exegete, his starting point was not exegetical (178). There were other concerns taking precedence over his exegesis, thus influencing it. It is this notion of primal influence, a hermeneutical key, which this thesis will continue to develop.

3.5 Conclusion

Williams proposes that to understand Arius - the conflict and the theology – one has to investigate the underlying factors. This chapter has looked closer at how Williams presents two of these: social-political factors, and theological. By investigating the socio-political, Williams demonstrated how the conflict was not a conflict between a 'Catholic' versus a 'Heretic' church. There is a distinct vacuum of defined identities at the time. What is to be 'Catholic' is still open, and it is influenced by the imperial will. The 'heretic' Arius is not the leader of an Arian fraction, but he stands in a tradition emphasizing the role of the inspired teacher. Williams, in addition to demonstrating the problem of identity, also shows how the conflict is one regarding authority: Who has the right to make judgements regarding the representative teachings of the church? Added to this question is the new setting, where Christianity now is the imperial faith, and thus it is important that the religion supports the peace. There is no room for disturbing elements, and those who oppose are deemed heretical. And so, when Arius opposes Alexander, and when he attempts to move power in the direction of the bishops, he is ostracized.

By investigating the theological factors, Williams demonstrated how Arius was a 'conservative Alexandrian'. His theology, and his methodology, had a longstanding tradition in Alexandria. Williams demonstrates this tradition by presenting, among other, Philo, Clement and Origen. It is by this presentation evident that Arius attempts to deal with what he sees as unresolved issues in the understanding of the Divine relationship. The freedom and inaccessibility of God influences his scriptural hermeneutics, and he proves his point by exegesis of certain biblical passages. This is the tradition of Origen.

Williams has by his presentation made his case stronger for the need to look at doctrines from a historicist standpoint. Exactly what this means will be dealt with in chapter 5. What can be stated at this point is that Williams' presentation of doctrines as the result of a process – a process still taking place – appears well founded.

Chapter 4: Arius the Radical

4.1 Introduction

While the last chapter portrayed Arius as a theological conservative, it is now time to investigate into what made him controversial – according to Rowan Williams. This controversial aspect, this originality, is what I call the radicalness of Arius – a term Williams also use, though perhaps more sparingly, and perhaps with a greater emphasis on disjunction. In both cases it is used to describe what is very different from the traditional. (Merriam-Webster) William states that Arius became controversial because he fused conservative elements with "a very un-conservative ontology […]" (Williams 2005a:232). Williams thus attributes the radicalness of Arius to his philosophical influences. Still, Williams is careful not to portray Arius as a philosopher who tried to make theology fit his philosophical mould (230). What he does do is make use of a language already present in order to make sense of the Christ event, and the revelation it is said to contain. Arius had a theological agenda: he understood the Christian doctrine of creation in metaphysical terms (231). The same goes for the intellect of God, and of participation with the divine life.

Williams summarizes in part III of his book on Arius the arguments Arius is trying to make by presenting three syllogisms (2005a:231). These syllogisms are related to the three areas that will be examined in this section: creation, intellect, and participation.

i) The Logos is the ground and condition, the rational or intelligible structure of the world; *But* that structure has no existence independent of the world which it structures; *Therefore* the Logos does not exist prior to the divine decision to make the world: *en hote pote ouk en*.

ii) God the Father is absolute unity, God the son (as the realm of intelligence and intelligibles) is multiplicity; *But* absolute unity cannot be conceptualized by any knowing subject without its being distorted into multiplicity (as something existing *over against* a subject). *Therefore* the Son can have no concept of the Father's essence, no *katalepsis.*

iii) The Logos truly exist as a subject distinct from the Father; *But* the defining qualities, the *essential* life, of one subject cannot as such be shared with another; *Therefore* the divine attributes traditionally and scripturally applied to the Son must be true of him in a sense quite different from that in which they are true of the Father.

The Logos is part of the *creation* of the world - no creation, no Logos. God is one, and there is no plurality in one, therefore the Son does not have complete access to the Father's *intellect*. The Logos is what the Father is by metaphor, and not *participation*. How exactly Arius argued for the soundness of these claims is what this thesis will deal with next. This will show how Williams presents the philosophical influence as something that makes Arius a conservative, as well as un-conservative. This again goes to show how Arius redefined theology in the wake of the conflict. Even if his theology was strongly refuted, his methodology proved hard to escape.

4.2 Creation

Williams presents Arius' view on creation as connected to ancient Greek philosophy. More specifically, Williams presents concerns regarding time and simplicity. Time is of relevance as it is part of Alexander's critique of Arius. Simplicity is of relevance as it is part of Arius' critique of Alexander. Arius is connected to a philosophical tradition by his attempt to present God as a self-determined individual, as Williams will argue.

4.2.1 Time

Williams begins his presentation on philosophical influences in the early church by referring to Plato's *Timaeus*. This text served as a basis for discussions on the origin of the world, and the creation of the cosmos. By the third century these discussions had become increasingly wrought with disagreement. This debate again influenced the church, and theology. As Williams states:

> What Christian theologians of this period and after found to say about God, creation and the beginning of time must be seen against the background of such debates. On the whole, it is impossible to say whether or to what extent any particular theologian knew the work of any particular philosopher; but there can be no doubt that for many of the most influential writers of the age, from Origen to Eusebius Pamphilus, the contemporary discussion of time and the universe shaped their conceptions of what could intelligibly be said of creation. (2005a:181).

When the early Christian theologians tried to make sense of the God of the bible, and his role in creation, they sought the help of philosophy. The notion of God as creator was biblically based, but what this actually meant – and what it said about God and his *economia* – they investigated by way of Plato.

To Plato the universe must have a cause. It does not exist stably, but is in the process of coming to be, and so it must have an *arche*. Seeing as this beginning has a cause – and it

results in beauty - it must be based on what is higher and better: an eternal world. The world is not created *ex nihilo*, but by making order out of chaos – there is formless matter. 'The builder' creates living beings to reflect him, and also time for the beings to move. "Time came into being (*gegonen*) along with the heavens" (Williams 2005a:182). Time is thus a result of creation.

Aristotle criticized Plato for presenting a universe that apparently had a punctiliar beginning, but would have no end (182). If the cosmos has a beginning it is capable of not-existing, but if it is endless there can be no time where it is not. If it has a beginning, it will have an end. If it is capable of not-existing, it can always 'not-exist'. If it exists, it cannot be capable of endless non-existence, so it will always exist, and has always existed. The cosmos is unique in that it is not created within time, but time is created within it. To Aristotle the cosmos must be *agenetos*.

The Judeo-Christian notion of a creation *ex nihilo* at a specific time, presented by Philo, was a new one in philosophical terms according to Williams (185). Plato was believed to teach that there was a process leading up the beginning of time – a disorderly time, along with disorderly motion (184). There is thus a chaos time, and up to about the third century matter was considered to be co-eternal with God. God simply organized what was already there (184). Form was considered to be active – it has to form 'something' – while matter was passive - it has to receive form. Form is eternally in the primal *nous,* who generates the ideas out of what it is - and it is what it is by contemplation of the One (185). It was part of a process. Aristotle, however, does not agree with this process. One cannot separate form and matter. "There is no pure matter 'lying around' waiting for some new form to unite with it […]" (185). Everything is made out of something: from something to something. Matter is never new, and so there can never be a process of nothing turning into something. This is why Williams state that Philo was the first to claim that "God caused matter and its rational structure to come into being at a point" (2005a:185). Form and matter are connected, and they come into being at a punctiliar beginning - at God's will. This means that the world of forms came as a result of Gods *will*. Which means that God is what he is quite independently of the world of forms. Williams has thus presented a development that opens for the possibility of 'God as he is' and 'God as creator' to be unconnected – as with the polemic of Methodius (d. ca. 311).

All this confusion over matter, form and time eventually leads up to Arius and Alexander. Alexander is trying to force Arius into a corner where he has to admit that they are talking about a time gap – a *diastema* – between Father and Son. A *diastema* is by Methodius an interval or distance that can be measured, which is a definition of time. Time is motion; motion is change; God cannot change. There is no *diastema* in eternity (186). However, something happened that was not always so: creation – which Athanasius accuses Arius for teaching happened in two turns. This difference, or separation, means change, and change means time. This seems to imply that there is time between God and his Son, much like time in this world. Still, Arius attempts to avoid presenting a notion of time between Father and Son, as that between Creator and Creature more generally (189). He, on the other hand, accuses Alexander of neglecting the Fathers precedence over the Son thus complicating the begetting of the Son (189). By refusing to use *diastema* Alexander seems to imply that the begetting of the Son made no difference for the Father – thus compromising the first principle. Alexander is threatening the simplicity of God.

4.2.2 Simplicity

Williams presents the need of Arius to separate between Father and Son as influenced by the understanding of the *monad* and the *dyad*, or singularity and multiplicity. Williams begins by presenting Methodius and how he held to the simultaneous appearance of multiplicity and the material world. Multiplicity, refracted through the Logos, is an occurrence that happens at creation. This is to counteract the Origenian view of "the idea of the Father's simplicity being mediated as a 'world of ideas' through the Son's beholding of the Father" (Williams 2005a:190). The Orgenian view clearly presents the priority of the Logos, by the Logos being before it. From this, stating that creation came about as a result of the Logos contemplation makes it a short step to state that Logos exist for the sake of creation (190). And further more, considering Methodius, it is possible to see how this presents the Logos as the result of God's will; thus having a punctiliar beginning somewhere between Gods eternity, and the *cronos* of the universe (191). Williams does not state that Methodius concludes thusly, but that it is possible to do so. Origenian cosmology opens a few doors, in regards to free will when the co-eternity of rational subsistents is dismissed. Williams relates this to Arius by presenting a gnomic line from the *Thalia*: "You should understand that the Monad [always] was, but that the Dyad was not before it came to be." Williams here takes Dyad to mean "the first level of being beyond or below primordial unity" (191). " Plurality

comes forth by singularity. By trying to incorporate *duas* into the *monad* one inadvertently threatens the divine simplicity.

Williams, once again, presents Arius as being potentially influenced by a pre-existing tradition. Leading up to the third century there is a move from Plato and Aristotle, and a primitive 'two principles' cosmology, to an understanding where plurality is derived from unity (192). Anatolius, Plotinus and Iamblichus, are taken as representatives of this tradition, however only the initial two will be presented due to the limitations of this thesis. To Anatolius the dyad is the "the first stage of separation from the monad, and is related to the monad as matter is to form" (Williams 2005a:191). The monad is active, while the dyad is passive, and so the monad affects the plurality in order to unify. "The monad is shown to be not merely unity in-and-for-itself but a unity that actively *unites*; and for it to appear thus it must generate an amorphous plurality on which it can work" (192). It is the 'refracted' *eikon* of a unifying principle, influencing the form of the dyad, - but not allowing it to be identical, or influential, to what is represents. Plotinus presents matter to exist in this world as that which form acts upon. Matter is distance from the One, and while distancing itself from the one, it reflects the one – however not in true likeness because it is different; it is potentiality. The dyad is shaped by the One, an effect of the one, but not willed by the One (193). "It moves, or affects, what it is not simply by being what it is" (194). By oneness facing what it is not – potentiality – and as one speaks about a relationship between the two, the dyad comes forth. From his presentation, Williams has shown that there was a development in Platonic philosophy after the third century (195). They differed on their understanding of how this relates to the *nous*, but there seems to be a *miljeu* in Alexandrian theology dealing apophatically with the first principle.

Williams argues that there are indication that Arius came in contact with this tradition, presented above (Williams 2005a:195). One of these indications are found in Arius' use of the word *duas* in regards to Logos. Earlier he quoted Arius' *Thalia,* and Arius evidently used *duas* as a title for the Logos. Also, Williams considers it unsurprising if Arius knew something about Anatolius and might even have shared Methodius' anti-Origenian views (196). The Son is begotten at a point, but not in time, rather together with time. The important point Williams want to make, is that God is now independent of the ideas or forms, and thus not connected to creation as a necessity from God's part. The difference between Arius and the post-Plotinus tradition is in how God retains *nous* – which is what enables will – thus lessening the extreme transcendence of the tradition. God creates not as much a result of

'natural processes', but as a result of his own will and self-determination. God has a mind - a *nous*. So even if Arius used a philosophical vocabulary, his intention is still distinctly Christian: God chose to create out of love (198). To Arius the freedom of God was not simply about unrelatedness, but about God's self-determination. What he did, he did because he chose to, and this is what Williams sees Arius as employing philosophy to support.

In summary, Arius, and Alexander for that matter, uses arguments found in philosophical cosmology, which had a tradition for being debated in Alexandria, when debating theology. The conflict between the two was connected to which philosophical concern should be given precedence. Arius attempted to argue for a distinct Christian understanding of creation by employing philosophical arguments. Though Williams does not necessarily agree with him on the soundness of his arguments, he nonetheless presents him as a theological serious exegete.

4.3 The mind

Williams again aims to show how Arius is standing on the cusp of an earlier tradition, this time in terms of God's intellect. And again he starts with classical Greek philosophy. From Plato we have the notion of *nous* and *noeta*. The Demiurge is a mind of sorts (*nous*), while the *autozoon* - the container of the rational form – is the object of the mind, the intelligibles. This notion proved problematic because it assumed that there could be an eternal object as well as an eternal subject. There had to be a hierarchy between the thought and what the thought rests on. There was a move, as Williams presents it, in the direction of 'isolating' the first principle (200). God is becoming un-intelligible. This progress is evident with Plotinus, which is where Williams starts.

Plotinus started out with a notion of the first principle being *noetos*, but he later separated the One from any kind of intellection. He asks "whether self-understanding is necessarily something possible only for a complex reality – that is, one with a 'knowing' and a 'known' part" (200). If one has a contemplating part, and a part being contemplated, then one does not have complete access to oneself; he would be an object to himself. It is hard to think of *nous*, understanding, as not understanding itself. *Nous* has to be the same as what it understands, and it exists only for its own sake (201). When attempting to work out whether there is something beyond *nous*, Plotinus argues that the *nous* creates separation by actively seeking understanding; by understanding something there is inescapably multiplicity - it involves duplication and distancing: "it seeks itself in otherness" (201). Williams presents

Plotinus to understand *nous* as being close to the One in its openness, but separated by the creation of multiplicity of trying to realize itself, and so the One eternally eludes the *nous*. "The One cannot be known, nor can it know" (201). Understanding is about motion, and the One cannot have motion, as that would speak of a need. Plotinus does not see the One as having self-awareness, as that would mean desire – and thus distance. By the One eluding the *nous* it also eludes objectification, and as such it is not graspable by word or thought: "There is nothing there to know, yet there is everything there" (Williams 2005a:202). This is the backbone of apophatic theology: being unable to say what is there, only what is not. Williams describes Plotinus as one who does more than formulating another apophatic theology; he connects it to the very nature of understanding. In the *nous'* continual search for understanding - in trying to comprehend - it objectifies, and the object created is itself. In its quest to understand more, it understands more of itself, thus understanding more of the One, as it originates from the One. This dance of not-knowing to knowing is what generates and creates new forms and images.

Williams goes on to describe how this relates to later Juedaeo-Christian tradition by presenting Philo's and Origen's take on the whole situation. With Philo, the realm of form is equated with the mind of God. God is *nous,* while the *logos* is what contains the *noetic* world and rational forms, the *autozoon*. The *logos* is not coterminous with the divine mind – only God knows fully what he is, and this knowledge is not accessible for the created mind, through the *logos*. God as *nous*, and man as *nous* is not the same, as "his 'intellectuality' is not defined by the noetic world, as ours is" (Williams 2005a:204). Philo does not make the *logos* into a subject, and so does not deal with the second principle's knowledge of the first. This distinction between Father and Son, *nous* and *logos*, is, however, dealt with more extensively by Clement and Origen. Williams propose that, considering the context, *nous* pertains to an expression of divine simplicity. At the same time, Origen is well aware that the father is more than *nous*; he is the father of every *nous* – he brings it into being, so the description must in some way be compatible to what he is (205). With Origen the Son contemplates the Father, and thus creates the world. He emanates from the Father, and looks upon the Father's divine simplicity and sees infinite variety – thus being infinite potentiality itself, as in him all things come to be. The difference between Plotinus and Origen is the latter's need to emphasise that God has a will, and thus a mind and self-understanding. God's generative power is based on a conscious decision, and so, as Williams states it, it can be seen as intelligent love (205). This is what challenges the Neoplatonic view of a purposeless deity.

The question of what the Son can know about the Father was important in the critique of Arius. Williams ties this in with Plotinus, as shown above, and with Origen. In dealing with how far Origen parallels Plotinus in this, he proposes that to Origen, "the Father […] does not have extra *information;* but – presumably – he knows his own simplicity *as* simplicity, while the Son knows it as cause and source of the multiple world of rational forms" (Williams 2005a:206). There seems to be an asymmetry of sorts, which begs the question: How is this different than how Plotinus views the second principle as not having complete knowledge of the first principle (complete disjunction)? However, for Origen, there was another element to consider: To state that the Son did not have perfect access to the father, thus complicating the Son's role as *eikon*, and his statements of unity with the Father, was improper, to say the least. The problem of how the Son knows the father continued to linger on. Later 'neo-Arians' said "that to know God as *agennetos* is to know his *ousia*" (207), while later Nicenes said that "the Father was known wholly and perfectly by the Son, because the Father's *ousia* was wholly communicated to the Son" (208). Williams uses the last two quotes, as well as other traditions, to build a case for the relevance of the question of the Son's knowledge of the Father in fourth-century theology. The question touched was of paramount importance for how theological truth could be understood – how it is possible to speak rightly about God – and how this again relates to the praxis of the church. Arius was unique, thought perhaps with a slight parallel in Origen, in that he emphasized disjunction over the Son's ability to present an accurate, truthful, image of the Father. This leads Williams to conclude, by the wordings of Kannengiesser, that "Arius entire effort consisted precisely in acclimatizing Plotonic logic within biblical creationism" (209). Arius was unique, and controversial, in that he used Plotinus to safeguard the voluntary creation of God.

Williams states that to understand the radicalness of Arius, one cannot ignore the influence of philosophers he shares so many parallels with (213). Williams also caution against 'the fantasy' of Arius as one who tries to "diminish the dignity of the Logos" (210). To Arius, the *nous,* the *logos,* is dependent upon the *dunamis* of the Father; the Son knows himself and the Father according to what the Father is. The Father is knowable because, in his unknowability, he emanates, though fragmented, because of his own self-contemplation. Williams purports that if what has been stated thus far in this chapter is accurate, then Arius is following Origen in presenting the Son, Logos, within the world of intelligible realities (212). Furthermore, Arius is following Origen into what this means for the divine intellect, although coming to an un-Origenian conclusion.

Supposing Arius to have taken for granted the anti-Origenian 'backlash' of the second half of the third century, supposing him to have sought for a logically tighter version of Methodius' assertion of the 'distance' between God and the intelligible world so as to underline the doctrine of a free creation and the essential indescribability of the creator, the philosophical environment we have been examining would offer many of the tools he needed. (Williams 2005a:213)

Williams presents Arius as a theological exegete, without interest in metaphysics or cosmology in their own right, who still uses the tools and arguments present in those areas to build his case. Just what case that is has been touched upon: the transcendence and free will of God. However to better understand what made Arius unique, Williams propose that we look closer at the 'analogical' continuity between Father and Son (213).

4.4 Analogy and Participation

Williams continues his search for the uniqueness of Arius by way of analogy and participation. This is again connected to a tradition, a process, and Williams begins his rendering of this process by bringing to attention a classical metaphysical question: "How is it that the same name or word attaches to a diversity of things?" (Williams 2005a:215). And again Williams follows the thread back to Plato. Plato tries to answer the question by presenting 'forms' and 'ideas': Forms are unified by the forms participating in a transcendent reality - an idea - which is also the source of the object. Plato was particularly interested in how "sameness" can be attributed to the different virtues. Williams uses the example of how both Ghandi and Socrates can be considered wise: they must share in the 'ideal' substance of wisdom (215). While Plato start out by considering this "sameness" in terms of maximation (as wise as can be), he soon abandons the notion in favour of one that sees the lower form as participating in the higher idea. This means that they do not share particularity, but rather that the idea is what causes the particularity. Williams exemplifies this by how person 'a' can have characteristic 'c_1' and person 'b' 'c_2'. What makes them 'c's' at all are their relation to the ideal 'c', while 'c' itself does not participate in its own 'c-ness'. It is like a reflection in a mirror: what it is is simply a reflection of the original – the idea (216). Participation is thus in antiquity understood as the relation between particular and form (217). The process Williams describes, leading up to Arius, evidently starts with Plato.

Williams was said to believe that conflict was the seed of progress, in a manner of speaking. This can be demonstrated by how Plato's understanding of participation was criticised by Aristotle. With Aristotle, as shown above, there is no separation between form

and idea, and so there cannot be a "*prior* reality of which the particulars can have a share" (217). Similarity in form did not lead back to some ideal 'c'; their similarity was a metaphor – it was just that the essential qualities of similar, but different, objects could be compared. This is participation by 'synonymy', or 'univocity': the same word means the same thing, even when describing differing objects or situations ('God is good', and 'man is good', is the same 'goodness'). Apart from this it made little sense in speaking of 'participation'. Non-participating substances are related by linguistic design, called 'homonymy, or 'equivocity: "they have a different *logos tes ousias,*" as Williams relates it (218). Aristotle's different types of equivocity is by Porphyry classified into categories. Apart from the accidental homonyms, there are four intentional homonyms: *likeness, analogy, prosegoria,* and *telos.*[5] Williams has thus presented two conflicting tradition, one of participation, and one of analogy. He then continues to present how this affected theology.

Participation and analogy is connected to theology, and to Arius, because it speaks of the accessibility of God. Williams prepares this argument by demonstrating how Plato imagined accessibility to 'what is higher'. To Plato, the 'Form of the Good' was the ultimate principle, and it is to the world of ideas what the sun is the material world. The Good and the One are both beyond structure – they consist of nothing beside themselves, nor can they be understood in terms of anything else (218). Still, the ultimate principle is not beyond definition – it is defined by its own intelligible structure. As Williams states: "'The Good beyond finite beings may for Plato have been limited by itself, in the sense of a limit beyond other limits', and the One also appears to be a 'limit of limits', neither wholly escapes 'limit' itself" (219). Plato's first principle is a harmonizing power – an active beginning - and not a distant one-in-itself. As limited, defined, it is also accessible to the mind. Plato's simile of the Divided Line shows how it is possible to move up to knowledge of the intelligible world. The mind can climb the hierarchy of reality because particulars are connected with the world of form, and the ultimate form of 'the good', making it possible to know 'Goodness' analogically. God is a case of intelligible reality, thus he is among the *noeta* as Plutarch states it (219). As forms are 'participated' by particulars, God is 'participated' by the ideal forms (220). This perspective belongs the 'Middle Platonist,' who saw the world as an image of the first principle. "This is why the third and fourth Christian centuries are such a significant and turbulent period in the development of religious epistemology" (Williams 2005a:220).

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5 Likeness: sharing some attributes. Analogy: standing in the same relation as the other (roof of mouth). Prosegoria: same purposive function (medicinal). Telos: produce same effect (healthy). WILLIAMS, R. 2005a. *Arius - Heresy and tradition, 2.ed.* Wales, SCM Press. [p. 218]

Williams has by presenting Plato's 'participation' prepared for how the Church of the third and fourth century faced a changing *milieu,* as this platonic notion of an accessible God got challenged.

Williams present Arius as one who uses Neoplatonic arguments in a predominately Middle Platonic environment. Neoplatonism, who in effect dismantled the access the Middle Platonists had to God through his creation, started talking about 'procession' (formed by higher, but not sharing essence) instead of 'participation'. There is univocity between form and particular: "a can be called f because some aspect of its existence can be understood by reference to a central or normative fact of something being f; but a's f-ness is not itself a *case* of f that can stand alongside the normative f" (220). This ties back to Aristotle, and his *pros hen* argument (*telos* above), where a meal, a climate, and a diet all can be said to be healthy – but only a person can be healthy in the words proper meaning. There is thus no 'participation', and the forms are not imitations of the Form of the Good. While there is a negative theology to be found in Middle Platonism – God cannot be grasped fully - it still did not go to the same extent as Plotinus did. He even denies a deliberate decision on the side of the One in creation; the *nous* 'emerges' from the One in total otherness, as overflow (221). With Iamblichus it is also argued that no "*ousia* can be *part* of another *ousia*" (222). Williams ties this in with Arius, as states: "Arius, like Iamblichus, condemns the idea of a fusion of substances into a 'consubstantial' compound: the Son is no a *homoousios* 'portion' of the Father: (2005a:222). The Son has no participation in God's nature. Neither can Father and Son be part of a common form of Godhead, as that would point to something beyond the two. Williams presents the climate in Alexandria as being almost void of Neoplatonic influences – a climate where it was still possible to talk about a participation of the divine *ousia*. "In short," Williams states, "when we look at Arius' attack on Alexander's theology, we see, at the very least, a close parallel to the Neoplatonist dismantling of earlier Platonic models of God's relation to the world" (224). Arius is a 'post-Plotinian' who holds to specific acts of revelation, and who also assigns a will and a mind to God.

Arius uniqueness is a result of him framing his theology in a Neoplatonic language. He is unique in that he is not positioned within mainstream theology, nor is he a full out Neoplatonist. This leaves him open for attacks. How can the Son be said to have any part in God at all, considering how he is unable to share God's *ousia*? It almost seems like the Son, in his oppositeness, is left with divine attributes understood more like metaphors. This is especially difficult for Arius, who also holds to the role of the Son in revealing "saving

knowledge of the Father, to create in us a transforming *gnosis"* (225). There is no room in Neoplatonic thought of a mediator, bridging the gulf between absolute and contingent. Arius solves this by again reverting back to the free and active will of the Father. The Son is what he is because the Father wants it – he is wisdom because the truly 'wise' God willed it (226). There is no automation in the Son's role as *eikon*; it is a result of God willing it so. Arius' mediator is one who is endowed with all the glory a creature can contain, one who has no resistance, and thus has been given the title Son. As Son, he praises the Father, and by being turned toward one who is greater, he is showing us what we could not see - the limitation of the Logos reveals the limitless-one behind him. "A Plotinian style of negative theology is being quite skilfully deployed in defence of some very un-Plotinian conclusions" (228). One of the challenges Williams sees with this is in regards to whether or not this 'will' reveals God's nature or not. If it does, then one is in essence close to what is said at Nicea. If it is not, then we are left with a whimsical God – a divine void. Williams concludes by saying "the problems set up by the extreme apophatic consequences of the third-century shift in philosophical thinking cannot be sidestepped by the appeal to a will without a fundamental irrationality being introduced into the Godhead itself" (2005a:229). To Williams, Arius is one who addressed relevant philosophical concerns of the era, though reaching a difficult, if not impossible, theological conclusion.

4.5 Summary

What Williams has been getting at through his presentation is that Arius' has a distinct metaphysical and cosmological outlook. It is different from Eusebius of Caesarea, and from Athanasius. He has left Middle-Platonisism – with knowledge of God through creation – and is closer to a Neoplatonic world. While not being a philosopher, he uses philosophy to arrive at some, for Williams, difficult positions: There is nothing more to be said of God other than that he has a free will; effectively reducing God to bare potentiality (231). It is this that makes him a heresiarch. His view of creation as created by the Logos, at a point, was not controversial – even his view of the Logos as created for the sake of creation was not all that radical. The Son's ignorance of the Father was more problematic, but it makes sense when viewed against a Middle Platonic / Neoplatonic debate. That the Logos does not really possess divine attributes was, and is, even harder to swallow. It made it difficult to say anything about God at all, and it reduced the *eikon* to a poor reflection of an arbitrary God. The Arian heresy came about as a result of fusing conservative themes with a very un-

conservative ontology (232). He is conservative in his methodology, and use of philosophy, but radical in his conclusions.

4.6 Aftermath

Williams wrote the book in order to present Arius without the distortion created by the polemic of Athanasius (2005a:134). He hopes that revealing what actually happened in this crisis will help shed light on how this event determined the future of theology. An influence that still effects contemporary discussion – especially in how to understand the nature of doctrinal continuity: "questions which the mere *fact* that there was a doctrinal crisis in the fourth century presses upon us" (244). The book attempts to give focus to some of these questions. So just what is the result of the Nicene crisis?

Arianism as a defined heretical group is by Williams understood as a post-Nicene development, and it is thus misleading. It gives off the impression of there being a distinct group with defined identity called Arians. However, as Williams states it: "there was no such thing in the fourth century as a single, coherent 'Arian' party" (233). Arianism is rather a description of those opposed to the process leading up to the council, and the result of it. Arians had a conservative view on the role of the presbyter *vis-à-vis* the bishop, and they held to the authority in the inspired ascetic teacher, as represented by Arius (233). Arius also addresses what he sees as shortcomings in the Middle Platonic understanding of a hierarchical approach to God, through participation, and follows the path of apophatic theology to what he sees as logical conclusion. And though Arius did made converts to his view, he was never seen as a leader of a movement. Williams emphasize the lack of a distinct Arian identity, because this has influence on how the sides of the conflict are to be viewed, and what this tells of the influence of Athanasius.

The influence of Athanasius is by Williams further demonstrated by complicating the traditional understanding of the conflict further. By dismantling the identity of Arianism, Williams makes it more visible how the definition of sides as 'Catholic' and 'Heretic' is a post Nicene development. To understand the conflict in those terms is to be clouded by Athanasius in ones understanding of the event. "It is very far from being a struggle by 'the Church' against a 'heresy'," as Williams describes it, "formulated and propagated by a single dominated teacher; rather it is, in large part, a debate about the continuity possible and necessary in the Church's language" (234). The Arian fraction regarded themselves as preservers of central formulae about God as *anarchos* and so forth. They tried to preserve

what they saw as central to the scripture, while having to step outside the simple reiteration of what had already been stated; it was necessary to speak with a new language, to preserve the tradition. It is this language that was debated, and the danger is in seeing the post-Nicene language as already there – as with Lindbeck (presented more thoroughly in the next chapter).

One word that can describe the result of the Nicene controversy is theology, as Williams describes it. It became important to say new things with new arguments, while still claiming it was the same being said. Arius had seen the need for a critical and logical defence of tradition when challenged by theological vagueness in his day (235). While Arius' arguments might be debated, the fact that there was a debate proved influential; the need for conceptual innovation was recognized, with the added need to do justice to the praxis of the church. "The doctrinal debate in the fourth century is thus in a considerable measure about how the Church is to become intellectually self-aware and to move from a 'theology of repetition' to something more exploratory and constructive" (Williams 2005a:235). By not allowing language to develop, by strict adherence to an archaic language, one is actually in danger of betraying the faith one is trying to preserve – like with *homoousios*. Williams once again describes theology as something originating in worship, and trying to express this in new ways, by keeping the language open. As he himself states it:

> There is a sense in which Nicaea and its aftermath represents a recognition by the Church at large that *theology* is not only legitimate but necessary. The loyal and uncritical repetition of formulae is seen to be inadequate as a means of securing continuity and anything more than a formal level; Scripture and tradition require to be read in a way that brings out their strangeness, their non-obvious and non-contemporary qualities, in order that they may be read both freshly and truthfully from one generation to another. They need to be made more *difficult* before we can accurately grasp their simplicities. Otherwise, we read with eyes not our own and think them through with minds not our own; the 'deposit of faith' does not really come into contact with *ourselves*. And this 'making difficult', this confession that what the gospel says in Scripture and tradition does not instantly and effortlessly make sense, is perhaps one of the most fundamental tasks for theology. (Williams 2005a:236)

The lead up to the council at Nicaea was a tumultuous time, in regards to the identity of the church; from persecuted church, to imperial religion. This also meant a reworking of its foundation - a critical reflection on its heritage; it saw the need for theology. This need was still present in the centuries to come, when a new conflict presented the need for continuity,

which lead Williams to conclude that some sort of doctrinal hermeneutics had come to stay. (237).

Theology as a need for self-awareness is not an old phenomenon. It is still important to answer what is at the core of the Christian proclamation; what is its distinctiveness – its 'this, not that'. Williams points out that it is important to not let questions regarding the identity of the church become silenced by social and ideological explanations of what the church is (238). As contemporary concerns in doctrinal theology have shown, proclaiming the same gospel now as before is not easy. Some of these contemporary concerns will be addressed shortly, suffice to say that it is difficult to know with a large amount of certainty what of the current proclamation belongs to the 'the message', and what are cultural influences. This is again a question of identity, and Williams builds the distinctiveness of the Christian identity on the idea of "new creation" (240). This "new creation" is based on an event; an event that makes a radical break with what was, creating a rupture – something that was not there before. This is what defines the Christian identity; this is what separates 'this' from 'that'. Williams thus separates himself from a relativistic position; there is something there that gives identity. This is some of the difficulty with Arius, as accused by Athanasius: The event didn't make sense when viewed from the position of Arius; not the incarnation, why there was one, or other factor making up the event: Why did God choose to do it thusly, and what does this say about who 'we' are? There is something in the event that is fundamental for the formation of identity, and it is in the "new creation" – in the *difference*.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the radicalness of Arius has been presented. Williams presents Arius as one who took conservative consideration to a radical conclusion. Arius was radical in that he emphasized the notion of God's free and immutable will over the role of Son as revealer of God. What is Williams' contribution to this is in demonstrating how Arius might have been influenced by a philosophical tradition. The old interpretive framework was cracking up, and Arius attempted to mend it.

The material, as presented by Rowan Williams, presents the formation of doctrine as a result of a process, and as such interconnected with a broad array of historical factors, such as culture, philosophy, power and more. However, Williams also points out that the process does have a distinct beginning. The process is the result of trying to make sense of one key notion; one fundamental that results in a new identity. To Williams this is described by the phrase

'new creation'; something happened that made a rupture between what was, and what now is. This crisis event is what needs to be interpreted, and this interpretation leads to doctrines.

The result of the conflict was theology. There was a need to interpret old notions with new words. It attempted to say the same thing, but it needed more then reiteration to do so. There was a growing need for self-awareness; for a more distinct identity. This identity was, according to Williams, based on the notion of 'new creation'. There was something in the event – something transformative – that might not have been all that clear. There were questions needing answers, like: why did God choose to do thusly? To answer this, and other questions like it, theology was needed.

Chapter 5: Current doctrinal concerns

5.1 Introduction

There are in this thesis more than a few loose ends that need to be tied up, and this seems like a suitable time to do just that. In chapter two, when attempting to present the hermeneutics of Rowan Williams, insufficient attention could be given to current doctrinal concerns. Williams' view of history as constructed, and as a tool to make learning possible, deserves further elaboration. This is also the case with the connection between doctrine and identity, and how this relates in a new language. Chapter three and four presented the Christological doctrine as a result of a process; a process interconnected with a broad array of historical factors, such as culture, philosophy, power and more. Still, this process had an origin - a punctilliar beginning – there was an event, and from this event came the need to make sense of the *difference*. How this lines up with current doctrinal concerns is an issue that needs to be dealt with.

This chapter intends to answer how we can relate to doctrines in a meaningful way, considering what has been presented up until now, and how this relates to current hermeneutical issues. Williams will now be presented alongside contemporary doctrinal concerns. This will achieve two things: First, it will reveal how Williams deals with contemporary challenges. Second, it will reveal some of Williams' uniqueness. From this it will be possible to debate the future course of doctrinal theology, based on issues presented by Williams, and developed with modern considerations in mind. To do this, this chapter will also deal with the intention behind doctrinal criticism, and how Williams relates to its challenge. Further, it will investigate if Williams' view of Doctrines as language has anything beneficial to offer, once again considering the challenges. Exactly what this challenge consists of will be further elaborated when dealing with historicism.

5.2 Doctrinal criticism

So what is the purpose behind doctrinal criticism? What is it one hopes to accomplish by this discipline? "*Doctrinal criticism,*" according to McGrath, "seeks to evaluate the reliability and adequacy of the doctrinal formulations of the Christian tradition, by identifying what they purport to represent, clarifying the criteria – historical and theological – by which they may be evaluated, and, if necessary, restated" (McGrath 1997:vii). The purpose behind doctrinal criticism is to investigate the reliability of a doctrine, and to evaluate it based on a

set of criteria, which are themselves in need of evaluation. This is what this thesis attempts to do; to evaluate the validity of the Christological doctrine, based on the presentation of Rowan Williams, and to discuss what criteria is valid in the evaluation of this doctrine. This discussion surrounding criteria for judgement will be developed based on how Williams faces doctrinal criticism, and how he presents his solution to the problem of making a doctrinal claim – a claim to speak the truth. Williams, as stated in chapter two, presents critical theology as an enterprise that tries to answer if what is emerging is actually the same as what was originally believed (2000:xv). This section will focus on this challenge: the combination of the truth claim inherent in doctrine, and whether this truth is comparable to the same truth that was originally believed.

Williams poses the challenge of doctrinal criticism as a question, derived from Wiles: "if, as is surely the case, traditional doctrinal statements make claims about what is actually true about the universe, how do we respond to those claims in an intellectual climate in which they cannot possibly be *legitimated?"* (Williams and Higton 2007:276). Doctrines *claim* to be carriers of truth, but how can this truth be accessed? As Williams states, the critical study of doctrine results in a fragile epistemological foundation for the claim of the doctrine - there is no certainty in the claim - but what there is is a heightened awareness of the intensity of the experience (277). And it is just this experience I believe is key in understanding Williams' idea of doctrines – and a beneficial path for further discussion.

I believe Williams makes a good case in seeing the truth of doctrine as connected to the Christ event. By so doing, the challenge of – or more accurately, the impossibility in – making ontological claims is faced, without eliminating truth completely. To claim that one's interpretation is valid is to position oneself in *normative* time, as Williams describes it; a position where all events are judged (Williams 2005a:23). This would be a form of absolutism (literalism), which share much resemblance with Lindbeck's *cognitive-propositional theory,* where "doctrine function as informative propositions of truth claims about objective realities" (Lindbeck 1984:16). The difficulty of presenting an objective truth in a post-Kantian universe reveals the untenability of this position. However, McGrath presents a more nuanced picture of the position than what Lindbeck does – there is reformulation according to historical circumstances (McGrath 1997:16) - which I believe has parallels to Williams. Doctrines can be said to be reliable, though not complete, descriptions of reality in that they represent something not confined to words; which McGrath sees the Nicene controversy as an example of (17). Doctrines can be true in that they are a response to something taken to be true: a

transforming event – a new creation – that gives content to an identity in need of a history. McGrath mentions in his brief dealings with the 'cognitive' theory of doctrine, that Giambattista Vico suggested that experience might be captured in words:

> A [*sic*] initial metaphorical perspective on reality gained through an encounter with the domain of experiences gives way to a reductive metonymic analysis of the situation. This process of deconstruction is followed by a process of synecdochic reconstruction of the relations between the superficial attributes of this encounter with reality and its presumed essence, finally yielding a reflective of dialectic of ironic comprehension of that experienced reality (McGrath 1997:19)

The articulation of an event is true, even if the word being articulated does not manage to contain the truth as such. The words need to be interpreted to reveal the truth they are said to contain. And in this I perceive a reflection of Williams. Truth is better understood as coherence than correspondence, but there is truth there: "If Jesus is finally *illustrative* of truths about God which are in principle independent of this particular life and death, doctrine will be above all the process of transmitting these truths […] (Williams and Higton 2007:295). Jesus is what makes it possible to speak of God, and relate to him; without this reference to Jesus as more than history, doctrines would make little sense. Just how Jesus illustrates truth will be presented shortly. To Williams, truth is connected to the Christ event.

Also, Williams proposes a way to access the truth contained in the doctrine, which I believe is helpful. This ties in with what has been presented above regarding Williams and his continual emphasis on the need for openness. In chapter two Williams was described as holding to a poetics of theological creativity, a position that sees "scripture, creed and tradition not as historical artifacts whose meaning is equated with the original authorial intention behind the texts but rather as scripts for a certain kind of performance, similar to the script of a play" (McCurry 2007:415). The words – the signs - in a script are given meaning by interaction; by being understood and reinterpreted. There is now a new meaning present; one not put there by the author. As such, doctrines are part of the story of where the script has gone, and by that also gives witness to where it now is (not). It is by that an *Other* to the reader of the script. Doctrines present the reader with an opportunity to learn by introducing a different world into his. Jeffrey McCurry calls it a "text unlimited", in that it can always say more, by interacting with the present world (416). Also, as script, it testifies to a beginning - a beginning of *this* script; an event to which it, and the characters in it, owes its identity. Doctrine cannot contain truth, in a literalist understanding, but it can prepare for the move

towards truth. Doctrines are practical in that they aid in presenting the strangeness of what is hidden in the Christ even. This presentation is a verbal presentation that is communicating in the present. The challenge of doctrinal criticism is a matter of uncovering the 'hidden truth' preserved in the chaotic Jesus event. This uncovering is a process, because the truth hidden is not able to fit within words – there is always more. So the uncovering of the 'truth' is *in actu* a deconstruction of a language; an opening up - allowing it to say more.

5.3 Doctrine as language

The challenge of doctrinal criticism is in how a doctrine can be said to carry any truth at all, considering what has been presented in this thesis up until now. It seems like doctrines are merely the result of historical processes. However, as stated above, a way out of this is by connecting the 'truth' to the event it attempts to make sense of. Williams does this by presenting Jesus as what is true; as what makes it possible to speak truthfully - which is what doctrine attempts to do. Jesus is the one who makes it possible to open up the language, by his role as *sign*. Williams states that: "Signs are signs of what they are not: they are transformations of the world by re-ordering it, not destroying it, so that the tension of 'otherness' remains, itself part of the fluid and dynamic nature of sign-making" (Williams 2000:207). Jesus, as the prime 'sacrament', is also a sign: the sign of a new people with God (204). In the world's efforts to contextualise Jesus – to make sense of the *difference* - it in turn re-contextualises itself. Signs reveal the 'this, not that' by being the provocative other, itself separated from the 'this' by having an identity of its own. This is the starting point of a hermeneutical dialectic, where the sign evolves by interaction – and in so doing transforms the world. A Christian doctrine is a statement of the truth in Christ; it is developed in dialogue, solidified in history.

Williams can also help in trying to understand revelation, and how doctrine tries to capture this revelation. As it has been treated extensively in this thesis, William has a dialectic understanding of how learning takes place. It is by encountering the 'other', and thus presenting to the learner that which is strange, or difficult. The scriptures present us with this strange world; this world of God, this kingdom of heaven. That's why a view of the scriptures as open – as still being able to communicate – is of such importance. Literal reading is for Williams to allow oneself to encounter the strangeness of the text, again and again – not just in the words themselves, but also by encountering the text in others (Higton 2004:67). This encounter reveals the symbols, which in turn give me a language, and this enables me to understand. Language is something I receive by encountering what is different.

Revelation is about receiving a new language, of which the doctrines are the grammar. This reception is of importance. As Williams says it: "before we speak, we are addressed or called" (1986:198). This calling invites us into its world by redefining the boundaries of ours. The generative experience – creating what is not there - is what revelation is about. This also results in an identity – the 'this' that God is makes sense by how the word is lived out by its speakers. Thus the word 'God' is given content by those who profess their participation in the word. Within a Christian framework the original professor is of course Christ, so the term 'Christian' is closely connected to the dialogue with Christ, his identity, and the resulting boarders on his name. 'He is one who calls God Father' – his 'Abba' makes mine 'Abba' possible. This new language gives me an identity – in Christ. Williams describes Jesus as God's revelation not because he makes things plainer, but because he makes things darker (203). He complicates the image present, and by so doing challenges the idols. Jesus makes it possible to talk of a transcendent God in a worldly way, with a worldly language. His role as *symbol* is based on how he incorporates a new word – a new meaning – into my world. This word is not closed off, but open – based on Christ as word, and then expanded, though always founded on Christ. It is revealed through a process of hermeneutics, and this process takes place within history. The starting point for this spiral was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It forced a new self-understanding, based on Jesus as Lord, and the believer as a 'new creation'.

5.3.1 Postliberalism

When trying to understand doctrines within a linguistic framework it is hard to bypass postliberalism. Is Williams a post liberalist? Theo Hobson, when dealing with sacramentalism and authority, presents Williams as one who "is very serious about the postmodern idea that religion should be understood in terms of communicative action" (Hobson 2008). In the abstract to his article on the same topic in Scottish journal of theology in 2008 it says that "[Williams] expounds the centrality of the Eucharist in cultural-linguistic and semiotic terms" (Hobbson 2008). Gary Dorrien describes Williams as one who share affinities with a more "'progressive' form of postliberalism" (2001). Chad C. Pecknold states that: "postliberalism found a positive and sympathetic reception in Britain as well, especially amongst theologians such as […] Rowan Williams" (Pecknold 2005:118n). By this it appears that Williams is a postliberalist, but is this an accurate assumption? Does his take on doctrinal criticism fit within this label?

To investigate into the relationship between Williams and postliberalism, I will present briefly postliberalism by referring to Lindbeck and the criticism against his presentation. Lindbeck states that doctrines do not behave the way they should, and that it therefore is a need for a more adequate way of understanding their nature and function – a postliberal way (Lindbeck 1984:7). He goes on to presents three general types that doctrine may be divided into. And while it is interesting to see how Williams fit into the *cognitive propositional theory*, or *the experiental-expressivist theory*, it is for the sake of this thesis more relevant to move straight on to *the cultural-linguistic theory*. This theory presents doctrines as grammatical rules, and religion as the language. "…A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. (Lindbeck 1984:33). Lindbeck makes this comparison quite extensive, like stating how religion is a communal phenomenon influencing the subject, and so it is not just an expression of this subject (33). Unlike 'experiential-expressive' it does not start with an internal experience, but with the acquisition of a language. 'Form over matter' – and in this way it resembles the cognitive theory (external) (35). With this view of religion there is naturally also implications for doctrine. As McGrath presents this position in *the Genesis of Doctrine*, doctrine must be seen in a narrative setting (McGrath 1997:27). It offers an identity to God by describing him, but it is not dependent upon the facts as such.

Williams states in his article *Trinity and Revelation* that "Theology, in short, is perennially liable to be seduced by the prospect of bypassing the question of how it *learns* its own language" (Williams 1986:197). It is this McGrath accuses Lindbeck of doing (McGrath 1997:28,30). The language of a doctrine is not just 'there'. So how does the Christian idiom come into being? McGrath presents this position as devoid of external referents. Truth is equated with internal consistency (29). That means that the Nicene creed does not make truth claims. No ontological reference. According to McGrath Lindbeck presents Athanasius as understanding *homoousios* as a rule of speech, rather than an ontological statement (29). The metaphysical aspect of the statement came later. While avoiding the details of this argument, it is still hard to accept this proposal, at least at face value, considering what has been presented in this thesis. There were factors influencing the Christological conflict from the start – including metaphysical factors. That is not to say that there is not a linguistic aspect in the controversy, but the problem is rather that this position presents doctrine as evolving in an ahistorical vacuum. McGrath also makes a point of how an intrasystemic view of doctrinal validity – no reference outside of the system – is problematic, and he therefore suggest that

Jesus of Nazareth is the external referent (McGrath 1997:32). These conflicting notions, doctrine as a grammar with the need for an external referent, and as an historical event, are connected with Williams.

There are similarities between Lindbeck and Williams, and there are also some key differences. The similarities are that they both use language as means to understand and explain religion. Language is something that happens to me – something external. Williams even state that orthodoxy is "the 'grammar' by which we can discern that even wildly divergent utterances are being made in one and the same language" (Higton 2004:79). The major difference is the role of Jesus. He is the source of the language, and doctrines are what makes it possible to speak "about a God who becomes unreservedly accessible in the person of Jesus Christ and in the life of Christ's community" (Higton 2004:81). The openness is closely connected with a specific set of commitments – a way of defining an identity – that is not intrasystemic. The doctrines testify about the external reference point – and thus they should be an aid in keeping the 'system' open. One of the errors of Arianism, from this perspective, is that, even if this position made more sense considering the concerns at the time, it was unable to sustain viability outside of that intellectual milieu (Higton 2004:84). Arianism had a timestamp on it by closing itself off, thus making it obsolete – unable to deal with new challenges. While Williams will state that "we speak because we are called, invited and authorized to speak, we speak what we have been *given*, out of our new belonging" he also states that "this is a 'dependent' kind of utterance, a responsive speech" (1986:209). It is connected to a revelatory event – a historic event. The world is not simply inserted into the texts; there is something more, from outside, thus revelatory, and presented to us in 'sameness', thus able to communicate - all this in the Christ event. It looks similar to what Lindbeck states, that "intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories. It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text" (1984:118). However, they differ on their intrasystemic aspect. If the text absorbs the world, then in turn the text is itself absorbed by the event. There is an insertion influencing all future interpretation: a hermeneutical key.

5.4 Historicity

There has in this thesis been made both explicit and implicit references to the topic of historicity. Williams' view of history as constructed, as a tool for making learning possible, his conviction of doctrines as result of a process - as well as his linguistic approach - all connects with this topic. As stated in chapter two, Williams does not hold to the idea of a

'normative time' - no absolute *locus standi*. History is constructed in hindsight in order to make sense of who we are now. This new identity also results in a new language – a language that keeps unfolding as we are faced with the *difference* revealed in our history. This unfolding – this process – both results in doctrines, as well as interprets doctrine. It thus appears that history, and doctrine, is constructed out of a consensus – which is what historicity argues.

Historicism sees everything in history as being a result of specific social contexts – e.g. the socio-political, theological and philosophical factors dealt with in this thesis – and that truth as such cannot be understood ontologically, but rather symbolically. One of the proponents of historicism, made reference to several times already in this thesis, S. G. Davaney, states that theology of historicism assumes "that the historical realm, broadly construed, is the only arena of human activity and knowledge and [that it] [repudiates…] traditional forms of foundationalism and correspondence theories of truth" (Davaney 1991:201). She also writes, when dealing with Williams Dean, that "they acknowledge that historical reality is created through interpretation of the historical subject – that it is history that makes history" (202). There is always an interpretation taking place – nothing is in 'normative time' as Williams would say. Williams obviously addresses some historicist concerns in his view on history – it is impossible not to – but how far does he follow this position? To answer this question it is interesting to compare how historicism positions itself in terms of truth, identity and the place of the past.

5.4.1 Truth

The historicist approach to truth is a matter of consensus, as stated above; what is true cannot be *known*, only accepted. Thus, religion, or the truth claims within it, is viewed as human constructs. Terrence Reynolds, in treating *historicism, truth claims, and the teaching of ethics*, while comparing Nietzsche and Davaney, points out that the impact on truth claims, in theology or ethics, is powerful. He then goes on to quote Davaney:

> …Truth is that which in any given historical moment can make its will felt, can bring about its effect. The distinction between truth and falsehood is not a question of ontological validity but of which forms of discourse are *accepted* as truth, both by virtue of coercion and because of the possibilities such realms of discourse bring into being […]. That is, not an ontology of truth but a politics of truth is what is demanded today. (Reynolds 1996:93)

Truth is a matter of acceptance, knowing that what one accepts is really culture. There is no access to reality. As such it is imperative to be open: open towards the past and the present.

The importance of openness is evident with Davaney's own historicist approach, that of *pragmatic historicism.* Pragmatic historicism follows historicism in acknowledging the historical character of human existence and of all human activity and institutions. Everything humans do are done within the context of place and time. With this in mind, absoluteness must be given a more temporal character – there is a suspicion present. This suspicion must be directed towards everything - even on historicism itself. And this is what Davaney does. While acknowledging the historical character of a position, it also acknowledges its own, thus opening for self-criticism. Davaney's complaint of historicists, such as postliberals and revisionist, is that they do not "carry through their positions to fully historicist conclusions" (Davaney 2000:147). The pragmatic historicist seeks to converse with a variety of disciplines in order to locate the human matrix; a matrix constructed by man because he is *man.* Humans are world creators, which is "what we heuristically call religious traditions […]" (148). This matrix is internally pluralistic, "composed of multiple contending and contested elements" (148). This idea of the world, of history and of identity as chaotic - as pluralistic – reveals why it is important to be open; to not close the system by labelling one perspective as truth.

The consensus of 'truth' does not receive support from the past. What was considered to be true does not have superiority over what we now *should* consider to be true. As Jan-Olav Henriksen summarizes in *Teologi i dag*, "[Davaney] emphasizes that no position can have superior authority based exclusively on being recognized as a valid solution to a *former* situational and contextual problem (Henriksen 2007:146) (translation mine). A position – a doctrine - is not deemed final simply on basis of its track record. The truth-worthiness of a doctrine is determined by an evaluation made in the present; a position held to be true by history can be overturned by the present. Thus 'truth' is a process in the making.

To Davaney theology is a mode of cultural analysis, and this is its value (2000:149). It no longer search for truth, but it aims to evaluate and assess a traditions function. Good theology is theology that contributes to our current historical position. This reveals the pragmatic position of Davaney's historicist approach. However, the pragmatic aspect – the evaluation in the present - is not disconnected from the past. *Au contraire,* it is from the past we develop a set of norms.

5.4.2 History

It is tempting to ask how one should deal with history considering that it has no precedence in making judgements. Is it to be discarded? This is where Davaney separates herself from other modern position. The non-finality of a position is not the same as starting from scratch, as Henriksen points out (2007:147). He further emphasizes how Davaney presents the past as what enables the conditions in the present (147). The standard we use to evaluate has its own history:

> Norms or standards of judgement do not simply appear, unrelated to an unentangled from the past. In large part what we take to be normative in any present era is a product of our dense histories, significantly shaped by the past out of which we and our traditions have come. For pragmatic historicism, then, even the most novel portrayal of reality and the most audaciously innovative criteria for judgement are situated and as such indebted to what has gone before and to their current environment. Our normative imaginings and judgements, as all other dimensions of human life, are traditioned. (Davaney 2000:150)

This awareness is an awareness of the impossibility of 'starting from scratch', because one will always be influenced by history. The judgement in the present cannot be disassociated with the past, even if the arguments for its continued relevance are based on contemporary concerns. This again leads to a pragmatic take on history. As Adonis Vidu states when dealing with Davaney: "The past has a function only if we are able to locate within it resources that can contribute to make our contemporary search for a meaningful life more successful. But the decision as to the adequacy of those recourses has to be justified according to present and public norms" (2007:216). The past is the pool from where we can draw understanding of who we are, and why we are just that.

Davaney presents history as being open, and instructional at the same time, though without precedence over the present. "Tracing the complex historical factors that shape us crucially contributes to our understanding of why certain values, practices, and visions of human life carry weight for us. But such tracing does not exhaust our responsibility to present rationales on behalf of our claims today" (Davaney 2000:152). The normative position for a valued judgement on a positions claim to truth is the ever-fleeting present. Justification for the validity of the Christian claims is not based on "it is written", but "is it reasonable today". And to make that contemporary judgement it is paramount to enter into dialogue; dialogue with history, and with the present. Past, present, future; hopes, aspirations, dreams – all aspects of life must be engaged in dialogue – and this dialogue must take place publicly.

5.4.3 Identity

Historicism has an acute awareness of the role of language in the formation of an identity. This again connects with Williams. In chapter two he was presented as seeing history as constructed. At the same time a reference was made to Kaufmann, and his view of humans being *world constructors*. This again ties in with language, because to Kaufman the development of language is connected to man's interaction with the world. We need a framework, and this framework is dependent upon the symbols created. As Davaney quote Kaufman: "We cannot gain orientation in life and cannot act without some conception or vision of the context within which we are living and moving, and without some understanding of our own place and role within that context" (Davaney 1991:204). Our identity is connected to language – a language Kaufman sees as the foundation for any interpretation of life taking place (reality remains hidden). To Davaney this results in a dualism, in that while man is in a biosocial world, as a creator of world, he is not coparticipant with that world; his experience is structured by language, but there is no clear notion of how experience structures language. "Thus," as Davaney states, " even within his system, where both self and world are constructs of the imagination, he develops a picture of the relationship between the two that is unidirectional, in which the constructive agency is almost exclusively on the part of the human knower" (217). What Kaufman fails to account for is the way the webs of realities are networks of power that are not innocent, but have social and political repercussions (219). Our understanding of the world, and our relation to it – our identity – is based on words, signs, which make up this world. The grid for our identity is constructed – which begs the question of how it began in the first place.

To Davaney, the pluralistic aspect of any tradition must be included in what is to be an identity. Humans are multi-traditioned, as opposed to mono-traditioned. While Kaufman rejects any notion of a Christian essence, Davaney points to the conglomeration of all that has happened through history (Davaney 2000:89). Identity is something continually in the making, in intermingling of contemporary as well as historical factors (110). Identity is not readymade, but part of a struggle: an attempt to make sense of it all, considering all factors. While doing this, the pragmatic historicist is also aware of how it by identifying something, it also in the process leaves others out. The 'this, not that' *can* be detrimental to the 'that' not being recognized. And so pragmatic historicism seeks to inquire into the *effects* of our identity making (170).

The concern pragmatic historicism has regarding identity can be linked to the struggle in the fourth century already mentioned. Who has authority to speak for this group? In an article in *Journal of American Academy of Religion* Davaney poses just this question: "Who has the authority to speak for or about religions?" (Davaney and Laderman 2005:980). With an increasing need for a global perspective on religion, Davaney connects the relevance of this question to current religious conflicts, whether that being Bosnia, the Middle East, or women's rights (981). While this thesis focused on the struggle between presbyters and bishops, a pragmatic historicist perspective would be to ask about those who were not consulted in this matter – the 'common' believers. In this it is evident that pragmatic historicism has something to offer, on multiple layers. However, the question at hand is how Williams is positioned in regards to the historicist approach Davaney advocates, and are there in Williams a solution to the radicalness of this position.

5.4.4 Williams and Historicism

How, then, does Williams historicist concerns parallel those of the pragmatic historicist; does his views line up with Davaney's? With first glance, it is evident that they have similarities. As she says, "there is a clear sense in which pragmatic historicist tend to agree with postliberals" – no way of knowing whether one got reality right (2000:171). The proposal from Davaney is to allow a conversation to take place with current and past currents, and then make judgements on the traditions right of existence. While Williams is not a postliberalist, he does see history – tradition – as the place from where we derive identity - while at the same time writing history to make sense of identity. This constructed history is not 'reality', and as such it is not, by Williams, seen as 'finished', but rather progressing. Also with Davaney, the symbols are given attention; for one, they give identity – though with some possible detrimental side effects (170). Further, in pragmatic historicism, the complexities and the plethora of traditions are seen to interact – and from this interaction a coherent system is formed (Davaney 2000:40). To use my former analogy from psychology, that the diverging traditions are to be understood as cognitive dissonance – forcing a harmonizing story to take place. In this view history is never a completed work (41). Comparing Williams to pragmatic historicism there will of course be similarities and overlap. Neither has been allowed to develop in a vacuum, but rather has progressed by interacting with the challenges and concerns presented to them. It this respect, it seems a little simplistic and of little benefit to typecast a position with thick borders. However, there is a need to look closer at where they

differ, in order to investigate into whether or not Williams can offer a way out of historicism that does not lead to relativism, or pragmatic historicism.

The difference is in regards to the essence of Christianity - to the identity of theology as a discipline different from science of religion. Considering what has been presented in this thesis, regarding the formation of the Christological doctrine, it is evident that Williams and Davaney share similar sentiments regarding the need to keep history open, and thus instructional. The statement that "religious communities or academic institutions, for example, come into being and function within the complex sets of social, political, and cultural relations that structure human existence" could have come from Williams, but it is Davaney whom I just quoted (2000:155). But would Williams follow Davaney when she says, while presenting Gordon Kaufman, that "*all* our notions of God are human constructions, and hence, like all other human creations, are open to question" (157) (italics mine)? I think not. They differ in the way doctrines are said to originate; to Williams there is still a revelation at heart of theology.

In his lecture given to the Diocese of Guildford he addresses some of the concerns touched upon above. His topic is *The finality of Christ in a pluralist world.* Here he starts by presenting how the classic conviction that what we meet in Christ is nothing less than the truth: the truth about God, and about man. This classical view is facing challenges today; challenges in regards to the moral, political and the philosophical implications of these views. Of these, it is the philosophical that is being addressed in this thesis: "Every truth is spoken in the terms of its own culture and its own times" (Williams 2010). So how then can there be any truth to talk of? Williams deals with this by first presenting a clarification about the truth claims of the New Testament:

> What the New Testament does *not* say is, 'unless you hold the following propositions to be true there is no life for you'. What it *does* say is, 'without a vital relationship with Jesus Christ who is the word of God made flesh, you will not become what you were made to be. You will not live into the fullness of your human destiny.' And it's *this* claim -- not so much about unique truth in a form of words but about unique relationship with Jesus -- which I want to explore a little with you. (Williams 2010)

It is not about having the right ideas, but about following him. The action of the triune God is to bring about a relationship, but the cultural wrapping on this expression – the words and

forms – are not what makes the difference (Williams 2010). This action - this promise of a relationship – is what enters and allows for change.

The truth about a relationship enters, which reveals something about God and man. In exemplary form: that which has entered as a nuisance, which I killed to evacuate from my life, this is my path to salvation. I was created to be son or daughter, but I cannot be this without the revelation of this relationship – by the word 'Father' entering my world' - which again allows me to realize myself. This relationship is the eternal relationship - the truth. The truth is not in the words, but in something that transcends the words, in what this relationship says about the triune God, and, by inference, says about man. This is the new creation. "The finality lies in the recognition that now there is something you cannot forget about God and humanity, and that you cannot correct as if it were simply an interesting theory about God and humanity" (Williams 2010). Holding this to be true does not, according to Williams, create difficulties in the communication Davaney advocates. Williams says that we do not communicate with the intention of changing our minds, but with the intent to learn something (2010). Dialogue is for learning, which one is very well capable of, even if the learning deepens, as well as broadens, ones convictions regarding the triune God. To Williams the uniqueness and finality of Christ is what makes it meaningful to talk about a 'Christian'.

To the question of whether or not Williams is a pragmatic historicist, the answer seems to be 'not quite.' In *Trinity and Pluralism* he presents the Christian as one who believes that 'history has shown God to be thus. What it *will* finally be is not something discovered in theory, but by encountering what is not the church' – while at the same time committing to the Trinitarian creed, and the process by which it came to be (D'Costa 1990:13f) He seems to take seriously the concerns of historicity, and there is room for much of what has been coined pragmatic historicism, however there is still a core there somewhere that is final. That core is founded on the Christ event, and the revelation it is said to contain. To Williams this is the relationship between God and man, and between Godself. There is a need for a hermeneutical key in order to make sense of the event – and this is what is missing with Davaney – the finality of Christ.

5.5 The uniqueness of Williams - Arianism as Other

It seems fitting to close this presentation on Williams by looking closer into how his presentation of Arius differs from that of other renowned scholars. Williams starts of his book on Arius by presenting how Arius and Arianism have been understood before him. Williams

starts off by briefly accounting for the 'demonizing' of Arius, and why this is such a precarious foundation to build an understanding of the Nicene crisis (Williams 2005a:2). To illustrate this he starts off by looking closer at the preceding century and a half. In succession he presents, briefly, Newman, Harnack, Gwatkin, and more. What is striking with this presentation is that the preceding treatments almost inevitably presents Arianism as 'the radically Other' – that which differ from their view. As Lloyd Patterson writes in his review of *Arius: heresy and tradition*, Williams notes how modern interpretations treat 'Arianism' by "projecting on them the views of what various writers regarded as the opposition to mainline Christianity, as they understood it in their own time" (Patterson 1989:202). And in the manner Williams' book began its trail on Arius, this thesis will end its trail.

Newman wrote an essay in 1833, *The Arians of the Fourth Century,* and up until that point, he claimed - with some merit - it had been customary to link Arianism with Neoplatonism, while he himself emphasised the Antiochene influence. "Arianism is the child of Antiochene Christianity, which […] is in thrall to Judaizing tendencies" (Williams 2005a:3). This meant, to Newman, according to Williams, a lower view of Christ and a rejection of allegory, while adhering to a more literal approach. An example of a more enlightened church would of course be the Alexandrian one. Arianism "is the result of a systematic refusal of true philosophy" (4). Williams presents Newman as one who uses the Arians as an example of what true religion is not, thus verifying his own dogmatic standpoint. He defends what the early Oxford movement thought of as more spiritual religion (5), while the 'judaizing tendencies' reflects the literal approach of evangelicalism of the day.

Harnack dealt with Arianism in volume III of his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte,* and Williams presents him as one who, like Newman, "sees 'Aristotelian Rationalism' as the background of Arius' system and as typical of the school of Lucian; Lucian himself is described as heir to the tradition of Paul of Samosata, and synthesizing Paul's teaching with that of Origen" (Williams 2005a:6). Harnack himself writes that:

> Arius says that there are two wisdoms, one which is the true one and at the same time exists in God; through this the Son arose and by participation in it he was simply named Word and Wisdom; for wisdom, he says, originated through wisdom according to the will of the wise God. Then he also says that there is another Word apart from the Son in God, and through participation therein the Son himself has been again named graciously Word and Son." This is the doctrine of Paul of Samos., [sic] taken over by Arius from Lucian. (2005:52)(footnote)

Harnack concludes that Arianism was a compromise between the Adoptian and the Logos Christology, and this proves that at the time in question it was impossible to not recognize "the personal pre-existence of Christ" (Harnack 2005:52). Williams presents Harnack as viewing Arius as one who emphasis on the humanity of Jesus; the Logos is a Neoplatonic figure who "advances in status as a result of the incarnation" (Williams 2005a:7). Logos does not participate in the divine life, and cannot bestow saving knowledge. Also here Arianism is represented as being an adversary to true spirituality, and would result in a Judaistic external obedience. Still, Athanasius is no hero himself. He saved the gospel from Arius, but the cost, according to Harnack, was too great – as Williams presents it (8).

> For Harnack, in fact, Arianism is the archetypal heresy in that it illustrates all the corruptions of Hellenized, Catholic Christianity without any of those features which have, historically, prevented Catholic Christianity from wholly losing sight of the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth – above all, the abiding commitment to the goal of *communion* with the divine life, however imperfectly and naturalistically this communion was understood. (Williams 2005a)

What was at stake in the crisis was the true spiritual gospel, versus the formalistic dead gospel.

The first to challenge this consensus was H. M. Gwatkin, who in his *Studies of Arianism* discredits the belief of a Jewish influence in Antioch, and goes with the pagan approach (9). Still, Arianism is "the result of irreverent philosophical speculation: it is 'almost as much a philosophy as a religion'" (Williams 2005a:9). God's transcendence is maintained by equating the Father with the isolated absolute of Middle Platonism, and the Son is made to be the demiurge (9). Arianism could not make sense of the relationship between creature and creator, and it could not support a notion of a triumphant evolutionary morality and philosophy (11). Gwatkin's agenda was the promotion of welfare and enlightenment, and Arius was presented as 'Other' to this agenda.

When Williams writes his book, the animosity towards Arius has cooled. In the seventies it was increasingly argued that Arius was a spiritually serious exegete, who might even have a soteriology (17). Is he a threat to the doctrine of grace, as Mönnich posed in1950 (18)? Is salvation the betterment of morals; is this why it appealed to the ascetics? The development of the view of Arius is also a development of 'Arianism-as-Other' (20). And as the pendulum continues its turn, and the God of Athanasius is presented as one who can experience lack, the question can be posed: 'did the Nicene fathers achieve not only more

than they knew but also more than they wanted' (22)? When Williams comes on the scene there is an acute awareness of how doctrines has a life their own - apart from those who wrote them. This leads back to what was written in chapter 2, about the methodology of Williams in dealing with Arius, where he presents Johannes Fabian and his book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* What is interesting here is that Arianism-as-Other no longer have only negative allocations. Other is now good.

Lloyd G. Patterson in his review of *Arius* also presents other aspects of Williams' uniqueness in his presentation of Arius apart from what has been touched upon above. For instance, Patterson draws attention to how Williams argues for the dismantlement of 'arianism' understood as a homogenous fraction, and rather perceives it as a post-Athanasius development (1989:103). Patterson himself believes Williams is correct in this, even if he expect this to be the subject of further discussion. Further, Williams' presentation of the Alexandrian climate in regards to bishops and presbyters and how this relates to authority is also new. Arius was not a Lucianist, but a learned teacher of scripture – a defender of traditional orthodoxy at that - which combined with the Constantine era made the conflict more deep-rooted that it would have been at the time or Origen (204). This, however, is not a startling conclusion, as Patterson sees it. What is Williams more unique contribution is found in his dealing with 'Arius and Philosophy". Williams' presentation of Arius as a critique of dyadic cosmology from Origen and Plato – Arius uniqueness – is also part of Williams' uniqueness. There was 'a restlessness', as Patterson calls it (205), with the *status quo* – a need for reinterpretation – which is what Williams builds upon in his postscript (2005a:235). There was a need to interpret the old, with new words – even extrabiblical words. The word *homoousion* serves as a sign that "scriptural teaching could not answer the theological questions of the fourth century" (Patterson 1989:206). This perspective from Williams is something Patterson sees as a future point of debate.

Williams was unique in that his presentation captured some of the growing concerns of the day in regards to the complexities of the situation – concerns that would continue to grow in the years to come (2005a:247). There is a plethora of factors influencing any event. One of his agendas in presenting the material was to show that there was a crisis brewing at the time in question. That Arius did not come from nowhere (266). Williams is here once again close to Davaney, and his historicist – perhaps even pragmatic historicist - understanding was, and is, part of the unique aspect he brought to bear on doctrinal theology. As he states in his comment to the second edition of Arius:

My 1987 text suggested that an *Ideologiekritik* of doctrinal history was a highly desirable prelude to any contemporary essay on the development of doctrinal language, and this is a commonplace of serious modern scholarship. […] My own specific suggestion about reading Arius' material in social/ecclesial context have had mixed reception, and my own ideological slant has not been neglected by reviewers! But the principle remains. One of the most fruitful areas, I believe, for future research will be the history of the Church history itself.

As with Davaney, there is with Williams an acute awareness of the need for the critique of any position, including ones own. As his dealings with Arius has shown, there is a case to be made for the acknowledgement of ideological influence on the Trinitarian doctrine, as well as with how this conflict came to be understood – and still is understood.

5.6 Conclusion

It was asked at the beginning of this thesis what kind of implications could be drawn from Williams view on doctrine, as it relates to current hermeneutical issues. To this question an answer can now be given. The implications are, for one, that doctrines must be looked at with historicist eyes. This means that there is no normative standpoint to cast judgement. History, and doctrine as a freeze frame of history, are valuable as they challenge us as who we are now. This challenge allows for growth – or a " greater fullness of Christian maturity," as quoted from Williams in chapter two. When passing judgement on history, it is imperative to be aware of ones own position, as one will often, while reading history-as-other, typecast the event. This is evident when investigating into how Arius has been presented in times gone by – and in how he is presented now. By being Other the event also reveal something about what is – the reflection of recognizing other as Other. Doctrine thus reveals some of what once was, and some of what is. The judgement on what is to come is thus part of a dialogue.

This perspective addresses some of the concerns of pragmatic historicism, but there is one significant difference. The passing of judgement, and the dialogue taking place, does so one a foundation. There is one underlying symbol that defines *this* as 'this, not that'. The identity forming symbol must have something to its essence, or it is a word devoid of content. Christian, in this respect, is a word based on one key event, the Christ event, and the revelation within that event – which, for Williams, is relationship. This reveals another major concern, which deserves greater attention than I here can give it, namely who is to define meaning to what is being revealed? I propose the answer must be in 'the radical different' – that which was not there before. There is a new word given, and this word alters everything by giving a new identity to God, and in consequence, to man. However, it is quite possible

that this word is not a closed word – it might be an everlasting word; a word that keeps unfolding as time moves on. And as a word it needs interpretation. The starting point for interpreting this new word is what is present in the Christ event. This is the foundation making it possible to understand what was not understandable. There is in the event a hermeneutical key.

Chapter 6: Putting it all together – The hermeneutical approach

6.1 Introduction

As this thesis is drawing to a close it is time to take a closer look at some possible consequences of what has been presented. It has not always been possible to comment on various issues, and perhaps propose areas of further study. Williams has been presented, and his uniqueness made note of. Now it is time to investigate whether or not there is a way of dealing with doctrine that can address all the concerns raised. This section will have a future oriented perspective, while also attempting to tie up any loose ends.

I will in this section give a recap of what has been presented up until now. From this I will also make some extensive comments. In addition to this I will present a hermeneutical approach to doctrine, and comment on how it meets concerns raised - that being the historical character of doctrine, or how, as with Williams, it needs to be grounded in an event. From this I will also present my own proposal of what might be a beneficial path in dealing with doctrines.

6.2 Recap

It might benefit the reader with a brief recap of some of the central notions presented in this thesis while I at the same time comment on them.

6.2.1 Chapter two

In chapter two an attempt was given to present Williams doctrinal position. This was done by looking closer at specific topics, like history, identity, intention, denominational influence, and doctrines. History was regarded as a teacher – an Other - entering, provoking. History is also written as a result of a crisis - a rupture in the constructed grid. This led to an understanding of identity as instrumental in the writing of history; it tried to remove the tension caused by the rupture. In addition to this, Williams' theological intention was also presented. He believes theology should be communicative, celebratory and critical. Theology needs to remain open for this to be the case. The challenges Williams presents are not solely of an Anglican concern - even if the Anglican Church has a tradition for being 'open'. In conclusion Williams doctrinal view was addressed more explicitly. Doctrines are symbols in need of interpretation. They are not equated with truth, but they contain truth – which has to be released in a continuing process. The symbols reflect how the writers attempted to make

sense of rupture – of history - based on their identity. Doctrines are identity statements that can guide the reader towards greater maturity; they reveal the truth said to be contained in the event by forcing the reader to position himself according to this foreign fragment being inserted into his life.

With Williams there is no normative time - no objective vantage point. The conflict and dialogue present in history, brought to attention by dealing with this history, moves history forward. By encountering this Other our contemporary position is revealed for what it is. By understanding how we became what we are, we understand better why we are what we are. This is what Williams means when he states that by dealing with the Arian controversy we become more aware of what we in our doctrinal 'present' owe, negatively and positively, to Arius (2005a:9), which is also mirrored by Davaney (152). Knowing more of the 'whys' enables a more knowledgeable judgement on what is. Orthodoxy is a work in the making – as both pragmatic historicism and Williams would have us believe. It is difficult to talk about absolutes, and the theologian can never know which doctrinal form that will succeed best in the future. As Williams says, "there is no absolute *locus standi* above the struggle; there is, ideally, a continuing conversation that must be exploratory and innovative even when it is also polemical. Orthodoxy continues to be *made*" (2005a:25). What is of utmost importance in doctrinal theology is dialogue.

History and identity can then said to be part of a circular loop: Identity is formed based on history, and history is written in order to make sense of identity. How is one to make sense of this apparent inconsistency? This circle between two factors, identity and history, sounds a lot like the hermeneutical circle, where the factors are preunderstanding and Other. Is identity then a result of encountering history as Other, thus forcing a redefinition of the self? But does this explain where the initial identity came from? I propose that there is, in a sense, a gift presented. Identity is not just developed, it originates as given. Something is handed to me, without me recognizing the gift as gift, and so freeing me from the obligation of returning the gift. I simply have something that I did not previously possess – and this possession entered my life by an event. Identity is thus given by encountering an event where the 'I' is experienced as something different than 'that'. History is then something happening to identity – which also reveals how there already is an identity before history happens. Identity is thus already present, but revealed by history – by limitation of the identity. *I experience myself as already present before I experience myself at all*; I am given to myself, but this given is hidden, so as to be a true gift. A group can experience difference – we used to be that,

but now we're this – which would imply a new identity taking place. If so identity is again the result of encountering history: we (I) used to be a sinner, but now we are (I am) saved. This would again lead back into the circle. My proposition was to incorporate the notion of gift into the circle. By this I am asking if there is not something happening before the encounter: a sense of connection to the newness arising in me before the encounter, making the event recognisable. If so, there is in the Christ event – before the Christ event – a sense of "this has relevance for me; I am connected to this somehow – the 'I' is intertwined with the 'we'." Motion is part of history, of formation, of identity, of transition from 'this' to 'that'. Still, before motion can take place, before the process, there is pre-presence, or pre-sense, of that which is forced to move.

There is more to identity than language. Identity is open, purposeful, formative and communal. Doctrines, as symbols of identity, are meant to be open, purposeful, formative and communal. Still, if symbols only reflect back on other symbols in infinite regression, then they are hard-pressed to contain any real meaning at all. However, if there is a given behind the language, behind the symbols, then there is a sense where the language, self-referring as it might be, revolves around a centre. The centre might not be communicable apart from symbols, but it is nonetheless there. This means that by engaging with the symbols, one can hope that the transformation it provokes, and the formative result, moves one closer to the essence of what is given.

6.2.2 Chapter three

In chapter 3 I analyzed how Williams presented Arius as a theological conservative. To do this he showed how socio-political and theological factors contributed to the ostracizing of Arius. There was not a 'heretic' versus 'Catholic' struggle, because there were no such distinct fractions. 'Arianism' is a term coined by a post-Nicene vantage point. What was at stake in the conflict was rather, among other issues, questions about authority. Add to this the need for peace in the newly united empire under Constantine, and one soon understands that this conflict was more complex then it has typically been presented as. Arius was a conservative Alexandrian, in that his theology attempted to deal with issues that had a long standing tradition in Alexandria. Arius attempted to deal with these issues in light of his overarching hermeneutical concern: the freedom and transcendence of God. This supports what has been stated above, regarding doctrine as the result of a process – a process trying to make sense of an event.

The conflict arose out of different theologians attempts to preserve key notions regarding the *economia* of God in light of *theologia:* how does what can be said (or not said) about God (his being) affect the understanding of what has happened through Christ (God's dealings with what is not God)? Arius emphasized God's immutability and his free will, while others emphasised more the sonship of the Logos, and his position as *theos*. Returning to Eusebius of Caesarea, and his opposition to the emanation metaphor – the Fathers free will must mean that the Son was created at a later point, prior to creation, although not *ex nihilo* – it is again more apparent why Arius was considered a rallying point against Alexander (Williams 2005a:173). "[Arius] theology is clearly the result of a very large number of theological views converging towards a crisis at the end of the third century" (171). It would be easy to do as Athanasius and throw all of these conflicting notions into one basket in an attempt to unify a heterogeneous group to one homogenous identity. However, what is at stake here is not individual theological preferences, but what can intelligibly be said about God, and how does this affect an understanding of the Christ event as a revelatory event: God chooses to reveal himself, but what is it he reveals?

The struggle for orthodoxy needs to be understood as an historical process. As such, it is susceptible to critical interpretation – not to discredit it, nor make judgements on it – in order for it to be relevant and able to mature those engaged. Arius had a specific agenda; as had Alexander. Arius wanted to keep the interpretation in the hands of the teachers, while Alexander wanted harmony within the church. This authority struggle mixed with a different emphasis on what hermeneutical key should be used to make sense of the revelatory event and thus played it's part in the formation of the Christological doctrine. Crisis, conflict, doctrine. What can be learned from this is how one overarching concern will affect all interpretation. There is a key hermeneutical notion behind the pontification; one identity defining concept giving meaning to a description of something as 'this, not that.'

6.2.3 Chapter four

Chapter 4 discussed how Arius could be considered a radical, and how this influenced theology, according to Williams. He interacts with traditional ideas, but he reaches some untraditional conclusions. Williams presents him as one who has left the world of Middle-Platonisism, and come closer to a Neoplatonic world. God is not knowable through creation, and all that can be said of him is that he is free. This is the core of Arius' heresy, and it leads to, for Williams, an unattainable position where the role of the Logos as *eikon* of god is effectively dismantled, and substituted with an arbitrary God.

The result of the Nicene crisis was theology. Williams presents the controversy as needing to take new steps – develop new words, even extrabiblical ones – in order to preserve what they saw as a key to their identity. The event provoked a new identity that had to be preserved. To Williams this identity is 'new creation, and it is based on an event.

A key point for this thesis is what Williams says about Arius: "Like any Christian theologian, Arius cannot but start from the fact of renewed or reconstructed experience of God, arising not from human endeavour, but from the event of Jesus Christ" (2005a:226). Arius was not trying to make theology fit philosophy, or vice versa; he was trying to make sense of the Christ event by employing all the resources he had at his disposal, which included philosophy. A philosophical framework did influence Arius' hermeneutics, but it only served as a foundation upon where Arius could build a case for his overarching concern. When making sense of the event he first analyzed the event within his pre-existing hermeneutical framework, and in so doing needed to make the event make sense considering the free will and immutability of God. The event created the dissonance, and Neoplatonism gave the tools to unify the conflicting notions.

Considering what Williams has presented, I suggest a larger scope of focus in dealing with doctrine. Arius and Alexander both tried to preserve one key notion. This key notion is what interacts with history, and in so doing is allowed to grow. With the church there appears to be many such notions, or seeds. There are differing ways of explaining the event – differing notions as to what is at stake; as to what the event is said to contain. The idea of a harmonious entity called the church - based on a clear distinct notion - is a heuristic. It is far more complex. Instead of a single notion that is self-evident, there are many – some of whom are even conflicting. Still, this diversity is 'diversity in unity' in that all the little seeds originate from the same event – thus making the event the mother of all the notions. Then instead of attempting to uncover the 'true' seed, the correct notion, doctrinal theology would be well served by looking at the larger picture - a picture where all the conflicting notions are trying to make sense of an event. This would welcome diversity, and invite dialogue. The event would remain open, and would be allowed to be interpreted inside of a community structure, which Williams advocates. Authority, in this case, would reside with that community – perhaps even with spirituality, and if so be closer to Arius than Alexander.

I would also like to point out that the problem Arius dealt with is not of an irrelevant nature for modern theology. How the Son and the Father can be same but different still

imposes interesting challenges on the theologian. If, as it has been proposed, identity is the result of facing the Other – by recognizing that I am 'this', not 'that' – then there is an acute awareness of separation present in the formation of identity. An individual will perceive himself to be just that, an individual, because he encounters that which he is not. When faced with an Other he realizes that this Other is closed off from him. He has no access to it. It is different because it is not known. If he had access to the Other, the Other would dissolve; it would be swallowed up in familiarity. The distinction between 'this' and 'that' is unfamiliarity; something is not known. One cannot understand the Other in its Otherness.

This has implications on the understanding of the trinity. If the Son is an Other to the Father – a distinct individual – then the Son will not be what the Father is. This jeopardizes the monotheistic fundament, and the freedom of God. And this is what Arius was attempting to save. It appears that the way out of this is to say that the Son is *not* an Other to the Father, which means the Father has complete access to the Son. If the Father has complete access, if there is not a recognition of something as closed off, then the Son is simply a part of the Father. Distinction is swallowed up in sameness. The reverse question would be whether or not the Father is an Other to the Son. If he is not, then there really is no Son to talk about, because the two words encompass the same 'area'. It appears the way out of this would be to say that the Father is an Other to the Son. The Son does not have complete access to the Father. If this proposition stands, then the Son is subordinate to the Father, and though he is *theos* he is not *ho theos*. The 'oneness' of the trinity would thus be of a hierarchical order, where 'Godness' flows down, not up. The Son is *homoousios* with the Father, and a distinct *hypostasis,* but the Father is not a *hypostasis* of the divine *ousia.* If he were then he would not be the first principle, but rather give witness to the first principle, which could continue *ad infinitum.* If this proposition holds up, then it would also have consequences into other doctrines – consequences that, unfortunately, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

6.2.4 Chapter five

Chapter 5 dealt with doctrinal criticism. Williams was presented alongside contemporary doctrinal concerns, where his views on doctrines as language, and his historicism concerns were evaluated. It was revealed that while parts of Williams' viewpoints could be ascribed to a postliberalist and a pragmatic historicist position, nonetheless he could not comfortably be placed in either category. What arose from this presentation was a confirmation of the need for taking these concerns seriously: there is no normative vantage point in evaluation of doctrine – and this recognition also presents the need to critically

evaluate ones own position. To do this dialogue is needed. Where Williams differed was in his concern for the finality of Christ. While Williams might have a Bultmanian approach to the death and resurrection of Christ, he still presents the event as one of revelatory significance: it reveals the 'new creation' as one of relationship. There is something now revealed about God that cannot be forgotten – it is this that serves as a foundation for an identity as Christian. Thus there is with Williams an acute sense of 'this', not 'that' in describing what is Christian, thus effectively distancing himself from relativism. There is a hermeneutical key.

Another important aspect presented by Williams is the need for *Ideologiekritik.* Arianism has been typecast as the Other to whatever position was considered orthodox by the writer. Williams emphatically states that orthodoxy continues to be made, and so a beneficial area of study would be the history of church history itself. How has history been presented, and within what ideological framework? This also speaks to a need for self-awareness in dealing with the material, and with history.

From what has been presented above, there is a need for a doctrinal theology that can meet all of these concerns. It needs to keep the narrative open, to allow for identity to develop. It also needs to come to terms with the historical aspect of the revelation, while at the same time not presenting the revelation as inaccessible. This view not only needs to critically investigate the history of doctrine, but also perform the same analysis on its own position. To do this it needs to allow for dialogue; a dialogue that is aimed at greater understanding and respect for one's tradition, and not a version where one leaves the old – the synthesis does not erase the thesis. There is an identity to consider; a 'this' not 'that' opposing a relativist approach. This identity, while being open and verbal, speaks of something hidden in the event, and perhaps something given before the event. There is a sense in which this event is relevant to 'me', and for which 'I' am allowed to be transformed. The process then commenced is one in which this 'I' is to be revealed. There is also the acknowledgement that this 'I' being developed is connected to what happened, which forces the question why it happened, seeing that it happened *to* me. The answer to why God choose to do it thusly – why death and resurrection – is acutely connected to who I am, and so, to quote Williams yet again:

> We begin with a sense of identity that is in some way fragile or questionable, and we embark on the enterprise of history to make it clearer and more secure. In the process, of course,

definitions may change a good deal, but the aim is to merge with some fuller sense of who we are. (2005b:23)

Answers to the fundamental questions are important because they say something about the questioner. The why this way, at this time and so forth needs to be dealt with. Doctrinal theology needs to consider all these aspects, so is there a system that can be helpful in this respect?

6.3 Hermeneutics of doctrine

Anthony Thiselton is by many seen as an authority on hermeneutics, and his book from 2007, *the Hermeneutics of Doctrine* deals with many of these concerns. In this book Thiselton investigates whether a more significant interaction between hermeneutics and doctrine can be formed. The reason for this attempt was based on how doctrines seemed to have become marginalized and detached from the life of the Christian community (xvi). Doctrines are theoretical phenomenons without real impact on the life of the believer. Thiselton, reflecting Rahner, believes it would be more beneficially viewed in terms like understanding, listening and truth. These are words Thiselton find echoed in Gadamer, speaking of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is about understanding, and it is formative by "keeping oneself open to *what is the other…*" (xvii). It also has a communal dimension, which further ties in with doctrines. This communal dimension is connected to identity: "doctrines does not rest on the consensus of the church", as Thiselton quote Pannenberg, though there is a "communality of knowledge that leads to the intersubjective identity of the subject matter" (xvii). Lindbeck's perspective of doctrines as "communal phenomenons that shapes the subjectives of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectives" is also emphasized (xviii). Thiselton thus connects hermeneutics with doctrine in terms of resonance, which he continues to elaborate upon.

In relation to this thesis three topics will be dealt with in regards to the hermeneutics of doctrine. These are related to *dialogue, truth* and *identity*. The reason for presenting these topics is that they are connected to concerns already addressed in this thesis: What methodological standpoint should one adhere to in the critical analysis of doctrine? Is there truth to be found in doctrine? And how is all of this connected to identity?

6.3.1 Dialogue

Thiselton's hermeneutical approach manages to take seriously the self-awareness Davaney calls for. The means by which it does this is also similar, namely dialogue. Thiselton

himself uses this ideal of dialogue in his own book, by conversing with different philosophers and theologians. Kenneth Archer points out this conversation in his review of *the Hermeneutics of Doctrine,* and states that "with this work [Thiselton] hopes to demonstrate how approaching doctrine through the resources of contemporary hermeneutics may provide means to rightly retrieve the importance of doctrine for the communal life of the church" (Archer 2009:151). There is in the hermeneutical approach to doctrine a strong sense of the need for conversation with different partners.

This dialogue, and this self-awareness, is part of the *two different kinds of horizons of understanding* Thiselton presents. The first of these is related to communication, while the other concerns truth – both are though part of a relationship and interact. As Thiselton describes it:

> The first kind of hermeneutical horizon concerns the formulation of initial *preunderstanding* (or a readiness to understand) on the part of those who seek to understand. It relates to the attempt to identity *points of engagement* between the interpreter and the subject matter. The second kind of hermeneutical horizon is different. This seeks to identify *what the "otherness" of the doctrinal subject matter demands* as a horizon within which its claims will be heard *without distortion* and without the interpreter's *imposing alien questions, concepts, and conceptual worlds upon it.* (2007:xx) (italics his)

Saving the second horizon for later, the first horizon – that of communication - can do well with further elaboration. The first horizon attempts to discover *preunderstanding* which makes it possible for people to have their already existing horizons find "*a point of overlap or engagement with that which has yet to be understood*" (311). Thiselton ties this in with the question of whether the message of the cross needed different words in communicating to the Hellenistic *mijeu* as compared to the Jewish-Palestinian (lordship rather than kingdom of God). While this hypothesis has been undermined, the topic is still relevant. Thiselton also uses the example of Paul, and if it is wrong to read him with a Lutheran process in mind (alienation from God leads to the cross). The point here is not about what is the 'correct' reading, but rather the fundamental notion behind the interpretation, which from a hermeneutical perspective is: "*someone else has done something for us that we are incapable of doing for ourselves*" (311 italics his). Apart from a valuable insight into the how the hermeneutical aspect makes the fundamental of the event relatable – we know what it means that someone does something for us we ourselves cannot do – the value is also in how

different horizons overlap – this was one regarding a theology of the cross – and thus how they can be discussed.

Archer writes on the first horizon that it is the current context, and that from this context critical questions arise. These questions are answered by approaching the other horizon, that of scripture and doctrine (2009:152).

> The theologian who utilizes 'hermeneutics' in the service of doctrine begins by asking current *'motivated questions that arise from life'* and with such pressing questions moves back to the horizon of Scripture, into the history of doctrinal development, and back to the current horizon in an attempt to meaningfully respond to the contemporary questions with a biblically sound Christian doctrine (Archer 2009:152)

This is the hermeneutical procedure, and it thus considers one's own position, as well as the truth said to be in the past. In this process – this dialogue – the Other is again employed for the formation of the individual. The two horizons of Thiselton thus address concerns of Davaney, with self-reflection, and the concerns of Williams, with history being influential in the formation of the individual. At the same time there is never a sense of completion – there is no normative standpoint, no ahistoric truth – while at the same time not ending up in relativism.

6.3.2 Truth

The second hermeneutical horizon is concerning the truth. Truth and hermeneutics are interconnected, as Archer points out: "hermeneutics is concerned about communication, historical distance, linguistic significance, and epistemological issues pertaining to truth" (2009:152). Thiselton states explicitly in the introduction to his book that "[he] strongly urge the importance of coherence as a criterion of truth" (2007:xx). This coherence approach to truth attempts to be pragmatic when balancing the need for coherence with the role of polyphony, dialectics and the system as open – it strives towards growth, not closure.

Thiselton when dealing with coherence draws on the works of Schleiermacher and Pannenberg, among other. When trying to resolve the dichotomy between doctrine ecclesiologically understood as "objective" truth, and the hermeneuts ideal of keeping the system open, he resorts to the contribution of Schleiermacher (2007:120). Schleiermacher argued for the separation of hermeneutics and theology, because to often in the past the theologian had used hermeneutics to substantiate his already existing notions on the subject. Hermeneutics needed its independence to effectively critique theology. At the same time there

is not complete understanding, as that would imply grasping "the whole". Thiselton further asks if the incompatibility between doctrine and hermeneutics is "the *provisionality* and *corrigibility* of judgements in hermeneutics (122 italics his). As he sees it, this would only be superficial disagreement, because in the protestant tradition there is an acute awareness of the fallibility of the church, and of man in general.

Thiselton moves from Schleiermacher into a discussion about the role of a "centre" in interpretation. The centre is where the individual parts are understood, by the whole they belong to. This again is from Schleiermacher, where, on one side, there is the need for historical interpretation to do justice to the historical time and place of the biblical authors. On the other side complete knowledge is dependent upon complete knowledge of the person, his language, and the choices available to him. "Complete knowledge always involves an apparent circle: that each part can be understood only out of the whole to which it belongs and vice versa" (124). This leads to a centre, which several scholars have attempted to identity in Paul: freedom from Jewish law, eschatology, salvation and so on. The search for a centre does not make everything else peripheral, but it receives relevance in every particularity (125).

Thiselton draws often on Pannenberg, perhaps because of the latter's emphasis on "*Truth as coherence",* which entails "the mutual agreement of all that is true" (125 italics his). Coherence serves as valid judgement of Christianity because it is a generally accepted criteria – a notion of truth that is "true" outside of the system of Christianity. This does not close the system for Pannenberg, It is provisionally awaiting the eschaton, which is the first point Thiselton makes. The second is "if truth is derived from the living God who acts in *ongoing history*, the truth of doctrine and truth of God is disclosed 'in a *contingent* manner' … Contingent events are the basis of historical experience. … The truth of God must prove itself anew in the future. … [even if] the truth of God embraces all other truth" (125 *sic*). Seeing as the truth is presented in historical form, it must be subjected to continued evaluation so that the truth in the event is not lost in the history.

Pannenberg further insists, as reported by Thiselton, on how knowledge is mediated by "revelation" (126). Truth is thus not the result of a mere consensus, even if the community plays its part. It is the belief in this truth that justifies the existence of Christian churches (126). The formational identity of the church is the revelation said to be found in the Christ event.

6.3.3 Identity

In regards to identity several of the topics mentioned above have relevance. Doctrine in it self is identity defining in how it creates a boundary. Archer comments on this, stating that doctrine, at best, serves this function – defining true and false beliefs about God (2009:151). He goes on to state that to Thiselton doctrine has a "dispositional function which forms and transforms Christian identity and practice because the personal confession of doctrine as truth claim involves much more than a simple cognitive affirmation" (151). By once again using the metaphor of language, and by referring to Wittgenstein, it is possible to propose a connection between words and identity, as Stephen Williams says it "words and concepts gain their meaning from their function in shaping a form of life" (Williams 2009:180). This is reminiscent of the other Williams, and how he described the need in the early Christian community for new words (chapter 2). Doctrine is identity forming, and this identity is connected with the truth and with the community. There is something, a revelation, which the community is trying to make sense of; this makes it possible to justify the existence of this community in the first place.

I would like to emphasize that the two horizons presented imply a subject – an object of identity present in the dialogue. This is also the case with Davaney, in which the critique of one's own position naturally reveals the presence of a 'one'. The dialogue taking place between the subject and its surroundings – past and present – says something about the subject who is trying to make sense of it all. Archer speaks of the community who enters into a relationship with the Other in order to receive greater understanding (2009:152), which of course reflects the two horizons above. I emphasize this because I believe this notion – this identity – is of fundamental value in how theology is to critically encounter doctrine.

6.4 The radical different

It may now have become apparent that I place a good deal of emphasis on identity in regards to doctrine. The reason for this, apart from concerns presented by the various theologians presented in this thesis, is what I perceive as a need for a distinct Christian identity. When dealing with issues of historicism and truth it is so easy to slip into a state of pragmatic agnosticism in terms of faith. This is not to say that these contemporary concerns are not merited, rather it is more a question of what it is they are preformed on. As with Davaney, and pragmatic historicism, it almost seems like the conclusions she draws are closer to a science of religion rather than a theology, *per se.* The same can be said for other theologians presented in this thesis, like Lindbeck. The reason I say this is what I perceive as

a lack of distinct identity in their theology. First of all, something happened. This is the hermeneutical starting point. As a result of this event, a new identity was developed: there was a "new creation". Christianity is irrevocably connected to this event to the point where if you remove the event, you also remove any outside reference to the word Christian – it is 'this' not 'that'. If Christian is simply a linguistic term, with a constructed content, flexible enough to incorporate any new perspective – if 'Christian' is what we define it to be – then one ignores the event, and the identity given.

The word 'Christian' is connected to an identity. This identity is connected to an event. What this event is said to contain is not obvious. This is where the hermeneutical approach can be helpful. As when Thiselton presents the debate regarding a "centre" in the theology of Paul, or as this thesis has presented a "centre" in the theology of Arius – and of Alexander - they all had one overarching concern, a 'whole', that influenced the individual elements, the 'parts'. This could be the freedom of God, the role of the Son as *eikon*, or a variety of other concerns. I propose that behind all of this there is a 'bigger' concern. Something happened, which they are all trying to make sense of. My suggestion is that what happened was something *radically different*.

The radical different is a hermeneutical key that makes room for various notions arising. If what happened was so different, then there was not a proper contextual framework present to make sense of it, which means that one did the best one could with what was available. This is of course not that different from what happens in any event, apart from one aspect: the *radical* different. The similarities are in the tools of understanding – using the framework present, be that cultural, philosophical, religious or more. The radicalness is in what this event claimed to represent: a revelation. Something came into the framework that was not there before. A new word not yet defined. What this word is, this Logos, is what is not stated. All we know is that the word, not of this world, came to this world – and that this act was of huge significance. It had to do with who God is and who man is; it had to do with identity. The clarity of this revelatory event can be discussed. It did happen in history, with all that it implies. One still needed to interpret the revelation according to what was already present, thus inevitably resulting in various notions, or fractions.

The radical different allows for the openness of the process. Seeing as the revelation had a place in time and space, and thus is limited, the truth it is said to contain needs to be unwrapped. One cannot escape space-time, so the unwrapping is never completed, so to

speak. There is only one revelation, limited to an event – to a man. At the same time it is not finished. It still seeks to reveal what is said to be in the event to man today, in his own language. Dialogue with the full array of community structures is of paramount importance in order to remain relevant - while at the same time not being absorbed into them.

The radical different serves as an identifying marker. It is a border helping keep 'this' *as* 'this', not 'that'. In encountering the complex array of societal structures, there is still an acute awareness of distinction between 'the radical different' and 'the different': is what is being encountered of 'radical' or 'societal' origin? In making this distinction, one is attempting to uncover more of the Christian identity's distinctiveness, rather than its sameness with other societal structures: 'this'' is *not* 'that'. This quest for distinctiveness is not by any means an attempt to create a dichotomy – nor is the ideal to draw distinct lines between 'this' and 'that'. The goal is to preserve a distinct identity.

The distinct identity developed does allow for other notions, while at the same time aiding in keeping perspective. The notion of something happening that was *radically different* gives understanding to why it is not easy to define precisely what is at the centre. This gives room for varying, even conflicting, notions to grow side by side. The perspective is kept by realizing that *'this' is not 'that'*. This might be helpful in dealing with, for instance, notions and understandings such as the social gospel, liberation theology or other ethically emphasizing notions. The question that can be asked is "does this notion come to terms with the radicalness of the event?" To simplify: "is ethics and social concern something that would not be possible without the Christ event taking place?" If the answer to these questions opens the position to the idea of there being more to the event, then this is *not* to say that it is not a Christian position. Far from it. It is just an acknowledgement that there is more to be revealed, and that one must resist closing the position. The overall motion of theology must be directed towards uncovering what this *radical difference* is, and this is done by dialogue.

The dialogue taking place does so on distinct premises. By the Christian identity being grounded in reality by an event, in practicality by a hermeneutical key, it will not dissolve into the Other. The Other serves a formational purpose. The 'Christian' encounter the Other, and from this encounter maturing occurs. While the primary sources for this is tradition, community, scripture and so forth, it is impossible not to interpret these sources in light of a broader spectre. The acknowledgement of this means that theology is free to interact with other sciences, like physics, philosophy, the humanities etc. – which it of course has done

from the start whether it was 'permitted' to or not. There is interaction between the Christian identity and the Other – but in respectable terms. The Other is not allowed to do violence to the identity by overpowering it.

The *radical different* is a hermeneutical tool, and as such it leans on coherence to make judgements on truth. It is not a "truth key", although it does rest on the premise of there being truth to be found. From what has hopefully become apparent in this thesis, one will inevitably employ a hermeneutical key in dealing with the material, so what I am advocating here is a greater understanding of this in regards to defining a Christian identity. It might very well be that my suggestion does not hold up to closer analysis, but what I am above all aiming for, is the growing awareness for the need of this analysis. What is the primary hermeneutical tool that will allow for a distinct Christian identity to be revealed? With this I once again side with Williams, in that this needs to be a collective enterprise – an ecclesiological undertaking. I hope that by performing this analysis we shall come out of the experience with a fuller sense of who we are.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has attempted to discuss more freely some of the concerns presented by this thesis. I did this by first doing a recap of what has been presented, and then commenting on some of the issues presented. This lead to a need for a way of dealing with doctrine that could meet these concerns, and I then proceeded to present a hermeneutical approach as one that could be beneficial. In closing I presented my personal view of what I believe can be a beneficial approach to theology, and doctrine.

Chapter 7: In closing

7.1 Answers

In the introduction to this thesis a problem statement was presented, along with three sub questions aimed at helping to resolve the problem statement. At the end of this thesis it is only proper to give this questions their answers. I will do this by first answering the sub-question, and then use those answer to build the case for the answer to the problem statement.

The first sub question was: *What kind of hermeneutical platform does Williams build in his dealings with the material?* To this an answer can now be given. Williams build a hermeneutical platform where openness is of fundamental importance. In his dealings with the material he aims to show how what happened was not as simple – or as closed – as one might be tempted to think. He also places large emphasis on the need to view the formation of the Christological doctrine as the result of a process. By seeing it as a process, it is more evident that the process is not done. It is still taking place, with the intention of bringing the believer to greater maturity.

The second sub question was: *What does the material, as presented by Rowan Williams, say about the formation of doctrine?* The material Williams presents gives support for his hermeneutical platform. The Christological doctrine is the result of multiple factors of a historicist nature. There were socio-political, theological and philosophical factors that influenced both Arius, and his opponents. There was not a distinct 'catholic' versus 'heretic' fraction. The lines were far blurrier. According to the material the formation of doctrine is a complex affair, with a huge array of influencing factors – all of them of an historical nature.

The third sub question was: *What kind of implications can be drawn from this view on doctrine as it relates to current hermeneutical issues?* The implications from what has been presented shows that doctrines are historical entities, and as such liable to critique of an historicist nature. This has implications on how the truth claim of doctrines is to be met, and in how rigid doctrines are. The implications could almost lead to relativism, or at least to pragmatic historicism, if it had not been for the role of doctrines as symbols of identity. And it is this identity that gives content to doctrines: they are true in that they speak of an event that was true - a true event claiming to reveal truth. There is thus a presence of truth in doctrine –

not in the words, *per se*, but in that they guide towards a greater understanding of this truth by presenting itself as Other.

The problem statement for this thesis was: *In what way can Rowan Williams' dealings with the Arian controversy, and the subsequent formation of the Christological doctrine, give greater understanding to the process surrounding the formation of doctrine?* From the answers above it is evident that Williams dealings with the event gives greater understanding to how doctrine is formed, and in so doing what challenges doctrinal theology faces. This gives greater understanding for the role of doctrinal theology, and reveals the need to critically assess on what grounds doctrines are to be evaluated. As a consequence of this doctrinal theology serves a greater function then simply being an archaeological enterprise. It is responsible for presenting the event in a manner that give understanding to how it has been understood, while at the same time being relevant enough to still communicate. This communication, with the community and with the Other, is what makes doctrines still relevant, and still able to speak truly about God.

I also believe that this thesis suggest that behind every interpretation there is a hermeneutical key. Before doctrine develops, and before theology is written, there is an overarching concern that needs to be dealt with. This concern is the result of a crisis of identity. An event has taken place, introducing a foreign element into my life, which I need to make sense of. Williams describes the result as history. Speaking of Christian doctrine, the foreign element is the revelation said to be in the Christ event. This sparks the Christian history. With all of this in mind I believe a rewarding path for future research will be on just what hermeneutical key we are meant to be given in the revelation event. Perhaps the 'seed' (1John 3.9), the '*mysterion*' (Col 1.26f) and the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16.19) have something to do with a new mindset (Eph 4.23) – a new hermeneutical key? This is of course only hypothetical guesswork, but an interesting notion. In any case I believe this thesis ends on a high note: if doctrines are open, and theology is open, then one is tempted to believe it is this way by design. If so, this means that there are still more mysteries to unravel, and more treasures to be found.

7.2 Suggestion for future study

I presented a few suggestions in the previous chapter that could not be developed fully. They might not stand up to further analysis, but they might prove to present new valuable insight. The giveness of an identity could do well with further development. This is

also the case with the slightly irregular presentation of the divine trinity. I am not entirely confident in that the simple presentation of the dilemma did justice to the complexity of the situation. Also, my suggestion to use *the radical different* as a hermeneutical key has not been developed properly, and should perhaps not be presented until further work had been done. My intention for doing so was simply to throw my two cents in, and hopefully by that create a good conversation.

Furthermore, what I see as an interesting path for future study would be to look at how the message would look if the hermeneutical key behind the interpretation came from a contemporary framework. This was originally some of what this thesis hoped to do, and it was asked in chapter 1 if we can deduce a relevant Christological understanding by employing the intellectual constraints of the era, but due to the magnitude of the topic it was not possible to treat this fully. However, I still believe it would be interesting to ask the question: "What would the dogmatic consequences be if the event took place today?" The Christological doctrine was developed with a 4$^{\text{th}}$ century intellectual backdrop. What would have happened if it had a 21$^{\text{st}}$ century backdrop? What would happen if Christ was read against current cosmological concerns, or with quantum physics in mind? Would this affect the understanding of what happened in the event, and if so, what would it do to the Christian identity? These questions, and others of similar nature, will be left alone for now, but at some point doctrinal theology, with its ideal of being communicable, should deal with this. It might bring us closer to the *radical differentness* of the event.

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