The development of logical positivism into modern Anglo-American ("analytic") philosophy involved the recognition that for propositions to be meaningful it was necessary only that they should be confirmable or disconfirmable by experience; and that often they used words in analogical or metaphorical senses. This allowed the development of philosophy of religion within that tradition, claiming that propositions about God were also confirmable and used words in analogical and metaphorical senses. Some analytic philosophers have claimed that the proposition that there is a God can be properly basic (that is needs no argument in order for us justifiably to hold it), while others claimed that good arguments can be produced for the existence of God. It is within such a developed philosophy of religion, that Anglo-American philosophers have developed views about the meaning and justification of the doctrine of the Trinity.

I thought that it would be useful at the beginning of our conference to set in their context the papers which you will hear from Anglo-American participants on the doctrine of the Trinity. Over the past sixty years there have been two very different streams of "Western philosophy." The stream which we call "continental philosophy" is philosophy as it has been practised in France and Germany and many of the countries of continental Europe, including both pre-Revolutionary and Marxist Russia. It has roots in Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Kirkegaard. Very different though these philosophers are from each other, they have given rise to a kind of philosophy which has a certain common terminology and unity of approach to philosophical problems. Contemporary continental philosophers paint very vague and general pictures of the world. Their writings are more like literature than science. It was from the continental stream and especially, I guess, from the work of Heidegger and Nietzsche that the form of scepticism known as
post–modernism emerged. The vast majority of contemporary Western theologians, including Bultmann, Barth, Tillich, and Rahner, and almost all Anglo–American theologians have written under the influence of continental philosophy.

The kind of philosophy which is taught and written in English–speaking countries is called “Anglo–American” or “analytic” philosophy; and this is closer to science than to literature. It has its more remote roots in the British empiricists of the eighteenth century—Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Its more immediate source is the logical positivism of the physicists of the Vienna circle of the 1920s, which was widely disseminated in Britain through the publication in 1936 of A. J. Ayer’s *Language, Truth and Logic*, and developed in the U.S.A. through the writings of the logician W.V.O. Quine. These philosophers all held that “all knowledge comes from experience.” The Logical Positivists went further and affirmed the verification principle, according to which the only propositions which had meaning were those which could be verified or falsified; all others were meaningless rubbish.

At first they meant by this—”conclusively verified or falsified”; and since virtually nothing in ordinary life, or history, or the natural sciences which the positivists respected so highly can be verified or falsified conclusively—that is incorrigibly, that version of the principle soon seemed to them implausible. They soon recognised that physicists reason from what they can observe to big conclusions about what they cannot observe,—about what is happening on a scale too small or too big to be observed, or what will happen tomorrow or in two centuries time—which may be false, but which are probable given what they observe. And so the logical positivists began to affirm, more plausibly, that to be meaningful a proposition must be confirmable or unconfirmable by experience; there must be the possibility of some evidence making it somewhat more or less probable. However, it seemed to some of us that there was no reason to believe even the moderate version of the verification principle. We understand a sentence, and so the proposition which it expresses has a meaning if we understand the form of the sentence and the individual words which compose it. We understand the form and the words if we know how to confirm sentences of that form and sentences in which those words are used, even if we do not know how to show the sentence in question probable or improbable. We understand the sentence “Once upon a time, before the existence of humans, the Earth was covered by sea,” because we understand the separate words—”Earth,” “sea” etc., in virtue of knowing how to confirm other sentences in which these words are used, and because we understand the form of the sentence for the same reason.

And then it became evident to some of us that physicists do not always use words in their literal sense, but sometimes they use them in analogical or metaphorical senses. They tell us, for example, that photons, electrons and protons are both “waves” and “particles.” But in a literal sense that cannot be