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The concept of evangelism has long been a source of controversy in the larger denominations. Three essays in this issue deal with it. Jesse Hays Baird discusses evangelism in terms of conversion, decision, and repentance. Edmund W. Robb takes a look into the soul of Methodism and gives denominational leaders some points to ponder in anticipation of the quadrennial General Conference in Pittsburgh next April. L. David Cowie reviews Billy Graham's Los Angeles crusade.

Continuing discussion of the racial problem, William Henry Anderson, Jr., criticizes evangelicals for dragging their feet. Now, he says, the white churchman must get out and meet the Negro on the common ground of humanity.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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the laity itself. The clergy-laity squabble was not the invention of laymen: it was the brain-child of ivory-towered men discoursing before captive audiences. The laity neither thought of it, nor approved it when told about it.

Then the laymen, with that instinctive wisdom that has been theirs across the years, called, not for the ivory-towered ones or the executive trouble-shooters, but for their own pastors. That call jerked us back to reality.

HEEDING THE RIGHT VOICES

Too long did we listen to the wrong voices. Too long did we take generous advice from poorly informed sources. Now men of the Word are aroused, and who will blame them for the claim of urgency in their coming, or for the flame of impatience in their voices?

Watch them coming now. See them ready to give and give again, in Christ's name. Observe a divine love bursting through the muscles of men who have no life but love. Hear them raise up the challenges of brotherhood, and walk in its ways till felled. Hear them speak the truth in love, neither muting the truth nor sentimentalizing the love. Watch them strike out against the filth from the depths. See them grapple with whatever destroys the purity of homes. See them come not as buddies to be coddled or as boys to be bossed but as men to mediate the causes of eternity in the midst of time. Watch them at the head of companies striving toward the throne of grace, struggling to recapture reason's citadel, going knee-bent to Calvary's brow where they live. See them stand with little ones, the last refuge of hope against a hell that will pander their little souls for a dollar's gain. Hear them tell men bound under the quaking, fear-shrouded cities of earth about a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. See them, world, and mark them well. Their love for their own, and all Christ's own, knows no limits. Of course they fail, make errors, and falter—but still they come, heralds loved of God and men and sacred to both. No banners proclaim their coming and no placards boast their names, but in the chill of the night, when feet grate on the cold gravel, these men of the Word come with a warmth from God.

The debunking of the ministry of the Word fails, and the cultural kick backfires: the sophisticated theological esthetes have had their day. Now a goodly company of disciplined ministers rises in the land. Their heads are high, their minds are alert, and their hearts reach out to brethren. These men are talking back; they are contesting error's sway and disputing wrong's rule. They are not afraid to fail and are less concerned to succeed: they are bound only to be found serving in the name of the Son of Man.

They shall continue to come—borne, trained, and sustained by the people of God. A Saviour sends them, a people supports them, and a world needs them. They seek to be true though all else prove false. They come not alone—they come as Christ's own. □

Analytic Philosophy And Christianity

ALVIN PLANTINGA

One important aspect of twentieth-century philosophy is the rise of what has been variously called "analytic," "critical," or "linguistic" philosophy. As in most such cases, no exact date can be assigned to its beginnings. But modern analytic philosophy got its start, we may say, around the turn of the century when Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore began to rebel against the Hegelian idealism of their teachers. Not that they called what they were doing "analytic philosophy" or anything of the sort; these labels didn't gain currency until considerably later. But their approach to philosophy and their ways of handling philosophical problems already characterized analytic philosophy.

Perhaps because it began as a revolt against Hegelianism, analytic philosophy is widely regarded as a destructive, iconoclastic force; people often associate it with skepticism, and with religious skepticism as much as skepticism of Hegelian dialectics. Hence many Christian intellectuals darkly mistrust analytic philosophy, suspecting that it is either a danger to the faith

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or a trivial waste of time (see, for example, "An American Bathtub," by Calvin Seerveld, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, August 30, 1963). Now this attitude seems to me to embody a great mistake. In what follows I shall explain why I think so.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Almost everyone knows that such a thing as analytic philosophy exists, and that contemporary English and American philosophers typically are doing philosophy in a way recognizably different from that of their forebears of, say, fifty to seventy-five years ago. But most persons outside the ranks of professional philosophers don't really have much of an idea as to what analytic philosophy *is;* misconceptions about it run rife. Some people seem to believe, for example, that analytic philosophers occupy themselves exclusively with *language* —with words and sentences and what is and isn't good English—rather than with the traditional concerns of philosophy; and, these critics justifiably add, concern with such questions as what the difference is between the words "highly" and "very" is something of a comedown for the "queen of the sciences." Now while there may be *some* analytic philosophers of whose work this is a recognizable caricature, there are many more who talk about language as such infrequently if at all—G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell are prominent examples.

Other people seem to think that analytic philosophers pretty much confine themselves to *logic* or questions about logic. Now developments in logic have certainly played an important part in the development of contemporary analytic philosophy. But then logic has always been intimately related to philosophy; and most analytic philosophers have been interested in logic not for its own sake so much as for its use in dealing with extra-logical philosophical problems. And of course there are many analytic philosophers who don't seem to care much about logic (in any traditional sense) at all.

Still others apparently believe that however one is to describe analytic philosophy, it is certainly quite different from traditional philosophy, and, indeed, is explicitly hostile to it. Here again there is a grain of truth in this idea. Some analytic philosophers, particularly some years ago, thought of themselves as making a complete break with traditional philosophy. They believed that analytic philosophy represented a radical new departure, enabling us finally to settle most of the traditional questions of philosophy, not by answering them, but by showing that the questions themselves are really nonsensical, can't sensibly be asked. Chief among this group were perhaps the logical positivists; they held that most of the traditional problems of philosophy aren't problems at all, but simply the products of confusion. I'll say more about the positivists later; what's important here it to see that positivism is by no means to be identified with analytic philosophy. Indeed, it is not easy at present to find a philosopher who is willing to call himself a logical positivist. And there is now a great deal of interest and concern, among analytic philosophers, with the great traditional problems of philosophy—human freedom, the nature of knowledge, the existence of God, the mind-body problem, and the problem of universals, to name only a few.

Granted that these are misconceptions, then, what *is* analytic or critical philosophy? I do not know how to give anything like a completely adequate definition. But perhaps the following, from an eminent practitioner of analytic philosophy, is as good as any: "the analysis and definition of our fundamental concepts, and the clear statement and resolute criticism of our fundamental beliefs—I call critical philosophy" (C. D. Broad, *Scientific Thought,* p. 18). Analytic philosophy is, first of all, *philosophy;* and it differs from non-analytic philosophy, it seems to me, chiefly in the following ways. First, its investigations tend to be piecemeal, thorough, and detailed. Secondly, analytic philosophers pay a great deal of attention to argument and counter-argument; they are less likely to announce startling theses with no argument, or only a half-hearted argument, than their non-analytic counterparts. And finally, analytic philosophers (the better ones, at any rate) strive mightily for *clarity.* They try very hard to say exactly what they mean; and they try never to introduce new terminology without carefully explaining what they propose to mean by it. (One might think this a relatively modest goal, but in philosophy it is a great deal harder than it sounds.)

NOT A NOVEL EMPHASIS

It is apparent, I think, that analytic philosophy in this sense is really nothing new. Most of the great philosophers of the past were analytic philosophers to some degree or other. A great deal of Plato's work, for example, is surely of a piece with contemporary analytic philosophy—particularly his determined attempts to explicate such concepts as those of *justice, virtue, wisdom,* and the like. Much the same may be said about Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Occam are analytic philosophers *par excellence;* their work is markedly characterized by careful argumentation and determined attempts at clarity. Descartes, Berkeley, Leibniz, Spinoza to a lesser degree —all these exhibit to at least some extent the qualities I ascribed to analytic philosophers. And the work of Hume and Kant, of course, is thoroughly germane to contemporary analytic philosophy. In short, the foes of analytic philosophy and some of its most ardent proponents make the same mistake here: both vastly overestimate the extent to which analytic philosophy breaks with the tradition. To be sure, the work of almost any contemporary analytic philosopher and that of (say) Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, or Kierkegaard seem hardly to belong to the same discipline at all; but the same goes for the work of any of these and, for example, Occam or Leibniz. A great deal of contemporary analytic philosophy is profoundly traditional.

Now I said that it is a mistake for the Christian intel-

lectual to regard analytic philosophy with suspicious hostility. It is a mistake, first of all, because analytic philosophy can make an important contribution to Christian apologetics. The intellectual world of the twentieth century has been full of forces running flatly counter to the spirit of Christianity. Consider, for example, the logical positivists, who were not prepared to concede that religious beliefs were even false; they devoted a tremendous amount of ingenuity and effort to showing that such alleged statements as *God exists,* or *God was incarnate in Christ* are, appearances to the contrary, utterly *meaningless*—in much the same way in which "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre" is meaningless. They are, according to the positivist, mere strings of words which appear to mean something, but really don't; and accordingly, of course, they aren't either true or false, any more than "Bix, bax, bix" is. What the positivists did was this: they tried to state a criterion (roughly, verifiability by sense-experience) which any alleged statement must satisfy if it is not to be nonsensical. This criterion was called the *Verifiability Criterion*; and in their palmy days (the 1930s) the positivists wielded their new weapon with vigor and assurance bordering on arrogance. Metaphysical statements, theological propositions, ethical statements, religious beliefs — all were declared meaningless and worthy to be cast into outer darkness.

ONLY THE OBSERVABLE ACCEPTED

Now the positivists were stating and developing in detail an idea or trend of thought which has a long history and has a certain attraction to everyone. This is the thought that it really makes sense to talk about something only if that thing can be *perceived by the senses.* Talk about such alleged entities as ghosts, the embolism of the spiritualist, fairies, and so on is, according to this tough-minded view, mere meaningless verbiage. The paradigm of a sensible statement, on the other hand, is one like *the chair in the corner is brown* or *this piece of paper is round.* Statements such as these, that is, statements which ascribe an observable quality (roundness, being brown) to an observable thing (a chair, a piece of paper), the positivists called *observation statements.* Now the positivists never said, so far as I know, that only observation statements are meaningful. But one of the earliest statements of the Verifiability Criterion went like this:

> *VC_1 A statement is meaningful if (and only if) it is or entails an observation statement.*

Here the term "entails" is used in the following way: where *p* and *q* are propositions, p *entails* q means *it is impossible that* p *is true and* q *is false.* For example, the proposition *All men are mortal and Socrates is a man* entails the proposition *Socrates is mortal.* And the proposition *there are three crows in that tree* entails the proposition *there is at least one crow in that tree.*

According to VC_1, then, all meaningful propositions entail observation statements. Critics were quick to point out, however, that mathematical and logical propositions do not entail observation statements; *seven plus five is twelve,* for example, does not entail any observation statement at all. And hence the positivist, if he wished to accept VC_1, would have to conclude that mathematical propositions are all meaningless. Since this was a conclusion they found unpalatable, the positivists restated VC_1 as follows:

> *VC_2 A proposition is meaningful if and only if either it entails an observation statement or it is a tautology.*

(A tautology is a mathematical statement or a truth of logic such as *if Socrates is mortal, something is mortal.*) But this wouldn't do the trick either; for there were still many propositions which the positivist took to be meaningful and which, on VC_2, turned out meaningless. Here is an example: *Anything which is a crow is black.* This proposition isn't a tautology and doesn't entail any observation statements. Indeed, it doesn't even entail that there are any crows. It says only that anything you care to mention is such that *if* it is a crow (and perhaps nothing is), then it's black. And since the positivists gave this interpretation to all universal propositions (i.e., they thought that propositions of the form *all* x *are* y really say *anything which is an* x *is a* y), they were forced to conclude that either VC_2 was mistaken or else all universal propositions are meaningless. Finding the latter alternative unappealing, they restated VC_2 as follows:

> *VC_3 A proposition* p *is meaningful if and only if either (1)* p *is a tautology or (2) there is another proposition such that* p *and this other proposition together entail an observation statement which the other proposition does not entail by itself* (A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic,* pp. 38, 39).

All crows are black, for example, doesn't entail any observation by itself, but *all crows are black* and *this is a crow* together entail the observation statement *this is black*; whereas *this is a crow* does not by itself entail *this is black.* Hence *all crows are black* meets the condition for meaningfulness laid down by VC_3.

AN OPPOSITE DEFECT

This attempt to state the Verifiability Criterion does not suffer from the deficiencies of its predecessors, all of which were too strong—i.e., they classified as meaningless many propositions which the positivists and everyone else clearly saw to be meaningful. Sadly enough for the positivist, however, VC_3 had the opposite defect; it was far too weak. For just any proposition you please is meaningful according to VC_3. Consider, for example, a peculiarly opaque utterance of the German existentialist philosopher Heidegger: "the not," he says, "nothings itself." This is surely about as good a candidate for meaninglessness as anything one could find; yet on VC_3 it is perfectly meaningful. For together with *if the not nothings itself, then the table in the corner is brown* it entails the observation statement *the*

table in the corner is brown. And it is easy to see that following this pattern just any proposition you pick can be shown to be meaningful, on VC_3. So VC_3 wouldn't do for the positivists, either. There were further attempts to state the Verifiability Criterion, but all of them met with the same fate: they all turned out to be either too strong, like VC_1 and VC_2, or too weak, like VC_3 (cf. Carl G. Hempel, "Problems and Changes in the Empiricist Criterion of Meaning" in *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language,* ed. by Leonard Linsky).

TWO LINES OF ATTACK

Philosophers also began to ask about the status of the Verifiability Principle itself. Suppose it could be stated in a way which satisfied the positivist: why should anyone accept it? Why shouldn't the theist retort as follows: "Your criterion is obviously mistaken; for many theological statements are not empirically verifiable; but theological statements are meaningful; hence it is false that all and only verifiable statements are meaningful"? What could the positivist reply? What sort of argument could he bring forward to show the theologian that he ought to accept the Verifiability Criterion and stop proclaiming these meaningless theological pseudo-statements? About all the positivist could say here would be that his criterion does fit scientific and common-sense statements and doesn't fit theological statements. And to this the theologian could agree with equanimity; there are, no doubt, many properties which distinguish scientific and common-sense statements from theological statements. But of course that does not suffice to show that theological statements are meaningless or logically out of order or anything of the sort. Indeed, it can be shown that there can be no relevant defense of the Verifiability Criterion as a criterion of significance.

The Verifiability Criterion, then, has been subjected to these two lines of attack. Its critics have shown first that every statement of the criterion proposed by the positivists is either so strong that it eliminates many statements the positivists themselves wished to accept as meaningful (e.g., mathematical statements, universal propositions) or so weak that just any statement turns out to be meaningful, in which case metaphysics and theology aren't eliminated at all. And secondly it was argued that there appears to be no reason to *accept* the Verifiability Criterion. As a result of these two lines of criticism, it is today exceedingly difficult to find a philosopher who is willing, in public at any rate, to express allegiance to logical positivism. But the point I want to call attention to is this: those philosophers who formulated and drove home the criticisms of the Verifiability Criterion were doing analytic philosophy; in fact the sort of activity in which they were engaged is a paradigmatic case of analytic philosophy.

Now of course some theologians were also concerned with the Verifiability Criterion. But for the most part their attempts to deal with it were not, I am sorry to say, of a sort calculated to win respect and assent of an impartial observer. Typically, they were inclined to say such things as that perhaps religious statements are nonsense, all right, but then after all we are to be fools for Christ's sake. Or they said that the beliefs of Christianity were nonsense for the unregenerate, but the believer was enabled to understand them by an infusion of divine grace. Or, finally, they claimed that philosophy and reason generally have nothing at all to do with the case; that religion is a matter of the heart. Now each of these replies may possibly have a kernel of truth in it; yet how decisive and satisfying the philosophical answers seem by comparison! The philosophical answer meets the positivist on his own ground and defeats him there; this, if it is possible, is surely the right thing to do.

It is evident from the above, I take it, that analytic philosophy as such (as opposed to certain varieties of it) is in no way hostile to religion or theology. On the contrary, it can be a valuable apologetic tool, as the case of positivism shows. Contemporary thought, both inside and outside of academic philosophy, contains much that is hostile to Christianity. The Christian intellectual community must make good use of the powerful techniques of analytic philosophy in defending its beliefs.

POSITIVE VALUES

I said at the outset that I thought suspicion and distrust toward analytic philosophy was a great mistake on the part of those Christian theologians and intellectuals who took up such an attitude. One of my reasons for so thinking has now become apparent: analytic philosophy has a crucially important role to play in Christian apologetics. But secondly, analytic philosophy is of value to the Christian community in that it promotes clear, penetrating, and careful thinking on matters of importance, hence providing a means for a deeper understanding of the faith. We say, for example, that God is omnipotent. What, exactly, do we mean when we say this? That God can do anything at all? But we don't mean to assert that God can, for example, create a square circle or perform any other contradictory action. That he can perform any logically possible or consistent action? *Raising one's arm* is a possible action; but we don't mean to imply that God can raise his arm, for since he is a spirit, he has no arm to raise. Again, *making a table which is not made by God* is a logically possible action. God certainly can't perform that action, however, for the proposition that he has performed it is self-contradictory. What then *do* we mean when we say that God is omnipotent? or that he is omniscient? or that he is the Necessary or ultimately real Being? In responsibly answering questions of this sort, the discipline, logical competence, and habits of clear and accurate thought fostered by the study of analytic philosophy are required.

For these reasons, then, I believe that analytic philosophy has a most important contribution to make to the intellectual life of the Christian community: it is useful as an apologetic tool and it can deepen our understanding of our faith. □