

*[From the Gordon-Conwell Lectures on Apologetics, 1981.]*

## Language, Truth, and Revelation, Part 1

Gordon H. Clark

This morning I want to turn to language, language and theology. The first half of this book has to do with the Logical Positivists and their view of language. There won't be any time to go over that, that's too bad. Language philosophy began with vigor with Bertrand Russell, not that there hadn't been any at all before. Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* investigated language and Jean-Jacques Rousseau tried to and found it impossible. There were some writers in the nineteenth century, and I'll mention one in particular who operated in New England with devastating effect on conservative Christianity. But mainly, language theorists are in the twentieth century and most of the time will be spent on them.

The first one will be Wilbur Marshall Urban, on page 85 of the book, and I hope you can understand what is written. I think it's rather easy. And, as I read you will notice somewhere on page 2 of the chapter, that would be somewhere page 86, 87, I recommend that you read his volume on language and reality. It is a very interesting book. It's only 750 pages, so you ought to be able to do that by dinner time this evening. You will enjoy it to no end. I'm not so sure you will enjoy my account of it, but don't let my account of it prevent you from reading it. And, he has wonderful theories of poetry and things like this and...

This very interesting author judiciously begins with the basic Empiricism of John Locke. And, you will find out as I go on a little bit, he is one of the first men who made a major attack against the Logical Positivists. That's the point I want to make. And we'll see about it. Come in, come in. This very interesting author judiciously begins with the basic Empiricism of John Locke. Locke had been surprised to find that he could not complete his essays concerning human understanding without investigating the relationship between thought and words. Berkley learned from Locke and concluded that all, or most, I think he means 'about all', confusions in philosophy resulted from the use of words apart from the ideas that they symbolised, or should symbolise. "Draw the curtain of words to behold the fairest tree of knowledge." Bishop Berkley could use the English language very well. That's a very nice phrase, but if you read the whole paragraph the aesthetic response should be greater. Urban states the problem very clearly, this

is it. "If all words originate in sense experience, then when they are carried over into the non-physical, the problem of their valid reference to non-sensible ideas is immediately raised." Or further. "The naturalistic and ultimately behaviouristic view of language, which has developed the necessity from Darwinian premises, has brought with it a scepticism of the word, a distrust of language, more fundamental than any hitherto experienced. The naturalisation of language," by naturalisation he means understanding it in the philosophy of naturalism, "the naturalisation of language makes of it, in the last analysis, merely a method of adaptation to, and control of, environment and denies to it *ab initio* all fitness for apprehending and expressing anything but the physical." Or more pointedly; Can advanced mathematics be expressed in words? Or; Is there a gap between the word and the world? If medieval nominalism denied universals, the new nominalism denies individuals. Which is not a verbatim quotation but that is approximately what he says.

Then, Urban asks the questions he intends to answer, and these four questions are repeated on the last page of the book, with answers that are tied into the argument. Urban ask the questions he intends to answer first. How is language a bearer of meaning? Incidentally it was this question that wrecked Stoicism in antiquity. They were Materialists, they were not Atomists, but they were Materialists. And yet, they had to acknowledge that words symbolised thoughts, and they were forced to modify and implicitly reject their original Materialism in order to accommodate a view of language. I don't suppose that any of you will look it up, but Bréhier, Émile Bréhier, wrote a very interesting monograph on *La theorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoicisme* and that's The Theory of Incorporeals. They had to have something incorporeal even though they began as Corporealists. A very interesting development a long time ago. The question they were faced with, How is language a bearer of meaning? How is communication possible? Third, What is the relation of logic to language? Fourth, How can language refer to things? There are the four questions that Urban takes on.

This monograph, that is the book I am reading from, this monograph has no intention of summarising his 750 page answers. A few of his suggestive ideas are all that can be included here. Isn't it too bad that this isn't a two semester course lasting from August to the following July, meeting five times a week, for three hours a day? Now we could cover a little bit in that time. Urban's material may be roughly divided into two parts. There are his refutations, not only of Logical Positivism but of John Dewey also and a few others, and, second, there are his own constructive efforts. Some of the former is almost essential to an understanding of the latter. John Dewey held that language changed brute animals into thinking and knowing animals by

creating the realm of meaning. Urban asks, Was there not first a realm of meaning for the expression of which language was created? If language created meanings, then obviously things could have no meaning prior to language. Urban is willing to acknowledge that some meanings are created by language, but he's especially concerned to show that there must be pre-linguistic meaning. One example of this is the fact that a wolf will refuse to eat a piece of meat in which poison has been hidden. In some sense, the wolf senses a meaning. The bait means death. For the animal, however, the meaning is not detachable from the sensory thing. While for man, on the other hand, it is.

Although human beings also sense these animal meanings, for example, when we begin to chew a bad nut and spit it out, these are for us extrinsic meanings also. John Dewey may say, as he does say, the clouds mean rain; but, they do not mean rain in the same way that a bad taste causes us to spit it out. The clouds are a sign on a different physical event. If the clouds meant rain, in the animal sense, they would mean the act of seeking shelter as the bad nut starts us spitting. But, if the clouds really mean rain, there must be a certain individuation of both the sign and the thing indicated which is not present in animal meaning. When the clouds mean rain, they do not necessarily mean seeking shelter. We may already be indoors looking at meteorological instruments. Meanings, as a cue or stimulus to action, and meaning as a relation to a sign and the thing signified, are two different meanings of meaning. Or in other words, the behaviourist theory that a thing causes a reaction fails to distinguish mechanical habits from interpretations of signs. If the sign is merely causal, as an event in chemistry would do something else, if the sign is merely causal there is no interpretation. Urban wants to insist on this point. Russell had said that meaning is an observable property of observable entities. Others of the same opinion say meaning is directly perceptible like colour and sound. It is an object of direct perception. Though he, Urban, though he acknowledges a sense in which this is true, Urban takes it as confusing. Russell's theory assumes things are given, but if only sensations are given, it is meaning that transforms sense data into things. Things are ideal constructions. Meaning is not something that is perceived. It is understood.

When, however, Urban turns from criticising Russell and the Positivists, and suggests something constructive, one must be cautious. He wants sounds to become words bearing meaning by their similarity to the things they designate. The word buzz is an imitation of the sound it signifies. Or, the inherent meaning of the sound ache turns it into a word. Such onomatopoeic are the first words of a language. Now, while the double z in the word buzz may sound like the noise of sawing, what about the letter b? Why should it not have been fuzz or any

other first letter of the alphabet? Then further, it is hard to see the similarity between the sound ache and a pain. Later, when he asserts that *ohato*, a word in some primitive language, sounds like and is a symbol of a stream, and that *ohato-oo*, for the same reason, means ocean, it is hard to follow him.

There are, of course, onomatopoeic words. And there are also metaphors. Urban mentions the transference of the word *kid*, a young goat, to a human child. In fact he says that metaphor is the primary law of speech construction. Does this not seem somewhat of an exaggeration? The introduction of the word *its* into the English language is hardly the result of metaphor. Do you realise that the King James Version of the Bible doesn't have the word *its* in it anywhere from beginning to end? The word *its* hadn't been invented when the King James Bible was translated. It came into the English language later. But, certainly it didn't come in as a metaphor of anything. Nor can the declining use of cases in Greek as it changed to Koine, with the increasing use of prepositions, that can't be explained either. I think it is that New Testament lexicon by what's-his-name, Arndt-Gingrich, has a list of changes between Classical Greek and Koine Greek. And the book is a big book, and there are several pages both of words that do not appear in Classical Greek or have changed their meaning, and also to information on how prepositions have taken the place of case endings in Classical Greek. Koine Greek is noticeably different from Classical Greek and this is a development in language. But, I don't think it is based on any extension of metaphors. Nor the virtual extinction of the optative mood. Now, I don't know how many times the optative mood occurs in the New Testament, but it's relatively rare. It occurs two or three times in maybe Ephesians and Colossians, and incidentally the form of the optative in Koine is different from the form you learn when you do Classical Greek, it's not the same form but it is an optative. But, the optative is very rare in the New Testament. And, that can't be explained by the method that Urban is doing. However, in spite of those things, that I consider flaws in Urban's linguistic theory, Urban's opposition to Behaviourism is well based. And, here comes a quotation that is directed against Logical Positivism:

"In the words of C.S. Lewis, speech is only that part of behaviour which is most significant of meanings and most useful for communication (He is describing Logical Positivism). The inability of the behaviouristic theory to explain even animal meaning, if in the concept of meaning is included the notion of understanding or interpretation of signs, would inevitably bring with it the conclusion that *a priori* it is unable to explain linguistic meaning. The causal conception of meaning (let me indicate again what is meant by the causal conception of meaning, it is a

chemical affair you know, if you drop sodium into a pan of water it explodes and catches fire and so on. Is that sodium or what, is that right? I make mistakes sometimes, well that is ordinarily explains as a causality, that somehow or other the water sets fire to the sodium, the behaviouristic theory is that the pronunciation of the word produces a reaction just as you put to elements together, two chemicals together, they produce a reaction). The causal conception of meaning in reductive behaviourism equates both the meaning of the thing and the meaning of the word with our way of reacting. All meaning is sufficiently accounted for by causal relations. The taste of a caterpillar, or the sound of a bell, are, to be sure, caused by the stimuli. But, unless the notion of understanding or interpretation a sign, a sign being left out of the notion of meaning, the possibility of Behaviourism vanishes. When we come to linguistic meaning it is precisely understanding, that is the *sine qua non*, of such meaning. The sound does not become a linguistic fact at all until it is detached from its purely causal context. And this detachment and mobility are not functions of the physical environment (if you think that quotation is a little meager, get Urban's book and read pages 129 to 131)."

Then Urban strengthens his attack on Behaviourism by a discussion on intention. All this may be, and it is, may be a valuable refutation of Behaviourism. But, Urban's view that words represent, rather than are symbols for things, has its own difficulties. If you want to work out a theory of language, you will have to choose between saying words represent things or words are symbols of things. They're two different theories. Previously mentioned was buzz and ohato. He will, that is Urban, will not have words to be arbitrary symbols. The symbol is imitative and conjures up the picture of the thing itself. Well, you know what I say about pictures of things. Some of you have pictures. Therefore, picturesque language is more adequate than conceptual language. For example, theory is grey but life is green. That is a quotation from... the famous German Romanticist, Goethe. Theory is grey but life is green would be less adequately expressed in conceptual terms. That is Urban's position. Quite the contrary, so it seems to me. Such metaphors have to be puzzled out and put in literal language before their vagueness is dissipated. They make for good poetry, but not for good understanding. Ahh you can hardly understand poetry.

Let me see if I can quote some. There was a poet by the name of Keats, he was a miserable, stupid ass. He said... oh dear oh dear... it will come to me sometime <response from audience> No that's a literal statement... Why I had it on my tongue just a minute ago. I am so forgetful... you know, truth is beauty and beauty is truth, that is all we know and all we need to

know. Now, isn't that stupid? Don't read Keats, even though I disagree with Urban, read Urban. I disagree with him, but even in defending Keats he makes more sense than Keats does. Of course there is good poetry; Miniver Cheevy child of scorn, cursed the day when he was born. That's good you know. Who wrote that? Well why did you laugh so funnily? Does anybody know where it comes from? I think he was an American poet, was he? And, he longed for the medieval grace of iron clothing. That is in Miniver Cheevy, Edwin Arlington Robinson. Oh, there are some, another good poet, his name is Guy Wetmore Carryl. He wrote a volume called *Fables for the Frivolous*. They're superb. But Keats, no no.

Poetry is not good for the understanding. When he says of analogical predication, "I am bringing to light some aspect which could not be determined or expressed except by such a transfer," he robs analogy of all meaning. Unless the analogy is based on a literal and univocal similarity, there could be no analogy at all. And I use this argument to pay my respects to Thomas Aquinas and Cornelius Van Til. Urban, indeed, on this very page states clearly enough of the view of those who oppose him; we abuse words when we use them metaphorically, the case of equivocal predication, analogical predication is ambiguous. He states very clearly the views he opposes. But, if some people agree with Urban, others think the view he states so well and rejects so sharply, is the literal, non-equivocal, truth. Similarly unacceptable is his dictum that "all words have originally, unquestionably a physical reference, and words for relations are primarily spatial in character." That's on page 185 and you better read the sentence 2 or 3 times again. "All words have originally, unquestionably a physical reference, and words for relations are primarily spatial in character." The term "originally" may push the question so far back into primitive society that no one could produce evidence for or against the thesis. But, if God gave Adam language for the purpose of worship, at least the word "God" did not have a physical reference. Nor is it evidence how the relationship "of", or "whys", or "more witty" could ever have been primarily spatial. Or for that matter, what spatial relationship can be found in "uncle" or "cousin?" It would seem that sometimes Urban makes very general assertions without sufficient justification.

Urban returns to these points many pages later. All words, he says, have a physical origin and a physical reference. After using such words, someone intuits a value and by metaphor applies the physical word to a new reference. We do not first, this is what Urban says, we do not first intuit an object and then express it. The expression is a constitutive part of the knowing. Language creates the world of cognitive meanings. This paragraph, on page 345, is mainly concerned with values; words such as generosity, nobility of character, and moral values

in general. Even the word morality, though he does not use this word as one of his examples, even the word morality must have had a physical origin which then creates a cognitive meaning. This sounds implausible and, indeed, self-contradictory. It is implausible because without the intuition of an object there would be no stimulus to expression. Why or how could anyone invent a word, other than a nonsense syllable, if he had nothing to express? The cognitive meaning must come first and a symbol second. As a science of electricity was being formulated in early modern times, the experimenters noticed certain relationships. To that date, no name had been given them, they had not been known before, so that there was nothing to give names to. But, when the intuitions occurred, the scientists took the names of three of their own number; Volta, Ampere, and Ohm, and assigned these names to the level of energy, the quantity of current, and the resistance. Only after a person has a thought, can he give it a name. Not only is Urban's theory thus implausible, but is also self-contradictory because he cannot avoid the difficulty that made it implausible. He has said: "All words are physical in origin. It is through metaphysical transfer that they acquire their new references. They become the vehicle of the intuition and description or expression of a new entities."

Here we have the intuition or knowledge first and the word comes second. But, a page and a half later Urban says: "Any intuition of reality without an element of description is pure myth. Knowing, in any significant sense of the word, is inseparable from language. Language creates [and it was he who italicized this word, that's not my italicizing] Language *creates* the world of cognitive meanings. Intuition is impossible without expression. The expression is, rather, a constitutive part of the intuition itself. One does not first possess an object in knowing and then express the nature of that object in terms of arbitrary and conventional signs, but the expression is a constituent part of the knowing itself."

Aside, now, from the fact, or if you wish the appearance, of contradiction between pages 145 and 147, aside from that fact, the latter, that is page 147, seems false. Urban uses crutchy??? and aesthetics for support. "The artist does not first intuit or present his object to himself and then find linguistic or other forms with which to express it." The present writer deems this to be false because one of his hobbies is oil painting, and he always selects his objects first and then tries to find a form by which to express it. But, no doubt, Urban would reply, "That is why you are not much of an artist." However, the present writer also writes, and if he does not have the object, the knowledge, the argument before he puts in words, any words he should write would be much worse than those now found in these publications. And, if Urban

had not thought before he wrote, I could not imagine how he could have completed so interesting a book.

Without doubt, Urban is indeed interesting and a great deal of what he says is excellent. He tries to alleviate his notion of spatial reference and pictorial representation by saying that poetry conveys a meaning not expressible in any logical picture. Poetry is pictorial, but not spatial. Now that wouldn't be true of Baudelaire, would it? Baudelaire's poetry isn't pictorial, is it? Baudelaire's poetry stinks. Yes he deals with smells. A map is a spatial picture but Turner's painting of Venice is not spatial. Now, it would seem that a spatial or pictorial theory needs considerable alleviation. But, Turner's painting, and all other landscapes as well, are surely spatial. They may alter the actual proportions of buildings or trees, they may disturb perspective, but surely they are spatial representations. What is better in Urban is his acknowledgment that symbolic representations, chemical formulas, and musical scores are not pictorial. Quite so. But, then why extend the term pictorial so far, rather than simply abandoning it as a theory of spatial language?

More acceptable, indeed highly commendable, are some of his remarks and refutations of nominalism. Scholastic nominalism, he asserts, is inconsistent because it still retains the reality of individuals. Neo-nominalism abolishes all substantives. All is flux and names distort reality. If universals are unreal, individuals are unreal too. For, the mere naming of a thing is a minimal universal. Neo-nominalism, therefore, has no things but only events. But, this makes nonsense of, first perceptual meanings, second value meanings, third descriptions, and fourth because it makes nonsense of metaphysics it makes nonsense of all empirical meanings. For, the former conditions the latter.

Now we're getting along pretty well, we got up to page 369. Don't you think you will finish the book before dinner tonight?

Further, that is unless you want to read Edwin Arlington Robinson. Further, in opposition to his opponents, Urban remarks that it is an assumption of evolutionary naturalism, not a necessity of logic, that language is purely practical; even if it had originally been such. It may have developed other uses since. But even at first, language was not purely practical. It was made for human communication and this is wider than mere practicality. The difficulty in Urban's extensive material seems to spring from the opposition between his basic empiricism and its unwanted implications. Meaning and verifiability are inseparable, he says, but observation is not the sole method of the verification. Mere sense data are not knowledge. No sentence is purely ostensive. Oh dear, read something about ostensive definitions. I hope you've heard of them



before, but maybe you haven't. Saint Augustine has a long section on ostensive definitions, and Bertrand Russell. Of course Augustine is opposed to ostensive definitions. Bertrand Russell favours ostensive definitions, he makes them basic, and that is one of the main flaws in his theory. Direct verification is a myth. It is one sentence that verifies another sentence. Sentences are needed to interpret the sense data. For example, an observation of mercury as verification involves a host of presuppositions. I'm referring to Einstein of course. The isolated observations cannot verify. Therefore, also, perceptual truth is only probable.

Sometime Urban is not only perceptive but witty as well. The several theories of truth, he says, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic cannot be sustained by their own criteria. Correspondence cannot be shown to correspond to truth, coherence coheres with nothing, and the pragmatic theory does not work. Therefore, the neo-positivists conclude that the meaning of truth is a meaningless question. For, if meaning is referenced to a sensory object, truth can have no meaning because it refers to no object. The truth of the criteria is truth only of interpretation.

Along with wit and insight, Urban's constructive theory contains much that is puzzling. It seems that originally language, with its onomatopoeic words, was always poetry, or at least aesthetic expression. Science came later. Even though he so extends the term poetry to include prose as well, its language is neither cognitive nor practical. Its power is the power to invoke images. The intellectualist fallacy views the aesthetic symbol as an imperfect substitute for philosophic or scientific knowledge. On the contrary, Urban asserts, the symbol contains an unexpressed reference which the abstract concept cannot express. The question is what is this so. Keats *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, though it's abstract, in the last two lines are utter nonsense, expresses something about a moment detached from the flux of time. It does not express it very well, and we can hardly know what Keats had in mind. Probably he was somewhat confused. But, had he thought clearly and expressed himself intelligibly, a reader, no matter how poetical the poem, could have put the meaning in clear conceptual prose. What cannot be expressed clearly is not meaningful.

The same is true of all art. Take the painting *Angelus*. In our civilization, the attitude of the two persons is recognized as the attitude of prayer. Presumably, because they are French peasants, the painting pictures Roman Catholic devotion. But, the painting does not convey this information. Present such pictures to people who know nothing about France or Roman Catholicism, for example a Tibetan Monk or a Japanese Shogun of last century, and they can only ask "what does it mean". Now I had a very poignant example of this. There was a group of

Japanese professors who were visiting universities in this country on a tour, and the whole group came to Indianapolis and stayed in the homes of various professors and we had a gentleman from Kyoto. He was professor of Irish poetry in the University of Kyoto, Japan; a very nice gentleman. Well, we were going through the theater there on the campus and in the lobby there is a tapestry, it is probably about 20 feet by 20 feet it's a rather gigantic affair, and there is a boat, a lake, and some fishermen are pulling in some fish, and the man who happened to be with me at the moment and looked at it and he says, "what is the story". Well, I told him the case of the miraculous draft of fishes, this is Christ who told the disciples to put their net down on the other side of the boat and bring in a whole net full of fish. Well you see, he could not get that from the painting. And, if you think you can get any Christian message from a painting, you are mistaken; you are imposing on it because you know the background already. Take a person who does not have a Christian background, they won't see anything particularly Christian in the Angelus or the miraculous draft of fishes or anything else. Painting can express a few things, but not too much. That requires a theory of art doesn't it? Well, I'm all in favor of a theory of art too. Painting does not convey the information; a Tibetan Monk wouldn't understand it.

The abstract or conceptual statement is far clearer than any picture can be. One of Urban's examples is Pascal's phrase, "man is a reed, but a thinking reed." The context there in Pascal is that a man is a rather fragile creature, he says the least thing can kill him, a drop of water can kill him if it gets in the wrong place. So he says man is a reed in nature, but a thinking reed. Urban continues to say that man is a reed is biologically grotesque. Yet, it is by precisely such deviations from the real that certain aspects of reality, otherwise inexpressible, are actually expressed. Now Pascal, the mathematical genius, could, when he wished, use metaphorical and poetic language. But, to say that his meaning is otherwise inexpressible, is not biologically but intellectually grotesque. One can say the man's bones are more easily cracked than granite, and a drop of water properly placed can kill him, yet neither the rock or the water can think, and thinking is infinitely superior to the mere physical existence. The aesthetic quality is here missing, but the thought is, nonetheless, more intelligibly expressed. And the thought is superior to the mere aesthetic enjoyment. Urban also quotes four lines from T.S. Elliott as "expressive, or revelatory, to an extraordinary degree." The first two lines of Elliott's poetry are intelligible, the third may be guessed at, but the fourth expresses, or reveals, nothing but the unintelligible confusion of T.S. Elliott's mind.

Repeating the idea, not otherwise expressible, four pages later, and after another ten pages of fairly clear expression of his ideas, Urban defends himself by saying:

“In that symbolic form, an aspect of reality is given which cannot be adequately expressed otherwise. It is not true that whatever is expressed symbolically can be better expressed literally. For there *is* [and the italics is Urban’s] no literal expression but only another kind of symbol.”

To which the intellectualist replies, the cat is black. Anyone who then says the cat is black is a poetical metaphor, does not deserve a literal denial.

For the purpose at hand, this monograph cites Urban as a defender of religious language against the Positivist’s assertion that religion is meaningless. The reader may now anticipate how he does so. Religion and poetry are closely related but not identical. The emotion of religion has the quality of the holy, which poetry does not necessarily have. Religious language is not only evocative, but invocative as well. Thus, religion has a personal god and is, therefore, dramatic and mythic. As the poet gets something of reality which the scientist has missed, so the religious person gets something the poet has missed. Religious language communicates something other language cannot. These several of Urban’s phrases are at best ambiguous. Of course the poet gets something the physicist *quo* physicist has missed, does not biological language grasp something chemistry has missed? The language of football gets and misses, what the language of international diplomacy misses and gets. The confusion here is between language as such, and the various subject matters of conversation. Of course chemistry is not botany, but language, the language of all of these is the same, the English language. Urban’s statement, therefore, is true and trivial. What he really means, as his wording in one place indicates, is that religion is emotional. Religion has no place for thinking. It is not intelligible. God can’t be known. Belief has no place. This is surely not trivial, it’s simply false. If it is not false, then Christianity is not a religion.

The religions that Urban can identify all speak the same language, he says, and are immediately friends. He’s not the only person who said that, that was in the first chapter of the three R book, wasn’t it? It was the fellow who shot our missionary enterprise to pieces, you know, what’s his name now? Hawking, yes. See I don’t have the word but I have the thought all right. If I didn’t have the thought I wouldn’t know that one word was the right word. The religions that Urban can identify all speak the same language and are immediately friends. But, Christ had religious enemies. He said, “no man cometh to the Father but by me.” Christ, of course, was not very religious. Well, maybe Jesus was religious once in a while, for, Holy Communion is a simple piece of symbolism to express a number of spiritual truths too great for ordinary language. The symbol expresses something too great for words. Page 586. Now, the present

writer, whose theology is known to a certain public, may not and does not claim to understand all the logical implications of the Lord's Supper. But, unless he had a literal understanding of some of its intellectual meaning, he would have no reason for going through the motions. In opposition to Sacramentarianism, where the magic works apart from the understanding, the Scripture says, "let a man examine himself." An intellectual task. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation unto himself not discerning the Lord's body. An intellectual task. Therefore, the Covenanters and the Calvinists will not celebrate the supper without a sermon to be understood. As Calvin said, "an implicit faith, is no faith at all."

More broadly, if Adam and Eve, on page 590, are merely mythological or metaphorical expressions of man's emotional alienation from an unknowable god, then Jesus is simply a character in Aesop's Fables to represent a fanciful union with that god. This implication, by itself, does not refute Urban's "religion", but it shows that it is not the Christian religion. The implication also suggests, in fact Urban's religious theory demands, that his religion be irrational. And that to me, of course, is repulsive. Though he himself has said that God is personal, this statement must also be mythological and has no intelligible meaning. Its concrete terms are not what religion really says. Quoting Brightman with approval, Urban's idea of God *symbolizes*, and again this is Urban's italicizing not mine, "the idea of god *symbolizes* a unity or harmony between existence and value." But, no doubt this impersonal harmony is itself also a literally untrue myth. Urban indeed tries to salvage religious language from the nonsense of Logical Positivism, but he empties it of all intelligible meaning, that the result is no better.