

**THE
CLAIMS OF
THE BIBLE**

Professor Dennis Bielfeldt, PhD
President of the Institute of Lutheran
Theology

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Think of How We Use Words

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask Utter Express Make Cheer Express Forgive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a Question • Utter a Command • Express Condolences • Make a Promise • Cheer Somebody Up • Express a Regret • Forgive Somebody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tell somebody you care ■ Make a joke ■ Lie to somebody ■ Speak metaphorically ■ Recite a poem ■ Threaten somebody ■ Make a claim
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Language is complex

Departments of linguistics work to clarify language's operations and structure

Logicians work to unpack the structure of language and its entailment relations

Teachers of language reflect upon how languages *translate*

Philosophers think about the ultimate nature of language

All are interested in the nature of statements

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Making Statements

Predicating Something of Something

Dogs are entities having properties and relations

- (1) 'The dog is black'
- (2) 'The dog runs'
- (3) 'The dog killed the rabbit'



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The Problem!



Sometimes we speak improperly, thinking that entities have properties and relations when they really don't



We speak similarly about something though we mean something quite different

- "She left in his sports car, but she returned home in a rage"
- But does she leave in the same type of thing she comes home in?
- Cars and rages are different, but she seemingly occupies both!

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Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

- Claimed that talk of God is not like talk of worldly things because:
- We cannot rightly hold that God is an entity (substance)
- We cannot rightly hold that God has properties and relations, particularly causal relations



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To Speak of God

- Takes us beyond the realm of all possible experience
- Such speaking is not like other speaking
- While we say rightly that changes in material objects *rightly* cause changes in other such objects, we cannot *rightly* say this of what lies beyond all experience

Saying "the dog causes the rabbit to die" is *proper*; it makes a truth claim that we can evaluate

Saying "God causes the universe to be" is *not proper*; it is not making a claim that can be evaluated

Causal connections link objects and events within the world; they cannot be used to link the totality of the world to something putatively lying outside it

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The Kantian Paradigm



- After Kant philosophers mostly agreed that God was not best thought of as an entity (substance) that can be causally relatable to other entities (substances)
- Theologians in Germany working in its universities mostly agreed
- God-talk is not like other talk stating the facts
- Maybe it expresses value?

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Neo-Kantians Distinguished Two Types of Judgments

Value Judgments

- "The symphony is beautiful."
- "The man is good."
- "Truth is higher than Experience."
- "God is Truth, Beauty and Goodness itself."

Factual Judgments

- "Entropy increases in closed systems."
- It is invalid to derive '-Q' from 'P' and 'If P, then Q.'
- All cultures have a word for 'truth.'
- "They believe that God is truth, beauty and goodness itself."

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God-Talk

The dominant theological tradition in Germany denied that one makes truth-claims when talking of God.

Such talk **expresses value**; it does not **claim truth**.

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God's Mighty Acts in History According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- The Bible seemingly speaks about God and His "mighty acts in history"
- However, since God cannot properly be said to *cause* natural events, the meaning of such language cannot be understood causally
- Causal talk about God is really *value talk*
- Scripture must be predominantly understood not as stating divine facts, but expressing rather how the dimension of the divine has value for us
- Resurrection talk is routinely regarded as value-talk

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Cultural Changes

I asked my students in 1987 these questions:

- If two people disagree about what is beautiful, must one be wrong?
- If two people disagree about what is good, must one be wrong?
- If two people disagree about what is true, must one be wrong?



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The Results

90% did not believe that if people disagreed on what was beautiful, one must be wrong: They thought that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

10% did not believe that if people disagreed on what was good, one must be wrong

All believed that if people disagreed on what was true, one must be wrong

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1995

95% agreed that nobody is wrong if disagreeing about beauty

60% thought that nobody is wrong when disagreeing about what is good

20% believed that nobody is wrong when disagreeing about what is true

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My Last Undergraduate Class

By 2010, 100% of the students thought that nobody is wrong when disagreeing about beauty

90% thought nobody is wrong when disagreeing about goodness

Over 50% thought that nobody is wrong when disagreeing about truth

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2025

Truth, Goodness and Beauty is now in the eye of the beholder
 Truth-talk is no longer in vogue
 Religious and Theological talk merely express what is meaningful to us

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But Consider I Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain and your faith is in vain.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died⁽⁴⁾ in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

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Truth Claims

- Paul understood the difference between the propositional content of a statement and the effect that that content might have
- Christianity spread because people thought the statements true
- They thought that "Jesus Christ rose from the dead," excludes certain ways that then world might have been
- They thought that salvation itself rested upon the particularity of the claim
- The statement is valuable only to the extent it is true

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The Institute of Lutheran Theology

Has from the beginning claimed that Lutheran Theology ultimately does not fit the Kantian paradigm

Lutheran theology makes definite truth-claims about God and God's relationship to the world

Lutheran theology is *realist* with regard to God, and God's relationship with us

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Truth

- Lutherans hold that God's grace is outside us
- We cannot control His grace
- We cannot justify ourselves before the law
- But God accepts me despite my sin
- The Otherness of the Divine grants Life Eternal through grace
- Lutherans should hold that truth too is outside us
- We cannot control truth
- We cannot move forward in the face of divine truth-conditions
- God's reality grants truth despite my best (or worst) intentions
- The otherness of the Divine grants life temporal, and his True Promises make possible a Real Future

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