**“The History & Philosophy of Fideism”**

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As a traditional, evidence-based apologist who is convinced of the necessity to utilize reasoning when proclaiming and defending the faith, it may seem a bit strange that I have a “healthy” fascination with fideism, which is that approach to apologetics characterized by an over-reliance upon faith, even at the expense of reasoning and evidences. Many classical, evidential, and cumulative case apologists may be inclined to quickly dismiss fideism as being an anti-intellectual appeal to religious experience, or nothing more than a “feel good” approach to both knowing God and sharing one’s beliefs with others. However, like the Berean Jews we must always be willing to examine the Scriptures in order to “test everything” (Acts 17:11). Fideism deserves the right to be investigated with an open mind, so that Christian believers may know the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to apologetics.

**A Brief Primer on Fideism**

The English term fideism is derived from the Latin term *fides*, which means “faith.” Therefore, we may accurately say that fideism is “faith-ism.” Of course, faith is good – most Christian believers are quick to refer to Christianity as being their “faith,” and even the most rationalistic of believers must admit that no one can know everything when it comes to God and the “big questions of life,” forcing us to rely upon faith in some matters which, in essence, makes all believers adhere to “faith-ism” to some degree or another.

Alvin Plantinga defines fideism as being an “exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth.”[[1]](#footnote-1) So not only is fideism an over-reliance upon faith, but it does so at the contempt of reason. In fact, many fideists declare that reason is the enemy of faith, seeking to destroy the purity of a mystical awe for God that may only be attained by an emotional “leap into faith.” However, not all fideists are created equal. Rather than referring to themselves as “anti-rational,” many fideists instead prefer to label themselves “anti-evidential” since their qualm is not with the ability to rationalize, but with an overemphasis on evidentialism as the primary means of religious epistemology.

The famous quote from the Early Church Father Tertullian, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” really summarizes the matter for those who believe by faith alone. Athens, the birthplace of Greek philosophy and the place where humanism was first rooted, represents human reasoning, while Jerusalem – that holy city which is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike – represents divine revelation. Tertullian was questioning the relationship between faith and reason, an issue which has lingered from his time to the present, pitting natural theologians at one extreme against pure fideists at the other end of the spectrum in a battle over the adequacy of reasoning in theological matters.

***Fideism versus Pre-Suppositional Apologetics***

Although many apologists are quick to argue otherwise, pre-suppositional apologetics does distinguish itself from fideism. Pre-suppositional apologetics maintains that all beliefs must begin with the proposition that God’s revelation in Scripture is [axiomatic](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Axiom), or taken for granted as being true; Scripture is the starting point for deducing all truth. In pre-suppositional apologetics there is no need to argue for God’s existence, as all people inherently believe in God – God has “hard-wired” us to believe in him.[[2]](#footnote-2) Perhaps this is what Solomon was alluding to when he penned the words, “He [God] has also set eternity in the human heart…”[[3]](#footnote-3)

In pre-suppositional apologetics truth cannot be directly determined by either logic or the scientific method, but rather only indirectly by [transcendental](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Transcendence_(philosophy)) argument.[[4]](#footnote-4) *Sola Scriptura* is the reigning idea behind pre-suppositional apologetics, whereas *Sola Fides* is the mantra of fideism. Some Christian believers may argue that there is no difference between “faith in Scripture” and “faith in faith itself,” but one must realize that we may have faith in Scripture because there are several lines of evidence for the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture, whereas faith in and of itself is a much more subjective concept.

***Why Fideism is Important to All Apologists***

Lita Cosner offers several reasons why many young people are prone to leaving their faith once they leave home, and at the top of the list: fideism and anti-intellectualism. Cosner comments at length about the impact that fideism, particularly the irrational or “anti-intellectual” form of fideism, can have on establishing a young person’s religious worldview:

Evangelicalism has unfortunately been characterized as anti-intellectual; an accusation which is too often true. This problem stems back to the “Enlightenment,” when many churches reacted to the materialism and anti-God philosophies coming out of the various branches of science by simply retreating from those areas altogether instead of combating them. Today the attitude lingers in some churches that science and advanced theological study are questionable at best and soul-destroying at worst. This attitude causes Christians to rebuff questions about their faith, often telling the questioner to “just have faith,” of course, meaning that the questioner is supposed to leave his brain at the church door. This gives the questioner the impression that there areno answers to his questions. But the sort of blind faith this attitude encourages is not enough for many college students who need a stronger foundation than just warm fuzzy feelings about Jesus if their faith is going to survive their college education.[[5]](#footnote-5)

It has become apparent that the “just believe” approach to grounding one’s faith is not working, as about two-thirds of Christian teenagers abandon their faith when they leave home.[[6]](#footnote-6) But then, why shouldn’t they? Many of these young people have never been exposed to evidence-based apologetics, and therefore they have never really examined their faith – and the unexamined faith is simply not worth having. Those teenagers who go on to college are likely to have at least one encounter with a religious skeptic – who often turns out to be one of their professors – and the widespread appeal to both scientific materialism and generic spirituality is often more than these young people can handle. Traditional apologetics is not just to be used in evangelistic encounters with non-believers, but is vitally important in helping to ground our young people in the core doctrines of the Christian faith.

Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, Jr. offer three reasons why every Christian apologist should familiarize himself or herself with this approach to apologetics.[[7]](#footnote-7) First, whether or not we view fideism as being anti-intellectual – and, therefore, anti-apologetic – nonetheless this approach to sharing the faith is becoming increasingly popular in evangelical circles, and that is a major reason why every apologist needs to understand fideism. Secondly, “fideists do offer reasoned arguments for Christian faith,”[[8]](#footnote-8) albeit those arguments are of a much different nature than those offered by classical, evidential, and cumulative case apologists. Finally, fideism, as with every form of apologetics, has something to offer, and apologists should be open-minded enough to not dismiss fideism out of hand.

**A Brief History of Fideism**

The only way to truly understand a philosophical or theological concept is to first examine the history behind the idea. As it turns out, fideism has a long and very interesting history. Although the term “fideism” formally entered into the world of philosophical-theological discussion in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the roots of this approach to religious epistemology and evangelism extend much further back in time. Richard Amesbury notes that the term has been applied retrospectively at least as far back as the second century A.D.[[9]](#footnote-9)

***Elements of Fideism in Early Church History***

Tertullian, who is often referred to as the earliest proponent of Christian fideism, was a lawyer who became a follower of Christ around the year A.D. 197.[[10]](#footnote-10) Unlike his apologetic predecessor Justin Martyr, who strongly favored the integration of Greco-Roman philosophy with Christian doctrine, Tertullian was convinced that these two realms of knowledge could not always be so easily fused together. Tertullian maintained that philosophy, if used incorrectly, could distort the true message of Christ – although that is a point which even Justin was careful to make. Nonetheless, Tertullian “himself utilized elements of Greek philosophy and logic that he believed to be compatible with Christian belief.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Therefore, the claim that Tertullian was a “pure” fideist is simply not true, although we may safely say that some of his core ideas did help to lay the foundation for fideistic thinking.

Amesbury calls into question the oft-repeated claim that fideism originated with Tertullian, as based upon his famous quote. “Contrary to popular belief, what Tertullian said is not *credo quia absurdum*, but *credible est quia ineptum est*.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Tertullian did not say, “I believe because it is absurd,” but rather he said, “It is credible, because it is ridiculous.” Tertullian was saying that what made Christianity so trustworthy for him is that it is not based upon reasoning, but rather is based upon a supernatural worldview which in many ways runs counter to reasoning. For Tertullian, as for countless millions since his time, the truth of Christian theism can only be explained by divine revelation, with reasoning contributing a limited role in the process of Christian “enlightenment.”

This approach to epistemology was articulated by Augustine as well – although it must be emphasized that reasoning played not a limited but rather a key role in Augustine’s faith. Augustine, the greatest theologian of the first millennium of the Church Age, always emphasized the ability of the human mind to engage in logic and reasoning, although Scripture was his ultimate guide in matters of faith. Steve Wilkens stresses Augustine’s conviction that Christianity is a well-reasoned faith, and not just a matter of the “heart” or emotions:

Augustine’s desire to demonstrate the logic of Christianity brings up the final thing of value I find in his biography. When certain falsehoods get repeated often enough, a lot of people start to believe them. One such falsehood I have heard often is that no one has ever been argued into faith. The fact is that Augustine was, in large part, brought to Christianity through the strength of rational arguments (and he is far from the only one). This is not to say that other important elements were not also present. Having a mother like Monica who prayed for her son for years does not hurt, and many Christians provided Augustine with good examples of the life of faith. But these alone were not enough. Augustine was the sort of person who would not send his heart to a place where his head could not also go. In order for him to commit his life to Christianity, certain intellectual questions had to be resolved. Fortunately for him (and for us) he encountered people of faith who were intellectually prepared to honestly and patiently answer some tough questions.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Augustine was intellectually-inclined by nature. He embraced Manichaeism[[14]](#footnote-14) at an early age, but eventually abandoned that belief system when it failed to adequately address key intellectual issues. After briefly considering the philosophy of skepticism, Augustine next embraced Neo-Platonism. Eventually, however, Neo-Platonism was also abandoned in favor of the sole source of truth: Christianity. Augustine was a respected scholar – a teacher of rhetoric – who on two occasions abandoned earlier belief systems before acknowledging the truth found only in Christ. For a respected scholar to twice admit that he was wrong about his beliefs is very honorable, and demonstrates Augustine’s commitment to discovering truth.

Carl Olson comments on Augustine’s balance between faith and reason:

In Augustine’s intense quest for God he asked: Can God be understood and known by reason alone? The answer is a clear, “No.” “If you understood him,” Augustine declares, “it would not be God.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

It may be said with certainty that although faith and Scripture were key elements behind Augustine’s commitment to Christ, it is clear that reasoning could not be completely jettisoned for “faith alone.” He simply had a balanced view of faith and reason, as did the next great theologian-apologist in Christian history: Anselm of Canterbury.

Anselm began his great work entitled *Proslogion* (*Discourse on the Existence of God*) with these famous words: “I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this I also believe, that unless I believed, I should not understand.” What Anselm was saying was that in order to make sense out of the Christian message, one really has to first embrace Christianity – in order to be moved by the Holy Spirit, who will “open the eyes” of the believer and bring about a greater understanding. As we know all too well, Christian doctrine is “foolishness to the Greeks” (1 Corinthians 1:23), and as many fideists are eager to point out, Christianity is an absurd (unreasonable) message that can only begin to be understood once one has accepted Christ by faith alone.

However, as with Tertullian and Augustine it is clear that Anselm was not a pure fideist, as he developed the ontological argument, the only *a priori* argument among the traditional lines of evidence for theism.[[16]](#footnote-16) Anselm’s exploration of the theistic evidences was for the purpose of better understanding God, despite his already well-developed faith; for Anselm, faith must precede reasoning.

The next great Christian thinker to come along was Thomas Aquinas, who is generally considered to be the antithesis of fideistic thought. Like Justin, Aquinas integrated Greco-Roman philosophy with Judeo-Christian revelation. Aquinas inserted Aristotelian logic into Christian theology, which was unfavorably looked upon by many faith-based theologians. Many Christian scholars at the time viewed philosophy as a work of the Devil, so needless to say Aquinas was not always admired by his peers in the world of theology. However, his interest in finding a common ground with the pagan world demonstrated his desire to effectively share the message of Christ with others. This common ground was, of course, his reason-based work in natural theology.

It must be pointed out, however, that Aquinas never held the position that reason alone could sustain Christian belief. Rather, he taught that although philosophical proofs had a place in Christianity, by itself they could never produce an adequate knowledge of God. For Aquinas, both Scripture and faith in Christ must be joined to human reasoning. As with the previously mentioned theologian-apologists, Aquinas sought to formulate a rational fideism that went beyond the pure reasoning of natural theology.

***Fideism and the Protestant Reformation***

The role of faith was given special attention by the Protestant reformers. Martin Luther and John Calvin stressed the priority of faith over human reasoning, with Luther being much more of a pure fideist as opposed to Calvin, who gave reasoning a more proper place in Christian epistemology.Boa and Bowman note that fideism, although certainly not limited to one branch or even denomination of Christianity, is most deeply-rooted in Lutheranism, and this is directly related to Luther’s approach to religious epistemology and evangelism. Although Boa and Bowman do not go so far as to properly label Luther a fideist, they nonetheless stress that the modern roots of fideism may be found in Luther.[[17]](#footnote-17)

For Luther, as for all of the key Reformers, Christianity as God intended came down to the five *Sola’s*, which are as follows:

1. *Sola Scriptura*, or “Scripture alone.”
2. *Solus Christus*, or “Christ alone.”
3. *Sola Gratia*, or “grace alone.”
4. *Sola Fide*, or “faith alone.”
5. *Soli Deo Gloria*, or “the glory of God alone.”

*Sola Fide* takes into account the other four statements, as through faith believers recognize that Scripture is the highest authority, that salvation can be found only in Christ – which alone is through his loving grace – and our purpose as human beings is to live for the glory of God alone. Whereas the pre-suppositional apologist may be inclined to stress *Sola Scriptura* as the primary means of religious epistemology and the basis for sharing and defending the faith, the fideist instead relies most heavily on *Sola Fide* – everything comes down to faith alone, even at the contempt of reasoning and evidences.

Luther maintained that the fallen nature of humanity was so severely debilitating that the mind was simply incapable of knowing anything with certainty about God and his will. Therefore, all people must rely solely upon faith in God alone. Luther did, however, hold the belief that reason was sufficient for temporal affairs, what he termed “matters of the kingdom of earth,” but when it came to eternal issues – or “matters of the kingdom of heaven” – reasoning is absolutely incompetent.[[18]](#footnote-18) In fact, Luther took it a step further and proclaimed that reason is an enemy of God.

Needless to say, Luther was not a fan of natural theology, although he did nonetheless maintain that it had a very basic usage among non-believers insofar as establishing general theism. As previously mentioned, Aquinas was largely responsible for the melding of Christian doctrine with Aristotelian metaphysics, an absolutely heretical concept in the minds of many Christians. Luther held a very low opinion of Aristotle, referring to him as the *rancidi philosophi* (“stinking philosopher”) who “rules in all of our universities and teaches in the place of Christ.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Of course, Aristotle exercised a strong influence within Christian thought only because of Aquinas and the other Scholastic’s, therefore Luther’s anger was a bit misplaced. Perhaps he was reluctant to criticize Aquinas directly, being that Aquinas was considered to be (along with Augustine) one of the two greatest Christian philosophers since the time of the Apostle Paul.

Luther was convinced that, other than establishing a very general form of theism, natural theology was quite useless as it offered no real knowledge concerning God’s will and plan of salvation. The plan of salvation is simply beyond reason, proclaimed Luther, and therefore reason is unable to guide a person to the necessary soteriological knowledge. The gospel message must be heard and accepted on faith alone. Further, Luther held that any attempt to defend the gospel message through logic and evidences would only succeed in subverting it: “Let us not be anxious: the Gospel needs not our help; it is sufficiently strong of itself. God alone commends it.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Luther clearly fit into the traditional (irrational or anti-intellectual) form of fideism.

***The Modern “Heavyweights” of Fideism***

Amesbury maintains that fideism has come to be associated with four philosophers: Blaise Pascal, Soren Kierkegaard, William James, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Most Christian resources on the subject of fideism discuss at length the thoughts of Pascal and Kierkegaard, but James and Wittgenstein are rarely mentioned, so therefore will be only briefly discussed in this work. Additionally, any thorough investigation into fideism must include an address of Karl Barth and Donald Bloesch in the twentieth century. As will be seen in this section, fideists differ markedly in how much room they afford to reasoning.

**Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)**

Blaise Pascal, the most extraordinary French scholar of the seventeenth century, excelled in mathematics, physics, and philosophy. Of more interest to apologists, however, was Pascal’s passion for upholding and defending the Christian faith. Rick Wade notes that for Pascal, evangelism was the true purpose of apologetics; apologetics as an exercise in defending Christian philosophy did not interest him – only sharing Christ did.[[21]](#footnote-21) Like Pascal, every apologist should question the primary motive behind his or her interest in apologetics.

Pascal pointed out the inadequacy of the usual apologetic arguments, being convinced that the “infinitely incomprehensible” being (God) cannot be known through finite, comprehensible arguments.[[22]](#footnote-22) The most that these philosophical arguments could do was to establish the existence of the so-called “God of the philosophers” (e.g., God of deism), who is vague and certainly not the one true God of the universe.[[23]](#footnote-23) This is most extraordinary, since Pascal had been influenced by the rationalism of both Galileo Galilee and Rene Descartes. In fact, Lew Weider maintains that Pascal cannot accurately be called a fideist, as Pascal adhered to three sources of belief: reason, custom, and inspiration.[[24]](#footnote-24) Being that reason was one of Pascal’s major sources of religious epistemology, yet most scholars are quick to stress that Pascal attempted to go beyond logic in his apologetic methodology, it seems clear that he was eclectic enough in his approach to apologetics that he combined fideism with evidentialism.

Pascal was convinced that reason alone cannot determine the existence (or non-existence) of God. However, faith is rational in the absence of “proof” (theistic arguments) “in a rational rather than an epistemic sense.”[[25]](#footnote-25) In other words, believing in God serves a practical purpose, whether or not there is solid evidence to back-up the claims of theism. Pascal’s “Wager” argument comes into play here: Pascal stated that in the absence of proof for God’s existence, it is better to side with God than with atheism, because the person who believes in God has everything to gain and nothing to lose. However, the person who chooses atheism has, if wrong, everything to lose and nothing to gain. Remaining agnostic, in Pascal’s opinion, was tantamount to choosing atheism, for not choosing to believe either way is equivalent to accepting atheism.

There are two major problems with Pascal’s Wager, however. First of all, any attempt to justify God’s existence as based entirely upon chance seems, at least to many people, a morally improper or even “impious” manner of approaching God. Secondly, while it is true that faith plays a huge role in Christianity, many converging lines of evidence – the theistic arguments, for starters, followed by the evidence for Christ’s deity and the divine inspiration of Scripture – provide the necessary intellectual ammunition that every follower of Christ needs to effectively share his or her faith with others (1 Peter 3:15). There is no reason to rely solely on faith in the unseen, when one can combine that brand of faith with apologetic evidences to build an impressive case for Christianity.

In the spirit of fairness, those who adhere to Pascalian philosophy seek to refute the claim that Pascal’s Wager has been discredited or rendered useless. Some proponents of the concept are adamant that “it is intended simply as a first step toward, and not as a substitute for, genuine religious faith.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Those who adhere to Pascal’s idea of “betting on God” are convinced that the value of the Wager is to be found in its ability to introduce people to a life of faith, and get them started on an examination of spiritual issues. Then, perhaps from this starting point, a person can eventually develop a rich, much more complete life of faith.

Pascal did rely upon two other arguments in his apologetic: fulfilled prophecy and miracles.[[27]](#footnote-27) Fulfilled prophecy falls into the realm of evidential apologetics, whereas miracles serve as a nice bridge between the fideism of the Wager and the rationalism of fulfilled prophecy. As a man with a passion for mathematics and statistical probability, it is no wonder that Pascal utilized fulfilled prophecy as an evidence for the deity of Christ. Pascal’s apologetic was very well-balanced: the Wager served as an apologetic for general theism, fulfilled prophecy served as the key in establishing Christian theism in particular, and the reliance upon miracles demonstrated that God is concerned with revealing himself to humanity.

**Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)**

Soren Kierkegaard is known to history for his proclamation that faith is characterized by a passionate commitment to God independent of natural theology or reason, and requires a “qualitative leap of faith.”[[28]](#footnote-28) For Kierkegaard, the reliance upon reason and science is not only unnecessary, but more importantly it would ruin the almost mystical reliance on “faith in matters unseen.” According to Kierkegaard, a truly genuine faith is not one that is established upon the basis of reason and science but rather transcends those human endeavors and attempts to understand God and nature through an existentialist worldview. Belief should be purely a matter of the will.

Kierkegaard held that each person can choose one of three lifestyles:

1. The aesthetic life, which is the life of pleasure.
2. The ethical life, which is lived in accordance to duty, laws, and decision-making.
3. The religious life, which is lived in service to God.

Kierkegaard taught that one must make an intellectual decision to leave behind the hedonism of the aesthetic life in order to progress to the morally-responsible ethical life. In other words, reason allows one to progress to the second stage. However, one cannot progress to the religious life by mere thought or reflection, as was possible before: Kierkegaard’s famous “leap of faith” is necessary to get from the ethical to the religious life.[[29]](#footnote-29) As an illustration of the religious life, Kierkegaard used the example of Abraham. Although Abraham was a man of high moral standards who would not normally take an innocent life, he nonetheless went beyond his ethical life to a life of *complete* obedience to God’s commands – Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac required a passionate “leap of faith.” Until this event, Abraham – despite being a man of deep faith in God – had not truly progressed beyond the ethical life. The lesson of Abraham, according to Michael Vlach, “is that your personal interaction with God is more important than pre-established expectations,”[[30]](#footnote-30) even if those pre-established expectations are firmly grounded in theistic morality. This is, of course, debatable, but nonetheless serves as “food for thought.”

Needless to say, those who subscribe to a more rationalistic approach in matters of faith have little, if anything, positive to say about Kierkegaard’s existentialist approach. J.L. Mackie even refers to Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith” as being “a sort of intellectual Russian roulette.”[[31]](#footnote-31) However, Amesbury points out that Kierkegaard viewed faith as being *incomprehensible*, but not necessarily *unreasonable* or *irrational*.[[32]](#footnote-32) Nonetheless, it is certain that this type of approach to faith – one which fails to fully utilize critical thinking – will often be less effective at swaying the thoughts of skeptics, who generally require an address of intellectual objections to Christianity. Kierkegaard is much closer to the pure fideism of Luther than to the integration of rationalism with fideism as practiced by Pascal.

**William James (1842-1910)**

It is not at all uncommon for famous thinkers to have an “intellectual enemy” – a contemporary who takes an opposing viewpoint, and strives to demonstrate how the other person is wrong; Augustine had Pelagius, and Calvin had Arminius. The fideist William James had such an opponent in the person of W.K. Clifford, an evidentialist who famously declared that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for everyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.”[[33]](#footnote-33) James, contrary to this viewpoint, insisted that it can be reasonable to believe in some things *even in the absence of proof*. Further, James insisted that he was not claiming that it is morally permissible to believe something to which one is not entitled epistemically, but rather “there are beliefs to which one can be epistemically entitled even in the absence of definitive evidence…entitlement is not always a function of evidential support.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Unlike Clifford, James was a proponent of the belief that sometimes knowing what is metaphysically true just comes naturally. Solomon alludes to this concept: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. *He has also set eternity in the human heart*; yetno one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”[[35]](#footnote-35) The fideism of James is quite similar to that of Kierkegaard.

**Karl Barth (1886-1968)**

Karl Barth is considered by many to have been the single most influential Christian theologian of the twentieth century. Barth, along with Emil Brunner, was the driving force behind the development of neo-orthodox theology, which was popular during the middle portion of the last century. Barth stressed the revelation of God over against natural theology,[[36]](#footnote-36) the transcendence of God over against the immanence of God, and faith over against reasoning.

Earlier in his career as a theologian, Barth heavily promoted Anselm’s position of “faith seeking understanding” in which a person who has already accepted the Christian faith then seeks to articulate a rational understanding of core beliefs. In other words, apologetics is predominately for the believer, not for the seeker or (especially) for the skeptic. For Barth, faith guided the intellect, and not vice-versa. Any attempt to begin with the intellect – as in natural theology – will never bring one to a true faith.

Of course, Barth could not argue that Anselm was a fideist, as it is widely accepted that the great medieval theologian relied heavily upon logic and reason. Rather, Barth insisted that Anselm knew when to acknowledge the paradoxical nature of the gospel message, and to allow the believer and the unbeliever alike to be amazed by what it says. In this sense, Barth was insisting that Anselm was a “rational” fideist.

Boa and Bowman summarize the two foundational points of Barth’s approach to religious epistemology and apologetics,[[37]](#footnote-37) as follows:

1. We can know both God and the truth about our relationship to God only by faith in his revelation. By faith alone we know with certainty that God exists, and by faith alone we know how God has reconciled us to him through Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross. We cannot reason our way into this knowledge.
2. Our knowledge of and about God comes directly from Christ through the Holy Spirit, and only indirectly from Scripture. “Scripture mediates this knowledge of God by its witness to Jesus Christ, not by providing a rational philosophical or theological system.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Therefore, Christ, who is the *Logos* or Word (John 1:1), *personally* reveals himself to humanity rather than *intellectually* revealing himself through written words.

Unfortunately, Barth’s theology is marred by two key points. First, Barth leaned heavily toward universalism, which essentially makes apologetics an unnecessary endeavor, and secondly Barth had no real use for apologetics other than its use by believers for the encouragement of their spiritual growth. Therefore, apologetics played no significant role is his writings. Like Luther, Barth held to a very traditional view of fideism.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)**

Ludwig Wittgenstein was greatly influenced by Kierkegaard, so it is no surprise that he mirrored many of Kierkegaard’s beliefs. Like Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein believed that religion was not so much theory (doctrine) as it was, or should be, practice (works). Certainly there should be an emphasis upon works in our faith; works not as a means of attaining salvation, but as way of serving others and building friendships with both believers and unbelievers alike. However, one can never minimize the importance of holding correct beliefs concerning the tenets of the Christian faith. Wittgenstein did not share that sentiment, however: “I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. They have to change your life…Wisdom is passionless. But faith by contrast is what Kierkegaard calls a passion.”[[39]](#footnote-39) Many professing Christians today, perhaps most prominently from the “neo-postmodernism” of the emerging church movement, share this sentiment.[[40]](#footnote-40)

**Donald Bloesch (1928-2010)**

AlthoughDonaldBloesch does not have the name recognition that most of the other men in this section possess, he was nonetheless a powerful force in fideism during the twentieth century. Bloesch was heavily influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr and (especially) Karl Barth, two of the biggest names in neo-orthodox theology. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bloesch preferred a more faith-based, and less rationalistic, approach to apologetics. In fact, he even considered Niebuhr’s apologetic to be too rationalistic.

The final chapter in Bloesch’s *The Christian Witness in a Secular Age* (1968) was entitled “Beyond Apologetics: A Restatement of the Christian Witness.” Boa and Bowman note that in these concluding pages, Bloesch quotes frequently from Barth, Kierkegaard, Pascal, and Luther,[[41]](#footnote-41) thereby further building upon the fideism espoused by these great theologian-apologists.[[42]](#footnote-42) Bloesch stressed that the gospel message cannot be reasonably correlated with humankind’s search for metaphysical truth – the gospel message is simply beyond reason. However, Bloesch did acknowledge that there is a role for traditional (rational-evidential) apologetics: “…there is an element of truth in the traditional apologetic enterprise which must not be lost.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Bloesch’s reason for maintaining traditional apologetics is for the benefit of clarifying doctrine for the believer, rather than for use in convincing non-believers of the veracity of Christian truth claims. This belief alone would place Bloesch within the “rational” fideist camp, but his disdain for natural theology prevented him from solidly landing there. In fact, Bloesch goes so far as to practically correlate natural theology with heresy:

Consistent with the Lutheran roots of fideism, Bloesch warns that evangelical rationalists such as Norman Geisler, by allowing that unbelievers could respond properly to the light of nature before receiving the light of the gospel, are in effect allowing intellectual works to contribute to salvation.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Of course, Geisler is well-known for his acceptance of natural theology; he is, in fact, recognized as one of the few big names in evangelicalism who readily allows for a Thomistic approach to apologetics. However, Geisler is quick to point out the limitations of natural theology, and does not claim more for it than it is rightly accorded.

Interestingly, Bloesch was reluctant to use the term “fideism” as a description of his apologetic strategy:

My position is probably closer to fideism than to rationalism; yet it is not really fideism, for it is based not on a venture into the unknown, necessarily fraught with uncertainty, but on the divine-human encounter, which expels all doubt. We know really and truly because we are known by God.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Certainly Bloesch recognized the pejorative use of the term “fideism,” and perhaps for that reason he was reluctant to label himself as such. Nonetheless, his willingness to embrace a system of religious epistemology that stressed faith even at the expense of reason is cause enough to properly label him a fideist.

**The Evidence for Fideism**

The Bible certainly addresses the importance of believing by faith: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and *certain of what we do not see*.”[[46]](#footnote-46) When Jesus asked Peter to step out of the boat and join him on the surface of the water (Matthew 14:22-23), Peter did not have time to collect the evidence for or against the possibility of his also being able to walk on water. Rather, Peter had to believe without an evidential basis – which he did, at least momentarily. In essence, Jesus was saying to Peter, “Don’t think, just believe!” This is, of course, the sentiments of the fideist.

Likewise, after his resurrection Jesus appeared to Thomas. Thomas was a skeptic if ever there was one, despite having seen Jesus perform miraculous feats earlier in his ministry. When Thomas doubted that it was truly Jesus standing before him, and not a ghost or a mirage of some sort, Jesus gave him a lesson on the topic of faith and reason. Jesus declared to Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Jesus’ stressing of the concept of faith, even when the situation seems unreal and incomprehensible, seems to be the proverbial “shot in the arm” for fideism.

**The Strengths & Weaknesses of Fideism**

As with every approach to apologetics, fideism has both strengths and weaknesses. Each point must be carefully considered, and the apologist must be willing to accept the individual strengths and weaknesses when attempting to weigh the value of fideism.

***Strengths of Fideism***

Fideism has three major strengths. First, fideists believe that since God is a person, people should accept God for who he is – a person whom we can have a relationship with. Therefore, fideism focuses on “heart matters,” stressing the importance of God’s compassion, his love for humanity, and our basic need for a relationship with God. For many fideists, the attempt to utilize natural theology as a way to intellectually know about God is a far cry from truly knowing God in the personal sense – which is the only real way to experience God.

Secondly, fideism correctly acknowledges that humanity is fallen, and therefore our intellect and reasoning abilities will likely be impaired to some degree. Therefore, fideists charge that it is wrong to believe that an over-reliance upon logic and reasoning can carry us all the way to a personal relationship with God. At best, evidentialism can establish a general theism, leading us not to the one true God of the universe, but rather to the poor imitation known as the “God of the philosophers.” Barth was adamant about this, maintaining that natural theology lead to deism rather than to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Thirdly, fideism is centered on Christ – which is exactly where true Christianity should be centered. When it comes to the questions of faith, Christ is always the answer. Many fideists are quick to charge that natural theologians are much too enthusiastic in promoting evidences for the God of theism, when in fact they should spend *all* of their time and effort promoting the *person* of Jesus Christ. For fideists, what people need is the person of Christ, not the religion or philosophy of Christianity which is merely an intellectual system of thought.

***Weaknesses of Fideism***

Although there is much that is positive about fideism, it alone is insufficient as an apologetic methodology for two reasons. First, although God is a person – since God clearly possesses the attributes of personality – no one can know God in exactly the same way that we know our fellow human beings. We can physically see, touch, and hear all people whom we come into contact with; we are able to detect other people, as well as animals and the physical world in which we exist, through our senses. Knowing God is different, however. We know that God exists, for he has revealed himself to us through his creation (Romans 1:20), he has made himself known to us through his words (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and we can feel the power of his grace upon receiving his gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). We can believe in God, despite the fact that he does not appear in a physical form to us, because he has given us ample evidence to know that he exists. If the world was not incredibly complex and extremely well-ordered, we could doubt the existence of God. If fulfilled prophecy was not a reality, then we could assume that the Bible is just an outdated “holy” book, and if we did not have the overwhelming evidence of Christ’s resurrection, then we could deny his divine identity – relegating him to the status of just another great moral teacher from the distant past. The idea of God is comforting on an emotional level, but many Christian believers cannot accept the reality of God without evidences for him, for without these lines of evidence many of us might be inclined to assume that both evolutionary biology and humanistic psychology is the correct explanation for reality. As many naturalists are quick to claim, humankind invented God as a means to give people hope from nihilistic despair.

Secondly, sometimes being ready with an answer (1 Peter 3:15) demands that one be ready to share evidences for the Christian faith, and sometimes being ready with an answer focuses on the emotional appeal of a life of faith. The emotionally-based appeal requires almost no preparation; all one needs to do is focus on personal testimony, the reading of Scripture, and why the Christian faith has been a source of strength and hope. The evidence-based answers, on the other hand, require doing some homework. Many in the world today, and throughout the past two millennia, have been unwilling to consider the existence of God and the Christian faith until confronted by a challenge to examine the evidence for Christianity. The author is an example of that situation. Two popular examples of atheists-turned-Christians are C.S. Lewis and Lee Strobel. These men converted to a saving faith in Christ not because they were seeking an emotional uplift, although that certainly happened later, but because they were persuaded by the evidence. Jesus commands us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *mind*, and with all your strength.”[[48]](#footnote-48) People are easily able to love the Lord with all their heart and soul through the process of introspection, but they must examine and thoughtfully consider the evidences for the faith in order to love God with all of their minds. Fideists are generally not as prepared to supply answers to those seeking intellectual evidences which are required for belief. Just simply believing in Christ for the sake of believing is not adequate for many seekers.

**Fideism beyond Christianity**

Fideism is not just a concept relegated to Christian thought; in fact, every philosophical worldview likely has many adherents who believe “by faith alone.” The following examples from naturalism, Islam, and Mormonism illustrates that fideism is a common form of philosophical and religious epistemology.

***“Atheistic Fideism”: The Will to Not Believe in God***

On a personal note, in July 2012 I entered into an email exchange with a college humanities professor. This professor had been a very successful competitive bodybuilder in the late seventies and early eighties, having achieved the runner-up position in the Mr. Universe competition on two occasions. At no point in his competitive bodybuilding career did he show the tell-tale signs of extreme anabolic steroid abuse, as many in the sport did – and continue to do. Instead, his physique was more athletic and was much closer to the classical Greco-Roman statues of Apollo than to the overly-bulked steroid abusers of his time. As a high school student who “lived and breathed” bodybuilding myself, I nonetheless opposed the usage of anabolic steroids and therefore found myself reading about his training techniques more than the other top bodybuilders of the day.

Out of curiosity I “Google-searched” this man’s name, to see if he was still actively involved in weight-training. Much to my surprise, I found that he is not only still training very hard, but that he holds two master’s degrees – one in divinity, and the other in classical languages (Greek and Latin) – as well as a doctorate in the humanities. The website also mentioned that his parents were devout Baptists. So, doing what I usually do best – *assume* – I emailed this professor to let him know that I was very impressed that he has maintained an intense training regimen, despite being sixty-five years of age, and also to let him know that we share the same interests: theology and history.

He immediately let me know that I was going to be disappointed: he was an atheist. He went on to state:

After examining all the evidence, and having spent much time in biblical studies even translating significant amounts from the Hebrew and Greek, I became an atheist. I find absolutely no evidence to support Christianity any more than I do Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Santeria, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, or any other mythology.[[49]](#footnote-49)

That was not exactly what I was expecting to hear, in light of his parent’s devout Baptist faith and a Master’s in Divinity. He continued: “In fact, it boggles my mind that anyone in the twenty-first century could believe any of that Bronze Age or Iron Age mythology.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Ouch! That one hurt. Then he really sunk the proverbial blade in deep: “I do still take time to read in religion but all the “apologetics” continue to be regurgitated Medieval scholasticism, including teleological  arguments that date back to Plato’s *Timaeus*.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Obviously he does not share the same enthusiasm for apologetics that I do. He then went on to denigrate one of the top Christian apologists of our day, and then praised Richard Dawkins, Michael Shermer, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens.[[52]](#footnote-52)

I am convinced that this man has rejected the Christian faith not because of a lack of evidence, but rather because he chooses – for whatever reason or reasons – to reject even general theism on a purely emotional-volitional level. The evidence for God is there, and there should be no mistaking it; as the Apostle Paul tells us, the evidence for the Creator is plainly before each one of us (Romans 1:20). This professor – a highly intelligent man, to say the least – is a classic example of one who chooses not to believe, in spite of the clear evidence for theism: he exemplifies what I have termed “atheistic fideism.” This type of person is often very difficult to reach with the gospel message, because they are exceptionally intelligent and occasionally even well-read in the area of philosophy and religion.

Another classic example of atheistic fideism: Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of the DNA double-helix structure. Long before Crick and his co-workers made their incredible discovery, Crick had been a vehement opponent of religion in general and Christianity in particular. In 1961 Crick resigned as a fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge when the administration there made the proposal to build a chapel. A generation before Richard Dawkins, Crick seems to have been the “militant atheist extraordinaire” of the United Kingdom.

When the DNA double-helix structure was discovered, Crick admitted that it appeared to possess the element of design:

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.[[53]](#footnote-53)

This statement is refreshingly honest but a bit deceiving, because Crick does not say that the DNA double-helix structure is designed, but rather he only admits that the inference of design should be expected as an explanation for the structure’s origin – but then again, the “sophisticates” know better, of course. In the tradition of the great skeptic David Hume, Crick argued that the appearance of design as seen in the double-helix structure was merely that: an appearance. Since nature is all there is, there can be no real intelligent design in physical or biological systems. Case closed. This is atheistic fideism at its best…or worst, depending upon how one looks at it.

A refutation of these skeptical attitudes, presenting the veracity of the classical theistic arguments, is not likely to go anywhere. The minds of these men, and others like them, remain tightly closed to the evidence for God and Christ; their atheism is a volitional act which is often (but not always) tied up with emotional rather than intellectual factors.

Fortunately, though, the ability to pursue truth – no matter where it leads – is an endeavor that can be exercised successfully. Both C.S. Lewis a generation ago and Lee Strobel in our time, as well as countless other examples, demonstrate that atheists can use logic and reason-based evidences to arrive at theism; belief is not just a matter of the will, but may go hand-in-hand with the intellect. This is why pure fideism, whether theistic or atheistic, is not the end-all explanation for belief.

For many atheistic fideists, prayer and an attitude of caring seem to be what will make a difference – if, in fact, anything does. Ultimately, their salvation is in the hands of God – a comforting thought for believers, who feel the heavy burden of evangelism.

***Islam***

The Muslim theologian Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), one of the greatest thinkers in the Islamic tradition, argued that reason must yield to revelation. Ghazali maintained that divine revelation was the absolute authority for all spiritual issues,[[54]](#footnote-54) a position which may be more properly labeled as pre-suppositional epistemology. His position was in opposition to the great analytical thinker of Islamic history, [Averroes](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Averroes) (1126-1198). Like Aquinas in the West, Averroes sought to integrate Aristotelian philosophy with his revealed religion, and he actually became a major influence upon many Christian philosophers in the medieval era.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Many Muslim believers adhere to their religious beliefs simply by faith alone, never having really taken the time to question their beliefs. These men and women, some who may truly be afraid to question the tenets of Islam, are examples of those who believe by “faith alone.”

***Mormonism***

The true follower of Mormonism seeks the confirmation of truth through the so-called “burning in the bosom,” which is the “feeling” of being correct in one’s religious beliefs. Mormonism bases this belief in the writing of James: “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”[[56]](#footnote-56) The “burning in the bosom” is somewhat akin to Kierkegaard’s famous “leap of faith.”

**Putting Fideism into Proper Perspective**

Not only is there a place in Christianity for believing by faith, but we are, in fact, commanded throughout Scripture to do so (Job 13:15; 19:25; Matthew 9:22; 15:28; 21:21-22; John 11:25-26; Acts 6:5; 11:22-24; 14:9-10; 15:8-9; Romans 1:16-17; 4:16-25; 2 Corinthians 5:6-7; 14:13-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; 6:16; Colossians 1:5-6; 2 Timothy 1:12-14; Hebrews 10:32, 35-39; 11:6, 24-27). However, opponents of fideism are quick to argue that reason and logic play a key role in Christianity; in fact, we are also commanded throughout Scripture to use logic and reasoning in our Christian walk. Paul, in Romans 1:20, tells us that no one may be excused for failing to believe in the existence of the Creator, for the simple reason that God’s fingerprints are all over the creation:

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Paul could say this with confidence, because even in his day the logic of an intelligent design requiring an intelligent Designer was overwhelming. This obvious conclusion, of course, requires logic and reasoning.

***Rational versus Irrational Fideism***

In recent years, some philosophers of religion have sought to reclaim fideism from its “negative” use by demonstrating how faith and reason should work hand-in-hand, rather than in opposition to one another. C. Stephen Evans distinguishes between “responsible” forms of fideism, in contrast to the “irrational” forms of this apologetic method. Responsible forms of fideism are based in the belief that faith can “take over where reason leaves matters of ultimate concern unresolved.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Certainly this is a balanced view of the relationship between faith and reason, and one in which the author agrees with wholeheartedly. Responsible (rational) fideism is not the fideism of those who are opposed to reasoning on the grounds that “reason is an enemy of faith,” as was the position of Luther. Rather, for Evans faith is not *against* reason, but rather *beyond* reason.

Using the triune nature of God as an example, rational fideism works in the following manner:

1. The apologist may first establish the existence of God in general through the classical theistic arguments. The author generally prefers to first outline the logical steps involved in the cosmological argument, followed by a discussion of the teleological argument. The moral argument may be used next, and one may also utilize the arguments from aesthetics, human cognition, and desires which are able to be met. Some may add the ontological argument and religious experience to this list, although the author generally avoids those lines of evidence, never having “clicked” with the ontological argument and knowing all-too-well how skeptical many non-believers can be with the “subjective” argument from religious experience.
2. Having established the case for general theism, the apologist may next offer some of the converging lines of evidence that support the divine inspiration of Scripture. This would include internal consistency, external verification (extra-biblical records and archaeology), accurate scientific concepts well in advance of modern discoveries, and fulfilled prophecy – both messianic prophecy as well as the establishment of modern Israel as foretold in Scripture.
3. Being that the lines of evidence for the divine inspiration of Scripture have been addressed, it stands to reason that whatever Scripture has to say about God’s nature should be true. Therefore, the apologist may highlight several verses which describe God’s monotheistic reality (Isaiah 44:6; John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:29-30; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5;James 2:19) and conclude with yet other verses which relate God’s three-in-one nature (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; John 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1-2).
4. At this point, many seekers and (especially) skeptics will be confused by the concept of the Trinity – everyone, if honest, must admit to being unable to adequately wrap their mind around this idea as it defies basic reasoning. It is at this point that fideism kicks in; the rational part of this teaching (theistic arguments and, to a lesser extent, Scripture) can lead us only so far regarding this doctrine. All believers must at some point “accept by faith” the triune nature of God, for no matter how hard we may try to understand the three-in-oneness of God this scriptural teaching is far beyond our ability to intellectually grasp. God is the infinite Being who immeasurably exceeds our finite reasoning abilities.

In this example, we see how both reason and faith combine to form a system of religious epistemology that allows us to accept our core beliefs. Neither reason nor faith alone is wholly adequate to argue for God’s triune nature.

**Conclusion**

As with all of the various approaches to apologetics, fideism has a role to serve in both religious epistemology and evangelism, although the author is convinced that only rational fideism carries any real weight. The history of fideism is associated with many different theologian-apologists, going all the way back to the time of the Early Church Fathers, and is inseparably tied to the debate between faith and reason. Fideism may find its greatest usefulness in areas of “in-house” theological debate which go beyond the limits of reason; paradoxical issues such as the triune nature of God, Christ’s hypostatic union, and divine predestination versus human free will always require great faith. The author is convinced that traditional (irrational) fideism offers very little help when it comes to sharing one’s faith, however, as we live in a culture of religious skepticism in which we as believers must be prepared to intellectually challenge the opponents of Christianity, who are sometimes bent on its destruction.

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5. Lita Cosner, “Who Has an Answer?” *Creation Ministries International*. <http://creation.com/who-has-an-answer> (accessed April 9, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Kenneth D. Boa & Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2005), 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Amesbury (accessed March 30, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Amesbury (accessed March 30, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Steve Wilkens, *Good Ideas from Questionable Christians and Outright Pagans* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Manichaeism was a Persian-based form of Gnosticism. Founded by the “prophet” Mani (c. AD 216-276), this belief system was a synthesis of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. Adhering to the major beliefs of Gnosticism in general, Manichaeism was widespread between the third and seventh centuries, and at its height was considered to be one of the major religions of the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
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16. The “traditional” lines of evidence for theism (theistic arguments) are the cosmological, teleological, moral, and ontological arguments, although other evidences from natural theology exist as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Boa & Bowman, 340. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid., 341. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid., 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
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26. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Weider, 391. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Amesbury (accessed April 1, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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32. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ecclesiastes 3:11, NIV (emphasis mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Although it must be noted that Brunner afforded a significant role for natural theology, although never to the point that Aquinas and other natural theologians claimed for it. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Boa & Bowman, 357-358. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Amesbury (accessed April 2, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. In many ways, the emerging church movement is a modern version of neo-orthodoxy, which became quite popular in the middle of the twentieth century in large part through the efforts of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Boa & Bowman, 360. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Of course, each of these men maintained varying degrees of commitment to fideism; for example, Calvin may be considered less of a fideist than was Bloesch. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Boa & Bowman, 360. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid., 362. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., 362-363. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Hebrews 11:1, NIV (emphasis mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. John 20:29, NIV. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Mark 12:30, NIV (emphasis mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Email exchange with anonymous college professor (July 12, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Although I do have to say that Michael Shermer seems very likable, and is much less prone to attacking those of faith, especially when compared to Dawkins, Harris, and the other “New Atheists.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
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