The traditions of fideism

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Abstract: Philosophers and theologians acknowledge that 'fideism' is difficult to define but rarely agree on what the best characterization of the term is. In this article, I investigate the history of use of 'fideism' to explore why its meaning has been so contested and thus why it has not always been helpful for resolving philosophical problems. I trace the use of the term from its origins in French theology to its current uses in philosophy and theology, concluding that 'fideism' is helpful in resolving philosophical problems only when philosophers scrupulously acknowledge the tradition of use that informs their understanding of the word.

Naming appears as a *queer* connexion of a word with an object. And you really get such a queer connexion when the philosopher tries to bring out *the* relation between name and thing by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word 'this' innumerable times. For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*. And *here* we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of mind, as it were a baptism of an object. And we can also say the word 'this' *to* the object, as it were *address* the object as 'this' – a queer use of this word, which doubtless only occurs in doing philosophy.

<div align="right">Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §38</div>

In employing the meaning of 'fideism' that I do, I have followed what is fairly common usage in the literature in English. Further, I think that this usage brings out more clearly the sceptical element that is involved in the fideistic view, broadly conceived. However, it is obvious if that if the classifications 'sceptic' and 'fideist' were differently defined, the various figures whom I so classify might be categorized in a quite different way.

<div align="right">Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism</div>

Since Kai Nielsen's widely read essay 'Wittgensteinian fideism' was first published in 1967, philosophy of religion influenced by Wittgenstein has often been associated with fideism.[1] One need not search far to see how extensive this association is, and it has affected what philosophers understand fideism to be. Definitions and explorations of fideism since 1967 rarely fail to mention Wittgenstein's thought on religion. While much has been published on whether

or not Wittgenstein or Wittgensteinian philosophers are in fact fideists,[2] comparatively little has been written on fideism itself.[3]

The diverse and sometimes conflicting individual definitions of fideism call out for some philosophical housekeeping if the term is to be useful academically. This preliminary investigation into the genealogy of fideism shows that the meaning of the term is not at all clear in either philosophical or theological discourse. Because of this confusion, academic investigations into the fideism of, for example, Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, or philosophers influenced by them are often disconnected from the historical origins of the term. The goal of this article is to suggest some ways towards clearing up this confusion and identifying the uses of the term that are fruitful in academic discourse.

Taking a cue from Wittgenstein,[4] I propose that it is best to see how the term was actually used in its original context and to construct extensions of the term carefully from this original use. Otherwise, the danger is that scholarly use of 'fideism' may degrade into instances of 'language gone on holiday', and if confusion is to be avoided, use of the term must be well grounded.[5] While some scholars might conclude that the term should be avoided altogether, I argue that confusion over the meaning of the term may be resolved when references to fideism are contextually grounded.

The confusion around use of the term 'fideism'

One need not venture far into theological and philosophical discourse about fideism to get the sense that often the term is not defined clearly. Philosophers and theologians use the word to pick out any of a number of views dealing with tension between commitments to faith, reason, and tradition. This may lead some readers to wonder with Richard Amesbury whether the term can be used properly.[6] The causes of this confusion over the meaning of 'fideism' are many; while it is not the goal of this essay to list them all, the following are some contributing factors.

'Fideism' is commonly used pejoratively

A survey of philosophical and theological writing over the last century shows that 'fideism' is sometimes, although not always, understood to be a term of reproach. This is shown as much in dictionary and encyclopedia articles as it is in essays and books. 'Fideism' often goes undefined in scholarly literature, its meaning apparently presumed to be clear. However, when it is defined, it is defined in various ways. The following excerpts represent some of this variety:

> (1) Fideists hold that religious belief is based on faith rather then reason. Extreme fideists maintain that it is contrary to reason; moderate fideists argue that what must first be accepted on faith may subsequently find rational support.[7]

(2) A contrasting view [to evidentialism] is *fideism*, best understood as the claim that one's fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment. A reason often given for this is that devotion to God should be one's 'ultimate concern,' and to subject faith to the judgment of reason is to place reason above God and make of it an idol. Proponents of fideism include Tertullian, Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and some Wittgensteinians.[8]

(3) Fideism is the view that truth in religion is ultimately based on faith rather than on reasoning or evidence. This claim has been presented in many forms by theologians from St Paul to contemporary neo-orthodox, antirationalist writers, usually as a way of asserting that the fundamental tenets of religion cannot be established by proofs or by empirical evidence but must be accepted on faith.[9]

(4) It should be noted that neither the Wittgensteinians nor the Reformed epistemologists espouse the view that the rationality of faith is irrelevant to whether or not it is acceptable to embrace it. That position has traditionally gone under the name of 'fideism', and such thinkers as Tertullian, William of Ockham, Pierre Bayle, Søren Kierkegaard, and Leo Shestov have regularly been classified as fideists. However, when one digs into the thought of the five thinkers mentioned on the topic of faith and reason, one not only finds it to be in each case subtle, and the various positions taken diverse, one also becomes less and less convinced of the propriety of describing any of them as a defender of irrationality in matters of faith.[10]

(5) Philosophical defenders of faith have commonly tried to show that it is not at odds with reason: that it is internally consistent, that it accords with scientific knowledge, or even, more positively, that some of its tenets can be established independently by philosophical reasoning. Fideists reject this mode of apologetic argument, and maintain, in contrast, that faith does not need the support of reason, and should not seek it.[11]

(6) 'Fideism' is the name given to that school of thought – to which Tertullian himself is frequently said to have subscribed – which answers that faith is in some sense independent of – if not outright adversarial toward – reason. In contrast to the more rationalistic tradition of natural theology, with its arguments for the existence of God, fideism holds that reason is unnecessary and inappropriate for the exercise and justification of religious belief.[12]

In these excerpts, three types of definitions are offered for 'fideism'. The first, shared by (1) and (3) is that fideism is the view that religious belief or truth in religion is based on faith rather than reason. Note that both indicate a division between moderate and extreme fideists. The second type of definition is found in (2): fideism is defined as 'the claim that one's fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment'. Definitions (5) and (6) share this conception. This portrait of fideism focuses not so much on what fideism is (e.g. a view that religious belief is based on faith rather than reason) as what fideism is not (a view that religious belief is subject to independent rational critique).

This manner of definition by exclusion from a normative conception of rationality is also found in (4): 'the view that the rationality of faith is irrelevant to whether or not it is acceptable to embrace it'. However, note how careful the author of (4), Nicholas Wolterstorff, is in mentioning the usefulness of this irrationalist category of fideism. While he mentions many of those philosophers

frequently associated with fideism, he goes on to observe that after careful scrutiny, the 'irrationalist' category of fideism fails to adequately describe their thought. Wolterstorff's observation on the futility of this conception of fideism anticipates the argument of the first section of this article: fideism, when used pejoratively, is not very useful in academic discourse.[13]

In theological discourse, fideism is generally considered to be a negative term of appraisal. This is the case in both essays and dictionary articles, although dictionary articles, by their very nature, attempt generally to be more balanced. Here are some representative definitions of 'fideism' from theological sources:

> (7) A philosophical and theological doctrine or attitude that minimizes the capacity of the human intellect to attain certitude and assigns faith as a criterion of the fundamental truths. Thus, God's existence, the immortality of the soul, principles of morality, the fact of divine revelation, and the credibility of Christianity cannot be proved by reason alone, but must be accepted on authority. The term fideism (from the Latin *fides*, faith) was used for the first time by Eugène Ménégoz, *Reflexions sur l'evangile du salut* (Paris 1789 [*sic*]), and then it was applied to traditionalism and other theories of similar strain.[14]
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> (8) A view which assumes that knowledge originates in a fundamental act of faith, independent of rational presuppositions. Though the term in this form dates only from about 1885 when it was associated with and adapted by French theologians, the standpoint represented by it had several times been officially condemned during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831–1846).[15]
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> (9) The word was coined in the nineteenth century, probably by A. Sabatier and his modernist circle of Protestants in Paris, to denote the view that (as Kant has demonstrated) reason could not prove the truths of religion and that therefore believers could rely upon faith, which was a kind of religious experiencing. Dogmas were only the symbolic expression of religious feelings; this view stands in the general succession from Schleiermacher (and Ritschl). 'Fideism' has continued to be used especially by theologians of the Thomist tradition as a pejorative term for subjectivist theories which are based upon religious experience and which undervalue reason in theology. 'Wittgensteinian fideism' is the term that has been applied to the work of some theologians and philosophers of religion who claim that every form of life, including religion, develops its own autonomous language-game, and that it is neither necessary nor possible for it to be justified by anything outside of itself.[16]
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> (10) A theological term coined at the turn of the century by Protestant modernists in Paris (Ménégoz, Sabatier) to describe their own thought, but since used pejoratively to attack various strands of Christian 'irrationalism.' Fideists, following Kant (who argued that reason cannot prove religious truth), are said to base their understanding of the Christian faith upon religious experience alone, understanding reason to be incapable of establishing either faith's certitude or credibility. Among others, Luther, Kierkegaard, Van Til, Schleiermacher, and Barth have been accused of fideism. The term, however, is used too imprecisely to be of much value. Certainly none of these theologians would deny the use of reason altogether. If helpful at all, the term functions to describe an excessive emphasis upon the subjective dimensions of Christianity.[17]
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> (11) Fideism, as the word indicates, attributes to faith (*fides*) the principal role in religious knowledge, which, when taken to the extreme, however, leads it to question the very

possibility of an authentic access to faith. Reacting to the exclusive rationalism of the Enlightenment, fideism is nevertheless dependent on certain
fundamental presuppositions of the position that it challenges … .
    The best known representatives of this movement were, under the label of 'traditionalism,' L. de Bonald (1754–1840), and H.-F.-R. de Lamennais (1782–1854), and under the label of 'fideism,' Ph.-O. Gerbet (1798–1864), L.-E.-M. Bautain (1796–1867), and A. Bonnety (1798–1879). Their attacks against the Scholasticism of their time, which they regarded as rationalist, provoked controversies that focused essentially on the status of knowledge within the framework of a fundamental theology … . The name 'fideism' was also claimed around this time be a group of French Protestants represented by A. Sabatier and E. Ménégoz, who applied the principles of Schleiermacher and adopted positions derived from the school of the history of religions.[18]

Most definitions in theological sources point to Eugène Ménégoz (1838–1921) and Auguste Sabatier (1839–1901), both Protestant theologians at the Sorbonne in the late nineteenth century, as the originators of the term (although, it is striking that the Catholic Encyclopedia (1909) points to no origination of the term, freely using it to describe theologians and philosophers throughout the history of Christianity). Religious experience is listed in (9) and (10) as being a source for religious truth separate from reason. Authority stands in as the alternate source in (7) and (11). The independence of religious belief from reason is stressed in (8). Each of these definitions takes a historical approach to understanding the term, and all but (8) indicate that the term was used by both Protestant and Catholic theologians in late nineteenth century France. While (7), (9), and (10) list Ménégoz and Sabatier as originators of the term, (11) remains agnostic on whether others used the term first. The pejorative use of the term is noted in definitions (9) and (10), and it is interesting to see scepticism expressed about the usefulness of the term at all in (10).

The philosophers, on the whole, have been drawn to seek after the essential doctrine underlying various instances of fideism through intellectual history; the theologians, on the whole, have been drawn to locate the lineage of the term and its subsequent use in theological discourse. An appreciation for the confusion over use of the term is evident in some of the theologians' definitions, but the philosophers mentioned above – with the exception of Amesbury and Wolterstorff – do not seem to register this. Nevertheless, the term is used in philosophical and theological discourse *without* context more often than not. The meaning of the term is presumed to be understood between author and audience.

A recent example of this presumption is found in probably the most widely read text to mention fideism explicitly, Pope John Paul II's 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*. The document echoes many of the ideas presented in the nineteenth century in the documents of the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) and the 1879 encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*. The Pope admits as much in the encyclical.[19] 'Fideism' is treated as a word with an unproblematic meaning, as in the following passages

from *Fides et Ratio* where John Paul II interprets *Dei Filius* from the First Vatican Council:

> Against the temptations of fideism, however, it was necessary to stress the unity of truth and thus the positive contribution which rational knowledge can and must make to faith's knowledge: 'Even if faith is superior to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth'.[20]

'One currently widespread symptom of this fideistic tendency is a 'biblicism' which tends to make the reading and exegesis of sacred scripture the sole criterion of truth.'[21] 'Other modes of latent fideism appear in the scant consideration accorded to speculative theology, and in disdain for the classical philosophy from which the terms of both the understanding of faith and the actual formulation of dogma have been drawn.'[22]

Fideism is understood by John Paul II to be the excessive reliance on faith in determining religious truth – as compared with the favoured method of the Catholic Magisterium: faith and reason working in concert. While the Pope may have held that the 'original' fideism of the nineteenth century had been adequately dealt with in prior encyclicals, these twentieth-century variants called for attention in a new encyclical. The biblicism the Pope mentions is presumably the fundamentalist movement in American Protestant Christianity. The anti-metaphysical approach of much twentieth-century philosophy and its subsequent influence on theology is presumably what is being criticized in the latter remark on latent fideism.

John Paul II places a number of different views under the banner of fideism. Fideist philosophies and theologies are to be corrected with a Catholic philosophy where faith and reason work in partnership. What these fideist views have in common is a divergence from the Catholic ideal of the relationship between faith and reason. Neither this encyclical, nor the first ever to use the word 'fideism', *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of 1907, mentions the historical origin of the term and neither shows any reluctance in using the term critically. In contexts such as this, the meaning of 'fideism' is presumed to be understood – and to be understood as a term of reproach.

Scholarship on fideism is largely ahistorical

The second problem surrounding scholarship on fideism is that the work on it tends to be ahistorical. Accusations of fideism rarely show signs of awareness of the historical origins of the term. Instead, critics depict fideism as a position that could be occupied by thinkers of varying historical periods and cultural or religious contexts. Fideism is thus treated by some scholars as a general category in religious and philosophical thought; however, because of its

common pejorative use, serious questions arise about whether fideism can be regarded as a general category.

Occasionally in scholarly literature, one will find references to thinkers far removed from modern philosophy labeled as fideists. Tertullian (c.150–c.230 CE), the early Church Father from North Africa, is one such example. On the face of it, it is not hard to see why. After all, he wrote of a stark opposition between Christian faith and Greek philosophy. In particular, Tertullian wrote extensive critical works attacking what he took to be the biased and/or ignorant depiction of Christianity among pagan intellectuals. In the *Apology*, Tertullian presents an attack not on the natural reason of the philosophers *per se*, but instead, on the intellectual integrity of the pagan philosophers of his day.[23] It is not reason that he gives up on but trust in the sincere pursuit of truth that philosophers are supposed to value above all else. It is the virtue of pagan philosophers that Tertullian criticizes. His criticism could be taken as being compatible with the stated aims of philosophy – a search for truth over opinion and virtue over vice.

Those who classify Tertullian as a fideist typically point to the expression '*credo quia absurdum*' as indicative of the view that faith is based in absurdity and runs counter to reason. Scholars now often indicate that this is a misquotation of Tertullian; the phrase in question should be '*credibile est, quia ineptum est.*'[24] Commenting on this point, Eric Osborn argues that Tertullian's use of paradox is an integral part of his apologetic argument:

> If God, who is wholly other, is joined to mortal man in a way which is not inept, then either God is no longer God or man is no longer man, and there is no true incarnation. Truth on this issue can only be achieved by ineptitude. Tertullian does not universalize his claim; most ineptitude is false. This argument is put into paradox, to imitate Paul and to make it more striking and provocative. Paradoxes are useful because they are wonderful and against common opinion.[25]

To think of Tertullian as a fideist is for Osborn to ignore both the genre Tertullian wrote in and the place of a conclusion in an argument. Tertullian sought to articulate a Christology that explained how God could save imperfect human beings; according to Osborn, the paradoxical description of this incarnated God was meant as a correction of Marcion's Christology, which denied the incarnation. But to Tertullian and others without the humility of incarnation, the God in question did not seem capable of saving imperfect humanity. Although from a distance, Tertullian's thought may appear to be an uncontroversial case of fideism, a contextually situated reading of his work suggests that the term does not fit well.

The historical origins of 'fideism' are complex

The third problem stems from the complex origins of 'fideism' within nineteenth-century Christian theology. When the term is defined in a historically

sensitive way, it may not be robust enough to survive being detached from its context. Contemporary confusion over the meaning of 'fideism' also stems in part from the various uses of the term in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perhaps the most surprising feature of the history of the term 'fideism' is that there seem to be two discrete points of origin for the term. In the nineteenth century, Protestant and Catholic theologians used the word to name post-Kantian theological approaches, but that in itself is not enough to warrant supposing that these two theological communities meant precisely the same thing by the word at the time. Furthermore, early Catholic use of the term to criticize modernist tendencies in theology was soon to be eclipsed by the pejorative meaning condemning traditionalist approaches in early to mid-nineteenth-century theology.

Popkin and Penelhum on 'sceptical fideism'

While not a lot of work has been done on the nature and history of fideism, the work of two historians of philosophy, Richard H. Popkin and Terence Penelhum, stands out in terms of influence. Popkin's ground-breaking study of the origins of modern scepticism, *The History of Scepticism: From Erasmus to Descartes* was first published in 1960. This book also included historically grounded exploration of what Popkin termed 'sceptical fideism': the appropriation of ancient sceptical arguments in the service of Christian apologetics. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as ancient sceptical arguments became more widely known, these arguments were appropriated into the intellectual debates of the day: debates that circled around the proper method of enquiry into the natural world and the proper method for determining truth about religious matters. Over the four decades following the publishing of *The History of Scepticism*, Popkin expanded his book through additional studies of early modern philosophy.

Briefly, the narrative that Popkin, Penelhum, and others produced goes as follows. In 1562, a Latin translation of the Sextus' *Hypotyposes* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) was printed and became widely available. During this time, sceptical arguments were swept up into polemical discourse between Catholics and Protestants. The debate between Catholics and Protestants largely concerned the proper criterion or criteria for religious truth: what they called 'the rule of faith'. Popkin writes, 'The problem of finding a criterion of truth, first raised in theological disputes, was then later raised with regard to natural knowledge, leading to *la crise pyrrhonienne* of the early sixteenth century.'[26]

While Catholics maintained, as always, that the proper rule of faith lay with the legal traditions and authoritative instruction of the Magisterium, Protestants held that the rule of faith ought to be what the individual believer discovers upon reading scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While Protestant

polemicists criticized Catholicism as just so much Pyrrhonism, no doubt aided by the writings of Erasmus, Catholics criticized the Protestants for in effect allowing anything and everything to be true, thus amounting to Pyrrhonism as well. 'Pyrrhonism' became a term of reproach; and yet, there were some moderate philosophers who sought after something like a Christian Pyrrhonism in the hopes of arriving at a peaceful, reasonable solution to the intractable and growing conflict between Catholic and Protestant powers. An example of this use of Pyrrhonism in supporting the Catholic religion can be seen in the thought of Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne's *An Apology for Raymond Sebond* is rightly remembered as a classic instance of sceptical arguments being put forward in defence of religious belief and practice. It is to members of the group of moderating figures that Popkin affixes the title 'sceptical fideists'.

Penelhum shares Popkin's association of the origins of sceptical fideism with the retrieval of ancient sceptical texts in the early modern period.[27] Yet, Penelhum's classification scheme is more strictly philosophical than historical. In *God and Scepticism*, Penelhum argues that there are two dominant strands of fideistic thought: conformist and evangelical fideism. Penelhum is in general agreement with Popkin that early modern scepticism initially emerged as a movement *within* religious thought, before it became the familiar philosophical bogeyman of twentieth-century philosophy. Penelhum understands fideism to be the 'recurrent theme in religious thought' that 'faith and reason are so disparate that faith is not undermined, but strengthened, if we judge that reason can give it no support'.[28] Penelhum focuses his attention on the class of fideists who use sceptical argument in the service of this end, the group Popkin termed 'sceptical fideists'. As previously mentioned, Penelhum further distinguishes two kinds of sceptical fideism. Penelhum writes, 'The attempt to represent Christian faith as analogous to the Pyrrhonian conformity to appearances I shall call Conformist Sceptical Fideism.'[29] He continues:

> Sceptical Fideism, however, has taken another, and in general much more influential, form. Its proponents have recognized that Sceptic belieflessness and Christian faith are indeed the polar opposites they seem. But they have nevertheless seen Scepticism as a tradition which has, unintentionally, served the cause of faith by exposing the inability of human reason to provide grounds for the commitment faith embodies … I shall call this position Evangelical Sceptical Fideism, or Evangelical Fideism for short.[30]

He understands Erasmus, Montaigne, and Bayle to represent conformist sceptical fideism and Pascal and Kierkegaard to represent evangelical sceptical fideism.

Technically speaking, both Protestant and Catholic thought could reflect conformist or evangelical expressions of sceptical fideism; however, the tendency, according to Penelhum, is for Catholic fideists to espouse conformism to tradition and for Protestant fideists to strive for theological purity. The reasons for

this tendency are not difficult to imagine, given the rules of faith each group favours. Popkin's work on the history of scepticism, and the religious uses of it, helps spell out the interests Catholics have had apologetically in defending tradition from first Protestant, then Enlightenment challenges. Likewise, Protestants have had apologetic interests in establishing or shoring up the *sola fide* criterion of religious truth established by Luther and further worked out by Calvin. These overarching needs may indicate the tendencies found in Catholic and Protestant thought. Penelhum subsequently uses this distinction to explore contemporary philosophy of religion.[31]

The work of Popkin and Penelhum stands in contrast to much work on fideism that is not concerned with the history of ideas, and for this their work is rightly esteemed. However, neither Popkin nor Penelhum explores the comparably recent origin of the term and the problems this circumstance presents for using the term outside this context. In the course of about 150 years, the meaning of the term has migrated considerably. In the first edition of *The History of Scepticism*, Popkin acknowledges the varying uses of the term between Protestant and Catholic thinkers.[32] Protestants occasionally use the term to describe their own views, whereas Catholics treat fideism as a charge to be avoided. Popkin and Penelhum use the term merely to classify figures in early modern thought, but the question remains over whether the term can be excerpted from its original context of use and applied to this novel setting (despite the wide influence of Popkin's treatment of these matters).

A genealogy of 'fideism'

The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies French as the original language of the word and places its first appearance in English in 1885. Many sources identify the Lutheran theologian Eugène Ménégoz as the one who first coins '*fidéisme*' in his *Reflexions sur L'évangile du salut* (1879).[33] However, while variants of the term are not found among the documents of the First Vatican Council (1869–1870), and are not widely used among Catholic philosophers until the 1880s, the term appears on occasion in theological periodicals as early as 1850s.[34] The earliest source I have found is from the Catholic periodical *L'Ami de la Religion* in 1854 in which the Abbé Robitaille uses the term to classify the thought of Lamennais.[35] However, I suspect this early use of the term may not have been widely influential because no dictionaries or encyclopedia I know of place the origin of the term before 1879. Catholic philosopher Léon Ollé-Laprune (1839–1898) uses the word in his *De La Certitude Morale* (1880) to refer to what he took to be a distressing overreliance on moral faith in establishing the existence of God in Kantian and post-Kantian idealism.[36]

Neither Ménégoz nor Ollé-Laprune gives any indication of awareness of the term's having already been in use. Both authors appear to take themselves to be

coining or otherwise appropriating the term (in both cases, placing it in italics). It is a testament to how cut off from one another Protestant and Catholic theologians in France were that Ménégoz did not discover the Catholic use of the word until three decades later when the 1907 encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* was written.[37] A key difference between neo-Thomist philosophers and theologians on the one hand and the Protestant faculty at Paris on the other is that these Protestants used the term '*fidéisme*' to describe their own theology; the neo-Thomists used it to classify the thought of others who relied 'dangerously' on faith alone in establishing God's existence.

The symbolo-fideism of Ménégoz and Sabatier

In 1879, when the French Protestant theologian Eugène Ménégoz chose the term '*fidéisme*' to express the Lutheran principle of *sola fide*, he most likely had no idea of the range of applications to which the word would be put in the following decades. As mentioned previously, the French Protestant faculty at Paris, where Ménégoz was a central figure, sought to articulate a standpoint between orthodox Lutheranism and the agnosticism of positivist philosophy of science. During the nineteenth century, French culture had been reeling from the Revolution and the overturning of long-established order; theologians of both Protestant and Catholic affiliations sought to reframe the truth-claims of Christianity in order to find some footing in the new secular society. Within a few decades after its appearance in French, the term 'fideism' appears in English and other European languages and enters more fully into Catholic and Protestant theological conversation. Eventually, it would find a place in philosophical discourse.

Far from being anti-modern and opposed to Enlightenment thinkers, the Protestant theologians of the École de Paris, Sabatier and Ménégoz, sought to articulate a path for Christianity after the Enlightenment, the rise of modern science and the development of the historical-critical method of biblical criticism. Rather than being a theology that sought to reinforce the importance of religious dogma or tradition over science, their theology sought to articulate a narrow path between what they took to be the two dogmatisms of orthodox religion and positivist science. Sabatier grounded religion in a primordial religious feeling – itself reminiscent of Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence; he understood individual religious expressions (whether orthodox or heterodox) to be approximations of the primordial feelings of fear and hope. Their theology was sometimes called 'symbolo-fideism'[38] to indicate the contributions of Sabatier's reflections on religious symbols and Ménégoz's emphasis on salvation by faith independent of belief.

In their writings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ménégoz and Sabatier together sought to establish and defend the theological movement of symbolo-fideism. In the decades following the publication of the

Reflexions sur l'évangile du salut, Ménégoz wrote short pieces for local theological periodicals. These essays include a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (1894) and a study of the significance of miracle reports in biblical texts. In both cases, Ménégoz sought to expand on his view that salvation lies in the simple act of faith rather than in assenting to specific doctrines. Ménégoz held that this view of faith and salvation had a biblical basis and that the orthodox forms of Christianity were often distortions of these original biblical notions. Through the 1890s and 1900s, Ménégoz wrote many occasional pieces for Protestant periodicals, often responding to his more orthodox critics. Émile Doumergue (1844–1937) is representative of these critics in that he held that fideism was an intermediate step from the liberalism of post-Kantian theology to the agnosticism of modern secular society. Ménégoz was at pains to distinguish his fideism from modernism and liberalism, which sought to deny either grace or religious tradition a critical role in faith and diminished the very nature of the salvation to which a Christian may aspire.

In a series of lectures given in 1906, Ménégoz looks back on this movement and describes the type of theology that he thinks is needed:

> Amidst the religious crisis which is now spreading throughout the Christian Church, it is necessary to guard against some of the confusions of our fathers, which had but little danger for them, but which now, with the progress of modern culture, may become serious obstacles to the spread of the Gospel. These confusions are specially visible in the idea of the Holy Bible as the word of God, and in the official teaching of the Church regarded as an authentic interpretation of divine revelation.[39]

The religious crisis to which Ménégoz refers is that brought on by the Enlightenment in general and the thought of Kant and Darwin in particular. He writes of the influence of philosophy on Christianity:

> Kantism, certainly, is not itself absolute truth, I do not believe it to be eternal any more than the Platonic philosophy. But today we are surrounded by its influence, and our theology is bound also to feel it. It has to adapt itself, as our ancestors adapted their ideas to the principles of Platonism … . To the philosophy of Kant, continued by the Neo-Kantians, has been added the powerful influence of Darwin's principles of evolution…The champions of orthodoxy clearly see the danger, they are terrified; they tremble, they make unheard-of efforts to support the cracked edifice, threatened with ruin.[40]

The result of Enlightenment thought was the slow ebb of confidence in the traditional theistic proofs and the very project of natural theology. Both the symbolo-fideists and the orthodox Lutherans they opposed can be thought of as responding to the crisis brought on by the decreased credibility of the traditional theistic arguments.

In response to the then new historical criticism of the Bible brought on by the Enlightenment, Ménégoz suggests historicizing the very representations of faith: 'The faith of the believer can only be expressed in the language of his time, and

this expression is subject to the conception of the world which forms the spiritual atmosphere in which he lives.'[41] This principle applies as much to the writers of the Bible as to any contemporary theologian. Ménégoz continues:

> [W]e must distinguish between faith itself, which is the essence of religious life, and the contingent and transitory form in which that faith is clothed at any given time in its history. The substance is, as to its nature, always identical with itself; the form is variable and subject to the laws of evolution.[42]

Ménégoz does not shy away from the critique of theology received from the Enlightenment or the natural sciences. Instead, he believes that Christian faith must adapt to the new environment in which it finds itself: an environment where scientific rationality is increasingly the paradigm of rationality in general, an environment in which the traditional rational ground of faith no longer seemed to provide the security it once did. Ménégoz holds that the key to dealing with this crisis is to focus on the protestant principle of *sola fide*.

It is also here that the work of Auguste Sabatier on religious symbols is most relevant. Sabatier retains Ménégoz's observation of an intractable opposition between the sciences on the one hand and morality and religion on the other:

> Our century, from the beginning, has had two great passions which still inflame and agitate its closing years. It has driven abreast the twofold worship of the scientific method and of the moral ideal; but, so far from being able to unite them, it has pushed them to a point where they seem to contradict and exclude each other. Every serious soul feels itself to be inwardly divided; it would fain conciliate its most generous aspirations, the two last motives for living and acting that still remain to it. Where but in a renovated conception of religion will this needed reconciliation be found?[43]

Sabatier's goal is to attempt to articulate a philosophy of religion (or perhaps 'philosophical theology' in contemporary parlance) that occupies and forges a middle path between the two dogmas. Sabatier writes:

> Our young people, it seems to me, are pushing bravely forward, marching between two high walls: on the one side modern science with its rigorous methods which it is no longer possible to ignore or avoid; on the other the dogmas and the customs of the religious institutions in which they were reared, and to which they would, but cannot, sincerely return. The sages who have led them hitherto point to the *impasse* they have reached, and bid them take a part, – either for science against religion, or for religion against science. They hesitate, with reason, in face of this alarming alternative. Must we then choose between pious ignorance and bare knowledge? Must we either continue to live a moral life belied by science, or set up a theory of things which our consciences condemn? Is there no issue to the dark and narrow valley which our anxious youth traverse? I think there is. I think I have caught glimpses of a steep and narrow path that leads to wide and shining table-lands above.[44]

Investigating this contemporary crisis, Sabatier, like Schleiermacher before him, locates the origin of religion in a primordial feeling. However, writing as he does, after not just Kant but also Darwin, Sabatier depicts humanity in an

evolutionary framework. In Sabatier's case, the primordial feelings of fear and hope are the beginnings of religiosity.[45] Alone, fear is incomplete, destructive, but mixed with hope, the sentiment provides the desire for help and the feeling of comfort that religions seek to reinforce and cultivate. Together, these feelings are according to Sabatier the foundation upon which all forms of religion are built. On the basis of this understanding of the function of religion, Sabatier, like Ménégoz, separates the propositional aspect of religious faith from the core of faith. Sabatier even goes so far as to indicate the possibility of pious heresy, where the emotion underlying the unorthodox expression of belief lays closer to this original feeling than the 'mechanical devotion' of the orthodox.[46]

In shoring up this picture of religious faith, Sabatier criticizes natural religion. This might be expected of a fideist, but Sabatier's critique is nuanced:

> I now understand why 'natural religion' is not a religion at all. It deprives man of prayer; it leaves God and man at a distance from each other. No intimate commerce, no interior dialogue, no exchange between them, no action of God in man, no return of man to God. At bottom, this pretend religion is nothing but philosophy.[47]

Sabatier objects to the picture of God entailed by natural religion: a God that is not religiously available (for prayer, for intercession, etc.). However, the following remark on evolution and teleology shows that Sabatier's thinking on natural religion is complex:

> Cosmic evolution proceeds always from that which is poorer to that which is richer, from the simple to the complex, from the homogenous to the heterogenous, from dead matter to living matter, from physical to mental life. At each stage Nature surpasses itself by a mysterious creation that resembles a true miracle in relation to an interior stage. What then shall we conclude from these observations except that in Nature there is a hidden force, an incommensurable 'potential energy' an ever open, never exhausted fount of apparitions at once magnificent and unexpected? How can such a universe escape the teleological interpretation of religious faith?[48]

How are we to reconcile these two movements in Sabatier's thought? Note in the first that he criticizes natural religion primarily for *religious* reasons, while his recommendation of teleology in evolution is naturalistic and promotes a sense of wonder (and possibly some sort of 'primordial' religious feeling). When natural religion stands in the way of piety, it is rejected; when it may assist piety, it is endorsed. Sabatier's nuanced view of natural religion is all the more surprising given the association between fideism and a rejection of natural theology.

The influence of Sabatier's symbolism is evident in Ménégoz's historicism with respect to the Bible as well as to Christians of various eras. This historicism applies as much to the writers of the Bible as it does to Christians of various other historical periods.[49] Ménégoz reflects on the separation between the epistemic presuppositions of contemporary Christian believers and those of ancient Jews, Christians, and pagans. He uses historical criticism to establish and support his

positive interpretation of Christian faith. According to Ménégoz, when the Bible is ossified into a timeless expression of the Christian faith, it brings the believer into direct conflict with modern science and historical criticism. However, according to Ménégoz and Sabatier, this is unnecessary and destructive to authentic Christian faith. In order to move past the contemporary cultural and intellectual crisis and survive, they counseled that the faith should seek its essence behind the historical changes, an essence they held to lie in *sola fide*.

In depicting the faith alone that is to be the essence of religion (and Christianity supremely) – fideism – Ménégoz first circumscribes the region in which it lies by delimiting the regions in which the essence of faith does not lie: ancient metaphysics, ancient sacred texts, science, and philosophy. Christian faith also does not lie in any particular historical expression of itself: it lies in the experience of transcendence that the believer has through contemporary religious symbols.

'*Fideism' in nineteenth-century Catholic theology*

French Catholic theologians in the early nineteenth century found themselves disoriented following the Revolution. While priests were still on the payroll of the state, mutual animosity presaged the separation that was to come between Church and State in France. The Abbé Felicité de Lamennais sought in his early writings to forge a path for the Catholic Church in the increasingly secular state of France. Against the tendency of the Enlightenment towards faith in the powers of human intellect to grasp the fundamental truths of reality, Lamennais held that human reason alone was insufficient to rise to genuine knowledge of divine matters; indeed, faith in reason alone is what thinkers like Lamennais thought helped bring about the Revolution and its horrors.[50]

Many theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, during the nineteenth century searched for ways to criticize the view of rationality associated with the Enlightenment, that genuine knowledge is grounded primarily in experience and the autonomous use of reason. Kantian modifications of empiricism made room for faith of a sort, but it was a faith deprived of transcendental rational grounding. While the traditionalists sought to defend Catholic tradition from Enlightenment critique, their efforts came under the critical eye of the Vatican and were implicitly rejected at the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) in favour of a revival of the Thomist ideal of the fundamental compatibility of faith and reason. Historian of theology Gerald McCool writes about the traditionalists, 'The most direct way to undercut rationalism was to show that unaided human reason was intrinsically incapable of reaching any true or certain conclusions about religious or moral issues.'[51]

The nineteenth-century French Catholic traditionalist theologians are often depicted in histories of theology as having been among the first fideists. Their traditionalist religious epistemologies ran counter to the compatibilist view of the relationship between faith and reason exemplified in Thomism. Indeed, an

argument can be made that there was a chain of influence from the traditionalists to mid-late nineteenth century romantics to the turn of the century modernists, whose 'errors' were understood by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*[52] to be roughly the same as those of the fideists: their views degenerated into agnosticism.

The traditionalists held that the Protestant rule of faith – not just *sola scriptura* but what it implied, the autonomy of the reasoning individual – is what led ultimately to the horrors of the French Revolution. Only a renewed Catholic communitarian epistemology would reestablish humanity's connection to morality and justice. Felicité de Lamennais was more theologian than philosopher, and his thought went through many stages of fealty to and rebellion against the Catholic Magisterium during his life. Louis Bautain likewise went through various intellectual stages, and like Lamennais, he had trouble with Catholic authorities during his life. However, unlike Lamennais, he submitted to the authority of the Church and assented to certain prescribed propositions on the ultimate compatibility of faith and reason.

It is likely that the association between the traditionalists and fideism stems not from their reactionary attack on the Enlightenment so much as their being perceived by later generations as being precursors to the modernism that would threaten the hold the neo-Thomists had on Catholic thought at the turn of the twentieth century. Ollé-Laprune was influenced by Bautain despite Ollé-Laprune's repudiation of what he took to be over-reliance on moral faith in theologies such as Bautain's. Ollé-Laprune sought to find a middle way between the ascendant neo-Thomists and the romantic theology of Bautain.[53]

The first Vatican Council, commonly regarded as having deemed fideism heretical, makes no mention of the word. The document produced by Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, identifies the Enlightenment critique of religion, perhaps embodied in the Biblical criticism inspired by the writings of Spinoza and Lessing, as the problem that brought about the need for the 'dogmatic constitution on the catholic faith'. During the third session of the Council, on April 24, 1870, various parameters were applied to the nature of faith within the Catholic Magisterium:

> Indeed even the holy Bible itself, which [the Protestant reformers] at one time claimed to be the sole source and judge of the christian faith, is no longer held to be divine, but they begin to assimilate it to the inventions of myth…Thus they would establish what they call the rule of simple reason or nature. The abandonment and rejection of the christian religion, and the denial of God and his Christ, has plunged the minds of many into the abyss of pantheism, materialism and atheism, and the consequence is that they strive to destroy rational nature itself, to deny any criterion of what is right and just, and to overthrow the very foundations of human society.[54]

Note how the document identifies the problem as stemming from the Reformation. The 'rule of faith' – or the epistemological method used to determine religious truth – of the Protestants, the individual reading of scripture, is

held to have degraded into the 'rule of simple reason or nature.' By this, the Council is criticizing a philosophy that takes material reality as being the only proper kind of reality. This metaphysic prevents a supernaturalist reading of the Bible, leaving in its place the need for a historical-critical method that encourages a purely moralistic reading of scripture. While subsequent Catholic sources point to Vatican I as stating the classic rejection of fideism, the word appears nowhere in the canons of the Council. This lacuna supports the idea that the term was not widely used at the time.

A decade lay between Vatican I and the publication of Ollé-Laprune's *De La Certitude Morale*. During this decade the authority of neo-Thomism would increase, culminating in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) in which the thought of Thomas is recommended for 'clearly distinguishing, as is fitting, reason from faith, while happily associating the one with the other'.[55] Thomas is celebrated because he

> … both preserved the rights and had regard for the dignity of [both faith and reason]; so much so, indeed, that reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height, can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.[56]

Again, the word 'fideism' is found nowhere in the encyclical despite the obvious relevance of the letter to subsequent Catholic criticism of what would later be understood as fideism.

Gradually, through the twentieth century use of the term 'fideism' drifts from these nineteenth-century contexts and is projected back through the history of ideas to refer to philosophers and theologians such as Kierkegaard, Montaigne, Pascal, Erasmus, and Tertullian. In each of these thinkers, embrace of Christian faith was coupled with a relative lack of trust in philosophy for discovering religious truth. The term was taken to be helpful for understanding the occasional opposition, for religious reasons, between theology and philosophy.

According to the twentieth-century theologian, Walter Horton, Ménégoz and late nineteenth-century Catholic critics of traditionalism coined the term separately.[57] If Horton is right, then there is additional reason to be sceptical about the term possessing a stable meaning, or a meaning stable enough to be philosophically useful beyond its use in pejorative criticism. It may be that no stable meaning for the term can be identified, but this does not mean that the term is not useful as a term of classification or comparison. It just means that use of the term must be qualified appropriately.

Historical context and the traditions of fideism

If 'fideism' were defined loosely as the idea that the truth about religious matters cannot be established by natural reason alone, then the vast majority of religious thought – among the many religions in the world – would be fideistic.

'Fideism' would lose its usefulness as a term of appraisal, being in extension little different than 'religious thought'. If 'fideism' were then used pejoratively, this would implicitly amount to a dismissal of religious thought. While some philosophical critics of religion might see little problem in such a rejection of the reasonableness of religious belief, among religious thinkers themselves – and sympathetic scholars – a variety of standpoints are available with respect to the relationships among faith, tradition and reason.

Taking a cue from Wittgenstein's mature philosophy, I suggest seeking not a single definition of 'fideism' but instead looking to the variety of ways the word is used – that is, to the traditions in which the term has been used. This is not to say that there is nothing in common among some or all of the various traditions of fideism;[58] however, inattention to the details of local usage of the term has contributed to confusion over the meaning of 'fideism' and thus to its oscillation between being used neutrally as a term of classification and negatively as a term of reproach. Clarity that is gained from study of particular traditions of use may contribute to resolution of philosophical problems concerned with the alleged fideism of a philosopher or theologian.

With this goal of perspicuity in mind, I identify six types of uses:[59]

    (1)   symbolo-fideism;[60]
    (2)   criticism of Catholic traditionalism;
    (3)   criticism of Biblicism;
    (4)   criticism of anti-metaphysical philosophy and theology;
    (5)   conformist sceptical fideism;
    (6)   evangelical sceptical fideism.

The first four items represent uses of the term in actual religious discourses, while the last two represent categories used by historians of philosophy. The pejorative uses of fideism (2–4), while perhaps having their place within polemical discourse – be it theological or naturalistic – are best not used in academic discourse. These uses tend to minimize or ignore salient differences between different philosophies and theologies and thus create the impression of 'fideism' referring to a general category in the comparison of religions, theologies, and philosophies. This leaves three remaining options: the symbolo-fideism of Ménégoz and Sabatier and Popkin's category of 'sceptical fideism', of which Penelhum identifies two types, conformist and evangelical.

However, Popkin's category 'sceptical fideism' can be criticized for grouping together figures from disparate periods under a common name. I hesitate to reject 'scepticial fideism' as being a species of fideism because Popkin's work has done much to convince analytic philosophers, the present author included, of the importance of rigorous historical research in philosophy and in resolving contemporary philosophical confusion, and use of the phrase 'sceptical fideism' is now commonplace in studies of early modern scepticism and religious thought.

That said, I do think that care should observed regarding the use of 'sceptical fideism' in categorizing early modern pious scepticism if one wishes to avoid confusion.

Resolving philosophical confusion, bringing language home from its sojourns, is no simple task. While languages retain traces of their histories, historical complexities can be forgotten in ordinary language use. It may not seem obvious to all after this preliminary study that the use of 'fideism' should be curtailed to contexts where its meaning is clearly grounded. After all, a locution such as 'Wittgensteinian fideism' is far more common in today's academic discourse than is the 'symbolo-fideism' of Ménégoz and Sabatier or the critical use of 'fideism' of Catholic opponents to traditionalism. Yet many uses of 'fideism' in academic discourse draw upon a vague idea in establishing the category of classification. Because of this lack of clarity, these labels are liable to create further philosophical problems even while resolving current ones. Scrupulously identifying the tradition of fideism that informs one's scholarly use of the term is one way to avoid introducing further confusion into one's analysis of a problem.[61]

Notes

1. Kai Nielsen 'Wittgensteinian fideism', *Philosophy*, **42** (1967), 191–209; reprinted in Kai Nielsen and D. Z. Phillips *Wittgensteinian Fideism?* (London: St Martin's Press, 2005) 21–38).

2. See Ken McGovern and Bela Szabados 'Was Wittgenstein a fideist?', *Sophia*, **41** (2002), 41–54.

3. A few books have been written specifically exploring fideism.: C. Stephen Evans *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Terence Penelhum *God and Scepticism: A Study in Scepticism and Fideism* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983); Richard Popkin *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2003) are the only book-length treatments I am aware of. Delbert James Hansen *Fideism and Hume's Philosophy* (New York NY: Peter Lang, 1993), and Sheila Delaney *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972) each deal with fideism in connection with the primary figure of study. However, none of these books mentions the historical origin and development of the term. Paul Helm *Belief Policies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) deals with fideism in its final chapter but addresses it in connection with the larger topic in epistemology, the idea of a 'belief policy'.

4. This method is similar to that used by Richard Amesbury in his *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on 'fideism'. There, he offers a brief history not of fideism but of 'the term's (contested) usage within the philosophical literature'. See Richard Amesbury 'Fideism', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2007 edn), URL= <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/>.

5. While several scholars suggest possible sub-classes of fideism, few of these distinctions have caught on in the literature. I do not dispute that this approach could potentially be useful for certain philosophical or theological purposes. In an unpublished paper, 'Understanding fideism as belief-policy: some remarks on reality, rationality and theology', Olli-Pekka Vainio offers a taxonomy of varieties of fideism in Christian theology and philosophy in order to better understand post-foundational theology. While Vainio's strategy for clarifying the meaning of 'fideism' is different than that taken in this article, he is careful about avoiding pejorative or otherwise misleading classifications of theologians as fideists.

6. See Amesbury 'Fideism', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

7. Philip Quinn 'Fideism', in Ted Honderich (ed.) *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

8. William Hasker 'Evidentialism', in Robert Audi (ed.) *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

9. Richard Popkin 'Fideism', in Paul Edwards (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York NY: MacMillan, 1967).

10. Nicholas Wolterstorff 'Faith', in Edward Craig (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998).

11. Terence Penelhum 'Fideism', in Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (eds) *Blackwell Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

12. Amesbury 'Fideism', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

13. Philosophical discourse does not always register this pejorative connotation of fideism. For example, Ralph Barton Perry's work on William James in the early twentieth century evinces nothing negative in representing James's thought as being fideistic. Furthermore, Robert C. Fuller's centennial essay on James's 'The will to believe' mentions James's thought in connection with fideism without any suggestion that the category might have a negative connotation. See Robert C. Fuller '''The will to believe'': a centennial reflection', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, **64** (1996), 633–650.

14. S. A. Matczak 'Fideism', *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York NY: McGraw Hill, 1967). The correct date for Ménégoz's book is 1879.

15. 'Fideism', in J. D. Douglas (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1978).

16. Alan Richardson and John MacQuarrie 'Fideism', in Alan Richardson and John Bowden (eds) *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1983).

17. R. K. Johnson 'Fideism', in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1984).

18. Karl-Heinz Neufeld 'Fideism', in Jean-Yves Lacoste (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* (New York NY: Routledge, 2005).

19. See John Paul II *Fides et Ratio* (1998), §52.

20. *Ibid.*, §53.

21. *Ibid.*, §55.

22. *Ibid.*

23. See Tertullian *Apologeticus and De Spectaculis*, T. R. Glover and G. H. Rendall (trs) (New York NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 201f.

24. See Geoffrey D. Dunn *Tertullian* (New York NY: Routledge, 2004), 31.

25. Eric Osborn *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 58.

26. Popkin *The History of Scepticism*, 3.

27. However, note that this does not apply to Penelhum's thought on fideism in general. Like many other philosophers, Penelhum points to figures as early as Tertullian as expressing a fideistic attitude on the relationship between faith and reason (see his article 'Fideism' in the *Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Religion*).

28. Penelhum *God and Scepticism*, ix.

29. *Ibid.*, 15.

30. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

31. The final section of the book addresses what Penelhum considers to be the fideism of Alvin Plantinga and D. Z. Phillips. Not surprisingly, given the confusion surrounding the meaning of 'fideism', both Plantinga and Phillips have rejected the term to classify their own thought. C.f. Alvin Plantinga 'Reason and belief in God', in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16–93; D. Z. Phillips *Belief, Change and Forms of Life* (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press International, 1986); *idem Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Phillips and Nielsen *Wittgensteinian Fideism?*

32. Richard H. Popkin *The History of Scepticism: From Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen, 1960), xv.

33. Eugène Ménégoz *Reflexions sur l'évangile de salut* (Paris: Librairie Fischerbacher, 1879); reproduced in *Publications diverse sur la fidéisme et son application a l'enseignement chrétien traditionnel*, I (Paris: Librairie Fischerbacher, 1900–1921), 36.

34. Technology allowing for the digitization of texts has enabled term-specific searching, and I have thus found uses of '*fidéisme*' in Catholic theological sources before the years of 1879–1880.

35. L'Abbé Robitaille 'Qu'est-ce que le traditionalisme?', *L'Ami de la Religion*, 16 September 1854 (Paris), 661–667.

36. Léon Ollé-Laprune *De La Certitude Morale* (Paris: Belin, 1880), 226–227.

37. See Ménégoz 'Le pragmatisme', *Publications divers sur le fidéisme*, II, 494–499.

38. American theologian George B. Stevens noted the awkward name for the school of theology in his 'Auguste Sabatier and the Paris school of theology', *Hibbert Journal*, **1** (1903), 553–568. Ménégoz and Sabatier accepted the name but did not invent it themselves, and tended to stay away from it in their publications. However, it is noteworthy that James Hastings (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908–1927), having no entry for 'fideism', includes one written by Ménégoz for 'symbolo-fideism'.

39. Eugène Ménégoz *Religion and Theology: I. The Triple Theological Distinction … II. Pardon and Righteousness* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), 7.

40. *Ibid.*, 35–37.

41. *Ibid.*, 7f.

42. *Ibid.*, 8.

43. Auguste Sabatier *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History* (New York NY: J. Pott and Co., 1902), xii.

44. *Ibid.*, xiv–xv.

45. *Ibid.*, 12f.

46. Sabatier writes, 'There are hours when the heresy which suffers, and which seeks and prays, is much nearer the source of life than the intellectual obstinacy of an orthodoxy incapable, as it would seem, of comprehending the dogmas that it keeps embalmed'; *ibid.*, 26f.

47. *Ibid.*, 30.

48. *Ibid.*, 84.

49. Ménégoz *Religion and Theology*, 8f.

50. See Darrin McMahon *Enemies of Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

51. Gerald A. McCool *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York NY: Seabury Press, 1977), 18.

52. Pope Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907) condemns primarily the modernist theology of Alfred Loisy; however, fideism is also criticized, understood in a way reminiscent of the symbolo-fideism of Sabatier and Ménégoz. See §7.

53. Walter M. Horton *The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain* (New York NY: New York University Press, 1926), 289–290.

54. Norman P. Tanner (ed.) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, II (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 804f.

55. See Leo XIII *Aeterni Patris* (1879), §18.

56. *Ibid*.

57. Walter M. Horton 'The theology of Eugène Ménégoz', *Journal of Religion*, **6** (1926), 174–194, and *idem The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain*. Horton writes in a footnote to *The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain:* 'The ''fideism'' of Bautain and other Catholic thinkers should be carefully distinguished from the ''fideism'' of Eugène Ménégoz, the friend and colleague of August Sabatier, which consisted in the doctrine that man is saved ''by faith, independently of beliefs''.' See, in *Publications diverses sur le fidéisme*, 'The two fideisms have nothing in common but their anti-intellectualism', 168.

58. An anonymous reviewer suggests that 'impropriety' or 'inutility' of natural theology is a common theme running through the thought of all those characterized as fideists (both in this article and elsewhere in philosophical discourse). Perhaps this is so, but this characterization would need qualification in order to apply accurately to individual cases. It seems to me that the qualifications and subtle distinctions that would follow on such an initial characterization would ultimately be little different from the suggestions I offer here on seeking perspicuity about traditions of usage of 'fideism' as well as the social and historical context of thinkers under study.

59. I do not mean to imply that these are the only uses of the term, but on the basis of this preliminary study, these seem to be the primary traditions of use. Sometimes philosophers distinguish between moderate and extreme variants of fideism. I have not included these modifications because as yet such distinctions have not caught on widely in the literature and rely in some unspecified sense on one or more of these traditions listed. Future work identifying such connections would be helpful.

60. I do not categorize the Catholic modernists as fideists. They did not use the term to describe their own theology, and in the context of Catholic theological discourse, fideism is a charge to be avoided rather than a neutral term of classification. In addition, Ménégoz was at pains to distinguish his theology from modernism. Nevertheless, similarities between the thought of turn-of-the-century French Catholic modernists and the Protestants Ménégoz and Sabatier merit further study and could conceivably complicate the picture I am drawing in this essay. In particular, there is need for further research on what influence Ménégoz and Sabatier may or may not have had on Alfred Loisy, leader of the modernist movement. I am thankful to Professor Han Adriaanse for helpful discussion on this matter.

61. I am indebted to many individuals for helpful comments on various segments of this article. I would like to thank in particular Professors Han Adriaanse, Ingolf Dalferth, Juliet Floyd, and Alan Olson for constructive criticism of earlier attempts to gain perspective on the nature of fideism. Helpful suggestions were also offered by an anonymous reviewer, and I believe the paper is stronger for them. All errors and infelicities are mine.