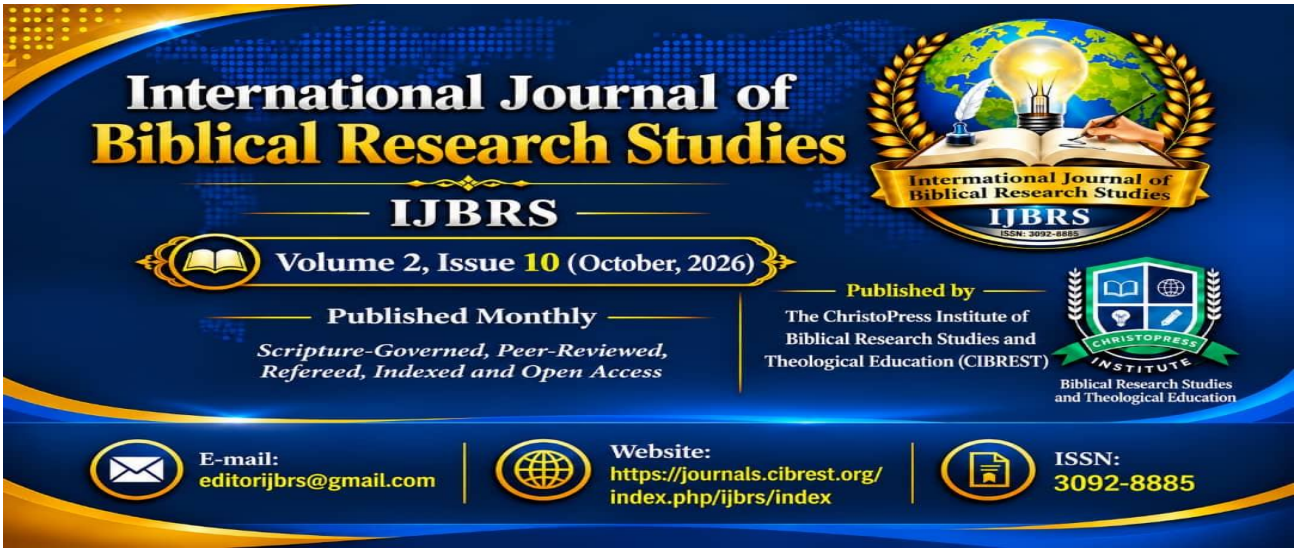
`



Taxonomy of Faith and the Propulsive Theory of Faith: A Scripture-Governed Theo-Theoretical Framework for Faith Theology

Dele Alaba Ilesanmi



Author's Details:
Dele Alaba Ilesanmi
Faculty of Biblical Research Studies

Affiliation: ChristoPress of Biblical Research Studies and Theological Education (CIBREST)

Corresponding Email:
pstdeleilesanmi3@gmail.com
ORCID: *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4874-0759*

GSM: +234-8062197040

Article Type: **Scripture-Governed Research**

Publication History:

Date Received: 15th October 2026
Date Accepted: 16th October 2026
Date Published: 28th October 2026

How to Cite this Article:

Ileanmi, Dele A. "Taxonomy of Faith and the Propulsive Theory of Faith: A Scripture-Governed Theo-Theoretical Framework for Faith Theology" In *International Journal of Biblical Research Studies* 2, no. 10 (2026): 1–25. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23779942

Published by CIBREST

© 2026 Dele Alaba Ilesanmi
A CC-BY-NC-ND license in partnership with Zenodo. *ChristoPress Institute of Biblical Research Studies and Theological Education*

Abstract

This paper develops an integrated Scripture-Governed framework that combines a taxonomy of faith with the proposed Propulsive Theory of Faith. The taxonomy addresses how scriptural descriptions of faith may be classified, while the theory explains how faith functions as a motivating conviction through which a person responds to what God has communicated. The study adopts a Scripture-governed qualitative conceptual analysis, employing scriptural review design by engaging with selected and relevant biblical and theological scholarship. The paper examines faith in relation to its object, source, operation, expression, condition, and outcome. It distinguishes person-associated descriptions, functional descriptions, and descriptions of faith's condition without treating them as mutually exclusive biblical species. It also clarifies the Delean analytical terms, "abstracted realities" and "concreted realities," as theoretical terms. Abraham's response to God's call and Noah's response to divine warning illustrate the proposed propulsive sequence: divine communication, faith, action, and possible outcome. The paper argues that the observability of an action does not make the faith motivating it empirical in nature. The findings reveal the taxonomy classifies the different objects, exemplars, functions, conditions, and expressions of faith, whereas the Propulsive Theory of Faith explains how faith motivates a person's response to what God has communicated. It concludes that the taxonomy and theory can function together as a preliminary framework for Faith Theology, subject to further exegetical testing, critical review, and clarification of the scope and limits of each category. However, the study contributes largely to the frontiers of knowledge in Faith theology.

Keywords: *Faith Theology; taxonomy of faith; Propulsive Theory of Faith; Scripture-Governed Research; abstracted realities; concreted realities; Hebrews 11:1, Scripture-Governed Theo-Theoretical framework.*

OPEN ACCESS

Thesis Statement

This paper argues that a Scripture-Governed account of faith requires both a careful classification of scriptural descriptions of faith and an explanatory account of how faith motivates action; accordingly, the proposed taxonomy identifies analytical dimensions of faith, while the Propulsive Theory of Faith explains faith as an antecedent motivating conviction in a person's response to God's communication positively.

Bible Version Used

All Bible citations are from the King James Version (KJV) unless otherwise indicated.



1.0 Introduction

Faith occupies a central place in biblical discourse, yet the term is used in diverse contexts to describe trust, belief, fidelity, confidence, reliance, and a response to divine communication. The New Testament's *pistis* vocabulary has attracted sustained scholarly discussion, including debate over the relationship between belief, trust, faithfulness, and allegiance (Morgan 2015; Gupta 2021; Bates 2020). These discussions caution against assuming that every occurrence of "faith" carries an identical nuance. Biblical research therefore requires attention both to the variety of scriptural descriptions and to the relationships among faith, divine communication, and human response.

This paper brings together two connected but distinguishable projects: *a taxonomy of faith and the Propulsive Theory of Faith*. The taxonomy asks how the scriptural descriptions of faith may be classified without collapsing different kinds of categories into one list. The theory asks how faith operates in response to what God has communicated. Its central proposition is that faith functions as a propelling force through which a person responds positively to what God has communicated concerning abstracted and concreted realities.[1] In this formulation, faith precedes and motivates the action that proceeds from it; the resulting action does not, merely by being observable, turn the motivating faith into an empirical phenomenon.

The study is conceptual and theological rather than experimental. It does not claim to measure inward faith, prove divine causation by empirical instruments, or establish that every action is necessarily produced by faith. Rather, it proposes a Scripture-Governed analytical framework and tests its usefulness against selected biblical passages. In this wise, Abraham's response to God's call (Gen 12:1–4; Heb 11:8) and Noah's response to divine warning (Heb 11:7) illustrate the proposed propulsive sequence: divine communication, faith, action, and possible outcome.

1.1 Aim of the Research Work

The aim is to develop an integrated Scripture-Governed framework that classifies scriptural descriptions of faith and explains faith's propulsive relationship to action through the proposed Propulsive Theory of Faith.

1.2 Research Questions

The paper addresses five questions:

i. What conceptual distinctions are necessary for a responsible taxonomy of faith?
ii. What kinds of scriptural descriptions of faith can be grouped analytically without claiming that Scripture provides a single formal taxonomy?
iii. How do selected biblical narratives portray faith as preceding and motivating action?
iv. How should "abstracted realities" and "concreted realities" be defined within this framework?

[1] Abstracted realities are realities apprehended through faith or conceptual understanding without direct sensory perception, while concreted realities are tangible realities that can be perceived through the physical sense. See Dele Alaba Ilesanmi, "Faith Theology as a Non-Empirical Approach to Understanding Divine Truth: A Study of Abstracted and Concreted Realities." *International Journal of Biblical Research Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16999828.

v. How can the taxonomy and Propulsive Theory of Faith be integrated without confusing faith, its expression, and its consequences?

1.3 Research Problem and Gap

Biblical and theological scholarship discusses faith in terms of belief, trust, faithfulness, allegiance, and practical response, but these discussions do not automatically provide a unified classification for the present project. Conversely, lists of "kinds of faith" can become conceptually unstable when person-associated labels, functional descriptions, and conditions of faith are placed together as though they were equivalent categories. A second problem concerns causal direction: faith and action are closely connected in Scripture, but the connection can be misdescribed if the observable expression of faith is treated as the source of faith itself.

The research gap addressed here is therefore specific and provisional: the paper proposes an integrated framework that differentiates the dimensions used to classify faith from the theoretical claim about faith's motivating function. It does not claim that no prior scholar has discussed these issues. Rather, it offers a distinctive synthesis within Ilesanmi's Scripture-Governed Faith Theology, building particularly on his account of Faith Theology as a non-empirical approach to divine truth and his discussion of empirical inquiry in biblical-theological research (Ilesanmi 2025a; Ilesanmi 2025b).

1.4 Research Methodology

The study adopts Scripture-governed qualitative conceptual analysis with a Scriptural review design. First, it defines key terms and distinguishes analytical levels. Second, it examines selected passages in their immediate literary contexts, giving particular attention to Genesis 12:1–4; Genesis 6:13–22; Hebrews 11:1–8; Luke 5:1–11; Luke 6:38; and James 2:14–26. Third, it engages selected scholarship on New Testament faith language and the relationship between faith and outward conduct. Finally, it constructs a provisional taxonomy and formulates the Propulsive Theory of Faith as a theoretical proposal rather than as an already validated or universally accepted theory.

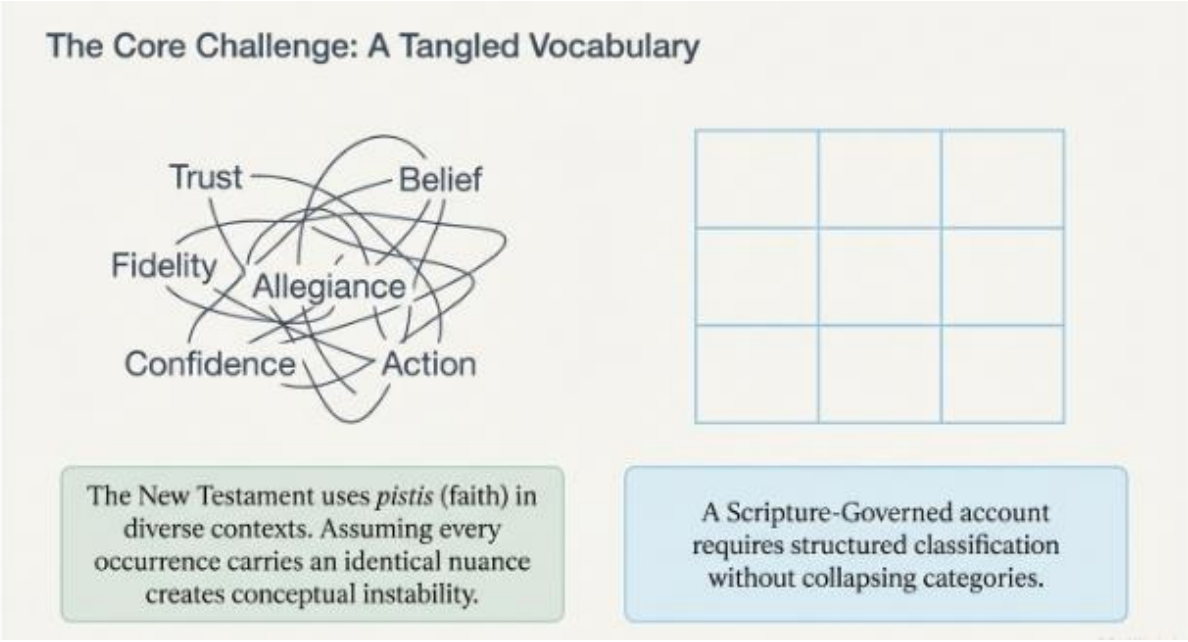
The method has limitations. This is not a comprehensive lexical study of every Hebrew and Greek term associated with faith, nor does it undertake a full historical-critical exegesis of every cited passage. The classifications are therefore presented as analytical tools to be tested and refined, not as exhaustive categories dictated by a single biblical list. Empirical methods may be used to investigate reported belief or observable conduct, but such methods cannot, by themselves, adjudicate the

theological truth of divine revelation. This distinction is consistent with the epistemological position advanced in Ilesanmi's earlier work, while remaining open to critical examination of its implications (Ilesanmi 2025a; 2025b).

2.0 Scriptural Review and Exegesis

Hebrews 11:1 presents faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The verse connects faith with hope and with realities that are not presently seen. It is foundational for the present framework because it prevents faith from being reduced to prior sensory confirmation of every reality believed. Nevertheless, the verse should not be made to say that all belief is unrelated to testimony, experience, or any form of evidence. Its immediate literary setting is a catalogue of people whose actions were shaped by trust in God, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Moses. The chapter repeatedly links faith with action while distinguishing faith's basis from prior possession of the promised outcome.

Hebrews 11:7 describes Noah as responding by faith to a divine warning concerning events "not seen as yet." Noah's faith is connected to reverent action: he prepared an ark. The passage offers a clear instance of the proposed propulsive relationship. Divine warning precedes Noah's response; faith is the posture through which he receives the warning as authoritative; preparation follows. The narrative does not present the building of the ark as the source that created Noah's faith. Instead, the action is narrated as a consequence of his response to the divine communication.



Hebrews 11:8 similarly states that Abraham, "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Genesis 12:1–4 supplies the narrative background: God calls Abraham to leave his country and kindred for a land that God will show him. Abraham's departure is an action, but the theological point is not that the action was the empirical foundation of his faith. Rather, the narrative portrays his departure as a response to the divine call. The event can be described historically as an outward action, but the faith motivating it is not rendered empirical merely because the action has an observable form.

Genesis 6:13–22 and Hebrews 11:7 provide a parallel in Noah's response to warning. Both narratives depict divine communication before the action that follows. In these cases, the object of faith is not a sensory object already verified by the person before acting; the response is oriented towards what God has said concerning a future or unseen reality. The theory does not require the claim that Noah or Abraham lacked every form of experience. Its narrower claim is that the relevant response did not depend on prior empirical verification of the promised or warned-of outcome.

Luke 5:1–11 recounts Jesus' instruction to Simon Peter to launch out and let down the nets. Peter refers to the unsuccessful labour of the night, yet says, "nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). This episode is useful because it explicitly places Jesus' word within Peter's decision to act. Peter's previous experience is present in the narrative, but the decisive response is expressed as obedience "at thy word." The episode therefore illustrates that faith-motivated action need not be described as a response to empirical evidence alone. The passage does not, however, establish that every practical action should ignore ordinary evidence or prudence; its theological context is the authority of Jesus' particular instruction.

Luke 6:38 commands, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." Within the Propulsive Theory, this text may illustrate a response in which trust in divine instruction motivates giving. Yet the interpretation must avoid overstatement. The verse by itself does not prove that every act of giving is motivated by faith, nor should its promise be reduced to a mechanical guarantee of financial return. It is an example of how a believer may respond to a divine instruction because the instruction is trusted. The theoretical point concerns the possible causal order—belief in the word motivating action—not a universal diagnosis of the motives behind every act of generosity.[2] However, what propels one to give under God's instruction is faith in God and His Word.

[2] Luke 6:38 is treated as an illustrative case of a possible faith-motivated response, not as proof that all giving is motivated by faith or that the passage guarantees a mechanical financial return.

James 2:14–26 is essential because it addresses the relationship between faith and works. James argues that a claim to faith without corresponding works is dead, using examples of practical response and recalling Abraham's offering of Isaac. The passage can be read as insisting that faith is not merely a verbal profession detached from action. It does not require the conclusion that works generate faith. Rather, works disclose or enact the reality of a claimed faith. In other words, faith is communicated through actions that renders an individual's inward convictions observable in outward conduct. James's formulation should be kept in dialogue with Paul's discussions of faith and works rather than used as a shortcut to dissolve their contextual differences. The present theory treats action as a potential expression and consequence of faith, while recognizing that James also uses works to challenge empty claims to faith.

John 20:24–29, the account of Thomas, requires special care in any taxonomy. Thomas requests a form of sensory confirmation of Jesus' resurrection, and Jesus responds by addressing his demand. Jesus' statement, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29), creates a contrast between seeing and believing without making the entire episode a simplistic opposition between evidence and faith. The narrative itself provides testimony and a sign within the story. *Thomasic faith* may therefore be used as an analytical label for the relationship between requested sensory confirmation and belief, but it should not be treated as a biblical technical term or as a stable "kind" of faith without further argument.[3]

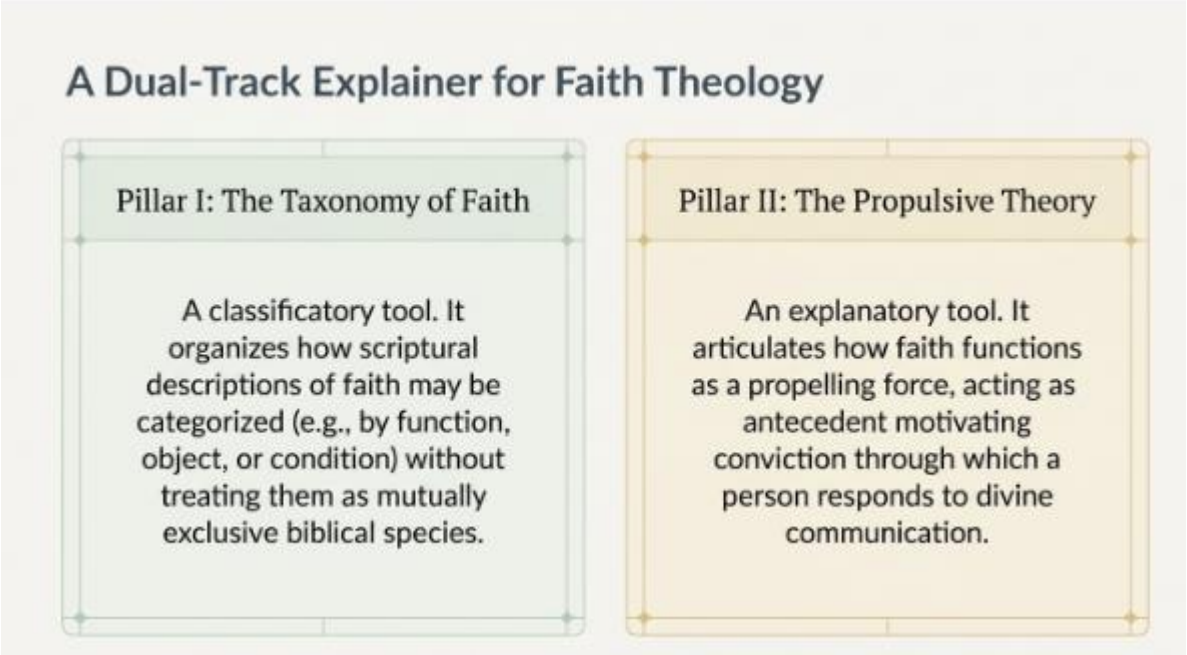
Taken together, these passages support three preliminary conclusions. First, Scripture depicts faith in more than one descriptive form. Second, faith is often connected to action, obedience, endurance, or practical expression. Third, the relationship between faith and action does not mean that action is always the source of faith. The Propulsive Theory formalises this third observation as a proposed explanatory principle, while the taxonomy organises the first observation into distinguishable analytical dimensions.

3.0 Theo-Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The Theo-Theoretical framework is Scripture-Governed: Scripture is treated as the controlling theological authority for defining and evaluating the concepts developed in this paper. This does not remove the need for linguistic, historical, contextual, and logical discipline. Rather, it establishes the

[3] The category *Thomasic faith* is an analytical label derived from the Thomas narrative in John 20:24–29. It is not a technical term used by the Gospel itself.

order of authority within the study: scholarly theories and research tools assist analysis, but they do not supersede the scriptural text as the final theological norm. Ilesanmi's work on Faith Theology as a non-empirical approach to divine truth provides a direct conceptual precursor to this orientation and is relevant to this study (Ilesanmi 2025a).



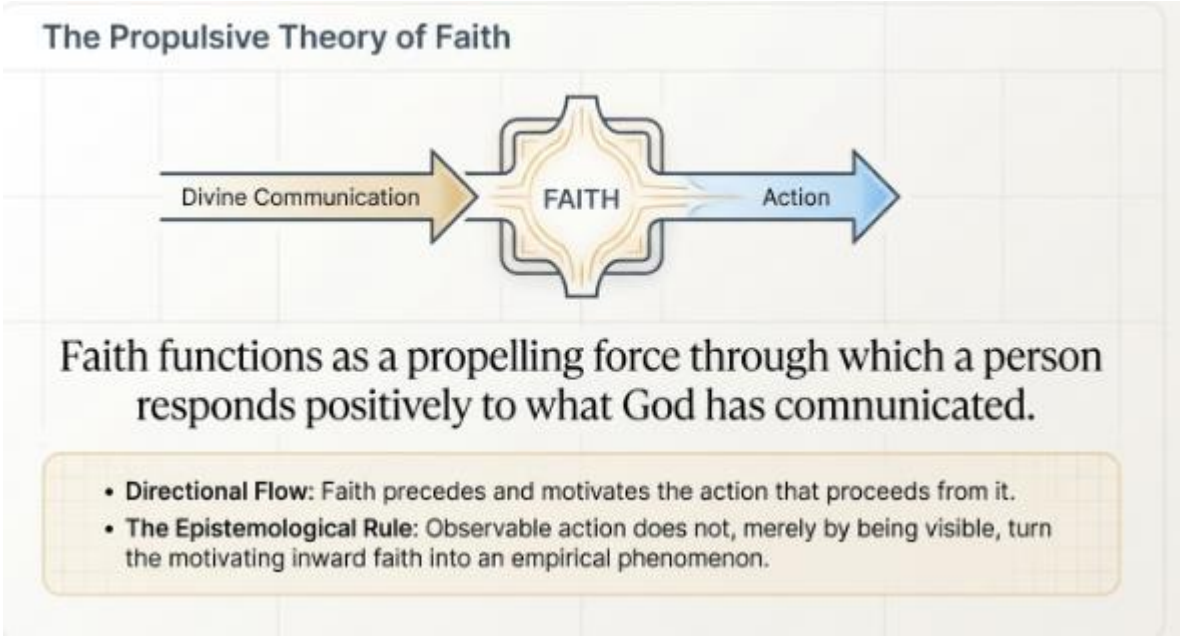
The term "faith" is used here in a broad theological sense to refer to belief, trust, or conviction in response to a communicated word or testimony. This working definition is not intended to settle every lexical debate about *Hebrew 'āman-related forms* or *Greek pistis* and *pisteuō*. Scholarship has shown that New Testament faith language can involve trust, faithfulness, loyalty, and relational commitment, depending on context (Morgan 2015; Bates 2020; Gupta 2021). The taxonomy must therefore classify scriptural uses contextually rather than assume a single English definition fits every occurrence.[4]

The terms "abstracted realities" and "concreted realities" are used as author-defined theoretical categories. In this paper, *abstracted realities* refer to realities communicated or believed without being directly accessible to sight or touch in the relevant context—for example, God's existence or a future promise. *Concreted realities* refer to tangible or sensory-perceptible created realities, such as water, trees, the sun, and the moon, considered within a theological account of God's creative activity. These terms are not presented as established biblical expressions. Nor does "abstracted" mean that a

[4] The Greek noun πίστις (pistis) and verb πιστεύω (pisteuō) have context-sensitive semantic ranges. This paper does not attempt a comprehensive lexical study; it uses "faith" as a working theological term and acknowledges the diversity of scholarly approaches to New Testament faith language.

reality is unreal, and "concreted" does not mean that sensory observation alone establishes its theological meaning. "Air" illustrates the need for precision: it is ordinarily invisible, but it is measurable through its effects and by scientific instruments. The distinction is therefore about the mode in which a reality is apprehended in the theological argument, not a claim that all invisible things are empirically inaccessible.[5]

The Propulsive Theory of Faith is defined as the proposition that faith functions as the propelling force through which a person responds positively to what God has communicated concerning abstracted and concreted realities. "Positively" here means responsively or in alignment with the communication as understood by the believer; it does not mean that every action resulting from a person's claimed faith is morally correct or divinely approved. The theory assumes that faith may motivate action, but it does not claim that every action is caused by faith or that the existence of action proves the genuineness of the faith professed.[6]

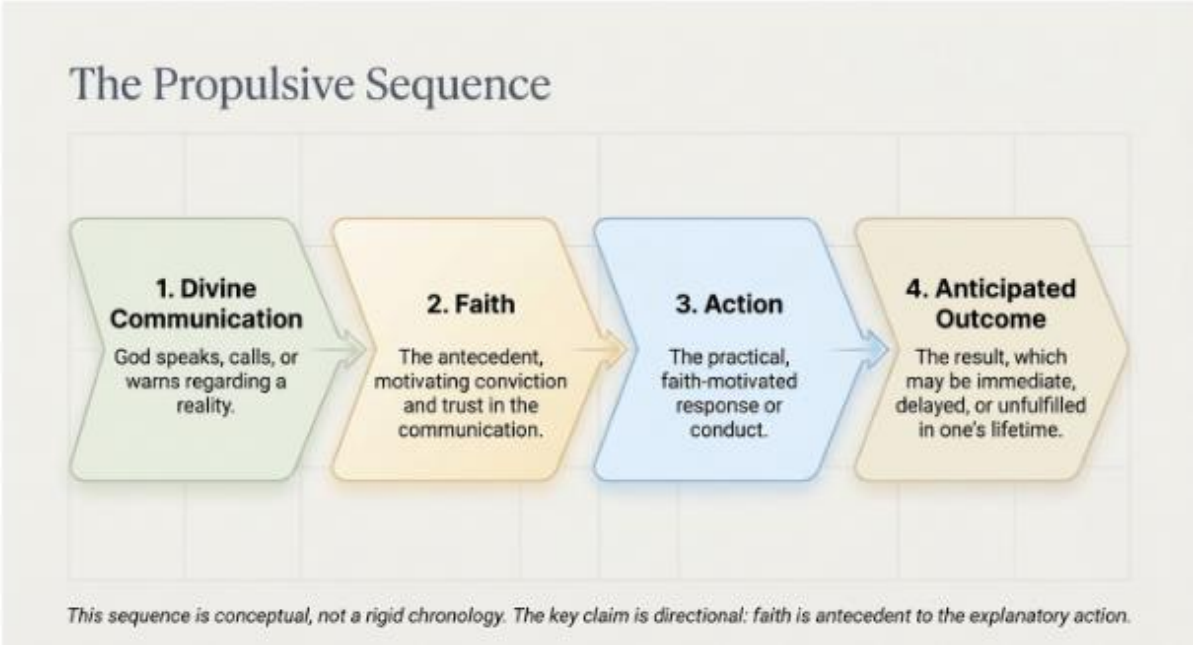


The core sequence is: *God's communication → faith in the communication → faith-motivated response/action → anticipated or subsequent outcome*. The sequence is conceptual rather than a rigid chronology for every biblical event. In some narratives, trust, understanding, obedience, and

[5] The terms "taxonomy of faith," "Propulsive Theory of Faith," "abstracted realities," and "concreted realities" are used in this article as analytical or theoretical terms. They should not be understood as direct quotations from biblical terminology or as already established categories shared by all biblical scholars. However, the understanding of the terms is grounded in Scripture.

[6] The phrase "faith is non-empirical" is used here in a restricted epistemological sense: the faith under discussion is not grounded solely in prior sensory verification of the reality promised or communicated. It does not mean that believers never encounter testimony, signs, experience, or observable events.

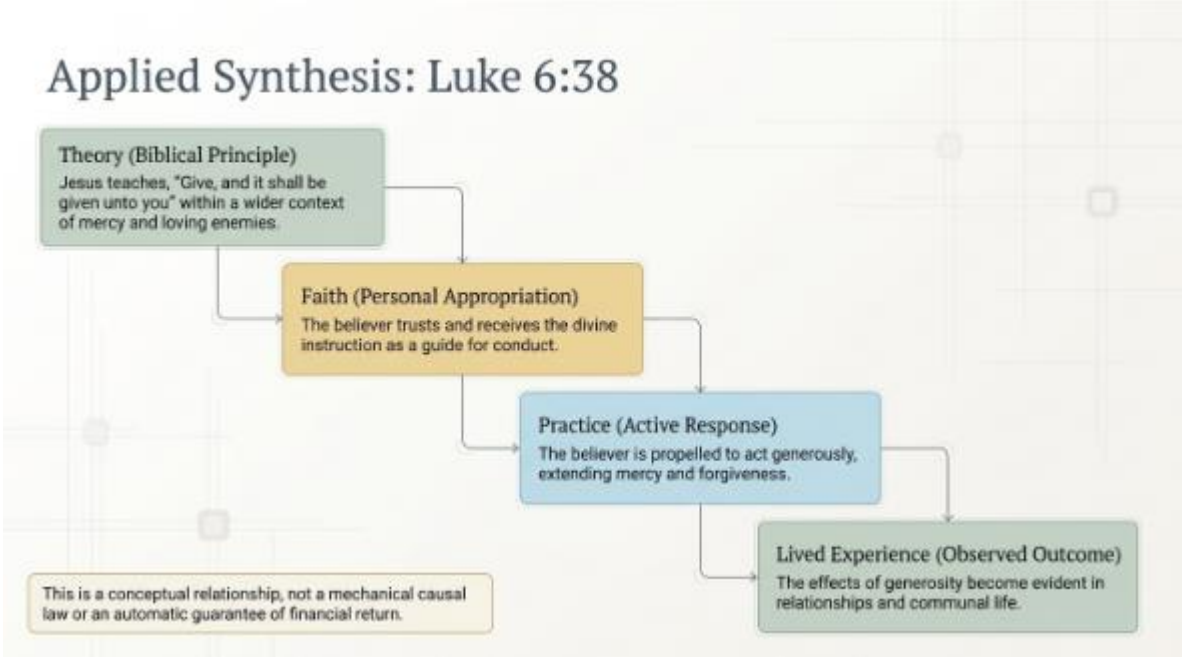
experience may interact dynamically. The key claim is directional: where a person acts because they trust a divine word, faith is antecedent to the action in the explanatory sense. The subsequent action may be observable, but that fact does not convert the antecedent faith into an empirical source of knowledge. This distinction is central to the framework and is consistent with Ilesanmi's argument that empirical inquiry should not be confused with the epistemological basis of theological truth (Ilesanmi 2025b).



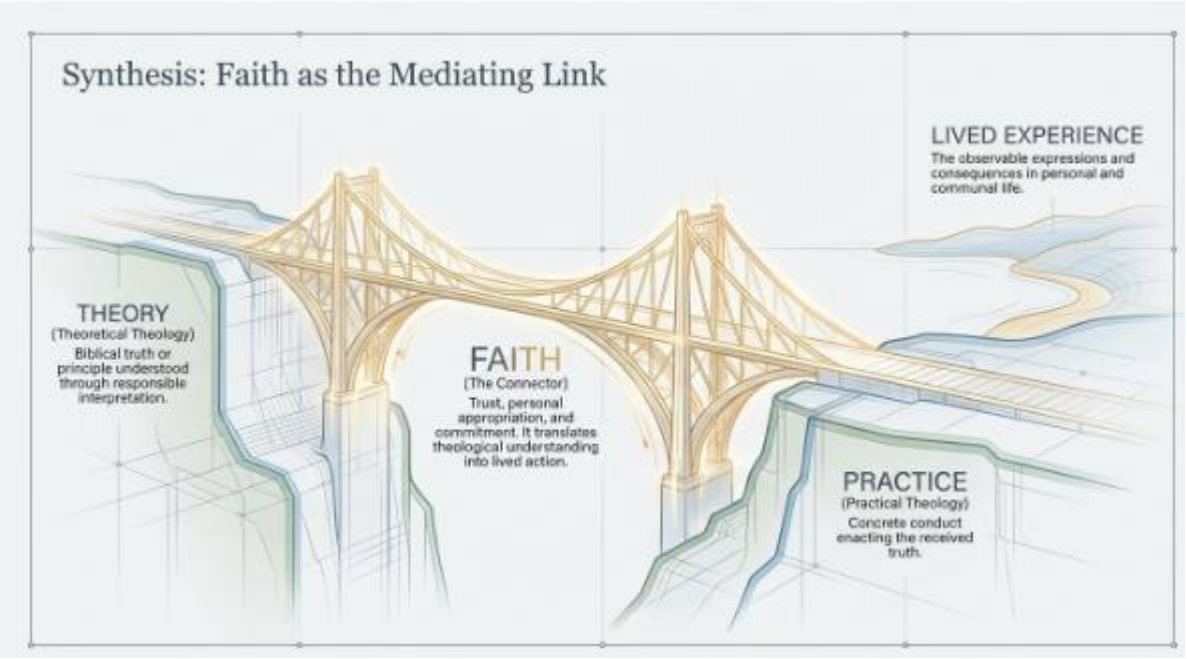
Furthermore, Faith is the link between theory and practice within Scripture-governed faith theology. In other words, or in a more specific term, within Scripture-Governed Faith Theology, faith is the mediating link between divinely revealed truth (theory) and its practical expression (practice).

Conceptually, **theory** is a biblical truth or principle understood through responsible interpretation of Scripture; **faith** is trust in, personal appropriation of, and commitment to the truth received; **practice** means **t**he concrete conduct through which the received truth is enacted in life; and **lived experience:** The observable expression and consequences of that conduct in personal and communal life.

Scripturally, Paul relates faith to hearing the message of Christ. In the argument of Romans 10, faith is not presented as an isolated technique but as a response connected with the proclaimed message (Rom 10:14–17). Hebrews 11:8 asserts that Abraham's faith is expressed in obedience: he responds to God's call by going out, although he does not know his destination. Faith propelled him into action. In other words, faith enacted in conduct. In James 2:17, James buttresses this by arguing that faith without works is dead. He challenges a claim to faith that produces no corresponding action; he does not reduce faith to mere outward performance (Jas 2:14–26). What is more, in Luke 6:27–38, more specifically, the command to give in Luke 6:38 belongs to a wider teaching on loving enemies, doing good, showing mercy, refraining from condemnation, forgiving and giving. Therefore, the passage should not be narrowed to financial giving alone. Luke 6:38 can be illustrated theoretically and practically:



- **Theory (biblical principle):** Luke 6:38 teaches, "Give, and it shall be given unto you"
- **Faith (personal appropriation):** The believer trusts and receives the teaching as a guide for conduct.
- **Practice (active response):** The believer acts generously and extends mercy and forgiveness to others.
- **Lived experience (observed outcome):** The effects of generosity may become evident in relationships and communal life.



It is important to note that Luke 6:38 should not be treated as a mechanical guarantee of financial return. Its literary context emphasises generous, merciful conduct and the measure used in relationships (Luke 6:27–38). The proposition describes a conceptual relationship, not an automatic causal law. Also, taken together, these passages cited support a relationship between receiving divine truth (theoretical principles), responding in faith and expressing that response through action (practical application). Faith is the mediating link between biblical theory and practical application within Scripture-Governed Faith Theology. They do not, however, explicitly define faith as a connector between the academic disciplines of theoretical and practical theology. That disciplinary formulation is this author's proposed theoretical synthesis.

Conceptual relationship in Faith Theology (Conceptual Sequence)

Theory

(Truth understood or received; Biblical principle—Luke 6:38)

Faith

(Trust, appropriation, and commitment to the teaching)

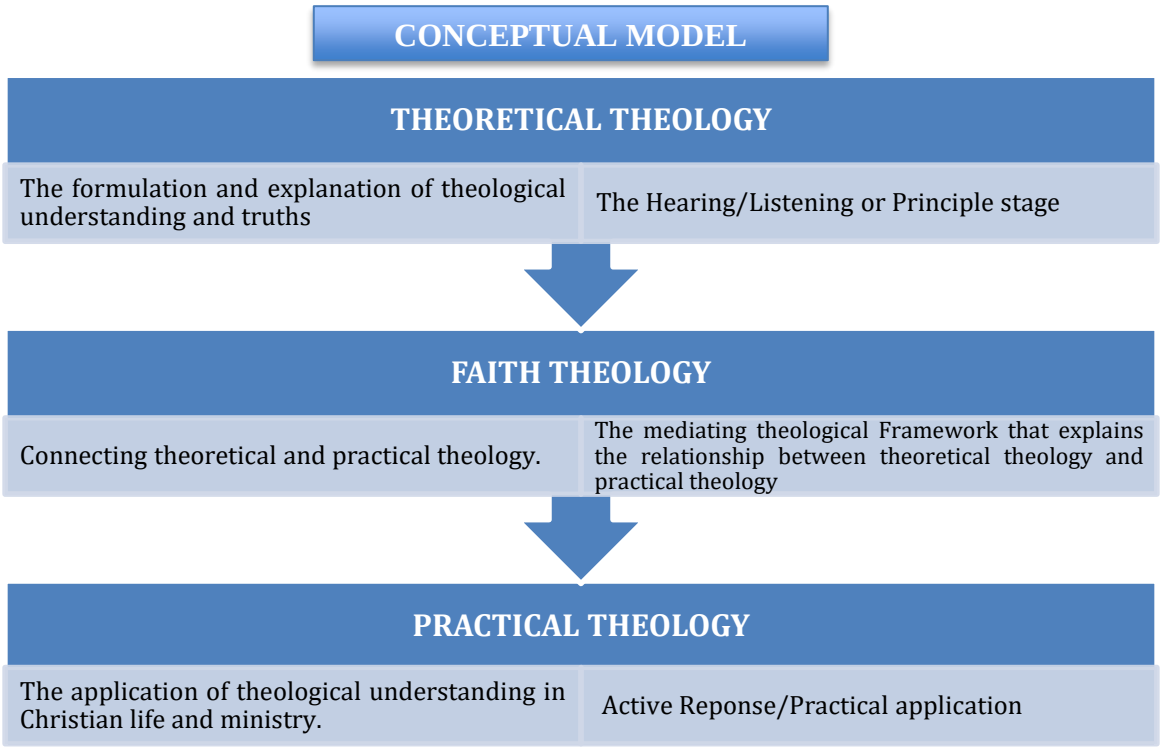
Practice

(Truth expressed in action/active response: active giving, mercy, and generosity)

Lived Experience

(Observable expressions and consequences in human relationships)

Additionally, Faith Theology is the mediating theological framework that connects theoretical theology with practical theology by examining how received biblical truth informs Christian belief, commitment, and action. This conceptual model explains the three theological terms:



It is also important to note that Faith does not automatically connect every theory to sound practice, nor does belief alone guarantee correct action. The biblical teaching must be interpreted responsibly, the response must be evaluated in context, and outcomes must not be assumed in advance. Scripture provides the governing norm for the proposition (2 Tim 3:16–17; 1 Cor 4:6).

In similar proposition, Faith is the mediating connector between theoretical theology and practical theology. That is, Faith is the mediating principle that connects theoretical theology with practical theology, translating theological understanding into lived Christian action. More so, Faith does not replace interpretation, discernment, or practical evaluation. Nor does every theological claim become true merely because someone believes it. Scripture remains the governing authority for evaluating theological claims and their practical implications (1 Cor 4:6; 2 Tim 3:16–17).

4.0 Taxonomy and Propulsive Theory of Faith

4.1 The Need for a Multidimensional Taxonomy

A taxonomy is useful only if it classifies comparable things according to stated criteria. The proposed taxonomy therefore does not present every label as a separate species of faith. It differentiates at least three analytical levels: (1) person-associated descriptions, which identify faith in relation to a biblical figure or narrative; (2) functional descriptions, which identify the role or operation associated with faith; and (3) condition-oriented descriptions, which characterise the perceived strength, vitality, or circumstance of faith. These levels can overlap. Abraham's faith, for example, can be discussed as Abrahamic by narrative association, as responsive to divine promise by object and operation, and as active through obedience by expression.

Taxonomy of Faith is a systematic classification of faith according to its object, biblical exemplars, function, and condition or expression.

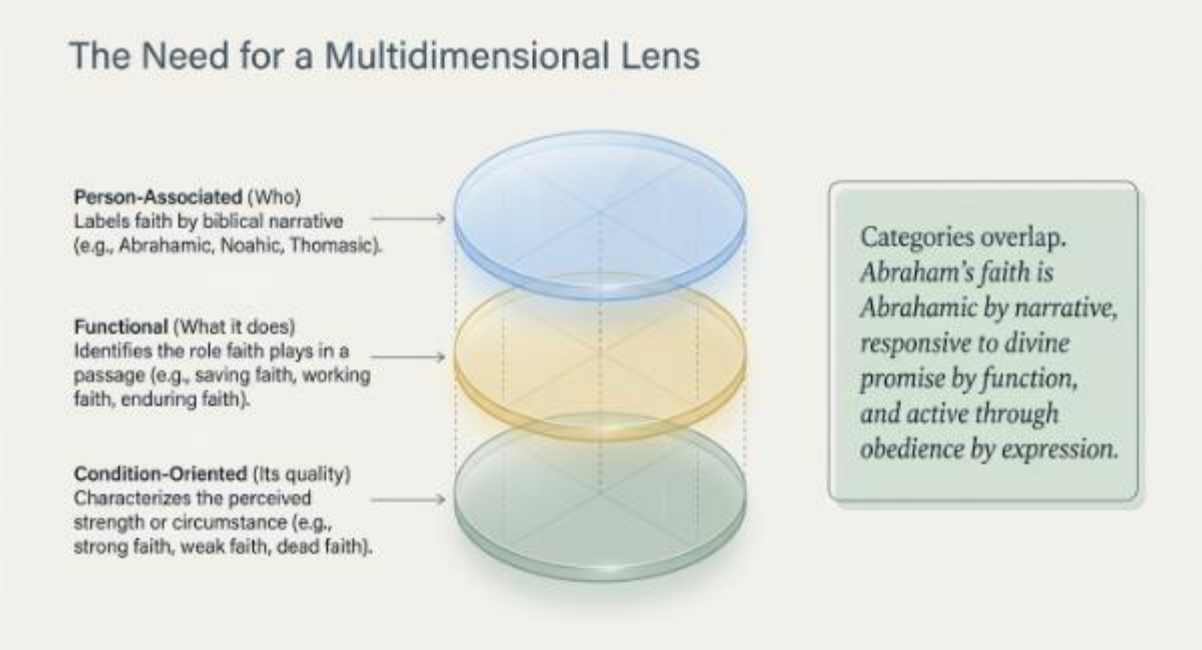


Table 1. Proposed Multidimensional Taxonomy of Faith

Classification dimension	**Guiding question**	**Illustrative biblical material**
Person-associated description/ Biblical exemplar	Which biblical person or narrative is associated with the faith under discussion?	Abrahamic faith (Gen 12:1–4; Heb 11:8); Noahic faith (Heb 11:7); Thomasic faith (John 20:24–29). Others are Mosaic faith, Davidic faith, Rahabic faith, Petrine faith, Pauline faith, etc.
Function	What role does faith play in the passage?	Saving faith, justifying faith, living faith, working faith, enduring faith. Faith and salvation (Eph 2:8–10); faith and works (Jas 2:14–26); endurance (Heb 10:35–39).
Strength/Condition	How is the condition or quality of faith described?	Strong faith, weak faith, little faith, great faith, dead faith, shipwrecked faith. Weak/strong (Rom 4:19–20); little/great (Matt 8:10, 26); dead (Jas 2:17, 26)

Object	In whom or what is trust placed?	Biblical-God-directed faith; God's promise (Gen 15:6; Rom 4); Jesus' word (Luke 5:5). We also have other-deity-directed religious faith; non-deity-directed trust.
Mode of apprehension	Is the relevant reality directly sensed, received through testimony, or anticipated as unseen?	Heb 11:1, 7–8; John 20:24–29
Expression	What response is associated with faith?	By expression or operation: Confessing faith, obedient faith, active faith, persevering faith. Obedience, preparation, giving, perseverance, practical care (Heb 11; Luke 6:38; Jas 2)
Outcome	What follows in the narrative, and is it immediate, delayed, or unfulfilled within the person's lifetime?	Heb 11:13, 35–40; narrative-specific outcomes

Important scholarly distinction: These categories are not mutually exclusive, and they are not all formal biblical labels. Some are derived from explicit biblical expressions, while others are analytical classifications proposed to organise the study of faith.

4.2 Person-Associated Descriptions

Labels such as Abrahamic, Noahic, Mosaic, Davidic, Rahabic, Petrine, Pauline, and Thomasic faith can serve as shorthand for analysing particular biblical narratives. They are not all explicitly named in Scripture as formal categories. Their usefulness is bibliogogical and analytical: Abraham’s narrative highlights trust in divine promise; Noah’s highlights action in response to warning concerning unseen events; Rahab’s highlights belief and protective action (Josh 2:8–14; Heb 11:31);

and Thomas's narrative foregrounds the relationship between seeing, testimony, and believing (John 20:24–29). Such labels should be used only when the relevant passage is specified and the feature being analysed is clearly stated.

4.3 Functional Descriptions

Functional labels classify faith according to the role it plays in a passage. "Saving faith" may describe faith in relation to salvation (Eph 2:8–10); "working faith" may describe faith expressed through works (Jas 2:14–26); "enduring faith" may describe steadfast trust under pressure (Heb 10:35–39); and "living faith" may be used analytically to contrast faith with the "dead" faith criticised in James 2. These terms require careful contextual definition. For example, Ephesians 2:8–10 attributes salvation to grace through faith and immediately describes good works as the intended walk of those saved; James 2 challenges a claim to faith that lacks practical expression. The passages should be interpreted in their respective arguments rather than forced into a superficial contradiction.

4.4 Condition-Oriented Descriptions

Scripture also uses descriptions such as weak faith (Rom 14:1; 4:19), strong faith (Rom 4:20), little faith (Matt 8:26; 14:31), great faith (Matt 8:10; 15:28), and dead faith (Jas 2:17, 26). These are descriptions of faith's condition or quality in particular contexts, not necessarily separate theological systems. A person may be described in one context as having weak faith and still be a believer; a text's description should not be generalized beyond its argument. Nor should "dead faith" be equated automatically with every imperfect or immature expression of belief. James's use is argumentative and concerns a claim to faith disconnected from works of mercy and obedience.

4.5 The Taxonomy as a Matrix Rather than a Single List

For clarity, the paper proposes a seven-dimensional matrix: source or prompting communication; object of faith; mode of apprehension; operation or function; expression; condition; and outcome. These dimensions are not all "kinds" in the same sense. Source asks what communication or testimony prompts faith; object asks in whom or what trust is placed; mode of apprehension asks whether the relevant reality is apprehended through direct sensory experience, testimony, or belief in an unseen promise; function asks what faith does in the passage; expression asks how the response is enacted; condition asks how faith is characterized; and outcome asks what follows in the narrative. This matrix avoids mixing the "kind" of faith with its observable expression or its consequences.

4.6 The Propulsive Theory of Faith

The Propulsive Theory of Faith seeks to explain the operational relationship between belief and action. Its central claim is not merely that faith and action are associated, but that in relevant scriptural narratives faith serves as an antecedent motivating force. Abraham departs because he responds to God's call; Noah prepares because he receives God's warning; Peter lets down the net "at thy word." These passages do not prove a universal psychological law that all human action is preceded by religious faith. They provide scriptural cases from which the theory proposes a theological principle: when action is undertaken in response to a believed divine communication, faith functions propulsively.

4.7 Theoretical Propositions

The integrated framework advances the following provisional propositions. First, scriptural descriptions of faith require contextual classification rather than an undifferentiated list. Second, faith can be classified along multiple dimensions, and categories from different dimensions may overlap. Third, in narratives where a person acts in response to divine communication, faith may be understood as antecedent to and motivating the action. Fourth, an action's observability does not establish that the faith motivating it is empirical in its epistemological basis. Fifth, observable action alone cannot conclusively establish the inward state, sincerity, or divine origin of a person's professed faith. Sixth, the categories "abstracted realities" and "concreted realities" must be defined as theoretical terms and tested against the scriptural contexts in which they are applied. Seventh, the theory remains provisional until subjected to fuller exegetical and scholarly evaluation.

4.8 Limits and Possible Misapplications

The theory must not be used to imply that faith guarantees any desired outcome that every positive action is divinely prompted, or that practical wisdom and available evidence are irrelevant. Scripture includes situations in which believers endure suffering, wait for fulfilment, or die without receiving the promise in its complete form (Heb 11:13, 35–40). Therefore, the sequence's final element is "anticipated or subsequent outcome," not a guaranteed immediate reward. Nor should the theory be used to judge another person's inner spiritual state solely from visible behaviour. The distinction between faith and action protects the theory from treating outward performance as an infallible measurement of inward conviction.

5.0 Discussion

The combined framework offers two different but complementary kinds of explanation. The taxonomy is classificatory: it organises descriptions of faith according to their contextual roles and characteristics. The Propulsive Theory is explanatory: it articulates how faith can motivate a response to divine communication. This distinction matters because a taxonomy alone does not explain the causal relationship between faith and action, while a theory of faith's propulsive function does nvot by itself classify the diverse ways Scripture describes faith.

The framework is consistent with scholarship that resists reducing pistis to a purely inward, private mental state. Bates (2020), for example, surveys an external-relational shift in New Testament scholarship that emphasises the outward expression of faith in relationships and patterns of life. Morgan's work likewise emphasises trust, trustworthiness, and relational dynamics in the New Testament (Morgan 2015; 2022). These scholarly perspectives help illuminate why faith can be discussed in relation to action. However, the Propulsive Theory's distinct emphasis is that, within a Scripture-Governed account, action is not simply a test that produces faith; rather, where the narrative describes an action as a response to divine communication, faith is interpreted as motivating that action.

The distinction between non-empirical faith and empirical study also needs careful wording. A researcher can empirically observe that a person gives, travels, builds, or makes a decision. A researcher may also collect a person's report that they acted because they trusted God's word. Such evidence concerns observable behaviour and reported motivation. It does not, by itself, verify the theological truth of the divine communication or demonstrate the ultimate spiritual status of the actor. Thus, the paper does not deny the empirical study of religious behaviour; it denies that empirical observation of behaviour is identical to faith's epistemological ground in the framework proposed here.

The abstracted/concreted distinction is the most distinctive and also the most conceptually demanding element of the proposal. Its usefulness depends on maintaining a clear definition. If "abstracted" simply means invisible, it becomes inadequate because many invisible phenomena can be measured through effects. If "concreted" simply means visible, it risks treating sensory access as a complete explanation of reality. The terms are more defensible when they are explicitly presented as theological-analytical categories concerning the way realities are communicated and apprehended

within the framework. Their boundaries need further development, especially where a biblical passage involves both testimony and observable signs.

The taxonomy also needs ongoing refinement. Person-associated labels can be useful but may proliferate without clear criteria; functional labels can overlap; and condition-oriented descriptions are often context-specific. The proposed matrix addresses this by requiring each classification to state its dimension and textual basis. It also prevents "Thomasic faith," for example, from being treated as an established biblical technical term. The paper therefore advances a framework for further research rather than a final, exhaustive taxonomy.

6.0 Findings

The analysis yields six findings:

First, biblical descriptions of faith are diverse and should be classified contextually.

Second, a useful taxonomy must distinguish person-associated, functional, and condition-oriented descriptions rather than treating them as equivalent categories.

Third, the selected narratives of Abraham, Noah, and Peter illustrate faith as antecedent to and motivating action in response to divine communication.

Fourth, James 2 supports the importance of action as an expression or demonstration of faith but does not require the conclusion that works are the source of faith.

Fifth, the observability of action should not be confused with the epistemological character of the faith motivating it.

Sixth, the Taxonomy of Faith and the Propulsive Theory of Faith can be integrated within a provisional Scripture-Governed framework, provided that the framework remains sensitive to textual context and its own conceptual limits.

7.0 Impacts

For biblical scholarship, the framework offers a structured way to discuss faith without collapsing different categories into one list. It also encourages researchers to state clearly whether they are classifying the object, function, condition, expression, or outcome of faith. For Christian education, the framework may help teachers distinguish the belief that motivates a response from the outward

action through which that response is expressed. For pastoral ministry, it may discourage simplistic judgments about the authenticity of another person's faith based only on visible behaviour. For Faith Theology, it provides a basis for further conceptual development, especially in relation to non-empirical apprehension of divine communication and the propulsive function of faith.

These impacts are prospective rather than empirically demonstrated outcomes of this conceptual study. Further research would be required to assess how the framework performs in teaching, pastoral interpretation, and comparative exegesis.

8.0 Recommendations

First, future studies should conduct focused exegetical investigations of key passages, including Genesis 12:1–4; Hebrews 11:1–40; James 2:14–26; Luke 5:1–11; and John 20:24–29.

Second, the taxonomy should be tested against a wider corpus of Old and New Testament texts, including passages in which faith is related to testimony, signs, covenant loyalty, obedience, suffering, and perseverance.

Third, researchers should define "abstracted realities" and "concreted realities" in a dedicated conceptual paper and examine whether the categories are sufficiently distinct for consistent use.

Fourth, the Propulsive Theory should be compared with alternative theological and philosophical accounts of belief, trust, intention, and action.

Fifth, empirical research into religious behaviour, where appropriate, should be clearly distinguished from claims about divine revelation and the spiritual truth of faith.

Sixth, subsequent publications should refine the propositions and specify possible counterexamples rather than assume the theory's universal validity in advance.

9.0 Conclusion

This paper has proposed an integrated Scripture-Governed framework combining a taxonomy of faith with the Propulsive Theory of Faith. The taxonomy classifies scriptural descriptions along distinct analytical dimensions, while the theory explains faith as a propelling conviction through which a person responds to what God has communicated concerning abstracted and concreted realities. Genesis 12:1–4 and Hebrews 11:8 portray Abraham's departure as a response to God's call; Hebrews 11:7 similarly connects Noah's faith with action in response to divine warning; and Luke 5:5 depicts

Peter's response "at thy word." These passages provide illustrative support for the proposed sequence of divine communication, faith, and action.

The framework's principal contribution is its distinction between faith, the action motivated by faith, and the outcome that may follow. An observable action does not make the motivating faith empirical in nature, and the action alone cannot conclusively establish the inward state or divine origin of the professed faith. The paper also cautions that the proposed taxonomy is analytical rather than a claim that Scripture presents a single formal list of kinds of faith. The combined framework should therefore be understood as a preliminary contribution to Faith Theology, inviting continued exegetical scrutiny, scholarly dialogue, and theoretical refinement.

References

Bates, Matthew W. "The External-Relational Shift in Faith (Pistis) in New Testament Research: Romans 1 as Gospel-Allegiance Test Case." Journal for the Study of the New Testament 42, no. 2 (2020): 139–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X19889213.

Gupta, Nijay. "Faith in the New Testament." Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies. Published July 28, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780195393361-0284.

Ilesanmi, Dele A. "Faith Theology as a Non-Empirical Approach to Understanding Divine Truth: A Study of Abstracted and Concreted Realities." International Journal of Biblical Research Studies 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16999828.

Ilesanmi, Dele A. "The Role of Empirical Inquiry in Biblical-Theological Research: A Faith-Theological Evaluation." 2025. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17772029.

Morgan, Teresa. Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198724140.001.0001.

Morgan, Teresa. The New Testament and the Theology of Trust: "This Rich Trust." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192856121.001.0001.



About the Author

Pastor Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (HND, B.Ed., MA, PhD, ThD, RBS) is a Professor of Biblical Research Studies and Biblical Education at Testament Theological Seminary, and a Professor of Biblical Research, Theoretical Theology, and Faith Theology at Chosen Life Christian University. Professor Dele Alaba Ilesanmi is a distinguished pastor–research scholar and Scripture-governed pracademic who integrates ministerial praxis with rigorous academic inquiry, theo-theoretical development, and research governed by the authority of Scripture.

As of 2025, he had authored more than 100 scholarly publications, including books, contributing to the advancement of Scripture-governed biblical-theological scholarship. His work engages emerging discussions in faith-based academic traditions, with particular emphasis on the development of biblically grounded epistemological frameworks and innovative approaches to research theory and methodology.

Since 2008, Pastor Ilesanmi has trained hundreds of believers in Christ and ministers of God, equipping them for spiritual growth, effective ministry, and faithful Christian service. He has supervised more than 30 graduate research projects, including doctoral dissertations. His scholarly contributions include the development of Grounded Truth Theory (GTT), Parabolic Differential Learning Theory (PDLT), Theory of Progressive Learning, Propulsive Theory of Faith, Quantum Theory of Giving, the GTT 7-Dimensional Analytical Exegetical Control Matrix, Scriptural Review, the Laws of Scriptural Review, the educational and theological concepts of Bibliogogy, Theogogy, Christogogy, Pneumagogy, and Apostogogy, etc.

He currently serves as President-Chancellor and Disciplementor of the ChristoPress Institute of Biblical Research Studies and Theological Education (CIBREST). He is also the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Biblical Research Studies (IJBRS), providing scholarly leadership in biblical research, academic publishing, and the dissemination of Scripture-governed scholarship.

His principal research focus is Biblical Research Studies, particularly Scripture-Governed Research. His areas of specialisation include biblical research philosophy, theory and methodology; biblical educational learning theories; bibliogogy; scholarly writing and publication; faith theology; and

theoretical theology. Across these fields, his work seeks to develop coherent, biblically grounded approaches to knowledge, inquiry, interpretation, and academic practice, with the aim of advancing scholarly excellence under the authority of Scripture. He is a Scripture-Governed Research Scholar and Consultant and President of the Christian Association of Biblical Scholars (CABS)

Professor Ilesanmi attended many institutions, including Ekiti Parapo College, Ido-Ekiti; Federal Polytechnic, Offa; Lead City University, Ibadan; University of Ibadan; Redeemed Christian Bible College, International School of Theology, Kaduna, North Western Christian University, Florida, USA, etc. Books published by the author can be accessed here: https://selar.com/m/PstIlesanmi