

Faith Without Fideism: The Named Floor of Open Inquiry

A Foundational Paper for Universal Collapse Theory

Jeremy C. Jones

HoldingLight LLC

contact@universalcollapse.com · ORCID: [0009-0007-2515-3774](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2515-3774)

Version: v1.0 — July 2026

Universal Collapse Theory — T0 Foundational Layer

Gateway arc: Kernel First → Faith Without Fideism → Sealed Inquiry → The Tether

Abstract

Every inquiry begins from somewhere. Before a framework can justify, test, revise, or defend its claims, it already relies on norms, capacities, practices, or commitments it does not fully vindicate within the same episode. This paper names one subset of those dependencies as faith, while sharply distinguishing the term from religious belief, revelation, credulity, or assent against evidence: a faith-floor is an explicit, action-guiding program commitment held under incomplete warrant and governed by public conditions of correction.

The paper argues that no enacted inquiry is floorless, and that the constructive response to the old regress problem is neither suspension nor concealment but naming. A crowned floor—a starting commitment promoted into final fact—becomes dogma. A named floor can be audited, inherited, revised, and abandoned if it degenerates. Naming does not validate the commitment; it makes the commitment auditable.

The paper draws a seam the corpus has run implicitly: the access-floor and the content-floor differ in kind. The access-floor is experience as the route by which claims reach human inquiry—a necessary condition whose denial must use it. The content-floor is UCT's elected commitment that its canonical kernel tracks recurring structural relations across domains—named, revisable, and fruit-tested. Biological Faith Systems and How Minds Resolve show the same commitment-before-certainty structure operating in biology and mind; this paper names the foundational form and gives it a stable address in the T0 gateway arc: Kernel First → Faith Without Fideism → Sealed Inquiry → The Tether.

Keywords: faith without fideism; terminal commitment; epistemic floor; Universal Collapse Theory; constrained actualization; pragmatism; Reformed epistemology; Peirce; Polanyi; Wittgenstein; Lakatos; Biological Faith Systems; Faith-Reason-Logic-Belief; The Tether.

Author Note

This paper uses the word faith in a restricted structural sense. It does not argue for religious belief, against religious belief, or for belief without evidence. It argues that finite, enacted inquiry relies on commitments it does not derive from within itself, and that an open program should place those commitments on the surface rather than hide or absolutize them.

1. The Word

By faith I do not mean religious belief. I do not mean revelation. I do not mean credulity, private certainty, emotional comfort, or assent against evidence. Those uses exist, and some are important in their own domains, but they are not the use that carries this paper.

By faith I mean a terminal commitment on which a finite, situated episode of inquiry relies—held before, and without proof from within, the system that depends on it. Terminal here is functional, not metaphysical: locally underived within the inquiry or program at the moment it is used, not final, unrevisable, or immune to external warrant. Faith, in this sense, is not the opposite of reason. It is what reason must already stand on in order to

begin. A system can reason from a premise, test consequences, revise models, and compare alternatives; it cannot derive its first right to reason from nowhere. It must begin.

The point is not that inquiry should stop at this recognition. The point is that inquiry already has. Whenever a researcher trusts that measurement can disclose something real, whenever a mathematician trusts the intelligibility of a formal practice, whenever a skeptic trusts the force of skeptical argument, whenever a reader trusts that a sentence will cohere long enough to finish reading it, a prior commitment is already in operation. The commitment may later be refined. It may be criticized. It may be abandoned. But it cannot be eliminated at the point of entry, because elimination itself requires some standpoint from which elimination is judged.

That operative fact fixes how the commitment vocabulary runs through this paper. An episode of inquiry relies on more than commitments—norms, capacities, and practices carry it too—but enacting the episode means proceeding as if certain things hold before they can be vindicated, and a dependency doing that work is a commitment in the functional sense just defined. When later sections say that every enacted inquiry rests on a terminal commitment, this is the claim being made—an operative claim about enactment, not a refutation of rival theories of justification. The faith-floor of Section 3 is narrower still: the commitment a program elects and declares, rather than merely operates on.

The central distinction of the paper is therefore between naming and crowning.

To name a floor is to say: this is where the system stands. It is not proven from within. It is held because without it the work cannot begin, and because the work it enables remains fruitful, corrigible, and open to failure. A named floor is exposed to audit. It can be inherited by successors, questioned by critics, and dropped if it stops doing legitimate work.

To crown a floor is to treat that same starting point as final fact. The commitment is not merely used; it is promoted into the base of all things. It becomes unavailable for criticism, protected from contrary records, and defended by changing the rules of update whenever it is threatened. A crowned floor is not only an epistemic mistake. It is the structural beginning of dogma.

The word faith is useful because it refuses to let the starting commitment hide under a more respectable name. If the word is too easily misunderstood, that is a reason to fence it carefully, not necessarily a reason to avoid it. A framework that begins from an unprovable commitment while pretending not to do so has not escaped faith. It has only concealed it.

Why not call this merely an assumption, an axiom, a hinge, or a posit? Each term catches part of the structure and loses something essential. Assumption sounds optional, something one could simply drop. Axiom sounds formal and self-contained, as if the commitment were a clean stipulation rather than a lived dependence. Hinge sounds tacit, a thing that operates beneath notice rather than a commitment placed on the record. Trust sounds psychological, a feeling rather than a structural condition of inquiry. Faith, in the restricted sense used here, names the lived and methodological fact that inquiry proceeds from a commitment before it can secure that commitment from within itself. The term is risky, which is exactly why it must be fenced. But its risk is also its use: it refuses to let the floor disguise itself as neutrality.

The title's contrast can now be stated. Fideism names a contested family of positions in the philosophy of religion—its usual reference points are Pascal, Kierkegaard, James, and Wittgenstein, with little agreement on who properly belongs (Amesbury, 2022)—and this paper engages only the structural core of its insulating forms. In this paper, fideism means insulating a faith commitment from rational assessment or evidential correction because of its status as faith. The faith-floor proposed here does the opposite: it is declared precisely so that its consequences and retention conditions can be assessed.

2. The Floor That Cannot Be Avoided

The regress problem is older than UCT and does not belong to UCT. Any claim offered as justification can be asked to justify itself. The next justification can then be asked to justify itself, and so on. The familiar ancient options are regress, circle, or stop (Sextus Empiricus, 1933)—the structure Albert (1985) later named the

Münchhausen trilemma. The Pyrrhonian tradition used this structure to motivate suspension: if no final ground can be secured without circularity or arbitrariness, then judgment should be withheld.

UCT accepts the diagnosis but draws a narrower conclusion than the trilemma alone can force. Foundationalism, coherentism, infinitism, and externalist accounts of warrant each contest the demand for a terminal ground, and this paper does not need to defeat them. Its claim is smaller: every finite, situated episode of inquiry relies on some norms, capacities, practices, or provisional commitments that it does not fully vindicate within that same episode. Terminal, throughout this paper, means locally underived at the moment of use—not metaphysically final, unrevisable, or immune to external warrant. The constructive task is not to find a position with no such dependencies; it is to identify them, name them, and build in such a way that the work above them remains corrigible.

This applies to everyone. A physicalist may begin from the commitment that everything actual is physical. An idealist may begin from mind, experience, spirit, or reason. An information-first theorist may begin from information, computation, or formal structure. A skeptic begins from trust in the force of skeptical reasoning. A scientist begins from commitments to order, measurement, repeatability, and the possibility that records can constrain belief. UCT begins from the commitment that its canonical kernel— Ω , K_t , C_t^K , x_t^* , R_t , S_t , T , U : structured possibility, the active constraint set, the constraint-conditioned collapse operator, the realized outcome (the resolution), record, residue, record-time, and the constraint update map—captures a real structural grammar across domains (Jones, 2025). Elsewhere this paper compresses the kernel to the shorthand possibility $\rightarrow$ constraint $\rightarrow$ resolution $\rightarrow$ record $\rightarrow$ update; the shorthand names the arc, and the eight-object kernel remains canonical.

This does not flatten the differences among these starting points. Some floors generate public records, discriminating tests, and reliable correction; others generate insulation, rescue maneuvers, and dogma. The shared fact of resting on a floor does not imply equal epistemic standing, and nothing in this paper should be read as claiming it does.

None of these starting points is self-grounding. That is not a defect unique to UCT; it is the condition under which enacted inquiry operates.

Polanyi's (1958) account of knowing is important here because it already undermines the fantasy of a perfectly detached knower. Scientific knowledge depends on tacit commitments, skills, trust in practices, and participation in a community of inquiry. This does not make science irrational. It makes science human, embodied, trained, and fiduciary. The question is not whether science can purge every prior commitment. It cannot. The question is whether its commitments are disciplined by records, public criticism, reproducible methods, and legitimate update. Peirce, James, and Lakatos extend this inheritance; Section 7 places the paper within it.

The same point can be stated in UCT vocabulary. Inquiry is not a view from nowhere. It is a collapse process operating under constraints it did not create, producing records that feed back into future constraints. A system that denies its constraints has not become unconstrained. It has simply lost track of them. A system that names its constraints can begin to manage them.

3. Two Kinds of Floor: The Seam

This distinction is needed because UCT must not let two different kinds of floor sit under one surface. They must be separated.

The first is the access-floor. Every claim about reality available to human inquiry reaches us through embodied cognitive and social experience—including instruments, testimony, records, and outputs from nonexperiencing systems. There is no claim-forming route available to us that bypasses experience entirely. Even a claim about what exceeds experience is formulated, entertained, doubted, defended, or revised in experience. To deny that experience is our access route requires the very access route being denied. But this does not prove that experience is the substance of reality, the base layer of being, or the final court of metaphysics. It establishes only that, for claim-making creatures such as us, experience is the unavoidable route through which claims are formed, entertained, tested, doubted, revised, and transmitted. The access-floor is therefore a necessary condition of claim-making, not an elected commitment: not something the program chooses and could have chosen otherwise, but the

standing condition under which choosing, claiming, and revising occur at all. The content-floor, by contrast, is elected—a commitment the program declares and could abandon.

This is why the access-floor and the content-floor differ in the kind of warrant that holds them, not in whether they are crowned. The access-floor is not a leap the framework freely elects; its warrant is that any attempt to deny it must use it, a denial that undoes itself. That makes it the most distinctively warranted condition available and the hardest to dislodge. But being the hardest to dislodge is not the same as being a final fact beyond all question. The access-floor therefore remains a named floor, held open in principle, distinguished from the content-floor not by being crowned but by resting on a stronger and different kind of warrant: self-undermining denial, rather than a commitment judged by its fruits. The Tether (Jones, 2026g, forthcoming) makes the access-floor operational in two distinct ways. Its ground requirement—claims must trace to human experience as abstractive ground—follows from the access-floor itself. Its service requirement—claims must serve human collective experience in some legible way—is a separately declared stewardship norm, not a consequence of access. The Tether does not thereby say that only experience is real. It says that any claim we can responsibly make, test, organize, or transmit must enter through the conditions under which claims can be made, tested, organized, or transmitted.

The second is the content-floor. UCT holds that its kernel tracks real structural features: possibility spaces constrained into resolution, resolutions leaving records, records altering future constraints, and update loops preserving or corrupting corrigibility. This cannot be proven from inside UCT as a final fact. It is the program's founding commitment. It is therefore faith in the restricted sense of this paper: a terminal commitment made before complete proof is available, held because it organizes inquiry within UCT, and judged by the fruits it produces.

The seam matters. If the access-floor and content-floor are blurred, UCT risks smuggling a chosen theoretical commitment into the status of an undeniable access condition. That would be crowning. If the seam is held, UCT can say something more disciplined: experience is the unavoidable access condition, while the kernel is a named content commitment tested by what it makes legible, what it predicts or discriminates, what records it preserves, and whether it updates under pressure.

Wittgenstein's (1969) hinge vocabulary is the nearest philosophical neighbor at this point. Inquiry turns on commitments that are not themselves doubted in the moment of inquiry. Such hinges can shift over time—the riverbed of certainty moves, slowly—and on the standard reading they shift tacitly, as a form of life drifts, rather than by deliberate decision against stated criteria. UCT's named floor differs on exactly that axis. It is not a hinge that turns silently as practice changes; it is a declared commitment in a research programme, placed on the record and held open to abandonment by criteria fixed in advance. A hinge characteristically shifts beneath notice; a named floor is dated, argued, and accountable to what it produces, so that its removal can be reasoned rather than merely undergone.

The two floors can be set side by side. The access-floor is the unavoidable route of all claim-making; its warrant is that any denial of it must use it; its characteristic failure is being crowned into idealism or anthropocentrism, as if the route of access were the substance of what is accessed. The content-floor is UCT's commitment that its kernel tracks real structure across domains; its warrant is the fruit it bears—the records it preserves, the discriminations it supports, the updates it survives; its characteristic failure is being crowned into dogma or decorative vocabulary, protected from the failures that would weaken any other commitment. The discipline is the same for both: each floor is named rather than crowned, each is held on its own kind of warrant, and each has a particular way of going wrong if its warrant is forgotten and the floor is treated as final.

This is the distinctive UCT move: not that inquiry has hinges, and not that every system has starting commitments. Those points are old. The move is to separate the unavoidable access condition from the revisable content commitment, then place the content commitment under records, standards, discriminators, and update integrity.

Four levels now stand distinct. The access-floor is a necessary epistemic condition of claim-making—experiential access; it is not itself faith. Constitutive faith, in the corpus's mind-phase vocabulary, is the non-elective condition of being a resolving system at all—the build rather than any placement; the corpus states it in its own right at the spine, and this paper does not assert it. The faith-floor is UCT's elected content commitment—a program-level instance of phase faith, the grain that How Minds Resolve carries in the mind-phase vocabulary (Jones, 2026b): a

specific, corrigible placement adopted under incomplete warrant. Faith-as-phenomenon is that same commitment-before-resolution structure as living and cognitive systems run it—faith as a process systems function out of, not only a position inquirers take (Section 7). The generic sense of Section 1—faith as the terminal commitment enacted inquiry operates on—remains the genus; the faith-floor names its declared, program-level subset.

4. Name, Don't Crown

Crowning a base layer of reality and crowning a floor of inquiry are the same structural error at two levels.

At the object level, the error appears when a framework promotes one rendered layer into the base of all the others. Matter, mind, information, mathematics, computation, process, relation, or structure becomes the final substrate. UCT names this base-layer reflex as the Observer's Fallacy (Jones, 2026c): an embedded observer mistakes a layer available from within the system for the renderer of the system as such.

At the epistemic level, the same error appears when a framework promotes its own starting point into an unquestionable fact. The system not only begins from a floor; it denies that the floor is a floor. It treats the commitment as self-evident, final, or immune to the failures that would count against other commitments. This is the Observer's Fallacy applied to the self-understanding of a framework.

Naming does not by itself prevent that move; a framework can name its commitment and still crown it. What naming does is make crowning visible and therefore contestable. When a framework names its floor, it places its own beginning inside the record. It can then say: this is the commitment under which the work proceeds; these are the standards by which the work will be judged; these are the conditions under which the commitment would weaken or be abandoned. A named commitment remains open only when contrary records are preserved, update rules apply symmetrically, and failures cannot be redescribed as confirmation—the sealed-inquiry failure treated in its own right within this arc (Jones, 2026e, forthcoming).

That is why the named floor is what lets UCT function as a research programme rather than merely a metaphysical assertion. A metaphysics can state what ultimately is. A program must declare a hard core, build a protective belt of applications and methods, and let the program's progress or degeneration be judged over time. In Lakatosian terms (Lakatos, 1978), UCT's kernel is held methodologically, not protected absolutely. Domain mappings should first be refined before the kernel is discarded; but if the mappings repeatedly fail to yield records, discriminators, or updateable results, the program weakens by its own standards.

This is also why the kernel's claim to track real structure across domains is not yet a crowned metaphysics. The claim is that the kernel tracks structural features, not that it is the final nature of reality; that it is the program's starting grammar, held because it currently makes structural work possible, not a completed ontology secured by proof. The difference is carried by the verbs. A crowned claim says the kernel is what reality ultimately is. A named claim says the kernel tracks what the work can so far disclose, and stays answerable to what the work later finds. The more consistently the program says tracks rather than is, starting grammar rather than final ontology, and judged by fruits rather than secured by proof, the clearer it becomes that the kernel is committed but not crowned.

This is not modesty as tone. It is openness as architecture.

5. Faith Across Systems

The universal claim of this paper must be stated at the right altitude. The claim is not that all commitments are equally good. The claim is not that science is just faith. The claim is not that evidence does not matter. Those claims would collapse the distinction the paper is trying to build.

The defensible claim is narrower and stronger: every enacted system of inquiry relies on commitments it does not vindicate from within, and systems differ by how they handle those dependencies. They differ in whether the floor is named or hidden. They differ in whether the floor is crowned or held provisionally. They differ in how much fruit the floor generates. They differ in whether the work above the floor remains answerable to evidence, records, criticism, and update.

On this account, science is not reduced to faith. Science is a disciplined way of preventing its starting commitments from becoming untouchable (Jones, 2026f). It uses public records, replication, independent checks, prediction, measurement, and error correction to make its commitments answerable to what happens. That discipline is exactly why science differs from dogma. The difference is not that science has no floor. The difference is that the best scientific practice keeps its floor exposed to the world through methods that allow correction.

The same distinction can be applied outside science. Religious traditions may name their faith explicitly but crown it in ways that prevent revision; or they may hold certain commitments as existential rather than empirical, making a different kind of claim. Secular frameworks may ridicule religious faith while quietly crowning matter, mind, computation, ideology, or method. Skeptical frameworks may reject positive metaphysics while crowning skepticism's own right to adjudicate all positive claims. The relevant question is not which vocabulary sounds most rational. The relevant question is what the floor does when challenged.

Reformed epistemology has pressed a prominent version of that question from the religious side: belief in God can be properly basic—held without inferential support yet without epistemic defect—while remaining answerable to defeaters (Plantinga, 1983, 2000). The named floor does not dispute basicity. It differs in what it adds: a named floor is declared, dated, and held under public retention conditions—an audit discipline that proper basicity as such does not supply. And whether commitments held as existential rather than empirical answer to the fruits standard at all, or stand outside it as a different kind of claim, is deliberately left open here; that question deserves its own treatment rather than a paragraph's verdict.

UCT's proposal is that a framework should put its floor where critics can see it.

The fruits standard then becomes decisive—with one discipline stated plainly. Pragmatic fruit warrants continued pursuit; it does not by itself establish that a framework tracks real structure. The tracking claim requires independent discriminations, risky predictions or retrodictions, stable cross-domain invariants, and comparative performance against serious alternatives. A named floor earns its place by generating clarification, discriminators, testable structures, successful integrations, and better update discipline. It weakens when it generates only relabeling, rescue maneuvers, decorative complexity, or immunity from criticism. This is why the faith-floor must be joined to the standards layer (Jones, 2026d; Jones, 2026h). Faith begins inquiry; records and update discipline keep it from becoming dogma.

6. Self-Application

A paper about faith-floors stands on a faith-floor. That is not an embarrassment. It is the point.

The present paper rests on the commitment that naming a floor is more honest and more corrigible than hiding or crowning it. That claim is not proven from nowhere. It is held because the alternative—pretending inquiry has no floor, or treating one's own floor as final fact—corrupts the update loop. The paper therefore names its own floor: open inquiry requires declared commitments, and declared commitments are better able to remain corrigible than concealed ones.

Does that floor have ground? Yes, in the restricted sense required here. It traces to the recurring experience of inquiry confronting regress, circularity, and starting assumptions. It traces to scientific and philosophical practice, where methods begin from commitments they cannot fully justify from within themselves. It traces to UCT's own experience as a corpus: Biological Faith Systems and the Faith-Reason-Logic-Belief cycle already used commitment-before-certainty before the present paper named the foundational form.

Does it have service? Yes. It gives UCT a citable place to name its founding commitment. It prevents later papers from repeatedly re-deriving the faith move. It gives critics an explicit target: not a hidden confidence that UCT simply works, but a declared floor that can be challenged. It clarifies the difference between UCT's access constraint, its content commitment, and its domain-level accounts of faith-like operation.

The paper could still fail. It would fail if the word faith causes more confusion than clarification after the fence is built. It would fail if the access-floor/content-floor seam cannot be maintained. It would fail if it could not sustain the difference between having a floor and all floors being equal. It would fail if the paper becomes an excuse to

protect UCT from disconfirmation. It would fail if the named floor stops doing work for the corpus—if it merely restates what Kernel First, Sealed Inquiry, The Tether, or the applied faith papers already carry. Like The Tether, this paper is not eternal. It is durable only for as long as it remains grounded, useful, and corrigible.

That conditionality is not weakness. It is the thing being argued for.

7. The Pragmatist Inheritance and the Deposited Instances

The faith paper should not pretend to invent the problem it names. Its philosophical ancestors are visible.

Peirce's abduction is the clearest ancestor for commitment-before-certainty as an operation of inquiry (Peirce, 1903/1998). Abduction proposes a hypothesis before certainty is available, then lets further inquiry test whether the proposed commitment can stand. James's defense of commitment belongs nearby—an essay whose original subject was religious belief (James, 1897): where an option is live, forced, and momentous, the choice cannot be postponed until proof is complete, because postponement is itself a practical choice. Polanyi (1958) adds the fiduciary dimension of knowing: even scientific inquiry depends on trust, tacit skill, trained judgment, and participation in practices not reducible to explicit proof. Lakatos (1978) gives the program form: commitments are not abandoned at the first anomaly, but they must prove progressive rather than degenerating over time.

UCT's contribution is not the atom. It is the molecule. The corpus combines the regress problem, commitment-before-certainty, pragmatist fruits (Peirce, 1878), program-level corrigibility, and an operating standards layer. It does not merely say that inquiry rests on faith. It asks whether that faith has been named, whether it remains updateable, and whether it generates load-bearing work across domains.

This is where Biological Faith Systems and the Faith-Reason-Logic-Belief cycle matter.

They are not the spine of the present paper. The faith paper is not a paper about biology or a paper about individual belief revision. It is the general foundational statement: every enacted inquiry rests on a terminal commitment, and an open program names rather than crowns that commitment. BFS and the FRLB cycle are instances of the same structure already developed in the corpus—Biological Faith Systems (Jones, 2026a) and How Minds Resolve: The Faith–Reason–Logic–Belief Cycle (Jones, 2026b), both deposited. Readers unfamiliar with those papers do not need to accept their full arguments here; they need only see why the corpus already treats them as cases of the structure this paper names.

Biological Faith Systems (Jones, 2026a) treats living systems as committing under uncertainty before complete resolution is available. The organism cannot always wait. Viability-relevant conditions change while evidence is still being gathered. The living system must bias action, preserve corrigibility, and correct afterward. That is faith-as-phenomenon in a biological register: commitment-before-resolution as something systems do.

The Faith-Reason-Logic-Belief cycle (Jones, 2026b) treats minds as beginning from starting trust, refining that trust through reason, constraining revision through logic, and stabilizing a belief that becomes the next cycle's starting trust. Here faith is the starting position of cognition rather than a doctrinal content. Belief becomes record; record becomes future constraint. That is faith-as-phenomenon in a cognitive register.

These two papers show that the present paper is not importing a decorative epistemological term into UCT after the fact. The corpus was already running the structure. BFS and FRLB had already made commitment-before-certainty load-bearing in biology and mind. The present paper externalizes and names the foundation that was operating tacitly, so those applied papers no longer need to carry the foundational burden on their own.

But the distinction must remain sharp. The epistemic faith-floor is the framework's own starting commitment. Faith-as-phenomenon is a domain-level structure the kernel describes in living and cognitive systems. They rhyme because both involve commitment before complete proof or resolution. They are not identical. One is meta-level; the other is object-level.

The recursion is the deep link. In naming its faith-floor, UCT enacts at the level of its own foundation the same structure its applied papers describe within the world: commitment before certainty, held open to correction by later records. That is not equivocation if the two levels remain distinct. It is the program's self-similarity becoming explicit.

8. What the Named Floor Licenses

A named floor—named and held open, in the sense of Section 4—licenses three things that a crowned floor cannot.

First, it licenses inheritance. A successor can maintain the program only if the program's floor is visible. If the successor keeps the named commitment while improving the methods, the program continues. If the successor abandons the commitment, the discontinuity is visible. This makes stewardship possible without requiring ownership by the original author.

Second, it licenses audit. Critics do not have to guess what the system is protecting. They can ask whether the named floor still generates progressive work, whether it preserves records, whether it updates under legitimate pressure, and whether its claims remain tethered to experience and service. Audit requires surface. The named floor supplies it.

Third, it licenses being built past. A program that names its floor can be superseded without treating supersession as betrayal. If a better grammar explains the same domains with clearer discriminators, stronger records, fewer distortions, and better update integrity, then the named floor has done its job by making the transition visible. A crowned floor must defend itself at any cost. A named floor can be worked, revised, or left behind.

This also clarifies what would count against the faith-floor of UCT. The floor weakens if the kernel becomes merely decorative vocabulary. It weakens if domain applications cannot specify possibility spaces, constraints, resolutions, records, updates, or failure conditions. It weakens if records are selectively preserved, if update rules become asymmetric, if contrary evidence is converted into proof by definition, or if the program increasingly depends on rescue interpretations rather than discriminating tests. It weakens if The Tether fails to bind the work or if the standards layer becomes ornamental.

The named floor therefore licenses commitment, but not immunity. It authorizes the program to proceed before final proof is available, but only under the condition that the work remains accountable to what it writes down and what it can learn.

9. Conclusion: The Confession That Sets the Work Free

No inquiry begins from nowhere. The attempt to avoid that fact produces two common failures. One is paralysis: because no final ground can be secured, inquiry refuses to proceed. The other is dogma: because a system needs a floor, it pretends its floor is final fact.

UCT takes a third route. It names the floor and proceeds.

The floor named here is not a religious doctrine, not belief against evidence, and not a claim that all commitments are equally good. It is the terminal commitment under which an inquiry begins before it can prove its own beginning. UCT's specific content-floor is the commitment that its kernel tracks real structural patterns across domains. That commitment is held as faith in the restricted sense: prior to complete proof, open to criticism, judged by fruits, and droppable if it degenerates.

The paper's most important distinction is the seam between access-floor and content-floor. Experience as our access condition is not the same as the kernel as UCT's content commitment. The Tether belongs chiefly to the first: its ground requirement follows from the access-floor, while its service requirement adds a declared stewardship norm. The present paper belongs chiefly to the second, naming UCT's founding commitment and making it auditable.

BFS and FRLB then show why this paper belongs in the corpus. They are not afterthoughts recruited to support a philosophical essay. They are evidence that the structure was already alive in the work: biology committing under uncertainty, minds beginning from starting trust, records feeding back into future constraints. The Faith paper externalizes the principle those papers were already running and gives the corpus a stable address for it.

The confession of faith is therefore not a weakness in the program. It is what makes crowning visible and therefore contestable; contrary records, symmetric update rules, and genuine abandonment conditions do the preventing. A hidden floor must be discovered. A crowned floor must be defended. A named floor can be worked.

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Library Note

This paper sits at the T0 (Foundational) tier of the Universal Collapse Theory corpus, within the gateway arc Kernel First → Faith Without Fideism → Sealed Inquiry → The Tether: Kernel First declines to reify the kernel, this paper names the program's floor without crowning it, Sealed Inquiry supplies the overrulability test that keeps a named floor from sealing itself, and the Tether binds the resulting claims to experience as ground and to human benefit as declared service. In the order of foundation it sits beneath its siblings, even though Kernel First is read first. It states the faith-floor that the applied faith papers—*Biological Faith Systems* and *How Minds Resolve: The Faith–Reason–Logic–Belief Cycle*—instantiate in biology and mind, and it should be cited when a later UCT

paper needs to distinguish named commitment from crowned foundation, access-floor from content-floor, program-level phase faith from constitutive faith, or epistemic faith-floor from faith-as-phenomenon.

Roadmap: universalcollapse.com/roadmap

AI Disclosure

AI tools were used to assist with manuscript preparation, drafting, organization, and editorial refinement. The underlying theory, structural decisions, analysis, and conclusions are the author's own.

Suggested Citation

Jones, J. C. (2026). *Faith Without Fideism: The Named Floor of Open Inquiry* (v1.0). HoldingLight LLC.

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