



From Literature Review to Scriptural Review: Reclaiming the Biblical Foundation of Theological and Biblical Research

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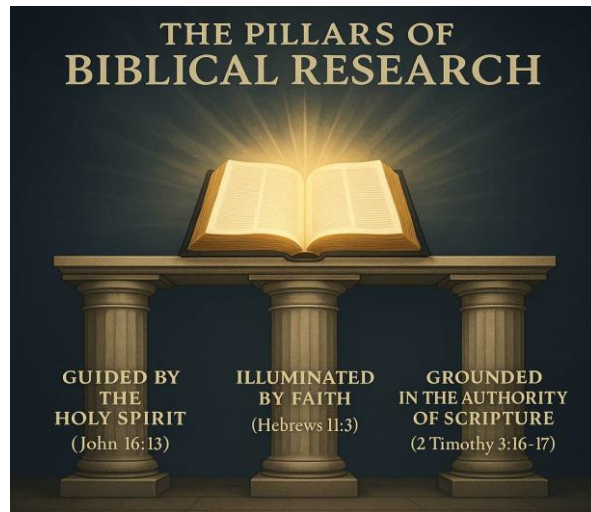
Abstract

In contemporary theological and biblical scholarships, the literature review has long served as a foundational element in research methodology. While literature reviews rely on secondary human sources for authority, scriptural review restores the primacy of divine revelation as the principal source of theological knowledge. The paper aims to explore the need to shift from the conventional literature review model used in secular academia to a scriptural review model that reclaims the biblical foundation of theological and biblical research. This paper argues for the recovery of a Scriptural Review—a biblically grounded method of examining theological questions through the lens of the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate authority of truth. Scriptural Review calls the researchers to engage the Word not merely as text but as living revelation. This study adopts a sola scriptura methodology, qualitative theological approach integrating Scriptural Review, exegetical interpretation of key biblical texts relevant to the work, and comparative analysis with the traditional Literature Review method. The study also offers theo-theoretical model that situates Scriptural Review within biblical praxis, and proposes a pneumagogical framework and Scriptural Review as a foundational methodological paradigm for biblical and theological education in the 21st century. The study finds that biblical or theological research grounded in Scriptural Review produces more biblically faithful, spiritually edifying, and doctrinally sound outcomes. Therefore, the paper recommends and concludes by urging biblical researchers to love and defend their own (Scriptural Review) with the same passion and dedication that the world shows for its own (Literature Review).

Keywords: *literature review, scriptural review, biblical and theological research, pneumagogical framework, the-theoretical framework, theo-theory.*

Thesis Statement

This paper argues for the recovery of a Scriptural Review—a biblically grounded method of examining theological questions through the lens of the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate authority of truth, which remains inerrant and infallible. It offers a clear, unassuming preference of Scriptural Review over the traditional Literature Review to establish Scripture—not secondary literature—as the ultimate and infallible source of divine truth, which is the pillar of biblical and theological research.



1.0 Introduction

The practice of reviewing existing literature remains indispensable in most academic disciplines. It ensures that research builds upon established knowledge, identifies gaps, and situates the researcher within the intellectual landscape of the field. In theology, however, this process often encounters a critical limitation: it risks substituting divine revelation with human speculation. The Literature Review, though methodologically sound, reflects a framework shaped by the epistemological assumptions of secular academia rather than the pneumagogical foundations of faith-based inquiry. Theology, at its essence, is the study of God grounded in divine revelation. Yet modern theological scholarship often mirrors secular research paradigms, particularly in its dependence on literature review as a measure of academic rigour. This overreliance on human sources risks subordinating divine revelation to academic opinion. In Dele Ilesanmi's recent work, a call for theological shift was made—from literature review to scriptural review—to re-establish the authority of Scripture as the interpretive centre of theological inquiry¹. As Paul admonished Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).² Thus, theological research must be rooted primarily in God's Word, not merely in the words of men.

A Scriptural Review reorients the research process towards the Bible as the primary source of truth and theological authority. It demands that theological knowledge begins not from what others have said about God, but from what God has revealed about Himself through His Word. The prophet Isaiah captures this divine directive: “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read it” (Isa 34:16). It is clear that Literature Review is an anthropocentric process grounded in epistemic humanism, while Scripture Review is a theocentric process grounded in epistemic inscripturated pneumatic revelation (Scripture) or bibliogogy³ – teaching of Scripture or the Bible.

¹ See Ilesanmi, D. A's work entitled “The Imperative of Scriptural Review in Biblical Research Studies: A Proposal for Paradigm Shift from Literature Review” in *International Journal of Biblical Research Studies*, 2025

² All scriptural citations are from King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

³ For a better understanding of the term “bibliogogy”, a concept developed by Ilesanmi, see Ilesanmi, Dele A. “Pneumagogy: A Proposed Theory for Effective Teaching and Learning in Christian Kingdom Education” in *African Journal of Kingdom Education*, 2023. doi:

What is more, in academic research, no doubt, the Literature Review is a well-established method for surveying existing scholarly works (the works of men, not of God), identifying gaps, and positioning one's study within the current body of knowledge. However, in biblical research, particularly within the paradigm of Faith Theology, this method often proves inadequate. The Scriptural Review emerges as a divinely oriented alternative — a review not of human writings, but of the divine text itself, examined as the ultimate source and standard of truth. It is important to note that Scriptural Review is therefore not a rejection of academic rigour, but a realignment of authority. It begins with Scripture, proceeds through Scripture, and concludes under the illumination of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16–17; John 16:13). This study adopts a sola scriptura methodology, qualitative theological approach combining Scriptural Review, exegetical interpretation of key biblical texts relevant to the work, and comparative analysis with the traditional Literature Review method. The theo-theoretical framework adds more credence to the total acceptability of divine truth and the ultimate preference of the infallible and inerrant source of divine truth, which is the pillar of biblical and theological research.

1.1 Aim of the Research Work

The aim of this research is to redefine theological research methodology by establishing Scriptural Review as the foundational framework for biblical and theological studies, thereby restoring the primacy of Scripture in academic theological discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

1. What distinguishes Scriptural Review from Literature Review in theological research?
2. How does Scripture function as the primary authority and evaluative source in theology?
3. What are the methodological implications of adopting Scriptural Review in theological education?

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1.3 Research Problem

The central problem addressed in this study is the displacement of Scripture as the central source of theological authority due to an overdependence on academic literature, resulting in a theology that is often anthropocentric rather than theocentric. This overdependence has culminated in cynicism about the relevance of theology and the effectiveness of Scripture in addressing human problems. This study, therefore, aims to correct this misunderstanding and misgiving by reaffirming Scripture's primary authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

1.4 Research Methodology

This research adopts a sola scriptura methodology, qualitative theological approach combining Scriptural Review, exegetical interpretation of key biblical texts, and comparative analysis with the traditional Literature Review method. The study draws from both biblical data and selected theological writings (e.g., Barth 1960; Wright 2012; Vanhoozer 2005, Ilesanmi 2025) to develop a coherent theo-methodological framework for theological and biblical education and research.

2.0 Scriptural Review and Exegesis

The idea of Scriptural Review arises from the conviction that Scripture interprets Scripture. The Latin "Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres" translates to mean "Holy Scripture is its own interpreter." The Greek phrase "ἡ γραφὴ ἑαυτῆς ἐξηγείται" (hē graphē heautēs exēgeitai) also conveys the idea of Scripture interpreting itself. Hence, Isaiah declared, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail" (Isa 34:16). This text embodies the theological principle that Scripture is self-authenticating, self-interpreting, and divinely sufficient (Packer 1974). Therefore, it does not need any external approval and support. This adds credence to the primacy of Scripture as an authentic and reliable source of truth.

Ilesanmi writes⁴ that in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it is revealed that all Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness for the man of God, a born again Christian, researcher, scholar to be perfect and well furnished, refined to produce good works. Prophets and angels desire to understand the scriptures for accurate prophecy, emphasising their significance in biblical research (1 Peter 1:10-12). More so, the entirety of scripture is truth, it is true from the beginning (Psalm 119:160) and stand firm forever and ever (Psalm 111:8; 119: 89). The Authority of Scripture should not in any way be compromised. The Scripture should be authoritatively taught, preached, and written, submissively and absolutely obeyed because it is the voice of God to humanity – God’s creature.

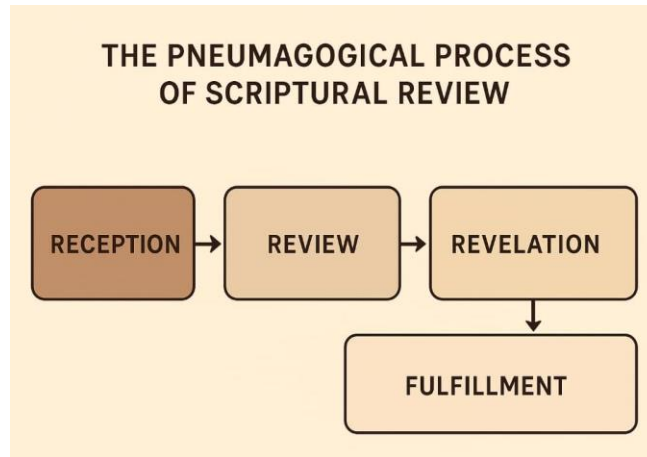
Moreover, in the New Testament, Jesus exemplified Scriptural Review when confronting the Pharisees: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Here, Christ does not appeal to rabbinic literature or philosophical sources but to the divine text itself as the locus of truth. Paul similarly commands believers to “compare spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor 2:13), illustrating the hermeneutical necessity of allowing Scripture to critique and interpret theological assertions. The Bereans understood the importance of Scripture Review. The Bible says “They searched the scriptures daily... ” (Acts 17:11) — Scripture was their review material. God’s human intellectual juggernaut, Paul, always built his theological arguments directly from Scripture (e.g., Romans 4; Galatians 3). This points to the preference of pneumatic and bibliogical epistemology.

⁴ Ilesanmi, Dele A “The Imperative of Scriptural Review in Biblical Research Studies: A Proposal for Paradigm Shift from Literature Review” in *International Journal of Biblical Research Studies*, 2025.

The Pneumagogical Process of Scriptural Review



Furthermore, Jesus Christ loves to use the Word in every situation. For example, in marriage and divorce, even though He was tested by the Pharisees, He said, “Have ye not read...?” (Matt 19:4); concerning the resurrection of the dead, He said, “Have you not read...?” (Matt 22:31); confronting the devil, Jesus said, “It is written ...” referring Satan to the authority of Scripture (Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Lk 4:4, 8). What is more, in the Synagogue (Church), Jesus showed to the people what is written about Him and His mission to the world, demonstrating the divine model of Scriptural Review when He read from the book of Isaiah. They gave Him the book of the Prophets Isaiah. He read it, reviewed it, and found what is written about His mission on earth and declared to the people His findings and concluded that “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”(Lk 4:14-21; cf. Isa 61:1-2)— He reviewed Scripture as the final authority with the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Scriptural Review is pneumatic, not anthropocentric like Literature Review. This Jesus’ example epitomises a profound truth about Scriptural Review as a divinely guided research process rather than a merely human intellectual exercise. Jesus’ reading of the book of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue of Nazareth is not a casual citation but a hermeneutical act – a divine review of Scripture in light of His own mission.



Therefore, Scriptural Review functions as both a method and a measure—a way of discovering truth and a standard by which all theological claims are judged (Ilesanmi 2025, Carson 1996). What is more, Scripture is a magazine of life; it has solution to every problem setting humanity.

3.0 Theo-Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The Theo-Theoretical Framework⁵ of this study rests on the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone as the ultimate authority in faith and research (Calvin 1559/1960). The concept of *theo-theory*⁶ is grounded in Scripture. It is regarded as the theory of God or theological theory. It is a term used to explain and understand divine truth. Theologically, this framework assumes that divine revelation is both sufficient and final for understanding God and His works. The Scriptural Review model thus draws its theoretical energy from biblical inspiration and infallibility (Grudem 1994). The Conceptual Framework differentiates between Literature Review—which evaluates human sources within an academic tradition—and Scriptural Review—which evaluates theological claims through biblical revelation. The two differ in source (human vs. divine), scope (contextual vs. eternal), and authority (subjective vs. absolute).

⁵ This term is coined by this author to differentiate it from the secular theoretical framework.

⁶ “Theo-Theory” is coined by this author to mean the theory of God used to interpret and understand divine truth.

In recent times, Ilesanmi (2025)⁷ has developed relevant Scriptural Review Theories (SRT) that support the preference of Scriptural Review over Literation Review. The theoretical basis for this study is rooted in the author called *theoretical triangulation*.⁸ It is important, therefore, to adopt these theories in this study for graphic understanding.

Ilesanmi asserts that if we do not doubt God, we should not doubt His voice or word. Hence, the *Scriptural Paradigm Theory (SPT)* or *Scriptural Grounded Theory (SGT)* by this author is relevant to this work. The theory states that the Bible is the ultimate or final authority in matters of faith, doctrine, and practice. It emphasises not only the authority of Scripture but also its importance as the primary source of authority and guidance because it is the voice of God to humanity (2Tim 3:16-17). This is supported in Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." Similarly, the earlier cited passages are all in support of this theory of Scriptural Authority. If this theory is to be obeyed, scholars, researchers, writers, preachers, teachers or educators, and other users of the Bible must give prominent to Scripture in all their doings by constantly studying or reviewing it.

Similarly, the *Scriptural Immersion Theory* by this author is relevant to the study. Scriptural Immersion Theory, as a theoretical framework, posits that constant and deeper engagement with the scriptures is essential for spiritual growth and understanding for correct interpretation, and application of biblical teachings. This theory has its root in Colossians 3:16 which says that "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Scriptural review is a building block for scriptural immersion. Thus, this theory is relevant to the current study. Three principal components of this theory are: (i.) Scriptures should be thoroughly studied and explored; (ii.) Constant and deeper reflection and meditation on biblical teachings are essential to spiritual growth and scriptural understanding; and (iii.) Constant scriptural engagement induces application and integration of biblical principles into daily life. In addition, the theory has the following underlying assumptions: (i.) Scripture is authoritative: The Bible is the authoritative source

⁷ Ibid., Ilesanmi, Dele A, 2025.

⁸ Ibid. This is the use of multiple theories or frameworks to interpret and understand divine truth

of spiritual guidance. Therefore it must be read, studied, and obeyed; (ii.) Immersion is essential: Deeply engrossing one in scripture is necessary for spiritual growth and understanding; (iii.) Transformation occurs: Spiritual transformation and growth occur by scriptural preoccupation. Through scriptural review, God's Word permeates the whole gamut of researcher's life.

What is more, Ilesanmi's *Grounded Truth Theory* is an important theory that espouses scriptural review in scholarly writing in biblical research studies. The theory has its origin in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 that says "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." To prove a thing pertains to God and the universe to establish the truth, it is essential to hear from God who created all things by reviewing the scripture. This theory involves test and evaluation to prove the validity of truth claims. This involves examining and assessing all things, including teachings, ideas, and practices, bearing in mind that the authority of Scripture must be established in all matters of faith, doctrine, and practice. The Grounded Truth Theory, though plays a dual role in biblical research, as elucidated below, is relevant to our research.

Furthermore, what this author calls *Divine Illumination Theory (DIT)* lends more credence to the imperative of scriptural review in biblical research studies. The theory postulates that man is enlightened by divine inspiration through scriptural immersion. The Holy Spirit fills the one who opens oneself to God's word. The scriptural support for this theory is Job 32: 8 that says "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." When there is a scriptural immersion, there will be a divine encounter that will bring up the light bulb of spiritual understanding that will lead to creativity and innovation. Scriptures make human's spirit active and in tune with God. When one is immersed in Scriptures, one's relationship with God will be cordial. This will create an atmosphere of illumination. This is the import of this theory. The theory presupposes that God is the primary agent of illumination; humans are receptive to divine illumination when engage deeply with Scripture; and scriptural immersion provides intellectual and moral insights. God's illumination enables us to see, understand, and apply His truth in our lives, leading to a deeper relationship. According to Exodus 31:1-11 and 35:30-35, God chose

and illuminated Bezalel and Oholiab for several reasons: (1.) Skill and expertise: Bezalel was skilled in various crafts, including metalwork, woodworking, and embroidery (Exodus 31:2-5, 35:30-33). Oholiab was also skilled in craftsmanship (Exodus 35:34). (2.) Divine calling: God specifically called Bezalel and Oholiab for this task, setting them apart for His purpose (Exodus 31:1-6). (3.) Spiritual enablement: God filled Bezalel and Oholiab with His Spirit by giving them wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to complete the task (Exodus 31:3, 35:31). (4.) Leadership and teaching ability: Bezalel and Oholiab were not only skilled craftsmen but also leaders who could teach and guide others in the construction process (Exodus 35:34). Similarly, Daniel and his other three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were ten times better than all magicians and astrologers who were in his whole realm because the excellent spirit, the Spirit of God enlightened their understanding (Dan 1:20; 6:3). The excellent spirit that came upon Daniel was initiated by the illuminating power of God, which engendered: Wisdom and discernment in Daniel to be able to interpret dreams and understand visions accurately (Daniel 1:17, 2:19); Integrity and morality in Daniel to follow God's laws and principles, even in the face of adversity (Daniel 1:8-16); Humility and teachability that create in Daniel the willingness to learn and receive guidance from others (Daniel 2:14-23); Faith and trust in Daniel to have confidence in God's sovereignty and provision, even in uncertain circumstances (Daniel 3:16-18); etc. when scriptural review is properly done, the scriptural immersion will initiate divine illumination that will produce biblical values and principles in us, which will eventually induce creativity and innovation. God plays an active role in illuminating the human mind, enabling individuals to understand and know spiritual truths, moral principles, theological and intellectual concepts through biblical lens.

4.0 Differences between Scriptural Review and Literature Review

The literature review seeks to identify *what others have said* about a topic. It is an anthropocentric process grounded in epistemic humanism — knowledge derived from human reasoning and scholarly consensus. Its purpose is to demonstrate awareness of academic discourse and to establish one's research within it. The Bible asserts that "Much study is a weariness of the flesh." (Eccl 12:12). Literature review method in research methodology is human-centred inquiry.

Scriptural Review, by contrast, is a theocentric process grounded in epistemic inscripturated revelation. It does not merely cite texts but listens to the voice of Scripture, the voice of God, what God says, not what human beings say as the living revelation of God. The researcher engages the Word prayerfully and contextually, discerning divine patterns, precepts, and truths that address the research problem. The Bible says “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail...” (Isa 34:16). Scriptural review method in research methodology is God-centred inquiry.

SCRIPTURAL REVIEW_{vs.} LITERATURE REVIEW IN BIBLICAL RESEARCH

Scriptural Review

Seeking Ont of the book of the Lord, and read.

KEY FEATURES

- **Primary Source: The Bible**
– Treating Scripture as the supreme academic authority
- **Spirit-Guided Interpretation**
the Holy Spirit essential for discernment, isaiaḏ 34.6’s claus’s “his spirit it thath gathered them”
- **Text Interprets Text**
Cross-referencing and harmonizing scripture within itself
- **Doctrinal Fidelity**
Ensures alignment with the consistent truth of Scripture
- **Exegetical Anchoring**
Begins with in-depth exegesis of Scripture

Literature Review

Read and analyze human literature about Scripture

MAJOR WEAKNESSES

- **Flevation of Human Authority Over Divine Revelation**
– Prioritizieee scholars over Scripture
- **Dependence on Flawed or Biased Sources**
– Reliance on sources that may deny biblical inerrancy
- **Marginalization of the Holy Spirit**
– Assuming a purely inte llectual process
- **Fragmentation of Truth**
Compiling conflicting views without a clear standard
- **Risk of Theological Drift**
Leading to questioning historicity of Scripture or redefining core doctrines

CRITERIA	Scriptural Review	Literature Review
Primary Source	The Bible	Human scholarship
Interpretation	Spirit-guided	Human analysis
Foundation	<i>Seek ye aut of the book of the Lord” (Isa 34:16)</i>	<i>”Read what scholars say about the book”</i>

The author identifies twenty-five key differences between Scriptural Review and Literature Review to form a comparative framework for both.

(a) Scriptural Review vs. Literature Review: A Comparative Framework in Biblical Research Methodology

No.	Area of Focus	Literature Review	Scriptural Review
1	Primary Source of Authority	Human scholarship and academic writings, which is subject to errors.	Holy Scriptures as divine authority, which is infallible and inerrant.
2	Epistemological Foundation	Human reasoning and empiricism	Divine revelation and faith
3	Nature of Knowledge	Constructed through investigation	Revealed by God through Scripture
4	Objective	Summarise and critique previous works	Discover and interpret divine truths
5	Orientation	Anthropocentric (human-centred)	Theocentric (God-centred)
6	Primary Question	What do scholars say?	What does God say?
7	Methodological Process	Search → Select → Analyse → Synthesise	Read → Meditate → Exegete → Illuminate
8	Type of Sources	Books, journals, databases	Scripture, canonical cross-references
9	Language and Expression	Academic and theoretical	Theological and revelatory
10	Nature of Truth	Relative and evolving	Absolute and eternal
11	Researcher's Role	Analytical critic	Spiritual listener and exegete
12	Evaluation Criterion	Logic and peer consensus	Biblical consistency and spiritual discernment
13	Intellectual Authority	Academic experts	Scripture and Holy Spirit
14	Scope of Inquiry	Broad and interdisciplinary	Canonical and revelatory
15	Hermeneutical Approach	Historical or literary criticism	Spirit-led exegesis and illumination
16	Outcome or Product	Academic synthesis/ Information	Revelatory insight

17	Research Motivation	Scholarly relevance	Divine alignment and obedience
18	Spirit Involvement	Minimal	Central and indispensable
19	Mode of Engagement	Detached and critical	Reflective and worshipful
20	Final Authority	Peer consensus	Word of God
21	View of Scripture	As literary or historical text	As the living voice of God
22	Research Ethics	Academic honesty and citation	Faithful handling of Scripture (2 Tim 2:15)
23	Validation of Findings	Peer review	Biblical corroboration and Spirit witness
24	Impact on Researcher	Expands intellect	Transforms spiritually
25	Ultimate Goal	Knowledge accumulation/ To explore academic perspectives	Faith formation and revelation/ To discover God's truth

(b) Conceptual Clarifications and Comparison

Term	Definition	Primary Source	Epistemic Authority
Literature Review	A systematic review of previous scholarly works, theories, and research findings relevant to a topic.	Books, journals, academic databases, etc.	Human intellect and empirical reasoning.
Scriptural Review	A theological and exegetical review of Scriptures relevant to a research question or theme, interpreted within its canonical and contextual framework. This involves scriptural cross-referencing to establish divine truth.	The Holy Bible (Word of God).	Divine revelation and pneumatic illumination.

4.1 Epistemological Standpoints of Literature Review and Scriptural Review in Research Methodology

It is important to note that while Literature Review operates as an anthropocentric process grounded in epistemic humanism, seeking knowledge through human rationality and

consensus, Scriptural Review functions as a theocentric process grounded in epistemic inscripturated pneumatic revelation, where divine truth is discerned through the Spirit's illumination of the written Word.

(a) Literature Review: Anthropocentric & Epistemically Humanist

Anthropocentric means “man-centered.” In academic research, a literature review depends primarily on human cognition, observation, and interpretation. It operates within the framework of epistemic humanism — the belief that knowledge is generated, validated, and transmitted through human reason and experience. Thus, the literature review process evaluates truth through anthropological lenses — a process grounded in epistemic humanism, which assumes that knowledge of reality can be achieved and verified independently of divine revelation.

(b) Scriptural Review: Theocentric & Epistemically Pneumatic

In contrast, the Bible says “But God has shown us these things through the Spirit. The Spirit knows all things. The Spirit even knows the deep secrets of God. It is like this: No one knows the thoughts that another person has. Only the person's spirit that lives inside knows those thoughts. It is the same with God. No one knows God's thoughts except God's Spirit. We received the Spirit that is from God, not the spirit of the world. We received God's Spirit so that we can know all that God has given us (1 Cor 2: 10-12 ERV). These passages perfectly describe Scriptural Review, which brings about revelation derived not from human literature but from divine illumination. This divine illumination cannot come without having contact with the Word – Scripture. Hence, Scriptural Review is *sine qua non* in Biblical and Theological Research.

Scriptural Review is theocentric — “God-centered.” It treats Scripture not as one source among others, but as the primary, living, revelatory text that interprets all truth through divine authority. It is an “epistemic inscripturated pneumatic revelation.” It is “epistemic” because it is concerned with the nature of knowing and knowledge; it is “inscripturated” because it refers to revelation that has been written down, preserved, and canonised (the Bible); and “pneumatic Revelation” because it involves truth revealed through the Spirit (John 16:13; 2 Pet 1:21). Thus, epistemic inscripturated pneumatic revelation refers to

knowledge derived from the Spirit's revealed truth as recorded in Scripture, illuminated again by the same Spirit to the researcher or believer.

Subject	Literature Review	Scriptural Review
Source of Authority	Human authors, scholars, and texts	God's inscripturated Word, the Bible (2 Tim 3:16)
Epistemic Ground	Empirical reasoning, logical coherence, and academic consensus	Pneumatic revelation mediated through Scripture
Ontological Focus	Human understanding of truth	Divine nature and truth as revealed in Christ
Direction of Knowledge	From human to human (horizontal epistemology)	From God to humanity (vertical epistemology)
Ultimate Criterion	Rational plausibility and peer validation	Scriptural and spiritual authenticity under the illumination of the Holy Ghost
Methodology	Analytical, comparative, and historical	Pneumatic, exegetical, and revelatory
Validation	Peer consensus	Scriptural consistency and Spirit illumination
Outcome	Conceptual knowledge	Transformative revelation and faith understanding

In biblical research studies and theology, knowledge is theo-epistemic — discovered through divine disclosure rather than human speculation.

Methodological Comparison

Aspect	Literature Review	Scriptural Review
Objective	To summarise and critique existing scholarly works.	To extract divine truths and theological principles from Scripture.
Authority Base	Academic consensus.	Biblical revelation.
Process	Search → Select → Analyse → Synthesise.	Read → Meditate → Exegete → Illuminate.
Outcome	Identification of knowledge gaps and scholarly trends.	Revelation of divine truth and scriptural patterns.
Spirit Involvement	Minimal or absent.	Central and indispensable (John 14:26).
Research Language	Theoretical and empirical.	Exegetical, theological, and theoretical

4.2 Rationale behind the Shift

4.2.1 The Limitation of Literature Review in Theology

Literature review, though useful for situating research within scholarly discourse, often leads to dependence on human interpretation rather than divine illumination. As Grenz (1994) observes, theological knowledge becomes fragmented when divorced from Scripture's unifying authority. Ilesanmi also observes that theology without the word of God, Scripture, is atheology (theology of the devil or humanistic theology).⁹ Every theology must be grounded in revelation – Scripture. Hence, it is imperative to review Scripture, especially when we discuss theological issues.

4.2.2 The Supremacy of Scripture as the Foundation of Theological Research

The Scriptures transcend all human wisdom: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). Scripture's divine origin guarantees its reliability as a research source (Wright 2012). Barth (1960) insists that theology must

⁹ Ibid.

begin and end with the Word of God—Deus dixit—“God has spoken.” This is important because the Word is perfect, inerrant, and infallible.

4.2.3 The Methodological Shift: From Literature Review to Scriptural Review

The proposed methodological shift involves three dimensions:

1. Epistemic Reorientation—placing revelation above rationalism;
2. Hermeneutical Realignment—reading texts theologically, not just academically;
3. Methodological Renewal—making Scripture the first and final reference point in research.

4.3 Types of Review in Biblical Research Studies (with Biblical Examples and Texts)

No.	Type of Review	Description/Focus	Biblical Example/Texts (KJV)	Primary Source Base
1	Scriptural Review	Examines the Word of God as the primary and sufficient source for truth; compares Scripture with Scripture to derive divine meaning. The Bible is enough to interpret itself; it does not need external supports. It is inerrant and infallible.	“Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read...” (Isa 34:16; 2 Tim 3:16–17)	The Holy Bible (KJV preferred)
2	Biblical Foundation Review	Studies the scriptural basis of a doctrine or concept, tracing its origin through both the Old and New Testaments.	The doctrine of faith from Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3; Heb 11:6.	Canonical texts (the Scripture) and biblical theology
3	Exegetical Review	Analyses biblical texts grammatically, historically, and	Nehemiah and the Levites “ <i>gave the sense, and caused them to</i>	Original Hebrew and Greek texts + Scripture

		contextually to uncover the author's intended meaning.	<i>understand the reading</i> " (Neh. 8:8)	
4	Hermeneutical Review	Evaluates interpretative methods (literal, typological, allegorical, and contextual) to discern accurate understanding of Scripture.	Jesus interpreting the Law and Prophets about Himself (Luke 24:27)	Biblical hermeneutics + Scripture
5	Textual-Critical Review	Examines manuscripts and textual variants to ensure fidelity to the inspired Word.	The Bereans " <i>searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so</i> " (Acts 17:11)	Manuscripts, codices, and textual apparatus + Scripture
6	Theological Review	Reviews the theological meaning of Scripture and its relation to doctrines and divine revelation.	Paul's review of Israel's theology in (Romans 9–11)	Scripture + historical theology
7	Doctrinal Review	Analyses specific doctrines (e.g., salvation, grace, atonement) in biblical consistency.	Paul reviewing the doctrine of justification by faith (Rom. 3:24–28; Gal. 2:16)	Systematic theology and Scripture
8	Faith-Theological Review	Approaches Scripture non-empirically through faith as the mode of knowing divine truth.	" <i>Through faith we understand...</i> " (Heb. 11:3); " <i>We walk by faith, not by sight.</i> " (2 Cor. 5:7)	Scripture illuminated by faith
9	Theo-Theoretical (Theological) Review	Reviews the conceptual and theoretical ideas underlying theology, connecting abstract principles with	Paul's reasoning in <i>Acts 17:22–31</i> (the unknown God discourse). We have such theories as Trinitarianism,	Theoretical and philosophical theology + Scripture

		revelation. To review the relevant theological theory (ies) – the theory of God – underlying our research work. These theories must be biblically grounded.	theogenesis, pneumagenesis, Quantum theory of Giving/Sowing, etc.	
10	Practical-Theological Review	Reviews how Scripture is applied to ministry, ethics, and Christian living.	James’ integration of faith and works (Jas. 2:17); Jesus washing the disciples’ feet (John 13:14–15)	Pastoral practice, applied theology + Scripture
11	Historical-Biblical Review	Investigates the historical settings and contexts that shape understanding of the biblical text.	Luke’s historical preface: <i>“It seemed good to me also ...to write...in order”</i> (Luke 1:3–4)	Biblical archaeology and history + Scripture
12	Contextual Review	Examines how Scripture speaks within a specific cultural or social context.	Paul adapting to Greek and Jewish audiences (1 Cor. 9:20–22)	Local theologies and contextual studies + Scripture
13	Comparative Review	Compares biblical themes with other belief systems to highlight divine uniqueness. For example, African theology can be compared with Christian theology, or Christian theology with Islamic theology, etc.	Paul comparing the “unknown god” with the true living God (Acts 17:23–24)	Comparative theology and Scripture

14	Literary Review (Biblical Perspective)	Reviews existing scholarly works, especially Christian literature, but measures them against the authority of Scripture.	Jesus correcting traditional rabbinic interpretations with “ <i>Ye have heard...but I say unto you</i> ” (Matt. 5:21–22)	Books, journals, dissertations + Scripture
15	Pneumagogical Review	Reviews the role of the Holy Spirit in revelation, teaching, and interpretation of Scripture.	“ <i>When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.</i> ” (John 14:26; 16:13); cf. 1 Cor. 2:10–13	Pneumatology and faith experience + Scripture
16	Ethical Review	Examines biblical moral principles for righteous conduct and decision-making.	The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7; cf. Micah 6:8)	Biblical ethics + Scripture
17	Missiological Review	Reviews the biblical foundation and theology of mission and evangelism.	The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:8)	Mission theology and Scripture
18	Christogogical Review	Focuses on the person, teachings, teaching methods, and work of Christ as the central key to biblical interpretation.	Jesus on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:27); cf. John 1:1–14. Jesus' teachings and methods are documented in the pages of the Gospels and Pauline epistles, especially in Romans, Corinthians (1 and 2), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians	Gospels and Pauline epistles (Purely Scriptural)

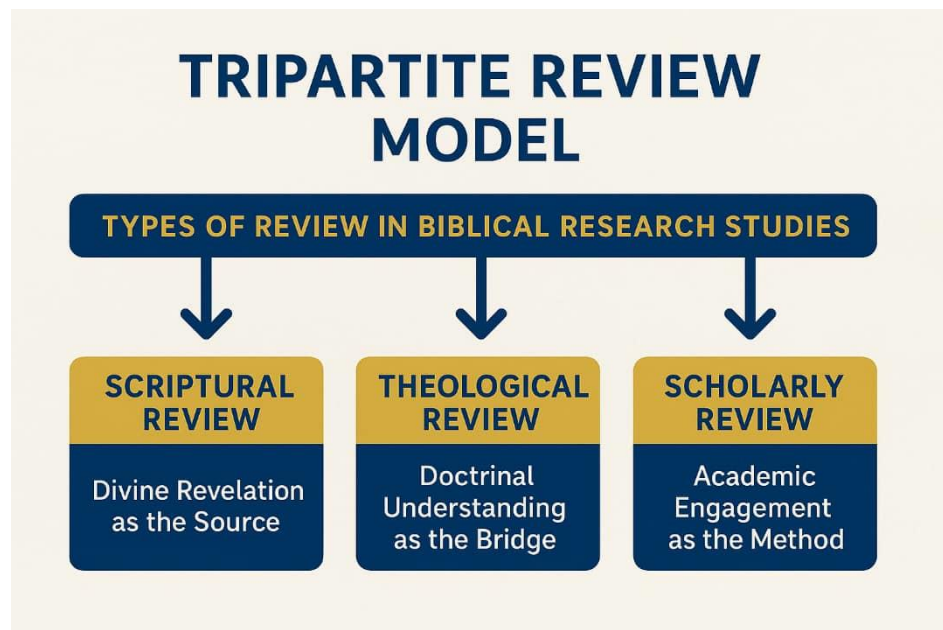
19	Ecclesiological Review	Studies biblical teachings on the Church's nature, order, and mission.	Acts 2:42–47; 1 Cor. 12:12–27	Acts, Epistles (Scripture), and Church history
20	Eschatological Review	Reviews the prophetic and apocalyptic passages concerning the end times.	Matt. 24; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; Rev. 21–22	Prophets, Gospels, Revelation

All these types of Biblical Research can be categorised into three called Tripartite

Review:

- (1) Scriptural Review – divine revelation as the source.
- (2) Theological Review – doctrine understanding as the bridge.
- (3) Scholarly Review – academic engagement as the method.

Together, these three reviews form a *tripartite model* of review in Biblical Research Studies, balancing faith, reason, and scholarship under the authority of Scripture. This is diagrammatically illustrated here:





A Tripartite Review Model

The Tripartite Review Explained

- i. **Scriptural Review:** Divine Revelation as the Source: This means that all true biblical research begins with the Scriptures themselves as the primary source of knowledge. It asserts that revelation — not human reasoning, not tradition, not previous literature — is the origin of theological truth. In other words, Scripture is not one of many sources; it is the Source. The following are the biblical basis: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Tim. 3:16–17); “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read...” (Isa. 34:16); “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet. 1:21); etc.
So in a Scriptural Review, divine revelation (what God has said) is both the starting point and final authority of all inquiry. Hence, Scripture itself is the Source.
- ii. **Theological Review:** Doctrinal Understanding as the Bridge. Here, “bridge” means connection — theology connects revelation to understanding. Once divine truth has been revealed through Scripture, theological reflection helps us interpret, systematize, and understand that revelation in coherent, doctrinal form. In other words, Theology stands between revelation and application — it translates divine truth into understanding. The biblical basis for this can be found in passages such as “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” (Luke 24:45); “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the

word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15); “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Tim. 4:13).

Thus, Theological Review functions as the bridge — transforming revealed truth (Scripture) into structured, doctrinal knowledge that can be taught, defended, and lived. Hence, theology is the Bridge.

- iii. **Scholarly Review:** Academic Engagement as the Method. Here, “method” refers to the discipline of research — the structured, intellectual, and analytical approach to studying biblical and theological truths. While Scripture gives revelation and theology provides meaning, scholarship provides methodology — the tools, frameworks, and analytical systems used to study, evaluate, and communicate what has been revealed. In other words, Scholarship does not replace revelation or faith; it serves them by providing method and clarity. The Bible has this to say concerning Scholarly Review: “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order...” (Luke 1:3–4); “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thess. 5:21); “Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man...which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” (Matt. 13:52); etc.

So Scholarly Review represents the disciplined, reasoned, and critical method by which biblical truth is examined and communicated — but always under the authority of revelation and theology. Hence, scholarship is the Method.

The Theological Sequence of Tripartite Review (STS):

Dimension	Role	Represents	Biblical Emphasis
Scriptural Review	Source	Divine Revelation	God speaks through His Word
Theological Review	Bridge	Doctrinal Understanding	Faith seeks understanding
Scholarly Review	Method	Academic Engagement	Mind renewed for truth and clarity (Rom. 12:2)

The tripartite review model — *Scriptural Review*, *Theological Review*, and *Scholarly Review* — should not be separated in essence, though it may be distinguished in structure

within a research work. In other words, they are distinct in function but inseparable in purpose. Indeed, the three reviews are used in a research work.

1. The Theological Reason

“Truth in Scripture is holistic, not fragmented.” In biblical research, truth flows from divine revelation (Scripture), through theological understanding, into scholarly articulation. If you isolate one, you distort the full picture.

Without *Scriptural Review*, theology becomes speculative; without *Theological Review*, Scripture remains uncontextualised or misunderstood; without *Scholarly Review*, divine truth lacks clarity, method, and communication. Thus, the model forms a Trinitarian unity — three operations working as one. Just as Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct yet one in essence (John 10:30; Matt. 28:19), these three reviews are distinct but indivisible in purpose — each complements the other. All the 20 types of review mentioned earlier fall under these three categories – *Scriptural Review*, *Theological Review*, and *Scholarly Review*.

2. The Research Reason:

“Each review serves a distinct function within one continuum.” In an actual academic or theological research paper, authors may organise their chapters or sections according to these reviews for clarity — but they should not divorce them in interpretation or purpose.

For example:

Review Type	Section or Role in Research Work	Function
Scriptural Review	Forms the biblical and revelatory basis (e.g., Chapter 2)	Establishes divine source and textual authority
Theological Review	Develops doctrinal and interpretive understanding (e.g., Chapter 3)	Bridges revelation with theology
Scholarly Review	Provides academic context and methodological discussion (e.g., Chapter 4)	Engages existing research critically and methodologically

This structural separation aids readability and organisation, but the spiritual and intellectual unity of the three must remain intact. Therefore, one can distinguish them in presentation, but unite them in purpose.

3. The Scriptural Pattern

Scripture itself models this tripartite unity:

Dimension	Biblical Example	Explanation
Scriptural	“It is written...” (Matt. 4:4; Lk 4:4)	Jesus grounded every claim in divine revelation.
Theological	“He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)	He interpreted Scripture theologically.
Scholarly	“That thou mightest know the certainty of those things...” (Luke 1:4)	Luke documented truth methodically and orderly.

This pattern shows that faithful biblical research must move from revelation to interpretation to method, not in isolation but in harmony.

5.0 Discussions

It was Ilesanmi (2025) who first moved the issue of a paradigm shift from traditional literature reviews to scriptural reviews in biblical research.¹⁰ The researcher said it is practically impossible to solve pneumatic problems by using secular tools. Scriptural review is pneumatic (spiritual) while literature review is secular (worldly). The work of the flesh (secular, literature review) always contends against the work of the spirit (spiritual, scriptural review). The two cannot please each other. In other words, they are contradictory. Galatians 5:17 has this to say: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” This is the exact picture this author is painting in this paper. As good as literature

¹⁰ Ibid.

review may appear to the scholars, it is of this world, it is worldly and human. Hence, it is anthropocentric. Therefore, the world will love to adopt the model. In contrary, Scriptural Review is of God. Thus, biblical research scholars or theologians should love and adopt its utilisation in their research work. The world will love their own, the Bible says: “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world ...” (John 15:19). The biblical researchers are not of the world (John 17:14, 15, 16). Therefore, they need to love their own – Scriptural Review.

The shift from Literature Review to Scriptural Review is vital to successful and impactful biblical and theological research. This shift does not dismiss scholarly contributions but reorders their authority beneath Scripture. As Vanhoozer (2005) notes, Scripture is not one voice among many but the normative voice that judges all others. In this light, Scriptural Review serves as a reformative principle—correcting the academic drift towards secular paradigms. This method demands that theologians engage scholarship critically, allowing Scripture to test, confirm, or correct human conclusions.

6.0 Findings

The study finds that biblical or theological research grounded in Scriptural Review produces more biblically faithful, spiritually edifying, and doctrinally sound outcomes. It realigns academic theology with divine revelation, reduces dependence on speculative reasoning, and enhances biblical authority in research.

7.0 Impacts

This work reawakens the Church and theological institutions to the necessity of Scripture-based scholarship, fostering a revival of truth-based learning that strengthens individual believers and enriches the corporate body of Christ. Additionally, the research promotes Bible study and biblical research that will help every believer to know God’s truth and know their positions in God’s agenda. What is more, a spiritually transformed Christian believer will transform the society and the church that will ultimately depopulate the kingdom of Satan and populate the Kingdom of God.

8.0 Recommendations

This author gives the following recommendations for urgent actions:

1. Theological institutions should integrate Scriptural Review as a core research method in their curricula.
2. Scholars should subject all secondary literature to biblical evaluation before citation or adoption.
3. Journals and seminaries should promote publications that privilege Scriptural Review as a mark of theological integrity, such as International Journal of Biblical Research Studies (IJBRs). This journal is a Scripture-based inquiry journal, setting the standard for other journals in the world.
4. Researchers should balance academic literacy with spiritual discernment grounded in Scripture.
5. Theological institution that is biblically based should be established. Such as ChristoPress Institute of Biblical Research Studies and Theological Education (CIBREST)
6. Biblical researchers should love and defend their own (Scriptural Review) with the same passion and dedication that the world shows for its own (Literature Review).

9.0 Conclusion

This paper argues for the recovery of a Scriptural Review—a biblically grounded method of examining theological questions through the lens of the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate authority of truth, which remains inerrant and infallible. It offers a clear, unassuming preference of Scriptural Review over the traditional Literature Review to establish Scripture—not secondary literature—as the ultimate and infallible source of divine truth, which is the pillar of biblical and theological research. Reclaiming the biblical foundation of theological research demands a methodological return to Scripture. Scriptural Review restores the voice of God to the centre of theology, transforming research from human speculation to divine revelation. As the Psalmist declared, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps 119:130). Theology must once again begin, continue, and end in that light. The distinction between Scriptural Review and Literature Review is ultimately a matter of authority. While the Literature Review is based upon human wisdom, the Scriptural Review is based upon divine revelation. Similarly,

While Literature Review informs, Scriptural Review transforms. The former reveals what men have written about God, while the latter unveils what God has written about Himself and His works, His creation. Biblical research, therefore, must move beyond mere intellectual tradition towards Scriptural illumination — where the Bible becomes both the literature and the laboratory of divine truth. To be genuine and life-transforming, biblical study must return to its source—the inspired Word of God. The future of Christian scholarship hinges on this realignment with Scriptural Centrality. Thus, the biblical researchers should love their own (Scriptural Review) as the world loves its own (Literature Review). This move will bring the Bible alive to the church and the world. It is therefore the author's believe that the study will expand the frontiers of knowledge in theological and biblical research.

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The Bible

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