

---

LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations

---

Fall 1988

## Review: Integrative Theology, V 1: Knowing Ultimate Reality and the Living God

A. Boyd Luter  
*Liberty University*, [abluter@liberty.edu](mailto:abluter@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs)



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [History of Religions of Eastern Origins Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Luter, A. Boyd, "Review: Integrative Theology, V 1: Knowing Ultimate Reality and the Living God" (1988). *LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 294.  
[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs/294](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/294)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

such an analysis often proves invaluable for Gooding's expositional insights, at times the structure is forced and Gooding faces the same problems that he notes with Talbert's work (pp. 361-61).

The book was disappointing in a few minor ways, however. In the first place, Gooding is unable to sustain the first thematic movement ("the Going"). This lack of intensity suggests that Gooding's structure may be forced in order to achieve such a fine balance between what he saw as two major sections. Secondly, the quality of the exposition is uneven. The book begins with the birth narratives, and Gooding offers an excellent analysis of those stories. At other places in the text, however, the narrative value of the text itself does not allow the exposition to rise to the same level as that of the birth narratives. Thirdly, the length of the exposition is such that a summary chapter would have enabled the reader to pull together the major themes of the gospel and bring a sense of closure to the exposition.

A final disappointment is perhaps the only major flaw of the book. The book is written in such a way as to be very helpful either to one who has no wish to pursue further study of Luke's Gospel or who already has the resources and knowledge to pursue further study on his or her own. The large group in the middle, those who are being introduced to the study of Luke's Gospel or to narrative analysis, are begin neglected, though. The book could have provided a bibliography without interrupting the flow of the exposition. Such a bibliography would allow the novice to pursue further study in areas related to the content of the book.

This review should not give on a negative perception of Gooding's book. It has a great deal to offer at every level, whether one be a novice, an expert, or somewhere in between. Gooding's exposition exhibits a strong exegesis and takes the text seriously. This book would be a good addition to one's library.

STEVEN SHEELEY

*Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, KY*

### III. *Theological Studies*

*Integrative Theology: Volume I*, by Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. Pp. 394. \$19.95.

This is the lead-off volume of a three-volume set of "cutting-edge" studies by Lewis and Demarest, Professors of Systematic Theology at Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary. They are well-qualified for their ambitious task, having previously written such well-known works as Lewis' *Decide for Yourself* and *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* and Demarest's *General Revelation*. Also, each has "played to his strength." In each chapter Demarest defines the problem involved, then handles the historical and biblical data, and Lewis deals with the systematic, apologetic, and practical aspects (p. 13).

It could be said that the present moment is not far from "the best of times" *and* "the worst of times" to be an evangelical systematic theologian.

From the negative standpoint, the systematic formulation of the faith is under attack, frequently by expected defenders. Not a few, including some evangelicals, are almost despairing over "the possibility of systematic theology" (see e.g., D. A. Carson, *Scripture and Truth*, pp. 65 ff.). Exegetical and biblical theology studies are flourishing, but there is considerable balking at the next stage of the theological process: systematic reflection.

On the other hand, some excellent systematics studies have emerged recently, notably Erickson's three-volume *Christian Theology*. Also, the current evangelical milieu actually accentuates the "felt needs for a new theological methodology" (p. 7), guaranteeing a more serious hearing for new paradigms, such as J. J. Davis' "contextualized" theology (see his *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* [Baker, 1984], pp. 60-72) and Lewis and Demarest's integrative proposal.

In a review of this length it is not possible to do in-depth analysis of such a significant contribution. It is hoped, however, that a listing of a few of the innovative features of this work, as well as several perceived strengths and weaknesses, will serve to motivate the individual reader to interact further with *Integrative Theology*.

In the estimation of this reviewer, Lewis and Demarest have made their case well for their integrative approach (pp. 7-13) and its underlying verificational method (especially pp. 11-12). Also, their early chapter, "Theology's Challenging Task" (pp. 21-58), is a superb initial orientation, whether for beginning readers or more seasoned theologians. The major sub-sections of the book, "Knowing Ultimate Reality" (mostly Bibliology) and "The Living God" are well-crafted and creatively written. Still, it is doubtful whether specialists from any of the fields the authors are seeking to integrate (i.e., historical, biblical, systematic, apologetic, and practical) will be entirely satisfied with the "helicopter view" necessitated by the breadth and modest length of the work. It should be remembered that *Integrative Theology* is more a method on display than a definitive exposition of its results.

The great strength of the integrative method is its reversal of the prevailing fragmentation of the theological arena into so many sub-specialty areas with "blindness" on. Also, it makes clear that none of the stages of the process is a theoretical "end in itself" until the ultimate goal of practical application has been treated. In that regard, it is particularly stimulating to read the (brief) practical discussion of the use of the Bible in spiritual warfare (p. 169), and the application of the Trinity (pp. 284-88) and election / predestination (pp. 328-34). Review questions and ministry projects are helpful features included at the end of each chapter, as are the subject and Scripture indices (pp. 359-94).

The two main criticisms this reviewer would voice both have to do with format, not content. First, the 'table of contents' (p. 5) is woefully deficient for a work of this type. Either it should have contained much more detail (breaking down each chapter into sections and sub-sections) or there should have been a detailed outline at the beginning of each chapter. As it is, it is difficult to track down a point without going through the flow of a whole chapter, which time constraints often do not allow. Second, in the commendable effort to maximize readability, the choice to use endnotes instead of

footnotes was unfortunate. Again, it is clumsy to try to locate a bibliographic point to facilitate further interaction.

All in all, *Integrative Theology* is highly recommended. The authors and Zondervan are to be congratulated, as we anticipate volumes two and three in the near future.

A. BOYD LUTER, JR.  
*Talbot School of Theology*  
*La Mirada, CA*

*Systematic Theology: Ethics*, by James Wm. McClendon, Jr. Nashville: Abingdon, 1986. Pp. 384. \$22.95.

McClendon has attempted to write a "baptist theology" that combines an emphasis on experience and Scripture. This initial work concentrating on ethics is the first of three scheduled volumes which McClendon hopes will constitute a systematic theology "in light of the baptist vision." Volume two will focus on doctrine and volume three will concentrate on philosophical foundations. The work draws heavily from the ethical formulations of John Howard Yoder as well as many insights from the new narrative theologies, especially Stanley Hauerwas.

The strength of the book is its attempt to intertwine together theology and ethics so as to emphasize the gospel's eschatological edge. McClendon builds the work upon the metaphor of a rope woven of intertwined cords and strands of which there are three: (1) the *physical*, organic order, particularly the body; (2) the *social and cultural* world of church and society; and (3) the *eschatological* realm founded upon the resurrection. Built on these strands, McClendon shapes his theological theme or "hermeneutical motto" which is a "shared awareness of the present Christian community was the primitive community and the eschatological community" (p. 31). In each of these three aspects there are carefully articulated theological and ethical constructions. These are presented biographically through the lives of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards, Dorothy Day and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, among others. One wonders if "baptist theology" could not better be illustrated or portrayed with baptist or at least baptistic biographical portraits (throughout "baptist" is not to be identified with any denomination, but with an understanding of Christianity).

Throughout the book McClendon constantly interacts with contemporary theological and ethical thought. He provides useful analysis but tends to leave the "narrative" genre in doing so and even interferes somewhat with the biographical portrayals. His analysis is simultaneously a strength and a weakness in that his analyses are competent and informative but seemingly detractive from his methodology.

I tend to agree with McClendon that baptist theology emphasizes both experience and Scripture, though I would reverse the order. I question the place tradition and history plays for McClendon. Perhaps it will receive greater emphasis in volume two. For me the verdict is still out on the value of narrative theology over against traditional approaches. While I enjoyed the