

## 7. The contribution of Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest

In *Integrative Theology*, volume one, Lewis and Demarest define theology as "the topical and logical study of God's revealed nature and purposes"; and state that "Systematic theology not only derives coherent doctrines from the entirety of written revelation but also systematically relates them to each other in developing a comprehensive world view and way of life." They go on to define integrative theology as follows:

Integrative theology utilizes a distinctive verificational method of decision making as it defines a major topic, surveys influential alternative answers in the church, amasses relevant biblical data in their chronological development, formulates a comprehensive conclusion, defends it against competing alternatives, and exhibits its relevance for life and ministry.

Lewis and Demarest state that integrative theology is a science.

Like other sciences, integrative theology works with interrelated criteria of truth (logical noncontradiction, empirical adequacy, and existential viability), accepting only those hypotheses that upon testing are discovered to be (1) noncontradictory, (2) supported by adequate evidence, and (3) affirmable without hypocrisy.

The authors explain their method as follows:

The method used here seeks to involve the reader in six distinct steps: (1) defining and distinguishing the one distinct topic or problem for inquiry; (2) learning alternative approaches to it from a survey of Spirit-led scholars in the history of the church; (3) discovering and formulating from both the Old and the New Testament a coherent summary of relevant biblical teaching by making use of sound principles of hermeneutics, worthy commentaries, and biblical theologies; (4) formulating on the basis of the relevant data a cohesive doctrine and relating it without contradiction to other biblically founded doctrines and other knowledge; (5) defending this formulation of revealed truth in interaction with contradictory options in theology, philosophy, science, religion, and cults; and (6) applying these convictions to Christian life and ministry in the present generation.

Further on, the authors expand on what they mean by the "verificational method", which they say grows out of a critically realistic epistemology. This proposed method includes five steps:

1. Genuine inquiry begins with defining a problem to be researched and becoming aware of its significance.
2. The theological method then discovers alternative answers to the problem by surveying relevant literature or interviewing theologians from many perspectives.