

Class 11, *Method* chapter 11 and *What Is Systematic Theology?* chapter 9, sections 1-4

Question 1: What sorts of theological operations constitute the functional specialty 'Foundations?'

One is doing Foundations in theology when (1) one objectifies the horizon within which doctrines, systematics, and communications are being done, and (2) one returns to that horizon to derive the categories that one will employ in these further specialties.

Question 2: What is the operator of the movement from the first phase to the second phase of theology?

The movement to direct discourse is prepared by dialectic and takes place with foundations. Indirect discourse is concerned with what others said and done but direct discourse meets the issue of the theologian's responsibility for his or her own positions, systematic understanding, and efforts at communication. For Lonergan it is one's religious, moral, and intellectual stance that structures one's horizon, and one's horizon ultimately determines what one will say in Doctrines, Foundations, and Communications. The conversions, then, are the ground of direct discourse. *Systematics*

Question 3: Why are the foundations limited explicitly to the second phase? What does Lonergan mean by saying they are not the sole foundation of second-phase work?

One's views on these issues are the ultimate grounds of one's other positions even in the first phase, but in the first phase, these views, implicit or explicit, govern the *results* of one's work, while in the second, which is much more personal, they constitute the very *methods* one will employ. Lonergan writes (268): 'Such conversion is operative, not only in the functional specialty, foundations, but also in the phase of mediating theology, in research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. However, in this earlier phase conversion is not a prerequisite; anyone can do research, interpret, write history, line up opposed positions. Again, when conversion is present and operative, its operation is implicit: it can have its occasion in interpretation, in doing history, in the confrontation of dialectic; but it does not constitute an explicit, established, **universally recognized criterion of proper procedure** in these specialties. Finally, while dialectic does reveal the polymorphism of human consciousness – the deep and unreconcilable oppositions on religious, moral, and intellectual issues – still it does no more: it does not take sides. It is the person that takes sides, and the side that he takes will depend on the fact that he has or has not been converted.'

Again, he writes on p. 271: 'Neither the converted nor the unconverted are to be excluded from research, interpretation, history, or dialectic. Neither the converted nor the unconverted are to follow different methods in these functional specialties. But one's interpretation of others is affected by one's understanding of oneself, and the converted have a self to understand that is quite different from the self that the unconverted have to understand. Again, the history one writes depends on the horizon within which one is attempting to understand the past; the converted and the unconverted have radically different horizons; and so they will write different histories. Such different histories, different interpretations, and their underlying different styles

in research become the center of attention in dialectic. There they will be reduced to their roots. But the reduction itself will only reveal the converted with one set of roots and the unconverted with a number of different sets. Conversion is a matter of moving from one set of roots to another. It is a process that does not occur in the marketplace. It is a process that may be occasioned by scientific inquiry. But it occurs only inasmuch as a man discovers what is unauthentic in himself and turns away from it, inasmuch as he discovers what the fulness of human authenticity can be and embraces it with his whole being. It is something very cognate to the Christian gospel, which cries out: Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand.'

These foundations, however, are not the sole foundation of second-phase work, which depends as well on the first four specialties. But they are needed to catalyze the movement to the second phase; they are (266) 'the added foundation needed to move from the indirect discourse that sets forth the convictions and opinions of others to the direct discourse that states what is so.'

Question 4: What is the distinction between foundational reality and foundations?

The conversions constitute **foundational reality**, and objectifying them is the first task of **foundations**. The real root (**foundational reality**) is a decision (268): 'a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against ... a decision illuminated by the manifold of possibilities exhibited in dialectic ... **a fully conscious decision about one's horizon, one's outlook, one's world view.**' In such a decision one '**deliberately selects the framework** in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective.'

So the theologian is prompted to such decisions, and Lonergan says the following about them:

- (1) They will be **conscious and explicit**, forced out perhaps into the open by the conflicts studied in dialectic.
- (2) They will **not be arbitrary** but the result of discriminating between what is authentic and what is not.
- (3) They are better conceived on the contemporary scene as a matter of **conscience** than as an act of 'will.'
- (4) They are **not easily attained or maintained**. 269: 'For the most part people merely drift into some contemporary horizon. They do not advert to the multiplicity of horizons. They do not exercise their vertical liberty by migrating from the one they have inherited to another they have discovered to be better.' But theologians must explicitly place themselves on the line, stating what responsibilities they have assumed or will assume and what are the grounds of their exercise of that responsibility. When they do that, they are doing foundations.
- (5) While such decisions are **intensely personal**, they are **not private**. They occur within a community that has a history, and they entail responsibility for that community and that history. They may even entail joining a new group or joining one's own in a new way.

Question 5: What is the alternative position against which Lonergan argues in the section entitled ‘The Sufficiency of the Foundational Reality?’

The alternative to this position would be **any attempt to locate foundations as a set of premises or logically first propositions** rather than as the immanent and operative set of norms that guides each forward step in the process (270). Foundations is not to be conceived in the following fashion (270): ‘... the only sufficient foundations will be some variation or other of the following style: One must believe and accept whatever the bible or the true church or both believe and accept. But *X* is the bible or the true church or both. Therefore, one must believe and accept whatever *X* believes and accepts. Moreover, *X* believes and accepts *a, b, c, d ...*. Therefore, one must believe and accept *a, b, c, d ...*’ Rather (270), ‘if one desires foundations for an ongoing, developing process, one has to move out of the static, deductivist style – which admits no conclusions that are not implicit in premises – and into the methodical style – which aims at decreasing darkness and increasing light and keeps adding discovery to discovery. Then, what is paramount is control of the process. It must be ensured that positions are accepted and counterpositions are rejected. But that can be ensured only if investigators have attained intellectual conversion to renounce the myriad of false philosophies, moral conversion to keep themselves free of individual, group, and general bias, and religious conversion so that in fact each loves the Lord his God with his whole heart and his whole soul and all his mind and all his strength.’ Doran would add, ‘psychic conversion to keep free of dramatic bias and to move with discrimination in the realm of elemental carriers of meaning,’ and perhaps something like a ‘social conversion to guard against political ideology and prevent one’s theology from being an instrument of oppression.’

At any rate (270-71), ‘the threefold conversion is not foundational in the sense that it offers the premises from which all desirable conclusions are to be drawn. The threefold conversion is, not a set of propositions that a theologian utters, but a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality that a theologian is. It operates, not by the simple process of drawing inferences from premises, but by changing the reality (his own) that the interpreter has to understand if he is going to understand others, by changing the horizon within which the historian attempts to make the past intelligible, by changing the basic judgments of fact and of value that are found to be not positions but counterpositions.’

Question 6: What are some of the implications for pluralism in theology when the foundations are shifted to conversion? Sections 3 and 4, to be handled by RD.

Sections 3 and 4 explore the implications for pluralism in theology when the foundations are shifted to conversion. There is a radical, dialectical pluralism grounded in the presence and absence of conversion. And there is a legitimate and permanent pluralism that results from the various differentiations and contexts in which converted consciousness may be found. Making conversion rather than propositions, tradition, authority, foundational frees theology to admit the latter kind of pluralism. More precisely, there is a legitimate pluralism in the spontaneous expression of the same fundamental stance, and there is a legitimate pluralism of theologies expressing the same faith.

Question 7: What are differentiations of consciousness? How are they related to the realms of meaning? How are differentiations related to pluralism?

Lonergeran introduces here the notion of **differentiations of consciousness**, which will become increasingly important as the book proceeds. Differentiations of consciousness are introduced in order to discuss pluralism in the expression of the same fundamental stance. 271: ‘While conversion manifests itself in deeds and in words, still the manifestation will vary with the presence or absence of differentiated consciousness. There results a pluralism in the expression of the same fundamental stance and, once theology develops, a multiplicity of the theologies that express the same faith.’

Differentiations of consciousness lie behind legitimate pluralism. Lonergan discusses **six realms of meaning**: common sense, theory, interiority, art, scholarship, and transcendence. 272: ‘Any realm becomes differentiated from the others when it develops its own language, its own distinct mode of apprehension, and its own cultural, social, or professional group speaking in that fashion and apprehending in that manner.’ These are not exhaustive. Moreover, common sense has endless varieties due to cultural differences, and theory has gone through the two phases of the classical period and modern science. Each of these differentiations will be incipient or mature or receding. **One’s theology will be a function in part of these contingent realities of differentiation, and also of context, as well as of conversion, and the point here is not to confuse these sources of pluralism.** Pluralism rooted in foundational issues is irreducible short of conversion. Pluralism rooted in differentiations and contexts contributes to the vitality of theology, while ever challenging theology to better communication.

This being said, however, Lonergan still **wants the contemporary theologian to have attained interiorly differentiated consciousness, and so to be familiar with the various differentiations: to attain a multiple differentiation of multiply converted consciousness.**

Question 8: Pp. 272-75 discuss each differentiation singly. Do you have any questions regarding these?

Question 9: Pp. 275-76 speak of the multiple differentiations, in the paragraph ‘I have been content ...’ And section 4 speaks of the theological implications of multiply differentiated consciousness. Again, are there questions regarding the last paragraph of section 3 and the whole of section 4? The paragraph on p. 278, ‘It may be objected ...’ is particularly noteworthy, as is the overview of what happened in the Middle Ages presented on p. 279.

Categories – handle largely by lecture, since this involves repetition of what was seen in earlier material and can probably be treated fairly quickly

Introductory remarks

A second task of foundations is the derivation of the categories. **This is, in my experience, not something that one does all of a piece.** Rather, as someone attempts to state what they themselves want to say in doctrines or systematics or communications, they will resort sooner or later to their own fundamental stance on cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics (intellectual commitments), or ethical stances (moral commitments), or religion (religious commitments).

Skip this paragraph: E.g., there appeared in an article a few years ago *Theological Studies* an article by Garth Hallett that insists that resorting to words such as ‘reality’ or ‘being’ in order to argue that there are grounds for crosscultural or interreligious dialogue is to resort to a set of abstractions that have little or nothing to do with the cultural-linguistic frameworks in which people operate. There is an entire cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics in such a statement, one with which I would take serious issue. As Lonergan says in the dogmatic part of his work on the Trinity, the evangelists and other NT authors may not have been able to put together a metaphysics, but everybody who has a mind and who is not insane knows being, for being is what is, and if they know anything they know being. If they do not know being, then they know nothing. And what is, is concrete, completely concrete. To say that being is an abstraction is to adopt a stance most closely associated with John Duns Scotus, whom both Lonergan and von Balthasar criticize in no uncertain terms precisely for maintaining such a position. This is not only an example of explicit dialectic, but also an instance of how one resorts sooner or later to one’s own fundamental stance, in this instance on cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. So I use this as an example of how the statement of theological positions always involves sooner or later resorting to one’s fundamental stances on these basic issues.

This particular task of foundations, then, is frequently done while one is working in other functional specialties. But **Lonergan also seems to posit a stage of deriving a set of models which then are tested, etc., as one does doctrines, systematics, and communications, and that too does happen, as we can see with the handout on ‘Categories of History.’**

General Categories

Theological categories are either general or special. **General** categories are shared with other disciplines. **Special** categories are proper to theology.

The distinction of general and special categories is one of the **crucial methodological options** in doing theology. Where you come down on this issue will determine much about your theology. The essential difference, e.g., between **Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas** is expressed in the following terms by Lonergan: ‘Where Bonaventure had been content to think of this world and all it contains only as symbols that lead the mind ever up to God, Aquinas took over the physics, biology, psychology, and metaphysics of Aristotle to acknowledge not symbols but natural

realities and corresponding departments of natural and human science.’ And in the light of that contrast Lonergan states his own option: ‘**Theology can succeed as a systematic understanding only if it is assigned a determinate position in the totality of human knowledge, with determinate relations to all other branches.**’ ‘Method in Catholic Theology,’ in CWL 6, 43-44.

It was this option that got Aquinas into difficulty in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and that was the essential issue at stake in the **Augustinian-Aristotelian conflict** that caused so much difficulty at this time, dividing theology into two camps that did not have to be formed and even dividing religious orders against one another. In our time, a theologian such as John **Milbank** would represent a view that disparages the significance of the general categories in theology, while Lonergan is perhaps the principal representative of a theologian who insists on the importance of the general categories.

Examples of general categories on the **handout** are abundant: equitable distribution of vital goods, community, practical intelligence, intersubjectivity, polity, economy, technology, etc.: almost everything up to and including the realm of ‘personal values.’ Other examples are found on pp. 286-88 in *Method in Theology*.

Special Categories

For **Aquinas**, as the quotation from Lonergan indicates, the source of the general categories was Aristotle’s philosophy, and the source of the special categories was both the scriptures, on which Aquinas wrote abundant commentaries, and the theorem of the supernatural arrived at by Philip the Chancellor around 1230, a theorem that distinguished two disproportionate entitative orders. The general categories, in this framework, had to do with **nature**, and the special categories with the **supernatural**.

In one effort at contributing to a contemporary theology, represented again on the **handout**, examples of special categories would be found at the level of ‘religious values’: God’s gift of love, sanctifying grace, active spiration, charity, passive spiration. Other examples are found in the principal areas of systematic theology: Christ, redemption, eternal life, church, baptism, sacraments, the word of God, original sin.

The Base of General Categories: Interiorly Differentiated Consciousness

The **foundation for general categories** in the theology that Lonergan would promote will be interiorly differentiated consciousness, the self-appropriation of conscious intentionality. Interiorly differentiated consciousness objectifies the transcendental notions that are relevant to every object we come to know. In an effort to see how this works out concretely, look again at the **handout**. The **levels of value** are a function of complicating the basic structure of conscious intentionality. The relations from below and from above are a function of the same relations among the levels of intentional consciousness. The dialectics of the subject, culture, and community are a function of the duality of human consciousness: intentional or spiritual and psychic.

The Base of Special Categories: Religiously Differentiated Consciousness

And the **foundation for special categories** will be religiously differentiated consciousness, the self-appropriation of religious interiority. Religiously differentiated consciousness objectifies the gift of God's love. Thus (*Method* 290): 'There are needed studies of religious interiority: historical, phenomenological, psychological, sociological. There is needed in the theologian the spiritual development that will enable him or her both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience.'

Again, to see the relation between the base and the categories, study the **handout**, at the level of religious values. The terms and relations expressed there are a function of religious self-appropriation.

Transcultural Base

Interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness, then, provide theology with its basic terms and relations. If these constitute the **basic terms and relations**, they give theology a **transcultural base**, something that is required for a theology that reflects on a religion that has a mission of universal communication, and especially in an age of crosscultural contact. Transcendental method is **transcultural, not in the way it has been formulated, but in the realities to which the formulation refers**. 282: 'The transcendental method outlined in our first chapter is, in a sense, transcultural. Clearly it is not transcultural inasmuch as it is explicitly formulated. But it is transcultural in the realities to which the formulation refers, for these realities are not the product of any culture but, on the contrary, the principles that produce cultures, preserve them, develop them.' The gift of God's love is also transcultural. It is offered to all, and it is manifest in the many and diverse religions of humankind. It is not conditioned by human knowledge or restricted to any stage or section of culture. 290: '... if this gift is offered to all men, if it is manifested more or less authentically in the many and diverse religions of mankind, if it is apprehended in as many different manners as there are different cultures, still the gift itself as distinct from its manifestations is transcultural. For of other love it is true enough that it presupposes knowledge – *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. But God's gift of his love is free. It is not conditioned by human knowledge; rather it is the cause that leads man to seek knowledge of God. It is not restricted to any stage or section of human culture but rather is the principle that introduces a dimension of other-worldliness into any culture. All the same, it remains true, of course, that God's gift of his love has its proper counterpart in the revelation events in which God discloses to a particular people or to all mankind the completeness of his love for them. For being-in-love is properly itself, not in the isolated individual, but only in a plurality of persons that disclose their love to one another.'

Validity of Categories

Theological categories, general or special, will be **valid to the extent that they are rooted in these transcultural components**, in their inner core. 284: 'In their actual formulation they will be historically conditioned and so subject to correction, modification, complementation. Moreover, the more elaborate they become and the further they are removed from that inner core, the greater will be their precariousness.'

Categories and Models

They will form a set of **interlocking terms and relations**, and as such they will possess the utility of **models**. If they refer to transcultural components, at their roots they will possess exceptional validity. But **whether they are more than models is a question left to the theologian working in doctrines, systematics, and communications**.

Derivation of categories

Deriving General Categories

The general categories will be derived from the basic nest of terms and relations built up from the theologian's own self-appropriation of oneself as attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible. 285-86: 'The base of general theological categories is the attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating subject along with the operations that result from attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating and with the structure within which the operations occur.' Lonergan's advice on the derivation of general categories is to **start with *Insight* and just keep moving**, in dialogue with developments in other fields. That at least is the upshot of what he recommends.

The first set of general categories, then, lies in the position on the **subject**: experience, understanding, judgment, decision. It expands with every further differentiation of the basic nest, so that today it includes at least: **patterns of experience, articulations of each level of consciousness, realms of meaning, heuristic structures, differentiations, biases, conversions**. He goes on to list a number of other categories from *Insight*. See 286-88. Scale of values.

Deriving Special Categories

The base of the special categories is **religious love** as the dynamic state whence proceed inner and outer acts in the supernatural order. This love is the unassailable fact (290) in the realm of religious experience, and the data on the dynamic state of other-worldly love are the data on a process of conversion and development.

Sets of special categories

Lonergan distinguishes five sets of special categories. The first objectify religious experience itself, the second community, the third God, the fourth authentic and inauthentic Christianity, and the fifth history as a matter of progress, decline, and redemption. See 290-91. The source of this listing is not clear to me yet, though I do some speculation on the question in *What Is Systematic Theology?*

Skip this section: Development and Use of the Categories

First, there is a summary on p. 292 of the position on deriving the categories. 'For general categories the base is the authentic or unauthentic man: attentive or inattentive, intelligent or slow-witted, reasonable or silly, responsible or irresponsible, with the consequent positions and

counter-positions. For special categories the base is the authentic or unauthentic Christian, genuinely in love with God, or failing in that love, with a consequent Christian or unchristian outlook and style of living.

‘The derivation of the categories is a matter of the human and Christian subject effecting self-appropriation and employing this heightened consciousness both as a basis for methodical control in doing theology and, as well, as an a priori whence he can understand other men, their social relations, their history, their religion, their rituals, their destiny.’

Next, categories need always stand ready for refinement and purification, achieved against the standards set by conversion. 292: ‘Nor may one expect the discovery of some “objective” criterion or test or control. For that meaning of the “objective” is mere delusion. Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. It is to be attained only by attaining authentic subjectivity.’

Third, general categories will be employed in all eight functional specialties as Lonergan envisions these. Special categories are derived seminally in dialectic and explicitly in foundations. Commitment to them, as referring to reality, occurs in doctrines, systematics, and communications. But they are used in interaction with data, which set up an exigence for their clarification, correction, and development.

Finally, and summing up the tasks of foundations, 293: ‘So, as theology is an ongoing process, as religion and religious doctrine themselves develop, the functional specialty, foundations, will be concerned largely with the origins, the genesis, the present state, the possible developments and adaptations of the categories in which Christians understand themselves, communicate with one another, and preach the gospel to all nations.’

What Is Systematic Theology? chapter 9, sections 1-4

The point of the chapter is (89) ‘to identify and state the grounds of authentic development itself, indeed the grounds of a genetically related sequence of systematic orderings of Christian constitutive meaning.’ Our situation today is ‘remarkably *unlike* the medieval scene,’ in that ‘we know in a quite explicit manner the limits of possible achievement. We know that we may ambition, not some grand synthesis that will stand secure forever, but only an ongoing set of genetically related successive syntheses, all of them incomplete, with the totality residing at a given time not in the mind of any single theologian, but in a collaborative community’ (89). **The question of foundations, then, takes on a new dimension: what will ground such a sequence of systems in theology?**

The **difficulty** is that the grounds must be **invariant**, not in their formulation, but in the **reality** that the formulation refers to. **Otherwise we may not expect (except coincidentally) any permanently valid content in systematic theology, nor may we expect that the work of theological synthesis is to be able to be self-consciously cumulative and progressive: a synthesis of each new insight with all previous valid insights (cumulative) and a sustained succession of discoveries (progressive).** Thus, the methodological prescriptions for systematic theology must include these historical and communal aspects.

Question 10: How does Doran respond to the anti-foundationalist objection to any talk of a permanently valid ground?

First, by distinguishing foundational reality from foundations, and second, by distinguishing foundational reality from a set of premises from which conclusions would be deduced. 'Foundations' is an ever incomplete objectification of a formal structure of self-transcendence that is permanent and normative. **The issue is: Are there formal structures of human integrity that can be incrementally articulated and that must be and, with God's grace, can be at least asymptotically satisfied, and satisfied with greater regularity as one develops affectively, intellectually, morally, and religiously?** It is interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness that will offer the invariant basis for ongoing systems (95).

For our purposes, the chapter may be viewed as arguing that **Lonergan's specification of foundational reality in terms of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion is not quite enough** to guarantee this sequence or to integrate the three permanent theological achievements spoken of in chapter 8. The notion of psychic conversion specifies an appropriation of an **aesthetic-dramatic operator** that enables one, among other things, to approach some understanding of the **aesthetic form of divine revelation and of the dramatic exchange of divine and human freedom**.

We can probably skip the material from 92 ('Lonergan on Foundations') to 109 ('Psychic Conversion'), since we will have already seen enough regarding these issues.

Psychic Conversion

Section 4.4 (109-24) is largely a review of earlier material on the notion of psychic conversion. The basic point of the notion has to do with appropriation of an **aesthetic-dramatic operator** of human development. If Lonergan's approach to **decision in *Method in Theology*** is correct, such an operator must be acknowledged. Possible values are apprehended in **affect-laden insights, and the quality of affectivity, its self-transcendence, is the criterion of the decision**. This means that there is **a set of operators built into the psychic unfolding** of a subject who also is intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, a set that complements the operators that consist of questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, and questions for deliberation.

Lonergan speaks of two distinct sets of operators as early as *Insight*, as the block quotation on p. 110 indicates. The **operator of development on the psychic level** is 'some cosmic dimension, ... some intimation of unplumbed depths, that accrue[s] to [our] feelings, emotions, sentiments' (quoted on p. 110).

Psychic conversion is the establishment of a dynamic correspondence between the intellectual, rational, moral dimensions of consciousness and the sensitive flow. That dynamic correspondence sets up what I call **a dialectic, but a dialectic not of contradictories but of contraries**. In the terms of *Insight*, there are affect-laden images that have to do with 'the

sphere of the ulterior unknown, of the unexplored and strange, of the undefined surplus of significance and momentousness' that constitute the primary field of both mystery and myth.

The dynamic correspondence may require (111) 'a **transformation of the censorship** exercised with respect to the entire field of what is received in empirical consciousness,' a transformation **from a repressive to a constructive exercise**. Self-appropriation has to extend to psychic dimensions of consciousness: the sensitive flow of sensations, memories, images, conations, emotions, associations, spontaneous intersubjective responses, bodily movements, received meanings and values. But this may or may not require in a person an **openness** on the part of intentional consciousness itself to a transition from the neural or the organic to the psychic. In that case the repressive censorship needs to be transformed into a constructive censorship that wants insight, rational judgment, and responsible decision, and that will admit into consciousness the sensitive and imaginal materials and received meanings and values will provide data for insight.

I go beyond Lonergan's tentative affirmation of a symbolic operator effecting the emergence of image and affect at the lower levels of consciousness, to affirm an **aesthetic-dramatic operator that precedes, accompanies, and transcends the intellectual or spiritual operators**.

Psychic conversion may occur in a psychotherapeutic context, but it is not limited to that. As von Balthasar argues, there is a **pathology of the aesthetic and the dramatic in culture generally**, and it calls for a shift in basic horizon if it is to be met at its roots.

Psychic conversion adds a **further resource** to the direct discourse in which systematic theology stands, and it does so **in three ways**. **First**, it enables a fuller information of systematic discourse by the symbolic communication that is the medium or carrier of **revelation** – a continuity of the formal and full meanings of both doctrinal and systematic theology with the elemental carriers of meaning in which God has revealed the mystery of divine love. The operators in which God revealed the eternal mystery of God's kenotic self-transcendence in our regard are aesthetic and dramatic; the meaning they convey is elemental, a meaning that never will be exhausted in the categories of human thought. **Second**, it equips one to employ **symbols in one's systematics** without relinquishing the systematic exigence, for it enables one to relate *to one another* the realities conveyed symbolically. **Third**, it is partly constitutive of the **social and cultural stance** required for engaging in mutual self-mediation and of some of the general theological categories to be employed in systematics. As for the social and cultural stance, **attention to the 'lower' openness of intentional consciousness serves to establish one in solidarity with the victims of the sin of the world. And a fidelity to the topmost operator will ally one's sympathies with those most in need.**