

# **REDEEMING RELIGION**

## **The Evolution Trilogies**

By Sylvester L. Steffen

### **I. The SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT Trilogy**

1. PRIMARY SCRIPTURE, Cosmic Religion's First Lessons
2. QUANTUM RELIGION, the Good News of Rising Consciousness
3. RELIGION & CIVILITY, the Primacy of Conscience

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2. WHAT SELF-DONATION IS, Kenosis, Eucharist and Green Religion
3. The POETREE WORLDVIEW, Leafing through History

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## “Redeeming the Enlightenment” — how about REDEEMING RELIGION?

<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474978251339>

In his book “Redeeming the Enlightenment”, 2010 copyright, Wm. B. Eerdman’s Publisher, Bruce K. Ward addresses the redemption of Enlightenment by way of attaching Christian sensitivity to the “liberal virtues” of the Enlightenment, perhaps most notably the virtues of tolerance and compassion. The public might well object that religion needs redemption more than Enlightenment does.

It is with Enlightenment and Religion that one cannot be redeemed except the other also is redeemed. Religion supposes enlightenment as faith supposes reason. Enlightenment rationality needs the *dialogic trust of compassionate tolerance* but so does religious faith. [Redeemed Enlightenment might also be called “Christian Humanism.”]

There can be no meaningful dialog between the parties except they trust each other. Religion (faith) and Enlightenment (reason) can dialog only when each accepts that the other has useful truths to share. Trust realizes that there is truth in differences, and when there is openness to trust, to differences, dialog can open both communicants to new truth. [“Compassionate trust” embraces differences, not just “tolerates” them.]

The problem between Christianity and Enlightenment is analogous to the woman/ nature conundrum pointed out by Walter Brueggemann, that the desecration of nature isn’t likely to be remedied (redeemed) except the alienation and desecration of women are remedied. <http://justifiedliving.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977...>

What this means is that the common premise of evolving consciousness (trustful communication, compassionate tolerance) applies mutually to woman and man, faith and reason, and to religion and enlightenment. The unresolved obstacle to trust is fixation in a worldview (static) that makes no sense to modern consciousness; mutually exclusive worldviews are inherently distrustful of each other. Fixation in conflicted worldviews is a non-starter.

[www.secondenlightenment.org](http://www.secondenlightenment.org)

<http://justifiedliving.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474978...>

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## The Steffen Evolution Trilogies

### TRIMORPHIC RESONANCE

Trinitarian thinking is ancient in origin. The three-form consciousness of original thinking is captured in the Greek term “trimorphic pretennoia.” The Steffen Trilogies develop the concordant theme of ongoing universal consciousness (trimorphic resonance) in applicable modes of psychological/ physical evolution. The conscious continuity of energy/ substance is well captured in the term *catholic experience*, what is “universal religion.”

In fundamental ways evolution works in “trinitarian” patterns. Atoms, for example, are in processes of formation and maintenance in the dynamics of electromagnetic divergence, convergence and emergence, as are molecules and organisms. Resonance is the quantum-electric energy of wave/ particle structuring of deep cosmic physics, ever busy proving possibilities of atoms, molecules, cells, etc. Organic life is sustained, renewed and maintained by “trimorphic resonance” at the deep wave/ particle level as well as at other levels and modes of processing and transformation.

Family, for example, is structured in a trinitarian or “trimorphic” pattern: father + mother = child; father/ mother/ child is a family of three. ( $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ ). The persons of family work together in harmony, that is, their energies resonate to build communities of three (and more.) Energetic resonance is the psychic bonding of families, communities and global peoples. In structure and in content the Evolution Trilogies exemplify and extrapolate on modes of harmonic trimorphism.

The gestation of these trilogies has been ongoing in me for more than fifty years (since 1957.) Their conception evolved from my sense of the hurtful division between faith and reason, as continues even now in the religious/ cultural conflicts between *fideism* and *rationalism*, religion and science. I set out to expose what to me is a cultural fraud, that is, that science and religion are in conflict; reason supposes knowledge (truthfully informed) as faith supposes trustful communication. Science, the accumulation of factual knowledge, is the basis of reason as reason is the basis of faith’s certification. Reason, knowledge and science are essential underpinnings of faith.

My “*coming to the light*.” has been a lifetime “birthing”. My trilogies document the timeline of my personal awakening to “second enlightenment,” a calculated effort to bridge the chasm that stands between First Enlightenment *rationality* and patriarchal *fideism*.

### SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT, a Trilogy of Trilogies

TRINITY is experience of personal process and by analogy the evolved consciousness of divine agency (Godhead) in the universe. Divinity is perceived in likeness of family, the basic unit of community. Human beings know how to think and talk about God by way of analogy and in words and terms of human coinage and relationship. The altruism of family relationships is consistent with how God *would, could, should* Self-reveal in the highly evolved modes of self-reflective development. The harmonic altruism of human family reflects on the altruism (love) of Divine Community—the Persons of Trinity.

Historically (from the 1600s) First Enlightenment challenged the dominion culture of fideism (blind faith in authority) and challenged Imperial Church by insisting on the role of reason in justifying personal awareness (conscience) of everyone. In deconstructing fideistic structures and culture, Enlightenment diminished the role of faith (fideism), and in so doing put reason (science, *scientia*) in priority relationship with faith.

“Second Enlightenment” develops the awareness of mutually valuable contributions of faith and reason in the on-going ascendancy of culture and consciousness. Faith is understood not as blind beliefs taught by authority figures (institutions) but as tested, trustworthy and enduring understandings upon which personal/ social consciousness and common wellbeing advance. The schism between faith and reason has pitted the world of “secular” consciousness against the world of “religious” consciousness and set up schizophrenic voices in minds of people. In practice, dogma and old faith traditions remain mostly unchanged from medieval formulations, notwithstanding advances of evolutionary consciousness. Conflicted voices will continue to foment discord until faith and reason are reconciled in individual minds.

Dominion theology and culture handed down dogma and structures through a disciplined all-male, celibate hierarchy which claims privilege of divine election in the linear transfer of divine grace from a top-down deity to a flat-earth people below. The Trinity Godhead is perceived as all male, consistent with understandings of Original Sin which caused the Fall of humankind at the invitation of Eve to Adam to eat the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. Women are excluded from hierarchical roles of grace transmission. In the rituals of institutional Sacrament people share in divinity and receive graces of salvation (merited in the death of Jesus, the Son of God.)

In the present time and consistent with the Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, the faith-sense of Roman Catholicism holds in principle the belief that “faith supposes reason as grace supposes nature.” (J. Courtney Murray. S.J.) The SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT Trilogy tries to enlighten the manner of nature’s evolving processes which transfer “graces” to humankind and organic life. (More at [www.secondenlightenment.org](http://www.secondenlightenment.org)) Every person is of equal value and authenticity before God and in the Sacrament of Natural Order.

## **The EVOLUTION Trilogies**

- 1. The SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT Trilogy (Communication—WORD)**
- 2. The CONSCIOUS LIGHT Trilogy (Consciousness—LIGHT)**
- 3. The JUSTIFIED LIVING Trilogy (Conscience—LOVE)**

### **1. The SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT—The Communication Trilogy**

The three books are: **PRIMARY SCRIPTURE; QUANTUM RELIGION; RELIGION & CIVILITY**

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**, Cosmic Religion’s First Lessons”, book one, presents Natural Law as its starting principle, and the evolving cosmos as the first and continuing scripture, the place of contact with divinity. We are hearers of the word and writers of scriptures. Trimorphic Resonance, the processing of faith and reason is introduced as the operative means of religious/ civil/ social evolution in the workings of Natural Law and Natural Sacrament.

Nature is the scripted venue of evolving organic life. The cosmos originates the energy/ matter that substantiate the “soul” of organic life. Female/ male persons procreate original persons male and female; original “thirdness” of person, whether male or female, carries the mark of bipolarity in the right/ left halves of the body and brain.

Book two, **QUANTUM RELIGION**, the Good News of Rising Consciousness”, sees reason, faith and purpose as dynamics of intelligent design in the life we inherit and pass on. The “trinity” of reason/ faith/ purpose is a dynamic that characterizes the vital processes of symbiosis, the reflective way of Godlikeness. Consciousness resides in individual and group minds; both evolve together as they together work through common experiences of co-dependency inside the natural order of Sacrament (*Naturalis Sacramentum Ordinis*.) Consciousness-awakening is a work-in-progress of faith and reason together informing each other.

**RELIGION & CIVILITY**, the Primacy of Conscience”, book three, is a retrospective on how religion and culture have co-evolved in rational and irrational ways, and how we inherit the conflicts of irreligion and incivility. Conscience is presented as a moral awakening, first in individual consciousness and gradually in collective consciousness. The individual person enjoys the primacy place over institutions. Institutions have authenticity only as received from individuals. Collective consciousness acts in interests of equal personal rights and privilege of individuals, and of “corporate” responsibility not to overreach personal rights but to safeguard them. The history of cultural incivility and irreligion is powerful testimony to the primacy order of personal conscience.

The religious development of Word, Light and Love speaks of the divine personae of Trinity, the Godhead Parent of Creation, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Communication is process of word origin—the first resonance; consciousness of individual person is the self-reflective awakening of light—the second resonance; and the holism of being advances on personal commitment to wellbeing, the motivation of love—the third resonance. Thus, trimorphic resonance advances by way of the three-form resonances of communication-word, consciousness-light and conscience-love.

## **2. The CONSCIOUS LIGHT—The Consciousness Trilogy**

The three books are: **THE POSSIBLE JOURNEY; THE GLOBAL THINKING COMMUNITY; GREEN RELIGION.**

Self-reflective consciousness is the fleshed word (embodied soul) of humankind and the individual person in dialogue with Earth atmosphere and other life. The evolved complex of diverse substance is the “ecos” (house) of self-reflective consciousness. Life’s highest self-reflective focus of consciousness resides in the human person.

There can be no authentic communication except there is trust; trust is the underlying premise of self-reflective exchange. Thought (conscious light) is the intentional product of communication as it occurs from moment to moment in advancing thinking and evolution. The perfecting of thought/ thinking is a natural virtue of evolved organic life that is ecologically diversified in sustainable (conscionable) accommodation of web-life ecologies (green religion) inside the reflective resonance of the electromagnetic (cultured) spectrum (love-light).

Consciousness is a process of mindfulness. Experience is in the moment, and if we learn to be attentive to the moment and do what needs to be done, the future connects with the past to unfold a seamless fabric. Attentiveness to the moment matures perspective and sharpens the insight of prevision. Prevision perspective attends to matters essential to common interests, such as food provision of food and organic sustainability.

The Sacrament of Natural Order: To be adult means to assume responsibilities in life, for oneself and for others who depend on us. Adult consciousness compels us to exercise the virtue of prudence in anticipating (*provision*) common needs and in marshalling resources to provide (*provision*) for needs. *Prevision* and *provision* are what adults do to live authentically, i.e., they anticipate and provide for life in and with natural ecologies, with sense of economy and religious sensitivity. This book challenges adult religious/ secular consciousness in joined works of previsioning/ provisioning for self and all other.

The first book **THE POSSIBLE JOURNEY**, "Uncompromised Trust", begins with the fresh insights of Vatican II on evolution, and insights how faith and reason have been and are yet being breached by inauthentic culture; distrust blights all cultures. Religions lose effectiveness because they address childhood consciousness without adequately challenging adult consciousness. Possessing only the mental capacity of a child doesn't work in real life complexities. The book intends to lead people from childhood to adulthood rationality/ faith, and to facilitate movement beyond schizophrenic consciousness.

Book two, **The Global THINKING Community**, "One Family, One Future," introduces the theory of the "method of evolution" which recognizes the controlling role of humankind in the future of organic life. Mindlessness and ignorance lead to disrespect and waste of nature, whereas, knowledge and intentionality (mindfulness) lead to consciousness of personal place in the ecology of organic life and the power of humankind either to deplete it or to respect and sustain it.

The third book **GREEN RELIGION** "inside the Cultural Spectrum", goes more in-depth into updated theological and scientific insights that integrate faith/ knowledge, religion/ science. GREEN RELIGION is meant to be used in two ways, personally, for daily reading and reflection, and in group study and faith-sharing.

### **3. The JUSTIFIED LIVING—The Personal Conscience Trilogy**

Personal conscience is an evolving awareness of place in life's justified ecology. The sustainability of mindful living (communication) supposes intentional focus (prevision) as to the essential interdependency of diverse global ecologies. Religion is authentic when its moral vision grasps understanding of human dependency on the "provision" largesse of sustainable eco-systems. Human self-consciousness of place in life's web complexes tells that life's interdependence is universal and involves iterations of processes whereby life forms birth, thrive and die. Life feeds on life. Lower life forms are food and substance of higher life forms—the working of symbiosis.

The multifarious, simultaneous resonances of life's iterations are a great polyphony of harmony. The music of the spheres, from cells to plants, to people, to planets, is a poetic rendering of Middle Tree vitality, an expanding song of salvation (whole-making), the refined justification of rhyme and reason, the worldview of Trimorphic Proténnoia.

The three books are: **2000—SUMMARY PREVISION; WHAT SELF-DONATION IS; POETREE WORLDVIEW**. Evolution is about sustainability, the justification of individuals in-place, and by the trial-and-error proving of organic life.

“**2000--A SUMMARY PREVISION** toward Global Revitalization”, presents a summary overview of the global predicament and the joined need for religion and education to bring healing to conflicts, and to exemplify how to communicate not just a sense of the urgency of the times, but also a sense of specific response toward restoring and revitalizing ecologies, and sustaining human, plant and animal life. It comes down to universal strategies of education and the conservation of nature.

“**WHAT SELF-DONATION IS**, Kenosis, Eucharist & Green Religion” All life is the soul/ substance (energy/ matter) of wave/ particle. Waves that shock and awe are dissonant; waves of inspiration are consonant waves of beauty that attract. Dissonance provokes divergence, consonance promotes convergence; the convergence of consonant energy promotes emergence while dissonance sets up conflicted polarities. (What is counter-intuitive is that like electrical charges oppose whereas unlike electrical charges attract.) Human sensitivity seeks attraction, consonance, and emergence—what are outcomes of self-fulfillment. Whit, will and wisdom accumulate consonant energy that affects resonant bonding that self-fulfills.

Intentional symbiosis, Eucharistic self-giving is conscious energy of harmonic purpose that advances wellbeing in common. Like fire attracts moths and nectar attracts honey bees, so energetic consonance attracts human spirit to common purposes of wellbeing.

Life is about discovering and sharing the energies of whit, will and wisdom. Deep down our hearts are restless. Divine magnetism tugs on the iron core (cytochrome-c) around which blood cells form. How true St. Augustine’s words, “My heart is restless, O Lord, until it rests in you.” We are naturally, magnetically drawn to the divine, to fulfillment of our hearts’ desires, which find consonance in Godlikeness. Consonance is fully and finally realized in living lives that turn on purposes of intentional Godlikeness in relations with all other. Love alone lasts.

The spirituality of divine attraction is “natural,” what means that it is both spiritual (intentional) and physical (intensional.) We cannot attain life’s fullness unless we seek The Light, the magnetism of divine attraction that calls us into harmonic relationships. Discover The Light. Pursue The Light. Give heart response to North Star magnetism. Self-fulfillment is in self-donation, the Eucharistic “pouring out” of self in Other.

“**THE POETREE WORLDVIEW**, Leafing through History” Light makes possible all organic existence, all communication, all sensation. Light fulfills purposes of divinity and humanity. Beauty is the harmony of consonance, the perceived sensations of conscious consonance. We are fulfilled, that is, “redeemed”, by awakening to and pursuing The Light. The dot-matrices of photons resonate consonance and bring molecular intensions to bond in strong-force and take on substantive forms. Except for the first particles of light (photons), there is no organic existence, no self-reflective consciousness. How awesome the profound beauty of resonance, convergence and emergence that conspires to create. How awesome that we come to know the beauty we are, the beauty around us that fulfills dream and destiny and tugs at heart strings.

The harmonics of resonances are the rhythms of the spheres, the rhythms of molecules, of cells, the rhythms of life. We all need to be symbiotic and follow the rhythms of our heartbeats, the tug of divine gravity at the very core of every blood cell. We need to pursue the consonant inspiration that fuels our dreams and destiny. This pursuit alone, this pursuit of beauty “saves” us, brings us to self-fulfillment. In truth! *beauty is truth, truth beauty, it's all ye need to know.* Beauty “saves the world.”

## **Leafing through History**

A dominant feature and self-inflicted curse of Western religions, Middle Eastern, is the alienation of the sexes and the overreach of one sex over the other. The theology of dominion justifies cultural dominion, male arrogation, alienation and violence. This misguided animus is destroying not just humankind, but Earth and life on Earth.

The crisis of the Seventeenth Century was an awakening that meant to redeem Roman Catholicism from its pall of alienation, dominion, corruption and violence. The response to the voice of reason has been slow and halting at best; but perhaps at this late hour, the irreversible crises of wasting nature and humanity might bring to consciousness what reason until now has failed to accomplish. God doesn't suffer fools; we cannot expect God to save us from culpable ignorance. Redemption is our personal obligation and work, it happens from within.

Cutting to the quick of it, the Protestant Reformation was a justified effort to redeem Christianity and European culture. As taught and exemplified by Jesus, the Christian Gospel intends to uplift humankind from obsession in self-serving and exploitation. The compassionate teaching of Jesus put the suffering of the marginalized above all else. The Gospel of Christianity is the same for people today, to be like Jesus, and to do as Jesus did and by so doing to redeem humanity from its satanic impulses to overreach others. Jesus lived and died under the uncompassionate reality of the Temple imposing all manner of insufferable strictures on people, and under the violent rule of the Roman Empire. The culture of his time repeats in many regards in our time.

History informs how Christianity came to be absorbed by imperial Roman culture; how Christianity became complicit in teaching and imposing the dominion culture of guilt and fear; and how imperial muscle was used to force religious conformity on people under penalties of physical torture and death.

A more rational humanism gradually rallied against the Empire and its dominion cult of violent rule by the sword and the cross. The rise of reason over fideism became a new urgency to redeem failed imperial Christianity. Enlightenment rationality came to illumine a “second” Christianity. Reformation and Enlightenment sought to engage the humane sensitivities of people as Jesus did, and to redeem religion from cultural captivity and frustrated redemption; but theological imperialism was too deeply engrained to be replaced by reform enlightenment. Christian redemption continues to be frustrated by the self-electionism of the imperial Catholic hierarchy.

Societal movement toward new (Second) Enlightenment rationality continues. The path toward the redemptive work of man and nature looks beyond the impasse of fideistic religion and First Enlightenment alienation. A lift to the effort was given by the Second

Vatican Council that endorsed contributions of modern science in bringing reason to bear on faith and conscionable living.

Science continues to reinforce and enlighten reason by new insights into the evolving processes of intensional/ intentional symbiosis. The value of truth is less in possessing it than in pursuing it and living the lessons it informs. The same can be said of beauty. In his book "Redeeming the Enlightenment", Bruce K. Ward addresses the humanist virtues (equality, authenticity, tolerance and compassion) that make room for receiving truth and recognizing the beauty of person uniquely possessed by each. Real dialogue happens between (amongst) people when they accept individual equality, authenticity and freedom of personal conscience, and when they not merely tolerate differences of others but embrace them with passion. Christian compassion goes beyond tolerance and motivates for reasons other than mere tolerance. *"Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know."*

As a community of compassionate believers whose aesthetic avatar is Jesus, the Christ, we are challenged to show the beauty of a transfigured (redeemed) humanity. We can believe with Dostoevsky that "beauty will save the world." Stanley Hauerwas is quite right to say that "Christianity is unintelligible without witnesses...people whose practices exhibit their committed assent to a particular way of structuring the whole." (Bruce K. Ward, "Redeeming the Enlightenment," pg 29, © 2010, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2140 Oak Industrial Drive NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505)

The enjoyment of beauty is in the moment, in witness to truth; compassion is in the moment. Intuitions are photons of awareness that work by their own urgency. All we can do is dispose our consciousness to be open when photons light up. Photons are like fireflies, visible for an instant, then gone. Be alert to the instant and catch the firefly. Compassionate humanism raises self-reflection to redemptive possibilities of Eucharistic out-pouring, what is intentional self-donation in the likeness of divine compassion. Jesus showed the way of redemptive Eucharist, a generosity that requires compassion from every person for every person—Jesus began the redemptive work and expects people of every generation to live redemptive lives.

Enlightenment principles of equality, fraternity and liberty (equality of person, compassionate sensitivity, and freedom of conscience) are conditions of intentional symbiosis, of compassionate living, relating mutually to one another and acknowledging, relying and building on the charisms of one another. By fidelity to mutuality, complementarity and subsidiarity we reinforce and collaborate with each other to be as Jesus would have us be, i.e., Eucharistic Humanists mindfully committed to justified living and giving self in service to others.

<http://englishhistory.net/keats/poetry/odeonagrecianurn.html>

### **Ode on a Grecian Urn**

(George Keats)

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunt about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.