

[H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 280, orig. 1888 ed.]

... neither the collective Host (Demiurgos), nor any of the working powers individually, are proper subjects for divine honors or worship. All are entitled to the grateful reverence of Humanity, however, and man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability *a co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task. The ever unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless Cause* of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart—invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through "the still small voice" of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*.

[Gottfried de Purucker, *Esoteric Tradition*, Vol I, p. 20-21, 1940 ed.]

What is the origin of the word 'religion'? — because the search for etymological roots often casts a brilliant light upon the functioning of human consciousness. It is usual among modern Europeans to derive the word 'religion' from the Latin verb meaning 'to bind back,' or 'to fasten' — *religare*. But there is another and perhaps a better derivation, which is the one that Cicero, the great Roman statesman, poet, and philosopher chooses; and, a Roman himself and a scholar, he unquestionably had a deeper knowledge of his own native tongue and its subtleties of meaning than even the ablest scholar has today. This other derivation comes from a Latin root meaning to select, to choose, from which likewise, by the way, comes the word *lex* — 'law,' that course of conduct or rule of action which is chosen as the best, and is therefore followed: in other words, that rule of action which is the best of its kind, as ascertained by selection, by trial, and by proof. Typically scientific is this in idea, even in our day.

In his book *On the Nature of the Gods*, speaking through the mouth of the eminent philosopher Quintus Lucilius Balbus, of the Stoic school, during the course of a discussion on philosophy and religion at the home of Cicero's friend, Cotta, Cicero writes as follows:

Do you not see, therefore, how from the productions of Nature and the beneficial inventions of men, imaginary and false deities have come into view; and that those have become the basis of wrong opinions, pernicious errors, and miserable superstitions? We know, as regards the gods, how their different alleged forms, their ages, clothing, ornaments, families, marriages, connexions, and all appertaining to them, follow examples of human weakness and are represented with human passions. According to the history of fables, the gods have had wars and fightings, governed by grief, lust, and anger, and this not only, as Homer says, when they interested themselves in different armies, but also when they battled in their own defense against the Titans and the Giants. Such tales, of the greatest folly and levity, are told and believed with implicit stupidity.

However, repudiating such fables with contempt, Divinity is diffused throughout all parts of Nature: in solids under the name of Ceres; in liquids under the name of Neptune; elsewhere under different names. But whatever the gods may be, whatever characters and dispositions they may have, and whatever the names given to them by custom, we ought to revere and worship them.

The noblest, the chastest, the most pious and holy worship of the gods is to revere them always with a pure, wholehearted, and stainless mind and voice; our ancestors as well as the philosophers have all separated superstition from religion. Those who prayed entire days and sacrificed so that their children should survive them, were called superstitious, a word which later became more general; but those who diligently followed and, so to say, read and practised continually, all duties belonging to the worship of the gods were called *religiosi*, religious, from the word *relegendo*, reading over again or practising; [a derivation] like *elegantes*, elegant, meaning choosing, selecting a good choice, or like *diligentes*, diligent, carefully following our selection; or like *intelligentes*, intelligent, from understanding: for all these meanings are derived from the same root-word. Thus are the words superstition and religion understood: the former being a term of opprobrium, the latter of honor

I declare then that the Universe in all its parts was in its origin builded, and has ever since, without any interruption, been directed, by the providence of the gods. [*De natura deorum*, Bk. II, sec. :xxviii.]