

H.P. BLAVATSKY and G. DE PURUCKER, DEFINING THE TERM 'RELIGION'

H.P. BLAVATSKY Babel of Modern Thought (BCW Vol.13, p.98)

In the beginning of time, or rather, in the childhood of the fifth Race, "the whole earth was of one *lip* and of one speech," saith chapter XI of *Genesis*. Read esoterically, this means that mankind had one universal doctrine, a philosophy, common to all; and that men were *bound* by one religion, whether this term be derived from the Latin word *relegere*, "to gather, or be united" in speech or in thought, from *religens*, "revering the gods," or, from *religare*, "to be bound fast together." Take it one way or the other, it means most undeniably and plainly that our forefathers from beyond the "flood" accepted in common one *truth--i.e.*, they believed in that aggregate of subjective and objective *facts* which form the consistent, logical and harmonious whole called by us the *Wisdom Religion*.

H.P. BLAVATSKY The Essentials of Religion (BCW Vol.5 p.99)

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Buddhism and Adwaitism—are as much religions as any theistic system. A "religion" does not necessarily imply the doctrine of a personal God or any kind of God in it. Religion, as every dictionary can show, comes from the Latin word *relegere*, to "bind" or collect together. Thus whether people pursue a common idea with, or without, a deity in it, if they are bound together by the same and one belief in something, that belief is a religion. Theology without the vital warmth of Theosophy is a corpse without life, a dry stick without sap. Theosophy blesses the world; Theology is its curse.

G. de PURUCKER (Esoteric Tradition Vol.1, p.20)

Thus, religion, philosophy, and science compose one triform method of understanding — what? The nature of Nature, of Universal Nature, and its multiform and multifold workings; and not one of these three activities of the human spirit can be separated from the other two if we wish to gain a true picture of things AS THEY ARE IN THEMSELVES.

For Science is an operation of the human spirit-mind in its endeavor to understand the *How* of things — not any particular science whatsoever, but the thing in itself, science *per se* — ordered and classified knowledge, based on research and experimentation.

Philosophy is that same striving of the human spirit to understand not merely the *How* of things, but the *Why* of things — why things are as they are.

And, lastly, Religion is that same striving of the human spirit towards union with the COSMIC ALL, involving an endlessly growing self-conscious identification with the Cosmic Realities therein — commonly and so feebly called by men, 'God' or gods.

These three children — functions and activities — of man's spirit-soul all have one tendency, one trend, because all working towards one objective. This is to reach the Heart of Things, Truth, Reality, and to become united therewith. The scientist seeks truth; the philosopher searches for reality; the religionist yearns for union with the Divine; but are these three not essentially one? Is there any essential difference as among Truth, Reality, and union with Divine Wisdom and Love? It is only in the methods of attainment by which the three differ. Their object is but one. Moreover, as becomes abundantly obvious, Science should be as spiritual and as philosophical as Philosophy should be religious and scientific and as Religion should be scientific and philosophical.

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.