

THE TAOIST POPE ON RELIGION.

THE Taoist Pope¹ has been visiting Shanghai, and delivered a lecture on religion in the International Institute, which is practically a continued religious parliament established in foreign countries and adapted especially to Chinese conditions. We owe an extract of his lecture to Dr. Gilbert Reid, the founder and director of the International Institute of Shanghai. He said:

“The Heavenly Principle, or Heaven’s law of Nature is without feeling, but Virtue comes to its assistance and gives it expression. Religions differ, but the principle that runs through them and the virtue that they show forth are the same. The main idea of all religions is that of saving the world, and unifying all mankind.

“There must be compassion for all, evil should be transformed into good; help should be extended to all nations and benefits offered to all peoples. These are the characteristics belonging to every religion.

“All holy teachers have the same heart, and under the mastery of the Heavenly Principle they have through Virtue formed their religious systems.

“The expansion of a religion is accompanied by the outward manifestation of the inner principle and the virtue of the heart. Confucius, Lao-tze, Sakyamuni, Jesus, Mohammed, have all been Heaven’s representatives, to work salvation in the world; they are heavenly messengers to bring happiness to home and country.

“Though the different religions are lived out in different ways, and though their words are unlike, they all agree in finding their source in the two words Tao and Teh, Heaven’s law and virtue. And of these two the latter is the outgrowth of the former.

“Religion is the expression of the virtue of the heart, and virtue is the product of Heaven’s everlasting law. The conduct which har-

¹In *The Open Court* for September 1913 there is a brief note on “The Pope of Taoism” (p. 573). The same number contains “An Exposition of Taoism,” contributed to the Parliament of Religions in 1893 by the predecessor of the present Chang T’ien She.

monizes with virtue and characterizes every religion may be summed up in eight qualities, patience, humility, reverence, forgiveness, generosity, pity, faithfulness, and kindness.

“Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism and Taoism all travel



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the same path. Confucianism alone descants on the duties of governments and takes account of the state, in which respect it slightly differs from all other religions.

“At present men’s hearts break Heaven’s law, turn from true virtue, and rush ahead in wrong paths. They are greedy for rewards; they love riches; they preach violence and rely on force. Unless religion be revived, what method is there for preventing man’s downward course, like one sailing down toward a cataract in a river? Unless every religion be stimulated to new activity, where is the remedy for the dangers that beset our country?”

Verily, Taoism contains much that is noble and good, and the spirit of its founder Lao-tze, the venerable philosopher who lived in the sixth century B. C., has not yet died out. In his little book *The Canon of Reason and Virtue* we read these remarkable sentences:

“Requite hatred with virtue” (Chap. 63) and

“The good I meet with goodness, the bad I also meet with goodness; that is virtue’s goodness” (Chap. 49).

For comments on the readings of this latter passage see the author’s translation of the *Canon of Reason and Virtue*, pp. 172-174.