

THE LIFE OF MEH TI¹

BY QUENTIN KUEI YUAN HUANG

THE life of Meh Ti is still a great problem to Chinese scholars. Some say that he was a native of the State of Sung; others, that he was a subject of the State of Lu. His date is also doubtful, and scholars differ about it. Sze Ma Ch'ien, the Herodotus of China, who lived about 185-136 B. C., has left no sketch of Meh Ti's life in his *Shi Ki* (Historical Records). Yet although we are confronted with difficulties, Meh Ti is not a myth and we have some evidences for constructing his life, both from his own works and from external sources. The external evidence is found in three sources: the *Works of Mencius*,² the *Works of Chuang Tzi*,³ and *Yu's Annals of Spring and Autumn*.⁴

¹ Meh Ti's surname is Meh which means "ink" in Chinese, and his personal name is Ti. There is a great deal of variation in the Romanization of his surname. Williams spells it as Moh while Marrison and Legge give it as Mih. Still some others spell it as Mo. These variations are due to the various pronounciations of the word Meh in different dialects. It seems to me more correct to spell it as Meh Ti according to the Mandarin. Meh Ti or Meh Tzi has been Latinized by Faber as Micius, who also calls Lieh Tzi Licius in analogy with the Latinized names Confucius and Mencius.

Tzi is used in connection with most of the names of the Chinese philosophers or ethical teachers. It has an honorary signification and different meanings. The root meanings are child, a son, any male, young, middle-aged, or old, but it has come to mean teacher, sage, or philosopher.

² Mencius is the Latinized name of Meng Tzi. His surname is Meng and personal name, K'o. Mencius, a native of Tsou (in modern Shantung), studied under Kung Chi, the grandson of Confucius, and later attained to what has been considered a perfect apprehension of the teachings of Confucius. He was an uncompromising defender of the doctrines of Confucius. It was due to him chiefly that the teachings of Yan Chu and Meh Ti have been stamped out for so many years. His work is called *Meng Tzi or The Works of Mencius*, being one of the "Four Books" of China.

³ Chuang Tzi or Chuang Chou was a native of Meng (in modern Anhwei). It is said that he held a petty official post at Chi Yuan (in modern Shantung). He refused the offer of the post Prime Minister from the Prince of Ch'u but devoted himself to the study of philosophy and to the

Mencius (372-289 B. C.) expressly declares that his mission is to 'drive away' the doctrines of Meh Ti and Yang Chu.⁵ He says: "Sage kings do not arise and princes of states give the reins to their lusts. The words of Yang Chu and Meh Ti fill the kingdom. The people are adherents either of Yang or of Meh. . . . If the principles of Yang and Meh are not stopped, the principles of Confucius can not be set forth."—(*The Works of Mencius* III, III, xi, 9-10).

Chuang Tzi (350-275 B. C.) defends his ancient master, Lao Tzi⁶ and criticises both Meh Ti and Yan Chu. He says: "If the mouths of Yang and Meh are not stopped, and benevolence and righteousness thrown aside, the virtue of all men will begin to display its mysterious excellence."—(*The Works of Chuang Tzi*).

From these two passages, it is clear that at the time of Mencius and Chuang Tzi in the fourth century B. C., Meh Ti's teaching was at its climax and his principles were wide spread throughout the kingdom. Mencius says: "The people are adherents either of glorification of Lao Tzi. His work, which now consists of thirty-three chapters, is known as the Holy Scriptures of Nan Hwa. Nan Hwa is the name of a hill in Tsao Chou, Shantung, on which he lived and died.

⁴ Yu, a native of the State of Wei, according to some; of the State of Han, according to others, lived as a merchant at Han Tan, the capital of the State of Chao. His surname is Yu and personal name, Pu Wei. He has been considered the father of Shi Huang Ti, the First Emperor of the Tsin dynasty (221-206 B. C.). For twelve years he was the minister of the State of Tsin. Furthermore, he was a great scholar and engaged a number of scholars to produce the work published under the title of Yu's Annals of Spring and Autumn. After he had completed this work, he put one copy of it in the market-place at Hsien Yang and offered the amount of one thousand taels of silver to any one who could improve it by adding or subtracting a single word. He died in 235 B. C. This work, though not mentioned in the Historical Record of Shih Ma Ch'ien, has a great reputation among the learned and is required to be studied by every school boy. To my knowledge there exists no English translation of this work.

⁵ Yang Chu, a contemporary of Meh Ti, was a native of the State of Wei according to the tradition. Whether or not he was a native of Wei, he went and settled there as a small proprietor. It is certain that he had an unrivalled audience in the State of Wei. He founded a school of ethical egotism and his central doctrine is to let everybody mind his own business.

⁶ Lato Tzi, the founder of Taoism, was born in 604 B. C. His surname is Li and personal name, Erh. He held office as Keeper of the records at Lo Yang, the capital of the Chou dynasty. It is said that he had foreseen the fall of the Chou dynasty before he turned his footsteps towards the west. At the Han Ku pass, he was besought by the governor of the pass, Yin Hsi, to write a book for erring humanity, whereupon the Tao Teh King was written. Whether or not the Tao Teh King was written by Lao Tzi is still a question. His teaching may be briefly summarized by two sentences, let Tao do its own work: be ever same no matter what happens to you.

Yang or of Meh." The teachings of Yang Chu and Meh Ti evidently divided the kingdom and left no room for the teachings of Confucius and Lao Tzi. As a rule, the teachings of any school of thought or religion can not be spread so widely as the teachings of Meh Ti were in a short period of time. Therefore, it seems very logical to conclude that Meh Ti lived at least one generation before Mencius and Chuang Tzi.

The third external source for our information about Meh Ti is Yu's *Annals of Spring and Autumn*. Yu says: "Both Confucius and Meh Ti were practical and political reformers travelling around from State to State. Worrying that the kingdom had lost the teachings of former rulers, they studied day and night. Whatever is good to learn and do, they teach others to do; whatever is not good to learn and do, they forbid others to do. It is said that Confucius and Meh Ti studied and applied their principles day and night diligently. At night they saw Wen Wang⁷ and Chou Kung⁸ and in the day time they took councils from them." Meh Ti, like Confucius, was a great political reformer and a profound moral philosopher!

Now let us turn to the internal evidences. First of all, the chapter on "Value of Righteousness," which I have omitted from my translation, states: "Meh Ti, while travelling in the south in the State of Ch'u, wanted to see King Hwei. On account of old age, the king refused him an interview but sent Mo Ho (his minister) to meet him." According to the Historical Records, King Hwei died in the ninth year of King Kao of the State of Chou or in the forty-seventh year after the death of Confucius, who died in 478 B. C. When he was travelling in the State of Ch'u, most probably he was forty or fifty years of age. If so, he was born between 481 and

⁷ Wen Wang (1231-1135 B. C.) was the father of Wu Wang, the first sovereign of the Chou dynasty. He was hereditary ruler of the Principality of Ch'i in modern Shensi. On account of his wisdom and virtue, he was canonized under the title Ch'ang, Duke of Chou. Before he was commissioned to make war upon the frontier tribes, he had been denounced by Hu, the Marquis of Ch'ung and was put into prison at Yu Li in modern Honan. He never ceased to denounce the cruelty and corruption of his day. Therefore, he is regarded as one of the model rulers of China.

⁸ Chou Kung or the Duke of Chou, fourth son of Wen Wang and younger brother to Wu Wang, was canonized under the title of Tan. He drew up a legal code and purified the morals of the people. He devoted himself entirely for the welfare of the government. To him a wonderful invention of a "South-pointing chariot," (the Mariner's compass) has been assigned. He died in 1105 B. C.

471 B. C. near the end of the life of Confucius.

We have very good internal evidence that he was a political reformer and a moral philosopher. In the Dialogue between Meh Ti and the ruler of the State of Lu it is written: "When you enter a government, select your profession and do your duty. When a nation is in disorder, teach the doctrines of preference of the virtuous and resemblance to the superior. When a government is poor, instruct the people to be economical and thrifty in burial ceremonies. When a nation loves sound and drink, speak against music and fatalism. When a nation becomes licentious and without propriety, (Li⁹), preach the principles of worshipping Heaven and honoring spirits. When a government attacks its neighboring States, propagate the Gospel of Universal Love."—(*The Dialogue Between Meh Ti and the Ruler of the State of Lu.*)

We are fairly certain, then, that Meh Ti was a native of the State of Sung, who was born between 481 and 471 B. C. According to the tradition he lived a long life of seventy-five years and therefore, he died between 406 and 396 B. C. He was a teacher and moralist who made the science of government his profession and who propagated his doctrines in the courts of the feudal states which divided China at that time.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TEXT

During the reigns of K'ien Lung (1735-1795 A. D.) and Kia K'ing (1795-1820 A. D.) of the Tsing dynasty, there was a great revival of old learning, and all literature of the past dynasties were collected, edited and commented upon by scholars. Followers of different schools of thought suddenly appeared and different syncretistic systems were founded. This was the Chinese Renaissance! At this time fifty-three chapters of Meh Ti were collected, studied

⁹ Li or Propriety.—Li in Chinese may be defined as reverence in attitude and action. Li has passed through three stages of development; in the first stage, Li was the rites of worshipping gods or spirits, in the second, Li was the rule of behavior parallel with all the customs and traditions, and in the third, Li was the guide of conduct, not limited by the old customs and traditions but changeable according to the time. It has been quite universally recognized both by the Chinese and Western scholars that there is no appropriate word in any language for the Chinese character Li. Li, as it now stands, includes all the rules, traditions, customs and habits both religious and secular. Li regulates speaking, clothing, acting, eating and so on.

and explained by Wang Chuang¹⁰ and Pei Yuan,¹¹ two of the great scholars of the Tsing dynasty. Before their time, the essays of Meh Ti, like other non-canonical writings, had not been collected, but were scattered among various volumes. In the Han dynasty (206 B. C.-23 A. D.), there were altogether seventy-one chapters (*Cyclopedia of the Literature of the Han dynasty*). When the first emperor of the Sung dynasty (960 A. D.) came to the throne, it was found that eight chapters had been lost (*The Record of the Chuang Shing Library*). Sometime later another ten chapters disappeared and the remaining fifty-three constitute the present text. It is due to Wang Chuang and Pei Yuan that we are able to read Meh Ti as a whole and to make a fairer judgment of him than was possible before their time.

With regard to its authorship, genuineness and the date of its composition, the work attributed to Meh Ti has been critically studied by scholars since the middle of the Tsing dynasty but no two have ever agreed on every point. However, as a result of two hundred years of critical examination, a general conclusion has been reached, in spite of many minute differences of opinion. Meh Ti, like other Oriental ethical teachers, did not commit his teachings to writing himself, although one or two modern Chinese thinkers have argued that Meh Ti did write four chapters, "Meh's Classic, I," "Meh's Classic, II," "Meh's Sayings," and "Meh's Sayings, II." Their arguments are not strong. The works of Meh Ti are generally attributed to some unknown disciple between the time of Meh Ti (481 or 471-406 or 396 B. C.) and the beginning of the Han dynasty (206 B. C.). They could not be as late as the Han dynasty because the *Cyclopedia of the Literature of the Han Dynasty* says that there were seventy-one chapters at the opening of the Han era. According to tradition and the general agreement of scholars, Meh Ti taught orally and his disciples recorded his words with some

¹⁰ Wang Chung, a native of Kiang Su, lived in 1743-1794 A. D., who was at first a servant in a private school. He got his education by listening to the students and borrowing books from a bookseller. His scholarship soon attracted a wide attention. He was the author of several classical commentaries and antiquarian works, among which Meh Ti is one. He declared himself a follower of the Han scholars and vigorously attacked Buddhism and Taoism.

¹¹ Pei Yuan (1729-1797 A. D.) served as an official with distinction in Kan Su. After he had suppressed various white Lily and aboriginal risings, he became Viceroy of Hu Kwang. He collected, edited and wrote several antiquarian works. Meh Ti is one of them.

additions and interpolations. It is generally agreed by Chinese critics that much of the material which has been preserved may be accepted as genuine.

Christianity is another factor which has caused the revival of the study of Meh Ti. In its Nestorian form it was introduced into China in the first half of the seventh century and was allowed to flourish for quite a while under the early emperors of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A. D.), but by the time of the Mings it seems to have disappeared entirely in China. The Nestorian Monument,¹² found not many years ago in Sianfu, Shensi, is the chief authority. Attempts to propagate orthodox Christianity in the Yuan, Ming and early Manchu periods suffered the same fate, leaving no deep impression upon the Chinese mind.

During the last fifty years, however, Christian influence has directed the attention of thinkers to Meh Ti. The essential ethical and spiritual teachings of Christianity have been found akin to the Chinese ideas of life, especially to those of Meh Ti. As a result he has been carefully studied and his doctrines compared with Christian teaching. The Christians interpret Meh Ti by Christianity as St. Paul and the Christian Apologists did the Greek Philosophy by the teachings of Jesus, while the non-Christians explain Christianity by Meh Ti as Peter Jensen did the Old Testament by means of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. How much they are alike or different, the readers of this translation may decide for themselves! Due to the revival of old learning in the Tsing dynasty and to the influence of Christianity, Meh Ti is bound to have a unique place in Chinese thought. I have been at some pains to translate a few chapters of Meh Ti from Pei Yuan's text, having taken great care not to permit bias or prejudice to influence my rendering. I hope Meh Ti may be an ambassador of good will and understanding between the East and West. Let the principle of Love, taught by Jesus Christ and Meh Ti, prevail! These selections are intended to show such essential teachings of Meh Ti as "Universal Love," "The Will of Heaven," "Non-aggression," "Non-fatalism," and "The Evidences of Spirits."

¹² The Nestorian Monument.—In 631 A. D. some of the Nestorians went to China and preached the Gospel. Five years later they settled down at Chang An (the modern Si-an-fu in Shensi). Their chief priest was Olopun. In 781 A. D. the famous Nestorian Tablet, now called the Nestorian Monument, was set up at Chang An, giving a rough outline of their faith and doctrine.

THE TEACHING OF MEH TI

In order to give a concise cross-section of Meh Ti's essential religious and philosophical teachings, I will not only use the essays which are translated here, but also materials available from those chapters which have not been translated. There are two main reasons for not having translated more than the following chapters: in the first place, some of them are utterly unintelligible even to Chinese, because of the textual discrepancies and corruptions. This is partly due to the neglect, or, to put it more correctly, to the persecution suffered by Meh Ti at the hands of Confucian scholars through so many successive dynasties. This also may be counted the reason why the Meh Ti has not been translated into English. In the second place, as I have stated in the first section of the Introduction, these translated chapters are chosen because they represent the essential teachings of Meh Ti, while the rest touch only the minor or insignificant points of his thought.

No early Chinese philosopher or ethical teacher is so conscientiously methodical and logical in his reasoning as Meh Ti. We must recognize that, except in Meh Ti, there was not a development of logical reasoning among the early Chinese thinkers analogous to that in Greece. They drew conclusions chiefly from daily experiences and historical facts. Meh Ti, on the other hand, always endeavors to prove every step he takes in accordance with such logical laws set forth by himself. Consequently consistency is one of the main features of his thinking. Hsun Tzi¹³ confirms this and writes: "He (Meh Ti) has never allowed himself to entertain the thought of higher classes, and therefore, he does not recognize the distinction between the ruler and his subjects. To maintain his theory, Meh-Ti advances some plausible reasons; and in expounding them he displays a certain logical skill, so that the ignorant masses are easily to be deceived and confused by him."—(*Hsuan Tzi* Chapter VI).

What are the methods of testing the soundness of a principle?

¹³ Hsun Tzi (340-220 B. C.) was a native of the State of Chao. His surname is Hsun and personal name, K'uang. He is often called Hsun Chin or Minister Hsun, in reference to his official position. In the State of Chi he was appointed Libationer. Later on he went to the State of Ch'u where he became magistrate of Lan Ling under Ruler Ch'un Shen. Finally he retired and taught pupils among whom the most famous ones are Li Tzi and Han Fei Tzi. He became disgusted with life and wrote a philosophical treatise called by his name in which he maintains, in opposition to Mencius, that the nature of man is fundamentally evil.

Meh Ti gives three methods of testing which he calls the "Three Standards."¹⁴ First, it must conform to the will of Heaven and be in accordance with the doings of ancient holy emperors;¹⁵ secondly, our practical observation and experiences must justify it; and thirdly, our doings must prove that they are for the general welfare of the government and the people. Meh Ti says: "There is the standard of precedent: there is the standard of observation; and there is the standard of function." What is the precedent? It comes from the doings of the ancient holy emperors¹⁵ above. What is the observation? It is derived from the evidence of the ears and eyes of the multitude below. What is the function? Its work lies in the administration of government and in the observation of the benefit to the country and its people. These are the "Three Standards."—Non-fatalism, I). Consistency is evident throughout his teachings. Indeed, Meh Ti is the father of Chinese logical reasoning!

THE RELIGION OF MEH TI

It will be found quite interesting to note that Meh Ti has come to realize, in a systematic way, the existence of Shang Ti¹⁶ or Heaven. Whatever argument the early Chinese moralists, philos-

¹⁴ The "Three Standards" means three principles or criteria by which the good and bad are distinguished.

¹⁵ The holy emperors mean the model emperors of the ancient three dynasties, Hsia, Shang and Chou. They are the models to be followed by the son of Heaven. Strictly speaking, the model emperors are Yu, T'ang, Wen and Wu but at other times Yao and Shun are included.

Yu or Ta Yu (Great Yu) was a native of Shih Nin in modern Szechuan. His father was Kun. After Kun had failed to drain the empire during a great flood, he was chosen by Shun to undertake the same work. He accomplished the task after nine years' toil. On account of his service he was ennobled as Prince of Hsia, and finally selected by Shun to be his successor in 2205 B. C. He became the first emperor of the Hsia dynasty, dying in 2197 B. C.

T'ang or Ch'eng T'ang, after he had defeated and overthrown Chieh Kwei, the last emperor of the Hsia dynasty, came to the throne in 1766 B. C. as the first emperor of the Shang dynasty. He has been regarded as one of the model emperors of China because of his virtue and love of the people.

Wen or Wen Wang.—See Note 7.

Wu or Wu Wang, the son of Wen Wang (1169-1116 B. C.), was the first emperor of the Chou dynasty and was canonized under the title Fa. In 1122 B. C. he assembled a vast army and defeated completely the forces of Chou Hsin, the last emperor of the Shang dynasty, at Meng Chin in modern Honan.

¹⁶ Shang Ti.—Shang means "above;" Ti, "sovereign." When they are put together, they signify a mighty sovereign on high. It is not altogether

ophers and political reformers might entertain as to the manifestation of the will of Heaven in human affairs, as a whole they were vague and lacked the support of sound reasoning. Meh Ti, however, conceived of an all-powerful Heaven by an intellectual and practical process, and devoted many chapters to this subject, trying to prove the existence of a Supreme Being, and giving good reasons why worship and reverence are due him. In fact, his doctrine of Universal Love is closely connected with and has a logical basis in his profound conception of Heaven, a Supreme Being who is just, benevolent and omnipotent. With him Heaven has been conceived as more personal than with any other ancient Chinese thinker who lived before him.

The following are important passages selected from different chapters of the Meh Ti where he reasons for the existence and for his conceptions of Heaven, a Supreme Being. Readers of Meh Ti can not escape from noticing his lofty ideas of Heaven, as the source of Love and Righteousness. Meh Ti's doctrine of Love and Righteousness can be well compared with that of Christianity. Here is the chief point of resemblance. Therefore, it is not strange that the non-Christians in China should claim great honor and deep respect for him. Heaven is the source of Love, who loves every one without discrimination and demands Universal Love from the people. Again, Heaven is the origin of righteousness, who is just to the people by punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. He demands righteousness of the people: Meh Ti says: "There are rulers and wise men specially favored by Heaven. They make

proper to regard Shang Ti as a being residing in heaven (tien), but he has some personality in him and has activities on earth as well as in heaven.

Heaven.—The character representing Heaven is T'ien composed of two primitives Yi (one) and Ta (great) according to Hsu Shan (100 A. D.), the author of the Shwo Wan dictionary. Therefore, Heaven means One Great or Great One. But it seems to me that there are three parts in the word T'ien; namely, Yi (one), Ta (great), and Jen (man). By putting an horizontal line or stroke in the middle of Jen, it becomes Ta or great. Again by putting another horizontal stroke which is Yi or one, the word T'ien or Heaven is formed. From this analysis it is clear that there is a personal element in T'ien. Therefore, we may say that it conveys the idea of One Great Being who dwells above and embodies the entire world.

Shang Ti is Heaven: Heaven is Shang Ti. They are same and yet different from different points of view. Lu Shih, a famous commentator on the Five Classics, says: "Ti (Sovereign) is T'ien (Heaven); T'ien is Ti. Why? Are they not identical?" Again, he writes: "He is called Heaven, when we look from the points of his overshadowing the entire world; he is called sovereign, when we look from the point of his rulership."

laws and administer to the needs of the people; the wicked are punished; the ignorant enlightened, and prosperity is secured. Do not all these things come from Heaven? Are not all these things given to every one without discrimination? Why, then? Heaven must be the source of Love and Righteousness. Our duty on earth is to follow his will and practice Universal Love and mutual benefit" (The Will of Heaven, II).

"Heaven knows no favoritism in his love for the world. He quickens and matures all things to benefit them all. There is not a single thing which is not made by Heaven and yet which can not be used by the people to benefit themselves."

"Heaven has the people as subjects. Why does Heaven hate them? But I have said that the killing of one innocent person must bring miserable punishment. Who kills the innocent? It is man! Who administers the punishment? It is Heaven! If Heaven do not love the people of the world and men kill one another, why should Heaven give these punishments? Thus, I know that Heaven loves the people of the world" (The Will of Heaven, I).

"Meh Ti says: 'Those wise men who truly wish to practice justice ought to discover the origin of justice.'

"Whence is justice?"

"Justice does not come from the ignorant and base, but from the noble and intelligent. Justice means good government.

"How do I know this?"

"When there is justice in the kingdom, order prevails; while there is no justice, confusion prevails. Therefore, I know that justice means good government. Those who are ignorant and base can not govern the noble and intelligent, while the noble and intelligent can govern the former. Thus, I know that justice does not come from the ignorant and base but from the noble and intelligent.

"Who then is noble, and who is intelligent?"

"It is Heaven that is noble; it is Heaven that is intelligent. If so, it must be from Heaven that justice comes."—(The Will of Heaven, II).

"How do we know that Heaven desires righteousness and hates unrighteousness? It is said: 'Having righteousness, the world grows; having no righteousness, it dies. With righteousness it is rich; with no righteousness it is poor. Having righteousness, it is at peace; having no righteousness, it is in disorder. Heaven desires

its growth and hates its death; desires its wealth and hates its poverty; and desires its peace and hates its disorder.' Thus, I know that Heaven desires righteousness and hates unrighteousness."—(The Will of Heaven, I).

"The will of Heaven does not desire to see the greater states attack the lesser ones, the greater families disturb lesser ones, the strong abuse the weak, the cunning outwit the simple, and the noble lord it over the humble. These are not desired by Heaven.

"Heaven, on the other hand, desires that the stronger among the people should co-operate with the weaker, the virtuous instruct the ignorant, and the wealthy divide with the poor. He desires that the higher should make an effort to conduct the government, and the lower to attend to their own occupations. When the higher conduct the government, order prevails in the State; when the lower attend to their occupations, there is an abundant supply. Now let the kingdom be in order and abundantly supplied with means, and the people on one hand will make offerings of wine and corn to Heaven and spirits, while on the other hand they will barter rings, gems, pearls, and jades with their neighbors on all sides. . . . When all the people are thus comfortably dressed and sufficiently fed and free from worries, peace and order will prevail. Therefore, wise men of today, who truly wish to practice rationality, to develop the resources of the country, and to discern the origin of justice, ought to revere the will of Heaven."—(The Will of Heaven, II).

Very logically related to his doctrine of Universal Love, Meh Ti reasoned out a theory of the creation of the world, which had never been definitely stated before his time. Due to his love of the people, Heaven created the sun, moon, and stars to shine upon them; arranges the four seasons to regulate their life; quickens the growth of the five cereals¹⁷ to feed them, and so on. All these are the results of Heaven's love for the people:

"Moreover, I know how sincere the love of Heaven for the people is! For it is Heaven that created the sun, moon, stars, and constellations, and made them shine and follow their courses duly. By arranging the four seasons he regulates the lives of the people on earth. By means of thunder, falling snow, frost, rain, and dew, he quickens the growth of the five cereals and thread-yielding flax.

¹⁷ The five cereals, according to the Chinese Classics, are: rice, millet, panicked millet, wheat; and bean. Sometimes corn is added to make the six cereals.

All these benefit the people. He planned the formation of mountains, rivers, and valleys, producing wealth in manifold forms. He created rulers, princes, and various dukes in order to supervise the moral conditions of the people, rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked. Heaven has supplied the people with clothing and nourishment, and made metals, earth, birds, and beasts to serve them, and cultivated the five cereals and thread-yielding flax to feed and clothe them.”—(The Will of Heaven, II).

From this passage, it seems that Meh Ti has a monotheistic conception of Heaven. He is the creator of everything. On the other hand, when we come to read the chapter on “Evidences of Spirits,” it is clear that the Heaven Meh Ti often speaks of, is always associated with spirits:

“Meh Ti says: ‘What the ancients and moderns called spirits are nothing but this: There is a Spirit of Heaven; there are spirits of mountains and waters; and there are also spirits of the dead.’” —(*Evidences of Spirits*, III).

It sometimes looks as if Meh Ti implies that Heaven, the creator of the universe, is above all other deities. On the other hand, he believes in the existence of other spirits and pays due reverence to them all. No matter what else Meh Ti was, he was profoundly religious, and his Heaven is a Spirit of Love and Justice who demands a righteous life on earth. With him there is at least a tendency to exalt Heaven to a point where Heaven is the creator of the Universe and embodies the moral order of the world.

Furthermore, in the Meh Ti we have a social consciousness of the Chinese people, and Heaven has become a democratic spiritual Being to be worshipped not only by the son of Heaven,¹⁸ but also by the common people as a group and as individuals. Meh Ti says: “Obedience to the will of Heaven is the law of justice.” In another place, he states: “Heaven loves every one without discrimination. Therefore, we should worship him.”

Heaven, as Meh Ti describes him, is the noblest and most intelligent Being. He is All-wise and All-knowing, who looks down upon the people as his subjects and executes justice among them. There is no one nobler and more intelligent than he:

¹⁸ The son of Heaven means the emperor who was regarded as the concrete and earthly representative of Heaven above. Through the emperor, Heaven governs the people.

"The Records of the ancient holy emperors tell us about the intelligence and doings of Heaven. How clear-sighted and knowing Heaven is! He looks down on the world below as his sovereign. That is to say, Heaven is nobler and more intelligent than the sovereign. I do not know if there is any one nobler and more intelligent than Heaven. Thus, Heaven is the noblest and most intelligent, and it must surely be from Heaven that justice comes."

It has been stated that Meh Ti has three methods of testing the soundness of a principle and of distinguishing between the good and the bad: first, the will of Heaven and the examples of the ancient holy emperors; second, our own daily experiences; and third, the pragmatic value of our acts. The most important of these three is the will of Heaven:

"Therefore, the will of Heaven is like the compass of a wheel-right, or the rule of a carpenter. When the wheelwright takes up his instrument to measure and distinguish between what is circular and what is not circular, he will say: 'That which is not circular will not be so called. By this, I distinguish one from the other.' Why? Because this measuring instrument is correct. As with the carpenter, so with the will of Heaven. He desires first to measure the rightful administration of rulers, princes, or superior men¹⁹ in the kingdom, and secondly, to judge the literature and utterances of all the people. Whatever deeds or utterances or administration are in accordance with the will of Heaven are called good; while those contrary to it are called bad. It is by this law or standard of Heaven that the goodness or badness of all the rulers, princes, superior men, and higher officials is measured and judged, as we distinguish between black and white.

"Thus, the rulers, princes, superior men, or wise men of today who truly wish to practice rationality, to promote the resources of the country, and to discern the origin of justice, ought to obey the will of Heaven. Obedience to the will of Heaven is the law of justice."—(*The Will of Heaven*, II).

A natural result of the exaltation of the will of Heaven is to

¹⁹ Superior men is the usual translation of the Chinese Chun Tzi. It is so rendered by the Western scholars, notably James Legge in the Sacred Books of the East. Chun Tzi or superior men has two meanings in Chinese. Sometimes it is used to indicate a class of people or nobles. Secondly, it is often used to denote those persons who practice virtue, without any considerations of class distinction.

obey and revere his will. To confirm and enforce obedience and reverence due to Heaven, Meh Ti develops the argument from physical reward and punishment. Salvation is physical. Heaven gives rewards to the good and executes punishment on the bad in this world. As to the life after death he has no great contribution to make. Though he believes in the existence of the spirits of the dead, his idea is just as vague as that of any ancient Chinese teacher:

"Therefore, wise men of today who wish truly to practice rationality, to develop the resources of the country, and discern the origin of humanity and justice, ought to revere the will of Heaven.

"In order to be noble and rich we have to follow the will of Heaven. All those who follow the will of Heaven, love one another, receive benefit from their mutual intercourse and shall gain rewards. All those who oppose the will of Heaven, hate those different from themselves, injure each other and shall receive punishments. . . . Meh Ti says: 'The ancient holy emperors of the Three Generations,²⁰ Yu, T'ang, Wen and Wu followed the will of Heaven, and, therefore, gained rewards. The ancient cruel emperors²¹ of the Three Generations, Chieh, Chou, Yiu and

²⁰ The Three Generations is a phrase often used to indicate exclusively the ancient three dynasties which are:

The Hsia dynasty (2205-1766 B. C.)

The Shang or Yin dynasty (1766-1122 B. C.)

The Chou dynasty (1122-294 B. C.)

²¹ The cruel emperors were the symbolical tyrants and embodiments of evil. They are as follows:

Chieh or Chieh Kwei, the last emperor of the Hsia dynasty, who came to the throne in 1818 B. C. He indulged in cruel brutality and lust. His pleasure was to amuse his favorite concubine Mo Hsi. Kuan Lung Feng, one of his ministers, remonstrated him and was killed. Finally T'ang arose against him. He was defeated and banished in 1760 B. C. Three years later he died.

Chou or Chou Hsin, the last emperor of the Yin dynasty, was extravagant and cruel. Like Chieh, he spent a vast sum of money to amuse his concubine T'a Chi. He committed all kinds of the wildest orgies. He killed Pi Kan, an innocent and virtuous relative, because he had remonstrated with him upon his excesses. Finally he was defeated by Wu Wang and died in the flames of his palace in 1122 B. C.

Li or Li Wang (878-842), a tyrannical emperor of the Chou dynasty, was greedy for money. He tried to rule by force and by terrorizing the people. As a result the people broke out in open rebellion in 842 B. C., and banished him. The government was left to the dukes of Chou and Shau, descendants of Chou Kung.

Yiu or Yiu Wang (781-771 B. C.), a lascivious son of Suan Wang, led a dissolute life and brought trouble on himself and his country by his infatuation for a woman name Pau Shih. He was finally killed by the Marquis of Shou. P'ing Wang succeeded him.

Li opposed the will of Heaven and therefore, received punishment.'

"But why did Yu, T'ang, Wen and Wu gain their rewards? Meh Ti says: 'They honored Heaven above, served spirits between and loved men below.' Therefore, the will of Heaven says: 'What I love, love thou; what I benefit, benefit thou. To love others like this is to be universal; to benefit others like this is to be great!'"—(*The Will of Heaven*, I).

"When our conduct is not in accord with Heaven's desire, but is what Heaven forbids us to do, Heaven will behave towards us, not in the way we desire, but directly against us. What we do not desire are diseases, epidemics, calamities, and curses. If the ruler fails to do the will of Heaven, but acts contrary to it, all the people of the kingdom along with him will be plunged into the abyss of calamity and curse. The holy emperors of ancient times knew well how disasters would be sent by Heaven and the spirits upon the people, and therefore, they avoided those deeds which would be hated by Heaven and the spirits. This was because the ancient emperors wished to promote the welfare of the kingdom and to avoid those things which were not good. Consequently, Heaven arranged cold and heat, regulated the four seasons, and harmoniously disposed of the Ying and Yang,²² rain and dew. The five cereals ripened according to the season, the six domesticated animals multiplied, and diseases, epidemics, and famines never assailed the people."—(*The Will of Heaven*, II).

Meh Ti's religion is founded on the will of Heaven by an intellectual process and aims at a pragmatic end in Universal Love and mutual benefit. Heaven is supreme, looking down upon the people as his subjects. He loves them all without discrimination, requires them to have Universal Love and mutual benefit. "What I love, love thou; what I benefit, benefit thou." The second divine attribute of Heaven is righteousness, which executes justice among the people by rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. Heaven demands a righteous life on earth. However, Heaven's rewards and punishments are limited to this phenomenal world and consequently, Meh Ti has not much to say concerning the life after death. Furthermore, Heaven is the noblest, most intelligent and all-power-

²² The Ying and Yang are the cosmic souls or breaths or principles which compose the universe. Yang is the male part and Ying the female. According to the Classics the union of Ying and Yang is Tao.

ful Being. These lofty conceptions of Heaven show Meh Ti to have been profoundly religious. Travelling from court to court he urged rulers, officials and people to follow the will of Heaven, to worship him and to pay due honor, praise and reverence to him. Meh Ti is the Apostle of Universal Love! If Meh Ti had not been persecuted by Confucian and Taoist scholars and had great apologists to defend his teachings as Christianity had in the West, the history of the religion of China would be totally different and Meh Ti, if not deified like some other ethical teachers in the East, would, at least, have been regarded as the founder of a noble and altruistic religion.