

CONFUCIAN COSMOGONY.

A TRANSLATION

OF

SECTION FORTY-NINE OF THE "COMPLETE WORKS"

OF THE

PHILOSOPHER CHOO-FOO-TZE,

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

BY THE

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LIFE OF CHOO-FOO-TSZE.



The writings of Choo-tsze come next to the Classics in the opinion of the Chinese. "As regards the learning of Confucius, Choo alone," say the Chinese historians, "fully comprehended its true import; and has transmitted it to future generations so perfect and immaculate, that were Confucius himself, or any of the ancient Sages to come back to life, they would not alter what he has written."¹ "In discussing the meaning of 鬼神 Kwei Shin," says Dr. Medhurst, "we shall be greatly aided by the analysis of a treatise on the subject by 朱夫子 Choo-foo-tsze, the learned commentator on the Four Books, and the elucidator of the five Classics, who, by fixing the sense of the standard writings of the Chinese, has created, as it were the mind of China, and established a system from which all subsequent writers have borrowed, and according to which all modern essayists must be conformed, or they cannot succeed at the literary examinations, through which alone distinction and power can be attained. The opinions of Choo-foo-tsze, therefore, constitute the orthodoxy of China, and all who differ from him are considered heterodox, insomuch that some modern writers, who have dared to dissent from his views, have not only failed in obtaining office, but have also been prevented, through fear of persecution, from publishing their lucubrations."²

This philosopher flourished during the Sung Dynasty. He was born A. D. 1130, in the reign of Kaou-tsung at Hwuy-chow, in the province of Ngan-hwuy; and died A. D. 1201 at the age of 71. His father was a Member of the Board of Office. It is related that when Choo-tsze was only four years of age, his father, pointing to the sky, pronounced the word "Heaven," whereupon the child, to the father's astonishment, asked the question, "What is there above it?" At eight years of age he mastered

1. Chin. Rep. Vol. xviii, p. 204.

2. Theol. of the Chinese, p. 162.

the Hëaou King which treats of filial duties, and wrote upon the cover of the volume, "If I cannot conform to these lessons, I shall never be a man." His favourite occupations, when other children were at play, were, it is said, either drawing diagrams or sitting in silent contemplation. When ten years old, having read the statement of Mencius, that "Sages are of the same race with me," he rejoiced that it was easy to become a sage. At the age of fourteen his father died, leaving him to the guardianship of Lëw Mëen-che, whose daughter he afterwards married.

When Choo-tsze was eighteen years of age, he took the first literary degree of Sëw-tsae, and in the following year he took the degree of Keu-jin. Shortly afterwards he visited his native village in Woo-yuen, and sacrificed at the tombs of his ancestors. When twenty-two he received his first official appointment as Assistant Magistrate at Tung-an near Amoy; and it was at this time that he devoted himself to the study of Philosophy. He studied the Classics diligently, and also the systems of the Buddhists and Taouists; but on the expostulation of his master, who advised him to confine himself exclusively to the works of the ancient sages, he gave up the two latter branches of study and applied himself to the Classics alone and to searching after true principles. He diligently performed his official duties, superintended the schools in his district, repaired those school houses and colleges which had fallen into decay, and built a library for the benefit of the students. He also revised the rules which related to the sacrifices offered to Confucius. When he retired from the magistracy, the scholars and other inhabitants of the district of Tung-an, subscribed together and erected a sacrificial court for him in the public college. In the year 1164 Choo-tsze was summoned to court by the Emperor, who granted him an audience in the Shwuy-kung palace. On this occasion he presented three memorials; the first inculcated the diligent study of the Classics, and denounced the systems of the Buddhists and Taouists; the second censured the prime minister for making peace with the Mongolians; and the third objected to the interference of the eunuchs Tsang and Lung in state affairs. The Emperor, it is said, was so displeased with the second and third memorials that he refused to continue the audience.

In the year 1179 Choo-tsze was appointed Governor of Nan-kang in

the province of Keang-se, where he built a sacrificial court in honour of the philosopher Ling-ke, and rebuilt the college in the valley of the White Deer. He also purchased lands for the support of the scholars; established a code of collegiate rules; and frequently visited the college for the purpose of instructing the students, in consequence of which many of them rose to eminence. In 1181, he petitioned the Emperor with regard to certain corrupt practices amongst high officials, and His Majesty on reading the memorial, which was drawn up in obedience to the Imperial command is said to have become greatly incensed, and to have exclaimed, "So he regards me as lost!" In 1182 he was appointed Superintendent of the revenue derived from the taxation of tea and salt, in the eastern part of Chê-keang, and shortly afterwards he was sent to take charge of the government of the department of Shaou-hing in the same province. During the following year he made a tour of the entire district under his jurisdiction, and travelled over dreary mountains and through sequestered valleys, carrying his luggage himself, and visiting all the subordinates under his charge without previous notice. Those whom he found unfaithful he reported to the Emperor with a view to their dismissal. His Majesty was so much pleased that he is reported to have observed to his Prime Minister, that "the government of Choo is truly worthy of admiration." A sacrificial court which had been erected to the honour of an infamous Minister, in Yung-kea, was demolished by his orders. During one of his tours of inspection, he received complaints against a magistrate who was related to the Prime Minister, and he memorialized the Emperor so strongly that the offender was deprived of his office as Commissioner of Justice, and that appointment was offered to Choo-tsze, who decidedly declined it, declaring that to accept it would be like "carrying off as booty the ox which had chanced to tread upon one's field." Shortly after this, Choo-tsze, being attacked and maligned by a Censor whom the Prime Minister had recommended to office, resolved to retire from public life: and an order having, in the mean time, been sent to him from Court, to return home and repair his ancestral temples, he went into retirement and closed his doors against all intruders.

In the year 1191, the Emperor Kwang-tsung appointed Choo-tsze