

**THE METAPHYSIC OF  
CHRISTIANITY AND  
BUDDHISM: A SYMPHONY**

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The Metaphysic of Christianity and Buddhism: A Symphony by Dawsonne M. Strong

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**DAWSONNE M. STRONG**

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AND  
BUDDHISM.

*A SYMPHONY.*

BY  
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TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE."

"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."—*Bible.*

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LOVINGLY DEDICATED  
TO  
MY WIFE  
IN MEMORY OF OUR SOJOURN  
IN  
THE EAST.

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## INTRODUCTION.

“ Si notre foi diffère quant à la forme et aux dogmes, nos âmes restent toujours d'accord sur un principe éternel et divin.”—GEORGE SANDS.

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AN immense difficulty has to be encountered by those who have been deeply impressed by the value and beauty of Christianity when they are called upon to consider the claims of other faiths. Anyone who has had within his experience and under his observation such an exceptional case as that of a sincere Christian who, from childhood to old age, has set before him the ideal Christ and the Christian conception of an all-compassionate Father—a Christian whose inner light has been so pure that no darkness of doubt has ever dimmed it, and no doctrinal warfare has ever stained its radiance—he, I contend, has an almost insuperable obstacle to overcome when he attempts to associate holiness and purity, of the same supreme order, with the followers of other religious systems which have been formulated for the comfort and salvation of humanity.

It is doubtful if any ordinary adherent of the Christian faith, however extensive his sympathies towards persons outside his own flock, has ever been able to pass this barrier, which always seems to interpose itself when search is made for a common bond of union with an alien belief.

A man may have lived many a year in the East, and witnessed there, with deep appreciation, the purity, the endurance, the touching self-denial of the devout peasantry, and the beautiful charity of the poor towards the poor; or he may have associated with saintly ascetics in India, and with the yellow-robed and gentle *religieux* of Ceylon; he

may have surveyed the famous temple of that fair island, in the intense stillness of a tropical night, till all identity of self seemed to vanish in the solemnity of the surroundings, and the only sound was that of a monk's intoning voice heard from within the dungeon-like apertures of the building, and the only light that of the fitful fireflies amid the lofty and drooping foliage ;—yet, in each and all of these experiences, that aroma of holiness, so perceptible at times in our own religious atmosphere, would somehow seem strangely absent to the unacclimatized senses, and no halo would be distinguishable by a vision which had been restricted by prejudice.

Still more difficult is it to rise to the same height of reverence for a saintly and surpassing personality if it is presented in sacred records other than those to which one has owned a prior allegiance. Nevertheless, the discovery in other religious systems of a correspondence with one's own particular persuasion must assuredly tend towards the attainment of that attitude of mind commended by St. Paul of "being all things to all men." To pave the way towards the acquisition of this mental posture in relation to religious concepts is the main object I have had in view in composing this small book.

It has been said that no age has more needed a departure in this direction than our own. "On the one hand, sectarian hatred and dogmatism almost obscure the great truths *common* to all mankind ; on the other, merciless and destructive criticism, in undermining much that used to be generally accepted, seems at times to threaten even the foundations of truth."

Some people, however, maintain that there is an appreciable value to be attached to all dogmatic declarations, and that those who are working in strictly-confined theological grooves are contributing, as specialists, to a knowledge of the whole. Even if these workers are possessed of all the uncharitable qualities sometimes attributed to the narrow-

minded, yet they may be held deserving of encouragement in view of the probability that the more their limited ideas become exposed to the light by their enthusiastic endeavours to assert them as final truth, the sooner will their imperfections be obliterated. The fragmentary opinions they cling to will then be discovered to possess no value except as constituent elements of the whole.

Others go the length of advocating that the flames of bigotry should be fanned to furnace-heat in order that the feeding fuel may be the more rapidly consumed.

In any case, the more apparent it becomes that every religion worthy of the name springs from a root common to all, and is really, at bottom, the one true cosmic religion, and that the variations are superficial and unimportant in themselves, the greater will be the advantages accruing to humanity in the political, social, and moral spheres. In other words, the advantage to be derived from the study of the obscure phases of religions lies in this—that, in so doing, our minds are better able to grasp the solidarity of religious thought and aspirations throughout the world. We are enabled to see more clearly that all religious forms, and even formless philosophies, however crude and idolatrous the former may appear to people of wide culture, and however mystical and evasive the latter may be regarded by those of narrow vision, are but the effects of one cause common to all.

When we have got rid, Buddhistically, of the idea of separateness, or, in a Christian sense, have exercised self-suppression, we can then proceed to eliminate the notion of separateness in religions and philosophies. Thus, whether we are Determinists or Indeterminists, we shall experience the sensation that, according to the law of development, it is in the scheme of things for us to struggle forward on our several paths, not in antipathy to, but hand in hand with, those who make use of different modes of progression towards one identical goal.