# *Our Country* – The Anglo-Saxon and the World's Future

Josiah Strong (1891)

*Josiah Strong was a white Congregational minister, from the midwestern states, who became prominent in the ecumenical and social gospel movements. In 1885, the American Home Missionary Society published Strong's first book,* Our Country, *in which he discussed what he saw as contemporary threats to US society, including alcohol use, urbanization, immigration, socialism, Catholicism, and Mormonism. The book attracted considerable attention, across the United States as well as in Canada and Britain. The selections below come from an updated edition Strong issued after the 1890 census. In these selections, Strong propounds a racialized conception of Protestant identity, along with a social Darwinist vision of the future in which Anglo-Saxon Protestants will outcompete every other race and religion on earth.*

The Anglo-Saxon is the representative of two great ideas, which are closely related. One of them is that of civil liberty. Nearly all of the civil liberty of the world is enjoyed by Anglo-Saxons: the English, the British colonists, and the people of the United States. To some, like the Swiss, it is permitted by the sufferance of their neighbors; others, like the French, have experimented with it; but in modern times, the peoples whose love of liberty has won it, and whose genius for self-government has preserved it, have been Anglo-Saxons. The noblest races have always been lovers of liberty. The love ran strong in early German blood and has profoundly influenced the institutions of all the branches of the great German family; but it was left for the Anglo-Saxon branch fully to recognize the right of the individual to himself and formally to declare it the foundation stone of government.

The other great idea of which the Anglo-Saxon is the exponent is that of a pure *spiritual* Christianity. It was no accident that the great Reformation of the sixteenth century originated among a Teutonic, rather than a Latin, people. It was the fire of liberty burning in the Saxon heart that flamed up against the absolutism of the Pope. Speaking roughly, the peoples of Europe which are Celtic are Catholic, and those which are Teutonic are Protestant; and where the Teutonic race was purest, there Protestantism spread with the greatest rapidity. [...]

It is not necessary to argue to those for whom I write that the two great needs of mankind, that all men may be lifted up into the light of the highest Christian civilization, are, first, a pure, spiritual Christianity and, second, civil liberty. Without controversy, these are the forces which, in the past, have contributed most to the elevation of the human race, and they must continue to be, in the future, the most efficient ministers to its progress. It follows, then, that the Anglo-Saxon, as the great representative of these two ideas, the depositary of these two greatest blessings, sustains peculiar relations to the world's future—is divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper. Add to this the fact of his rapidly increasing strength in modern times, and we have well-nigh a demonstration of his destiny. [...]

In one century, the United States has increased its territory tenfold, while the enormous acquisition of foreign territory by Great Britain—and chiefly within the last hundred years—is wholly unparalleled in history. This mighty Anglo-Saxon race, though comprising only 1/13 part of mankind, now rules more than 1/3 of the earth's surface and more than 1/4 of its people. And if

this race, while growing from 6 million to 120 million, thus gained possession of a third portion of the earth, is it to be supposed that when it numbers 1 billion, it will lose the disposition or lack the power to extend its sway? This race is multiplying not only more rapidly than any other European race, but more rapidly than *all* the races of continental Europe taken together. [...] And it is possible that, by the close of the next century, the Anglo-Saxons will outnumber all the other civilized races of the world. [...]

What is the significance of such facts? These tendencies enfold the future; they are the mighty alphabet with which God writes his prophecies. May we not, by a careful laying together of the letters, spell out something of his meaning? It seems to me that God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future. Heretofore there has always been, in the history of the world, a comparatively unoccupied land westward, into which the crowded countries of the east have poured their surplus populations. But the widening waves of migration, which millenniums ago rolled east and west from the valley of the Euphrates, meet today on our Pacific coast. There are no more new worlds. The unoccupied arable lands of the earth are limited and will soon be taken. The time is coming when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence will be felt here as it is now felt in Europe and Asia. Then will the world enter upon a new stage of its history—*the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled*. [...] Then this race of unequaled energy, with all the majesty of numbers and the might of wealth behind it—the representative, let us hope, of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization—having developed peculiarly aggressive traits calculated to impress its institutions upon mankind, will spread itself over the earth. If I read not amiss, this powerful race will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa, and beyond. And can anyone doubt that the result of this competition of races will be the "survival of the fittest"?

[...] Whether the extinction of inferior races before the advancing Anglo-Saxon seems to the reader sad or otherwise, it certainly appears probable. I know of nothing except climatic conditions to prevent this race from populating Africa as it has peopled North America. And those portions of Africa which are unfavorable to Anglo-Saxon life are less extensive than was once supposed. The Dutch Boers, after two centuries of life there, are as hardy as any race on earth. The Anglo-Saxon has established himself in climates totally diverse—Canada, South Africa, and India—and, through several generations, has preserved his essential race characteristics. He is not, of course, superior to climatic influences; but even in warm climates, he is likely to retain his aggressive vigor long enough to supplant races already enfeebled. Thus, in what Dr. Bushnell calls "the out-populating power of the Christian stock"[a] may be found God's final and complete solution of the dark problem of heathenism among many inferior peoples.

Some of the stronger races, doubtless, may be able to preserve their integrity; but in order to compete with the Anglo-Saxon, they will probably be forced to adopt his methods and instruments, his civilization and his religion. Significant movements are now in progress among them. While the Christian religion was never more vital, or its hold upon the Anglo-Saxon mind

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[a] *Horace Bushnell was a white New Englander and a nationally prominent Congregational minister. The quoted phrase is a chapter title from a famous book of Bushnell's,* Christian Nurture.

stronger, there is taking place among the nations a widespread intellectual revolt against traditional beliefs. "In every corner of the world," says Mr. Froude, "there is the same phenomenon of the decay of established religions.... Among Mohammedans, Jews, Buddhists, Brahmins, traditionary creeds are losing their hold. [...]"[b] The contact of Christian with heathen nations is awaking the latter to new life. Old superstitions are loosening their grasp. [...] In Catholic countries, Catholicism is losing its influence over educated minds, and in some cases the masses have already lost all faith in it. Thus, while on this continent God is training the Anglo-Saxon race for its mission, a complemental work has been in progress in the great world beyond. God has two hands. Not only is he preparing, in our civilization, the die with which to stamp the nations, but, by what Southey called the "timing of Providence,"[c] he is preparing mankind to receive our impress.

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[b] *Strong is quoting James Anthony Froude, a white English historian and an advocate for British imperialism.*

[c] *Presumably Strong is referring to Robert Southey, a British poet laureate. However, the expression "timing of Providence" does not actually appear in Southey's works.*

**Source:** Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, rev. ed. (New York: Baker & Taylor Co., for the American Home Missionary Society, 1891), 208-213, 222-225 (chap. 14), https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah221t. Public domain, Google-digitized.

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These edited excerpts from Strong's book are intended for ***teaching*** purposes only. For ***research*** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed

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**See also:** These are the contemporary works by Bushnell and Froude from which Strong quotes:

Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1861), chap. 8, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ia.ark:/13960/t80k2nn00.

James Anthony Froude, "Romanism and the Irish Race in the United States," *North American Review*, December 1879, 519-536, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011580720.

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