
CHAPTER
28 **American
Expansion
Overseas**
(1898–1914)

180 **America's
Anglo-Saxon "Mission"**

A great change took place in American foreign policy in the late 1800's. The nation's traditional isolationist policy was replaced by a policy of expansionism. During these years a number of writers developed arguments in favor of American expansion overseas as well as in the Western Hemisphere.

One of the most influential of these writers was Josiah Strong, a Congregational minister. His arguments in favor of American expansion were based, however, on two false beliefs. One was the concept of an Anglo-Saxon "race," which to Americans meant the people of Great Britain and their descendants. The other belief, called social Darwinism, applied the theories of scientist Charles Darwin—especially the theory of the "survival of the fittest"—to peoples and nations. Many Americans misused Darwin's theories to claim that the earth should belong to the energetic, the strong, and the fit—that is, to the American people.

READING FOCUS

1. According to Strong, what "great ideas" form the basis of civilization?
2. What is America's Anglo-Saxon mission?

Every race which has deeply impressed itself on the human family has been the representative of some great idea—one or more—which has given direction to the nation's life and form to its civilization. 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 in the world is enjoyed by Anglo-Saxons: the English, the British colonists, and the people of the United States. Some peoples, such as the Swiss, are allowed by their neighbors to maintain it. Others, such as 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 other great idea represented by the Anglo-Saxon is that of a pure, spiritual Christianity.

It is not necessary to argue that the two great needs of human beings are, first, civil liberty, and second, a pure, spiritual Christianity. These are the forces which, in the past, have contributed most to advancing the human race. They must continue to be, in the future, the most efficient aids to its progress. It follows, then, that Anglo-Saxons, as the great representative of these two ideas, have a special relationship to the world's future. They are divinely commissioned to be, in a sense, their brother's keeper.

Another important fact is the Anglo-Saxon's rapidly increasing strength in modern times. In 1700 this race numbered less than 6

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million persons. In 1800, Anglo-Saxons (I use the term somewhat broadly to include all English-speaking peoples) had increased to about 20 million. In 1880 they numbered nearly 100 million, having increased almost five times over in 80 years.

In 100 years the United States has increased the size of its territory ten times. There can be no reasonable doubt that North America is to be the great home of the Anglo-Saxons, the principal seat of their power, the center of their life and influence. Our continent has room and resources and climate, it lies in the pathway of the nations, and it belongs to the zone of power. Already, among Anglo-Saxons, we lead in population and wealth.

Moreover, our social institutions are stimulating. In Europe the various classes of society are, like the layers of the earth, fixed and rigid. There can be no great change without a terrible upheaval, a social earthquake. Here, society is like the waters of the sea, constantly moving. All people are free to become whatever they can make of themselves. They are free to transform themselves from rail-splitters or tanners into the nation's President. Our aristocracy, unlike that of Europe, is open to all comers. Wealth, position, influence, are prizes offered for energy. Every farmer's child, every apprentice and clerk, every friendless and penniless immigrant, is free to enter the contest. Thus many causes combine to produce here the most forceful and tremendous energy in the world.

What is the significance of such facts? It seems to me that God, with great wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future. Up until now in the history of the world there has always been unoccupied land westward. Into this the crowded countries of the East have poured their surplus populations. But there are no more new worlds. The unoccupied farmlands 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 the world will enter upon a new stage of its history—the final competition of races. The Anglo-Saxon is being trained for this. Long before our numbers reach a billion, the expansionist tendency inherited by this race, and strengthened in the United States, will assert



One view of America's "Anglo-Saxon Mission"

itself. Then this race of unequaled energy, with all its numbers and the might of wealth behind it—the representative of liberty and Christianity—having developed aggressive traits to force its institutions upon all people will spread itself over the earth. If I predict correctly, 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"?

Is there room for reasonable doubt? This race, unless weakened by alcohol and tobacco, is destined to drive out many weaker races, absorb others, and mold the remainder, until, in a very true and important sense, it has Anglo-Saxonized humankind.

READING REVIEW

1. (a) Name the two great ideas that Strong said formed the basis of civilization. (b) According to Strong, how did the Anglo-Saxons represent these ideas?
2. What evidence did Strong offer to support his prediction that Americans would "Anglo-Saxonize" the human race?