**Josiah Strong and American Expansion**

Josiah Strong was born in Naperville, Illinois in 1847. He went to Western Reserve College in Ohio and became ordained as a Congregationalist minister in 1871. As a young man, he spent time as a missionary to Indians in Wyoming and then returned east to take a pastorate. In the 1880s, Strong began to write the first of what would eventually be eleven books and hundreds of articles all explaining how to make Protestant Christianity relevant. This became known as the Social Gospel, and it was meant to combat the ills of urbanization and immigration.

Although Strong believed that American Christians should minister to the poor and immigrant masses as well as to Native Americans here in the United States as the 19th century came to a close, he increasingly advocated a more global approach to Christian evangelicalism. Here are his arguments for American imperialism:

“The Anglo-Saxon, as the great representative of … [Christianity and civil liberty], sustains peculiar relations to the world's future, is divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper…. This mighty Anglo-Saxon race, though comprising only one-thirteenth part of mankind, now rules more than one-third of the earth's surface, and more than one-fourth of its people.”

“Another marked characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon is what may be called an instinct or genius for colonizing. His unequaled energy, his indomitable perseverance, and his personal independence, made him a pioneer. He excels all others in pushing his way into new countries. It was those in whom this tendency was strongest that came to America, and this inherited tendency has been further developed by the westward sweep of successive generations across the continent.”

“On Anglo-Saxon Predominance” (1891)

Strong was not the lone voice in the debate about faith and imperialism. Ministers across the country, especially during the Spanish-American War (as in many previous and later wars), argued that the American mission was divinely inspired and backed.

Wayland Hoyt, Pastor of Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City:

“I do not believe that there ever was a war more righteous than that which we have undertaken, nor one closer to the law of the self-sacrificing Christ that we bear one another's burdens. If there ever was a war simply for the sake of humanity with no desire or purpose of national greed of any sort, it is the one that now is upon us, calling our soldiers and the navy to arms.”