

Primary Source Reading 4-2 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A Strong Voice for Expansion

▣ About the Selection

Some Americans thought that overseas expansion was the country's cultural destiny and religious duty. These views often were based on a mixture of the belief in the superiority of the white race, a belief in the theory of evolution, and a commitment to missionary work. The Reverend Josiah Strong argued along these lines in his best-seller, *Our Country*. The book increased the nation's interest in overseas expansion.

Reader's Dictionary



abject: low condition or hopelessness

heathenism: uncivilized

precursor: one that came before

supplant: to take the place of

GUIDED READING

As you read, note how Strong refers to race, evolution, destiny, and God in his argument. Then answer the questions that follow.

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 to-day on our Pacific coast. There are no more new worlds. . . . 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 state 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. . . . And can anyone doubt that this competition of races will be the "survival of the fittest"? . . . Whether the feebler and more abject races are going to be regenerated and raised up, is already very much of a question. What if it should be God's plan to people the world with better and finer material? "At the present day," says Mr. Darwin, "civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations, excepting where the climate opposes a deadly barrier, and they succeed mainly, though not exclusively, through their arts, which are the products of the intellect." Thus the Finns were supplanted by the Aryan races in Europe and Asia, the Tartars by the Russians, and thus the aborigines of North America, Australia, and New

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Zealand are now disappearing before the all-conquering Anglo-Saxons. It seems as if these inferior tribes were only precursors of a superior race, . . .

Thus, in what Dr. Bushnell calls "the out-populating power of the Christian stock," may be found God's final and complete solution of the dark problem of heathenism among many inferior peoples. . . .

Thus, while on this continent God is training the Anglo-Saxon race for its mission. . . .

Source: *The Power of Words: Documents in American History Volume II*. New York: HarperCollins College Books, 1996.



READER RESPONSE

Directions: Answer the following questions on the lines below.

1. According to Strong, for what is God training the Anglo-Saxon race?

2. How does Strong describe the Anglo-Saxon race?

3. How does Strong show he supports the theory of evolution?

4. What does Strong think the pressure of increased population on the food supply will cause?

5. **Critical Thinking** How would you reply to Strong's arguments?
