

# JOSIAH STRONG AND A SCIENTIFIC SOCIAL GOSPEL

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One of the salient facets of American history during the late nineteenth century was the conflict between the sciences and religion. Clearly, Darwinian evolutionary theory and other new scientific perspectives caused enormous difficulties for those conservative evangelicals stressing biblical literalism and tending towards fundamentalism. Just as clearly there are religious leaders like James McCosh, Joseph P. Thompson and Lyman Abbott who found much to appreciate in this new naturalism. By naturalism, I mean that movement to apply scientific methods and laws towards understanding human cultural and social reality which, among other things, precipitated organization of the social sciences.<sup>1</sup>

My particular concern is to analyze the impact of social science naturalism on the social gospel within the larger context of the Religion of the Republic. Josiah Strong provides a classic case for the study of that relationship. In Sydney Ahlstrom's words, Strong "was the dynamo, the revivalist, the organizer, and altogether the most irrepressible spirit of the Social Gospel movement" such that there might not have been a movement without him. Indeed, his electric message about applied science and divinely guided evolution greatly reduced anxiety by enabling many late nineteenth century Americans to believe there was an underlying, progressive order to that urban chaos caused by modernization of culture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James McCosh, "Religious Aspects of the Doctrine of Development," *Evangelical Alliance for the United States, Evangelical Conference, 1873 History, Essays, Orations* (New York, October 2-12, 1873, ed. by Philip Schaff and Samuel Irenaeus Prime (New York, 1874), pp. 264-71 and "Discoveries in Science and Speculation in Philosophy," *Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System, Report Of The First General Presbyterian Council Convened at Edinburgh*, July 1877, ed. by Rev. J. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 187-94, Joseph P. Thompson, *Man In Genesis and In Geology* (New York, 1870), Ira V. Brown, *Lyman Abbott* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953). Cf. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 55ff, James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (Cambridge, Eng., 1979), Cynthia E. Russett, *Darwin In America* (San Francisco, 1976). Read before the 1978 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, this paper rests on extensive research in the MSS collections of Union Theological Seminary, New York. Space being at a premium, I have drastically reduced the content of these footnotes and eliminated book subtitles. A more complete version of the notes may be obtained by writing me via the History Department, Western State College, Gunnison, Colo. 81230. For the larger picture of 19th century evangelicalism and its relation to American culture, see my *The Evangelical Alliance For the United States of America, 1847-1900 Ecumenism, Identity and The Religion of the Republic* (New York and Toronto, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History Of The American People, II* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), pp. 265-66, Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search For Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967).

The social sciences were academic latecomers because essentially the product of this search to understand the new, technological civilization. Josiah Strong participated in that scientific quest as an evangelical clergyman seeking new social theory and methods to make the gospel effective among the urban masses for the "city . . . must be saved before the Kingdom can fully come." If academic social scientists like William Graham Sumner and Lester Frank Ward held little sympathy for the kingdom, Strong still partook of the desire of more humane naturalists scientifically to reform civilization so as to ameliorate the living conditions of the urban masses. His lifelong message juxtaposed an evangelical jeremiad of American declension with the hope of so saving American souls, and advancing what was, in effect, the Religion of the Republic, that the Kingdom of God would be established worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

Like many Americans, Josiah Strong participated in what Sidney Mead describes as the "theological merging of evangelical Protestantism with the religion of the Republic." Although I agree with Mead that the Constitution required separation of the "Republic's neutral civil authority" from religion, by the 1830's public opinion overrode that legal neutrality by allying evangelicalism and government. Americans accordingly believed theirs a democratic republic, watched over a triune God, with a Constitution, Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence which, to use Ralph Henry Gabriel's terms, reflected the divinely inspired concepts of the fundamental law, free and responsible individual and American mission.<sup>4</sup>

This 19th century evangelical Religion of the Republic inherited an assumption from the Fathers of 1789 that the universe, and hence the new American Republic, rested on a fundamental law comprising two natural and related laws. (1) The Creator gave man reason to discover the 'natural' moral law implanted in the human heart which endowed man with such unalienable rights as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. By the 1930's, Americans interpreted natural law to mean that only a democratic government allowed man the full exercise of his rights. In addition, the moral law recorded in the Christian Bible obliged man, ideally the converted evangelical, to obey the divine precepts for humane living and to respect the rights of others. The individual therefore could be free and responsible only by obeying the fundamental law and implementing it in society. These laws won many antebellum Americans to the mission of so perfecting their democratic and

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<sup>3</sup>Josiah Strong, *The New Era Or The Coming Kingdom* (New York, 1893), p. 201. By evangelical I mean that religious type produced by the revival conversion experience, who, more or less, pervaded all major Protestant denominations by the 1850's and stressed theologically such notions as human sin and responsibility, individual need for redemption through faith in Christ the Savior, and in God's loving kindness.

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<sup>4</sup>Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation With The Soul Of A Church* (New York, 1975, pp. 71, 73-74, 18-19; Ralph Henry Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1956), pp. 1-39. Cf.: Jordan, *Alliance*, pp. 1-12 69ff; Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" in William G. McLoughlin and Robert N. Bellah, ed., *Religion In America* (Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 3-23; Elwyn A. Smith, *The Religion Of The Republic* (Fortress Press, 1971).

Christian nation that the world would follow suit (2) Evangelicals and other pre-Civil War Americans also accepted the Fathers' belief that man must discover and obey those universal laws undergirding nature akin to Newton's law of gravity. In Dwight Dozeman's words, they stressed a Baconian scientific ideal which required a "strenuously empiricist approach to all forms of knowledge, a declared greed for the objective *fact*, and a corresponding distrust of 'hypotheses,' of 'imagination,' and, indeed, of reason itself." Such Scottish Realism enabled evangelicals to retain the American Enlightenment belief in the compatibility of science and religion while avoiding revival of that radical, atheistic theorizing characteristic of the French Philosophes. Of course, American evangelicals discussed science in the context of Christian biblicism rather than the mechanistic deism of Jefferson and Franklin.<sup>5</sup>

This happy alliance between science and religion shattered by mid-century against a new science which broke from Baconian fact gathering by elaborating massive theoretical support for evolutionary rather than instant Creation of reality. Many educated evangelicals like Charles Hodge fled this open-ended science by turning to a religious fundamentalism which retained Baconism. Others like Josiah Strong thought the new process-oriented science justified evangelicalism and authenticated the Religion of the Republic for America and the world.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Washington Gladden and Lyman Abott, Strong never created an elaborate apologetics for the compatibility of Christian doctrine with evolutionary science partly because, as Dorothea Muller suggests, laymen must accept the judgment of scientific authority. Much more, Strong thought the "new evangel of science" became *transparent revelation* needing no explanation when used in appropriate Christian argument. Failure to delineate science as to theory and method, often resulting in an untenable eclecticism, was so typical of even academic social scientists that Josiah Strong still gained the contemporary reputation as one of America's preeminent Christian sociologists. As such, his essential message was that scientifically derived knowledge of social reality provided a key to creating a healthy Christian society in anticipation of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>7</sup>

## I.

If this be so, then What was Strong's perception of science? How did it relate to his social gospel? What place did it have in his total worldview? Let me first answer the latter question. Graduate of Lane Theological Seminary (1871), Josiah Strong held various home mission and regular Congregationalist pastorates from

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<sup>5</sup>Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants In An Age Of Science* (Chapel Hill 1977), pp. 3, 49-51, 71-72.

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<sup>6</sup>Bozeman, *Protestants*, pp. 166-68.

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<sup>7</sup>Dorothea R. Muller, "The Social Philosophy of Josiah Strong: Social Christianity and American Progressivism," *Church History*, 28 (June, 1959), p. 186. Strong *New ERA*, p. 12.

Cheyenne, Wyoming, to Cincinnati, Ohio. His first book, *Our Country* (1886), sounded the implications of the ending frontier well before Frederick Jackson Turner by combining the traditional home mission fear of the barbaric west with a new perception that an equally barbaric city had emerged as the "nerve center" of society, thereby posing a double threat to American civilization. Hoping to sustain the evangelical Republic, he called for restoration of good citizenship and government while prescribing denominational cooperative support for a radically Christian stewardship towards westerners and urbanites as the only remedy for the crisis. Salvation of the world itself was at stake.<sup>8</sup>

Public acclaim over *Our Country* made Strong General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance for the United States from 1886 to 1898. Both the man and the ecumenical body desired to convert the multinational, heavily Roman Catholic and Jewish urbanites to the evangelical Religion of the Republic, to 'Americanize' them. Under Alliance auspices, Strong mobilized the leaders of social Christianity in a series of major national conferences which helped to coalesce the social gospel movement and contributed to creation of the major early twentieth century American ecumenical and social gospel body, the Federal Council of Churches (1908). Yet the relationship between the Alliance and Strong terminated in 1898 because the man seemed to rely overmuch on social science perceptions while veering too far left of the evangelical doctrinal center. Undaunted, Strong founded a League for Social Service to educate the public through sociological analysis of society and the world.<sup>9</sup>

The question, then, is: What was Josiah Strong's scientific theory? Quite clearly he relied on the Bible as the source of authority concerning religious knowledge. But, like American Enlightenment thinkers, he was just as convinced that the nature of stars or the structure of a society could be comprehended only through rational and scientific study of God's other area of revelation, the physical universe. Although man was capable of enormous degradation, the evolutionary historian John Fiske, philosophical sociologist Herbert Spencer, and other social scientists strengthened Strong's belief that both Western man *and* society could be perfected as long as individualism thrived and society achieved sufficient organization to retain the fruit of individual initiative.<sup>10</sup>

Like many contemporary naturalists such as the physical and social scientist John William Draper and anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, Strong was convinced that Western Civilization was superior to all others in the world because the most technologically progressive. Yet technology itself, according to Strong, rested on a science rooted in 'great ideas' and human reason and was the handmaid to Christian discovery of all dimensions of God's truth, spiritual, as well as material. Hence, Strong thought it literally *providential* that truly progressive

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<sup>8</sup>Strong, *Our Country* (New York, 1885, 1891), pp. 179, 179-94, 228-67, *ERA*, p. 185.

<sup>9</sup>Jordan, *Alliance*, pp. 143ff.

<sup>10</sup>Strong, *ERA*, pp. 12-26.

civilization rested on control of physical forces which for the first time human history were melding Western individualism into closer social, national and world relations, into unity. His last books on this subject hold a unique status in social gospel literature by anticipating the one world society, united by science, so touted by such moderns as Buckminster Fuller and Kenneth Boulding.<sup>11</sup>

By 1893, Josiah Strong predicted creation of the Kingdom of God on earth in the twentieth century. Given democratization of European politics, education, culture and rising appreciation for organized labor, its increasing approximation to American reality, conquest of space and time by steam and electricity augured the carrying of a perfecting Western Civilization to the world. True to the American Religion of the Republic, Strong applauded this rising freedom as a healthy consequence of the individualist impulse in a Western society wherein trends towards centralization of business and government augured the twentieth century as one of completed social organization. This growth of freedom and organization reflected what Strong thought a complex law of social reality: the maturer the science, the higher the civilization, the greater the complexity, interdependence and freedom therein.<sup>12</sup>

Another sign of the new era was the growing apprehension of the human body as a temple of God which man ought to sustain in good health. Strong agreed with Herbert Spencer, whom he thought the leading social scientist, that civilized man had developed a more nervously refined temperament capable of great creativity but also of a sensuality leading to sin. Survival of higher civilization required the elevation of the masses to this more refined temperament while at the same time counteracting the tendency to degredation, a tendency which socialists and other utopians underestimated because of overreliance on secular reform of social environments. Denominational cooperation in Christian social service held the day since it was the "duty of the church to educate the individual conscience and itself to be the conscience of the social organism." Only reorientation of human character through an indwelling of Christian love, *aided by* scientific reform of the social environment, would preserve civilization and eliminate that poverty, crime, materialism and sin at the root of contemporary urban crises.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, Josiah Strong believed the "truths of science are God's truths, that its laws are God's laws," that "unity in diversity seems to be the fundamental law of the universe." In this respect, Strong's thought reflects the persistence of the Enlightenment rather than Baconian concept of 'design in nature' among both advocates of the social gospel and the more pious of naturalists. He differed from

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<sup>11</sup>Strong: *Country*, pp. 18-20; *ERA*, p. 2; *Our World, The New World Life* (New York, 1913); *Our World, The New World Religion* (New York, 1916); Cf.: John William Draper, *The Intellectual Development of Europe*, 5th ed. (New York, 1863, 1867); Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York, 1877); Stow Persons, *American Minds*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1976), pp. 224, 248-52, 264-70.

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<sup>12</sup>Strong, *ERA*, pp. 3, 5, 11.

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 235, 35-39, 118-22.

the Baconians by what they would consider an overly theoretical orientation and by elevation of scientific discovery to the same level as scriptural revelation.<sup>14</sup>

God, or, to use Strong's enlightened term, "Infinite Intelligence" created a physical universe harmoniously rooted in natural laws but man failed to use his endowed reason and freedom to go beyond discovery of those laws towards fulfillment of their moral implications. Given human frailty, God sent Christ to teach that attracting law of the moral universe, akin to the law of gravity in the physical. Christ taught man a love which allows for human diversity, individualism, while sustaining unity among men and between man and God.<sup>15</sup>

Unhappily, Protestantism so overstressed right relations to God that those among men were neglected. Clearly, *both* laws of fatherhood and brotherhood simultaneously must be obeyed. As Strong insisted, the problems of this "sociological age of the world" can only be solved by means of "the teachings of Christ; and this fact constitutes the great opportunity of the church to retain or rather regain her hold on the multitude and to mould the civilization of the future by accepting, preaching, and practising a full-orbed Gospel." Such loving obedience to God's laws of unity and diversity not only perfects society but augurs the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>16</sup>

Like the Baconians, Josiah Strong believed in the unity of all truth but differed from some by allowing science and scripture *equally* to clarify the truth of the other. In this context, historical criticism and biological evolution posed dire crises for American biblical literalists. According to their 'all or nothing' rationale, if man *evolved*, then the Creation story was myth and even basic truths were of doubtful validity. Such dogmatic interpretation of Bible passages angered Strong for it rested on an assertion of inerrancy which ignored even the basic problems of translation and interpretation. Despite the truth of human evolution, *Genesis* still proved God the author of the universe and all physical laws therein. In the light of David Friedrich Strauss and scientific history, Strong thought not even the most jaded can doubt Christ's earthly sojourn while scripture proves His divinity.<sup>17</sup>

Through "the prophets of science, God has made a revelation to us which sheds new light on his relations to the world, . . . enriches Scriptural expressions," reveals himself as "a God of law" rather "than a God of caprice." Hence to Strong, "if the scientific method has destroyed dogmas, it has led us back to Christ, back to the simplicity which is him, and back to the kingdom of God, which was the great subject of his teaching."<sup>18</sup>

If science revealed truth, it also contributed to the progress of mankind worldwide by undercutting the civilizations and religions of India and China,

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 11, 18, 12.

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<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 116, 19-29.

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 18-113; Strong, *World Life*, p. 5; Bozeman, *Protestants*, pp. 108, 116ff.

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<sup>18</sup>Josiah Strong, *The Next Great Awakening* (New York, 1902), pp. 86, 28, 27.

thereby opening the Orient to Christian conversion. That Darwin, Spencer and other scholars thought modern civilization most progressive in the United States, coupled with statistical proof of national industrial power, convinced Strong of America's providential mission to carry true Christian civilization and democratic forms to the world. The symbiotic relationship among science, civilization and evangelical Christianity denied the old sacred/secular dualism by revealing God as "immanent in nature and active in human affairs, purposing, guiding, overruling, accomplishing." He will save and perfect the world through natural law, human forces and the gospel.<sup>19</sup>

Like other contemporary naturalists, Strong believed the law of 'evolution' a key to physical reality and the unity of the sciences but differed from many by seeing divine providence therein. Although "life must always be adjusted to its environments," God shaped creation as a process, rather than a one time event, wherein man rose above nature's struggle for existence to intelligent mastery of the process. Consequent evolving culture and society, a new environment, enabled him slowly to conform to government by moral law. Strong accordingly warned the churches that they could guide man's adjustment only if they attuned to the new centralizing society.<sup>20</sup>

Still, each person responded to internal as well as to external environments: "Modern science has demonstrated that the physical, intellectual and moral elements in man are most intimately related." Rejecting the Newtonian, Baconian and traditional evangelical separation of mind from matter, Strong concluded that "environment is commonly (not always) decisive in shaping character, that the body profoundly influences the soul and that the individual is in very large measure what society has made him." The Kingdom of God therefore shall not come "until society has been Christianized, unfavorable environments transformed, and our physical lives raised to a much higher plane." Our God of infinite knowledge and wisdom requires each person to obey the Kingdom's social laws of Love, Service and Sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

Like Enlightenment and some contemporary naturalist thinkers, Josiah Strong knew growth in man's knowledge of and obedience to natural law also increased human freedom and happiness. Unlike some of these thinkers, however, Strong felt mankind must use liberty to go beyond happiness to become "*a mighty will joyously choosing the will of God . . . as a co-laborer with him into the kingdom.*" He therefore went beyond the Enlightenment and Baconian static conception of design in nature to one of process wherein human will evolved toward obedience to God: "without struggle" man's will "could not be strong; without power to sin it

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid* , pp 102, 102-05, Bozeman, *Protestants*, 82ff

<sup>20</sup> Josiah Strong *Religious Movements For Social Betterment* (New York, 1900), pp 15, 15-16, *World Religion*, pp 29-37

<sup>21</sup> Strong *Awakening*, pp 98, *My Religion In Everyday Life* (New York, 1910), pp 50, 50-56, *World Life*, pp 6-9, *Movements*, pp 40-41 Bozeman, *Protestants*, p 90

could not be free; without freedom it could not be autonomous; without autonomy it could not give itself." Strong clearly perceived man as more than matter in motion for "matter can reveal somewhat of God, but spirit can reveal more; hence God is manifest in human character and life as he cannot be in nature." The divine method may be revealed in nature but the divine purpose appears most fully in human life and society.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, the history of the Christian West reflected the social development of "germinal" ideas rooted in "Christ's revelation of God." Since man's self-image related heavily to his view of the divine, each new idea of God led to a newer view of man in that historic progression from theology, to anthropology, to soteriology and "lastly *sociology* or the doctrine of society, the relations of man to his fellows." The urban sociological age was upon the Christian West and, consequently, the world. All evidence convinced Strong that "the full coming of the Kingdom of God on earth — is typified not by a garden but by a city."<sup>23</sup>

Josiah Strong also relied on a variety of naturalist perceptions of society, race, civilization and organic analogies. Like Lyman Beecher and Horace Bushnell before him, Strong feared Roman Catholic and Mormon immigrants were flooding the formative American West with alien cultural and religious perspectives. The lusty childhood of the American West might strengthen the youthful American East in its ability to revitalize the decrepit nations of the world but unfamiliarity with evangelical democratic institutions meant a flawed west threatened the Republic's civilizing and revitalizing role. America was the world's last hope for she represented the epitome of that Anglo-Saxon, democratic, scientific-industrial and Christian civilization essential to restoration of health even to the "decrepit East," the Orient.<sup>24</sup>

Although such notions may reveal characteristics of abhorrent and racist 'social darwinism', they really are part of a complex pattern of thought which shows more ambiguity about race and more benevolence towards the peoples of the world than such a rubric allows. To an extent Strong's usage of the term "race" was cultural. As he stated in *Our Country*, "every race . . . has been the representative of some great idea". The "Anglo-Saxon", however, represented the "two great ideas" of "civil liberty" and "pure *spiritual* Christianity". They so pervaded the English and North American languages, cultures, societies and governments that the Anglo-Saxon apparently was "divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Strong, *World Religion*, pp. 43, 19, 38-43.

<sup>23</sup>Strong: *ERA*, p. 131; *World Life*, p. 283.

<sup>24</sup>Strong: *Country*, pp. 11, 195, 58-137, 208-27; *Expansion: Under New World Conditions* (New York, 1900) pp. 164, 187-208.

<sup>25</sup>Strong: *Country*, pp. 208, 210, 26-28, 265-67; *ERA*, pp. 41-69, 54-67, 78-79; *World Life*, pp. 10-11.



Yet it also partook of those geographical and biological determinisms, akin to John William Draper's 'blood theory' of race, so popular among contemporary naturalists. Like Draper, Strong argued that each race attained its unique level of cultural achievement in a particular climactic and geographic region — the Anglo-Saxon in the temperate zone of Europe and America — but suffered physiological and cultural degeneration itself, or contaminated the host culture, if it migrated to other types of climatic and geographic regions or mingled with another race. That the great Charles Darwin himself argued natural selection sent only the most " 'energetic, restless and courageous.' " Europeans to America seemed to confirm Strong's belief that "the largest injections of foreign blood are substantially the same elements that constituted the original Anglo-Saxon admixture, so that we may infer the general type will be preserved". As did Crèvecoeur a century before, Strong concluded that Americans were forming a new race intellectually, morally and physically superior even to the old. Even so, Strong's new Anglo-Saxon race rested on an intermixture of *allied* European people only but the late nineteenth century witnessed an influx of hordes of 'inferior' elements from Northern Europe, primarily Roman Catholics, and a 'new immigration' from Southern and Eastern Europe which threatened America's racial purity and strength. Strong still hoped American Christianity might transform the non-Anglo-Saxons enough culturally to make them into good Americans; the evidence seemed to indicate that "a foreign heredity is overcome by an American environment." Proper culture can create Anglo-Saxons!<sup>26</sup>

The end of the American frontier, so disturbing to Strong in 1886, ironically meant the teeming millions formerly emigrating to American shores would now range over the world: "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.*" And "can any one doubt," asked Strong, "that the result of this competition of races will be the 'survival of the fittest'?" Quoting directly from his theological mentor, Horace Bushnell, Strong claimed " 'nothing can save the inferior race but a ready and pliant assimilation. 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?' " Still, knowing that Darwin's evolution is an inherently gradual and peaceful process, Strong insisted that "to this result no war of extermination is needful; the contest is not one of arms, but of vitality and of civilization."<sup>27</sup>

If themes on race and Anglo-Saxon mission pervade *Our Country*, they are stressed even more rigorously in *Expansion: Under New World Conditions*. In the latter book, Strong relied heavily on William Graham Sumner's argument, one reflecting Lewis Henry Morgan's cultural-anthropological scale, that progress is so

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<sup>26</sup>Strong: *Country*, pp. 218, 220; *The Challenge Of The City* (New York, 1907); p. 94. Cf.: John William Draper, *Development*, pp. 20-25; John William Draper, *Thoughts On The Future Civil Policy Of America*, 4th ed. (New York, 1865), pp. 77-78, 105-08, 161-66, 171-72.

<sup>27</sup>Strong, *Country*, pp. 222, 223, 264, 207, 213, 220-25.

greatly a consequence of the hard work and accumulated technological advancement of one's ancestors that the teaching of ideas and morality alone can not elevate the savage. Hence, Strong believed that different races were capable of different levels of technological sophistication, only some progressing to the point of civilization. Both Morgan and Strong, however, assumed that only the West had achieved civilization. This gradual creation of civilization by the superior Anglo-Saxon race, explained Strong in Darwinian fashion, resulted from "kindly service" "conditions of life" which forced the race to struggle with its environment to the point of both technological mastery and the growth of "a strength and fibre of character otherwise impossible." Strong gave this argument a neoLamarckian twist by assuring his readers that the acquisition of firm character by their forebears was physically inherited by subsequent Anglo-Saxons.<sup>28</sup>

Yet Strong's confidence in total Anglo-Saxon superiority waned by 1913 when he published *Our World: The New World Life*. Not only had the various civilizations, languages and religions proven far more resistant to Western forces than expected, a disappointment to Strong, but recent experience revealed the validity of the notion that races were suited to particular geographic and climactic regions; the whites for example could not successfully colonize tropical regions like Africa. Strong decided these signs proved different racial ability part of God's plan for diversity amidst uniformity. Indeed, like Draper, he thought science indicates that "universal amalgamation" of the most divergent of races violated nature. God, therefore, wanted harmony among separate races. The net effect of these judgments was that Strong began to speak of an American social gospel for the world wherein the varied peoples made their respective contributions towards attainment of the ultimate goal, a worldwide Kingdom of God.<sup>29</sup>

## II.

In conclusion, Josiah Strong thought science a new evangel wherein God encouraged scientific reason to discover and utilize divine natural laws for human mastery of the physical world and in furtherance of gospel truth. This opened Strong to all sorts of contemporary and so-called scientific notions — such as biological, cultural, and social evolution, the blood theory of race, organicism, progress, and the cultural-anthropological scale — which at times had invidious, even horrendous implications from the perspective of Christians today. If his racial theory be repugnant, and it is, we must remember that it was typical of the social gospel and progressive reform eras and that, before he died in 1916, Josiah Strong actually came to see the various races as fulfilling a meaningful part of the world drama. Indeed, throughout his life, Strong was in the forefront of religious concern for suffering human beings when he advocated a wide range of reforms both to alleviate that suffering and to create a humanely Christian society.

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<sup>28</sup> Strong, *Expansion*, pp. 38, 9, 36-39, 220-21.

<sup>29</sup> Strong, *World Life*, pp. 164, 159-75.

Clearly, Josiah Strong modified the current American Religion of the Republic by adding evolutionary science to evangelicalism, the fundamental law, free and responsible individual and the American mission as the core elements of human progress towards creating God's kingdom on earth. That he always thought himself an evangelical, although he no longer stressed the revivalist techniques of his clerical youth, reflects the importance of Bushnellian Christian nurture to his conception of human and social salvation. Given recent proofs of the evolutionary development of society and culture, an Enlightenment type of rational growth in knowledge appeared to be God's normal way for human improvement as long as man remembered that the moral law and Christian scriptural truth still required the channeling of reason towards human salvation. If he never developed a systematic scientific theory, nor, like the antebellum Baconians, grappled with some of the knottier issues between revealed religion and rational science, he at least avoided the Fundamentalist abandonment of recent science and the modern world. Rather, Josiah Strong helped to preserve the hope that man could be simultaneously religious and scientific in a world which tends to so focus on the particulars of physical reality that the enormous mystery inherent in the universe often goes unnoticed.

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