

**Race Rendered Theologically:
The Entangled Theological and Racial Discourse of Josiah Strong, 1885-1915¹**

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Statistical evidence shows that white Christians in the United States today – Evangelical, Protestant and Catholic alike – are significantly more likely to hold racist views than the general population, than whites not affiliated with a religious denomination, and than Black Protestants.² While white Evangelicals and Catholics generally scored higher on the Racism Index than white mainline Protestants, the difference is less than ten percentage points (.78, .72, and .69 respectively).³ Considered inversely, people with racist attitudes are more likely to be white Christians than not.⁴ The stubborn prevalence of racist thinking among white Christians generally, and white mainline Protestant Christians specifically, raises the question of the relationship between theology, race, and racial reasoning today.

The co-constitutive relationship of race and religion, and more specifically race and modern Christianity, is well established in the colonial era. For example, the critical work of Willie James Jennings and J. Kameron Carter examines how colonialism and empire reshaped the Christian imagination and particular modes of Christian teaching.⁵ Katharine Gerbner demonstrates how “white” supplanted “Protestant” as the signifier of a free person over and against an enslaved person in the seventeenth century.⁶ This scholarship is critical yet unclear or unspecific about if or how these historical formations have life beyond their particular moment, in either a marked or unmarked form.

When scholarship considers the relationship between theology and race in more contemporary times, it may focus on how theological constructs persist within secular

² Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, Illustrated Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 169, 170.

³ Jones, 170.

⁴ Jones, 184.

⁵ J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁶ Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

conceptualizations of race without attending to how racialized theological constructions persist within theological discourse.⁷ Other scholarship considers how religious freedom claims may justify racial discrimination or support segregation, or how coded religious rhetoric in political discourse functions as “dog whistles” to signify support, belonging, and authenticity to certain religious audiences, particularly white Evangelical Christians.⁸ This critical work demonstrates the continued relevance and hegemony of Christianity in the U.S. political sphere, yet it does not interrogate how theology or theological discourse may be entangled with racial discourse or logics. Further, much of this scholarship focuses on white Evangelical Christianity at the expense of interrogating other Christian communities’ complicity; as such, white mainline Protestantism in the U.S. remains largely unexamined.

Yet analyzing the relationship between white mainline Protestant theology and white supremacy in the twentieth-century United States raises methodological challenges. Theologies that are overtly linked to racial and national supremacist rhetoric can be considered fringe or too intertwined with sources outside the Christian theological canon to be interesting to scholars. Theologies that are not explicitly marked by these supremacist projects, however, can still support them. The challenge is how to identify the racial implications of theological arguments that are not explicitly racially marked. This erasure of explicit racial markers reflects the shift in public

⁷ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41949874>; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Religion, Modernity, and Coloniality,” in *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies*, ed. Richard King (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Race, Religion, and Ethics in the Modern/Colonial World,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 42, no. 4 (2014): 691–711, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12078>.

⁸ Tisa Wenger, *Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Bethany L. Albertson, “Dog-Whistle Politics: Multivocal Communication and Religious Appeals,” *Political Behavior* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 3–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9265-x>; Brian Robert Calfano and Paul A. Djupe, “God Talk: Religious Cues and Electoral Support,” *Political Research Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 329–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908319605>; Corey D.B. Walker, “Religious Freedom’s Racial Reckoning” (Berkley Forum, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, 2020), <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/religious-freedom-s-racial-reckoning>.

discourse to the coded language of dog-whistle politics and color-blind racism.⁹ This is further complicated by the contested and shifting boundaries of who is included in the categories of whiteness, Protestant or Christian, and American in public discourse.¹⁰

This paper seeks to get at these two questions by examining how theological constructs which were explicitly linked to white supremacist projects may continue to replicate whiteness and racial logics even when detached from explicit racial markers. Identifying structural similarities between these marked and unmarked theologies can show how racial and theological discourse are intertwined even when devoid of racial markers, and how, in certain instances, theological claims made on behalf of Christianity – in the face of named opponents such as secularism or religious difference – may also function as claims on behalf of whiteness.¹¹

To do this, I analyze the theological discourse of texts published by U.S. Congregationalist minister Josiah Strong between his entering the national stage in 1885 and his death in 1916. Strong's early theological discourse explicitly engaged in projects of racial and national supremacy but eventually became detached from these explicit markers; yet, as I argue, his work continues to be structured by racial reasoning and to center and reproduce whiteness. As Strong's discourse both replicated and influenced white Protestantism in the U.S., this analysis points to the potential prevalence of entangled racial and theological discourse in white U.S. Protestantism more broadly. For example, Strong heavily influenced the social gospel movement, including Walter Rauschenbusch, as well as ecumenical projects like the Federal Council of Churches, a precursor

⁹ Ian Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Wenger, *Religious Freedom*; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Toward a New Political Praxis for Trumpamerica: New Directions in Critical Race Theory," *American Behavioral Scientist* 63, no. 13 (November 1, 2019): 1776–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219842614>.

¹⁰ Wenger, *Religious Freedom*; Matthew McCullough, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War*, Studies in American Thought and Culture (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

¹¹ I am indebted to Michelle Sanchez and Steve Rizzo for helping me to formulate and articulate these research questions.

to today's National Council of Churches. Strong was also active in Progressivist Era social reform projects.

The primary contribution of this paper is the analysis of how Strong's later theological discourse that lacks explicit racial, imperial, national supremacist claims continues to be racial discourse that advocates a global assimilationist project into whiteness. Drawing on Ann Stoler's theorization of the "polyvalent mobility" and "fixity" and "fluidity" of racial discourse, I demonstrate how racial essentialisms entwined in Strong's theological discourse shift while the racial categories and grammar of an evolutionary logic that hierarchizes categories of being based on these shifting essentialisms remains consistent.¹² Strong's racial discourse shifts from emphasizing hereditary, to environmental influence, to religious training by deploying an evolutionary grammar that hierarchizes beings according to "stages of development," first based on somatic, religious, political, "civilizational" and lingual categories, and later on development of the will towards selflessness. The result is a subsuming of racial grammar into a more narrowly articulated theological discourse, and the subsuming of a global imperial project of assimilation to U.S. Protestant "civilization" into a global evangelizing project.

At the end of his life, Strong argues that conversion to his "Christianity of Christ" is the only mechanism capable of elevating human will to a disinterested selflessness (in contrast to other religious traditions that "arrest" the development of human will). As such, religious training becomes a eugenic tactic as the three social laws of Christ become evolutionary laws, and conversion to Strong's "Christianity of Christ" becomes the culmination of both God's plan for humans and the evolution of humans. The global social ideal of the Kingdom of God, once a vision of racial amalgamation, becomes a vision of religious amalgamation. Conversion is totalizing as

¹² Ann Laura Stoler, "Racial Regimes of Truth," in *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

Strong rejects the divide between the secular and the sacred and argues for the application of the three social laws of Christ to all aspects of individual and social life. Further, as the correct application of the three social laws to solve the problems of the “new world life” will first occur, he claims, in the U.S. and then be exported to the world, and, as Strong continues to emphasize the assimilation of immigrants in the U.S. into Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideals, the totalizing life that comes with conversion is assimilation into whiteness.

I argue, in contrast to earlier scholars of Strong, that the erasure of explicit racial rhetoric does not indicate a weakening or removal of racist reasoning, but rather that Strong’s redeployment of essentialisms to religious categories demonstrates the “fixity” and “fluidity” that Stoler identifies as constitutive of racial reasoning.¹³ As such, Strong’s theological discourse continues to be racial discourse even when not explicitly marked with typical racial categories resulting in race being rendered theologically. This points to how profoundly white supremacist racial reasoning structures Strong’s thinking.

Furthermore, by reading theological discourse as public discourse within a particular socio-political context I consider how Strong’s theological discourse influences social-political life. I argue that Strong’s discourse is an example of the theo-political production of the theological anthropology of secular modernity that J. Kameron Carter theorizes as the “Imperial God-Man.”¹⁴ Building on Nelson Maldonado-Torres’ “Imperial Man,” Carter theorizes how Western social and political life is organized around the subject of the “Imperial God-Man.” This figure assumes a

¹³ Gary Scott Smith, “Strong, Josiah, Social Reformers, Congregational Clergy” (Oxford University Press, 2000), <https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.0500754>; Wendy Jane Deichmann, “Josiah Strong: Practical Theologian and Social Crusader for a Global Kingdom” (Ph.D., United States -- New Jersey, Drew University, 1991), 280, 306–7, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303947090/abstract/773C37F8E774A20PQ/3>; Christina Littlefield and Falon Opsahl, “Promulgating the Kingdom: Social Gospel Muckraker Josiah Strong,” *American Journalism* 34, no. 3 (2017): 289–312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2017.1344060>.

¹⁴ J. Kameron Carter, “An Unlikely Convergence: W. E. B. Du Bois, Karl Barth, and the Problem of the Imperial God-Man,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (2011): 167–224, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2012.0015>.

“messianic and mediatory role in the world” due to his perceived “‘divine right’ to establish a Utopian kingdom – a kingdom of whiteness, we might say – as the Kingdom of God” on earth.”¹⁵ As “Imperial God-Man,” Western Man acts as God in what he deems to be the altruistic work of colonizing the world towards the achievement of an eschatologically significant utopia that reflects whiteness. Carter describes how this “configuration of the human...came into crisis” in World War I and “has been working to reconstitute itself, its world, and its divine prowess ever since.”¹⁶ As I will demonstrate, Strong’s discourse, written in the years preceding the war, contributes to the construction of “Imperial God-Man” theological anthropology. In fact, the liberal Christian internationalism that Strong’s discourse reflects preceded and brought shape to Woodrow Wilson’s vision of an international order.¹⁷

This analysis builds upon and concretizes Carter’s theorization of the theological anthropology of secular modernity and contributes to the ongoing project of describing the complex relationship between God-talk and social-political life. Strong’s discourse prior to 1901 participates in religio-racial making of the subject and nation that explicitly binds the racial category of whiteness – for Strong constrained to Anglo-Saxons – to the religious category of Protestant Christian –constrained to Christians of his social “Christianity of Christ” – to the national identity of American.¹⁸ Strong justifies U.S. imperialist and colonialist projects by collapsing divine history into U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestant history, by racializing eschatology, and by attributing salvific efficacy of God to white U.S. Protestants. Strong’s religio-racial nation

¹⁵ Carter, 189.

¹⁶ Carter, 172.

¹⁷ Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor, 2012), 616, 805.

¹⁸ On religio-racial self-making see: Judith Weisenfeld, “The House We Live In: Religio-Racial Theories and the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (May 23, 2020): 440–59, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfaa011>. On “citizen-subject” formation and nationalism, see Carter, “An Unlikely Convergence,” 176.

making participates in the construction of the “ideality of a nation” - the *persona ficta* - around which a nation is imagined and from which difference is racialized.¹⁹ As Carter theorizes, “successful nationalization, that is to say whiteness, is accomplished” when one successfully imitates this ideal.²⁰ Gaps in imitating this ideal become “signified as [one’s] racial difference.”²¹ Strong’s earliest theological discourse demonstrates the co-constitutive “violent construction of American whiteness,” “violent racial construction of American Christianity,” and the “religio-racial construction of American identity.”²²

I make my argument in two sections. In the first section I establish my theoretical framework by reviewing Ann Stoler’s theory of the “polyvalent mobility” of racial reasoning.²³ In the second section, the bulk of the paper, I analyze Strong’s published theological discourse from 1885 – 1915. My analysis is constrained to Strong’s published works because archives are closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. To ease the tracking of Strong’s discourse over thirty years I break it into three discursive periods based on Strong’s conceptualization of Christianity and engagement with white supremacist projects: 1885-1900, 1898-1910, and 1913-1915. In the first period, Strong’s theologizing of Anglo-Saxonism, U.S. exceptionalism and imperialism is most explicit as evangelization projects are entangled with the civilizing assimilationist projects of U.S. imperialism abroad and settler-colonial westward expansion. The first two periods overlap because there is a time between 1898 and 1900 in which Strong continues to publish texts in support of U.S. imperial projects abroad while also shifting from home missionizing work to domestic social reform. In the second period, 1898-1910, Strong emphasizes domestic issues including the state of

¹⁹ Carter, “An Unlikely Convergence,” 178.

²⁰ Carter, 178.

²¹ Carter, 178.

²² Megan Goodwin, “Unmasking Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Hostility and/as White Supremacy,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (May 23, 2020): 363, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfaa012>.

²³ Stoler, “Racial Regimes of Truth.”

the city, the Americanization of immigrants, the declining Protestant church, and the need to Christianize Christians. There is also a dramatic shift in his rhetoric: Strong drops explicit references to Anglo-Saxons and appeals for U.S. imperialism. During the third period, from 1913 to his death in 1916, Strong publishes two of the four texts of his *Our World* series. In these texts Strong formulates the “Christianity of Christ” to be the universal “world-religion” of the global “new world-life.” It is in his final text, *The New World Religion*, that the transference of the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God as racial and civilizational oneness to religious oneness in whiteness is complete. In the conclusion, I briefly consider the legacy and implications of Strong’s theo-racial discourse.

My hope is that this analysis, which seeks to make visible the functioning of white supremacist racial reasoning within a particular white Protestant theology devoid of racial markers, serves to “[hold] whiteness accountable for its own homicidal origins.”²⁴ It also challenges theologians to consider other locations in which white supremacist racial reasoning is present in theological discourse even when not explicitly marked as such. Let me be clear that I condemn in the strongest sense the racist supremacist views expressed by Strong and those he cites. The theological entanglement of racial supremacist and imperial projects that Strong represents was critiqued in his time by people including W.E.B DuBois. I hope this paper continues that important work.

The Grammar of Racial Discourse

The crux of the challenge of recognizing how theological discourse devoid of explicit racial markers can participate in white supremacist racial discourse is an analytical assumption that racial reasoning necessitates a “fixed” or “immutable” characteristic, such as a biological trait, as the

²⁴ Goodwin, “Unmasking Islamophobia,” 363. Goodwin cites Cressler 2017.

essential characteristic of a racial group. This assumption limits where scholars see racial reasoning functioning. Anthropologist Ann Stoler challenges this assumptions by demonstrating racial reasoning's "polyvalent mobility."²⁵ She describes how it latches onto existing cultural and socio-political categories, or "other names for difference."²⁶ In other words, she points to racial discourse as a grammar or logic of "racial essentialisms" that shift not in grammar but in content: "racial essences...are made up not of a fictively fixed and finite set of features but of an essentialized malleable and substitutable range."²⁷ Stoler's analysis challenges theologians to consider where racial discourse is embedded in theological categories of difference. Stoler is clear that "'polyvalent mobility' does not mean that racial discourse is infinitely adaptable," or present everywhere, and as such I am not arguing that theological discourse necessarily or always is entangled with racial discourse.²⁸ However, I argue here that in Strong's case it is.

Stoler's theorization explains the instability of Strong's racial reasoning: in the first period Strong defines U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestants as a religio-racial group based on entangled physical, religious, political, lingual, and "civilizational" characteristics. Stoler's intervention explains how Strong's shift in 1915 to focusing on religious and "civilizational" essentialist characteristics on a hierarchized scale of evolutionary advancement continues to be religio-racial discourse albeit devoid of typical racial signifiers. In fact, Strong's growing reliance on religious essentialism recalls how "Protestant Supremacy" – an "exclusive ideal of religion based on ethnicity" that "used religion to differentiate between slavery and freedom" - preceded white supremacy in the Protestant Caribbean planter colonialist societies.²⁹

²⁵ Stoler, "Racial Regimes of Truth," 245.

²⁶ Stoler, 252.

²⁷ Stoler, 239, 249.

²⁸ Stoler, 264.

²⁹ Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 2,3.

Strong's Theological Discourse in Context

Before turning to Strong, I will first briefly situate him within his Congregationalist context by examining the major themes of two texts: first, the 1865 Burial Hill Declaration, the first faith declaration approved by a national Congregational body since 1648, and second, the 1858 edition of *Our Country* published by the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) which Strong rewrote in 1885.³⁰ AHMS was an interdenominational home missions organization when it was founded in 1826 but, due to old school Presbyterians leaving the organization in 1837 and new school Presbyterians following suit in 1861, the AHMS became a Congregational home missions organization.³¹ In this section I demonstrate how Strong's discourse reflects and shapes broader Congregational discourse. Strong's early writings carry forward major themes of the 1865 and 1858 documents while strengthening their attachment to Anglo-Saxon U.S. imperial rhetoric. His later writings are devoid of this racial and nationalist rhetoric. Yet despite Strong's changing rhetoric, the focus on Christianizing as civilizing in the image of Puritan Protestant whiteness persists.

The Burial Hill Declaration reveals that Strong's preoccupation with Christianizing the expanding settler colonial U.S. as well as the entire globe is not exclusive to Strong but rather a widely held belief within his Congregationalist milieu.³² Further, the equation of Christianity with

³⁰ I am indebted to Deichmann for pointing out the relationship between Strong and the Burial Hill Declaration. Deichmann, "Josiah Strong," 49. The three documents are: American Home Missionary Society, *Our Country, Its Capabilities, Its Perils, and Its Hope: Being a Plea for the Early Establishment of Gospel Institutions in the Destitute Portions of the United States* (New York: Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society, 1842), <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.FIG:004449752>; American Home Missionary Society, *Our Country: No. 2., a Plea for Home Missions* (New York: American Home Mission Society, 1858); Williston Walker, "The 'Burial Hill' Declaration of Faith; and the Statement of Principles of Polity, 1865," in *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*. (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1960), 569, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000210388>.

³¹ "American Home Missionary Society | Amistad Research Center," accessed March 15, 2021, <http://amistadresearchcenter.tulane.edu/archon/?p=creators/creator&id=11>.

³² The mission set forth by the Declaration: to "carry the gospel into every part of this land [U.S.], and with them we will go into all the world." Walker, "The 'Burial Hill' Declaration of Faith; and the Statement of Principles of Polity, 1865," 564.

civilization generally, and U.S. Puritan civilization specifically, is also not exclusive to Strong.³³ What is decidedly missing from this Declaration that becomes prominent in Strong's discourse is his eschatological vision of a final competition of races in which the Anglo-Saxon race will prevail and inferior races will assimilate, a theologizing of evolution, a deployment of race theory, a stronger call for U.S. imperialist and colonialist projects, and theological arguments for the need to labor with God to realize the Kingdom of God on earth.³⁴

There are strong correlations between the 1858 version and Strong's 1885 version of *Our Country*. The most significant theo-political-racial entanglements that Strong carries forward from the 1858 AHMS version for the purposes of this analysis is the entangling of national and global evangelization projects with colonizing and "civilizing" projects of the U.S. in the form of Puritan Evangelical Protestantism – all considered the particular responsibility of American Evangelicals to do "as workers with God, in achieving this nation's immortal destiny" within God's providential plan.³⁵ As such, while Strong's discourse elevates and makes more explicit the attachment between evangelization and Anglo-Saxonization than the Burial Hill Declaration and the 1858 *Our Country*, his discourse is reflective of broader Congregationalist sentiment. As such, Strong's discourse cannot be considered an outlier. I now turn to Strong's discourse.

³³ The Declaration recalls faith and work of their "Puritan Fathers" who not only "gave [them] this free land" but also "applied [the gospel's] principles to elevate society, to regulate education, to civilize humanity...to mould and redeem...everything that belongs to man in his individual and social relations." Walker, 563.

³⁴ While there is not an explicit reference to Anglo-Saxons or Anglo-Saxonism in this Declaration, the multiple explicit references to Puritans does a similar work of particularizing the faith and way of being to that of the early English, or Anglo-Saxon, colonists. In regards to the earthly Kingdom of God around which Strong's discourse revolves, earlier versions of the Declaration clearly articulate a heavenly eschatology: an "eternal life and eternal death" determined by the "deeds done in the body." Walker, 558.

³⁵ American Home Missionary Society, *Our Country*, 13. The text deploys colonial and militarized rhetoric in describing this global evangelization: "the Christian conception of our nation's destiny; and that purpose is, the complete Christianization of this American people, and through its instrumentality, in part, the conquest of the world, and the incorporation of all realms into the Kingdom of heaven," so that through "peaceful colonization" and "armies of missionaries" they will "inevitably" become the "rulers of the world." American Home Missionary Society, 83, 17, 131, 24.

1885-1900: Spiritual Christianity

In this section I analyze Strong's discourse between the years 1885-1900 as represented in four of his published texts: the 1885 and 1891 version of *Our Country* (OC), the 1893 *The New Era, or the Coming Kingdom* (NE), and the 1900 *Expansion under New World Conditions* (Expansion).³⁶ In this period, Strong articulates a "spiritual Christianity" entwined with Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Projects of evangelization are entangled with "civilizing," assimilationist projects of U.S. imperialism abroad and settler-colonial westward expansion. For Strong, these are not just political or economic projects but evangelizing projects with eschatological significance. As there is surprising thematic continuity and conformity amidst these four texts, I focus on Strong's 1885 *Our Country*. After briefly introducing the text, I first demonstrate how Strong's particular theological anthropology, Christology, and eschatology are examples of what Carter theorizes as the "Imperial God-Man." The significance of this analysis is that Strong's explicit participation in the destructive imperialist, colonialist, and assimilationist projects both at home and abroad shifts in his later work to a local assimilationist project and a global Christianizing project. Despite the shift, both projects replicate the theological anthropology, Christology and eschatology of the "Imperial God-Man" political theology. Second, in relation to Stoler, I examine the grammar of Strong's racial reasoning in this period including how he defines Anglo-Saxons and his engagement of race theory. This initial analysis of Strong's racial reasoning is critical because the content of Strong's racist discourse shifts over time while the grammar persists.

The text that thrust Strong into the public spotlight was his 1885 revision of *Our Country*, published by Baker & Taylor for the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS). By the end of

³⁶ See Appendix 1 for a list of Strong's work and the abbreviations I use in this paper. Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* 1885 (Baker & Taylor, 1885); Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (Baker & Taylor Company, 1891); Josiah Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom* (Baker & Taylor, 1893); Josiah Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions* (Baker and Taylor Company, 1900).

Strong's life over 176,000 copies had been sold.³⁷ The text covers a variety of topics: the imperative of the moment; westward expansion and its wealth of natural resources in light of depletion of public lands; seven "perils" including the city, money, Catholicism, Mormonism, and immigration; and the role of Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the world's future.³⁸ I focus on the chapter "The Anglo-Saxon and the World's Future." The stated purpose of the book is "to lay before the intelligent Christian people of our country faces and arguments showing the imperative need of Home Missionary work for the evangelization of the land, the encouragements to such effort, and the danger of neglecting it."³⁹ Strong argues for the support of missionary work occurring alongside western settler colonial expansion and the genocide of Native Americans. Yet this domestic focus is embedded within an eschatological anxiety for the entire globe. It is not until *New Era* (1893) and *Expansion* (1900), however, that Strong explicitly argues for U.S. imperial and colonial projects abroad.

At the crux of Strong's discourse in this early period is a religio-racial binding of what he considers the purest form of Christianity, "spiritual Christianity," with Anglo-Saxons. Strong's description of the theological characteristics of "spiritual Christianity" is sparse in this period compared to his development of "social Christianity" in the following. Instead, here Strong racializes "spiritual Christianity." Strong argues that the Anglo-Saxon "is the exponent" of a "pure *spiritual* Christianity" over and against Catholicism and the Protestantism of non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans, including Germans. Strong argues that "it was the fire of liberty burning in the Saxon heart that flamed up against the absolutism of the Pope" in the Reformation, and that it was "where the Teutonic race was purest" that "Protestantism spread with the greatest rapidity."⁴⁰ The co-

³⁷ Smith, "Strong, Josiah, Social Reformers, Congregational Clergy," para. 2.

³⁸ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, ix, x.

³⁹ Strong, bk. Prefatory Note.

⁴⁰ Strong, 160.

constitution of Anglo-Saxons and “spiritual Christianity” is critical because it is the origin from which Strong’s religio-racial theologizing and subsequent religio-racial projects develop. I first examine Strong’s racialized theological imagination before turning to his theologized racial imagination.

Strong’s Racialized Theological Imagination

Central to Strong’s theological discourse is his Kingdom of God eschatology. According to Strong, “Christians have but one business in the world; viz., the extending of Christ’s Kingdom.”⁴¹ Strong’s theological development of his Kingdom eschatology is sparse here compared to the second period. Instead, here racialization of eschatology is emphasized. Strong envisions an impending “competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled.”⁴² According to Strong, God is preparing the Anglo-Saxon race to “Anglo-Saxonize mankind” by “dispossess[ing] many weaker races, assimilate[ing] others, and mold[ing] the remainder.”⁴³ Strong cites Rev. Horace Bushnell at length: “Nothing can save the inferior race but a ready and pliant assimilation...What if it should be God’s plan to people the world with better and finer material? Certain it is.”⁴⁴ In a terrifyingly eerie moment, Strong paraphrases Bushnell saying that Anglo-Saxon supremacy is “God’s final and complete solution of the dark problem of heathenism among many inferior peoples.”⁴⁵ Anglo-Saxonism and eschatology are deeply intertwined as the Kingdom of God becomes both a religious and racial “final solution.” Racial supremacy in the form of a vision of racial amalgamation and assimilation couples with religious supremacy in the eschatological vision of a global Christianity as the Kingdom of God.

⁴¹ Strong, 195.

⁴² Strong, 175.

⁴³ Strong, 178. In naming English as the “great agent of Christian civilization throughout the world” Strong is quoting Jacob Grimm, a German philologist.

⁴⁴ Strong, 175–76. Strong cites Bushnell’s “Christian Nurture” p207, 213

⁴⁵ Strong, 177.

Underlying Strong's racialized eschatological vision is the collapsing of human and divine time. Anglo-Saxon imperial and settler colonial projects are theologized as proof that God is preparing Anglo-Saxons to dominate the world. Strong writes: "Does it not look as if God is preparing in our Anglo-Saxon civilization the die with which to stamp the peoples of the earth, but as if he were also massing behind that die the mighty power with which to press it?"⁴⁶ Strong's discourse theologizes human history centered on "Western Man" – or in Strong's case Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the U.S. – as God's history. Collapsing human and divine time around "Western Man" is characteristic of the political theology of the "Imperial God-Man" that Carter theorizes. Carter draws on Barth to critique how "Imperial God-Man" political theology "appropriates eternity" by usurping "God's eschatology, God's time" into the "false eschatology of World History."⁴⁷

One result of this collapsing of divine and human time is Strong's trafficking in a "politics of apocalyptic crises."⁴⁸ Carter describes how collapsing divine into human time results in a rhetoric of crises that functions to justify the colonialist and imperialist work taken on behalf of achieving a global utopia.⁴⁹ Similarly, Strong's call is urgent: "a mighty emergency is upon us. Our country's future, and much of the world's future, depends on the way in which Christian men meet the crisis."⁵⁰ Carter describes how the figure of an "Imperial God-Man" centers on an eschatological vision in which a country "imagining itself at the epicenter of the last days" works to establish a "new global Utopia."⁵¹ Strong believes the particular moment is critical for "Christians of the United States, during the next fifteen or twenty years, to hasten or retard the

⁴⁶ Strong, 165.

⁴⁷ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 194.

⁴⁸ Carter, 195.

⁴⁹ Carter, 195.

⁵⁰ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 217.

⁵¹ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 186, 168.

coming of Christ's kingdom in the world by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of years."⁵² The result of the collapsing of eschatological and human history, coupled with the urgency of crisis, is the shift of the agent away from Christ and towards a particular country and people: Strong elevates the United States generally, and Anglo-Saxon Protestant men specifically, as shapers of destiny, or in Strong's 1893 language, as people who will "intelligently co-labor with God."⁵³ This divination of certain men is a carryover from the AHMS 1858 version of *Our Country*.⁵⁴ Discussion as to the work that Jesus does to accomplish this eschatological vision is glaringly absent.

In a supercessionist move, Strong appropriates a theology of election and applies it to the U.S. generally and Anglo-Saxon Protestants specifically: "this country is [God's] chosen instrument of blessing to mankind."⁵⁵ Strong says: "Ours is the elect nation for the age to come. We are the chosen people."⁵⁶ According to Carter's theorization of the "Imperial God-Man," this supercessionist move justifies Western Man's "right to rule over the earth."⁵⁷ For Strong, the particular people chosen for this work are American Anglo-Saxon Protestants: "it is fully in hands of the Christians of the United States" to "hasten or retard the coming of Christ's kingdom in the world."⁵⁸ Strong's anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism make it clear that he referring to Protestants, while his vision of Anglo-Saxon racial dominance makes it clear he is referring to Anglo-Saxon Protestants specifically.⁵⁹ In short, U.S. exceptionalism is theologized: "if this

⁵² Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 180.

⁵³ Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom*, 250.

⁵⁴ American Home Missionary Society, *Our Country*, 13, 16, 17–18, 30, 39.

⁵⁵ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 217.

⁵⁶ Strong, 217, 219.

⁵⁷ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 198.

⁵⁸ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 180, 217.

⁵⁹ Strong's anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism is made explicit in: Strong, chap. 5,7.

generation is faithful to its trust, America is to become God's right arm in his battle with the world's ignorance and oppression and sin."⁶⁰

By Strong constraining his vision to Anglo-Saxons generally and U.S. Anglo-Saxons specifically, this analysis of Strong nuances Carter's generalization of "Western Man." Carter examines nineteenth century Germany as a case study of a more generalizable "Western Man," or "white Global Masculinity," that he argues occurs in "Britain, France" and the U.S.⁶¹ Strong's specific brand of "Imperial God-Man" political theology entangled with Anglo-Saxonism and U.S. exceptionalism excludes non-English speaking European Protestant immigrants to the U.S., such as Protestant Germans, until they are Anglo-Saxonized. This reveals the limits of who can be in close proximity to "Western Man" by reflecting the shifting category of whiteness in the U.S..

The religious, racial, and national categories of white/Anglo-Saxon, Protestant/Christian, and American are inexplicably intertwined. Yet in the period leading up to, during, and just after Strong's writing, the meaning of each term and their relationship to each other was contested and shifting. As Nell Irvin Painter describes, whiteness as a racial category in the U.S. is contested and has undergone a number of expansions "against a backdrop of the black/white dichotomy."⁶² During this period, Strong's discourse mirrors the changing category of whiteness. In the late eighteenth century, the categories of Anglo-Saxon, Puritan Protestant, and American were linked among the dominant class.⁶³ Painter describes the first expansion of whiteness in the "first half of the 19th century" occurring when "property qualifications for voting" ended thus allowing "virtually all male Europeans and their free male children" to be eligible to be "naturalized and

⁶⁰ Strong, 218.

⁶¹ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 189.

⁶² Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People*, Illustrated Edition (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 438.

⁶³ Painter, 241, 274.

vote as white.”⁶⁴ Yet this entrance into political whiteness – which served to uphold slavery – did not come with entrance into social whiteness which was still “monopolized” by the “figure of the Saxon.”⁶⁵

Strong is writing during what Painter identifies as the second expansion of whiteness: the long gradual inclusion of Catholic Irish, the “old immigrant,” over and against “new immigrants” from eastern and southern Europe beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and extending “across the lifetimes of a generation and more.”⁶⁶ Aided by the Irish’s “blue eyes and light complexions,” Painter describes the creation of a “new hierarchy” that maintained Anglo-Saxon supremacy but placed the Irish - considered “Nordics” - above the new immigrants of the last decades of the nineteenth century and first of the twentieth century.⁶⁷

Yet for Strong, U.S. Anglo-Saxons were superior to not just non Anglo-Saxons but also British Anglo-Saxons. To justify the superiority of U.S. Anglo-Saxons over British Anglo-Saxons, Strong cites U.S Anglo-Saxons’s physical superiority, superiority in “nerves,” and superior racial mixing that constitutes U.S. Anglo-Saxons.⁶⁸ Strong argues that the “highly mixed origin” of the Anglo-Saxon race is furthered in the U.S. than England because of the “new comingling of races” that is creating the “new Anglo-Saxon race of the New World.”⁶⁹ In highlighting the “mixing” of U.S. Anglo-Saxons, Strong is trafficking in the fixity and fluidity of racial reasoning that Stoler theorizes. Fixity persists in the essential characteristics that define Anglo-Saxons, or in other words, the ideal from which proximity (or lack of proximity to) is racialized. At the same time, it

⁶⁴ Painter, 438.

⁶⁵ Painter, 440, 328–29.

⁶⁶ Painter, 455, 449.

⁶⁷ Painter, 447.

⁶⁸ Strong argues that the “national genius is Anglo-Saxon, but not English” for it is distinct due to the “finer nervous organization” being developed in the United States. Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 168. Strong argues that “Americans were found to be superior to Englishmen not only in height, but also in chest measurement and weight.” Strong, 170.

⁶⁹ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 171–72.

is fluidity that enables certain people to become Anglo-Saxonized and thus gain entry into the “mighty Anglo-Saxon race” through assimilation.⁷⁰

In this period Strong’s eschatological vision reveals the limits of who, according to Strong, can be Anglo-Saxonized: “this race is destined to dispossess many weaker ones, assimilate others, and mold the remainder until, in a very true and important sense, it has Anglo-Saxonized mankind!”⁷¹ Strong’s Anglo-Saxonizing project necessitates both assimilation and the “extinction of inferior races before the advancing Anglo-Saxon.”⁷² As such, there are limits as to who can be Anglo-Saxonized. In 1885, Strong is confident that immigrants from Europe are “certain to be Anglo-Saxonized” upon arrival in the U.S.⁷³ On the other hand, in a disturbing and racist reflection, Strong says: “whether the extinction of inferior races before the advancing Anglo-Saxon seems to the reader sad or otherwise, it certainly appears probable.”⁷⁴ This reflection on “probable” “extinction” is in the context of Anglo-Saxons “populating Africa as it has peopled North America.”⁷⁵ As such, for Strong Europeans in Europe and in colonial “Canada, South Africa, and India” are capable of being Anglo-Saxonized, while indigenous people in North America and non-European Africans will become extinct. Strong’s vision to Anglo-Saxonize mankind is a particular version of white supremacy in that he seeks to Anglo-Saxonize people of European descent and eradicate indigenous folk and people of color. As such, there is a clear correlation between the assimilation Strong calls for and whiteness narrowly defined against a black /indigenous/white divide.

⁷⁰ Strong, 210.

⁷¹ Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom*, 80.

⁷² Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 177.

⁷³ Strong, 163.

⁷⁴ Strong, 177.

⁷⁵ Strong, 177.

Yet the supremacy of Strong's beloved Anglo-Saxons and the U.S. is at risk. Anxiety over the potential failure of American Protestants drives Strong's Christianizing projects to his death in 1916. According to Strong, the "mighty Anglo-Saxon race" is liable to corruption and would "speedily decay but for the salt of Christianity."⁷⁶ In other words, Anglo-Saxons were instrumental in the development and spread of spiritual Christianity, and conversely, spiritual Christianity is critical for the superiority of Anglo-Saxons; here racial-religious rather than religio-racial. As such, the U.S. becoming God's instrument is "conditioned on the Church's rising to a higher spirit of sacrifice."⁷⁷ The entanglement of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy with religious practice explains Strong's growing emphasis on Christianizing U.S. Christians in order to Christianize the world that is at the fore in the next period.

Tied to Strong's anxiety over the state of Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the U.S. is his anxiety over the "dangers of immigration."⁷⁸ As such, the assimilationist project in Strong's discourse begins at home. Strong asserts assimilation as necessary to immigrants "[adding] value to the amalgam which will constitute the new Anglo-Saxon race of the New World."⁷⁹ Assimilation for Strong is tied to Christianization: "Christianize the immigrant and he will be easily Americanized."⁸⁰ The immigrants that are to be "Anglo-Saxonized" that Strong is referring to are from European countries such as Germany.⁸¹ This entwining of Christianizing and Anglo-Saxonizing is critical because it reveals how evangelizing projects are Anglo-Saxonizing projects.

⁷⁶ Strong, 176, 161.

⁷⁷ Strong, 217.

⁷⁸ Strong, 172.

⁷⁹ Strong, 172.

⁸⁰ Strong, 210.

⁸¹ Strong, 163.

Strong's Theologized Racial Reasoning

To understand how Strong's eschatological vision of a global Anglo-Saxonized Kingdom of God is a Christianizing, "civilizing," and colonizing project it is necessary to examine more closely the grammar and content of Strong's racial discourse in this period. In *Our Country* Strong defines racial groups, including Anglo-Saxons, based on their physical, religious, political, lingual, and "civilizational" characteristics. Strong deploys a logic of hierarchizing racial groups based on their perceived evolutionary progress – a progress which is theologized as God's providence. This initial use of "civilizational" and religious characteristics as a racial characteristic grows in emphasis as physical characteristics diminish in emphasis. The entwining of English language assimilation, Christianization, and "civilizing" into a single project is significant because, in Strong's last two texts, religious training, "civilizing," and language learning become signified by Strong as the three chief areas of assimilation required to achieve the unity Strong imagines as the "new world life" rooted in the "new world religion" of Christianity. This demonstrates the continuity of the U.S. Anglo-Saxon imperial and colonial projects of the 1885 *Our Country*, and the global evangelizing project of the 1915 *Our World*. It also shows the persistence of racialized logic albeit more fully subsumed in theological categories.

The characteristics that define Anglo-Saxons for Strong are also identified as the most evolutionarily developed. To argue for physical supremacy Strong draws on Dr. Jedediah Hyde Baxter: "native whites" in the United States are superior in physical size to the English and Scots.⁸² Drawing on Dr. Geo M. Beard, Strong argues that it is the "nerves" that define both the "highest civilization" and the "strong races" including the Anglo-Saxons.⁸³ Of greater emphasis than physical characteristics are lingual, political, religious, and "civilizational" characteristics. Strong

⁸² Strong, 170.

⁸³ Strong, 169.

describes Anglo-Saxons as “the representative, let us hope, of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization...[which] will spread itself over the earth.”⁸⁴ Entangled with this supremacy of the religious, “civilizational” and political essential characteristics of Anglo-Saxons is a belief in the particular power of the English language to be “the great agent of Christian civilization throughout the world” and to become the “language of mankind.”⁸⁵ Thus, while Strong identifies Anglo-Saxons as “all English-speaking peoples,” English as a language is imbued with the physical, “civilizational,” religious, and political essential characteristics of Anglo-Saxons.⁸⁶ Strong’s explicit binding of political institutions (liberty), religious (“spiritual Christianity”) and “civilization” to a particular race is important because this entangling of religious, political, and civilizational supremacy persists throughout all of Strong’s discourse, yet in the later periods it becomes detached from explicit racial or Anglo-Saxon identifiers while religion grows in emphasis.

Strong argues that the Anglo-Saxon’s political and religious supremacy justifies why Anglo-Saxons have “an instinct or genius for colonizing.”⁸⁷ Theologizing what is understood as a racial trait of colonization, Strong argues that the Anglo-Saxons are “divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother’s keeper.”⁸⁸ Strong advocates for westward settler colonial expansion and missionizing in the 1885 and 1891 *Our Country* series. In Strong’s *Expansion Under New World Conditions* (1900) he argues for specific U.S. colonialist and imperialist projects abroad, specifically “possession of the Philippines” and naval dominance in the Pacific.⁸⁹ Despite his critique of European colonial projects as “selfish,” Strong envisions selfless American colonial

⁸⁴ Strong, 175.

⁸⁵ Strong, 178–79.

⁸⁶ Strong, 161.

⁸⁷ Strong, 173.

⁸⁸ Strong, 161.

⁸⁹ Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*, 201, 205.

projects as the “responsibility” of U.S. Anglo-Saxons “as a trust for civilization” by which Anglo-Saxons train an “undeveloped race, which is incapable of self-government.”⁹⁰ In 1900 he begins to discuss this colonial project as a part of a “new world policy” that is not about “national aggrandizement, but the noblest ministry to the new world life.”⁹¹

Strong’s use of hereditary and physical characteristics, as well as social, political, and cultural characteristics, to define racial groups reflects the race theory of his time and Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric. In the mid to late nineteenth century there was debate over whether hereditary or nurture was the prime determinant of racial characteristics. In 1869 Francis Galton, considered the founder of eugenics, tied social characteristics to hereditary.⁹² Painter describes how this debate came to a standstill with Richard Dugdale’s 1877 “The Jukes Report” which doubled down on hereditary over environment.⁹³ In addition, Strong was influenced by the popularization of Anglo-Saxonism that purported the religious, lingual, and religious supremacy of Anglo-Saxons generally, and U.S. Anglo-Saxons specifically. Ralph Waldo Emerson was an important proponent of Anglo-Saxonism in the U.S. at that time. For Emerson it was the intertwining of racial and religious characteristics – of a Saxon ancestry defined in relation to Protestantism and the English church – that explained the political supremacy of Anglo-Saxons. In Nell Painter’s words, Emerson equated “Protestants to the English church, the English Church to the magna carta, and the magna carta to ‘liberty.’”⁹⁴ At the turn of the century during the early years of Strong’s writing career, Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric was deployed heavily as a “racial-exceptionalist argument” to justify U.S. imperialist and colonialist projects abroad against competing “claims of national

⁹⁰ Strong, 295, 289.

⁹¹ Strong, 264.

⁹² Painter, *The History of White People*, 573–77.

⁹³ Painter, 553.

⁹⁴ Painter, 385.

exceptionalism."⁹⁵ Paul Kramer describes how advocates for overseas colonialist projects used Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric to argue that the U.S. would be successful in colonial projects by tying U.S. colonizing potential to British colonialist projects.⁹⁶ It is in this context that Strong also deploys Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric in his *New Era* (1893) and *Expansion* (1900).

Organizing Strong's articulation of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy is an underlying grammar of evolution and teleology of progress that hierarchizes racial groups based on their so-called stage of development. Strong reasons that "if human progress follows a law of development" then "our civilization should be the noblest."⁹⁷ Strong quotes Darwin's argument that "natural selection" is the cause of the "wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people"⁹⁸ and goes on to theologize racial progress: "inferior tribes were only precursors of a superior race, voices in the wilderness crying: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"⁹⁹

Stoler's rejection of the argument that racial discourse necessarily requires an "immutable" characteristic is helpful for characterizing Strong's racial discourse in which he mixes physical, religious, "civilizational," lingual and political characteristics to define racial-religio groups.¹⁰⁰ Stoler argues that "racisms gain force...in the fact that they combine notions of fixity and fluidity in ways that are basic to their grammar."¹⁰¹ By fixity and fluidity Stoler is referring to the instability of essentialized racial characteristics: "that racial essences...are made up not of a fictively fixed and finite set of features but of an essentialized malleable and substitutional range."¹⁰² This instability of racial essentialism explains Strong's reliance on both heritable physical

⁹⁵ Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (2002): 1318, 1331, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2700600>.

⁹⁶ Kramer, 1332.

⁹⁷ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 168.

⁹⁸ Strong, 170.

⁹⁹ Strong, 176.

¹⁰⁰ Stoler, "Racial Regimes of Truth," 261. "But 'immutability' as racism's defining feature is historically problematic because it never was – nor is it now – a necessary and sufficient condition to sustain a racist logic."

¹⁰¹ Stoler, 260.

¹⁰² Stoler, 239.

characteristics as well as lingual, “civilizational,” political, and religious characteristics to define Anglo-Saxons and other racial groups. It also explains how Strong’s eschatological vision of a Kingdom of God on earth involves both racial amalgamation, assimilation and extinction.

Earlier rhetoric on the “final competition of the races” in which all “inferior races” will assimilate and for which God is preparing the Anglo-Saxon race shifts in 1900 to a recognition of the permanent differences between “Asiatic” and “Anglo-Saxon” races.¹⁰³ However, the logic of hierarchizing based on “stages of development” persists. As a result, Strong’s Kingdom eschatology shifts into a single, supreme, worldwide Christian civilization.¹⁰⁴ In this period it is still explicitly tied to Anglo-Saxon, U.S. political and global supremacy at home, in the Pacific, and in the Mediterranean, but as I show in the next section, Strong’s discourse becomes far less explicit in this connection.¹⁰⁵

Another important shift that begins in this period is the introduction of two internationalist concepts that grow in emphasis in Strong’s later discourse: “world consciousness” and “new world life.”¹⁰⁶ What is significant is their attachment in this period to not just Anglo-Saxon supremacist rhetoric, but a vision of a supreme worldwide civilization - the Kingdom of God - realized through Christianization and assimilation to Anglo-Saxon Protestant Christianity. I examine this growing focus on oneness in the next section.

In this first period Strong’s theological discourse is embedded within projects of settler-colonial expansion west and U.S. imperialism abroad. Strong theologizes these projects as part of the Christian evangelization of the world towards the achievement of the Kingdom of God on earth.¹⁰⁷ In doing so, Strong conflates and replicates empire with Christian eschatology and

¹⁰³ Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*, 190–94, 259.

¹⁰⁴ Strong, 191.

¹⁰⁵ Strong, 205, 289.

¹⁰⁶ Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*; Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom*.

¹⁰⁷ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 161.

evangelization. At the same time, Strong's eschatological vision is racialized: Strong envisions racial amalgamation transpiring through assimilation and extinction. Strong defines racial groups by their somatic, lingual, religious, political and "civilizational" characteristics. The entangling of lingual assimilation, Christianization, and "civilizing" here precedes how religious training, "civilizing," and language learning become signified by Strong in the third period as the three chief areas of assimilation necessary for the "new world life" rooted in the "new world religion" of Christianity. As I will show in the subsequent sections, this demonstrates the continuity of the discourse of *Our Country* (1885) with *Our World* (1915), as well as the persistence of racial logic albeit subsumed in theological categories.

1898-1910: Social Christianity and Social Reform

In this section I consider Strong's theological discourse across five texts published between 1898 and 1910: *The Twentieth Century City*, 1898, *The Times and Young Men* (TYM), 1901, *The Next Great Awakening* (NGA), 1902, Volume 1 of the monthly periodical *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom* (SGK), 1908, and *My Religion in Everyday Life*, 1910.¹⁰⁸ During this period Strong develops his Kingdom of God theology by articulating the three social laws of Christ by which the Kingdom is actualized. This "new conception of Christianity" is named "social Christianity" in the 1908 *Studies of the Gospel of the Kingdom*.¹⁰⁹ There is also a dramatic shift in rhetoric as Strong drops explicit references to Anglo-Saxons. In this period there is a growing emphasis on Progressivist Era domestic issues including the state of the city, the Americanization of immigrants, the declining Protestant church, and the need to Christianize Christians. I will first describe these texts and rhetorical shifts before showing how Strong's call for Christians to be "co-

¹⁰⁸ Josiah Strong, *The Twentieth Century City* (Baker and Taylor Company, 1898); Josiah Strong, *The Times and Young Men* (Baker and Taylor, 1901); Josiah Strong, *The Next Great Awakening* (Baker & Taylor Company, 1902); Josiah Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom: Series No. 1-* (American institute of social service, 1910); Josiah Strong, *My Religion in Everyday Life* (Baker & Taylor Company, 1910). See Appendix for a list of abbreviations used.

¹⁰⁹ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 1.

laborers” with God to “save” and “solve” all individual and world problems through the application of God’s three social laws is a particular example of Carter’s theorization of the political theology of the “Imperial God-Man.”

Shifts in the Work and Rhetoric of Strong

The shift to domestic concerns was less of a shift and more of a departure from explicitly engaging U.S. foreign policy. As far back as 1885 Strong named the city as a “peril” in *Our Country*, and while at the Evangelical Alliance from 1886-1898 Strong focused on fostering ecumenical collaboration to build the church and to solve local problems.¹¹⁰ While missionizing and Christianizing continue to be his main project in this period, what becomes foregrounded here is the emphasis on material conditions and social reform – specifically in the city – as necessary for Christianizing the world and actualizing the Kingdom of God on earth. In 1898 Strong founded the League for Social Service, renamed the American Institute for Social Service in 1902, to focus on educating the public on social problems, such as housing, immigration, and prohibition, as well as religious problems, such as the “Decline of Religion in New England.”¹¹¹

Strong’s shift to social reform was theologically driven. In 1902, he argued that the Kingdom of God is not just the spiritual but the “synthesis of the spiritual and the physical.”¹¹² As such, the mission of the church is to “make an ideal world actual” by attending to both spiritual and physical needs.¹¹³ As the current “social system is unchristian,” Strong argued that the “world cannot be Christianized until industry has been Christianized.”¹¹⁴ His shift to focusing on the city and on Christianizing Christians reflects a shift from the uncritical optimism and confidence in Anglo-Saxon Protestantism that characterizes the previous period to a critique of the Protestant

¹¹⁰ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, x. Deichmann, “Josiah Strong,” 85.

¹¹¹ Deichmann, “Josiah Strong,” 176–77.

¹¹² Strong, *The Next Great Awakening*, 1902, 6, 7.

¹¹³ Strong, 6.

¹¹⁴ Strong, *The Times and Young Men*, 57; Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 25.

church in the U.S. and a call for the church to “conquer ourselves with the gospel” as prerequisite for “[carrying] a conquering gospel into all the world.”¹¹⁵ In this period Strong’s theological texts aim to “awaken” the church to this new social Christianity and the work of social reform.

The shift to social reform is explained not only by Strong’s shifting theology, but also by his shifting racial imagination and concern that the church was losing its saving mission. Strong was afraid that the proliferation of benevolent societies not associated with the church would save society instead of the churches.¹¹⁶ Strong’s shifting race theory, which began to consider both hereditary and environment as determinant of racial progress, with a growing emphasis on environment, also explains this focus on transforming environment through social reform.

The early texts of this period refrain from engaging with topics of what Strong calls the “race problem” and thus are largely devoid of racialized rhetoric. In *The Twentieth Century City* and *The Times and Young Men* there is no explicit racial or Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric, while in *The Next Great Awakening* there is no Anglo-Saxon terminology and minimal racial rhetoric. The so called “Race Question” is taken up directly in a 1909 installment of the *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom* (SGK).¹¹⁷ Strong’s departure from Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric reflects the increased absence of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric in public discourse after 1900. Kramer describes three reasons for this: first, the growing involvement of German and Irish immigrants in U.S. colonialist projects and their rejection of Anglo-Saxonism from which they were excluded, second, a growing critique of U.S. colonial and domestic governance by Britain as evidence that the U.S. was “not so Anglo-Saxon” but rather “Latin,” and third, the existence of U.S. colonial properties that eliminated the

¹¹⁵ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 2.

¹¹⁶ Deichmann, “Josiah Strong,” 137.

¹¹⁷ SGK was a monthly bible study published by Strong’s American Institute for Social Service from 1908-1918. (Dong-Ba Chai, “Josiah Strong: Apostle of Anglo-Saxonism and Social Christianity.” (Ph.D., United States -- Texas, The University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 259.) Published after the founding of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), the SGK was officially endorsed by the FCC. (Chai, 252–54.) It’s audience was “churches, Sunday Schools, church brotherhoods, and YMCAs” and it reached between 10,000 and 40,000 people in the United States and Canada. (Deichmann, “Josiah Strong,” 258,259.)

need for U.S. proponents of colonialism to draw a parallel to British colonial projects as justification of U.S. propensity to colonize.¹¹⁸ Strong biographers have also attributed this shift to his departure from the "ethnocentric and nativist AMHS and the conservative and anti-Catholic Evangelical Alliance," his international travel, and his "close association with the younger and more liberal social gospelers" including Walter Rauschenbusch.¹¹⁹ Yet here I argue that this absence meant something else: a sublimation of racial reasoning into theological discourse.

The Kingdom of God and the "Imperial God-Man"

Central to this period is Strong's development of his Kingdom of God theology. Strong critiques an individualistic Christianity focused on "right personal relations of the individual soul with God" and a narrowing of salvation to "simply the salvation of the individual."¹²⁰ Instead, Strong articulates a "new conception of Christianity" by arguing that the center of Christ's teaching was the Kingdom of God, or "Jesus' social ideal."¹²¹ Central to this "rediscovery of Christ" is the discovery of the "three great laws which never change:" the laws of service, sacrifice and love.¹²² According to Strong, application of these laws is the "complete solution of the problems of life."¹²³ Strong's "social Christianity" is totalizing and rejects any divide between the sacred and the secular; as such, despite the foregrounding of theology, socio-political concerns are embedded within theological discourse. Contained within Strong's paternalistic saviorism is the tri-pronged tactic of "civilizing," Christianizing, and assimilating immigrants at home and those he deems, using racist language, "heathens" or "savages" abroad.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons," 1344-45, 1347, 1349.

¹¹⁹ Chai, "Josiah Strong," 264-66.

¹²⁰ Strong, *The Times and Young Men*, 55-56.

¹²¹ Strong, 59, 9.

¹²² Strong, 9.

¹²³ Strong, 183.

¹²⁴ Strong deploys the racist rhetoric of "heathen" and "savage" in: Josiah Strong, *The next Great Awakening*, Eighth thousand., Revivalism and Revival Preachers in America 16 (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1902), 25, 115, 183.

Strong's argument in *The Times and Young Men* that Christian men should imitate and become like Jesus as both the social and personal ideal is an illustration of how the figure of the "Imperial God-Man" functions as the "*persona ficta*," or "concrete universal," around which both the "religious and the civic self" are constituted.¹²⁵ According to Strong, Jesus, the "supreme hero of the ages," is the prime example of Christian masculinity and the ideal to which all Christian men should aspire. Imitating Jesus' "perfect life" and his "perfect love, perfect service and perfect sacrifice" – the three social laws – is the solution to all personal and social problems.¹²⁶ For Strong, solving the former requires solving the latter, and what is at stake is not just material but eschatological.¹²⁷ While Strong does not explicitly state that he is discussing ideal Americans in *TYM*, it can be surmised that the project to form Christian men in *TYM* is also a project to form good American citizens because of the text's situatedness within Strong's broader project of Christianizing Christians and assimilating immigrants in the United States.

Carter describes how successful imitation of the "*persona ficta*" results in "whiteness" being "accomplished," whereas any gap is "signified as their racial difference."¹²⁸ In this analysis of Strong's discourse, by drawing on Stoler's theory of the polyvalent mobility of racial reasoning, I will demonstrate how gaps in relation to the *persona ficta* are racialized even when, in Strong's case, that difference is not a typical racial characteristic but rather religion or language. I will demonstrate in the ensuing paragraphs how religious, lingual, and "civilizational" gaps in one's imitation of Jesus become signified as racial difference. Demonstrating the racialization of one's religious difference in this period is critical because in the next period religion becomes the critical marker of difference. However, across both periods, Strong's call to minimize the distance

¹²⁵ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 179.

¹²⁶ Strong, *The Times and Young Men*, 183. Strong, 181.

¹²⁷ For the eschatological significance, see my discussion of Strong's theological imagination on p. 11.

¹²⁸ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 178.

between self and God by imitating Jesus as co-laborer with God results in this idealized figure acting as a “replacement Christ-figure” through whom “all subjectivity” is considered.¹²⁹ This reveals the continued racial implications of Strong’s argument in the third period even when it lacks typical racial categories.

The Shifting Theo-Racial Reasoning of Strong

In this period, Strong argues that there are “two kinds of racial differences, viz., those which create race antipathies, and those which are complementary...evidently the solution of the race problem must be found in the removal of the former, as far as possible, and in the coordination of the latter.”¹³⁰ Building on his admission in *Expansion* (1900) that there are different and permanent races, Strong recognizes that “there will always be important differences between races” and even lightly theologizes them as being purposeful: “differences of race were not developed and deepened for thousands of years without a wise purpose.”¹³¹ This soft theologizing of racial difference in which neither God nor providence is mentioned is striking next to the explicit theologizing of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the previous period.¹³²

Evoking his articulation of the supremacy of Anglo-Saxons in physicality and “nerves” from *Our Country* (1885), here Strong identifies permanent racial characteristics as “physical and mental.”¹³³ It is critical that in this period he continues to consider language, religion, and “civilization” to be racial characteristics, yet emphasizes their relationship to environment and thus mutability: they “can be removed” because they come “not from hereditary but from environment.”¹³⁴ This includes “differences of custom, manner, habit, ethical standard, religious

¹²⁹ Carter, 193.

¹³⁰ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 81.

¹³¹ Strong, 81.

¹³² Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*, 212.

¹³³ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 81.

¹³⁴ Strong, 81.

beliefs and ordinances and standard of living.”¹³⁵ Stoler’s concept of the fixity and fluidity of racial discourse and her rejection of the existence of an immutable characteristic as the defining feature of racial discourse is helpful here because Strong deploys racial discourse that admits that racial categories of being span both immutable (hereditary) and mutable (religion, lingual, “civilization”) characteristics. The persistence of religion as a defining racial characteristic that can be changed in this period is critical because it foreshadows Strong’s shift in the third period to religion as the critical marker of difference. This illustrates the “polyvalent mobility” of racial difference: its ability to latch onto existing categories of difference including religious.¹³⁶

As Strong’s emphasis shifts to environment, a corresponding slippage occurs in his discourse: Strong mixes the terms race and civilization in parallel explanations for the cause of difference. In the December 1908 edition of SGK, Strong attributes the “differences of civilization” of early “peoples” to the strengthening of the “divergence of their habits and characteristics” by geographic dispersion, “separated by seas and mountains,” and “climatic differences.”¹³⁷ In this explanation of the movement from diversity to oneness, civilization replaces race as environment is emphasized over hereditary. Yet in August 1909, Strong returns to race language in describing how races “separated by... mountains and deserts, rivers and oceans” “developed racial differences which became hereditary.”¹³⁸ Similar in structure to the former, the latter foregrounds race while implicitly referring to “civilizational” difference by mentioning the growing “interracial contacts” caused by commerce and transportation.¹³⁹ The confusion, equation, and slipped between racial and “civilizational” difference is apparent. This entangling of racial and

¹³⁵ Strong, 81.

¹³⁶ Stoler describes how racial reasoning is entangled in existing categories: it “operates instead as an embedded nexus of speech acts and practices that adhere to other names for difference and work through the logics on which they mutually thrive.” Stoler, “Racial Regimes of Truth,” 252.

¹³⁷ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 17.

¹³⁸ Strong, 81.

¹³⁹ Strong, 81.

“civilizational” categories in Strong’s discourse reveals how, when “civilization” is foregrounded, race is still at play. More significantly, it explains the transferal of racial essentialisms to “civilization” while the logic of hierarchy persists.

Strong foregrounds how “civilizations” are evolving through hierarchized stages of development: “different nations and different communities, like different individuals, do not move abreast in the great march of civilization, some are a few years, or it may be generations or even centuries in advance of others.”¹⁴⁰ Strong centers the English and U.S. in terms of “stages of development” thereby reinscribing the Anglo-Saxon supremacy made explicit in the previous period.¹⁴¹ This is further demonstrated by Strong’s continued usage of racist colonial rhetoric: Strong describes missionaries in the “density of African heathenism” and “beyond the frontier of civilization, alone in the midst of savages” as an example of people whose faith never faltered.¹⁴² The intertwining of eschatology and progressive civilizational logics reaches its climax when Strong argues that “Civilization is now in the third stage. When it has reached the fourth, the Kingdom of God will have come in the earth.”¹⁴³

An outcome of Strong’s shifting racial discourse is the shift in his eschatological vision from racial amalgamation to civilizational and religious oneness. It is no longer Anglo-Saxon Christians winning the “final competition of the races” but rather oneness in a “new world life.” Strong describes how “different races, nations, languages, customs, institutions, civilizations have grown more and more widely variant until recent times” when this “tendency has been reversed” and the “movement is toward the oneness of the world.”¹⁴⁴ At the heart of this oneness is the

¹⁴⁰ Strong, *The Next Great Awakening*, 1902, viii–ix.

¹⁴¹ Strong, ix.

¹⁴² Strong, 115–16.

¹⁴³ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 74.

¹⁴⁴ Strong, 2.

industrial revolution and the "new civilization" that it dawns.¹⁴⁵ The binding of the "oneness of the world" to a "new civilization" of industrialization functions to center this global vision on the U.S., which has become "God's great social laboratory for the world."¹⁴⁶ This "oneness" is also bound to Christianity, a "world religion," and the "only religion capable of solving the world problems, of establishing and maintaining a world peace, and of transforming the world life until its kingdoms become the kingdom of our God."¹⁴⁷ I will address each of these entanglements separately starting with the Kingdom of God.

In NGA, Strong articulates for the first time a theme that will dominate the third period: the characteristics of a universal religion. According to Strong: "the supreme test of a universal religion is that it is adapted to all peoples and to all ages; is capable of meeting the peculiar and changing needs of a progressive civilization."¹⁴⁸ Strong does not yet outright declare social Christianity to be the "universal religion" as he does in the third period, but he does argue that individualistic Christianity is not universal because it cannot "[lift] a civilization to a higher plane, because it is not adapted to the peculiar needs of modern civilization."¹⁴⁹ Yet Strong does point to the potential of Christianity to be the "final religion."¹⁵⁰ What is important is the start of a discourse of explicit religious supremacy in the language of a universal religion, as well as how religious and "civilizational" development are intertwined in that a universal religion is tied to "a progressive civilization." For according to Strong, "the greater the progress of civilization, the greater the new apprehension of God."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Strong, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Strong, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Strong, 2.

¹⁴⁸ Strong, *The Next Great Awakening*, 1902, xvi–xvii.

¹⁴⁹ Strong, x.

¹⁵⁰ Strong, vii.

¹⁵¹ Josiah Strong, *The Next Great Awakening* (Doubleday, Page & Company, 1913), 30.

This global oneness in Christ has Anglo-Saxon supremacist undertones. Strong's explanation for why the world will come together in Christ is the same explanation he used in the previous period to argue for the world's convergence in the Anglo-Saxon race. In *The New Era* (1893), Strong justifies Anglo-Saxon supremacy saying that the "characteristics" of the "Hebrew and Greek and Roman pillars" which "make a nation supremely important in the world's history, *all three* unite in the one Anglo-Saxon race."¹⁵² He theologizes this convergence as the Anglo-Saxon race being "especially commissioned to prepare the way for the full coming of God's kingdom in the earth."¹⁵³ In SGK (1910), Strong similarly situates his project within the culmination of these three same histories yet transfers the culmination from the Anglo-Saxon race to their "[convergence] on the advent of Christ."¹⁵⁴ This parallel points to the continued equation of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy with the supremacy of Christ in Strong's discourse, and reflects the shift from foregrounding Anglo-Saxonist racial markers to Christian religious markers. As the three great civilizations of "Jewish, Greek, and Roman" history converge in both the Anglo-Saxon race and in Christ, then a corollary is indicated between "His kingdom" and the Anglo-Saxon civilization. Further, this oneness is in the image of the U.S. and preconditioned on assimilation. According to Strong, "America has become God's great social laboratory for the world" in which all the social problems will be solved.¹⁵⁵ It is important that Strong's U.S. exceptionalism persists in his locating the U.S. as the locus for the solving and perfecting of this new civilization.

The U.S. Strong envisions – the model for the new global civilization – is an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant project as demonstrated by Strong's emphasis to assimilate and "Americanize" immigrants. In the editorial of the June 1909 edition of SGK, Strong is preoccupied with the

¹⁵² Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom*, 54.

¹⁵³ Strong, 69.

¹⁵⁴ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Strong, 2.

necessity to “Americanize the foreigners in our cities” for otherwise “immigration will foreignize our civilization.”¹⁵⁶ Strong is concerned that the influence of immigrants will “sink the average man,” the “native born of native white parents” below the “dead line of ignorance and immortality” in which “free institutions perish.”¹⁵⁷ His calls for assimilation are totalizing and intertwined with socio-political structures in that they are achieved in “common rights, common interests, common schools, a common language, a common freedom.”¹⁵⁸ This anxiety over immigration is a continuation from the first period, during which Strong calls for “guarding against the deterioration of the Anglo-Saxon stock in the United States by immigration.”¹⁵⁹ Strong points to the U.S. as having “powers of assimilation unequalled by any other.”¹⁶⁰ This recalls Strong’s argument in *Expansion* (1900) that the Anglo-Saxon race has “remarkable powers of assimilation” which is “best illustrated by the U.S., into whose current of life alien peoples are characteristics, in one, or at most two, generations, sink and disappear like snowflakes in a river.”¹⁶¹

Strong’s emphasis on assimilation raises the question of who can be assimilated and who cannot. Strong does not include enough details in the editorials of the SGK bible studies to answer this question. As such, I now briefly turn to the bible studies themselves.¹⁶² In the body of the bible study, discussion of assimilation applies to “immigrant races” including Italians, Germans, Polish, Irish, and Greek.¹⁶³ Discussion of assimilation is decidedly missing from the subsequent discussion

¹⁵⁶ Strong, 66.

¹⁵⁷ Strong, 66.

¹⁵⁸ Strong, 66.

¹⁵⁹ Strong, *The New Era, Or the Coming Kingdom*, 80.

¹⁶⁰ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 66.

¹⁶¹ Strong is comparing the similar supremacy of the assimilationist power of the Anglo-Saxon and the Slav races. Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*, 188.

¹⁶² The SGK monthlies included an opening editorial written by Strong as well as a multi-point bible study on the same topic written by Strong’s associates with sections for “Scripture Basis,” “Facts,” “Teachings of Christianity,” and “Discussion,” a section entitled “What the Church Can Do” and references for further reading. (Chai, “Josiah Strong,” 252–54.) Everywhere but in these particular instances I constrain my analysis of Strong’s discourse to the opening editorials. However, Strong does not specifically discuss the limitations of assimilation in the editorial. As such, in this instance I draw on the body of the bible study in recognition that Strong edited the entire volume.

¹⁶³ Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 84.

of African Americans. Instead, the instruction for the church is as follows: “In general the negro must be helped, but by recognizing facts, not by blinking at race differences. This usually means, where negroes are numerous, their own churches, schools, society, as best able to give them training and development.”¹⁶⁴ This comes after a recognition that African Americans “cannot be exported as a race to Liberia” and are “not a dying race like the North American Indian.”¹⁶⁵ In contrast to an assimilationist approach taken in relation to European immigrants, a racist segregationist approach is taken in relation to African Americans at the same time that Native Americans are considered on the verge of racial extinction.

Underlying this segregationist approach to African Americans are three “fundamental Bible principles:” first, the “universal brotherhood of man, resting upon the universal fatherhood of God,” second, the “responsibility of brother for brother, and particularly of the educated, strong, and advantaged for those less educated, weaker, with fewer advantages,” and third, “the recognition by the Bible of what may be called evolutionary ethics... This principle applied to the negro problem means undoubtedly that... we must not fail to recognize the conditions under which we live to-day, and the very different development reached by negroes and whites as races.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, while there is a recognition of “universal brotherhood” it is undercut by a racist paternalism and a racist confidence in white supremacy. Moreover, these racist ideas are justified as biblical principles. This ability to both give lip service to the “brotherhood of man” while also espousing white supremacist views demonstrates the peculiar ability of white Christians, including Strong, to theologize white supremacy even in the face of monogenesis. It is the theologizing of “evolutionary ethics” that make this possible. The text theologizes “evolutionary ethics” saying:

¹⁶⁴ Strong, 83.

¹⁶⁵ Strong, 87, 83.

¹⁶⁶ Strong, 87.

“The world works out its ‘own salvation with fear and trembling’ (slowly and with errors) – yet works it out because it is ‘God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’”¹⁶⁷ While there is a candid recognition of the “responsibility of white men, North and South, for the condition of the negro today” in the bible study, there persists an emphasis on “hereditary” and related racist descriptions of the “nature” of African Americans.¹⁶⁸

This trivial recognition of the “brotherhood of man” and Strong’s recognition of the permanence of race groups leads him to admit for the first time in NGA (1902) that the Kingdom of God is open to all races. He cites F. Herbert Stead: the “kingdom progressively realized on earth...a girdle of love destined to clasp into unity the whole of mankind, whether the race, the color, the culture, and to bind all to the throne and heart of the universal father.”¹⁶⁹ Yet the difference in approach between European immigrants (assimilation) compared with African Americans and Native Americans (segregation or extinction) reveals the failure to reconcile a global vision to both a newfound recognition of the permanence of racial groups and a narrow Anglo-Saxonist white supremacy. European immigrants can be Anglo-Saxonized while African Americans should be “trained and educated” within segregated institutions and “society.”¹⁷⁰ Thus while Strong admits that the Kingdom of God is open to all it continues to be entrenched with assimilationist and segregationist projects organized around U.S. Anglo-Saxon Christians. Strong continues to work out the implications of his shifting race theory, persistent Anglo-Saxon white supremacy, and Kingdom of God theology in the subsequent section. Meanwhile, Strong does not

¹⁶⁷ Strong, 87.

¹⁶⁸ “It can not change the facts of negro heredity nor of his present state of development.” 87 “The Church must especially help in industrial education, because this is one of the negro's main needs. He needs this more than the white man, because he is here by nature more lacking, and is, by circumstance, more economically dependent upon such work.” 87-88 The “high death rate” of African Americans is blamed on “lower morals.” 85

¹⁶⁹ Strong, *The Next Great Awakening*, 1913, 90.

¹⁷⁰ “In general the negro must be helped, but by recognizing facts, not by blinking at race differences. This usually means, where negroes are numerous, their *own* churches, schools, society, as best able to give them training and development.” (italics added for emphasis) Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 88.

denounce his earlier racialized eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God as an Anglo-Saxonized mankind.

1913-1915: Christianity of Christ

In the third period I turn to Strong's culminating works: his Our World series. Intended to be a four volume series, only two of the volumes, *The New World Life* (NWL), 1913, and *The New World Religion* (NWR), 1915, were published before Strong's death in 1916.¹⁷¹ In this period religious training becomes a eugenic tactic as the three social laws of Christ become evolutionary laws, and conversion to the "Christianity of Christ" – identified as the consummation of evolution and God's plan – becomes the culmination of human evolutionary development. Structuring this argument is a grammar of the development of stages of human will, with the "Christianity of Christ" the only mechanism capable of elevating human will to a disinterested selflessness (in contrast to other religious traditions that "arrest" the development of human will). The global social ideal of the Kingdom of God becomes a vision of religious amalgamation. Yet, as Strong rejects a division between the secular and the sacred and argues for the application of the three social laws of Christ to all aspects of individual and social life, conversion is a totalizing conversion to a social ideal modeled on and brought about by the church of the U.S.. As such, Strong's theological discourse continues to be racial discourse and assimilation, now deemed conversion, is assimilation into characteristics of whiteness.

Strong describes his Our World series as an extension of *Our Country* (1885). Instead of examining "national problems" Strong purports to analyze "the great world-problems" from the same "social" and "religious point of view."¹⁷² The explicit correlation between these two projects

¹⁷¹ Josiah Strong, *The New World-Life* (Doubleday, Page & Company, 1914); Josiah Strong, *The New-World Religion* (Doubleday, Page, 1915).

¹⁷² Strong, *The New-World Religion*, ix.

thirty years apart is significant because it demonstrates the continuation of Strong's thought generally, and more specifically, a continuing approval of or comfort with the discourse from that earlier period, including his Anglo-Saxonist, nativist, imperialist, U.S. exceptionalist rhetoric. While Strong explicitly backtracks on "racial amalgamation" and recognizes the lack of scientific evidence for racial categories (and then proceeds to use them), he does not express regret or correct his earlier Anglo-Saxonist, imperialist, nativist rhetoric.

The aim of the first volume, *New World Life*, 1913, is to articulate a "new world-life" for which "men are now groping" and the "new world-problems" that go with it.¹⁷³ The *New World Life* is not framed as a theological text yet draws heavily on theological, philosophical, scientific, social and political sources. In fact, in both form and content it reflects the complete rejection of the putative division between the secular and the sacred that is a theme of Strong's totalizing theology. The second volume, *New World Religion*, 1915, argues that the "Christianity of Christ...defines, illuminates, and glorifies" that "new world-ideal" and makes it achievable.¹⁷⁴ The last two volumes, never published, were meant to focus on the "[application of] the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of science to the solution of the great world-problems," and the special role of the United States as the "great laboratory of the world" to solve these problems.¹⁷⁵ The two completed texts are theological and academic tomes at over 300 and 500 pages, respectively. Reviewed by scientific and theological leaders of his day, including professors from Auburn and Oberlin Theological Seminaries and an ex-President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, this series is written not for the general public or the non-churched but to persuade an intellectual and religious elite to adopt the "Christianity of Christ" over an

¹⁷³ Strong, ix.

¹⁷⁴ Strong, ix.

¹⁷⁵ Strong, x.

“individualistic Christianity,” and for the church to adopt Strong’s particular social-political agenda.¹⁷⁶ This drive to awaken, educate, and reform his fellow churchmen persists throughout all of Strong’s texts despite their varied genres and thus, his rhetoric must be understood as being intentionally chosen for polemic and persuasion. In this section, I focus briefly on *The New World Life* because a chapter is dedicated to the “New Race Problem,” before examining Strong’s universalizing of the “Christianity of Christ” in *The New World Religion*.

The New World Life (1913)

In *The New World Life*, Strong’s eschatological utopia of the “new world life” is newly defined by obedience to God’s laws. The ideal occurs when one “[lives] in harmony with all the laws of its own being, thus actualizing its highest possibilities.”¹⁷⁷ This is achieved through “perfect obedience” and “a comprehensive knowledge of the laws necessary to the mastery of the physical world.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, the social ideal is achieved by obedience to the social laws of Christ as well as “knowledge” of the laws that make manipulating the physical world – including human “stock” and environment – possible.¹⁷⁹ As such, embedded within the definition of the social ideal is not just conversion to Christianity but obedience to Strong’s interpretation of the laws Christ taught, as well as eugenics and environmental reform.

The social ideal of the “new world life” is bound up in the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God achieved on earth. In NWR, Strong says: “the kingdom was ‘at hand’ because Jesus was about to announce the social laws, acceptance of which would inaugurate it, and world-wide obedience to which would consummate it.”¹⁸⁰ Entry into and the “credentials of citizenship in the kingdom” are “accepting Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom with its social laws,

¹⁷⁶ Strong, x.

¹⁷⁷ Strong, *The New World-Life*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Strong, 57.

¹⁷⁹ For an example of where Strong uses terminology “stock” see Strong, 65.

¹⁸⁰ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 123.

and...obedience to those laws.”¹⁸¹ As such, both the “new world life” and the Kingdom are defined by obedience to the social laws Christ taught. Yet it is not just obedience that is necessary but theological assent to Strong’s particular interpretation of Christ. So despite Strong arguing that the kingdom does not require oneness in a “common creed,” in actuality he does not make space for religious plurality.¹⁸²

This ideal world, the Kingdom of God on earth, is totalizing: it is the application of the three social laws “in the church...in the family, in industry, in politics, in legislation, and in all human society.”¹⁸³ As Strong rejects the divide between the secular and the sacred, his argument for global Christendom based on obedience and application of three social laws is not constrained to the religious sphere but rather transformative of every aspect of both individual and collective life.¹⁸⁴ The totalizing nature of the Strong’s Kingdom of God theology lends itself to functioning as racial discourse. Stoler describes how racial discourse serves to “delineate a field and set of conditions that make it impossible to talk about any range of domains...without inscribing those relations of power with racialized distinctions and discriminations.”¹⁸⁵ By arguing that the three social laws of Christ apply to every “domain” of life, Strong constructs a totalizing norm from which any deviance is racialized. Further, as Strong considers the U.S. to be the “world’s great laboratory” in which the solutions to the world’s problems will occur, it can be inferred that U.S. based solutions will be exported as social reform to the rest of the world as part of this global evangelizing project. Further, despite Strong’s critique of violent colonialist and imperialist projects, he deploys violent rhetoric to describe his vision: when “the cross has conquered the

¹⁸¹ Strong, 255.

¹⁸² Strong, 245.

¹⁸³ Strong, 77.

¹⁸⁴ Strong, 98.

¹⁸⁵ Stoler, “Racial Regimes of Truth,” 255–56.

church, its members will go forth to conquer the world, and win the kingdom for their Lord.”¹⁸⁶ I now turn to Strong’s discussion of the “new race problem” in relation to this “new world life” social ideal.

Strong devotes an entire chapter to the so called “New Race Problem” in *NWL*. Despite his aim to define “precisely what the race problem is,” Strong articulates a shifting race theory. The “race problem,” according to Strong, is increasing “friction and race antagonism” due to growing “physical contact” among racial groups, economic “interracial competition,” and the threat of a “vast migration” from Asia to the “comparatively unoccupied lands of the white race.”¹⁸⁷ Despite admitting at the outset that “there is no scientific basis for” a division of races based on “certain distinctive peculiarities such as colour, nose, teeth and skull,” Strong proceeds to use racial categories “for convenience.”¹⁸⁸ However, as the term centers an entire chapter it is hardly used merely “for convenience.” Strong proceeds to show a chart that lists “race” by “location” and “number.”¹⁸⁹ Demonstrating the continuity of his racial reasoning over time, this is the same chart printed in the August 1909 edition of *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom* entitled “The Race Question.”¹⁹⁰ Strong’s unstable, contested, and shifting ideation of what defines a racial group on display here underscores Stoler’s theorization of the polyvalent mobility of racial discourse. Strong’s continued trafficking in racial categories despite the lack of an essential somatic, immutable characteristic demonstrates Stoler’s argument that racial discourse does not necessitate an “immutable characteristic” at its center.¹⁹¹ As I will show in my analysis of *NWR*, religious identity generally, and conversion to Strong’s “Christianity of Christ” specifically,

¹⁸⁶ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 245. As an example of where Strong critiques violent imperial projects and “corrupt” missionizing projects see Strong, 262–63.

¹⁸⁷ Strong, *The New World-Life*, 161–62, 166.

¹⁸⁸ Strong, 167.

¹⁸⁹ Strong, 167.

¹⁹⁰ Strong, 167; Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 82.

¹⁹¹ Stoler, “Racial Regimes of Truth,” 245.

becomes the essential characteristic that defines the location of a person on a hierarchy of evolutionary advancement.

Next, Strong proceeds to explain why racial amalgamation is no longer the culmination of his eschatological vision. Strong, continuing his tactic of elevating U.S. Anglo-Saxons over the English, blames the idea that “the final solution of racial differences should be the reduction of all mankind to a single racial type” to Englishmen who “naturally brought [it] to America” where “until recently [it] was rather taken for granted.”¹⁹² In a very peculiar statement that sounds a lot like the popular contemporary tactic of saying “but I have Black friends” as a way of falsely denying one’s racism, and that also makes little sense alongside Strong’s earlier writings, Strong declares that he is “consciously attracted to [coloured races] when I see Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, or Negroes, due doubtless to my early training.”¹⁹³ It is unclear and unconvincing what early training Strong may be referring to, as he was steeped in Anglo-Saxonism. Yet he continues to explain why “the reduction of all the races to a single type would not be possible” nor “desirable.”¹⁹⁴ Not only is this the first time Strong defends his changing view, but the necessity to explain this indicates the prevalence of this thinking amid his audience.

As in *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, Strong again defines certain racial characteristics as permanent and others as malleable. Here, in discussing the “half a dozen obstacles to universal racial amalgamation,” Strong considers both changeable and “permanent and insuperable” obstacles. In doing so, Strong considers as obstacles both essential racial characteristics and logistical obstacles. Strong characterizes malleable obstacles to be racial traits specific to a particular racial group, such as language and “habits” and “foods,” and unchangeable

¹⁹² Strong, *The New World-Life*, 168.

¹⁹³ Strong, 168.

¹⁹⁴ Strong, 168.

obstacles to be both traits specific to racial groups, specifically climate adaptability, and as restrictions on immigration, colonization, imperialism, and genocide.¹⁹⁵ For example, Strong says:

“the following are permanent and insuperable [“obstacles” to the “reduction of all the races to a single type”]. Differences of climate make impossible the universal distribution of the several races without which universal amalgamation could not take place. In a large part of Africa, the Negro by many centuries of adjustment has become immune to climatic influences which are usually fatal to white men. The same is true of tropical peoples in general. The idea has been abandoned that the tropics can be permanently colonized by the white race.”

In contemplating tactics for racial amalgamation Strong also discusses the lack of environmental “famine or pestilence” leading to racial extinction, the unlikelihood of “race suicide,” and the inability to assimilate Italians because they cannot all be brought to the U.S.¹⁹⁶ In these reflections Strong equates the inability to assimilate other races into U.S. Anglo-Saxonism through immigration with genocide.

In contrast, Strong identifies three categories of mutable racial characteristics: “difference of civilization,” “difference of language,” and “difference of religion.”¹⁹⁷ These are three of the same categories that Strong uses in 1885 to define U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and to argue for their racial supremacy. Strong defines Anglo-Saxons in 1885 using somatic traits (physical, climatic, nerves), religious (“spiritual Christianity”), language (English-speakers), “civilizational,” and political (special capacity for governance and freedom).¹⁹⁸ This characterization of unchangeable and changeable racial traits is critical because it demonstrates the persistence of the

¹⁹⁵ Strong, 168–70.

¹⁹⁶ Strong, 169–70.

¹⁹⁷ These include “ideas and ideals of life, strange customs, habits, foods and a thousand other things,” “common speech,” and religion. Strong, 168–69.

¹⁹⁸ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 208–9.

race theory structuring Strong's thought in 1885 to the race theory structuring Strong's thought here. In other words, it reveals the continued role of social, political, religious, and lingual traits as essential racial characteristics in Strong's discourse, while underscoring how social, political, religious, and lingual assimilation functions as racial assimilation.

A critical shift that occurs in this moment is Strong's shift to emphasizing religious assimilation and identity over the other mutable essential racial traits. Strong describes how "difference of religion is a greater obstacle than either" differences in civilization and language.¹⁹⁹ He argues that Jews, despite assimilating in terms of "civilization," "language" and national identity, remain "separate and peculiar" until "he has lost his faith or changed it."²⁰⁰ Civilizational and language assimilation is not enough for Strong – religious assimilation or conversion to Strong's universal "Christianity of Christ," the central topic of *New World Religion*, is not only desirable but necessary.

The growing emphasis within Strong's discourse on religious assimilation tracks alongside what can be characterized as a form of religious eugenics in which obedience to the three social laws of Christ actualize human evolution. It is in this way that the grammar of racial discourse persists while the content of it shifts to religious formation. Strong articulates a theological imagination or worldview in which everything – chemistry, biology, evolution, and the events of human history – are signified as God's work in the world.²⁰¹ This is not new for this text as Strong interprets human history - specifically Anglo-Saxon social, political, and economic dominance - as God's work in *Our Country* (1885), and science and evolution as God's methods in *Times and Young Men* (1901). What is newly articulated is Strong's sophisticated articulation of the social

¹⁹⁹ Strong, *The New World-Life*, 169.

²⁰⁰ Strong, 169.

²⁰¹ Strong, 62.

laws of Christ, love, service and sacrifice, as doing the work of evolution. After reviewing the progress from “matter” to “animal kingdom” under natural laws, “brute” to “man” under “moral law,” Strong says that “the evolution and elevation need not end here. Man by yielding himself to other and still higher laws, the social laws of love, service and sacrifice, is born again- born into the kingdom of heaven.”²⁰² These three social laws are the laws Christ set out and which obedience to is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God and actualization of the global social ideal. In fact, naming the laws as “social laws” instead of “religious” or “Christian” laws supports their characterization as “natural” and “moral” laws thus masking their particularity to Christ in lieu of a seemingly “social” universal.

For Strong, improvement through obedience to social laws parallels improvement through eugenics and environmental transformation. In the same chapter, Strong discusses “eugenics” and describes how, because of growing “control” over the “laws” of “hereditary and variability,” along with “sterilization of the unfit,” “the law of natural selection ceases to apply to man, and the race is made responsible for its own improvement.”²⁰³ In addition to eugenics, this includes “transforming the conditions of life to transform life itself; that is, we modify our environment.”²⁰⁴ The parallel discourse as it pertains to continuing evolution through obedience to social laws of Christ and through eugenics is striking. Strong continues to develop this in the *New World Religion*.

The New World Religion (1915)

In *New World Religion*, the transference of the vision of the Kingdom of God as racial and civilizational oneness in Anglo-Saxon, U.S. Protestantism to religious oneness is complete as

²⁰² Strong, 76.

²⁰³ Strong, 66.

²⁰⁴ Strong, 66.

conversion to the “Christianity of Christ” becomes the culmination of evolutionary development of the human race generally, and individual humans specifically. The evolutionary logics of racial development through hereditary and environment theologized as God’s providence that undergird *Our Country* (1885) are transferred to religious training resulting in the “Christianity of Christ” constituting the highest stage of development and the culmination of God’s plan through evolutionary progress. Instead of a vision of racial amalgamation in which all other races succumb to the Anglo-Saxons, the vision in *New World Religion* is of religious amalgamation, where the “fittest” are considered those whose will has reached the highest, Christian stage of development, and the “unfit” are those whose will has not. Yet this vision of a oneness of humanity in Christ rather than racial amalgamation continues to rely on the theologized and continued process of “creative evolution” (understood as God’s “design”) aided and hastened by man as co-laborer in which “merciful death perpetually [removes] the incorrigibles” while “hereditary and environment constantly improving” hastens the “rate of progress.”²⁰⁵ It also requires “conversion” away from “undeveloped” religions that have “held the race in slavery” such as Catholicism, “paganism” and Islam, and the continued progress from “savagery to civilization.”²⁰⁶ This “transformation of the world” is achieved through religious conquest: when “the cross has conquered the church” then “its members will go forth to conquer the world, and win the kingdom for their Lord” with the purest motives.²⁰⁷ As such, the growing emphasis on religious amalgamation does not preclude but rather necessitates civilizational and environmental assimilation cloaked as progress, eugenic projects aimed at hastening the “creative evolution” of the race, and the continued removal of “incorrigibles.” As the “Christianity of Christ” and white U.S. society continue to constitute the

²⁰⁵ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 37, 21, 29, 119–20. This recalls the “evolutionary ethics” first mentioned in Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 87.

²⁰⁶ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 202–3, 44.

²⁰⁷ Strong, 242, 245.

highest stage of development, religious training is assimilation into whiteness, even if that whiteness is heavily critiqued by the author for not necessarily living up to its ideal.²⁰⁸

In NWR, Strong more clearly articulates the evolutionary work of natural, moral, and social laws than in NWL. The three laws that exist on three hierarchical planes of existence that Strong identifies are the natural or physical, the moral, and the spiritual or social. Strong identifies natural or physical laws as the most rudimentary laws from which “the progress of life up the long slope was slow.”²⁰⁹ For Strong, these laws are able to be applied by humans through science. Yet, with the creation of humans and their “free will” a new law was introduced: the “moral law.”²¹⁰ This serves to “educate the race” towards self-control.²¹¹ It is from these two laws that “the race has risen from savagery to civilization.”²¹² Yet Strong interprets Jesus as having revealed a higher plane of existence, the Kingdom of God, actualized on earth through obedience to the three social laws of Christ: service, sacrifice, and love.²¹³

In his clearest articulation yet of the relationship between evolution and scripture, Strong identifies two “revelations” of God: first, the “Word” as the revelation of God’s “Divine Aim,” and second, science” as the revelation of God’s “Divine Method.” “Divine Aim” relates to the “rediscovery of the kingdom of God” that is at the basis of Strong’s “Christianity of Christ,” and the “Divine Method” is the “laws by which God works his will in the world.”²¹⁴ For Strong the “Divine Aim,” or the “great consummation of the divine plan,” is a “perfected man” who is realized

²⁰⁸ Strong critiques the violence of lynching in both its mob and legalized form. Strong, *The New World-Life*, 204. This is one of many examples in which Strong critiques his fellow countrymen in relation to the problems of “lawlessness,” “wealth,” and “industry.” Strong, v.

²⁰⁹ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 29.

²¹⁰ Strong, 38, 44.

²¹¹ Strong, 38, 44.

²¹² Strong, 44.

²¹³ “And for this new society Jesus laid down social laws, intended to govern the family, in business, in politics, and in all human relations.” Strong, 98.

²¹⁴ Strong, 2, 273.

by man becoming “co-laborer with God.”²¹⁵ The “Divine Method” is the “universal and unchanging laws” through which God and the human co-laborers of God effect the “progress of the race.”²¹⁶ It is through the manipulation of these laws that “life can now take the initiative” to “perfect or even improve the conditions of life.”²¹⁷ What is significant for this analysis is how the physical or natural, the moral, and the spiritual laws are equated such that religious training and conversion becomes not just another method of human progress, but the most advanced method of human progress and evolution. Also significant is the divinization of human evolution has having ultimate eschatological significance for God.

The relationship between obedience to the three social laws Christ taught and the actualization of the Kingdom of God on earth is important because it constructs the mechanism by which humans are supposedly transformed from a lower state of existence to the highest state of existence: conversion. Religious training is added to environment manipulation and hereditary as the prime strategy for elevating both individual and social lives. In short, as the “Christianity of Christ” is the consummation of evolution, religious training becomes a critical eugenic tactic. The relationship between obedience to the laws of Christ and the Kingdom of God is important because it puts assimilation at the center of Strong’s global vision. As the solutions to the problems of the “new world life” will be discovered in the United States and exported to the world, and, as Strong heavily emphasizes assimilation into Anglo-Saxon, Protestant ideals in the U.S., it carries forward that this totalizing “new world life” will be modeled on Anglo-Saxon, Protestant U.S. ways of being.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Strong, 24.

²¹⁶ Strong, 38, 46.

²¹⁷ Strong, 28, 29.

²¹⁸ On Strong and assimilation see Strong, *Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom*, 75, 77.

Strong's focus on obedience as entry into the Kingdom of God is tied to his articulation of a hierarchy or "stages of development" of will that enables him to evaluate the stage of development of a religion (in which his "Christianity of Christ" comes out on top) and the so-called fitness of a person by their position on this hierarchy of wills. This is the underlying developmental logic that underscores his use of religion and religious ascension as a primary marker of whether an individual is "fit" or not. Strong describes "three different stages of growth" of wills: "strength, self-mastery, and good-will" of which the development of a "strong," "autonomous," and "benevolent" will is "clearly God's great object in creation."²¹⁹ Achieving "self-mastery" from a "strong" will is through training.²²⁰ The emphasis on training as the mechanism for ascension up the developmental stages leads Strong to scorn other religious traditions.

Deploying a grammar of evolutionary logic, Strong articulates a hierarchy of religions to justify his argument that his "Christianity of Christ" is the most developed religion. Strong declares that the "respective rank" and "order of evolution" of a religion is constituted by the degree of emphasis it places on, in ascending order, the "sensuous or physical nature," the "intellectual," or at the top, the "moral and spiritual nature, that is, in the will."²²¹ Strong argues that Christianity is currently moving from the second to the third plane: from 'individualistic Christianity' to his "Christianity of Christ." This supremacist claim is embedded within a chapter devoted to first defining a "world religion" and then arguing that his "Christianity of Christ" is the only one that fulfills the qualifications he himself laid out.²²²

²¹⁹ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 198.

²²⁰ Strong, 200.

²²¹ Strong, 372.

²²² Strong, chap. 12.

Strong's discourse does not just elevate the "Christianity of Christ" but denigrates other religions based on the logic of the development of the will. Strong argues that "Mohammedan and pagan religions" and "perverted forms of Christian faith," including "Roman Catholic training," have "held the greater part of the race in actual and abject slavery" by preventing the development of "independence of thought and action" and thus "arrested" the will's development "at the age of thirteen or fourteen."²²³ As justification Strong calls on Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric saying "so-called Anglo-Saxon people are fond of pointing out certain characteristics of the so-called Latin races...now all of these are characteristics of children, that is, of undeveloped wills."²²⁴ He attributes these "undeveloped wills" of the "Latin races" "less to inheritance and to climatic influences than to religious training."²²⁵ Again, religious training comes to the fore. He contrasts the "undeveloped will" of the Roman Catholics and the "Latin Races" with the proclivity to "civil liberty [which] can be said to flourish only among Protestant peoples."²²⁶ This Protestant exceptionalism is tied to "the strength, endurance and steadiness" of the "Germans, Scandinavians, and Britons."²²⁷ This is a recapitulation of his argument in *Our Country* (1885) in which he denigrates both Roman Catholics and "Latin people" when justifying his Anglo-Saxon and Protestant supremacy.²²⁸ The emphasis on religious training over hereditary or climate as the primary determinant of the development of the will stated alongside the same Anglo-Saxonist, Protestant supremacist argument made in *Our Country* reveals not just the continued relevancy of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant supremacy in Strong's thinking, but more importantly, it reveals how the new emphasis on religious training is not a departure from but rather rooted in Strong's earlier

²²³ Strong, 203, 204.

²²⁴ Strong, 203.

²²⁵ Strong, 203.

²²⁶ Strong, 203.

²²⁷ Strong, 203.

²²⁸ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 214.

Anglo-Saxon, Protestant supremacist racial thinking. In fact, Strong's heavy emphasis in *Our Country* (1885) on the role that "spiritual Christianity" plays in both helping define and "purify" the Anglo-Saxon race parallels the emphasis here on religious training as the prime marker and strategy of racial development.²²⁹ While the role hereditary and climate plays slowly retreats behind an emphasis on religion and religious training, and while the explicit focus on Anglo-Saxons as the agent drops away, the focus on Christianizing, assimilating, and "civilizing" persist. Further, the agent continues to be "the church" in the United States.

By centering his hierarchies of development of societies and religions on "will" Strong redefines the "fittest" and the "unfit." Strong says that on the third plane of development, the "Christian plane," "the fittest to survive is not the strongest, nor the one who by wit or cunning or some other adaptation is best fitted to minister to self, but the one whose disinterested love inspires complete self-sacrifice."²³⁰ "Disinterested love" is the term Strong uses to describe the driving force of a someone who has fully accepted and applied the three social laws to their life.²³¹ As such, the "fittest" is the true Christian whose "new and benevolent will" through the sacrifice of self-will in conversion constitutes their membership and "new birth" in the Kingdom of God.²³² It is this true Christian, the "fittest," who is responsible for eradicating the "unfit." In contrast to the "unmoral" natural law in which the "unfit" are "sacrificed" for the "fit," Strong argues that "the unfit, whether in soul or body, must be eliminated not by *destruction* but by *transformation*, by the self-sacrifice of the fittest for the unfit, the higher for the lower, the Sinless One for sinners."²³³

²²⁹ "the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled... Then this race of unequaled energy... the representative, let us hope, of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization... will spread itself over the earth... nothing can save the inferior race but a ready and pliant assimilation... the Anglo-Saxon race would speedily decay but for the salt of Christianity." Strong, 175–76.

²³⁰ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 178.

²³¹ "Christian love," "Christian service," and "Christian sacrifice" are "disinterested because they spring from the divine life in the soul." Strong, 185.

²³² Strong, 235, 248.

²³³ Strong, 180.

Strong has sustained the natural selection logic of the necessity to eliminate “unfit” while refashioned its classification of “fit” and “unfit” to the religious sphere in which conversion to Strong’s particular brand of Christianity becomes the qualification for being “fit.” Further, Strong transfers the agent from nature to particular men: his true Christians who have ascended into a plane of existence in which they become co-laborers with God. This emphasis on selfishness of will and its relationship to conversion and the “Christianity of Christ” can be misread as merely a spiritual or religious matter. However, Strong’s correlation of the “Christianity of Christ” to Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, U.S. supremacy, as well as his articulation of a totalizing faith that is applied to all aspects of individual and collective life, reveals the extent to which religious conversion is totalizing assimilation.

Thus, when Strong argues that the solution is “not to reduce all races to a single type...but rather to perfect each note and tune them all for heaven’s harmony of brotherhood on earth,” it becomes clear that Strong does not envision a plurality of social, lingual, and religious difference, but rather “civilizational,” lingual, and religious assimilation to the “crown of all [God’s works] – final civilization” modeled on Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, U.S. whiteness.²³⁴ Because Strong defines Anglo-Saxon, Protestant U.S. supremacy in 1885 via somatic/physical, “civilizational,” lingual, and religious traits, and because here he is arguing that “civilizational,” lingual, and religious characteristics are changeable racial traits, despite his movement away from physical assimilation or annihilation, his project here correlates to his 1885 project. Further, as Strong considers “civilizational,” lingual, and religious characteristics to be racial traits, and because he continues to traffic on an evolutionary logic that hierarchizes categories of being, this discourse is racial discourse even when devoid of typical racial terminology.

²³⁴ Strong, 174.

In addition to continuing to traffic in racial discourse, Strong continues to center the U.S. as the agent who is commissioned to actualize the utopian Kingdom of God on earth. While not explicitly marked as Anglo-Saxon or American, Strong centers the agent, the church, in the United States by narrating four periods of Christianity. To demonstrate Christianity's "power of adaptation altogether unique among religions," Strong identifies three "periods" of Christianity: "the primitive church, the medieval church at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the modern church as it appeared in the U.S. at the beginning of the nineteenth century."²³⁵ He argues that it is now imperative that this "modern church" "readapt itself or perish," in other words, to move from "institutional Christianity" to the "Christianity of Christ."²³⁶ Recalling arguments from *Our Country* (1885) in which Strong equates Protestantism, Anglo-Saxonism, and civil liberty, in this text Strong points to the third period, the "Protestant formulation of the doctrine of salvation by faith" and its corresponding focus on individual liberty, as the period from which this "fourth or sociological period" will evolve.²³⁷ Strong is not just rooting his religious revolution in the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in the U.S., but is articulating his "Christianity of Christ" as the *further* elevation, evolution, and development of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. The U.S. Anglo-Saxon, Protestant way of being is still the most supreme but now it is no longer the most supreme as it can evolve, under the tutelage of Strong's "Christianity of Christ," into the Kingdom of God.

The result of Strong's elevation of certain men into co-laborers with God to hasten the Kingdom of God on earth is that it enables Strong to argue for the righteous conquering of the world. Strong declares that "when the cross has conquered the church, its members will go forth

²³⁵ Strong, 320.

²³⁶ Strong, *Our Country*, 1885, 322, 325.

²³⁷ Strong, *The New-World Religion*, 323.

to conquer the world, and win the kingdom for their Lord, with the highest possible aim, the purest possible motive, and the noblest possible enthusiasm....thus will the passion of the cross become the creator of the world's peace."²³⁸ While Strong critiques the "character of Christendom" and the "vice and crime, the greed and lust of 'Christian' nations" that prevents the conversion of the world to Christ, Strong continues to articulate a vision in which a Christianized church conquers "pagandom" and the world.²³⁹ Righteous violence becomes justified as a tactic for peace.

The theme of noble and benevolent international involvement aimed at peace reflects the rhetoric of benevolent assimilation that proponents of U.S. imperialist and colonialist projects deployed at the turn of the twentieth century. Proponents of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines argued that the U.S. was engaging not in "colonial rule" but "benevolent assimilation" and "expansive republicanism."²⁴⁰ Justifying imperial and colonial projects "aimed at ruling the world" by claiming them to be "missionizing" and "soteriological" is at the core of the political theology of the "Imperial God-Man."²⁴¹ Strong's rhetoric here reflects and adopts this discourse.

Carter argues that this Christian internationalism, tied to the "Imperial God-Man" figure, came to head in the first world war and continues to persist in the secular modernity. Carter points to World War I as the inflection point in which this figure "came into crisis" and since then "has been working to reconstitute itself, its world, and its divine prowess ever since."²⁴² The figure of the "Imperial God-Man" became the organizing figure of secular modernity through the "globalized, imperialist, and often "benevolent" Christian power that believes that only Christianity can properly order universal, and thus secular space."²⁴³ Carter argues that this

²³⁸ Strong, 245.

²³⁹ Strong, 263, 503.

²⁴⁰ Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons," 1350.

²⁴¹ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 172.

²⁴² Carter, 172.

²⁴³ Carter, 181.

“[remains] at work within secular modernity.”²⁴⁴ Strong’s vision of a totalizing global Christendom, coupled with his rejection of the sacred and secular divide, is one instance in which Christianity is deployed to structure all of human space. While Carter focuses on the secularization of Christianity, Strong would reject this secularization in lieu of a totalizing Christian world order. Thus, in this manner, Strong’s political theology and the political theology of the “Imperial God-Man” depart. Yet the correlation between the two and Strong’s persistent vision of a Christian world order point to how the political theology of secular modernity is not just bound to a Christian vision of the world, but also points to how this “Imperial God-Man” political theology persists within Christian theological discourse as well.

Strong’s vision of a Christian world order was not unique to Strong but reflective of broader liberal Christian internationalists preceding the first world war.²⁴⁵ In fact, historian Andrew Preston describes how the liberal Christian internationalists of the Protestant mainline churches “had already sketched out the principles that would soon be better known as Wilsonianism...long before the U.S. entered the war.”²⁴⁶ According to Preston, “Wilsonianism was essentially an expression of Christian reformism, of the global application of progressive Christianity.”²⁴⁷ The rhetoric of benevolent interventionism continues with Wilson who argued that the U.S., who entered the war with “no selfish ends to serve,” became an “instrument in the hands of God to see that liberty is made secure for mankind.”²⁴⁸ While the U.S. never joined the League of Nations, Wilson’s vision of an international order and call that the “world must be made safe for democracy” persisted. This points to how Strong’s vision in relation to the political theology of the “Imperial God-Man” has ongoing implications.

²⁴⁴ Carter, 168.

²⁴⁵ Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 616.

²⁴⁶ Preston, 805.

²⁴⁷ Preston, 902.

²⁴⁸ These are quotes from speeches he gave in April and June 1917. Preston, 624–25.

Conclusion

This analysis of the shifting discourse of Josiah Strong between 1885 and 1915 illustrates how theological discourse explicitly entangled with racial discourse may continue to be entangled even when that discourse does not explicitly contain typical racial categories. Strong's early discourse theologizes Anglo-Saxonism, U.S exceptionalism and imperialism, at the same time that it racializes eschatology. In doing so, Strong collapses divine time into human time with the result that the work of certain people, U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestants, takes on eschatological and salvific significance. This divination of U.S. Anglo-Saxon Christians enables Strong to "assign righteousness to themselves at the same time that they assign unrighteousness and evil to the wretched of the earth."²⁴⁹ This functions to justify what W.E.B Du Bois deemed the "religion of whiteness," or the "will to rule the earth."²⁵⁰ In this way, Strong's theological discourse is a specific instance of the theological anthropology of the "Imperial God-Man" that Carter theorizes.²⁵¹

The entangling of Strong's theology with U.S. Anglo-Saxonism further nuances Carter's theorization of the "Imperial God-Man" political theology. Strong constrains "Western Man" to Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the U.S. Thus, Strong's vision necessitates that European immigrants from such countries as Germany (which Carter argues participates in "Imperial God-Man" political theology) must also be Anglo-Saxonized. Strong's particular brand of U.S. Anglo-Saxonism intersects with white supremacy generally in that he envisions the extinction, annihilation, or eventual segregation of people of color, including Native Americans and Africans. The mutual constitution of the category of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Christian, and American in Strong's discourse demonstrates what Carter names the "symbolic foundation of modern subjectivity."²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence," 206.

²⁵⁰ Carter, 206.

²⁵¹ Carter, "An Unlikely Convergence."

²⁵² Carter, 176.

Examining Strong's theological discourse in relation to the political theology of the "Imperial God-Man" demonstrates how theological entanglements with white supremacist and Anglo-Saxonist racial reasoning undergirds secular modernity generally, and the shape it takes in the United States specifically.

Yet even more significantly, this analysis demonstrates one instance in which racial reasoning continues to structure theological discourse even when that discourse does not engage political projects or is not marked with typical racial markers. Drawing on Stoler's theorization of the "polyvalent mobility" of racial discourse, I demonstrate how the grammar and logic of Strong's racial reasoning persists while the content becomes subsumed into theological categories of difference. The content of Strong's racial reasoning shifts from emphasizing somatic, lingual, political, religious and "civilizational" characteristics, to ultimately emphasizing religious characteristics. Persistent throughout these shifts is a logic of evolutionary stages of development that hierarchizes related categories of being. Religious training becomes a eugenic tactic as conversion to Strong's "Christianity of Christ" results in the actualization of the highest form of human existence, of God's eschatological plan, and the achievement of the Kingdom of God on earth. Underscoring this is the transformation of religious laws, the three social laws of Christ, into evolutionary laws. Strong's global evangelizing project replicates whiteness in that conversion is conversion into the ideals of U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. Strong's particular type of U.S. centered Anglo-Saxonist racial reasoning structures his thinking so deeply that even when he accepts the implausibility of a global Anglo-Saxon racial amalgamation, and after he acknowledges that racial categories lack scientific basis, and when he refrains from using Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric, the grammar and logic of such racial reasoning persists. The result is that racial reasoning is subsumed within theological categories such that in the end, the vision of a world

centered and organized around whiteness generally, and U.S. Anglo-Saxon Protestantism specifically, persists. In short, Strong's discourse is U.S. Anglo-Saxon white supremacy rendered theologically.

This analysis of the persistence of a racial grammar structuring Strong's theological discourse raises a number of fruitful questions for further research on the complex relationship between the categories of race and religion. Most significantly, it challenges theologians to consider where else racial reasoning generally, and white supremacist racial reasoning specifically, may structure white Protestant theological discourse even when that discourse is not marked with typical racial categories. Considering instances in which this may occur in popular white mainline Protestant theological discourse of pastors, Sunday School teachers, community leaders, liturgies, and religious literature may begin to explain the continued and widespread prevalence among white Protestant Christians in the U.S. to support, accept, or compromise with white supremacist policies and projects in the twenty-first century despite liberal Protestant denominational and ecumenical statements against racial violence.²⁵³

Strong's shift from hierarchizing racial-religio categories of being to religious categories of being raises questions about how religious identities are racialized in public discourse. The racialization of religion poses the question of how theological claim related to non-Christians may, in certain instances, function as a sort of theological dog-whistle: "a way to advance a basically racial message while still maintaining plausible deniability."²⁵⁴ For example, Ian Haney-Lopez discusses how coded racial appeals shifted in the early 2000s to target Muslims.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ See Jemar Tisby and Lecrae Moore, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2019); Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*, Prophetic Christianity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014); Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, Reprint Edition (Bold Type Books, 2017).

²⁵⁴ Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 119. I am indebted to Michelle Sanchez for this question.

²⁵⁵ Haney-López, 117–20, 157.

“By deemphasizing biology and focusing instead on religion...Bush could claim he was only criticizing a religion, or even more narrowly, the perversion of a religion... His speech...was decidedly a form of racial demagoguery, hidden, however transparently, behind references to religious differences.”²⁵⁶

When religious identity is racialized, theological discourse in the face of religious diversity may function as racial discourse rendered theologically.

The justification work that binding “Spiritual Christianity” to Anglo-Saxons does for Strong’s argument of Anglo-Saxon supremacy raises the question of religious supremacy.²⁵⁷ Strong’s Anglo-Saxonism was defined by a belief in the Anglo-Saxon’s special relationship to what they considered the most advanced form of a universalized religion: spiritual Protestantism. By binding Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, the universality of Christianity that gives Christianity global credence is assigned to Anglo-Saxons as well. Further, the ease with which Strong’s global Anglo-Saxonizing project is entangled with an evangelizing project raises the question of whether and how universalizing Christian theological claims lend themselves to supremacist racial discourse.²⁵⁸

Analyses that extract the structuring work that racial reasoning can have in white Protestant theological discourse even when not marked as such are critical for making visible the brutal co-construction of whiteness, Christianity, and national identity in the United States.²⁵⁹ These

²⁵⁶ Haney-López, 119–20.

²⁵⁷ Scholars such as Hill-Fletcher and Knitter have begun to consider these questions. See Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “Warrants for Reconstruction: Christian Hegemony, White Supremacy,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2016): 54–79; Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017); Paul Knitter, “Symbiotic Supremacies: Racial and Religious,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 39, no. 1 (October 8, 2019): 205–15.

²⁵⁸ On how Christian universalizing arguments of early Christians resonate with contemporary forms of racial reasoning see Denise Kimber Buell, “Early Christian Universalism and Modern Forms of Racism,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin H. Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109–31.

²⁵⁹ Megan Goodwin, “Unmasking Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Hostility and/as White Supremacy,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (May 23, 2020): 363, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfaa012>.

analyses can also point to where these violent entanglements still exist. Such analyses are critical for accounting for the historical complicity of theologians in vicious white supremacist projects, as well as for constructing theologies that disrupt and dismantle the relationship between modes of racial or national supremacy and particular white Protestant theologies in recent history.

Appendix

Abbreviations used of Josiah Strong's published works in chronological order

<i>Our Country</i> , 1885	OC
<i>Our Country</i> , 1891	n/a
<i>The New Era, or the Coming Kingdom</i> , 1893	NE
<i>Expansion under New World Conditions</i> , 1900	Expansion
<i>The Twentieth Century City</i> , 1898	n/a
<i>The Times and Young Men</i> , 1901	TYM
<i>The Next Great Awakening</i> , 1902	NGA
<i>Studies in the Gospel of the Kingdom, vol 1</i> , 1908	SGK
<i>My Religion in Everyday Life</i> , 1910	n/a
<i>The New World Life</i> , 1913	NWL
<i>The New World Religion</i> , 1915	NWR

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