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'Eastern History with Western Eyes': E.A. Freeman, Islam and Orientalism

Vicky Morrisroe

There may be some advantages in a treatise composed, not by a professed oriental scholar, but by one who looks at Eastern history with Western eyes, and who is therefore naturally inclined to give most attention to those parts of his subject which, in the way either of connexion or contrast, possess some bearing upon the history of the West. (E.A. Freeman, *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (1856))¹

E.A. Freeman (1823–1892) was a historian whose work focused primarily on the West. His *magnum opus* was the gargantuan *History of the Norman Conquest* (six volumes, 1867–1879) and he dedicated 14 works to the history of Britain and the Continent. Understandably, modern scholars have focused on Freeman's panegyrics to England's ancient constitution and his specifically mid-Victorian belief that the common political institutions of European nations proved their shared Aryan descent. This article acknowledges the significance of Freeman's writings on the West but maintains that they form only one part of a wider intellectual project that has been overlooked because his writings on the East languish in near-perfect obscurity.²

The understanding of Freeman as a confident proponent of the superiority of the Aryan race demands revision in light of an analysis of his two neglected volumes on the Orient: *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (1856) and *The Ottoman Power in Europe* (1877). The best recent studies of Freeman, those of John Burrow and Peter Mandler, have focused on his attempt to combine a traditional Whig narrative on

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1. E.A. Freeman, *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1856), p. v; further page references appear in parentheses.
 2. For comments on Freeman's work on the East see: Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Two Types of Universal History: The Cases of E.A. Freeman and Max Weber', *Journal of Modern History*, 58.1 (1986), 235–46; C.J.W. Parker, 'The Failure of Liberal Racialism: The Racial Ideas of E.A. Freeman', *Historical Journal*, 24.4 (1981), 825–46 (see especially pp. 827 and 838–39); Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 16–17; and Paul Stephenson, 'E.A. Freeman (1823–1892), A Neglected Commentator on Byzantium and Modern Greece', *Historical Review*, 4 (2007), 119–56 (see especially pp. 126–27).

English liberty with new ideas about Western racial characteristics and have presented Freeman as at once ‘the most Whiggish of all’ mid-Victorian historians, and ‘the greatest nationalist historian of the nineteenth century’.³ Hugh MacDougall and C.J.W. Parker, by comparison, have emphasized Freeman’s hierarchic ordering of the Aryan nations and ‘intemperate distaste’ for non-Aryans and have concluded that his works demonstrate the ‘failure of liberal racialism’ and stand on the ‘extreme limits of racism’.⁴ From a different perspective, Rosemary Jann and Susan Walton have examined the difficulties Freeman faced as a gentleman scholar who held no professional post for most of his career and who allowed his racial prejudices to influence his work at a time when the writing of history was becoming self-consciously ‘scientific’, objective and located within the Academy.⁵ While Freeman’s conception of history was undoubtedly based on the idea of the unity and progress of the Aryan nations, scrutiny of his Oriental volumes suggests that he did not believe in fixed or inherent characteristics. In these works, Christianity emerges as central to Freeman’s view of the West as an unstable community of culture which was far from guaranteed a place of continued pre-eminence in the modern world.

This article uses the insights of scholarship on Western approaches to the Orient to examine Freeman’s *Saracens* and *Ottoman Power*. First, Edward W. Said’s argument in *Orientalism* (1978) that the West always exploits the East according to contemporary exigency and consistently represents the Orient as ‘other’ can illuminate Freeman’s motives in producing the volumes on the East and constituting the Orient in relation to Europe. Composed in response to Britain’s support of the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War (1853–1856) and Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1878), Freeman drew on well established discourses of ‘otherness’ to represent purposefully the Orient as distinct from, and inferior to, the West. Here I demonstrate that, in the context of the Eastern Question, Freeman associated Christianity with Western progress and expressed fierce hostility towards the non-Christian world. Moving on to a detailed analysis of Freeman’s representation of the East as ‘other’, this analysis challenges scholarship which suggests that the Victorians produced increasingly positive and objective reappraisals of Islam.⁶ While there were various views of Islam in circulation by the mid-Victorian period, Freeman retained a

3. John Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 195 and Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 43.

4. Hugh MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982), pp. 100–1 and Parker, ‘The Failure of Liberal Racialism’, p. 837.

5. Rosemary Jann, ‘From Amateur to Professional: The Case of the Oxbridge Historians’, *Journal of British Studies*, 22.2 (1983), 122–47 and *The Art and Science of Victorian History* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985); and Susan Walton, ‘Charlotte M. Yonge and the “Historic Harem” of Edward Augustus Freeman’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11.2 (2006), 226–55.

6. Philip Almond, ‘Western Images of Islam 1700–1900’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49.3 (2003), 412–24; Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

'traditional' and 'confrontational' attitude towards the rival faith as a creed which he believed accounted for the barbarism of the East. Finally, this article considers Freeman's view of Euro-Christendom as a cultural community struggling against the encroachments of the Muslim world. While it has been assumed that Orientalist discourses empower the West and are associated with Imperialism, Freeman's narratives on the Orient focus on the threat posed by the presence of Orientals within the bounds of Christendom and culminate in demands that the Turkish 'other' be removed from, rather than dominated, by Europe.⁷ Freeman was not a confident believer in the unhindered and inevitable progress of the Aryan race. In the Oriental volumes, history emerges as the record of dangerous political power struggles between fundamentally incompatible civilizations; an 'old internecine war between the East and the West, between despotism and freedom, between a progressive and a stationary social state'.⁸

1. Freeman's Oriental 'other'

The publication of Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* (1978) stimulated critical analyses of Western approaches to the Orient. In *Orientalism* Said argues that European writing on the Orient has always assumed a basic distinction between East and West and made reductive statements about the Orient.⁹ In Said's analysis, the distinction between 'them' and 'us' was initially based on religious categories while, in the eighteenth century, the binary opposition was restructured and accommodated to secular theories of human differentiation. In particular, writes Said, 'theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves . . . with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality'.¹⁰ Crucially, according to Said, modern Orientalism was characterized by a reinforced, expanded and increasingly secure, Eurocentric perspective. The professional Orientalist emerged whose works established an authoritative discourse on the weakness and inferiority of the Orient and raised the level of its assertions to 'truths'. In Said's view, this discourse not only excluded a potential dialogue between the Orient and the Occident but also prevented the articulation by Europeans of disparate views on the East. While Western culture had always, implicitly or explicitly, accepted the 'otherness' of the East, the establishment of modern Orientalism was accompanied by a more aggressive mode in thought and action which meant that it was easily implicated in the West's political and material domination of the

7. See, for example, Asli Çırakman, *From the 'Terror of the World' to the 'Sick Man of Europe': European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002) and Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

8. [Freeman], 'Mahometanism in the East and the West', *North British Review*, 23 (1855), 450, in Freeman Papers, ref. EAF/2/2/14, John Rylands University Library, Special Collections, quoted by permission from the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

9. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 2–3.

10. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.

non-Western world. According to Said, as 'European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self', the hegemony of the West over the East was established, and European imperial power gained its rationale.¹¹ In short, Orientalism became a 'style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.¹²

The debate between Said and his critics is voluminous but three points of discussion are important in assessing Freeman's motivation and methodology in representing the Orient as 'other'. Each of these criticisms focuses, in various ways, on the reductionism and ahistoricism of Said's analysis, which arises from the use he makes of the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault showed that ideas about human nature and society, often taken to be fixed truths, change in the course of history and that these shifting discourses determine the way the world is interpreted or experienced.¹³ While Foucault acknowledged that both statements and the meaning of an object itself fluctuate in space and time, Said argued that statements about the Orient in the West refer to a single object and its allegedly eternal nature and that this discourse is preserved indefinitely for the purpose of dominating the Orient.¹⁴ The first criticism, advanced by Aijaz Ahmad and James Clifford among others, is that Said wrongly assumes that there is one monolithic Western discourse which affirms itself against the subjugated Eastern 'other'.¹⁵ As Ali Behdad, Lisa Lowe and Ussama Makdisi have demonstrated, European representations of the Orient have varied according to the context in which they were produced, Europeans have not always viewed the East as inferior to the West, and there is no absolute demarcation between the complex discourses on the Orient articulated by Europeans and the equally complex discourses on the Orient articulated by colonial peoples themselves.¹⁶ On a second and related point, Javed Majeed and Gyan Prakash claim that Said fails to consider authorial intentions, the role of individual conceptual frameworks, tools, techniques of investigation, and the availability of information, in the production of Orientalist texts.¹⁷ Finally, some scholars have been concerned with the validity of the

11. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

12. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

13. See, in particular, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970), *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1972), and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

14. See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 32.

15. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Between Orientalism and Historicism', *Studies in History*, 7.1 (1991), 135–63 (see pp. 138–39), and James Clifford, 'On Orientalism', in *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255–77.

16. Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *American Historical Review*, June (2002) <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/107.3/ah0302000768.html> [accessed online 12 April 2010].

17. Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and Gyan Prakash, 'Orientalism Now', *History and Theory*, 34.3 (1995), 199–212.

fundamental theoretical assumption on which *Orientalism* is based. Keith Windschuttle questioned Said's proposition that societies need an 'alter-ego' and contended that Europeans draw on their own heritage rather than on comparisons with barbarian others when defining their self-identity.¹⁸

Said denies that he was a proponent of a monolithic rendering that did not account for communication between the Occidental and Oriental and, in his later writings, emphasizes the 'overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals and the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled with each other'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Said continued to stress the dominance of a unified Western discourse on Eastern 'otherness' and to de-emphasize the heterogeneity of different kinds of European representation of the East. It is therefore necessary to adapt and extend Said's thesis in the following ways. By acknowledging the persistent problem of ahistoricism in Said's account, I pay specific attention to the context in which Freeman composed his works and to the preconceived objects with which he approached the task. Thereafter, I employ Said's idea that the West exploits a reduced model of the East according to the needs of the Occident to illuminate Freeman's political motives in representing the Orient as 'other' in the context of the Eastern Question. In order to avoid Said's tendency to conflate disparate texts into one unified discourse, my discussion then turns to the sources available to Freeman and the use which he made of them. Said's assertion that Western writers are reliant on a well-established and authoritative discourse on the Orient is then used to explain Freeman's methodological neglect of primary Oriental sources. Once we acknowledge that Freeman's understanding of the Euro-Christian past did inform his conception of Western identity, then Said's insight into the European need for an 'other' remains invaluable. In the Oriental volumes, Freeman's strong sense of European self-identity is powerfully reinforced through contrast with the East.

By placing Freeman's Oriental volumes in historical context, it becomes clear that Said's idea that the West exploits the East according to practical exigencies can illuminate the motivation with which they were composed. Freeman wrote his works in direct response to Britain's periodic involvement in the Eastern Question, a problem that concerned the future of territories encompassed within the crumbling Ottoman Empire.²⁰ From the 1830s onwards Britain had been locked in a power struggle with Russia because, while Britain sought to maintain the integrity of the Empire, Russia had grievances over territory and trade and felt a natural sympathy

18. Keith Windschuttle, 'Edward Said's "Orientalism Revisited"', *New Criterion*, 17.5 (January 1999) www.newcriterion.com [accessed online 10 October 2008].

19. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), pp. xxii–xxiii.

20. For the Eastern Question in British politics, see M.S Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966); Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875–1878* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); R.T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* (London: Nelson, 1963); and Martin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

with Orthodox Christians living under Muslim rule. When, in May 1853, Russia demanded that the position of Christians within the Ottoman Empire be guaranteed, a Russo-Turkish war that would implicate Britain became inevitable. In demanding the right to protect Orthodox laymen under Turkish rule, Russia demanded, in effect, the right to intervene in the Empire's internal affairs. War was declared on 15 November 1853, and on 12 March 1854 Britain committed itself to the defence of Ottoman Empire. Freeman had taken an active interest in the Crimean War from the beginning.²¹ Initially, he held that British support for the Turk was justified in order to save the European subjects from falling under the yoke of a stronger Russian despotism.²² After the Conference of Vienna, however, when pacific overtures from Russia were rejected, Freeman decided that the war was no longer a war in defence of Turkey but one of aggression against Russia, because Russia would not guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The insistence on such a guarantee, he claimed, was an act of deliberate 'wickedness' for it meant a guarantee to perpetuate the Turk's oppression of his European subjects.²³ If only the history of the East was considered, it would be clear that Islam posed an ineradicable barrier to the improvement of Turkish rule in Europe. In the *Saracens*, Freeman exploited Oriental history to prove that British policy in the East was misguided.

Two decades following the end of the Crimean War the Great Eastern Crisis began with the Slav revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1875. The British Government, under Benjamin Disraeli, encouraged the Ottomans to suppress the insurrections and, in May 1876, news broke of the Turkish massacre of 15,000 Bulgarians.²⁴ Rumours of the atrocities caused Russia to enter the war in defence of the rebels in April 1877, raising the prospect of a conflict that would involve Britain. As Jonathan Parry has noted, Disraeli's continued support of the Ottoman Empire was part of his policy of protecting routes to British India and an expression of his commitment to the empire which was crucial if the language of patriotism was to be 'stolen' from Palmerstonian Liberalism for the Conservative party.²⁵ Whatever Disraeli's motives, he mishandled the Eastern Crisis disastrously. Liberals such as Freeman and Gladstone denounced Disraeli's support of Turkey as demonstrative of the stagnation, elitism and Oriental sympathies of the Conservative government.²⁶ The Liberal charge that Disraeli had sacrificed humanitarian sentiment, earnestness of principle, and commitment to the

21. See W.R.W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1895), I, 148–53.

22. Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 149. Freeman wrote several letters to the press on this subject and these reflect his change of opinion. On 29 October 1853 Freeman asserted that the war was justified; in letters of 16 April 1855 and August 1855 Freeman outlined his argument that the support of the Turk was wicked.

23. Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 152.

24. See Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*.

25. Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 324.

26. See Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, pp. 323–86, and W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and Russia in Turkistan, with Other Tracts* (London: John Murray, 1876).

constitutional principle of self-government, to further his own ambitions spoke loudly to the British public.²⁷

Freeman condemned Disraeli's foreign policy and described it as 'unrighteous', 'a moral crime' and 'the greatest of evils'.²⁸ His support for the revolt was intensified by correspondence with eye-witnesses to the 'intolerable wrongs' and 'frightful cruelties' perpetrated by the Turks.²⁹ Adelaine Irby, working among Slav refugees, reported to Freeman that the Turks 'are just now beginning to set up crosses to crucify the Christians alive', that they were going through 'the villages robbing and plundering' and 'shamefully ill-treating' the wives of murdered men.³⁰ Similarly, Dr Humphrey Sandwith, stationed in Belgrade, reported on the 'violation of women, of people roasted alive and the flesh of children thrust into the mouths of peasants etc'.³¹ Sandwith drew a colourful picture of the fearful barbarity of the Turks:

I am witnessing scenes such as I have read of in the bloody records of the middle ages, and I ask myself if I am really living in the nineteenth century . . . I hear stories of deeds almost too foul and hideous to repeat [of a young girl]. Outrages, dishonour and brutality of the foulest kind were not enough, her ravishers actually cut out large strips of skin and flesh from her back and left her frightfully mutilated. She was found some hours afterwards by Servian [Serbian] troops and they gently carried her into one of the field hospitals where she lingered four days and quietly died.³²

Freeman publicly insisted that Britain's alliance with Turkey ought to end and he put himself at the head of a protest movement which became known as the Bulgarian Atrocities Agitation. As R.T. Shannon described it, in less than six weeks nearly 500 demonstrations throughout Britain expressed to the government abhorrence at the atrocities and forced Disraeli to consider revising his Eastern policy.³³ Freeman composed the *Ottoman Power* at the height of the Crisis and attempted to use Eastern history to show that 'as long as any Christian land remains under the Turk, there will be discontents and disturbances and revolts and massacres; there will be diplomatic difficulties and complications; in a word, the "eternal Eastern Question" will remain eternal' (p. x). This history, Freeman believed, was particularly necessary because

27. See Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 328.

28. E.A. Freeman, 'The Relation of the English People to the War', *Contemporary Review*, 30 (1877), 481–510 (p. 496); Freeman, 'The True Eastern Question', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s., 18 (1875), 747; and *The Ottoman Power in Europe: Its Nature, Its Growth, and Its Decline* (London: Macmillan, 1877), p. xi (further page references appear in parentheses).

29. Stephens, *Life and Letters*, II, 101.

30. Miss Adelaine Irby, 'To E.A. Freeman', 8 April 1876, Freeman Papers, ref. FA1.2.135, The John Rylands University Library, Special Collections; Irby, 'To E.A. Freeman', 8 April 1876, quoted with permission from the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

31. Dr Sandwith, 'To E.A. Freeman', December 1876, Freeman Papers, ref. FA1.2.178a and 178b, quoted with permission from the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

32. Sandwith, 'To E.A. Freeman', 3 September 1876, *Freeman Papers*, ref. FA1.2.181a, 181b, quoted with permission from the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester.

33. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, p. 49.

Britain was being deceived by a ‘Jewish’ Prime Minister who was naturally an Oriental sympathiser.

Said’s idea that Western writers draw on an established Occidental discourse on the East rather than turning to original Oriental sources is instructive when examining Freeman’s sources for the Oriental volumes. Given the pressured circumstances under which he wrote, both works were composed ‘rather quickly’.³⁴ He worked at home with no time to study Oriental material and had been forced to ‘get up the story [of the *Saracens*] how I might from a private library which had been collected without any special reference to the subject’.³⁵ Similarly, the *Ottoman Power* was based on what Freeman already knew, ‘an expansion of a tract called “The Turks in Europe”’ he had recently written.³⁶ Freeman’s access to source material was further limited by his self-confessed lack of technical ability as an Orientalist. As he wrote to the historian George Finlay in September 1856: ‘I am delighted that you think so well of my *Saracens*. Mine, you know, is a purely exoteric and Western view. I learned a little Hebrew years back, which enables me now and then to see the meaning of an Arabic name; that is all my oriental scholarship.’³⁷ The *Saracens* contains only one reference to primary Oriental material – that made to the Abu’l-Fida, dealing with the life of the Prophet, translated into Latin by J. Gagnier in 1723. The *Ottoman Power* contains no references to primary Oriental material. Among Freeman’s principal sources were two generally recognized landmarks of Oriental scholarship: Simon Ockley’s *History of the Saracens* (1708) and George Sale’s *Qur’an with Preliminary Discourse* (1734).³⁸ Material was also drawn from modern Orientalist works such as Sir John Malcolm’s two-volume *History of Persia* (1815). In gathering factual information from these works Freeman imbued their Orientalist themes: Malcolm’s argument that Islam was a shackle to progress in the East, for example, is repeated in Freeman’s narratives.

Freeman’s view of Western identity was primarily informed by his understanding of the Euro-Christian past, although this idea of Europe would be reinforced by an emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Orient. Freeman’s conception of European identity was deeply influenced by the teachings of Thomas Arnold who he had heard lecture as Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1841 and 1842.³⁹ Arnold believed that an analysis of a nation’s political institutions would reveal the inner stage that the nation had reached in a universal process of progress from ‘childhood’

34. Freeman, ‘To George Finlay’, 1 September 1856, in Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 233.

35. Freeman, *The History and Conquests of the Saracens*, p. vi.

36. Stephens, *Life and Letters*, II, 126, ‘The Turks in Europe’, was written as the first in a series entitled *Politics for People*, published in 1877.

37. Freeman, ‘To George Finlay’, 1 September 1856, in Stephens, *Life and Letters*, I, 233.

38. On Simon Ockley, see A.J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 11–47. On Sale, see Arnoud Vrolijk, ‘Sale, George (b. in or after 1696, d. 1736)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101024529/George-Sale4> [accessed online September 2007].

39. Freeman discusses his intellectual debt to Thomas Arnold in *The Office of the Historical Professor* (London: Macmillan, 1884), pp. 8–9.

through 'manhood' to 'decay'.⁴⁰ Based on the assumption that a comparative study of political institutions revealed that ancient and modern nations contained primitive and advanced elements, Arnold rejected the traditional periodical divisions of 'ancient' and 'modern' in history. For Arnold, nations could only be properly classified as ancient or modern according to the maturity of their political institutions and not on the basis of their chronology. Once so classified, Arnold believed that the unified process by which nations passed through their life-cycle would be revealed. This idea of unity in history was bolstered by the idea of a connection between the nations of the ancient and modern cyclical ages. Arnold held that the Greeks and Romans of the first age, and the Teutons of the second age, had each achieved the highest level of civilization available to them. The progress of the Western races was understood to be shared, not because they had inherent characteristics that guaranteed their development, but because the achievements of the ancient world had been communicated to the modern world by the close historic and geographic contact between Romans and Teutons.

Freeman's *Saracens* dutifully articulates an Arnoldian conception of Europe's unified cultural development:

In studying the records of Greece, of Rome, of medieval Europe we are studying the history of our own predecessors, of men and nations whose direct influence we carry about with us to the present day. From the days when art and civilization and freedom first sprung into being in their native soil of Hellas to the last event recorded by the contemporary chroniclers of our own stirring and eventful age, all are but links in one great chain . . . European history forms one great drama, which can never be thoroughly understood if divided by unnatural and arbitrary barriers into 'ancient' and 'modern'. It is essentially the history of progress. (p. 1)

Freeman understood Western history to form a unity based on the common language, habits, and institutions of European nations, on the fact that they were all drawn within the influence of the Roman Empire, and that they all converted to Christianity. In the *Saracens*, where Freeman sought to identify the primary cause of differentiation between West and East, Christianity emerges as central: 'The immemorial habits of the European nations prepared them in many respects for the reception of the Gospel; while its character, as a system purely of religion and morals, was no impediment to the European mind in its career of progress' (p. 2). Christianity, which lay down no political or civil precepts and allowed its followers to work out the best way to apply its teachings, had ensured that Europe had 'gone on steadily developing for nearly three thousand years' (p. 1). In stark contrast, Freeman describes how, 'earlier as it appears in the field of history than the West, the East has lagged far behind the development of its rival' (p. 3). Freeman believed that Islam

40. Arnold outlines his view of history most explicitly in 'The Social Progress of States', collected in *The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold*, 2nd American edn (New York: D. Appleton, 1846), p. 306. The best study of Arnold's philosophy of history remains Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952).

posed a barrier to progress and that consequently Oriental history possesses ‘a certain sameness and monotony which we do not find in the history of any western country’ (p. 4). It was for this reason that he held that ‘there are large portions of oriental history which are alike unprofitable and well nigh impossible, to be remembered’ (p. 3). ‘The mind’, Freeman asserted, ‘refuses to be burthened with the genealogies, or with the massacres, of the countless series of unknown princes and unknown dynasties which flit across the canvas in dazzling and perplexing succession’ (p. 5).

While Freeman’s later works can be dissected for statements that suggest biological racism, he continued to favour a cultural explanation of human differentiation. In the 21 years that separated the *Saracens* from the *Ottoman Power* Freeman adopted the Comparative Method, pioneered in the 1860s and 1870s by Friedrich Max Müller and Henry Maine.⁴¹ The Comparative Method was used to identify similarities in the languages, myths and laws of the European nations, and to advance the idea that the uniformity of Western culture proved the common descent of each nation from an original Aryan homeland. In articulating the idea of an Aryan race based on linguistic and cultural homogeneity, its practitioners were careful to ensure that their arguments were not confused with arguments based on physiology. Müller maintained that ‘Aryan, in scientific language is utterly inapplicable to race. It means language and nothing but language’, while Maine explained persistent tendencies in terms of the acquisition and transmission of characteristics which might be modified in the course of history by a variety of social processes.⁴² Freeman, too, while convinced of the existence of an Aryan race made it clear, in his essay, ‘Race and Language’ (1877), that the researches of the Comparative Method were to be distinguished from the work of those whose ‘business lies with the different varieties of the human body, and specially, to take that branch of his inquiries which most impress the unlearned, with the various conformations of the human skull’.⁴³ Freeman asserted that the Comparative Method focused on phenomena that depended on human will, not on physical laws, and pointed out that there was no

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41. On the mid-Victorian use of the Comparative Method, see Peter Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 35–36; J.W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 207–46; and Mandler, *English National Character*. On nineteenth-century views on race see: Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (London: Tavistock, 1977); Michael Biddiss, *Images of Race* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979); Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation. Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1996) and George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Fertig, 1978).
42. Friedrich Max Müller, quoted in Lourens P. Van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 206. On Maine, see Kenneth E. Bock, ‘Comparison of Histories: The Contribution of Henry Maine’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16.2 (1974), 232–62.
43. Freeman, ‘Race and Language’, in *Historical Essays*, 3rd ser. (London: Macmillan, 1879), pp. 173–230 (p. 183).

scientific proof that the Aryan ‘race’ was based on blood, that there may be ‘no such thing as race at all’ and that ‘the doctrine of race is essentially an artificial doctrine, a learned doctrine’.⁴⁴ Similarly, in an essay on ‘The Physical and Political Bases of National Unity’, he described the ideal ‘pure’ nation as one ‘where a continuous territory is inhabited by a people united under one government, and all of them speaking the same language’, and underlined the fact that he was ‘satisfied with unity of language, and I say nothing about unity of race’.⁴⁵

In the later *Ottoman Power*, Freeman’s strong conception of Europe as a cultural entity is reiterated and bolstered by arguments associated with the Comparative Method: ‘There was a time when the forefathers of all the nations of Europe . . . were all one people, when they marched in one common company from the common home far away’ (p. 4). The Aryans, having settled in lands which were geographically continuous, were subsequently able to add to the original tie of kinship and speech, the tie of common historical experience (p. 6). Despite these commonalities Christianity remains, for Freeman, the key to European progress. Its teachings, he explains, have forced development by necessitating the abolition of polygamy and slavery and by encouraging all European governments to continually reform ‘towards a system which does tolerably fair justice between man and man’ (pp. 14–15). In a move that sets up the Oriental ‘other’, Freeman notes ‘the Turk has no share in that original kindred of race and language which binds together all the European nations’ because, while ‘all the European nations, with the smallest exceptions, belong to Aryan stock . . . the Turks belong to the Turanian stock’ (p. 52). If this difference had stood alone, however, it would not have been enough to hinder the Turks from becoming European ‘by adoption’ (p. 53). ‘Here then’, Freeman explains, ‘is the great point which makes it altogether impossible for the Turks really to become an European nation. They cannot become an European nation, as long as they remain Mahometans’ (p. 54). For Freeman, the prevalence of Islam made it impossible for Muslims to adapt to European ways of life because the Qur’an bids true believers to fight against the infidels (p. 60).

There are clear similarities between the *Saracens* and *Ottoman Power*, in their motivation, methodology and representation of the Orient as ‘other’ to the West. Both works were prompted by the Eastern Question, exploited a simplistic model of the Orient according to contemporary exigency, and drew a distinction between Europe and the East based primarily on religion. While the parallels are important, the differences are significant. The *Saracens* had consisted of a set of historical lectures and Freeman had felt that ‘it would have been obviously out of place to do more than point the political moral of the story in a general way’ (p. ix). Still, he would demonstrate that the Turks were incapable of reform because Islam hindered progress. The *Ottoman Power*, by comparison, was an overtly political work and an attempt by Freeman to demonstrate that the presence of the Oriental Turk within the bounds of Euro-Christendom should not be tolerated. In this work, Freeman’s

44. Freeman, ‘Race and Language’, pp. 189, 191 and 181.

45. Freeman, ‘The Physical and Political Bases of National Unity’, in *Britannic Confederation*, ed. by Arthur Silva White (London: G. Philip, 1892), pp. 31–56 (p. 36).

conception of European progress as inextricably associated with Christianity produces a fear of the un- and anti-Christian Orient.

2. Islam and Orientalism

Said argues that Christian antagonism towards Islam first led to the idea of the Orient as 'other' but, though traditional fears and hostilities towards the rival faith persisted into the modern period, these were masked behind narratives that purported to be secular and objective, while still bolstering imperialistic ambitions.⁴⁶ In contradistinction to Said, Hourani and Lewis propose that an explicit preoccupation with Islam continued, and even intensified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as secular philosophers such as Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle sought objective re-evaluations of Islam and theologians like F.D. Maurice tried to accommodate Christianity to Islam. From a different perspective, Clinton Bennett has focused on Victorian theological and doctrinal debates and the development of two Christian schools of thought on Islam: the conciliatory school, represented by Charles Forster and Reginald Bosworth Smith, and the reactionary, represented by Sir William Muir and William Tisdall.⁴⁷ The *Saracens* does not fit neatly into any of these traditions. Freeman advanced an openly 'traditional' and 'confrontational' interpretation of Islam which shaped his account of Oriental distinctiveness. His attack was not motivated primarily by theological or doctrinal enquiry but by fierce political opposition to cultural contact between Europe and the Orient.

Freeman's *Saracens* can be compared most instructively with the writings of J.H. Newman. Like Freeman, Newman delivered lectures on the East in response to Britain's involvement in the Crimean War which were subsequently collected and published as the often forgotten *Historical Sketches*, vol. 1, subtitled *The Turks in Their Relation to Europe* (1872).⁴⁸ The confrontational attacks on Islam which are advanced by Freeman and Newman are almost identical and neither deviates in any significant way from the traditional Christian polemics of, for example, George Sandys or Humphrey Prideaux.⁴⁹ Furthermore, both Freeman and Newman incorporate their diatribes against Islam within a wider narrative of universal history, which assumes a form that was novel in the nineteenth century. As Arnaldo Momigliano has demonstrated, where traditional universal historians had emphasized lines of development such as the succession of a silver age by a golden age, or one empire by another empire, in the nineteenth century universal historians 'recognized the possibility that their typology, rather than providing criteria for the description and classification of successive ages of mankind, would lead to the

46. See Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

47. See Clinton Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam* (London: Grey Seal, 1992).

48. J.H. Newman, *Historical Sketches Volume One: The Turks in Their Relation to Europe*, new edn, 3 vols (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1970); the contents of these volumes were originally delivered as a series of lectures in October 1853 and published in 1872.

49. See George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610* (1615; 5th edn, London, 1652), and Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd in the Life of Mahomet* (1697; 8th edn, London, 1723).

partition of mankind into several co-existing groups or races, each with its own permanent features'.⁵⁰ Freeman and Newman characterize the East as a force which emerged as entirely separate from Europe, because Muslim peoples and societies were constrained, and permanently stereotyped by, the teachings of Islam. Christianity and Islam subsist, for both men, as fundamentally incompatible and antagonistic forces, and the history of the conquests of the Saracens, which witnessed the emergence of Islam as a militant force that clashed with Europe on its own soil, was the primary vehicle through which to demonstrate this fact. Newman perceived the historic struggle as one between 'Christ in the West, and Satan in the East', between the 'land of civilization and the land of barbarism'.⁵¹ Freeman explicitly approved of this view; 'as Dr Newman says, [the Turk's] victories – except when gained over fellow Mahometans – have always been at the expense of the Christian'.⁵²

The scope of Freeman's and Newman's lectures on the East suggests something of the traditional Christian attitude with which they approached Islam. Identifying Arab national history with the advent of Islam, both men exclude any view of Islam as a spiritual faith which is part of the unbreakable historical continuity of the Arabic peoples. This approach makes the advent of Islam appear to be a 'surprise' phenomenon that was 'revolutionary' in its effects, but secular rather than spiritual. While Carlyle had argued that Muhammad was a true Prophet and a hero, both Freeman and Newman entertain the idea, which did not deviate from medieval norms, that the Prophet was an impostor who was driven by lust and political ambition to unite spiritual and temporal powers.⁵³ Freeman believed that Muhammad's 'prosperity corrupted him', that his 'confidence in his own teachings . . . is by no means inconsistent with some alloy of conscious imposture' and that 'he may have been open to the charge of self-delusion' (p. 58). For Freeman, Muhammad is 'that illiterate camel-driver from Mecca', an 'adroit and consummate hypocrite', 'a destroyer in the general history of the world', 'voluptuous' and 'impulsive'.⁵⁴ The 'False Prophet' is most blameworthy because, 'he did not sufficiently examine into the true nature of Christianity A little more inquiry and Mahomet might have proved a Christian missionary.'⁵⁵ In sum, he 'was of a truth the very Antichrist, and his followers are justly branded with the name of Infidel' (p. 63). Similarly, for Newman, Islam has no divine, revealed, or absolute status. In his lectures Islam appears as a 'depraved' religion, a 'loose profession' and an 'imposture'.⁵⁶ In relation to other systems of faith Newman positions Islam somewhere between Paganism and Christianity, and he ascribes all Islamic doctrinal aspects which agree with Christian doctrine to Christianity, and the remaining

50. Momigliano, 'Two Types of Universal History', p. 235.

51. Newman, *Historical Sketches*, pp. 87 and 25.

52. Freeman, 'Mahometans in the East and West', p. 478.

53. See Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841).

54. Freeman, 'Mahometanism in the East and West', p. 449, and *Saracens*, pp. 7 and 59.

55. Freeman, *Saracens*, pp. 62–73.

56. Muhammed Al-Da'mi, *Arabian Mirrors and Western Soothsayers: Nineteenth-Century Literary Approaches to Arab-Islamic History* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 112.

aspects to Paganism. As followers of a rival and corrupt religion, Muslims are portrayed as ‘tools of the Evil One, and preachers of a lie, and enemies, not witnesses of God’ (p. 88).

The denial of divine revelation to Muhammad’s teachings is associated with the argument that the spread of Islam, as a false religion, can be due only to its use of the sword. Where conciliatory theologians such as Forster and Maurice doubted that the spread of Islam could be entirely due to the sword and pointed out that ‘signal examples are not lacking of [Islam] progressing among nations who never felt its sword’, Freeman and Newman maintain the traditional argument.⁵⁷ Comparing the propagation of Christianity and Islam, Freeman identifies one key difference:

The one is commanded to go and teach all nations; if charged to compel them to come in, yet that compulsion must be purely moral, for the same voice has said, that all they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. The other assumes that forbidden weapon as its chosen means of conversion; its preachers are warriors, its school of disputation is the field of battle. The one calls on the infidel to repent and believe, and so avoid the wrath to come, the other forces on him the immediate temporal alternative of ‘Koran, Tribute, or Sword’.⁵⁸

Newman asserts that violence is central to Islam and is harmonious with the Turks’ inherent barbarism. Islam is a religion in which ‘the soldier is the missionary, the soldier is the martyr also’ (p. 89). As such, Islam provided an outlet for the martial energies of the barbarous Turks, ‘it has given an aim to their military efforts, a political principle and a social bond’ (p. 73).

In arguing that Islam was a secular revolution, Freeman and Newman contend that it was soon exhausted and would have been a transitory phenomenon were it not for the sword. This understanding of exhaustion and degeneration shaped the idea of the Orient as backwards and despotic. Certainly, Freeman accounts for all the perceived ills of Oriental society by reference to the long-term consequences of the teachings of the ‘insufferably dull’ Qur’an (p. 190). Even though Islam may have alleviated ‘the great evils of the old oriental system . . . despotism, polygamy and absence of law’, it is still the case that ‘none of these has Mahometanism removed [but] by the very fact of alleviating it has sanctioned and stereotyped them’ (pp. 67–68). For example, where ‘the old despots of Nineveh or Babylon knew no law but their own will, and recognized no responsibility to God or man, the new legitimate Mahometan despot claims to be the Caliph or representative of the Prophet’ (p. 68). Far from making the new despot more responsible, in Freeman’s view ‘it is clear that the institution of despotism is thereby established and consecrated’ (p. 68). Polygamy, ‘one of the greatest and most fearful evils in the Mahometan system’ is reinforced by the teaching of the Prophet: ‘This is one of the cases in which the first step is everything’, he writes, ‘See to how Mahomet’s own precept is observed. His

57. Charles Forster, *Mahometanism Unveiled*, 2 vols (London: Durcan, 1829), I, 37, and F.D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World and Their Relations to Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1846).

58. Freeman, ‘Mahometans in the East and West’, p. 467.

followers have found it much easier to remember that he allowed four wives than that he allowed only four' (pp. 53, 69). Muhammad, Freeman concludes, 'has eventually done more than any mortal man to hinder the progress alike of truth and civilization. The religious reformer has checked the advance of Christianity; the political reformer has checked the advance of freedom, and indeed of organized government in any shape; the moral reformer has set his seal to the fearful evils of polygamy and slavery' (p. 72).

Newman similarly argues that Islam is 'as congenial to the barbarian as Christianity is congenial to man civilized' (p. 203). Islam is presented as antithetical to art and thereby to human creativity.⁵⁹ The Turks'

religion forbids them every sort of painting, sculpture, or engraving; thus the fine arts cannot exist among them They have scarcely any notion of medicine or surgery; and they do not allow of anatomy. As to science, the telescope, the microscope, the electric battery, are unknown, except as playthings. The compass is not universally employed in the navy, nor are its common purposes thoroughly understood. Navigation, astronomy, geography, chemistry, are either not known, or practised only on antiquated and exploded principles. (pp. 187–88)

Islam paralyses the human mind and, inevitably, leads to fatalism; a misconceived version of submission, which, in Newman's writings is the quintessence of barbarism (p. 199).

Freeman and Newman deal with the contemporary Ottoman Empire as well as its history, arguing that British support of Turkish rule in South-eastern Europe is misguided because the Turk will never reform. 'Full justice I trust I have done to the Prophet himself and the nobler among his disciples', declares Freeman, 'but what has been the result of our inquiry? That Mahometanism is essentially an obstructive, intolerant system' (p. 246). There could not be a 'sadder sight' than the ensign of 'him who in deed, though not in will, has been the Antichrist' established within the limits of what once was Christendom, in 'vanished Carthage, in Alexandria, in Byzantium, in the Holy City itself' (p. 247). His most cherished hope was 'to see the Cross gleaming upon the dome of St Sophia' (p. 247). The *Saracens* ends with a plea to the reader: 'let not the individual Christian have to recognize a Mahometan master as his sovereign. So long as a government remains Mahometan, so long must it be intolerant at home; so long will it only be restrained by weakness from offering to other lands the old election of 'Koran, Tribute, or Sword' (pp. 247–48). For Newman, too, the Turks are incapable of reform and their presence within Europe should not be tolerated because they are 'in the way of the progress of the nineteenth century' (p. 222). Concerned that the Turk 'has in its brute clutch the most famous countries of classical and religious antiquity', Newman hoped the barbarians would 'be surrounded, pressed upon, divided, decimated, driven into the desert by the force of civilization' (p. 228).

59. Al-Da'mi, *Arabian Mirrors*, p. 117.

3. Islam's 'strange secret sharer'

Freeman's traditional Christian antagonism towards Islam is similarly evident in the *Ottoman Power* but the deprecating tone of the earlier work is replaced by fear of Turkish invasion and destruction that is heightened by Freeman's suspicion that the 'Jewish' Disraeli was conspiring with the Turks against Europe. Said first suggested a link between European representations of Jews and Muslims in the introduction to *Orientalism*. 'By an almost inescapable logic', he wrote, 'I have found myself writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism. That anti-Semitism and, as I have discussed it in its Islamic branch, Orientalism, resemble each other very closely is a historical cultural, and political truth.'⁶⁰ According to Said, Euro-Christian representations of Islam and Judaism are alike informed by the idea of 'otherness' and are associated with the European exertion of power over the Islamic/Jewish Orient.⁶¹ Freeman's account of the Jew as an 'Asiatic in Europe' runs parallel to his narrative regarding the fearful barbarity and despotism of the Turk. His 'two discourses for Semites', however, do not merely resemble each other but are inextricably linked, in a way which challenges Said's understanding of modern Orientalism.

As we have seen, Freeman had followed Arnold and the practitioners of the Comparative Method in defining the West as a community of culture, rather than blood. For Arnold, Max Müller, Maine and Freeman, European progress was not guaranteed and historic development had been cyclical rather than unilinear. Arnold believed that states, like individuals, went through certain stages in a certain order before ultimately decaying.⁶² Müller held that the Indo-European language had grown by the two-fold laws of 'phonetic degeneration' and 'dialectic regeneration'.⁶³ Maine, as Burrow has pointed out, advanced a status-to contract dictum which, if it claims to be a law, is one based on the imagery of a life cycle and historical successions, and it predicts the decay and death of Aryan societies.⁶⁴ Basing his conception of race on culture rather than biology, Freeman, too, accepted that European historical development could be cyclical. His *Comparative Politics* (1873) fused the perspective of the new Comparative Method with a systematic exposition of Arnold's philosophy of history and studied the political institutions of the Aryans comparatively in order to demonstrate that the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, and the civilizations of modern Europe, constituted two discrete historical successions in an overarching process of progress towards modern liberty.⁶⁵

60. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 27–28.

61. Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', *Cultural Critique*, 1 (1985), 89–107 (p. 99).

62. There has been no extended study of Thomas Arnold's view of race but see, Richard K. Barksdale, 'Thomas Arnold's Attitude toward Race', *Phylon Quarterly*, 18.2 (1957), 174–80.

63. Müller quoted in Van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller*, p. 219.

64. John Burrow, 'Henry Maine and mid-Victorian Ideas of Progress', in *The Victorian Achievement of Sir Henry Maine: A Centennial Reappraisal*, ed. by A. Diamond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 55–69 (p. 57).

65. See Freeman, *Comparative Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1873).

Freeman's cultural conception of the Aryan race, his idea of an unalterable distinction between the West and the East based on religion, and his view of the cyclical nature of history, are all fundamental to an understanding of his fear of the Islamic East. Far from bolstering the strength and power of Europe *vis-a-vis* the East as Said would suggest, the Islamic and Jewish 'others' in the *Ottoman Power* are bound together by Freeman's explicit belief in an anti-Christian Oriental conspiracy which threatens the West with degeneration and recapitulation.

As Anthony Wohl has demonstrated, popular discontent at Disraeli's handling of the Eastern Crisis focused on his perceived Jewish ethnicity and produced a virulent and 'expressible' form of anti-Semitism.⁶⁶ Although Disraeli was baptized at age 13, his idiosyncratic writings helped to create the widespread image of the embittered and hostile 'alien'.⁶⁷ His response to the Bulgarian atrocities only heightened these suspicions as he first tried to deny the massacres had taken place – infamously dismissing reports of atrocities as 'coffee house-babble' – and then asserted they were of little consequence to British policy. While Disraeli's foreign policy was diplomatically legitimate, many believed England's foreign policy had been captured by the Jewish Disraeli and by forces antithetical to Christianity.⁶⁸ Among the most bitterly hostile of Disraeli's critics, Freeman consistently portrayed the Premier as a traitorous Oriental foreigner: 'The charge against Lord Beaconsfield is that he has never become an Englishman, that he has never become an European, that he remains the man of Asian mysteries, with feelings and policy distinctly Asiatic'.⁶⁹ The preface to the *Ottoman Power* contains a comprehensive exposition of Freeman's suspicions and prejudices regarding Disraeli:

There is another power against which England and Europe ought to be yet more carefully on their guard. It is no use mincing matters. The time has come to speak out plainly . . . it will not do to have the policy of England, the welfare of Europe, sacrificed to Hebrew sentiment. The danger is no imaginary one. Every one must have marked that the one subject on which Lord Beaconsfield, through his whole career, has been in earnest has been whatever has touched his own people. A mocker about everything else, he has been thoroughly serious about this . . . we cannot sacrifice our people, the people of Aryan and Christian Europe, to the most genuine belief in an Asian mystery. We cannot have England or Europe governed by a Hebrew policy. (pp. xvii–xix)

Disraeli, Freeman continues, 'is the active friend of the Turk', but the extent of 'the alliance runs through all Europe . . . Throughout the East, the Turk and the Jew are leagued against the Christian' (pp. xix–xx).

66. Anthony Wohl, 'Ben Ju-Ju': Representations of Disraeli's Jewishness in the Victorian Political Cartoon', *Jewish History*, 10.2 (1996), 89–134 and "'Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi': Disraeli as Alien', *Journal of British Studies*, 34.4 (1995), 375–411.

67. Sarah Bradford, *Disraeli* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), p. 2, and Wohl, 'Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi', p. 380.

68. On the justice and tradition of Disraeli's policy see Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, pp. 454–55.

69. Freeman, 'Present Aspects of the Eastern Question', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s., 20 (1876), 415.

The narrative of the rise of the Ottoman Power, of the manner in which the Turks infiltrated and superseded the Saracenic and Byzantine empires, is intended as a warning regarding the contemporary presence of the Ottomans in Europe. Freeman begins by demonstrating that the Saracens, like modern Europeans, were superior to the Turks in strength and civilization: 'The Turks and Saracens first came to have dealings with one another at the moment when the Saracen dominion which the Turks were to supplant was at the height of its power' (p. 89). The Saracenic Empire had become 'the dwelling-place of art, science, literature and philosophy', but it was this very predilection for the intellectual and the controversial that led to the decline of the Caliphate.⁷⁰ Factions emerged within the Caliphate which claimed severally to be the successors of Muhammad and it was only due to such social dismemberment that the Turk was able to penetrate into the heart of the Empire. The declining Caliphate became reliant on Turkish mercenaries to such an extent that the Caliphs of the late Abbasid period became nominal sovereigns and the Turks emerged 'as practical masters, as avowed sovereigns' (p. 91). Freeman contrasts the Caliph's nominal power with the real authority of the Seljuk Turks who pressed their conquests into Eastern Europe in the latter part of the eleventh century. This caused the Christian nations of the West to come to the help of their brethren in the East, but, Freeman argues, the effect of the Crusades in weakening the Seljuk Power was to enable the Eastern Roman Emperors to win back a great part of the land and, in effecting the break up of the Sultans' dominion, they 'paved the way for the coming of a mightier power of their own race': the house of Othman (p. 95).

Freeman would move on to the divisions of Medieval and modern Christendom which, in turn, promoted the success of the Turk but first he discoursed on the nature of the Ottomans. His account of the rise of the Ottoman Empire starts with a warning that 'we must be prepared then from the very beginning to find in the Ottoman rulers much that is utterly repulsive to our modern standard, much that is cruel, much that is foul' (p. 103). Under Othman's son Orkhan (1326–1361) the Ottoman Turks first made good their footing in Europe, but while his dominion was still only Asiatic, Orkhan 'began one institution which did more than anything else firmly to establish the Ottoman power. This was the institution of tribute children' (p. 103). While writers such as James Phillpotts had described the Janissary with relative detachment and noted the 'wonderful efficacy of this remarkable institution',⁷¹ Freeman laments:

The deepest of wrongs, that which other tyrants did as an occasional outrage, thus became under the Ottomans a settled law These children torn from their homes and cut off from every domestic and national tie, knew only the religion and service into which they were forced, and formed a body of troops such as no other power, Christian or Mahometan, could command. In this way the strength of the conquered nations was turned against themselves. (p. 104)

70. Freeman, *Saracens*, pp. 120–21.

71. James Phillpotts, *The Causes of the Success of the Ottoman Turks* (Oxford: T. and G. Shrimpton, 1859), pp. 12–14.

All of this is taken as evidence that ‘the Ottoman power was the power, not of a nation, but simply of an army’ which proceeded to ‘swallow up Greeks, Servians, and all other nations, bit by bit’ (p. 104).

Throughout, Freeman is keen to provide evidence of the barbarism and destruction which characterized the history of the Turks. Thus Bajazet (1389–1402) was ‘the first to begin his reign with the murder of a brother out of cold policy’ (p. 111). Under his rule, ‘foul moral corruption which has ever since been the distinguishing characteristic of the Ottoman Turk came for the first time into its black prominence. Other people have been foul and depraved; what is specially characteristic of the Ottoman Turk is that the common road to power is by the path of the foulest shame’ (p. 111). At this point, the best feature of Islam, the almost ascetic temperance that it teaches, passes away, and its worst features, the recognition of slavery, the establishment of the arbitrary right of the conqueror over the conquered, ‘grew into a system of wrong and outrage of which the Prophet himself had never dreamed’ (p. 111). Freeman narrates the advance in Turkish power which continued under Amurath the Second (1421–1451) and the events of the reign of Mahomet the Second (1444–1446 and 1451–1481). Where earlier writers, such as Edward Upham, admired Mahomet the Second as ‘the most artful, most courageous, and most persevering conqueror . . . in all respects a very extraordinary man’, Freeman dwells on this reign as one in which ‘the three abiding Ottoman vices of cruelty, lust, and faithlessness stand out’.⁷² By relating how Mahomet overthrew the last remnants of independent Roman rule, of independent Greek nationality, and fixed the Northern and Western frontiers of his Empire, Freeman claims that the divisions of Western Christendom promoted the success of the Ottoman Empire. Nothing helped the Ottomans so much as dissensions between the Eastern and Western Churches, whose members ‘could not be got heartily to act with one another’ (p. 124). Freeman recalls that ‘many of the Greeks said that they would rather see the Turks in Saint Sophia than the Latins, and they lived to see it. And the Latins, with a few noble exceptions, could never be got to give any real help to the Greeks’ (p. 124). Consequently, the Turks were able to thoroughly establish their dominion in Europe.

Freeman presents the seventeenth century as a time when Christians began to struggle for liberation. He condemns in high moral and Christian language the failure of Europe to help their brethren in the East. Thus it was now necessary ‘to take up the righteous cause, to undo the wrong that we have done, to wipe away the tears that we have made to flow, to burst asunder the chains that we ourselves have riveted’ (pp. 265–66). ‘Our thoughts’, Freeman urges, must ‘go back to the days when crusades were still crusades We should go forth with the pure zeal of the great assembly of Clermont; we should put the cross upon our shoulders with the cry of ‘God wills it’ on our lips and in our hearts’ (p. 266). Modern Europeans, like the Saracens and citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire, are

72. Edward Upham, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1829), I, 78–79, 217, and Freeman, *Ottoman Power*, p. 114.

superior to the Oriental Turk in many ways but they are divided among themselves on religious lines and nurture a misguided antagonism to the Eastern Church. For Freeman, the potential danger posed to Europe by the Turk remains, even while their Empire declines, because Britain is allied with the Turk against the attempts of the South-eastern Christian nations to revolt with the aid of Orthodox Russia.

4. Conclusion

The conventional portrait of Freeman as a mid-Victorian historian of Britain and the Continent, champion of the Aryan race and confident believer in Western progress can be modified in view of his two neglected Oriental volumes. In direct response to Britain's support of the Ottoman Empire and in attempting to demonstrate that the presence of the Turks within the bounds of European Christendom was intolerable, Freeman turned, not to Oriental source material, but to the work of authoritative Orientalists, and rearranged the past to represent the East as irrevocably distinct from, and actively hostile towards, the West. Drawing a distinction between the West and the East based on religion, Freeman viewed history as a panoramic struggle between Christianity and anti-Christian forces, from which Europe will not necessarily emerge victorious. While Said has argued that Western accounts of the Islamic and Judaic Orient reinforce and empower the European self-image, it is clear that Freeman's traditional Christian anxiety regarding the rival religion underpins his fear of a Judeo-Islamic conspiracy. The contemporary East remained a dangerous threat to the West because, while Europe was superior to the Ottoman Empire in many ways, the divisions within Christianity and the Asiatic sympathies of European Jews made it vulnerable to invasion. Consequently, Freeman urged a cultural and geographical separation of Muslims and Christians.

Freeman's volumes on the East suggest the complexity of Victorian representations of Islam that must be viewed in their specific historical contexts. The overall trend in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century approaches to Islam was undoubtedly one of increasingly positive and objective reappraisal. While secular philosophers such as Gibbon and Carlyle acknowledged Islam as a valid faith which ought to be respected, 'conciliatory' theologians discoursed on the merits of the rival system and sought to overturn the traditional critiques of the 'confrontational' school. Nevertheless, it is clear that at moments of direct engagement with the Islamic East Victorians could draw on convenient medieval stereotypes and crusading rhetoric to denounce British foreign policy. While Freeman and Newman appear to have been among a small minority combining anti-Islamism and political protest in the 1850s, such fusing of political and religious perspectives was characteristic of the public reaction to the crisis of the 1870s. As paranoia about Oriental conspiracies overwhelmed earlier fears of the Russian bear, Freeman was foremost among those producing negative portrayals of Jews and Muslims. That his writings now found a receptive audience and that he frequently acted as a keynote speaker at anti-Turk meetings points to fluidity in nineteenth-century perceptions of Islam, a point that has not been adequately acknowledged.

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