

TEUTONIC FREEDOM: RACIAL LIBERALISM
AMONG THE ANGLO-GERMAN VICTORIANS

ODED YAIR STEINBERG*

ABSTRACT

The late Charles W. Smith, among others, identified the racial component of European/Western Liberalism. What he referred to as “racial liberalism” had systematically excluded non-whites as well as other groups such as Jews from the individual rights and freedoms that were associated with liberalism since the end of the eighteenth century. This essay traces the idea of racial liberalism and contextualizes it by delving into late Victorian liberal thought. By focusing on a few central British and German liberal scholars (all residing in Britain), such as Karl Blind, E.A. Freeman, Goldwin Smith, Max Müller and others, the essay illustrates how racial liberalism shaped their view of historical time. Through a shared idea of Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic (Germanic) supremacy, these liberal thinkers imagined a racial hierarchy in which the Teutonic and Protestant nations of England and Germany, who dominated the racial ladder, distributed the idea of freedom throughout history. Thus, according to these scholars, it was also through the dissemination of liberal values that these nations validated their racial supremacy. The scholars’ perception of Europe (West) was tightly linked to this ideology since it was their Germanic forefathers who shaped history, ever since the fall of the degenerated Roman Empire. While making such historical claims, these Victorian scholars also discriminated against other people such as the Ottoman-Turks, Jews, and others, claiming that these people were in a stationary stage, unfit to adopt liberal values. The racialization of other people, as I will show, originated from the unique historical context of the late Victorian era. It was in this period, following the outbreak of the famous ‘Eastern Question’, that many British liberals adopted a harsh stance against the Ottoman Empire, claiming that Aryan-Christian Europe must once again oppose the Turanian and Semitic races.

Keywords: Racial Liberalism, Teutonic, Aryan, Victorian, Anglo-Saxon.

* Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Address for correspondence: oded.steinberg@mail.huji.ac.il.

Oded Y. Steinberg, Cardinal Franz Koenig Chair in Austrian Studies, is an assistant professor in the departments of International Relations and European Studies (European

“As far at least as our race is concerned,
freedom is everywhere older than bondage.
We may add that toleration is older than intolerance.
Our ancient history is the possession of the liberal”

E.A. Freeman¹

These are the words of Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892), a prolific man of letters and historian, who became a prominent advocate of racial liberal ideas during the second half of the nineteenth century.² Besides Freeman, in the following essay, I will focus on other English as well as German liberal scholars (all residing in Britain), such as Goldwin Smith, Charles Kingsley, Baron Bunsen, Max Müller and Karl Blind illustrating how the apparent oxymoron ‘racial liberalism’ shaped their view of historical time. By racial liberalism, the discussion studies the adoption of nineteenth-century liberal attitudes together with a racial hierarchical view of history and present politics. What these scholars considered as liberalism, which will be discussed later, did not contradict race, but sometimes nourished and sustained racial hierarchies, mainly justifying the alleged superiority of the ‘free’ Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic race. Through a shared idea of Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic (Germanic) supremacy, these liberal figures imagined a racial hierarchy in which the Teutonic and Protestant nations of England and Germany, who supposedly dominated the racial ladder, distributed the idea of freedom in Europe.³ According to these scholars, it was also through the dissemination of liberal values that these nations validated their racial supremacy over other non-Teutonic people such as Celtic-France and Ireland.

Nevertheless, the Teutonic racial identity was not the only racial classification that these liberal thinkers adopted. Together with this, as will be shown, they glorified their Aryan racial distinctiveness in order to differentiate between all of Aryan-Christian Europe and what they considered as other ‘lesser’, ‘uncivilized’ races such as the Turanian-Turks.⁴

Forum) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research, as an intellectual historian of international relations, is primarily focused on the exchange of ideas across social and national borders in modern Britain and central Europe. Within this framework, his publications have explored various aspects of British and central European intellectual, cultural, and diplomatic history. His latest book *Race, Nation, History: Anglo-German Thought in the Victorian Era* was published in 2019 (Penn: University of Pennsylvania Press).

¹ FREEMAN 1890: x.

² PARKER 1981: 825-846.

³ On the ‘Teutomania’ that had emerged in Britain (including Scotland), especially from the mid-century see STEINBERG 2021: 1331-1347.

⁴ It was Baron Bunsen and Max Müller who introduced the category of Turanian into the Victorian discourse. See MÜLLER 1854.

Namely, different racial classifications coexisted and were utilized depending on the scholars' argument: when aiming to stress their alleged Teutonic supremacy they racialized against other Aryan stocks (Celts, Latins, Slavs) and while speaking of the Aryan – Semitic, Turanian strife they employed another, more wide-ranging classification. In both cases, these Victorian scholars infused a patronizing facet into their liberal attitude which could be labelled as 'racial or condescending liberalism'.

The study of the racial-liberal perceptions of some of these figures, especially Freeman, did receive some scholarly attention.⁵ However, the essay, beyond delving into understudied figures such as Karl Blind, also argues that these scholars must be examined together under their common 'racial liberal' ideology. This is mainly because most of these figures, who also held vast connections between themselves, shaped Victorian society. For instance, Kingsley was one of the most influential Victorian novelists, Max Müller became the symbol of Anglo-German relations and known for his works on comparative languages and specifically Sanskrit while Freeman and Blind were man of letters who published multiple essays in Victorian periodicals.

1. RACIAL TIME

Instead of identifying the rise of modern Europe in the sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, in the eyes of many of the above scholars 'modern Europe' had already been conceived during the fourth and fifth centuries when the Teutonic/Germanic tribes toppled the Roman Empire. As the Prussian Baron Bunsen (1791-1860), whom I will discuss later, wrote:

The Germans put an end to the Western Empire, and, by settling in Italy, laid the ethnic foundation for the modern world... with the advent of the thoroughly pure-blooded Bactro-Aryan Teutons, a new outgrowth of Humanity in religion, as in all else, should appear upon the theatre of the World.⁶

Hence, the rise of this certain race, in that specific period altered European and global history. This is a prominent example of what I conceptualize in a different place as 'racial time'. Namely, these scholars bonded between the division of historical time and the alleged emergence of a certain race.⁷ Furthermore, these allegedly superior races introduced

⁵ MORRISROE 2011, 2013; STEINBERG 2018, 2019.

⁶ BUNSEN 1868-1870: II, 394.

⁷ STEINBERG 2019.

the notion of freedom into the world scene and without them, no historical 'progress' was ever possible. Although the essay will exemplify the concept of 'racial time' among English and German scholars of the mid and late Victorian era, it is argued that this concept may also be relevant to our understandings of other modern and constructed historical narratives as it closely links the liberal idea of historical progress with the achievements of Europe or the West, while sometimes racializing against the 'rest'.

I find the relationship between liberalism, race and the division of historical time or periodization as requiring far greater attention especially due to the prevalent conception of contrast between race and liberalism. Yet, what did these terms mean to the above nineteenth-century scholars? Of course, this is an extensive and complicated question.

For Arthur de Gobineau, the mid-nineteenth century French author, racial purity determined everything.⁸ In Britain, from the mid-century, writers such as the notorious Robert Knox and even the very influential Thomas Carlyle (*Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question*), based their world view on racial conceptions. Race was on many occasions the independent factor of history regulating historical time. It denoted an imagined hierarchy of human groups which was not necessarily biological but also cultural. Together with biology, it was religion, nation, language or class that determined racial hierarchies. As various studies stress, Victorian scholars developed a composite understanding of race. Ian Hesketh illustrates how Freeman fused his racial understanding with language.⁹ Duncan Bell shows the way nineteenth and early twentieth figures such as W.T. Stead fostered an "Anglo-Saxon racial utopia" between England and America. This utopia was not necessarily founded on biological understanding of race but also on a cultural vision of a shared Anglo-Saxonism.¹⁰ Importantly, as Sadiyah Qureshi exemplifies, race was not limited to the writings of a few Victorian scholars, but became popular also through the emergence of the ethnological and anthropological exhibitions (e.g. Crystal Palace).¹¹

As for nineteenth-century liberalism, for these scholars, it is not necessarily an organized, homogenous ideology but more a set of shared attitudes. Namely, instead of generalizing on a list of shared values, the liberal tendencies of these figures are best exemplified in their rather similar reactions to different political and social questions. For instance, their association with the British Liberal party, support of abolitionism,

⁸ GOBINEAU 1915: 188-189.

⁹ HESKETH 2011: 52-53.

¹⁰ BELL 2020.

¹¹ QURESHI 2011.

the enlargement of the voting census (only for men), aiding Christian minorities living under Ottoman rule (Bulgarians, Armenians etc.) and advocating liberal Protestantism while opposing dogmatic Catholicism.

Although my meaning in this essay is to demonstrate the peculiar nineteenth-century fusion of liberalism and race, there are of course many contradictions between these two concepts. Indeed, among nineteenth-century scholars such as John Stuart Mill, there was an embedded tension between racial hierarchies and liberalism. Mill for that reason harshly criticized the assumption that innate racial factors determine the economic and political conduct of entire human groups. When protecting the industrious nature of the Irish, he wrote:

Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences.¹²

Furthermore, various studies juxtapose race and liberal thought. As asserted in one study, during the 1880s the liberal Gladstonian idea of protecting minorities weakened because of the emergence of racial prejudice within the global stage: “national and racial feelings in Europe, in Egypt, and south Africa were becoming more heated, and liberalism everywhere was on the decline”.¹³

Duncan Forbes and later J.W. Burrow magnificently sketched the fusion of liberalism and historical perception among prominent Victorian scholars.¹⁴ Indeed, their works paved the way to what is today a flourishing field of study focusing on the political, religious, national and racial understandings of Victorian thought.¹⁵ While Forbes and Burrow were less engaged with the racial perceptions of liberal intellectuals, it was Uday Sing Mehta in his *Liberalism and Empire* who perhaps most famously illustrated the ‘racial liberalism’ of prominent Victorian figures such as Macaulay and John Stuart Mill.¹⁶ Hence, despite Mill’s above words against racial hierarchies, he was still, according to many, holding some racial views. David Theo Goldberg named this as “Liberalism’s limits”.¹⁷ Catherine Hall studied lesser-known liberal figures, such as the Birmingham preacher John Dawson and his racial perception of

¹² MILL 1888: 197.

¹³ ROBINSON *et al.* 1961: 466.

¹⁴ FORBES 1952; BURROW 1981.

¹⁵ Recent examples are BRANTLINGER 2011 and BENNETT 2019.

¹⁶ MEHTA 1999.

¹⁷ GOLDBERG 2008.

the colonies (particularly Jamaica).¹⁸ The term racial liberalism is not necessarily identical to the more subtle 'liberal imperialism'. There are studies like those of Theodore Koditschek that stress the close linkage between the racial and imperial aspects.¹⁹ Various 'liberal imperialists', indeed, justified the expansions of the British Empire through racial justifications. This was especially the case when justifying the British rule in parts of Africa and India. Charles W. Mills led the concept's theorization claiming that most debates understudied the racialized aspect of liberalism: "Liberalism, I suggest, has historically been predominantly a racial liberalism, in which conceptions of personhood and resulting schedules of rights, duties, and government responsibilities have all been racialized".²⁰ Hence, these studies, among others, identified different racial components in British and European liberalism exemplifying the systematic exclusion of non-whites as well as other groups (e.g. Jews) from the individual rights and freedoms that were associated with liberalism since the end of the eighteenth century. These studies mainly inform us of how racial liberalism cases were turned 'outside', towards the colonies as part of what is known as the "civilizing mission" which "was at best a mixed blessing, in large measure because it was everywhere underwritten and undermined by racism".²¹ Nevertheless, in the following discussion I will mainly illustrate how this racial liberalism also pointed into the inner European sphere allegedly confirming the superiority of the 'free' Teutonic nations over the despotic Roman Empire and its succeeding Celtic and Latin nations.

But what does this racial liberalism among Anglo-German scholars mean for our understanding of Anglo-German relations during the nineteenth century. Paul Kennedy states that the antagonism between Germany and England already began in the 1880s (if not earlier as he sees signs of antagonism already in the 1860s), when Germany emerged as a substantial economic power that began threatening England. Thus, the antagonism, culminating in two World Wars, was rather long.²² In this essay, as well as in other works, the conclusion is somewhat different and similar to various other studies the argument is that leading figures perceived England and Germany as close allies also after the 1880s.²³ These liberal figures maintained close connections and mutual admiration while

¹⁸ HALL 2002.

¹⁹ KODITSCHEK 2011.

²⁰ MILLS 2008: 1380-1397.

²¹ BRANTLINGER 2011: 9.

²² KENNEDY 1980.

²³ STEINBERG 2019.

fostering the racial (Teutonic) and religious (Protestant) affinity between the two countries. This 'special relations' lasted at least until the Naval Arms race of the 1890s and was even apparent on the eve of the Great War.

2. THE COMMUNITY OF RACIAL-LIBERALS

Many of the liberal scholars maintained scholarly, social and even familial connections with each other. To a certain extent, they formed a community of Anglo-German liberal Victorian scholars. Nevertheless, it must be clarified that they also conflicted on various political, social and historical issues. For instance, while many of his contemporary liberals supported Russia primarily against what in their eyes was the decadent Ottoman Empire, Karl Blind (1826-1907) was very much an anti-Russian campaigner. In a letter published in the newspapers, Blind described Russia as an "irresponsible, despotic, semi-barbarian Government, not amenable to the laws and usages of civilised countries... Russia's never-ending conquering tendencies hare kept at bay united strength, both in the direction of India and Constantinople".²⁴ Despite these differences, in the following discussion, I will mainly focus on the commonalities of these scholars, stressing how their shared idea of a glorified Teutonic past, was predominant in their understanding of how liberalism, also through racial superiority, evolved in both England and Germany.

In his obituary of the liberal historian Goldwin Smith (1823-1910), James Bryce, the Jurist, historian and Liberal politician, described his impression of Smith after the latter withdrew from his Oxford professorship for a position at the newly established Cornell University:

To Ithaca he went, and there I visited him in 1870 in company with his and my friend Mr. Albert Dicey, afterward Professor of English Law at Oxford. We reached him just after the fall of the Emperor Louis Napoleon, and found him happier than I ever saw him before or since, for he detested the Bonapartes and all their works, and had poured out the vials of his wrath upon the French ruler and Court many a time and oft in the paper of the *Saturday Review*. With all the Oxford Liberals of those days, except Jowett, hatred of the French Emperor was the first article of faith, looking upon France as the disturber of Europe. Goldwin Smith was, not indeed an admirer of Bismarck, yet a warm partisan of Germany in the war of 1870. He was more prone to racial antagonisms than an historian ought to permit himself to be; was markedly anti-Semitic, and had the old-fashioned English suspicion of the Gallic race.²⁵

²⁴ "Mr. Karl Blind on the Russian Government", *Shields Daily News*, July 25, 1885.

²⁵ BRYCE 1914.

Indeed, Smith was what I can name an exemplary racial liberal Victorian scholar, holding, sometimes even in the same paragraph, both liberal, tolerant views together with intolerant, racist ones. For instance, On the one hand, he was an ardent resister of British imperial expansion whom Bryce in the same obituary even defined as a humanist:

his feelings of humanity were often shocked by the oppressions practiced by Europeans upon the native races with whom they came in contact, and he wished to keep England free from, any such stain. Jingoism, though not yet called by that name, was just beginning to show itself in England, and it filled him with disgust.²⁶

On the other hand, he was the writer of a few racial, antisemitic essays such as *Can Jews be Patriots* (1878) in which he accused the Jews of exploiting Christian Europe for centuries through the practice of usury.²⁷ It was in the same year that Smith also expressed harsh anti-Ottoman/ Islamic views writing, for example, that

Islam, the military religion of the plundering Bedouin...never can produce civilization – moral, political, or even material. Industry, liberty, science, progress of every kind, are essentially alien to it. Militarism, despotism, fatalism, polygamy, concubinage, slavery, cleave to it as parts of its nature, everywhere and in all times.²⁸

It was no coincidence, that this anti-Islamic sentiment merged with Smith's antisemitism in 1878. During this year the Russo-Turkish War shook the European and global spheres, influencing the balance between the Great Powers. Smith defined the war as an "Indian War" since he accused his own Britain, headed by the Conservatives and Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister of Jewish origin, of neglecting the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire in order to safeguard its Indian interests.²⁹ This, indeed, was part of a greater debate that erupted in England and Europe during the 1870s. It was then that what became to be known as the Eastern Question, the struggle between the European Powers on the territorial fate of Ottoman lands, infiltrated the public British discourse underscoring religious, political, and most important for this essay racial issues. The main rivalry, following the Crimean War, confronted England and Russia, when the former, in fear of Russian expansion, supported the Ottoman

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 520.

²⁷ SMITH 1878a; HOLMES 1972: 25-30.

²⁸ SMITH 1878b: 648. The degrading views of Islam and the Orient are, of course, evident in SAID 1979.

²⁹ SMITH 1878b: 648.

Empire. Nevertheless, due to the violent acts of the Ottomans against their Christian populations, the pro-Turkish policy of different British governments (from Both political parties) raised inner harsh criticism.³⁰ One of the most dramatic events occurred in Batak (Bulgaria) when Ottoman forces massacred thousands of Bulgarian Christians. Following this, W.E. Gladstone, the famous leader of the Liberal Party, published his *Bulgarian Horrors* (1876) in which he named, among other reasons, the innate characters of the Turks as the reason for these atrocities:

They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view.³¹

Beyond the religious strife between Christianity and Islam, Gladstone chose to stress the racial aspect claiming that religion rather than race is not always an obstacle as evident in the peaceful character of north-Indians Muslims. The Turks, yet, denoted from the very beginning an unbreachable innate difference from western civilization. Disregarding any Ottoman achievements as well as their protection of minorities (e.g. Jews), Gladstone demeaned Islam as well as the Turks, representing a rising Turkophobic sentiment among the British public. This view was also part of Gladstone's ongoing rivalry with Disraeli and the Conservatives. For Gladstone and especially for Smith, Freeman and other liberals, Disraeli's support of the Ottoman Empire resulted from a natural Semitic-Turanian affinity or 'Asian Mystery' against the Aryan race and Christianity. Hence, in their eyes, the Turkish atrocities against the Christians were another episode of an enduring 'clash of civilizations'.

Smith, like many liberals in his period, named the Teutonic tribes as the vital force in the progress of European freedom and democracy. For instance, in an essay titled *The Greatness of England* (1878), Smith argued that English liberal values and success resulted from its dominant Teutonic character as well as from the fact that it was founded on an island and dissimilar to other continental entities it was less threatened by external enemies: "England is indebted for her political liberties in great measure to the Teutonic character, but she is also in no small measure indebted to this immunity from invasion".³²

³⁰ Multiple studies have been published on the 'Question'. For the most recent studies, see KOVIĆ 2011; FRARY and KOZELSKY 2014; PRÉVOST 2013; SCHUMACHER 2014: 64-80.

³¹ GLADSTONE 1876: 10.

³² SMITH 1878c: 4.

At this stage, before I further illustrate the racial perceptions of the different liberal scholars, it is important to note that many of these scholars, including Smith, possessed a complicated definition of 'race'. On many occasions they doubted the validity of race as a definite factor, arguing that there is no such thing as racial purity since throughout history different human groups became mixed. Furthermore, sometimes they questioned the scientific validity of racial reasoning. As the Anglo-German scholar Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) wrote to Freeman "race is built on sand – it may be very learned, but it will not stand a breath of harsh criticism".³³ Smith, for example, in the above-mentioned essay on England stressed that indeed the differences between races were not innate and "the same primitive institutions, are found in all the races that come under view; they appear alike in Teuton, Celt, and Semite... the less favored races, placed under happier circumstances, may in time be brought to the level of the more favored".³⁴ However, he continued, that "it is surely absurd to deny that peculiarities of race, when formed, are important factors in history". Thus, according to Smith, 'race' is perhaps not fixed, yet it is still a dominant aspect separating human groups. In any case, it is still evident that these scholars adopted racial hierarchies, separating between their Teutonic stock and other, less 'privileged' and 'free' races. The racial views of these figures materialized in their emphasis on Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon identity which supposedly situated them at the most superior stock of the Aryan race. Beyond this, they also echoed their Aryan identity that contradicted the alleged stationary condition of the Semitic and Turanian races.

Following one of Smith's anti-Semitic essays, the Chief Rabbi of Britain, Dr Hermann Adler defended the Jews, praising their contribution to world history while citing the words of the famous Anglo-Irish historian W.E.H. Lecky who identified the Jews as the main protagonists of progress and learning during the Middle Ages "while those around them were grovelling in the darkness of besotted ignorance".³⁵ Smith responded to this, claiming that the argument was historically flawed as it was these same 'barbaric' medieval people that were the

Teutonic organisers of modern Europe, the framers of the Great Charter [Magna Carta], the originators of Parliamentary government, the builders of the cathedrals, the creators of Christian art generally, the founders of the universities, the authors of that vast system of school philosophy which, with all its aridity and supersubtlety, formed an important instrument for human training.³⁶

³³ Müller to Freeman, June 1, 1870, Freeman Archive Manchester, MSS FA 1/7/592.

³⁴ SMITH 1914.

³⁵ ADLER 1878: 637-646.

³⁶ SMITH 1878: 885.

Many other of Smith's contemporary liberals also constructed the Teutonic tribes as the harbingers of modern European history as well as some form of constitutional democracy adopting both direct (as preserved in Switzerland) or indirect voting and constitutional practices (institution of the of *Witan*). These liberals, following Tacitus's *Germania*, also underscored the supposed equality that characterized the ancient Teutonic tribal system, contradicting it with the tyrannical manners of other races/civilizations. Consider, for instance, the racial liberal leanings of the famous mid-Victorian novelist Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), who was Regius professor of history at Cambridge while Goldwin Smith held the parallel position at Oxford. Kingsley, a Christian socialist, advocated together with his mentor F.D. Maurice for a significant improvement in the conditions of the poor. Nevertheless, he was a man of contradictions criticizing slavery as seen in his novel *Two Years Ago* (1857) but supporting the cause of the South during the American Civil War. Most importantly, although he praised racial mixture, he also constructed a meta-historical narrative which established the Teutonic Anglo-Saxons as the superior race of world history.³⁷ In one of his most successful historical novels *Hypatia*, he referred to the tribes as infusing "new and healthier blood into the veins of a world drained and tainted by the influence of Rome". The forefathers of the English and many other European nations, he argued, contributed dramatically to the freedom and morality of Europe:

Those wild tribes were bringing with them into the magic circle of the Western Church's influence the very materials which she required for the building up of a future Christendom, and which she could find as little in the Western Empire as in the Eastern; comparative purity of morals; sacred respect for woman, for family life, for law, equal justice, individual freedom, and, above all, for honesty in word and deed; bodies untainted by hereditary effeminacy, hearts earnest though genial, and blessed with a strange willingness to learn, even from those whom they despised.³⁸

In a series of lectures given at Oxford and titled *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864), he stated in front of his Cambridge students that England, more than any other place in Europe, succeeded in cherishing the Teutonic value of freedom since it evaded the tyrannizing influence of Rome:

And if our English law, our English ideas of justice and mercy, have retained, more than most European codes, the freedom, the truthfulness, the kindliness, of

³⁷ On Kingsley's various and sometimes contradictory facets, see CONLIN and KLAVER 2020.

³⁸ KINGSLEY 1853: I, XIV-XV.

the old Teutonic laws, we owe it to the fact that England escaped, more than any other land, the taint of effete Roman civilization; that she therefore first of the lands, in the 12th century, rebelled against, and first of them, in the 16th century, threw off, the Ultramontane yoke.³⁹

Kingsley, interestingly, adopted a gender-based typology, dividing between the masculine, strong Protestant-Teutonic nations and the supposedly feminine and weak Celtic and Latin Catholic stocks. As Linda Colley shows the British-Masculine versus the French-Feminine divide became dominant in England already in the eighteenth century, especially when the clash with France intensified.⁴⁰

Max Müller, the Anglo-German scholar of comparative languages and expert of Sanskrit, shared similar opinions. He identified England and Germany as close Teutonic and Protestant allies that stood as a bulwark against other European stocks and creeds. As Müller wrote in a letter to Kingsley, who was his close friend and relative through marriage:

England and Germany will represent the Teutonic element in Europe, with all that is good and bad in it; and, if united by common objects, they will stand like a breakwater between the Romans and Roman Catholics in the West and South, and the Slavs and Greeks in the East and North.⁴¹

The future of Europe as Max Müller repeated in various letters to several colleagues and friends, depended not only on the alliance between Germany and England but also on the union with America, which Müller defined as the third Teutonic nation. For instance, amid the Franco-Prussian War (September 1870) he wrote to the American abolitionist and liberal, Moncure Conway that

the political guidance of the whole civilized world belongs to the English, the Americans, and the Germans. If these three Teutonic nations hold together, the world will have peace again. But if these three Teutonic nations are divided by suspicion, jealousy, or pride, the furies of war will never be chained in Europe.⁴²

Müller was heavily influenced by his Prussian mentor, Baron Bunsen, a keen anglophile who served as the Prussian ambassador to Great Britain during the mid-century. Bunsen who followed the preaching of Friedrich Schleiermacher adhered to liberal Christianity and cherished the liberal

³⁹ KINGSLEY 1864: 294.

⁴⁰ COLLEY 1992: 252.

⁴¹ Müller to Kingsley, April 16, 1867, in MÜLLER 1902: 352.

⁴² Max Müller to Moncure Conway, September 18, 1870, in MÜLLER 1902: 407.

attitudes of England and Germany which distinguished them from Catholic Europe. As Bunsen wrote to his friend, the historian and educator Thomas Arnold, another passionate liberal and Teutonic thinker:

Possibly, one who belongs to those unfortunate exclusively Catholic countries of the Romanic nations, may in our time arrive at the point of waiving all considerations, from the conviction that the past is irrevocably rotten, that the existing is without foundation, and without hope, either in Heaven or on earth. But that cannot be the case with you, the son of great Albion, the pride of Europe, and the triumph of Teutonic and of Christian liberty – she who alone through a thousand years has retained the instinct of life, and known the mystery of creation, by making old things new, by clinging to the past, while calling forth a new manifestation of existence.⁴³

E.A. Freeman, deeply influenced by the Teutonic tendencies of Bunsen and especially Thomas Arnold, also merged liberalism with racial Teutonic dominance. This is evident in primaeval Teutonic institutions such as the *Landsgemeinden* of Switzerland that

we [English] may see the institutions of our own forefathers, the institutions which were once common to the whole Teutonic race, institutions whose outward form has necessarily passed away from greater states, but which contain the germs out of which every free constitution in the world has grown.⁴⁴

There was a tight link between the migration of the free, superior and noble Teutonic race (Angles, Saxons, Jutes) during the fifth century and the liberty of England. From that ancient period onwards the people's council which later developed into the parliamentary system restrained the power of the monarch, forming a free nation. A certain race manifested liberalism:

Since the first Teutonic settlers landed on her shores, England has never known full and complete submission to the will of a single man. Some assembly, Witenagemot, Great Council, or Parliament, there has always been, capable of checking the caprices of tyrants and of speaking, with more or less of right, in the name of the nation. From Hengest to Victoria England has always had what we may fairly call a parliamentary constitution.⁴⁵

Like other liberals of his age, he added Protestantism into the liberal-Teutonic cauldron stating that “as a rule, the Teutonic nations are Protestant,

⁴³ Bunsen to Arnold, *Idibus Martiis* 1833, in BUNSEN 1869: I, 238.

⁴⁴ FREEMAN 1890: 8.

⁴⁵ FREEMAN 1875: 42.

the Romance nations are Catholic".⁴⁶ Indeed, in Switzerland, Germany and Austria many Teutons are still faithful to Catholicism but those, he argued, were exceptions. Typically, the innate freedom of the Teutonic nations urged them to embrace the Reformation, which was according to Freeman a 'Teutonic Movement': "there can be no doubt that the Protestant theology suits a free people far better than the Roman Catholic theology does".⁴⁷ England adopted Protestantism "because we instinctively found them to be those which best suited a free, an enterprising, and a dominant nation".⁴⁸ As 'Teutonic islanders', the English were even better suited to hinder 'continental influences' such as Catholicism, developing a free society, institutions and a flourishing trading system. Hence, the adoption of Protestantism was another, natural stage since the geographical and racial (Teutonic) conditions already planted the seeds of English freedom.

Freeman was an ardent racial thinker, devising his narrative and periodization of world history as a clash between races and civilizations. He wrote of an enduring struggle between the freedom-loving Aryans and the despotic Semitic and Turanian races which had already emerged at the beginning of world history as evident, for example, during the Punic Wars when Latin Rome (Aryans) faced Carthage (Semitic).⁴⁹ The Aryan-Semitic and Turanian clash continued with the invasions of the Huns in the fourth century, the expansion of the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century, the Crusades of the twelfth century and finally in Freeman's own nineteenth century when the Turanian Ottomans persecuted the Aryan-Christian communities (Greeks, Armenians etc.).⁵⁰ For Freeman and others, as seen in the case of Gladstone the 'champion of minorities', the advocacy on behalf of the Christian communities was a central pillar of their liberal ideology. Nevertheless, together and sometimes due to their humanitarian activities they frequently racialized against the Turanian Ottomans claiming that they represent an inferior, stationary race. For them, the need to aid these suffering communities was a result of both religious (Christian) and racial (Aryan) reasoning.

For Freeman, as shown in the case of his contemporaries, the Aryan race also included an inner hierarchy separating the superior Teutonic nations (England, Germany, Scandinavia, and Switzerland) and the inferior Celtic as well as Latin nations. Freeman defied slavery, although racializing against

⁴⁶ FREEMAN 1892: 292.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 289.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 290.

⁴⁹ STEINBERG 2018: 651-679.

⁵⁰ FREEMAN 1877.

blacks; opposed the expansion of the British Empire (resembling the liberal ideas of the ‘Little Englanders’), together with retaining strong nationalistic opinions; supported the enlargement of the voting constituency, yet only among specific populations and defended the minorities living under the Ottoman rule while retaining antisemitic leanings. Thus, he represented racial liberalism with all its inner contradictions.

In comparison to the blunt racialism of Freeman, Karl Blind was, to some extent, less of a racial thinker, writing, for instance, that “I believe mankind, even in its most widely separated branches, is related”.⁵¹ A famous liberal German revolutionary who lived in England for decades following the failure of the ‘Spring of Nations’, Blind opposed Bismarck, advocated for republicanism, supported minorities and spoke of religious liberty. In one of his essays titled *A Good Word for Jews* (1889), Blind (whose adopted children were of Jewish descent) wrote that, unlike the prevalent antisemitism of nineteenth-century Germany, the ancient Germans had been far more tolerant:

our German forbears, during their heathen history, had distinguished themselves by a spirit of fairness toward those of another creed. There is no instance on record of a non-believer in the Teutonic religion having had to drink the cup of hemlock or to die on the cross for the sake of his faith.⁵²

This is an illuminating example since while Blind was a passionate liberal and even sometimes opposed racial thinking, he still, I argue, was a very central yet understudied figure in the popularization of the (racial) Teutonic narrative. He wrote numerous essays for different British, German and American periodicals, glorifying the study of Teutonic deities and the shared racial, cultural and philological commonalities between his two beloved ‘nations’: England and Germany.

While the Teutonic roots of Germany were obvious, Blind sought to stress the archaeological and cultural Teutonic heritage of England, writing, for instance, that: “this country [England] is very rich in place-names referring to the ancient German and Norse deities”.⁵³ Interestingly, Blind wrote these words in an essay that attempted to validate the ancient Germanic lineage of Queen Victoria, claiming that the monarch, together with many other English noble families, were descendants of Odin, an ancient Norse chieftain (not the God). As a German living in England, he aimed to rebuild the ‘bridge’ between the English and their Teutonic past,

⁵¹ BLIND 1870: 84.

⁵² BLIND 1889: 675.

⁵³ BLIND 1899: 372.

arguing that while the knowledge of Greek and Roman gods “is considered a matter-of-course accomplishment”, the English almost forgot their own “Germanic Pantheon, in which the creed of that race was once embodied, from which Englishman have in the main Sprung!”⁵⁴ In a different place, he described this English ignorance of Teutonic heritage with the following words:

Sometimes, in walking through the British Museum, the thought has struck me: what do these intelligent artisans, what do these fairly educated middle-class men, what do these fairly educated middle-class men, nay, what do the large majority of highly cultivated people whom one sees here gathering round the statues of Greek and Roman and Egyptian gods, what do they know, what do they care, about the creed of their own ancestors? Have the great mass even a slight notion of the grandeur, and, in its way, the beauty, of the mythological system which, in ages past, had been worked out by the Germanic race, – that race whose wild vigor changed the face of Europe, and whose adventurous sons founded the English nation, and gave this country its name?⁵⁵

As shown throughout, the notion that the Teutonic tribes transformed Europe was a prevalent view of the Anglo-German liberal scholars. Blind, in addition to this also set to popularize this Teutonic narrative among the wider English public. The English, for instance, could engage with their neglected past through ancient texts such as the Icelandic sagas: “The Edda is the Scripture of the ancient creed of our common forefathers – of Scandinavians, of Englishmen, of Lowland Scotch, and the great parent stem of Germans”. In the British Isles, the marks of Teutonism were apparent in various places mainly in the northern (Scottish) Islands of Orkney and Shetland “where the Norse race, a branch of the great Teutonic stock, has made an equally deep imprint by its blood, its speech and its laws”.⁵⁶ Hence, Blind despite different remarks concerning the equality of mankind, assigned cultural as well as racial uniqueness to ‘his Teutons’.

It was indeed during these years and especially during the War of 1871 that Blind, like Müller and other contemporary German liberals, expressed heightened German nationalistic and anti-French/Celtic remarks. Blind, in an argument that became very popular in Germany but also among English scholars, insisted that the Rhine had rightfully belonged to Germany and, hence, any French claim for ownership was illegitimate as

⁵⁴ BLIND 1872a: 599.

⁵⁵ BLIND 1872b: 290-291.

⁵⁶ BLIND 1894a: 612.

well as chauvinistic.⁵⁷ The Rhine, already from the time of the Germanic hero Hermann (Arminius), who defeated the Romans in the famous battle of Teutoburg Forest (9 AD), was a symbol of Germanic freedom. For this reason, when Blind described the deeds of the ‘national hero’ Hermann, shortly after the building of the *Hermannsdenkmal* in 1875, marking the victory of 1870-1871 over France (the ‘new Rome’), he stated that the monument “turned towards the Rhine: a doubly significant position in our days”.⁵⁸ Additionally, while the Teutonic nations stood for democratic institutions, the French repeatedly relapsed into autocratic regimes:

As the old Gallic, or rather Kelt-Iberian, spirit, though occasionally very turbulent, is eminently favorable to the one-man system. The Teutonic or Frankish infusion, which, in Montesquieu’s words, brought the principles of self-government ‘from the forests of Germany’, has in course of time become more and more obliterated in France.⁵⁹

In another, earlier essay Blind quoted Montesquieu’s words in full writing that “from the forests of Germany the liberties of England had come”. In this earlier essay he also mentioned that in Germany, dissimilar to France, the Holy Roman Empire was founded on the principle of electiveness, embedding the values of modern republicanism.⁶⁰

Blind engaged directly with questions of physical differences between the races as seen for instance in his response to John Rhÿs (1840-1915), a famous Welsh scholar and the first professor of Celtic at the University of Oxford. Rhÿs argued that racial differences divided the ‘fair’, Teutonic northern Germans, and the “darker”, Celtic southern Germans. Blind refuted this distinction claiming that a recent survey conducted in Bavarian schools showed that most Southern Germans were fair and hence belonged to the Teutonic race. In addition, Blind emphasized, that this survey included Jews, a fact that raised the percentage of the non-Teutonic element. In the same article Blind challenged another of Rhÿs’s claims. While the latter considered the Belgians as Celtic, Blind, through reference to Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, identified them as Teutonic.⁶¹ Blind, thus, was deeply involved in nineteenth-century racial discourse, aiming to authenticate the racial or in this case Teutonic origins of different groups. This racial reasoning appeared on another occasion when Blind contended

⁵⁷ BLIND 1871: 53-66.

⁵⁸ BLIND 1875: 243.

⁵⁹ BLIND 1894b: 602.

⁶⁰ BLIND 1892a.

⁶¹ BLIND 1892b.

that Russia was not part of the Aryan civilization but consisted of rampant Turanian influences that formed a despotic, illiberal regime. Blind's necessity to reject the Aryan roots of Russia, emerged during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) following the calls to support Russia, based on racial commonality, against the 'Yellow Danger'.⁶²

Attempting to pacify the evolving rivalry between England and Germany during the Naval Arms race, a decade and so before the outbreak of WWI, Blind referred to the fact that Englishmen and Germans are 'kindred races'. The two nations never fought between themselves but "stood shoulder to shoulder" against the French enemy. The peace between the two Teutonic nations of Germany and England was key to the prosperity and progress of humanity: "Sprung from the same stock, having similar aims of culture, Germans and Englishmen can do a great deal, in peaceful rivalry, for the spread of general civilization".⁶³

Together with England and Germany "representing the highest state of civilization on the continent", Blind, like the above-mentioned Max Müller, Goldwin Smith and others, also named the American settlers as "kinsmen in Blood", sharing the same Teutonic roots.⁶⁴ The famous statesman Joseph Chamberlain, a radical Liberal turned Conservative, also echoed such ideas linking England, Germany and America through a shared racial Anglo-Saxon and democratic heritage. In 1899 amidst the Boer War and following his meeting with the German Kaiser and Foreign Secretary he supported "a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race [Germany] and two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race [England and America]".⁶⁵

Freeman voiced these ideas in a series of lectures he gave while visiting the American Northeast in 1881-1882. In his first lecture in Boston (New England), setting the tone for the whole lecture tour, Freeman stated in front of a large crowd that his focus will be set on the concept of 'New England'. English history, he explained, must be divided into three 'homes' or periods: the old, middle and new. By the 'old' he referred to the ancient origins of the English people in the northern parts of Germany; the 'middle' denoted the settlement of some of these Teutonic tribes in the British Isles; and by 'new' he meant the rather recent expansion into America. In all three "homes" the "English people", as Freeman insisted on calling them, belonged through bonds of "blood and speech" to the same folk.⁶⁶

⁶² BLIND 1904: 801-811.

⁶³ BLIND 1905: 689.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 705.

⁶⁵ MARSH 1994: 471.

⁶⁶ Freeman argued that the term the 'English nation' is less accurate since a nation must include a group who strives to live under the same government. He also contended that the

Most importantly, dissimilar to other groups such as the Gauls and Spanish (which succumbed to Rome), the English people had maintained their freedom from antiquity and until their settlement in America. The first, most significant victory had already occurred in the old Germanic “home” of the English people when

Arminius saved the national life, the national freedom, of the English people, before it had become the English people, no less truly than those who saved the national life and freedom of the fully-grown English people of later times.⁶⁷

Indeed, American scholars such as the historians George Bancroft (1800-1891), Herbert B. Adams (1850-1901) and James K. Hosmer (1834-1927) followed their Anglo-German contemporaries when regarding the village communities of America, especially the ones established in New England, as embedding Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic freedom.⁶⁸ This racial and institutional lineage of free American settlements commenced in the forests of Germany and allegedly endured until the nineteenth century. As Hosmer wrote:

The blood and fibre of the whole great English-speaking race, in fact, is derived from those Elbe and Weser plains; government of the people, by the people, for the people, which is as the breath of its life wherever that race may be scattered, is the ancient Anglo-Saxon freedom.⁶⁹

The superiority of the Teutonic stock, therefore, was also manifested in American institutions.

CONCLUSION

Writing amid the Great War, James Bryce, one of the only major liberal Victorian scholars to still be alive, wrote:

No race, not even the Teutonic or the Anglo-Saxon, is entitled to claim the leadership of humanity. Each people has in its time contributed something that was distinctively its own, and the world is far richer thereby than if any one race, however gifted, had established a permanent ascendancy.⁷⁰

term the ‘English race’ is not fitting since the English people belong to the greater Teutonic stock that is part of the Aryan race; FREEMAN 1882: 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 34.

⁶⁸ On the American interpretation, from the eighteenth century, of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon myth and its multiple facets, see HORSMAN 1981; ROSS 1984; KAUFMANN 1999: 437-457.

⁶⁹ HOSMER 1903: 10.

⁷⁰ BRYCE 1918: 15.

To a certain extent, Bryce's words echo the eighteenth-century notion of Johann Gottfried von Herder who, occasionally, cherished the equality and historical contribution of all the world's nations: "each human being has, to be sure, all the abilities that his whole species has, and each nation the abilities that all nations have".⁷¹ It was the horrors of the Anglo-German clash that most probably influenced Bryce to neglect his own and especially the ideas of his fellow liberal scholars who swore in the name of their Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic supremacy during the nineteenth century. Indeed, as the essay illustrated, racial reasoning and mainly the association between the Teutonic nations and free institutions was at the core of the liberal ideology of the Anglo-German Victorians. While racializing against the Celtic and Latin nations and their Catholic conviction, these scholars regarded the Teutonic nations of England and Germany as the main pillar of modernity. For them, modern democratic institutions, and constitutions, which originated among ancient Teutonic communities, confirmed the innate dominance of their race. Furthermore, the racial attitudes of the liberal scholars were also turned, especially during the last third of the century, against the Ottomans. While they sought, as part of their liberalism, to offer humanitarian aid to the suffering Christians, they systematically racialized against the Turks and occasionally against their Jewish 'allies'.

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⁷¹ HERDER 2002: 159; Together with this reading of Hegel, he also adopted more hierarchical arguments concerning the supposed superiority of his own Germanic people. See, for example, HERDER 2004: 39-40.

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