

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v6i6.1284

Citation: Yigit, P., & Özkutlu, S. (2017). Protestantism as the Guarantee of National Liberty in the Eighteenth-Century Britain. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 6(6), 313-327. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v6i6.1284>

Protestantism as the Guarantee of National Liberty in the Eighteenth-Century Britain

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Abstract

In eighteenth-century, Britain was experiencing success in international arena, increase in economic conditions, improvement in education and developments in arts and sciences. However, especially the advance in natural sciences and the growing popularity of rationalism harmed the political, social and psychological power of religion during the aforementioned period. Due to the religious controversies, Protestant principles lost their crucial role in maintaining the political and social order in Great Britain. Besides internal threats, the country had experienced external threats –such as France- as well. The peril of France was also considered as a direct threat of Catholicism to the Anglican Church. Therefore, the Anglican Church needed to be defended against both the internal and external threats. As a result, the church was re-established as the basis of political and moral order by the attempts of Anglican thinkers and religious men. In order to show how Anglicans had promoted their religious principles, the works of John Brown (1715-1766) -one of the most influential religious men of the period- were analysed. The controversy between Protestantism and Catholicism, namely between Great Britain and France, led Brown to use Protestantism as the basis of English liberty and attack to Catholicism by means of the concept of “liberty” provided by Protestant principles. At this point Brown defended Anglicanism and indicate Anglican’s opposition to Catholicism in terms of liberty. The aim of this paper is to reveal how the concept of ‘liberty’ and Protestantism were used together in order to preserve the commonwealth in Great Britain. In addition, how the concept of liberty changed in John Brown’s works after the threat of Catholicism and became a social concept in the English Enlightenment is also examined.

Keywords: Eighteenth century, English Enlightenment, Anglican Church, Religion, Freedom, Rationalism.

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The developments in philosophy and science and the growing popularity of rationalism encouraged non conformists to have heterodox opinions and private judgement, while directing them to become absolute threats to social order in the eighteenth-century Britain (Wykes, 1996). After experiencing a civil war over religious issues in the previous century, Great Britain was under the threat of religious controversies in the eighteenth-century since the insistence of reason and secularization caused licentiousness and corruption. This weakened the privileged status of the established Church, and thus the Anglican Church had to re-establish and defend itself against the varieties within the church (Plummer, 1910; Walsh and Taylor, 1993; O' Gorman, 1997; Sykes, 1934; Sykes, 1926). Both the internal and external threats challenged the Anglican tradition. Therefore, the threats of free thinkers, deists, atheists, dissenters and Catholics needed to be eliminated to prove Anglican church as the established church; namely to maintain the stability of the British constitution.

Especially the works of the intellectuals like John Locke, Earl of Shaftesbury, John Toland, Lord Bolingbroke and David Hume worried Anglicans, and led them to defend Protestant principles more passionately to preserve Anglican Church as the established religious authority of Great Britain. To illustrate, Locke in his *A Letter Concerning Toleration* suggested separating the principles of the state and church. For him, the state aimed to protect external interests of men like the interests related to life, liberty and welfare, whereas church dealt only with internal ones like salvation, and tried to regulate men's lives "according to the rules of virtue and piety" (Locke, 1740: 3). This divorce between the state and the church was considered as a direct threat to the Anglican Establishment in the conditions of the period. Similarly, for Anglicans, Shaftesbury's insistence on finding the foundation of ethics in the constitution of the human nature instead of God harmed the moral and political order (Shaftesbury, 1732). In addition to this, John Toland, the author of *Christianity not Mysterious, or, a Treatise showing, that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason nor above it, and that no Christian doctrine can properly be called a Mystery* was another peril for the Anglican state. Briefly, he emphasized that although reason and the gospel were not contradictory, they seemed in contradiction with each other due to the conception of human beings, and he added that people adored what they could not comprehend (Toland, 1702). Moreover, Lord Bolingbroke advocated the superiority of human knowledge, and opposed to the idea of revealed religion. He had questioned the scripture authority; the Old Testament could not be the product of Holy Ghost as it was impossible for it to be transmitted through ages (Bolingbroke, 1749; Bolingbroke; 1752). He was against the idea of gaining knowledge by a priori reasoning, and he argued that man could not achieve knowledge of God's moral attributes by reasoning a posteriori. Obviously, for him, the moral values were not found in the idea of God, rather they were invented by mankind (Bolingbroke, 1754). It is not hard to see that such an elimination of God from social life could harm the Anglican establishment in the given period. Similar to the ideas of Shaftesbury and Locke, Toland's claims about the rationality in the doctrines of Bible and the supremacy of rationality over religious doctrines

were regarded as criticisms against religion; although he stated that his only purpose and duty was to defend Christianity (Toland, 1702).

David Hume also stated that human beings were not able to discover any attributes of God and the principles of action that govern them even if the Divine Being had those attributes (Hume, 1748a). For him, it is not possible to suppose or infer the existence of any attributes of God as the cause of everything since such a reasoning goes “beyond what has immediately fallen under our Observation” (Hume, 1748a:224-225). Human beings, by reasoning, could achieve the fact that virtue, honest, wisdom and power were the most valuable qualities but they adapted them to the idea of God (Hume, 1748a). God, for Hume, was only a product of human imagination (Hume, 1748a) and the idea of religion enslaved people (Hume, 1748b).

Echoing other thinkers mentioned above, for Anglicans, Hume’s rejection of God as the moral governor of the universe could lead moral disintegration and contribute to the public mischiefs in the state. Those threats necessitated Anglican Church to be defended as the basis of political and moral order. In order to do that, John Brown (1715-1766) one of the most influential religious men of the period tried to promote Protestantism by presenting it as the only sect that provided freedom for the subjects. The doctrinal and political controversy between Protestantism and Catholicism, namely between Great Britain and France, led Brown to use Protestantism as the basis of English liberty, and he defended Anglicans’ stand towards Catholicism in terms of liberty. The aim of this paper is to reveal how the concept of liberty was used together with Protestantism for the preservation of the commonwealth, how it was changed in John Brown’s works after the threat of Catholicism as it became a social concept in English Enlightenment.

Individual Liberty vs. National Liberty

The religious Principle of Protestant Christianity seems to have taken the Lead, even of the Love of civil Freedom. The Dread of Popery was, at least, equal to that of arbitrary Power: The national Honour and Conscience coincided with, and confirmed the Christian Principle: These three united Powers raised Liberty to the brightest Throne she ever sat on (Brown, 1765:93-94).

In 1765, John Brown defined the era after Glorious Revolution with those words, and established a link between liberty and Protestant Christianity. In this light, Protestantism as the rational religion was introduced as the foundation of Great Britain’s liberty, and liberty appeared under the restrictions of religion. The religious controversies and thus the political worries of Anglicans brought Brown to focus on morality in his works that he started publishing in 1743. However, after 1751, liberty was introduced as the opposition to the tyranny of Catholicism; a concept related with Protestantism.

At the beginning of Seven Years’ War, Britain lost Minorca to France. This led the war to be seen in favour of France at first, although Great Britain won at the end. Brown published *An Estimate of The Manners*

and Principles of The Times (1757) at that time, and suggested a moral regeneration for Great Britain. According to Brown, the character of the kingdom was degenerated because of the corruption in principles and manners. Although, for Brown, the liberties of the English nation were found in the “natural Climate, Stock, and Soil” (Brown, 1757a:18-19), the virtue to secure their liberties were corrupted in the absence of salutary manners and principles (Brown, 1757a). The moral character of the nation was to preserve the nation’s spirit of freedom and thus the stability of Great Britain (Brown, 1757a; Brown, 1757b). Therefore, for Brown, the maintenance of the political society and also the happiness of the subjects depended on the moral part of the political state; what provided the internal unity of the state was the moral character. At this point, Brown had introduced the necessity of religion and Protestant principles to avoid the internal destruction while also providing a national liberty for Great Britain. That is to say, in his theory, liberty of the whole nation was provided under the control of religious principles. However, liberty had not been analysed as the national liberty in his works written before 1751. In other words, Brown began to investigate the concept of liberty as a social concept after the threat of France had been felt in Great Britain. Brown studied liberty at an individual level, and he tried to establish a link between truth, virtue and freedom by means of the rectifying character of reason on passions in his early works. His aim was to achieve a virtuous, free and happy life. In order to do that, he defended a moral sense theory based on reason. Virtue, truth and liberty were all discussed within the framework of the subjects’ happiness. Afterwards, they became necessary concepts to maintain the durability of the political state. For Brown, the aim to achieve individual freedom was replaced by the one in order to suppress individual freedom, and reach a national freedom instead. Virtue turned out to be public virtue found in the idea of God, and it served for the happiness for all. At this point, morality had become a political issue contributing to social order, and Brown’s insistence on religion as a political tool had taken the place of his moral sense theory. Religion as an alternative to his moral sense could be seen in his following words; it was necessary “to [re]establish the public Happiness of Mankind on the solid Basis of *Virtue*, which is the End of *Religion itself*” (Brown, 1758: 69).

Brown’s defence of national liberty through religion, namely Anglicanism, led him to be criticized as giving up his liberal ideas. In this respect, Brown’s early works were considered as more “liberal” than his works appeared after 1751. The author of the *Works of the British Poets*, Robert Anderson (1795), claimed that Brown had liberal ideas even in divinity, and he did not pay attention to the doctrines of Christianity. Likewise, William Clarke and Robert Shelton Mackenzie (1833: 330) also stated that his liberal opinions in his early works had undergone a considerable change “when his works betrayed a strong bias towards authority”. It could be stated that the conditions of the eighteenth-century triggered him to change his ideas on liberty, which had been introduced as one of the rings of his moral chain before.

The Chain of Morality

Brown's first work called *Honour: A Poem* was published in 1743. The analysis of this poem is necessary in order to understand how Brown enlarged the concept of virtue as a social virtue in his later works. The main object of this poem was to indicate the relationship between truth and virtue, which are the main rings of Brown's moral chain. In order to do that, first of all he investigated the foundation of honour. For him, everyone wanted to find honour but each saw it in different situations; "The Soldier views her in shining Blade; The Pedant 'midst the Lumber in his Head" (Brown, 1743:6). According to him (1743), honour could only be found in truth, virtue and honesty. Brown's insistence on reason had also appeared at this point. He asserted that people should take reason as their guides to find honour in virtue. Passions could deceive mankind as people "fall down and worship what themselves have made [by passions]" (Brown, 1743:7). Therefore, people should "discard Self-Love; set Passion's Glass aside" to find true honour. He also talked about heroes in history to mention the significance of reason. He saw tyrannical heroes as "baleful Comets flaming in the Skies"; whose vices "cloud the Splendor of the brightest Line" (Brown, 1743:13). In order to differentiate those tyrants from honoured men, the eye of reason was required.

After defending the superiority of reason over passions, he argued that virtue and truth were the same but they differed in name. According to Brown (1743), men should achieve virtue to ascend to truth. This naturally brought Brown to claim that anything vicious could not be truth; he considered truth as eternal. In the same manner, virtue should also be stable and immortal. This means, for Brown, that honour lying in virtue should have a fixed nature like truth because all of them are discovered by means of reason.

His emphasis on reason could also be seen in his *Essay on Satire*, which was published in the same year. It was a eulogistic essay about Alexander Pope³ but what made it significant was the criticisms of passions. For him, passions were unbridled and destructive to mankind. People should discard from the chains of passions to be virtuous. Brown stated that, only those people "whose eye, from passion's film refined, Can see true greatness in an honest mind; Can see each virtue and each grace unite, And taste the raptures of a PURE delight" (Brown, 1745:6).

The Jacobite Rebellion that broke out in 1745 led Brown to point out the nature of truth and virtue by emphasizing the role of reason again. Brown was the vicar of Morland in Westmorland when the rebellion took place. As a passionate supporter of Hanoverian rule, he stayed in Carlisle and acted as a volunteer during the rebellion (Crimmins, 2004). The Jacobite rebellion failed because people had the fear of tyranny, and they did not want the return of a Catholic monarchy (Roberts, 1996). After the suppression of the Rebellion in 1746, Brown preached two sermons to justify a Protestant regime, which could

³ Alexander Pope (1688-1744), was a Catholic poet and the author of famous "An Essay on Man" (1734-5). He got on social terms with the first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. He was also friend of Henry, St. John (Viscount Bolingbroke) and William Warburton (1698-1779) to whom he left the copyright of his printed works. The *Characteristics* of Brown as the refutation of Earl of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* was originally the idea of Pope. See 67n. For more on Pope, see Howard Erskine-Hill "Pope, Alexander (1688-1744)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008).

promote religious freedom against the Catholic tyranny. Brown (1746) revealed his ideas on religion in detail, and endeavoured to establish a link between truth, virtue and religion; Protestant principles. He defended the Protestantism, and established a balance between its rationality and faith against the attacks of Catholicism. Before criticizing the oppression of Catholicism, he (1746) underlined the necessity of religion for subjects to achieve free and virtuous lives while stating that religious truth could “elevate the human Soul, and raise it to a Love of Freedom” although atheism made people be licentious and vicious (Brown, 1746:14-15). Moreover, Brown (1746) pointed out that only the truth of Protestantism could be regarded as the religious truth because for him, the true Christianity was Protestantism. The Catholic principles could be the instruments of oppression, and could not be seen as true Christian Principles. According to Brown the head of the Catholic Church, “is the great Enemy of Truth and Freedom, the great Patron of Tyranny and Falsehood, he may at least in a secondary and figurative Sense be justly accounted Anti-Christ” (Brown, 1746:17). In addition to this, Brown censured Catholicism for being superstitious and thus regarded it as the source of irreligion and licentiousness. For him, it “invert[ed] all the Dictates of Morality” (Brown, 1746:39-40), enslaved its votaries, and promoted corruption by destroying the virtuous and just. As a matter of fact, he was talking specifically about France as follows; “that neighbouring Kingdom, so often the unworthy Object of our Envy and Imitation, is in a state of deep and confirmed slavery” (Brown, 1746:45). Brown stated that (1746) the infidelity and the vice of Catholic monarchy caused France to lose its freedom and virtue; although France was a powerful Kingdom, Brown did not consider it as the kingdom of liberty. Conversely, in Great Britain, Protestantism provided “a surer and nobler Foundation of Liberty than any ancient Heathens were ever possessed of” (Brown, 1746:18). The Protestant principles assisted by reason “gave Mankind a juster and more enlarged Conception of each other’s Rights” (Brown, 1746:18). In other words, in Protestantism, the principle was superior to passion and impulse, and people had respect to other’s rights. For Brown (1746), people could achieve freedom only in the possession of their rights. In brief, he stated that only the knowledge of pure religion, Protestantism, would make the subjects free.

Brown added the ring of ‘religion’ to the previous chain which was composed of virtue, truth, reason and freedom by means of these sermons. Religion, for Brown (1746), should also be used to resist the solicitations of the senses and passions, which were strongly urging demand. Actually this morality chain was to maintain social order, and the rings were connected to each other for the sake of the society. Religion, for him (1746:35), “is the natural Parent of Integrity and Virtue”, and it must be inculcated into people to maintain social order. Although he examined religion as a political instrument in his *Essays on the Characteristics* (1751) in detail later, he also focussed on the sanctions of religion and their rectifying role in society in these sermons. Brown (1751:35) laid special emphasis on the enforcement of religious sanctions as he believed that they were “infinitely more powerful than these [human laws]; because the Good it promises, and the Evil it threatens, are infinitely greater and more lasting”. Therefore, religion and

its “Sanctions of future Rewards and Punishments, from which it derives its Force, must be very strongly impressed on the human Mind” (1751:32-33) to maintain social and political order.

This brought Brown (1751) naturally to indicate that true religion, Protestantism, was the source of virtue, truth and freedom in Great Britain. It was reasonable for Great Britain to overcome the threat of superstition and tyranny, namely the enemies of liberty, by means of the laws of the gospel (Brown, 1751). Great Britain could be a peaceful and free kingdom only on the condition that Protestantism was preserved and Catholicism was avoided. It is worth quoting him to clarify this point;

If we practice those Truths we know, and rightly use that Freedom we enjoy, we shall be established as on a Rock; we shall still rise above the Waves that threaten us; *tho they toss themselves, yet shall they not prevail; tho' they roar, yet shall they not pass over us* (Brown, 1751:48).

It is the case, Brown introduced to use protestant principles in maintaining the social order by emphasizing the liberty of Protestantism since he attacked Catholicism on the basis of freedom. These sermons highlighted the interdependence between civil liberty and Protestantism, and they also explained Brown's remedy for Great Britain against the threat of Catholicism in the eighteenth-century.

After three years, Brown published another poem *On Liberty*, and indicated his contentment about freedom emerged in peace, after the War of the Austrian Succession had ended. In this poem, he talked about truth, virtue and freedom like his previous works. After he considered truth and virtue as same in 1743, he regarded truth and freedom as twin-born sisters in 1749. At this point, he (1749) underlined that freedom could not be possible if there was falsehood and vices. In the following year, Brown also highlighted the necessity of true pleasures in achieving virtue in his other sermon preached in 1750. To Brown (1750:2), “no true and lasting pleasure is, or can be obtained, without the Practice of VIRTUE”. Although some vices would pretend to conduct people to true pleasure, it could be realized that their pleasures were only delusions because they would necessarily be followed by fatal circumstances in the end. For Brown (1750:3), the vices could only “destroy the Health of the Body, and all the Powers of the Mind”. Therefore, the misery and ruin were unavoidable unless the appetite was honest, true, lovely, praise and virtuous (Brown, 1750:13).

In this sermon, Brown (1750) also criticized the maxims of luxury and pleasure, which were dominant in the present time. He stated that people could not obtain delight from a false pleasure; an appetite provided false pleasure was exhausted immediately after it was satisfied. In Brown's words (1750: 6), “as new Objects rise before us, we renew our Pursuit, find ourselves again deceived, and thus pass our Time between Expectation and Disappointment”. According to him, virtue was essential for true pleasures to be emerged, and human mind had to be cultivated to achieve virtue. At this point, Brown (1750) introduced religion as the external aid for the growth of virtue in human mind.

Until 1751 he explained the similarity between truth and virtue, the co-existence of truth and liberty, the necessity of reason to rectify passions and finally religion as the foundation of all of them. However, his moral chain was replaced by religion's social and political power in maintaining order of the commonwealth by the publication of his *Essays on the Characteristics* in 1751.

Religion as an Instrument

During the English Enlightenment, Anglican religious men thought that the elimination of God and the enforcements of unwritten laws would destroy the public peace. The divorce between ethics and religion was regarded as a direct threat to social order (Warburton, 1738). In order to protect religion from the danger of deism and atheism; "all the works of Infidelity" (Warburton, 1809: 36), Brown published his popular *Essays on the Characteristics* in 1751. It was so applauded as to be printed for the fifth time in 1764.

In *Characteristics*, Brown's main object was to show the universally motivating character of religious principles in achieving common good in a political society. In order to do this, he introduced the necessity of reason and religious principles. Men had selfish passions, and they had to be regulated in the light of reason and religion. Thus, the harmony between selfish passions and the common good could be reached. This coexistence of morality and religion, for Brown (1751), contributed to the stability of the state and the happiness for all. At this point, Brown had to talk about the nature of virtue to provide a solid basis for his moral theory. As he insisted on the stability of the nature of virtue, he attacked the relativity of virtues. In order to provide the permanent nature of virtues and vices, Brown (1751) regarded the faculty of reasoning as the common guidance for all the creatures of God. Firstly, he defended the superiority of the faculty of reasoning. Secondly, he argued for the existence of God, criticized atheism and finally he advocated the cooperation of religion with morality for maintaining common good under the light of fixed virtues.

For Brown, the most dangerous threat to moral order is the dominance of the senses and the relativity of vices and virtues thus he attacked them. In Brown's words (1751:12); "THE Passions are no more than the several Modes of Pleasure and Pain, to which the Author of Nature hath wisely subjected us, for our own and each other's Preservation". The passions and senses were seen as the sources of all ideas in human mind. However, it is the case that only the "apparent, not real Good and Evil are universally the Objects of all our Passions" (Brown, 1751:14). Therefore, the difference between the realities and appearances could not be discovered by the guidance of the passions; rather reason was required to correct passions and to determine what is true, false, good or evil. According to the passions, what makes people joyful is good, what frightens them is danger and what makes them angry is injury. In order to distinguish them from realities, reason as the "superior and corrective Power" (Brown, 1751:40) should examine circumstances,

separate ideas and correct the passions. Evidently, passion as the criterion to test the truth was not able to give the realities without the province of reason.

Brown endeavoured to provide the stable nature for virtues and vices by means of introducing reason as the only guide. For him (1751:145), human beings had equal reasons to claim that the nature of virtue and vice was “fixed, certain, and *invariable*”. Actually, their permanent nature was to contribute to public happiness which Brown tried to achieve through his moral theory. According to him (1751), there needed be certain actions that could produce happiness for all under the same circumstances. To reinforce this point, he (1751:143) added that:

All Ages and Nations having without Exception or Variance maintained that Humanity, Fidelity, Truth, Temperance, and mutual Benevolence, do as naturally produce Happiness... That Cruelty, Treachery, Lying, Intemperance, Inhumanity, Adultery, Murder, do as naturally give Rise to Misery.

For him, on the one hand, virtues like humanity and honesty would contribute to public happiness in all times and nations. On the other, vices like inhumanity and lying would destruct common wealth. In this light, he regarded anything which contributed to the happiness for all as virtue, and saw anything destructive to common good as vices. Brown (1751:143) summed up his point in those words;

Whatever tends to the Good of all, is by the consent of all, denominated Virtue; that whatever is contrary to this great End, is universally branded as Vice; in the same Manner, as whatever nourishes the Body is called Food; whatever destroys it, Poison.

Regarding the question of virtue, Brown’s goal was not to explain which actions were the virtuous and which ones were the vices. Rather, he (1751:112) tried to answer “*what makes Virtue to be what it is*”. To say honesty is a virtue and virtue is honesty did not explain what makes honesty as a virtue. Brown (1751:135) introduced the happiness for all at this point, and claimed that an action, which did not contradict with the greatest public happiness, could “assume both the Name and the Nature of virtue”. Evidently, virtue or truth of a morally good action did not reside in the action itself, but emerged from its consequences. An action could not be evaluated without taking its possible consequences into consideration, and what is to be morally worthy was necessarily related with the action’s ability in the production of happiness for all. In his words; “the Idea of Virtue hath never been universally affixed to any Action or Affection of the Mind, unless where this Tendency to produce Happiness was at least *apparent*” (Brown, 1751:133). Obviously, for Brown, virtue had to be in conformity with the public good. Since the contribution to common good and the greatest happiness were same, the actions derived their moral beauty from their ability to serve for the happiness for all.

Brown needed to introduce the idea of God and religion to strengthen his moral theory against the influence of moral theories that had eliminated God. According to Brown, each individual's comprehension of happiness that emerged from the various mixture of sense, imagination and passion would naturally differ since this mixture gave a different complexion of mind to each person. The various opinions of mankind were "not universally and clearly connected with the Happiness or Misery of Mankind" (Brown, 1751:144). Therefore, laws were also required to teach men how to practice virtue. For Brown (1751:209), common laws could "establish general Happiness of Society, by making the *acknowledged Interest* of every *Individual* to coincide and unite with the *public Welfare*". In the same manner, the idea of God and the religious laws are required to enforce people for the same end. Brown stated that (1751:209-210), the internal enforcement for people to achieve virtue and thus the common good was provided by religious laws because;

as human Laws cannot reach the Heart of Man; as they can only inflict Punishment on Offenders, but cannot bestow Rewards on the Obedient; as there are many Duties of imperfect Obligation which they cannot recognize; as Force will sometimes defy, and Cunning often elude their Power; so without some further Aids, some Motives to Action more universally interesting, Virtue must still be betrayed and deserted.

For Brown (1751), although men had reason to conclude what was virtuous, the motive of religion to virtue was stronger since the religious principles were common to mankind and universally prevail. In this light, only religion could "convince Mankind that their own Happiness universally depends on procuring, or at least not violating the Happiness of others" (Brown, 1751:210). Therefore, the selfish passions of man had to be curbed by the idea of God and religious laws. At this point, he (1751) also talked about the existence of God, and stated that men could naturally conclude the existence of God as the creator of Nature and the laws for welfare since God had given a necessary passion and equal reason to mankind. To Brown (1751:251), besides the idea of God, the fear of God was "absolutely necessary to [men's] Happiness" since it was also the sure basis of human ethical behaviour that prevented human from evil.

Regarding the motivation of people toward public virtue, Brown (1751) stated that any natural motive or obligation could only be to vice, not to virtue. Clearly, he (1751:184) claimed that "where the selfish or malevolent Affections happen to prevail, there can be no internal Motive, or natural obligation to Virtue". Thus, for Brown, the idea of God was necessary for human beings to be encouraged to behave virtuously, namely according to public happiness. The "freedom of God"⁴ alone could form the man's moral character because only "the great, universal, religious Principle, a rational obedience to the Will of God, will raise [man] to his utmost Capacity of moral perfection" (Brown, 1751:235). Obviously, religion was required to achieve true happiness; public happiness. In societies, religion was to direct the passions to

⁴ For Brown Shaftesbury "prefer[red] the Weakness of Man, to the freedom of God" by ignoring religion in his system. See, Brown, John. *Essays on the Characteristics* (London, 1751), p. 316.

proper objects, and replace the selfish interests with the common interest. Although both the prejudices for or against religion would arise in human mind, it was the reason's task to control them, and direct the mankind to religious principles (Brown, 1751). For Brown (1751:248), religion was "unhinging Society to the utmost of his Power", and religious sanctions were more important than civil laws for a society.

Although he (1751) acknowledged the difficulty in seeing the future effects of irreligion on society in the present state, Brown had estimated the future threats, and wanted to take precautions for preventing religion from a possible decline. He aimed to preserve religion in order to maintain the permanence of the state. Both the idea of God and religious laws appeared to be for the sake of social and political order. Religion in Brown's theory was not only a belief between a person and God but it also enabled the sovereign to rule the majority and it was also a motivating force to keep people in line.

It could be stated that, on the contrary to his earlier works, *Characteristics* is worthy of attention with regard to the principle of utility and the defence of religion in politics. Brown had examined virtue in detail in his previous works, but unlike them, he explained the nature of virtues by means of the principle of utility in *Characteristics*. Brown put his utilitarian theory on the solid basis of the idea of God, and advocated religion as a political tool to achieve a peaceful society. It was religion that had the ability to cultivate public virtue and public happiness. Therefore, religion was introduced as the pillar of the political society and the remedy for the future threats like the internal moral destruction of the state.

In 1753, Brown preached another sermon; *On the Use and Abuse of Externals in Religion*, and strengthened his ideas on religion again. Briefly, Brown (1753:7) stated that men were "imperfect, and embod'd State", thus the aid of religion was required to keep men in the right way due to this weakness in human nature. For Brown (1753:7), "without publick Religion, Mankind in general would relapse into a State of Barbarism and a total Forgetfulness of all Religion". Having mentioned its role in the maintenance of a political society, he restated its relation with virtue, which was seen as one of its ends.

In 1757, Brown published his *Estimate* after the Seven Years' War had begun to awaken the nation to maintain the internal strength of Great Britain. To Brown (1758:36), Great Britain was;

a political Constitution, superior to all that History had recorded, or present Times can boast: A religious Establishment, which breaths universal Charity and Toleration. A Spirit of Liberty yet unconquered; a general Humanity and Sincerity, beyond any Nation upon Earth: an Administration of Justice, that had even silenced Envy. These are Blessings which every *Englishman* feels, and ought to acknowledge.

Nevertheless, for Brown (1757b), it was going to lose its strong, free, hardy and courageous character. He (1758) thought that the reasons of this corruption had to be explained to find the cure. Brown's emphasis on virtue, moral order and sanctions brought him to analyse the situation of Great Britain in terms of morality. For him, "the most effectual Way to render Kingdoms *happy, great, and durable*, [was] to make

them *virtuous, just, and good*" (1757a:70). Since he revealed the relation between truth, virtue, and religion before, this meant that it was Protestantism that could make the kingdom stable. That is to say, the stability of the state depended on the preservation of moral values and Protestant principles. Under the light of his ideas mentioned in previous works, he defended a moral regeneration for Great Britain. In this defence of a moral regeneration, he insisted on religion's role in the reformation of eighteenth-century Britain. It appears that the Protestant principles were introduced as the only element that could secure the state.

In the following years, Brown's main goal became the defence of Protestantism rather than defending a moral theory. Brown (1765:22) claimed that man by nature was "at once *selfish and social; compassionate and resentful; docile, either to Good or Evil; and hence, capable of acquiring new Habits, new Passions, new Desires, either to the Welfare or Destruction of his Fellow Creatures*". At this point, religion, namely Anglicanism, was considered as compulsory to compel selfish appetites of individuals to yield to common good. Man needed to be motivated to behave according to laws by means of religious principles. It is the case that, he established a link between freedom of the subjects and the rational religion; Protestantism. Evidently, religion had never been introduced as an alternative to his doctrine of morality until the appearance of the *Characteristics* in 1751. Afterwards, religion and the defence of Anglicanism became his main issue.

The superiority of reason, freedom in personal morality and the dominance of virtue were replaced by the power of religion in maintaining the moral and political order, and thus the preservation of happy and free Great Britain. In Brown's theory, morality had a social aspect; it was the virtuous people, who could enable the society to be free and stable. These virtuous subjects could contribute to the moral climate of the society by eliminating their selfish interests. A person's interests and morality should accord with public morality for the maintenance of the common good. Obviously, the state needed to enforce such harmony, and for Brown, religion seemed to be the best instrument to achieve it. Men, who behaved according to their selfish passions, had to be directed to the way to virtue. The accordance between the passion and virtue in man could eliminate the possible conflict between the selfish interest and the common interest. At this point, Brown used religion to direct men towards common interest, public virtue and thus a stable Great Britain.

Conclusion

Brown's moral chain composed of the interdependence of freedom, truth and virtue was replaced by his emphasis on religion after the Catholic threat had been felt. Since the religion was introduced as the political tool to prevent Great Britain from future threats and to protect the welfare of the empire, Brown gave up his liberal ideas mentioned in his early works. Furthermore, it could be claimed that Brown's issue changed because of the conditions of eighteenth-century Great Britain. For the Anglicans, the thinkers

mentioned at the beginning of the paper and the conditions of the century paved the way to the destruction of religion and political order in Great Britain. This is the reason why Brown's moral ideas went through a change from having individualistic approach towards having a social aspect. In addition to this, he added religion to his moral chain that was emerged from the coexistence of truth, liberty and virtue at the beginning. At this point what religion meant for Brown was Protestantism, namely Anglicanism. Especially the Seven Years' War and the corrupted foreign relations with France necessitated the defence of Protestant principles against Catholicism. In order to do that, English religious men attacked Catholicism by accusing its principles of being enemies to liberty. Similarly, Brown (1756:3), who called Britons "the sons of Freedom" and suggested Britons to be friends of freedom against the threat of expiring liberty, tried to protect Protestantism by means of the same concept; freedom. In other words, Brown's love of freedom appeared to be an opposition to Catholicism. The conditions of the century in general led Brown to point out a relationship between religion and liberty and especially a relation between Protestant principles and national liberty of Great Britain. Protestantism was defended as a guarantee of liberty for the empire in order to protect Great Britain from external threats like one of France and from the internal threats such as deism and atheism.

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