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Book Review – Religion in Public by Elizabeth Pritchard Symposia

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pot) intended for lay audiences promote Buddhist devotional practice as a means of achieving felicities in future births (including sometimes even *nirvāṇa*), advocating the “true *Dharma*” (*saddharma*) of the Buddha. Berkwitz himself points to other moments in Sinhala literature inimical to Hinduism prior to the 16th century.

None of these potential criticisms diminish *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism* as a work of commendable scholarship: lucid, thoroughly researched, and theoretically apposite. It is a book that was waiting to be written and, now that it has been, is one that will remain on the shelves of historians and religionists of Sri Lanka and South Asia for years to come.

Justin W. Henry
History of Religions
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***Religion in Public: Locke’s Political Theology.* Written by Elizabeth A. Pritchard. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. 227 pages. ISBN 0804785759. \$28.12 CDN.**

Elizabeth A. Pritchard’s recent publication *Religion in Public: Locke’s Political Theology* provides a timely reconsideration of Locke’s legacy in contributing to modern secularization narratives. In her monograph, Pritchard sets out to critically reassess Locke’s observations on religion in the public sphere. She particularly challenges the idea that Locke effectively embraced a wholesale sidelining of religious sentiment to the personal, private sphere. On such a reading, Locke is seen as having encouraged a separation of the religious from the political. Against the sense that Locke promoted a civil religion, Pritchard argues that his project rather constitutes a political theology, and that

it entailed the “promotion of the worldliness of religion.” (1)

The first five chapters of the book center on close readings of Locke and Locke scholarship, while the final chapter brings together Pritchard’s renewed attention to Locke with contemporary discourse assessing the purported tension between religion and secularism. From the outset, Pritchard’s main contentions are that current understandings of this tense relationship a) anachronistically rely on concepts of public and private in conceiving Locke’s contribution to a narrative of secularization, and b) overemphasize a simplified understanding of a private-public dichotomy as a primary source of secular-religious conflict. Pritchard draws our attention to the fact that “public” and “private” spheres were only emerging as theoretical frameworks at Locke’s time. Moreover, even if one were to concede such an anachronistic reading of these emerging concepts, her reading highlights that Locke was very much concerned with envisioning a more worldly, public dynamic of religion. On the one hand, such a view indeed entails a movement *away from* religion as it had hitherto been understood as *embodied* in church, king, and scripture. On the other hand, such an understanding promotes a *virtual* embodiment of the sacred or divine in the exchange of ideas (both religious and non-religious) in a public sphere.

Pritchard puts great emphasis on this movement from embodiment of the sacred or religious to its embodiment in the exchange of ideas. She goes on to highlight the prominence that Locke accords to consent, i.e. the consent to truth claims in a newly arising political, public sphere. Towards this end, Pritchard shows how both Locke and Mendelssohn assess the power of words as signs. Seeing that one of the primary tasks of modern liberalism is to arrive at a temporarily binding political consensus (36), both thinkers investigate ways in which language creates a

desired social bond. Pritchard claims that what is novel in Locke is the combination of a demand for consent in order to secure political legitimacy, as well as a caution against ritualism of any kind, be it religious or secular in nature (56). In this sense, Locke can indeed be seen as endorsing a move away from “religion”. In envisioning a project of political legitimacy grounded in consent, Locke seeks to overcome the conventions of previous political theologies which discriminate along the lines of embodiment. According to Pritchard, however, Locke overcomes such divisive legacies not by “the neutralization of the political” (80), but rather by secularizing or worlding the political (*ibid.*). However, he accomplishes such a secularization of the political precisely by invoking a shared consensus on God’s transcendent love for all humans, which in turn negates mankind’s ability to discriminate between “pure bodies and polluting bodies” (*ibid.*).

Pritchard strengthens her nuanced portrayal of a more conflicted Locke by highlighting two further aspects of Locke’s philosophy; his standpoint on which varieties of force are permissible in bringing about a social bond, and his conflicted view on the role of the family in religious and civil education. Regarding force, Pritchard shows that while conventional readings of Locke emphasize his desire to separate power and religion, he was consistently bringing these two realms together, albeit in a novel, disembodied sense (83). Locke appears most conflicted when he expounds on the role of the family in bringing about a political sensitivity and duty in individuals. On Pritchard’s account, he comes across as torn between conflicting desires to uphold benevolent patriarchal power while also promoting politics grounded in individual consent.

As a close reading of the reception history of Locke, Pritchard manages well to recast Locke as significantly more complex,

even conflicted, than recent scholarship has acknowledged. The first five chapters are systematically argued and guide the reader well. The concluding chapter of the book, however, begs for more critical engagement with the concepts and binaries alluded to throughout the book. In light of Pritchard’s astute readings and accessible accounts of Locke in the first parts of the book, the closing tie-in to current discourse could have benefitted greatly from similar rigor applied to readings of Rawls and Taylor, among others.

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Blood will Out: Essays on Liquid Transfers and Flows. Edited by Janet Carsten.

Cambridge: Wiley Blackwell, 2013. vii + 187 pages. ISBN: 9781118656280. \$37.95 CDN.

Originally published as a special issue of *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* (Vol. 19, May 2013), this volume explores a diverse range of blood phenomena, from the use of hematic metaphors in modern finance and reflections on blood symbolism in medieval Europe to museums of blood martyrs in Burma and discursive figures associated with blood donation. The essays are, for the most part, evenly split between historical and anthropological approaches to blood and many are indebted to Caroline Walker Bynum’s *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Bynum’s work sets the theoretical tone by attempting to partially address the long-standing anthropological interest in symbolism and its connection to materiality. Janet Carsten picks up this note and asks us to see in her collection of contributions, not only the