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On Judith Berling and Arthur Holder

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The Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology publishes a regular issue annually (see Vol. 2, No. 1 for this volume's regular issue) but occasionally, special circumstances warrant the dedication of a special issue that might address or celebrate important matters or events at the GTU. The decision to publish a special issue rests solely with the BJRT's chief editor. While the 2015-2016 academic year has witnessed many special events, one is particularly notable: the retirement of Professor Judith Berling from the faculty, and Professor Arthur Holder's stepping down from his deanship of the GTU. These are two remarkable scholars who are formidable figures in the academy, and their leadership at the GTU have been instrumental over the past decades. Hence, this special issue is commissioned in honor of both scholars. In this editorial, I simply wish to provide a short biography of these two remarkable leaders of the GTU.

Judith Berling

Judith Berling received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1976. She began her long and distinguished teaching career at Indiana University, where she taught for twelve years before joining the GTU as the 4th Academic Dean, becoming the first woman to hold the position in the GTU's history. After stepping down from the deanship in 1996, she continued to teach for 19 years as Professor of Chinese and

Comparative Religions while serving in various roles in the Cultural and Historical Studies of Religions and Interdisciplinary Studies areas. Her bevy of honors indicate the weight of her contributions to teaching and her disciplines of research. She was the recipient of the Herman Bachman Lieber Distinguished Teaching Award at Indiana University in 1986, and in 2003 she was the first recipient of the GTU's Sarlo Excellence in Teaching Award. For her contributions to religious studies, she was awarded the Henry Luce III Fellowship *twice*, the Ray Hart Service Award from the American Academy of Religion in 2005, and was the GTU Distinguished Faculty Lecturer in 2000. In 1990, she was president of the American Academy of Religion.

I've had the privilege of getting to know Professor Berling rather early on in my doctoral career at the GTU. I came into the GTU as a student in interdisciplinary studies (IDS). All incoming IDS students under the IDS curriculum are required to register for IDS-6000, the Seminar on Interdisciplinarity, where we had the daunting task of thinking about our dissertations beginning the second week of our doctoral program! But Professor Berling knew what she was doing. She was always one of two co-instructors of the seminar, and was able to guide every student in thinking critically about important questions pertaining to their work, specifically on how they intend to bring two disciplines in constructive conversation with each other.

So instrumental was she in teaching IDS-6000 that for the past two years, some of my doctoral colleagues and the faculty members I know have wondered what would happen to the course when Professor Berling retires. Her skill in navigating the complex terrain of interdisciplinarity with rigor and perspicacity, encouraging students to delve deeply into the two disciplines they aim to bring together in conversation, and analyzing the different approaches to the endeavor, are difficult to match. This is absolutely important; when done without the rigor and care that Professor Berling encouraged, the

“interdisciplinarity” that results does short shrift to the disciplines that are being brought into conversation. Judith’s many students, some of whom are featured in this special issue, emulate the rigor and care that she has so brilliantly demonstrated throughout her scholarly career, and especially during her time at the GTU.

Fortunately, her legacy will continue to live on in the GTU’s new doctoral curriculum. Beginning the Fall of 2016, **all** first year doctoral students from across the four departments of the GTU will be required to take IDS-6000 as part of their coursework. The course is modeled largely after the IDS-6000 course that Professor Berling has so masterfully taught over her tenure at the GTU. We wish the best for Professors Kathryn Barush and Devin Zuber, who will be teaching this course in the Fall and carry forward Professor Berling’s legacy in the course!

Arthur Holder

Arthur Holder joined the GTU as assistant professor of pastoral theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in 1986, shortly before he received his Ph.D. in Historical Theology from Duke University. At CDSP, he served as director of field education until he became CDSP’s Dean of Academic Affairs in 1995. In 2002, he moved across Ridge Road to become the GTU’s 6th Academic Dean. Arthur Holder’s main contribution to religion and theology is in the field of Christian spirituality, focusing on the writings of the Venerable Bede. He is considered one of the leading figures in establishing Christian spirituality as a unique and interdisciplinary field of inquiry in the theological academy. Indeed, during his tenure at the GTU as faculty and as dean, the GTU remains one of the very few places in the world where students can concentrate their doctoral studies on Christian spirituality. Arthur Holder is the reason for why many students come to the GTU. He was President of the Society for the Study of Christian

Spirituality, and in 2013 he delivered the 2013 Reading of the Sacred Text Lecture at the GTU.

I first met Dean Holder in his office while visiting the GTU to determine if this was the right school for me to attend for my doctoral studies. Indeed, he was the first faculty member I had the privilege of meeting. (The second was my current dissertation director.) It was largely due to my conversation with him that I made the final decision to attend the GTU, and I turned in my deposit later that week. I remain exceedingly glad I did.

Beginning the second year of my doctoral program, I began my two-year term as a member of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC).

That year, a few members of the SAC (including myself) laid the groundwork for the Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology, and Dean Holder was one of the most indefatigable supporters of the journal. This year, we have raised the bar and published our second volume, with two issues. That we are able to do so was made possible by the constant support of Dean Holder. I can also attest from the SAC meetings that the Dean Holder has always been a constant advocate for the students of the GTU. Many initiatives that will be rolled out in the coming months and years were begun under his deanship.

Final Remarks

Hence, it is only fitting that we put together this special issue together in honor of these two leaders and scholars of the GTU. We have assembled contributions from colleagues and former students of Professor Berling and Dean Holder. All of our contributors to this issue are extraordinarily busy scholars, with a bevy of publishing deadlines to meet. Some were in the midst of transitions in their lives as well – one was in the middle of moving from one academic institution to another! Yet, in honor of Professor Berling and Dean Holder, they've graciously

carved out slivers of time and effort to make their contributions. All our contributors deserve our gracious thanks.

In a deleted scene from the movie, *Star Trek: Nemesis* (2002), Captain Jean-Luc Picard and Lieutenant Data were having a conversation on board the *USS Enterprise-E* over life transitions. (They had just attended a wedding.) Data, an android, observes that human rituals denote the passage of time, to which Picard responds, “Not just the passage of time, but the presence of time within us... they encourage us to think about what lies behind us, and what lies ahead.”

I think this is a fitting way to think about what this journal issue is about. We are not merely trying to remember, commemorate, and celebrate the scholarly and administrative accomplishments of these two figures. In a way, we are also celebrating the future of the GTU and of the scholars that have come from this great institution. The possibility that scholars of all religious traditions can study together and each other in a spirit of interreligious harmony and greater understanding on Holy Hill is a stark counterpoint to the torrid politics of division and otherization, so unappealingly presented on the televisions during this election year, and the building of ideological walls that we see often in the public. Remembering the importance of Professors Berling and Holder is, in a way, a remembering of the importance of the GTU and its future as the nexus for where “religion meets the world,” an underappreciated but also an undeniably and increasingly important location for the world’s future. Such a future for the GTU was made possible because of the leadership and scholarship of Judith Berling and Arthur Holder.

Henry S. Kuo is a third-year doctoral candidate in systematic and philosophical theology at the GTU, focusing on Reformed ecclesiology. He is the founding editor-in-chief of the *Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology* and has just completed his two-year term as member of the Student Advisory Committee.