

Watanabe Lecture and Celebration of Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe at Gettysburg

A conference featuring a Watanabe Lecture and celebrating Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe was held on September 23-24, 2017 at United (formerly Gettysburg) Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Under the auspices of the American Cusanus Society and the International Seminar on Pre-Reformation Theology, the conference welcomed nineteen registrants from across the country, with thirty-one registrants and guests attending the banquet. The conference was free of charge for all participants, thanks to financial support from the Watanabe Fund (given by Kiyomi Watanabe in memory of Morimichi Watanabe) and facilities and staff support from our host, United Lutheran Seminary. The conference Committee included Donald Duclow, Thomas Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson, who coordinated arrangements.

We celebrated Dr. Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe for her many contributions to the Society. These include her long-time companionship with Morimichi Watanabe, her very generous support of the Gettysburg Conferences, which concluded after thirty years in September 2016, and her recent gifts to the Bond-Watanabe Collection in the United Lutheran Seminary Library which has grown into one of the largest Cusanus collections in the United States. We were delighted to welcome Kiyomi, who had attended nearly all the Gettysburg conferences. She was accompanied by her son Tsugumichi Watanabe, Esq., and his wife Kay, who made their first visit to Gettysburg. A reception in the Seminary library highlighted the Bond-Watanabe Collection, and presented Kiyomi and her family's donation of personal memorabilia such as letters and certificates of every school Mori attended, beginning with elementary school in Japan.

On Friday evening, those who arrived early gathered for a memorable meal, with ample libations, at the Appalachian Brewing Company just down the block.

Religious services in the Seminary's handsome chapel have always been part of the Gettysburg conferences. Saturday morning began with an Ecumenical Service of Prayer with Commemorations of deceased Cusanus scholars and friends. On Sunday morning, participants gathered for an Ecumenical Service of Word and Sacrament.

Another tradition of the Gettysburg conferences has been tours of the battlefield, led by Tom Izbicki. Saturday's tour focused on Little Round Top. That hill, the left flank of the Army of the Potomac, was the scene of one of the dramas of the Battle of Gettysburg. On July 2, 1863, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and his Twentieth Maine distinguished themselves by repelling a Confederate attack threatening control of the high ground. Little Round Top also offers a spectacular view of the battlefield, including the rugged rock formations of Devil's Den.

Saturday afternoon featured the conference's academic centerpiece: John Monfasani's Watanabe Lecture, "Cusanus, the Greeks, and Islam." Challenging common views, John argued that Nicholas' *De pace fidei* is not an irenic dialogue, but an apologetic work aiming to convert Muslims to Christianity, while the *Cribratio Alkorani*'s detailed study of the Gospels and the Qur'an shows Cusanus to be "the most enlightened, informed, and clear headed interlocutor of Islam in the fifteenth century." Monfasani also discussed works on Islam by George of Trebizond and George Amiroutzes, both of whom Cusanus knew.

The highlight of our celebration of Kiyomi Watanabe was Saturday's candlelight banquet in the refectory, with Jason Aleksander as MC, and music by Celtic harpist Sharon Knowles. After an elegant dinner, Il Kim gave a personal and deeply moving recollection of Morimichi and Kiyomi Watanabe. He described them as his "mentors in the US," and said, "I was fortunate to have known them over the past twenty three years, during which time I learnt from them not only how to approach Cusanus, but also how to be a sincere, generous human being." Il Kim's complete talk appears elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.

The conference concluded on Sunday morning with a Roundtable on "Recent Literature on Nicholas of Cusa and His Times," with Nancy van Deusen presiding. Tom Izbicki spoke about editions and translations of Cusanus' works. The Heidelberg edition of the *Opera omnia* is nearly complete. While the *Acta cusana* has reached Cusanus' episcopate in Brixen, it is still years away from completion. Translations into the vernacular began in the sixteenth century, and Nicholas' political and theological-philosophical works have appeared in the major European languages. Sermons and letters are receiving increasing attention. Most recently, editions and translations have begun appearing on the World Wide Web. Lee Miller discussed David Albertson's *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres* (2014), and Peter Casarella's *Word as Bread: Language and Theology in Nicholas of Cusa* (2017). Don Duclow commented on Richard Serina's *Nicholas of Cusa's Brixen Sermons and Late Medieval Church Reform* (2016), and Joshua Hollmann's *The Religious Concordance: Nicholas of Cusa and Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (2017). Maarten Halff spoke about his research into Cusanus' mission to Constantinople, drawing on overlooked and unpublished sources. He suggested a new perspective on Cusanus' account of receiving inspiration for *De docta ignorantia* from the "Father of Lights" while at sea, pointing to parallels in Sylvester Syropoulos' description of a natural phenomenon illuminating the night on the same voyage.

Like previous Gettysburg conferences, this year's gathering was rich in scholarship, celebration and conviviality.

– Gerald Christianson, Donald Duclow, Thomas Izbicki, & Il Kim

The Watanabe Lecture and Celebration of Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe

September 23-24, 2017

**United Lutheran Seminary
(New Name, Same Location)
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325**

**In Cooperation with the American Cusanus Society and the International
Seminar on Pre-Reformation Theology**

In addition to the annual Watanabe Lecture, we gather to celebrate Dr. Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe for her many contributions to the American Cusanus Society, for her companionship with Morimichi Watanabe, for her very generous support of the Gettysburg Conferences, which concluded this past September after thirty years, and for her most recent gifts to the Bond-Watanabe Collection which has grown into one of the largest Cusanus collections in the United States.

We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Dr. Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe Fund (in memory of Morimichi Watanabe) and facilities and staff support from our host, United Lutheran Seminary.

PROGRAM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 (for early arrivals)

5:30 p.m.	Social Hour	Singmaster Center
7:00 p.m.	Dinner (on our own)	Appalachian Brewing Company
	Singmaster residents: Gather in the foyer, 6:45 p.m.	
	Motel guests: restaurant is two doors north.	
9:00 p.m.	Social Hour	Singmaster Center

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

8:00 to 9:00 a.m.	On campus guests: Breakfast	Refectory
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9:30 a.m.	Ecumenical Service of Prayer and Commemorations	Chapel
10:00 a.m.	Coffee break	Coffee Shop
10:15 a.m.	Battlefield Tour	Valentine Commons
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	Refectory
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	Registration and Refreshments	Valentine Commons/ Coffee Shop
3:30 p.m.	The 2017 Watanabe Lecture Chair: Thomas Morrissey , SUNY Fredonia “Cusanus, the Greeks, and Islam” John Monfasani , SUNY University at Albany	Valentine Auditorium
5:00 p.m.	Reception Recent Acquisitions, Bond-Watanabe Collection	Pioneer Room, Library
7:00 p.m.	Candlelight Banquet Chair Jason Aleksander , National University Music Sharon Knowles , Celtic Harpist “Morimichi and Kiyomi Koizumi Watanabe: A Personal Recollection” Il Kim , Auburn University	Refectory
9:00 p.m.	Social Hour	Singmaster Center

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

7:00 a.m.	Mass	St. Francis Xavier Church
8:00-9:00 a.m.	On-campus guests: Breakfast	Refectory
9:00 a.m.	Ecumenical Service of Word and Sacrament	Chapel
9:45 a.m.	Coffee Break	Library Rotunda
10:00 a.m.	Working Session Chair: Nancy van Deusen , Claremont Graduate University Roundtable with Discussion	Library Lecture Room

Recent Literature on Nicholas of Cusa and His Times

Books by Joshua Hollmann and Richard Serina

Donald F. Duclow, Gwynedd Mercy University

Books by Peter Casarella and David Albertson

Clyde Lee Miller, Stony Brook University

Recent Editions and Translations

Thomas M. Izbicki, Rutgers University

Comments on other literature from the group

11:45 a.m. Close

Departures begin at 12:15 p.m.

12:30 p.m. Lunch (Optional)

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The Committee for the 2017 Celebration: **Donald F. Duclow** and **Thomas M. Izbicki**
(co-chairs). Arrangements: **Gerald Christianson**. Registrars: **Margaret Folkemer, Arin
Liszka, A.J. Houseman.**