



Outward from the Centre

Featuring Arthur Walker-Jones Graduate Studies

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies recently connected with Dr. Arthur Walker-Jones from the United Centre for Theological Studies.



By Deanna England

Can you tell us about your background and your areas of research interest?
 I have a BA from Oral Roberts University, and an MDiv and PhD in Biblical Studies from Princeton Theological Seminary. When I was applying for promotion to Professor, one member of the University Tenure and Promotion Committee said, “Your research interests seem to be all over the place.” I have done some research and writing on learning, in order to try to become a better professor, and I have written a Hebrew textbook, but I answered that the rest of my research and writing was related to ecological criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Ecological criticism or ecological hermeneutics looks at the way readings of the Bible have been used to legitimate ecological exploitation and develop readings that might help Christians and Jews address the global environmental crisis and climate change. Thus I wrote my PhD dissertation on creation stories in the Book of Psalms, because I, like others, hoped that creation theologies might help address the environmental crisis. Since then I have written chapters for books on ecological hermeneutics, and my book *The Green Psalter: Resources for an Ecological Spirituality* argued that, while the Psalms contained some problematic texts, they also contained a concept of ecojustice and celebrat-





ed the intrinsic worth of all parts of creation.

Theology recently made some changes to its MA program. Can you tell us about that?

Theology recently added a Bible and Culture concentration to the MA (Theology). At least until the eighteenth century the Bible was a major source of literary imagery and illusions and, even with the rise of secularism, biblical imagery, references, and allusions, continue to be used in literature, film, popular culture, and politics. Over the past twenty years, biblical scholars have become more interested in researching uses of the Bible in popular culture and the field has been profoundly influenced by theories and perspectives from cultural studies, especially in the areas of feminism, womanism, and postcolonialism. The new concentration in Bible and Culture makes use of faculty and courses from the MA in Cultural Studies in order to increase the academic resources of the degree and give theology students first-hand experience in cultural studies. This will provide a unique and valuable preparation for further graduate work in biblical or cultural studies and be of interest to anyone interested in further study of the intersections between the Bible, science, culture, and politics.

You teach courses on Hebrew in Biblical Studies. Do you often find opportunities to speak Hebrew in your life? Have you ever visited Israel?

I teach courses on Classical Hebrew and sometimes Aramaic, a cognate language used in some biblical books. Modern Hebrew is different than Classical Hebrew, though the changes were not as great as in other living languages, because for centuries it was only spoken by Rabbis, until it was revived in Modern Israel. Nevertheless, Modern Hebrew has added new vocabulary, and the grammar has been modified to be closer to the grammar of European languages. The participle, for instance, is used as a present tense in Modern Hebrew, but is not used that way in Ancient Hebrew, and the term “participle” may even sneak in a European grammatical concept foreign to Semitic languages. I regret that I have never been able to visit Israel, but I did take Modern Hebrew for two years as an undergraduate, periodically try to revive it, and this year enjoyed having three speakers of Modern Hebrew in class who could discuss the meanings of expressions and the differences between Ancient and Modern Hebrew, as well as similarities and differences between Jewish and Christian interpretation, and even the ways biblical interpretation gets caught up in Israeli politics.

What are you currently working on?

I’m working on a couple of book-length projects and some shorter articles. I’m writing an ecological commentary on Book Two of the biblical Psalter for the Earth Bible Commentary.

This spring I spent three weeks at the University of Notre Dame as part of an international research project funded by the John Templeton Foundation. The *Human Distinctiveness* project is a transdisciplinary dialogue between evolutionary anthropologists and theologians about human nature, or human becoming. There are fourteen other scholars and several postdoctoral students involved, each with their own research projects. My project has to do with evidence for niche construction and the coevolution of humans with other species in ancient Israelite religion. I also have two articles that I’m working on coming out of the project: a coauthored article with Timothy Sandoval of Texas Christian University on Proverbs 12:10, “The just know the souls of their animals, but the compassion of the wicked is cruelty” (translation mine), and an article about echoes in the creation stories of Genesis of what the anthropologist Pat Shipman calls “the animal connection” in human evolution.



News and Notes

By Rev. Tanis Kolisnyk, MA BA CMS

The Diocese of Rupert's Land allowed me to attend the National Sacred Circle gathering in Port Elgin Ontario in August 2015. It was an honour to be there. First Nations, Metis and Inuit representatives were present, along with many Bishops and Primate Fred Hiltz. The National Indigenous Bishop of Canada, Mark MacDonald presided over the Sacred Circle. Canon 22 was in action; self-determination of Indigenous Anglicans was happening in my midst. I knew I was a witness to a beautiful moment in the Anglican Church of Canada.

My UW thesis was on the subject of Indigenous Anglicans and the path to Self-determination. My studies were a great blessing to me in giving me an understanding of the journey that has brought us to this point. It was in moments of listening to wise Elders around the Sacred Fire, connecting with Indigenous clergy and hard working Indigenous people who love their Anglican Church that impacted me deeply. I heard stories of struggles and also wonderful stories of hope. I also heard Mauri and Somi people tell their story of their path to self-determination. There is a powerful connection with Indigenous people across the world. The path to self-determination of Indigenous Anglicans in Canada continues as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans build new relationships as together we strive towards this goal. Thanks be to God!

<http://rupertslandnews.ca/indigenous-anglicans-in-canada-a-new-agape-and-the-path-to-self-determination/>

Read Tanis' thesis here: <http://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/xmlui/handle/10680/820>

Do you have a special accomplishment or celebration you would like to share with us?

Please email to [Sandy Peterson](mailto:Sandy.Peterson).

All submissions are subject to editing and space.

Congratulations to Stepan Bilynsky (MA in Spiritual Disciplines and Ministry Practices 2014) who has accepted the position of Director of Mission and Spiritual care services in Misericordia Health Centre.

We invite all students from the United Center for Theological Studies to submit papers for consideration for the **Paterson Prize**. The Paterson Prize was established in memory of the Rev. John "Jack" Paterson. Students may choose papers already submitted for course evaluation.

The papers should include a statement of the thesis, the development of the thesis, and a summary of the findings.

The paper should demonstrate an ability to examine and understand the resource material being studied as well as give an expression to the writer's personal reflections on the subject of the paper.

Papers must be typed and footnoted according to an accepted style for publication, e.g. Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 8th edition.

Submissions for the prize should be sent electronically to [Sandy Peterson](mailto:Sandy.Peterson) no later than January 15/16 and the committee will make their selection by February 15/16. The winning paper will be printed in Outward from the Centre.

Theology, Queen of Sciences Surrounded by Faith, Love, Hope, Wisdom, Moral Conduct, Humility, and Love of Learning



Unveiling of the recently restored historic stained glass window

The University of Winnipeg launches [Artsfest 2015](#) with the unveiling of its recently restored historic stained glass window *Theology, Queen of Sciences Surrounded by Faith, Love, Hope, Wisdom, Moral Conduct, Humility, and Love of Learning*. A reception will take place in the Chapel located on the main floor of Bryce Hall, followed by a performance featuring faculty from the Manitoba Conservatory of Music and Arts.

Theology was created in 1892-93 by esteemed British artist Henry Holiday upon commission by the first Principal of the University's founding Manitoba College, John M. King. The artwork has been lovingly restored by [Prairie Stained Glass](#) and [Yarrow Sash and Door](#) thanks, in part, to funding from the Government of Manitoba's Heritage Grants Program.



Above: The Reverend Dr. Mac Watts, former Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

Right: Dr. Claire Labrecque, [Assistant Professor History of Art](#)





Dr. Annette Trimbee, President of The University of Winnipeg and the Honourable Ron Lemieux , Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection.

Winter Registration deadline January 5, 2016

2015/2016 Courses

Winter Bursary Deadline is November 15, 2015

To qualify for a bursary you **MUST** be registered for courses in the term you are applying in. Retro-active bursaries will no longer be awarded.

Please be sure that your registration is submitted early enough to be processed before the bursary deadline.

Spring/Summer - June 1

Fall - August 15

Winter - November 15



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The Knowles-Woodsworth Centre

FOR THEOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Affirming the connection between faith and progressive politics

Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si*, on the environment, on care for our common home, and on climate change more particularly has been the subject of much debate since its release in June. Believers and unbelievers alike, united by a common concern for the future of the planet, had high hopes that someone who chose to name himself after that great lover of creation, Francis of Assisi, would say something truly transformational. They have not been disappointed.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Pope Francis is only deepening an element of Papal teaching that has roots in Pope John Paul II's call in 1990 for a new solidarity to protect the integrity of creation from atomistic and reductionist attitudes toward the environment that lead to the plundering of the earth's resources, and in Pope Benedict's call in 2010 for a cultural renewal to counter the "myopic economic interests" that are preventing responsible stewardship of the earth.

Unfortunately, such past papal observations were routinely ignored by the media, who found more journalistic joy in the culture wars over abortion and sexual orientation than planetary survival. The coverage of Pope Francis seems to be different, perhaps in part because he himself has counseled against focusing exclusively on such issues. Now what Pope Francis needs to do, what we all need him to do, is to move ecological insights and imperatives from the margins of his church's teachings to the centre of Catholic moral teaching, to make them critical to the identity of the faithful in the world.

The debate about the encyclical is a context in which to reflect on the increasing salience of these issues in the life of the whole church community, and on the potential contribution that churches can make in shaping public opinion to accept and support policies that will make a difference.

The good news from the evangelical Christian community for a while was symbolized by The Evangelical Climate Initiative, a call for action signed initially by dozens and then a couple of hundred American evangelical pastors and professors which proclaimed that "The basic task for all of the world's inhabitants is to find ways now to begin to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels that are the cause of human-induced climate change." This was part of a larger evangelical environmental consciousness raising that was often referred to as the "creation care" movement.

The bad news is that these hopeful developments produced push back, and counter declarations from groups such as the Cornwall Alliance whose mysterious blend of climate change denial and capitalism portrays environmentalists as closet socialists who sadly do not see that the importance of divinely sanctioned free markets trumps all other concerns. The tactical tendency in this camp of late has been to plead that it is the poor who will suffer most from any policies like carbon pricing. This claim ignores the well established fact that climate change itself harms the poor and powerless, which is why climate change activism some time ago morphed into a climate justice activism that recognizes the challenge of dealing



with the issue in a way that addresses the needs of vulnerable humanity as well as a vulnerable planet. The battle for the hearts and minds of evangelical Christians over climate change is ongoing. Keeping in mind that in recent years evangelicals shed their historically negative attitude towards Catholicism, as they fought alongside it in the culture wars, a strong statement from Pope Francis might be persuasive with many evangelicals.

The good news is to be found in documents like the one prepared for the Canadian Council of Churches [CCC], in framing principles for witness and action on climate justice, energy, and the economy, “Working for justice now means working to prevent further climate disruption; it means working for environmental stabilization that will enable all people to achieve the security and dignity of a good life; it means working with a clear commitment to intergenerational equity. Climate justice for the most vulnerable peoples of the earth – people who have contributed the least to climate change, but who are now affected the most – requires a new global approach to energy use and economic development- a new ethic of energy use.”

The document looks to a transformation in which climate change mitigation and the reversal of environmental degradation is achieved by requiring a drastic reduction in the use of fossil fuels, a rapid increase in the use of renewable energy, and “the maturing of consumer societies into conserver societies.”

None of this is necessarily all that new. The so-called mainstream churches have been saying the right thing on climate change for years, but there is an urgency to the language that is new. This urgency needs to find its way to the pulpits of these churches on a more regular basis. Indeed, it is the urgency of the situation, both morally and environmentally, that one hopes will ring more loudly around the world thanks to Pope Francis.

If all the churches could move climate justice to the centre of their preaching and moral teaching, it just might help make the difference in creating a constituency that would give backbone to the politically fearful, and open up space for the politically cautious, to seek the kind of mandates, the kind of political traction, that will lead to a future other than the ecological, economic, and societal collapse that is being planned by those who cannot or will not imagine an alternative to fossil fuels and the kind of economic growth that has brought us to the very dangerous situation we are now in. |

On October 29th, 2015 the Knowles-Woodsworth Centre was pleased to bring to the University of Winnipeg, for the 6th Annual Knowles-Woodsworth Lecture, Dr. Chris Hrynkow of St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon to share his thoughts on *Laudato Si*. Dr. Hrynkow specializes in Catholic social and political teachings.



Upcoming Events

6th Annual Knowles-Woodsworth Lecture

THE POPE, THE PLANET, AND POLITICS
FRANCIS AND FAITH-FULL GREEN
TRANSFORMATION



OCTOBER 29TH
7PM

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG
ECKARDT- GRAMMATTE HALL

The free lecture will be given by Dr. Chris Hrynkow, Professor of Religion and Culture at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Hrynkow, formerly of Winnipeg, specializes in Catholic social and political teaching, and his reflections on *Laudato Si'*, the most recent encyclical of Pope Francis on care for our common home, will be especially timely given the ongoing discussion of faith and the environment stimulated by this papal teaching.

KNOWLES
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Building a just Winnipeg together

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The United Centre for Theological Studies is committed to excellence in theological education within a liberal arts University. We welcome all those who wish to study theology and we seek to empower leaders for religious and social service by providing a safe and respectful environment for critical reflection that is contextual and global in scope and values social and ecological justice. We are shaped by the historic contributions of the United Church of Canada and its commitment to the social gospel movement, liberation theology, and whole world ecumenism.