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Interview.

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INTERVIEW

By Ryan Brousson, with Jiří Moskala

Jiří Moskala has served as dean of the Seminary since 2013. *Current* magazine interviewed him regarding his five-year vision for the three-year-old magazine and the Seminary.

JM: My vision for *Current* is that each issue address specific questions that are relevant to the Church and students, provide an orientation as well as some answers to current problems we face in the post-Christian era, and enable us to better serve our gracious Lord, the worldwide community of faith and the needs of the world. It should also inform a larger audience about Seminary life, symposia and conferences being offered, and provide examples of the thinking and research of Adventist scholars, faculty, and students.

CM: Thus far into your tenure as dean, what are your impressions/reflections?

JM: The issues of life are more complex than ever. I am overwhelmed and “terrorized” by emails. When I accepted the call to be dean, I asked God for joy and peace so that the work could be done in a proper way and to His glory. God is fulfilling my request; and when the peace and joy are gone, I will know it is time to quit. To work with the students and to develop new programs brings me deep satisfaction. Serving and supporting the best staff and faculty in the world is a great privilege. Our faculty is an estimable resource for the Church, and to

stimulate them to deal with hot issues is very rewarding. I have realized the wisdom of one African proverb that says: “If you want to go fast, run alone, but if you want to go far, walk together.” My desire is to build a happy, committed Seminary family; a community that supports each other unselfishly and with a passion to serve others in order to strengthen their Adventist identity.

CM: What goals/roles do you have as dean?

JM: My role as dean is first to cast a vision and to closely collaborate on that vision with the faculty, staff, students, and our Church. Working together in mutual trust and responsibility is my goal. As faculty, we need to diligently cooperate in order to give our students in the various programs the best education possible. We currently offer five master’s programs, six dual-degree programs on the master’s level, and six doctorates, as well as a post-doctoral fellowship. With over 1,000 students worldwide, this is a huge task. As the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, my vision for us is that we be a theological resource for the world Church, a global institution providing answers to the problems that the Church is facing on a worldwide scale, making the Seminary a source of light for the Church, and a model of a spiritual community of faith, love, and hope.

Second, to create space for faculty to excel and succeed in their God-given mission. My role is not for myself

but to promote and create room for our faculty to collaborate with others. Creating space also means to create new programs and international sites, as well as online programs. I need to build and foster excellent relationships with the leadership of Andrews University and the Church, not only on the local level but also with all 13 world divisions, especially the North American Division (NAD) and the leadership of the General Conference (e.g., the president, vice-presidents, education and ministerial departments and Biblical Research Institute). I desire that our doctoral programs reach both national and international students.

Third, to motivate and encourage faculty and staff to fulfill their goals and mission.

Fourth, to listen carefully to students who come from various backgrounds and will be serving diverse groups once they graduate. I plan to promote the implementation of their ideas and thus improve the delivery of our spectrum of programs.

Fifth, to focus on the North American Division pastors, their education and development.

CM: What are some of your most satisfying accomplishments?

JM: There are many but let me enumerate some of them: hiring new faculty and staff dedicated to our mission, seeing students reach their academic goals, giving faculty awards for special accomplishments, being able to provide students needed financial

support that enables them to realize their education goals, receiving meaningful notes from faculty, staff, students, or church representatives which express gratitude for what is being done in the Seminary. Also, providing many successful conferences and symposia at the Seminary. Being able to work with top Church scholars and theologians in harmony, as well as to see the dedication of our staff to God's cause and service. All these bring joy to my heart in the midst of heavy administrative responsibilities.

CM: Where and when was it decided to have a faculty hermeneutics conference?

JM: Three years ago, I expressed my passionate desire to bring our faculty together to study the Word of God, laugh and play, which would not only facilitate, theological unity but also social and spiritual. Later I spoke with a sponsor who was interested in helping with that vision. The topic of hermeneutics was chosen, because everything in the classroom and our ministry needs to be studied and done from a proper biblical perspective. It is a very important topic in our Church, so I wanted to engage all our seven departments in this enormous task. I was very pleased that they all decided to closely collaborate in presenting professional research papers on hermeneutics. This was a unique feature in itself because biblical hermeneutics is usually done in isolation by biblical scholars and systematic theologians.

CM: Who attended?

JM: Forty-three of our full-time faculty and their spouses.

CM: Why is hermeneutics important?

JM: Hermeneutics is in crisis in our Church. There is a need to comprehensively develop a balanced biblical hermeneutics and avoid the two extremes, the literalistic or the liberal approaches, in order to know how to interpret the Scriptures so we can have a solid foundation for all our activities. We need to be consistent in our interpretation of the Bible. We can say that church history is a reflection of the interpretation of the Bible. As Seventh-day Adventists, we need to be able to convey the Bible in a meaningful way in the 21st century. We are living very far (1,900–3,500 years) from when Scripture was originally written. Language, culture, habits, and lifestyle have changed over that time. We need to understand this change as well

as the original intent of the biblical text for the original audience so we can know how to apply it to our postmodern world.

CM: Who paid for it?

JM: A private sponsor completely paid for it. Neither the Seminary nor Andrews University paid for this conference.

CM: What was the purpose?

JM: The purpose was to really engage all our professors and departments in rethinking what we do in order to make sure that everything we do in the Seminary is done from a biblical perspective and engagement. What we teach or do, and everything in the Seminary must be done in such a way that it reflects firm biblical principles, methodology, and worldview.

CM: What was the hoped-for result?

JM: To be more faithful to the interpretation of the biblical text. I am sure that from this engagement will spring a renewed passion for truth, because such an engagement with the Scriptures in seeking to obtain a better understanding of the Holy Word cannot do otherwise than bring an experience of joy, as happened in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when they engaged in a deep study of the Scriptures (see Nehemiah 8). And the goal is that the Word of God will be in our mind and penetrate and transform our lives and that our hearts will burn for God in loving and humble service to others. As we read in Luke 24:32 regarding Jesus's two disciples who only recognized Jesus after walking with Him and listening to His interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures for at least two hours on their way to Emmaus, they declared: "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (NIV). It is my desire that our hearts will burn, and we will enjoy God's Presence in such a way that we will freshly see the face of God and share this experience with others.



Ryan Brousson, MA (Religion) student, with an emphasis in systematic theology. Interested in science and religion, his goal is to teach within those fields at the university level.



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