



EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

Reading | BY BONNIE DWYER

While breakfasting at Hudy's Café in Champlin, Minnesota, I spotted what looked like children's artwork nestled between the salt shaker and ketchup bottle. Reaching over to take a closer look, what I picked up was an enthusiastic student book review on laminated paper. Looking around, I was delighted to see that each table setting included a similar document in honor of February being "I Love to Read" month in Minnesota.

Reading and Responding to John's Gospel is the subtitle of the book that I am currently reading, Kendra Haloviak Valentine's *Signs to Life*. With the gusto of the Minnesota children reviewers, I'd like to recommend it to you because it demonstrates "dialogical" text and calls attention to the fact that the fourth gospel is also dialogical: "the author of the gospel is in conversation with others in his community—for John that means Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians and Jews. These conversations helped create the work just as they create the interpretations readers will give to the stories," she writes.

In the introduction to her book, Haloviak Valentine tells a story from her childhood when then-General Conference President Neal Wilson presented her and her brother with a book as a reward for sitting quietly in the front row of the General Conference worship sessions. "I remember the moment President Wilson handed me that book (*Tell Me About Sister White* by Marye Trim). It was a moment when I could tangibly feel and appreciate that my church community had special stories, traditions and ideas it valued, and it was passing these on to me."

These are the stories that we, too, are reviewing, debating, and celebrating in this issue of *Spectrum*. Several authors trace the history of our past readings: Gil Valentine takes us to Australia to show how our understanding of the Trinity changed because of the readings by W. W. Prescott. Richard Rice examines more recent history,

including the preparation of the SDA Bible Commentary. I've written about the Theology of Ordination Study Committee's January 2014 meeting, utilizing the papers that are now available for all to read at the website of the Adventist Archives, Statistics, and Research (<http://www.adventistarchives.org/january-2014-papers-presented#.Uw-i9Cj6RCg>). And in the section on Racism, members of the Society of Adventist Philosophers examine our history in terms of race and provide the basis for a renewed dialogue concerning that topic.

One thing that I took away from reading these materials is a more acute awareness of what we do to biblical text, even while claiming to stand outside of it. Plus, the material gave me a renewed appreciation for the conversation about the biblical text that has been at the heart of our community life.

Writing for the North American Division's Biblical Research Committee, Kyoshin Ahn pointed out that "for Adventists, meaning is a property of the text rather than the result of a reader's engagement with the text." And yet, he notes, "The bottom line is that regardless of whether interpreters openly and candidly recognize it, they bring themselves to the text." Ahn also points out that our official document, *Methods of Bible Study Document* (MSBD) voted by the General Conference, "emphatically advises the interpretation of Scripture in its cultural and historical context."

With Haloviak Valentine, "I believe that the Adventist church has valuable insights and important ideas to pass on to others." The dialogue about those ideas—the conversation about how we read the Bible—continues to fascinate and challenge me.

I invite you to read along. Every month is an "I love to read" month in Adventism. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.