Richard J. Bautch and Jean-François Racine, *Dreams and Visions in the Bible and Related Literature.* Atlanta: SBL, 2023. 201 pages. $40.00. ISBN: 9781628375534

When I was doing my graduate studies, after completing my coursework, my dissertation advisor, Jean-François Racine, offered a course on "Dreams and Visions in the New Testament." My initial reaction was ambivalent. On the one hand, I was "excited." I had taken his earlier course on "Luke and Acts" and enjoyed writing an essay on Peter's vision in Acts 10—particularly how it parallels the call of Jonah, where his initial refusal turns into acceptance and ultimately results in repentance. I explored how Peter's vision plays a pivotal role in transitioning from the Jewish mission to the Gentile mission in Acts. I later presented that paper at the 2016 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. On the other hand, I was "perplexed." I was unsure how much such a course and academic endeavor could benefit the mostly M.Div. students who were preparing to be ministers and priests of the Word and Sacraments in their respective religious settings.

Years passed. I graduated, began ministry in a local church, and was surprised by my advisor's early—and, from my perspective, unexpected—retirement. Then, last year, I found a gift from him in my mailbox: a copy of his edited work, *Dreams and Visions in the Bible and Related Literature*. I was delighted that he had published the book and that he had envisioned a larger project when offering the course "Dreams and Visions in the New Testament." As I opened the book and began reading the collection of essays, I felt even more "cheerful," realizing that the project was designed to foster dialogue between the text and the reader—more precisely, to explore how reading communities interpret dreams and visions.

Aware of contemporary readers' hunger and thirst for meaning, the editors and contributors of this volume employ reader-response criticism. Unlike historical criticism, which limits the reader's role to searching for the author's original intent or reconstructing the community behind the text, the reader-response approach gives the reader or audience an active role. The community does not simply receive dreams and visions—it discerns and interprets them. Put differently, the book focuses "less on what the text means and more on the interaction between the text and the reader, or how meaning happens" (p. 6, emphasis original).

The book is organized into four parts:

1. **Hermeneutics of Readership** – This section, which contains two essays on Elijah's vision in 1 Kings 19 and the vision of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12, introduces the methodology—how communities wrestle with the text and discern its meaning.
2. **Reading and Intertextuality** – This section includes three essays on Abraham's vision in the Genesis Apocryphon, Jeremiah's vision in 2 Maccabees, and Pilate's wife's dream in Matthew, examining the interplay between reading and intertextuality.
3. **Affection and Emotion in Navigating Dreams and Visions** – This section explores respectively vision(s) in Enoch, Acts, and Shepherd of Hermas, analyzing the emotional and affective dimensions of visionary experiences.
4. **A Concluding Response** – The final chapter revisits the book's central question: "Is there a reader for this text?"

In the introduction, Bautch and Racine offer a working definition of dreams and visions in this volume: "the account of a revelatory experience, mystical or not, fictional or not, involving a visual, aural, or both aural and visual dimension" (p. 6). The essays reflect the engagement of reading communities with the text. Borrowing Werline's term wrestling the text, the editors argue that "readers bound together in community are wrestling a meaning out of the text" (p. 8). Through this interpretive process, reading communities achieve two things—first, deepening the meaning by bringing the text and its meaning under some level of interpretive control and, second, broadening the meaning by considering marginalized voices within the community. The editors make it clear that this volume is a product of such an interpretive framework.

In chapter 1, Gina Hans-Piazza, explores Elijah's vision—or possible delusion—in the wilderness of Horeb. She questions the Hebrew phrase קוֹל דְּמָמָה דַקָּה, often translated as "still small voice" but more literally meaning "sound of silence." Who initiated Elijah's journey? Is he a Moses-like prophet who saw God? If not, is he still a hero? If so, how?

In chapter 2, Andrea Spatafora, examines the vision of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12. Is this story merely fiction, or does it reflect reality in a way that challenges the reading community? Spatafora highlights "a dual situation" in which believers have already conquered the dragon yet still suffer his persecution (p. 40).

In chapter 3, Joseph McDonald investigates Abram's dream in the Genesis Apocryphon, in which Abram persuades Sarai to lie to Pharaoh to spare his life. McDonald raises the question: Is what Abram claimed he saw reliable? If Abram is an uncertain medium, can we trust his vision, just as our interpretations are not always trustworthy?

In chapter 4, Richard J. Bautch interrogates Jeremiah's visions in 2 Maccabees, where Jeremiah appears with a sword in his hand (2:18; 15:13-16). While these visions encourage resistance and violence against the Seleucids, readers may recall Jeremiah as a vulnerable prophet. How should they navigate this paradox?

In chapter 5, Roy Allan Fisher reexamines Pilate's wife's dream in Matthew 27:19, challenging the conventional view that she serves as **"**a foil to the Jews" (p. 96). Is her warning to Pilate about ethnicity, or is it about control and authority?

In chapter 6, Genevieve Dibley explores why Enoch weeps in the Book of Dreams (1 Enoch). Is his weeping a response to God's delayed judgment? How might a persecuted reading community interpret Enoch's vision of Gentile inclusion?

In chapter 7, Deborah Prince discusses why Acts contains more visions than any other New Testament book, except Revelation, and why they are mostly in the first 12 chapters. She questions the narrative function of Peter's and Cornelius's double visions in Acts 10 and the reappearance of visions in Acts 22 and 26. What would be a community's response to them?

In Chapter 8, Jean-François Racine, examines the emotional spectrum in Shepherd of Hermas, analyzing how Hermas's series of visions evoke emotions ranging from fear and terror to cheerfulness.

Rodney A. Werline's response chapter concludes the book by summarizing the essays and reaffirming the value of reader-response criticism. He argues that this approach helps us understand both the historical communities that preserved the text and ourselves as modern readers.

Bautch and Racine, along with the contributors, deserve praise for offering a fresh perspective on the role of reading communities in interpreting dreams and visions. Too often, biblical reading is viewed as a quest for either the author's original intent or personal spiritual nourishment. This book reminds us that biblical authors were embedded in communities—and that our reading should be, too. For example, I read Peter's vision in Acts 10 through the Wesleyan quadrilateral, which integrates scripture, reason, tradition, and experience together. Am I too Methodist for doing so? Probably. But I can't help it.

While this book makes valuable contributions, I have two lingering questions. First, what happens when there is tension between canonical and non-canonical texts? For a Protestant, disregarding the Genesis Apocryphon may seem easy, making Abram's dream unreliable by default. A discussion on canonicality and its implications for reader-response interpretation would have been helpful. Second, can ordinary readers challenge authoritative figures like Elijah, Abram, or Enoch? This volume challenges readers to "wrestle" with texts, but many churchgoers may be hesitant to question biblical figures' authority.

In conclusion, this book effectively demonstrates that meaning is not locked within the text but actively created by readers. So, are you "perplexed" by this approach? Or "excited" to engage? Wherever you fall, I echo Augustine's words: "Take up and read." You may find yourself not just "glad"—but truly "cheerful."

Hyun Ho Park
First United Methodist Church of Yuba City