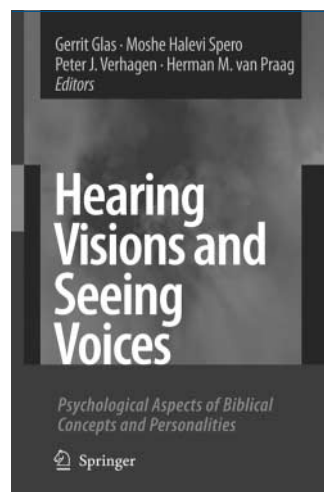


questioning and perhaps accepted some abstracts at face value, leading in places to incorrect conclusions. Thus, I think a better and more analytically thorough job is done by some of the older texts such as Bruce Wampold's *The Great Psychotherapy Debate* (2001).

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Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices. Psychological Aspects of Biblical Concepts and Personalities

Edited by G. Glas, M. H. Spero, P. J. Verhagen & H. M. van Praag
Springer. 2007.
£99 (hb). 326 pp.
ISBN: 9781402059384

Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices arose from a conference that sought to explore the bond between religion and psychology, which the authors suggest lies in their shared history of the *cura animarum*, or the care and cure of the human soul. The book contains a series of erudite reviews on the psychological and theological literature of some iconic Jewish and Christian biblical characters.

The studies on Paul and Jesus are extensive but draw almost exclusively on the theological literature and have little in the way of psychology, possibly because so little was known about the early formative years and the personal lives of these key religious figures. The chapters on the Old Testament Hebrew prophets, especially the one on Jeremiah, draw on Hasidic writers such as Joseph Heschel and show how the Hebrew concept of God changed radically during the prophetic era. Blind obedience to the deity and the law characteristic of the earlier patriarchal period are no longer the sole expectation of the Hebrew God, nor is there to be vengeful punishment for deviation. Instead, society assumes a more compassionate perspective and thus the God of the prophets emerges as a champion of ethical values while the prophets preach on the importance of individual moral responsibility. The beginnings of social justice are to be found in the pleas of Jeremiah, who urges the people to care for the widows and orphans, groups who were dangerously disadvantaged throughout the ancient world. Perhaps here are also to be found the beginnings of socialism. The huge chapter on Job reviews the mainly psychoanalytic literature on his suffering and his stalwart capacity to withstand personal tragedy. It seems as if Job was not an ancient Israelite at all, but most likely a mythical figure of the ancient world that never actually existed (which is most fortunate for Job since he had a truly enormous amount of bad luck).

Only one chapter explores how biblical themes feature in the presentations of common psychiatric disorders today; thus in Switzerland, where the author practises, religious delusions in psychoses may be associated with a demonic presentation in up

to 30% of cases. Some patients, especially those with religious mania, may even trek to the Holy places (the so-called 'Jerusalem syndrome').

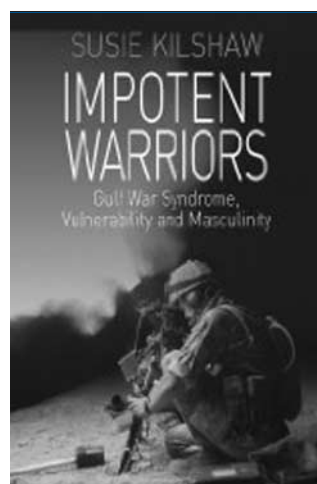
The book also contains brief essays on topics of general interest to psychiatrists difficult to find elsewhere, such as prophetic frenzy, messianism or martyrdom (an act of religious faith) and its relation to suicide (a sin). It ends with a chapter on the lengthy history of biblical psychology which appears to have started in the 16th century. The word *psychologia* was first used by Marulic and popularised in 1530 by Philip Melancton, a student of biblical psychology and associate of Martin Luther, in his book *Commentarius de anima* which in turn was a commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Psyches* indicating that psychology itself owes its name to the early Lutheran tradition.

Much in this book is fascinating but some of the writing in its unbridled enthusiasm for the topic is barely comprehensible, let alone scientific. At £99 for a mere 326 pages these words of wisdom are very expensive.

The topic attracts a wide audience, yet so little of any academic worth is published in the field. *Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices*, being both scholarly and a rich source of references, is a 'must buy' for all the larger teaching hospital libraries.

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Impotent Warriors. Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability and Masculinity

By Susie Kilshaw.
Berghahn Books. 2008.
£55.00 (hb). 280 pp.
ISBN: 9781845455262

The status of 'Gulf War syndrome' has been the focus of a vigorous and sometimes bitter debate. Groups of veterans suffering from medically unexplained symptoms have argued that their enduring ill health is the result of exposure to toxins while serving in the Gulf. Whether it be side-effects of vaccinations, organophosphates, fumes from oil-well fires or depleted uranium, they believe that their immune systems have been compromised leaving them vulnerable to known diseases. However, their campaign has attracted little support from scientists and doctors who have been unable to identify a unique disorder or a specific pathological mechanism associated with the Gulf War. Because much of this research was funded by government, negative findings have fuelled conspiracy theories and claims of a cover-up. The picture is further complicated because the public in the UK and the USA is generally sympathetic to the veterans' plight and shares their belief in the existence of a definable syndrome.

Seventeen years have passed since Gulf War syndrome was first proposed, sufficient time to allow an objective view of these