



# Saints and Madmen: Psychiatry Opens Its Doors to Religion

*Russell Shorto*

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## **Saints and Madmen: Psychiatry Opens Its Doors to Religion** Russell Shorto

What is the boundary between psychosis and religious experience? Psychiatrists have only recently acknowledged the role that spirituality plays in their patients' worlds, adding a new category-"the religious or spiritual problem"-to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1994. Some psychiatrists now specialize in treating the spiritually disturbed, yielding case studies of religious ideation worthy of Oliver Sacks. Journalist Russell Shorto investigates this new science of the soul, examining cutting-edge issues of chemistry and consciousness, and whether psycho-pharmacology has a spiritual component. At the same time, he explores curious byways of the phenomenon such as "Christian psychiatry" and alien abduction, and follows a clergyman who goes "with" the spiritually disturbed on their psychotic journeys. In this moving and impeccably researched narrative, he brings to life two distinct and provocative-and now intertwined-efforts to probe the deepest meaning of human existence.

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