


Psychiatrists and Clinical Depression – Part 1

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by [Martin and Deidre Bobgan](#) | May 30, 2026 | [Psychiatry and Research](#)

This article is written in the context of our over 50 years of reading, doing research, and also writing in the area of psychotherapy and the unholy mixtures which we label “psychoheresy.”^[1] We have co-authored 27 books and over 400 articles, many of which focus on the subject of counseling. Prior to forming our own publishing company, our books were published by Moody Press, Harvest House Publishers, and Bethany House Publishers. Some of our books have been translated into other languages, including Chinese, the world’s most widely spoken language. We have ministered to others for over 50 years, and for years, headed the soul care ministry in a local church. We hold six university degrees between us, including one doctorate in the field of psychology. One of us qualified for the Clinical Psychologist’s license in California, but never applied for it. After all of this education, we concluded that psychotherapy was a hoax being perpetrated on the church and the American public, and spreading worldwide.^[2] Others, who are academically distinguished, have said likewise.^[3]

Many respected Christians, academics, and scholars in psychology and psychiatry have endorsed our position on psychotherapy. At the time of publishing the original edition of *PsychoHeresy* (1987),^[4] trustworthy Christians gave written endorsements for the book, including the following Christians: Dr. Jay E. Adams, Professor of Practical Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, author of over 100 books; Dave Hunt, the author of numerous books including *Beyond Seduction* and coauthor of *The Seduction of Christianity*; W. Phillip Keller, author of more than thirty-five books, including *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*; Dr. J. Vernon McGee, pastor and Bible teacher on “Thru the Bible Radio”; Ed Payne, M. D., Professor of Family Medicine, Medical College of Georgia, and author of *Biblical/Medical Ethics*; and Leonard Ravenhill, evangelist, conference speaker, and author.

Two well-known, distinguished psychiatrists also endorsed our work: Dr. Thomas Szasz and Dr. E. Fuller Torrey. One of the most distinguished scholars is psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Szasz.^[5] Szasz was a university professor who wrote numerous books and articles. His writings were controversial, and he became one of the best-known psychiatrists of the 20th century. One of his many statements that rankled psychotherapists was given in his discussion of mental health care. Szasz recommended that the responsibility for mental health care should be taken away from the mental health professions and given to

voluntary associations such as churches. He said: “I would turn this whole business [mental health] back to the ministers and priests and rabbis.”[\[6\]](#)

The other most distinguished scholar is Dr. E. Fuller Torrey, who is a clinical and research psychiatrist. He is internationally known for his research on schizophrenia and bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder and is the author of numerous books. His international best-selling book, *Surviving Schizophrenia*, is filled with scientific research indicating that schizophrenia is a systemic illness.

We believe that clinical depression is a systemic illness, meaning that it is a medical condition that involves the entire body and not just the mind. Many people believe that depression is fundamentally a spiritual issue in cause and cure. We hope and pray that this article will be carefully considered.

Our Journey

In 1979, our first of 27 books was published. At that time, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the *DSM II*, with over 180 mental disorders, was published. A more recent manual, the *DSM-5* (change from Roman numerals to Arabic numbers), was published in 2013 with about 300 mental disorders. Subsequently, the *DSM-5-TR* (Text Revision) was published in 2022, with some new disorders.

It is known that only one or two of the numerous mental disorders have a cause-and-effect bodily symptom associated with them. Many have concluded that such disorders without a known cause must be spiritual problems requiring a spiritual solution. In this article, we explain why we adopted the mainline hypothesis (claim) of thousands of researchers, with other researchers cited in the millions of their footnotes. **Based on all the research, the mainline claim is that clinical depression is a systemic (body, brain, and mind) disorder and not just the mind alone.**

To address the mainline claim, we reviewed numerous research studies and their footnotes, which reveal the education, experience, and expertise of all those involved. Additionally, these studies were published in academic journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and many others. All of these journals are peer-reviewed, meaning they have been rigorously evaluated by a panel of independent experts in the same field before publication.

After new instruments and procedures for probing the body and brain had been developed, and the research studies had reached thousands with millions of citations affirming the same hypothesis (claim) that depression is a systemic illness, we became convinced. **In Part 2, we will give the other side, which is that clinical depression is a spiritual problem requiring a spiritual solution. In a later Part, we will give one of the strongest arguments for the mainline claim.**

The Mainline Claim

We accept the mainline claim, which is that **clinical depression is a systemic illness, meaning that it involves the body and brain, not just the mind.** When we speak of depression, we are referring to clinical depression, which includes the following diagnoses: Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia), Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), Postpartum (Perinatal) Depression, Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder, and Bipolar Disorder.[\[7\]](#) The following will reveal why we have reached the conclusion that clinical depression is a systemic illness.

The Human Brain

An article in the *Psychotherapy Networker* describes the human brain as “the most complex biological entity known on earth.” The author adds, “The number of possible interconnections among its neurons exceeds the estimated number of atoms in the universe.”[\[8\]](#)

Christof Koch declares, “The brain is by far the most complex piece of highly excitable matter in the known universe by any measure. We don’t even understand the brain of a worm.”[\[9\]](#)

An article in *Psychology Today* reports that there are “100 billion neurons in the human brain” and that it would take 32 million years “to count each synapse in the human brain at a rate of one synapse per second.”[\[10\]](#)

We have written on “The Human Brain,” and we describe much more than the three quotations above to illustrate the brain as the pinnacle of the creative hand of God, rather than as mere hardware with the soul as mere software. God’s creation of the human brain should convince every atheist that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

The mysteries of the brain and mind have baffled humankind ever since the Fall. The mind has been the focus of philosophers, psychologists, and theologians, particularly in the immaterial processes of thought, emotion, and will. As biological science developed over the years, the brain has been seen as the biological organ that enables the mind to think, feel, and choose. Even so, most of the connections between the brain and mind, and between the brain and body, are yet to be discovered. Since the 1980s, research on the mind-body connections has been unfolding with thousands of studies on depression. These research studies have been made possible by the various means of accessing information about the body and mind. **Because of these numerous scientific studies, clinical depression is now seen as a systemic illness affecting the mind, brain, and other parts of the body.**[\[11\]](#)

In 2018, Oxford University Press published a book titled *Depression as a Systemic Illness*. An abstract of the book says:

Depression has been declared by the World Health Organization in March of 2017 to be the illness with the greatest burden of disease in the world. This volume attempts to examine the current state of our understanding of depressive disorders, from the animal models, allostatic load, patterns of recurrence, effects on other illnesses, for example, cancer, neurological, cardiovascular, wound healing, etc. It is from this perspective that the editors declare that depression is a systemic illness, not just a mental disorder.[12]

TO BE CONTINUED.

PsychoHeresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity / Revised and Expanded. Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1987, 2012.

Against Psychotherapy / For the Bible. Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 2024.

[3] Lawrence LeShan, *Association for Humanistic Psychology*, October 1984, p. 4.

[4] Martin & Deidre Bobgan. *PsychoHeresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity*, Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1987.

[5] “Thomas Szasz,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Szasz.

[6] “Nobody Should Decide Who Goes to the Mental Hospital,” *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, Summer, 1978, p. 60

[7] “Depression: Learn More—Types of Depression, NIH National Library of Medicine, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279288/>.

[8] Mary Sykes Wylie and Richard Simon, “Discoveries from the Black Box,” *Psychotherapy Networker*, Vol. 26, No. 5, p. 17.

[9] Christof Koch, quoted in *The New York Times*, Oct. 14, 2018, www.nytimes.com.

[10] *Psychology Today*, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 17.

[11] Jorge Luis Sotelo and Charles B. Nemeroff, “Depression as a Systemic Disease,” *Personalized Medicine in Psychiatry*, Vol. 11-2, March-April, 2017, pp. 11-25, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S246817171630014X>

[12] James J. Strain (ed) and Michael Blumenfield (ed), Abstract of *Depression as a Systemic Illness*, Oxford University Press, 2018, <https://academic.oup.com/book/24777>.

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