

Missions & PsychoHeresy

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August 16, 2022

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In 1979 Bethany House published our first of 26 books: *The Psychological Way / The Spiritual Way*. At that time, we predicted that psychological theories and therapies, like the proverbial camel's nose in the tent, would soon fill the entire Church. Indeed, from 1979 until now, psychological theories and therapies have mesmerized the Church, and the churches' response has been adoption or capitulation. Nearly everywhere one looks in the Church, one will find much evidence of the psychological takeover of the Church's understanding of the soul and of soul care itself. This psychological understanding of the soul and its care has infiltrated Christian churches, schools, colleges, universities, seminaries, denominations, and mission agencies.

Mission Agencies

Every missionary candidate knows the Great Commission, which Jesus gave His disciples. It is a command for all that follow Him throughout history and throughout the world. Jesus clearly says:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20.)

Missionaries are sent to "all nations" today to fulfill that command. Individuals and couples apply to mission agencies and, if **approved**, are sent to the field. Otherwise they are **rejected** for service. The approval process has several parts to it. Two important and required parts of the approval process involve an evaluation by a mental health professional and a personality test. Then later, if missionaries on the field are experiencing problems of living, they are sent to mental health professionals.

To discover what the mission agencies were doing in the process of psychologically evaluating candidates for the mission field and providing psychological services for missionaries in need of soul care, we devised a **three-question survey**. The results of our survey follow:

After interviewing 35 of the largest mission agencies and 9 of the largest denominations, we emphatically state: No one, but NO ONE, questioned the use of mental health professionals and psychological tests for screening missionary

candidates, and no one, but NO ONE, questioned the use of mental health professionals to care for missionaries with problems of living.[1]

There is an expression that we all may have heard: “Follow the science.” The 35 mission agencies we interviewed have greatly violated the scientific standards in response to Questions 1 and 2. In addition, they have grossly transgressed the Bible in response to Question 3. We will list and discuss the first two questions, describe why science rejects the way they evaluate missionary candidates for service, and then reveal how these missionary agencies abandon the very Words they send missionaries to proclaim.

Our first goal was to examine the involvement of mental health professionals and psychological tests in the screening of missionary candidates. Following our disclaimers to the first two questions, we will conclude with the death blow to the use of those two means of evaluation used by the 35 mission agencies. Then, regarding Question 3, we will expose the fact that mission agencies’ choice of professional psychological counseling for the missionaries in need of help contradicts the very Words of the Bible which they are called to “teach all nations.” **All three of these questions involve myths.**

Question 1: Do you use mental health professionals to screen or evaluate missionary candidates?

The first myth has to do with mental health professionals’ expertise in missionary selection. The psychological grid through which a mental health professional will view a missionary candidate will be either one or a combination of two or more of the 500 psychological systems of personality theory and counseling methodology in existence today. They are all pseudoscientific opinions and guesses about man from the very “wisdom of men” that God has warned His followers about. If one truly wants to know about the depths of a missionary candidate’s character, one needs only the doctrines of Scripture applied to a life. The pseudoscientific psychological nonsense available will not and cannot improve upon that.

Critical to the mental health professionals’ ability to predict success or failure of a missionary candidate is the ability to accurately diagnose. Psychiatrist Walter Reich calls diagnosis “the central psychiatric act” and says the psychiatrist’s privilege to diagnose “gives him the power to control and to influence.”[2] Since diagnosis is so important, the question is: How good are mental health professionals at diagnosing? In our earliest book, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way*, we quoted research to show that psychological diagnosis is a disaster. Besides involving massive errors, diagnoses made by such mental health professionals are no better, and sometimes worse, than those made by nonprofessionals.[3] Psychiatrist Hugh Drummond says, “Volumes of research have been done to demonstrate the absolute unreliability of psychiatric diagnosis.”[4] In fact, studies have demonstrated that the psychoexpert’s system cannot be relied on to distinguish the sane from the insane in civil or criminal matters.[5]

Question 2: Do you use psychological tests to screen or evaluate missionary candidates?

The second myth has to do with the usefulness of psychological testing to screen missionary candidates. A Christian's character can best be discovered through a direct or indirect acquaintance with the individuals through their pastor, church leaders, friends, family, and acquaintance with their life experiences. Personality tests are at their worst when used to predict success or failure of a missionary candidate, with no scientific support for doing so, **as we will demonstrate.**

The prolific use of psychological tests to evaluate missionary candidates begs the question: Is the use of psychological tests to evaluate missionary candidates for service a trustworthy means of selection? All psychological tests have problems, but personality inventories are even more problematic. In her academic text, Anne Anastasi says, "The construction and use of personality inventories are beset with special difficulties over and above the common problems encountered in all psychological testing." [6]

Frederick G. Brown, in his text *Principles of Educational and Psychological Testing*, says: "The more traditional personality inventories exhibit such low relationships with real-life criteria that their use for purposes other than hypothesis building and to make statements about the general characteristics of individuals or groups seem quite tenuous." [7]

Dr. George K. Bennett, when president of The Psychological Corporation, which publishes and distributes personality tests, said, "Personality tests are of little, if any, value in employment." [8]

George Dudley, a test researcher and president of Behavioral Science Research Press of Dallas, believes there should be more humility about testing. He says:

Testing is a way to get at the truth sideways, and if you believe that the only way to get at the truth about another person is to administer a test, then you're not only fooling yourself, but you're also demonstrating a very negative view of mankind. You're saying that truth cannot be determined by asking the subject, or those who know the subject, but only by asking a testing expert. [9]

The book that sets the standards for tests is published by the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. The title of the volume is *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. The following Standard 1:22 is just one of the 24 standards: "When it is clearly stated or implied that a recommended test use will result in a specific outcome [i.e., success on the mission field], the basis for expecting that outcome should be presented, together with relevant evidence." [10] That has never been done by the 35 mission agencies we interviewed.

Walter Mischel, professor of psychology at Stanford University, says in his text *Personality and Assessment*, “A behavior sample cannot be interpreted as an index of unobserved behavior unless the links between the sample and what it represents are demonstrated.”^[11] A personality test is a “behavior sample” and “cannot be interpreted as an index of unobserved behavior **unless** the links between the sample and what it represents are demonstrated” (emphasis added). No such link has been demonstrated between test results and success as a missionary by any mission agency. At least we are not familiar with any such links from the extensive search we have made of the literature.

Consider a man, woman, or couple preparing for the mission field, desiring to serve God with their lives, being required to take one of the many personality tests and being rejected for service on the basis of the test results. A rejection, for whatever reason, can have a dramatic impact and lasting effect on the rejected candidates. Their future is thus determined by faulty instruments that have nothing to do with the Bible and do not even meet scientific standards in the manner they are used. The proper level of acceptability does not exist for any personality test to be used for missionary selection, either when used alone or with other criteria.

One has to wonder what would have happened to the great missionaries of the past if they had been subjected to taking personality tests before going to the mission field. God only knows! As we will shortly show, no one should ever be rejected for missionary service on the basis of a personality test score or even a battery of personality tests.

Because of Myth One (so-called expertise of mental health professionals to screen missionary candidates) and Myth Two (so-called truth of psychological tests), mission agencies and denominations have rationalized the use of these so-called experts and their psychological tests. Representatives of missionary agencies and denominations tell us that the psychological screening and testing are only two of several facets used to look at the missionary candidate. However, two questions need to be asked of these missionary agencies and denominations:

1. Can a missionary candidate refuse to be screened by a mental health professional or psychological test without being discriminated against for doing so?
2. Has any missionary candidate refused such screening?

The facts are that missionary candidates know that refusing the psychoexpert screening and psych tests will lead to being rejected by the mission agency. Missionaries have told us that, as a candidate, you just do it because it is required.

The following is excerpted from a copy of a letter sent to us from the husband of a couple who had been subjected to personality testing **and subsequently been rejected**:

This whole process of psychological testing strikes me as having several serious defects.

(1) In the tests used, certain “norms” are provided as to how the majority of people perform. Do these norms really reflect what is right or wrong for Christians? How can the norms of lost men be used to determine the quality of my character?

(2) These norms are a product of comparing people with other people. This is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures. We do not dare to classify or “compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12).

(3) We are tested by God in the milieu for the purpose of proving our character. The artificial environment of the assessment center and its tests simply cannot take the place of the tests God has put me through during the last 30 years, and especially in the last 3 years of my life.

(4) It was pointed out to us that one of the reasons that psychological tests were being used was, “Who do you get your references from? From your pastors and elders who are your friends, right? And what are they going to do but give you really good reports, right?” The understanding was that the testing would get to the real truth. This attitude is unbiblical and expressive of a very low opinion of the pastors, elders, and Christian friends who are being asked to give their assessments. The premise that these men cannot be trusted, therefore psychological tests which can be trusted must be used and depended upon, is patently wrong.

(5) The assessment center seems to be pursuing a process of worldly wisdom to achieve its goals. “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). Does this testing program operate on that premise? It does not. How many Pauls and Jeremiahs would make it through these tests? We are in danger of cutting off the head of anyone who stands out as being not “normal.” Many men of God are not altogether “normal,” as I am sure you know.

I am disturbed that capable men are being rejected across America because they do not measure up to some false standard.[\[12\]](#)

Untested Homogeneity

Understanding the research standard of **untested homogeneity** will reveal why all the 35 largest missionary agencies, which we interviewed, failed in their attempts to determine which candidates would do the best on the field, as they approved some candidates for service and rejected others. Put simply, only the ones they approved were sent to the field; those that were rejected stayed home without the selection process itself being tested to

see if it really works. The agencies just assume without proof that the ones who were approved will likely be successful on the field.

Untested homogeneity is a powerful research requirement that exposes the fact that mission agencies have **zero proof** for their means of evaluating all missionary candidates and approving some for missionary service and rejecting others. The entire evaluation process, which includes, but is not limited to mental health professionals and psychological tests, is a hoax! This hoax is hidden in plain sight, but not seen by any of these 35 largest missionary agencies that we contacted. The very act of identifying (accepted or rejected) individuals/couples and then sending **only** those who are accepted to the mission field is known in research as an **untested homogeneity**, because no one can say that the accepted sent-to-the-field missionary candidates will likely be successful missionaries and that the rejected missionary candidates would likely fail if sent to the mission field.

“Untested” means “unproven.” Under the current practice by all of the 35 largest mission agencies, no one can know whether they made the best choice, because the rejected missionary candidates were never given a chance to prove themselves on the field. In fact, the ones who were rejected through the selection process could actually have turned out to be even more successful than those who were approved. Under the selection process no one can say.

To avoid this lethal error of untested homogeneity **all candidates** must be sent to the mission field and secretly labelled either “accepted” or “rejected.” A standard for success should be set up for all candidates sent to the field. At the end of their first term of service and upon return every missionary should be rated by whatever standard used without knowing which are in the “accepted” or “rejected” group. After all the missionaries are labeled “successful” or “unsuccessful,” the results are compared with the original “accepted” or “rejected” labels revealed. From then and only then can the process of selection be known as successful or unsuccessful. It may be that on average the rejected individuals make better missionaries than the accepted ones. No one really knows, as no mission agency has ever tried this to determine whether their means of original evaluation and selection really work.

Question 3: Do you use or favor the use of mental health professionals to assist missionaries if they are experiencing problems of living?

This third question is a third myth. This myth has to do with the usefulness of mental health professionals to care for missionaries who experience problems of living. The greatest care one can give a missionary who is experiencing nonorganic problems of living is biblical and must be solely and purely biblical. The psychological man-made wisdom of this world will only detract from and distort the purity of what God has already provided.

Link Care

Link Care is located in Fresno, California and is a psychological assessment agency used for a variety of psychological purposes by mission agencies. They are unabashedly an integrationist organization that, according to them, uses “sound psychological principles to enhance performance of overseas missionaries.” Integrationists such as Link Care will claim to use “sound psychological principles,” to be completely biblical, and at least not to violate Scripture.

Link Care conducted a survey some years back of “78 missionary sending agencies.” We mention their survey and note that they found that “psychological assessment as represented by interviews with psychologists, psychiatrists, or counselors occupies approximately one-fourth to one-third of the average selection interview time.” Regardless of the percentage of time devoted to psychological interviews and regardless of what mission agency, it is our estimate that the psych screening is taken seriously and can make or break the selection, in spite of protests to the contrary by the agencies. [\[13\]](#)

Link Care and other such agencies make claims and offer services for a price. Therefore, the burden of proof is on them to scientifically demonstrate that their services produce the results for which they have been hired. The best way for this to occur is for the mission agencies that use Link Care and other such psychological services to hire an independent, third-party psychometric evaluation team. We predict that if this were done, it would expose the uselessness and damage of using such organizations as Link Care.

The following is excerpted from the beginning of an article that Jon Lutes, a missionary, wrote after being sent to Link Care with his wife upon their return from the mission field.

Many times American Christians have told me that God’s Word is important but not all-sufficient. That there are real problems from our past that must be dealt with by psychological probing, evaluating, and counseling. That validating past feelings is necessary for present healing. That simple trust in and obedience to God are just not adequate in dealing with modern “dysfunctions.” That there is a “new” priesthood (Christian psychologists) who have hidden knowledge, which with a sprinkling of Scripture equals healing truth. And all this for mere mammon.

At first I scoffed at this blatant defiance of GOD, His Spirit, and His Truth. But now I am so thankful to the Lord that He opened my eyes. I was able to undergo “Christian” psychology for 5 intensive weeks (for \$5,000+). My suspicions and doubts of psychology are gone. They are now convictions based on God’s truth and my experience. I now acknowledge this psychology as a “Trojan Horse” of Satan. It appears to be a gift from the world, but internally it is full of enemies set to steal, kill, and destroy. I cannot say that Christian psychologists are mal-intended or that all their counsel is wicked. I cannot even say that there are not some positive results.

Some valuable points may be gleaned. However, whenever truth and error are mixed, the result is impurity and eventual diversion from devotion to GOD alone.

I am not about to write a book critiquing psychology. Rather, I simply want to present a few fundamental snares of the devil in “Christian” psychology. I certainly will not say anything new, but rather some things eternal and unchanging. The basis of this brief article is my experience during a five-week stint at LinkCare, a counseling center for Christian workers. My wife and I were directed there to get help for our marriage. We are missionaries and had returned to the states to grow stronger in our marriage. We had had no prior marriage counseling. However, we came away from this experience at LinkCare not only NOT helped, but instead rather more confused about our marriage and ourselves....

As a result of the Link Care Experience, this missionary concludes his article by saying:

I fully realize this will trouble some of you. Those of you still paying psychologists, I feel for you. On one hand I am glad that you have had someone to talk to and that you may be feeling better. But at what cost? More than money, probably you have missed an opportunity to turn this trial into an intimate, transforming encounter with the Master. But of course He is willing still to take over the counseling and provision of your well-being. And the best part? The cost has been paid by the blood of Jesus!

In a very real sense the end of the matter is this: LinkCare is ministering to the old man, the soulish man, thereby resurrecting that which God wants us to reckon as dead. Due to sensitivity for those who have been through LinkCare or who are still in bondage there, I have not mentioned other precious brethren who have experienced similar distress at the hands of LinkCare. It is for these dear saints and for those who may be exposed to LinkCare that I dedicate these brief words.[\[14\]](#)

The Call to Missions

When we point out the failures and fallacies of psychological interviews, personality tests, and psychological therapy, people ask, “What do you have to replace them?” In other words, if you don’t give us something better, we’ll stick with what we have. When we answer, “The Lord and His Word,” they say something like “Oh, yes, but. . . .” They are looking for a system at least resembling what they have. Nevertheless, God and His Word will accomplish more than anything the world has to offer for evaluating missionary candidates and treating problems of living. What qualities are needed on the mission field? Would they not be Christian virtues rather than personality traits and temperaments? Such virtues as humility, honesty, integrity, faithfulness, diligence, compassion, commitment, obedience, trustworthiness, and merciful concern for others would certainly be foremost along with the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23). Would not a primary requirement be some evidence of sanctification unto good works? “For we are his workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Learning about how the candidate has shown faithfulness to the Lord and a willingness to follow Christ prior to candidacy will reveal more important information than psychological interviews and tests.

Personality tests are not scientifically valid to use for missionary selection. Moreover, they are merely man-made measures of people, “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,” which according to God’s Word, “are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12). Personality tests are measures judging a person according to personality traits and types. There is no such measure given for believers in Scripture. Works and fruit are to be judged, doctrine is to be judged, but there is no place where personality traits are to be judged. Certain forms of behavior and attitudes are called the works of the flesh or the fruit of the flesh and other forms of behavior and attitudes are identified as the fruit of the Spirit, but where are the personality traits?

Personality tests are not accurate measures of people as they work according to the psychological opinions and invalid evaluations of the world. They all emanate from psychological theories of personality that attempt to explain why man is the way he is, what he should be, and how he changes. What a contrast to the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual who has been born of the Spirit of God and in whom He dwells. Missionary work is a spiritual endeavor. Evangelization is a spiritual endeavor. Planting churches is a spiritual endeavor. If it is not the Spirit of Christ in the individual doing the work, whereof will there be fruit? Personality tests may keep from the field the very ones through whom Christ may work and then send to the field those with personalities that are so great they could hinder the work of the Spirit. Psychological interviews, personality tests, and psychological therapy are based on personality theories devised by unbelievers, some of whom were direct enemies of God and some of whom were actively involved in the occult. Therefore, they come from the same cisterns that hold no water. What a contrast to the Living Water of the Word, whereby we can know God and man according to God’s perspective and whereby we are known and transformed, ready to be used of God. The Word of God is alive and powerful to change people from the inside out.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Psychotherapy can cover up a deep spiritual problem, but it cannot transform one spiritually. Psychological theories and therapies attempt to fix up the unregenerate, nonChristian self and/or Christians who are living by fleshly self-effort, because they work with the flesh. Psychotherapy is limited to dealing with what Scripture calls the “old man,” the very nature that needs to be replaced with what the Bible refers to as “the new man,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). God does not just fix up the “old man.” Instead, He counts the old man dead and buried and gives believers a new nature, which is spiritual and which is centered in Christ.

God has something far better than the world has to offer. There is no need for modern-day psychological therapies, their underlying psychologies, or personality tests. The church did well without them for centuries. From its inception the Christian church has ministered to those suffering from problems of living. That ministry includes evangelization of the lost, salvation of souls, and sanctification, which involves spiritual growth through life’s daily trials. Is not this why Christians send missionaries—to evangelize the lost and lead them in the way of sanctification and spiritual growth through life’s daily trials? **Psychotherapy offers both a substitute salvation and substitute sanctification.** How can missionaries do the work of the Lord if they are evaluated and treated with such religious substitutes?

These mission agencies have fallen into a form of deadly hypocrisy! They select and send missionaries to the field to seek the lost, proclaim the glorious Gospel, and teach doctrines of the faith as sufficient for life and godliness, when they themselves use the world’s wisdom to evaluate and treat missionaries. The selection process itself reveals their faith in carnal means that lack scientific certitude and their choice of using carnal psychological counseling rather than biblical, spiritual soul care. They are using worldly means, which do not bring forth and nourish the new life. And in doing so, they are contaminating the missionary candidates and missionaries on the field with a leaven that not only diminishes their own faith but has contaminated mission work on the field. If anyone should be encouraged to find help in the Lord, it should be missionaries! They deserve the best that Christ gives: Himself in the believer, His life-giving Word, and His ongoing presence through the indwelling Holy Spirit! True biblical soul care ministers to every believer in every aspect of life and depends upon the Word of God, which describes both the human condition and the process of relief for troubled minds. That is the standard to be used in choosing missionary candidates for service and for caring for their souls.

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[2] Walter Reich. “The Force of Diagnosis,” *Harper’s*, May 1980, p. 24.

The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1979, p. 6.0

[4] Hugh Drummond. “Dr. D. Is Mad as Hell,” *Mother Jones*, December 1979, p. 52.

[5] Bobgan, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way*, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

[6] Anne Anastasi. *Psychological Testing*, Sixth Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1988, p. 560.

- [7] Frederick G. Brown. *Principles of Educational and Psychological Testing*, Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983, p. 415.
- [8] George K. Bennett quoted by Martin L. Gross. *The Brain Watchers*. New York: Random House, 1962, p. 243.
- [9] George Dudley, quoted by Martin Lasden in "The Trouble with Testing," *Training*, May 1985, p. 83.
- [10] *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Washington, DC: American Education Research Association, 1999, p. 23.
- [11] Walter Mischel. *Personality and Assessment*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968, p. 100.
- [12] Letter on file.
- [13] Larry N. Ferguson, et al. "Candidate Selection Criteria: A Survey," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1983, Vol. 11, No. 3., p. 247.
- [14] Jon Lutes, "LinkCare & Christian Psychology," <https://psychoheresy.com/christian-psychology/linkcare-christian-psychology/>.

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