

# God's Plan for the Fullness of Time: Overhauling Ralph Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" Models (Part II)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Over the past half-century, Dr. Ralph Winter (1924-2009) shaped the framework, goals, and strategies of evangelical missions more than any other single missiologist. Winter's monumental presentation at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, entitled "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," steered the focus of evangelical missions away from converting individuals and their countries to reaching people groups. Winter argued persuasively that distances missionaries needed to traverse were cultural more than geographical. The concept of two ongoing structures he termed sodalities and modalities, along with his identification of modern missions' "closure" trait, are only two of many other seminal insights that reinforced Winter's expansive influence.

Related were Winter's two historical models that have influenced evangelical missiology. His "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement" has especially shaped Evangelicals' historical sensibilities; Winter's broader "Ten Epochs of Redemptive History" links with and supports the "Three Eras" model. Both of these models substantiate Evangelicals' expectation that today is both the final missions era and the age of Jesus's return. As such, Winter's "Three Eras" has provided evangelical missiologists and missions mobilizers a useful historical framework for inspiring fellow Christians to become involved in today's missions movement.

These "Eras" and "Epochs" models have undoubtedly galvanized evangelical missions with easily understandable historical metanarratives necessary to sustain any movement. They convey a passion and spirit to be cultivated and treasured. Even so, the models seemingly de-emphasize important biblical-theological themes. Moreover, due to contextual changes the models appear to have inadequate capacity for current historical sensibilities as well as the kind of theocentric and worldwide-collaborative character required for future mission movements.

Divided into three parts, this study conducts an overhaul of the two models to see what repairs and enhancements might be needed. Part I introduces the models, including their general context and basic components. Important influences on the models' formations are noted in Part II, leading into an analysis of the models' contextual moorings, traits, and limitations for wider use. Part III then considers viable courses of action, including commending features of more adequate historical models for Evangelicals to consider for moving forward. Recognition of the inherent limitations of all human constructs for explaining God's "plan for the fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10) concludes the study.

**Key Words:** context, iterations, limitations, mobilization

## Influences on the Models

Ralph Winter understood himself to be a "scholar-activist" (Winter 2004, xviii). All of his missions models arose out of an impressive breadth and depth of scholarship. Just as important was Winter's active involvement in Christian missions. Indeed, Winter's activist side was a, if not *the*, primary

driving force behind the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” frameworks. Winter’s active Christian missions service involved stimuli and interactions that catalyzed his understanding and message.

### *Contemporary Catalysts*

Winter rolled out both models in close connection with founding the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) and its associated organs, as well as with pivotal meetings with mission executives (EFMA in 1979, Edinburgh in 1980). That flurry of activity came in the wake of a decade of teaching at Fuller School of World Mission, which had followed a decade of missionary service, including creating a Theological Education by Extension system, in Guatemala (Frontier Ventures 2020a; Huckaby 2013). Ralph Winter’s missions service drove the formulation of his historical models.

Mobilizing Christians for frontier missions was a laser focus for Winter and his various formulations. Winter’s awareness of the need for frontier missions among unreached peoples was piqued during his ten years of missionary work among the Mam, a Mayan people in Guatemala’s Western highlands largely ignored by the national Latino church (Huckaby 2013; Winter 2008, 2). During the ensuing decade of teaching at Fuller, Winter learned through missionaries doing masters and doctoral studies, then himself beginning to write, about “thousands of minority groups in every country [that] were still walled off from missions by the tendency of many missions to assume that the churches they established could easily bridge the many ethnic differences which make most countries into a linguistic mosaic” (Winter 2008, 2). Regarding that same theme on a macro-structural level, Winter personally reported on the 1961 amalgamation of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches, then four decades later published his analysis of that 1961 event—which he termed “the gravest transition in mission cooperative structure in the 20th Century” (Winter 1999c; Winter 2003).

Winter saw a “slow, massive, agonizing transition between a Second Era and a Third (and final) Era” of Protestant missions, in which “the partnership and participation stages of the Second Era confusingly overlap and tend to obscure the logic of the pioneer and paternal stages of the emerging Third Era” (Winter 1981b). To promote understanding and mobilize pioneer missionaries for frontier missions, in 1976 Winter founded the USCWM, “a vast ‘implementation annex’ to the Fuller School of World Mission” (Winter 2008, 2). Having taught the “Historical Development of the Christian Movement” for ten years at Fuller (Winter 2004, xvii), Winter again “intuitively drew on historical analysis as a tool for mission” (Gill 2016, 3) by rolling out both of his historical models to compel Evangelicals to serve in frontier missions. Winter’s conclusions to his models’ essays call for participation: “The Kingdom Strikes Back” cites Matthew 24:14, “The Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come”; the last sentence of the “Three [Four] Eras” essays’ concluding “Can We Do It?” sections proclaim, “No generation has less excuse than ours if we do not do as He asks.” Winter generated both models to help mobilize Evangelicals for frontier missions.

Winter’s immediate forerunners Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran were also vitally important stimuli for how Winter’s historical models took shape. Specifically regarding the “Three Eras” scheme, Winter had studied and taught about William Carey and Hudson Taylor as historical missionary figures. In the cases of Townsend and McGavran, however, Winter directly entered the same concrete settings where these two missionary statesmen, both three decades his senior, served. Swimming personally in Townsend’s and McGavran’s same ministry streams persuaded

Winter quickly to add them—first Townsend, then McGavran—as the two pioneers for modern missions’ third and final era of reaching hidden/unreached peoples.

Winter’s missionary service in the Western highlands of Guatemala among the Mam people was “the precise place, we were told, where Presbyterian missionaries told Cameron Townsend that it was of little use distributing Bible portions in Spanish to people whose mother tongue was radically different.... [H]e was the young man later called affectionately ‘Uncle Cam,’ who ... established today’s marvelous Wycliffe Bible Translators,” knocking down linguistic barriers to gospel ministry among UPGs (Winter 2008, 2). Winter’s personal acquaintance with Townsend’s legacy was strong enough to persuade him to add an important feature to what he had already added in an earlier version about Townsend’s ministry, namely that “He was befriended by a group of older missionaries who had already concluded the indigenous ‘Indian’ populations needed to be reached in their own languages” (Winter 1981c, 174; Winter 1992b, B—41).

Winter acknowledged McGavran to have been central to the USCWM’s eventual founding through McGavran’s move to Fuller Seminary in 1965 to establish the School of World Mission. “For ten years, from 1966, I [Winter] was a witness to what that move meant, since I was the first additional faculty member appointed, arriving in the new school’s second year. The worldwide respect McGavran had already gained drew students rapidly and the school soon possessed the largest missiological faculty and student body in the world” (Winter 2008, xvii). Late in life, Winter introduced a volume of his collected writings by noting, “If there is any one looming figure from whom I have gained many clues and encouragement it would be Donald A. McGavran, now deceased, a third-generation missionary to India” (Winter 2008, ix). It is no wonder, then, that Winter’s description of McGavran’s fundamental and vital pioneering role in the third era of modern missions included the grand claims, “McGavran’s active efforts and writings spawned both the church growth movement and the frontier mission movement, the one devoted to expanding within already penetrated groups, and the other devoted to deliberate approaches to the remaining unpenetrated groups.” (Winter 1981c, 175).

Clearly Townsend and McGavran were key figures in shaping Winter’s “Three Eras” scheme. Winter’s later emphasis on “Kingdom Mission” was also an important catalyst, even if this focus was not integral to either historical model, particularly their original formulations. However, as noted earlier Winter’s later revisions of both models (particularly “Three Eras”) was very much affected by his interest in combating evil, including eradicating disease, a passion that arose after his first wife Roberta was diagnosed in 1996 with a rare form of terminal bone cancer called multiple myeloma (Roberta Winter Institute n.d.b; Fickett 2012, 127ff.). Roberta died in 2001, soon after which Winter established the Roberta Winter Institute with a mission “To ignite in the body of Christ a theological shift regarding disease and its eradication” (Roberta Winter Institute n.d.a). Soon afterward Winter was diagnosed with the same multiple myeloma, continuing to provide him impetus for pursuing mission as “destroying the works of the devil.” Winter’s voluminous output of scholarship and writings continued until his death in 2009, including through editing the IJFM 2001-2008 (International Journal of Frontier Missions n.d.) and, as noted earlier, adjusting his historical models accordingly.

### **Contextual Moorings and Traits**

The models’ contemporary catalysts, purposes, and influences motivated Winter against the backdrop of his prior development. Ralph Winter also described himself as a “Christian social engineer” (Time Staff 2005). Winter had grown up watching his father Hugo work and teach as an

engineer, then he studied civil engineering himself at California Institute of Technology University (Fickett 2012, Chapter 2; Noland 2009). His adulthood shift to Christian ministry and mission studies utilized the skills and instincts of his engineering background. It should be no surprise that Winter engineered his historical models out of analytical approaches, methodologies, and tools developed throughout his childhood and early adult years.

### *Historical Framework*

Using those tools, Winter engineered both the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” models out of his foundational historical framework. It should be noted that any attempt to tease out Winter’s assumed (i.e., unarticulated) framework should recognize that, like in most any other field, Winter was progressive and generally ahead of his contemporaries in his sense of history. Moreover, those close to Winter knew that “he was different and would think and act in counter-intuitive ways from those around him” (Parsons 2012, 38). As an engineer by upbringing Winter may have indeed been “a Johnny-come-lately to history,” but his complexity and ingenuity prevents him from being easily “pigeonholed” within a familiar historical approach (Gill 2016, 3).

In terms of his historical views, then, Winter would not have been simply and mindlessly stuck in a common but outdated Euro-centric view of world history, or of Christian history. Indeed, Winter’s writings demonstrate that he had a broadly informed, wide-ranging historical sense that gave substance to the influential models of redemptive history and modern missions history under consideration here. To complicate matters further, Winter’s understanding of history—including cosmic, biblical, and human—never stopped developing, including through his later years as he doggedly sought to integrate scientific and biblical metanarratives of the cosmos (Fickett 2012, 140-153).

Even with its multifaceted contours and never-ending development, however, Winter’s historical sensibilities reflect his particular U.S.-American context and era. No human being develops in a vacuum, and even the most broad-minded and widely experienced thinkers have concrete heritages, models, and inputs that help shape them. In Winter’s case, his lifelong home was Pasadena, California; his godly parents and two brothers were central components of his stable and evangelical-presbyterian Christian upbringing; and, his studies in civil engineering and in theology, sandwiched around eight months in the U.S. Navy in 1945, broadened and deepened what he learned while growing up from his engineering and military veteran father, godly mother, and other Christian mentors (Parsons 2012, 33-79).

From his life setting and writings, at least four marks of Winter’s context and era that characterize his historical framework, and hence the two models specifically under consideration here, can be discerned.

First, despite tantalizing indications otherwise, throughout his writings and models Winter’s overall approach to history is Western-based and even U.S.-based. To cite one representative example from his most focused publication on the “Ten Epochs” model, “The Kingdom Strikes Back,” Winter hints at approaching the subject based on a worldwide outlook, most especially in referencing “world population” at the time of Abraham as well as “surviving documents that are respected by Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions” (Winter 2009a, 7). Even so, Winter follows the innocuous qualification, “In the space available ... it is only possible” by proceeding “to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back” (Winter 2009a, 10). More accurate

would have been something like, “Based on what is most familiar and important to me, I will outline the Western part of the story.”

Given a similar dearth of attention to non-Western history(ies) elsewhere in Winter’s writings (apart from where the missions movement enters those histories), his implicit but foundational Western-based historical view—certainly of human history—is clear. In setting the stage for the essay’s culminating challenge to U.S.-American Evangelicals to join the frontier missions challenge, Winter notes, “Clearly we face the reaction of an awakened non-Western world that is suddenly beyond our control”—connoting a view of the world outside the West having been inactive and asleep (Winter 2009a, 11). Later in the same “Kingdom Strikes Back” essay, Winter’s references to “our own country” and “we in the West” (Winter 2009a, 23) further reveal his assumed view of history underlying his description of redemptive history. Even in his cutting-edge emphases on non-Western missions, Winter celebrates “new” and “national” missionaries as additional recruits for the modern missions enterprise that can also help to overcome hindrances erected by “the prolonged educational experience which we have come to prize so highly” in “our American educational system” (Winter 1983).

As Winter added to and later revised his “Three Eras” model, the ten pioneers and influential individuals he added consisted of two eighteenth-century Englishmen, Wesley and Whitefield, and eight U.S.-Euro-American men. Given that Winter was born and bred in a U.S.-Euro-American setting, his Western, U.S.-based approach to history is not surprising.

A second mark consists of the contemporary historians that Winter most deeply appreciated, trusted, and commended to others. For his “pioneering” 1974 “The Historical Development of the Christian Movement” course at Fuller School of World Mission (Kraft 2013, 94), Winter’s four recommended textbooks were Christopher Dawson’s 1958 *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, a different survey of (Western) medieval history, and two on Christian mission history, one each by Stephen Neill and Kenneth Scott Latourette (Dawson 1958; McEvedy 1961; Neill 1964; Latourette 1970). Perhaps even more telling were the four *required* textbooks: three by Winter (one of those co-authored with R. Pierce Beaver) and “the basic text” listed first, Latourette’s 1953 *A History of Christianity* (Latourette 1953; Winter and Beaver 1970; Winter 1973; 1974). Winter’s comments in the syllabus note the improvements of Latourette’s 1953 volume over his magisterial seven-volume *Expansion* set (Latourette’s textbook recommended for the course) that had been written with “great detachment,” namely that the 1953 *History* included “devotional and spiritual dimensions ... beautifully and even adds a wealth of information on the monastic movement...” (Winter 1974a, 3-5). Winter had actually encountered the Yale historian when Latourette contributed lectures to his wife Roberta’s and his missionary training for Guatemala. That contact not only launched what his close colleague Charles Kraft described as Winter’s “major interest in and commitment to a unique approach to the history of the Christian movement, looking at that history as a missionary enterprise that is always expanding,” but also, and even more fundamentally, “Winter lit his history candle at the fire of Kenneth Scott Latourette” (Kraft 2013, 91, 94).

Winter especially picked up on Latourette’s observation of “resurgences” and “recessions” in Christian history. The “resurgences” have matched, in Winter’s view, corresponding “renaissances” that have occurred, first in Western history and more recently globally in connection with Christian missions (Winter 2009a, 21). Elsewhere Winter notes, “A good way to

tell that [same] story is in 400-year epochs; each beginning in chaos or extreme difficulty and ending in a flourishing of the Gospel in a new cultural basin” (Winter 2009e, 29).

Christopher Dawson was “a Catholic historian [and] a giant of an intellect” whose writings, Winter testified late in life, provided “one of the major turning points in my understanding of the fact that our [Christian, perhaps U.S.-American/Western?] religion, our faith, our people, our church, our activities, really are forming and developing our whole world and society” (Winter 2009c, 22). Winter clearly drank deeply from the wells of Lautorette, Dawson, and a select group of other contemporary Western historians. At the same time, along with Lautorette’s “basic text” Winter required three of his own writings for Fuller’s pivotal missions history course, “The Historical Development of the Christian Movement.” Winter’s historical framework included a deep sense that he himself had unique contributions to make to understanding history, particularly that of the Christian movement.

A third contextually identifiable mark of Winter’s historical framework concerns his intriguing understanding of Israel’s obligation, and in turn the obligation of nations blessed by the gospel after Jesus’s first coming, to bless other nations. Perhaps various Christian understandings in his day of the 1948 constitution of the modern state of Israel played a role in Winter’s viewpoint. More certain would have been the ubiquitous role played by the heritage of a European Christendom that shaped Westerners’ instincts that European people and nations (and their offspring) were Christian and others were not. In any case, Winter understood that, just as Israel had been called to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant “to be a blessing to all families of the earth,” so was it that after Jesus’s time “the other nations are both blessed and *similarly called*” (Winter 2009a, 9; emphasis original). Awkwardly juxtaposed with Winter’s understanding, expressed otherwise, that the international Church (comprised of both modalities and sodalities) was obligated to convey the gospel to all peoples is his explanation of so-called Christian nations’ obligation to succeed Old Covenant Israel in doing so. Winter’s trend of taking innovative approaches nevertheless bears contextual marks of his era.

Finally, the fact that both of Winter’s historical models included what Winter often described as a “closure theology” showed the contextual conflation of technological advances, worldwide Christian growth, and eschatological expectations associated with A.D. 2000. Here are Winter’s own words, published in 2002:

The word ‘closure’ refers simply to the idea of finishing. In the 1970s, the Lord began to open the eyes of many to the fact that the irreducibly essential mission task of a breakthrough in every people group was a completable task. At the time, over half of the world’s population lived within unreached people groups. Even so, a small group of mission activists had the faith to believe that if a movement could be mobilized to focus attention on the unreached peoples, which for a time were called ‘hidden peoples,’ then the essential mission task could be completed within a few decades. In faith, they coined the watchword ‘A Church for Every People by the Year 2000’ to capture the essence of the completable nature of the mission mandate (Winter and Koch 2002, 21).

The first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization had built “Great Momentum” in 1974 (Winter and Koch 2002, 23), further spurring Winter on to spearhead a coordinated strategizing movement he called “‘Mission 2000’: Towards a Strategy of Closure” (Winter 1985a). Shifting the focus of missions to a measurable task of reaching unreached peoples helped to fuel the hope of closure and completing the Great Commission (Johnson 2001, 83-84). These initiatives were

just some of the enthusiasm and confidence budding from what statistics and eschatological expectation strongly suggested: mission activists could actually “fulfill Jesus’ mandate to have a ‘witness’ among every people, or in other words to ‘disciple all the nations’ (Matt 24:14; 28:19,20). We can confidently speak of closure to this unreached peoples mission” (Winter and Koch 2002, 21).

Winter distanced himself (and tried to distance others as well) from pinning hopes on Jesus’s Second Coming occurring in A.D. 2000. As he put it in the mid-1980s, “We must not *predict* the return of Christ, but we must *prepare* for his return” (Winter 1985b, 219; emphases original). Winter further explained, “No one I know is trying to *predict* when Jesus will return, but many are convinced that it is *possible* for every tribe and tongue and nation to have a resident church community by the year 2000, a goal which might be one of the bases for the return of Christ” (Winter 1986, 68). Winter’s engineering analysis calculated that the task was doable, even while offering disclaimers about the specific Y2K eschatological hope that was widely embraced.

In sum, Winter’s “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” historical models arose within his discernable historical framework that was Western-/U.S.-based, shaped by select Western historians (including himself), tied to a European Christendom-conditioned sense of national obligation, and bounded by a contextually developed “closure theology.”

### *Engineering Design*

Along with Winter’s underlying sense of history was an engineering design methodology that produced his many influential diagrams, including those for the two historical models this study is overhauling. A scientific mentality could also be pinpointed here, particularly since “Science inquiry and engineering design use similar cognitive tools such as brainstorming, reasoning by analogy, mental models, and visual representations.” In Winter’s case, however, the engineering goal of changing the world by finding solutions overshadows the scientist’s process of discovering rules that provide explanations of observed patterns (National Academy of Engineering 2020). Both the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” models seek scientifically to explain observed patterns in redemptive and missions history, respectively. More than simply providing explanations, however, was Winter’s motive to mobilize Christians to help reach the models’ ending arcs, namely the “Ends of the Earth” and “Unreached Peoples.”

An initially striking feature of each model’s diagram is their geometric symmetry, perhaps indebted to their engineering design. There is also a balance between the explanations given of each arc within each model. Winter qualifies the “Ten Epochs” scheme by commenting that the succession of “400-year ‘epochs’ is designed to be easy to remember, not to determine the reality of history” (Winter 2009a, 21). However it was that Winter designed the model to “determine,” “remember,” or reflect actual history, one can almost see some of the bridgework that Ralph Winter’s father Hugo would have helped design for the Los Angeles freeway system or that Winter himself had studied in civil engineering at CalTech (Fickett 2012, Ch. 2; Frontier Ventures 2020b).

Winter’s evolving articles about each model demonstrate the aforementioned conceptual tools of “brainstorming, reasoning by analogy, mental models, and visual representations” he clearly used in pulling the models together. Winter did not develop the two models and their diagrams initially as hypotheses to be tested as historical explanations. Rather, as Winter carried out his wide-ranging studies in TESL, linguistics, anthropology, mathematical statistics, and theology, then served for ten years as a missionary among the Mam people in Guatemala, then began to

teach missions history back in Southern California, his earlier imbibed engineering instincts and studies equipped him to wrestle through formulating schematic historical backdrops against which he could wholeheartedly give himself to the missions task of “Catalyzing Kingdom Breakthrough” through the USCWM starting in 1976 (Frontier Ventures 2020b).

Winter’s self-description as a “Christian social engineer” is no more evident than in his “Ten Epochs of Redemptive History” and “Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement” graphics. Their simple, elegant designs emerged out of painstaking study, discussions, experience, and heartfelt striving after solutions. Having had his eyes opened in the 1970s “to the fact that the irreducibly essential mission task of a breakthrough in every people group was a completable task,” Winter designed these two historical models to show Christians the necessity, significance, and urgency of their involvement in reaching the world’s remaining unreached peoples.

### **Contextual Limitations**

Ralph Winter would have been the first to acknowledge that there were limitations and inadequacies in his two historical models. Winter’s revisions to the “Three Eras” model, made by integrating “Kingdom Mission” themes, is clear evidence of his realization that limiting modern missions to three eras, each of singular focus, was inadequate. While Winter never modified the “Ten Epochs” pattern—either in essay form or graphically—to the extent that he did the “Three Eras” scheme, both his minute revisions and his substantial attempt to add both Latourette’s analysis and wider historical phases to the “Second Half” of the story demonstrated again that neither model is sacrosanct and beyond revision.

At the same time, Winter developed (and revised) those models as a passionate missions mobilizer and astute scholar. They were part of his “means,” to use Carey’s (and Winter’s) term, to convey the urgent need for zealous missions participation. There are good reasons why Winter and those who have learned from him have used the models as part of their missions efforts.

In order for this study to press ahead with its overhaul of Winter’s two models, exploring five contextual, limiting traits is a necessary next step.

#### *Western Viewpoints*

Ralph Winter was a brilliant and widely read scholar with eclectic interests and worldwide connections. He also lived his entire life in the Americas, all but ten years in the United States of America (mostly in Southern California). All of his family members and the vast majority of his ministry and scholarly colleagues were fellow English-speaking U.S.-Euro-Americans. Since the creator of the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” models was so decidedly rooted in the U.S. and the West, the models as well assuredly bear unmistakably Western traits. It is no wonder that the earliest publication of the models begins and concludes with an analogy of when “a startled world stepped hesitantly into the space age” with a 1961 U.S. satellite launch (Winter 1979), although “the world’s” actual first satellite launch was in 1957 by the Soviet Union, Sputnik 1.

The models’ Western historical frameworks and having been shaped by Western historians’ emphases has already been noted. Given those roots, both models clearly developed an approach to redemptive, missions, and world history that assumes Western—and often U.S.-American—centrality. Visually, the final arc in each model’s diagram continues the previous arc’s reach to non-Western peoples (from the West); the verbal explanations in later versions of the “Three Eras” diagram of “Non-Western dominance” and a “Non-geographic” strategy have trouble dislodging



the visual connotation of Western missionaries going to non-Western heathens (Winter 1999b, 259). Models with a more worldwide or universal fabric would look quite different, as explored later.

Objections to such an analysis could take several different forms, first in relation to the “Ten Epochs” model. One objection would point out that redemptive history since the time of Jesus has taken place primarily in (and from) the West, in terms of both numbers and societal effect. In fact, however, substantial Christian histories have taken place eastward over the centuries quite apart from Western Christian history, especially before (but also after) the seventh-century birth and spread of Islam. The latest, 2009 fourth edition of the Perspectives reader seeks to rectify the previous readers’ (and two models’) unwarranted Western historical imbalance (Winter and Hawthorne 1981, 1992, 1999, 2009). Winter even hints that the “Second Half” portion of the “Ten Epochs” story could have focused (at least some) on Eastern Christian history with the innocuous quip, “In the space available ... it is only possible to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back” (Winter 2009a, 10). Moreover, “redemptive” history is not necessarily restricted to “Christian” history (nor to “church” history); discussing that point would move this study too far afield, particularly insofar as it correlates with various understandings of how God’s dealings with the world are, or are not, connected with Christian presence.

Another “Ten Epochs” model-related objection might point to the global reach of “the Ends of the Earth” during the last epoch. A quick retort would point out further that the Western base of the model is evident in that last epoch’s movement “to the [non-Western] Ends of the Earth,” i.e., from the Western center (in Acts 1:8 language, “Jerusalem”). Yet another objection, in specific connection with the “Kingdom Strikes Back” essay, would highlight the early and late references to the “immeasurably strengthened non-Western world ... that is suddenly beyond our control” and could possibly “invade Europe and America,” which would be God’s rejection of the self-centered West as conveyors of blessing: “God can raise up others if we falter” (Winter 2009a, 11, 23). An answer would agree that Winter’s models have an inherently Christian commitment to the gospel and Christ’s Kingdom that ultimately supersedes any loyalty to one’s own people or group; but, the Western limitation of the model comes through in the essay’s consistent identification of “we” with “Westerners” or “U.S.-Americans.” (This particular discussion will continue further below under a separate heading.)

Second, objections related to the “Three Eras” model’s alleged Western-centeredness might first point to actual historical realities that modern missions were Western-originated and initiated; that movements progressed as the model describes and shows; and, that missionaries (until well into the Third Era) were Westerners. A more thorough response to this objection will come later. For now, suffice it to reply that the mission receivers over recent generations need more explicit space than in relation to other (Western) Christians’ awareness of them; and, in actual fact many “modern” missionaries and missions initiatives have been non-Western.

A further objection might point out that non-Western missions are explicitly highlighted as a main characteristic of the Third Era; as shown earlier, iterations of the model’s graphic progress from asking “Third World dominance?” to stating “Non-Western dominance.” Indeed, this objection might continue, Winter was one of the first mission leaders to promote and celebrate non-Western missions (Winter 1983). This objection is important for appreciating the combined limitations and usefulness of the “Three Eras” model. The Western-centered character of seeing non-Western missionaries as new recruits to the modern missions enterprise was noted earlier. At

the same time, Ralph Winter's zeal, ingenuity, lifelong learning, and breadth of missions awareness have woven worldwide threads into his models for present and future missions.

In addition to explanations given earlier, the limited, Western character of each model's history is manifested in various ways, some explicit and some subtle. Non-Western peoples, except for their missions roles in the "Third Era," are absent, objectified as geographic or linguistic-social groups, or "hidden" from or "unreached" by Western Christians. That is, the histories presented have no active non-Western participants—except those who appear by group description in relation to Western Christians, including the late reinforcements for the dwindling missions task force that will finish the missions task. The models' mobilizing purpose connects here. As the prelude to the earliest 1979 publication of the "Three Eras" history appeals, "The concentrated paragraphs below contain an urgent message we hope you will take to heart and help deliver quickly to at least a million *evangelical Christians in America, people just like you*, who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour and have made Him the Lord of their lives" (Winter 1979, 4; emphasis mine). Even if the "Third (Final) Era" is described as involving a "Non-geographic strategy based on people groups" of going "To the Ends of the Earth" (Winter 1999b, 259), the "evangelical Christians in America" being mobilized will catch a skewed historical progression that is mis-taken from Jesus's prophetic forecast recorded in Acts 1:8—"Jerusalem [through Europe, then the U.S.] to the ends of the earth." Insofar as that skewed view of Christian history continues to be passed along (often by well-meaning Evangelicals), limitations are shackled onto all peoples who try to incorporate all of history, including their own, into their relationships with the triune God.

Alongside the Western-centered (or U.S.-centered) history inherent to each model, that limiting character was reinforced by Winter's later attempted couplings, described earlier, of on the one hand Latourette-informed "Pulses in Western Civilization" and Winter's "Renaissance" periods with the "Ten Epochs" (second half) scheme and, on the other hand, "Kingdom Mission" themes with the "Three Eras" model (Winter 2009a, 11, 21; Winter 2009b, 265). These later revised models reflect Winter's belief, informed by Christopher Dawson's writings as described earlier, that Christian churches and missions "really are forming and developing our whole world and society" (Winter 2009c, 22).

Accordingly, Winter's models embody an optimistic Western-Christian historical view of what Latourette has called Christian "Resurgences" or "Expansions" that have had a deep and comprehensive socio-political impact on settings in which Christianity has grown, most especially on Western Civilization as a whole. Hence the "Western world ... has, until this age, been [the] most prominent sponsor [of] Christian ideals." To be sure, each model opens the door for "Non-Western dominance" in the wake of "The present spectacle of a Western world flaunting the standards of Christian morality," "a decay of spirit," and Western insistence "on keeping our blessing instead of sharing it." Even so, "the tremendous energy that is mushrooming in the Third World today" is due, "Rightly understood," primarily to "Protestant missionaries, along with their Roman Catholic counterparts, [who have] led the way in establishing throughout the world the democratic apparatus of government, the schools, the hospitals, the universities and the political foundations of the new nations" (Winter 2009a, 22, 23).

Winter's optimistic view of Christian socio-political impact throughout history—and stated in his "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay on the "Ten Epochs" model, as noted immediately above—enabled him to claim that, in the sense that the non-Western world has embraced Christian ideals

through Protestant missions, “Christianity has already conquered the world” (Winter 2009a, 22). Perhaps it was Winter’s European Christendom heritage, which has deeply shaped most all U.S.-Euro-Americans, that gave him such a view. Perhaps the seemingly inexorable progress of U.S.-American capitalism and political influence throughout Winter’s twentieth-century lifetime played a similar role. Whatever the explanations, the limited view of history interwoven into each model has a peculiar Western and U.S.-American flavor, foreign to many others.

The second area of the models’ embodiment of Western viewpoints, intertwined with the first area of history, is that of mission agents. This topic has already been touched upon and will thus require less attention here. In sum, the only active human agents or “subjects” in both models are those understood to be Christian (or Abraham and his descendants, Israel, in the first two millennia of redemptive history). Others are either objects of mission or not present at all. That characterization holds true throughout the “Kingdom Strikes Back” essay and the various versions of the “Three Eras” model. Insofar as the former only outlines “the Western part of the story”; the latter focuses on English and U.S.-American mission “pioneers”; and, both seek to recruit U.S.-American Evangelicals to frontier missions involvement, the models’ active agents of missions are Western Christians.

Even when including non-Western mission agents in the Third Era, Winter notes elsewhere that “probably only in the South Pacific” had earlier (pre-1970) missions activities been taken at “the initiative of the national churches” (Winter 1983). In actuality, however, indigenous non-Western Christians had been widely instrumental in cross-cultural missions work for generations, for example nineteenth-century Sierra Leonean and other West African Christians, including Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and even Japanese Christian missionaries in Korea before Western Protestant missionaries had arrived there (Walls 2002, 160-161; Matsutani 2017). Those vast numbers of non-Western missions agents are “hidden” from the models’ Western viewpoint.

More broadly, the objects of missions focus are cast as “hidden,” “unreached,” or passive recipients. Important for a healthy missions understanding, however, is to recognize that “the peoples of the new worlds beyond Europe [and later U.S.-America] were not passive in the encounter either with Europe [and U.S.-America] or with its faith... The meeting with the Americas, Africa, and Asia has been equally transformative of the Christian faith” (Walls 2002, 28-29). All peoples are active subjects with respect to Christian missions, including those not yet engaged by “frontier missions” efforts (even if they are in “kingdoms of darkness” held in bondage by Satan (Winter 1996, 63-64)), those encountering but not embracing the Christian gospel, and those who believe and give witness. Even though the models’ primary purpose has been to mobilize Western (U.S.-American) Christians for frontier missions, the history into which recruits are being asked to enter should include all active subjects.

### *Eschatological Connotation*

Each model has conveyed that the current “epoch” of redemptive history and “era” of modern missions is the final one. The first two versions of “The Kingdom Strikes Back” had the subtitle, “*The Ten Epochs of Redemptive History*,” and ended with the sentence, “The expanding Kingdom is not going to stop with us, ‘This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come’ (Matt 24:14)” (Winter 1981d, 137, 155; emphasis mine). The various iterations of the “Three Eras” essay and graphic assert that the “Third Era” is the “final” one (with only a few exceptions among the several latest versions). The model’s first version points to the “last frontier” (Winter 1979, 5), and another early version ends with

Matthew 24:14 (Winter 1981a). Taken together with some of the adjustments made in later versions (noted earlier), the strong connotation is that these historical models were birthed with an eschatological expectation of Jesus's Return and the end of history.

Winter's active role in the AD 2000 Movement reinforces that same connotation. Indeed, many other participants in that movement apparently looked for the Second Coming in AD 2000 (Coote 2000, 161). Some of Winter's other remarks in the early to mid-1980s also suggest an eschatological hope tied to his models and the year 2000, e.g., "Will 1986, like 1886, be another 'threshold year'—a *final* threshold just prior to the End of History? This is no idle question" (Winter 1985c, 152; emphasis original). In 1985 Winter even initiated a discussion called "Mission 2000': Towards a Strategy of Closure," with nine "Underlying Convictions" that included, "We believe this task ['to plant the church within every people by the year 2000'] is ... more readily within our grasp than ever in history, and that *the very end of history* may therefore be near" (Winter 1985a, 1; emphasis mine).

As noted earlier, Winter elsewhere explained—beginning in the mid-1980s—that "No one I know is trying to *predict* when Jesus will return" (Winter 1986, 68). Put differently in 1989, "I know of no mission leader who is confused about the difference between the Return of Christ and the completion of the task." Winter then retorts, "Let me ask you, 'In our concern to avoid setting a date for His Return must we give up the thought of setting any goals at all, until we have coasted safely past the 2000 mark? Is this the only decade in which we are not allowed to benefit by setting goals for prominent future dates?'" (Winter 1989b).

Along the same line, "The leaders of the ["AD2000 and Beyond," the revised name] Movement neither predict nor prophesy 'closure' by the year 2000. But they are calling the church to face realistically its commission to make disciples of all peoples and to pursue that priority with greater zeal and unity than ever before" (AD2000 and Beyond Movement 1999). Similar to the AD 2000 Movement's leadership, Winter explained (in the mid-1980s) that, strategically speaking, "many are convinced that it is *possible* for every tribe and tongue and nation to have a resident church community by the year 2000, a goal which might be one of the bases for the return of Christ" (Winter 1986, 68; emphasis original). Winter's related revisions to the "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay and "Ten Epochs" model, similar to his just-mentioned explanations, likely were either in response to questions and criticisms he received, indicative of some changes in his own understanding, or perhaps both.

In 1990 there were reportedly "more than 2000 different evangelization plans by Christian organizations and denominations focused on the year 2000" (AD2000 and Beyond Movement 1999). Clearly eschatological expectations were involved. Winter's two historical models reinforced many Christians' hopes for a Y2K Second Coming. That connection was (and still is) a limitation, given that many other Christians have not shared those same specific eschatological hopes or understandings. Kenneth Latourette, in the very textbook Winter assigned to his students at Fuller, expressed the diversity of Christians' eschatological understandings—and by implication the limitations of conveying a conviction of only one option: "What is to be the end of the story? That the course of Christianity on the planet has only recently begun is evident. Is it only at its beginning? Is history to go on until all human society, within history, and all individuals within it fully conform to God's ideal for men? Or is God to bring history suddenly to an end, perhaps at an early date? Here Christians have not agreed" (Latourette 1953, 1476).

### *Scientific Infrastructure*

“Engineering design” was elucidated earlier as one of the models’ contextual traits. Winter wanted to solve the problems of U.S.-American Evangelicals’ being oblivious to, and hence uninvolved in missions endeavors for, unreached people groups. Part of engineering a solution was to design the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” historical models as compelling interpretations “of the *advancement* of God’s kingdom” (Gill 2016, 4) that Christians should excitedly feel constrained to join.

Since scientific inquiry and engineering design share such cognitive tools as “mental models and visual representations” (National Academy of Engineering 2020), the models’ scientific makeup or infrastructure is another limitation to be considered. On the one hand, part of Winter’s genius was his dogged pursuit of integrating scientific and biblical explanations. One strength of the two models under consideration here is the integration of scientific, biblical, historical, and missiological insights. At the same time, the specifically scientific underpinnings of the models—perhaps the “Three Eras” model more so—limit their capacities to convey God’s redemptive-missional dealings with his world. This limitation is compounded when people who are not as scientifically trained or driven as Winter encounter the models and attempt to follow them, use them for instruction, or critique them.

The models’ scientific infrastructures are striking. Both models have a mathematical symmetry, first arithmetically. The “Ten Epochs” model has equal halves of 2,000 years before and after the historical midpoint, and each half is divided into five “roughly” equal 400-year “epochs.” Although more difficult to achieve because of ties to specific years, the “Three Eras” model also exhibits arithmetical symmetry with near-equal completed first and second eras (118 and 115 years) and transition periods (45 and 46 years). These arithmetical symmetries are articulated and refined, starting in the earliest versions of each model (Winter 1979, 4; Winter 1981b; Winter 1981d, 138-141).

A second mathematical symmetry is geometrical. In “The Kingdom Strikes Back” essay, God gives “His own Son *at the very center* of the 4000-year period” (Winter 2009a, 7; emphasis mine). The models’ geometric symmetries appear visually (including as representations of the arithmetical symmetries just described) in the various iterations of graphics presented earlier. A subtle variation that reflects the geometric precision employed is the gradually increasing sizes of arcs representing the five epochs during the story’s second half (0-2000). (The clarity of the changing sizes increases with advancing technology from the first (1981) version to the second (1992) and especially third (1999) versions—unless the first version intentionally increased only the final epoch’s arc.) The steady enlargements no doubt depict “the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation” (Winter 2009a, 7).

Another manifestation of the models’ particularly Western type of scientific infrastructure is their use of Western (Gregorian) calendrical units. The Gregorian dating system is ubiquitous enough in today’s English-speaking circles to be too obvious to notice, as well as too prevalent to allow for easy alternatives. Even so, many peoples of the world use other calendars, including Islamic, Chinese, or various imperial systems. These other systems can be “scientific” as well, but in general they maintain a holism that Western scientific approaches often lose by employing analytical, reductionist, quantitative, empirical, objectified, positivist, and materialistic methods (Mazzocchi 2006).

Biblical dating systems also were different from the Western-scientific and solar-based, specifically Gregorian, calendar. The Bible speaks of “generations” and ruler’s reign lengths rather

than of "centuries" or punctiliar year-points on a mathematical timeline. The fact that the models assume Gregorian calendrical dates and units of time is another signal of their contextually assumed, Western-scientific macro design. (Since each version of the "Ten Epochs" model's graphics mistakenly lists the year "0," sometimes even accompanied by "BC" or "AD," perhaps the graphics creators were more mathematically inclined than familiar with the Gregorian dating system.)

Perhaps Winter's early voracious study of the Scofield Reference Bible helped to inculcate a scientific and mathematical approach to biblical and Christian history (Winter 2005, 69-70). Depicting history through charts and distinct periods would have been modeled and reinforced for Winter's instructional techniques as an adult.

Of course, the extensive scientific research that underlies identifying the "hidden" or "unreached people groups," which comprise the central characteristic of the "Three Eras" model's "Third (Final) Era," almost goes without saying. Anthropological, sociological, scientific-historical, and statistical research together birthed the conception of "people groups" in the first place, as well as of their "hiddenness" and "unreached" conditions.

Winter certainly did not intend for the models to detract from his fundamental notion of a cosmic, spiritual war being depicted. Here is how he framed the alleged dilemma of scientific-spiritual interrelationships leading up to AD 2000: "Is God really playing with statistics ... watching curves on a computer graph? Is He mechanically waiting for a certain number of souls to be saved? Is counting peoples and persons the name of the game? Is that all He expects us to shoot for by AD 2000?" Winter's answer was that frontier missions is "primarily a spiritual battle," but also "we know that it is our fight, not just His, and that He is fighting with us" (Winter 1996, 63-64). While the models were inherently enhanced and limited by their scientific infrastructure, all epochs and eras were intended to depict "the grace of God intervening" and "contesting an enemy ... so that the nations will praise God's name" (Winter 2009a, 8). Even so, per the scientifically structured "Three Eras" model in particular, Christians' roles in the spiritual war of missions can unwittingly give the appearance of displacing the overriding and central role of God.

### *U.S.-American National Identity*

Another limitation needing explicit, intentional discussion is the U.S.-American national identity associated with the models' formulations and appeal. This limitation emerged earlier, under the limitation of Western-centeredness. The significance of U.S.-American identity that seems intertwined with the models merits its own consideration.

This topic arose earlier in connection with the regular, consistent, and unqualified use, in both models' essays and elsewhere in Winter's publications, of the first-person plural pronoun in reference to U.S.-Americans: "we," "us," "our." Toward the end of "The Kingdom Strikes Back" Winter writes, "We may not even be sure about the survival of our own country" (Winter 2009a, 23). "What has been launched in Pasadena [the USCWM] must alert us, as did that first satellite, that we have entered a new age, and nothing short of a total effort will conquer this last frontier," the initial (and relatively short) rollout of the "Three Eras" scheme concludes. "As individual Christians and as a nation we are responsible 'to be a blessing to all the families of the earth,'" subsequent "Three Eras" versions assert (Winter 1981a; Winter 1981c, 168).

An objection to reading too much into such usage might suggest that Winter's essays were simply and consciously addressing other U.S.-Americans. That objection is strengthened upon adding that the late 1970s and 1980s were still days of pre-Internet, pre-email, and pre-instantaneous digital international communication. *Mission Frontiers* and the *Perspectives* course reader (the sources just quoted) were intended for—mailed to and taught to—U.S. Christians. It is only natural, then, that the first-person-plural pronoun would be used in essays written by one U.S.-American for other U.S.-Americans.

That objection loses force, however, upon examining later iterations of the two historical models, i.e., after even more international missions collaboration, celebration of non-Western missions leadership, as well as digital international communication had come to the fore. For example, later versions of “The Kingdom Strikes Back” essay leave unchanged those same first-person-plural pronoun references present from the beginning (despite tiny adjustments meticulously made about other topics, as noted earlier [in Part I – ed.]). Both of the later and substantially revised versions of the “Three Eras” essay focus extensively and primarily on U.S.-American history. For example, in “Three Mission Eras and the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000,” among the various events and periods discussed are “the War of 1812,” “the Second Great Awakening,” and “the Civil War,” leading to the following brash claim: “Between these two wars extensive religious awakenings, coupled with the general upheaval, *fostered the most extensive positive transformation any country has ever experienced in history.*” The ensuing paragraph then begins, “The resulting transformation of the young nation was so extensive we sometimes read back into the ethos of our earlier Founding Fathers the bold and creative Christian character of this later, much more Christian, period” (Winter 2009b, 268-269; emphasis original). In “Seven Men, Four Eras,” the added “Fourth Era” discusses “Evangelicals” (another de facto first-person-plural label) and U.S.-American history. Finally, the three aforementioned U.S.-American scholar-authors are described as “the pioneers of the growing Kingdom Era for American Evangelicals in the 20th and 21st centuries. Thus we now have ‘Seven Men and Four Eras’” (Winter 200b, 314-315). Rather than dissipating and internationalizing in later versions, the inherent U.S.-American identity of the models' earliest versions became even more evident and focused over the next three decades.

There are numerous other examples in Winter's related publications of U.S.-American national identity, illuminating further how that identity is interwoven in the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” schemes. One mid-1980s presentation draws lessons from the late-nineteenth-century Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) (and its hopes to evangelize the world by 1900) for mobilizing fellow U.S. Evangelicals to reach the world by the year 2000. The section “Mt. Hermon and the Year 1900” has three sub-sections entitled “The Institutional Current,” “The Secular Current,” and “The Spiritual Current.” While interweaving various themes, the essay notes within “The Secular Current” sub-section, “Shortly after the 1886 [Mt. Hermon student] conference, six new states were admitted in two years.... [T]hese new states secured *our* border in the West against Canada. Shortly *we* were to plunge southward to take over Cuba and Puerto Rico.... Within months *we* had reached clear across the Pacific to seize Guam, the Philippines, and half of the Solomon Islands” (Winter 1985c, 161; emphases mine). Winter and his fellow U.S.-American-Evangelical audience moved seamlessly, subconsciously, and imperceptibly between U.S.-American national identity and Christian-Evangelical identity.

As another example, the aforementioned 1989 article that uniquely presents both the “Ten Epochs” and “Three Eras” models is part I of a two-part “Seeing the Big Picture” series (Winter

1989a). Forecast in Part I to “zero in on the more recent scene,” Part II is subtitled, “Positive Lessons from Our American Past.” The historical sketch focuses on the late 1800s in order to shed light on present-day U.S.-American Evangelicals and how, “as no other generation, we find ourselves nearing rapidly the ‘blessing’ of all remaining peoples on the face of the earth” (Winter 1989b).

One noteworthy example of Winter’s assumption of a widespread U.S.-American view of history, then adjusting when constrained by new research findings and by his own integrity, is in the revision of one small part of the depiction of pre-European America in “The Kingdom Strikes Back.” At the beginning of the section on 1600-2000 AD, the earlier versions state, “Apart from taking over what was almost an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of the non-Western world” (Winter 1981a, 153; Winter 1992a, B—19). Starting with the 1999 version the wording has been tweaked in the two places indicated: “Apart from taking over what was *relatively* an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of *the rest of* the non-Western world” (Winter 1999a, 210). Ralph Winter viewed the world and world history—including pan-American history—as a widely read and ever-growing U.S.-American.

Clearly it is paradoxical that the historical models which Winter created for mobilizing frontier missions to reach all “people groups” would be self-limiting by embodying any “national” trait in the modern political-state sense. The concluding sentence (in the earliest versions) of “The Kingdom Strikes Back” essay rings out the present epoch’s final challenge of Matthew 24:14, including the re-interpreted “people groups” for *ethne* (Winter 1981d, 155; Winter 1992a, B—21). The “Three Eras” model describes and visualizes the current final era’s frontier of reaching the “nations” understood as “hidden” or “unreached peoples.” Winter later explicitly explains, “By the phrase ‘all the nations’ [in Matthew 24:14], Jesus was not referring at all to countries or nation-states. The wording he chose (the Greek word *ethne*) instead points to the ethnicities, the languages and the extended families which constitute the peoples of the earth” (Winter and Koch 2002, 16). On top of Winter’s mobilizing objectives and scholarly explanations was his own multifaceted engagement with peoples, histories, and studies from all around the world. Winter also explicitly separated U.S. well-being and blessing from God’s ongoing kingdom war against Satan, for which “God can raise up others if we falter” (Winter 2009a, 23).

The paradoxical reality comes from Winter’s own background, as previously described, and from the subtle potency of modern national self-identity—especially within the United States of America since the mid-twentieth century. Winter grew up in a period when the United States was growing into its role as a world power and became locked in a superpower struggle with the Soviet Union. “In God We Trust,” adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1956 as a distinguishing trait compared with the atheistic Soviets, gave Christian U.S.-Americans all the more pride and self-identification as Christian “Americans.” Those U.S. Christians like Winter who came to identify as “Evangelicals” (not in the twenty-first-century sense, but in distinction from mainline WCC Christians) became all the more rooted in their identities as Christian “Americans.” Winter could thus look back at the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and enthusiastically see its “bold and creative Christian character,” having undergone “*the most extensive positive transformation any country has ever experienced in history,*” as cited earlier. Like for other U.S.-American Christians, for Ralph Winter the U.S.-Christian heritage was exceptional.



Given the reality of such a powerful, subterranean sense of Christian-national self-identity, it is only to be expected that the historical models inherently targeted “at least a million evangelical Christians in America” to join the task of frontier missions (Winter 1979, 4).

### *Protestant-Evangelical*

A final limitation considered here is that the models’ specific appeal to Protestant Evangelicals conveys the sense that Protestant-Evangelical missions must continue to build the explosive growth of worldwide Christianity that Carey’s and Taylor’s efforts began. This limited focus is clearly evident in the “Three Eras” model. The initial 1979 publication of the model claims that “This new thrust [to inland areas] sparked recurrent attention to new frontiers throughout the next 100 years of unprecedented Christian growth until today almost half the people in the world are either committed to Christ or at least claim to be Christians” (Winter 1979, 4)—despite the fact that over half of the world’s Christian peoples were (and are) Catholic and Orthodox. The historical backbone of the model’s appeal comes from Carey and Taylor having been direct precursors of contemporary Evangelicals. Self-awareness of the Third Era’s focus on “frontier missions” to “people groups” emerged together with the evangelical Lausanne Movement. Moreover, as noted earlier Winter explicitly cast the “Three Eras” paradigm as part of his mobilizing appeal to “evangelical Christians in America.”

In a much broader way, “The Kingdom Strikes Back” addresses 4,000 years of “Redemptive History.” The “Ten Epochs” model thus traces biblical history from Abraham’s day up through Western Christian history. Winter, no doubt surprisingly to many fellow Evangelicals, stressed the importance of Roman Catholic missionary orders as part of his historical sketch. It is relevant to note that Winter’s appreciation for Catholic mission efforts took many forms, including his coordinating a 1991 multi-author set of reflections on Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. Winter’s own positive reflection included his acknowledgement that “The fact is, the plain language here on paper, ... one must admit in sheer honesty, is a remarkably clear and Biblical statement on mission to the unreached peoples” (International Journal of Frontier Missions 1991, 103).

Even so, in the end the “Ten Epochs” model exhorts Protestant-Evangelicals to continue what Protestant missions took over from 1800 (Winter 2009a, 22). The Tenth Epoch focuses on “The Ends of the Earth,” which is evangelical missions phraseology. The concluding obligation of Matthew 24:14 is particularly directed to U.S.-American Protestant-Evangelicals. The “Modern Missions Movement” and its continuation are misleadingly assumed to be Protestant-Evangelical. [To be continued – ed.]

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