

BOOK REVIEW OF...

RALPH D. WINTER: EARLY LIFE AND CORE MISSIOLOGY

by Greg H. Parsons



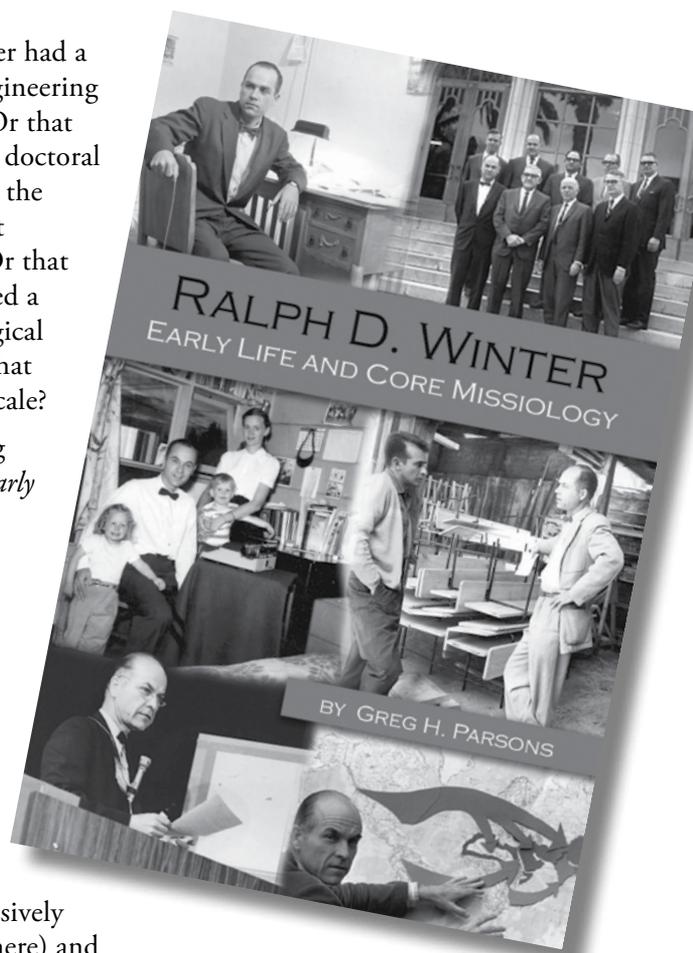
DAVE DATEMA

General Director,
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Did you know that Ralph Winter had a penchant as a youth for re-engineering and re-building firecrackers? Or that one of his main professors during his doctoral work threatened to remove him from the program because of Winter's constant attempts to change how he taught? Or that the World Council of Churches played a significant role in promoting Theological Education by Extension (TEE)? Or that the E-scale actually began as the M-scale?

These and other surprises await in Greg Parsons' new book *Ralph D. Winter: Early Life and Core Missiology* (WCIU Press, 2012). The book is Parsons' doctoral dissertation recently approved by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. It is the result of many years of association (Greg has been on staff at the USCWM since 1982), research in Winter's personal records and archives, as well as many interviews with Winter and his colleagues.

The book reads amazingly well for a doctoral dissertation. Though extensively footnoted (some of the best stuff is there) and boasting a 74-page section of appendices, it is nonetheless easily accessible for readers of all kinds. Roughly half of the book is biographical, dealing with Winter's upbringing, education and marriage, his years as a field missionary in Guatemala and his tenure at Fuller Theological Seminary as a professor. These pages help show the forces that shaped Winter's thinking and life direction and are crucial to understanding the person behind the persona.



Author: Greg H. Parsons
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The other half of the book focuses on three basic aspects of Winter's legacy: Theological Education by Extension, Sodalities and Modalities, and his 1974 presentation on cross-cultural evangelism at the Lausanne Congress. While many readers familiar with Winter's life will already know about these topics, what is most helpful in Parsons' treatment is to see the progression of thought over the course of years that eventually led to the ideas themselves. All ideas spring from a context, and the specific context for these ideas in Winter's life are instructive and enlightening.

While the book does not focus on any of Winter's more recent thinking, the reader will be surprised by how current many of these "old" ideas remain. For example, in the 1970s Winter would often deplore the fact that while mission agencies were good at planting churches in foreign fields, they seemed blind to the need to plant mission structures in those same fields. Even today, with the

needed and encouraging focus on Church-Planting Movements, there remains a need to consider mission-planting movements as well. If it is true that Winter was ahead of his time, then it should not surprise us that many of his old ideas still speak today.

Anyone who met or read Ralph Winter, and in turn grew fond of the man, will love this book.

IF IT IS TRUE THAT WINTER WAS AHEAD OF HIS TIME THEN IT SHOULD NOT SURPRISE US THAT MANY OF HIS OLD IDEAS STILL SPEAK TODAY.

It will fill in gaps, bring a smile to the lips and revive old memories. For those who never knew him, it will bring to life a truly unique individual who gave his all for God's glory. 

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