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Hal Lindsey's geopolitical future: towards a cartographic theory of anticipatory arrows

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ABSTRACT

Hal Lindsey & Carlson's, 1970 book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, was the best-selling non-fiction book of the 1970s. In it, using the eschatology of premillennial dispensationalism commonly believed by American evangelicals, he conflates biblical prophecy with current geopolitical conflicts. He exploits the uncertainty of the nuclear age, civil rights movement, and 'wars and rumours of wars' in Asia by giving readers a certain explanation: Christ will soon return. Within his book, Lindsey provides two maps depicting his narrative for the battle of Armageddon. The maps are devoid of borders, and only show troop movement via thick black arrows. This article focuses on these arrows and their geopolitical function. The article argues, beyond symbolizing mobility, that arrows on maps also symbolize future anticipatory cartographic temporalities. It is theorized that Lindsey's arrows potentiate and help actualize a narrow geopolitical future.

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"If you have no interest in the future, this isn't for you."
Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* 1970: np

1. Introduction

Lindsey and Carlson's (1970) *The Late Great Planet Earth* sold over 35 million copies and was the 'number one non-fiction best-seller of the decade' according to the *New York Times* (Harding, 1994, p. 33). As is a common practice among the evangelical community, the book was ghost-written by Carole C. Carlson although little is known about her. Initially published by a small theological press, the book was reissued by Bantam Books in 1971. In 1979, the book was made into a film narrated by Orson Wells that appeared in theatres across the USA. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (henceforth *Late Great*) includes two geopolitical maps of future events. Using arrows, the Main maps graphically depict the narrative of the battle of Armageddon. The arrows indicate an anticipatory geopolitics and prognosticates the end of the world through the prism of an evangelical Christian eschatology called premillennial dispensationalism (henceforth 'premillennialism'): a field of thought about future prophetic events shared by approximately 20 million Americans (Weber, 2004, p. 9; cf. Sweetnam, 2011).¹ Premillennialism and Hal Lindsey have been the discussion of geopolitical scholarship (Sturm & Dittmer, 2010), but there has been no engagement with Lindsey's cartography of Armageddon. In all other fields, the maps are

largely ignored. Spector's (2004) detailed writing on *Late Great* mentions the maps in passing and an MA thesis on the book mentions the maps only once: Lindsey 'even includes maps of the Soviet battle plans for its European takeover' (Basham, 2012, p. 23).

In this article, I ask how we might theorize, specifically from Lindsey's unique temporality, geopolitical apocalyptic narratives and cartographic arrows as anticipatory cartographic strategies. Focusing on Lindsey's book, *Late Great*, I engage with: (1) Lindsey's apocalyptic geopolitical imagination and (2) his cartographies of the future, specifically the cartographic technique of arrows used to actualize the future in the present (see Figures 1 and 2). Here I illustrate how the cartographic arrow more generally replaces time with space. I first give a brief background to Hal Lindsey and outline his geopolitics in relation to the maps. I then review the cartographic literature on arrows, for which scant attention has been paid in cartography and geography literatures. In the conclusion, I suggest that such cartographic arrows can foreclose possible futures and actualize a future.

2. Lindsey's apocalyptic geopolitical imaginations

2.1. About Hal Lindsey

Hal Lindsey was born in 1929 as Harold Lindsey. He served in the Korean War and afterward worked as a tugboat captain in New Orleans. Lindsey began studies in 1958 at the Dallas Theological Seminary which is the

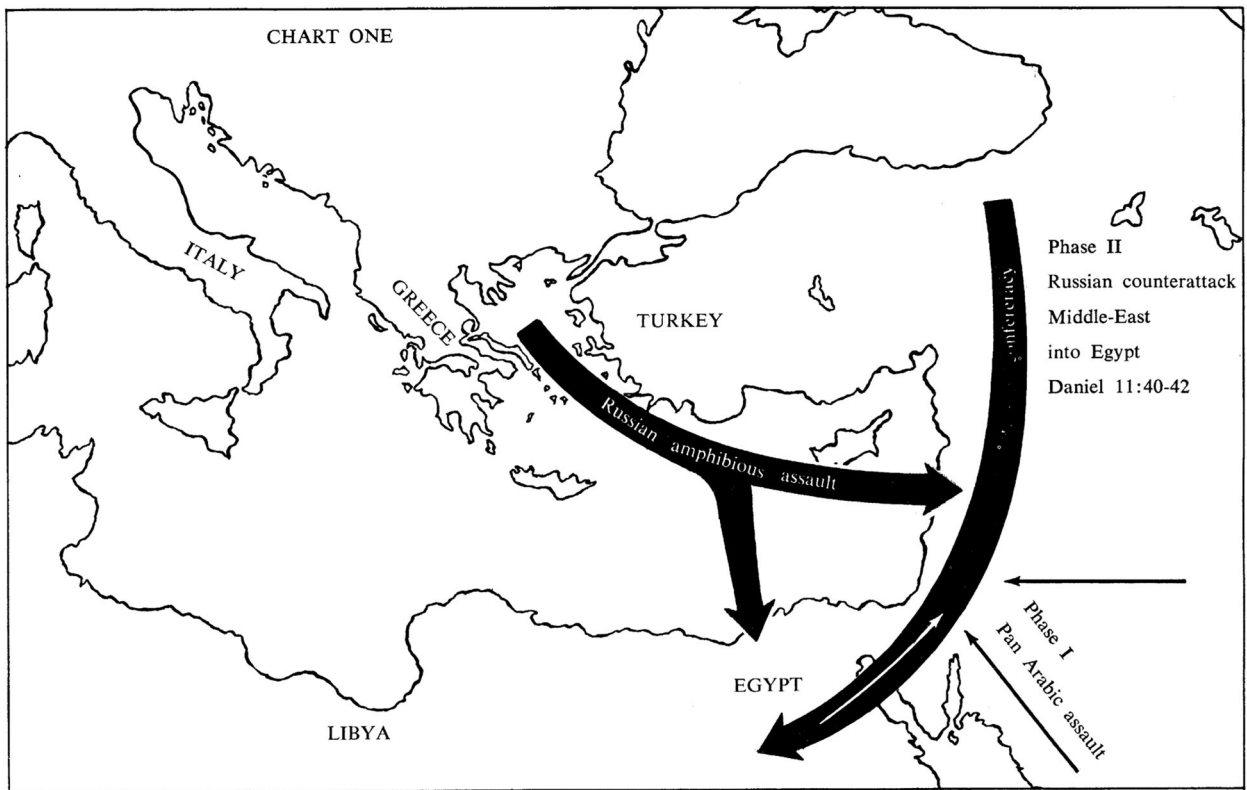


Figure 1. Hal Lindsey's Charts of Armageddon. Source: Lindsey, (1970) *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

most influential institution for premillennial thought (O'Leary, 1994, p. 140; Spector, 2004, p. 48). He would later mingle with university students during the countercultural era of the late 1960s as a preacher and missionary for Campus Crusade for Christ.

Granting himself a 'topos of [geopolitical] authority,' on campuses he tested the resonance of his ideas in the upheaval of the nuclear era, wars in the Middle East, and the civil rights movement (O'Leary, 1994, p. 143 and 147). Lindsey popularized premillennialist

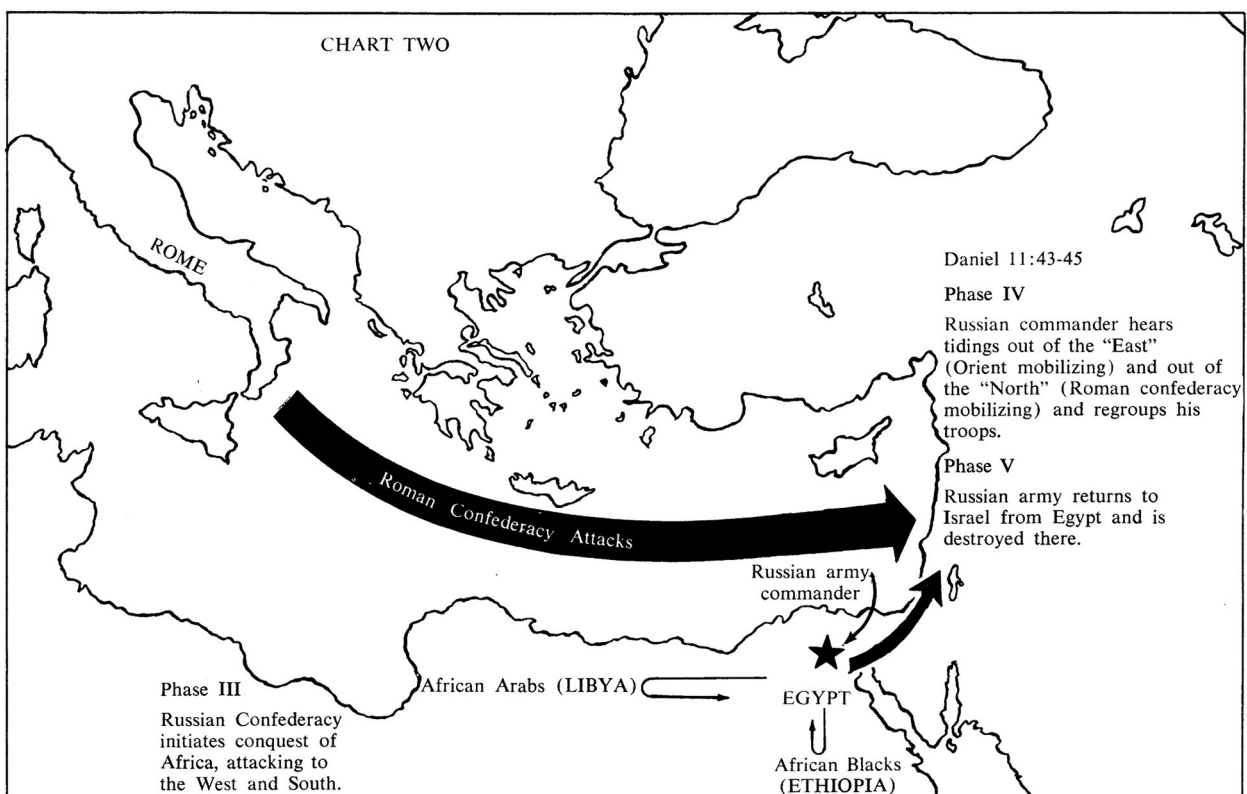


Figure 2. Hal Lindsey's Charts of Armageddon. Source: Lindsey, (1970) *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

eschatology and ‘fundamentalist doctrines of the end times that used accessible language and a pseudo-hip writing style to target baby boomers on the edge of the counterculture’ (McAlister, 2005, p. 294). He targeted what he called, the ‘searching generation’ for ‘answers to the large problems of the world’ (Lindsey & Carlson, 1970: epilogue, np). To appeal to that searching generation, *Late Great* was sold alongside other new age literature on Buddhism, and was commonly found at pharmacy checkout counters (Harding, 1994, pp. 33–34).

Lindsey’s influence potentially extended beyond cultural interest to international politics. President Reagan invited Lindsey to speak at the Pentagon on his geopolitics of the future (Halsell, 1986, p. 47). He would write about the experience, ‘it seems that a number of officers and non-military personnel alike has read *Late Great* and wanted to hear more’ (Lindsey 1980, p. 6). Lindsey’s book remained the leading text in popular evangelical geopolitics until it was dethroned by Lindsey’s ‘imitator,’ Tim LaHaye, with his *Left Behind* fiction series in the 1990s (Hill, 2002, p. 1).

2.2 The geopolitics of Lindsey

Lindsey’s book popularized the Rapture, geopolitics, prophecy, and the Apocalypse as key themes in evangelical culture (Gribben, 2009; Wojcik, 1997, p. 37) and helped popularize imaginings in mainstream American mass culture which are now ‘strangely informing American geo-political debates’ (Casanova, 2001, p. 416). In an attempt to make sense of the nuclear age, Lindsey was set apart from many of his contemporary prophecy writers because he recognized the global political significance of Bible prophecy, specifically Israel at the centre of wars in the Middle East (Wojcik, 1997). At this time, most evangelicals were isolationist, concerned with family and church matters whose concerns nary left the American horizon. Popularizing and making accessible Bible prophecy contributed to the politicization of American evangelicals. Lindsey was the primary populariser of prophetic interpretations of the Six-Day War, specifically who would control the Harem al Sharif/Temple Mount.

O’Leary (1994) writes that Lindsey largely avoided the ‘perils of predictive specificity by an artful use of strategic ambiguity.’ But what O’Leary (1994) in his otherwise foundational book on the psychological reasoning of Hal Lindsey misses, is Lindsey’s use of space to replace time. Lindsey was able to write to his general audience with fearful, welcome, and imminent affect by replacing date setting with geopolitical analysis from the USSR to the Middle East (Sturm, 2006).

Lindsey devotes the first three chapters of his book to the infallibility of the Bible, linking prophecy with current events. The rest of the book makes up the prophetic ‘jigsaw puzzle,’ as he puts it in Cold War

geopolitical language, on End Times events: the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, the military seizure of Jerusalem in 1967, an alliance of what he calls an ‘Arab confederation’ against Israel, the development of the Cold War and rise of the USSR, European integration leading to a one-world government, and the decline of American Empire. Lindsey predicts the building of a Third Temple over the Haram esh-Sharif, further Arab invasions of Israel, and a major ‘Russian’ advancement into Israel which will spark the final battle of Armageddon (Kidd 2009, p. 94).

The two central state actors for Lindsey’s geopolitics are Israel and the USSR. Concerning the first, the Balfour Declaration in 1917 was largely understood by believers in premillennialism as a fulfilment of Jeremiah 29:14: ‘I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.’ The day ‘the prophetic countdown began!’ for Lindsey, however, was the declaration of an Israeli state in 1948. Lindsey and Carlson (1970, pp. 57–58) urges,

Obstacle or no obstacle, it is certain that the Temple will be rebuilt. Prophecy demands it ... With the Jewish nation reborn in the land of Palestine, ancient Jerusalem once again under total Jewish control for the first time in 2600 years, and talk of rebuilding the great Temple, the most important sign of Jesus Christ’s soon coming is before us ... It is like the key piece of a jigsaw puzzle being found.

The events of 1967, most importantly, the capture of the old city in Jerusalem, further reinforced for premillennialists that the wheels of prophecy were once again moving, not only because of territorial gains important to biblical Eretz Yisrael, but also because of Israel, and ‘the Jews,’ were once again embattled with a clear enemy of racialized biblical importance that equated Arabs with Ishmael (Livingstone, 2011).

The second, and the central theme of Lindsey’s maps, is the USSR or what he often calls ‘Russia’ because he equates it to the Biblical ‘Rosh’ in Ezekiel 39:1. The maps largely outline his Russian Confederate Army’s and naval battle plans. Reinforced by thick black arrows on his maps (or what he calls ‘charts’), this battle on Israeli and Palestinian space is the anticipated Battle of Armageddon.

Conflating his reading of current events with Biblical prophecy, Lindsey’s maps begin with the building of the Third Temple where the Dome of the Rock now sits and 3.5 years before the final battle of Armageddon. In Phase I of CHART ONE (Figure 1), an Arab-African confederacy called the ‘Kings of the South’ invade Israel/Palestine on three flanks indicated by thin arrows. The large Russian army and navy (‘Kings of the North’) indicated by thicker black arrows, illustrates Phase II: a ‘Russian counterattack’ on land and a ‘Russian amphibious assault’ from the Aegean Sea via the Black Sea which together captures Israel/Palestine and Egypt. CHART TWO (Figure 2)

confirms Russia's success invading North Africa in Phase III. Meanwhile with their troops in North Africa, the 'Kings of the West' which are the 'Caucasian race' that made up the European Economic Community or 'Roman Empire' (Daniel 9:26) prepare to advance on Israel/Palestine. Led by the Antichrist and indicated by a bold arrow, the 'Roman Confederacy Attacks' along side a 200 million strong 'Kings of the East' army which he alternatively refers to as the 'Asian hordes' (Revelation 16:12). They surround the USSR as it retreats back to Israel/Palestine (Phase V). In this final battle, the USSR is defeated by the Antichrist's armies through a thermal-nuclear exchange that kills one-third of the world's population. Just as the Battle of Armageddon reaches its crescendo, Christ appears, vanquishes the unbelievers, halts further hostilities, and protects the remaining believers in Christ.

Lindsey's maps have no state borders aside from where land meets bodies of water. The crucial device in Lindsey's cartography are the thick black arrows that traverse the sparse narrative text embedded on them. Lindsey's arrows make his maps narratives of a singular and determinative prophetic future, both the *becoming* and what will *become* of the Earth. For the rest of the article, I will attempt to theorize Lindsey's arrows as a symbolic strategy to not only anticipate, but to actualize a future.

3. Arrows actualize the future in the present

There is much to be said for the cartographic devices that represent developments, notably arrows, however simplistic they may seem.

—Jeremy Black, *Maps and History* 1997a: 211.

Arrows are commonly used to indicate movement across space and time. Cartographic literature has paid only passing attention to arrows on maps. Below I review this fragmented literature, exploring their history, function, anticipatory orientation, and conclude by situating Lindsey's arrows as symbols of a unique anticipatory cartographic imagination of future time.

Arrows on maps are common on the popular cartography of newspapers, magazines, activist tracks, and propaganda material. As suggested in the epigraph, Jeremy Black (1997a; 1997b) has the most to say on the historical cartography of the arrow. Arrows appeared with regularity in the late nineteenth century to illustrate processes. Black (1997a, p. 94) writes, 'arrows have for long been used in maps of the 'Barbarian invasions,' but were, otherwise, relatively uncommon in political mapping, though important in maps of exploration and warfare.' The intended use and meaning of maps in the twentieth century shifted from compendiums in text to narratives in themselves. 'This was achieved,' writes Black (1997a, p. 93), 'by making them more dynamic, and the particular means by which this was achieved was the use of the arrow.'

The historical development of the use of arrows on maps relates to their function. Maps depicting war, specifically the Second World War, attempted to challenge American isolationism 'with their arrows and general sense of movement, also helped to convey an impression that the was not a static entity at a distance, but rather, was in flux and therefore could encompass the spectator both visually, through images of movement, and, in practice, by spreading in his or her direction' (Black, 1997b, p. 155). This emphasis on mobility and movement came to be the dominate function for arrows on maps (Rankin, 2016, p. 70).

Monmonier (1996, p. 108) provides diagrams as to the 'arrow symbols portraying a variety of manoeuvres and stalemates,' specifically two sets of forces represented as arrows meeting on a boundary, border, and zone of engagement as: 'threatened,' 'poised for defence,' 'threat repulsed,' 'invasion repulsed,' 'successful invasion,' and 'invaders bottled up.' Arrows in military cartography, for Monmonier (1996), are abstract propaganda symbols for the dramatization of enemy threats, both in the immediate past and the near future. Likely because of the propaganda value and the misleading affective persuasiveness of arrows, Black (1997b, p. 199) is not an advocate for the use of arrows, calling them 'cartography as drama' which 'served the newspaper's point by making themes of danger and threat readily apparent.'

Black however assumes a position of cartographic objectivity, for which Harley's (2001, p. 44 and 79) metaphorical 'causal arrows' flowing into and out of the map illustrate the always already 'ideological arrows' embedded in all maps as artefacts of power. Maps do not merely reflect particular social practices, they actively shape the experience and perception of the world. For Wood (2010, p. 82) arrows – as with all map symbols legitimated by cartographic norms or not – are part of a litany of 'presentational code' that help carry 'the map out of the domain of intrasignification into that of extrasignification, into that of the society that nurtures it, that consumes it... that brings it into being.' On the one hand, the intended authorial meaning of arrows on maps are not direct perceptual transpositions, and on the other, maps are brought into being through their powerful instantiation and affect that they are accurate, yet simplified, representations of the world.

Lindsey's maps serve a number of ideological purposes: to convince readers of *his* geopolitical interpretation of the Bible as God's truth, to portend a certain future, and to legitimate geopolitical violence in the Middle East as God's necessary work on Earth. All of which bring his maps into *being* for the reader. His maps are part of the wider narrative of his story of the end of the world, soothsaying of a temporally imminent geopolitical future that is held up and backed by a speciously inerrant reading of a Bible.

3.1 Anticipatory arrows

On a static map, frozen in space, future time is the dominate dimension of arrows. While not all arrows on maps are anticipatory, all are futures or relics of futures, the latter is what Koselleck (2004) termed ‘futures past.’ Whether the march of soldiers, plodding of railways, the movement of glaciers, rivers, floods, all use the spatio-temporality of the arrow to demonstrate movement from one time and place to another, albeit often on abstract timelines. Arrows are of course more than the usual lines that divide on maps. Illustrating spatio-temporal movement, they push through divides, borders, planes, and boundaries across seconds, months, and years with their equilateral or isosceles triangle tip χ or vaulted head β . Symbolically they are going (in the future tense), or have gone (in the past tense), somewhere, across space and time.

Black (1997b, p. 61) hints at this temporality by arguing that arrows erode the spatiality of maps as symbols of time: ‘the use of arrows and the emphasis on causality can diminish an emphasis on space and spatial characteristics.’ Arrows are used to imply imminence/immanence, movement, and sphere of influence temporally through spatiality (Sturm, 2012). Raffestin’s (2001; p. 12) discussion of how arrows inform geopolitical cartography captures Lindsey’s temporal cartographic strategy:

Space and territory are seen as objects to be seized, encircled, isolated or absorbed. To sustain the analogy with grammar, it can be claimed that in this system there is only one ‘conjugation’ in the indicative, which in turn has only two tenses. These being the present which testifies to a situation and the future which indicates a situation to be arrived at, that is, objectives to be achieved.

Lindsey employs the strategy of arrows to show where Armageddon’s soldiers are coming from and where they are going. The arrows are sweeping, vague, and abstract, illustrating general direction and future intent. Lindsey’s arrows are couched in the anticipatory future tense, less about what *is* than what will *come* (Massumi, 1993, p. 9). Rendering the apocalypse cartographically potentializes the present and actualizes the future as a method of persuasion (Tyner, 1982) through ‘psychological imminence’ (McGinn, 1998, p. 378) by rendering the apocalypse visible and exploiting the specious infallibility of cartography.

Maps of the apocalypse in premillennial writings were not common prior to Lindsey and still remain relatively uncommon with some exceptions (cf. Hitchcock, 2003; Rosenberg, 2008). The more common representation of premillennial events was through timeline charts (a kind of temporal map where space is represented only through punctuated events in space), illustrated to represent God’s vertical intervention across time directly from Heaven (see Figure 3). In the traditional fatalistic premillennial understanding of historical events, Earthly relations are inconsequential, only the vertical set of relations matters as believers wait to be Raptured into Heaven. As Gunnar Olsson (2004, p. 205) writes, ‘all that exist are two coordinates, above and below.’

Lindsey’s use of maps challenges normative verticality by laying the temporal events horizontally on maps. Arrows then replace the temporal verticality of the timeline chart, essentially replacing time with space. In doing so he employs what De Certeau (1984) calls ‘strategies’ of power that seek to transform temporal relations of the past and future into spatial ones, thus transforming time into space.

De Certeau makes three suggestions about strategies; ‘that strategies mark the triumph of space over

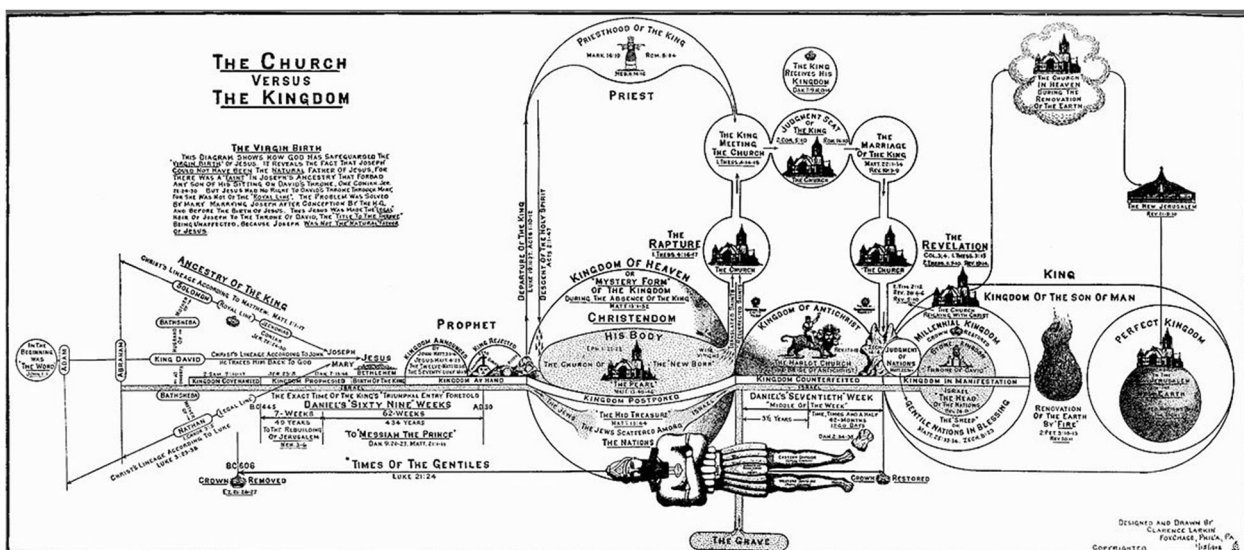


Figure 3. Clarence Larkin (1918) 'The Church vs The Kingdom.' Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Larkin-dispensationalism-timetable-1918_(2).jpg]

time (the production of a ‘proper place’ – one’s own/ owned space); that strategies typically involve the mastery of places through sight (through a system of surveillance); and that strategies are revealed in the power ‘to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces’ (Gregory, 1994, p. 169). This is not simply a reading strategy transported from de Certeau onto a very different subject matter. There are consistent strategies through which the world is interpreted, seen, and represented in Lindsey’s maps. Lindsey’s theo-politics are reinforced as geo-theo-politics through his prophetic maps.

The knowledge of theo-cartographic tools that have the power to pry into the Bible and read the political geography, is a strategy that make certain an otherwise open future. De Certeau writes in this regard, that ‘to be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading space’ (Quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 42). In this way, Lindsey has traded in conventional date setting (the singularity of which has always thus far come to pass) for Christ’s return for more abstract geopolitical events, effectively replacing time with space (Sturm, 2006). Because of this, geography is privileged in premillennial geopolitics whereas history is downgraded as an explanatory teleology; arrows spatialize that future history. Maps and geopolitical representations on them allow the Biblical cartographer to get a handle on history’s timeline. Geography is a ‘sign’ and handle that makes history and premillennial belief tangible, secure, and certain.

4. Conclusion: open end time

While Lindsey’s prophetic future may never take place, it nevertheless has a particular reality, as an ontological commitment and category. Cartography has a *trompe-l’œil* affect, making Armageddon all the more real and imminent. Abusing the assumption that maps never lie, his arrows provide a geopolitical reality and model in the future perfect tense as though it has already happened. As Adams (2004, p. 305) writes of Schutz (1967), future time is politically affective by its nature because it has a motivating quality to it: an ‘in-order-to’ achieve some goal. In other words, the arrows on Lindsey’s maps put the ‘geo’ in his theo-political messaging; they make present and real an actionable future. Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 173) captured the future orientation of maps well: ‘a map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent.’ Once those in power map space, they assign control, God’s proxy control in Lindsey’s case.

Popular geopolitical maps in the twentieth century have played a role in the construction of America’s geopolitical imagination and its moral mission in the world (Schulten, 2001). Lindsey’s arrows on his

popular maps are affective, more-than-map-representation, of a larger narrative that attempts to make future time a spatial projection. But more than their motivational quality, in making premillennial time geo-graphic, his maps and their arrow narrative symbols foreclose the open possibilities of non-calendar time.

While uncertainty accepts a complex world, Lindsey’s apocalyptic certainty reduces future complexity to the abstraction of the geopolitical arrow. Complexity, often written of through the language of flows, flux, and contingency, are explained away by Lindsey as acts of evil portending Earth’s finale. But of course, the future is open, uncertain, rather unpredictable, contingent, conjunctural, and earthly: it is emergent (Grosz, 2002). Uncertainty can be perceived as a threat to the control and certainty Lindsey provides on his arrow laden maps to his ‘searching generation,’ but, and as was the original intention of the term apocalypse, it can also be radical and redemptive (Megoran, 2012).

Note

1. Premillennialism means they believe Christ will return previous to Christ’s millennial rule. Dispensationalism means they believe that history has been split up into seven historical periods or dispensations, in each of which God deals with humanity differently. The current, and penultimate, dispensation known as the Church Age will be followed by the Rapture, the Tribulation (7 years of conflict which includes the Battle of Armageddon and ends with Christ’s return), and the millennium (See Sturm & Dittmer, 2010).

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