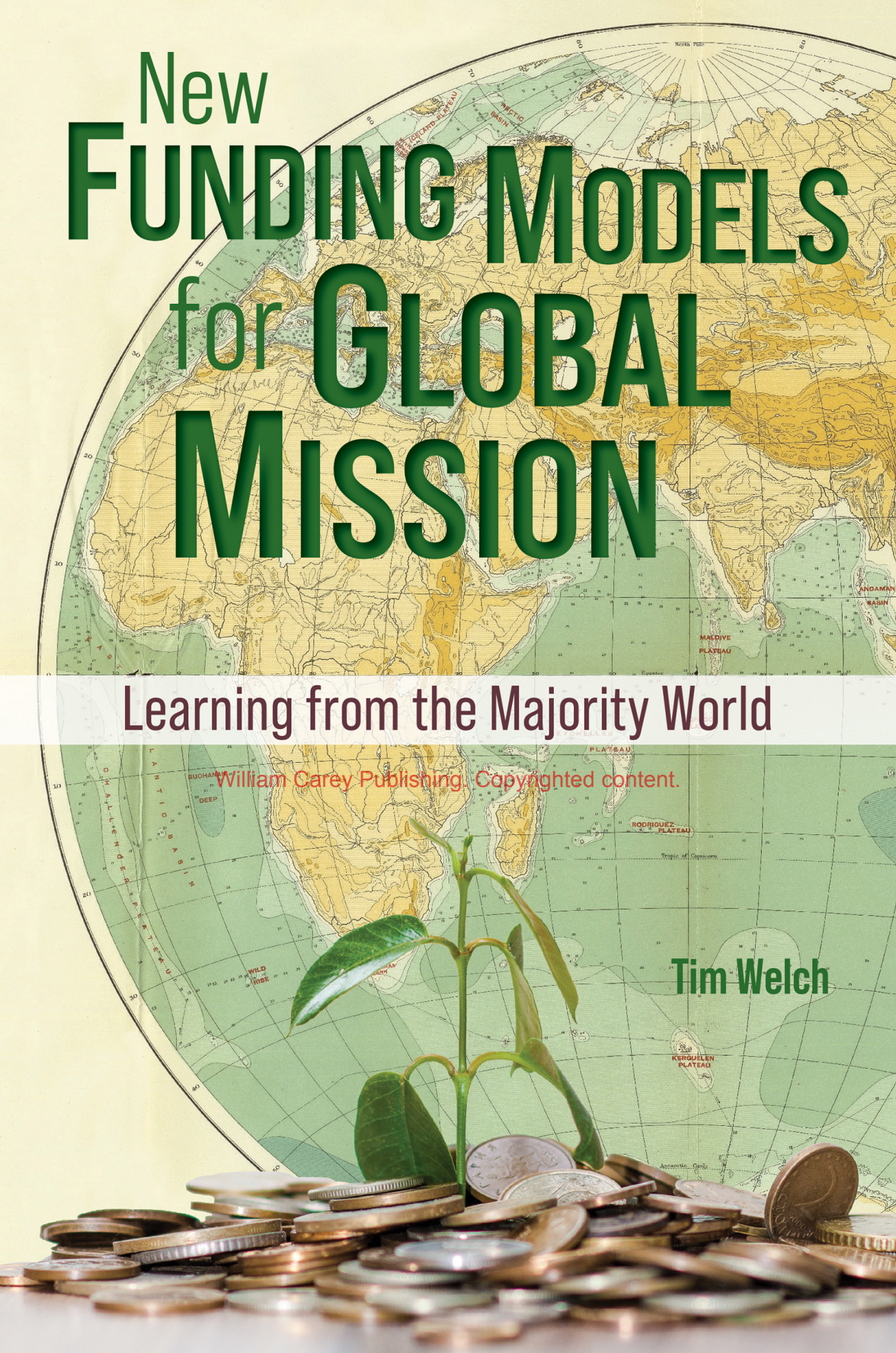
New Funding Models for Global Mission

Learning from the Majority World

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Tim Welch

New Funding Models for Global Mission: *Learning from the Majority World*

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Chapter 1

Why Study This Topic?

Churches that take the Bible seriously are virtually unanimous in maintaining that Jesus Christ gave a command to all who follow him: a command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). The Gospels according to Mark and Luke each give a similar command (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47), and the Gospel according to John treats the same idea by talking about the example of Jesus and his incarnation (John 20:21)—that is, how to send, instead of what to do or say when sending.

Sending people to all the nations in the world supposes that there are sending strategies in place. One school of thought opts for "lay missionaries" (Bjork 2015, 21) to reach the world for Jesus Christ, wanting to move away

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from mission agencies and toward "tentmakers." Another school of thought accepts the validity of tentmakers while accepting that other models are also valid, thus supporting the validity of mission agencies.

This latter group says that "there is rich biblical and historical precedent for a special commission that is supported [financially] by communities of faith" (Matenga and Gold 2016, 177). But whichever strategy is used, both schools of thought agree that the methods used by the evangelical church in the West to send missionaries are being adopted by the evangelical church in the Majority World. (In this book, I use the term *Majority World* to refer to those countries previously called the "Third World," "developing countries," or the "Global South" by many people.)

When the Majority World adopts the ways practiced by the West, the financial cost of doing so is quite high. Jonathan Bonk declares that "the Western missionary enterprise, meanwhile, is utterly and fatally dependent upon the accoutrements of affluence" (Bonk 2006, 18). Can Majority World evangelical churches send their own missionaries while avoiding this dependence on affluence? I believe the answer to this question is yes, provided that these churches are led by transformational leaders.

Transformational leadership aims to impact institutional functions and processes in a way that leads to positive change. This change thereby promotes a holistic transformation of the entire institution as well as the individuals within it. In this case, the institutions concerned are mission agencies and evangelical churches in the Majority World.

Through this book, I hope to contribute to reflective leadership by offering mission and church leaders the opportunity to think differently about the matter of mission funding. I am also seeking to contribute to contextual leadership—helping mission organizations, churches, and their leaders discern what works well and what does not work well in different cultural contexts. Next, this study will contribute to global leadership, because mission agencies and evangelical churches on one continent are different from those on another. Models of mission funding do not have to be the same from one country to the next. Finally, through this book I seek to contribute to prophetic leadership in order to change systems and practices that seem to be failing in their task of resourcing missionaries. Mission agency and church leaders need to consider new possibilities and approaches to global mission funding.

Since the beginning of the "modern era of world mission," toward the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the industrialization of Europe, the model most often used for the financing of Western

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evangelical missionaries has been that of seeking financial support "by faith." In other words, the missionary himself or herself has to go from church to church or person to person to ask for some kind of financial partnership. This was not—and still is not—the model used by all church denominations in the West, but it is the model used by many evangelical churches around the world.

I know from personal experience that some evangelical churches which have formed their own mission agencies, such as the Baptist General Conference Church and the Conservative Baptist Church, both in the United States, ask their missionaries to pass from church to church, seeking to supplement their financial support. This demonstrates that these church denominations are not able to support their missionaries solely through their offerings, as churches have done in the past and as other Protestant and Catholic churches do today.

This model of seeking financial support "by faith" certainly has some advantages. One advantage is that missionaries know their donors personally and receive increased prayer support as a result. This may help to explain why this model has been used for over two hundred years in the evangelical community. Such longevity explains why I refer to it as the "traditional" model. However, it is based on certain presuppositions that are necessary for it to succeed.

Paul Borthwick quotes Pastor Oscar Muriu of Nairobi Chapel, who says that this model depends on a fairly high economic level, financial stability, and disposable income in the country where the missionary resides (Borthwick 2012). In addition, it requires the cultural acceptance of approaching potential donors to ask for money for one's ministry. That and many other factors will be addressed in later chapters.

With the publication of Philip Jenkins's book *The Next Christendom*, in 2002, the Christian world became more aware that the Majority World includes more Christians than all the countries of Europe and North America combined. The fact that Christianity is truly a world religion helps explain why churches in the Majority World seek to be a part of God's global mission. Increasingly, missionaries come from Asia, Africa, and South America, rather than only from so-called "Western" countries.

Despite the rich missionary history of the Christian church—Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox—and their various ways of funding missionaries, evangelical mission agencies and churches tend to focus on one model of seeking financial support for their missionaries. Again, I call this the traditional model—i.e., where the missionary seeks his or

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her own funding. Perhaps the relative success of this model in the Western world makes it seem like the best model to use. But mission agencies from the evangelical tradition need to recognize that other models are equally effective.

I know an Ivorian missionary who serves with a US-based mission agency, and that agency has forbidden him to use any other model for seeking financial support; he must use this traditional model in which he has to go from church to church and person to person to ask for an ongoing contribution to his funding. He even talked with some of his leaders to contend that other models would be more effective in Africa, but they refused to change their approach to mission funding. At least my friend has the advantage of holding a leadership position in his organization, which means that he travels to the United States from time to time for meetings and then visits new acquaintances to tell them about his need for support. Most of his African colleagues don't have that opportunity.

Unfortunately, the traditional funding model has the potential to negatively impact missionary workers around the world. According to Pastor Muriu's remarks cited above, this model prevents many people from acquiring adequate mission funding because their social standing means that they don't know enough people with sufficient disposable income to contribute to their ministry in this way. And these people don't have disposable income because their country's economy is neither prosperous nor stable.

The consequences of this situation are that the missionary workforce in our world is in danger of becoming solely white—which doesn't properly reflect the global body of Christ at all, and which in turn risks communicating that Christianity is *not* for all cultures and all peoples of the world.

The traditional model of missionary funding also frightens many Christians who wonder if they should consider becoming missionaries. This is true not only in the Majority World, but in Western countries as well. Younger generations resist the idea of "begging" for their monthly financial support. Although this fear of raising financial support is not justified biblically, it is a widespread impression among missionary children. And if this causes fear among the children of Western missionaries, it is all the more true for young Christians in the Majority World who do not dare experiment with this model.

So that leads us to the basic question of this book: Apart from the so-called "traditional" model, what other models of missionary financial support might be more appropriate and suitable for evangelical mission agencies and churches in Majority World countries?

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As mentioned above, the traditional model of fundraising requires missionaries themselves to go from church to church or person to person to request some sort of regular financial partnership. This model was well suited to the nineteenth century, when several "parachurch" mission agencies emerged, such as the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade founded in England, the Sudan Interior Mission founded in Canada, and many others later. Since these mission agencies were not linked to a single Christian denomination, it may have made more sense for their members to travel from church to church in order to find their financial support.

Today, however, with the proliferation of mission agencies and parachurch associations and the decline in the number of churches that take the Bible seriously in this regard, this model risks flooding churches in the evangelical tradition with its growing demands.

So are there other models to use?

The answer to that question is yes, and the overall purpose of this book is to identify and analyze the other financial support models for global mission funding that evangelical mission agencies and churches in the Majority World have used. I hope to facilitate participation by the Majority World church in global mission by listing these other funding models and thus help churches see that possibilities more appropriate to their context exist. New models that are better suited to the situation in which the Majority World church finds itself will provide more adequate funding for global mission, because it is clear that certain deficiencies exist in the area of mission funding in evangelical churches. At the same time, the Western church will do well to learn from these models which the Majority World church is already using.

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