

Mission Basics 101: Lessons from Chiapas for the 21st Century

Charles Van Engen

The state of Chiapas is the southernmost of the thirty-six states of the United States of Mexico and borders Guatemala and the Pacific Ocean. Roughly half the size of Iowa, Chiapas has two major mountain ranges. Rising to around ten thousand feet above sea-level, they cut the state in thirds. Around three-quarters of its nearly three million people speak Spanish. The other quarter speak five Mayan languages as their heart language (Tzeltal, Ch'ol, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Lacandón) and Zoque, an ancient pre-Columbian¹ language coming from the neighboring Mexican state of Oaxaca. Four other pre-Columbian languages, Mam, Quiche, Chiapa, and Motozintlec, are no longer spoken in Chiapas.² Today, over a quarter of the state are Protestants, the largest percentage of any state in Mexico.

For approximately the first thirty years of Reformed Church in America (R.C.A.) presence in Chiapas, R.C.A. missionaries worked predominantly among the Spanish-speaking Presbyterian churches. Today, about one-half of all Presbyterian Christians in Chiapas speak Spanish. They have been instrumental over the years in supporting and encouraging the growth and development of the churches in the Mayan areas.

Although we in the Reformed Church associate the beginning of the mission work in Chiapas with the arrival there in 1925 of pioneer missionaries John and Mabel Kempers, they were not the founders of the Presbyterian churches in Chiapas.³ And John Kempers was not the originator of some of the basic principles that guided the mission work in Chiapas. In 1920, five years before the Kemperses arrived in Mexico, the foundation had been laid by the Reverend José Coffin (1881-1956), a Presbyterian pastor from the neighboring state of Tabasco.⁴ Coffin's father was a Scottish-American Presbyterian from the U.S. and his mother was a Mexican native of Tabasco.⁵ Coffin had been assigned by the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico to carry out evangelistic mission work among, and supervise the development of, the churches in the state of Chiapas. By the time the Kemperses arrived in Chiapas, there were six major Presbyterian church centers in the state.

- Tuxtla Gutierrez (1903 – from where eventually grew the Zoque work);
- Mazapa de Madero (1910);
- Yajalón (1915 – from where eventually grew the Ch'ol churches);
- Tapachula (1915).
- San Cristobal de Las Casas (1918 – from where eventually grew the Tzeltal and Tzotzil churches); and
- Las Margaritas (1919 – from where eventually grew the Tojolabal churches).

In 1902, in the capital city of Tuxtla Gutierrez (central Chiapas), a Presbyterian missionary from the U.S, Edwin McDonald, shared the gospel with a group of Christian Endeavor young people who eventually became the founders of the church there. Everywhere else in the state, the first groups of believers began almost exclusively through the evangelistic witness of laypersons who shared their Bibles and their faith in Jesus Christ. These early pioneer lay evangelists came from the north (Tabasco) and from the east and south (Guatemala). The church in San Cristobal de Las Casas (the oldest city in Chiapas, dating back to 1528) originates from the witness of a young man, Manuel Molina Espinoza. He came to faith in a Presbyterian church in the neighboring state of Campeche where he had gone to find work. Upon returning home he, his wife, and another couple held public, rather heated debates about the Bible and faith in Jesus Christ with the traditional Roman Catholic clergy and the seminarians from the local Roman Catholic seminary. So began of the Presbyterian church in that city. For the past one hundred years, Presbyterianism in Chiapas has been a predominantly lay-led, popular movement.⁶

In this context, José Coffin established the following basic guidelines for mission in Chiapas.

1. Personal Evangelism (over against public campaign evangelism).
2. Rural Work (over against church development in the cities that was the Presbyterian pattern in much of the rest of Mexico at the time).
3. Ministry of the Laity. In each small congregation of believers, he would name *capellanes*, lay chaplains who would preach, visit homes of interested inquirers, and be the organizational leaders of the new believers.
4. Pastoral Leaders were to be chosen on the basis of their experience, giftedness, and leadership recognized by their congregation, and all leadership positions were to be voluntary, with no remuneration.
5. Clear Ecclesiastical Structures were taught and carefully organized along the lines of Presbyterian polity.
6. Avoid Publicity whenever possible, due to the constant harassment and persecution of the believers, persecution that dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Arriving with Mabel in 1925, John Kempers began his missionary career in Chiapas with a three-month trip, traveling with José Coffin on foot and by horseback from Palenque on Chiapas's northern border with Tabasco, through the mountainous central region, down the eastern side of the state bordering Guatemala, and ending up in Tapachula where Mabel was waiting for him. In 1925 and 1926 much of this area was virgin jungle crisscrossed by muddy trails along swollen rivers and rocky slopes covered with ancient pine groves. Beginning with that trip, over the next several years Kempers was initiated into mission in Chiapas by José Coffin, learning Coffin's mission

guidelines.

Twenty years later, in the late-1940s, John Kempers and José Coffin would butt heads over the autonomy of the work in Chiapas and the formation of the Chiapas Presbytery. (José Coffin would not let go of his “mission field.”) And yet it is clear that John Kempers, that young man from the corn fields of Sioux Center, Iowa, would draw his most foundational mission principles for work in Chiapas from his early mentor and co-laborer, José Coffin. With time, Kempers modified what he learned from Coffin and established missiological principles that have influenced the mission practice of R.C.A. missionaries and the Chiapas churches ever since.

John Kempers was also an avid reader, a profound thinker, and an astute and careful missiologist. He read the mission thinkers of his day. In what follows, I want to reflect on that eighty-year history and draw out what I consider to be the seven most foundational mission principles that have guided the work of mission in Chiapas. (There are others, of course, that one might select.) In relation to each of the seven, I will briefly mention the broader global origin of each missiological principle and where Kempers would have encountered it in his reading, summarize the way that principle took shape in Chiapas, and briefly suggest ways in which it may apply to mission in North America in the twenty-first century. My thesis for this essay is that the growth and development of the churches in Chiapas is due in part to following classical, tried-and-true missiological principles that apply equally well for mission in North America in the 21st Century.

1. A Three-fold Goal of Mission – Gisbertus Voetius

The most foundational principle of classical Reformed missiology was articulated by Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676). Voetius was the most influential Dutch theologian of the seventeenth century. J. H. Bavinck and Johannes Verkuyl agreed with and followed Voetius, as has R.C.A. mission theory of the past hundred years.⁷

The Principle

Voetius stated that the biblically based goal of mission is three-fold:

- ❖ the conversion of people to faith in Jesus Christ,
- ❖ the planting of churches, and
- ❖ the glory of God.

The longer history of the impact of the gospel in Chiapas is filled with stories of radically transformed lives in the midst of great poverty and severe, constant, concerted persecution.

In Chiapas

In Chiapas, Voetius’s vision was articulated with the motto of the R.C.A. missionaries,

Chiapas para Cristo, Chiapas for Christ. The perspective of the three-fold goal of mission permeated the vision, set the priorities, and guided the day-to-day decisions of the Reformed missionaries and their Mexican partners.⁸ This understanding of mission made it necessary to emphasize long-term identification and deep immersion on the part of the missionaries in the culture and life of the people and the churches in each place. The type of mission carried out in Chiapas cannot be accomplished through short-term mission endeavors. Chiapas missionaries have seen themselves primarily as evangelists – and as the supporters, trainers, and equippers of indigenous evangelists.⁹ The desire was to be able to share the gospel in appropriate and meaningful ways after having gained the right to be heard because one has become an integral part of the life of the new culture, enjoying close personal relationships with people in that culture.

This meant that Reformed Church missionaries have necessarily devoted long years to understanding their adopted culture, building friendships, immersing themselves in the life of the church in their area, and walking through thick and thin alongside their Chiapanecan friends. Thus from the 1940s through the late 1960s Kempers insisted that any new missionaries coming to Chiapas were expected to spend their first four years living in a village or small town, listening to, worshiping with, and learning from the Christians there. They were essentially forbidden to begin any major programmatic initiatives during those first four years. There was deep wisdom in this way of doing cross-cultural mission. In later decades this approach was not followed quite as closely, with rather significant negative results.

For mission in the 21st Century

Gisbertus Voetius's classical Reformed view of mission is nothing new to the Reformed Church in America. A brief look at the *Evangelism Manifesto* of 1977, the *Ad Hoc Report On World Mission* of 1987, numerous publications of the General Program Council of that decade, the "R.C.A. Ad Hoc Task Force For Mission in the 1990s," and the *Mission Handbook* of the Mission Services Unit of the General Synod Council of the R.C.A. will demonstrate that this perspective remains at the bedrock of the R.C.A.'s missiology. The "Mission and Vision Statement" adopted in 1998 reflects Voetius's vision. And the ten-year goal adopted by the Reformed Church in America in 2003 and 2004 is built on this same commitment to call people to faith in Jesus Christ, to plant a hundred new churches in multiple contexts where people speak many different languages, and to transform all of the life of persons and structures in a given context, to the glory of God. We now know that mission among the multitude of cultures and languages in the cities of North America will require a similar long-term, incarnational, evangelistic, and missional commitment if we are to see new churches born in our cities, to the glory of God.¹⁰ Just how this vision was lived out in actual missionary practice in Chiapas is the substance of next six mission principles.

2. A Holistic Gospel – John Mackay, Helen Barrett Montgomery, John R. Mott

A central figure in Latin American Protestantism generally and Presbyterianism in particular is John A. Mackay (1889-1983). Born in Scotland, Mackay and his wife, Jane Logan Wells, served from 1916 to 1932 as Presbyterian Free Church of Scotland missionaries in Lima, Peru; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Mexico City. In 1932 Mackay became the president of Princeton Theological Seminary and later a major figure in the ecumenical movement.¹¹ Together with important ecumenical mission leaders like Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861-1934),¹² and John R. Mott (1865-1955),¹³ among others, John A. Mackay was part of a generation of mission thinkers that did not split verbal evangelism from social action.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a common understanding of the Bible. Missiologists generally shared a consensus around a classical view of mission that saw the gospel as affecting all of life. They had a common definition of mission, articulated and popularized by the watchword of the Student Volunteer Movement (S.V.M.): “The evangelization of the world in this generation.” That watchword was later used by John R. Mott as the title of his most famous book and was also adopted as the motto of the great World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910. The S.V.M.’s watchword assumed a holistic view of mission, even though we must recognize that such a view was too often encased in a Euro-centric goal of Christianization and civilization. Yet even that goal assumed a conversion component. The emphasis on social service of a hundred years ago in terms of agriculture, medicine, and education were not seen as activities over-against verbal proclamation and personal faith conversion. They were seen as integral aspects of proclamation of a gospel that called for conversion. After the Second World War this changed in North American thinking about mission, and a great gulf was created between those who advocated socioeconomic and political change over against those who affirmed verbal proclamation as central to mission.

The Principle

We might state this second principle as follows:

When a person comes to biblical faith in Jesus Christ there begins a process of conversion that transforms all aspects and every aspect of that person’s life both personally and socially.

In Chiapas

In Chiapas, the missionaries and the Chiapas Christians never accepted the North American dichotomy of the 1950s and 1960s between proclamation evangelism and social action. This artificial dichotomy became a significant problem in other parts of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (N.P.C.M.) and had significant impact in the R.C.A. as well. But not in Chiapas. I believe it was primarily the influence of the ancient

Mayan worldview that would not allow the R.C.A. missionaries to accept a split in their understanding of mission. For a thousand years the Mayans had understood that all of life is interconnected. One's relationship to the deities, one's spiritual and emotional health, one's physical health, family relationships, and the agricultural fruitfulness of one's land are seen as interwoven aspects of one whole. Thus, for the Mayan Christians, their conversion to Jesus Christ was expected to impact every aspect of their lives.

This holistic understanding of the gospel provided the foundation for a host of mission activities on the part of R.C.A. missionaries in Chiapas. Their central desire was that men and women become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of Christ's church (*Chiapas para Cristo*). Yet, while holding to that center, over the past eighty years the Reformed missionaries have been heavily involved in literacy; agriculture; public health; medical clinics; spiritual warfare; education; music; home crafts like carpentry, sewing, and cooking; the relocation of refugees; and continual visitation and support of prisoners. In several cases R.C.A. missionaries helped build whole new towns. Though some may think that the Chiapas missionaries have not been as politically active as they might have been, one needs to consider that all these activities have been carried out in a context of pervasive political corruption, social dislocation, and religious oppression. In the Chiapas context, a holistic gospel and an integral approach to conversion is in fact powerfully subversive and transformational.

For example, from 1917 to 1924 the church in Tapachula was the primary provider of asylum and medical attention for people of the area who were suffering first from an epidemic of smallpox and later from tuberculosis. That ministry eventually became the Red Cross of the area. José Coffin oversaw that ministry just as he had been instrumental in creating the Red Cross in his native Tabasco some years earlier.

From the 1940s to the 1960s the Presbyterian churches throughout the state were at the forefront of efforts to teach people, especially women, to read. From the 1930s to the 1950s John and Mabel Kempers devoted considerable energy to organizing special youth hostels, homes-away-from-home where young people could live in the city in order to further their education. The Bible schools in each area have served a broader educational purpose, with a significant number of Bible school graduates becoming government-paid school teachers in their communities. And ever since Wycliffe Bible Translator Florence Gerdel opened her clinic in Corralito in the Tzeltal area in the late 1940s, the R.C.A. has been heavily invested in supporting the medical and public health work of the Mayan churches through rural clinics.

The holistic mission practice in Chiapas is due in large part to the contribution of the women missionaries. The genius of the R.C.A.'s salary structure for the Chiapas missionaries was that it supported the couple as a team, not individual persons. Thus the missionary wives were freed and empowered to contribute to the mission efforts at whatever level was possible, given each person's giftedness, sense of call, and the

demands of family and children's education. In each case, the balance between missionary action and family commitments changed over time as the children grew up and left for the U.S. to continue their education.¹⁴

The women missionaries carried out holistic mission. The first medical clinic initiated and supported by the R.C.A. was started by Nita De Voogd, a nurse, on the banks of the swift-flowing Tulijá river, in the middle of the Ch'ol jungle. Nita De Voogd, Dee Meyerink (midwifery), Carla Sterk (parasitology), Carolyn Folmsbee (public health), and Arlene Meerdink (home health) were heavily involved in matters that span the whole of life. They engaged in public health, home health, and the training of paramedics. Home crafts were taught by Sharon Heneveld, Helen Hofman, and Dee Meyerink at the Tzeltal Cultural Center at Buenos Aires. Education of youth and women saw the contributions of Mabel Kempers and Ruth Van Engen (literacy and young women's short courses); Jean Van Engen and Arlene Meerdink (Mabel and Ruth Young Women's Bible School); Carla Sterk and Sue Schreuder in San Cristobal. Mabel Kempers, Ruth Van Engen, Jean Van Engen, and Arlene Meerdink taught music. The Bible translation work would not have been possible without the dedicated work of Dorothy Meyerink, Helen Hofman, and Carla Sterk. The translation, preparation, and editing of periodicals, educational materials, and publications of all kinds involved Mabel Kempers, Ruth Van Engen, Dorothy Meyerink, Dorothy Hostetter, Helen Hofman, Arlene Meerdink, Carla Sterk, Jean Van Engen, and Donna Renes. Sharon Heneveld has taught in a local university and created a program for prison visitation. As has been the case throughout the past two hundred years of Protestant mission work around the world, women were at the forefront of holistic mission action.

For Mission in the 21st Century

It is a reason for rejoicing that at the beginning of this new century, mission theorists and mission practitioners no longer hold to the dichotomy between verbal evangelism and social action created fifty years ago. There is today a very substantial global consensus around the kingdom-of-God theme as a way of building a more holistic view of mission.¹⁵ Missiologists representing every major tradition in Christianity now recognize the need for what some are calling a "missiology of transformation" that seeks to offer a gospel that transforms all of life personally, socially, structurally, and nationally. This is especially true today in terms of mission in the cities of the world. Some years ago, Emilio Castro articulated this view so well.

In carrying out God's mission, we cannot opt permanently for one aspect of mission or another, be it liberation, development, humanization, or evangelization. These are all essential, integral parts of the mission entrusted to us and cannot be set against one another without becoming, simply, caricatures of what they really are....Our critical approach will be credible only if it is clearly seen to be closely linked to a declaration of our faith in Jesus Christ, if it does not stem from any connection with

competing ideologies or rival power groups. As Christians participating in a political liberation struggle, it is absolutely essential that we never lose sight of our commitment to the Christian community as a whole and to the deepest roots of our faith. But, at the same time, our evangelism can be credible only when its message is seen to be valid in relation to the often cruel facts of real, everyday situations (Castro 1978: 88; quoted in Norman Thomas 1995:146).

3. The Bridges of God – Donald McGavran

In 1955, Donald McGavran published what some consider the most important mission book of the twentieth century, *Bridges of God*. McGavran spoke out against the prevailing “mission station” approach so prevalent in Africa and Asia at the time, an approach that extracted converts from their culture and natural relationships and isolated them in mission compounds where they became carbon copies of the foreign missionaries.¹⁶ Over against such a practice that he had also seen in his native India, McGavran affirmed that “bridges of God” form the clearest and most effective pathways for believers to share their faith personally and informally with those with whom they have natural affinity relationships. Of course, McGavran did not invent this process of God’s mission – it is as old as the church itself. But McGavran suggested that it should be a much more intentional part of mission practice.

The Principle

The most effective means of evangelizing people, especially in resistant areas, is for Christians to share their newfound faith in their heart language and in culturally appropriate ways with those with whom they have natural affinity relationships. The gospel then spreads and the churches grow as a grass-root, popular movement.

In Chiapas

Personal, relational witness has been the primary methodology whereby the churches have grown in Chiapas. From the beginnings of the first churches a hundred years ago until today, no other method of evangelism comes even close to its impact in Chiapas. One person told another person about their newfound faith – who told another person, who told another. As family members watched the changed life (in all its facets) of a new believer, they too would become interested in reading the Bible and eventually becoming believers in Jesus. Often these changes have involved physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, especially from alcoholism. Thousands of fascinating stories abound of the way the gospel spread through natural “bridges of God” in every corner of Chiapas. One of the best collections of such stories is found in Al Schreuder’s master’s thesis, where he traces the growth of the church in the Chamula (Tzotzil) area – almost exclusively through relational evangelism.

Relational evangelism was rendered even more effective because of a pattern of

constant relocation of people throughout the state. For example, the church centers of Mazapa and Tapachula began because of the witness of coffee pickers from Guatemala. The founders of the church in Las Margaritas (Tojolabal) as well as the early Christians in the Chamula (Tzotzil) and some Tzeltal areas first heard the gospel when they went down to the hot country along the southern coast of Chiapas to work in the coffee plantations. Early Ch'ol believers had gone north to the state of Tabasco to work where they heard the gospel. In his article in this issue of the *Reformed Review*, Vern Sterk mentions the relocation to San Cristobal of thousands of persecuted believers from the Tzotzil areas. This eventuated in the evangelization of San Cristobal. Where thirty years ago there were three or four small, struggling Protestant churches, today the town is literally surrounded by around forty church buildings that are packed with people every Sunday.

Yet over the years, the Chiapas missionaries also used every available technological means at their disposal to share the gospel. They used victrolas (hand-wound phonograph players), flannel graph, filmstrips, an extensive audiotape ministry, 16-millimeter movies, cassettes, and the printed page. At one point my father, Garold Van Engen, was running a printing business that published five monthly periodicals in three languages, had several hundred people enrolled simultaneously in a Bible correspondence course, and printed thousands of pamphlets and tracts. Chiapas missionaries wore out countless mimeograph machines. But the technology was seen as secondary and supplementary to the personal faith-sharing by Christians along their natural relational bridges. The impact of personal witness by Chiapas Christians was so strong that John Kempers had an oft-quoted saying: "The church seemed to grow most rapidly where I was not present."

For Mission in the 21st Century

Everywhere in the world and particularly in Europe and North America, mission along the "bridges of God" is being relearned. We saw the effectiveness of personal witness some years ago when we discovered the phenomenal growth of the house-churches in China in the midst of severe persecution during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Today, if one were to examine fifty books on evangelism published over the past thirty years, at least half of them would be about relational evangelism and personal witness.

The growing trend in new church development today is to establish cell-based churches, house churches, or Bible study groups. And it is increasingly apparent that the postmodern generation's distrust of traditional church structures, styles, and systems in Europe and North America means that the only way they will be able to hear the gospel is from the lips of another trusted person with whom they have a close personal relationship. We now know that over 80 percent of new church members in North America first come to a church because of the witness of a friend, coworker, family member, or business associate. For the R.C.A. to start one hundred new churches in the next ten years, it is imperative that we equip and empower the members of our

churches to share their faith along their natural relational bridges. Of course, this has implications concerning the faith-development of R.C.A. church members. We speak of our faith only when there is something to tell. And that is the subject of the next several principles.

4. The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church – Roland Allen

John Kempers was a follower of Roland Allen (1868-1947). Allen was a British missionary to China (1895) and Africa (1931-1947). A prolific mission writer, Allen is best known for *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (1912) and *The Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (1927). Allen "ranks among the most influential (missiologists) when it comes to applying biblical principles to missionary work." He is also "credited with being the first to develop the connection between the Holy Spirit and missions." As a strong critic of contemporary mission practice, Allen "challenged what he saw as an over-reliance on professionalism, money, and organization in mission."¹⁷

The Principle

Following Roland Allen's missiology, this fourth principle is as much recognition of fact as it is a pattern of mission work. The development and growth of the church is first and foremost the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit, and human efforts and organizations are secondary, at best. John and Mabel Kempers were in complete agreement with this perspective.

In Chiapas

The "spontaneous expansion of the church" took a unique twist in Chiapas. It became a principle of decentralization, one of the most important and foundational operational rules that Kempers insisted on. In his history of the Presbyterian Church in Chiapas, the Reverend Hugo Esponda places this as the first of eight mission principles that Kempers followed.¹⁸ This working principle meant that as new R.C.A. missionaries arrived in Chiapas they were placed in remote areas with little contact with other expatriate missionaries. Garold and Ruth Van Engen were sent to Yajalón and later to San Cristobal, Paul and Dee Meyerink to Corralito, and Al and Nita De Voogd first to Santa Maria and then to the middle of the jungle on the banks of the Tulijá River where three major trails crossed each other in the middle of the Ch'ol area. As director of the Chiapas Mission, John Kempers did this intentionally. He believed that this dispersion would force the expatriate missionaries to have to learn from, work alongside, and depend upon national leadership.

In Kempers's mind, keeping the number of outside missionary personnel small and dispersed would allow for the spontaneous expansion of culturally appropriate churches. Although this made for very difficult cross-cultural ministry, it accomplished the goals John Kempers set. As Roger De Young signals in his article in this same issue,

the foundation of “partnership” in Chiapas between the R.C.A. missionaries and the national leadership was laid with this principle.¹⁹ As Kempers had done with José Coffin, the next generation of R.C.A. missionaries ended up traveling, eating, sleeping, bathing in the rivers, learning culture and language, making major ministry decisions, and carrying out their mission practice alongside their Mexican coworkers. From that time to the present, Chiapas mission practice has never been “us” the American missionaries over against “them” the national leadership. It has always been “us,” servants of the church—no matter the place and culture from which we come.

This spirit of close companionship, cooperation, and interdependence is evident in the by-laws of the Chiapas Presbytery, founded in 1949. In spite of Kempers’s strong, independent, pioneering, sometimes domineering personality, he refused the privilege of voting in the Presbytery he fought so hard to create. Contrary to the contemporary practice in the rest of the Mexican Presbyterian Church, in the Chiapas Presbytery the expatriate missionaries would have no vote, and they would have voice only when and if the Presbytery invited them to speak. This mode of partnership continues to this day.

This together-with style of operation can be seen even in the recent Bible translation work of the Meyerinks, Hofmans, Sterks, and Henevelds. The principal translators were indigenous leaders, with the missionaries coming alongside only as facilitators and learners. Here lies the relational genius behind the creation of the Commission for Joint Mission, as Roger De Young describes. This pattern was also followed by Vern Sterk (with assistance from Chuck Van Engen) in working with the leaders of the now fourteen presbyteries in Chiapas to create the Chiapas Mission Association.

Roland Allen’s concept of the spontaneous expansion of the church gave rise to a second operational rule in Chiapas: do not begin anything that the national church cannot continue. Though this was not always followed (as in the case of the “Media Center”), it colored much of the missiology of the Chiapas missionaries. This viewpoint meant that by the late 1950s Chiapas missionaries no longer paid the salaries of national pastors and evangelists, nor did they pay for church buildings. One impetus for this operational rule was a recognition that the Chiapas Christians themselves could and should support their own pastors at the same economic level as the members and build church buildings that resembled their own homes. The Chiapas missionaries emphasized intentional and concerted teaching about stewardship and tithing, knowing that once a group numbered around fifteen family units who tithed, they could support a full-time pastor and could carry out the programs of their church. In the mid-1960s, this commitment to stewardship and tithing moved Garold Van Engen and Alfonso Marín to work toward creating the first Union of Deacons in the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico.

A second impetus for this operational rule came from the fact that the Chiapas missionaries were always strapped for money. From the 1930s until the 1970s, all

international, cross-cultural mission work in the R.C.A. was supported, funded, and coordinated through the Board of Foreign Missions, with one exception: Chiapas. From its early years, the work in Chiapas was the only international cross-cultural work that the Board of Domestic Missions supported. The domestic (home) board supported pastors and ministries in the five or six Native American mission fields. But the Board of Domestic Missions was not set up to support an operation as complex and costly as the work in Chiapas. So for decades, until 1972 when the two boards were brought together in what became known as the General Program Council, the missionaries essentially had to fend for themselves.

I remember a story that Kempers loved to tell about writing to the secretaries of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Domestic Missions. He needed a horse and did not have the money for it. The first response he received back from the R.C.A. leadership was to question why a missionary would need a horse. In New York and New Jersey to have a horse was a tremendous luxury only the rich could afford. Kempers responded with an explanation as to why he needed a horse to travel the trails of the mountains of Chiapas. After a lengthy correspondence, Kempers finally received the approval and the money to buy a horse. By that time, according to his story, he had bought one horse (with borrowed money), had worn that horse out, and had nearly worn out a second. The systemic lack of support of the Chiapas mission endeavor during its first fifty years forced the missionaries to be very careful with their expenditures and very self-conscious in not funding anything that the national church could do. Thus they focused their energies in Bible distribution, encouraging and supporting lay Bible colporteurs,²⁰ lay evangelists, and the women of the churches who regularly visited homes of people interested in studying the Bible.

This operational rule also meant that partnership projects were to originate from, and be operationally managed by, primarily the mission practitioners on the local level. Although there have always been high-level church-to-church and mission-to-mission conversations during the past eighty years, they have proven to be rather counter-productive if they are not in touch with the local people, local issues, and local church structures. True mission partnership arises out of close personal relationships of trust, mutual respect, interdependence, and local empowerment.

For Mission in the 21st Century

The traditional Pentecostal movement, the more recent Charismatic movement and what is known as the "New Apostolic Reformation" movement of the past decade have echoed Roland Allen's principal contribution. They have emphasized the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the renewal, equipping, sending, planting, and development of churches. Those of us from the older historical churches could probably profit from listening more carefully to that emphasis.

Roland Allen's thought, not received well during his lifetime, has had a profound

impact on mission practice in the latter third of the twentieth century. During the past twenty years, for example, two of the best-known restatements of his “spontaneous expansion” perspective can be found in the writings of Peter Wagner and Christian Schwarz. In the early 1980s Wagner wrote *Your Church Can Grow* (1984), in which he describes what he called the “seven vital signs” of a healthy church that grows. This book was reprinted a number of times and read by several thousand pastors in North America and Europe studying missiology or pursuing doctor of ministry degrees in church growth. In 1996 Wagner’s idea of “seven vital signs” was restated by Christian Schwarz, who did his doctor of ministry studies under Wagner’s mentorship. Schwarz subsequently developed the “eight quality characteristics” of what he called *Natural Church Development* (1998). During the 1990s, Schwarz’s “biotic approach” exerted significant influence in the thinking, planning, and processes of church development among a number of Reformed pastors and regional leaders. The approach is almost a carbon copy of Roland Allen’s mission theory.

Today’s stress on personal giftedness for ministry and on empowering the members of R.C.A. churches for ministry both in the church and in the community draws its theoretical inspiration from the thought of Roland Allen. Allen would also be pleased to see our recent emphasis in the R.C.A. that congregations should parent new congregations as well as our desire that local classes build cooperative mission endeavors with regional groups of churches in other parts of the world.

5. Indigenous Church Principles – Venn/Anderson, Roland Allen, Eugene Nida, and Charles Kraft

Roland Allen was part of a line of thought about the “indigenous church” that began with the Englishman Henry Venn (1796-1873) and the American Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), was restated and expanded by Allen, and then was transformed by the contributions of Eugene Nida, Charles Kraft, and others who brought cultural anthropology to bear upon their missiological reflection. Venn and Anderson are famous for advocating what became known as the “three-self formula:” that the goal of cross-cultural missions should be to establish a church that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. They suggested that at that point, the work of the foreign missionary was finished. The “three-self formula” essentially ruled the day for almost a hundred years (the 1840s through the 1940s) in mission thinking generally and in the R.C.A. specifically. It was designed by two mission administrators anxious to have a way to be able to bring to a close mission endeavors in certain parts of the world. The formula played a very important role in focusing attention on the development of the national churches and reducing to some degree the missionary paternalism and control of the day. But missiologically and theologically it proved to be reductionistic and introverted, creating churches that exhibit all over the world fourth and fifth “selves:” self-centered and selfish.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Roland Allen strongly advocated the “three-

self,” but with a twist. National churches, he suggested should be “indigenous” in a deeper sense. They should be native to the soil in which they have been born – not potted hot-house plants transplanted from Europe or North America and placed artificially in Asia and Africa. This new concept of “indigeneity” looked beyond the internal church structures and considered the extent to which a church was appropriate to its culture. Interestingly, this new concept of indigeneity arose out the situation of the churches in China. This was true of Roland Allen’s thought and also relates to the insistence decades before Allen (in the late 1850s), by R.C.A. missionaries in China that the Chinese church should be autonomous, a truly Chinese church, not an extension of the R.C.A. in China.

In the late 1950s and 1960s the concept was again reshaped. By this time, some folks were beginning to draw insights from cultural anthropology to assist them in their cross-cultural communication of the gospel. And what they began to learn from cultural anthropology caused them to re-define the concept of “indigeneity” once again, giving it a deeper and broader meaning with reference to the worldview of the culture or cultures in which the churches found themselves. This change in mission thinking was huge.

The Principle

The fifth principle appears simple today; it was revolutionary in its day. Simply stated, it insists that congregations in a given context should be appropriate culturally and in every other respect to the context in which they are located.²¹

In Chiapas

In Chiapas, this principle had already been woven into the very fabric of R.C.A. missionary life because of the patterns of decentralization and partnership mentioned above. But over time the importance of cultural indigeneity as understood through the lenses of cultural anthropology became even more important to some. I believe this issue derived from the uniquely close partnership of the R.C.A. missionaries in Chiapas with Wycliffe Bible Translators. It is important to realize that Cameron Townsend (1896-1982), founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, though starting his work in Guatemala,²² was very much involved – and learned much – from the situation in Chiapas. He was a family friend and some-time partner of John and Mabel Kempers and Garold and Ruth Van Engen. The authors of some basic textbooks that Wycliffe uses to train its translators have names like John Beekman (who worked in the Ch’ol area: see Beekman 1974, 1981) and Bill Wonderly (who worked among the Zoques), both of whom cut their linguistic and anthropological teeth in Chiapas.²³

Shortly after arriving in 1952, Albert De Voogd began reading Eugene Nida. For a time the De Voogds had been mission partners with John and Elaine Beekman, living

together in Berea. Albert became enamored with cultural anthropology. It is a strange part of the history that one of the major sources of often heated disagreement between John Kempers and Albert De Voogd was about the insights of cultural anthropology. Oddly, Kempers did not seem to appreciate anthropology, though he had been doing it his entire missionary career. De Voogd believed it could help solve a number of problems. With time, De Voogd was proven right. In later years the Hofmans, Meyerinks, Sterks, Schreuders, C. Van Engens, and Renes's all studied anthropology with Charles Kraft in one way or another.

One cannot underestimate the profound impact that this new concept of "indigeneity" had on the work of the Chiapas missionaries. This principle was the basis for requiring that new missionary recruits spend most of their first four years getting to know the people, language, and culture of their new adopted home. Language learning was considered the integral part of their mission work. The desire to see the rise of culturally appropriate, indigenous churches spurred the long and arduous Bible translation projects in all the Mayan areas. It fueled the almost furious translation and production of materials of all kinds in the indigenous languages. It propelled the missionaries to encourage the Chiapas Christians to develop their own hymnody, drama, and indigenous styles of music. And, while remaining within a broad Presbyterian polity, the churches in Chiapas have developed their own indigenous forms of church organization, leadership, and decision-making that best match their culture.²⁴

The commitment of the R.C.A. missionaries to this principle has also meant that they have given top priority to long-term missionary service in Chiapas. Short-term assistance has been helpful to them. But the long-term immersion, identification, and partnership with the indigenous church is the primary missional orientation.

For Mission in the 21st Century

In North America we are just beginning to learn from the experience of cross-cultural, long-term missionaries around the world. We have begun to recognize the tremendous cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and generational diversity of people in the cities of North America. We are striving to learn how to incorporate a number of different worship styles and to discover how "a thousand churches in a million ways" can meaningfully present the gospel to a "lost and broken world so loved by God."²⁵ As I have written elsewhere, an "indigenous" church in North America today should be as ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse as the schools, sports complexes, and shopping centers of its context.²⁶

The R.C.A.'s search for a variety of models to plant different kinds of congregations demonstrates an awareness of cultural differences and a desire to see Reformed churches appropriate to their context. To be viable and believable, the churches of North America will need to explore ways they can be reformed, reshaped, recreated to be more appropriate to the people who live in their mission contexts. In the R.C.A., the

Regional Synod of New York is showing us all the way forward in this exploration.

6. "Each one teach one" - John Nevius and Frank Laubach

The sixth principle flows naturally from the desire for a culturally indigenous church mentioned above. The Reformed missionaries in Chiapas were committed to developing a church that was not only contextually appropriate but one that was biblically grounded as well. And for this John Kempers drew from the thought of John Nevius (1829-1893)²⁷ and the "Nevius Method."²⁸ John Nevius was a Presbyterian missionary to China. Bong Rin Ro, a Korean missiologist, reports the following. "In June 1890 the Presbyterian Mission in Korea invited John Nevius and his wife...to give a series of messages on Nevius' book, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*. Though the Neviuses were only in Korea for the two-week missionary conference, the Nevius Method was adopted by the missionaries as the primary means to reach Korea for Christ. Many attribute the rapid growth of the Korean church to the consistent application of the Nevius Method in Korea."²⁹

The Principle

The Nevius Method and the principle behind it are very simple. Every Christian should be learning the Bible from someone and should be teaching the Bible to someone. Because of their heavy involvement in literacy work in Chiapas, the missionaries sometimes referred to the Nevius Method with the words, "each one teach one." Although that phrase presents a similar idea, it actually came from Frank Laubach (1884-1970) and his efforts in literacy.³⁰ But the principle is the same.

In Chiapas

John Kempers read avidly about the growth of the churches in Korea. In Chiapas, he and Mabel, together with Garold and Ruth Van Engen, applied this principle as the bedrock of church development, especially in the Spanish-speaking churches. Kempers and Van Engen were avid students of the Protestant Reformation and as Reformed Christians in Latin America they were convinced that "*sola Scriptura*" was a missional principle not only for the sixteenth century but also for twentieth century Chiapas. As children of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, they believed in the "priesthood of all believers" and wanted to see all members of the Chiapas churches reading, understanding, and interpreting Scripture for themselves regardless of their level of secular education. All through their missionary careers they carried boxes of Bibles in their cars wherever they went, distributing and selling Bibles in the churches or leaving them on consignment with pastors, lay evangelists, elders, deacons, and leaders of the churches.

The churches in Chiapas have been deeply committed to the Bible. For many years in August they would hold an entire week of special worship services every night of the

week. It was called the “Week of the Bible,” culminating in a great Sunday celebration that was known as *Día de la Biblia* (“Day of the Bible”). The offerings received during that week-long celebration would be sent to the Mexican Bible Societies and sometimes to the World Home Bible League for the printing and distribution of Bibles. I have often thought of that special week as a kind of mission-emphasis week in Chiapas. For most of the past eighty years, R.C.A. missionaries have worked closely with the Mexican Bible Societies on a host of projects. And the present director of the Mexican Bible Societies, the Reverend Abner Lopez, is the son of one of the early leaders of the church in Mazapa, Chiapas. Abner’s father, Heriberto, lived with the Kemperses and was disciplined and mentored by them in the days before there was a Chiapas Bible School.

One of the ways the Kemperses and G. Van Engens worked out their commitment to the Nevius Method was in organizing the Union of Christian Endeavor Societies (1943) and the Union of Women’s Societies (1947), both of which pre-date the formation of the Chiapas Presbytery (1949). They devoted a huge amount of time and effort to these unions of local societies. Every year these organizations would hold a “convention,” hosted by a local church. John and Mabel, Garold and Ruth seldom missed a convention. They organized Bible recitation bees like spelling bees; they held competitions in on-the-spot extemporaneous Bible expositions, there were competitions and presentations of music and drama. And every night there was serious Bible study.

These two couples also laid a heavy stress on adult Bible study during the Sunday school hour. For years they kept track of the statistics of Sunday school attendance in every one of the Spanish-speaking churches in Chiapas. Graduates of the Chiapas Bible School in which all four missionaries taught understood that one of their primary responsibilities as pastors and lay leaders in their churches was to teach the Bible so that their students could in turn teach others. If there is one foundational principle above all others that I would highlight as directly influencing the growth of the churches in Chiapas, it is the adherence to the Nevius Method of Bible study.

With such a foundation in Bible study, it is no wonder that beginning in the late 1950s the Chiapas missionaries in the Mayan areas would devote the next fifty years to translating the Bible, preparing Bible study materials, encouraging the indigenous development of phenomenal dramas of the Christmas story (particularly in the Tzeltal field), and doing everything they could to empower every member of the Presbyterian churches in Chiapas to read the Bible for themselves, to learn from someone and to teach someone else what they had learned about the Bible.

For Mission in the 21st Century

We urgently need to affirm this principle if we want to re-evangelize North America. It is difficult for people to share their faith in Jesus Christ with others if they do not know their Bibles. Without Bible knowledge, such conversation is reduced to the story of one person’s experience or an advertisement as to why the hearer should begin to attend the

speaker's church. One of our biggest obstacles to the development of healthy, vibrant churches in North America is the biblical illiteracy of the members of our churches. We have known for some time now that the church is only one generation away from extinction. The church dies if the children no longer follow the faith of their parents.

Yet in Europe and North America today there is a deep hunger for spiritual meaning. People seek out others for spiritual direction. They buy countless spiritual self-help books. Concerned churches develop extensive discipleship programs. The recent phenomenon surrounding the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, served to demonstrate once again the deep spiritual hunger that permeates North American society in this new century. We might find that an adapted form of the Nevius Method would open up whole new opportunities for grass-roots movements that call people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, students of the Bible, responsible members of Christ's church, and witnesses of God's grace in their lives.

7. In-ministry Leadership Formation - José Coffin

We have come full-circle and return to one of José Coffin's most fundamental guidelines of church development: the in-ministry formation of pastoral leaders. The matter of pastoral leadership has been a major issue for the church since before Pentecost (see Acts 1). And down through the church's history there have been a number of different ways the church has responded to its need for qualified, motivating, transformational leaders. In Chiapas the churches have followed an approach first developed by José Coffin.

The Principle

Pastoral leaders of the church should be indigenous to their churches, the natural, culturally appropriate leaders who have arisen from the ranks of the faithful in the churches. They are to be chosen on the basis of their experience in ministry, their giftedness, and their leadership ability that is recognized and confirmed by their local congregation. Their formal theological education is important but should be viewed in a supporting role, not as the basis for their leadership.

In Chiapas

The principle as articulated above was modeled by José Coffin, encouraged by John Kempers and the other Chiapas missionaries, and institutionalized in the Chiapas presbyteries as the foundation for raising pastoral leadership in Chiapas. This model has differed markedly from the practice in central and northern areas of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, where seminary education is still seen as a prerequisite to, and the basis of, selection and authority in ministry. José Coffin began this model in Chiapas before Kempers's coming. Like a bishop, as he itinerated around the state he would name *capellanes*, spiritual chaplains who were to lead each congregation and

church. For example, three of the first five Presbyterian pastors in Chiapas were selected and ordained precisely on this basis. In addition to this pattern, in the Spanish areas the Christian Endeavor societies and the Women's Societies provided a kind of "farm club" for leaders in the church.

Due in large measure to José Coffin and the pattern he had seen arise previously in Tabasco (and due in part to the terrible shortage of ordained pastors everywhere in Chiapas), an indigenous form of church organization arose that continues to this day in all the language areas. In order for a congregation to become a mother church and have an ordained pastor, it is expected that the congregation will be caring for anywhere from five to twenty-five other smaller congregations and preaching stations in its surrounding area. Each of these congregations will have a president, a treasurer, and a lay preacher selected by the members of that congregation. Deacons and elders are usually selected from the entire church field, the mother church, and its satellite congregations. The deacons are often charged with the responsibility of evangelism and works of mercy in the community. Elders are expected to be able to preach several times a month.

Within this structure there arose another indigenous model of leadership. As a consistory becomes aware of young people (men and women) who appear to have the gifts for ministry, they are selected and called to be unordained, half-time or full-time *obreros* ("workers" – the men) and *misioneras* ("missionaries" – the women). Some may already have some Bible school training. They are given staff responsibilities for evangelism, Christian education, daily vacation Bible schools, teaching Sunday school, preaching in the numerous congregations, visiting the homes of inquirers, comforting the sick, and so forth. They do almost everything an ordained pastor does except preside over the consistory and administer the sacraments. Much of the pioneer evangelism throughout Chiapas has been due to the work of these *obreros* and *misioneras*. This indigenous pattern of home-grown leadership formation has been a wonderful fountain from which has flowed a constant stream of new leaders who can respond to the explosive growth of the churches in Chiapas. The six Bible schools and seminary in Chiapas come alongside this pattern of leadership formation and offer theological education as a supporting supplement to the experienced-based ministry formation that occurs in the churches.

For Mission in the 21st Century

In this new century there is increasing interest in developing new patterns of leadership formation for missional churches in North America. The house-church movement and the growth of cell-based churches are calling for a pattern of in-ministry formation. The large mega-churches seem to be increasingly convinced that they need to form their own home-grown leaders who rise through the ranks of ministry within their church.³¹ And we now know that the formation of pastoral leaders for ministry in the cities of North America involves a long and deep process of personal transformation in the

midst of ministry before a person is prepared to begin learning about ministry in the city. Further, cross-cultural demands of mission in North America make contextually appropriate ministry formation even more urgent.

The professionalization of the clergy so prevalent fifty years ago in North America has run its course and seems to have little to offer the new emerging church structures. Churches everywhere seem to be looking for pastoral leaders with the appropriate formation in their being, knowing, doing, and serving. Many seminaries are increasingly strapped to provide all the resources that this holistic approach to ministry formation calls for. In the Reformed Church for some time now we have been discussing the need for new patterns of ministry formation to meet the needs and missional vision of our churches in North America. The churches in Europe are experiencing as great an upheaval in pastoral leadership as we are in North America. Everywhere in the West we seem to be searching for ways to renew old paradigms and discover new paradigms of ministry formation.³² Increasingly, postmodern young people seem to be aware of their need for emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing, and they are calling for personal mentoring and one-on-one spiritual direction as an integral part of their formation for pastoral ministry in North America. Maybe there is something to be learned from the past eighty years of ministry formation in Chiapas.

Conclusion

Taken together, these seven mission principles are rather basic. There are no surprises here. The planting, growth, development, and health of the church is always a mystery (Karl Barth called the church itself the “mysterious creation of God”). But on the other side of the coin, there is no mystery at all. There are no secret formulas, no instant solutions. If there is one thing we might learn from the eighty years of R.C.A. mission work in Chiapas it is that, along with the mysterious and wonderful work of the Holy Spirit, the human side of evangelism and mission involves mostly long, slow, basic, hard work and common sense – and a profound commitment to “be all things to all people so that by all possible means” (1 Cor. 9:22) some may come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. And it is hard work.

Mission in Chiapas has been essentially Mission Basics 101. It has been “one beggar telling another beggar where to get food.”³³ May we learn from the Christians in Chiapas and keep telling the story of Jesus Christ to all who yet do not know him. *Chiapas para Cristo, “North America para Cristo!”* To God be the glory.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Pre-Columbian” refers to the ancient civilizations that existed in middle America before the coming of Columbus.

² Hugo Esponda, *Historia de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Chiapas* (Mexico City: El Faro, 1986), 11-13.

³ In Chiapas, the R.C.A. works with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico that began in Monterrey, Mexico,

in 1872 and began in Chiapas in 1903. The R.C.A. began work in Chiapas at the invitation of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico.

⁴ See Comité Pro-Centenario, *1872-1972 Centenario Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* (Kingsville, Texas: Escuela Presbiteriana Panamericana 1973), 881-83.

⁵ Coffin was the first moderator of the General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, 1947-1950. (cf. Comité Pro-Centenario 1973: 876).

⁶ Esponda, *Historia de la Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 166-67, 237.

⁷ Cf. J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960), 155; David Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 126-27; Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 21; Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 1002; *The Ad Hoc Report on World Mission*, 1987, 4-7; "R.C.A. AD HOC Task Force For Mission in the 1990s," 1990; Eugene Heideman, *A People in Mission: The Surprising Harvest* (Grand Rapids: R.C.A. Press, 1980), 79-90; General Program Council, *Mission Handbook*, (Grand Rapids: R.C.A. Press, 1987), 2-3.

⁸ It is interesting to note here that another area of the world where this vision permeated the work of R.C.A. missionaries was the Sudan-Ethiopia-Kenya region, where the conversion of people to Christ and the growth of the churches has also been remarkable, to the glory of God.

⁹ Vern Sterk mentions this in his article elsewhere in this issue of *Reformed Review*.

¹⁰ Cf. C. Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, eds., *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, (Monrovia: MARC, 1994).

¹¹ See Elias Medeiros, "John Alexander Mackay," in Moreau, Netland and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 589-90.

¹² Helen Barrett Montgomery, an ordained Baptist pastor and preacher, was one of the most important women missiologists of the twentieth century. She was an American Baptist trained at Wellesley College and Brown University, majoring in classical literature. She was the first president of the national Women's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the first woman president of the Northern Baptist Convention. She and a coworker established an annual day of world prayer which eventually became the World Day of Prayer. She wrote a book titled, *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, which sold 100,000 copies in 1910. (By contrast David Bosch's book, *Transforming Mission*, today's mission best seller, has sold a mere 30,000 copies.) She was the first female scholar to translate the entire New Testament (titled, *Centenary Translation of the New Testament*). She was the first female missiologist to write extensively in the theology of mission: *The Bible and Mission*. See Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 469-70; Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 657; and Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, James M. Phillips, eds., *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 62-70.

¹³ John R Mott, a Methodist layman, was secretary of the YMCA, cofounder of the Student Volunteer Movement, chair of the great World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910, founder and chair of the International Missionary Council and presided over the IMC conference of Jerusalem 1928. In 1946 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize and at its founding in 1948 the World Council of Churches named him its honorary president. His best-known work is *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*. See Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 664; and G. Anderson, et al, *Mission Legacies*, 79-84.

¹⁴ Recently, this remuneration policy was changed in R.C.A. missionary support, with questionable results.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1991), 101-118.

¹⁶ See also the dialogue between McGavran and folks in the World Council of Churches on this subject in the *International Review of Mission*, vol. 54 (Oct), 1965 and vol. 57 (July), 1968.

¹⁷ Jim Reapsome, "Allen, Roland," in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 54.

¹⁸ Hugo's list of John Kempers's eight principles is as follows:

1. Decentralization of church workers and missionaries, spreading them out and placing them in strategic locations;
2. The identification of the missionaries with the indigenous people (a key to the success of the mission work, especially in the Mayan areas);
3. Establishing only institutions that the national church could later direct and maintain without subsidies;
4. Supporting the construction of churches and pastor's homes only if the local church pays half the cost, following the principles of good stewardship;

5. Avoiding the payment of such high salaries that later the national church cannot take over the complete support of its own ministers and church workers;
6. Giving preference to the training of national pastors and lay church workers over the introduction of a growing number of expatriate missionaries;
7. Working toward having the Mayan churches and the Spanish-speaking mestizo churches be part of one Presbytery of Chiapas for the good of the Church and for the integration and empowerment of the Mayan Christians; and
8. Seeking the approval of local consistories and the Presbytery before initiating any new mission work (Esponda, *Historia de la Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 238-39 – translation by Charles Van Engen).

¹⁹ This operational rule was also encouraged by the Mexican Constitution of 1910-1912 that prohibited foreigners from administering the sacraments or officially pastoring Mexican churches. Thus the missionaries could build the church only as they walked and worked alongside strong national leadership.

²⁰ The “Bible colporteur” movement is a major feature of Latin American Protestantism, beginning with James Diego Thomson (1788-1854), who distributed Bibles as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society and began Lacastarian schools that used the Bible as a primary text. “Thomson established some one hundred Lancastrian schools in Buenos Aires (Argentina) alone and was made an honorary citizen of Argentina and Chile, where he was invited by the government in 1821....In 1827, Thomson was sent by the Bible Society to Mexico, and later worked in the Carribean” (Stephen Sywulka, “Thomson, James ‘Diego’” in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 959-60). Names like Moisés Ovando, Zenón Cueto, and Margarito Hernandez are famous in Chiapas for being instrumental in the founding of a number of major church centers. They would walk the mountainous, muddy trails behind a burro laden with boxes of Bibles.

²¹ Because the words have other meanings and are prone to misunderstanding, we no longer use the words “native” or “indigenous” to refer to this quality of a church that in every sense belongs in its context.

²² Cf. Peter J. Silzer, “Townsend, William Cameron” in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 964.

²³ The list of cooperative partnerships between R.C.A. missionaries and Wycliffe translators is rather long. Here are some examples:

John and Mabel Kempers with Beekmans, Wonderslys, Goertz, Marianna Slocum, Florence Gerdel;
 Garold and Ruth Van Engen with Ken and Nadine Weathers and Ken and Elaine Jacobs;
 Al and Nita De Voogd with John and Elaine Beekman;
 Paul and Dorothy Meyerink and Sam and Helen Hofman with Marianna Slocum and Florence Gerdel;
 Henry and Char Stegenga with John Beekman; with Wilbur and Evelyn Aulie; and with Vi Workington and Ruby Scott;
 Jim and Sharon Heneveld with Marianna Slocum and Florence Gerdel in the Bachajón area;
 Vern and Carla Sterk with Marion Cowan and Ken and Elaine Jacobs;
 Chris and Henny Platteel and Sam and Helen Hofman with Julia Supple in the Tojolabal area;
 Al and Sue Schreuder with Ken Weathers and Ken and Elaine Jacobs.

²⁴ In the September, 2004, issue of the *Church Herald*, the question is asked, “Can Evangelism and TULIP Happily Co-exist?” (Steve Bierly, 20-23). The history of the R.C.A. mission work in Chiapas would give a resounding YES! John Kempers and Garold Van Engen printed and reprinted thousands of copies of a small booklet in Spanish on “the five points of Calvinism.” For years they taught that material everywhere throughout the state. Most of the pastors of the Spanish speaking churches had the booklet nearly memorized. And as “five-point Calvinists,” they were deeply committed and highly effective evangelists.

²⁵ Taken from the R.C.A. Statement of Mission and Vision.

²⁶ Charles Van Engen *Planting Multiethnic Churches in North America*, unpub. ms, 2002.

²⁷ Cf. James Reapsome, “Nevius, John Livingston” in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 676-77.

²⁸ Cf. Bong Rin Ro, “Nevius Method,” in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 677.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Cf. Alan Seaman, “Laubach, Frank Charles,” in Moreau, Netland, and Van Engen, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 562.

³¹ See, for example, “The Ladder System—How to Select and Train a Minister,” *Church Herald*, May 19, 1972, 4-5.

³² See C. Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 240-52.

³³ D.T. Niles, *That They May Have Life* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), 413.