

## I. Introduction

The term emerging leader applies to a person who engages the postmodern community in developing the next generation church. They embrace the missional<sup>1</sup> approach to making disciples, using various methods which are available and effective in bringing people to Christ. This emerging leader seeks to integrate the Christian beliefs of the church with the postmodern world.

There is a concern from current leaders whether or not the emerging leader has the ability to uphold scripture as paramount over culture. However, if scripture is upheld but not made relevant to the world, then it is ineffective. It is necessary for the emerging leader to tackle and work on integrating scripture with post-modernity, even if it may seem, at first, to be in disagreement to what has been held prior as the standard way of seeing scripture.

The emerging leader not only re-interprets scripture in light of a postmodern hermeneutic, but also acts upon it. I believe the emerging leader must be active in the lives of the community around them, seeking out justice. In light of this, it is imperative that the baton be passed to these leaders, in order that they may offer new possibilities for the church to share (*and explore*) our passion for God found in love, justice and unity. Only such leaders can continue to lead congregations and by extension the church into a stronger relationship with God and a more satisfying relationship with the world.

The emerging leader, as well as the emerging church, have a long list of values and characteristics that would take more than the time allotted to me, so I will focus on one particular

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1. The term "missional focuses on the the Church's indigenous, rather than cross-cultural context, with the church contextualizing its methods, morality, and message to fit this indigenous culture." "Missional Living," (2007).

category that I believe to be very important. I will briefly speak concerning the category of justice in two forms, social justice, and eco-justice.

## II. Justice

In the Micah passage, there are three things we are called to do: "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" The lord therefore requires of us to do Justice. *Mishpat* is the Hebrew term for justice and refers to a judicial justice. However, throughout scripture, *mishpat* is consistently used in a relational setting. *Mishpat* is a way of deciding what is just when there is a conflict, to restore relationship (or harmony) between conflicting parties. Additional terms, such as *tsedek* in Hebrew or *dikaioyne* in Greek refers to righteousness and/or judgment, and refer to the notion of relation. Justice therefore stands as a mean that restores harmony in relationships, for we need to relate to one another. Justice is "fidelity to the demands of a relationship."<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Social Justice

The emerging leader desires social justice. If we look throughout scripture, we can see that God sides with the poor and seeks justice in the social realm. The term poor can be taken in many contexts, but I am speaking in particular on the poor in both economics and rights and privileges. Psalm 72:13 states, "He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save." If God sides with them, then we too must side with the needy, with the poor, the widow, to provide justice, not only so the poor can overcome, but rather that there can

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2. Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 66. Also refer to Kathryn Tanner, "Justification and Justice in a Theology of Grace," *Theology Today* 55.04 (1999): 510-23.

be relationship, a continual steady relationship between the two. The emerging leader seeks this in the community and in the church.

Let us examine the immigration reform for instance. In 2006, there was a big concern on how to control the upsurge of Latino immigrants coming into the United States. In response to the upsurge, the United States sought to break the immigrant help program. Hispanic American organizations, the NHCLC and the Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Reform are striving to promote instead a comprehensive immigration reform that will be helpful for both the United States and entering immigrants.<sup>3</sup> This mending of the relationship between a nation and individuals seeking to dwell therein is what justice or better yet social justice is about. Leaders in local and national arenas need to identify and fight against injustice within communities and even on a larger scale. The emerging leader of the Hispanic church needs to stand against injustice that Christ might be reverberated in our actions as well as in our words.

## **2. Eco-Justice**

The emerging leader must also be involved in *eco-justice*, the care of the ecological matter of the earth. Eco-justice has been a hotly debated issue; leaders such as Rick Warren of the Saddleback church, and Rich Cizik of the NAE have been strong advocates for ecological reform. Eco-justice needs to be taken seriously by both current and emerging leaders.

How does this fit in the praxis of Christianity, in churches and for leaders? The creation account of Genesis chapters 1-2 informs us on how the earth and every living creature on the planet were created. When God created humanity in his own image, he placed a responsibility

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3. For more in-depth information, refer to Allan Wall, "Hispanic Evangelicals Press Pelosi on Immigration Reform," (2007)., Allan Wall, "Hispanic Evangelicals and Immigration," (2007)., and Alexander Zaitchik, "'Christian' Nativism," (2007).

over them. This responsibility was to *radah*, to rule over God's creation. Genesis 2:15 details how in fact God placed man and woman in the garden to cultivate and keep it. The word for cultivating is *abad*. Theodore Hiebert of McCormick Theological Seminary states that the word *abad* has a sense of serving the earth by caring for it; it has more of a connotation of serving, rather than ruling over.<sup>4</sup> In light of that definition, we understand that when God made humanity responsible for the earth, he did not just charge them to lord over all things, but to care for the planet and anything that crawled on it. Yes, man is to rule over the earth but it is more on behalf of it, taking care of it, rather than simply reigning over it.

Unfortunately, eco-justice has largely been neglected among church leaders. The emphasis has always been on humanity, and yes that is very important, but it is also important to mind about where humanity dwells and will be living in the future. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his *Letters & Papers from Prison* states, "The ultimate question for a responsible man to ask is not how he is to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation is to live."<sup>5</sup> As suggested by Bonhoeffer, the emerging leader must be concerned about the coming generation. Part of this implies being concerned about the ecology of the planet.<sup>6</sup> If we do not think about it and act for the benefit of our environment now, we are condemning the future of coming generations. The emerging leaders must care for the ecosystem we call earth, and must

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4. Pamela Sparr, "God's Covenant With Every Living Thing," *Response Magazine* (1997): 23-25. For a more in-depth look into scripture through an Eco-justice lense, see Marcia Bunge, "Biblical Views of Nature: Foundations for an Environmental Ethic," ), David Rhoads, "Reading the New Testament in the Environmental Age," ).

5. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers From Prison* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 7.

6. Larry Rasmussen states that "humans are a microcosm of the macrocosm, an embodiment, even a mirror, of the universe itself." With this in mind, humanity as community is part of the larger context of the earth as community to a galaxy, and the galaxy as community to multiple galaxies. This places us in a better context to truly be more involved in the ecology of the earth. Larry Rasmussen, "Creating the Commons," in *Jusice in a Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community, and World*, ed. Pamela K. Brubaker et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 102.

stand toward preserving it, even when it happens to be a struggle for the leader and church.

Alexie Torres-Flemming, founder and executive director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, who trains young people to be aware of the injustice placed on this earth, portrays a perfect example of Eco-justice actions.<sup>7</sup> They have implemented projects which enabled the removal of close to 10,000 tires that were dumped in the Bronx River. Among the multitude of other detriments removed were also used cars, refrigerators, and stoves. They have vastly improved the status of this river and they are now promoting other similar projects that help improve their community.

### **III. Conclusion**

The emerging leader cannot go around the whole world to involve him or herself in it. Yet working in ones community, becoming involved in the life of the people as example of Christ caring for humanity and the earth, will bring the postmodern world to the feet of the master who cares for the whole life of humanity and the world. Justice, I believe, is one very important aspects that the emerging leader must act on.

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7. Alexie Torres-Flemming, "Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice," (2005).

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