

Northwest University

Christian Stewardship and Sustainable Agriculture:  
Confronting the Injustices of the Modern Food System

Aaron Gleason

International Community Development

Dr. Forrest Inslee

23 April 2017

*Some material included in this thesis project was previously submitted to meet the requirements for the ICD courses: Globalization and Development, Social, Practicum III, and Environmental Justice*

## Table of Contents

I.	Preface.....	3
II.	Introduction.....	5
III.	The Origins and Consequences of the Modern Food System.....	6
	i. The Green Revolution and the Modernization of Agriculture.....	7
	ii. Globalization, Capitalism, and Consumerism.....	14
IV.	Christianity, Environmentalism, and Justice.....	24
	i. Servants and Protectors.....	25
	ii. Moral Awareness, Neighbor-Love, and Embrace.....	28
V.	Sustainable Agriculture and Christian Stewardship.....	30
	i. Community Supported Agriculture and Secular Stewardship.....	31
	ii. Merging Secular and Christian Stewardship.....	36
VI.	Conclusion.....	41
VII.	Works Cited.....	42

## I. Preface

What is the best way to meet the nutritional needs of human society, while protecting the integrity of the natural world? Over the last half-decade in particular, we have come to understand the importance of finding balance between these two objectives. The resources of this world are indeed exhaustible and it is up to humans to treat the natural world as such, while implementing systems that safeguards its integrity for generations to come. As a Christian and a biologist, I have been exposed to the intricate beauty of the natural world and have a profound calling to protect it that is rooted in my faith. It is in the communion of these two elements that have led me to understand how mankind was designed to interact with the natural world in a way that preserves and respects human and environmental life, both of which are essential aspects of my Christian faith.

Sunstein and Chiseri-Stater assert in *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research* that, “It’s critical to understand your personal curiosity or fascination with the subculture you plan to study” (56). Using this framework, I can trace my own “fascination” with this topic to an experience I had as an undergraduate. At Northwest University, undergraduate students are required to participate in a cross-cultural experience aimed to expose them to opportunities in which they can apply their education in the service of others. As a biology student in 2015, I had the opportunity to partner with a nonprofit organization, called Convoy of Hope, in Arusha, Tanzania. While in Arusha, we participated in a series of service projects in which we were exposed to the many needs of community members in the city and across region.

One such program that Convoy of Hope implemented was an educational program that sought to teach farmers in the region sustainable farming techniques that would replace the standard use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides (such as crop rotation, land

intensive farming, double-dig tilling methods, and the steady production and incorporation of compost to soil). The organization also educated farmers with whom they worked on the negative consequences of chemical usage, both on their produce and their surrounding communities. As an illustration of the effectiveness of such growing practices, we helped Convoy of Hope design and build a test farm where local farmers could witness these techniques for themselves. These sustainable practices were a hard sell for farmers in the region as chemical usage provided them a more consistent harvest each year, which more sustainable alternative methods might not produce.

This particular interaction with the local farmers of Arusha, Tanzania exposed me to the reality that the conventional agricultural system created by the developed countries in the Global North are being exported to developing countries in the Global South as a potential solution to poverty and malnutrition. While this can be seen as an act of goodwill, the negative implications of such agricultural practices have proven harmful to farmers and their communities long term. For this reason, it is ultimately not the agricultural practices in the Global South that are at the root of the problem, but the dominant agricultural practices developed and championed by the Global North must be implicated and challenged to find a better way forward.

As a sovereign institution that is called to live in and separate from the World (John 17:18-19), the Church has the responsibility to identify and confront injustice in all forms. The interconnectedness of the modern world makes confronting the issues within modern agricultural systems even more pressing as the actions of one affects the lives of all. The following represents a call to the Christian Church to seek environmental and social justice. By outlining the parallels between the Church's mission and that of the local food movement, I explore a context by which

the Church body can confront the issues within the modern food system, while leading the way in developing alternative systems that respect life in all forms.

## **II. Introduction**

All life is dependent upon the health of the Earth. Although this seems like an obvious statement, the structure of contemporary societies in the Global North would suggest that such an understanding of the natural world has been lost. Because it is built upon the principle that all resources are replaceable as long as technological advancement can outpace consumptive habits, this societal model has led to the creation of an unsustainable socioeconomic system. This system treats the Earth as a resource to be exploited, no matter the consequences it has on individuals, communities, and natural ecosystems. Such actions of the Global North directly contradict the Christian values that the majority of the world's population ascribes (Pew Research Center) and is counter to their biblical call to steward God's creation.

By exploring this calling in light of Genesis 2:15, and more specifically the Hebrew words of *abad* and *shamar*, we can begin to grasp the urgency within God's commandment to be stewards of His creation. Thus, we can comprehend the full breadth of the justice and harmony that God designed us to seek. This calling is fundamental to the purpose of the Church and must be recovered if it is to bring God's creation back into full relationship with Him. As a movement that parallels the Christian call towards stewardship and justice, the sustainable food movement works to combat the exploitative habits of the modern agricultural system at the grassroots level, which works to build healthy communities by creating a food system built around sustainability and holistic well being.

As keepers of the natural world and advocates for social justice, the Church has an opportunity to promote the values within the secular sustainable food movement and partner with

them in combatting the socioeconomic and ecological implications of the modern system.

Through the exploration of this idea in the context of Spokane, Washington, and by working with a business that is actively involved in the sustainable food movement, I aim to demonstrate the vital role that the Church can and must play in actualizing its call to be servants and protectors of the Earth, while providing for the physical nutritional needs of its community. By first dissecting the origins and consequences of the modern food system, I can then theorize a framework for a more just and equitable form of food production.

### **III. The Origins and Consequences of the Modern Food System**

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, civilization began a marked shift that brought the economies of the world under a more interdependent relationship, stimulated by the opening of international borders for the fluid movement of goods and services and great strides in technological advancement. Although “globalization,” as it is called today, had been building steadily over the previous two centuries, this embodiment was not dependent upon the complete control of powerful nations over developing countries through colonialism. Rather, it was dependent upon a more seditious methodology that saw the dominant powers in the Global North exert their economic and political prowess through “neo-colonialism” or, more commonly referred to as, “imperialism” (Willis 20, 73). This imperialism is not necessarily interested in the direct control of people, but that of markets and ideas. Through the rise of this globalizing force, and in conjunction with the rise of free-market capitalism and modern technology, the world economy experienced an unprecedented boom that saw efficiency of production improve. This allowed for the production of superior goods at more affordable costs to producers and consumers, therefore making them more accessible to a wider range of consumers around the world.

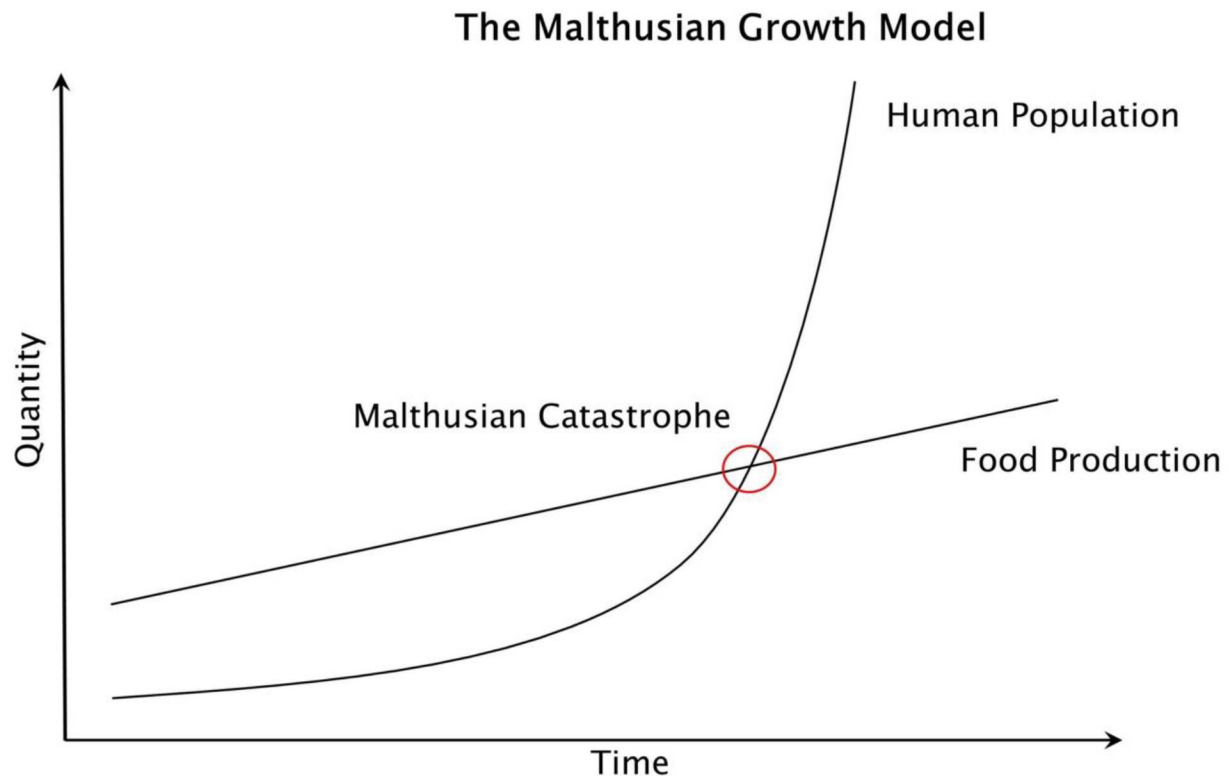
However beneficial globalization, free-market capitalism, and modern technology have been for the development of the modern world economy, their implementation inextricably led to a number of detrimental and unintended consequences to humans and the natural world. One particular sector of the world economy that has seen significant change as a result of these forces has been that of agriculture. The modern agricultural machine represents a system centered upon the utilization of technology to maximize the yield potential of a given crop and minimize the waste and labor required to produce it. Technology, such as pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, large machinery, and irrigation, allows farmers to grow on an enormous scale, while specializing in a single crop type, known as a monoculture.

With the rise of globalization, these conventional agricultural practices have been transferred across international lines and made the positive and negative implications of these growing methods available to developed and developing countries alike. Although this can be viewed as a victory for free market economics, the ethical repercussions of implementing such agricultural practices, on an environmental and human level, must be weighed to understand its full cost. This system is not only characterized by extreme efficiency, but by systemic injustice that has been felt across the world and can even be observed within domestic agriculture in the United States. To explore the full effects of the new age in agricultural production, it is helpful to begin with Norman Borlaug and his Green Revolution.

i. *The Green Revolution and the Modernization of Agriculture*

In the late eighteenth century, Thomas Malthus published a theory on population growth, which stated that human populations grow conversely with agricultural production. However, Malthus also theorized that human populations would grow at an exponential rate, while agricultural production would grow at a linear rate, resulting in famine or war that would

ultimately stagnate the rate of population growth (Malthus 8) (see figure 1). Because Malthus came before the industrial revolution and the eventual advancements in agricultural practices that would allow for massive scaling of production, he was cynical of the possibility that technology could keep pace with population growth. Therefore, Malthus believed that population would ultimately reach an equilibrium as a result of insufficient supplies of food (Malthus 8).



Source: *The Malthusian Growth Model*. Digital image. *Geographic Perspectives on Sustainability and Human-Environment Systems*. Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Science, 2011. Web. 2 Apr. 2017.

Figure 1

Fast-forward to the mid-twentieth century: The world was in the midst of what seemed to be a Malthusian catastrophe, with its population rising at an unprecedented rate of 2 percent (US Census Bureau "Annual World Population Change: 1950-2050") and the total population rising



above three billion (US Census Bureau "World Population: 1950-2050"). With the theoretical Malthusian world, painted 150 years prior, coming to fruition, human civilization was confronted with the dilemma of developing new technologies to feed a burgeoning population or facing an unprecedented food crisis that would see millions, if not billions, of people perish.

In this void stepped American agrobiologist, Norman Borlaug. Borlaug, known today as the father of plant cross-breeding, revolutionized agriculture when he successfully developed a variety of wheat that was genetically bred to produce the maximum harvest, while being resistant to draught. This vision for agricultural advancement was eventually given the name of the Green Revolution. Such wheat varieties helped Mexico become wheat independent and, eventually, aided India and Pakistan in their struggle to feed their growing populations amidst regional famine in the 1960s (The Nobel Foundation). Along with the famine resistant wheat, Borlaug, in conjunction with the International Agriculture Research Center, incorporated the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, and mechanization to make the growing process even more efficient, which ensured that crop production was maximized. By using such agricultural practices, the productivity of wheat in India skyrocketed and effectively filled the country's granaries making them grain independent by the 1990s (Rosset et al. 3).

However, with such explosive growth came greater risk to farmers and the environments in which they farmed. The technology that the Green Revolution brought to India required farmers to buy each of the components of the farming method (seed, fertilizer, pesticide, irrigation supply, machinery, and great swathes of land). If one of these elements was missing, the effectiveness of the farming method would shrink drastically, limiting its overall yield potential. To add insult to injury, as Radhakrishna Rao explains, because of the surplus created by the utilization of the Green Revolution growing methods, the price of wheat dropped making

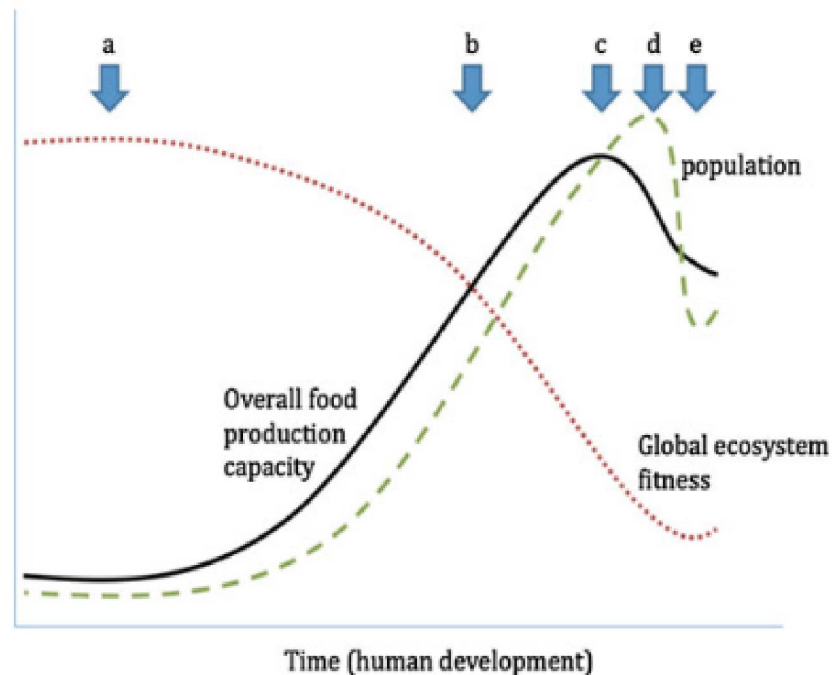
it more difficult for farmers to pay for the necessary technologies that they had to buy annually (often paid for through loans) (10).

Further, Rao describes a recent study that shows a significant regression of the effectiveness of Green Revolution technologies, as chemical fertilizers have not effectively replenished soils, pests have developed resistance to the pesticides used, and over-irrigation has led to the depletion of waterways (11). Due to the fact that this agricultural model is also dependent upon the amount of land used (the greater the land, the greater the profitability of the crop), farmers with the largest amounts of land were able to withstand the debt burden required to use such technologies. Small-farmers, resultantly, had difficulties competing within this new market and were either absorbed by larger farmers, or driven into insurmountable amounts of debt. Tragically, many of these farmers saw no other escape from this debt than to end their lives by consuming the very pesticides that were intended to help them (Banerjee et al. 213). Agricultural regions of India have also experienced an extreme degree of environmental degradation, as a result of the use of petroleum-based chemicals in conjunction with the irrigation that such growing methods require. This combination dualistically led to eutrophication and depletion of waterways, which exponentially increases the concentration of harmful chemicals making them dangerous for human consumption and the natural world.

In light of the Green Revolution experiment, the Malthusian theory of population growth was unable to effectively predict the extent to which human civilization could evade the catastrophe that would theoretically come when population exceeded food supply. While Malthus' conclusion that technology would be unable to keep up with exponential population growth was technically incorrect, the technology developed during the Green Revolution had adverse effects on farmers, their communities, and their natural environments. As a result of this

new paradigm, Scott Soby developed an amended version of Malthus' population growth graph to include the adverse effects that new food production technologies would have on ecosystems (see figure 2). While advancements in technology have been able to increase the amount of food available for an exponentially increasing world population, the technology used has had adverse effects on the health of the natural world and actually limits the long-term sustainability of the system as a whole. Where "global ecosystem fitness" intersects with "food production capacity", the overall productivity of the agricultural process will begin to slow, leading to a belated Malthusian catastrophe as indicated by point "c" on figure 2. The well-meaning agricultural technologies that Borlaug championed would, therefore, do little to address hunger in the developing world, which only delayed the inevitable catastrophe and adding to the poverty of the people he was trying to serve.

## The Sobjan Population Model



**Fig. 5** Model of the impact of global ecosystem fitness on food production capacity and human population. Rapid declines in the human population have been predicted since the middle nineteenth century, but did not and could not factor in technological developments in agriculture, chemistry, transportation, energy and other primary technologies, nor the secondary technologies of health care, pollution remediation and others. In this model, increasing human population intensifies pressures on an otherwise robust ecosystem (a) resulting in the accumulation of damage which cannot be corrected or which cannot be reversed within a time scale of decades. Either some extraordinary event or the accumulation of decreases in ecosystem fitness (b) results in a decline in overall production capacity (c) such that the food production/transport system can no longer support the level of population (d), resulting in a rapid and significant decrease in population (e). Each of the components in the model has some level of 'inertia' which allows the system to continue for some period of time before changing its trajectory

Source: Soby, Scott. "The End of the Green Revolution." *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics*, vol. 26, no. 3, June 2013, pp. 537-546.

## Figure 2

In the end, the Green Revolution was an innovative concept that was unable to fully realize its envisioned potential. Availability of grain was indeed improved at a historic level and participating countries such as Mexico, India, and Pakistan were able to achieve sovereignty in

their production of the grain. However, in analyzing hunger statistics in the wake of the Green Revolution, researchers argue that food security has not changed as a result of utilized technologies and, because of socioeconomic inhibitors, as of the year 2002 “200 million men, women and children still go to bed underfed every night” (Rao 11). Is this simply a flaw in execution or can the ineptitudes of the Green Revolution be tied to something different?

The article “Wheat Lag,” published in *Nature*, an electronic science journal, suggests that, as a crop, wheat’s inability to maintain a steady growth of yields annually can be attributed to the lack of funding that wheat development has received in relation to that of similar agricultural products (Nature 400). Corn, as one such product, receives four times the breeding and research funding of wheat (Only five hundred million US dollars per year). *Nature* argues that wheat must become a greater priority for such funding if it is to regain a 1.7% growth that is theoretically needed to keep up with its demand (Nature 400). This view of agriculture infers that the only way to improve yields is through the development of enhanced, genetically modified strains of wheat and more advanced agrochemicals. No matter how substantial the funding for wheat development, this view of agriculture is fundamentally unable to address the perilous cycle of environmental exploitation and destruction that is innately bound to the modern food system. New technologies can indeed be developed to mimic natural processes, but at some point we must come to the realization that the most effective and sustainable method for growing produce is one that works with natural systems, rather than in manipulation of them.

Like much of the developed world, *Nature* does not acknowledge the inherent risk that comes with the use of unnatural practices. It also refuses to recognize that the use of fertilizers and pesticides have a much greater impact on ecosystems beyond the agricultural fields on which they are applied. The idea that these practices “could benefit natural ecosystems,” as *Nature*

explains, is frankly irresponsible (Nature 400). As we have seen, there is more to addressing the food needs of the world than simply through agricultural development, a lesson that we are beginning to realize, however slowly the process may be. In retrospect, humanitarians such as Borlaug may have been better off looking to address the exponential growth of the populations in the developing world through development projects, such as the education of female populations in developing countries with the objective of slowing population growth (Dreze and Murthi 54), rather than attempting to manipulate the food production model and, through it, the natural world. Borlaug's greatest fault was his shortsightedness. His desire to help clouded his judgment and only added to the poverty of the people that he aimed to serve.

So if the technologies commercialized by Norman Borlaug and his Green Revolution were ultimately unsatisfactory in achieving its goal of addressing world hunger, while contributing to significant deterioration of the natural world, why have the technologies used within this food system become a staple within food production across the globe? This is a multifaceted question that requires a discussion regarding the effects of globalization and free-market capitalism that have become two driving factors within the world economy. The legacy of the Green Revolution is integrally connected to the interplay between these two factors and the use of the technologies that the revolution helped to create. Although originally intended to feed a growing human population, it has become an instrument for the accumulation of wealth amongst a small portion of the world's population and, principally, for the propagation of injustice in the world.

#### ii. *Globalization, Capitalism, and Consumerism*

Globalization is a modern phenomenon that has taken thousands of years to develop into its contemporary form. The flow of people and ideas has become steadily more efficient with the

development of new technologies (such as the rise of new transportation systems and the internet), and, over the last century, we have seen an unprecedented accessibility to diverse cultures and worldviews. Although pervasive and impartial in nature, globalization has been guided by the dominating social classes from the Global North. Through Globalization, countries of the Global North have used their political and economic prowess to impose their values onto nations of the Global South. This imperialistic force moves beyond the control of global markets and to the propagation of cultural and ideological values.

The rise of globalization was closely paralleled by the popularization of a predominant socioeconomic system in the Global North: the privatization of business and the enabling of the market to regulate itself based on the forces of supply and demand. In its infancy, capitalism, as the system was called, was primarily controlled by small, family-owned businesses within localized markets. Businesses were forced to use the resources found within their communities to manufacture their products and they were required to be in tune with the needs of their neighbors in the tabulation of demand. However, as business began to grow, government policies had to be created to hold the privatized business sector in check, ensuring that the public good was protected from exploitation. The rise of multinational businesses tied the hands of governmental entities, as the sanctions that they placed on businesses only went as far as their country's borders.

This age of globalization and capitalism created the perfect environment for the development of enormously powerful transnational corporations (TNCs) that could use their capital to influence government policy to benefit their company's bottom line. Within this global economic model, when resistance is encountered, principally in the form of ecological or labor standards, and the profitability of their business is limited, TNCs can rely upon the globalized,

free-market system to find more favorable political environments. In his examination of capitalist globalization, Leslie Sklair describes three tenants that work to ensure the feasibility of such a business model: “. . . the transnational corporations strive to control global capital and material resources, the transnational capitalist class strives to control global power, and the transnational agents and institutions of the cultural-ideology of consumerism strive to control the realm of ideas” (Sklair 69). With the natural resources needed for the production of goods, the political means to push their agenda, and a “cultural-ideology” that offers access to an array of goods that are requisite for “a happy and satisfying life,” globalized businesses have the opportunity to expand the profitability and marketability of their products to a consumer base across the globe (Sklair 68). Amartya Sen further characterizes this “global capitalism” as a venal model, which “is much more concerned with expanding the domain of market relations” than securing the rights of “society’s underdogs” who predominantly live in vulnerable regions of the world (i.e. the Global South) (Sen 24). Since this economic system breeds self-interest, exploitation is a natural derivative that places profitability over the health of humans and the environment.

An exploration of the dominant Western cultures of the Global North, which have led this globalizing effort and have had the largest hand in manipulating the ideals within this new global world system, can provide keen insights into the values that perpetuate the perceived rise of capitalism and consumerism. In *Cultures and Organizations*, Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov developed a series of indices to explore the differences between the major cultures of modern society. Their original intent was to aid intercultural cooperation within the interconnected globalized world, thus helping individuals and organizations connect with their counterparts despite cultural disparities. However, the indices that Hofstede et al. created also allow us to



visualize the prevailing values of different regions of the world and further comprehend different societal norms. With the help of Hofstede et al.'s indices, a clearer understanding of Western values can be developed to build cultural awareness and, in turn, lead to societal change to confront the negative implications that they may have.

Three indices that are especially telling of Western culture's draw to capitalism and consumerism are Hofstede et al.'s Individualism Index (IDV), Long-Term Orientation Index (LTO), and Indulgence Versus Restraint Index (IVR). By analyzing the location of such Western cultures on these indices, there is a clear trend towards high IDV, low LTO, and high IVR ratings (Hofstede et al. 95, 256, 282). The combination of these three ratings suggests that such cultures predominantly share the sentiments that the interests of the individual prevail over that of the group (Hofstede 91), the tendency "toward[s] immediate need gratification, spending, and sensitivity to social trends in consumption" are natural (Hofstede 242), and a "tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun" is an intrinsic right (Hofstede 281). Self-interest and the consumption are, therefore, integral aspects of Western culture that associate the pursuit and attainment of "more" with happiness and fulfillment. These values cause Western cultures and countries in the Global North to look inward toward their own interests, rather than outward toward the interests of the world at large. Since it was advanced by such cultures, the modern food system works within this same set of values and has ultimately led to the exploitation of "others" in the Global South.

After the apparent success of the Green Revolution within the agricultural sector, in 1972, economist Harry Cleaver, Jr. wrote an article that outlined the contradictions presented within the system of food production. One of the contradictions that Cleaver, Jr. perceived was that corporate entities would use the technological advancements that were originally intended to

address hunger in developing countries as marketable products to be used for the creation of wealth (Cleaver, Jr. 180). TNCs such as Monsanto, AgrEvo, and Dupont have stepped into this role as deliverers of progress and have thus become major beneficiaries of this new market through their stranglehold on the seed and chemical markets (Rosset 1). These actions by TNCs effectively bind developing countries to the forces of capitalism and manipulate farmers in such regions into clinging to modern food production methods as the most efficient means of creating a better harvest, while accepting the negative implications that come with it as inevitable. The benefits of the system have thus been secured chiefly by and for the entities of the Global North and the secondary benefits of improved growing potential to that of the Global South, which is accompanied by a variety of intrinsic risks.

Although such manipulative business models have become standard practice within TNCs, dependence upon growing technologies is only one of many grievances that the farmers of the Global South have suffered. The experiences of the Indian farmers discussed earlier are a common theme within the application of the modern food system that is dependent upon agrochemicals, irrigation, and mechanization. The use of pesticides alone within the modern agricultural system has been linked to a wide range of adverse health effects in handlers of the chemicals (the suppression of the immune system, hormonal disruption, birth defects, and cancer), the contamination of foodstuffs with unhealthy levels of chemical residues, the pollution of surface water, soil, and ground water contamination, bioaccumulation within wildlife, and the killing of beneficial microorganisms in soil, non-target vegetation, and non-target terrestrial and aquatic organisms (Aktar et al. 2-7). Such effects of modern agriculture have been coupled, in regions of the Global South, with the decimation of ecosystems (most notably seen in the

deforestation of the Amazon in Brazil (Morton et al. 14638)) to provide the space that such agricultural practices require, paints a bleak future for the health of the natural world.

In his book, *Resisting Global Toxics*, David Naguib Pellow uses a discussion of Ulrich Beck's "risk society" thesis to frame his critique of the modern economic system, as "... the project of nation building, the very idea of the modern nation-state, is made possible by the existence of toxins – chemical poisons – that permeate every social institution, human body, and the natural world itself" (Pellow 23). Within these "risk societies," the privileged citizens of the world (the Global North) are able to externalize the worst of the implications of the "risks" their actions produce onto "spaces occupied by devalued and marginal others: people of color, the poor, indigenous persons, and even entire nations and regions of the globe" (Pellow 23). As the primary propagators of the modern food system, TNCs, along with the transnational capitalists class and transnational agents and institutions of the cultural-ideology of consumerism that sustain them, have unwittingly embraced the role as guardians of Pellow's "risk societies" and have become predominant actors in the peddling of risk from affluent nations to impoverished and devalued populations in the Global South.

The modern food system is the embodiment of global capitalism and consumerism, as it uses globalization to export the production of foodstuffs into parts of the world with less socioeconomic power, thus generating products at a cheaper price, which can then be sold at cheaper prices that are more palatable to the consumers of the Global North. As discussed previously, capitalism allows businesses to find the cheapest means of producing goods so that they can be competitive in the global marketplace. The food system, in particular, is arranged to give big business an advantage over farmers across the globe, as they have the power to dictate the distribution of the products to consumers. Farmers are, therefore, subjugated by the powers

that distribute their goods and are unable to control the prices of their products. According to Marion Nestle, produce farmers receive as little as five percent of the marked prices that consumers of the Global North pay in their local grocery stores (Nestle 41). Such a lack of profitability makes paying the labor force a fair wage almost impossible and, resultantly, handcuffs farm owners into participating in the perpetuation of injustice. For a real world representation of the unjust agricultural system and how it demonstrates the “risk societies” that Pellow describes in a familiar context, let us look at the American berry industry and its dependence on immigrant labor.

From 2003 to 2004 researcher Seth M. Holmes actively observed a group from the small village of San Miguel, Mexico, called the Triqui people. Holmes’ study, which was later published within *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant*, was designed to expose the “social, political, and health issues related to U.S.-Mexico migration” and the exploitative nature of their work within the American agricultural sector (Holmes 3). His journey brought him from San Miguel, Mexico all the way to the Skagit Valley of Washington State, and exposed him to the complex systems that have forced the Triqui people to travel north where they endure racism, psychological suffering, and physical harm only to provide the American people with fresh and affordable fruit.

To understand the root cause for the movement of Triqui populations over the 3,200-mile trip from the southern state of Oaxaca to Skagit County of Washington, we must first study the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and its implications on the corn market in the United States and Mexico. The 1994 legislation, originally championed by President Bill Clinton, banned the use of “economic barriers, including tariffs, between signatory countries”,

yet did nothing to prevent the use of government subsidies that were designed to protect businesses from within (Holmes 25).

This combination of international policies brought disaster to the family growers that make up the majority of corn producers in Mexico, as the United States was able to use its financial resources to raise farm subsidies over 300 percent over the course of the first decade that the trade agreement was in place (Holmes 41). The Mexican government did not have the capital to subsidize domestic food production and, therefore, were unable to protect their own agricultural sector. NAFTA eventually led to the ability of Midwestern American corn (not coincidentally grown with modern agricultural technologies) to undersell the local, family owned farmers in rural Mexico, effectively forcing them out of their livelihood and, in some cases, towards the risky path of immigration. Because the Triqui people of rural Oaxaca were dependent upon the production of corn as their primary means of income, they were particularly affected by the trade policies presented within NAFTA and, resultantly, represented a large proportion of the peoples forced to emigrate from their homes.

While working on Tanaka Brothers Farm in the Skagit Valley, Holmes experienced first hand the racist treatment of his migrant coworkers, the segregation of the workforce according to ethnicity, the backbreaking labor they endured in the field, the exposure to toxic chemicals and fertilizers sprayed on the crops they harvested, and the systemic barriers that prevented migrant populations from having equal access to education and healthcare. Such treatment of immigrant workers is a variation of Pellow's "risk society" thesis, as the dangers of food production are not exported outside of the borders of affluent society, but are simply passed to members of society who are politically, economically, and physically vulnerable.

At the conclusion of his work, Holmes implicates unfair trade laws in the decimation of agricultural production in Southern Mexico that have forced populations such as the Triqui people to seek work thousands of miles from their homes, and the ignorance of the American consumers who, ultimately, create a market for unethically produced goods. This view of the food system parallels Sklair's tenants of the global capitalism, and echoes his thesis that the power of TNCs hinges upon the complicit participation of consumers (Sklair 70). In his account, Holmes does not direct a significant amount of blame to the berry farm owners, as they have been forced to participate within the exploitative economic system in order to survive. The Tanaka Brothers Farm is fighting to stay afloat in the competition with larger farms in California and in China that sell hardier, less-sweet, and less expensive varieties of berries (Holmes 59). While the owners of the farm aim to produce fruit in the most ethically sound processes, to keep the doors of the farm open they have been forced to compromise their high ideals and depend heavily on cheap labor.

Although his study is not a universal representation of agriculture in America, Holmes depicts a group of people for whom the system has failed. Migrant workers within the modern agricultural system are trapped within a cycle of exploitation that treats them and the natural world as expendable and, as a result, second-class citizens that are forced to submit to the will of dominating bodies. This treatment is apparent when individuals who produce such foods "confront abnormally high rates of pesticide-related illness, poisoning, cancer, and birth defects" (Pellow 150). Structural racism forces such minority groups into these dangerous lines of work through positive feedback systems that obstruct such populations from achieving basic human rights, essentially using their failure to realize such basic human rights to rationalize their

treatment as less-than-human. This is the experience of the Triqui people in their journey towards more financially stable lives.

The modern food system is historically and contemporarily bound to the creation of injustice for both human populations and the natural world. Although originally intended to address the food crisis in the 1960s, the technologies produced during the Green Revolution became a symbol of imperialism for the Global North as TNCs effectively marketed them to farmers in the Global South with the promise of greater yields and greater profitability. As we discussed, these promises rang hollow as the modest improvement in yield potential was heavily outweighed by the high monetary, health, and environmental costs. The irony within the modern system is thick, as the technology that was intended to bring growth and prosperity to every corner of the Earth has resulted, as described by Vandana Shiva, in the destruction of “the environment and local, sustainable, livelihoods”, which “create[s] poverty instead of removing it” (Shiva 570).

The concepts of globalization, capitalism, and consumerism represent the lifeblood of the perpetuation of the unjust modern food system. Just as Sklair suggested, the propagation of the system centers on the valuation and portrayal of consumerism by the individuals in the dominant social class who, along with TNCs, have the most to gain from it. Leonardo Boff’s piece on “Liberation Theology and Ecology” paints a powerful picture of the future we face as a species and as a planet if change is not achieved:

There is a danger that “the culture of the satisfied” will become enclosed in its consumeristic selfishness and cynically ignore the devastation of the poor masses of the world. There is also a danger that the “new barbarians” will not accept their death sentence and will set out on a desperate struggle for survival, threatening everything and

destroying everything. Humankind may find itself facing violence and destruction at levels never before seen on the face of the Earth unless we collectively decide to change the course of civilization and shift its thrust from logic of means at the service of an exclusionary accumulation toward a logic of ends serving the shared wellbeing of planet Earth, of human beings, and of all beings in the exercise of freedom and cooperation among all people. (Boff 138)

If such a destructive future is to be avoided, members of the privileged citizens of the Global North must act in solidarity with the oppressed communities (human and natural), with the knowledge that our Earth is a closed system where the actions of one affect the lives of all. As an integral element to their belief system, Christians have the responsibility to lead this effort in achieving a more equitable, justified world system. But before we explore a context by which the Christians Church can actively work to confront such injustice within the modern agricultural system, we must first look to understand their “why.”

#### **IV. Christianity, Environmentalism, and Justice**

In *Start With Why*, Simon Sinek describes the important role that purpose plays in creating a successful culture within an organization or business. This “WHY,” as Sinek calls it, is the driving force that inspires everything an organization does and what enables them to inspire others to join their cause or buy their products (Sinek 41). Although Sinek’s message is intended for audiences in a professional setting, his words are relevant to a wide range of institutions including the Christian Church. To understand the depth of the Church’s call toward justice we must first look to the beliefs that drive them toward such a goal or, simply put, their “WHY.”

As a description of God’s formation of the Earth, Genesis 1 and 2 represent a fundamental starting point from which we can examine our role within God’s creation. The



purpose by which God created man is the driving force that defines our relationship with others, both human and non-human, and sets the tone for the whole of the biblical narrative. The call to stewardship is the well from which the Christian Church must draw its inspiration for addressing injustice in all forms and, in the case of the injustice within the modern food system, help direct society toward more equitable structures that brings it into fuller relationship with God, man, and the natural world. The Hebrew *âbad* and *shâmar* are key words within original language of Genesis 2.15 that describe man's relationship with God and the natural world, and are a fundamental reflection of our reverence towards Him and His dedication towards us. Therefore, as an extension of the Christian values found in Genesis 1 and 2, Jesus' appeal in the New Testament for his followers to love others moves well beyond that of individuals and was designed to encompass all of God's creation. Let us first analyze God's formation of man in Genesis 1.

i. *Servants and Protectors*

“So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” – Genesis 1.27-28 (ESV)

As the first chapter of Genesis states, man was formed on the sixth day of the creation narrative. It is the point in which we begin to grasp the profound nature of the entrance of humanity into the world and the divine purpose that man has within God's narrative of His creation. As image bearers of the Creator God, man was gifted the natural world to populate,

“subdue,” and “have dominion over” (English Standard Version, Gen. 1.28). There are two questions that we must discuss before moving further: what is this “image of God” and what did God mean when he used the strong words of “subdue” and “dominion?” The image of God is bountiful in significance as it paints a picture of who we are in reflection of the One who created us. The title of image bearer meant that man was given tangible characteristics that were a reflection of the perfect Creator (i.e. His creativity, love, knowledge, grace, compassion) and certain roles as responsibilities that were previously reserved for God exclusively (dominion). As Catholic Social Teaching explains, this identity “in the likeness of God . . . [implies] inherent value, worth, and distinction” that transcends socioeconomic, racial, sexual, or cultural identity (Groody 109). Therefore, as descendants of Adam, the first man God created, all of humankind has been given the same responsibility to wield God’s dominion over the Earth.

The second component of this verse, man’s responsibility to subdue and have dominion over the Earth, is more contentious as modern society has found significant difficulty in developing a functional construct to apply this calling in society. According to Cancran’s piece, *Image of God: A Theological Reconstruction of the Beginning*, “[i]n Hebrew, an image is used by a monarch who expanded his territory and eventually governed it by its dominium” (7). Therefore, as image bearers of the Supreme Monarch, mankind was intended to govern God’s dominion over creation and enact His vision on Earth.

However, as Horrel argues, modern society, and modern Christians through their active participation in such societies, has misinterpreted the interaction between their identity as image bearers of God and their call to subdue and dominate (as inferred by the Hebrew origins of dominion) as justification to use the natural world as it sees fit, which is ultimately what has led to “the present ecological crisis” (Horrel 31). This depiction of man’s calling clarifies God’s

command to “be fruitful and multiply”, subdue, and have dominion over, and removes any connotation that would give man the right to exploit the natural world for its own pleasure. It is paramount that Christians, in particular, develop a new paradigm that incorporates a more complete formulation of the call to subdue and have dominion over creation. It is only through this formulation that Christians can lead humanity towards its intended relationship with the natural world. To do this we must look to the second chapter of Genesis, in verse 15:

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

-Genesis 2.15 (ESV)

Within this verse I would like to key in on two words: “work” and “keep.” Using Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, these words can be traced back to the original Hebrew of *abad* and *shamar*, respectively. Because no languages are exactly the same, the best way to understand the true meaning of a given word is to explore how the words are used in different contexts. *Abad* is associated with situations that range from agricultural work (English Standard Version, Gen. 3.23), to the active service of others (English Standard Version, Num. 8.12), to the worship of God himself (English Standard Version, Ex. 3.12). *Shamar*, on the other hand, is used in contexts that include taking care of an object (Job 2.6), watching over an object (English Standard Version, 1 Sa. 26.15), or keeping a covenantal promise (English Standard Version, Gen. 18.19).

Using the context of Genesis 2.15 to find the best translation that fits the original authorial intent, it is reasonable to believe that *shamar* can be interpreted as “to protect” as it is closely related to the command of “taking care of an object.” *Abad* is more difficult to translate because of the diversity in which it is used and the ambiguous nature of its placement in the verse. Although *abad* is used in Genesis 2.15 to express man’s activity in the garden of Eden, I believe that it refers to more than just agricultural production and implies a greater level of care

towards the plot of land. In relation to the word that follows it, the interpretation of *âbad* as “to serve” aligns more closely to the demand of protecting the garden that follows it. Service, therefore, acts as a qualifier of protection that indicates how the word is to be expressed.

Together, *âbad* and *shâmar* grants us a more holistic view of man’s intended relationship with God’s creation. It is important to note that the call serve and protect reflect elements of our relationship with the creator Himself and give further significance to the image that we bear. Our capacity to serve nature is bound to our call to “serve [or *âbad*] the lord with gladness” (English Standard Version, Ps. 100.2) and is the same service that God showed to man when He sent Jesus to empty himself on the cross for man’s transgressions (English Standard Version, Matt. 27.45-54). Service to God, as inferred by Canceran’s above discussion, necessitates that we exercise His will on Earth and His dominion over creation. Our role as protectors is fundamentally attached to the image of God, as the Creator himself is described as the one who “keeps [or *shâmar*] Israel,” His chosen people (English Standard Version, Ps. 121.4). Together, *âbad* and *shâmar* paint a beautiful picture of how Christian stewardship was intended to look. When we, as the image bearers of God, approach creation in a posture of service and protection, there is an innate shift that drives us to live in harmony and towards life-giving justice. This is the crux of mankind’s God-given calling to stewardship and is the source from which our calling to love our neighbors as ourselves flows (English Standard Version, Lev. 19:18, Matt. 19:19).

ii. *Moral Awareness, Neighbor-Love, and Embrace*

In her book *Resisting Structural Evil*, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda introduces the concept of “moral oblivion,” which she states, blurs the vision of society so that it is either unaware of the harm its actions can cause to others or disillusioned by the idea that its actions could actually cause others harm (89). As Moe-Lobeda asserts, moral oblivion is reinforced by a hegemonic

view of the world and empowers the formation of systems that feast on injustice and exploitation (89). Moral oblivion infers that such hegemony begins at the individual level. Therefore, activity that counters moral oblivion and hegemony must begin with individuals, flowing from them into their communities and addressing such mores of society at the source. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda continues by exploring two important methodologies to counteract moral oblivion: the construction of moral awareness and the cultivation of neighbor-love (Moe-Lobeda 120, 170). Where moral awareness is an internal exploration, neighbor-love is an outward expression. Each plays an integral role in the creation and integration of an equitable agricultural system.

Building moral awareness, as argued by Moe-Lobeda, is comprised of three primary realizations: the actions of individuals affect all, structural inequality is best perceived through the eyes of the marginalized, and the health of man is inalienably connected to that of the Earth (Moe-Lobeda 120-124). Additionally, Sallie McFague argues that moral awareness must also lead to the realization that “[c]ommunal relations are mutual relations in which the norm is [...] that each loses in the other’s losses and gains in the other’s gains” (McFague 101), from which the only logical response is action. Neighbor-love, as a fundamental element of Jesus’ teachings, is the posture in which we respond to moral awareness, as it is an expression of the love that God first showed to us (Moe-Lobeda 178). If we truly love our neighbors and God, awareness of the inequalities that exist in our world must lead to action on behalf of those who benefit least from the modern world systems. Justice and love are, therefore, inseparably bound. Where the pursuit of one is incomplete without the pursuit of the other. Our role as servants and protectors of the natural world is dependent on our capacity to acknowledge our short fallings and humbly seek equity in our daily lives.

The redemption of our relationship with creation, therefore, hinges on our ability to embrace the very thing that we have sought to control and separate ourselves from. This disgust that we show towards our mortality, as Beck calls it, is constructed to isolate us from the natural world in which we were created (147). This is a revolt against both our relationship to creation and our relationship to God, himself. Before we can redeem our relationship with God's creation we must first seek love. As Miroslav Volf argues in *Exclusion & Embrace*, "disgust builds boundaries, while love dismantles them" (87). By embracing our intimate relationship to nature, we embrace our role as stewards, servants, and protectors, and can develop a clearer sense of our shared identity with the Creator.

The modern agricultural system that we explored earlier is wrought with the implications of moral oblivion and is perpetuated by hegemonic social structures that convince the societies that benefit most from its implementation that there is nothing that can be done to change it. As this system has become the predominant form of food production in the world, it is fair to say that mankind, particular living in Western cultures in the Global North, has lost sight of its calling as stewards of God's creation. The dominant, egocentric values of individualism and consumerism in Western cultures, as described by Hofstede et al., directly hinder our ability to serve and protect the natural world and, as a result, live out our creation in the image of God. This is where Moe-Lobeda's neighbor-love is particularly valuable as it calls for the loving of others as a reflection of the love that God, the Creator, has for us (170). Because this love calls us to place the needs of others above our own, it has the profound capability of counteracting individualistic ideals and providing us context for a to convert our newfound moral awareness into moral action.

## **V. Sustainable Agriculture and Christian Stewardship**

Through our grounded understanding of social consciousness and the Christian calling to stewardship and justice, we can begin to construct ecumenical systems that lead to such ends. In the context of food production, sustainable agriculture, in the form of community supported agriculture (CSA), is one such form that deviates from the popularized methods within the modern agricultural system. In order to study the intersection between the values within the sustainable farming practices of CSA agriculture and the Christian interpretation of environmental stewardship and justice, I spent time as a farmhand on a small organic farm in the city limits of Spokane, Washington. This ethnographic experience provided me a framework to evaluate the inherent values within the food production model and visualize the motivation that drives farmers to participate in such demanding work.

i. *Community Supported Agriculture and Secular Stewardship*

“...how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used... To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as we can, this complex relationship.” – Wendell Berry

Urban Eden Farm is a small-scale farm located in the Vinegar Flats neighborhood of Spokane that uses organic, sustainable growing practices. As a community supported agriculture, or CSA, farm, its business model is predicated on the financial investment of community members, who in return receive compensation in the form of weekly shares of produce throughout the growing season. In Spokane this growing season generally runs from early June until the last week of October. A forty-acre plot of land in whole, Urban Eden represents the only such farm in the Spokane city limits. The farm was originally purchased in 2003 by its current owner, Jim Schrock, in response to pressure from land developers threatening to build apartments buildings on the property, thus protecting one of the few green spaces remaining in the city. In the spring of 2012 the farm was officially put into production and has been steadily

expanding its operation to its current production of over fifty varieties of crops on five of its fifteen tillable acres.

While working at Urban Eden I was amazed with the intentionality of their maintenance and preparation of their land. Every activity has a purpose and is designed to work within natural processes. Rather than chemical fertilizers, the farm used organic compost and manure from local ranches. By rotating crops throughout the fields, the farm ensures that no plant can deplete the soil of any particular nutrient. Instead of using herbicides, farmers weeded fields with their hands. As Patrick Mannhard, the farm's lead farmer, informed me, there is no need for pesticides as the diversity of the plants they grow ensures that no one pest can destroy the entirety of their harvest. When compared to conventional agricultural, the two growing methods have very little in common apart from their production of food. The ultimate goal of the farm is to create "a self-contained structure" that would allow for Urban Eden to be holistically sustainable and to protect the land for future generations (Mannhard 8 May).

My work on the farm consisted of the relentless cycle of planting, weeding, harvesting, and cleaning vegetables with a group of four other farm hands from the early days of spring until the late days of fall. Although this work was extremely strenuous and exceedingly dirty, sweat was often accompanied by laughter, physical activity was accompanied by intellectual conversations, and quiet was often accompanied by the sweet sound of birds chirping happily from above. The job that I anticipated to be full of aches, pains, and good produce, led to the creation of friendship and community that went far beyond farming. These people were as passionate about stewarding creation as I was and had found a context in which they could seek positive change in their community. Each of my coworkers were college educated (with only one having less than a bachelors degree) and chose to participate in sustainable agriculture because of



their disgust with the modern food system and their infatuation with growing healthy, delicious food.

It is through them that I realized that sustainable agriculture is much more than a business model, but a context where environmental activists can convert their hunger for change into action that meets a need in their community, which closely reflects Bornstein and Davis' description of a social enterprise (40). Urban Eden and its farmers sacrifice the improved profitability that they could get from their fields through the use of agrochemicals for the knowledge that they are confronting social norms that are actively destroying the natural world in which they love. To them, success runs much deeper than a number in their bank account. This experience reflects Galt's study of CSA farmers in the Central Valley of California, which described the self-exploitation that small farmers endure to serve their communities, and more specifically their CSA members (Galt 359).

On the other side of this same coin, the farm manager, Tarawyn Waters, expressed to me the importance of providing a livable wage to the seasonal workers that she employs (Waters). Where many farms try to maximize profits by paying employees minimum wage, Urban Eden pays employees fifteen dollars an hour, which is well above the current minimum wage of \$9.47. As a worker, I found that my relationship to the owners of the farm was as empowering and life-giving as their appreciation for me and my coworkers went past that of a relationship with a boss and felt more like that of family.

A program that was important to the heart of the farm owners and the farmhands was their connection to local colleges who they partnered with in leading tours of the farm. Gonzaga University was one such college that consistently sent their students to the farm as a part of their general sciences class for non-science majors. Within these tours, I was able to participate in

engaging conversations with students that were not necessarily aware of the many ethical issues that are attached to their daily food choices. It is this kind of mind-opening experience that lead people to see the world through a different perspective and challenges any incomplete preconceptions. Such mind-opening experiences was the beginning of a number of students from Gonzaga coming to volunteer at the farm and buy more of the farm's produce at the local farmers markets, which together help populations like students from Gonzaga find ways to engage in alternative food systems in whatever way is suitable to their lifestyle. These experiences are what lead many to partner with farms like Urban Eden through investment in their CSA program.

The most valuable element of my experience on the farm was my interaction with the community members that invested in the farm through the CSA program. Members like Shallan Knowles, with whom I would speak weekly at CSA pick-up nights, shared with me the holistic value that she found within her investment in the farm. Not only did she express her love of the freshness and deliciousness of the produce I helped grow, but she shared the value that it gave her knowing that she was able to participate in a food system that protected the place she calls home and supported a local business in the process (Knowles). Testimonials like Shallan's reflect Steven Schnell's findings verbatim in his article, *Food Miles, Local Eating, and Community Supported Agriculture: Putting Local Food in Its Place*, when he describes the values that drive CSA members to participate in local food production (621). Although the food is often more expensive than the conventionally produced food found at most grocery stores, using similar growing practices to that of Urban Eden "reflect[s] the true cost of the food we eat," as Clawson describes, in that they refuse to pass the cost of production onto "taxpayers or fieldworkers or the environment" (Clawson 114). Consumers like Shallan and the individuals

described by Schnell understand this dynamic and wield their power as consumers to demand systemic change.

Previously I expressed the cultural values that predispose Western societies to self-interest and consumerism described by Hofstede in *Cultures and Organizations*. The danger within these cultural values is clear, as they have led to the creation of unjust systems that treat people and the natural world as commodities to be exploited. In my time on Urban Eden Farm, it was clear that the farmers, customers, and volunteers that I worked with on a daily basis had a deep desire to combat the toxic individualism and consumerism that is rampant in America. The food production that they support represents a platform where they can defend their own community's environmental integrity, the rights of the workers that produce their food, and ensure that the food that they consume is grown with the health of future generations in mind. This social consciousness is the key to initiating social change and is a reflection of Moe-Lobeda's assertion that the rejection of moral oblivion can only be completed through an expanded level of moral awareness. The people of Urban Eden Farm embraced this mindset and employ it as inspiration for their equitable action.

The food system that I participated in at Urban Eden Farm could not have been more different than the modern food system described previously. Where the modern food system is dependent upon the manipulation of the natural world and the people who grow its food, the sustainable food system depends upon the natural world and the people who grow its food as mutually beneficial partners. When community members make the conscious decision to support agriculture that is rooted in such sustainable practices, they stand against unjust systems that are driven by exploitation, and stand for a just system that protects people and the natural world. The creation of morally aware and neighbor-loving communities is a vital element of developing

such social and environmental change. Behind the leadership of individuals such as the farmers at Urban Eden Farm, communities can see the value within localized agriculture and begin to make the conscious decision to stand against injustice through their daily food choices.

Alternative systems will take time to implement on a large scale, but with justice and equity as our guides, change is indeed possible.

The most consequential aspect my experience at Urban Eden was that, apart from myself, there was no Christian influence on the farm. This is fascinating because I found my work on the farm to be a fundamentally spiritual experience. Each seed I planted, weed I pulled, and vegetable I harvested represented elements of my Christian faith and my identity as an image bearer of God that I had never felt before. I was actively serving and protecting the very creation that I had always been called towards, but never had a context to express it. Of the people I worked with, the majority were either deists (who believed in a divine power, but did not see it as interested in a relationship with them) or atheists (who refused to acknowledge any kind of a higher power). This is fascinating, because their secularized calling to stewardship of the natural world, although incomplete, has led them seek equitable action on behalf of exploited populations and the natural world without the knowledge of our God-given calling as stewards, servants, and protectors of His creation. The irony within this realization is that a farm, whose namesake represents the very place where man and God were last able to experience full relationship, that does not know of God is taking the lead in bringing man back into its proper place on Earth.

#### ii. *Merging Secular and Christian Stewardship*

As we have decided that change must originate from individuals and their communities, finding an alternative agricultural system that focuses on their specific needs, while maintaining

an awareness of local environments is a logical next step towards the development of socially and environmentally just food production models. Local agriculture represents a stark contrast to the modern food system as it is built upon the ideals of care for all participants, both human and non-human, the equitable distribution of its benefits, and preservation for future generations. Along with a morally aware and neighbor-loving community, the implementation of locally rooted agriculture delivers a holistically beneficial food system and a more socially and environmentally aware society. As each of these objectives of the alternative, sustainable agriculture model aligns with the biblical call of Christians toward service and protection of the natural world, it is imperative that the Church seeks a context from which they can stand in solidarity with the sustainable food movement.

Through conversations with Whitney Jacques, the manager of Catholic Charity Spokane's "Food For All" community garden, I discovered that there are about a dozen Church affiliated gardens throughout the Spokane region. These gardens do amazing work donating the food that they grow to feeding people in need around the Spokane community and represent a much needed context where such populations can receive fresh, wholesome foods that they might not otherwise have access to. Although food security is an important issue that the Church must be involved in, Church gardens are extremely limited in their ability to address social and environmental injustice by only having an altruistic focus for these programs. Their impact is restricted to their own community and their social impact ends with the mouths they are able to feed. As argued by Bornstein and Davis, philanthropic ventures, like those traditionally employed by the Church, are also limited in their ability to address social mores by their dependence on continuous reinvestment from external sources to continue programs (108). As an alternative to the charitable missions of these Church gardens, the social enterprise of a

Community Supported Agriculture farm, as I experienced in my fieldwork, offers a more sustainable way of offering food to a community and represents a citizen-led response to the many social and environmental implications of food issues. In terms of participation in building awareness of food issues and the implications that food choices have on human populations and the natural world, such partnerships would awaken an otherwise silent Church. Though I see Church gardens as unsatisfactory in fighting the full breadth of environmental and social injustice, such programs represent a foundation from which future secular-religious partnerships to grow from.

At the conclusion of *Food & Faith*, Michael Schut paints a picture of what a Church-CSA farm partnership could look like:

Supporting a CSA allows a congregation to embody its recognition that they are called to care for the land, care for the soil and water, and care for the small farmers struggling to survive in global agricultural markets, and care for their own health. A congregation is obviously already a community... Imagine the congregation's farmer, delivering shares every Sunday morning during the growing season! What a fellowship hour that would be—families splitting their shares with each other, people trading zucchinis for tomatoes for cucumbers. What a practical vision of God's care for all of us would be embodied in such a scene. (Schut 232-233)

During my time at Urban Eden Farm, I experienced this very interaction on a weekly basis and saw the genuine friendships that formed between otherwise strangers. Such an interaction is undoubtedly translatable to the context of the Church as it “is obviously already a community”, as Schut describes, and would only add to the continuity of its congregation. Further, by adopting a secularized farm like that of Urban Eden, the Church would open itself to a collaborative

relationship with an institution that has a similar heart, in terms of environmental and social justice, and would represent a synergistic relationship that would allow each to provide unique insights and assets. This collaborative spirit reflects what Kelley and Kelley describe on page 186 of *Creative Confidence* and could represent a context for a “creative tension” to be formed that could lead to “innovative and interesting ideas” that might not have been reached without the other party. This would provide farms with much needed business and a community of individuals with whom they could engage in the diverse issues within the modern food system. Congruently, a relationship with a secularized organization would allow the Church to participate with otherwise inaccessible populations in authentic conversations about the motivation that drives them to action.

The aspects of this synergistic relationship that Schut is not able to touch on in his brief description are the educational, infrastructural, and communal assets that each can provide the other. Where farmers can lead conversations on the implications of the modern food system and the Western cultural values that predispose Americans to participation in such a system, the Church can provide farms with much needed members and even philanthropic partnerships that can help to distribute the imperfect foods, or what farmers call “seconds”, to community members in need. Ideally, through collaboration, the individuals who make up partnering CSA farms will help churches discover meaningful and tangible ways to act on their calling as stewards of God’s creation and inspire both secular and religious populations to join. This will certainly lead to a cascading effect that will help create real change in society and transform how the Western culture interacts with individuals across the globe and the natural world.

Throughout my fieldwork I experienced constant derision toward the Christian Church from the people I worked with on the farm, as, to them, it represented a group of people that

were called to action on behalf of the oppressed, yet were seemingly content with insulating themselves behind the four walls of the Church (Mannhard 13 September). Although this stereotypical view of Christians is absolutely not universal, it is something that even I have witnessed when it comes to the service and protection of the natural world. It is rare to see a congregation living the God-given characteristics of *âbad* and *shâmar* in the Western Church and is a cause for concern in light of the damaging effects that modern agricultural technologies are having on the natural world and the people that grow our food. Embracing the modern food movement gives the Church the opportunity to take real steps toward the realization of a more just world and brings greater legitimacy to the power of Community Supported Agriculture. Such a relationship will help move the Church, as a Moe-Lobeda describes, away from moral oblivion and towards moral awareness that is acted upon in response to neighbor-love. The initiation of this partnership will take some time to foster, as there seems to be a level of distrust between a portion of secular farmers and the Church, but with enough investment from Christian individuals, relationships are sure to materialize.

It is my assertion that the Church can and must embrace Schut's vision for a congregational partnership with local and sustainable farms. By partnering with CSA farms in the community and engaging in sustainable food practices, Christians will begin taking steps toward their calling of stewards, servants, and protectors of God's creation. Such a partnership gives Christians the opportunity to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with secularized stewardship, where both sides can share their motivation for seeking justice and confronting the cultural values that stifle such efforts. As previously discussed, the Western values of individualism and consumerism are two such cultural norms that rationalize the injustice within the modern food system. The image of God and our Christian calling to love our universal



neighbor are vital to combatting such values. Living in light of these truths, we have the power to challenge inequity in all forms and champion alternative lifestyles that treat others with the inherent value that they deserve.

## **VI. Conclusion**

In closing, there are two actions that we can take. We can submit to the lies of moral oblivion and falsely accept that there is nothing we can do to confront the inherent injustice connected to the food choices we make. Or, we can choose to personify the God-given calling to protect and serve the world around us and chase a more equitable food system that treats people and nature with the respect that they deserve. With an understanding of the historical roots of the modern food system, and the cultural and socioeconomic forces that drive it, justice-seeking institutions such as the Christian Church and the sustainable food movement can counter the oppressive effects of such a system by improving societal awareness and implementing a more equitable food production model that treats the natural world as an ally and the workers who create the food with the respect they deserve as image bearers of God. Therefore, Christians must uphold themselves as image bearers of this same God and wield the power within this title to protect and serve His creation. Standing with institutions that are working towards a just food system is one tangible way in which we can embrace this role, bringing ourselves back into relationship with the natural world and creation back into full relationship with God, himself. Food is more than what we eat; it is a reflection of who we believe ourselves to be.

## Works Cited

- Aktar, Wasim, Dwaipayan Sengupta, and Ashim Chowdhury. "Impact of Pesticides Use in Agriculture: Their Benefits and Hazards." *Interdisciplinary Toxicology* 2.1 (2009): 1-12. *De Gruyter*. SlovakToxicologySociety, 2009. Web.
- Banerjee, Sohini, et al. "Deliberate Self-Harm and Suicide by Pesticide Ingestion in the Sundarban Region, India." *Tropical Medicine & International Health* 14.2 (2009): 213-219. Print.
- Beck, Richard Allan. *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Morality*. Eugene, Or.: Cascade, 2011. Print.
- Boff, Leonardo. "Liberation Theology and Ecology." *Money and Faith: The Search for Enough*. Denver, CO: Morehouse Education Resources, 2008. 134-138. Print.
- Bornstein, David, and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.
- Canceran, Delfo. "Image of God: A Theological Reconstruction of the Beginning." *Asia Journal of Theology* 25.1 (2011): 3-23. *Academic Search Elite [EBSCO]*. Web.
- "The Changing Global Religious Landscape." *Religion & Public Life Project*. Ed. Michael Lipka. Pew Research Center, 05 Apr. 2017. Web.
- Chiseri-Strater, Elizabeth, and Bonnie S. Sunstein. *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*. 4th ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. Print.
- Clawson, Julie. *Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of Our Daily Choices*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009. Print.
- Cleaver, Harry M., Jr. "The Contradictions of the Green Revolution." *American Economic Association* 62.1 (1972): 177-86. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web.

Dreze, Jean, and Mamta Murthi. "Fertility, Education, and Development: Evidence from India."

*Population and Development Review* 27.1 (2001): 33-63. *JSTOR*. Population Council.

Web.

The English Standard Version Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

Galt, Ryan E. "The Moral Economy Is a Double-edged Sword: Explaining Farmers' Earnings and Self-exploitation in Community-Supported Agriculture." *Economic Geography* 89.4

(2013): 341-65. *Academic Search Premier [EBSCO]*. Web. 31 Mar. 2016.

Groody, Daniel G. *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*.

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007. Print.

Hofstede, Geert, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov. *Cultures and Organizations*. New

York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. Print.

Holmes, Seth M. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*.

Berkeley, CA: U of California, 2013. Print.

Horrell, David G. *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*.

London: T & T Clark, 2010. *Academic Search Elite [EBSCO]*. Web.

Jacques, Whitney. "Community Gardens of Spokane." E-mail interview. 11 Aug. 2016.

Knowles, Shalan. Personal Interview. 19 Nov. 2016.

Malthus, Thomas R. "An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future

Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet,

and Other Writers." (1798): *Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project*. Foundation of

Classical Genetics, 1998. Web.

*The Malthusian Growth Model*. Digital image. *Geographic Perspectives on Sustainability and Human-Environment Systems*. Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Science, 2011.

Web. 2 Apr. 2017.

Mannhard, Patrick. Personal Interview. 18 May 2016.

Mannhard, Patrick. Personal Interview. 13 Sept. 2016.

McFague, Sallie. "The Ecological Economic Worldview and the Ecological Society." *Money & Faith: The Search for Enough*. Ed. Michael Schut. Denver, CO: Morehouse Education Resources, 2008. 96-101. Print.

Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological and Economic Vocation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. Print.

Morton, D. C., R. S. Defries, Y. E. Shimabukuro, L. O. Anderson, E. Arai, F. Del Bon Espirito-Santo, R. Freitas, and J. Morissette. "Cropland Expansion Changes Deforestation Dynamics in the Southern Brazilian Amazon." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 103.39 (2006): 14637-4641. *PNAS*. Web.

Nestle, Marion. "Food Politics." *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. New York: Morehouse, 2009. 37-44. Print.

"Norman Borlaug - Biographical." *The Nobel Foundation*. Ed. Frederick W. Haberman. Nobel Lectures, 1970. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.

Pellow, David Naguib. *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007. Print.

Rao, Radhakrishna. "India's Green Revolution has Turned Sour." *Appropriate Technology* 29.1 (2002): 10-1. *ProQuest*. Web. 3 Apr. 2017.

Rosset, Peter, Joseph Collins, and Frances Moore Lappe. "Lessons from the Green Revolution."

*THIRD WORLD RESURGENCE* (2000): 11-14.

Schnell, Steven M. "Food Miles, Local Eating, and Community Supported Agriculture: Putting

Local Food in Its Place." *Agric Hum Values Agriculture and Human Values* 30.4 (2013):

615-28. *ProQuest*. Web. 2 Apr. 2016.

Schut, Michael. *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. New York: Morehouse, 2009. Print.

Sen, Amartya. "How to Judge Globalism." *The Globalization Reader*. 5th ed. ED. Lechner,

Frank J., and John Boli. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015. 19-24. Print.

Shiva, Vandana. "Ecological Balance in an Era of Globalization." *The Globalization Reader*. 5th

ed. ED. Lechner, Frank J., and John Boli. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015.

566-574. Print.

Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York:

Portfolio, 2009. Print.

Sklair, Leslie. "Sociology of the Global System." *The Globalization Reader*. 5th ed. ED.

Lechner, Frank J., and John Boli. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015. 63-70.

Print.

Strong, James, LL.D., S.T.D. *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

Red Letter ed. Nashville, TN: Nelson Thomas, 2010. Print.

US Census Bureau, Demographic Internet Staff. "Annual World Population Change: 1950-

2050." *International Programs*. US Census Bureau, 27 June 2011. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.

US Census Bureau, Demographic Internet Staff. "World Population: 1950-2050." *International*

*Programs*. US Census Bureau, 27 June 2011. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. Print.

Waters, Tarawyn. Personal Interview. 21 June 2016.

"Wheat Lag." *Nature* 507.7493 (2014): 399-400. *Academic Search Premier [EBSCO]*. Web.

Willis, Katie. *Theories and Practices of Development*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.