War and Peace and the Environment

Edward P. Echlin

The flower power of the sixties was ultimately anthropocentric in its, 'make love, not war'. In *America* Philip Rule, S.J., observed that flower power died trampling flower beds during a demonstration at Harvard. Nevertheless, the tramplers had a point: love conquers conflict. Conflicts damage the whole earth, or soil, community, for whose health, people, under God, are responsible. Environmentalists, therefore, who increasingly include a significant percentage of Christians, are among peacemakers'— and earth lovers'—best friends. The peace movement, and environmentalists everywhere, are in at least partial 'intercommunion', they recognise each others' ministries.

And their mutually supportive ministries are (literally) vitally necessary. For human aggression among people and against the earth, remains wanton and, fortified by modern technologies, increasingly life threatening to all living beings on earth. The causes of conflict are myriad, including transnational corporation led globalization itself. Human beings are neither wise nor clever enough to manage the biosphere without conflict. World banks, trade organizations, and conglomerates fail to understand that the real, fundamental economy is the earth's economy, within which all other economies are dependant and derivative. For humans to attempt to manage the world's trade, or services, is like a child trying to manage a panther, which is pretty much the point of God's words to Job (Job 38-39). Relentless population growth, with unsustainable demands on the earth's water, soil fertility, and climate, brings conflict, not only in developing regions, but even in North America. Vanderbilt University's Howard Harrod argues that anthropocentric utilitarianism, which devalues animals, triggers conflicts over human treatment of other animals. 'Debates about the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone Park as well as the discussions of killing possibly brucellosis-infected buffalo when they range outside the park, are ready examples of conflicts generated against the background of a human-centred utilitarianism.' [1] Catalysts of strife also include climate change from industrial countries' fossil fuel addiction, disruptive migrations, unsustainable mass tourism and aggressive pressures on small scale food growers and stockmen to leave the land for more 'efficient' or 'productive' agribusiness management. A recent satellite

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survey discovered that one quarter of the earth's surface is under concrete or its equivalent. As car cultures and air transport, and relentless suburbanization of farm land, accelerate so does earth destruction and conflict. Social unrest and conflict over road and runway construction in western Europe is a microcosm of what happens everywhere when human economic activity becomes aggression against the earth. Few tactics are more aggressive, albeit in legalised sheep's clothing, than forcing a people to open their bioregions to earth damaging imports. Globalized trade organizations, powered by entrepreneurs, 'externalize' costly damage to human and soil health. I emphasize soil health, because all of us, people as well as other components of the soil, are interdependent within a fragile soil community.[2]

An Inclusive Just War Theory

A culture of disarmament is developing, in both an active and passive, or community building, sense: that is, supranational associations, often through the United Nations, attempt to resolve conflicts, when necessary, with the assistance of professional armed forces; while, throughout the earth, different regional, national, and international peacemaking groups, and individuals, without recourse to armies, foster peace among people, and with the whole soil community. American and European forces, arguably and paradoxically, are a potential resource for peace on earth. We need to welcome highly trained and disciplined forces within a culture of disarmament. Their very presence is a deterrent, as, for example, in the Balkans and in Cyprus. Brave young people have prevented armed conflicts and loss of life. They have enabled and led humanitarian activities. Disarmament and peace was the aim of American intervention in Somalia. Its failure revealed the limits of even disciplined professional forces, and the necessity of co-operation of indigenous civilians. UN forces, drawn from many nations, are inherently peacemakers. We are beginning to see military training extended to comprehensive peacemaking, the traditional works of mercy, and the restoration of infrastructure, such as training police in Kosovo. We are breaking new ground: a culture of *altruistic*, armed disarmament is new. Religious people can offer the wisdom, and neighbourly love and compassion, within their traditions, and actively assist military personnel in training disarmers.

Just war theories were moulded and refined by humans, regarding human conflict as if humans were virtually the only species on earth. The just war theory needs revision. We need a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', and a retrieval of the presence of other species and habitats, which exist, if at all, between the lines of traditional arguments about proportionality

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and double effects. Where force—and 'collateral' damage—is inevitable, it should be proportionate to the welfare of all species. Co-operation between environmentalists and the peace movement facilitates what may be described as sustainable disarmament. 'Justice and peace' workers, too, now recognize that they cannot love every person who comes into the world, unless they also love that world into which every person comes. The wider soil community is a fragile non-combatant. Collateral damage afflicts the whole innocent community. The myth of 'surgical' bombing is reminiscent of the MP, who said he favoured a (controversial) bypass in his constituency to transfer emissions away from his constituents and out onto the marsh! Sanitized bombing, like road building without unacceptable damage, is self-contradictory.

Historically, armies sometimes have waged war directly on the innocent, on women and children, and on their fields. Southern Americans long remembered William Tecumseh Sherman's ruinous march through Georgia. Current examples include military experiments on primates, shooting livestock for enjoyment, napalming forests, and even now, in Palestine, Israeli assaults on indigenous peoples' olive groves, fields, and crops. Less direct and visible, but no less damaging, is contamination of the seas by discarded gas canisters, munitions, and helicopters and nuclear submarines. In Flanders fields I have noticed the live grenades, mines, bombs and canisters from the Great War, gathered by Flemish farmers in April and October, and placed near telegraph poles for collection by the Belgian army. One need look no further than today's regional conflicts to behold war's collateral, and even direct, damage to innocents. From the earth's perspective, the endemic ecological damage when young males do battle, armed with modern gadgets, is rarely proportionate or sustainable. We require just war (or, better, conflict) theories, from the earth's perspective. We have analogous precedent in the restraint by World War II bombers towards built treasures as, for example, Oxford, Cologne Cathedral, the Louvre, and Charlemagne's chapel at Aachen.

Conflict Damages Farming Wisdom

Sometimes ignored, to our peril, is the lasting damage done by conflict (including economocentric aggression against the earth), to what may be described as 'farming wisdom', or 'the art of earth care'. When aggression (including industrial farming) disrupts a small farm, a farming family, a local culture, it deletes *centuries* of soil wisdom that no amount of technology nor 'sustainable development' can replace. Farming is a long term process, with unpredictable results, some of which cannot easily be reversed. Farming is not a culture of supply and demand, it

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cannot readily stop and start, adapt and change, for human 'managers' brimming with new ideas from new technical education. It understands, inhabits, conserves, and often enhances, unique terrain, soil, climate, fertility and biodiversity, which sometimes differ as little as a mile, even a field apart, and from one growing season to another. This culture, upon which much of life depends, requires local soil love and nurture, small farms and holdings, and long memories. None of these can be replaced with lofty plans or doctrines, after battles are over, and warriors departed. Not only does farming, by which I mean genuine, small scale farming, literally feed millions, preferably those nearest the farm, it is labour intensive, supporting workers and their families. It guards aquifers, flood defences, wildlife and habitats, soil structure, biodiversity, and scenery. Extensive, small scale agriculture, which includes hedges and copses, and habitats with predators, provides some open space in this earth, now over a quarter under concrete, where people can enjoy life, scenery, soil and silence. 'If somewhere in his community', Barbara Ward said, 'man leaves a place for silence, he may find the wilderness a great teacher of the kind of planetary modesty man most needs if his human order is to survive'. Extensively farmed agricultural terrain *is* an alternative wilderness, a place in this earth where people, plants, animals, and habitats live together in peace. Organic horticulture, with sustainable settlements, is a parable of the awaited kingdom. To discourage and drive from the land, farm families, the way war and agribusiness and compliant politicians have done, is hubris, now bringing nemesis to the whole earth community, as, for example, in BSE, foot and mouth epidemics, and food saturated with chemicals. As Pope John Paul II said to farmers in Rome, 'when the farming sector is underappreciated or mistrusted, the consequences for life, health, and ecological balance are always serious and difficult to remedy, at least in the short term.' [3]

Seeds and Peace

All people, indeed all earth creatures, depend on the earth's plants. At Wakefield Place, Sussex, the Millennium Seed Bank, sponsored by, among others, Kew Gardens and the National Trust, is in itself a symbol of universal peace and sharing of soil, water and trees, biodiversity and food. The Seed Bank collects, studies, catalogues, and stores seeds from everywhere on earth, gathered by indigenous people from every nation, every biosphere, and given to the Millennium Seed Bank for care, research, and preservation. When needed, seeds may be 'borrowed' from the Bank for restoration of diversity, or food security, anywhere on earth. The Seed Bank, which would make a good venue for conferences on disarmament, is a reminder of what the earth could be if people lived and

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shared in love. Agreements are reached with partner countries before seeds are collected, stored and exchanged. This awareness of the fragility of our dwindling biodiversity—and of the Bank itself, which has approximately ten per cent of the world's plant seeds—contributes to international trust and peace. The co-operation of scientists and conservationists at Wakefield Place complements the more 'on the ground' co-operation of Israeli and Arab conservation in Palestine, with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. Seed and wildlife conservation is antithetical to conflicts. I am presently growing vegetables from seeds 'loaned' or given to me by the HDRA Heritage Seed Library, and by Irish Seed Savers in the Irish republic. Some of these come from Seed Saver Exchanges in Iowa, which in turn exchanges seed with eastern Europe. I grow a tomato which was found growing in Hungary. Conservation and exchange of seeds especially of rice and cereals which feed billions, is peace exchanging which is both global and local. Make peace globally by sowing seeds locally. The cultivation of food is a given of rational life on earth. And, as Jean Porter says, 'Christian morality is grounded in a theological interpretation of the natural given in human life.' [4]

Disarmament in Love

Aggressive globalization, even when sanitised through world trade organisations agreed to by a few politicians and industrialists, should be resisted and disarmed. Non-participation is an effective form of disarmament. We need non-participation in lavish fossil fuel burning, as in motor cultures, in unnecessary 'food miles' imports, and distant holidays. Climate bashing anywhere on earth damages all living beings and habitats now, and in the future. Climate bashers should be told that their behaviour is unacceptable. Saturday afternoon demonstrations outside the American embassy in London, since the Hague climate conference, often with the presence of CEL banners, is a prophetic action which all of us should support, even by our presence. Similarly, American tourists should be informed, very politely but firmly, that American fossil fuel abuse is aggressive and unacceptable. We make peace globally by living peacefully locally with the whole earth community, including the climate which sustains all.

Christian Peace Includes All Creatures

Jesus combined the two great commandments in Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19; the latter text is closely related to concern for the poor, and for fruit trees, which belong to God (Mt. 22.37–40; Lk. 10.27). The core of Christian praxis is inclusive love. Sustainable and local

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horticulture, with exchange of goods and services, at sustainable settlements, is a parable of God's kingdom. The ultimate goal of Christian disarmament and peacemaking is that people, with wild and domesticated nature, may live in peace, as signs of God's kingdom on earth as in heaven.

A culture of disarmament cherishes the world's waters. Jesus sanctified the waters in his baptism in the Jordan. Orthodox Christianity recalls the sanctification of waters, in liturgies commemorating Christ's baptism. 'Thou hast accepted to be baptized ... that have sanctified the nature of the waters, that thou might lead us to a new birth through water and the Spirit.'[5] People also have special affinity with trees. All people appreciate certain, special trees, we might even say, with Saint-Exupéry, their 'tamed' trees. Even where there is little earth literacy or sensitivity, people enjoy planting trees. For Christians, trees are especially related to the cross. 'His cross is every tree', in Joseph Plunkett' s beautiful words. At the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Orthodox Christians pray, 'Let all the trees of the wood rejoice, for their nature is made holy by Christ who planted them in the beginning, and was outstretched upon the tree.'[6] In the eucharist we offer water and trees and the whole soil community, in Jesus crucified and risen. God's Word is uniquely present in Jesus. 'His Word', says Irenaeus, 'through whom the wood bears fruit, and the springs gush forth, and the earth gives, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear"' (*Against Heresies*, 4,18.4). The relationships of Jesus with water and trees, is pictured for our imaginative contemplation, in Christian art of the flight into Egypt. At St Mary's parish church, Fairford, Gloucestershire, for example, the medieval glaziers portray the donkey and Mary resting near water, Mary feeding her Son, while Joseph picks fruit from a tree.

The soil community is created not to be alienated, nor in conflicts, nor even neutral, but to glorify God in peace, to be a means through which God shines in His creation. An appreciative reverence for the earth's water and trees, drink and food, is itself a source of Christian disarmament and peace. There are in the Jewish scriptures, the Christian Old Testament, universalist texts related to food and soil, that deserve more attention. In Isaiah we may contemplate the beautiful words, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage'. (Is. 19.25) All people, and the climate and food that both nourish and, in truth, depend upon people, are God's. Isaiah pictures what we could describe as an organic harvest feast, on Mount Zion. 'On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full

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of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined' (Is. 25.6). There are other universalist texts, not least the lovely stories of Ruth and Jonah, that Jews and Christians share, which include domestic animals, cereals and a plant which gives both food and shade. Christians, whether we live with many brethren, or scattered in a neo-diaspora, enjoy a centre of disarmament and peace in our eucharists, especially when we share communion. Our eucharists connote the universal banquet. As the late J. M. Tillard noted, worldwide intercommunion is a reminder of universal salvation. 'The simple fact that human communities, rooted in different cultures, representing different social contexts, linked to different expressions of faith, adopting different liturgies, mutually recognize their respective eucharists constitutes and confesses the universality of salvation.' [8]

Christian disarmament may sometimes be active, even forceful, but it may never be vindictive, nor unloving. Love is the premier peace commandment. The apostle Paul, no stranger to conflict, suggests the spirit with which we should proceed. 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink, for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good' (Rom. 12.20–21).

1 Howard Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing, Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship* (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 2000), p. xxiii.
2 Edward P. Echlin, *Earth Spirituality, Jesus at the Centre* (New Alresford, Arthur James, 1999), pp. 71-86; 'Salvation of Soil', *New Blackfriars*, Feb/2001, pp. 88–93.
3 *L 'Osservatore Romano*, 22 November 2000, p. 2. (English Edition).
4 Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law, Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), p. 13.
5 *The Festal Menaion*, Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, trans. (London, Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 383.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
7 Simon Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches* (London, Penguin Press, 1999), p. 215–217.
8 J.M.R. Tillard, *Eglise d'églises, l'ecclésiologie de communion* (Paris, Cerf, 1987), p. 165.

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