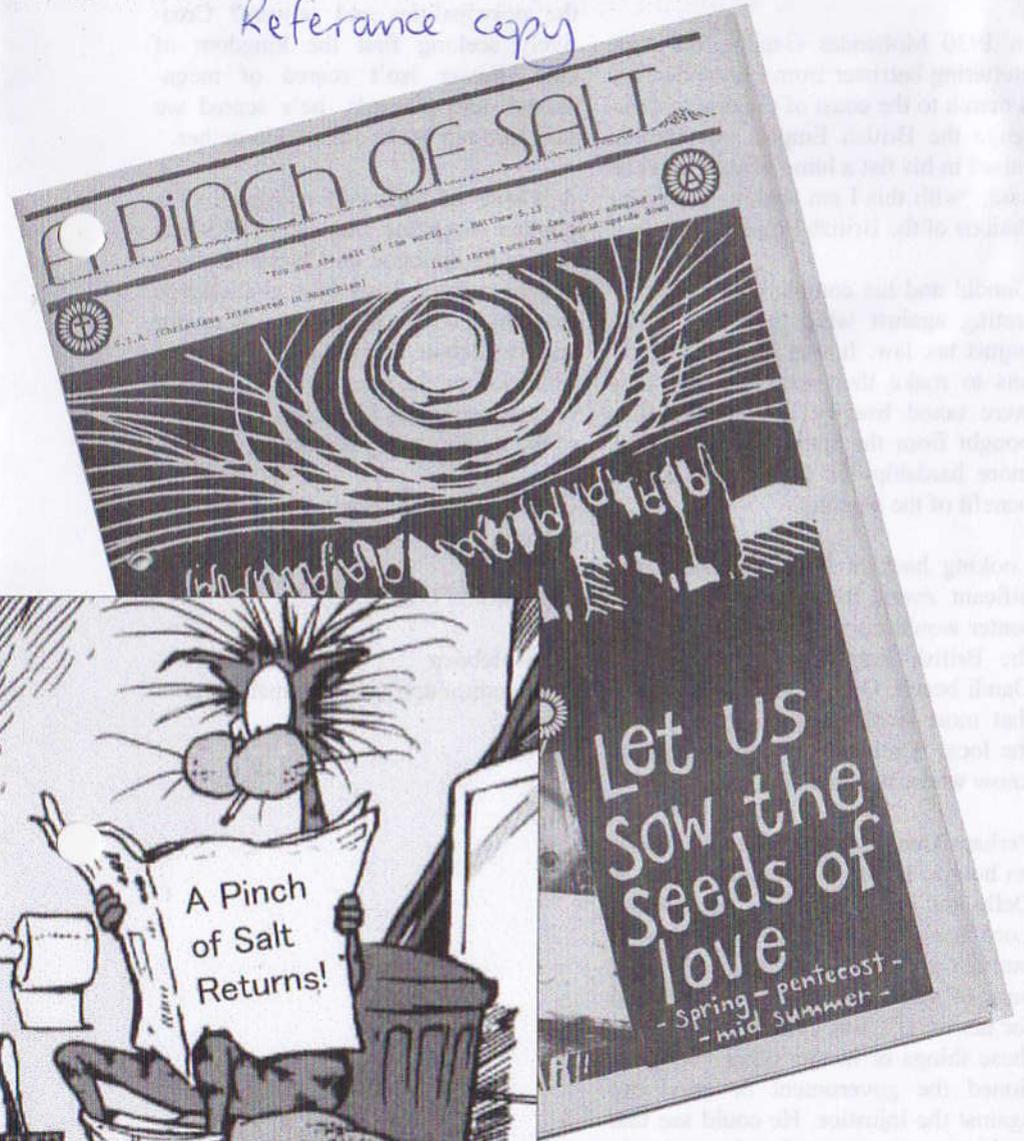


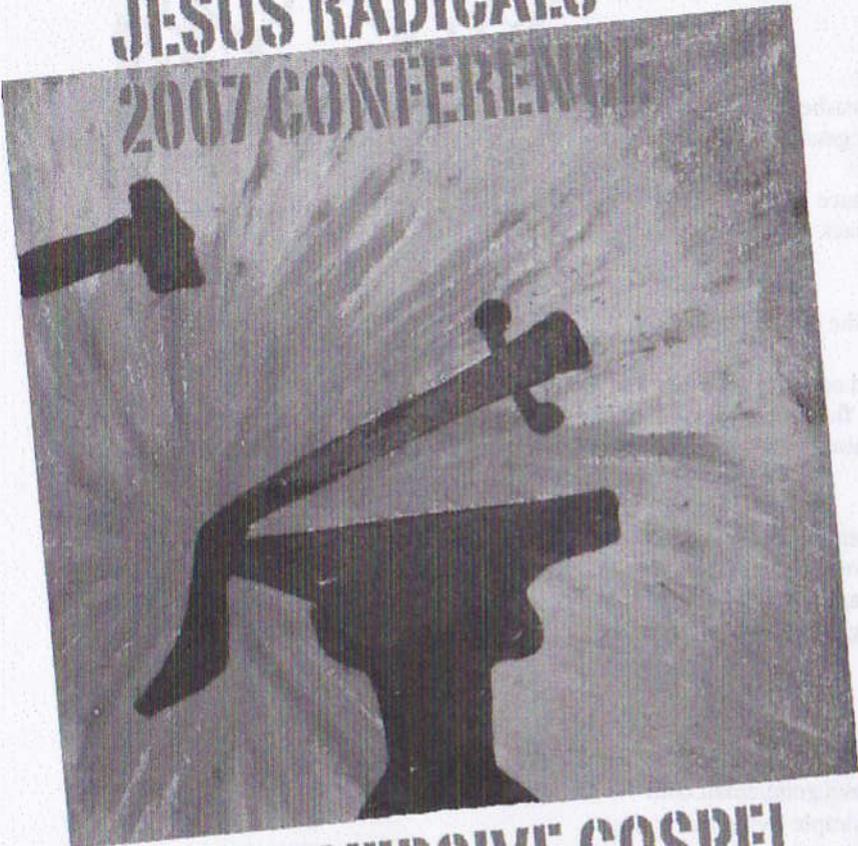
FREE

a pinch of salt

Reference copy



JESUS RADICALS - 2007 CONFERENCE



THE SUBVERSIVE GOSPEL

CHRISTIANITY & ANARCHISM
 BRADFORD 2007 - SEPT 7TH - 8TH
[HTTP://UK.JESUSRADICALS.COM/](http://uk.jesusradicals.com/)

Editorial: A Pinch of Salt to shake the Empire

In 1930 Mohandas Gandhi, the once stuttering barrister from Porbander, led a march to the coast of Gujarat to challenge the British Empire. As Gandhi raised in his fist a lump of salty mud he said, "with this I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire".

Gandhi and his companions were protesting against what they saw as an unjust tax law. It was illegal for Indians to make their own salt yet they were taxed heavily on the salt they bought from the state. The result was more hardship for the poorest to the benefit of the wealthy.

Looking back at that historically significant event the contemporary dissenter would do well to remember that the British Empire wasn't seated at Dandi beach. Until that day it is likely that most British administrators, save the local 'Collector' would struggle to know where it was on the map.

Perhaps Gandhi was advised by friends on how to tackle this injustice; "Go to Delhi and dump a sack of rice outside Lord Irwin's house", "Find a way to put salt into his water supply," "send bags of salt to London with a petition for tax relief". But Gandhi did none of these things or in any other way petitioned the government or cried out against the injustice. He could see that in this case the power for change lay in the hands of the people through making their own salt, thus rendering the salt law impotent.

Just as Jesus' most revolutionary message is in the way he lived his life, so Gandhi has discovered that the most revolutionary act is the one that is independent of state. How do we challenge the principalities and powers? Creatively seeking first the kingdom of God. Power isn't scared of megaphones and placards; he's scared we may turn our backs on him altogether.

A Pinch of Salt is a re-launch of a popular magazine from the 1980s encouraging dialogue on Christianity and radical politics. How best to challenge the principalities and powers is up for creative debate. It is shaped by honest reflection on the many ways Christians choose to express their faith in the face of the world's many injustices.

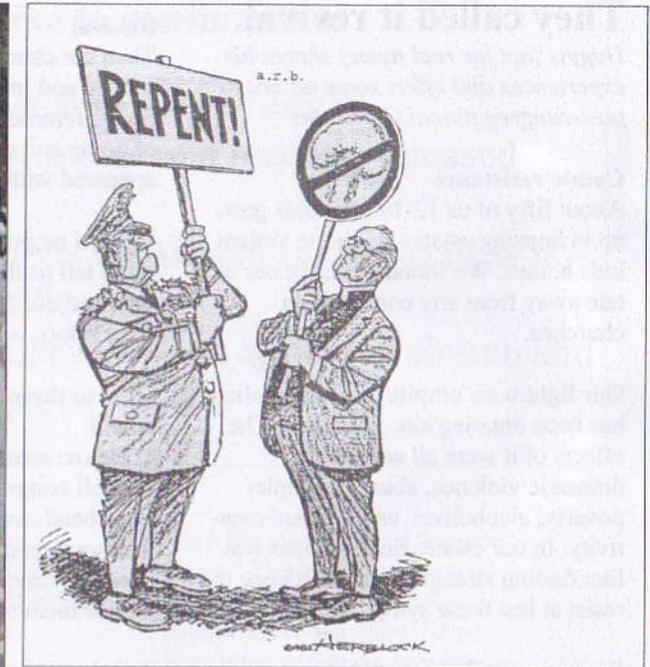
Contributions and suggestions are welcome.

What would Gandhi do?

Keith Hebden
email: editor.apos@googlemail.com



M. K. Gandhi,
5 April 1930



CENSUS ALERT

How do Christians respond to a national census? Send us your thoughts.
Email: editor.apos@googlemail.com

The Catholic Worker movement as you may know is Catholic Christian, anarchist, and pacifist in identity. Both the London and Oxford Catholic Worker communities are looking for new members and participants in their work. Between them they offer a mix of big city, town and semi-rural living, and a variety of options in terms of full or part-time working in outside jobs / the life and work of the community. For more information call:

Martin 020 7249 0041 - Hackney / LCW
Scott 01923 777 201 - Rickmansworth / LCW
Susan 01865 248 288 - Oxford CW
<http://www.londoncatholicworker.org/>



They called it revival

Haggis (not his real name) shares his experiences and offers some advice to post-congregational Christians

Comic resistance

About fifty of us 12-19 year olds grew up in housing estates and quite violent kids homes. We found Christ in our estate away from any contact with churches.

Our fight with 'empire' and colonialism has been ongoing since children. The effects of it were all around us—domestic violence, abuse, multiple-poverty, alcoholism, and crushed creativity. In our estate, finding Jesus was like finding strength and confidence to resist at last these symptoms of empire.

We hung out daily, no meetings or services, church was a whole way of being. We loved the closeness and vitality; even sharing our wages, standing up comically to bullies and pretenders. Many of us kids had experienced unmentionable stuff- that had ripped holes inside us- only such a grassroots ontological miracle could heal what ached in us, embrace and release our vivid imagination, dark humour and turn it into comic resistance to the games that powers play.

Revival

Then the church found us. They called it revival and insisted on taking care of us. So we returned to the dependence way of being and our radical community disappeared within six months.

We had no prior experience of Christianity to tell us the same empire that had wrecked our families had co-opted the church too.

How to thrive in a post-congregational world

1. Detox: wean the church off the Powers - all congregations covenant together to disband over a three-year period. If the numbers of joiners keeps growing over this time, design bad services or reduce them to one per month

2. Release the dreams of every saint into the land as long as it is in a 'given' area of creation in locality (not one you made up). This will release saints deep into groans of creation/locality instead of just hovering over it to colonise it.

3. Encourage saints to connect and re-aggregate around these shared dreams and just live in it and enjoy it.

Dream days

We've started here in Edinburgh over last two years - doing citywide dream days where people get five minutes to spout off their dream for city- then we get some money and resources to release them a bit and help them run with their dreams into specific spheres.

Haggis works in Edinburgh helping new ideas gain funding and encouraging a 'gift economy'.

APoS would like to commission:

- A story of a skip surfer 'virgin'
- Reviews of music and recently released books
- Your opinions on Advent texts and their political significance.
- Ideas for Christmas to agitate at church and in the shops.

Churchgoer Tips God For Excellent Week

CHARLESTON, SC—
Churchgoer Brad Thaden, 48, reportedly tipped God a little something extra Sunday, claiming that the Almighty had done a better job than usual that week, especially with the weather and his children's behavior.

"Hey Big Guy, here's a five-spot for ya," Thaden silently prayed while placing the bill in the church collection plate. "If you keep it up, and make sure Mom doesn't have one of her spells at dinner on Wednesday, there's more where that came from."

According to God, five dollars is "basically nothing" after He tips out the the priest, the pope, the altar boys, and the Holy Spirit.
-Thanks to *The Onion* for this.



Tell us your story

Intentional living? Community organising? Finding God in unusual places? Engaging with the 'Principalities and Powers'? Setting up a co-operative? Tell us your story in two hundred words or less so we can all learn from your experience. Clever clogs.

editor.apos@googlemail.com



<http://apinchofsalt.squarespace.com/>

Tolstoy the peculiar Christian anarchist

Christianity in its true sense puts an end to the State. It was so understood from its very beginning, and for that Christ was crucified.

— Leo Tolstoy

Even for a Christian anarchist, Leo Tolstoy's reading of the Bible was unusual. When he 'converted' to Christianity near his 50th birthday, he did not embrace the orthodox Christianity of the traditional church. For him, Jesus was no 'son of God', nor did he perform any supernatural miracles. Tolstoy was convinced that these superstitious stories in the Bible had been added by the church in order to keep 'Christians' hypnotised enough to ensure that they did not question the unjustifiable compromise that the church had reached with the state. He was convinced that an honest and full application of Christianity could only lead to a stateless and churchless society, and that all those who argued the contrary were devious hypocrites.

The Sermon on the Mount

For Tolstoy, the implications of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-42) were nothing short of revolutionary. Jesus was proposing a new, radical and wiser method for human beings to respond to any form of 'evil'. That is, when coerced or when treated unjustly, do not retaliate, but respond with love, forgiveness and generosity.

Unchristian institutions

If that is the essence of Christianity, however, then for Tolstoy, Christians

ought to reconsider the relationship they have with the state. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructed his followers not to swear oaths, not to judge and not to resist. Yet the state demands oaths of allegiance, judges its citizens and resists both criminals within and enemies without. Besides, the state uses violence to impose its laws, and maintains its citizens in a form of economic slavery. Thus, Tolstoy concludes, the state is an unchristian institution.

Furthermore, if Christians actually acted as Jesus taught them to — if they governed their social interactions through love, forgiveness and charity — then there would be no need for a state. People would help one another and willingly share all of life's basic necessities. The ordering principle of society would be love, not a fictional 'justice' enforced by a brutal state.

For Tolstoy, therefore, Christianity and the state are incompatible visions for society. One cannot be both an honest Christian and at the same time recognise the legitimacy of the state, both because the state directly contravenes Jesus' clear advice, and because if Jesus' recommendations were put to practice, then the state would anyway become obsolete.

But why, then, are Christians told to own allegiance to the state? For Tolstoy, the answer is clear: ever since Emperor Constantine, the official Church has betrayed Christianity by hypocritically cuddling with state power. Tolstoy is therefore just as scathing of the church as of the state. He accuses church and state authorities of conspiring to maintain their

hold on power by perpetuating a cunning mix of irrational lies and legitimised violence to keep 'Christians' hypnotised into submission.

For the last thirty years of his life, Tolstoy relentlessly wrote dozens of books, articles and pamphlets on religion and politics in the hope that it could help awaken his fellow Christians to the true essence of Christianity. His virulent criticisms of both state and church authorities led him to be frequently censored, but his writings were published abroad and circulated both in Russia and elsewhere. His fellow Russians respected him for standing up to the Tsar, but he also received plenty of letters (including from Gandhi) and visits from abroad by people inquiring about his political interpretation of Christianity. So he became an important international figure at the turn of the century, even though today, we only really remember him for the novels he wrote before he 'converted' to Christianity.

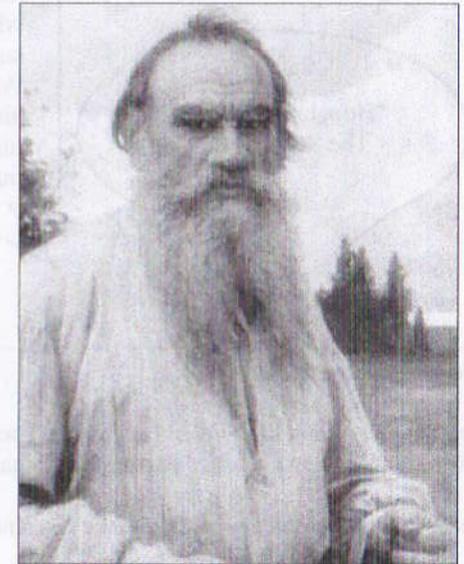
His version of Christianity will be uncomfortable to those who sincerely believe that divine mysteries can only be revealed through patient contemplation and diligent ritual. And critics could well be right in being weary of Tolstoy's extreme, almost fundamentalistic interpretation of Christianity. Yet Tolstoy's contribution to Christian anarchism remains valuable in that he brings attention to the neglected political implications of the Sermon on the Mount, and on this topic, he wrote well and he wrote a lot. His interpretation of Christianity may have been peculiar indeed, but his work makes him an eminent voice in the Christian anarchist literature today.

— Alexandre Christoyannopoulos

This is an edited version of a paper Alex delivered at the Christianity and Anarchism conference in 2006.

Alex is a research student (and part-time teacher) at the University of Kent at Canterbury, currently in the final year of my part-time PhD studying Christian anarchist thinkers.

Alex is also a member of the Anarchist Studies Network.
<http://anarchist-studies-network.org.uk>



Leo Tolstoy (above) with magnificent beard(s).

Lived: 1828—1910

Full title: Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy

Quote: "How can you kill people, when it is written in God's commandment, 'Thou Shalt not murder'"

Unusual: Made his own shoes.

Camp for Climate Change August 2007

"I've lived here twenty years, and at fifty years of age I've got to say I'd given up. I've said to my wife, what will happen will happen. But tonight you lot have changed my bloody mind!"
-Heathrow resident, at the 18 July public meeting

"I am formally welcoming Climate Camp to my constituency. They're going to put our campaign on the map in a way that some of us have tried - but not been able to."
-John McDonnell, MP for Hayes & Harlington

"We're working towards a Christian presence at this year's camp, which follows on from the hugely successful 2006 camp by Drax Power Station. The camp has 4 aims: education, sustainable living, action and movement building." - Prayer I58 member

"Hopelessly Naïve"
- The Sun

Meetings for planning

London - Saturday 8th September 2pm at The Upper Room, 8 Greenland Street, NW1 - 1 min from Camden Town tube, contact 07814061324.

Leeds- 16th September - all day at the Common Place in Leeds.

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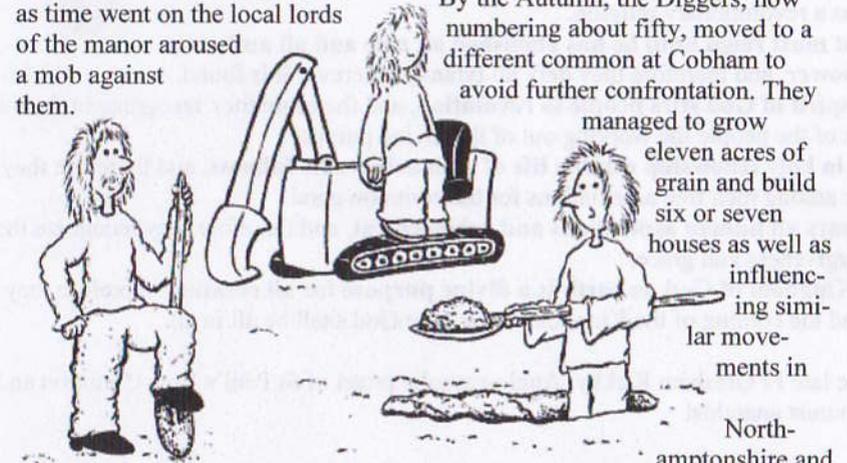


3.



Who were the Diggers?

On 1 April, 1649 a little group of unemployed labourers and landless peasants gathered together at St. George's Hill near Walton-on-Thames, Surrey and began to dig up the common land and prepare for sowing vegetables. Their leaders were William Everard and Gerrard Winstanley. At first they only aroused curiosity and sympathy but as time went on the local lords of the manor aroused a mob against them.



By June another mob, including some soldiers, assaulted the Diggers and trampled their crops. The Diggers announced that they intended to cut and sell the wood on the common, and at this point the landlords sued for damages and trespass. The court awarded damages and costs and seized the cows Winstanley was pasturing on the common, but released them because they were not his property.

By the Autumn, the Diggers, now numbering about fifty, moved to a different common at Cobham to avoid further confrontation. They managed to grow eleven acres of grain and build six or seven houses as well as influencing similar movements in Northamptonshire and

Kent. However, the landlord, Revd John Platt turned his cattle into the grain and led a mob in destroying the houses and running the Diggers out. Eventually the two leaders were sent to London to explain themselves to Thomas Fairfax. They claimed that since the Norman conquest England had been under a rule of tyranny which would now be abolished, and that God would relieve the poor and restore their freedom to enjoy the fruits of the earth. The two men also explained that they did not want to interfere with private property but only to plant and harvest on the many wastelands of England and to live together holding all things in common.

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On 1 April, 1650, Winstanley and fourteen others were indicted for disorderly conduct, unlawful assembly, and trespass. There is no record of how the case turned out but this is the last we hear of the experiment in communism at Cobham.

K. C. Hone,

Fundamental Beliefs of an Anglo-Catholic Socialist

The Earth is the Lord's therefore God is the only landlord.

He has made of one blood all nations, and therefore they adopt as their banner the red flag of international solidarity.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and therefore they strive to break down all that divides humanity.

Christ came to cast fire on the earth, therefore they look for the revolutionary purging of the empires of this world and the destruction of the forces of evil.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ the New Age has dawned, therefore they proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God as a revolutionary religion.

Christ must reign until he has abolished all rule and all authority and power, and therefore they defy all tyranny wherever it is found.

The Spirit of God stirs people to revolution, and therefore they recognize in the movements of the people the working out of the divine purpose.

Only in holy fellowship can the life of man achieve its fullness, and therefore they seek to create among men free associations for the common good.

Sin mars all human aspirations and achievement, and therefore they recognize the need for forgiveness and grace.

The Kingdom of God on earth is a divine purpose for all creation, therefore they look beyond the coming of the Kingdom to the time God shall be all in all.

By the late Fr Gresham Kirkby, Anglo-catholic priest of St Paul's Bow Common and communist anarchist

Message from the Jesus Radicals website host, Andy Alexis-Baker

"We are in the process of taking down all of Jacques Ellul's works we had uploaded for reference. I am aware that some folks have used these files for research purposes in writing MA theses and other academic work. Therefore, if you would like to continue to use them, I suggest you download them. ..."

The reason these books are coming down from the Jesus Radicals site is because several (but not all) of Ellul's family members have come to the decision that they love money more than Jacques Ellul's ideas. Ellul wrote a book called "Money and Power." I hope they read at least that book someday."

-These resources are now available (temporarily at the <http://apinchofsalt.squarespace.com/journal/>)



Vegan Gravy

Ingredients

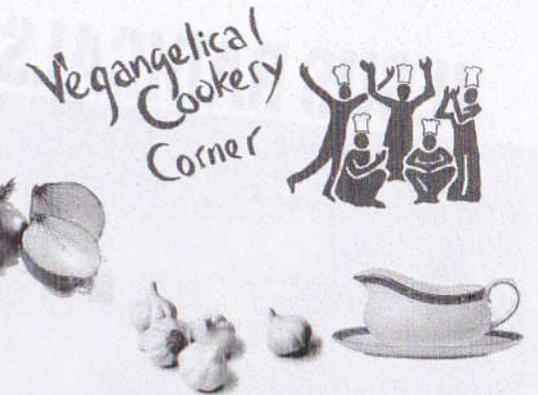
1 onion, diced
2 tbsp oil
2 tbsp plain flour
clove of garlic (crushed)
450ml/15 fl oz vegetable stock
1 tsp yeast extract
1 or 2 tbsp soy sauce
freshly ground black pepper

Method

Fry the onion in the oil for 5 mins.

Add the flour and cook for a further 5 to 10 mins until the flour and onion are nut-brown and the onion is soft and slightly pulpy.

Add the garlic then gradually stir in the vegetable stock (or the water from any vegetables you happen to be boiling at the same time). Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 mins.



Finally, add the yeast extract, soy sauce and black pepper. Stir well. Strain if you like, or serve as it is.

This recipe comes from Rose Elliot's Vegetarian Cookery.

Contribute to A Pinch of Salt

Email: editor.apos@googlemail.com

- Ideas for simple living and eating
- Profiles of notable subversives
- Reflections on slippery scriptures
- Reflections on your experiences of direct action on local, national, and international level.
- Tell us about your group and its activities
- Any other ideas or comments
- Cartoons

In the next issue:

- Reflections on the nativity narrative.
- Politics and Life
- Annie Heppenstall, *Food Sacrificed to Idols*
- More besides...