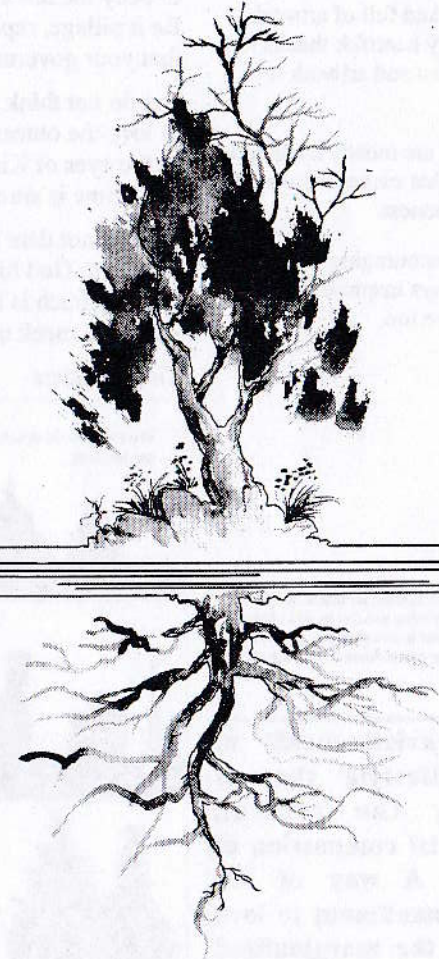


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DO NOT BE  
CONTENTED  
WITH  
MEDIOCRITY

Issue 23 , Easter 2011

# a pinch of salt



SC

FREE! (or nearest offer)

1 Editorial

The cover image for this issue is Sean Cleary's 'The Tree of Faith', in his words it is "shooting up through the dull lines of our society". Seems a lot like Colin Ward's anarchists society as always there like "seeds beneath the snow" of injustice.

Not only is this issue packed full of artwork but all of it is original. My heartfelt thanks to all who contributed articles and artwork to make this happen.

As often the contributors are mostly male and white. It's the one thing that makes me want to give this thing up, to be honest.

Still, my thanks for the encouraging letters and emails. And I'm always inspired by what is sent in so I hope you are too.

Love, peace and anarchy,  
Keith

Keith Hebden  
Editor.apos [at] gmail.com  
58 Haycroft Drive  
Gloucester  
GL4 6XX  
01452 311041

Disclaimer: None of the content of this magazine are true in comparison to the truth of God found in Jesus and nothing true can be said of God, not even that God exists. Each contributor to this magazine chooses to be held responsible for her or his actions and chooses to be animated by the radical message of Christian love.

**Christi-Anarchy /kristiaeneki/ n. Christlike life; lifestyle that is characterized by the radical, non-violent, sacrificial compassion of Jesus the Christ. A way of life distinguished by commitment to love and to justice; to the marginalized and disadvantaged; so as to enable them to realize their potential, as men and women made in the image of God; through self-directed, other-oriented intentional groups and organizations.**

- Dave Andrews in *Not Religion, but love*

Good Christian Living

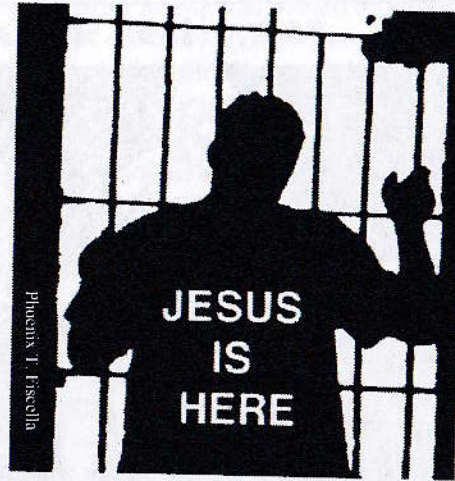
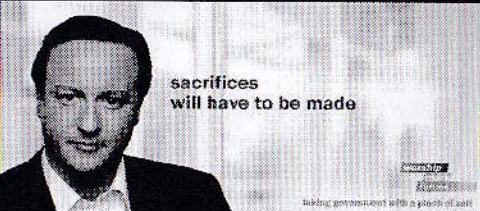
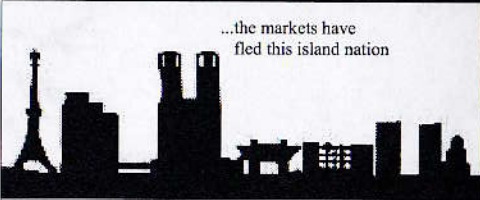
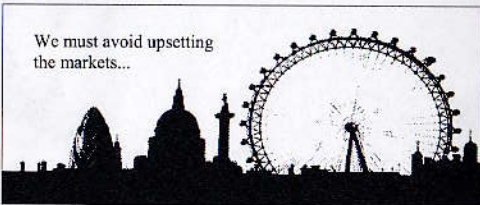
Be careful, fearful Christian,  
to pay Caesar what is due,  
To withhold taxes from Her Majesty,  
is sinful, well and true!

And take care, dear Christian,  
to obey the law's commands,  
Be it pillage, rape or torture,  
that your government demands!

But do not think a second,  
to love the outcast first,  
In the eyes of King and Country,  
that crime is sure the worst!

And do not dare consider,  
to give to God his worth,  
For not much is left for Caesar,  
when the meek own all the earth!

Tim Saunders



Tolstoyan Nonresistance

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teaching about *resist not evil, but return evil with good* captured Tolstoy's understanding of what it is to call oneself a Christian and he summed up the *Sermon's* teaching in five simple propositions:

- 1) *Love your enemies;*
- 2) *Do not be angry;*
- 3) *Do not lust;*
- 4) *Do not fight evil with evil, but return evil with good; and*
- 5) *Do not take oaths.*

Curiously enough many Christian denominations prefer to spiritualise Jesus' teaching rather than accept them as intended for human relations of then, now and in the future. Most Christian denominations can swallow whole a theology that dei-

2  
For Tolstoy and Tolstoyans by contrast the *Sermon* teachings are of sole importance.

Nonresistance is lived out by refusing to have anything to do with government, its police, courts and military. It is about challenging the oppression of peoples, animals and planet through nonviolent resistance; and living lifestyle choices that reflect and promote a commitment to radical nonviolence.

For more further information please contact:

Tolstoyans (UK)  
59 Chapel Road Ramsgate Kent  
CT11 0BS UK Tel. 01843 589027  
email:gez6551 [at] yahoo.co.uk

WHAT WOULD JESUS BUY?



## Christians and the Capitalist State

### Tim Foster

Tolstoy wrote in 'The kingdom of God is within you' that the true Christian cannot help but be opposed to the state as the state's authority and effective functioning rests on its capacity to use force and coercion to ensure obedience to its laws-laws often drawn up by the elite to extend, preserve and defend their interests. As the state uses force or the threat of force to ensure obedience it is inherently antagonistic to the nonviolent teachings of Jesus. So far so straightforward for the Christian one would hope though obviously not as most Christians seem very comfortable with the state's claim to a monopoly on legitimate violence. John Holloway in 'Change the world without taking power' argues that the modern (western) state is not a state over a capitalist economy/society but is a capitalist state developed and shaped to prosecute and facilitate the interests of capital(ists). The state is an aspect of, and serves, an economic system that is opposed to the Kingdom of God, an economic system that is exploitative, competitive and reduces people to objects to be used.

Holloway also sees the state as inherently irredeemable as irrespective of who captures the states' power the same power dynamics and asymmetries of elitism and hierarchy will be reproduced, he then changes focus to write that capitalism's use of people as labour is a taking and



subjugating of the human capacity to do that should be pointed in a creative direction and be expressed in collective efforts to change things for the better. This capacity is taken and reduced to labour, including the continual separation of that done from the doer in exchange for a wage that enables the doer to continue to supply that that capital needs to extract from the working class, labour, the adding of value to material so that those who own the means of production continue to accumulate capital and 'power over'. As a Christian I would add that this exploitation includes the hijacking of an aspect of our being 'made in the image of God', our ability to do and be creative, and reduces it to repetitious labour. Holloway also argues that the

sense of who we are that should be a by-product of our collective projecting of our hopes into reality is also stolen and replaced by labels and categories' offered to us by capital as sources of substitute partial/false identities, for example: national identity.

Capitalism is also competitive, it has and does pit nation against nation, corporation against corporation and person against person. Growing up in this society corrupts and infects our personalities and our ability to relate to others. Instead of being socialised to co-operate and treat others as equals we are taught to view others as threats, rivals and competitors, our collective power to achieve change and improvement being consequently jeopardised by our internalising of capitalist values.

Holloway writes, referencing Marx I think, that this is another aspect of the alienation that capitalism creates, of the worker from his fellow worker, individuals alienated both from their work and from each other. Our collective power to work together to realise our dreams and hopes taken and subjugated to capitalisms need for alienated labour. Capitalism creates a competitiveness that we are all infected with, including Christians, so we struggle for power, influence, dominance forgetting Jesus teaching not to emulate the leaders of his time who lorded it over their subjects and 'exercise(d) authority over them' and his correcting of the disciple's desire for power/greatness (Matt.20: v20-28 and Mark 9:v33-38 NIV).

## Capitalism creates a competitiveness that we are all infected with, including Christians, so we struggle for power

Part of this problem of competitiveness and alienation is seeing others as a means to our ends rather than as people to be cared for, learnt from, worked with. Capitalism commodifies people and sees them as objects to be used, I may expect to experience that at work however too easily we replicate this in our own lives working from positions of self interest, organising ourselves in hierarchical structures that replicate the world around us rather than pointing to something better, to a future hope. Both Walter Brueggemann (in 'Prophetic Imagination') and Holloway encourage us to use our collectively abilities to creatively do in ways that both challenge and pronounce the passing away and irrelevance of what is and simultaneously give expression to, and point towards, what could be, As Christians, anarchists, and Christian anarchists we need to be giving collective and individual expression to non hierarchical, non patriarchal, non competitive ways of being and living that both disregards 'the powers that be' and gives glimpses of what we hope for to those around us, and who knows it may catch on.

# THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

a liberationist approach

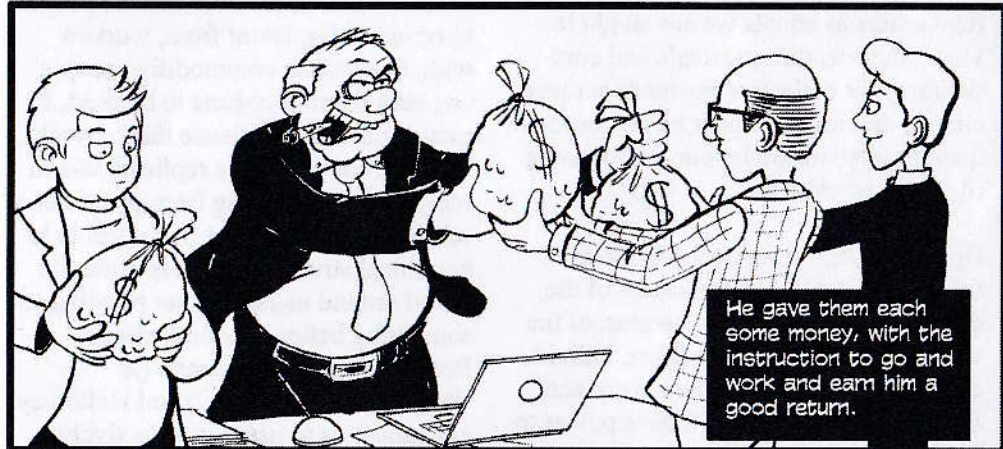
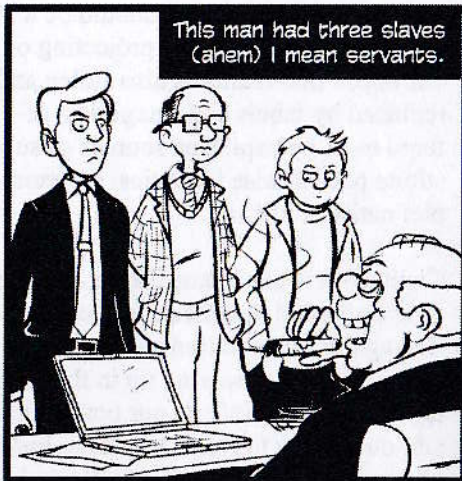
(with thanks to William Herzog for the inspiration!)

BY SIMON CROSS & STEVE BECKETT

There once was a talented man. *Very talented*, in fact, at getting others to make money for him.



This man had three slaves (ahem) I mean servants.



He gave them each some money, with the instruction to go and work and earn him a good return.

Yeah yeah, listen, I need to earn some serious cash — what do you know about short selling?



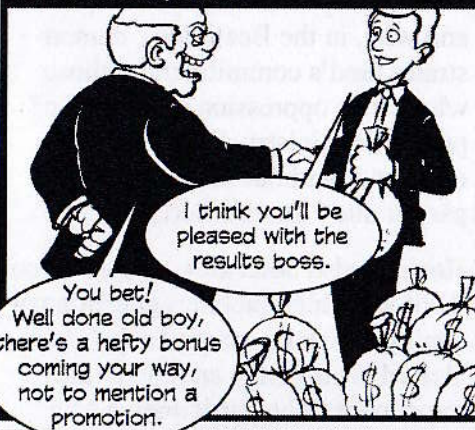
Yes but you didn't hear it from me, I don't want to get done for insider trading.

You're sure?

This sucks — I'm not putting up with being part of this system any more.

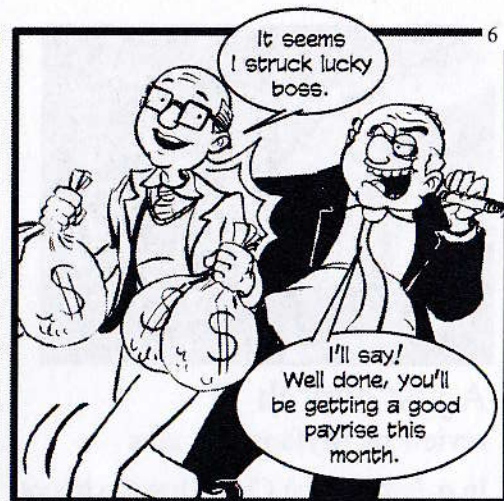


One day the master decided it was time to have the money back.



I think you'll be pleased with the results boss.

You bet! Well done old boy, there's a hefty bonus coming your way, not to mention a promotion.



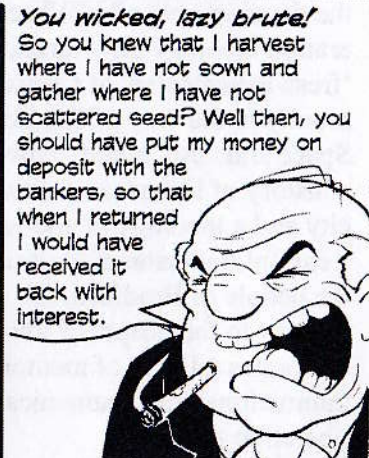
It seems I struck lucky boss.

I'll say! Well done, you'll be getting a good payrise this month.

Master you're a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. I wasn't prepared to do what you wanted me to I'm afraid.



Your money is dirty, so I put it with the rest of the dirt in my garden. I'm afraid it didn't grow. So, here is what belongs to you.



*You wicked, lazy brute!* So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

Take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.



Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And so it goes, while the majority agree to bow to injustice, the few that refuse to will be vilified, oppressed, and punished. Biblical wisdom taken from Matthew 25:14-30.



## A just church

review by Myfanwy Franks

In *a Just Church* Chris Howson traces the development of a 21<sup>st</sup> century liberation theology now formative of two 'fresh expressions' of Christian community in the City of Bradford, SoulSpace and JustChurch. Howson offers a history of liberation politics in the city and a theology of action rooted in a careful understanding of the story of the people of Bradford. He outlines his journey to the gospel of liberation and celebrates a litany of mentors from the international and ecumenical history of liberation theology.

Accounts of attempts to imitate the life of Jesus in post-industrial Bradford are thought-provoking and should appeal to all readers who wish to develop Christian activism in their particular setting. For instance JustChurch worship resists hierarchy within the wider church by adopting a dialogical form. Howson makes the biblical case for protest, and points out that the Bible with its stories of resistance was born 'in the shadow of imperial domination'.

He describes an activist Jesus who does not separate religion and politics and who, in the Beatitudes, demonstrates God's commitment to those who suffer oppression. This kind of prophetic ministry, Howson points out, is not without its dangers but is part of our Christian heritage.

Howson also describes, an active eco-theology which includes guerrilla gardening which he traces back to Gerard Wynstanley and the Digger movement. The participation of a JustChurch in the wider international Peace movement, work in solidarity with the oppressed or those seeking sanctuary, anti-nuclear protest and opposition to war, being Street Angels on weekend nights, all involve risk-taking and passionate involvement in the wider community.

Howson suggests that the emerging church movement will only be a sign of God's love when it embraces the social justice agenda with practical liberation theology in the 21st century finding ways to express the Kingdom of God on Earth.

This book is an excellent resource for reflection on possible developments for Christian activism in the context of any community and I recommend anyone interested in such development to read this rewarding book.

**Chris Howson, *a Just Church: 21st Century Liberation theology in Action*, (London, Continuum, 2011).**

## Dates and water, bread and wine

Peter Haresnape

Some years ago, in a series of evening meetings, I shared bread and wine with Christian activists from a range of denominations. When some of those Christians referred to the event as an Agape Meal, I assumed it was just a different name for what I knew as Communion. Then an Anglican priest visited and suddenly we were, in fact, taking Communion.

A recent ceremonial celebration of unity, looked and felt a lot like Communion to me, but was not named as such. The event was the final worship session of a week-long retreat of a group consisting of around thirty Christians (or those with a Christian background) and a single Muslim. Questions about the faith identity of the (Christian) organisation had been an underlying topic throughout.

This group had agreed to put back its evening meal times by two hours to coincide with the end of the day for the Ramadan-observing members, both the Muslim and a few of the Christians. That way, we could all eat together. For several nights we had listened to a recording of the muezzin announcing the end of the day's fast. Each night we drank water and ate dates, the traditional Palestinian way to break fast, we would proceed to our shared meal.

Now, on our last night together, as the sun went down, we read that we are One Body with Many Parts (1 Corinthians 12), and sang about the breath, the spirit, that we shared.

It was a moving time of worship, featuring songs translated into the first languages of several of the people in the circle. What drew my attention was the way that the worship leaders blended the end of the Ramadan feast with something that looked a lot like communion to me.

Passing around the water jug, we filled each others' glasses, those who had not drunk since the morning partaking with greater eagerness. Each of us took a date or two from the plate in the centre of the circle, surrounded by candles flickering in the air from the ceiling fans. The bread was a beautiful loaf, and as it passed around the circle I tore off my piece and accepted half a glass of grape juice, thinking of my sins and my Saviour's grace. What others thought about, I do not know, but for each of us our participation was an acceptance of the participation of all the others.

This was not, to me, a challenging piece of ritual/theatre, blending two traditions to make a point about the efficacy of multi-faith worship. I sat in a place where parts of two religions came alongside each other for long enough to share a handshake, a holy kiss (Romans 16:16). Considering the land we met upon, I thought of the Two-Row Wampum Belt that symbolises the ideal relationship between Haudenosaunee and settler peoples on this continent. Two blue rows represent two vessels on parallel courses, two nations living on the same land, neither threatening the other. Could this simple sharing of bread and dates, water and grape juice model a respectful, accepting, mutual-meeting relationship?



## John Ball – Heretic or Reformer?

By Tom Wharnes

John Ball a priest from St Albans, Hertfordshire was at the forefront of the reformation of the Catholic Church in England. A dedicated follower of John Wycliffe, whose doctrines gave the basis for a reform to take place.

Wycliffe explored the Bible thoroughly for the first time in the middle ages. It was from these studies that a literal view was taken and that all spiritual instructions were to come from God and people could only answer to God for their sins as it was the supreme authority within the church and not the pope. At this time there was a lot of corruption throughout the church and Wycliffe chose to expose this by criticising it within his doctrine in which he also translated the bible into English.

This doctrine had sparked a reformation.

Wycliffe had a dedicated following known as Lollards, this being where John Ball learnt of the new theories. Ball was well aware of the corruptions within the church as he had experienced them first hand, whilst giving a sermon in his parish in Colchester in which he criticised the feudal system. As a result he was removed from his post by the bishop, the church obviously fearing an uprising and trying to cut it off before it starts.

It is from this that Ball started his next step as a travelling priest giving sermons in local churches. This was a great way for Wycliffe's doctrine to be distributed to the local community or peasants as they were known back then. This allowed for a discussion of these new teachings to take place amongst the lower classes and give them a new perspective on spiritual life apart from the one the church had provided previously. Again this did not go down well with the church and the Bishop of Norwich ordered Ball to be imprisoned to stop his ideas being circulated anymore around the country. However Ball could not be contained in the prison and was soon released after which he toured Essex and Kent continuing with his distribution of Wycliffe's doctrine. This provoked the church even more and brought about Ball's dismissal from the church by the Archbishop of Canterbury who gave orders that Ball was no longer allowed to preach in churches throughout the country.

However this did not deter Ball who continued his preaching on village greens accumulating a greater following of the common people and so the church

soon became the focus of discussion amongst the masses. This caused a great threat to the church that still feared an uprising and so once again Ball seen to be the leader of this suspected rebellion was thrown into Maidstone prison. However Ball did not anticipate what was to happen next.

A direct effect of the sermons on the village greens was the amount of influence on peasants this was seen through the actions taken by Wat Tyler and his rebel army at the start of the revolt in 1381. The course of action taken on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1381 with the rescuing of John Ball from Maidstone prison and ransacking of the Archbishop of Canterbury's palace it set the tone of the rebellion that was to take place. The reason behind rescuing John Ball being the rebels saw him as an inspirational leader who had allowed them to see the truth within the church and the corruption that took place.

With the rescuing of Ball from Maidstone prison this only confirmed the churches suspicions of Ball being the leader of this rebellion or revolt that was taking place. When really it was only his teachings that had given a reason for people to rise up he never toured the country trying to raise an army as Wat Tyler had done. The Peasant army however was no match for the trained soldiers under King Richard II's control and the rebellion was soon crushed with the suspected leaders including Wat Tyler and John Ball being put on trial.

From this uprising and with Ball being associated with it the church was able to finally have an excuse to be rid of Ball and

so he was excommunicated after which he was executed as the monarchy did not want to fall out of favour with Rome as the relationship was hostile due to the current war with France.

It is from the churches view here that John Ball is regarded as a heretic and menace to the conventional church, however from his distribution of Wycliffe's doctrine he was able to spark something much bigger than a reformation within England when the doctrine had wound up in Bohemia being studied by Jan Hus which later sparked the reformation of the catholic church throughout central and eastern Europe.

*"When Adam dug and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? From the beginning all folk by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of evil people. For if God would have had any slaves from the beginning, he would have appointed who should be enslaved, and who free. And so I encourage you to consider that now the time has come, appointed to us by God, in which you may (if you will) cast off the yoke of slavery, and recover liberty."*

John Ball, Sermon at Blackheath (where the summer 2009 Climate Camp took place).