



www.faithfutures.org

office@faithfutures.org

Canada & United States:
P.O. Box 6728, Shawnee Mission, KS 66206, USA

All other countries:
P.O. Box 822, Kenmore, Qld 4069, Australia

FFF Update Issue 4 September 2001

News & Information from FaithFutures Foundation, Inc.

Please note that this is a distribution-only service.

Comments, questions or suggestions should be addressed to office@faithfutures.org

To unsubscribe at any time, send a blank email to FFFUpdate-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

In this issue—

1. In a world that has changed ...
 2. *A New Christianity for a New World*
 3. *The Birth of Christianity: A Study Guide*
 4. **JESUSdatabase** update
 5. Charter Membership
 6. Financial Information
 7. Education Resources
 8. What's happening?
-

1. In a world that has changed ...

The opening paragraphs of the last issue noted the impact of the northern summer vacation period on activity. None of us could have anticipated just how quickly our sense of our place in the world would change.

Then came the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon complex. Suddenly it all seems different even when, with the benefit of hindsight, we can recognize prior warnings of approaching trouble.

There has been a succession of reactions: shock, horror, sympathy, anger, fear, sorrow. And more. Individuals, communities and nations are struggling to come to terms with the significance of these attacks and what they suggest for our shared futures on this planet.

As the focus moves from rescue to recovery and beyond that to retribution, people of faith see their religions being conscripted for military and political advantage. Some religious leaders seem to welcome these developments, perhaps glimpsing an opportunity to regain some significance in

the public discourse of an increasingly secular society. Many others are simply seeking solace from their spiritual tradition in the face of uncertainty and suffering.

I am pleased to see that there is still an instinct that turns many people to the churches, mosques, synagogues and temples for comfort and wisdom. At the same time I wonder if many will soon sense—despite themselves—that the time-honored phrases and rituals have worn thin for them.

As that begins to happen, we may hope that there will be many voices offering ways to integrate the ancient wisdom of humankind with the insights and challenges that we face right now. Supporting local efforts to “re-tool” our religious traditions for the new challenges before us is the primary task of FaithFutures Foundation. Now more than ever we need to know how to draw the best of the old and the best of new from the storehouses of faith.

The following items, selected from a diverse range of possibilities, may be of interest to FFF members:

Interfaith relations.

Information technology has played a critical role in this crisis, with images and opinion being rapidly and widely disseminated. If truth is one of the first casualties of war, in a crisis such as we presently face, religious tolerance is another early victim. The Internet also provides many opportunities to access helpful information to promote interfaith relations and religious tolerance. In addition to the resources gathered for the [World of Many Faiths](#) page on the FFF site, the [Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance](#) site offers a wealth of material.

Financial and practical assistance.

To assist those with relief and recovery efforts following the September 11 attacks in the United States, visit <http://www.helping.org>. This site provides a comprehensive listing of non-profit organizations, including the Red Cross, September 11th Fund or the New York Firefighters Fund 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund.

Reflections on media coverage of the events, from an Australian perspective.

Hugh Bingham writes: The destructive slaughter in New York of Tuesday, September 11 has been the most appalling and fastest developing news event in history. There have been other shattering and tragic events but none so immediately covered with dreadful images and descriptions transmitted worldwide by television, radio and print media.

[\[story continues ... \]](#)

Loving our enemies? Theological reflections, from a Canadian perspective.

David Galston of [SnowStar Institute of Religion](#) writes: Addressing the terrorist attacks on September 11 has been the hardest thing I've had to do in my ministry, and all the theological training in the world does not help answer some of the basic questions people have raised at my church or among colleagues. But the question needs to be addressed, and it is highly appropriate to recall these words of Jesus.

[\[story continues ... \]](#)

2. A New Christianity for a New World

The latest book from Bishop John Shelby Spong has just been published. *A New Christianity for a New World* was released on September 18 by HarperSanFrancisco. It is a more intentionally constructive work than some of his earlier titles, and may well serve as a stimulus for readers keen to think more deeply about the future forms of Christian faith in a global world.

There will be more news about this book, and related materials, shortly.

3. The Birth of Christianity: A Study Guide

A study guide for Dom Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, is now available through the FFF web site. This guide was prepared by Susan Curtis and has been tested in several local adult education settings. The study guide is available as master copies, in PDF format, with permission to reproduce freely for local use. A portion of the purchase price will be retained by FFF for its own funds. An [online order form](#) is available on the FFF site.

4. *Jesus*database

The [new format](#) developed by Don Spencer is now available for public access. The following extracts from the introduction prepared for the new version of the material may be of interest:

The **JESUSdatabase** is an online annotated inventory of the traditions concerning the life and teachings of Jesus that have survived from the first three centuries of the Common Era. It includes both canonical and extra-canonical materials, and is not limited to the traditions found within the Christian New Testament.

The goal is to provide a collection of Jesus materials that will be of interest to scholars, to educators, to students, to clergy, to church members, and to the wider public.

The following outline of the rationale behind the collection may be of interest.

Anyone wishing to collect and study the ancient traditions about Jesus soon has to choose between various strategies. Is it best to consider sayings separately from the acts of Jesus? How best to handle the multiple variants in which some items occur? Can we avoid excessive fragmentation of the materials into almost 2,000 items, or even more if the Johannine discourses are divided into individual sayings?

The collection is being constructed around the clusters of Jesus material first identified by John Dominic Crossan in his *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition* (Fortress Press, 1986). That collection of 522 items served as a basic tool for the ground-breaking work of the Jesus Seminar, and also underlay Crossan's own major works: *The Historical Jesus* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) and *The Birth of Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). A complete list of the items included in Crossan's inventory is also available on this site.

While Crossan's inventory provides the rationale for the selection and arrangement of the traditional materials in this database, the project seeks to take account of other voices from the field of historical Jesus studies. The information gathered here reports the voting decisions of the Jesus Seminar, for which Crossan was co-chair throughout its most productive period, where those decisions relate to any of the items within each cluster. In addition, where other major Jesus scholars have published an opinion on the historicity of specific traditions, these are being noted within the collection.

A team of people is being assembled to work on this project. With technical assistance from Don Spencer, and the collaboration of various participants from the Hodos community, the collection has begun to take shape. If you would like to contribute to the development of the **JESUSdatabase**, we would welcome your help. The following are some of ways in which you may wish to contribute:

- preparing HTML files of the texts involved
- locating discussions of specific texts in various scholars
- cataloging resources by cluster and individual texts
- technical support
- preparing original language pages to match the English versions
- scholarly notes and brief essays on points of interest
- financial gifts to underwrite the costs

If you are interested in helping in any way with this project, we would love to hear from you.

5. Charter Membership

To acknowledge the role played by people who join the Foundation during its formative period, the category of "Charter Member" has been created. All individuals who become members up to 30 June 2002 will be recognised as Charter Members.

Online forms are available for [memberships](#) and [donations](#).

6. Financial Information

Summary membership data and financial information will be published on the FFF web site at regular intervals. The first of these reports should appear during October following the end of the September quarter.

7. Educational Resources

A reminder about two sets of resources mentioned previously—

- **OHP Transparencies:** The resource collection within the FFF site now has a growing set of masters for overhead projector transparencies (“OHT”). The set has begun with materials prepared for workshop and university classes, and will be continually supplemented as additional materials become available. To preserve document design features, these are all available as [PDF files](#).
- **Video directory:** Early work is underway to create a directory of video materials for use in educational and other settings. The idea is to provide reviews of video materials, in addition to information about their availability. [You can help us](#) by providing information about video resources that you have used, including comments on the contents and suitability for particular settings. Thanks.

8. What’s happening?

The [Fall 2001 Westar Institute meeting](#) is scheduled for October 17–24. Full information including program and registration details are available from the Westar web site.

SnowStar Institute of Religion [events](#).

Check the [Events](#) page on the FFF web site for information on coming events, including the public schedules for Marcus Borg, Dominic Crossan and John Shelby Spong. [Tell us](#) about other events that should be listed.

Postal addresses for FaithFutures Foundation

Canada and United States

Robert J. McElwain, FFF Treasurer
P.O. Box 6728
Shawnee Mission, KS 66206
USA

All other countries

FaithFutures Foundation
P.O. Box 822
Kenmore, Qld 4069
Australia

**Your interest and support is greatly valued.
Please help make FFF known among colleagues and friends.**

Prepared by Gregory C. Jenks
Executive Trustee, September 2001

© 2001 FaithFutures Foundation, Inc.