



ONE COUNTRY

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens" – Bahá'u'lláh

INSIDE

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4

Amid controversy, the World Conference against Racism reaches consensus.



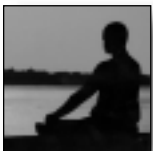
12

Seeking to break the cycle of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



14

In Uganda, the Bahá'í community celebrates 50 years of existence.



16

Review: In *The Phenomenon of Religion*, Moojan Momen paints a broad canvas on the impact of religion.

In Switzerland, Landegg International University wins increasing attention

Less than five years after launching major new degree-granting programs in "integrated studies," the Bahá'í-inspired institution gains official recognition by the Swiss government and assembles a global student body.



Located in the foothills of the Swiss Alps, Landegg International University has gained increasing attention for its innovative approach to "integrated studies." Shown above are Landegg students Zaynab Olin, Kimberley Syphrett and Sepideh Jahangosha.

WIENACHT, Switzerland — Although African herself, Njeri Mwangi was turned off by brochures from top universities in North America that touted special clubs for Africans, Indians and other major ethnic and racial groups.

"There just seemed to be a lot of separation on those campuses," said the 20-year-old Kenya native, discussing her decision to come instead to Landegg International University, a Bahá'í-inspired institution of higher learning in the foothills of the Swiss Alps. "It seemed to me that things were designed so that people of different cultures could stay apart.

"But here at Landegg, the emphasis is on having people of different cultures get together — and that is what I was looking for."

Entering her third year in Landegg's Bachelor of Arts, Ms. Mwangi is happy with her choice — a choice made somewhat venturesome by the fact that Landegg's degree programs are only five years old.

But she has indeed found the kind of unity amidst diversity that she was seeking, and Ms. Mwangi also believes she is receiving a topflight education, one with a distinctive approach.

"It aims to combine various disciplines of study so that they make more sense and the

Landegg, continued on page 9



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For more information on the stories in this newsletter, or any aspect of the Bahá'í International Community and its work, please contact:

ONE COUNTRY
Bahá'í International
Community - Suite 120
866 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
U.S.A.

E-mail: 1country@bic.org
<http://www.onecountry.org>

Executive Editor:
Ann Boyles

Editor:
Brad Pokorny

Associate Editors:
Vladimir Chupin and
Galina Tumurova (Moscow)
Christine Samandari-Hakim
(Paris)
Kong Siew Huat (Macau)
Guilda Walker (London)

Editorial Assistant:
Veronica Shoffstall

Design:
Mann & Mann

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“One same substance”

[The following is adapted from a statement issued by the Bahá'í International Community to the World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August 2001 to 8 September 2001.]

Racism originates not in the skin but in the human mind. Remedies to racial prejudice, xenophobia and intolerance must accordingly address first and foremost those mental illusions that have for so many thousands of years given rise to false concepts of superiority and inferiority among human populations.

At the root of all forms of discrimination and intolerance is the erroneous idea that humankind is somehow composed of separate and distinct races, peoples or castes, and that those subgroups innately possess varying intellectual, moral, and/or physical capacities, which in turn justify different forms of treatment.

The reality is that there is only the one human race. We are a single people, inhabiting the planet Earth, one human family bound together in a common destiny, a single entity created from “one same substance,” obligated to “be even as one soul.”

Recognition of this reality is the antidote to racism, xenophobia and intolerance in all its forms. It should, accordingly, be the guiding principle behind the discussions, deliberations and ultimate output of the World Conference against Racism.

A proper understanding of this fact of existence has the capacity to carry humanity not merely past racism, racial and ethnic prejudice, and xenophobia but also beyond intermediate notions of tolerance or multiculturalism — concepts that are important stepping-stones to humanity's long-sought goal of building a peaceful, just and unified world but insufficient for the eradication of such deeply rooted afflictions as racism and its companions.

The principle of human oneness strikes a chord in the deepest reaches of the human spirit. It is not yet another way of talking about the ideal of brotherhood or solidarity. Nor is it some vague hope or slogan. It reflects, rather, an eternal spiritual, moral

and physical reality that has been brought into focus by humanity's collective coming of age in the twentieth century. Its emergence is more visible now because, for the first time in history, it has become possible for all of the peoples of the world to perceive their interdependence and to become conscious of their wholeness.

The reality of human oneness is fully endorsed by science. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, sociology and, most recently, genetics, in its decoding of the human genome, demonstrate that there is only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. The world's great religions likewise uphold the principle, even if their followers have, at times, clung to fallacious notions of superiority. The Founders of the world's great religions have all promised that one day peace and justice would prevail and all humanity would be united.

The contemporary realization of humanity's collective oneness comes after a historic process in which individuals were fused into ever greater units. Moving from clans, to tribes, to city-states, to nations, the next inevitable step for humanity is nothing less than the creation of a global civilization. In this new global civilization, all people and peoples are component parts of a single great organism — an organism that is human civilization itself. As stated by Bahá'u'lláh more than 100 years ago, “The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

Further, as explained in the Bahá'í writings, the oneness of humanity “implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.... It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world — a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.”

In considering the themes of the World Conference against Racism, a proper under-

standing of the reality of the oneness of humanity holds a number of implications.

It implies that any law, tradition or mental construct that grants superior rights or privileges to one grouping of humanity over another is not only morally wrong but fundamentally at odds with the best interests of even those who consider themselves to be in some way superior.

It implies that nation-states, as the building blocks of a global civilization, must hold to common standards of rights and take active steps to purge from their laws, traditions and practices any form of discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic origin.

It implies that justice must be the ruling principle of social organization, a corollary principle that calls for widespread measures on the part of governments, their agencies, and civil society to address economic injustice at all levels. The Bahá'í writings call for both voluntary giving and government measures, such as the "equalization and apportionment" of excess wealth, so that the great disparities between the rich and the poor are eliminated. The Bahá'í writings also prescribe specific measures, such as profit-sharing and the equation of work with worship, that promote general economic prosperity across all classes.

Issues of xenophobia before the Conference in relation to contemporary problems of minority diasporas, the uneven application of citizenship laws, and refugee resettlement can likewise best be addressed in the light of humanity's oneness and, as Bahá'u'lláh indicated, the concept of world citizenship.

Further, the principle of the oneness of humanity exposes any attempt to distinguish separate "races" or "peoples" in the contemporary world as artificial and misleading. While racial, national and/or ethnic heritage can be considered as sources of pride and even a backdrop for positive social development, such distinctions should not become a basis for new forms of separation or superiority, however subtle.

Over the years, in statements to the United Nations, the Bahá'í International Community has supported or called for specific actions in support of human oneness and the fight against racism, including:

- The widespread promotion of international educational campaigns that would teach the organic oneness of humankind, urging specifically that the United Nations itself facilitate such an effort, involving na-

tional and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations.

- The widespread ratification of — and adherence to — international instruments, which represent humankind's collective conscience, that might contribute to a comprehensive legal regime for combating racism and racial discrimination, especially the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

- The worldwide promotion of human rights education, with the aim of creating a "culture of human rights."

The Bahá'í International Community has also sponsored or participated extensively in activities aimed at the eradication of racism and racial discrimination. Working largely through its national affiliates, which currently number 182, the Community has for example sponsored numerous public meetings, conferences, educational programs, newspaper articles, radio programs and exhibits that specifically seek to combat racism. [See page 6]

Those seeking to understand more fully how the oneness of humanity can be brought into practice might find it useful to examine the experience of the Bahá'í International Community itself, which offers a continuously advancing model for how diverse individuals can live together in harmony and unity. With a membership of more than 5 million, the worldwide Bahá'í community is composed of individuals from virtually every background. More than 2,100 different racial and tribal groups are represented, as are individuals from virtually every nationality, religious background and social class.

Despite this great diversity, which is reflective of the world's population at large, the worldwide Bahá'í community is among the most unified bodies of people on earth. This sense of unity goes beyond a shared theology. Individuals from many of these backgrounds have intermarried, for example, something which is promoted in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, and/or they work together closely in local Bahá'í communities, serving together on its local- and national-level governing institutions. A careful examination of the worldwide Bahá'í community will reveal a surprisingly widespread and yet singularly committed body of people who are consciously creating a global culture, one that emphasizes peace, justice and sustainable development, and puts no group in a position of superiority.*

"O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest."

– Bahá'u'lláh

Amid controversy, the World Conference against Racism reaches consensus

The 160 some governments gathered at the World Conference against Racism agreed on a number of specific steps aimed at combating racism, principally through prevention, education and protection measures at the national level, and by closer international monitoring

DURBAN, South Africa — After nine days of intense and often difficult deliberations, governments represented at the World Conference against Racism (WCAR) agreed to an international action plan that condemns racism, xenophobia and intolerance in all forms and calls for concrete efforts by the international community to eradicate them wherever they may be found.

More specifically, the 160 some governments gathered here agreed on a series of steps aimed at combating racism, principally through prevention, education and protection measures at the national level, and by closer international monitoring

Significantly, governments also agreed on text that expresses regret for the human suffering caused by slavery, declaring it a crime against humanity and saying it always has been one. The text also calls the practice of slavery a “historical injustice” that has “undeniably contributed to poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity that affects many people in different parts of the world, in particular in developing countries.”

“The Conference recognizes the need to develop programs for the social and economic development of these societies and the Diaspora within the framework of a new partnership based on the spirit of solidarity and

mutual respect,” the Declaration continues, specifying that such programs should occur in the areas of debt relief, poverty eradication, building or strengthening democratic institutions, promotion of foreign direct investment, market access, agriculture and food security, technology transfer, health, education, and the “facilitation of welcomed return and resettlement of the descendants of enslaved Africans.”

Reaching a final accord on the issues before the Conference was not easy. Two topics were especially controversial: the possibility of requiring reparations for the past practice of slavery and the degree to which the conflict in the Middle East can be related to racism. Originally scheduled to run from 31 August 2001 to 7 September, the Conference was extended by one day, as delegations sought to find wording on these issues that would satisfy all parties.

In the end, however, governments and UN officials expressed satisfaction that the outcome of World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as the event was officially known, was a significant step forward in many areas.

“Many questioned whether it would be possible to reach consensus but we have succeeded and that is no small achievement,” said Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the secretary-general of the WCAR. “We now have a series of concrete recommendations — for national plans and programs, for better treatment of victims, for tougher anti-discrimination legislation and administrative measures, for universal ratification and implementation of ICERD [the International Committee on the Eradication of Racial Discrimination] and other relevant international treaties, for strengthening education (a most important area), for improving the remedies and recourses available to victims, and many more.”

A new view on development aid

Some human rights specialists said that the language on the issue of slavery and its legacy



Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, acted as Secretary General of the World Conference against Human Rights, held 31 August–8 September 2001 in Durban, South Africa.

is especially significant because it establishes a greater sense of moral responsibility for development efforts by northern countries.

"It is essentially saying that development aid is not any more just a nice thing that Western or Northern governments give to Southern governments," said Antoine Madelin, the representative to the UN of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues. "It means that debt relief and other forms of development aid are not only nice gestures, but they are also a way to repair the wrongs of the past."

Other elements of the program of action include calls for all nations to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by 2005; wider use of public and private investment to eradicate poverty in areas predominantly inhabited by victims of discrimination; and the implementation of policies and measures designed to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the basis of religion or belief that many people of African descent experience.

On the issues related to the conflict in the Middle East, language was found which expressed concern over both anti-Semitism and "Islamophobia" — and which also recognized both "the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state" and "the right to security for all states in the [Middle East] region, including Israel..."

According to the United Nations, there were 2,300 representatives from 163 countries, including 16 heads of state, 58 foreign ministers and 44 ministers, at the Conference. Nearly 4,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and more than 1,100 media representatives were accredited.

"In the past, people had a tendency to view racism through their own eyes," said Diane Ala'i, who headed the Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the Conference. "And many equated racism with just the problems between blacks and whites.

"But this Conference, because of the diversity of issues addressed and the wide range of delegations among the NGOs, raised awareness that racism is multifaceted in its scope," said Ms. Ala'i. "It gave voice to some of the previously voiceless groups, like the Roma. It drew attention to the fact that slavery is still practiced in some countries at the beginning of the 21st century. And it also showed how racism and religious intolerance and various forms of xenophobia



cannot be dissociated from each other."

NGO Forum

Some 6,000 representatives from 2,000 NGOs also held a separate NGO Forum before the Conference, running from 28 August to 1 September. Like the main UN Conference, this event was also marked by controversy, principally because a number of NGOs squared off over the Middle East conflict.

The NGO Forum issued a 9,000-word Declaration that, essentially, included wholesale the positions of the various interest groupings or "caucuses" that had assembled for the Forum. Accordingly, the document takes sometimes conflicting positions. Included, for example, is language from the "anti-Semitism" caucus expressing concern "that Jewish populations and institutions continue to be targets of threats and acts of violence in countries around the world." At the same time, there is language from the "Palestinians and Palestine" caucus that declares "Israel as a racist, apartheid state."

The NGO Forum's International Steering Committee (ISC) decided to include language from all of these caucuses, however controversial, as a way of seeking to reflect the diversity of views expressed at the Forum.

The International NGO caucus, however, chose not to participate in the vote on the final NGO document. As well, the Bahá'í International Community, which is a member of the International NGO caucus, issued its own statement to the WCAR, which called for the recognition of the oneness of humanity as the "antidote" to all forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance. [See page 2]*

The Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the World Conference against Racism was international and multiracial, representing Bahá'í communities from around the world. Shown left to right are Robert Henderson of the United States; Sheryl Davis of New Zealand; Diane Ala'i representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations in Geneva; Antonio Borja of Spain; Gabriel Marquês of Brazil; and Rachel Ndegwa of Kenya.

"[The resolution on slavery] means that debt relief and other forms of development aid are not only nice gestures, but they are also a way to repair the wrongs of the past."

***– Antoine Madelin,
International
Federation of
Human Rights
Leagues.***

Around the world, Bahá'í communities promote tolerance and racial harmony

Worldwide, Bahá'ís have sought first and foremost to build a model of racial integration within their own communities, embracing people from all races, backgrounds and classes of society.

Since its founding more than 150 years ago, the Bahá'í International Community has sought to promote the ideal of racial unity, both in its own communities at the local, national and international levels, and in the world at large.

Writing in the mid-1800s, Bahá'u'lláh stated unequivocally that humanity is a single race, and He called on the world to recognize the principle of human oneness in all spheres. "Close your eyes to racial differences," Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "and welcome all with the light of oneness."

Since then, Bahá'í communities worldwide have steadfastly sought to implement this ideal.

In India, where the Faith was established in the late 1800s, Bahá'ís have long fought against caste discrimination and sought to promote a model of intercommunal harmony, embracing believers from all backgrounds and classes of society. The earliest Bahá'ís in India were from Muslim and Zoroastrian backgrounds, but believers from Hindu and Sikh backgrounds soon embraced the Faith.

By 1920, there were local Bahá'í communities in Bombay, Karachi, Delhi, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Lahore, Mandlay, Rangoon,

Daidnaw, and Pune, and by the end of 1950, Bahá'í literature was available in a wide range of Indian languages: Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Panjabi, Urdu, and Bengali. In the 1960s, many Bahá'ís from lower caste backgrounds embraced the Faith, and Bahá'ís belonging to different castes associate with each other in complete harmony and often serve together on local Bahá'í councils. In 1994, the Supreme Court of India recognized the Bahá'í community of India as a successful model for communal harmony.

In the United States of America, Bahá'ís were in the early 1900s among the first religious communities to hold fully integrated meetings. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Bahá'í community of the United States also began to hold public "race amity" meetings. One such event in 1921 sponsored by the Bahá'í community in Springfield, Massachusetts, drew some 1,200 people.

In South Africa, where Bahá'ís have lived since 1911, the Bahá'í community has always been fully integrated, despite the system of apartheid that kept races separate and discriminated wholly in favor of whites.

Under the watchful eye of the South African Government's special police, who were charged with maintaining racial separation, Bahá'ís held administrative and worship meetings in private homes, since integrated meetings in public were forbidden.

In such meetings, whites usually entered through the front door, while blacks came in through the kitchen. Yet, despite such restrictions, the first national Bahá'í governing council of South Africa, elected in 1956, had four white members and five blacks — a degree of integration that was extremely rare, if not unique, for any sort of national organization in South Africa at the time.

Beyond their efforts to build a model of racial integration within their own communities, Bahá'ís have also actively sought to promote the ideal of unity in the societies

Below: A Bahá'í-sponsored "Race Amity" conference in 1921 in the USA.





In India, Bahá'ís have long promoted intercommunal harmony.

around them, using a wide range of non-violent and peaceful means. These activities include work with the United Nations and its agencies, with governments and like-minded non-governmental organizations and religious groups; educational initiatives; media-based outreach campaigns; grassroots initiatives; youth workshops; and individual initiatives that encompass a variety of innovative and creative approaches to local problems and concerns.

In 1997, for example, the Bahá'í International Community launched a global campaign to promote human rights education, in support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). The campaign encourages national Bahá'í communities to become involved with their governments and with other NGOs in promoting human rights education, outlining a broad program of action that includes as a key element efforts to promote tolerance and an end to racial discrimination.

More than 100 of the Community's national affiliates participated in training sessions at the start of the campaign, and 50 have already undertaken some form of human rights education activities. In addition, 39 have in-country training for those who, in support of the Decade, will be interacting with government officials and NGOs, either nationally or locally.

In Australia, the Bahá'í community has participated in or sponsored various events

during the annual "National Refugee Week." Such events have ranged from seminars on the problems facing refugees to the hosting of simple "afternoon tea" gatherings and interfaith prayer services.

In Canada, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada established in 1992 an annual "Unity in Diversity Week." Held in November, the week has typically been observed by more than 100 local Bahá'í communities, which reach out to like-minded groups and organizations to hold events such as cultural festivals, seminars and workshops, or public talks — even pancake breakfasts — with a focus on the elimination of prejudice.

In Rwanda, the national governing body of the Bahá'í community issued a statement in March 2000 to the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation. It urged the Commission to consider the principle of human oneness as a basis for reconciliation in the country, which saw ethnic fighting at the level of genocide in the 1990s.

"Bahá'ís believe that humankind has always constituted one species, but that prejudice, ignorance, power seeking and egotism have prevented many people from recognizing and accepting this oneness," stated the Rwandan National Assembly, urging the adoption of a program for moral education that would seek both to abolish prejudices and to foster social and economic development.

In the United Kingdom, the Bahá'í community in January 2001 established the Insti-

Beyond their efforts to build a model of racial integration within their own communities, Bahá'ís have also actively sought to promote the ideal of unity in the societies around them, using a wide range of non-violent and peaceful means, including work with the United Nations, with governments, and with like-minded non-governmental and religious organizations.

At the grassroots level, Bahá'í communities around the world have engaged in numerous activities and projects that promote race unity, cross-cultural harmony, and religious and ethnic tolerance.

tute for Social Cohesion as a forum for research and discussion on the question: "What is it that makes a society stick together?"

"What became clear is that the existing models and language aren't working," said Dan Wheatley, external affairs spokesman for the UK Bahá'í community. "There is a need for new models, new ideas and even a new language in developing a more cohesive society."

In the United States, the Bahá'í community closely collaborated with President Clinton's year-long Initiative on Race, launched in July 1997 to stimulate a dialogue on race relations throughout the country, which engendered a series of local town meetings and regional religious forums. Local Bahá'í communities throughout the country participated in those forums and, as a result, Bahá'ís were asked to be on the planning committee for a summit in October 1998 of forty national faith leaders to discuss how religious communities can contribute to improving race relations. The Bahá'ís were later asked to participate on the planning committee for a second conference with the president and some 150 faith leaders in March 2000.

Bahá'í communities in the United States organize or are substantial contributors to countless Martin Luther King Day observances throughout the country. Representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly served on the MLK Jr. Federal Holiday Commission. Bahá'ís have also supported the activities of the King Center in Atlanta and played a major role in King Week festivities each year.

The US Bahá'ís have also produced and sponsored the broadcast of a series of videos designed to reach households in every part of the country with positive messages about spiritual solutions to social problems. The first video, "The Power of Race Unity," is about four individuals who actively work for racial reconciliation in their communities. It continues to be broadcast on cable TV channels along with 30- and 60-second commercial spots on the themes "Children Without Prejudice," "World Citizen," "One Race," and "Golden Rule."

"In the United States, race unity is our primary occupation and has been for almost 100 years," said Robert Henderson, secretary general of the Bahá'í community of the US. "Bahá'ís here sponsor each year over 1,000 activities and projects to promote race unity, from race unity walks and days to much more sophisticated and long-term activities that engage so-

cial institutions like hospitals and police departments and school systems."

At the grassroots level, Bahá'í communities around the world have engaged in numerous activities and projects that promote race unity, cross-cultural harmony, and religious and ethnic tolerance.

In Brazil, the Bahá'ís of Salvador in the state of Bahia organized in February 2000 a Gathering of Afro-Descendants. The event, like four previous such gatherings, gave special attention to Afro-Brazilian cultural elements in the arts, in cooking, in dress and in history, seeking the incorporation of these elements in harmony with the Bahá'í activities.

In India, there are more than 40 schools operated by Bahá'ís or Bahá'í institutions. Race unity and communal harmony — including teachings against caste prejudice — are fundamental elements of the curriculum. Since its founding in 1977, for example, the Rabbani School in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, has sought to enroll and provide scholarships for mostly poor students from nearby villages from all castes — and to ensure that high- and low-caste students are fully integrated in campus life. With an enrollment of about 300 students, the school has an extensive moral education component to its curriculum that stresses the equality of all people.

Around the world, as well, Bahá'í youth have been at the forefront in the movement to promote race unity, principally by establishing "youth workshops" that explore cutting edge social issues through an intensive process of group consultation, combined with improvisational training in acting and dance.

These workshops then give free performances for their peers, offering up a self-realized message that stresses ending racial prejudice, freedom from substance abuse, the emancipation of women and other progressive social principles. So far, Bahá'í youth in more than 50 countries have started youth workshops.

In Dakar, Senegal, for example, Bahá'í youth have established a dance group called "Les Etincelles" (The Sparks) with the aim of promoting unity. The group was established in June 1999, and has since then devised and produced three different dances on the theme of the unity of the human race. The group has started performing in schools and other audiences in Dakar and suburbs, and has each time elicited a warm response from the audience.*

In Switzerland, Landegg International University wins increasing attention



A typical classroom session at Landegg. The campus is fully computerized, using a wireless technology to network computers everywhere, allowing the use of a wide range of media and software tools in the classroom.

Landegg, continued from page 1

education is more applicable to life,” said Ms. Mwangiru, enrolled in a program that brings together the fields of psychology, human development and education.

“And it has delivered everything in terms of the education I expected,” she continued. “We have lots of contact with the professors and many in-depth discussions. The school has a general belief in the uniqueness of the individual — and at the same time the unity of all.”

Ms. Mwangiru’s description of her experience at Landegg quite accurately matches the university’s stated goals, which are to develop and practice a new “integrative” approach to education that combines modern scientific thinking with spiritual and ethical values in a way that meets the needs of an interdependent and global civilization.

“Our curriculum seeks to make sure that the students not only receive the latest academic and scientific information about what they are studying, but that they will also be exposed to the various ethical considerations that pertain to it — and that they will then learn how to apply it in the real world,” said

Hossain Danesh, president of Landegg.

On 20 September 2001, Landegg received an important new level of recognition for its approach, when it was formally registered by the cantonal and federal authorities as a private university in Switzerland. To achieve that, the university had to meet the rigorous criteria set by the government at both levels.

“One of the most significant implications of Landegg’s new status is that the Swiss Government has recognized the legitimacy of an approach to education that is global in reach and that has as its basis the idea of applied spirituality within a framework of integrated studies,” said Michael Penn, who served as vice rector at Landegg from 1998-2000 and is currently an affiliate professor.

“It is a recognition of the idea that an institution of higher learning can, in an academically rigorous way, apply principles of ethics to the interrogation of social problems in the world,” said Dr. Penn, who is professor of psychology at Franklin and Marshall University in Pennsylvania, USA.

Landegg is also winning recognition in other important ways. A high percentage of its graduate students have gone on to doc-

“One of the most significant implications of Landegg’s new status is that the Swiss Government has recognized the legitimacy of an approach to education that is global in reach and that has as its basis the idea of applied spirituality within a framework of integrated studies.”

**– Michael Penn,
former vice rector at
Landegg**

"We have students from countries as diverse as Mongolia, Russia, the United States, Venezuela and China. This is one of the wonderful things about Landegg, the global nature of our very small campus."

- Graham Hassall, associate dean of undergraduate studies

Below: The St. Gallen building, the heart of Landegg's 31-acre campus.



toral programs at universities such as Stanford and Cambridge. And it has launched a major peace education project in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is winning praise from government officials.

A gradual evolution

Landegg's evolution into a full-fledged university has been a gradual process. Located on some 31 acres on a hillside overlooking Lake Constance in the rustic Swiss village of Wienacht, Landegg International University was previously known as Landegg Academy, and it was used primarily as a conference center.

In that role, Landegg was the site of a number of significant meetings, including a series of "International Dialogues on the Transition to a Global Society." The first such Dialogue was held in September 1990 and included the participation of Federico Mayor, then UNESCO's Director-General; Karan Singh, a leading Indian author and diplomat; and Bertrand Schneider, then secretary-general of the Club of Rome.

In addition to such high-level gatherings, Landegg was also host to a number of international programs, focusing on peace and world order studies for young people.

Currently comprising some nine buildings, the campus was originally built as a holiday retreat in the 19th century. In the 1980s, the campus was acquired by the Bahá'í community of Switzerland, which undertook the renovation of its main buildings and established it as a conference center.

In the mid-1990s, it was decided that Landegg's role as a center of learning

should become formalized, and Landegg's functions were transferred to an independent board, whose charter states that the university will be operated as an independent university, directed by an international governing board.

In September 1997, Landegg formally inaugurated a new program of graduate studies, offering a Master of Arts degree in eight areas, including conflict resolution, psychology, education, and religion. In 1998, Landegg began to offer undergraduate degrees as well and by 2000, the school began seeking formal recognition as a university.

Over the years, Landegg has opened active scholarly exchange programs with a number of universities, including the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Beijing University in China, the State University of Sergipe in Brazil, and the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, in the USA.

Currently, Landegg offers undergraduate degrees in four areas: economics and international development; political science and international relations; psychology, human development and education; and the integrative study of religion.

Graduate degrees are offered in six areas: consultation and conflict resolution, moral education, applied ethics, the integrative study of religion, leadership and management, and spiritual psychology. A certificate program in information technology has also been launched this year.

In all subjects, the school seeks to take an integrative approach, said Dr. Danesh. That approach strives first to study all of the relevant theories and models that currently exist in a given field. Professors and students are then encouraged to create a new model, based on the new insights into human nature and those universal ethical and spiritual principles that are present in the spiritual and philosophical heritage of humanity. The final goal is to see the theory applied in practice.

"For example, if we are studying conflict resolution, we first study all of the different theories and models of conflict resolution," said Dr. Danesh. "And we keep them. But we have also developed our own model, which we call 'conflict-free conflict resolution' (CFCR)."

The new CFCR model, Dr. Danesh said, does not accept that conflict or aggression is an inevitable feature of human nature. "Rather, our new theory suggests that conflict is a reflection of the different stages in human development and evolu-

tion and that it reflects the absence of unity," said Dr. Danesh.

Global Campus

Although the Landegg campus is relatively small, with a capacity of approximately 100 full-time, on-campus students, its reach is global. At any given time, only about one third of the school's students are on campus. The rest study from afar, using an array of distance-learning technologies but principally email and the World Wide Web.

The global diversity of the student body is another hallmark of the Landegg experience. For example, the 30-some young people in the undergraduate program come from 20 different countries. The graduate student population of approximately 120 students is equally diverse.

"We have students from countries as diverse as Mongolia, Russia, the United States, Venezuela and China," said Graham Hassall, associate dean of undergraduate studies. "This is one of the wonderful things about Landegg, the global nature of our very small campus."

Nyambura Mwagiru, 21, Njeri's sister, said she was indeed attracted to Landegg by the global diversity of its student body. "Just being able to sit down and talk with people from so many different places is one of the best things about Landegg," said Nyambura, who, like her sister, is in the psychology, human development and education program. "We learn from each other, and have time to reflect and grow."

The faculty of Landegg is similarly global in its diversity. Composed of more than 70 professors, many who are affiliated with other colleges and universities around the world, only about 15 are on campus at a given time. Nevertheless, the ability to draw on well-respected academics from more than 20 countries contributes greatly to the internationalism of the educational process at Landegg.

The school has also had a surprising degree of success in placing its graduates. Although only about 30 students have so far received graduate degrees from Landegg, a number have gone on to highly regarded graduate programs.

Jenni Menon of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, for example, has been accepted this year into a doctoral studies in psychology and education at Stanford University in the USA; Tania Sargent of Zimbabwe is currently in her second year at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania in the



USA; and Meiko Bond of Japan went on to do a master's degree in criminology at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

"Landegg was instrumental in helping me get into my current PhD program," said Ms. Menon, who received an MA in moral education from Landegg earlier this year. "As a student at Landegg I feel I was simultaneously exposed to a rigorous theoretical and practical service-oriented type of learning. A unique aspect of Landegg is that this approach occurs through an effort to integrate the scientific and the ethical/moral and spiritual aspects of knowledge and investigation. I think that this unique integrative approach sounded appealing to Stanford."

Ms. Sargent likewise feels her experience at Landegg contributed greatly to her acceptance as a PhD candidate at the University of Pennsylvania last year. "I was still very surprised when I was accepted and given a good scholarship offer," said Ms. Sargent. "Some people used to ask me, 'Why are you going to such a new school, don't you need to get real credentials?' But getting an MA from Landegg obviously doesn't hinder you from going somewhere else."

Ms. Bond likewise found that some of her friends questioned her decision to go to Landegg to get a master's degree in conflict resolution in 1996. "They would say, 'Will it be recognized by an established university? Will it look good on your CV?'" said Ms. Bond, who is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Manchester. "But I thought it would be an exciting place to study. And in the end, I did end up at Cambridge. So now my friends have changed their minds."*

Class size at Landegg is small and the emphasis is on close teacher-student interaction.

"A unique aspect of Landegg is that this approach occurs through an effort to integrate the scientific and the ethical/moral and spiritual aspects of knowledge and investigation. I think that this unique integrative approach sounded appealing to Stanford."

***- Jenni Menon,
Landegg graduate,
now in a PhD
program at Stanford
University***

Landegg's Education for Peace project seeks to break the cycle of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina — To understand what the faculty and administration of Landegg International University mean when they speak of “integrative studies” and “applied spirituality,” there is no better example than the Education for Peace project unfolding here in this war-torn land.

For more than a year, a small group of Landegg graduate students have participated in a ground-breaking pilot project to introduce concepts of peace education to teachers, students and parents at six schools in three ethnically diverse communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Education for Peace (EFP) is distinctive because of the way it focuses on the training of present and future generations of children and youth to become peacemakers by overcoming age-old prejudices, with the goal of breaking down the cycle of violence that has so often consumed the people here in the past.

Key to that approach is an integrative method that seeks to introduce fundamental concepts about peace, unity and interethnic harmony in all major topics of the school curriculum — from history to science to the arts — so that peace education is not merely added on as an extra course but instead becomes an integral part of a student's experience. The process also involves parents, and the goal is to create a force for the transformation of the entire community.

“We provide training on a new understanding of human nature, which teaches that there is a latent potential within human beings to create a civilization of peace,” said Sara Clarke, the project's administrator in Bosnia. “From

there, we focus on the dynamics of conflict, the prerequisites of peace, and what it takes to create a culture of healing.”

Funded by the Government of Luxembourg and functioning with the support of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OHR), the international civilian agency overseeing the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, the EFP project has won praise from educational administrators and specialists in Bosnia.

“This invaluable project was conceived in such a way that the soul-searching process of reflection which the participants undergo as the project unfolds — be they pupils, teachers, parents, administrators, ordinary school workers — results, largely speaking, as we have ascertained ourselves, in a heightened holistic awareness of the war period and its tragic consequences, and indeed triggers the desire amongst them to become authentic peace-makers...,” wrote Claude Kieffer, senior education advisor to the OHR, in a report last April.

More importantly, perhaps, the project has evoked a powerful response from many of the students it seeks to serve.

“Through EFP our school has become a new one,” said Zlatan Karakaš, a grade 11 student at the Mixed Secondary School in Travnik. “Before, everyday we just had ‘school’, but through this project we have been given a new way of learning through creative presentations.”

The project grew out of Landegg's emphasis on applying integrated scientific and spiritual solutions to real world problems.

“The ultimate objective of EFP is to create a culture of peace based on fundamental scientific and ethical principles such as the consciousness of the oneness of humanity and the practice of unity in diversity,” said Hossain Danesh, president of Landegg and director of its Education for Peace programs.

Formally launched on 28 June 2000, the project is set to run for two years, covering the academic cycles for 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. The project has received key support from the relevant Bosnian ministries of education. EFP project administrators are hopeful that project funding will be extended and expanded.

During its first two years, the project is focusing on six schools in three areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Third Primary School, Ilidza, Sarajevo Canton; the Second Gymnasium, Sarajevo, Sarajevo Canton; the Ivo Andrić Primary School, Banja Luka, Republika Srpska; the Gymnasium, Banja



Students at the Third Primary School, Ilidza, making a human circle of peace in October 2000.

Luka, Republika Srpska; the Nova Bila Primary School, Travnik, Central Bosnia Canton; and the Mixed Secondary School, Travnik, Central Bosnia Canton.

In its first year, the project worked directly with some 400 teachers, administrators and support staff in these six schools, serving some 6,000 children and youth. In addition, through the distribution of materials, group meetings, and the holding of regional and nation peace events, the project has presented the fundamentals of violence prevention and peace education to a significant portion of the 8,000-10,000 parents involved in the six schools.

At the heart of the EFP project is a set of core themes that transcend and unify the various subjects of the standard public-school curriculum. Training seminars seek to equip teachers of all subjects — physical sciences, sports and technical education, arts and humanities — with the knowledge and skills that they need to integrate these core themes, defined as “principles of peace,” into their lesson plans throughout the year.

“For example, one of the principles we discuss is the notion that unity is the essential condition underlying all life and growth,” said Ms. Clarke, who recently completed the requirements for a master’s degree in conflict resolution at Landegg. “This idea can be taught across the curriculum. Even in a physics class, the teacher can demonstrate that unity is a necessary aspect of the universe by describing the basic bonds between atoms and showing how the same law applies to all phenomena. Likewise, this concept can be explored in biology, sociology, history, music and other subjects. The whole aim of this program is to have the teachers themselves begin to reflect on what it is they are teaching their students.”

Zerina Ibricic, a biology teacher at the Third Primary School in Ilidza, where some 70 percent of the children have lost one or both parents through ethnic conflict, said such concepts have helped students see that “hate is not good for living and that we should continue to live together with others of different ethnicities.”

“Through the subject of biology, the pupils have realized that unity in diversity is the product of various things coming together and that one thing can’t function without another one,” said Ms. Ibricic.

Samra Halilovic, a teacher of English at the Mixed Secondary School in Travnik, said that the project “has helped us look at our syllabus in a different way, from a different perspective, giving us a chance to enrich it with issues not dealt with so thoroughly before.”

The project has other distinctive aspects, including efforts to involve the entire school community, including all teachers, administrators and support staff; a curriculum that cuts across ethnic lines, with no alterations to suit local political or ethnic concerns; and the extensive use of the arts, such as plays, concerts and the creation of drawings and paintings.

“This project is very important for us because its main issue is to change the way that people think about life, especially young people,” said Meliha Sujoldzic, a teacher and a parent at the Mixed Secondary School in Travnik, a



Students from Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Travnik came together for a “Youth for Peace” conference in June 2001 at UN Headquarters in Sarajevo to discuss strategies for creating a culture of peace in Bosnia.

city that is fairly evenly split between Bosnian Muslims and Croat Catholics. “The very good thing about the project is that students, their parents and teachers are included in it. That is something new in Travnik, and it is very good because the culture of peace is going to continue growing part by part in all parts of the community.”

Jozefina Matoševic, a parent and member of the support staff at the Nova Bila Primary School in Travnik, said the project’s emphasis on artistic expression has had an important effect.

“The EFP project has brought some changes to our school, our community and our families,” said Ms. Matoševic. “The walls of our school are full of students’ art works, pictures, poetry, posters, essays and drawings. The collaboration between parents and the school has become better.”

During the course of the school year, students were given several opportunities to present the core themes of the EFP Project to the wider community. At public events, both in the region and statewide, students sought to demonstrate their understanding of the principles of peace through music performances, plays, contests and displays.

Municipal leaders in the localities which host project schools — Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Ilidza, and Travnik — have also lent their support to the EFP Project, through both public statements and assistance with project events. For example, the mayors officially proclaimed February 2000 as “Peace Month” in their cities to mark the first set of regional and national peace events.

“Because the EFP program takes a holistic approach to peace education, involving students, teachers and parents, across all ethnic groups and lines of curriculum, it has a transformative effect, we believe,” said Ms. Clarke. “This is very important for creating a culture of peace. Because unless there is real transformation in minds and hearts of people, you cannot create lasting peace. At best, you end up with short bursts of stability, in between periods of conflict.”*

Uganda Bahá'ís celebrate 50th anniversary

In a statement, Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni praised the community's emphasis on unity.

Below: Some 2,000 members of the Bahá'í community of Uganda gathered on 2 August 2001 at the Bahá'í House of Worship near Kampala to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the community.

KAMPALA, Uganda, 5 August 2001 (BWNS) — In a week-long celebration that opened to the joyous beat of African drums — and went on to feature a statement by Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni — the Ugandan Bahá'í community commemorated in early August the 50th anniversary of its founding.

The Ugandan Bahá'í community was established on 2 August 1951 when a small group of Bahá'ís from Great Britain and Iran arrived with the intention of bringing the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith to people here.

The principles of unity and social progress offered by the Faith soon won acceptance from individuals in every region of the country and most of the major tribal groups. Within two years the community had expanded to nearly 300 members in some 25 localities who represented 20 tribes.

Today, the Bahá'í Faith has an estimated 105,000 members in Uganda, organized into some 200 local governing councils and established in more than 2,800 localities. Its members represent virtually every tribal and religious background.

“You will find we have Bahá'ís in all regions of the country, in the western, northern, eastern, southern and central regions

of Uganda,” said George Olinga, director of external affairs for the Bahá'í Community of Uganda. “And you will find that the diversity of all Uganda is clearly seen in the Bahá'í community and in our activities.”

Praise for the Faith's record of promoting harmony and development in a country that has often been divided by tribalism was a main message of President Museveni's statement, which was read on 2 August 2001 by Captain Michael Mukula, state minister for health, before a crowd of some 2,000 people at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Kampala.

“In Uganda we are constantly fighting against ethnic and religious sectarianisms and our politics was played out and polarized along those major fault lines for a very long time,” wrote President Museveni, explaining that his government has sought to “bring all the people together irrespective of their faith, race, color or ethnicity.”

“We have been doing what you in the Bahá'í Faith began to do a long time ago,” President Museveni stated in prepared remarks. “Yours is a very useful message and can contribute greatly to nation building.”

President Museveni's statement went on to highlight the need to fight the evils of corruption and the necessity of reducing poverty — goals which he said he and his government share with the Bahá'í community.

President Museveni also said his government shares a commitment to bring about equality between women and men. “I appeal to members of the Bahá'í Faith, who hold the equality of rights and opportunities for women and men as an act of faith and as their basic principle, to join in our crusade for the empowerment of women,” stated President Museveni.

Among other highlights of the week-long celebration, which began on 31 July in Kampala and ended on 5 August in Tilling, Kumi District, in Eastern Uganda, were the presence of four of the six founding members of the community, the attendance of various officials in the Ugandan government, and extensive coverage of the celebration in the Ugandan media.*



Photo: Ryan Lash

Review: *The Phenomenon of Religion*

Review, continued from back page

as Dr. Momen indicates in his introduction, is whether the great religions of the world — and the experiences of their followers — are fundamentally similar, or utterly different. Dr. Momen, who is himself a Bahá'í, notes that religious scholars are largely divided into two camps on this issue, and he unambiguously states that he is in the first.

In undertaking a comparative survey of religious phenomena across so many themes, throughout history, and considering so many aspects of humanity's response to religious experience, all presented with a high degree of objectivity, Dr. Momen ends up providing the reader with powerful evidence that religions are at their heart and soul fundamentally the same.

This is especially true, Dr. Momen writes, at the individual level. "The religious experience of the individual as described in many religious traditions from around the world is broadly similar," writes Dr. Momen, who has published widely in the field of world religions. "The experience can be described in many different ways, but its essential features include a feeling that the experience has saved or liberated the individual and, usually, an element that transforms the life of the individual."

Once social expressions of religion are considered, Dr. Momen writes, there is greater diversity. "We human beings create the intellectual and cultural worlds that we call reality. Each of these cultural worlds sees reality in a different way."

In the end, Dr. Momen makes no claim to having arrived at any overriding theory or unified theoretical framework to explain religious phenomena. Nevertheless, the book itself — by dint of the information presented — reveals that there are indeed significant patterns and similarities among the religions, whether in their histories, the experience of their followers, or their impact on the societies around them.

In the chapter on comparative religious history, for example, Dr. Momen notes that although "the histories of the various religions have taken very different courses and, because they appeared at such widely varying places and times, they have shown markedly different features, there are some com-

mon themes."

He then proceeds to outline those themes in the text and in a startlingly simple table, entitled "Lives of the Founders of World Religions," showing that most of the Founders were preceded by a forerunner, had a precipitating vision of enlightenment, called a gathering of initial disciples, underwent a period of solitude, emerged to break with the previous or surrounding religion, made public declarations to contemporary rulers and leaders, experienced both internal and external opposition, and, at some point, undertook or were forced into a migration or exile.

Throughout the various chapters, Dr. Momen shows similar commonalities. The book indicates that all or most of the six religions have common ethical principles (illustrated by the universal teaching of the Golden Rule); that most have experienced a tension between fundamentalism and liberalism; that all religions hold out the promise of a future savior or returning prophet; and that the followers of most religious communities often share similar types of experiences and activities, such as rituals, mystical insights, and programs of proselytization.

This is not to say that Dr. Momen has not given due regard to the differences among the religions. He clearly delineates some of the basic distinctions between the "theistic" religions of the West, which place God above all things, and the "monistic" religions of the East, which do not differentiate the "Ultimate Reality" from human reality.

"In the Western religions, the transcendent reality is given the name of God and is thought of as a personal, omnipotent, omniscient Being," writes Dr. Momen. "God as the Creator is usually conceived of as being wholly other than His creation...."

"In contrast, the Eastern religions, Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism of the Advaita school, have no concept of God as a person; rather their concept is of Ultimate Reality as a process, a truth or a state of being," Dr. Momen writes.

Indeed, fair-minded to the end, Dr. Momen does not offer any over-arching conclusion that religions are the same, that God is one, or that He even exists. Nevertheless, presented with so much information, assembled in such a wide sweep of disciplines, readers are likely to draw their own conclusions. And the evidence of patterns across all religions is quite compelling.*

"The religious experience of the individual as described in many religious traditions from around the world is broadly similar... its essential features include a feeling that the experience has saved or liberated the individual and, usually, an element that transforms the life of the individual."

— Moojen Momen

New insights from a sweeping analysis of religion

The Phenomenon
of Religion: A
Thematic
Approach

By Moojan
Momen

oneworld

Oxford

Occasionally, when the research on a particular topic is inconclusive, scientists go back and do a fresh analysis of the combined results of previous studies.

The method, called “meta-analysis,” has most often been applied to health studies. Researchers go back and sift through old data on heart disease or cancer in an effort to gain new insights.

The process sometimes leads to entirely new conclusions. By standing back and looking at the whole, researchers sometimes detect previously unseen patterns.

In the social sciences, the topic of religion is anything but resolved. It has been endlessly studied — by theologians, sociologists, psychologists and individual seekers everywhere — and yet there remains wide disagreement over key questions about religious phenomena. Are mystical experiences the result of a divine process or something internal to the human mind? Are religions basically similar in their essence or are they fundamentally different? Is God to be found in all things or does the Creator stand above and apart from all things?

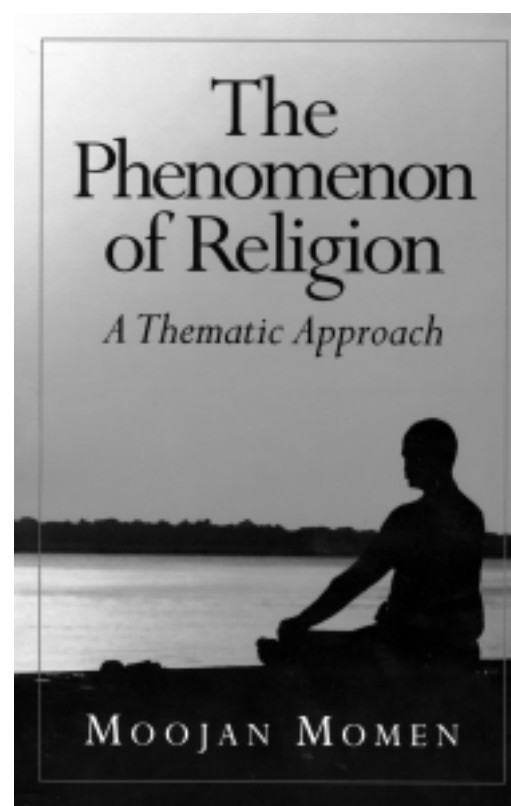
In *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach*, Moojan Momen has done something akin to performing a meta-analysis of the entire field of religious studies. In some 500 pages (626 pages with notes and index), Dr. Momen has undertaken a sweeping survey of religious phenomena and experience across the globe and throughout history.

He analyzes various aspects of religion and religious phenomena as a series of themes, including chapters on “The Concept of Religion,” “Pathways to Religious Experience,” “Suffering, Sacrifice and Salvation,” and “Fundamentalism and Liberalism.” The themes, Dr. Momen writes, were chosen to consider three main aspects of religion: its central experience, its conceptual aspects, and its social effect.

His survey is comparative in nature. Dr. Momen examines what six major independent world religions — the Bahá’í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism — have to say about each theme, and/or what their followers have come to

understand or experience. He also considers what secular theorists, from sociologist Max Weber to psychologist Sigmund Freud, have had to say about religion.

On this point alone, Dr. Momen has provided an enormous service. Even if one simply takes *The Phenomenon of Religion* as a resource on comparative religious studies — and the book would certainly excel as a text for any college-level course on that topic —



the sweep of its approach, the depth of its analysis, and the clear, lucid and essentially dispassionate nature of Dr. Momen’s writing style make it an outstanding reference for anyone concerned with religion as an aspect of the human experience.

Yet, as so often happens with other forms of meta-analysis, in the reconsideration of what others have said, written, and concluded about religion, the book also ends up providing some important new insights in and of itself.

Among the key questions it approaches,

Review, continued on page 15