

THE INDEPENDENT

FREE BOO! ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WORLD RELIGION **THE GREAT RELIGIONS - PART ONE OF A NEW**



Exposed:
The hygiene
scandal on the
high street

Dozens of branches of leading
restaurant chains found to
have 'disturbing' and
'unsafe' standards

Concrete canvas



Examples of the 'concrete canvas' tents, invented by Peter Brewin and Will Crawford

"While starvation occurs over a period of weeks," says the UN Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, "death from exposure can occur in a single night." There are currently over 35 million refugees worldwide. The aid agencies and troops that help save lives in emergency situations require accommodation, field offices and medical clinics. Current solutions are either soft-skinned (offering inadequate protection) or expensive and difficult to transport. In Afghanistan, for example, the useable life of some conventional tents has been less than three weeks on

account of wind damage. Peter Brewin and Will Crawford (two engineering graduates who met at the Royal College of Art) were visiting a refugee camp in northern Uganda in 2004 when a storm broke. Within 20 minutes the dining tent had flooded as rain leaked under fly sheets and soaked into the mud floors. They visited a storage tent where thieves had easily broken in. But their new super-tough material would solve these

problems. "Concrete canvas" (made in Wales) consists of a cement-impregnated fabric folded into a plastic sack. Once the fabric is saturated with water, the structure inflates and dries to form an impermeable shell which hardens within 4 hours. The shelters can be sterilized (for use as an operating theatre), secured with a locking door, insulated with earth or sandbags or ventilated with windows cut out of the skin.