

# Professor's Book Tracks Global History Of Christianity

BROOKINGS — An Australian publishing company's work with an American scholar and her colleagues in other countries has led to a first-of-its-kind history of Christianity that pays close attention to how Christianity developed differently around the globe.



**Bahr** Professor Ann Marie Bahr in

South Dakota State University's Department of Philosophy and Religion, the chief consultant for the project, said Australia-based Millennium House asked her to help guide the project because she had written a section on world religions for an earlier reference work published by the company.

"Millennium House came to me with the idea of doing a high-quality, illustrated reference work for libraries on Christianity," Bahr said. "They came to me with an outline that was very traditional. It was a historical western history of Christianity that went through the early period and the Middle Ages and the Reformation period and the Enlightenment, all of which is in this book too, because these things are very central to the history of Christianity."

Bahr loved the idea, but suggested an added emphasis. "I asked if they'd be willing to consider doing a more global history of Christianity, something that would show how Christianity came to different parts of the world and when, and how it developed there, and what the status is of Christianity in all parts of the world now — looking at it more globally instead of focusing on western Christianity," Bahr said. "Increasingly, this is the way academics prefer to look at it. But as far as I know, this is the first reference book to use this approach anywhere in the world to telling the history of Christianity."

Bahr said the value of the approach is that it helps readers get past misconceptions of Christianity as solely indebted to European traditions.

"It was definitely an attempt to break down this monolithic sense of what the history of Christianity has been and to incorporate the different perspectives of Christians around the world," Bahr said. "The story of Christianity cannot be told from a single geographic vantage point."

In fact Christianity made headway in other places before catching hold in Europe.

"Some of the early missionaries, the Nestorian Christians, took the gospel all the way to China within a couple of centuries, through mountains and deserts. That story has been lost to most of us because Nestorian Christians no longer exist, for the most part. But it's an important part of the story. Christianity went east before it went west, to a great extent. It's very relevant to us today because it was along that route that they first met, for example, with Buddhists," Bahr said. "That's relevant history to us today — what happened in those early encounters?"

About one of every three people in the world today claims to be Christian, if asked about their religious faith. Bahr notes that the world's religions, including Christianity, are an important factor in helping shape global society. That is why it's important for citizens of the 21st century to understand an ancient faith such as Christianity.

"Christianity became a global phenomenon at least at the same time as capitalism, if not prior to that. When we talk about the globalization in the economic sphere, when we talk about globalization in the communications sphere, we sometimes forget that the linking of ideas, including ideas that are meshed with values, is also part of globalization. The major world religions are a significant part of that," Bahr said. "So what we will be in the future really depends upon whether these traditions can talk to each other, both internally — their differences within each tradition — and externally — the differences between them."

Bahr says "religious literacy," or understanding the importance of Christianity and other religions, is a crucial part of being a citizen in the world of the 21st century. Bahr was a member of the Religion in the Schools Task Force of the American Academy of Religion until 2008. She continued to serve as one of a group of 20 professors selected from public universities nationwide to review the committee's work providing guidelines for K-12 public school teachers who want to incorporate teaching about religions into their lesson plans in a manner in keeping with First Amendment principles.

FRIDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT															MAY 6, 2011									
	3:00	3:30	4:00	4:30	5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	1:00	1:30		
<b>BROADCAST STATIONS</b>	PBS KUSD 2 8 (2)	WordGirl (DVS)	Wild Kratts (DVS)	The Electric Company	Fetch! With Ruff Ruffman	Nightly Business Report	PBS NewsHour (N) (In Stereo)	Washington Week (N) (In Stereo)	Need to Know (N) (In Stereo)	Market to Market	Steve Miller Band: Live in Chicago (In Stereo)	BBC World News	Charlie Rose (N) (In Stereo)	Tavis Smiley (N) (In Stereo)	America's Heartland	Secrets-Abuse	Father-Loss							
<b>PAY CHANNELS</b>	HBO 17 (40)	** "Scoby-Doo"	** "Ghosts of Girlfriends Past"	** "The Mistress of Spices"	"Cinema Verite"	Real Time With Bill Maher	Real Time With Bill Maher	** "A Perfect Getaway"	** "Whiteout"															
<b>CABLE STATIONS</b>	A&E 57 (41)	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Breakout Kings	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds	

**\$59** a month for 12 months no contract!

High-Speed Internet  
Digital Preferred Plus with Encore movies  
SmartChoice Phone with unlimited long distance & features

Sign up today & we'll give you:  
**FREE HD Equipment**  
**FREE DVR**  
**FREE Edge Internet** with speeds up to 25 Mbps

**Offer expires May 15.**

Promo Code: 9003

**I Can Get The Best Deal**

(800) 514-4001 | [ConnectWithKnology.com](http://ConnectWithKnology.com)

What can you do? **KNOLOGY**

Subject to Knology terms and conditions. Limited time offer. Available only to new qualified residential customers in our serviceable areas. Other restrictions may apply. © 2011 Knology Inc. All rights reserved.