

Those last minute gifts?

- ✓ Hand-selected cards
- ✓ Books
- ✓ Toys
- ✓ Local pottery
- ✓ Nativity sets
- ✓ Jewelry & scarves
- ✓ Candles
- ✓ Music
- ✓ Gift Certificates

They're all wrapped up!

Montreat
Books & Gifts
montreatbooksandgifts.org
828.669.5298



Reset: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future

By Stephen Kinzer
Times Books, 288 pp., \$26.00

In the Middle East, the United States has poured money and arms into two principal allies: Israel and Saudi Arabia. Oil, strategic considerations and domestic constituencies have guided these policies. But today, with Iraq a mess and Israeli-Palestinian relations at a nadir, the U.S. would do well to rethink its regional approach. After the confrontational policies of the Bush years, the Obama administration has promised a reset of relations with Russia. In *Reset: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future*, Stephen Kinzer argues that the U.S. should push the reset button in the Middle East as well. Instead of focusing so much on Israel and Saudi Arabia, the U.S. should take a new look at Iran and Turkey. By effecting a rapprochement with the former and deferring to the latter as a mediator, Kinzer maintains, the U.S. can help bring peace and security to a region that has had a shortage of both.

Kinzer is an evocative writer and knows this territory well. He has served as a foreign correspondent in Europe, Latin America and Turkey and has recently written a book on Iran (*All the Shah's Men*). In *Reset* he traces the parallel modernization of Iran and Turkey and their efforts to become Muslim democracies. With its many fascinating stories about modernizers, insurgents, dictators and generals, *Reset* is an excellent guide for those who know little about the 20th-

century history of these two countries with rich and complex cultures.

For all the book's virtues, however, Kinzer gets bogged down in this history. Although he promises an analysis of how Turkey and Iran should figure in America's future, he doesn't get to the present until more than halfway through. Then, after finally bringing both Iran and Turkey into the post-9/11 era, Kinzer embarks on an elaborate detour into U.S. relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia when a relatively brief summary would have sufficed. Only in the last chapter does Kinzer return to the essential question he poses at the outset: how to "reset American policy in the world's most volatile region."

In this final chapter, Kinzer does deliver on his promise, though in a truncated fashion. He rightly identifies Turkey as essential to any realignment in the Middle East. Led by the Justice and Development Party, which came to power through elections in 2003, Turkey has transformed its foreign policy from an inward-looking parochialism to a dynamic engagement with neighbors and adversaries. If anything, Kinzer understates the importance of Turkey's new "zero problems with neighbors" approach and how the nation has enhanced its position by building bridges with Greece, Armenia, Syria and Russia, not to mention reaching out to Africa and Asia. He fails to mention Turkey's role in the politics of Eurasian oil and gas deals or how it is spreading its culture and educational model far and wide.

Kinzer is more interested in Turkey's role as an intermediary. "Turkey has taken on the role of mediator, concilia-

First Baptist Church in
Newton, MA is a
progressive & welcoming
American Baptist Church.

Please visit our website
for a complete church
profile and position
description or contact
Mark Heim at
mheim11@verizon.net.

At First Baptist Church in Newton, we are

Searching...

For a new Senior Minister. We are looking for an experienced Leader and Preacher to join us as we grow Spiritually and find new ways to Live Out Our Faith.

www.fbcnewton.org/search



But Ahmed never integrates this model of American identity into the discussions of Muslims that come later. Moreover, many of Ahmed's Muslim informants find the model to be misleading or incomplete. Representative Keith Ellison, one of two Muslims in Congress, gently challenges the author to explore how the Virginia colony was just as important to the formation of the United States as the Massachusetts Bay colony, a thesis made famous by Edmund Morgan's 1975 book, *American Slavery, American Freedom*. Unfortunately, this is not one of the books Ahmed consulted in order to understand the American past.

Perhaps *Journey into America* is most useful as a cautionary tale about how not to build relationships with Muslim communities in the post-9/11 era. Instead of dropping in on a mosque for a single visit to ask penetrating, personal questions, we might better gain knowledge of our Muslim neighbors by establishing longer-lasting relationships of mutual interest and trust. This kind of careful community building, which Ahmed praises in the book, has led to constructive service projects and interreligious understanding throughout the U.S. since 9/11.

For those hoping to explore more complex portraits of contemporary Muslim-American communities, there is a fine body of peer-reviewed anthropological literature that includes books such as Carolyn Moxley Rouse's *Engaged Surrender* and JoAnn D'Alisera's *An Imagined Geography*. Ahmed's study would have been strengthened if he had consulted such works. Unfortunately, he lists just 18 of the 100-plus books that

have been published on Muslim Americans in the past three decades, then concludes that there is a "surprising dearth of reliable and good books on American Muslims."

Ahmed's lack of engagement with literature on Muslim-American history leads him to ignore how earlier interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims shaped the current debates over Islam and Muslims in America. He sets up a dichotomy between "America" and "Islam." By framing the tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim Americans in this way, he unintentionally confirms the assumption that Islam and America are on a collision course. That may be an effective model for understanding conflicts of interest between Muslim-majority nations and the U.S. government—as many of his former diplomatic colleagues attest in their endorsements of the book—but it will not lead to a more constructive understanding of Muslims' role in the American republic.

SUBMISSIONS

If you would like to write an article for the CENTURY, please send a query to submissions@christiancentury.org or to Submissions, The Christian Century, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 700, Chicago, IL 60603-5901. Allow four to six weeks for a response from our editors. We do not consider unsolicited manuscripts for our regular columns or book reviews.

The BUECHNER INSTITUTE Annual Lectureship

January 29, 2010 Bristol, Tennessee



Katherine Paterson

January 28 & 29, 2011

Drama: *Bridge to Terabithia*

King College Theatre Department

January 28, 7:00 p.m., Paramount Theater

January 29, 3:00 p.m., Paramount Theater

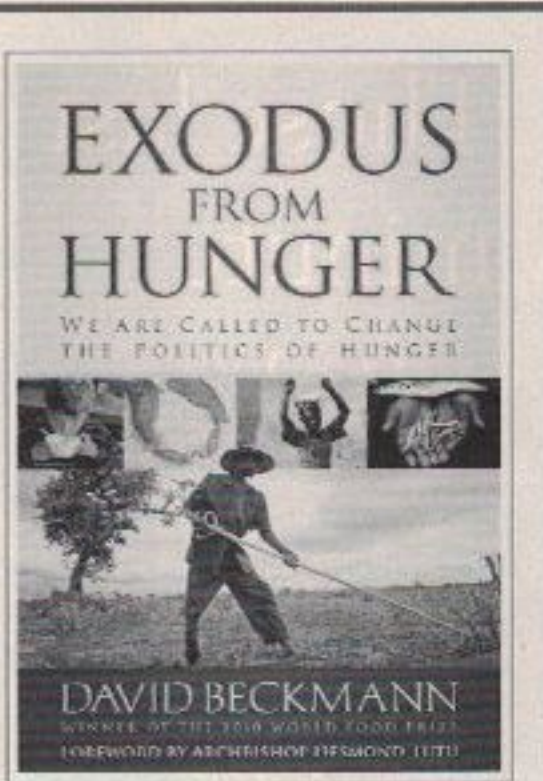
January 29, 2011

Annual Lectureship | Katherine Paterson

7:00 p.m., Paramount Theater

The
BUECHNER
INSTITUTE
at KING
COLLEGE

For more information and a full schedule of the weekend's events, visit www.buechnerinstitute.org or call 423.652.4156.



Paperback, 216 pp, \$13.95 incl. shipping
Westminster John Knox Publishers

*God is moving in our
time to end hunger, and
we are invited to be part
of this great liberation.*

— David Beckmann

In this hopeful new book, David Beckmann, winner of the 2010 World Food Prize and president of Bread for the World, uses experiences from his own life and from a few of the extraordinary leaders he's worked with—to show how each of us can help end hunger.

Place your order at
www.bread.org/go/hungerexodus
or call toll-free

1-800-822-7323



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

425 3RD STREET SW, SUITE 1200
WASHINGTON, DC 20024

XD10x-CC

tor, and arbitrator," he writes. "The world urgently needs some country to play that role. Few are better equipped to do so than Turkey." And indeed, Turkey has attempted to mediate between Israel and Syria, between different factions in Iraq and between Iran and the U.S.

The U.S. would do well to encourage Turkey's mediating capacity. Kinzer believes that the interests of the two countries are convergent. "Turkey's foreign policy, though independent, reinforces America's," he writes. "Both countries share key strategic goals. Both are essentially conservative. The existing world order has been good to them. They want to strengthen it, not radically reshape it."

But Kinzer downplays the fundamental challenge that Turkey offers to the United States. If Turkey ultimately joins the European Union, their combined power could challenge American hegemony. Or if Turkey throws its lot in with a constellation of other powers—Russia, Iran, Syria—it could represent a major counterforce in a region that is at the center of U.S. national interest. In some sense, however, the ambiguity of Turkish foreign policy only reinforces the importance of Kinzer's overall point: that "as the United States shapes and carries out its policies toward Muslim countries, it should do so with Turkey at its side."

U.S. policy toward Iran is even more in need of a reset. Kinzer rehearses the sorry history of U.S. meddling in that country, from the involvement in the coup that overthrew Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953 and the subsequent strengthening of the repressive dictatorship of the shah, to the backing of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War and the failed opportunities to engage Iran's reformers in the 1990s. Today the Obama administration is ratcheting up economic sanctions and threatening rhetoric. Kinzer finds this approach counterproductive: "American policies aimed at isolating Iran have had precisely the opposite effect, isolating Americans from the information and contacts they need in order to deal effectively with Iran."

Kinzer advises a different course. He's not naive about the current Iranian lead-

ership, which he identifies as "an irresponsible and deeply disturbing factor in global politics." But engagement with Iran, like détente with China in the 1970s, is the better way of ensuring more predictable policies.

It's a shame that Kinzer squeezes all of his most provocative assessments into his final chapter. He misses an opportunity to explore how the current Turkish government is reining in the influence of the military and to consider whether Iran's aborted Green Revolution will have any lasting impact on the country's political structures. His final thoughts, too, seem mere sketches. He ends by recommending the application of two diplomatic breakthroughs of the 1970s—détente with China and the Helsinki Accords in Europe—to U.S.-Iranian relations. This seems right, but he doesn't devote enough space to the thorny challenge of applying these examples.

U.S. détente with China prepared the stage for the latter to enter the international community, but it neither eliminated China's nuclear weapons program nor overcame the adversarial nature of U.S.-China relations. The Helsinki Accords, meanwhile, became synonymous with the human rights movements that eventually overthrew the communist regimes that signed the agreement. Surely the leadership in Iran is not interested in embracing such a scenario.

At the very least, *Reset* raises these tantalizing possibilities and provides the historical backdrop for understanding the necessity of transforming U.S. relationships with Turkey and Iran. It's up to the diplomats to take it to the next level.

Reviewed by John Feffer, codirector of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies, Hyattsville, Maryland.

God's Economy: Faith-Based Initiatives and the Caring State

By Lew Daly

University of Chicago Press, 344 pp., \$37.50

God's Economy is a bold, wide-ranging book that will challenge both liberals and conservatives. A senior fellow at Demos, a nonpartisan public policy research and advocacy organization, Lew Daly sets President Bush's faith-based initiative and the intense debates that swirled around it in the much broader context of American judicial, social and economic history and of European Christian Democracy in the previous 100-plus years. His brilliant synthesis has the potential to transcend the debates and mistakes of the Bush years.

Daly maintains that President Obama's endorsement of much of Bush's faith-based initiative during his presidential campaign and his subsequent actions as president have cemented that initiative as a bipartisan consensus in American politics. But he also argues that the liberal-conservative battles over Bush's initiative and the inherent weaknesses of Bush's vision produced an approach that was fundamentally inadequate for overcoming poverty.

Daly contends that Bush's faith-based initiative transcended earlier debates between liberals and conservatives

Reviewed by Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action.

SEMINARY SEEKS VISIONARY LEADER

San Francisco Theological Seminary seeks a new president to lead its Christ-centered, ecumenical community. A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminary on the Pacific Rim, SFTS educates 400 culturally diverse students on its Northern and Southern California campuses.

The new president will be asked to:

- Empower SFTS to refine its identity
- Expand outreach to increase enrollment
- Enhance church, alumni and donor relationships
- Capitalize on Graduate Theological Union resources

