

2024 MACDONALD LECTURES
IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY

Christians Living Under a Hostile Government

WITH GUEST LECTURER
DR. MANFRED KOBER

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Plymouth, MN



**THE MISSION OF CENTRAL SEMINARY IS
TO ASSIST NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES
IN EQUIPPING SPIRITUAL LEADERS
FOR CHRIST-EXALTING
BIBLICAL MINISTRY.**



**CENTRAL BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

SCHEDULE

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM REGISTRATION

8:30 AM – 9:20 AM – SESSION I:
THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

9:20 AM – 9:35 AM – BREAK

9:35 AM – 10:25 AM – SESSION II:
THE UNTOLD STORY OF AN UNCOMMON SAINT

10:25 AM – 10:40 AM – BREAK

10:40 AM -11:30 AM- SESSION III:
SUFFERING SAINTS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

11:30 AM – 11:45 AM – BREAK

11:45 AM – 12:35 PM – SESSION IV:
GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

12:35 PM – LUNCH
FELLOWSHIP HALL



MACDONALD LECTURES SERIES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY



Every winter, Central Seminary conducts the MacDonald Lectures Series in Bible and Theology. This academic lecture series was created in memory of Charles MacDonald, Th.D. (1903–1971), beloved professor of pastoral theology at Central Seminary.



DR. CHARLES MACDONALD
CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, 1967-1971

Academically, Dr. MacDonald received a B.S. degree from Northwestern University, the Th.B., B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Northern Seminary, and a D.D. degree from Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis, where he taught the last four years of his life. From 1936 to 1939 he taught on the faculty of Northern Seminary.

Dr. MacDonald served three pastorates, at Elgin, Illinois, then eight years at Mount Morris, Michigan, and eighteen years at Lincoln Park, Michigan. His warm pastoral heart, his efficient dedication, his Biblical principles based on a life of successful service give this book a practical value certain to be helpful to prospective pastors, pastors and many laymen serving in local churches.

PREVIOUS MACDONALD LECTURES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY



2023 - Dr. Matt Shrader, The Building of a Baptist Tradition:

The Early History and Theology of Northern Baptist Seminaries

2022 - Dr. Ryan Martin, The Sources and Context of "Gracious Affections" in Jonathan Edwards

2021 - Dr. Preston Mayes, The Widow, Orphan, and Immigrant in Deuteronomy:

What can Moses teach Christians about the modern social justice movement?

2020 - Dr. David Saxon, Defending the Gospel:

Lessons from the Polemical Writings of Andrew Fuller

2019 - Dr. Jon Pratt, Issues in Sanctification

Previous Lecture Videos & Notes are available at centralseminary.edu

OUR SPEAKER

DR. MANFRED KOBER



Dr. Manfred Kober is a native of Germany. Born of Christian parents who perished as a result of World War II, he grew up in the war-torn province of Saxony, where he experienced Communist oppression firsthand. In 1952 he miraculously escaped to western Germany, leaving behind his relatives, including a brother and sister. Due to his background, Dr. Kober has a special love for America and a unique perspective on its place in history.

Dr. Kober received his Th.M and Th.D. degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas. He taught from 1969 until 1999 at the Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, chairing the Department of Theology. He also served as the research assistant for Russ Doughten Films and Mustard Seed International, a worldwide evangelism outreach ministry specializing in evangelistic Christian films and discipleship training.

Dr. Kober has contributed to a number of publications. He travels widely in a Bible conference ministry, speaking on such topics as prophecy, the Bible and archaeology, the Christian and his country, contemporary ethical issues and important issues facing fundamentalists.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Modular Courses

March 25-29 Counseling Problems & Procedures (Dr. Daniel Berger)

April 1-5 John (Dr. Robert Lillo)

Spring DMin Seminar - April 2-5

Affections, Identity, and Idolatry (Dr. Brett Williams)

Friends & Family Banquet – Monday, April 15

Contact Ron Gotzman to Host a Table or to be Invited

Commencement – Friday, May 10

7:00 PM Service

Summer Module Courses

May 20-24, Marriage & Family Counseling (Dr. Stuart Scott)

June 3-7 Acts, (David Melin, ThM)

Every fall, Central Seminary conducts its annual Fall Conference. This one-day conference is designed to edify and equip believers in the areas of ministry and Christian life.

FALL CONFERENCE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024

MORAL INJURY



Colonel Chris Melvin
SENIOR ARMY CHAPLAIN

Chris Melvin, MDiv, DMin, has served in USAF and the U.S. Army for the past 26 years and now serves as a Senior Army Chaplain with the Arizona Army National Guard. He has been deployed on two combat tours to Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa as an Army Chaplain. Chris is a graduate of the Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS) VA/DoD program and is actively involved in relationship retreats, counseling, as well as Moral Injury and PTS work.



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Matt Morrell

President, Central Baptist Theological Seminary

Senior Pastor, Fourth Baptist Church

Thank you for attending our MacDonald Lectures on navigating challenges in following Christ. Like Peter, we desire to 'rejoice and be glad' as we share in the sufferings of Christ as we wait for His return (1 Peter 4:12-13). We hope that our time together can be an encouragement to your ministry of sharing the message of Christ.

INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Central Baptist Theological Seminary intends its graduates to function as Christian leaders, and therefore expects that its students will develop in the following areas.

- Biblical and doctrinal knowledge (ideas that the graduate believes, knows, and understands, including moral convictions)
- Ordinate religious affection (Christ-like character that the graduate demonstrates, including devotion to God, moral fiber, integrity, perseverance, and self-denial)
- Functional ministry skills (tasks that the graduate performs in the execution of Christian leadership)



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ELECTRONIC DEVICES**



**RESTROOMS LOCATED
IN SEMINARY WING**

To maintain the safety of our school children, use only the seminary restrooms located in the seminary wing



LUNCH SCHEDULE

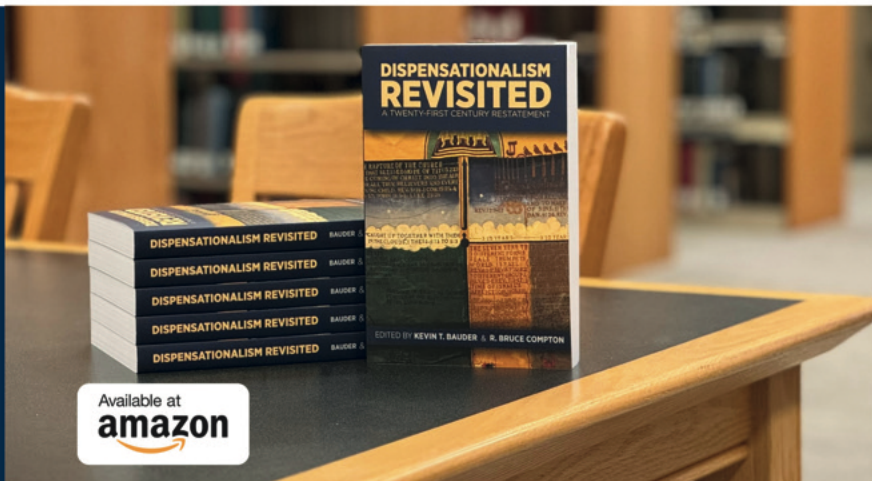
Food will be served in the Fellowship Hall, located in the lower level of Fourth Baptist Church & Christian School. Seminary staff will guide you downstairs. There is an elevator available for any who need it.

MINISTRIES OF CENTRAL SEMINARY



CENTRAL SEMINARY PRESS






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with Jared Page
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with Mark Stuckey & Brett Williams, Part 1
-  **Understanding the Kingdom of God--Ep. 043**
with Roy Beacham & Jeff Brown, Part 2
-  **Understanding the Kingdom of God--Ep. 042**
with Roy Beacham & Jeff Brown, Part 1



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SESSION 1:

THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

A TESTIMONY TO GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND PROTECTION

REMINISCENCES BY DR. MANFRED E. KOBER



THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

REMINISCENCES BY DR. MANFRED E. KOBER

Transcription of a Presentation at Saylorville Baptist Church, Des Moines, IA, in 1986

I think as we look back on our lives, each one of us, we cannot help but marvel at the Lord's goodness, at His leading and at His direction. And while I'm sure we all could say it has not always been easy, nonetheless it has always been good because we know that it was the Lord who brought us step by step to the place where we are today.

My students have never heard my testimony in its entirety. Because of this missionary conference, I've been asked to give it, but normally I don't talk about my life. For one thing, it opens up old wounds, and who'd like to do that? For another thing, it sounds too self-serving. But I appreciate the opportunity of sharing my testimony. There is one Scripture passage I always like to mention, because it rather perfectly reflects my experience, and it surely does reflect David's experience when he wrote in Psalm 40 concerning God's marvelous deliverance from his mortal enemy, probably King Saul, who sought after his life. God brought David out of a very difficult situation. Similarly, the Lord delivered me from a dreadful dilemma.

I think the words are well known to all of us. David said, **"I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit (and that's what Communism is, a horrible pit), out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust."** That's my testimony tonight. I trust it's yours as well.

As I think back on my very earliest childhood memories, I must conclude that it wasn't a very happy childhood. Those were the closing days of World War II. I lived in what is now East Germany. The Germans were still under Hitler's reign of terror. Probably my very earliest memory goes back to a time when I looked out of our third-floor apartment window and saw two Gestapo cars come to a screeching halt at the door right next to ours and then witnessed several policemen rushing into the house. They pulled out the neighbor's daughter Gertrud, in her early 30's. She was screaming for her life as they pushed her into the car. They placed her between two of those burly officers and sped away. Three weeks later her parents received notice that Gertrud had died of a heart attack. We found out some time later that she had actually been poisoned by the Nazis. What was her crime? She was overheard by a Nazi living in the same house as she said something critical of Hitler. A man named Herr Thoss had listened at Gertrud's apartment door, taken notes, then turned her in. That was the end of that lovely young lady. And we were afraid that the next time those cars came by, they would come to a screeching halt in front of our door.

The reason being that in those days Hitler waged a very, very vicious campaign against the Jewish people. First they had to identify themselves through the yellow star with the word "Jew" written on it, and then they lost their businesses, and then they lost every means of livelihood. I learned years later that, because the Jewish people were unable to get employment and food for themselves, my grandfather and his brother-in-law helped Jewish people. As Christians who loved the Jews, they went

to their homes and deposited handfuls of money into their mailboxes, so they could go out and buy something to eat. Those Jewish people probably never knew where the money came from. My grandfather felt that we as Christians had an obligation to God's chosen people. He, of all people, could have been mad at the Jewish people. Some crooked Jewish businessmen in our town cheated him out of 45,000 Marks. He never got his loan repaid. But he knew Genesis 12:3, "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee." He felt it wasn't just a commandment; it was a privilege to help the Jewish people. And that's what he did. My relatives told me later on that he predicted that "Hitler might as well give up. He has lost that war before he has begun it, because he is touching the chosen people." Since 1933 Hitler had persecuted the Jewish people. My grandfather said, "The Jewish people are God's plumb line by which He is going to judge the nations. And God is going to be through with Germany."

It's only by God's grace that one third of Germany is still free. One third is what we now call East Germany, and the other third is now part of Poland and Russia. But my grandfather and some of my other relatives helped these Jewish people. When they couldn't go into stores any longer, they were invited into our home. Each evening we had Jewish people at our supper table. We didn't know who they were. My grandfather never introduced them to us. We were giving them food and then sent them on their way; hopefully many made it to Eastern European countries and some of them to Israel. We never knew what became of them, but we trust that at least we had some measure of success in helping Jewish people get out of Germany.

The Gestapo knew what we were doing, and that's why we feared that the next Gestapo car would pull up in front of our house—and it would have, as surely as the dawn follows the night—if Hitler had won the war. When the Communists sifted through the documents in the city hall of the small town where we lived, about 40 miles inside East Germany, the town of Falkenstein, just a small city of 18,000 people, about 40 miles inside East Germany, they found a list that Hitler's henchmen had made, of people who would be eliminated once the war was won. Hitler wanted to take care of his enemies without and then he was going to take care of the enemies within. Those were Christians, and especially those Christians who helped the hated Jews. Guess whose name was at the very top of the list? Hermann Wolf and family. That included us: my grandfather, Hermann Wolf and his children and their children. So I am glad, for one, that Hitler didn't win the war. Otherwise we would all have been sent to Buchenwald. Well, I think that God honored the faith of our grandfather because through him all my relatives, at least on my mother's side, and many on my father's side, came to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The war was coming to an end, and maybe some of you Americans were among those who bombed us. If you were, I'd like to speak with you outside as soon as the meeting has concluded. At first they came over with large squadrons of bombers. As long as I live, I'll never forget the threatening sound of those engines, hundreds of planes at a time. They bombed every large city: Dresden, Chemnitz, which is the communists changed to Karl-Marx-Stadt and Plauen. As a matter of fact, when they bombed Plauen, a rather large industrial city near us, I was working in the fields. I was four years old at the time but I was already working on my grandparents' farm, my sister along with me, and my mother. We were picking up little kernels of wheat that the farmers had left behind, to keep alive, because there was no food reaching us. The Americans had tightened their stranglehold on the part of Germany where we lived.

The bombers went over. Eight miles away they bombed the city; a few minutes later the black smoke rose to the sky. Hundreds were killed in two hours. If that doesn't leave a deep imprint on your life, nothing will. First they came over with those bombers. Then they came over with smaller spotter planes because the army was moving in on the ground, and to precede the army they came in with some small planes, with an open door and mounted machine guns on the door. I don't know what they did

elsewhere, but in that part of Germany where we lived, they were shooting anything on the ground that moved.

That day the planes came to fly over our town. Providentially, I suppose, because we kids were always playing on the street, my great aunt, a rather portly lady, about a Sabbath day journey around (and that's a significant detail I want you to remember for just a moment, came to the rescue). She invited me to go with her to visit some friends in the forest. She was getting scared that we would be bombed—as indeed we were that day. She wanted me to go with her to the forest where she had some friends; actually they lived at the edge of a small town, the town of Beerheide. When we came to the farmhouse, we found that these people, in turn, had locked up the farm and had fled farther into the forest.

As we tried to gain entrance into the farmhouse, those spotter planes were coming near and you could see them circle, and their circles came ever so close. No shade trees to hide under, and the only visible means for hiding was, you guessed it, the outhouse. It was a typical farmhouse, four rooms and a path. Out in the pasture there was that little building standing. The only refuge we had for me and my great aunt (and I mean she was large) was to squeeze into that outhouse. I remember standing there for three hours until it got dark, watching those spotter planes circle overhead. Once it got dark, we left our hiding place and went back home. We found during that day several bombs had been dropped over our town. Thankfully, none of our relatives was injured or killed in that raid. It was a very tense, fearsome time.

The Americans had been given incorrect information. When they approached on the ground, they had heard that a German army was hiding out in our town, so they surrounded our small town and for three weeks, several hours a day, they lobbed large shells on the town—these 200 pounders—through cannons and tanks. You could hear the sound of the cannon going whump and then ooooooooo; it gave us 15 seconds to make it to the safest room in the house, which was normally down in the basement. Then there was the explosion and the sound of breaking glass and bursting mortar, and so on.

For three weeks we feared for our lives because one never knew when these cannons were going off. The Americans kept food from us because they wanted to starve the German army out. The Germans had fled way to the east. There were no soldiers around anywhere. Before they retreated, they had thrown railroad cars off overpasses onto the road below, as we little kids watched in amazement. The Americans were getting close, and then the soldiers just put a little explosive charge under each car, and Poof! Like a child's toy the cars flew over to the side of the road. Then they brought in these big earth-moving machines. They must have been Caterpillars. They moved anything, even buildings, out of their way. Unbelievable! What a stark contrast to what we saw a few days later when, unfortunately, the Russians were permitted to come in.

When we came back upstairs to our apartment after one of these shelling attacks, we found out that the elderly couple across from us just had been torn to shreds by the shrapnel of exploding shells. I was so afraid that the next night our lives would be snuffed out, that I asked my mother what would happen to me if tonight we would all be killed? And it was then that my godly mother explained to me in very simple terms the plan of salvation. She said, "You can be sure that you're going to heaven where your father and I will be waiting for you, providing you trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. There's nothing you have to do to be saved. Christ has done it all in your stead, and the moment you believe He's your Savior from sin, that very moment He will give you eternal life. And it doesn't matter what happens to you after that, the moment you die you will be in the presence of the Lord and your father and I will be

there waiting for you.” And of course that’s the assurance that I wanted more than anything else, because we had no idea what would happen to us minutes later, let alone hours later.

I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior in those closing days of the war. Not until I came to stay with relatives in New England did I come to actual assurance of salvation. That is, I could say with positive certainty, “I am saved, and I’m saved eternally.” My Methodist relatives—and they are the old-time, fundamental Methodists—did not stress that aspect of the Christian faith. But I thank the Lord today for a Christian father and a Christian mother, a mother who led me, who led my brother and sister very early in our lives, to the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust you’ve had that experience in your life, to come personally to Jesus Christ for cleansing and forgiveness of sins. That makes life worth living. Apart from that, I don’t know what I would have done.

The most startling event during the American siege was the sounding of a shell on the granite sidewalk outside our basement window. We were sleeping, as children, like sardines on the concrete floor. There wasn’t enough room for the adults to lie down. All the men were fighting in the war. The women had to stand guard along the wall. They stood up all night long. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, with the cannons going off, there was a big crashing sound right outside our window. The next morning when we kids climbed out of our basement confinement and went out in the fresh air a little bit, we had a rather macabre game. We would go out with a box, and whatever kid found the largest pieces of shrapnel from those shells, had won. I won for that day, as I vividly remember, because outside our basement window one of those shells had struck—but instead of detonating, upon impact the fuse had broken off with powder and everything intact and that had penetrated the basement wall, which is where I found it sticking. I pulled it out and then I put it in my box. No one had ever seen one of those things before, so I won.

But what had happened to the shell? Rather than bouncing into our basement like it normally would have done, as we figured the trajectory, it rather bounced on the street. From there it then bounced into the basement window of our neighbor’s house where the shell was intact and full of powder but no fuse on it. It bounced on the basement floor, it bounced in the ceiling, and the lady for whatever reason was not in that room. She should have been there. Providentially she wasn’t. She and her son were upstairs. She was sleeping in her bed, and it threw her up and down several times, as if she were sleeping on a trampoline. They told us about God’s marvelous interposition in their behalf. Soon thereafter, as they came over and related their harrowing experience, we all bowed for a word of prayer, thanking God for His safe deliverance.

While the Americans had us surrounded, the only ones who could get any food was us kids. We were small enough to escape notice of the American hidden observers and under cover of darkness we would crawl outside of our town to a little brook called the Goeltzsch. We brought back some leaves called Spitzwegerich (ribwort plantain) and Breitwegerich (broad plantain) and plants like that which grow in moist soil near brooks or ponds. We’d put those in water, boil them and eat that broth and thus at least were halfway kept alive. That went on for three weeks.

Then finally somebody picked up a white flag, marched out to the Americans and said, “What do you want? We’re not fighting you!” They should have caught on after two days. Nobody was replying with armaments from our town. The Americans were super cautious. So, they lifted the siege and rather than moving farther east they just stayed there around our town. And that’s when I picked up my first English. My relatives surmised that if I went out to the Americans, with even a minimum knowledge of English, I might get some food. So my first words were in the English language, “I am hungry.” It took me

awhile to learn that, but it finally stuck with me. My sister two years older, and my cousin just as old as I am, marched out to the American camp. They had just finished breakfast. I didn't know what they were eating. Later I found out that it was pancakes, those flat little things, you know, with butter and syrup. They had a nice stack left over and so we tried our English on them. "I am hungry." They totally ignored us. We asked a second time. But instead of offering us some of the leftovers, they took a can of gasoline, poured that gas over the pancakes and burned them in front of our eyes. Now, I didn't start World War II. We kids didn't have anything to do with those concentration camps. But we felt the viciousness of people in the war. However, this was nothing compared to what the Russians did a few days later.

The Americans came through our town, as you see them in some of those old war movies. Triumphant they stood on top of the tanks and on their armed personnel carriers. They reached in their pockets and threw chocolate bars and chewing gum to the kids. I saw it with my own eyes, so what kept me from getting some? The bigger kids behind who pushed me out of the way so they could maybe dive for that chocolate bar or that piece of candy. I never got any, but everyone else around me got some. Then suddenly, the "Amis" were gone. They never told us. We might have gone with them. The Americans pulled out; and what everybody had feared came to pass. The Russians were coming.

I don't know how much you've been told during the missionary conference, but you must understand that the common people of Russia are just as gracious and nice as common people anywhere else. But in war time, with the wrong commanding officer, and with the ravages of the war, man can become a beast, and especially so when that warfare is directed by the Communists, who have no regard for morality, for ethics, for right and wrong. We saw it in South Vietnam. We witnessed it in Cambodia, where the Communists butchered one-third of the population. What the Americans did as they invaded from the West is nothing in comparison with the atrocities perpetrated by the Russian invaders from the East. Sadly, the first to feel the full brunt and brutality of battle are not the men, but the women. I'll just give you one illustration.

We knew that in the larger cities to the east of us where the Russians had come, all the pregnant women were made to stand in a line, and then the brutal Russians tore open their wombs and killed the fetuses in these hapless women, out in public. That was part of Russian warfare. Needless to say, the women in the part of our country heard about that and they were terrified. Happily, God spared our small town. But in every larger town where the Russians went, their commanding officers gave them three weeks of free reign to do as they pleased. We saw how the Americans were. A few days later, we saw how the Russians were, and we were never mistaken about whose side we wanted to be on.

The Russians came and they put up the Iron Curtain. That was 1949. They completely upended the school system. They fired all the old teachers. They put new young teachers in our schools who had just undergone six weeks of intensive training and political indoctrination. They were already convinced Communists, and they were now told how to take a whole generation of children and make Communists out of them. Their sentiment is this: Give me a child until he is eight, and he will be mine for life. The exception proves the rule. Yours truly has not swallowed the Communist line. But as a matter of fact, most of the young people in East Germany, if I could take you over there this evening, have not swallowed the Communist line. Because any rational person can differentiate between lies and truth. If you are constantly lied to, day after day in school, and you step outside the school and see exactly the opposite to be true, you have no respect for your teachers. They didn't want our respect, they wanted our total obedience. I mean they were disciplinarians from the word Go.

I remember sitting in the classroom of one brutal teacher and if I so much as turned my head slightly to the left or slightly to the right, I was called to the front of the class and slapped in the face by the teacher. That happened to me twice, so I had vivid recollections of that. My students at Faith think I'm tough on them now just because I don't let them chew gum in class and I don't let them sleep for more than five continuous minutes. Listen, you should be in the classroom of some Communist school system. It's another reason why you ought to be thankful you're an American.

The teachers had it in especially for those of us who believed in God and the Lord Jesus Christ. They tried to educate a generation of atheists. What especially bothered them was that when it came to the issue of the God of the Bible and of Christ, those students in class who really did better than some of the others always got to their feet (there were about four or five of us) and objected to what the teachers were trying to tell us. I recollect one instance, which was a rather hazardous time for me, where the professor, a young, very young radical Communist in one of the classes, explained to us, for I don't know how many times, the origin of the universe, from one little speck of dust. It gradually evolved into the whole universe and there was this big bang. You don't need a God to believe in universe, in nature, in science. As a shy ten-year old lad, I didn't know how to refute that Communist atheist evolutionist. But I knew that what he said was directly in opposition to what the Bible taught, what my parents and Sunday School teachers had told me. I raised my hand, and finally the teacher recognized me. Proper procedure was that you stand to your feet and you bow to the teacher and then if he's pleased, he'll call on you. I said, "Herr Lehrer (Mr. Teacher), I can't prove that what you say is wrong; but I know that the Bible teaches that God created the world. And when you die, you will see that I was right and you were wrong." That's a famous last thing to say to a Communist teacher! And literally, all hell broke loose in that school.

The teachers evidently had a faculty meeting and there they decided they would need to put the thumbscrews on us Christians a little tighter, and they did. They lowered our grades. They made us come in after hours. We had classes six days a week. We had to come in evenings to help some of the slower students, two or three hours a night, in their school work. And during the summertime, when we should have enjoyed at least a time off from school, our teachers went with us—they accompanied us everywhere—to camps. We had fun swimming, hiking, sightseeing and the like. But I was chosen to keep the diary, an accurate account of what everybody said and what everybody did during the day. They wanted me to play stool pigeon on my fellow classmates, and I refused to do that. I simply recorded our day's activities, never any negative comments my friends might have made about school or politics. Needless to say, I was in hot water with the teachers because of that.

All our teachers tried to cram atheism down our throats even more than before. My homeroom teacher, who was my next door neighbor, started an anti-Christian tirade in my class. And providentially I remembered something that happened just a few years before. I said, "Do you remember, Mr. Clemmer, do you remember those final days of World War II? Do you recall that night when a shell struck outside on the sidewalk by our window and then bounced through your window? And you and your mother, for whatever reason, were upstairs rather than in the room where you normally hide out? You came to our house that morning, and we bowed together and thanked God for his marvelous deliverance? Are you now denying that it was God that protected you? To whom did we all give thanks that morning?" I said that in front of the class, and his face turned as red as a beet. He didn't say a word in response. But you know something? He never said another word against God. He left me alone. I can't prove it, but I think from that time on I had one friend on the faculty.

Well, the Lord in His all-wise plan saw fit to take my parents away from us. My father was probably killed by the Russians on the Baltic Sea. My mother died soon after the end of the war as a result of it. That left us three kids stranded, my brother, my sister and myself. Word of our family situation finally reached my relatives in New England who had come here in 1927 to escape from the depression of Germany in those days. They invited one of us three children to come over here and join them. But when that invitation finally came in 1951, my brother and sister had already been adopted by fine Christian people. They had moved elsewhere. I was still living with my aged grandfather, so the happy lot of coming to the United States fell on me. Just one little problem—how to get out? How to make it across the barbed wire fences and mine fields?

In those days, you still could go to East Berlin because the wall was not put up until 25 years ago this year, 1961. You could still walk from East Berlin over to West Berlin and then fly from that capitalistic island surrounded by Communist sea across 118 miles of East German territory to West Germany. But we couldn't take that escape route, because we lived in a county called Vogtland, or the county of the counts, where the Russians had special military installations, radar stations, rockets, uranium mines. In these mines they clean much of their uranium for their atom and hydrogen bombs they build in Russia. So for some years we couldn't even leave that county. We were in a prison within a prison.

My relatives tried to hire a mountain guide who would take me across a small mountain range, the Erzgebirge, over into Czechoslovakia and through a corner of Czechoslovakia to the safety of West Germany. But that escape route looked too hazardous because many people that left with these guides were never heard of again. Evidently these unscrupulous men killed their victims, robbed them—because they had converted all their earthly possessions into jewelry or gold or silver. We know most of them never reached their destination in West Germany. They never wrote a letter back home, they never sent a package. And while I certainly did not have much of this world's goods, my relatives weren't about to take a chance with me like that. So there was just one avenue left, and that was through direct, divine interposition. As it turned out, the good hand of God would soon be evident.

We had been praying for the Lord's direction in seeing me out. I have never, once in my life, doubted God or His goodness, because I reflect, as you reflect on God's leading in your life, and I just marvel how the Lord works out events, things that are impossible. I sat down, as a little kid—I wasn't even a teenager yet—and I wrote a letter to the East German government, very simply asking them for a permit to leave. You don't do that in a Communist country because that means either you are guilty of treason, in which case you belong in jail, or you're crazy. Why would you want to leave the most perfect society on earth (from their vantage point, a Communist country) and come to a decadent country like West Germany? So you belong in a mental institution, and the alternatives are not very enviable.

But you know what? God honored our faith and He answered our prayers, as He always does. Maybe not in our time or in our way, but in this case in our time in the way we had asked Him to do it. An official-looking envelope arrived in the mail after three weeks. My relatives tore it open for me, curious individuals that they were. They thought—*Oh, this looks like an exit permit. Ha, ha, somebody's trying to pull a joke on us.* They knew that we were trying to find a way for me to get out. It took them three days to realize that this was the real McCoy, a genuine exit permit. As soon as they realized, "Hey, this guy can go," they quickly packed my suitcases for me, put me on the train and took me as close to the border as they were permitted to go, which was about three miles away from Bavaria, from the West German border.

Just hours later, I arrived near Würzburg in West Germany and stayed with some friends who had welcomed me and wanted me to stay with them until the United States would issue me a visa.

I had arrived in West Germany, rejoicing in my newfound freedom. It was unbelievable to walk through the streets and look in the store windows. And I didn't have a dime! Do you know the first thing I wanted to buy once I got out of East Germany? The thing I coveted more than anything else? The thing which actually, for the first and only time of my life, made me beg somebody for a dime, for just ten Pfennige? A stick of American chewing gum. I despise it when it's chewed in the classroom and in worship services. But to me, that was the ultimate symbol of America, and that was going to be my new home. A friend of mine gave me the Groschen (a dime). That is the first thing I bought in West Germany.

My newfound freedom, or my newfound joy because of that freedom, was somewhat short-lived. Somebody informed the police back in East Germany that my ultimate plans were to come to the United States. I did not have to say that when I applied for the exit permit. But the police came to my relatives' house. They said, "We know the boy is going to America. You have him back here by March 15." That was 1952. "If he's not back by that date, we are going to knock on your door and you are going to have a very difficult time." Well, I had left February 8. That gave me about a month to think what I would do. If you had been in my place, what decision would you have made? Would you have said, "Oh, well, the Lord saw me safely out. Now let the Lord take care of my relatives." Actually, my choice wasn't all that difficult, because I was so homesick I didn't care what would happen if I went back. I just wanted to see my brother, my sister, my grandfather, all my relatives. I knew I would never see them again. Once an individual leaves a Communist country, it is permanent. He is not able to go back. And I expected that to be my lot as well.

I was ready to get back on the train and head back and face the music, so that my brother and sister and other relatives wouldn't have to suffer because of my leaving. But my godly uncle from East Germany, who was my legal guardian in those days, wrote me another letter. He said, "Manfred, let's wait awhile before you make your final decision. If God can perform one miracle to get you out, He certainly can perform a second miracle to keep you out." As you can see, that second miracle happened.

I followed my uncle's instructions to let that March 15 deadline pass. It came and went, and absolutely nothing happened. That is miraculous. When the police say "We're going to be knocking on your door on March 15," you may be sure they are there very early at 7 in the morning, maybe even earlier. They completely dropped the matter. It is as if I had never lived there. They know I lived there, because each year when I apply for a permit for East Germany, I have to go to the same police station where I originally left, and I go in and there's the little guard at the door—it's like a big jailhouse, really—and he opens the door and it slams shut behind you, and you go in the room through several hallways inside the building, sort of like a maze. Then you are finally at the desk. They already have a copy of your application form. They want to know, "Have you ever lived here? When did you leave here? Where did you live? How did you leave?" And they already have all that on file. They pull out a file on me from their system, about a half inch thick. They just leaf through it, shake their head and give me the stamp in my passport to permit me to stay there for however long I'm going to stay.

Each year I'm afraid they are going to close the trap. So far they haven't. And through God's direct intervention, I was allowed to leave and I'm allowed to come back. I entered the United States exactly one year to the day after arriving in West Germany, February 8, 1953. My friends in West Germany with whom I stayed were kind enough to take care of me—very good people. My relatives in the United States had sent some money periodically so they would have something to help me with my food and

clothing. Then the Americans finally gave me an entry permit. Actually, it was easier for me to get out of East Germany than to get into the United States. It took the Commies three weeks to get me an exit permit. It took you Americans a whole year to give me an entry permit. But of course in those days the USA had a quota system, only so many, for stance, 20,000 Germans were permitted to come to America during any given year, and the quota had been full for the previous year, so I had to wait until the following year.

My friends took me to the ship in the harbor of Bremerhaven and helped me to board the second largest passenger liner on earth, the SS America, with the displacement of 40,000 tons. That was my first experience with a ship and with the ocean. I was duly impressed. Those friends just put me on the boat. There was a family who was supposed to take care of me during those eight days of crossing. We had a little gentleman's agreement with them. I said, "I'll behave myself if you leave me alone." They said, "*Das ist gut so. Wir sehen uns öfters*" ("That's just fine. We'll run into each other often"). And so they let me have free run of the ship. I shared my cabin with three other fellows, considerably older than I.

The problem was I didn't speak any English except for "I am hungry," and all the signs were in English on the ship. I tried to make it to the dining hall and I ended up in the swimming pool—not in the water—but twice on the same day in the pool area. (Those ships are so large, you can easily lose your way). Finally, I found my way to the dining hall, but then I was too embarrassed or too proud to ask the people sitting at the table with me for help. There was a lady who owned a chain of restaurants in Germany, a man who owned one of the largest industrial plants in West Germany, and a university professor. I did not want to ask them what this or that item was on the English menu. My relatives had asked me to read an etiquette book before they ever let me leave home. According to German etiquette, when ordering food in a restaurant, you eat it all; you never return any of it. You clean the plate. That is proper etiquette. I never knew what I was pointing at on the menu. The waiter brought it and I ate it. Some of it was good, some of it not so good. The thing that I liked best, finally, was something that I found out several weeks later, to be corn flakes. They tasted pretty good, especially when the waiter put on some milk. And then sprinkled some sugar on the flakes, and they tasted even better. So morning, noon and night I was looking for the words corn flakes, on the menu. My travel companions undoubtedly wondered—what is it with that little guy and corn flakes? I rather enjoyed them!

This was February, 1953. I don't know how many of you get *National Geographic* magazine. Our copy came yesterday. It mentions in an article on dike construction in Holland that the worst storm raged in the North Sea in February of 1953, and at least 1600 Dutch people were killed in that storm. Just as we were bobbing along on top of 30 to 40 foot waves in the English Channel during that time, I had never seen the ocean before, as I mentioned, so I thought these waves were the order of the day. But then I thought something was strange because there were only two or three of us that still made it to the dining hall. And there were fewer and fewer waiters. Now the reason I went to the dining hall was not because I felt so well, but my relatives, again, had told me to keep from getting seasick: two things—just keep eating, and keep exercising. No matter what happens to your food, just keep eating, and I did, three times a day. And I found another crazy little kid who enjoyed exercising as much as I did. There was a ping pong table up on deck. Oh, it's fun to play ping pong on the deck of a ship heaving in the ocean. At one time he was up there and he slams the ball down, and then the ship tilts and you really have your come-uppance as you can take your turn at slamming the ball down his throat. So that's what we did several hours a day. The steps are like this, and when the boat heaves just right, the steps become perpendicular—they actually do. It's a miracle I didn't break something during that ocean crossing.

It was such a severe storm that it took two additional days for that ship to make it. We were blown way off course. Then we were running low on fuel, so we had to stop at Halifax and take on additional fuel before we could make it to New York City. Long before we reached New York harbor, customs officials, the harbor pilot and immigration personnel boarded the America. A certain kind lady from the Immigration Service somehow contacted this lone traveler and said that she wanted to take care of me. She assured me that she would see to it that I would safely get off the ship once we had landed. She promised to assist me in meeting my relatives at Pier 15 on the Hudson River. So I waited patiently with my little hand luggage in that central lounge where she told me to stay until she came back for me. As I remember, it was a beautiful lounge with large leather chairs and couches. But there were no windows to the outside world. I had so looked forward to seeing the skyscrapers of New York and the Statue of Liberty. While everybody else lined the deck looking at the New York skyline and especially the beautiful Statue of Liberty, that symbol of welcome to America, which visitors and immigrants have heard so much about and longed to see, I obediently stayed confined to the lounge. I never saw anything of New York City during that first crossing, because I was too obedient for my own good. I stayed in that lounge. One hour passed, then two, three, four hours. Sadly, that pleasant lady had forgotten all about me.

Only later did I find out the reason for the long wait. It seems that the captain of that ship had to turn the ship on the fulcrum of the pier, just inches away from the pier, under the ship's own power, because of the dock workers' strike. The captains of the tugboats were on strike. Their boats normally push the ship around the turn, against the pier. I have some aerial pictures that my relatives saved from newspapers of the day, showing that marvelous feat; but I didn't know what was going on. Four hours! Finally, I saw everybody leaving the ship, even the waiters and the stewards, and all those people with whom I had become acquainted occasionally in the dining hall, and I figured it was time for me to leave.

I came to the pier, I looked for the letter K, the first letter of my last name, because they had told me under that would be my luggage, and it was there and so was my uncle whom I had never met. Outside were some of my other relatives waiting, and it was marvelous getting acquainted with those folks and with the country, of which I had heard much, but which turned out to be much more marvelous, much more wonderful than I had ever imagined.

I've made that trip by boat several more times since then, and I never tire of arriving in New York Harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty and all it symbolizes with that sonnet so expressively stating:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore; [and that's what I was]
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

I think that's God's destiny for America, at least in part, to be a refuge for the homeless, to be a home for those who are persecuted and hounded elsewhere. The lamp on the Statue of Liberty symbolizes, of course, the light of freedom; not just political, but spiritual freedom that America sheds around the world. If it were not for America's missionary activity, there would hardly be any missionaries on earth. Of the world's 50,000 evangelical missionaries, 45,000 come right here from the United States.

Well, when I went with my relatives to their home in Springfield, Massachusetts, I attended a special school for six weeks, two hours in the morning, where a teacher gave special attention to Polish and Greek and Italian students who had come in all throughout the year. She spent 15-20 minutes with each

of us personally during the day. After six weeks, I took a test and tested out of this program and attended regular public school classes. I went to a technical high school, thinking that I might like mechanical engineering. I love drafting and designing. I had a high school teacher who promised me a job in his business. He was designing guns and military hardware for the Springfield armory. But I first wanted to go away to a year of Bible college to get ever so firmly grounded in the Word.

My pastor in those days greatly encouraged me along those lines, Dr. David Nettleton, the former president of our school. That's how I happened to end up in Iowa. He had invited me to teach at Faith Baptist Bible College here in Ankeny, Iowa, when I concluded my studies at Dallas Seminary. I recall being so impressed when I first arrived here in the States because the first words I heard from the first American pastor were in German. Dr. Nettleton had taken the pains to learn a few German sentences so he could welcome me properly in my native language at the Regular Baptist Church in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Halfway through my high school years, the East German government unexpectedly declared a general amnesty for anybody who left before 1957. No matter how you got out of the country, you could come back. All of a sudden the good hand of God opened the door for me to see my relatives again. I did not go back to Germany until I finished my studies at Baptist Bible Seminary, located in those days in Johnson City, New York. The school is now known as Baptist Bible College (more recently, Clarks Summit University), located in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania.

In 1962/1963 I did graduate studies at the University of Erlangen and during that time made four visits to East Germany, each time taking with me needed items such as medicine and clothing, but especially Christian literature for pastors and my many relatives. I recall that at Christmas time in 1962 I took with me five suitcases filled with a total of 500 books. With folks in West Germany and the USA praying for me, the Lord made it possible for me to cross the border without a problem.

Addendum — As it turned out, I made 50 trips behind the Iron Curtain while there was still an Iron Curtain (1962-1989), at least once a year to the DDR and once a year to Czechoslovakia. My brave family joined me every other year. How the Lord wonderfully protected us in many tense situations, I will relate another time.



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