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Interview of Clyde Antwine

Clyde Antwine

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This is Joe Hacker and we are recording today in Augsburg, Germany, talking with Clyde Antwine who is the preacher of the gospel here.

Hacker: Brother Antwine, could you give us a brief survey of the history of your work on the mission field and in Europe?

Antwine: I came to Europe in July, 1959. I first came to Zurich, Switzerland and stayed there for seven years until 1966 at which time we returned to the States for a two-year stay. Since July, 1968, we have been here in Augsburg. Our actual experience on the mission field covers almost nine years on the field.

Hacker: Can you give us a brief sketch of the history of the work here in Augsburg and as far as you would like to go in this region of Germany?

Antwine: As far as this region is concerned, I probably don't know enough to tell about it but I can tell something about the work here in Augsburg and its history. It was begun in 1952 in the form of a tent meeting conducted by Jack Nadeau who was then preaching in Munich. Augsburg was about 60% destroyed during the war and at this time in 1952 there was quite a bit of rubble still left. They conducted a tent meeting here just as an experiment to see what response would be to the gospel. The meeting was planned for a week but the crowds were so great and the response was so great that they extended for two weeks. At the end of this time, there were ten people baptized. This was the beginning then of the church, at least in modern times, here in Augsburg. The response was great numerically because this was at a time when Germany was still recovering from World War II and the economy had not reached the peak it has now. The people were searching for God more as this was the case in all of the other German cities.

Hacker: How did the work develop then following that beginning into where you now have a building and a program with the American church and the German church as well?

Antwine: Well, in 1954, I believe it was, Ted Nadeau, Jack's brother, moved to Augsburg and stayed almost two years. In 1956, the Hinds Miller family from Frankfurt moved to Augsburg and stayed here for twelve years until we came in 1968. It was during the Miller's stay here that the building was built, a large piece of property was bought, a very nice church building was built as well as a nice preacher's home. This was accomplished through the help of the American brethren. There has been an American congregation here through the years which has helped tremendously in every phase of the work and this was especially so as they began the building of the building. I understand from talking with others who were here that the American brethren arranged for bulldozers to come and level off the property and they saved a lot of money in this way as well as contributing manual labor and financial help for the erection of the building.

Hacker: How did the churches in America respond to this? Did they make most of the financial contribution?

Antwine: I believe about \$10,000 was contributed from the American brethren. Hinds Miller, the German preacher, made a trip to the States raising money, and I believe the figure was about \$10,000 that the American churches contributed. The rest was paid off by the Germans and the Americans. The building is almost paid for now. We are paying the last mortgages on the building which are very low.

Hacker: How has the relationship between the American church and the German church varied through the years? Has this changed any with the change in the economy?

Antwine: Of course, you always have the barrier of the language and this prevents the fellowship which we would like to have exist. The German brethren here have a very deep and high regard for the American Christians because of the help which they have rendered through the years, and I might add, still are. At present we have a very fine American group. It is small, and it is comprised entirely of young couples at the present time. Most of them are rather new converts, but they have a very generous spirit and they help tremendously in a financial way. The German brethren see this and it makes for a good relationship.

Hacker: Brother Antwine, you've had quite a bit of experience on the mission field. What, in your experience, have been methods which you tried but have found unsuccessful in Europe? The second question relating to that, why do you feel that these particular methods did fail? After you finish with that, we will look at the positive side of this. We will take both the negative and the positive.

Antwine: Well, it is actually difficult for me to talk about methods of mission work as such because I think we still would have to say we really don't know too much about it, even though we have had some years of experience. In trying to think of methods which I personally have tried and they have failed, it is hard to say what a failure is and what isn't a failure. In answer to this question, I would say the things we try which don't work out, we usually revert back to the old method of just preaching the gospel. I see no substitute for this. I can't really think of anything I have undertaken which would be new-- maybe, it's because I haven't undertaken anything. I can't think at the moment of any one thing that I myself have invented or tried to invent.

Hacker: How have you approached the German nationals specifically? How do you contact them?

Antwine: My thinking through my experience on the field has developed into a pattern which I feel, at least for my work here, is necessary for the strengthening of the church. I am coming more and more to believe that we need strong churches in Germany from which the gospel will radiate. I've come to see my usefulness in the work here as more building churches rather than evangelizing. I think probably this is true for most American workers. I think most of the

evangelizing, reaching new people and baptizing them, will probably come through Germans. I think we can render a great service in strengthening and building churches. This is my goal while I am here in Augsburg. I hope to leave some day and can say I left a church behind that was strong and that I had a part at least in grounding the brethren we have in the truth. This is where I am really concentrating my efforts at the present time. For example, I believe very firmly in having some kind of program working with the men and since I have been here, we have started a men's class and I hope to continue this throughout the time I am here. For the past year, we have been studying church history, tracing the fall, the apostacy, seeing how all of these things developed, and this has provided an excellent opportunity for them to see why we almost fanatically stick with the Bible. They have understood our plea for New Testament Christianity in a better way. We will resume this study in the fall. We are down to the Middle Ages now. We will resume this study in the fall and continue on through the reformation, and then we plan to study the doctrines of various groups so that they really know what we believe, why we believe it and know how to talk with other people. This is all a part of my thinking of the German people having to reach the other German people or at least can better do it.

Hacker: Along that line, what is your experience and perhaps your attitude out of this experience toward subsidizing the German preachers with American money and perhaps even training them in America?

Antwine: This is a difficult question to answer because it varies from person to person. We have some very fine German preachers who have studied in the States and certainly this would be no criticism of them. They are contributing in a wonderful way to the church. At the same time, we have had a lot of fellows go to the States and we've lost them. It is my thinking, and I think this is becoming more true of every mission field, that it isn't best for fellows to go to the States to study. Certainly not as a blanket rule. The ideal situation is training on the field. There are too many things involved when fellows go to the States. We have some very fine exceptions and some very fine preachers. I think it is better as a whole to say that we train the workers here.

Hacker: In coming to Europe with your family and raising your family, there are some real personal adjustments that have to be made. What advice would you give to a young man and his wife and a young man who may some day have a wife that would help prepare them for a work in Europe?

Antwine: First of all, I would say it has to be a decision made by both partners. The wife, I think, should be willing to go and express her willingness to go because if this isn't the case, if she has reservations about going or doesn't want to go in the first place, but hides it because she knows her husband does, this will come out in the strain and stress of the mission field. Believe me, there are strains and stresses and there is no reason to say there aren't. When you are learning a language, adopting new customs, and all of these things involved, these frustrations will come out. If two people, and I stress two people, in a family (all members of the family) if they aren't dedicated to this task, usually tragedy finds them. This is the first thing--both husband and wife are committed to the task.

Secondly, I think your mental preparation is very important--you know why you are coming and you know that it is going to require a lot of maturity to stick

it out through thick and thin and that you come prepared to do this. I think some of the greatest damage done in mission work has been to come and leave before you have really settled down to accomplish anything, and especially in those areas of the world where a language has to be learned there is no short cut to effectiveness. It just takes time to get ready, and I think two people ought to come with this mental attitude of preparing to stay for a long time.

Hacker: You believe then that probably the first step in the preparation would be their analysis of their own attitude, spiritually as well as psychologically and emotionally and then secondly, language preparation?

Antwine: Language preparation, I feel, is very very important. As to how long, this varies from person to person and even varies among the opinions of missionaries. My own personal feeling is a year or perhaps two years of concentrated language study and then come to the field because there are things you just can't learn until you are on the field. I think you need to have exposure to the language before you come because you can save yourself a lot of time if you know the basic grammar for example, the fundamentals of the language before you come, this is very helpful. I know in our case, the year before we came I took a year of concentrated German. Of course, I suppose I delved into it deeper because I knew I was coming to Germany and I had a reason for devoting so much time to it. I took a year of very concentrated German, worked at it real hard, and then came directly to the field. This was fresh on my mind and I had the good fortune of working with Jack McKinney in Zurich who is a very talented person in the language and he studied with me privately and repeated the grammar book. In this way it gave me a good basis, a good foundation in the language. I don't think you could stress the importance of the language too much, because if the gospel is this important that you give up your homeland to come and to preach, it is important to learn to communicate as well as you can to the best of your ability in the language.

Hacker: Do you have any feeling from your experience and observations among our people in so far as the effectiveness or the attitude of the national people relative to workers as their ability to communicate in the language?

Antwine: Again, this depends upon the worker. I know personally workers who have never learned the language well and probably never will because they don't have the native ability, but they are effective workers. They have been here for years and years and do a very fine job in spite of the language.

Hacker: They would probably do much better with their talent.

Antwine: It is in spite of the language and not because of. They have other abilities which compensate, but it only stands to reason the better equipped you are linguistically the better you can communicate and the more effective you will be with the people. People have a great understanding for a person who doesn't speak the language for a while, but then it gets old.

Hacker: In planning to go to a mission field, in addition to these steps, what would you recommend that a person do? Say, for example, a young man is deciding that he wants to go to Germany in the next year and he was here in your office in Augsburg today saying, "I want to come to Augsburg in the next twelve months."

What advice would you give him? Let's assume he has already faced this language problem.

Antwine: There are any number of things you can mention along this line. I want to mention two which stand out in my mind immediately as you asked the question. One of them is do **all** you can to cement a relationship with the church that sends you before you come. Involved in this could again be any number of things. I think one of the important things, as far as the German mission field is concerned, is that the brethren who send a worker know from the beginning what to expect as far as the work is concerned. They need to have a realistic picture of what the work in Germany is like because if this isn't the case there will be heartaches involved. This is one thing I tried to do two years ago when I came back to the field. Our supporting church was informed as best I could inform them from my experience on the field previously as to what kind of field this is. I recall looking for support, it was difficult for me to find support. I think in some cases the reason was maybe I was too realistic, and they got a negative impression. I have made up my mind that I had rather risk this and not get the support than to have brethren take on our support and be disappointed in what the field is. Incidentally, the elders which agreed to support us told me later one reason they decided to take us was because I was honest with them in telling them what to expect and they appreciated this. I think this is true of elders who are the right kind of elders. I would stress trying to cement a good relationship with them before you come. Let them know all you can, all you know and can gain from other people what the German field is. We need informed elders and churches supporting the works in particular areas. This is to be a fellowship and not just sending out a pay check each month.

The second thing which comes to my mind, and this is very fresh in my mind at the present time, is be prepared on doctrinal issues. Things in the States which the average preacher doesn't have to contend with, we on the field do. I am talking about doctrinal areas such as the Sabbath question and premillennialism and Pentecostal teaching, tongue speaking, miracle working and all of these various teachings which aren't so relevant in the States today. I understand in some cases it is getting to be relevant. We hit these things head-on in Germany. Germany is the place where Pietism originated, and we still have a lot of remainings of this here. Here in Augsburg, for the last several months, I have had some very real battles in the church over tongue speaking and miracle working. We have lost members. So you've got to know what you are talking about because you will hit it head-on.

I would say these two things stand out in my mind, a good relationship with the church sending you and cram on doctrinal teaching.

Hacker: How does one on the field keep his spiritual and emotional equilibrium?

What things need to be considered as part of one's preparation so he can keep his equilibrium after he gets on the field?

Antwine: I think one thing which is very important is to try to tell yourself before you come, "I am going to take time out for recreation." It is very easy to get involved and work to such an extent that this is everything. One fellow

gave the expression, "It is like trying to sweep the ocean back with the broom." You see the need is so great, you see so many thousands and millions of people who need to be taught, and here you are such a few. It is easy to think, "Well, I've got to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week to try to get the job done." This, of course, is a big mistake. We are human beings and each person has his breaking point and each person has his need to be recharged spiritually. When you are alone, it is, of course, especially difficult. We have no co-workers and we don't have any other co-worker, any other fellow preacher in the immediate city to talk with and to visit with and to help each other. We try to use every opportunity possible to meet with other workers in other cities or various retreats or things of this nature where we can share ideas with other people and simply have our batteries recharged. This is very necessary.

Hacker: What about the problem of the education of your children? How do you face that problem?

Antwine: Well, we don't have any problem right now. Our children are still rather small. They are 10, 9 and 7. They were all born in Switzerland and spent only two years of their life in the States. However, during these two years they lost all of their German, so we had the problem all over again two years ago when coming back. We were very fortunate. We put them in the German schools. It was difficult at the beginning, but they had good teachers and teachers that were patient who knew English and helped them and now they are just like little German children. We don't face any problems right now. We may later on when they get into the higher grades, but we will just have to wait and see what happens then. At the present time, we have no real problems.

Hacker: What would be your advice concerning a single male or a single female coming to the European field?

Antwine: Of course, it is ideally better to be married. There is no doubt about it. I would never say that a person shouldn't come if he is single; it depends upon the individual. He will have disadvantages as he would in any mission field and perhaps in some cases be under suspicion, but if a person is dedicated and really dedicated--this is the key--and is mature and is willing to accept the things involved being a single person on the mission field, the, of course, I see no reason why he shouldn't or couldn't come. Ideally, of course, it is better to be married.

Hacker: If you were in college again and were facing this decision, what would you be doing? You said that when you faced the decision, you prepared yourself in German. What other courses now as you look back on it, would you have taken advantage of in your college preparation?

Antwine: I don't know if I would take advantage of more courses but I would say this: I would be more studious. I can't think of any courses that I would have taken probably that I didn't take but I sure have some regrets about some of the courses I did take and didn't do as well as I could have and should have. For example, denominational doctrines and church history. Those courses which I took then would be very valuable to me now and I just wish I had applied myself more at the time.

Hacker: What about courses that are generally considered outside of the Bible Department? Do you feel there is any necessity for, say, psychology or philosophy or some other related area?

Antwine: Yes, possibly. I am thinking of another secular course which I think would be very useful and this would be European history. It is quite embarrassing to me, for example, as I teach this course in church history, it is invariably related to world history or European history and sometimes I am embarrassed by what the class knows that I don't know. They teach me because they are well grounded in European history, and I am having to dig this out for myself and sometimes my information is a little shallow. They can fill me in on details which I didn't know. Certainly, European history, if you are contemplating a European field would be very good.

Hacker: As a general rule, this would probably be true in most any country.

Antwine: Yes, the more you know about the country you are going to, the better equipped you are.

Hacker: Do you feel that formal preparation in sociology and psychology would be important or is it going to boil down to the basic personality of the individual?

Antwine: I think any course is good preparation. Psychology certainly because you are dealing with people. There is no doubt about it. When you are alone, especially, you feel lost many times. How I wish so often I had someone that I could ask, "How do you feel about this person and his problem?" Because here I am not only the preacher but I guess you could say the elders, too, and the whole weight of the direction of the church falls upon my shoulders and my handling of any given situation and it is hard for me to know sometimes, say, when a person is creating a problem in the church whether I have understood that person or whether I have misjudged him and here your course in psychology would be helpful, to know something of human nature. People are basically the same in human nature all over the world.

Hacker: You have worked here alone for awhile and you also have been part of the team with Jack McKinney in Zurich. How would you recommend that a person approach it? Do you think it would be better to go as a group or as a team of two or three, one or two missionaries, or work alone?

Antwine: I think the best situation from my standpoint is two people working together. I know there are missionaries who very strongly feel that they themselves work better alone. This again depends upon the worker. I would like very to have someone to work with me. I think it is good for the mutual strengthening, mutual discussion of problems and so forth. There are, of course, adjustments to be made in this area too and there are certain advantages and disadvantages on both sides, but I would say in the long run, it is better to have two together if they are suited for each other. Now, if they don't get along, of course, this is worse. This spills over into the church too when two co-workers don't get along or their wives don't get along. It is a discouraging factor to the church. I think it is better to be alone than to have two who don't get along.

Hacker: What advice would you give to a young lady preparing to come, married to a man that wants to be a missionary?

Antwine: As far as her adjusting on the field, you mean? Well, I think it is good for her to have some language preparation too because so many times this hasn't been the case. The man has studied the language because he is going to be preaching and it is not felt that she should really learn the language. So what happens is they get there and then she feels left out because he can communicate, can understand and she can't. She gets depressed and then problems develop. She should learn the language too before coming, know all she can. Basically, have the same preparation that her husband does, perhaps with some exceptions like I don't think it would be as necessary, it would be good, but it would be as necessary for her to know all of the doctrinal problems and these things.

Hacker: Would it be necessary for her to take some home economics courses and things like this so she can be self-reliant?

Antwine: This is a good point. I am glad you brought this up. Here in Germany, for example, a lady would have to adjust to not going to the supermarket every day to buy her groceries. Adjusting to having to spend more time in her household chores. It is still frustrating to my wife after all these years on the field to have to lose her whole morning going shopping and she feels like she ought to be doing something else but she has to go to four or five different stores to even get the necessities for the day.

Hacker: Our time is about up for this interview. We appreciate your giving us this time and pray your work will continue to be fruitful.