HE'S COMING--WHO'S GOING?
TSFM Conference April 8, 1984
By Wayne Detzler

"So what?" I can almost hear the question now. Who cares if there are 16,750 people groups who have never heard the good news about Jesus Christ? Who cares if they ever have an opportunity to respond and repent? Who can take in that large a lump of humanity?

"It's so inaccurate," says one missions man. Another chimes in to say, "it's so imprecise." You can't trust a computer to count the Christless. Still a third says, "It's so irrelevant." To many, understanding the unreached is nothing more than a religious computer game. Whoever wins is not yet clear. The losers are the unreached.

"So what?" says another as he hears of ten million Berbers wandering across northern Africa. When Roberta Winter wrote for *Moody Monthly* (November, 1982), she knew of not one single witness winning Berbers for the Lord.

Most Christians say, "So what?" Here is another question. "Who will bring Berbers to believe in Jesus Christ?" Imagine it, a population as large as Tokyo and no gospel witness. Who will go to get Berbers for Christ?

Similarly, in French-speaking Africa there are an estimated four million Golo tribespeople. As animists they believe implicitly in a super spirit. In fact, they tune their lives to the spirit world. Somewhere they know there is a great spirit.

The current volume of *Unreached Peoples* registers the Golo tribe as "not reported." The church of Jesus Christ registers them as "not deserving" of a gospel witness. And God registers them as people for whom Christ died. Who will go to the Golos? Tucked away in the People's Republic of China are five million Hui Muslims. They have heard the words of Mohammed, but not the Living Word, Jesus Christ. They have heard the call to prayer, but not the call to Christ. They have heard about the pilgrimage to Mecca, but they have never taken the pilgrimage to Calvary. They have known the fast of Ramadan, but not the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Who will tell the Hui Muslims of China that their bondage to the law is simply that --bondage? Who will lead them out into the light of the Lord's liberty?

In the Kerala state of southern India there are three million Irva Hindus. Officially they are reluctant to receive the gospel. Practically no one knows, because no one goes.

Like any good Hindu they long for release from the rat race of reincarnation. They hope to climb the ladder to pure delight. Eternal life for them is a punishment, not a prize. In their minds this means endless rounds of reincarnation spiraling through the aeons to the bosom of Brahma.

Who will tell them that Christ makes people new? Who will lead them out of the maze and into the majesty of God? Who will walk with the Irva Hindus out of the vicious circle of meditation into the circle of Christ's kingdom?

Then there are the three million secularized Koreans living in Manchuria, tucked away in the mountains of communist China. Like their hosts, they seek salvation in the panacaea of the People's Republic.

Who cares about this Chicago-sized population submerged in the sea of China's billion? Who cares if they are cut off from Korea and their cultural roots? Who cares if they have ever experienced an intelligent expression of spiritual reality in Christ? Who will go to reach the Korean refugees in the Manchurian mountains?

There are 16,750 people groups with no witness --who will go? There is a Berber race almost as large as the state of Illinois --who will give them the gospel? The Golo tribespeople are animated by animism --who will show them the true and living Way? What of the Hiu Muslims who are keeping the commands but missing Messiah --who will give them Christ? Finally, there are the Koreans in the People's Republic in Manchuria --who will scale the great wall to reach them?

The task is awesome. The unreached are almost unknowable. The job is gigantic. However, the question is practical: what shall we do NOW? When he wound up his great treatise to the Romans, Paul passed priorities on to his Christian brothers and sisters. In Romans 13:11-14 the Apostle cries out, "Wake Up!"

FIRST, LET'S WAKE UP TO OUR TIMES. Paul put it this way: "Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (vs. 11). Christians don't see history as a rat-race with each rodent firmly fixed to the tail of his fellow. We are not part of a cosmic circle rolling along an endless conveyor belt. History has a purpose, a prize to be grasped. History is indeed His Story.

When we first believed we could see only a small part of the plan of God for our lives. Daily the vision becomes brighter as we aim at eternity. Christ is the great coming event on the marquee of mankind. Then our salvation will take shape and our full privileges will emerge.

Meanwhile our world is cracking at the seams. Attempts at disarmament dissolve into escalating arsenals of destruction. Progress on the scientific front is mocked by the misery of mankind and the bloated bellies of babies. The bright promise of a people's government often fades into the dull gray of dictatorship. In fact, by the year 2000, more than 90% of all people will tolerate totalitarian tyrants of either the fascist or the marxist stripe.

But the believer is not hopeless. His hope is personal. Christ is coming. All our puny kingdoms will be eclipsed by the Kingdom over which the King of Kings rules and reigns. "The King is Coming" is not just a super sentimental song contrived to pep up poor professors of religion. It is reality. Now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. So, wake up to our times!

SECOND, WAKE UP TO OUR TARDINESS. "The night is almost over," according to the Apostle (vs. 12). We have slept away our opportunities and drowsed during the day of opportunity. Now it is high time to wake up to our tardiness.

Like spectators we have seen the population of our globe growing from day to day. With every tick of the clock an army marches into the battlefield of human history. In the same tick of the clock a second army slips over the edge into eternity. And they never heard that Christ came.

Meanwhile fat cat Americans fight over the depth of the pile in the church's carpet or the number of registers in the new pipe organ. Fundamentalists fume at Evangelicals. Charismatics castigate Calvinists. Baptists browbeat the Brethren. Presbyterians punch out each other. We are so busy slugging the saints that we miss Satan all together. And all the while people are passing out into eternal darkness to the din of demonic cheering.

In India there are 3000 castes. Hermetically sealed from each other, they cannot speak. Only 71 of these 3000 castes have any gospel witness at all. What is our solution? Let Mother Theresa do it. Let her pick up the human garbage off the streets and try to recycle it. Let her bind up the broken bodies. Let her bury the street sleepers the street sweepers left. Let her show love to a world warped by sin and twisted by terror.

"The night is almost over." How about the victims of the Beirut massacre? When the news of carnage came to American families they were surrounded by Christian friends. A caring congregation was seldom more than two streets away. Comforting Christian music flowed from a high-fi F.M. station into their homes. Almost every family possessed a Bible.

But what of the French families? Their sons were snuffed out in the same spate of urban terrorism. The bomb blew their boys into eternity too. But the French families had no gospel churches. In 36,000 towns and villages there is no gospel witness. Most Frenchmen have never even held a copy of the Bible in their hands. No one wept when their sons were swept away. No one whispered Jesus' name into their grief deafened ears.

The night is almost over. Let's wake up to our tardiness. Graduation is not the gate to a padded paycheck, a church-owned car, a home in suburbia and a smooth slide to retirement. Graduation is God's gate to a world full of unreached peoples. Don't sit home with your feet up and your mind munching on the latest TV ditties. Wake up to our tardiness and push out the frontiers of evangelism in a world which is gospel starved.

THIRD, WAKE UP TO YOUR TEMPTATIONS. Paul portrays these as "deeds of darkness...orgies and drunkenness...sexual immorality and debauchery" (vss. 12-13a). George Verwer gave an interview to the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 1983). The editor asked, "As you talk to hundreds of young people, what are their chief problems?"

The answer was vintage Verwer. "They come to us with a lot of hurts," he said. Then he added, "An increasing number are mixed up sexually. They've been in perversion. Every youth audience has some people who have been in perversion and still may be in it. There are many, even in seminary and Bible college, living a double life. Prostitutes, homosexuals, the works."

After teaching in Bible colleges and seminaries in half a dozen European and American countries, I can wholly concur with Verwer's assessment. To you who've got an eye on the unreached peoples, the Bible says put aside the deeds of darkness.

Let's speak plainly. Don't mess around sexually and try to serve the Lord. Don't read a pornographic peep sheet and expect to keep strong spiritually. Don't kid yourself by thinking you can lock up the Lord in a religious compartment and shut up your sexual fantasies in another. Don't pretend that you can fool around with homosexuality and still keep a cutting edge for God.

When was the last time you caved in to sexual temptation? You thought no one knew. Your roommate didn't see. Your pastor didn't know. Your professors still think you are all out for God. Your fellow students look up to you as a spiritual leader. But God knows, and you know.

Wake up to your temptations. Stop the slide into sexual sloppiness. Come clean with God. Unless you do, you are excess baggage in the church of Jesus Christ. You will gag the gospel. Your life will twist your testimony into a lie. Wake up to your temptations.

FOURTH, WAKE UP TO YOUR TEMPER TANTRUMS. To put it in Pauline parlance, "get rid of dissension and jealousy" (vs. 13b). There are dozens of devoted disciples who appear more pious than Puritans. Sexual thoughts would never penetrate their pure minds. The mention of such sins is acutely embarrassing. Never would they deviate from one doctrinal digit. Their minds are creed crammed craniums.

But their tongues are something else. Sarcasm shoots like sparks from them. Gossip gushes from their speech. Their spiritual lives are laimed by infantile paralysis of the spirit. Every conversation is punctuated by some verbal mud pie flung in the face of an unsuspecting "friend." The Bible labels these mud pies as "jealousy and dissension."

Recently I discussed two outstanding evangelical professors. My colleague praised their eloquence and intelligence. Then he added, "they spread gossip throughout the halls of this seminary." As soon as they showed up you knew they had come to share some juicy tidbit. Their books have made them famous, but their blight has made them infamous.

Is it different with students? I think not. Students may focus on frontier missions and reach out to unreached people. But all around them is the barrenness of a busybody.

Even in Spurgeon's day such spiritual manure-spreaders stunk up the church. When commenting on a recently deceased deacon Spurgeon said, "May the grass grow green on his grave. Nothing grew around him as long as he lived."

Wake up to your temper tantrums. You cannot commit yourself to communicate the gospel and spend your days and nights communicating gossip. What legacy will you leave on graduation? Will it be the afterglow of a burning heart for God, or the stench of a rotten tattletale tongue? Wake up to your temper tantrums.

FIFTH, WAKE UP TO YOUR TACKINESS. "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ," Paul told the Romans (vs. 14). Some of us are stripped of spiritual protection, and we don't even know it.

It is as if we wandered out onto the Olympic hockey rink wearing a figure skater's short skirt. Then on signal the Soviet goal machine would hit the ice. After twenty minutes of blows, body checks, and stick slashing, we would limp bloodied and bruised off the ice. This is the picture of most seminary grads. They wander out into the battlefield wearing nothing more than a M. Div. hood. Satan's mean machine mauls and mangles them.

Paul says, "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." Put on the "whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). Suit up with a new nature (Col. 3:10). Don't face the foe flailing around with a feather pillow.

The unreached peoples are at home on Satan's homestead. He has held them for centuries. He has resisted the Redeemer's advances by simply blinding the eyes of sincere Christians. Satan's not going to lie down and play dead.

Before you invade infernal territory, wake up to your tackiness. Your education is inadequate. Your intelligence is too finite. Your eloquence is all in English. Your boldness will run up against a bolted door. Your only hope is to go in a garment of God's greatness. Wake up to your tackiness. Put on Christ.

Wake up...and stand up for Christ. Stand up in a new commitment to reach the unreached. The statistics are overwhelming, but so is our God. The tally of the untold grows geometrically. But the time you graduate there will be more people with less gospel than ever before. Stand up for them now!

You can consider the Hidden Peoples and keep the gospel hidden from them. Or you can see the enormity of the task and take it as your own. Christ is coming. You can count on that. Are you going? Can He count on that?