

If neither of these happens, my present guess is that we are headed for another dark ages. In 450 A.D. all through Europe-- all through the southern half of Europe at least, most of the people could read and write. They read the great classics of the Greeks and Romans wrote. They had a comparatively high standard of civilization and Christianity had spread quite widely through the whole area, and thousands had come to know the Lord, in 450 A.D. Between 500 or at least 600 and 1000 A.D. perhaps 2%, perhaps half of 1% of the people knew how to read and write. All the literature, all the history --everything we know of 500 years there is not as much as we know about any 50 years of that period before. And civilization had to start again and gradually come up. If the Lord tarries, that's what I see ahead! I see a dark age coming.

We sing the song, Work for the night is coming. Maybe it is coming. Maybe very soon most of the knowledge our universities have will either be lost or some of it preserved in writings that are buried in cornerstones somewhere to be rediscovered 1000 years from now if the Lord tarries.

Whether Jesus' coming is soon, or whether it is 1000 years from now, it's interesting to speculate. We don't know. But this we know, that he has put us here in the first place that we may believe in Jesus Christ and be saved by Him and that we may grow in grace and become the kind of people He wants us to be. And in the second place that we may reach others for Jesus Christ and be his instrument to bring them to a knowledge of salvation and be his instrument to help them grow in grace and be the kind of people that he wants us to be. If we fulfill those two purposes, our life on earth will be worth-while. If we don't fulfill those purposes our life on earth will not be worth-while.

So the emphasis we find in some ecumenical writings on the unity of the body of Christ is fine. But unfortunately it's leaders, I fear, are not members of the body of Christ! The unity of which the Scripture calls the ecumenic, the unity of the whole ungodly world, is not something that's represented as an ideal in the Scripture. The energy, effort and money that Christians are putting into that are wasted as far as God's purposes is concerned if they are not actually used to tear down the Scripture.

I talked to a young woman who was doing graduate work in anthropology at the U. of PA. She told me how going over to a large region in S.E. Asia in order to study the ancient customs of the people. She said it was frustrating. She said, Those Methodist missionaries had gone in there and won practically everyone to Christianity, and it was only by people's recollection of their habits of their tribe way back that you could learn anything. I heard of one person who was trying to learn about the habits of a tribe, and they asked a man about a certain story or belief. Oh yes, that's right he said. Then they asked him something else. Just a minute he said, and he went into the back room and came out and had a whole story of it. Then they asked him something else. He said, Just a minute. And he went into the back room. And he told the whole story. And they were so interested in writing all this down. Then they said, By the way would you let me look at that book that you look at in the back room in between. Sure he said, And he brought out the book and it was one someone had written