By the kindness of Rockefeller Foundation, a Program of Advanced Religious Studies (PARS) has been conducted for the last five years at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It is a program of studies related to the ecumenical movement. I was very fortunate to be elected as one of the 25 for PARS 1959-60. A full report of the year’s work will take too much space here. It was a very valuable year. Let me share with you two of the thoughts which come back to my mind very often since I came back from PARS.

In one of the seminars, Christian witness and the effort of evangelizing were being discussed. There were 23 “fellows” (members of PARS) present besides the directors. We were a group of men and women from 21 countries, with church traditions of high, low and free. Among the group there were school teacher, Archbishop, radio announcer, theological educators, S. C. M. secretary, principal and head-mistress of schools, missionaries, lay and ordained church personnel from different cultural background and different personal emphasis and inclinations in thoughts and opinions. It was a very serious discussion. Witness and evangelization are subjects very close to our hearts. Amidst the discussion, a quiet voice from the tiniest in size said, “Jesus never wrote a book but He lived.” This simple statement and reminder temporarily stopped every voice. There was a profound and prolonged silence. We Christians discuss, write, read, organize, build, run meetings and conferences, preach, etc. Yet we still feel that the Church of Christ is very weak and inefficient, especially when the number of Christians is compared with the world population.

Moreover, in some areas people are anti-Christians. There are many reasons why people are against Christianity. One of the reasons is that people do not see in us much of the likeness of the God we talk about, which means we are disliked because we are hypocrites! Could it be that while we are so busily doing this and doing that we forget to be Christians or to live as Christians should? All the “churchy” things we do and the activities, directly or indirectly connected with theology in general, which we participate in are meant for witnessing and evangelizing. For some reason, these unfortunately have sometimes become
sources of friction, contention and disunity. We either become very un-Christian while doing these things, because of a lack of love, of understanding and of appreciation, or we do these things as if they were ends in themselves. Sometimes all these activities are looked upon by non-Christians as pastimes or diversions for the kind of people who call themselves Christians and who are socially and economically classified as people of leisure. Leisure! Most of us will protest. But in the eyes of those whom we tried to evangelize, our hustle and bustle do not seem to have meaning or relevance to them. The evangelion has not got across very well. Is it a matter of technique, language or living?

Every evening prayer was conducted by the "fellows" in PARS chapel. One evening the leader asked a question in connection with the motive of our zeal in our work. He asked, "Do we love Jesus more or do we love ourselves and whatever we identify ourselves with more?" What a subtle question! If the motive is self love, we can not be true Christians. If we are zealous because it is something we have identified ourselves with, then it is again self-love in a different appearance. None of us wants to say that he loves himself more; yet quite often we serve our Lord with mixed motives unawares. It is a fine distinction; yet it is an important distinction. All of us are engaged in kinds of work which we can say are for Christ. Nevertheless, it is important that we examine our motives from time to time. If we are zealous because what we do is what we are doing instead of what Christ wants us to do, we run into at least two great dangers. One, we shall be in danger of using the name of Christ or the name of the Church for our "Ego." Two, we shall greatly distort the "image" of the Body of Christ, because it is filled with our likes and dislikes. Someday these dangers might cause us to hear the Lord Jesus say to us, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt. 7:21-23).

I realize that these are questions to which no single final answer is possible. Yet no Christian can afford not to ask himself these questions if he is really concerned about the condition of the Church or the ecumenical movement.