APPENDIX ONE

THE EVANGELICAL DECLARATION OF BOGOTA

FIRST LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CONGRESS
Bogota, Colombia November 21–29, 1969

Those of us united here, believers in Jesus Christ, members of the several denominational communities which work on our continent among Latin American people, have met together in this First Latin American Congress on Evangelism, in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit Himself has led us to this encounter with the purpose of examining anew our evangelistic mission in the light of Biblical teaching and the present Latin American situation.

Our presence in this Congress has exhibited our unity in Christ, the spiritual and not the organizational nature of which, is rooted in our common evangelical heritage, based on the truths of the Bible, the authority of which as the Word of God and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, we affirm categorically.

Consequently, this declaration which we present to the Latin American evangelical people, is an expression of a consensus in which there is agreement on the fundamentals; but there is also room for diversity which comes from the abundant grace of God through which gifts are given to His people: diversity within unity.

This declaration also attempts to reflect the self examination which the Lord Jesus Christ has caused us to undergo during these days, making us feel the urgency both of the multiple crises which afflict our people, and the imperative nature of His command to evangelize. Together we have recognized the necessity of living the Christian life to the full and proclaiming the total Gospel to the Latin American man in the context of his many needs.

We share what the Lord’ has shown us with a sense of urgency, but with no intention of legislating for the life of the Latin American churches. Instead, we invite the Latin American people to read and study these declarations which express the convictions which the Lord has brought home to us during the Congress.

THUS, WE DECLARE:
1. The evangelical presence in Latin America is the fruit of the action of God through an immense flow of Christian love, missionary vision, sacrificial spirit, work, effort, time, and money invested here by the foreign missions which have been laboring for more than a century, including the work of the Bible Societies. This glance at our history cannot do less than awaken within us a spirit of gratitude for the work of the pioneers. At the same time, looking toward the future, we are conscious of new responsibilities, new tasks, and new structures which form a true challenge to Latin American believers and to the indigenous leadership in all dimensions of the ministry.

2. The commission to preach the Gospel to every creature is an imperative clearly expressed in the Word of God. Evangelism is not something optional: it lies at the very essence of the Church: it is her supreme task. The dynamic, which undergirds the evangelistic task, is the action of the Holy Spirit. It is He who gives gifts to the Church, who prepares the evangelist, who testifies of Christ to the hearer, who illuminates, who convicts of sin, righteousness, judgement, and eternal damnation: who changes the sinner into a new creature, and who makes him part of the Church and a co-laborer with God in evangelism. Where this initiative of the Spirit is not recognized, evangelism is reduced to a mere human endeavor.

3. Our theology of evangelism determines our evangelistic efforts, or the lack of them. The simplicity of the Gospel is never in conflict with the theological dimensions. The essence of the Gospel is the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We reaffirm the historicity of Christ according to Scripture: His incarnation, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. We reaffirm the unique quality of His mediatory work, as a result of which the sinner finds pardon for his sins and justification by faith alone, without repeating that sacrifice. We also reaffirm that Christ is the Lord and head of the Church, and that the final manifestation of His Lordship over the world will be made evident in His second coming, the hope of the redeemed. This is the good news which, when proclaimed and accepted, radically transforms man.

4. Latin America’s fields are white and ready for harvest. Large segments of the population show receptivity to the Gospel, but such an hour of opportunity demands an adequate strategy. We need to reevaluate our present evangelistic methods in the light of amazingly rapid growth in some denominations. Such an evaluation, together with a careful consideration of the life of the New Testament Church, will show first of all the need for the total mobilization of the Church for