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Christianity is the only world religion whose primary source documents are in a language other than the language of the founder of the religion. We have become accustomed to seeing a variety of new translations and specialty Bibles that are now widely available to everyone. In the past there was only the King James Version “Authorized Version” that was the bible for English speakers and in recent times it has been eclipsed by dozens of new translations, paraphrases, study Bibles, and special focus Bibles. The Bible now reflects the languages that Christians around the world speak, in the actual proportion to how they are globally represented. As we look at some of the broad demographic of the world Christianity as a way of setting the context for why we need to rethink how to discuss and engage in Global missions in the twenty-first century.

As we look at Pentecostalism in Latin America, it is the fastest growing Christian movement in history, and with over half a billion adherents, it is second only to Roman Catholicism as the largest single block of Christian identity. Roman Catholic mission began to arrive in Latin America in the late fifteenth century after the Padroado. Over a few centuries, Latin America became one of the most thoroughly Roman Catholic regions in the world. Protestant missionaries did not arrive until the late nineteenth century, and Pentecostalism did not come to Latin America until the early decades of the twentieth century.

The story of Latin America Pentecostalism is a helpful contemporary example of the breakup of the Christendom arrangement that has dominated the Latin American religious and political landscape since the sixteenth century. For centuries evangelism in Latin America meant a process of general acculturation, whereby people were Christianized and incorporated into “monoculture Christendom in which they were subjected to Christian authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil.

The theory of Latin America Pentecostals several important challenges to traditional evangelical discourse in Europe and North America concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and the lives of believers, which is of particular importance to the theme of this of this observation. Latin America long have insisted that traditional European and North American theologies of the Spirit were too static and disconnected from the suffering and economic hardship of the people of Latin America. In addition, Pentecostals have felt that mainstream North American theologies were overly preoccupied with theoretical issues and, in the process, lost the evangelistic urgency needed to evangelize the world.

Looking at these several portraits of twenty-first century world Christians offer a few important glimpses into the unfolding mission of our time. Many of the most important stories will not be fully known until the full revelation of the New Creation. Until then, we “see but poor reflection” (1Cor. 13:12). However, the few glimpses we are able to discern reveal that the global church of Jesus Christ is beginning to reflect that great eschatological vision of the apostle John in which he sees men and women from every nation, tribes, people, and language worshipping the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ.