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As in any market economy, moreover, suppliers must also reach local markets, and in this regard the Catholic Church is heavily disadvantaged. The church is perennially short of priests (who take years to form), and has too few parishes; the parishes that do exist are too large to reach the faithful in a meaningful way in their daily lives. The problem is particularly acute in poor neighborhoods and rural areas. In Chile there is on average one parish for every 20,658 inhabitants in those areas with less than a 10 percent poverty rate but 73,537 inhabitants per parish in those where the poverty rate exceeds 19 percent (Lehmann 2001).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in Venezuela there are on average 17,668 persons per parish in the richest quartile of parishes but 42,830 in the poorest (Froehle 1995, 137). Protestant missions also received an early boost from Central American governments that promoted them as a way of making their countries more attractive to the “right” immigrants from the “right” countries. More recently, the U.S. government and various right-wing groups financed Protestant missions in the indigenous highlands of Guatemala and in El Salvador as a way to undermine support for troublesome Catholic opponents of military regimes that were fighting insurgents and to create a support base for a more conservative political order (Stoll 1990; Crahan 1992; Garrard-Burnett 1998).

Thus, the Catholic Church’s concern about the inroads made by other religious denominations and missions is not exaggerated or without foundation. But the “false prophets” and “rapacious wolves” of other religious denominations that came to feed on a vulnerable flock, as Pope John Paul referred to them,<sup>11</sup> are not the only threat to the hegemony of Catholicism in society.

#### Is Latin America Turning Secular?

The giants of early twentieth-century social theory—Max Weber and Emile Durkheim—expected modernity to erode the religious founda-