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This volume on Catholic Pentecostal/charismatic history, demography, and diversity in Latin America will be an important resource for those interested in evangelical and ecumenical outreach. There is a rich literature—theological, sociological, and historical—on Protestant Pentecostal developments globally and in Latin America. The current image of Latin America is one of an overwhelming tide of movement from Catholicism to Protestant communities, especially Pentecostal. This volume corrects both of these tendencies.

Data shows that 73 million Pentecostals are within the Latin American Catholic Church while there are only forty million Christians within the whole range of evangelical communities. Hopefully, this synthetic overview of the movements and countries in Latin America will generate more research on, and evaluation of, the complexity and diversity of religious revival, Catholic as well as Protestant, in the region.

The volume surveys the history of the origin, diffusion, and institutionalization of the various Catholic charismatic movements in the different countries throughout the region. The author begins with countries, like Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina, where the Catholic charismatic numbers and growth are high, and then moves on to other countries, where the percentages are lower but significant.

In many parts of Latin America, both Catholic and Protestant Pentecostalism is still growing. Many people believe that there is a fierce competition between Catholicism and Protestant Pentecostalism; one may find many significant examples in Guatemala and Brazil in particular. However, there are other examples where the movement has started out fully ecumenical, as in Argentina, and has remained so. Furthermore, many see tensions between liberation and Pentecostal emphases within the Catholic community. Examples of such tensions may be found in Brazil. However, counter examples from Honduras and Peru, where social activists were central to charismatic development, or from conservative Colombia, where charismatic communities are key in energizing social engagement, may be found.

The new pluralism in Latin American culture, both within Catholicism and its various renewal movements and within a society more open to religious freedom and religious diversity, may encourage more active religious engagement than when the Church suffered a comfortable apparent hegemony. The author floats the hypothesis that the rise in the statistical significance of unbelievers may not represent so much of a new phenomenon in the Latin American spirit but a new freedom of people to profess how they really believe—or not. The author suggests that there may even be a rise of religious engagement in the region because of the rise of pluralism.

The thesis that the modern world is inevitably consigned to the advance of secularism has long been discredited. The rise of Pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities and other forms of popular religion are clear evidence of the per-
durance of supernatural faith. However, there is still a tendency to treat these movements as dependent variables, contingent on political, economic, and psychological factors, instead of analyzing them on their own religious principles. If we are to face the post-modern world and the Christian new evangelization with honesty, integrity, and dialogue, the sort of careful, differentiated, and non-reductive study initiated in this volume will make an important contribution.

Hopefully this study will stimulate the depth of theological investigation that Protestant Pentecostalism and Catholic popular religion have already produced in a variety of disciplines. Many authors suggest that the rise of Pentecostalism in Latin America is related to the pervasiveness of Catholic popular piety with its openness to the miraculous, its search for healing, its affinity for “magical realism,” and its direct experience of the supernatural. This study fills out some of the questions that will need to be faced if the relationship between these two dimensions of the common Pentecostal spirituality can be explored. This, indeed, may be the frontier of both the ecumenical challenge and the evangelical imperative in the twenty-first century.