The Sword of the Spirit: Pentecostals and Political Power in Guatemala

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Abstract
Guatemala was predicted to become the first nation to become predominantly Protestant due to the tremendous growth of the Pentecostal church between 1960 and 1990. Historically, the Pentecostal church was very pietistic and did not involve itself in politics. However, the presidency of Efrain Rios Montt (1982-1983) and the election of Jorge Serrano Elias (1991-1993) reflect a change among Pentecostals with regard to political involvement. The Protestant church has moved from a marginalized minority to comprising almost twenty-five percent of the population. In the August, 1994 congressional elections, 20 of the 80 congressmen elected to office were evangelical Christians (25%). Evidence shows that Evangelicals vote for evangelical candidates though the reasons why remain unclear. Despite these developments, the Pentecostal church is still deeply divided over involvement in politics. However, although Pentecostals do not constitute a unified movement, politicians cannot ignore them because they vote in greater numbers than the rest of the population.

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