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In the 1970s the increase of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches provoked profound transformations in the religious panorama of Latin America. The dominance of the Catholic Church and the Protestant, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist or Lutheran minorities were impacted by a new confessional plurality. A growing percentage of members of these churches became part of the new churches. Today they make up between 15 and 20 % of the Latin American Christians. In parallel with this development, the number of Catholics involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) increased, and currently comprise 16 % of Latin American Catholics. This book, which originated from a PhD-research at Aarhus University in Denmark, takes Guatemala as a case study to understand current changes in global Catholicism from the question: ‘How the Charismatic influence and subsequent transformation of local Catholicism unfolds in a Catholic parish in Guatemala City and in the archdiocese to which it belongs’ (p. 2). The author proposes to answer this question from two perspectives: first, clarifying how the CCR affects the religious life in Guatemala, and second, explaining its importance for the pastoral praxis and the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church.

In the introduction, the author explains that he applies different qualitative methods, such as interviews and participative research, to work out an ethnographic description from a parish in Guatemala City. In addition, he reviews central elements of Guatemalan history to understand the background of his object of study. From this I highlight the genocide of the Mayan people, poverty, gang violence and narcotraffic that today converts Guatemala into one of the most violent countries in the world.

This book is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1 exposes the development of the CCR in Latin America, and then compares it with the peculiarities of Guatemala. One of those is interrelated with the rapid increase of the evangelical churches, estimated at 14 % after the earthquake of 1976, when affected people moved to urban areas where the Catholic pastoral presence was weak. Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework to understand the influence of the charismatic renewal in the church, based on the Pentecostal theology, as analysed by Zimmerling, the ecclesiological models of Dulles and the Pneumatology of L. Boff, among others. Chapter 3 sorts out and analyses the findings of the field research. Thorsen founds that in the parish a variety of Catholic movements are active. Charismatic elements appear in other groups outside the charismatics, such as prayer groups or groups of Biblical reading;
praises and songs constitute to the charismatic elements of greater impact in all the parish. The author concludes that the Charismatics are *pentecostalizing* Guatemalan Catholicism. Chapter 4 analyses the charismatic identity in relation to the Catholic Church and the Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. The Charismatics strive to remove all doubt about their own Catholicity. They also interpret the leadership of the laity as complementarity to the role of the priest, they defend the authority of the Pope and devote great attention to the veneration of the Virgin Mary. In addition, Charismatics present themselves as ‘truly Catholics’, through their ‘encounter with Jesus’ in the Eucharist (p. 140).

Chapter 5 studies the relationship between the charismatic movement and the missionary strategies at the level of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) (continental level), the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala (national level) and the parish (local level). The CELAM has proposed to carry out a ‘great continental mission’, and according to arguments of the missiologist Suess, Thorsen notes the presence of a charismatic language in this proposal. Mainly, when the CELAM encourages ‘a personal encounter with Jesus’. From this the author concludes that it is possible to speak of an ‘incipient institutional pentecostalization’ of the Catholic Church in Latin America. The last chapter recapitulates core contents of the research on ecclesiology, theology and pastoral work. One of the main conclusions of the author concerns the positive impact of the charismatic renewal for the Catholic Church:

> By allowing the enormous popular enthusiasm found in the Charismatic movement to flow freely, the Church has secured an impressive comeback of Catholicism into its core area: providing believers with a Christian view of the world, a language of prayer to relate to God, a moral code to get on in societies plagued by social ills, and the practical religious tools to handle the latter. At the same time Charismatics have made the Church visible in a Guatemalan society, which is becoming religiously pluralist (p. 204).

The author also foresees difficulties in the development of the mission because not all Catholics support a widespread introduction of charismatic elements in the Latin American’s Catholic Church.

It is noteworthy that the use of the term ‘pentecostalization’ is problematic in Latin American Catholicism and has a clear Evangelical and Pentecostal connotation. The author collects criticisms of the use of this term; from a pastoral way of view (pp. 212-213) however he insists on using it. This term is not neutral in this context, it does not have an ecumenical sense nor does it represent the sensibility of Charismatics, and I would therefore recommend