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978-1-107-07832-1 - New Centers of Global Evangelicalism in Latin  
America and Africa

Stephen Offutt

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## New Centers of Global Evangelicalism in Latin America and Africa

This book shows that new centers of Christianity have taken root in the Global South. Although these communities were previously poor and marginalized, Stephen Offutt illustrates that they are now socioeconomically diverse, internationally well connected, and socially engaged. Offutt argues that local and global religious social forces, as opposed to other social, economic, or political forces, are primarily responsible for these changes.

Stephen Offutt is Assistant Professor of Development Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. His work has been published in a number of peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, the *Journal for the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, and *Sociology of Religion*. He has contributed to edited volumes such as *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*, *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*, and *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*. Offutt also writes for popular audiences, with work appearing in magazines such as *Books & Culture: A Christian Review* and *Prism*.

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STEPHEN OFFUTT

*Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky.*



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*To Amy,  
Addy, Emily, & Gabi*

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## Preface and Acknowledgments

The blisters on my hand were open, and sweat was running freely down my face. It was the aftershock, though, that caused us all to pause. I leaned on my shovel and glanced warily first up the hillside and then across the valley, at the San Salvador volcano.

The date was January 12, 2001. An earthquake had ripped through El Salvador the previous day, creating landslides and destroying houses across much of the small, mountainous country. In Santa Tecla, the town in which I lived, a landslide covered almost the entire neighborhood of Las Colinas. The hundreds of ensuing aftershocks caused the volcano to bellow ominous plumes of dust.

I came to El Salvador as part of a socially conscious tech startup company. One of our Salvadoran colleagues, who I will call Juan, lived in Las Colinas. He was out running errands when the earthquake hit. His wife, two small children, and a niece visiting from Guatemala were at home.

Juan was a member of a small evangelical church. I joined his fellow congregants as they climbed up onto the landslide with shovels in hand. We began to dig down into his house; we were one of several gaggles of people gathered over buried houses in the neighborhood. We had collectively suspended our belief in the new reality that the landslide had brought. But hope was fading as we pressed on in the glaring sun, and what our shovels found after hours of digging forced us to confront and accept our worst fears. Juan's family added four to the tally of more than 550 landslide victims in Las Colinas that day.

The scene in Las Colinas recalls and transforms the image Roger Lancaster (1988) painted of Central American religion in his remarkable prologue to *Thanks to God and the Revolution*. Lancaster imagines large, moving statues of Marx and Jesus on opposite ends of the square in Managua, Nicaragua. As they oppose each other, the crowd in the square comes to embody the synthesis of ideology and religion. Lancaster uses the rest of the book to show the ways this works for different Central American faith communities.

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By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the region's guerrilla movements had been incorporated into the political process, and the region's religious movements were in rapid flux. Las Colinas served as a different kind of public square and a different locus of activity. A local congregation was a first responder to a natural disaster. Full of pragmatism, fear, fortitude, and personal loss, congregants arrived well before the massive international aid machine got on the ground; they even arrived ahead of the national government's plodding response. The local congregation would later become part of a global faith-based disaster response, showing that it too had international ties. But in those first moments, it was simply a group of people responding to physical and emotional pain in very practical ways – ways that hinted at subtle religious changes that would become more amplified over the next decade and a half.

Two and a half years after the earthquake, I left El Salvador and returned to graduate school to learn more about the changes occurring to evangelicalism, not just in Latin America but also in Africa, where I previously lived, and quite possibly in other parts of the world. This book is the result of that journey.

I have had immeasurable help along the way. Four people deserve special mention for their intellectual influence on this project and on me. During the dissertation phase at Boston University, Nancy Ammerman advised my work and grounded my view of religious communities in sound theoretical principles. Peter Berger served on my committee; he became an invaluable conversation partner about how to interpret global evangelical and Pentecostal movements. Robert Wuthnow also provided guidance and insights into how to think about and investigate religion and transnationalism. He was extremely gracious in the time that he gave me, both when I worked for him and after. Finally, Grace Goodell served as a mentor at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), where I earned my master's degree. She has provided intellectual depth, friendship, and wise council from the beginning of this project to the end.

Institutions matter when one undertakes intellectual inquiry, and I have had the privilege of being associated with some of the world's best places to study religion and globalization. At Boston University, the Center for Religion and World Affairs (CURA) and the Center for Global Christianity & Mission were important places of discourse. At SAIS, the Social Change & Development Seminar transformed all of the students who participated. I found a home at Princeton University's Religion and Public Life Seminar for several years, and I benefited from the experience I had at the University of Notre Dame's Center for Religion and Society. Finally, Wheaton College's Human Needs and Global Resources program and the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary have both provided conversation partners from all over the world. Were it not for the opportunity I have had to participate in these communities, this study would not have been possible.

People fill institutions and provide them with meaning. I had the privilege of interacting in these venues with Dana Robert, Emily Barman, Laurel Smith-Doerr,

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A word of gratitude must also go to those who welcomed me and provided me with enormous assistance in my field sites. In El Salvador, a special thanks must go to Hilda and Raul Bojorquez. Indeed, it is because of them that I am able to pen the final additions and corrections of this manuscript in the same quarters I inhabited when I first lived in El Salvador. Others who have been important include Alejandro Amaya, Terri Benner Dominguez, David Bueno, Ron Bueno, Adonai Leiva, Andy Liu, Moises Mejia, Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Kevin Sanderson, and Ana Silvia Valencia. In South Africa, Michael Cassidy, Calvin Cook, Johannes Erasmus, Oya Gumede, Jurgens Hendriks, Aidan and Robyn Hillebrand, Gareth and Jane Killeen, Barry Noel, Sandra Pillay, Tuso Siziba, and Ron Steele were extraordinarily gracious. Both of these cultures and communities provided an open and inviting space for the data-collection part of this project.

Various types of assistance eased the considerable transition that the manuscript underwent as it moved from dissertation to book. Tim and Emily Wank provided living and office quarters; 1712 was a memorable venue in which to work. Kevin Hughes served as a research and writing assistant. My visit to see him in Nicaragua helped put my two case studies in further context. Rebekah Smith helped design the map in Chapter 1. There were also several key informants in both of my research sites that put up with a great number of e-mail messages and efforts to verify or double-check claims that are made in this book. I thank them for their patience.

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needed guidance. Richard Wood has been enormously helpful throughout the process, going above and beyond any normal level of responsibility. Shaun Vigil has also lent a needed hand. I count it a privilege to work with such professionals. Any errors or problems that appear in the book are of course my own.

Thanks must also go to the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies*. Some pages in this book first appeared in articles published by these journals, and each has graciously allowed for them to be reprinted here.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my family. My grandparents have shown a keen interest in my work and have been a source of encouragement. My parents have been tireless supporters of everything I have done, and this project is no different. They were involved in some of the early efforts to organize the data. My three daughters – Addy, Emily, and Gabi – have come along at different stages of this project and have kept its overall importance in perspective. My wife, Amy, has been my most important intellectual partner. She shared in the field visits, tirelessly listened to different iterations of the book’s argument, sharpened my ideas, and helped refine their presentation. For all of these things and so much more, I say thank you.

Abbreviations

AE	African Enterprise
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AG	Assemblies of God
AIC	African Independent Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ARENA	The National Republic Alliance
BGA	Billy Graham Association
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CAM	Central American Mission
CCC	Campus Crusade for Christ
CCI	International Christian Center
CCMN	Cell Church Missions Network
CELAM	Conference of Latin American Bishops
CIA	International Center of Praise
Comisal	Committee for Salvadoran Missions
CONESAL	Salvadoran Evangelical Association
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DGACE	General Directorate of Attention to the Community Living Abroad
EFSA	Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa
ES	El Salvador
FMLN	Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front
GDOP	Global Day of Prayer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFCC	International Federation of Christian Churches
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

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NCE	New Center of Evangelicalism
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NUPSA	Network of United Prayer in South Africa
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PCN	Party of National Conciliation
PDC	Christian Democratic Party
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACLA	South African Christian Leadership Assembly
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAMS	Southern African Missiological Society
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TBN	Trinity Broadcasting Network
TEASA	The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WCD	World Christian Database
WCE	Western Center of Evangelicalism
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WV	World Vision
ZCC	Zion Christian Church