



BRAZIL

Offering Good Literature

Omar de Souza interviewed Donald Price, who, serving as Vida Nova's chief executive officer, has learned how a publishing house can effectively meet the demands of local Christian leaders.

Donald Price is American-born, but he knows Brazilian Christian leadership as few do. He's been serving on the board of Vida Nova publishing house ever since he arrived in Brazil, in 1987. He taught missions at the Baptist Theological College of São Paulo for many years, and served in various national and international missions organizations. At Vida Nova—which he took over as its board chair and CEO in 2000—he's been using his biblical knowledge and teaching ability to lead the publishing house in providing reference materials to Brazilian leaders in the face of remarkable growth in the evangelical Church.

What is the profile of the Brazilian Christian leader? How is he or she trained?

I assume you mean leaders at the pastoral level. In traditional, non-pentecostal churches, the pastors and leaders tend to have formal, college-level theological training, quite often in addition to other college-level studies. More recently, the Brazil-

ian Ministry of Education has offered to accredit the institutions that offer theological degrees that meet its criteria, even fitting their curricula into the model it proposes, drawn largely from bachelor's degrees in philosophy.

In traditional pentecostal churches, like the Assemblies of God, the training for leaders has traditionally been offered through church-based Bible institutes and extension programs, not always at a collegiate level.

In the newer pentecostal churches, like the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, leaders most often have a background in marketing, business administration, or the like, inasmuch as advancement within the church is based on receipts (church income).

Does the Brazilian leader have a "reading habit?" What are his or her primary areas of interest?

Well, I would say that Brazilian church leaders have reading habits more or less in line with their socioeconomic status in



Vida Nova's director, Donald Price "is one of the most Brazilian Americans I know," says Omar de Souza.

society. College-educated pastors and leaders read the same kinds of literature that the majority of other college-educated Brazilians read, meaning they primarily read newspapers and magazines. Those with less formal training would likely read quite a bit less.

Last year, Editora Sepal, which is OC Ministries' publishing house in Brazil, did some research. They asked the readers of their magazine, *Leadership*, what they read the most in the previous year. How-to ministry books, a la *The Purpose Driven Church*, topped the

list, followed by self-help books.

Does Brazil produce good theological literature, or does it still need to import a lot of material? Who are the most sought-after authors?

I take issue with the dichotomy implicit in the first question.

The truth is, Brazil produces quite a bit of good theological literature—primarily in the form of magazine columns and journal articles, while books are on the upswing.

At Vida Nova, for instance, in the last few months we published a *Polyglot Old Testament* containing the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Ralph's *Septuagint*, the Portuguese *Revista e Atualizada* translation, and the English NIV, in parallel columns. We also published a technical guide to using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Both works were produced in Brazil by Brazilian theologians. However, we still import a lot of material, as well.

This, of course, stems in part from the usefulness of participating in international theological discourse. The other part stems from the difficulty many Brazilian authors have in writing, given the fact they work so many hours just to make ends meet. Often it is simpler and cheaper to translate a work.

Is the material the Brazilian Christian leader has at his or her disposal of good quality, both in terms

of content and presentation?

There is a lot of good stuff out there. But there is also a lot of garbage, often very nicely packaged!

What would you say are the similarities and differences between the American and Brazilian Christian markets? Do Christian leaders in both countries have the same demands?

Leaders in both countries are interested in being better leaders, or at least in growing larger churches.

At the same time, Brazilian culture has a greater affinity for European culture, especially French culture, than does the American. So, leaders in Brazil are likely to be more comfortable with works with philosophical and sociological roots than their American counterparts; and, far less accepting of anything that would smack of a "right wing" political agenda.

Do Brazilian authors tend to be conservative, or liberal? How is this reflected in the country's Christian literature?

Brazilian authors definitely tend to be more *politically liberal* than their American counterparts, much more accepting of Marxist social analysis. As to biblical exegesis, or theological tradition, I would say that *most* are theologically naive, due to their lack of training. Again, the terms "conservative" and "liberal"

apply very differently to the Brazilian theological spectrum. On the whole, however, I would classify most Brazilian evangelicals with conservative evangelicals within the American spectrum.

With regard to the biblical text, is there a preference for a particular translation?

The best selling biblical text in Brazil would be the rough equivalent of the New Revised Standard Version in the U.S. Next are the various versions of the *Corrigida*, a text on the order of the American King James Version. The Brazilian versions of the *Good News for Modern Man* and NIV Bibles come next, with the *Living Bible* bringing up the rear.

What is Vida Nova's editorial stance?

We have a non-sectarian evangelical theological line, leaning towards the non-charismatic.

How would you describe Vida Nova's position in the Brazilian editorial market?

We specialize in study Bibles, reference works, theological textbooks, and tools for leaders. We are known for both the theological and editorial quality of the works we produce. I believe we are niche leaders.

Looking at the leaders that are coming up, what is your evaluation of the future of Brazilian Christian editorial production?

I'm excited! Editorial production requires both

qualified professionals to write the literature and those who will edit, package, and distribute it.

More and more, in Brazil, seminaries are developing graduate level programs. With a little seasoning, the graduates will produce more and more theological literature (my area of interest).

We also have a good, younger, crop of up-and-coming leaders in the industry, who are truly committed to honoring God and maintaining good ethics, as well as to producing and distributing literature that will help Brazilian churches. I believe, more and more, that the world will be hearing from Brazil's evangelical leaders. ❖