



# Spanish-Language Publishing Matures

*Increased sophistication and professionalism are evident in new Spanish-language titles from Christian publishers.*

by Kim Pettit

**F**ifteen years ago, I started work on a bibliography of Spanish-language materials on cults—now referred to with a less pejorative term, *new religious movements*, or NRMs—and non-Christian religions. To prepare the bibliography, I reviewed the materials of apologetics ministries. Then, I expanded my search to publishers' catalogs. After a while I started securing copies of the books themselves, and following up references in footnotes, end notes, and bibliographies. I frequented new and used bookstores, pored over library holdings, and employed numerous internet search engines. Now I have a 200-page bibliography listing materials in Spanish on over 150 religious groups.

As I studied the resources in Spanish on new religious movements and other religions, my narrow focus made it easy to compare the output and quality of various publishers. Here is what I found:

**1. Translated materials were published on the basis of availability rather than relevance.** Because a good resource existed in English, it was translated, without regard to its relevance to readers in the target language. Ministry listings, in particular, included translations of works on NRMs that had few if any adherents in Latin America.

**2. Original materials were poorly researched and badly written.** Too many authors relied on secondary sources and did not do original research. They parroted English-language writings. Their tone was sensationalistic. This could be attributed to the zeal of the authors, or their lack of expertise, but it also indicated the low editorial standards of their publishing houses.

**3. Works were not contextualized.** Books outlined the history of a particular sect, but never stated how and if it had spread to Spanish-speaking countries. While I did not expect U.S. or British writers to have expertise outside their fields, I did wonder why the editors of the translations of their works did not commission new material to

make books more relevant to the intended audience. For books written in Spanish, the authors' dependence on foreign materials meant they often failed to address the NRMs emerging in their own countries.

**4. Materials gave scanty references.** Standards for citations varied tremendously. One book might list the author, title, and publisher of the reference cited; another the author, title, and year; still another the author, title, city, and number of pages of the cited work. At times the footnotes, or the subject and Scripture indices that had graced the English original, mysteriously disappeared in translation.

**5. Books were poorly produced.** Often translations were of deplorable quality, with unattractive covers, and poorly laid-out interiors. The pages yellowed and the binding quickly fell apart with use.

What has happened since I started this research? There has been a *vast* improvement in the books coming from Spanish evangelical publishing companies, both those based in the United States, and those in Latin America.

Less irrelevant material is published. Production quality is better. Standards for style, consistency, and bibliographic citations are much improved. Now there is material on NRMs that cites primary sources, where authors show awareness of current research. Authors are dealing with NRMs in a way that is relevant to Latin America and are demonstrating charity and respect toward unbelievers.

There is still a lot to be done, but the improvements in this area reflect changes that have taken place in every single category across the board. Apologetics books are better, and so are Christian living titles, devotionals, pastoral helps, books for children, and so on. The Christian Spanish-language publishing industry is maturing, growing in its expertise and service to the Lord. And, this researcher is happy to see the changes!❖