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Spanish Language Christian Academic Publishing

With the growing importance of the Global Church, there is a rising need for scholars and librarians to access material from other parts of the world. Spanish-language material used by the Latin American Church is a rich source for understanding Latin American theology in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

History

Some of the oldest religious books in the world are the ancient Mayan codices found scattered in a few museums in Europe. These “books” of folded bark paper were very durable, but most where destroyed during the Spanish conquest when these items were sought out and burned as dangerous and heretical writings. The most well known examples today are the Dresden Codex, the Madrid Codex, and the Paris Codex. But the tradition of religious publishing did not stop with the conquest of the Americas by the Spanish and Portuguese. In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed and began the conquest of Mexico. Conversion of the indigenous population to Roman Catholicism was part of the overall plan, so in 1527 Juan de Zumárraga was chosen by Charles V to be the first bishop of Mexico and Protector of the Indians. Along with establishing a school for Indian girls, several hospitals, and dealing with the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Zumárraga also established the first printing press in 1539 in Mexico City with an Italian, Giovanni Paoli (Scialabba 2005:10). A collection of 400 Colonial Spanish publications from the British library is available on microfiche from IDC Publishers (http://www.idcpublishers.com). It includes the earliest surviving imprint from Mexico, Zamárraga’s *Doctrina breve muy provechosa de las cosas que pertenecen a la fe Católica y a nuestra Cristiandad en estilillo para común inteligencia* (1543). “Zamárraga argued that a press would be vital in the important task of converting the indigenous population to Christianity.”2 Hanks (2010:90) notes that by the end of the 1500's Spanish missionaries recognized the value of printed translated works to avoid the problem created by faulty translation and “defective hand-copied translations.”3
A second colonial publishing center was quickly established in Lima, Peru. "The same evangelizing motive prompted the establishment of a press in Peru. The second Peruvian imprint, and the first full-length book, was a trilingual (Spanish, Quechua, Aymara) catechism printed in Lima in 1584." Given its colonial history, the Roman Catholic Church dominated colonial publishing in Latin America. The majority of the books were catechisms, sermons, devotional material, religious biographies, and works on theology and doctrine. Guibovich details how the Inquisition in Peru operated to maintain ideological control over the books available in the Spanish colony. It was almost impossible for people to even obtain Protestant material and needless to say such books could not be published in Latin America during this time.

The first known organized Protestant publisher in Latin America was in Toluca, Mexico, when Baptist missionary, J. Edgar Davis, began operating a foot-powered press in his kitchen and published his first book on November 17, 1905. This was the origin of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House. In 1910, during the Mexican Revolution, Davis even had to make a deal with Pancho Villa to print some of his revolutionary propaganda in order to keep his press in operation for religious purposes. Despite this measure, conditions in Mexico led Davis to relocate the press to El Paso, Texas in 1916, which has been the home of Casa Bautista de Publicaciones ever since.

Given the length of history and the geographical breadth of this subject, it is impossible to cover all of Latin American Christian publishing, except in a cursory way. Therefore, this survey will look at the five major regions of Spanish-speaking Latin America, as well as publishers from Spain and Spanish language publishers in the United States who are major participants in Christian publishing in Latin America. Only a few key publishers from each region will be mentioned, and it is important to remember that publishing in Latin America is a very fluid situation and is constantly changing as old publishers disappear almost overnight and new ones appear very rapidly. Finally, this essay will conclude with a brief look at organizations which are important to Latin American Christian publishing in a general way throughout the region.

Mexico

Since Mexico was the first place to host Christian publishing with Juan de Zamárraga, it is suitable that we begin a survey of Christian publishing here. In terms of Mexican Catholic Theology, a group of Jesuits formed the Centro de Reflexión Teológica in 1975 which publishes the journal Christus (www.christus.org.mx). Another Jesuit publication from Mexico is the journal Revista Mirada, which focuses on spirituality and human rights.
Ediciones Las Américas (www.edicioneslasamericas.com) was originally set up by Central American Mission in Guatemala as Editorial Centroamericana, but relocated in 1956 to Puebla, Mexico, and thus represents one of the older Protestant publishing presences in Mexico. Publicaciones El Faro (www.publicacioneselfaro.com.mx/index.php) is one of the main Protestant publishers, producing material for the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico, as well as a journal, El Faro. Another Protestant voice is Misión Latinoamericana de México (www.milanex.com) which publishes a journal Revista Prisma which is more popular in nature.

Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama)

In Costa Rica, one of the major Protestant academic publishers is Editorial Sebíla, the publishing branch of the Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (www.ubila.net/Libreria.html). Of special importance is the journal Vida y Pensamiento, but also the newsletter Faces which is available online in English (www.ubila.net/Faces.html). In addition, through the Universidad Nacional, books are published by the Escuela Ecuméntica de Ciencias de la Religión (www.una.ac.cr/teologia/publicaciones.htm).

Costa Rica is also home to the Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones with their publishing branch Editorial DEI (www.dei-cr.org). This group publishes primarily scholarly Protestant material including Revista Pasos which examines theology and the social sciences and is downloadable from the website, and Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana (Revista RIBLA).

Similarly in El Salvador, UCA Editores (www.ucaceditores.com.sv/uca/) is the publishing arm of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simón Cañas, Departamento de Teología. This publisher is Roman Catholic and is committed to preserving and spreading the writings, sermons, and ideas of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the well-known Salvadoran church leader assassinated in 1980 while saying mass for his support of the poor and oppressed of that nation. This publisher also publishes two key journals, Revista Estudios Centroamericanos and Revista Latinoamericana de Teología as well as a series Colección Teología Latinoamericana.

In Guatemala, the Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano prints a number of Anabaptist resources and other Protestant material through their Ediciones Semilla (www.semilla.org.gt/ediciones.html). Another interesting publisher is the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, which was founded in 1992 in Verapaz, Guatemala to work on dialog and inculturation with Mayan Christians which is published as a series under the name Ak' Kutan (http://www.akkutan.info/publicaciones.html). A prominent Catholic publisher in Central America as a whole is Editorial Lascasiana, which has published books in Guatemala,
Nicaragua and Costa Rica. This publisher produces the journal Alternativas, Revista de Análisis y Reflexión Teológica.

While Honduras and Panama do not appear to have any predominant Christian publishers, Nicaragua is the home of the Centro Ignaciano de Centroamérica (http://pastoral.uca.edu.ni). This group is a Catholic organization devoted to social justice which produces two publications: Revista Diakonia and Entérate-Boletín Informativo. Another Catholic publisher which focuses on lay ministry is Teyocoyani (www.teyocoyani.org). They have published a number of resources aimed at developing Catholic leaders from Base Communities. Nicaragua is also the host of the Centro Interreligioso de Estudios Teológicos y Sociales (CIEETS) which is a Protestant group focused on issues of social transformation. They produce two publications, Boletín Comunidad, and the more academic Xilitl: Revista Nicaragüense de Teología.

Spanish Caribbean (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico)

For numerous reasons, the Spanish Caribbean is not a major producer of publications. The political situation in Cuba, economic difficulties in the Dominican Republic, and the close proximity and open markets to the U.S. Spanish language publishers in Puerto Rico all tend to discourage Christian publishing in this area. There are however, a few publishers worth noting.

Located on Cuba is the Seminario Evangélico de Teología Matanzas, founded in 1946 by the Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians (www.cubatheological-seminary.com/publications.htm). The main importance in terms of theological publishing is the journals Cuba Teológica and Didajé which are available online.

On Puerto Rico, the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico (www.se-pr.edu/servicios/libros.htm) was founded in 1919 by Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and the Disciples of Christ. Besides books, they also produce the journal Revista Presencia.

South America- Andean Zone (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela)

A major important Christian publisher in Bolivia is the Instituto Superior Ecuménico Andino de Teología (ISFAT) (www.iseatbolivia.org). This group focused on indigenous religion and Christianity in the Andes, releases two periodicals: Revista de Cultura, Religión y Desarrollo, and Revista Fe y Pueblo. In addition they publish two series of books: Teología y Filosofía Andinas and Religión y Desarrollo en los Andes. Also in Bolivia is the Instituto Latinoamericano de Misionología (www.skidi-on.com/mision/publicaciones.php) which has published a few books on missiology from a Roman Catholic viewpoint.

Colombia is perhaps the most dominant country in the region in terms of Catholic publishing. It is the central location of the Centro de Publicaciones
of the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM). CELAM (www.celam.org) is a Roman Catholic organization connecting the 22 Catholic conferences of Latin America which was founded in 1955. Besides the Centro de Publicaciones (www.celam.org/publicaciones) and their major journal Boletín CELAM, they also include the Centro Bíblico Pastoral para América Latina (CEBIPAL) (www.celam.org/cebipal).

Ecuador is the headquarters of CLAI Ediciones, the publishing arm of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (the Latin American Council of Churches)(www.claieweb.org). Of particular importance is their journal Signos, which helps cover news and articles from a wide diversity of Christian groups throughout the region. Another important work from Ecuador is the Catholic missiological journal Spiritus (www.spiritus.org.ec).

Peru is home to Ediciones Puna del CENIP (Centro de Investigaciones y Publicaciones) (www.edicionespuma.org) which is a major Evangelical publisher, although many of the books are translations of English books by people like John Stott. A Catholic work for over 40 years among the people of the Andes is the Instituto de Pastoral Andina (www.ipandina.org) which puts out two publications, Pastoral Andina and Alpamochis for the study of mission work in the area.

From Venezuela comes the online newspaper, Verdad y Vida (www.verdad yvida.org/inicio.html) with a decidedly conservative look at the issues relevant to evangelicals in South America.

South America- Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)

One of the leading Evangelical publishers in the Southern Cone of Latin America is Ediciones Kairos in Argentina (www.kairos.org.ar/index.html), which is the publishing branch of the Fundación Kairos, an organization founded in 1976 and led by Hispanic theologian, René Padilla. The organization was created to promote integral mission and seeks to combine both proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. The organization also produces two key journals: Revista Kairos and Revista Iglesia y Misión.

Argentina is also the home of the Instituto Universitario ISEDET, a university founded in 1969 by the historical Protestant churches in Latin America, including: Anglican, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. This organization publishes a number of scholarly academic resources (http://publicaciones.isedet.edu.ar/ojs/), in particular the journal Cuadernos de Teología and JOLAH (journal of Latin American Hermeneutics).

There are other important publishers in Argentina. For Catholic material, Grupo Editorial Lumen (www.lumen.com.ar/), and for Pentecostal material (mostly translations of international leaders like T.D. Jakes, David Yonggi Cho, etc. into Spanish) there is Editorial Peniel (www.peniel.com).
While Argentina dominates the Southern Cone, Chile does have a presence in Christian publishing as well. The Comunidad Teológica Evangelica (www.ctedechile.cl/) was founded in 1964 and is a joint effort by Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Pentecostals. Paraguay is home to the Centro de Estudios Paraguayos Antonio Guasch (CEPAG) (www.cepag.org.py/) which is an organization associated with the Jesuits and their interest in social justice work among the Guarani tribe. This organization publishes two journals: Revista Acción and Revista Acción Popular. Also in Paraguay, the Coordinadora Nacional de Pastoral Indígena (CONAPI) (www.conapi.org.py) published a journal Diálogo Indígena Misionero (DIM) which was an academic publication on work among indigenous peoples. This was published at least through 2006, although I can find no recent information on this publisher. In Uruguay, the Catholic school, the Facultad de Teologia del Uruguay Monseñor Mariano Soler (www.facteologia.edu.uy/publicaciones_libros.html) is one of the main Christian publishers in that country and also produces a journal called Soleriana.

U.S. Spanish Language Publishers

As mentioned earlier, one of the earliest attempts at Spanish language publishing in the United States was Casa Bautista de Publicaciones founded in Mexico in 1905 by U.S. missionary J.E. Davis, which moved to El Paso, Texas in 1916. Today it is still a major force in Protestant Evangelical publishing, although now it often goes under the name Editorial Mundo Hispano (www.casabautista.org).

The first nationally organized approach to Spanish language publishing in the United States began in the 1990's with Thomas Nelson’s Grupo Nelson (www.gruponelson.com), which now includes five imprints: Editorial 10 Puntos, Editorial Betania, Editorial Caribe, Editorial Católica and Líder Latino. Around the same time Zondervan launched Editorial Vida (www.zondervan.com) which has been very successful especially in works on popular Christian spirituality.

The Spanish Evangelical Publishers’ Association also organized at the end of this period and their annual Expolit book fair in Miami (www.expolit.com) has led the way in bringing various publishers from this genre together. In addition, Editorial Unilit, Editorial Portavoz from Kregel (www.portavoz.com), and Casa Creación (from Strang Communications) (www.casa creacion.com) have also entered the Spanish language Christian book market. While these publishers have had great success, they are still predominated by translations of popular English writers into Spanish.

Today, a number of denominational publishers also provide resources in Spanish. Libros Desafio (www.librosdesafio.org) provides material from the Reformed Church tradition. Editorial Concordia (http://sites.cph.org/
The editorial branch of Concordia Publishing House which produces Lutheran books, Editorial Bautista Independiente (www.ebi-bmm.org), is another publisher of Baptist material for the Spanish market. Casa Metodista de Publicaciones (CMP) (http://intro.metodista.cat) is an additional publisher of Methodist material.

There are also special organizations for Hispanic theology which produce books in Spanish. The Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH) (www.aeth.org) formed from a meeting in 1991 of U.S., Canadian, and Puerto Rican theological educators. Currently they produce three main book series: Serie Conozca su Biblia, Serie de Introducciones, and Serie de Tres Meses. Another very new step is the Society of Biblical Literature’s new Ancient Near East Monograph Series (www.sbl-site.org/publications/Books-ANEmono graphs.aspx) which is completely open access and free online. Currently the first two volumes are both in Spanish, though the series is not specifically limited to Spanish materials.

Spain

Spain remains an important influence in Latin American publishing due to its historic and linguistic connections. Commonly known as la madre patria or “the mother country,” it is a major source for scholarly Christian material, especially from the Roman Catholic tradition. The largest publisher of Protestant Spanish language material is Editorial CLIE (www.clie.es) which is also located in Spain and was founded in 1924 as the second oldest Evangelical Spanish language publisher in the world. It was founded by Samuel Vila, a young Evangelical who found no Protestant seminaries in Spain, so he went abroad and worked with C.H. Spurgeon. After his studies he decided to return to Spain and create a publishing ministry to provide academic resources for Spanish-speaking Protestants. Another Protestant publisher is Andamio (www.publicacionesandamio.com) which also publishes Evangelical material.

Roman Catholic publishers in Spain include Editorial Verbo Divino (www.verbo divino.es) which publishes the Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano, Comentario de la Casa de la Biblia, and the Biblioteca Bíblica Básica among other major academic Christian resources. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos is another major Catholic publisher, as is Ediciones Universidad De Navarra, S.A. (www.eunsa.es) which publishes the Simposios Internacionales de Teología along with many other academic theological works.

General Resources

One large Roman Catholic group spanning all of Latin America is the Confederación Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Religiosos/as (CLAR) (www.clar.org) which publishes the periodical Revista CLAR and other works of Catholic theology and religious life.
For Protestant scholars, the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (www.ftl­
al.org), which is known in English as the Latin American Theological Fellowship, provides vital access to the theological works of Hispanic Theologians through its English-language Journal of Latin American Theology: Christian Reflections from the Latino South.

For librarians interested in locating Christian Spanish-language resources from Latin America, there is no good central distributor. Librarians have formed the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) (www.salalm.org/about/index.html) back in 1956, but this is not particularly focused on Christian materials. Distributors like Libros Latinos (www.libroslatinos.com) and Libros Centroamericanos (www.libroscentroamericanos.com) help fill the gaps in collections, but they are not focused on religious materials and so collection development using these sources is rather arbitrary. Some organizations, such as Latin America Caribbean Library Services (LACLS) (www.lacls.org) are working to help religious libraries in Latin America, but so far collection development does not seem to be part of their work.

A growing number of online resources are also becoming available. Items such as Directorio Catolico de Internet (www.galeon.com/dircat/ publicaciones.htm) with many links to Roman Catholic Spanish language material, Centro Online de Juan Wesley (http://wesley.nnu.edu/espanol/index.htm) with many full text Methodist material, and Northwestern Theological Seminary’s online Spanish material (www.ntslibrary.com/ Libreria-Virtual.htm) are good examples of this trend. Two other useful online full text sources are Revista Electrónica Latinoamericana de Teología (http:// /servicioskoinonia.org/relat) and Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal (http://redalyc.uaemex.mx). It is also possible to find many Spanish language journals on the Directory of Open Access Journals (www.doaj.org). In addition, the Library of Congress has made the Handbook of Latin American Studies accessible online (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/hlas) with some links to electronic sources.

Current Issues

Roman Catholic publishers continue to dominate Latin American academic publishing. The Protestant market is flooded with translations of English writers from the United States, although these are mostly popular books on spirituality. It is much more difficult to find Latin American Evangelical writers. A larger area for concern is the lack of access to international publishing by indigenous independent Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-Charismatic writers. Often these works are self-published and distributed only within small church-based bookstores. Without wider distribution, the voices of the fastest growing, and largest community of
Protestants in Latin America is largely unheard, although many of them are beginning to tap into online venues.

Latin American Christian publishing continues to be a huge untapped source of theological work and pastoral wisdom which is currently being lost to the greater Christian community around the world. Electronic publishing and the use of the internet has expanded access, but there are few central directories which allow people to easily find this material. It is to be hoped that the Global Church will become more involved in helping the Latin American Church enter into theological dialog with other Christian communities, by opening more access to the Spanish language publishing markets and distribution systems.

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Endnotes


3 Hanks, William F. Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross. 2010, Berkley, University of California Press.


