

Publisher's goal: Spanish Bibles for all Spanish speakers

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EL PASO—Nearly four and a half centuries after the first Spanish translation of the Bible was published, an El Paso publishing house continues to advance the same goal as those 16th-century translators—to make God's message accessible to all Spanish-speaking people.

On Sept. 28, 1569, former Catholic monk Cassiodoro de Reina and his collaborators published the first complete Spanish-language edition of the Bible. Revised a generation later by Cipriano de Valera, the Reina-Valera Bible is the most widely used translation among Latin American evangelical churches.



Raquel Contreras

Like those early translators, Editorial Mundo Hispano—better known for generations as the Baptist Spanish Publishing House—wants to make the Bible available to all Spanish speakers, including those from the most humble origins, said Raquel Contreras, general director and publisher.

“We want to communicate the message of Jesus Christ and make disciples through print and electronic media,” Contreras said. “Our passion is to

produce resources that will help people to know God more.”

Editorial Mundo Hispano—which publishes a variety of evangelistic and theological materials—began as Casa Bautista de Publicaciones in Toluca, Mexico, in 1905.

During the Mexican Revolution, founders J. Edgar and Mary Davis saw the need to leave Mexico, and the publishing house relocated to El Paso in 1916. After moving to various locations throughout the city, Casa Bautista de Publicaciones found a home in 1938 at the former location of the Baptist Tuberculosis Sanatorium.

Adapting to changing times

Through the years, the publishing house adapted to changing circumstances. As technology has improved, books that once had to be printed in El Paso and shipped around the world now can be printed more economically closer to where they are needed, Contreras said.



Editorial Mundo Hispano in El Paso—which publishes a variety of evangelistic and theological materials—began as Casa Bautista de Publicaciones in Toluca, Mexico, in 1905. (Photo courtesy of Raquel Contreras)

So, Editorial Mundo Hispano shut down its presses at 7000 Alabama St. in El Paso in 2000 but continues to operate as a publisher—not a printer.

The publishing house also has adapted to the blurring of denominational lines among evangelicals. Today, about a dozen Christian publication houses serve essentially the same audience, Contreras observed.

Editorial Mundo Hispano publishes between 950 and 1,000 titles annually, she said, noting churches of varied denominations throughout Latin America seek out its products because of their recognized quality.

Editorial Mundo Hispano strives to provide a contextually appropriate message to Spanish-speaking people in a variety of settings, Contreras said. It is important to consider how a Baptist church in Chile will read a book differently than a Hispanic Baptist church in Tennessee, she said.

Editorial Mundo Hispano also seeks to communicate the message of Christ to Native South American people by translating some books into their languages, she added.

As Hispanic churches expand in the United States, and as congregations recognize the need for their ministers to receive theological education, Editorial Mundo Hispano has seen its domestic sales increase significantly in the last decade, she said.

Published its own translation of the Bible

In 1989, Editorial Mundo Hispano produced its own version of the Reina-Valera Bible based on translations from the original biblical languages. It published its latest revised version of the Reina-Valera Actualizada in 2015.

In addition to seeking greater fidelity to the best biblical texts available, the

Reina-Valera Actualizada translators also kept in mind its audience. For example, translators presented biblical measurements in the metric system, since it is used throughout Latin America, Contreras said. The revised edition also replaced some archaic terms with more contemporary language.

Contreras, who went to work for Editorial Mundo Hispano as editor in 2011, was named general director and publisher two years later. She studied law in Chile and has served as pastor of a Baptist church in Chile, as well as vice president, president and executive secretary of several Baptist conventions in Chile and Latin America.

Every day, she examines new releases to determine which books could help Baptist churches grow and provide tools to form disciples.

“As a Baptist, I grew up learning from and using the materials from Casa Bautista,” Contreras said. “So, I know the Baptist Spanish Publishing House is really important for the churches in all of Latin America and for the Hispanic churches here.”