

# Your Bible, Now Made In China

By Angela Lu

(WNS)--China, the world's largest producer of textiles and manufactured goods, is now also the largest producer of Bibles. In 2012, the country's sole Bible printer, Amity Printing, produced 12 million Bibles and New Testaments.

Although the increased availability of Bibles is a big step forward from China's strictly Communist days, a closer inspection reveals the country continues to control how many Bibles are printed and who can get them.

Amity Printing started in 1988 as a joint effort between the British United Bible Societies (UBS) and Amity Foundation, the charity arm of the Three Self Church. Bible production increased from 500,000 the first year to 12 million last year. But many of the Bibles aren't going to Chinese Christians, as Amity Printing has found it can turn a profit by exporting its goods. Bibles are printed in more than 90 different languages, and of the 88.9 million Bibles printed between 1988 and late 2011, 33.2 million were exported.

And the number of exported Bibles is increasing. In 2011, about two-thirds of the Bibles printed went out of the country, with only about 4 million copies remaining in China's borders.

Not only is the number of Bibles printed by Amity unable to keep up with the growth of Chinese Christians, the 50 million believers in unregistered house churches do not have

direct access to them, said Paul Hattaway of Asia Harvest.

The Bibles are distributed to the 55,000 registered churches, and anyone can purchase them there for an affordable 9.50 Yuan (\$1.50). Christians found owning an Amity-printed Bible do not face punishment. But Christians in rural house churches far from registered congregations have a difficult time getting Bibles. Christians who ask for more than a few Bibles at a time raise suspicion.

"There is a growing emergency in China because of the lack of God's Word among the rural house churches," Hattaway said in an interview in Asia Harvest's 2011 newsletter. "If this need is not rebalanced soon, I fear it will have dire consequences for the revival that has been burning so brightly in China for the last 30 years."

Hattaway said the government's claims that Bibles are no longer needed in China is propaganda, and through speaking with the leaders of house church networks, he found they still need 34 million Bibles to give one to all their members. Asian Harvest has so far printed and distributed more than 6 million Bibles to these house churches.

"More than 60 years of atheistic Communist teaching in China has resulted in a large spiritual void in the lives of a billion people, which creates a hunger for truth," Hattaway said. "When many people hear truth, they are eager to embrace and wholeheartedly live for God."