



Translation of the Holy Scripture into Chinese language discussed at a round table meeting in Moscow



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On 27th January 2025, within the framework of the 33rd International Christmas Educational Readings, a round table meeting took place in Moscow, focusing on the translation of the Holy Scripture into the Chinese language. Taking part in the meeting were: Mr Taras Ivchenko, director of the Confucius Institute of the Russian State University for the Humanities; Archpriest Andrei Rakhnovsky, senior lecturer at the Biblical Studies Department of the Moscow Theological Academy, lecturer at the Sretenskaya Theological Academy, rector of the Church of the Deposition of the Robe in Leonovo, Moscow; Priest Kirill Shkarbul, rector of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish in Taipei, Taiwan (he participated remotely); and Ms Viktoriya Lobacheva, a Master's student of the Peking University.

Among those who attended the meeting was Hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin), staff member of the DECR Secretariat for Far Abroad Countries. Deacon Anatoly Goldman, senior lecturer at the Theology Department of the St. John the Theologian Russian Orthodox University, cleric of the Chinese Patriarchal Metochion in Moscow, acted as moderator.

Priest Alexy Yusupov, secretary of the Chinese Patriarchal Metochion, opened the meeting. In his speech, he pointed out that mission is inseparable from the Holy Scripture in that mission is proclaiming the Word of God to people. The word “mission” is commonly translated into Chinese as “spreading the Gospel” or “evangelization.” As Father Alexy emphasised, there is no contemporary Orthodox Christian translation of the Holy Scripture into the Chinese language, which makes the topic under discussion particularly relevant.

Archpriest Andrei Rakhnovsky outlined in his address a number of challenges that will face translators, such as the existence of different Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and certain specificities of the Russian Synodal Bible, in which, for example, the word “righteousness” is in most cases translated as “truth.”

Priest Kirill Shkarbul spoke about his decade-long work of translating the Gospel of Mark into the Chinese language and shared his plans to translate the Gospel of Matthew. Father Kirill pointed out a number of problems of the existing translations made by non-Orthodox Christian confessions and expressed a hypothesis that the use of certain translation methods is linked to the specific doctrinal characteristics of those confessions.

Mr Taras Ivchenko compared two translations of the Holy Scripture – the one made by St Gury (Karpov) and the one made by Metropolitan Innocent (Figurovsky), emphasising the importance of studying these texts collectively. He also noted that it is impossible to say whose translation is better because each of them offered better variants for different parts of the text.

In her address, Ms Viktoriya Lobacheva also dwelt on the work done by St Gury and Metropolitan Innocent, focusing on their translations of the Sermon on the Mount, and shared her conclusions of the comparative analysis of the two texts.

Meaningful discussions followed every report, with guests having an opportunity to ask the speakers their questions.

To conclude the meeting, Priest Alexy Yusupov thanked all those present and expressed his hope that the round table meeting would mark the beginning of the joint work with the view of preparing a new Orthodox translation of the Holy Scripture into the Chinese language.

