

# Robert Morrison (missionary)

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**Robert Morrison** (traditional Chinese: 馬禮遜; simplified Chinese: 马礼逊; pinyin: *Mǎ Lǐxùn*) (January 5, 1782 in Bullers Green, near Morpeth, Northumberland – August 1, 1834 in Guangzhou) was a Scottish missionary, the first Christian Protestant missionary in China.<sup>[1]</sup>

After twenty-five years of work he translated the whole Bible into the Chinese language and baptized ten Chinese believers. Morrison pioneered the translation of the Bible into Chinese and planned for the distribution of the Scriptures as broadly as possible, unlike the previous Roman Catholic translation work that had never been published.<sup>[2]</sup>

Morrison cooperated with such contemporary missionaries as Walter Henry Medhurst and William Milne (the printers), Samuel Dyer (Hudson Taylor's father-in-law), Karl Gutzlaff (the Prussian linguist), and Peter

Parker (China's first medical missionary). He served for 27 years in China with one furlough home to England. The only missionary efforts in China were restricted to Guangzhou (Canton) and Macau at this time. They concentrated on literature distribution among members of the merchant class, gained a few converts, and laid the foundations for more educational and medical work that would significantly impact the culture and history of the most populous nation on earth. However, when Morrison was asked shortly after his arrival in China if he expected to have any spiritual impact on the Chinese, he answered, "No sir, but I expect God will!"

## Robert Morrison



First Protestant Missionary to China

<b>Born</b>	January 5, 1782 Bullers Green, Morpeth, Northumberland, England
<b>Died</b>	August 1, 1834 (aged 52) Guangzhou, Guangdong, China
<b>Title</b>	D.D.
<b>Parents</b>	James Morrison Hannah Nicholson

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## Biography

### Early life

Son of James Morrison, a Scottish farm laborer and Hannah Nicholson, an English woman, who were both active members of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. They were married in 1768. Robert was the youngest son of eight children. At age three, Robert and his family moved to Newcastle where his father found more prosperous work in the shoe trade. It is possible that Robert was a childhood friend of George Stephenson, who invented the steam locomotive.

中文

**This article contains Chinese text.**

Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes, or other symbols instead of Chinese characters.

Robert's parents were devout Christians and raised their children to know the Bible and the Westminster Shorter Catechism according to Presbyterian ideals. At the age of 12 he recited the entire 119th Psalm (176 verses long) from memory in front of his pastor without a single mistake. John Wesley was still alive and many foreign mission agencies were being formed during this period of the Evangelical First Great Awakening.

In 1796, young Robert Morrison followed his uncle James Nicholson into apprenticeship and later joined the Presbyterian church in 1798.

By age 14 Robert left school and was apprenticed to his father's business.<sup>[3]</sup> For a couple of years he kept company in disregard of his Christian upbringing and fell occasionally into drunkenness. However, this behavior soon ended. In Robert's own words



Robert Morrison Birth Place - Bullers Green near Morpeth Northumberland England

“ It was about five years ago [1798] that I was much awakened to a sense of sin ... and I was brought to a serious concern about my soul. I felt the dread of eternal condemnation. The fear of death compassed me about and I was led nightly to cry to God that he would pardon my sin, that he would grant me an interest in the Savior, and that he would renew me in the spirit of my mind. Sin became a burden. It was then that I experienced a change of life, and, I trust, a change of heart, too. I broke off from my former careless company, and gave myself to reading, meditation and prayer. It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, and at that time I experienced much of the “kindness of youth and the love of espousals.” And though the first flash of affection wore off, I trust my love to and knowledge of the Savior have increased.

”

When Morrison was at work at his father's business he was employed at manual labour for twelve or fourteen hours a day; yet he seldom omitted to find time for one or two hours of reading and meditation. Even at work, his Bible or some other book was usually open before him. He was not able to obtain many books, but such as he could get hold of he read and re-read frequently. The diary, which he began to keep very early in his life, shows that he did much self-introspection; but his earnestness was clearly intense, and his sense of his own shortcomings continued to be remarkably vivid.

Soon he wanted to become a missionary and in 1801, he started learning Latin, Greek Hebrew<sup>[4]</sup> as well as systematic theology and shorthand from the Rev. W. Laidler, a Presbyterian minister in Newcastle, but his parents were opposed to his new vocation. During this period, Robert often spent free time in the garden in quiet meditation and prayer. At work, the Bible or some other book such as Matthew Henry's Commentary was open before him while his hands were busy. He regularly attended church on Sundays, visited the sick with the "Friendless Poor and Sick Society", and in his spare time during the week instructed poor children. He shared his faith in Christ with another young apprentice and to a sailor, showing a deep concern for the conversion of friends and family.

On January 7, 1803 he entered George Collison's Hoxton Academy in London and was trained as Congregationalist minister.<sup>[5]</sup> He visited the poor and sick and preached in the villages around London without neglecting his studies.

Already at the age of 17 Robert had been deeply moved by reading about the new missionary movement in *The Evangelical Magazine* and *The Missionary Magazine*. But he was deeply attached to his mother and promised he would not go abroad so long as she lived. He kept this promise and was present to care for her in her last illness when he received her blessing that he might go abroad.

## Preparing to be a missionary

After his mother's death in 1804, he joined the London Missionary Society. He had applied to the Society in a letter dated May 27, 1804, offering himself for missionary service. The next day he was interviewed by the board and accepted at once without a second interview. The next year, he went to Mr. David Bogue's Academy in Gosport (near Portsmouth) for further training. For a while he was torn between Timbuktu in Africa and China as possible fields of service. His prayer was:

“ that God would station him in that part of the missionary field where the difficulties were greatest and all to human appearances the most insurmountable. ”

In 1798, just when the young Robert had been converted, the Rev. William Willis Moseley of Northamptonshire was strongly burdened for the spiritual needs of China. He issued a letter urging “the establishment of a society for translating the Holy Scriptures into the languages of the populous oriental nations.” He providentially came across a manuscript of most of the New Testament translated into Chinese (probably by earlier Jesuit missionaries) which had remained gathering dust in the British Museum. He immediately printed 100 copies of a further tract “on the importance of translating and publishing the Holy Scriptures into the Chinese language.” Copies were sent to all the Church of England bishops and the new mission agencies. Most gave discouraging replies, giving such reasons as the cost and “utter impossibility” of spreading the books inside China. But a copy reached Dr. Bogue, the head of the Hoxton Academy. He was so moved that he replied to Moseley that if he had been younger he would have “devoted the rest of my days to the propagation of the gospel in China”! Not surprisingly, Dr. Bogue promised to look out for suitable missionary candidates for China. His choice fell on Morrison who soon after turned his attention away from Africa and focused entirely on China. Robert wrote to a friend urging him to become his colleague in this momentous new work,

“ I wish I could persuade you to accompany me. Take into account the 350 million souls in China who have not the means of knowing Jesus Christ as Savior... ”

He returned to London and studied medicine with Dr. Blair at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and astronomy with Dr. Hutton at the Greenwich Observatory. After the decision of the Directors as to his destination, Morrison had most diligently and laboriously pursued the study of Chinese. He learned the Chinese language from a student that he shared lodgings with, called Yong Sam-tak from Canton City. At first they did not get on well together. Morrison absent-mindedly burned a piece of paper with some Chinese characters on it - and infuriated the superstitions of his Chinese mentor, who left for three days. From that time on, Morrison wrote his characters on a piece of tin that could be erased. They continued to work together and studied an early Chinese translation of Gospels named *Evangelia Quatuor Sinice* which was probably written by a Jesuit, as well as a hand-written Latin-Chinese dictionary. Yong Sam-tak eventually joined him in family worship. In this way Morrison made considerable progress in speaking and writing one of the most difficult of languages for an English-speaking person to learn. The hope of the

Directors was that, first of all, Morrison would master the ordinary speech of the people, and so be able to compile a dictionary, and perhaps make a translation of the Scriptures for the benefit of all future missionaries. To accomplish this, it was first of all necessary to get a footing on Chinese soil, and not hopelessly offend the Chinese authorities. At this time intercourse of foreigners with the people, except for purposes of trade, was absolutely forbidden. Every foreigner was strictly interrogated on landing as to what his business might be ; and if he had not a reasonable answer to give, he was sent back by the next vessel, and often very unceremoniously treated. Morrison was aware of the dangers.<sup>[6]</sup> He traveled to visit his family and bid them farewell in July 1806, preaching 13 times in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

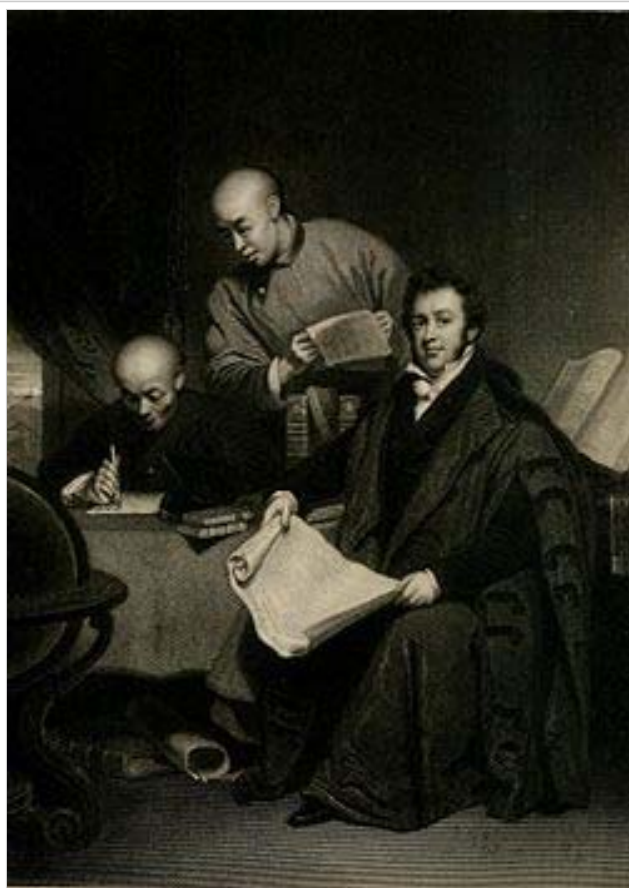
## Early missionary work

Morrison was ordained in London on January 8, 1807 at the Scotch church on Swallow Street and was eager to go to China. On January 31, he sailed first to America. The fact that the policy of the East India Company was not to carry missionaries, and that there were no other ships available that were bound for China, forced him to stop first in New York on April 20 after a stormy and perilous voyage aboard the "Remittance". Some have made the argument that missionaries like Morrison were a tool of Western commercial imperialism, but the general hostility that he aroused from the British commercial endeavor in China, like William Carey of India, prove that he acted independently. Morrison spent nearly a month in America. He was very anxious to secure the good offices of the American Consul at Guangzhou, as it was well known that he would need the influence of some one in authority, if he was to be permitted to stay in China. The promise of protection was made from the United States consul, and on May 12, he boarded a second, the *Trident*, bound for Macau.

The *Trident* arrived in Macau on September 4, 1807 after 113 days at sea. The first move of the new-comer was to present his letters of introduction to some leading Englishmen and Americans, in Macau and Guangzhou. He was kindly received, but he needed a bold heart to bear up, without discouragement, under their frank announcement of the apparently hopeless obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of his mission. George Thomas Staunton discouraged him from the idea of being a missionary in China. First of all, Chinamen were forbidden by the Government to teach the language to any one under penalty of death. Secondly, no one could remain in China except for purposes of trade. Thirdly, the Roman Catholic missionaries at Macau, who were protected by the Portuguese, would be bitterly hostile, and stir up the people against a Protestant missionary. On September 7, he was expelled by the Roman Catholic authorities in Macau and went to the Thirteen Factories outside Canton City. The chief of the



American factory at Canton offered the missionary for the present a room in his house ; and there he was most thankful to establish himself, and think over the situation. Shortly afterwards he made an arrangement for three months, with another American gentleman, to live at his factory. He effectively passed himself as an American. The Chinese, he found, did not dislike and suspect Americans as much as they did the English. Still Morrison's presence did excite suspicions, and he could not leave his Chinese books about, lest it should be supposed that his object was to master the language. Certain Roman Catholic natives such as Abel Yun were found willing to impart to him as much of the Mandarin Chinese as they could ; but he soon found that the knowledge of this did not enable him to understand, or make himself understood by, the common people; and he had not come to China simply to translate the Scriptures into the speech of a comparatively small aristocratic class.



Robert Morrison and Chinese helpers translating the Bible

During these early months his trials and discouragements were great. He had to live in almost complete seclusion. He was afraid of being seen abroad. His Chinese servants cheated him. The man who undertook to teach him demanded extortionate sums. Another bought him a few Chinese books, and robbed him handsomely in the transaction. Morrison was alarmed at his expenditure. He tried living in one room, until he had severe warnings that fever would be the outcome. His utter loneliness oppressed him. The prospect seemed cheerless in the extreme.

At first Morrison conformed as exactly as he could to Chinese manners. He tried to live on Chinese food, and became an adept with the chopsticks. He allowed his nails to grow long, and cultivated a pigtail. " He walked about the Hong with a Chinese frock on, and with thick Chinese shoes." In time he came to think this was a mistaken policy. So far as the

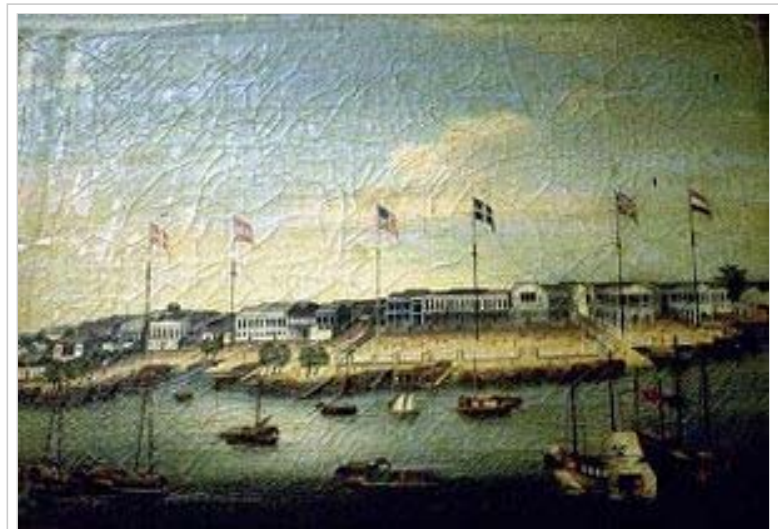
food was concerned, he could not live on it in health; and as for the dress, it only served to render him the more unusual, and to attract attention where he was anxious to avoid publicity. A foreigner dressed up in Chinese clothes excited suspicions, as one who was endeavoring by stealth to insinuate himself into Chinese society, so as to introduce his

contraband religion surreptitiously. Under these circumstances Morrison resumed the European manners of the Americans and English.

Morrison's position was menaced by political troubles. One move in the war with France, which England was waging at this time, was that an English squadron bore down on Macau, to prevent the French from striking a blow at English trade. This action was resented by the Chinese authorities at Guangzhou, and reprisals were threatened on the English residents there. Panic prevailed. The English families had to take refuge on ships, and make their way to Macau. Among them came Morrison, with his precious luggage of manuscripts and books. The political difficulty soon passed, and the squadron left; but the Chinese were even more intensely suspicious of the "foreigner" than before.

## With the East India Company

Morrison fell ill and returned to Macau on 1 June 1808. Fortunately he had mastered Mandarin and Cantonese during this period. Morrison was miserably housed at Macau. It was with difficulty he induced any one to take him in. He paid an exorbitant price for a miserable top-floor room, and had not been long in it before the roof fell in with a crash. Even then he would have stayed on, when some sort of covering had been patched up, but his landlord raised his rent by one-third, and he was forced to go out again into the streets. Still he struggled on, laboring at his Chinese dictionary, and even in his private prayers pouring out his soul to God in broken Chinese, that he might master the native tongue. So much of a recluse had he become, through fear of being ordered away by the authorities, that his health greatly suffered, and he could only walk across his narrow room with difficulty. But he toiled on.



Painting of the factories in 1780 with flags of Denmark, Spain, US, Sweden, Britain, Holland

Morrison strove to establish relations between himself and the people. He attempted to teach three Chinese boys who lived on the streets in an attempt to help both them and his own language skills. However, they treated him maliciously and he was forced to let them go.



In 1809, he met Mary Morton and soon married her on February 20 of that year. They had children James Morrison (5 March 1811, died on the same day), Rebecca Morrison (July 1812), and John Robert Morrison (17 April 1814). Mary Morton died in 1821.

On the day of their marriage Robert Morrison was appointed translator to the East India Company with a salary of £500 a year. He returned to Guangzhou alone since foreign women were not allowed to reside there.

This post afforded him, what most he needed, some real security that he would be allowed to continue at his work. He had now a definite commercial appointment, and it was one which in no way hindered the prosecution of the mission, which always stood first in his thoughts. The daily work of translation for the Company assisted him in gaining familiarity with the language, and increased his opportunities for intercourse with the Chinese. He could now go about more freely and fearlessly. Already his mastery of the Chinese tongue was admitted by those shrewd business men, who perceived its value for their own commercial negotiations.

The sea between Macau and Canton was full of pirates, and the Morrises had to make many anxious voyages. Sometimes the cry of alarm would be raised even in Guangzhou, as the pirate raids came within a few miles of the city; and the authorities were largely helpless. The perils of their position, as well as its solitude, seem to have greatly and painfully affected Mary. She was affected by unhealthy anxiety. There was no society at Guangzhou that was congenial to them. The English and American residents were kind, but had little sympathy with their work, or belief in it. Their first child, a boy, died at birth, and the Chinese demurred about the burial. Very sorrowfully Morrison had to superintend the internment of the little one on a mountainside. At that time his wife was dangerously ill. All his comrades at the Company's Office thought him a fool. His so-called Chinese assistants robbed him. Letters from England came but seldom.

The Chinese grammar was finished in 1812, and sent to Bengal for printing, and heard no more of for three anxious, weary years for Morrison. But it was highly approved and well printed, and it was a pivotal piece of work done towards enabling England and America to understand China. Morrison went on to print a tract and a catechism. He translated the book of Acts into Chinese, and was overcharged to the extent of thirty pounds for the printing of a thousand copies. Then Morrison translated the Gospel of Luke, and printed it. The Roman Catholic bishop at Macau, on obtaining a copy of this latter production, ordered it to be burned as a heretical book. So to the common people it must have appeared that one set of Christians existed to destroy what the other set produced. The facts did not look favorable for the prosperity of Christianity in China.

The machinery of the Chinese criminal tribunal was set in motion when the Chinese authorities read some of his printed works. Morrison was first made aware of the coming storm by the publication of an edict, directed against him and all Europeans who sought to undermine Chinese religion. Under this edict, to print and publish Christian books in Chinese was declared a capital crime. The author of any such work was warned that he would subject himself to the penalty of death. All his assistants would render themselves liable to various severe forms of punishment. The mandarins and all magistrates were enjoined to act with energy in bringing to judgment any who might be guilty of contravening this edict. Morrison forwarded a translation of this famous proclamation to England, at the same time announcing to the Directors that he purposed to go quietly and resolutely forward. For himself, indeed, he does not seem to have been afraid. Undoubtedly his position under the East India Company was a great protection to him; and a grammar and dictionary were not distinctively Christian publications. But the Directors were even then sending out to join him the Rev. William Milne and his wife, and Morrison knew that this edict would make any attempt of another missionary to settle at Guangzhou exceedingly hazardous and difficult.



William Milne arrived in 1813 to help with the work

On the 4th of July, 1813, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, it being the first Sunday in the month, Mr. and Mrs. Morrison were sitting down together to the " Lord's Supper" at Macau. Just as they were about to begin their simple service, a note was brought to them to say that Mr. and Mrs. William Milne had landed. Morrison used all his influence with those in whose hands the decision lay as to whether Milne should be allowed to remain. Five days after the newcomers had arrived, a sergeant was sent from the Governor to Morrison's house, who summoned him. The decision was short and stern : Milne must leave in eight days. Not only had the Chinese vehemently opposed his settlement, but the Roman Catholics were behind them in urging that he be sent away.

From the English residents at Macau, Morrison received no assistance either ; for they feared lest, if any complications arose through Morrison, their commercial interests might be prejudiced. For the present Mr. and Mrs. Milne went on to Guangzhou, where the Morrises followed them ; and soon both families were established in that city, waiting the next move of the authorities. Morrison spent this time assisting Milne to learn to speak Chinese.

## Return to England

In 1822 Morrison visited Malacca and Singapore, returning to England in 1824.

The University of Glasgow had made him a Doctor of Divinity in 1817, and upon his return to England, was made a Fellow of the Royal Society. He brought a large library of Chinese books to England, which were donated to the London University College. Morrison began The Language Institution in Bartlett's Buildings in Holborn, London during his stay there, to teach missionaries.

The years 1824 and 1825 were spent by Morrison in England, where he presented his Chinese Bible to King George IV., and was received by all classes with great demonstrations of respect. He busied himself in teaching Chinese to classes of English gentlemen and English ladies, and in stirring up interest and sympathy on behalf of China. Before returning to his missionary labors he was married again, in November 1824 to Eliza Armstrong, with whom he had five more children. The new Mrs. Morrison and the children of his first marriage returned with him to China in 1826.

An incident of the voyage will illustrate the perils of those days, as well as Morrison's fortitude. After a terrible spell of storm, the passengers were alarmed to hear the clanking of swords and the explosion of firearms. They soon learned that a mutiny had broken out among the seamen, who were wretchedly paid, and who had taken possession of the forepart of the vessel, with the intention of turning the cannon there against the officers of the ship. It was a critical moment. At the height of the alarm, Morrison calmly walked forward among the mutineers, and, after some earnest words of persuasion, induced the majority of them to return to their places ; the remainder were easily captured, flogged, and put in irons.

At Singapore, Morrison was confronted with fresh trials. The Singapore Institution, now Raffles Institution, had been in process of formation there, on his departure for England, similar to the college at Malacca. Little progress had been made with it. A new governor manifested less interest, and Morrison had not been present to see that the work went on. After a stay here for purposes of organization, the missionary and his family went on to Macau, and subsequently Morrison proceeded to Guangzhou, where he found that his property had been also neglected in his absence. The institution, however, at Singapore collapsed, greatly to Dr. Morrison's sorrow. He had personally subscribed very liberally towards it, and he felt its abandonment as a severe personal loss.

## **Final days in China**

Together the Morrisons returned to China in 1826.

Changes in the East India Company had brought him into relation with new officials, some of whom had not the slightest respect for the calling of the missionary, and were inclined to assume a high hand, until Morrison's threat to resign induced a more respectful temper. The relations, too, between the English traders and the Chinese officials were daily becoming more strained. Morrison strongly disapproved of much of the correspondence which it fell to his lot to conduct with the native mandarins. Clouds were gathering, which were to break in a few years' time. There were grave faults on both sides. The officiousness and tyranny of the mandarins were hard to bear, but on the English rested the more grievous responsibility of resolving to force a trade in opium on the Chinese people. War would come later, and might would be on the side of England, and right on the side of China. The whole future of missions would be prejudiced by this awful mistake. The ports would be opened to opium first, to Christianity second. No one can tell how vastly the difficulty of evangelizing China has been increased by this policy.

On Morrison's visit to England, he had been able to leave a Chinese native teacher, Liang Fa, one of Milne's converts, to carry on what work he could among the people. This man had already endured much for his faith, and he proved entirely consistent and earnest during the long period of Morrison's absence. Other native Christians were baptized ; and the little Church grew, while at the same time it was well known that many believed in secret, who did not dare to challenge persecution and ostracism by public confession. American missionaries were sent to help Morrison, and more Christian publications were issued. Morrison welcomed the arrival of the Americans, because they could conduct the service for English residents, and set him free to preach and talk to the Chinese who could be gathered together to listen to the Gospel. In 1832 Morrison could write :

“ There is now in Canton a state of society, in respect of Chinese, totally different from what I found in 1807. Chinese scholars, missionary students, English presses and Chinese Scriptures, with public worship of God, have all grown up since that period. I have served my generation, and must the Lord know when I fall asleep. ”

In 1833 there was a rising of the Roman Catholics against Morrison, which issued in the suppression of his presses and publications. Thus his favorite method of spreading the knowledge of Christ was taken away from him. His native agents, however, set themselves industriously to circulate to advantage such publications as were already printed. At this time, also, the monopoly of the East India Company was taken away ; and consequently Morrison's post under the Company was abolished, and his means of sustenance ceased. He was subsequently appointed Government translator under Lord Napier, but only held the position a few days.

In June, 1834, he prepared his last sermon on the text, "In my Father's house are many mansions." It was to show how much of the joy of the eternal Home would "consist in the society formed there; the family of God, from all ages and out of all nations." Even now he was entering his last illness, and his solitude was great, for his wife and family had been ordered to England. On August 1 the pioneer Protestant missionary to China died. He died at his residence: Number 6 in the Danish Hong at the age of 52 in his son's arms. The following day his remains were removed to Macau, and buried in the private Protestant cemetery there on August 5, beside those of his first wife and child. He left a family of six surviving children, two by his first wife, and four by his second. His only daughter was married to Benjamin Hobson, a medical missionary, in 1847.

## Epitaph



Robert Morrison's Grave



Robert Morrison's tomb

Morrison was buried in the Old Protestant Cemetery in Macau. The inscription on his marker reads:

Sacred to the memory of Robert Morrison DD.,

The first protestant missionary to China,  
 Where after a service of twenty-seven years,  
 cheerfully spent in extending the kingdom of the blessed Redeemer  
 during which period he compiled and published  
 a dictionary of the Chinese language,  
 founded the Anglo Chinese College at Malacca  
 and for several years laboured alone on a Chinese version of



The Holy Scriptures,  
which he was spared to see complete and widely circulated  
among those for whom it was destined,  
he sweetly slept in Jesus.  
He was born at Morpeth in Northumberland  
January 5th 1782  
Was sent to China by the London Missionary Society in 1807  
Was for twenty five years Chinese translator in the employ of  
The East India Company  
and died in Canton August 1st 1834.  
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth  
Yea saith the Spirit  
that they may rest from their labours,  
and their works do follow them

## Work

### Missionary work

### Translation of the Bible into Chinese

Morrison produced a Chinese translation of the Bible. He also compiled a Chinese dictionary for the use of westerners. The Bible translation took twelve years and the compilation of the dictionary, sixteen years. During this period, in 1815, he left the employment of the East India Company.

By the end of the year 1813, the whole of the New Testament translation was completed and printed. The translator never claimed that it was perfect. On the contrary, he readily conceded its defects. But he claimed for it that it was a translation of the New Testament into no stilted, scholastic dialect, but into the genuine colloquial speech of the Chinese. The possession of a large number of printed copies led the two missionaries to devise a scheme for their wide and effective distribution.

At this time several parts of the Malay Peninsula were under English protection. English Governors were resident, and consequently it seemed a promising field for the establishment of a mission station. The station would be within reach of the Chinese coast, and Chinese missionaries might be trained there whose entrance into China would not excite the same suspicions that attached to the movements of English people. The two places specially thought of were the island of Java, and Malacca on the Malay Peninsula.

It was well known that many thousands of Chinese were scattered through these parts, and Milne traveled around surveying the country, and distributing tracts and Testaments as opportunity offered. For the next seven or eight months the younger missionary devoted himself to this itinerating mission. He visited the island of Banca; and then went to Batavia, the principal town in Java. Here the Governor welcomed him, and sent him at the expense of the Government through the interior settlements of Java. From Java Milne made his way to Malacca, where he received equal kindness from the authorities. He would have gone to Penang, but his journey had already occupied as much time as he could spare; and so, in the autumn of 1814, he returned to Guangzhou.

The object of the two missionaries was now to select some quiet spot where, under protection, the printing press might be established, and Chinese missionaries trained. Malacca had this advantage, that it lay between India and China, and commanded means of transport to almost any part of China and the adjoining archipelago. After much deliberation it was determined to advise the directors that Milne should proceed to establish himself at Malacca.

In this year Morrison baptized the first convert on May 14, 1814 (seven years after his arrival). The first Protestant Chinese Christian, was named Tsaë A-Ko. Mr. Morrison acknowledged the imperfection of this man's knowledge, but he relied on the words, " If thou believest with all thy heart ! " and hence he administered the rite. From his diary the following was noted:

“ At a spring of water, issuing from the foot of a lofty hill, by the sea-side, away from human observation, I baptised him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . May he be the first fruits of a great harvest. ”

Amid such difficult circumstances the native Chinese Church began.



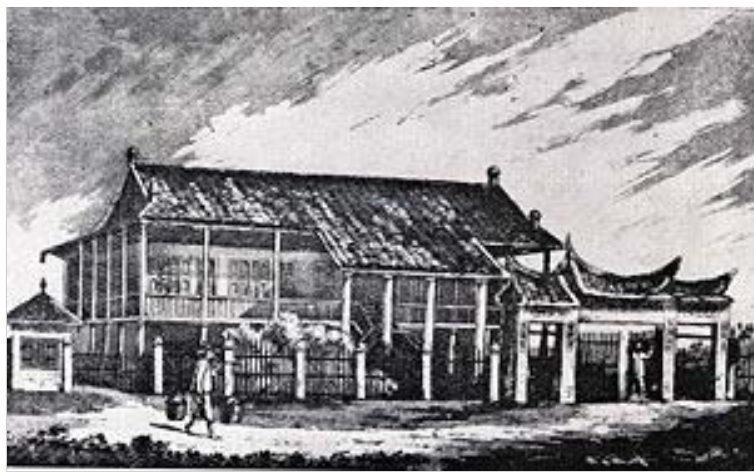
A page from Morrison's dictionary (ca. 1820; 1865 reprint shown), possibly the first major Chinese-English dictionary. Characters are arranged alphabetically, based on Morrison's romanization, which long predates both Wade-Giles and Pinyin. Note that no tones are marked.

About the same time the East India Company undertook the great cost of printing Mr. Morrison's Chinese Dictionary. They spent £10,000 on the work, bringing out for the purpose their own printer and printing press. The Bible Society voted two grants of £500 each towards the cost of printing the New Testament. One of the Directors of the East India Company also bequeathed to Morrison \$1000 for the propagation of the Christian religion. This he devoted to the cost of printing a pocket edition of the New Testament. The former edition had been inconveniently large; and especially in the case of a book that was likely to be seized and destroyed by hostile authorities, this was a serious matter. A pocket Testament could be carried about without difficulty. The small edition was printed, and many Chinese departed from Guangzhou into the interior with one or more copies of this invaluable little book secreted in his dress or among his belongings.

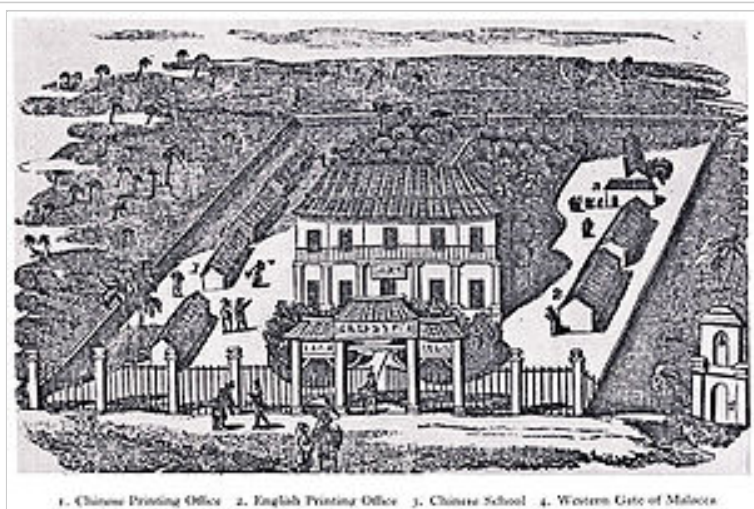
Mary Morrison was ordered to England, and she sailed with her two children, and for six years her husband was to toil on in solitude.

In 1817 Morrison accompanied Lord Amherst's embassy to Beijing. His own knowledge of China was very considerably enlarged by this. He was sent by the Company on an embassy to the Emperor at Beijing in the capacity of interpreter. The journey took him through many cities and country districts, and introduced him to some novel aspects of Chinese life and character. The object of the embassy was not attained, but to Morrison the experience was invaluable ; and it served, not only to revive his health, but to stimulate his missionary zeal. Through all that vast tract of country, and among that innumerable population, there was not one solitary Protestant missionary station.

Another accomplishment of Morrison's, in which he proved himself a pioneer, was his establishment of a dispensary, where native diseases might be treated more humanely and effectively than was customary in China. Morrison was profoundly stirred by the misery, the poverty, and the unnecessary suffering of the Chinese poor. The people were constantly persuaded to expend their all on drugs and herbs that were absolutely useless. Morrison sought out an intelligent and skilful Chinese practitioner, and placed him at the head of his dispensary. This man, who had learned the main principles of European treatment, received great help from Dr. Livingstone, a friend of Morrison's, who was much interested in this attempt to alleviate the sufferings of the poorer Chinese.



The college in Malacca, Malaysia in 1834.



1. Chinese Printing Office 2. English Printing Office 3. Chinese School 4. Western Gate of Malacca

The original Anglo-Chinese College campus was located in the British Straits Settlements of Malacca, Malaysia.

Morrison and Milne also established a school for Chinese and Malay children in 1818. The school, named Anglo-Chinese College (later called Ying Wa College), was moved to Hong Kong around 1843 after the territory became a British possession. The institution exists today in Hong Kong as a secondary school for boys. Milne received the support of the English Governor at Malacca. He represented the extreme eastern outpost of Protestant missions in Asia, and Morrison assumed the name " Ultra-Ganges " mission.

Morrison and Milne translated the Old Testament together; and although Morrison had the advantage of a far more intimate knowledge of the language, and was thus able to revise the work of his colleague, Milne also had made remarkable progress in his mastery of Chinese. The press was kept steadily at work. Tracts of various kinds were issued. Morrison wrote a little book called "A Tour round the World," the object of which

was to acquaint his Chinese readers with the customs and ideas of European nations, and the benefits that had flowed from Christianity.

As if his manifold activities in China were not sufficient to occupy him, Morrison began to formulate an even broader scheme for the evangelization of China. This was, to build at Malacca what he called an " Anglo-Chinese College." It's object was to introduce the East to the West, and the West to the East ; in other words, to mediate between the two civilizations, and thus to prepare the way for the quiet and peaceful dissemination of Christian thought in China. The idea fired him with enthusiasm. He wrote home, urging the friends of China to take it up. Here, he said in effect, is a language which is the speech of something like one-third of all our species. Tens of thousands of English boys and girls are educated to know dead languages. Surely some may be found to learn this living one,

and hence be enabled to make known the Christian faith to the many lands where Chinese is spoken. The college was to be open to all Chinese students of European literature, and European students of Chinese. Our missionaries, as they came out to the field, would learn in the college the language in which they were to preach.

The proposal was warmly taken up. The London Missionary Society gave the ground. The Governor of Malacca and many residents subscribed. Morrison himself gave £1000 out of his small property to establish the college. The building was erected and opened. Printing presses were set up, and students were enrolled. Milne was the president ; and while no student was compelled to declare himself a Christian, or to attend Christian worship, it was hoped that the strong Christian influence would lead many of the purely literary students to become teachers of Christianity. Intense as were his Christian convictions, he could sanction nothing that would do deliberate violence to the convictions of another ; and he had a faith that Christian truth would eventually prevail on its own merits, and need never fear to be set side by side with the truths that other religious systems contain. Eight or nine years after its foundation, Mr. Charles Majoribanks, M.P. for Perth, in a Government report on the condition of Malacca, singled out this institution for very high praise on account of its thoroughly sound, quiet, and efficient work.

A settlement having now been established, under British protection, and in the midst of those islands which are inhabited by a large Malay and Chinese population, reinforcements were sent out from England. After a period in Malacca they were sent on from there to various centers: Penang, Java, Singapore, Amboyna, wherever they could find a footing and establish relations with the people. In this way many new stations sprang up in the Ultra-Ganges Mission. A magazine was issued, entitled *The Gleaner*, the object of which was to keep the various stations in touch with one another, and disseminate information as to progress in the different parts. The various printing presses poured forth pamphlets, tracts, catechisms, translations of Gospels, in Malay or in Chinese. Schools were founded for the teaching of the children : for the great obstacle to the free use of the printing press was that so few of the people comparatively could read. The missionaries had to be many-sided, now preaching to the Malays, now to the Chinese, now to the English population ; now setting up types, now teaching in the schools ; now evangelizing new districts and neighboring islands, now gathering together their little congregations at their own settlement. The reports do not greatly vary from year to year. The work was hard, and seemingly unproductive. The people listened, but often did not respond. The converts were few.

Mary Morrison returned to China only to die in 1821; Mrs. Milne had died already. Morrison was 39. In 1822 William Milne died, after a brief but valuable missionary life, and Morrison was left to reflect that he alone of the first four Protestant missionaries to



China was now left alive. He reviewed the history of the mission by writing a retrospect of these fifteen years. China was still as impervious as ever to European and Christian influence ; but the amount of solid literary work accomplished was immense.

## Scholarly work

# Published Works By Robert Morrison

*Main article: List of works by Robert Morrison (missionary)*

## See also

- Morrison Academy
- Yung Wing
- Raffles Institution, the oldest school in Singapore, all-boys in Year 1-4 and co-ed in Year 5-6
- Ying Wa College, is the world's first Anglo-Chinese school founded in 1818, now located in Hong Kong

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## Notes

1. ^ Wylie (1867), p. 3-4 /Morrison/Biography.html
2. ^ Townsend (1890), appendix 5. ^ [http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison](http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison/Morrison/Biography.html)
3. ^ [http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison](http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison/Morrison/Biography.html) /Morrison/Biography.html
4. ^ <http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison> 6. ^ Horne (1904), ch. 5

## Further reading

- *The funeral discourse occasioned by the death of the Rev Robert Morrison ..., delivered before the London Missionary Society at the Poultry chapel, February 19, 1835.* By Joseph Fletcher [1784-1843]. London : Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1835. 75 p. { CWML G429 ; CWML G443 ; CWML N294 }
- *Memoir of the Rev Robert Morrison, D.D., F.R.S., &c.* By T.F. In *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* March 1835. { CWML O251 ; CWML N294 }
- *Memoirs of the life and labours of Robert Morrison. Compiled by his widow [Eliza Morrison, 1795-1874], with critical notices of his Chinese works,* by Samuel Kidd [1804-1843]. London : Longman, Orme, Brown, and Longmans, 1839. 2 v : ill , port ; 23 cm. { CWML Q122 }
- *The origin of the first Protestant mission to China : and history of the events which induced the attempt, and succeeded in the accomplishment of a translation of the Holy Scriptures into the Chinese language, at the expense of the East India Company, and of the casualties which assigned to the late Dr Morrison the carrying out of this plan : with copies of the correspondence between the Archbishop of Canterbury ... &c and the Rev W. W. Moseley ... To which is appended a new account of the origin of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and a copy of the memoir which originated the Chinese mission &c.* By William Willis Moseley. London : Simpkin and Marshall, 1842. [ii], 116 p. { CWML O86 ; CWML N310 }
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- *Cleaving the rock: the story of Robert Morrison, Christian pioneer in China.* By T. Dixon Rutherford. London: London Missionary Society, [ca.1902?]. 24 p. : ill., ports. [New illustrated series of missionary biographies No.14] { CWML U233 }
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- *Robert Morrison, a master-builder*. By Marshall Broomhall [1866-1937]. London, Livingstone Press, 1924. xvi, 238 p. ; front. (port.), 1 ill. (plan) ; 19 1/2 cm. { CWML U169 }
  - *Robert Morrison : China's pioneer*. [By Ernest Henry Hayes, 1881-?]. London : Livingstone Press, 1925. 128 p.
  - *The years behind the wall*. By Millicent and Margaret Thomas. London : Livingstone Press, 1936. 126 p. : ill. (some col.), frontis., maps on lining papers ; 20 cm. { CWML R449 }
  - *Robert Morrison : the scholar and the man*. By Lindsay Ride [1898-1977]. Hong Kong (China) : Hong Kong University Press, 1957. vii, 48, [ii], 13, [12] p. : ill [Includes an illustrated catalogue of the exhibition held at the University of Hong Kong September 1957 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Robert Morrison's arrival in China] { CWML M97 }
  - *The origins of the Anglo-American missionary enterprise in China, 1807-1840*. By Murray A. Rubinstein [1942-]. Lanham, MD : Scarecrow Press, 1996. xi, 399 p. ; 23 cm. [ATLA monograph series no. 33] { ISBN : 0810827700 }
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## External links

- Andrew West, The Morrison Collection (<http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison/index.html>)
- Andrew West, A Chronology of Morrison's Life (<http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison/Morrison/Biography.html>)

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