

Evangelist at the Gate:

An Inquiry into Robert Morrison's Mission Thought

(An abstract)

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The arrival of Robert Morrison at Macao on 4 Sept. 1807 marked the beginning of the nineteenth century Protestant missionary movement in China.

Except for Morrison's furlough in England between 1824 and 1826, he lived in Macao and Canton for twenty-five years and finally died on 1 August 1834 in Canton. The most familiar and important heritage of Morrison is the translation of the Bible into Chinese, and the compilation of *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (華英字典). Moreover, he founded the Ultra-Ganges Mission in 1814, of which the Malacca Anglo-Chinese College and the publication of religious tracts became an indispensable part of the Chinese mission. When Morrison concluded his work in 1832, only ten Chinese had been baptized. However, as pointed out by other historians, the true measure of Morrison's accomplishment is not to be sought in the harvest of souls but in the foundations laid for future work.

Apart from Morrison's prominent work, his mission thought, an important but often neglected field, is worthwhile for our investigation. As a pioneer missionary in the nineteenth century, he lived in a strange heathen world for twenty-five years. How did he perceive the traditional

Chinese culture and religions and convey the Christian message to this pagan and heathen world? Had he ever experienced any dilemma and undergone any inner struggle in face of the huge political obstacles of the Chinese Empire? How could he hold his evangelistic vision and passion in such an adverse and unfavorable environment? This essay aims at sketching the mission thought of Robert Morrison, focusing on the way in which he responded to the above issues in the early nineteenth century China.