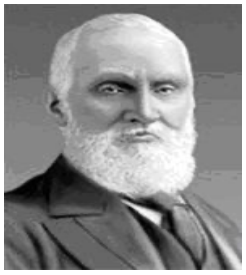

William Thomson 1824-1907

Can you imagine the world today without radios or telephones? Much of the development of telephones, wireless telegraphs and broadcasting are dependent on the work in electric circuitry done by British scientist William Thomson in the mid-19th century.

At age 22 William became a professor of natural philosophy at the University of Glasgow, where he remained for fifty-three years. There he did important work in mathematical analysis of electricity and formulation of the first and second laws of thermodynamics, and he did much to unify the emerging discipline of physics in its modern form. His studies led him to establish what we use daily – a scale of absolute temperatures.

Thomson designed and developed many scientific instruments to practically apply his theories. In 1881, he had the first house in Scotland with electric lighting, developing many of the switches, fuses, and equipment himself. He developed the instruments which made the Atlantic cable possible, and in 1858 he supervised its laying. On August 5, 1858, the first telegraphic message was sent from America to Europe. Thomson exclaimed, "Europe and America are united by telegraphic communication. Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace, good will towards men."

In recognition of his work on the transatlantic telegraph project, Thomson was knighted by Queen Victoria, becoming Sir William Thomson. In 1892, in honor of his achievements in thermodynamics, Thomson was elevated to the position of Baron in the House of Lords, becoming Lord Kelvin. Lord Kelvin is the name that most know him by today.

Thomson maintained a strong and simple Christian faith throughout his life. He faithfully studied the Bible, and his Christian faith pervaded all of his work. He always began his college classes with prayer and looked upon his scientific work as a kind of worship. He believed science must be treated with reverence, for a close observation of the phenomena of nature brought one closer to understanding God's work. He stated, "If you think strongly enough you will be forced by Science to a belief in God which is the foundation of all religion." He believed study of the scientific law was the noblest privilege God granted to man's intelligence.

Thomson strenuously opposed Darwin's evolutionary theories of natural selection and thought them unscientific. He believed Darwin ignored clear evidence of God's design in creation, and he refused to believe the atoms of dead matter could ever come together to make life.

William Thomson's passionate earnestness in his scientific investigation, his love for learning, his practicaland life-changing discoveries in energy, his simplicity of character, and his Christ-like faith all stand as an example for all mankind.