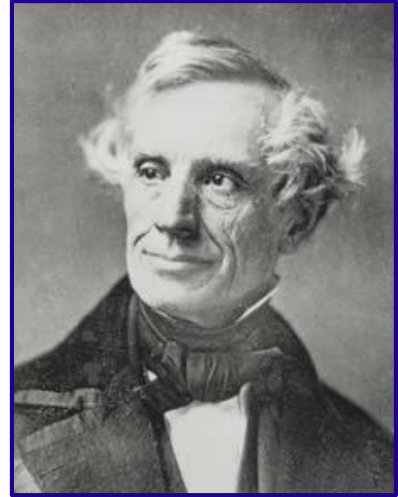


An Undeserving Inventor

After establishing his reputation as a portrait painter, Samuel Finley Morse (1791 -1872), in his middle age, contributed to the invention of a single-wire telegraph system based on European telegraphs. He was also a co-developer of the Morse code, and helped to develop the commercial use of telegraphy.

These inventions were huge steps forward in communication capabilities for mankind.

In December 1842, Morse made a trip to Washington, D.C., stringing wires between two committee rooms in the U.S. Capitol building, and sent messages back and forth to demonstrate his telegraph system. Congress appropriated \$30,000 in 1843 for construction of an experimental 38-mile telegraph line between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, along the right-of-way of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.



On May 24, 1844, the line was officially opened as Morse sent the now-famous words, “What hath God wrought,” from the Supreme Court chamber in the basement of the Capitol to the B&O’s Mount Clare Station in Baltimore. Annie Ellsworth chose those words from the Bible (Numbers 23:23). Her father, U.S. Patent Commissioner Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, had championed Morse’s invention and secured early funding for it.

Through it all, Morse remained humble. On one occasion, in an interview, Morse was asked if he ever encountered situations in which he didn’t know what to do.

Morse replied, “More than once, and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed to God for light and understanding.”

Morse received many honors from his inventions, but felt undeserving. “I have made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to other men, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and He was pleased to reveal it to me.”

Morse’s conclusion is a statement of how God works. He created each of us, with a plan for each individual life. To accomplish His purposes, our Lord invested us with the talents necessary to fulfill His designs.

God honors the discovery, the refinement, and the exercise of those gifts, whether there is public acclaim arising from them or not. Our recognition of their source and our faithfulness in obedience to Him produce genuine humility and direct the praise to our Creator.

He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter