

# “Faraday and Franklin”

by

Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas, F. R. S.



Photographer: John Hickman

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**Mitchell Hall**  
**University of Delaware**

Franklin and Faraday, at different times, were each the best known and most admired men of science in the western world: Franklin, during the last half of the eighteenth century, Faraday, who was born eighteen months after Franklin's death, during the middle half of the nineteenth century. Each discovered a large variety of new phenomena, and each was associated with some of the most spectacular experiments ever performed.

Of Faraday, who greatly admired and often quoted Franklin, Einstein had said that he was responsible for the greatest change in the intellectual framework of physics since Newton, and Rutherford called him one of the greatest discoverers of all time.

The lecturer will describe (in terms that will be intelligible to non-experts) how these two autodidacts became such iconic figures, and how much they have influenced the modern world.

Sir John Meurig Thomas is Honorary Professor of Solid State Chemistry at the University of Cambridge and Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, London. Formerly, he was Master of Peterhouse College (1993-2002), the oldest College in the University of Cambridge, Director of the Royal Institution (1986-2001) and Head of the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Cambridge (1978-1986). Earlier, he taught and researched at the University of Wales (Bangor and Aberystwyth).

For his work in catalysis, materials and surface chemistry he was awarded the Willard Gibbs Gold Medal of the American Chemical Society (ACS), the Giulio Natta Gold Medal of the Italian Chemical Society and was the first recipient (1999) of the ACS Annual Award for “creative research in homogeneous and heterogeneous catalysis”. Stanford University awarded him the 2003 Linus Pauling Gold Medal for his contributions to the advancement of science. **In 1991, he was knighted for “services to chemistry and the popularization of science”.**

*This event is co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the University Faculty Senate, the College of Arts and Sciences, **the College of Engineering**, the University Honors Program, and the Departments of Chemical Engineering, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Electrical and Computer Engineering, History, Materials Science and Engineering, Philosophy, Physics and Astronomy, and Political Science.*