C. W. SHOOP—PIONEER ECUMENIST
By Calvin Reber

Since the United Brethren Church, like its sister Evangelical Church, was not a large denomination, its outstanding leaders never gained the fame afforded those of larger denominations; yet there were a number who not only received broader recognition but actually achieved influence because their denomination was smaller. Like tug boats that pushed the large ocean liners to the pier, they helped the big denominations into new possibilities.

Among these was C. W. Shoop, whose ecumenical achievements included his influence in the formation of the Church of Christ in China.

Charles W. Shoop was born at Enterline, Pennsylvania in 1879. His parents were remembered as being of strong character and faith, and Charles became a member of the church at age 12. Growing up in an ungraded school, he became a help to the teacher and soon a teacher on his own while he attended Millersville Normal School and Elizabethtown College. Then he went to Lebanon Valley College and graduated there in 1908.

In 1909 he married Kathryn Steffy, who was also United Brethren, having joined the church at age 8. After she had graduated from the Sinking Spring high school, they went together to Bonebrake Seminary where Charles graduated and Kathryn completed the missionary course in 1912.

Under appointment of the Board of Missions, they went to China, where they gave themselves at once to language study and to observing the strange new world in which they found themselves.

They continued their service with furloughs through two world wars, various times of unrest and Communist influence, Japanese occupation and internment and personal burdens, including the death of a much loved child, until retirement in 1950, the death of Kathryn in 1954 and the death of Charles in 1956.

Dr. Shoop's best known ecumenical achievement was his influence in the formation of the Church of Christ in China. In 1926 the rising nationalist spirit in China made clear that greater power must be given to Chinese leadership. The Church of Christ had come into nominal existence earlier but control still largely resided in the missions. To meet the new need, a sweeping proposal was set forth for turning the supervision of the churches and financial grants over to the Church of Christ in China. K. S. Latourette reports this development in his A History of Christian Missions in China and observes, "The United Brethren Mission promptly approved the plan in its entirety, and the other cooperating missions sanctioned it with reservations, for the most part slight." (803)
While Latourette’s statement dramatically expresses a high point in Shoop’s achievement, it does not state either the full extent of his influence or the factors contributing to it. Realizing these requires a closer look at his life.

A primary factor in his influence was his confidence in people. He showed this toward me, the young missionary who succeeded at his retirement, but it was notable from the beginning and especially toward the Chinese. In 1916 after only three years on the field and a visit to Lung Kong, he praised the heroic efforts of the people toward self-support (Woman’s Evangel, July-August 1916, 280). In 1918 he reported how in a series of meetings by the Canton pastor, without aid from any missionary, fifteen men decided for Christ (Evangel, January 1918, 29). After his first furlough, he wrote of the importance of putting the Chinese brethren to the front and said, “They are learning very rapidly, and doing many things so much better than we foreigners ever did them. I have very profound respect for my Chinese brothers and it is a great joy to be associated with them in this work.”

When requesting further missionary personnel, he wrote, “For this work we need a man who has faith in the Chinese” (Religious Telescope, September 24, 1921, 19). He also wrote, “Owing largely to shortage in our foreign staff, we have been obliged to repose in our Chinese leaders a larger measure of responsibility than we had thought proper in earlier days. In almost every instance such responsibility has been well carried and confidences have almost universally been well bestowed.” He lamented the tendency of missionaries to hold on to power and was understanding of Chinese anti-foreign feelings. His commitment to raising up Chinese leaders was expressed in individual actions. When on a special trip to the Philippines, he offered to return at once to China if that was necessary to facilitate Ma Lai Chuen’s travel for study in America. His most noteworthy achievement in individual nurture was Peter Wong, whom he confidently sent for study in the United States and supported to become the executive secretary of the Kwangtung Synod. Wong was the foremost interpreter of the Chinese church to United Brethren congregations.

Shoop’s confidence in persons was matched by a strongly cooperative spirit. He was constantly alert to the work that could be done best together and early led the mission to cooperative enterprises. In regard to the development of Chinese leaders he wrote in 1919:

As a mission we cannot hope to adequately train and develop these leaders in church and school in isolation from other missions. This work can best be done in cooperation with other Protestant missions whose problems, as well as aims, are akin to our own. We are already cooperating with a half dozen other bodies in the training of a more efficient Christian ministry in the Canton Union Theological College. We should likewise enter a union effort with other missions to establish a normal school for the training of teachers (Evangel, January 1919, 24).

By 1920 he reported the steps towards Chinese church union effected between three Presbyterian bodies, the American Board churches, the Scandinavian Alliance and the United Brethren (Evangel, January 1920, 20). A year later he wrote, “Nothing that I have witnessed in China during the years has been quite so faith inspiring as the ability, aye even eagerness to recognize this oneness in Christ” (Evangel, March 1921, 68). He also reported participation in the newly formed normal school, Boys Middle School and union language school, as well as the theological college. As a result of (continued on page 6)

An Apology

We regret the tardiness of the Winter 1997 issue, which did not reach readers until summer. Several factors affected its production, and we apologize for the lateness and any inconvenience this may have caused, especially to those who attended the EUB 50th Anniversary Celebration and looked forward to our special issue focused on that event.
THE LAST YEARS OF LYDIA SEXTON
By Julia Dagenais

The reader who perseveres through the 655 pages of The Autobiography of Lydia Sexton, reviewed by Calvin Reber in the Winter 1995 Telescope-Messenger, will close the book, weary, but wanting more. Sexton’s introduction indicates that she lived at least ten years after the conclusion of her tenure as Chaplain of the Kansas State Penitentiary which she deals with in the final chapters of her book. Many questions arise.

Besides getting her book ready for the publisher, what was she up to during those supposedly sunset years? Did her vigorous good health continue? For how long? Did she rest on her laurels or did she serve and preach as before? Are her earthly remains in peaceful repose in some Kansas cemetery, perhaps in Fredonia where she tells us her husband’s body was buried in 1878, or did this westering New Jersey native push on even farther in her transcontinental life journey?

For readers interested in the sort of history which biography provides, I offer a few additional glimpses of this intrepid pioneer.

Lydia Sexton died at 95 on December 17, 1894, in Seattle. An obituary in the Seattle Press Times, bearing the headline “Mother Sexton is Dead,” says that the aged evangelist preached until a year or so before her death when blindness forced her to give it up. She had moved to Seattle in April of 1890 with her youngest son and his family. Another son had lived in Washington for some years and Lydia had made at least one visit to the area before her own move. Like all her visits and journeys, this one included preaching. A frequent contributor to the United Brethren Religious Telescope, she reported this experience in a letter labeled July 28, 1886, Maryville W.T. (Washington Territory). She rhapsodized about the country:

“I am away here in this land of stumps, trees, logs and pure spring water, free from lime. There is no more lime in the tea-kettles than on your hand. And, oh, the sweet, pure air!” She commented about the novelty of having her congregation arrive by water “in canoes and little boats,” and, as always, rejoiced in a field ready for harvest. And her description and evaluation concluded:

I preached here in a hall two weeks ago last Sabbath. There was a good turn-out but no one to sing or pray but myself. I left another appointment for last Sabbath, and lo and behold the young people had got together . . . to practice for Mother Sexton’s meeting on Sabbath . . . There has never been much preaching here, but the people want it badly. I have another appointment for two weeks. I do think there is a chance for a great reformation here, and it is greatly needed. The Lord send it for Jesus’ sake.

Preaching was Lydia’s work and she met all requests for her services if she possibly could. Many small-town Kansas newspapers from the late 19th century carry references to her visits during the last decades of her life like this one from the Olathe Mirror, June 20, 1872:

Mrs. Lydia Sexton, Chaplain of the State Penitentiary at Leavenworth and mother of M. F. Moore of Spring Hill, preached to a crowded house in the M. E. Church at Spring Hill Sabbath evening last. Mrs. Sexton explained the meaning of Paul’s passage: “Let your women keep silence in the churches,” in a manner interesting to all and satisfactory to herself. Mrs. Sexton possesses an unusually strong and active mind for a woman of her age, being now over 70 years of age.

Family members in correspondence with each other often referred to Sexton’s preaching with pride and wonder, as in this letter from one grandniece to another in January, 1887: “Aunt Lidia (sic) was here nearly two
weeks. She looks older than she did three years ago, of course, but can talk as well as ever. She preached twice at Ocheltree and would have preached more if Aunt Caroline hadent (sic) written for her to come up to Lee’s.”

Lydia herself was grateful and somewhat amazed at her continuing power. She sent this joyful message to a grandniece-by-marriage, July 9, 1888: “I traveled with a M. E. minister and his wife yestirday twenty miles And preached three times an hour Each time how is that for a woman in her ninetieth year I am so verry thankfull to God for such good health.” (In this quotation I have preserved Mrs. Sexton’s orthography and punctuation.)

While Rev. Sexton was on a preaching tour which included Independence, Kansas, Daniel Votaw, a Quaker and an old friend, took her to visit some settlements of impoverished black immigrants to southeast Kansas. She was much affected by the suffering she saw and became convinced that God had called her to assist these “Exodusters.” Accordingly she undertook a preaching/fundraising journey east. Her destination was New Jersey where she still had many relatives, but she stopped at places along the way, including Dayton, where she raised, according to the July 19, 1882, Religious Telescope, $60 in cash and about $115 in new and used clothing.

In this brief account of Lydia Sexton’s later years, we see a person, busy, cheerful, compassionate and “useful” till the end. Besides the activities mentioned, we hear of her piecing “crazy quilts” for all her daughters-in-law and regularly attending Annual Conference of the Neosho Conference. So long as she lived in Kansas she was seated, “in an advisory capacity,” and asked to preach at some Conference sessions. In Conference notes referring to this activity, she is called “the venerable Lydia Sexton.”

[Editor’s note: Mrs. Dagenais’ appreciation for Lydia Sexton is evident in her condensation of the 655 pages of Sexton’s original autobiography to a 166-page typescript summary with abundant quotes. It reads with zest and interest. She then appended a chapter of Lydia’s later years that is more amplified than the summary above. A copy of this well-written, readable typescript has been deposited in the EUB Collection at the UTS Library, Dayton, Ohio.]

**BISHOP LEWIS DAVIS:**

**FATHER OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST**

By Richard L. Glass

Gratitude is given to Rev. Dr. Lewis Davis (1814-90) for his roles in the founding both of Otterbein College, which observes its Sesquicentennial in 1997, and of United Theological Seminary, which celebrated its 125th Anniversary in 1996. Without a university education himself, Davis served as President of Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio twice between 1850 and 1871, and as the first Senior Professor of Union Biblical Seminary (now United Theological Seminary) in Dayton, Ohio, 1871-86.

Born in Virginia, Davis received only an elementary and partial academy schooling. Fond of fast horses, young “Lute” apprenticed to Jacob Hammond, a blacksmith in New Castle, Virginia. Methodist Episcopal circuit riders often lodged in the Hammond home. One of these preachers, Rev. Jeremiah Cullom, agreed to give Lewis a book on The Evidences of Christianity if he would commit it to memory.

Davis devoured it and quoted the entire 150 pages. He ascribed to Cullom both his spiritual and intellectual awakenings.

As the encounter between Phillip William Otterbein (1726-1813) and Martin Boehm (1725-1812) launched the United Brethren movement, another meeting initiated U.B. work in higher education. This second rendezvous

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introduced Lewis Davis and William W. Davis (1812-1880), a self-educated home missionary of the U.B. Church. Not related to Lewis, William gave the former a copy of the United Brethren Discipline. This document so impressed Lewis Davis that in 1838 he was licensed to preach, and in 1839 he joined the Scioto Conference in south central Ohio.

At Circleville, Ohio, the Jerusalem of the United Brethren Church in 1845, the Ninth General Conference, with a 19 to 4 vote, passed a resolution to establish an institution of learning and to recommend the project to the fourteen annual conferences. In the mid-nineteenth century there was rivalry among established denominations to place colleges across the states. The Scioto Conference took the U.B. lead, not to compete with Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians, but rather to serve their own young members.

Although there was little church unity for the educational project, Davis was appointed in 1846 to solicit funds and to engage other conferences in the endeavor. His own lack of formal instruction and his thirst for knowledge motivated him to overcome delays and disappointments. Lewis faced opposition from those who feared “priest factories” and equated college-trained clergy with formalism. Among these was Bishop John Russel (1799-1870) who preferred that young ministers be educated by itinerant seasoned pastors.

Like John Wesley, Rev. Lewis Davis held a philosophy of holistic education united with Christian piety. In his Essay on Education Davis wrote, “you cannot but regard the education of the whole man, physically, mentally, and morally, as first among the necessities of life” (4). Other quotes from this work reveal his thought. “The fear of the Lord is . . . the only true basis of right education” (26) and “If the intellect should be trained to think and reason, . . . is it not of equal importance that the will be so cultivated that we may choose (the right) course of action” (22).

Rev. William Hanby (1808-80), father of composer-preacher Benjamin Hanby, and Rev. Jonathan Dresbach joined Davis to purchase Blendon Young Men’s Seminary in Westerville, Ohio. This academy had been founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1839 but had failed for want of students and support. The campus of four acres and two buildings was acquired for $1,300 and Otterbein University opened in 1847 with eight students as the first United Brethren school.

Twice Rev. Davis served as President of Otterbein, 1850-57 and 1860-71. In 1853 he unexpectedly was elected the seventeenth bishop of the United Brethren Church and served simultaneously as bishop and Otterbein’s president for four years. In 1857 Lewis Davis was re-elected bishop but resigned in 1860 to serve full time as the college president.

A man of self-discipline, priorities, and punctuality, Reverend Mr. Davis arose at 6 a.m. for prayer and study of his Greek New Testament. As an administrator, instructor and scholar he continued a life-long search for truth and knowledge. Washington and Jefferson College of Washington, Pennsylvania conferred upon him the Doctor of Divinity degree.

The General Conference in 1869 instructed bishops to appoint a Board of Education, whose duty it was to promote education in the church and to develop a plan for a Biblical institute to educate ministers. On August 2, 1871 the Board of Education (composed of ten bishops) elected Dr. Lewis Davis as Senior Professor (virtually president) of Union Biblical Seminary. On October 11, 1871 Union opened with two faculty and eleven students in the basement of the Summit Street Church in Dayton. Dr. George A. Funkhauser (1841-1927) served as first professor of Greek exegesis and homiletics.

In 1841 Lewis Davis was married to Rebecca Bartels of Hanging Rock, Ohio. They had no children of their own, but many spiritual children received their love and hospitality. When Abraham Lincoln called for Union volunteers in 1862, Lewis and “Aunt Becky” wept at the departure of two Otterbein students from their home. One “son” died in battle three weeks later, and the other became a wounded prisoner of war.

Dr. and Mrs. Davis employed Mary Englehart as household helper, and their Westerville home was a station on the
"Underground Railroad." Lewis and Rebecca influenced Otterbein’s acceptance of students regardless of race, sex, or economic condition. Pupils both in Westerville and in Dayton were grateful for the home of Dr. Davis, “Aunt Becky” and “Aunt Mary.”

Although concerns over slavery and secret societies restrained Lewis from membership in the Wesley-founded denomination, his younger brother, Rev. James Davis, was a member of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As president of Union Biblical Seminary, Dr. Davis regularly was invited to preach by several denominations, but he declined because teaching was his first priority. He also advised young preachers not to allow outside demands to divide their focus.

In 1877 Dr. Davis was requested to write a biography of Bishop David Edwards (1816-76). Therein he affirmed, “Seldom does God give to his . . . servants notice beforehand of the parts they are to perform.” Certainly the Rev. Dr. Lewis Davis did not know that he would be remembered as “the father of higher education in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.”

(continued from page 2)

this participation and the continued strengthening of the Church of Christ in China, he was able to write in 1941, “Our own United Brethren Church is probably more completely identified with the ecumenical ideal than any other denomination in South China” (Evangel, February 1941, 46). By that time cooperation included also the Shung Kei Bible Training School for Women and the Canton Hospital.

This movement in cooperation at a time that required courage was made possible by Dr. Shoop’s adventurous spirit. One example was his pioneering ecumenicity with A. J. Fisher. The two young missionaries appointed to oversee churches in the Pearl River delta found themselves passing each other as Fisher visited Presbyterian churches while Shoop visited United Brethren ones. They realized the duplication of their travel and decided between themselves to divide the area so that Fisher would take one part and Shoop would take the other without regard to the origin of the individual churches. They believed that denominational connections had to give way to common sense.

Shoop’s innate intelligence was cultivated by his desire and ability to grow. His five furloughs were marked by graduate study which could have secured for him a doctoral degree if he had not determined instead to seek the courses most directly helpful to his missionary service. One furlough he spent at Union Seminary in New York with Daniel Johnson Fleming, the premier missiologist, and two others at the University of Chicago. He was impatient with missionaries who did not learn the Chinese language and culture, and he sought growth possibilities in China and the United States for Chinese of ability. When a young missionary praised Albert Schweitzer for leaving positions of prestige to serve in Africa, Dr. Shoop’s response was, “But he had so much to give.” Having much to give was as important to Shoop as giving it.

His life and ministry were undergirded by a strong and growing Christian faith. His early life commitment was given direction by his taking the Student Volunteer Movement pledge in college. As a student pastor, he conducted his
own evangelistic services in seven local churches resulting in more than a hundred commitments to Christ and church membership. In China he gave himself in educational directions only because he felt the Chinese were best able to do the evangelism. He expressed his faith in that by declaring, “The Holy Spirit can and does use consecrated Chinese just as effectively as he uses Americans and Europeans” (Religious Telescope, September 1921, 19).

The deeply personal nature of his faith is shown in his response to the death of their son Kelman, whose weak heart caused his demise by heat stroke when only six years old. Kelman’s sister always remembered the tears her father shed, but he was able to report the event to Evangel readers in faith:

But we are sustained—all of us—by the consciousness that all is quite well with our dear little son. We had him, and he had us, for six years, three months and fourteen days. All our memories of him are pleasant and precious. During the night I was watching by his bedside, he spoke much of being tired and asked me, “If a person dies and goes to heaven, will he get tired there?” (October 1927, 281).

Kelman was buried in the Macao Fort Cemetery, which confirmed Dr. Shoop’s purpose to hold on in China. But the memory of Kelman as a testimony to faith continued its witness to the end of Shoop’s life. Dr. Mark Hostetter was pastor of the Sinking Spring U.B. Church when Mrs. Shoop was buried in the nearby cemetery and after the service a group was conversing when C. W. recalled how his wife learned that she had terminal cancer. The agreement was that the doctor would share the results of the tests with Dr. Shoop who would then carry the news to his wife. He did this by saying, “Well, it looks as though you are going to see our son Kelman before I do.” Mrs. Shoop died some time later and C. W., when telling about it, added, “After all, we aren’t kidding. We believe in the resurrection.”

Such faith, undergirding ability, led to his being made early the superintendent of the South China Mission (in 1918) and associate general secretary (with a Chinese General Secretary) of the Kwangtung Synod of the Church of Christ in China after its formation. When new work was proposed in Yunnan Province during the Sin-Japanese War, he and Dr. Frank Oldt were sent to explore the possibilities. After he and Mrs. Shoop came home from internment, they were sent back to give support to the work in west China. At another time he was called to the Philippines to provide guidance from his China experience for church union efforts. In both cases he characteristically downplayed his contribution.

When Dr. and Mrs. Shoop retired from their service, their fellow church workers gave them a set of three pieces of silk embroidery with a Chinese scene in the middle and their testimony to the Shoops on the side panels. On the one they said (in Chinese), “Foundation stone of the church like Peter,” and on the other “Went miles across the ocean to preach the Gospel like Paul.” Not only the beauty of the pieces, but that this was the testimony of their co-workers indicates the regard the Chinese had for them.

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Help Wanted

The Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage wants to compile a list of EUB historic sites that can be visited. We know of sites like Long’s Barn, Boehm’s Chapel, Old Otterbein Church, Albright Chapel, Seybert Memorial Cluster, Hanby House, and Red Bird and McCurdy Missions. But we need the help of our readers, conference Commissions on Archives and History, and others to identify other sites and to supply descriptions of them. Please send this information to: Editor, Telescope-Messenger, 1318 Daventry Court, Centerville, OH 45459.
The time was June 1954. Classes at Bonebrake Theological Seminary were completed and the world lay ahead. Helen, one-year-old Terry, and I were ready to face the world by way of the Evangelical United Brethren Board of Missions.

My dissertation was under Dr. Calvin Reber with the title of "A Christian Approach to the Moslem in Negro Africa." Dr. Reber's remark was, "I'd like to see how you would write this ten years from now."

We were assigned to Nigeria. Our heritage in the United Brethren Church in Erie Conference gave us no background knowledge of this field for it was formerly a mission of the Evangelical Church. So, we were the first of the former U.B.'s to be sent to Nigeria. This in itself was an inspiring challenge to us. We would know no one in our field of service.

The summer of '54 went swiftly as we did missionary orientation, visited many churches which would supply support, and, obtained and packed items for a three-year stint. In September we arrived in London for three more months of preparation.

En route to Nigeria by ship at the close of December, we stopped at several African ports. One of these was Freetown, Sierra Leone. I remembered the presence of Rev. Charles (Pa) leader in my home church at Corry, Pennsylvania. When we went ashore at Freetown, it was "Pa" Leader who met us. We had a good share of the day away from our ship to visit so Rev. Leader toured us around Freetown. Annual Conference was in session under Bishop Warner so we had a short visit there.

As we were being driven back to our ship, "Pa" Leader was quite insistent that we claim our luggage and remain to work in Sierra Leone. He said he would wire Dr. Carl Heinmiller, Executive Secretary of the Board of Missions, and explain everything. He said, "You kids shouldn't go on to Nigeria; that's the Evangelical work!" I replied, "No, we are needed out there to make this merger (U.B. and E.U.) a reality."

Needless to say, we followed our marching orders and proceeded to Nigeria.

The time we spent in our Nigerian work amounted to seventeen years. Our fellow workers were the Ira McBrides, the A. J. Fausts, the K. Kuglins, the W. Erbeles and other younger missionaries. We found them to be a very cordial group and, more importantly, a very evangelical and evangelistic people with a heart to reach Nigerians for Christ. It was an honor and a rich blessing to work with them in establishing the Church.

There were twenty-three different dialects in the area of the Mission. Though we filled varied positions, our main assignment was among the Mumuye people. It has been thrilling to see the Church grow over the years. We praise God for His blessing. The village of Lankaviri had four teenage converts in 1968 and now the membership totals over four hundred.

We enjoy retirement now in North Carolina and continue to rejoice "in the things He has done."

Helen and Eugene Westley