

Around 1840, we began talking about starting a United Brethren college. Part of our motivation was to keep good UB kids in the UB church. Other denominations sponsored colleges, and too many of our young people were ending up in their folds. We didn't like that.

The 1845 General Conference passed a resolution to start a college... somewhere. Conferences were invited to pursue the idea, and a bunch of them did. Scioto Conference bought a closed Methodist seminary in Westerville, Ohio, and turned it into Otterbein University, which opened in 1847 as the first United Brethren college. From the start, it was open to women and to all races, and had women on the faculty.

But early on, there was considerable opposition to higher education, especially for ministers. A common fear was that intellectual pursuits would undermine spiritual fervor. William Rhinehart, editor of *The Religious Telescope*, wrote, "Don't you see that three or seven years is too long a period to doom a pious youth to Christian theology?"

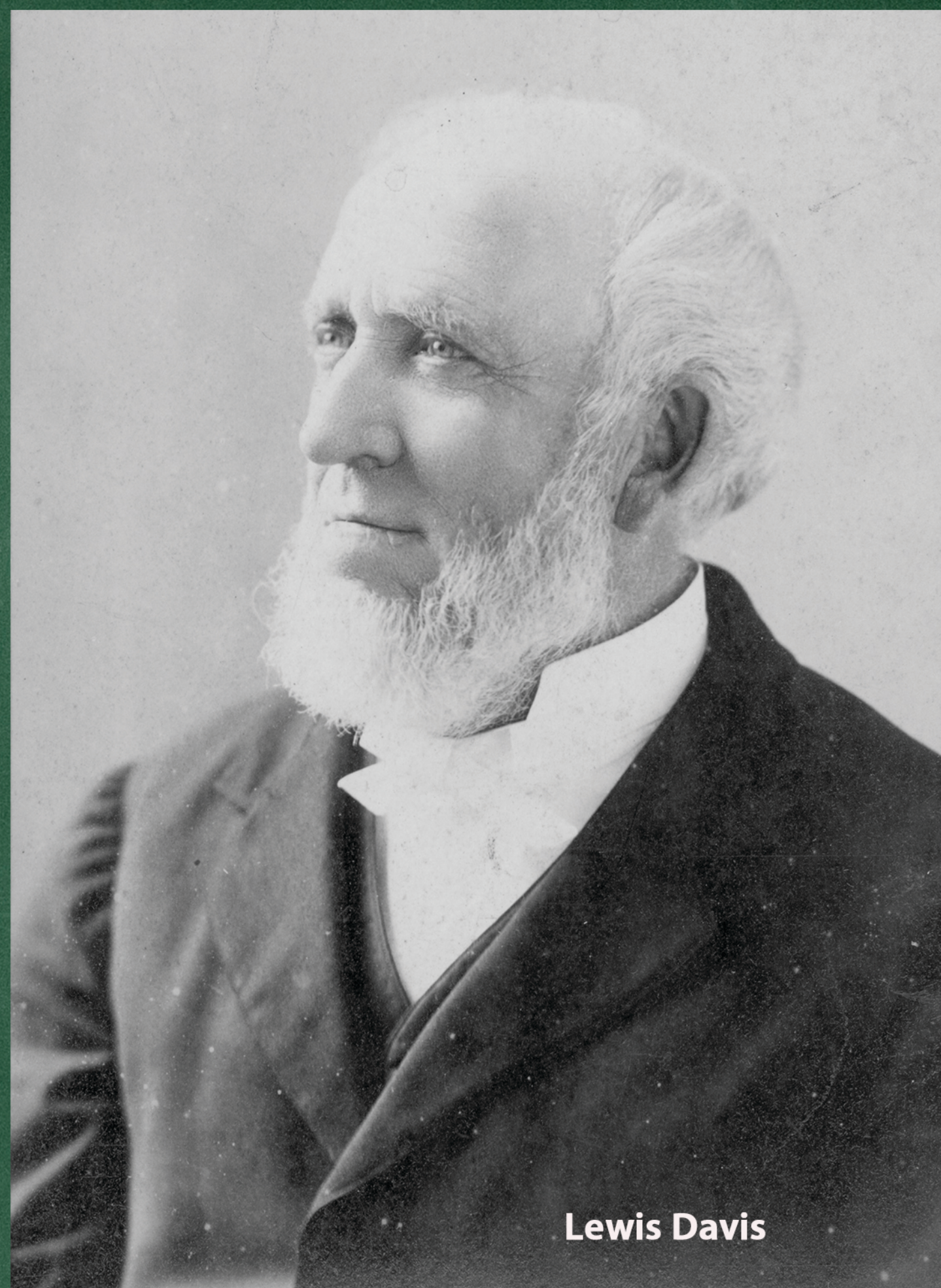
William Ambrose, who traveled extensively with Christian Newcomer, said he had been urged to attend college, but, "If I had gone, I expect I should have come out as Aaron's gold came out of the fire."

Bishop Henry Kumler, one of the bishops at the 1845 conference, wrote in May 1847, "In many instances, students, while at college, lay the foundations of both their physical and moral ruin." He said United Brethren people desired education for their children, "but not at the sacrifice of their health, habits of industry, and immortal souls."

Some people referred to colleges as "priest factories" which spewed out preachers who were not called by God to preach. Some favored having colleges, but disagreed on the type of education they would provide. Some feared colleges would draw us away from our evangelistic mission. Some felt we were rushing into it, without much thought or counting of the cost. Bishop John Russel contended that educating people was society's responsibility. He didn't want the church "to descend from the lofty business of saving souls to manage institutions of learning."

Bishop William Hanby, trying hard to be gracious, said these folks weren't opposed to education, per se. They just felt that college education was the reason so many non-UB churches had degenerated into "spiritual death and formality." They didn't want that to happen to UB churches. Wrote Hanby, "However unsound we conceive this position to be, yet members...were doubtless honest in their sentiments."

Nevertheless, the floodgates were open. Between 1850 and 1880, we opened 26 colleges. And many more followed.



Lewis Davis

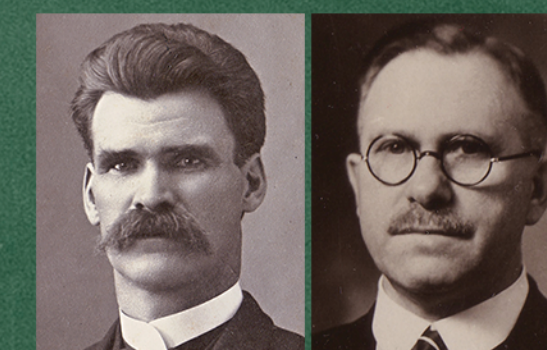
"The best thing our church ever thought of is the Christian college," said Lewis Davis, who served as bishop 1853-1861.

Davis has been called the Father of Higher Education in the United Brethren church. Some people saw value in having a church college. Davis considered it an absolute necessity.

As "soliciting agent" for Otterbein University, Lewis asked people for donations. He received \$10 here, \$50 there, \$5 somewhere else. One person pledged one dollar, payable in four quarterly installments.

Davis later became president of Otterbein, and left in 1871 to start our first seminary, Union Biblical Seminary. Davis Hall, at Huntington University, was named in his memory.

"The friends of these early schools were compelled to fight their way at every stop....A large majority of the ministers shared this opposition. It was not an unusual thing for some of them in their pulpits to thank God they had never rubbed their backs against college walls." (From *The Religious Telescope* in 1866)



Fermin Hoskins

Clarence Mummart

Three bishops have been president of Huntington University. During the 1921-1925 period, all three were bishops at the same time.

Fermin Hoskins became bishop in 1905 and served 28 years in that role. During that time, he was college president for one year, 1911-1912. He was followed by Clarence Mummart, 1912-1915.

Mummart and Harold Mason were both elected bishop in 1921, joining Fermin Hoskins. Mummart became president 1925-1932 (the only president to serve twice), and then Mason took over until 1939.



Dr. Elmer Becker

During its first 40 years, Huntington College went through nine different presidents (if you count Clarence Mummart twice). But during the last 75+ years, there have been just five presidents. That run started with Elmer Becker, who served 1941-1965, longer than any other president before or after. He was also the last minister to fill the role. A son, Carlson, also became a United Brethren minister.

# HIGHER EDUCATION