



ELDER JOHN HICKERNELL.

OUR FIRST HALF CENTURY.

—BY—

S. G. YAHN.

BEING A

BRIEF HISTORY

—OF THE—

West Pennsylvania Eldership

—OF THE—

CHURCH OF GOD

DURING THE PAST FIFTY YEARS.

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."—I Sam. 7:12.

MOUNT PLEASANT, PA.
1893.

INTRODUCTION.

The fiftieth session of the West Pennsylvania Eldership of the Church of God was held in October of last year. This semi-centennial point in our history naturally suggested many thoughts in reference to the past, the present and the future. And it occurred to my mind that a brief history of the work of the past fifty years might be interesting and profitable.

Brother S. Arnold, of Pittsburgh, Pa., generously agreed to bear the expense of publication, with the understanding that the income from the sale of the books be added to the Superannuated Fund of the West Pennsylvania Eldership. As a result this sketch was written, and I very cheerfully donate the time and work required in its preparation.

This is in no sense a treatise on the doctrines of the Church. Such information can be found in other works published for the benefit of the General Body. It is simply a brief history of our local work as an Eldership, written for those who are supposed to be acquainted with our doctrines and methods of work.

The information contained in the following pages was obtained from the records of the proceedings of the Eldership, from the volumes of *The Church Advocate*, and from conversations with the older brethren.

As the consideration of the causes which led to various effects and changes is not within the province of a small publication of this kind, I have been content to give a brief outline of historical facts, leaving the philosophizing largely for others of the present and future generations.

We now present this edition, hoping that it may be of some interest to the reader, and that the proceeds may, in a small measure at least, benefit those whose sacrifices have assisted in securing our success as an Eldership.

S. G. Y.

Mount Pleasant, Pa., August, 1893.

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I.

Preliminary Work.

The first Eldership, then designated the General Eldership of the Church of God, but now the East Pennsylvania Eldership, was organized in Harrisburg, Pa., in the year 1830. Three years later Elder Joseph Adams was appointed by this Eldership as a missionary to what was then known as "the circuit of Ohio." He was followed in 1834 by Elders Thomas Hickernell and Jacob Keller. Their work prospered, and in 1835 the elders of Ohio requested the General Eldership to grant them "the privilege of holding a yearly Eldership in the State of Ohio." The permission was given, and the East Ohio Eldership was organized the following year. The western part of Pennsylvania, being between the territories occupied by these two Elderships, naturally received the attention of ministers in their travels to and fro. The field seemed to be inviting, and in the year 1838 Elder Thomas Hickernell, of Ohio, and soon after his brother, Elder John Hickernell, of East Pennsylvania, came to West Pennsylvania as missionaries. Their appointment was the Pittsburgh Mission, which at that time included Allegheny and several adjacent counties. After continuing for a time in Westmoreland county they went to Pittsburgh and to various

other points in Allegheny, Venango, Butler and Beaver counties. In Pittsburgh the meetings were held in an engine house, and at other points they held camp-meetings during the summer and services in the old-fashioned log houses during other seasons of the year.

The work of these early pioneers was attended with constant toil, privations, hardships and opposition; yet their faith enabled them to look beyond immediate difficulties and picture the grandeur of ultimate success. Thus, with a devotion to duty almost without a parallel, and with zeal and energy born of God, these two noble heroes continued to labor. They traveled on horseback and on foot, in all kinds of weather, trying to bring souls to Christ and form the scattered brethren into organized churches. After a short time Elder Thomas Hickernell returned to Ohio, but other brethren came to assist in carrying the work forward. Elders Joseph A. Dobson, Daniel Wertz, Edward Wood and others rendered good service during this period. Successful meetings were held and the cause was strengthened. In the year 1839 churches were organized at Barkeyville, Venango county; Slippery Rock, Beaver county; at or near Old Harmony, Butler county, and at Old Bethany, Westmoreland county.

As a result of this prosperity a committee was appointed by the Ohio Eldership, in 1843, "to consider the propriety of forming another Eldership." The committee made a favorable report, and thus originated the West Pennsylvania Eldership of the Church of God, as the outgrowth of the East Pennsylvania and East Ohio Elderships.

II.

Organization and Growth of the Eldership.

The first meeting was held in Pittsburgh, Pa., beginning Monday morning, March 4, 1844, and continuing three days. Elders John Hickernell, Joseph A. Dobson, Daniel Wertz, Henry Rosenberger, Edward Wood, Jacob Meyers and John S. Kerr were the ministers present, with John Kerner and Louis Kraft as ruling elders. The Eldership was organized by the election of Elder John Hickernell, Speaker, and Jacob Meyers, Clerk. The business consisted principally of hearing reports from preachers, making appointments, and considering the cases of three ministers whose work and standing had been questioned. There were no committees. The examining of applicants for license, the stationing of preachers and all other work was done by the Eldership. David Glassburner was the first to apply for and receive a license. Louis Kraft was also licensed at this meeting.

The Eldership met again at Bethany, Pa., October 28th of the same year, thus making two meetings in 1844. Elder Winebrenner was present, and at his suggestion the first delegates to the General Eldership were elected. John Hickernell and Joseph A. Dobson, ministers, and Abraham Sherrick and Joseph Anglemeyer,

laymen, were chosen. They were elected to attend the first session of the General Eldership, which was held in Pittsburgh, Pa., from May 26th to 30th, 1845. The first Standing Committee of the West Pennsylvania Eldership was elected at this meeting. Also the first Stationing Committee, consisting of three preachers and two ruling elders. Subsequently other committees, such as we now have, came into existence from year to year as the work of the Eldership required.

At the seventeenth session of the Eldership, in 1859, a committee was appointed "to consider the propriety of, and take the preparatory steps necessary to, an act of incorporation." But nothing definite was done in this direction until 1865, when Elders Jacob M. Domer and Peter Loucks were appointed to make the preparations necessary to have the Eldership incorporated. As a result of their work the Eldership was incorporated April 11, 1866.

The journal of the twenty-fifth session, 1867, contains the names of twenty-two ministers, showing a fair growth, all things considered, during the first quarter of a century. The same gradual progress has marked the last twenty-five years of our history, as shown in the following statistics of our present strength: Preachers, 36; appointments, 52; organized churches, 42; church houses, 38; members, 1951; Sunday-schools, 47; total attendance in these schools, 2745; for the work of the year ending October 1, 1892, ministers received as salary, \$5,672.88; and in addition to the expenses incident to carrying on the work of these churches and schools, the Eldership raised during the

year a total of \$639.18 for the supernannated, educational, contingent and mission funds.

The above statistics were given at the fiftieth session of the Eldership, held in West Newton, Pa., October 6th to 8th, 1892. And while it is very difficult to get correct statistics of church membership, the foregoing is as nearly accurate as possible, as a special effort was made in this direction, with a view of using in these pages the information thus obtained.

Another important fact must be taken into consideration, as explanatory of the comparison between our strength at the beginning and close of the last decade. In the year 1882 there were fifty ministers in the Eldership, and the territory included West Pennsylvania and West Virginia. This year the preliminary steps were taken which resulted in the organization of the West Virginia Eldership, and hence a decrease in the strength of the West Pennsylvania Eldership.

Although certain years show but little increase, and in some instances a decrease, yet when considered as a whole the results of our first half century are encouraging.

III.
Camp Meetings.

Much of the success of the Eldership during the first two decades was due to the work accomplished at the camp-meetings. The Standing Committee usually made arrangements for these meetings, which were held in central localities, to which the people came from various directions. Many brought their tents with them and stayed until the meeting was over. As the brethren were scattered, and preaching was not supplied as frequently and regularly as at present, they often came from distant points to attend these meetings.

The brethren were severely persecuted. The following, related by Elder John Hickernell, will serve as an illustration:

“During these years we had fierce opposition to meet, especially from unruly persons at our camp-meetings. Sometimes intoxicated individuals would ride into the midst of the camp on horseback, amid the shrieks of the women. At other times clubs and stones were thrown. I remember once, when Elder Dobson was preaching, an apple, thrown from the rear of the audience, struck him in the eye and he fell as if shot, but got up again and continued his discourse. At another time, Elder George U. Harn was preaching, and when

the stones and clubs began to fly the preachers leaped from the stand and ran, leaving the speaker and myself alone on the platform; but Elder Harn, in his well-known fearless manner, said: ‘You may spill my blood, but from this platform you cannot drive me.’ * * * * At another camp-meeting we held, the sheriff of Butler county was present with fifty men to preserve order.”

But while many, on account of the strange doctrines that were being taught, and because of their lack of Christian and gentlemanly culture, were engaged in this persecution, others were deeply impressed by the able sermons, powerful exhortations and soul-searching songs. Precious seasons of grace were enjoyed and many souls were saved. Family worship was observed regularly in the tents, and prayer-meetings were held between preaching services. There was but one object in view—the glory of God in the salvation and Christian culture of immortal souls.

As soon as possible the converts were taken to the nearest stream and baptized. This occasion was always a solemn one. The people gathered on the bank, and after prayer the brethren and sisters sang while the minister and candidate “went down both into the water,” and “went up straightway out of the water.” When the singing ceased for a few moments, while the convert was being immersed, the silence was impressive. No recollection is more pleasant than that of singing or hearing upon these occasions the following familiar lines:

“O how happy are they
 Who their Saviour obey,
 And have laid up their treasures above!
 Tongue can never express
 The sweet comfort and peace,
 Of a soul in its earliest love.”

The hymn beginning with the above stanza was invariably used, and the beautiful melody will always linger with those who have enjoyed the privilege of hearing it.

The holding of camp-meetings in these early days was not only a pleasure, but also a necessity, as there were but few houses of worship where the people could be comfortably accommodated. But as church houses became more numerous, and churches grew stronger and secured preaching more frequently, the desire for camp-meetings gradually decreased. As a result, the Eldership, in 1849, advised “all the churches to strive and pray to revive the former camp-meeting spirit.” It was also suggested that “there ought to be at least one camp-meeting on every circuit.” Arrangements were made for three meetings the following year. As time passed on and the local churches became stronger numerically, there was less desire to travel long distances to meet together. Consequently the attendance at the camp-meetings was restricted principally to the people of the immediate vicinity, thus obviating the necessity for tents. As a result the Standing Committee, in 1858, arranged for “woods-meetings.”

A number of camp-meetings were held in later

years, notably in Venango county, and at Mount Sewickley, Allegheny county. There are still a few places where “grove-meetings” are held occasionally, but we have had no camp-meetings for several years.

A few of the groves where the early camp-meetings were held are still in existence, and are designated as “the old camp-ground.” The aged veterans of the cross delight to speak of these historic grounds, and relate reminiscences of their battles for Christ.

“We felt that we were fellow-men;
 We felt we were a band
 Sustained here in the wilderness
 By Heaven’s upholding hand.
 And, when the solemn Sabbath came,
 We gathered in the wood,
 And lifted up our hearts in prayer
 To God, the only good.
 Our temples then were earth and sky;
 None others did we know
 In the days when we were pioneers,
 FIFTY YEARS AGO!”

IV.

Educational Work.

In the early years of our history there were but few educational advantages compared with those we now have. The demand for a better educated ministry, which we find in many places at the present time, did not then exist. Hence, for a number of years this subject received but little attention. The requirements for admission to the ministry in these years are illustrated in the following record of the manner in which the first license was granted, in 1844:

“Brother David Glassburner made application. In giving an account of his experience he stated that he felt it his duty to preach the Gospel, and that he never felt at rest, nor his mind tranquil, unless attending to his duties in this manner. He said that in the midst of existing obstacles he was willing to go into the field of labor. Voted, that a license be granted him.”

Thus, brethren who realized the Divine call, and who evidenced the same by a restlessness and eagerness to enter the conflict regardless of obstacles, were sent forth. They went into the pulpit from the field and the workshop. The Bible was their text-book, and they made its pages a constant study. Their education was acquired in the school of experience, and was conse-

quently of that practical type which served so well in the days when the circumstances required men

“Who learned their wisdom in a graver school
Than we have known.”

They did noble work for God and humanity, and erected monuments of self-culture and self-sacrifice that are an honor to the Church.

But as time passed on, and the people began to give more attention to education, the Eldership found it necessary to do the same. Accordingly, in 1851, the Committee on Education, the first that had been appointed, recommended a faithful study of the Bible, and that the brethren “have their children well educated.” In 1855 the Eldership urged that “ministers not having the advantage of an early education, try to improve themselves in language and all other sciences necessary for the qualifications of the ministry.” This seems to have been heeded to some extent, as we find that two years later the Committee on Education “rejoices to see that there is an interest manifested on the part of some of the preachers of this Eldership to improve in language.” They were encouraged to “go on in their studies and improve still more,” and those who had been negligent were exhorted “to arouse to action.” Committees have been appointed by the Eldership at various times to examine ministers in the studies they were expected to pursue, but this plan has never been fully carried out.

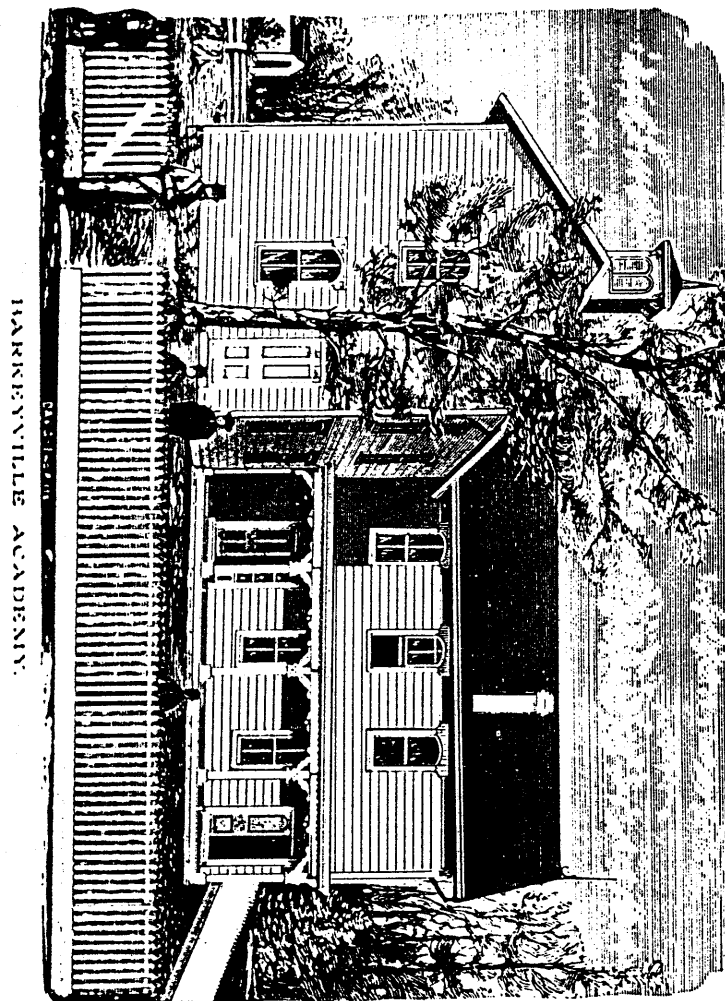
The delegates elected in 1871, were instructed to

call the attention of the General Eldership to the importance of our having an institution of learning in some central locality for the benefit of the brotherhood. This request was repeated six years later, and with the expressed desires of other Elderships, resulted in the General Eldership deciding, in May, 1881, to establish a college, which was subsequently located in the city of Findlay, Ohio, and incorporated on the 28th of January, 1882, under the title of "Findlay College."

In 1874 Elder Peter Loucks offered a resolution urging our people to patronize, "for the time being," the Western Pennsylvania Classical and Scientific Institute, located at Mount Pleasant, Pa., for the following reasons:

1. A Christian education is absolutely essential to successful workers.
2. We have no such schools of our own.
3. This school is "aggressively Christian," and "is to be sectarian in no respect further than to be under the control of the Baptists;" and those "who attend have the opportunity of attending religious services with the Church under our own supervision."

As a result of the adoption of this resolution, quite a number of the young people of the Church of God have attended this Institute. The same year that this resolution was passed, the Committee on License strongly recommended that young men spend a few years in school before entering upon the ministerial work, and also recommended that a collection be taken at each appointment to assist in educating worthy young men.



BARKEYVILLE ACADEMY.

In the year 1881 Elder J. R. II. Latshaw started a select school at Barkeyville, Pa., in which he was encouraged by the citizens, especially by Brother Abraham Hunsberger and Elder Henry Barkey, who assisted in providing grounds and suitable buildings. The school prospered and soon grew into an academy, and began to receive the favorable consideration of the Eldership. The institution was incorporated March 10, 1884, under the title of "Barkeyville Academy." In 1889 the property was conveyed to the Eldership, and then leased by the Eldership to the Trustees of the Academy for school purposes. The Eldership was thus made the owner of the property. This action was taken on account of the churches having paid a part, and being willing to assume the balance of the indebtedness of the institution. This financial incumbrance has since been removed by individual contributions by Bro. Daniel B. Stoner and others, and by the Board of Trustees of the Eldership appropriating from the proceeds of the sale of the church property in Pittsburgh a sufficient amount to liquidate the entire indebtedness.

The school is controlled by the Board of Trustees of the Academy, while the Eldership's interest in the institution is under the supervision of the Board of Education. This Board, consisting of five members, came into existence in 1883, and is elected annually by the Eldership.

Advantages are offered in the Classical, Latin-Scientific and Scientific courses. There are also Primary

and Music departments. The object is to prepare young people for college, and to provide others who cannot attend college, with as full a training as possible in the time allotted.

The Academy is located in the rural and healthful village of Barkeyville, Venango county, about six miles from Grove City. The property, consisting of a school-building, boarding-hall and over four acres of ground, is valued at about six thousand dollars.

Elder John R. II. Latshaw, A. M., D. D., Prof. Erastus F. Loucks, A. M., Prof. John F. Bigler, A. B., and Elder Charles Manchester, A. M. B. D., have served in the order named as Principal of the Academy. They have been assisted by a strong Faculty.

The Barkeyville Academy is thoroughly Christian, and is a strong auxiliary to Findlay College. The interests of the Church of God are constantly kept in view, and much good has been accomplished. A number of young men who have completed their courses in college, and who are now engaged in successful ministerial or secular employments, received their preparatory training in this institution; while others who received no other training than that afforded by the Barkeyville Academy are doing very successful work for the Church.

The Eldership each year passes resolutions in favor of Barkeyville Academy and Findlay College. And while neither a collegiate nor an academic education is made a positive requirement before applicants are granted a license to preach, yet all influence possible is

used to persuade young men to thus equip themselves before entering the active work of the ministry.

The foregoing outline shows a somewhat slow, but nevertheless a constant growth of sentiment in favor of educational work. Future prospects along this line are growing brighter and brighter.

V.

Financial Features.

MISSIONARY MONEY.

Money for missionary work has been raised by collections, through missionary societies and by ministers and others giving notes, the interest of which was to be paid annually and the principal during life, or at death. During the last several years money for frontier work has been secured by the assessment plan.

From the record it is evident that the work of collecting missionary money has always been attended with difficulties requiring heroic efforts to attain even a small measure of success. Strong resolutions were passed from year to year, urging ministers to preach missionary sermons and collect money. In 1868 it was decided "that each preacher failing to collect at least ten cents from each member shall be regarded as unfaithful in urging the claims of the mission cause, and shall thereby sacrifice his reputation for efficiency in his calling." According to our By-laws the failure to lift collections or raise assessments is considered a "just cause for withholding the license of a minister for one year, unless excused by the Eldership."

Part of the money raised has been used in mission work in the West, under the supervision of the Board of Missions of the General Eldership. Appropriations have been made to ministers who were sent into unoccupied parts of West Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and to pastors of the weaker churches of the Eldership. A few individuals and societies have also given to the Foreign Mission Fund.

SALARIES OF PASTORS.

There is no record as to salaries until the fifth meeting of the Eldership, in 1847, when the Committee on Resolutions recommended that ministers "advise the churches to take up subscriptions for their support, and that the preachers present the same at the next annual Eldership." At this time the preachers, as a rule, ministered unto their necessities with their own hands, and had the same reason for doing so that Paul had: the churches were weak numerically and financially, and the ministers did not desire to be burdensome to them. But this willingness to relieve the churches of financial obligations doubtless tended, in many instances, to make us financially "inferior to other churches." And no doubt many in later years, when seeing the results of this lack of proper training, have felt like saying, with Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, "Forgive me this wrong."

The foregoing resolution was reiterated the following year, and also two years later, in 1850, in a way indicating that anticipated results had not been realized.

In 1853, deacons were requested "to make a more vigorous effort to raise an adequate support for their preachers in charge." Six years later the Eldership passed the following:

"Resolved, That we consider that a man with an ordinary family should receive at least two hundred dollars a year, and others above or below that amount, according to their circumstances."

This seems small now, but at that time, in 1859, \$100 was the highest salary reported. In 1872 the Committee on the State of Religion reported salaries from two hundred to seven hundred dollars. Four years later it was recommended that the following article of agreement be prepared and signed by the deacons of each congregation:

"We, the deacons of the Church of God, at ———, hereby agree, without defalcation, to raise the sum of ——— for Elder ———, as a reward for his pastoral labors among us during the year ———. The same to be paid to him by the deacons, quarterly in advance."

In 1888 each minister was directed to make an agreement with the church officials as to the amount of his salary, the same to be paid weekly or monthly. At present, salaries range from about \$700 down.

Actions have been taken, resolutions passed, and plans suggested for raising our financial standard, but no recommendation has ever been fully carried out by all the churches of the Eldership. There always has

been, and still is in some places, a strong antipathy to a positive agreement or a definite amount being insisted upon by the pastor. This view, however, is gradually disappearing, and several churches enter into an agreement with their pastor regularly each year. Our people are also slowly becoming more liberal, and are beginning to form the commendable practice of giving in weekly or monthly installments. We hope for splendid results from these systematic efforts, and trust that in the near future our brethren may receive an adequate remuneration for their labors.

VI.

Public Questions.

SLAVERY.

At the first session of the General Eldership, in May, 1845, the following resolutions were passed:

Resolved, That it is the unequivocal and decided opinion of the General Eldership of the Church of God, that the system of involuntary slavery, as it exists in the United States of North America, is a flagrant violation of the natural, unalienable and most precious rights of man, and utterly inconsistent with the spirit, laws and profession of the Christian religion.

Resolved, That we feel ourselves authorized by the highest authorities, and called upon by the strongest ties and obligations, to caution our brethren in the Church of God against supporting and countenancing, either directly or indirectly, the said iniquitous institution of involuntary slavery. And should any of our ministers or members ever become guilty of this great and crying sin, we do most earnestly and religiously recommend and advise that all such be excommunicated, or cast out of the Church, and denied the right of Christian fellowship amongst us”

This action of the General Eldership was approved by the West Pennsylvania Eldership, in October of the same year.

In 1850 the Eldership passed the following:

“WHEREAS, Our late Congress has passed an act relative to the recovery of fugitive slaves, which law imposes on us duties subversive to the law of God and to our feelings; therefore,

“Resolved, That we will use all possible and legal means for the immediate repeal of the aforesaid Fugitive Slave Law.”

Three years later a minister of the Eldership was censured for writing and publishing in *The Church Advocate* an article in favor of slavery.

“The Church Hymn Book,” in use at that time, contained several anti-slavery hymns, which gave the people an opportunity to express their sentiments through the instrumentality of song. The following stanzas are found in these hymns:

“Hearken, Christians! hear the groaning
Of the poor oppressed slave;
Hear him now his fate bemoaning,
None to pity, none to save.

* * * * *

Will you, by your votes and silence,
Servitude perpetuate?
Can you look without abhorrence
On a system God doth hate?”

From an “*Appeal to the Slaveholder:*”

“What mean ye, when God’s bounteous hand
To you so much has given,
That from the slave who tills your land
You keep both earth and heaven?”

In 1857 the Eldership adopted a lengthy and very strong report, declaring, among other things, that “we will not, we cannot hold our peace against this or any other evil or sin, but with trumpet-toned tongues we will sound it through the land until this blighting curse is banished from the soil of our once happy Columbia.” This action was occasioned largely by the pro-slavery position taken by two of our ministers, who were then laboring in Texas.

In 1861, finding the country “plunged into a terrible war in consequence of a wicked and uncalled-for rebellion,” the Eldership passed resolutions expressive of loyalty, and besought God to bless the President, the officers and soldiers, and “preserve their lives, health and spiritual interests.”

Resolutions of similar import were passed each year during this trying period, until righteousness prevailed and slavery was but a dark page in the history of our country, and no longer a subject for official action.

SECRET SOCIETIES.

Elder George U. Harn was present at the Eldership in 1845, and offered the following, which was adopted:

“Resolved, That this Eldership advise the ministers and members of the Church not to identify themselves as members of secret societies, such as Free Masons, Odd Fellows, etc., etc.”

In 1848 it was decided that this Eldership “does discountenance and disapprove all secret societies, such as Sons of Temperance, Odd Fellows, Free Masons, etc.” Six years later this resolution was “so modified as not to include temperance.”

In later years no action has been taken by the Eldership on this subject, and the opposition, so far as official notice is concerned, has ceased to exist. As a result, many of the church members and also a number of ministers have identified themselves with secret organizations. There are others, however, who are still strong in their opposition. The subject of secret societies is at present an individual question.

INTEMPERANCE.

“Intemperance, like a raging flood,
Is sweeping o'er the land;
Its dire effects, in tears and blood,
Are traced on every hand.

It still flows on, and bears away
Ten thousands to their doom;
Who shall the mighty torrent stay,
And disappoint the tomb?

Almighty God, no hand but thine
Can check this flowing tide;
Stretch out thine arm of power divine,
And bid the flood subside.”

The West Pennsylvania Eldership has always been unalterably opposed to intemperance in the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

In 1852 ministers were requested “to preach a sermon in favor of the Maine Liquor Law,” and the effort to introduce this law into other States was indorsed.

The list of committees was increased in 1874 by adding a Committee on Temperance, and the people were urged “to vote for none but those who are favorable to the local option law.”

Resolutions have been passed from year to year against intemperance, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and other temperance organizations have been indorsed. The license system has been discountenanced and prohibition has been indorsed.

VII.

Biographical.

I. ELDER JOHN HICKERNELL.

Elder John Hickernell, whose picture appears as a frontispiece, was born in Lisburn, Cumberland county, Pa., in the month of December, 1814.

When eleven years of age he heard Elder Winebrenner preach a sermon to children, and a lasting impression was made upon his mind. That he was not wickedly inclined in his early years is evident from his own words: "When young I never swore an oath. When young I never took an intoxicating draught. O, how glad I am?" He did not accept Christ as a personal Saviour, however, until he was eighteen years of age.

Elder Hickernell, like most of the early pioneers, entered the ministry through the preparatory practice of exhorting. He was a shoe-maker by occupation, but spent much of his time in attending meetings and exhorting the people to turn to God. Finally a minister said to him: "John, throw away your tools and preach." After a short time he made the effort, and God gave him all needed assistance. A number were led to Jesus as a result of his second sermon, and then he deter-

mined to consecrate himself fully to the work of the ministry.

He was licensed by the East Pennsylvania Eldership in 1838, and appointed to the Pittsburgh mission. He soon after entered his new field of labor. It meant the leaving of friends and the comforts of home, to endure the exposures incident to an itinerancy in West Pennsylvania. But he willingly made the sacrifice for the cause he had learned to love.

His first work in his new field was in Westmoreland county, in connection with his brother, Elder Thomas Hickernell, who had preceded him. From here they went to Pittsburgh, and thence to other points in adjacent counties, and held very successful meetings. Elder Thomas Hickernell soon returned to Ohio, and the subject of this sketch was left alone in a strange land. He traveled a circuit of about two hundred and fifty miles, and his work was remarkably successful. He held meetings at various points in Westmoreland, Allegheny, Butler, Venango and Beaver counties, and many souls were saved. In 1839 he organized a few churches. That more were not formed he explains as follows: "But in the work of organizing churches I was not so hasty, because we lacked competent men to care for them. Hence, I often waited before organizing until I felt assured that we had men to care for the organizations."

During these early years Elder Hickernell spent a short time in Ohio. Of his experience there he speaks as follows: "I went to serve the Columbiana Mission in Ohio for one year, for which I was to receive eighteen

dollars. It was not much, but it was all the people could pay, and I got along, had enough to eat, and am still alive. It is true, as the woman said, 'we had to live a little skimped,' but that was good for our health."

He possessed a very strong physique, which enabled him to suffer hardships which but few others could have endured. The strength of his voice in preaching and singing, especially at camp-meetings, was remarkable. He was very successful as a revivalist, and many, especially among the older members, were converted under his labors.

Elder Hickernell was present at the first session of the Eldership, and was elected Speaker. He served in this position for several years in succession. For many years he filled the principal positions on the various boards and committees of the Eldership, and has been looked upon as a leader during the entire period of our history. He was present and took an active interest in the last, or fiftieth session of the Eldership. The presiding officer of the first meeting of a body being present at the fiftieth annual session is certainly a rare occurrence. He was present as a delegate from the West Pennsylvania Eldership, at the first session of the General Eldership, in 1845, and was also present as one of our delegates at the recent, or seventeenth triennial session of the General Eldership, in Findlay, Ohio, in June of the present year. Of the delegates to the first meeting of the General Eldership he is the only survivor.

Elder Hickernell did not have the advantage of an education, but by careful study and constant practice he

so developed his natural talents that he has had but few equals in pulpit power and pastoral prestige.

The efforts of nearly his entire lifetime have been devoted to the interests of the Church in the territory of the West Pennsylvania Eldership. He is spending the closing years of his eventful life, with his aged wife, at their comfortable home, at Bethany, Westmoreland county, Pa., where he organized one of the first churches of God in West Pennsylvania, fifty-four years ago. He preaches occasionally, but has not been in the active work since 1885, his last pastorate being at Mount Pleasant.

His health is good for one of his years, and his tall, erect form, silvered locks and long flowing white beard give him a striking and commanding presence. It is certainly a cause for gratitude to God that one who was instrumental in preparing the way for the Church of God in West Pennsylvania has lived to see and enjoy the fruits of his labors, and to assist in guiding the movements of the Eldership for so many years. May heaven's richest blessings attend him while he lingers and watches with unabating interest the beginning of our second half century.

"Why should I shrink at pain and woe,
Or feel at death dismay?
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,
And realms of endless day."

VII.

Biographical.

2. ELDER WILLIAM J. DAVIS.



ELDER WILLIAM J. DAVIS.

The subject of this sketch was born in Cambria county, Pa., December 31, 1813. When but a small boy his parents were converted and joined the Baptist church, and a few years later he, with seven others, was converted, baptized and joined the same church. A converts' meeting was started, of which he was made the leader. He was soon impressed that it was his duty to preach, and he was anxious to do so, but his limited educational attainments caused him to abandon this idea in despair. After some time he was married. Having failed to heed the Master's call to the ministry, he naturally wandered away, but six years later his wife was converted, and through her influence he was brought back to the fold of Christ again.

He was immediately impressed again with a call to preach. His wife having joined the Evangelical Church, he was persuaded to take a license from that body in 1842. He continued to preach and conduct revival meetings for seven years, and much good was accomplished, but he never fully indorsed the doctrinal views of the Evangelical Church.

About this time he heard Elder B. Ober preach, and the views advanced being in accord with his own, he and his wife united with the Church of God. In the fall of the same year, 1849, he received a license from the West Pennsylvania Eldership, and was appointed to the Venango county circuit in the spring of 1850. He at once gave up his occupation, that of making charcoal, and prepared to enter his field of labor. In this he was prevented by the illness of his wife, who died May 2, 1850, leaving him with three small children.

He did not permit this severe affliction to long deter him from carrying into execution the purpose he had formed, and as soon as possible he found homes for his children and started out to work for the Lord as opportunity afforded, preaching at various places in Cambria and Indiana counties till the next meeting of the Eldership. He was then appointed to the Indiana circuit, which he served during the year for \$50.

In 1852 Elder Davis was appointed to Somerset county and continued till 1855, during which time he was very successful. He then went to Marshall county, Va., and labored four years, being rewarded for his work with many conversions and baptisms. About two hundred were baptized during the four years. The people were very poor, and he deprived himself of many of the comforts of food and clothing that he might not be burdensome to them financially.

In 1859 he returned with his wife to Somerset county, he having married again a few years previous. They made the journey of about sixty-five miles with one horse, riding and walking alternately. After one

year of successful service he was sent to the Green county, Pa., work, where he labored for five years during the war period. There was a division of sentiment in regard to the agitating questions of that time, which caused a division in the churches on the circuit. Those who were in sympathy with the rebellion formed a new body, known as the Remanent Baptist Church, but they soon became extinct as a body and nearly all returned and the Church of God prospered. During these years, many of the brethren were on the field of battle and the Church was very weak, especially financially. His support the first year was \$10, and but little more the remaining years. During these five trying years there were about one hundred and fifty conversions and baptisms.

In 1865 Elder Davis was appointed to the Wheeling, W. Va., circuit, which he served for four years, and scores of souls were saved. His report shows one hundred conversions and baptisms the first year and fifty the second year. A church was organized and a meeting-house built. He then returned and labored three years more in Somerset county, and his work was blessed with about one hundred conversions. The last year his salary was \$320, the highest remuneration he had yet received. He was appointed to Fayette county in 1873, and after one year's work, resulting in about forty-five conversions, he went to the Marshall county work and spent two years more.

In 1876 he was sent as a missionary to Putnam county, W. Va., with an appropriation of \$100. He traveled this field for three years, and also preached in

the adjoining counties. Many were converted, out of which he organized the first Church of God in Putnam, Jackson and Roane counties, W. Va. His next work was in Armstrong county, Pa., where he labored with good success for three years. He was then appointed to Tarentum in 1882, where he preached for three years in connection with the Glade Mills appointment, and was rewarded with eighty-five conversions at Tarentum the second year. He then served Glade Mills alone one year with an appropriation of \$50.

His next and last appointment was Rockland, Venango county, Pa., where he labored acceptably for two years, till the meeting of the Eldership at Templeton, Pa., in the fall of 1888, when, owing to failing health, he retired from the active ministry and his name was placed on the superannuated list. He received thereafter an annual appropriation of \$100.

The following, from an autobiographical sketch of Elder Davis, is illustrative of his hardships: "The first of January, 1851, I started for Fayette county. The weather was very cold, and I was very thinly clad. I had no underclothes, no overcoat, no money, and was in debt for a doctor bill of one hundred dollars and no earthly home."

The closing years of his eventful life were spent at Barkeyville, Pa., with nothing to disturb his contentment save the regret that he could not go out and preach the Word.

He continued to decline in health till February 3, 1893, when he passed peacefully away. After an impressive funeral service, conducted by Elder Charles

Manchester, B. D., his body was laid to rest in the Cemetery at Barkeyville, Pa.

The active ministerial career of Elder Davis in the Church of God extended through about thirty-eight years of continuous service. As a rule he received the weaker appointments of the Elderships, but he always accepted and served them without a murmur or word of complaint. We rejoice to know that he is now receiving what he never received in this life, a full reward for his labors.

He was very humble and never sought place or power.

He was true to the Church, earnest and faithful in his work.

One of the most impressive characteristics of his preaching was his deep sympathy, and the strongest element of his influence was his holy life. He leaves behind him a record as spotless as the snow and as bright as the sun.

"The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace."

VII.

Biographical.

3. ELDER JACOB M. DOMER.



ELDER JACOB M. DOMER.

Elder Jacob M. Domer was born in Rockland township, Venango County, Pa., on the fourteenth day of December, 1830. He was the second son of a family of six sons and four daughters.

His parents were members of the Evangelical Church, and the training of the family was strictly of a religious nature. The beneficial results of this culture were manifest in after years, when three of the sons, besides the subject of this sketch, entered the ministry, two in the Evangelical Church and one in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The influence of this early instruction was doubtless a potent factor in shaping the future course of Elder Domer, which proved so creditable to himself and so useful to the Church. But these impressions, strong as they were as to the fundamental principles of Christianity, were made subservient to his own conscientious conclusions in reference to the true doctrines. This was exemplified in his making the Church of God his choice in after years, instead of remaining in the church in which he was raised.

His marriage to Margaret Bollinger occurred May 7, 1850. His wife was a member of the Church of

God, and was a helpmeet in the truest sense. Their union was blest with three children, two sons and one daughter. In the home he was a model husband and father. His words of instruction, commendation and reproof were always prompted by love and uttered in kindness.

In the year 1854 Elder S. S. Richmond held a meeting in Rockland township, at which Elder Domer was converted. Soon after he united with the Church of God and was baptized. The scene at the time of his baptism was so solemn and impressive that his oldest brother, who had been a professor of religion for a number of years, was fully convinced and was also baptized on the same occasion.

Shortly after his conversion he entered the work of the ministry, and was licensed in 1856. At this time his work of usefulness to the Church properly begins. During his ministerial career he served the Venango, New Brighton and Westmoreland circuits, the latter for eight successive years, a part of the time in connection with Elder Peter Loucks.

In 1868 he was appointed to the Venango circuit, and in the early part of 1869 he moved to Barkeyville, where, in connection with other points on the circuit, he continued to preach until about five weeks before his death. His first appointment, a number of years before, was in this county, and it also proved to be his last field of labor.

Elder Domer had a good common school training, but lacked the advantages of a collegiate education. This want, however, was largely supplied by his intense

interest in and close application to books pertaining to his calling. He was an able preacher, a faithful and efficient pastor and a wise counselor.

During the summer of 1869 Elder Domer received a challenge from the Rev. Mr. Graham, of the M. E. Church, to publicly discuss the question of feetwashing. Elder Domer, though not seeking a controversy, was always willing to defend the truth, and the preliminaries for a meeting were soon arranged. The debate took place at Wesley, Venango county, Pa., August 18th and 19th. It was based on the following proposition: Did Christ institute feetwashing as a permanent ordinance of the New Testament Church? This, of course, was affirmed by Elder Domer and denied by Rev. Graham. Those who heard the discussion unite in saying that Elder Domer's brilliant talents were never more fully manifest. His reasoning was logical, his manner remarkably calm, his words very expressive, his voice pleasing, his bearing dignified, and his entire deportment so agreeable that those of opposite faith became friends instead of enemies.

At the General Eldership in 1872, which he attended as a delegate from this Eldership, he was elected Speaker, and discharged the duties pertaining thereto with entire satisfaction to the body. At the same session he was elected assistant editor of *The Church Advocate*, which was an evidence of the high estimate placed upon his abilities by the General Eldership.

During the year 1872 his health continued to fail, and on November 9th resulted in congestion of the lungs. He grew worse rapidly, and on Friday morning,

November 15th, he passed away, aged 41 years, 11 months and 1 day.

Thus, in the very prime of life, in the midst of his labors, when he had become a recognized leader in this Eldership, and his ability was becoming known and appreciated in the General Eldership, his career abruptly ended, and his place has been difficult to fill.

The funeral services were held at Barkeyville, November 17th. The discourse was preached by Elder P. Loucks, his long and intimate friend. His body was laid to rest near the church. Truly his works have followed him.

“Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ;
And, while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Savior's joy.”



ELDER PETER LOUCKS.

VII.

Biographical.

4. ELDER PETER LOUCKS.

Elder Peter Loucks was born March 1, 1828, in Westmoreland county, Pa., near the present village of Alverton, but which has until recently been known as Stonerville.

His parents were of German descent, and were members of the Mennonite Church, under the religious influence of which the subject of this biography was brought up. His early life was spent in working on his father's farm during the summer, and attending school during the winter. He also taught school for several terms in subsequent years.

Elder Loucks was converted at the age of twenty-three, at a meeting held at West Bethany, Pa., by Elder John Hickernell. He immediately united with the Church of God and entered with diligence into the work of the Master. Soon after he was instrumental in the organization and became superintendent of the first Sabbath-school under the supervision of the Church of God in the vicinity of his home.

For a number of years he had been impressed with a call to preach the Gospel, and when he began to dis-

charge the duties of an active layman, these impressions grew so strong as to lead him to decide to make the Christian ministry his work for life. But before entering into the active work of his calling he spent several terms in the Mount Pleasant College, and also gave his attention to studies of a theological and homiletical nature, in order to better prepare himself for his future work.

Elder Loucks was married December 24, 1855, to Anna Fox, youngest daughter of John Fox, of Mount Pleasant, Pa. Their married life proved to be a very happy one. Their home was blest with four children, three sons and one daughter. As a father, Elder Loucks manifested a commendable and far more than ordinary interest in the welfare and education of his children.

On New Year's night, 1856, he preached his first sermon, in West Bethany, where a few years before he was converted to Christ. He was granted a preacher's license by the West Pennsylvania Eldership, October 30, 1858, without the usual examination. This was one evidence of the confidence and esteem in which he was held. He at once entered upon his career of activity and usefulness to the Church.

The first four years of his ministerial life were spent as a missionary, principally within the bounds of this Eldership. His presence and able assistance in protracted meetings and at special services were eagerly solicited by the ministers and highly appreciated everywhere. He afterwards served as pastor at Pittsburgh, West Newton, New Brighton, Stonerville, Mount Pisgah, Laurel Run and Mount Pleasant. He preached for

several years in succession at Mount Pleasant, and a house of worship was built under his supervision. He was a faithful and efficient pastor.

Elder Loucks possessed considerable wealth, and always looked upon it as a trust committed to his care, to be used for the glory of God. He was very liberal in supporting all departments of the work of the Church. He was elected to various positions of trust in the Eldership, which he always filled with marked ability and satisfaction.

For a number of years Elder Loucks was President of the Board of Missions of the General Eldership, and retained his membership in the Board from the time of his first election until his death. In 1873 he was prevailed upon to make two missionary visits to the State of Maine, in the interests of the Church of God. The results of his efforts in establishing the work were highly satisfactory to the Church.

He was selected as editor of *The Workman*, in its beginning, in 1879, and at the next session of the General Eldership was unanimously re-elected, his work having been highly creditable and universally satisfactory. He was soon after compelled to resign this position, owing to his severe illness. He was afflicted for nearly four years, and his sufferings, which he bore with righteous resignation, continued to grow more intense until Saturday morning, September 3, 1881, when he passed from mortality to immortality—from toil to rest—from earth to heaven.

The funeral services were held in the Bethel, at Stonerville, Pa., near where he had always lived, and

his body was laid to rest in the cemetery near by. The discourse was preached by Elder R. L. Byrnes, who also prepared the obituary notice for publication in *The Church Advocate*, from which we take the following extracts:

“As a preacher Elder Loucks was clear and positive in his statements, logical in his reasoning, forcible in application, yet ever calm and sympathetic. In his appeals to the unconverted was discoverable a vein of tenderness and sympathy well-nigh irresistible. He succeeded in persuading many to engage in the service of God. He was a man of strong convictions, yet of a loving, gentle disposition. Generous to the poor and distressed, his hand was open to render such aid as was needed. His liberality to the Church was manifest in gifts of time and means, amounting to about \$8,000 during the twenty years of his ministry. A true friend, a Christian gentleman, earnest and faithful in all things. * * * * *

“A few weeks before his death he said: ‘The grace of God is sufficient.’ When near the crossing of the river he said: ‘I am not afraid.’ His sufferings are over. His work is done. He is crowned a victor. But, oh, how we miss him!’”

“Servant of God, well done!

Thy glorious warfare's past;
The battle's fought, the victory won,
And thou art crowned at last.”

VIII.

Names of Ministers.

The following list contains the names of all ministers who are or have been members of the Eldership, given in the order in which they were licensed:

John Hickernell, Joseph A. Dobson, Daniel Wertz, Henry Rosenberger, Edward Wood, Jacob Meyers, John S. Kerr, David Glassburner, Louis Kraft, Seth S. Richmond, Jacob M. Kline, Joseph Glenn, Munson W. Cook, Abraham Osmore, Henry Berkey, William Vance, Abraham Latshaw, Wylie Harper, John Gillespie, Benjamin Ober, Christian Cobaugh, John Hovis, William J. Davis, Emanuel Logue, Joseph Anglemyer, Enoch Marple, Edward Jordan, Stephen Barnhart, H. Bowman, Aaron Utley, Joseph Pritts, John S. Tinsman, Moses M. Utley, Jacob J. Miller, Asa C. Marple, William Wilson, Isaac Koontz, Abraham C. Raysor, Henry Berkey, Jessie Evans, Nicholas Hissong, Jacob M. Domer, John Gillespie, Samuel Hoerger, Jonathan Grumbling, Joseph Marple, John A. Plowman, Samuel Stroup, Adam Flenner, Michael Liken, William J. Statler, Peter Loucks, Daniel Blakely, Benjamin Walker, Martha J. Beecher, James Reese, Joseph Grimm, Peter R. Munnel, Jackson Travis, A. O. Stouffer, R. Deford, H. M. Lynn, Moses Coates, Miles S. Pritts, Joseph Walter, Lewis Yahn, Sanford Hoffman, James W. Davis, J. S.

McKee, David T. Leach, John Gallentine, W. B. Long, Richard Vanaman, J. Smith Marple, G. J. Bartlebaugh, Lyman Shearer, James W. Bloyd, William W. Patterson, Nathaniel Morris, Shadrach Woods, B. F. Bolton, H. H. Messenger, G. C. Thompson, Joseph Cook, Daniel Hearshlings, John P. Davis, Christian H. Kreger, John L. Lucas, John Brown, Milton R. McVay, Matthew H. Davis, Robert L. Byrnes, Leander C. Hall, Simon Fulton, J. W. Adams, Jessie Morgan, J. C. Cunningham, George A. Bartlebaugh, Charles W. Koonce, Franklin Flowers, W. H. H. Crisswell, David A. Stevens, Thomas Woods, William B. Elliot, A. R. McCahan, L. F. Murray, George Clayton, Henry Armstrong, J. B. Evans, A. J. Flowers, J. R. Wilson, N. M. Anderson, William Cousins, W. R. Covert, W. H. H. McKlveen, L. B. Appleton, S. B. Craft, W. G. Steel, J. C. Brown, Amos T. Fox, J. R. H. Latshaw, Nathan I. Van, William R. Craig, S. P. P. Young, H. D. Grimm, G. W. Shober, G. W. Cumberland, Malissa Grimm, Benjamin Walker, C. H. Grove, S. G. Yahn, W. J. Umstead, J. H. Means, E. H. Baker, W. N. Yates, A. Hetrick, J. F. Smith, Charles Manchester, S. B. Stephens, A. J. Peacock, G. D. Statler, J. N. Humbert, Jane Chapman, G. H. Ritchie, George W. Davis, J. E. Stillwagon, John Hunter, W. S. Kreger, Herbert Dyke —149.

Of this number thirty-six are members of the Eldership at the present time, some have gone to other Elderships; others have left the ministry for secular pursuits; some have forsaken not only the Church, but even the principles of morality, while others are reaping their reward in the presence of God.

IX.

Miscellaneous Matters.

In early years the Eldership adjourned each afternoon to meet "at early candle light."

The first Treasurer of whom we have any record, Brother Abraham Sherrick, was appointed in 1852.

In 1871 it was "Resolved, That every Christian should constantly carry with him a copy of the New Testament."

Resolutions have frequently been passed since 1873, urging ministers to abstain from the use of tobacco.

Efforts have been made at different times to bring about a closer relationship between the Church of God and the Free Baptist Church, but nothing definite has been accomplished.

In 1875 the Eldership passed a resolution discountenancing fairs, festivals and "all such things in the churches of God throughout its bounds."

The first session of the Eldership continued three days, just as long as the fiftieth, though but little business was transacted at the first as compared with the last.

Five hundred accessions and five new houses were reported in 1872, and an increase of six hundred and ninety-two members was recorded in 1883.

In 1860 Elders John Hickernell, Peter Loucks and A. C. Raysor were appointed to draft a constitution for the government of the Eldership. The following year they reported a "System of Co-operation," much the same as we have now. Prior to this rules were adopted at each annual session.

In the year 1858 "female preaching" was indorsed, and it was decided to give a recommendation to all worthy sisters in the gospel work who applied for the same. The following year Martha J. Beecher was given a certificate of recommendation. Other sisters have since been granted a license to preach, but not to administer baptism or the communion.

The General Eldership has met four times within the bounds of the West Pennsylvania Eldership. The first meeting was held in Pittsburgh, in May, 1845. The third session was held in the "Disciples' meeting-house," in Allegheny, in May, 1851. The seventh in June, 1863, at New Brighton, and the fifteenth at West Newton, in May, 1887.

In 1873 it was decided to cease to grant licenses to exhorters, believing that it was not apostolic, and that the matter should be left with the local churches, as they would know better than the Eldership who could be useful among them as exhorters. In the last few years, however, the Eldership has given an exhorter's license to a few applicants.

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION.

A ministerial Association existed for a short time, and several meetings were held. Questions having a practical bearing on the work of the ministry were freely and profitably discussed. But these meetings have been discontinued, owing to the fact that but few of the ministers attended. The last meeting was held at Templeton, in 1888, just preceding the session of the Eldership. Thus the past in this respect has been largely fraught with fruitless expectations, while much good might have been accomplished had all manifested a proper interest.

SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK.

At the sixth meeting of the Eldership, in 1818, the preachers were urged by a resolution to use their influence in establishing Sabbath-schools "on the principle of the American Union." In 1865 some of the ministers reported Sabbath-schools on their fields of labor.

The interest in the work has steadily increased from year to year, until at present we have more Sabbath-schools than organized churches. Many precious souls have thus been taught "the knowledge of the truth."

A number of Sabbath-school conventions have been held. The first at Barkeyville, in May, 1871, and the last at New Brighton, in May, 1888. Comparatively few of the ministry and laity attended these meetings, and those who were invariably present were unable to arouse a general interest among the churches, and hence

the conventions were discontinued. This is to be regretted, as good results doubtless followed these conventions, and with proper efforts they could be made highly profitable to the Sabbath-school interests of the Eldership.

A retrospect of our first half century indicates that although there has not been as much accomplished as the brethren worked and hoped for, yet the good results were sufficient to encourage them to go on. And our present church and school property, with our churches and Sabbath-schools, are an honor to the cause of Christianity and a credit to West Pennsylvania. And this does not fully represent the results of our work. Many converts of our meetings and members of our churches have moved to localities where no organization of the Church of God exists, and have thus been lost from our number. So we expect the revelations of eternity to show the accomplishment of much more through the efforts of the Eldership than our present statistics indicate.

The first year of our second half century, which is now rapidly passing away, has been very prosperous. The prospects for future success are growing brighter and brighter. May God graciously bless our labors, and enable us to go on in the name of Jesus. If so, whoever writes the history of this Eldership fifty years hence, will be able to record the accomplishment of a work commensurate to our highest anticipations.