



The Historical  
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Collection 3121

A. H. Long journals

1880-1887

5 volumes, 0.25 lin. feet

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Creator: Long, A. H., 1823 - 1908  
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**Abstract**

A. (Abraham) H. Long (1823-1908) was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to Abraham Long and Magdalena Hershey. He became prolific in his ministerial duties to The Church of God, spreading the teachings and philosophies of the church through his sermons and publications. During his life he was involved various church-related activities; and he provided nearly fifty-five years of service to the church. As a leading figure in the Pennsylvania division of The Church of God, Long was influential in the development of the church's policies and philosophies. Collected here is a small sample of his work, including five of his journals, which offer a glimpse into the thought and theology he followed and preached.

**Background note**

The history of the Church of God begins with the conflict between John Winebrenner and the Synod of the German Reformed Church. Winebrenner, the son of German immigrants, began preaching in the German Reformed Church in Harrisburg after completing theological studies in Philadelphia under the tutelage of Rev. Dr. Samuel Helfenstein. He made many unorthodox decisions that were not consistent with the beliefs and/or desires of his parishioners and other church leaders. By 1825 the complaints of the congregation required the intervention of the Versey, the governing board, which also required an investigation by the Synod. In the end, Winebrenner's behavior and decision making forced the church to expel him and renounce him as a minister in the German Reformed Church, although he maintains that the decision to leave was of his own. The battle over Winebrenner's right to preach and make decisions freely escalated to the point where dissenting members of church locked the doors of the church to keep Winebrenner and his followers from entering one Sunday morning. On the second occasion when the doors were locked, he replied: "The people can lock houses, but they can not [sic] lock the door of heaven." On this occurrence the congregation split, where Winebrenner's friends and supporters separated from the German Reformed Church.

According to Forney, Winebrenner stated in 1844 that when he decided to leave the church to begin work as an independent preacher that then the idea of the churches of

God formed in 1827. Winebrenner was considered an “aggressive rivalist” with theological views consistent with that of evangelicals. It was through his success as an evangelist—a soul saver, perhaps—that influenced the early “peopling” of the Church of God. He once commented regarding the many revivals that were occurring in the counties surround Harrisburg, as cited in Forney, that “In these glorious revivals there were hundreds and multitudes happily converted to God. The conversion of these scores and multitudes in different places led to the organization of the churches.” These converts were unsaved members of the German Reformed and Lutheran churches who were searching for a church that held tightly to the ideas, principles, and doctrines in the Bible. This of course becomes the base of the theology of the Church of God, which had come to be consistent with that of Pentecostalism.

The revivals were spreading to surrounding areas like Lancaster, York, Lebanon, and Shippensburg. It is through the revivals that the individuals like A. H. Long would become connected with the Church of God. Long’s testimony of his conversion was recorded and collected by J. F. Weishampel in 1858; Long stated, “During a powerful revival of religion at Mt. Joy, Pennsylvania, in 1851, I was first led to bestow upon the subject of experimental religion that serious, prayerful and candid consideration which its importance imperatively demands.” Further he stated,

I was awakened by the singing in an adjoining tent. The first word I understood was "Jesus." That moment Jesus spoke peace to my soul, and revealed Himself as He really is, "chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." My evidence was as clear as the cloudless sun at noonday. The joy I felt cannot be described. For months "Jesus all the day long was my joy and my song." On the morning of the same day of my espousal to Christ, I followed Him into the water, and was baptized by Elder J. H. Hurley. Like the Eunuch, I then went on my way rejoicing [Acts 8:39], and on the way told others of my heavenly hope. Impressed with the duty of preaching the gospel, I said to the brethren, "Here am I--send me" [see Isaiah 6:8]. Since then I have been trying to preach Christ, and whilst earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints [Jude 3], as believed in the Church of God, I pray God ever to grant me grace to love Christians in all denominations. I hope for eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

After becoming a member in 1851 he was subsequently ordained in 1853. He quickly became a recognized member of the Eastern Pennsylvania Eldership—a body of teaching elders who met annually to discuss important matters of the Church of God—where he contributed to its institutionalization. When not serving as a minister delivering sermons, he was assisting in the development of Sunday schools and participating in dedicatory services of a number of Bethel meeting houses between 1858 and 1904. He was elected to various positions during his time as a member of the Eastern Pennsylvania Eldership. He was elected as a clerk at the meetings held in 1854, 1855, 1856, and 1863. In 1854 he was appointed as missionary in Montgomery County,

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<sup>1</sup> See J. F. Weishampel (1858) *The Testimony of a Hundred Witnesses* (<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/believers/weishampelthw/THW027.HTM>) accessed Nov. 13, 2009.

Pennsylvania. His responsibilities as a missionary in the Church of God were to collection missionary funds and preach.

Long served several congregations as pastor during his years as a minister with The Church of God. In 1856 the congregations of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania and Bainbridge, Pennsylvania were united under the same charge. Long served both churches from 1859 – 1961. Long was also the pastor at the Church of God in Wooster, Ohio, from 1864 to 1866. In 1873 he was asked to lead the charge in Chicago; however, he declined.

At the first Sabbath-School Convention held in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania in 1868 Long served as recording secretary and presented on the topic “The Relation of the Pastor to the Sabbath-School.” The following year, in 1869, he was re-elected as the recording secretary when the meeting was held in Middletown, Pennsylvania. At this meeting the body of elders adopted the constitution for the organization.

Long also participated in the East Ohio Eldership in 1865 and the Evangelical Alliance in New York in 1870; and during the church’s expansion farther west, in Iowa, he led the services of the General Eldership in 1890.

In addition to the ministerial and administrative services, Long was one of the preeminent scholars of The Church of God during the formative years of Bethel meeting houses. Often he engaged in many debates regarding a variety of topics related to church policy and the behavior of its members. Of his published writings, his most recognized work, *Popular Sermons*, came out in 1878. He sold this item during his travels and speaking engagements. Other publications Long authored include: *Baptism* (1877); *Scriptural Baptism* (1890) and *The Ordinance of Washing the Saints’ Feet* (1890). Upon his death on February 7, 1908 he was called “a preacher of more than ordinary strength and power, and a man of splendid Christian character<sup>2</sup>.”

## Scope & content

This collection contains five handwritten volumes of journals of Elder A. H. Long that, according to inscriptions on several of the volumes, may have once belonged to Long’s nephew, Joseph L. Brandt. The journals reveal much about Long’s religious thought and practice which gained him much respect within The Church of God.

Volume One is a travel journal containing a summary of Long’s evangelistic tour in 1880. It is primarily an ethnographic “write-up” of his observations of the rural communities he visited in western Pennsylvania, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, New York, and Canada. These observations consist of notes on environmental and population characteristics, as well as descriptions of the people who attended the Bethels in which he preached during the tour. The tour began on Tuesday, May 18, 1880, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and concluded four months later. Summarizing his journey, he stated that he covered three thousand miles across six states while preaching thirty-five sermons and selling 132 copies of his book, *Popular Sermons*. Pleased with the trip, he

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<sup>2</sup> See C. H. Forney’s *History of the Churches of God in the United State of North America*, p. 796.

commented, "In all this journey I have enjoyed tolerable good health. I have had the society of hundreds of the sincere, and excellent of the earth, the watchful care of a kind providence has been exercised over me, and kept me in all my ways, and the gracious presence of Jehovah Jesus has attended me all the journey through."

The remaining volumes consist of Long's sermons. Nearly every sermon deals with the transformation of the sinner's life, from darkness to the light of God's good grace. While Long held close to scripture, he often made clear the objective in his teachings. In Volume Two (1882) he was adamant and straightforward with his arguments regarding the path and duty of the sinner: "The duty of man is to prepare to meet God by consideration, prayer, repentance, faith, and obedience." Other sermons in this volume focused not on the sinner's behavior per se, but suggested that "Sinful thoughts and imagination then must be abandoned. Every purpose or desire to do wrong must be given up. But it is not enough that sinners abandon their sinful ways, and thoughts." This according to Long is "the duty of sinners to call upon God in prayer," before one is "beyond the reach of hope and mercy."

The sermons in Volume Three (1885) address the character and nature of God as the "rock"; being the "emblem of strength; and God is called 'the perfection of strength'" in which all must place their faith. What follows an explanation of the uses of faith and the resulting consequences: ". . . the just shall live by his faith because faith is the means of the origin and preservation of spiritual life in the lord. Thus we see that the Just shall live by faith because their spiritual life is sustained and perpetuated by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." In other sermons in this volume Long resumed his gaze upon the sinner, and the role of sinners in saving themselves from eternal damnation by turning to religion. Long specifically notes sin as spiritual disease through his interpretations of Psalm 41:4.

Volume Four (1886) includes six sermons. One of them is "The Washing of the Saint's Feet" which was published and became one of his most popular and cited sermons. In it he discussed the origins of the practice, cited its rationale, and engaged in critical discourse with other theologians who had previously written on the topic. Long was very critical of how Christians practiced their Christianity. In Volume One, he stated that while visiting a town in Indiana, "The churches in Indiana are in error in order of the ordinances. They observe the Lords supper before the washing of the Saint's feet. We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God." In later years, the Eldership encouraged many biblical scholars to weigh in on the debate; and Long entered the conversation by asking "is the washing of the saint's feet an ordinance or institution of Christ obligatory upon Christians?" To make his case, he suggested that Jesus did in fact wash the feet of the disciples "at the same time, place, and occasion that he instituted the Holy Supper." Long asserted that "surely Christ's washing the disciples' on an occasion like this was intended to have an important meaning." This was done as an example for their imitation, he suggests. As such, they were then required to also instruct others the same. Long concludes proclaiming that "the washing of the saints' feet is a sacrament."

The last volume (1887) includes five sermons entitled "The Stronger Side," "The Marriage of the King's Son," "The Sin of Unbelief," "Human Life a Vapour," and "The Instrumentality through Which the Divinely Appointed Method of Salvation is to be

communicated to Mankind.” Consistent with the subject matter in previous volumes, these sermons primarily concern the rebirthing of sinners’ lives and their subsequent walk with Jesus toward salvation.

## Separation report

None.

## Bibliography

Forney, C. H. *History of the Churches of God in the United States of North America*. Harrisburg, PA: Publishing House of the Churches of God, 1914.

Weishampel, J. F. *The Testimony of a Hundred Witnesses*. Baltimore, MD: Ryan & Ricketts, Stereotypers.

## Subjects

Religious thought--19<sup>th</sup> Century

Long, A. H., 1823-1908

Church of God

## **Administrative Information**

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

### **Acquisition information**

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## Volume listing

<b>Volume/Folder title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Volume</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Travel Journal	1880	1	n/a
Sermons I	1882	2	n/a
Sermons II	1885	3	n/a
Sermons III	1886	4	n/a
Sermons IV	1887	5	n/a