

A Tribute to John D. Long

Rev. Joseph S. Lame

Rev. Joseph S. Lame (1832-1895) was a visible supporter of John D. Long at his 1858 trial. The previous year, Lame was stationed on Snow Hill (Maryland) Circuit, and began publishing anti-slavery letters under the pseudonym "Junius" in Zion's Herald, a Methodist abolitionist paper published in Boston. After the 1858 conference session, Lame's identity as Junius was discovered, and he was forced to leave his circuit. He later published his Junius letters in a pamphlet, Maryland Slavery and Maryland Chivalry. The following tribute to his friend was published in the conference paper The Philadelphia Methodist, in its issue of July 28, 1894.

The morning mail bringing me the news of the death of Rev. John D. Long, I am surprised and startled, not having heard of his illness. Brother Long was no ordinary individual; he was a man of clear perceptions, strong convictions and of unquailing courage. He was born in Newtown (now Pocomoke City), Worcester County, Maryland, on the 26th day of September, 1817, being at the time of his decease in this 77th year. Shortly before his decease he said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better," and on the 12th of July, 1894, at high noon, the desire of his soul was satisfied, and his gentle spirit winged its way to the land of the unclouded day.

He was received into the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1835 by Rev. John A. Roche. Commencing his ministerial career in 1838, he was received into full connection in the Philadelphia Conference in 1842. He served the following appointments: Lewes, Delaware; Laurel, Delaware; Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania; New Castle, Delaware; Talbot, Maryland; Denton, Maryland; Nottingham, Pennsylvania. At this last appointment, his health failed, and at the conference of 1848 he took a supernumerary relation, which he sustained until 1854, when he was placed on the superannuated list. Since 1848, his health failing, he has been almost a lifelong invalid. For many years he rendered effective service as Superintendent of Bedford Street Mission, in the city of Philadelphia.

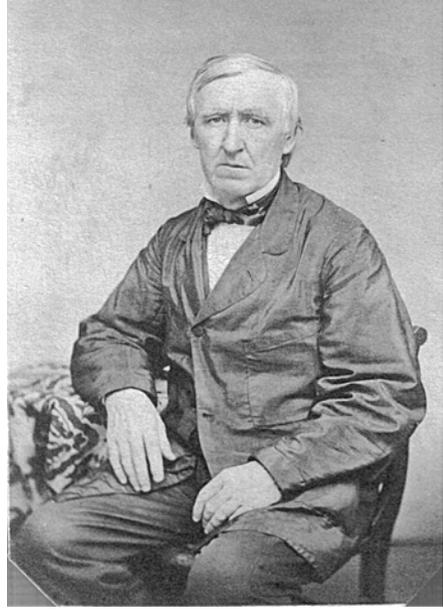
Receiving from the lips of his mother, who was a devout member of the ME Church, his first anti-slavery lessons, he, like Cassius M. Clay, Henry Winter Davis and Freeborn Garrettson, and many others, became

a Southern man with Northern principles. Feeling that Southern soil and the atmosphere of slavery were not favorable to the development of industrial habits, and having four boys to educate, he decided in 1856 to remove to Philadelphia. Speaking of this period he says, "To my astonishment I found prevailing a vast deal of pro-slavery sentiment. At this discovery, all my latent anti-slavery feeling awoke into activity. A conviction that I ought to bear my testimony against the system by writing now took possession of my mind. But difficulties loomed up before me – I should lose my friends, and would doubtless have to encounter persecution. Again, save a few scraps and obituary notices, I had never written a line for publication. But, in view of the responsibilities of the great future, the path of duty seemed plain. When my manuscript was ready, no publisher in Philadelphia that I approached would undertake its publication. My design was not to array the poor against the rich, or the colored against the white, but to array all classes against slavery as it existed in the Southern States of this Union."

Making no pretensions to beauty of style, he thus characterizes his production: "I regret that I have not been able to present my thoughts and facts in a more attractive form. Like a plate of strawberries, or a quiver full of arrows, they have associations, but little arrangement." In 1857 the dynamite bomb exploded. *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State* came from the press of T.K. and P.G. Collins. The book was strongly anti-slavery, and consisted of personal reminiscences, biographical sketches, facts and illustrations.

Such was the inflamed state of public feeling on the subject of slavery that it was denounced as an incendiary publication and concentrated upon itself the fire of a hundred batteries. It proved to be a magazine of facts, figures and assertions with which to supply abolition orators and anti-slavery preachers with free and fixed ammunition. In the Philadelphia Conference of 1858 charges were preferred against him by Rev. T. J. Quigley accusing him of "Misrepresentation – misrepresenting the people of Delaware and Maryland – misrepresenting the members of the ME Church; misrepresenting the Philadelphia Annual Conference, and misrepresenting the colored people of Delaware and Maryland."

Rev. James Cunningham presented a bill of exceptions. Finally, Dr. F. Hodgson presented a substitute to which was appended this resolution:



Left: Rev. Joseph S. Lane, author of this tribute. Right: Rev. James Cunningham was a presiding elder at the time, and had served as a delegate to the General Conferences of 1852 and 1856. It was remembered that his spirited defense of J. D. Long at the 1858 session cost him re-election as a delegate to the General Conference of 1860.

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*Resolved*, That it would be judicious to select some other was of refuting and redressing the alleged misrepresentations and grievances.

This resolution passed by a vote of 85 to 42. Brother Long's character passed by a large majority. A long and angry wrangle followed the presentation of his claim on the fund for the superannuated members of the conference, but the claim, like his character, passed. It was during this part of the proceedings that James Cunningham overawed the opposers of Brother Long and electrified his friends by an overwhelming burst of eloquence, exclaiming, "For myself, I here link my fate and name with that of J. D. Long! My destiny and his shall be embarked together in the great cause of which he is among us the representative. He deserves and must receive my homage for his character and his principles."

At the conference of 1860, three series of resolutions were received from the Erie, Providence and Cincinnati Conferences, all proposing to make non-slaveholding a condition of membership in the church. On the Erie Conference resolutions, Rev. J. M. McCarter moved that this [the Philadelphia] conference concur. Rev. T. J. Quigley moved that this conference not concur. The conference refused to concur by a vote of 169 to 8. Concerning the Providence Conference resolutions, Rev. P. Coombe moved non-concurrence. Rev. James Cunningham advocated the resolutions in a masterly speech, but the conference refused concurrence by a vote of 170 to 12. The resolutions of the Cincinnati Conference following immediately, Rev. W. Cooper offered the motion of non-concurrence, which prevailed by 165 to 17. On all these great questions affecting human liberty, Brother Long voted with the illustrious minority.

We are often too near events to see their importance. You may hold a dime so near the eye that it will hide the whole material universe. The further we recede from those historic incidents, the vaster they appear. There are crises in history, hours of supreme peril, decisive contests fought and battlefields made immortal, by the principles there settled and facts forever fixed. There are Thermoplae, Hastings, Yorktown, Waterloo and Gettysburg. Many battles may be fought and little decided, but there are moments of sublime immortal interest when the tide of human history turns and turns forever. Such were the destiny-deciding movements in which Rev. John Dixon Long took an active and important share. He was a Christian gentleman, a tender husband, a bright and genial companion, a true friend, an uncompromising and rugged reformer. When history comes to write the fame of her heroes, the name of J. D. Long may not appear on the roll, but in that great day when the eternal Liberator shall say, "Ye have been faithful over a few things," many a slave that had a lash-torn back will rise up and call him blessed.