"Inside Prince Hall" by David L Gray

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North American publisher's note: ~ "Inside Prince Hall" provides the most accurate and comprehensive work on Prince Hall Freemasonry to date. It combines scholarly research with fresh critiques of Prince Hall Freemasonry in both historical and present day contexts. Although building upon the works of Prince Hall researchers Walkes and Wesley, and 'mainstream' researchers Draffen and Pope - "Inside Prince Hall" corrects some of the accepted assumptions of the early history of Prince Hall Freemasonry. This book also covers previously taboo subjects such as the Christianization of Prince Hall Freemasonry as well as Bogus Black Masonic Groups.

Foreword - Prince Hall Freemasonry is an important part of the Black experience in the United States of America. Commencing in March 1775 when Prince Hall and fourteen others were initiated into Freemasonry in Irish Military Lodge No.441, and gathering pace with the issue of a Warrant in September 1784 by the premier (Moderns) Grand Lodge of England to meet as African Lodge No. 459, Freemasonry was seen by Prince Hall and his brethren as an important means of personal development and of gaining acceptance in wider American society. Subsequent history tells us that this was a most difficult task which they set themselves. Many claim it to be a task not fully achieved to the present day.

In the first century after 1775 America underwent the Civil War, abolition of slavery and the exploration of the American West. This first period saw the organisation of Prince Hall Affiliated Masonic Lodges in various states and territories, and in Military units, and the formation of various Prince Hall Affiliation Grand Lodges. During the second century, Prince Hall Freemasonry consolidated, with strengthening of the various Grand Lodges and development of other Masonic Orders, including the York and Scottish Rites. During this second period there were two World Wars, followed by the struggles of the Civil Rights movement.

The achievements of the more recent past have resulted in additional challenges becoming evident at the turn of the second millenium, with social mobility and changes causing dislocation of the solid base from which Prince Hall Freemasonry formerly drew its strength. At the same time, Prince Hall Freemasonry has achieved wider acceptance, following the development of fraternal relations with various Grand Lodges of North America, the British Isles, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

I am delighted to recommend this collection of talks and lectures about Prince Hall Freemasonry by David L Gray, published to coincide with his lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand under the auspices of the Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Council. The lecture tour will be the first in the Antipodes by an American Mason, as well as by a member of the Prince Hall fraternity.

I have had the good fortune to be associated with David over the past seven years, to learn from him by exchange of views on email lists - and in person by attending his lodge in Xenia, Ohio (Wilberforce Lodge No.21), when he was Master.

Now, by the publication of this book, others are able to share in David's mastery of his subject. I am confident that this will prove a worthy addition to the sparse literature on Prince Hall Freemasonry, and hope that it will serve to dispel remaining ignorance about this important and fascinating facet of Freemasonry Universal.

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