

Chaplain's Corner *by Rev. W. Leroy Jones*

Leslie F. Brandt in his book *Psalms/Now* captures the first verses of Psalm 1 like this: "the man who chooses to live a significant life is not going to take his cues from the religiously indifferent. Nor will he conform to the crowd nor mouth his prejudices nor dote on the failures of others. His ultimate concern is the will of God. He makes his daily decisions in respect to such. He can be compared to a sturdy tree planted in rich and moist soil. As the tree yields fruit, so his life manifests blessing for others. His life is productive and effective."

As I read this passage the other day, suddenly I saw it in a new light. It described my concept of a Mason. The structure of the Psalm is simplicity itself. It states and sharpens up the contrast between the godly and the ungodly man. Or as we might say, between the religious and the irreligious man.

This first psalm describes the true nature of blessedness. The Hebrew word for blessed means happy or joyous. But a deeper penetration into the root meaning reveals the nature of that

bliss. It comes from a verb meaning to go forth, to advance, or even lead the way. All of this may be implied in the first verse of this psalm. The portrait of a joyous person is one who is pressing on in a life of clearly set goals and purpose. His eyes are on the Lord and His plan for him. Life is exciting; many experiences of grace await him each new day; expectation of unlimited possibilities make his spirit vibrant with hope.

Surprisingly, the psalmist described what the blessed man does not do. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of the disrespectful. Or, as we would say, he must avoid irreligious counselors, he must avoid the companionship of those who openly and knowingly disobey God, he must not join company with those who are cynical and skeptical about God, who say in their heart, "There is no God."

Rather, he will delight in the law of the Lord and meditate upon it day and night. He must do more than passively accept the law of the Lord. He will make it the object of joyous contempla-

tion at all times and he will delight in it. Habitual daily reading of the Bible provides us with an assurance of God's love, providence and intervening grace. What is implied by the psalmist is that our meditation is to make the law our nature and character. We are to be immersed, soaked thoroughly, inundated with the truth of God's word. The righteous person is consistently open to God's teaching and direction.

Psalm 1 suggests that happiness is more than enjoying ourselves, that the goal of life is greater than self-fulfillment, and that prosperity is more than getting all we want. Psalm 1 calls for a decision—the decision to find happiness in God's direction rather than in self-assertion; the decision to seek the goal of life by offering ourselves to God, the decision to find prosperity by connecting ourselves to the source of life. Psalm 1 turns the world's values upside-down. The happiness of the righteous is the assurance that their lives are known by God and that God is their refuge in the midst of the best and the worst that human life can bring.

Recognition of Prince Hall Grand Lodge

On August 14, 2002, then Grand Master of Masons in Delaware, Most Worshipful James S. Russell, Jr., at the invitation of Most Worshipful Solomon Henry, then Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge in Delaware, had dinner in Dover, Delaware. Also present at that dinner was the Honorable Judge and Past Grand Master, Prince Hall affiliation, C. P. Houston and Donald D. Thomas, Past Master of Hiram Lodge Number 25 in Newark. At that meeting, the topic of mutual recognition of the two Grand Lodges was discussed.

On Saturday, September 16th, 2006, at the Masonic Temple in Wilmington Delaware, a Compact, establishing mutual fraternal recognition between these two Grand Lodges, was signed by Most Worshipful Ronald W. Conaway, Grand Master of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons in Delaware, and Most Worshipful James R. Fitzgerald, Jr., Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware.

The Grand Lodge of Delaware was formed on June 6, 1806 by four Lodges chartered by either the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania or the Grand Lodge of Maryland. Both the Grand Lodge of

Pennsylvania and the Grand Lodge of Maryland, directly, or indirectly, trace their lineage back to the Antient Grand Lodge of England. In September of 2006, the Grand Lodge of Delaware was composed of twenty-eight Lodges and a Lodge of Research with a total membership of about 5400 Masons. Recognized Appendant or Concordant Bodies by this Grand Lodge includes the York and Scottish Rite Bodies, the Shrine, the Order of the Eastern Star and numerous other Masonic based organizations.

The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Delaware was formed in Wilmington on June 9, 1849 by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. These Grand Lodges trace their lineage back to African Lodge Number 459 of Boston, Massachusetts, organized in 1787 under a charter granted by the Grand Lodge of England in 1784. At the time of the signing of the Compact, the Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware was composed of thirteen Lodges with a total membership of about 550 members. Recognized Appendant and Concordant Bodies of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge include the Royal Arch Masons, the Scottish Rite, the Shrine and the

Eastern Star.

The Compact signed by these two Grand Masters on behalf of their Grand Lodges states, in part:

"Purpose: To establish mutual recognition between our two Grand Lodges, to establish and promote a continuing harmonious relationship, to provide the right of each Grand Lodge to retain its sovereignty over its own affairs, having the legitimate right of each to continue to exist and operate within the geographical bounds of the State of Delaware and to promote Freemasonry in general."

It has been written – 'Human brotherhood is not just a goal. It is a condition on which our life depends. The question for our time is not whether all men are brothers. That question has been answered by the God who placed us on this earth together. The question is whether we have the strength and the will to make the brotherhood of man the guiding principle of our daily lives.'

The ritual of the Masonic degrees reminds us all that '...it is the internal and not the external qualifications that recommend him to be made a Mason'.

So Mote It Be.