



It is a proven historical fact that originally freemasonry only comprised the degrees of entered apprentice and fellowcraft. Therefore, the Master's degree can be seen as the initial step to the higher degrees, and the first in the Apprentice-Fellowcraft-Master initiatory series which actualizes the cycle of the *Maîtrise*¹, based on the legend of Hiram. This legend provides freemasonry with what Paul Ricoeur calls its *narrative identity*. It consists in a tragedy in three acts: Master, Secret Master, Perfect Master, which is itself an articulation between the first two symbolic degrees and the degrees that follow.

Generally, symbolic lodges only work once a year at the third degree, for an elevation to the Master's Degree, as if it were a celebration in the memory of the founding event - that is Hiram's death – nay, as if it were both celebrated and feared. They unwittingly work at the Master's degree only for substituting a live W. Master whose flesh does not leave the bones to sacrificed Hiram. Hiram's lost word, exiled and inaccessible, is replaced by the W. Master's Substitute Word. The transmission is thus broken, marking the end of Hiram's world to open up the possibility of the advent of the new world, that of the Worshipful Master.

The degrees of Secret Master and Perfect Master give the answers to the questions following Hiram's death.

Though Hiram left no will, the Secret Master is in possession of his heritage and he must answer these three questions: what of that old world? What are we to do with that old world? How are we to build a new world? Remembrance alone can reconstruct the past, the indispensable transmission of which makes it possible to build the future.

The Perfect Master entombs Hiram in a white and black marble mausoleum inside the Temple. Such installation of the dead body frees the live Master who is no more place bound, which allows him to undertake his own journeys and to build a new world, his own world.

Except if one limits oneself to a literal reading of the texts, there is no transmission without a substitution. Modern science has made a masterful demonstration of this: substitution is for transmission what epigenetics is to genetics. The one does not exist without the other. That is a scientific explanation of the operative strength of our rituals in the successive substitutions which they offer, thus ensuring a transmission well geared to our times.

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33°

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¹ This expressive word wants an equivalent in English, Freeman's Right and Mastership come nearest. The French use *La Maîtrise* to designate the Third or Master's Degree. *Mackey's Encyclopedia*.