

The Question of Masonic Posthumous Honors

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There has been some concern expressed regarding the Prince Hall Grand Lodge making Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a Freemason posthumously (after he had died). Dr. King had applied for membership, but was assassinated before he could receive his degrees. His wife was asked to accept the honor of membership on his behalf.

As far as I know, this was the first time such had occurred in Masonic history. The question is, was it “legal” in a Masonic sense? I am sure many Masonic scholars have debated the question, and I don’t know how the Prince Hall Grand Lodge justified their decision.

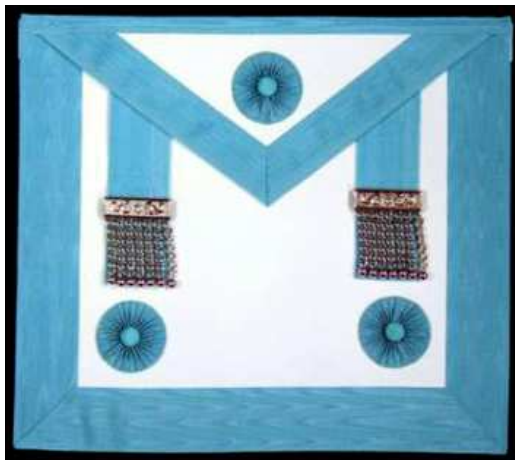
Nevertheless, what I do know does, at least in my mind, fully justify posthumous degrees.

To begin, every Grand Master is a representative of King Solomon, and he had the right to do anything. Did he do something with a posthumous connection? Remarkably, he did.

In our Masonic ritual, when King Solomon went to the grave of Hiram Abiff, he had hopes of finding the Grand Masonic Word. Only Hiram knew the word, but he was murdered before he could impart it. King Solomon considered the eventuality that the word would not be found on Hiram’s remains; and this being the case, he said he would provide a substitute. We all know what happened after that, and all Masons have the SUBSTITUTE Grand Masonic Word. As a result, the word came to us POSTHUMOUSLY (after the death of Hiram Abiff).

It might be said that King Solomon took the place of Hiram Abiff, and by absolute and unquestionable authority provided the word.

Given what I said at the outset as to Grand Masters representing King Solomon, it can be said that Grand Masters have the authority to grant Masonic degrees posthumously; and we have an incident in our ritual where posthumous action was taken, as provided.



The Masonic “Medal of Honor.”

It is common knowledge that Grand Masters can make Masons “at sight.” This has happened many times. It does, however, require consent, and a deceased man cannot provide this. Nevertheless, in the case of Dr. King, he had previously consented to membership.

I will mention here that the same circumstances (somewhat ironically) can be applied to Abraham Lincoln. He had effectively consented to Masonic membership, but was also assassinated before his degrees could be conferred. I, for one, would be pleased to see Lincoln proclaimed a Freemason posthumously. It must be kept in mind that Masons are taught that death is transition, not finality.

Numerous honors are bestowed posthumously by governments, even Medals of Honor; and let me draw a little parallel here with the lamb-skin apron—it is our “Medal of Honor.”



Dr. King, the first “posthumous” Freemason.