



Sir Charles Warren
Victorian English Freemason,
the Search for the Temple,
the Boy Scouts, and Jack the Ripper
by Dr. David Harrison

Freemasonry in England during the Victorian age witnessed a surge of interest in researching the origins of the order and answering questions about its connection with the Temple of Solomon. It was exactly this drive and desire to research the early history of Freemasonry that inspired the founding of the London based Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 in 1884. Here the members presented papers on all aspects of Masonic research which were published in their annual Transactions. Sir Charles Warren, R.F. Gould, and many others such as Golden Dawn founders Dr. William Wynn Westcott and the Rev. A. F. A. Woodford were contributors. Both Westcott and Woodford predictably produced very esoterically themed papers for the first volume of the Transactions published in 1888, Westcott discussing the Kabbalah and Woodford talking about Hermeticism.¹ Sir Charles Warren presented a paper which reflected his research on the Temple itself.

Sir Charles Warren was initiated into Freemasonry in 1859 and was involved in various lodges throughout parts of the British Empire. He was a member of the Royal Lodge of Friendship No. 278 in Gibraltar and served as the District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of the Eastern Archipelago from 1891 to 1895. He also served as Grand Deacon in 1887 for the United Grand Lodge of England and had become the elected founding Master of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 in 1884. Due to his departure to Africa, the lodge did not meet until his return

at the end of 1885. The famed Masonic historian, R.F. Gould, also attended various lodges throughout the British Empire, being involved in lodges as far away as China and Gibraltar. He was also, along with Warren, a founder of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge and published a paper in the first volume which echoed his own search for hidden knowledge entitled English Freemasonry Before the Era of Grand Lodge. 2

Gould went on to publish many varied papers in the Transactions, searching for the origins of Freemasonry and becoming one of the leading Masonic historians during the late Victorian period. Other famous founders of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge included the writers Sir Walter Besant and George William Speth. On Speth's motion to form a literary society under the guidance and protection of the lodge, a Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle was created which promoted the work done by the lodge and ensured a wider reading of the Transactions and an increased attendance at the lodge meetings. 3

The Victorian period experienced continued interest in the research of Solomon's Temple, and Sir Charles Warren became personally involved in excavating a section underneath the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Warren excavated underneath the Temple Mount and surveyed Herod's Temple in 1867. As an agent of the Palestine Exploration Fund, his work paved the way for a new modern approach to Biblical archaeology. He went on to present a paper concerning the Orientation of Temples to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge in 1887, a paper which also went on to be published in the first volume of the Transactions the following year. 4

Warren also wrote further works on the Temple based on his research and archaeological work, such as *The Temple or the Tomb* in 1880 and *The Survey of Western Palestine-Jerusalem* in 1884. Both of these examined his findings in Jerusalem with notable attention to the Dome of the Rock and the chronology of the Temple itself. Warren became a leading specialist on the archaeology of the Temple, and his work went on to inspire other archaeologists in the field during the period.

It was however by his connection with the Jack the Ripper case that Warren was to be best known, especially among the many speculative writers who have since written about the murders. These murders took place in London's East End in the fall of 1888. Warren was working as Commissioner of the Police from March 1886 to November 7th, 1888, his post covering the Jack the Ripper murders, and as the murderer was never caught, Warren's handling of the case has been much criticized. The fact that Warren was a Freemason has led one such writer, Stephen Knight, to put forward that there was a Masonic conspiracy to cover up the murders of the five prostitutes, a conspiracy that supposedly included other Freemasons such as Sir William Gull, the Royal physician; Sir Robert Anderson; and Prince Albert Victor, the Duke of Clarence. Gull was purported to have committed the murders in an effort to avoid a royal scandal by covering up a marriage between Prince Albert Victor to a working class girl.⁵ Knight's controversial theory has since been dismissed by scholars, but his work on the Ripper case remains popular.

Warren resigned from his post as Commissioner of the Police after coming into conflict with the Home Secretary, Henry Mathews, earlier on the day that Mary Jane (Anne) Kelly, the last murder victim attributed to Jack the Ripper, was found killed. He was also criticized for his lack of control of the Criminal Investigation Division during the case. Warren also attracted criticism as a commanding officer in the Boer War in 1899. His military background did however, assist him in his later pursuits when he became involved with the Boy Scout movement with Robert Baden-Powell. There is no evidence that Baden-Powell was a Freemason, though he was friends with the Freemason Rudyard Kipling, and there are a number of lodges named after him in Australia, all linked to the scout movement which has a similar ethos of charity, education, and duty.⁶

Despite his critics and the later speculative links to a conspiracy in the Jack the Ripper case, Warren's career has been much discussed over the years, and his Masonic work and writings on the Temple have attracted staunch praise, especially as a founder of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge, which remains to this day the leading Masonic research lodge in England. His work in the early Boy Scout movement has also added to his reputation. His archaeological work inspired a new, modern approach to Biblical archaeology, his research on the Temple gaining respect and support from fellow archaeologists at the time. Warren has certainly left a lasting legacy on Freemasonry, and in light of the controversial conspiracy theories, his career is overdue for reanalysis.

Notes

1 See Rev. A.F.A Woodford, "Freemasonry and Hermeticism," and W.W. Westcott, "The Religion of Freemasonry illuminated by the Kabbalah," in AQC, Vol. 1, (1888), pp.28-36 and pp.55-59.

2 R.F. Gould, "English Freemasonry Before the Era of Grand Lodge," in AQC, Vol. 1, (1888), pp.67-74.

3 See Robert A. Gilbert, "Masonic Education: Leading the way," in MQ, Grand Lodge Publications, Issue 11, October, 2004.

4 See Sir Charles Warren, "On the Orientation of Temples," in AQC, Vol. 1, (1888), pp.36-50. For more information on modern interpretations of Solomon's Temple see Leroy Waterman, "The Damaged 'Blueprints' of the Temple of Solomon," in the Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 2, No. 4. (The University of Chicago Press, October, 1943), pp.284-294.

5 See Stephen Knight, Jack The Ripper: The Final Solution, (London: Harper Collins, 1977).

7 See "Freemasonry and the Scout Movement," published by the Baden-Powell Lodge No. 505, the United Grand Lodge of Queensland, Australia, (1982).

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