

# The Use of Stones from Solomon's Quarry

by **Dr. David Harrison**

The interest in using supposed stones from Solomon's Temple for inclusion in modern Cathedrals became commonplace during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - especially as more modern research developed in Biblical archaeology, with stones excavated from the Temple being famously placed within St. Paul's Cathedral in London by archaeologist James Fergusson.<sup>1</sup> Even in the United States of America, in the Washington National Cathedral, the high altar was made from stone which was quarried from King Solomon's Quarries which supposedly supplied the stone for the Temple. The building of the beautiful gothic Washington National Cathedral commenced in 1907 when Freemason Theodore Roosevelt laid the foundation stone.

In the same year, Brother H. Anderson brought a piece of stone from King Solomon's Quarry at Jerusalem and presented it to the York Lodge No. 236, a lodge that still meets today in York, England. The stone has since been used as the rough ashlar in the lodge, and Brother Anderson wrote a paper on the location of King Solomon's Quarries, stating how they were discovered in a series of chambers underneath the city wall to the north of the Damascus Gate. Photographs of the quarries were also presented to the lodge, and Anderson stated that there were still many large blocks of stone lying around the caverns which were partly hewn, displaying the marks of the masons' tools, their size corresponding exactly with the outer walls of the Temple still standing. Today, Masonic meetings still take place on various occasions in the Quarries, in a main chamber aptly called "Freemasons Hall." <sup>2</sup>

To obtain stones from King Solomon's Quarries naturally became the ultimate prize for a lodge. The King Solomon's Temple Lodge No. 4611 was founded in Jerusalem in 1924, the lodge catering to English Freemasons who had remained in Palestine after World War I to assist in the country's administration. This Jerusalem lodge later became involved in the founding of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research Lodge, No. 5502 in 1929 and presented the new lodge with a pair of ashlar hewn from the quarries. According to notes which were submitted with the ashlar, the stones were hewn under the supervision of members of the Lodge of King Solomon's Temple, No. 4611 and were consecrated at Jerusalem by the Grand Secretary, R.W. Bro. Sir Colville Smith, C.VO. This Lodge had the privilege of presenting to the Grand Lodge of England, on the occasion of the dedication of the Grand Temple on 19th July 1933, a similar pair of ashlar, rough and smooth, for each of the sixteen Lodge rooms in the new grand temple.<sup>3</sup>

The archaeological study of Solomon's Temple had captured the minds of many a Victorian explorer, with Freemasons such as Sir Charles Warren conducting a number of investigations into the Temple, leading Warren to publish a number of papers and books on the subject, such as *The Temple or The Tomb* in 1880, Warren coming into direct conflict with fellow Temple archaeologist James Fergusson regarding the interpretation of the archaeology. Victorian writers were also attracted to the themes of the search for

the historical Solomon such as Freemason Henry Rider Haggard who wrote the excellent adventure novel, King Solomon's Mines, in 1885. The story involves three men who venture on a quest of discovery in Africa, finally discovering the wealth of King Solomon's Mines after a number of trials and adventures.

Because of new archaeological approaches and easy travelling access to Jerusalem (apart from during World War I), it became easier to study the history of the Temple and, most importantly, to access the archaeology - especially the quarries - to obtain the stones for Masonic lodges and new Cathedrals in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

## End Notes

1 A photograph of one of the "Temple" stones placed in St. Paul's Cathedral in London can be seen in David Harrison's, The Genesis of Freemasonry (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2009).

2 Robert Wood, The History of the York Lodge No.236, (York, 1977), p.70-71.

3 <http://kingsolomonstemple.homestead.com/Sponsors.html> [Accessed 3/July/2011]

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