

***The Da Vinci Code* - Separating Fact from Fiction**

Lecture Two: The Formation of the Templars

To recap briefly *The Da Vinci Code's* argument: Robert Langdon asserted that a French King named Godfrey de Bouillon formed the Priory of Sion immediately after he had conquered the city of Jerusalem in 1099. King Godfrey possessed a powerful secret that had been in his family since the time of Christ. The brotherhood of the Priory of Sion was charged to protect that secret. The Priory had learned of a stash of hidden documents hidden beneath the ruins of Herod's temple. These documents corroborated Godfrey's powerful secret and were so explosive that the Church would stop at nothing to get those documents from him. In order to retrieve the documents from within the ruins, the Priory of Sion formed the Knights Templar. The idea that this group was formed to protect travelers in the Holy Land is sheer fabrication. Their true role was to retrieve secret documents. Supposedly they found something in their digging that made them wealthy beyond their wildest dreams. Having demanded to reside by the Temple where they could excavate in secrecy, they discovered the object of their search and spirited it to Europe where their influence solidified. On the basis of what they found the Knights blackmailed the Vatican and were granted unlimited powers by the pope.

Robert Langdon eventually touts Godfrey de Bouillon as a descendant of the supposedly-ended Merovingian line. Never one to keep his story straight, not only was Godfrey the founder of the Priory of Sion, but, said Langdon, he "was the same man who ordered the Knights Templar to recover Sangreal documents from beneath Solomon's Temple and thus provide the Merovingians' proof of their hereditary ties to Jesus."

Let us now examine the real story, a narrative far more fascinating than any Dan Brown could construct.

Prelude to the Formation of the Templars

On a Sunday in the middle of the eleventh century three booted men entered the basilica of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople as the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church was celebrating a solemn mass. The leader of the trio slammed a document down on the altar; they then turned and marched out of the church without a word. The three men were cardinals, and the document they had delivered was a decree from Pope Leo IX excommunicating the emperor of Byzantium, all the patriarchs, priests and monks of the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as all the citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire. Everyone had the same choice: either accept eternal damnation or submit to the overlordship of the church in Rome.

This event was the latest in a long, unrelenting conflict between Rome and the Orthodox Church, a feud that had continued since the fourth century, each claiming to be the one true Church. In truth, the Eastern Church simply wanted to be left alone to practice its faith in the manner it saw best. By contrast, the Roman Church demanded that the world recognize its exclusive right to exercise dominion over everyone's mind and conscience. Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII, restricted the title of papa, or pope, to the bishop of Rome and forbid anyone else to use that title. Whereas nobles had often heretofore paid homage to a bishop of kissing his foot, now the pope declared that only *his* foot would be kissed and this kissing was mandatory. Gregory VII also said that the divine right of kings came through the medium of Christ's vicar on earth, which is to say that only the pope had the right to bestow or remove that divine right, meaning that the pope had the power to command citizens of any country to abandon allegiance to any secular ruler and the pope had the right to depose any king or emperor.

Gregory VII also flexed his ecclesiastical muscle to decree that he intended to enforce the ban on married priests. At the time, half of the priests were married, so Gregory's declaration wasn't welcomed. But Gregory decreed that either these priests set aside their wives or they couldn't exercise any priestly functions: the people of their parishes were supposed to shun them.

Gregory also cultivated warm relations with emperor of Byzantium, Michael VII, who was greatly in need of friends: Michael VII had asserted his claim to the throne when his father-in-law, emperor Romanus Diogenes, had been wounded and taken prisoner in battle with Turks. Once he had healed, the Turks had set him free. Michael then arrested his father-in-law when he tried to reclaim his throne. Michael's henchmen blinded Romanus Diogenes, the time-honored way of rendering a deposed ruler ineffective, though in this case his henchmen were a little too brutal, and Romanus Diogenes soon died, infuriating the family.

Moreover, Michael VII had recently suffered the loss of the Eastern Empire's last possessions in Italy to the Normans in 1073, who had similarly conquered all of England 7 years earlier. With the Italian possessions lost and the Turks carving away land in the east, one of the Eastern Empire's provincial governors, Nicephorus in 1078 rose in revolt, causing the spineless Michael to retire to a monastery, putting aside his beautiful wife, who then offered her hand to Nicephorus, who claimed the role as the new emperor. Pope Gregory excommunicated them both. The Turks continued to make in-roads, and a former ruling family revolted against Nicephorus, proclaiming their own emperor, Alexius Comnenus. The Pope excommunicated him, too.

But Pope Gregory had his own problems: the Holy Roman Emperor reigned supreme in the temporal world, while the pope ruled only in the spiritual. Pope Gregory didn't like this arrangement because he believed that all mortals should be under him in all matters. He especially didn't like the custom of "lay investiture," where kings, princes and other noblemen could appoint bishops who commanded large land holdings in their domain. These appointees thus had loyalty not to the pope, but to the local rulers, many of which sold their appointments to wealthy candidates to raise substantial money. Pope Gregory declared that all appointments would henceforth be made by the pope, and not by any layman, a great blow to the local rulers and great financial boon to the pope. Gregory announced this innovation in 1074 at a world council of bishops. In 1075, he was kidnapped from the altar of Basilica of St. Mary Major, taken to a house, beaten, and insulted before friends rescued him. Gregory held fast to his claims for power.

The Holy Roman Emperor at that time was Henry IV, only twenty years old. He soon received a letter from Gregory demanding a notarized written confession of all Henry's sins, at which point Henry called his own council, which then declared that Gregory should be deposed. Gregory's reaction was predictable: he excommunicated Henry IV. Henry IV tried to ride out the initial outcry of public opinion, but realized that he had overplayed his hand when his bishops and nobles began to desert him. His own people in Germany issued Henry an ultimatum: either have the ban removed before February 2, 1077 or lose the support of his constituents. Gregory announced that he was coming to Germany to restore order, and Henry IV met him at the castle of Canossa. Henry climbed the stairs of the castle in biting cold (it was January 25), dressed in sackcloth and barefoot, like a true penitent. Gregory kept him shivering in the cold for three days and nights then admitted him to the papal presence and lifted the ban in exchange for Henry's promise to obey the pope in all things. Gregory VII then demonstrated that all he had done was God's will: he asked God to make a piece of bread stick in his throat and let him choke to death if he was guilty of wrongdoing. When he swallowed the bread easily, the crowd cheered. Thus the pope demonstrated God's favor toward him.

However, Gregory discovered that he had overplayed his hand, too: Henry IV had apparently not spent his time on those stairs in penitence, but in planning. He went home, strengthened his army, then invaded Italy, laying siege to Rome. Gregory was rescued by the Normans, who took advantage of the situation to pillage Rome. Gregory died in exile in 1085.

Meanwhile, Alexius Comnenus, who was still stinging under Gregory's excommunication ban, struck an alliance with Henry IV. That Gregory had been rescued by the hated Normans who had just taken the Eastern Church's Italian holdings made him all the more despised in their eyes. Henry called a council to appoint his own pope, Clement III, who was not universally accepted. Thus, once Gregory died, cardinals loyal to him

elected Victor III, an elderly man who died within two years. Then the cardinals elected a shrewd man who took the name of Urban II.

Urban II was conciliatory and courteous. Exercising considerable diplomatic skills, he won the support of Spain and France. He also encouraged Henry IV's son to revolt against him, while lifting the ban of excommunication against Henry IV's colleague, Emperor Alexius, and striking a friendship with him. Urban II was able to return to Rome and avoided repeating Gregory's aggressive claims for superiority over temporal rulers. In truth, he had the same view of his position as had Gregory, but he was more subtle in asserting his power. He was looking for the right opportunity to assert his supremacy when his chance came in a letter from Emperor Alexius.

Alexius was continuing to have trouble with the Turks. Writing a letter to Urban II, Alexius asked for Urban to send him troops to help drive out the Turks, noting the many atrocities that the Turks had inflicted on their Christian captives. In 1095 the Pope called a council and allowed Alexius' representatives to trumpet a case for a Christian war against the Turks. There was little enthusiasm among the nobles and bishops.

However, Urban II saw a great opportunity. He envisioned a Holy War that would win the Christians the Holy Land, which would then come under Rome's control. Having a common goal would unify Europe's endlessly-fighting warring powers, and victory would make land available for younger sons of nobility since the laws of primogeniture were taking hold and all but the eldest sons were landless, thus turning into adventurers or near-bandits. The Church would play the lead role in organizing and blessing the venture and everyone would have to recognize her dominion.

Urban II made an appeal in 1095 for all Christians to go to war against Muslims. The response was tepid. In fact, Christian pilgrims had been going to the Holy Land for years, generally without problems. Whatever Muslim government was in power would countenance Christians as pilgrims or permanent residents. Christians were even permitted to run a hostel or "hospital" for pilgrims in Jerusalem. Yet Urban II played up the atrocities visited on Christians by Muslims, held out the promise of land, and promised soldiers eternity in paradise by declaring that all who died in this Holy Crusade would receive instant absolution and total remission of sins. The crowd responded with "Deus lo volt!" (God wills it!) and the Bishop Adhemar of le Puy was first to kneel to ask for permission to go.

Here we finally encounter Godfrey de Bouillon, described by Robert Langdon as a French king. In truth, Godfrey was no king at all, but the duke of Lower Lorraine, and was one of several high-ranking nobles who responded to Pope Urban's call. In fact, possessing somewhat limited means, Godfrey de Bouillon sold and mortgaged his lands to finance a fighting force. He was joined by Count Raymond of Toulouse and Prince Bohemond, son of Norman leader Robert Guiscard, who also raised sizable armies. So, too, did the brother of the king of France.

In Constantinople, Emperor Alexius was anything but pleased. He had sent the pope a request for a few thousand mercenaries, and had his plea answered with a call for a crusade that would attract a great multitude. Alexius knew that his country would need to feed these men and send them on their way, and they did their best, but fifteen thousand uprooted men were hard to contain: many of the Crusaders practiced their pillaging skills across Europe.

The Crusaders' first goal was Nicea, which had been conquered by the Turks not long before. After a short siege, the Crusaders had the city on the point of surrender, when they discovered that the Turkish leader had made a deal with Alexius to surrender to him, thus depriving the Crusaders of the spoils of war. Alexius soothed their feeling somewhat with gifts but then forced the Crusaders to swear allegiance to him as a price of proceeding. They did so, only because he controlled their entry and escape routes to the Holy Land. If

things went poorly, they would surely need the Emperor's ships to effect a retreat. Alexius saw this oath of allegiance as binding; the Crusaders saw it as a way to spring themselves out of a trap.

The Crusaders proceeded to Antioch, a walled and heavily fortified metropolis a mile wide and three miles long. They settled down for a long siege. The Muslims were mystified: the Muslim ruler of Antioch had not interfered with the Christians' practice of their religion: the Christians had their own churches and patriarch. But under threat of war, the church was closed, the Christians expelled, and their patriarch was put in prison. Periodically they would hang him over the wall in a cage as a way of taunting the Christians.

After waiting in siege from October to June, word reached Bohemond that a Turkish officer, an Armenian Christian named Firuz, who had converted to Islam, would sell the city out for a price. Firuz happened to command two adjoining towers. He saw to it that the Crusaders were permitted to put ladders to a tower window, and after sixty knights had made the climb and taken the second tower, they were able to place ladders between the two towers and entered the city in sufficient numbers to open the gates. The frustrated Crusaders poured in, and slaughtered the inhabitants, without consideration for sex or age. By nightfall every Turk in Antioch was dead. Bohemond declared that he had the right to rule the captured city.

The rest of the Crusaders, with two exceptions, moved toward Jerusalem. Bohemond stayed in Antioch to enjoy its spoils; Godfrey's younger brother Baldwin had already taken off on a separate mission. While in Antioch, Bishop Adhemar died of typhoid. His diplomatic skills would be sorely missed.

Meanwhile, the Egyptians had taken Jerusalem from the Turks while the latter was worried about Antioch. The Egyptians suggested to the Christians that they should work together against the Turks. In return the Christians could freely visit Jerusalem; the Egyptians would even provide protection. No, said the Christians, it has to be all ours. All Muslims were infidels and enemies of Christ. The campaign for Jerusalem was begun.

The Egyptian commander poisoned all the wells around Jerusalem and forced all the Christians to leave, not as an act of mercy but to place additional burdens on the Crusaders. One of the ejected Christians, was the master of the Amalfi hostel; he shared all he knew of the layout of Jerusalem. They laid siege to Jerusalem for 6 weeks, but discovered that they would have to adapt their tactics to the situation. In the first place, there were no trees for the construction of siege machines, so lumber had to be brought from the coast or the forest of Samaria. They also had to make a 12-mile round-trip for water. With twelve hundred knights and twelve thousand foot soldiers the provision demands were tremendous and severe shortages were frequent. But one of the priests in the company had a vision: the good bishop Adhemar had appeared to him and said that the Crusaders would win Jerusalem if they stopped bickering among themselves, if they fasted and prayed for three days and if they processed around the city in humility barefoot on the third day. They did everything as the vision demanded, though the Egyptians looking down on the barefoot Christians circumnavigating the city taunted them in derision and urinated on the crosses they carried.

About that same time, three siege machines were built. These towers had to be rolled up to the walls of selected positions, which meant the great dry moat had to be filled in. This was done at great cost, amidst stones and fire. However, by July 13, 1099, they rolled the towers into position. Raymond positioned his tower at the wall first, but couldn't get his men from the tower to the wall. However, Godfrey de Bouillon managed to drop a bridge on to the wall and land soldiers on the wall: hand-to-hand combat ensued and in two hours they commanded enough of the wall to permit scaling ladders. Godfrey then sent men to open the Damascus gate and the Crusaders flooded in, once again butchering everyone. Jews crowded into their synagogue, hoping to prove to the Christian invaders that they were not Muslim. Sadly the Crusaders burned down the synagogue, killing all inside.

Only one merciful gesture was recorded: the Egyptian emir in charge of Jerusalem offered to surrender the city if Raymond of Toulouse would guarantee his safety and that of his men. Raymond did so, even providing an armed escort for them all the way to Ascalon, a coastal city. The word went out that Raymond was a man of his word.

The Kingdom of Jerusalem

Pope Urban II may have given Bishop Adhemar instructions as to how to rule Jerusalem, but the good bishop, of course, had died prior to the taking of the city. Urban II could not be consulted, because he died two weeks after the conquest of Jerusalem, not knowing that victory over the Holy City had been attained.

Four leading nobles were considered to be the leader of Jerusalem: Two, Robert of Normandy and Robert of Flanders, declined consideration. They planned to head home as soon as Jerusalem was secured. Raymond of Toulouse was the obvious choice, but he was pompous, arrogant and overbearing – in short, he was generally unpopular and plenty of Christians had not liked his sparing of the Egyptian emir. Moreover, most of the other nobles didn't want Raymond as king because he would interfere with their plans.

Thus, the choice for leader became Godfrey, a fierce fighter, as the Jerusalem battle had indicated, but an excessively pious man. The man whose entire mission, according to Robert Langdon, was to find documents that would undermine the integrity of the Church, was in fact a man so dedicated to the Church that his own chaplains considered him overzealous in his piety and prayers. Indeed, the reason he was chosen as leader was that though he was ferocious in battle, pious in behavior and exhibiting the highest moral character, he was so preoccupied with sacred duties that everyone knew he wouldn't interfere in secular matters. So, Godfrey du Bouillon, duke of Lower Lorraine, became first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. However, he expressly rejected the title of king: no one should be king in Christ's city, he said.

The city needed a religious leader and the nobles bestowed the patriarch of Jerusalem upon a priest named Arnulf, a religious figure who had never held any position in the Church. He was a popular companion, though his sexual indiscretions were so constant and flagrant that he had inspired quite a few lewd songs and poems in the army. But he was chaplain to Robert, duke of Normandy and had befriended Robert's father, William the Conqueror, serving as tutor to Robert's sister Cecilia, who had pressured her brother into promising to make Arnulf a bishop some day. This was the day. Arnulf's first move was immediately to imprison the Greek Orthodox priests who had served in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. These priests had hidden the "True Cross" on which the Savior had died, but under threat of hideous torture they revealed to Arnulf where they had hidden it in the church wall. The True Cross became the most valuable object in all Christendom.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to all, Urban II had before his death appointed a replacement for Adhemar, a priest named Daimbert, who had been accused of embezzlement in Spain, but who was a good organizer and a strong advocate for papal supremacy. He saw the Holy Land as belonging to the church and himself as the Pope's designated ruler over all of it.

Godfrey dispatched his brother Eustace to discern the nature of a Egyptian attempt to counter-attack Jerusalem, and Eustace managed to capture some advance scouts of the vizier and torture them until they revealed that the vizier's army was waiting to be resupplied and was not ready for battle. Godfrey re-gathered his knights and marched with 1200 knights and 9000 men down to meet a Muslim army that outnumbered them 5-1. Before them they carried the True Cross. They attacked just outside the walled city of Ascalon and routed the Egyptian troops. The booty they captured was greater than they could carry.

However, this success produced a situation that would lead to great disharmony and stupidity. The culprit was none other than Godfrey du Bouillon. The rich port city of Ascalon offered to surrender to the Crusaders, the

merchants of the city being more than willing to be ruled by Christians rather than Egyptians or Turks. However, Ascalon wanted to surrender to Raymond of Toulouse, whose word they trusted, to protect them from the brutality that had ensued at Jerusalem and Antioch. This bloodless victory would give Jerusalem its own seaport. Unfortunately, Godfrey wanted Ascalon to surrender to him instead. Everyone pleaded with him, but he was adamant: If Ascalon was going to be part of the Jerusalem Kingdom it needed to recognize the personal supremacy of Godfrey. Another seaport city also offered to surrender to Raymond. Godfrey wouldn't hear of it.

The result was that the Muslims would hold on to Ascalon for another fifty years, and taking it would cost thousands of Christian lives. Robert of Flanders and Robert of Normandy were so disgusted with Godfrey that they went home. Raymond broke with Godfrey, too, and went off in search of his own kingdom to conquer. Godfrey's own cousin, Baldwin of Le Bourg went with Raymond. Tancred, Bohemond's nephew, stayed briefly with Godfrey, then struck out on his own to capture most of Galilee and set up his own kingdom. Soon troops were leaving Godfrey to go enjoy Tancred's rule in Galilee. Godfrey watched his forces disintegrate.

Along came Archbishop Daimbert with a great fleet, which Bohemond enlisted to blockade the coastal city of Lattakieh, which would give Antioch a much-needed port. Bohemond didn't mind breaking his word to the Greek Orthodox emperor Alexius, and Daimbert considered the Greek Orthodox believers to be heretics anyway. But when the homebound Crusaders came to Lattakieh they were appalled to learn that Bohemond was attacking fellow Christians and was doing so with the aid of an archbishop. So they sent for Daimbert to come explain himself. Daimbert quickly adapted to the presence of these powerful men, humbly accepting chastisement. He apologized profusely and removed the blockade; Bohemond likewise backed down. The city of Lattakieh was relieved and grateful, providing ships for the two Roberts to ferry them and their troops home.

Daimbert moved on to Jerusalem, eager to assume his true command as patriarch of Jerusalem, and Bohemond agreed to accompany him. He was joined by Godfrey's brother Baldwin, who now commanded a sizable area. After all, Godfrey was in declining health and the older brother Eustace had returned to France. Baldwin was next of kin, and hereditary transfers of power were common.

After Christmas, Daimbert was approved as the true patriarch of Jerusalem, deposing Arnulf. Godfrey knelt in front of his Church's true representative. So, too, did Bohemond and Tancred, though for different reasons. Godfrey was recognizing the power and legitimacy of the Church; the other two were stating that they were not vassals of Godfrey but independent rulers in their own right. Baldwin didn't kneel at all. Daimbert even persuaded Godfrey to change his will so that Jerusalem was ceded to Daimbert and the Church. (So much for depicting Godfrey as one bent on founding an organization to usurp the Church!)

However, Daimbert left town to assist in the conquering of Acre, so he was not present in Jerusalem when Godfrey died quietly in his sleep, on July 18, 1100. One of Godfrey's friends quickly sent news to Baldwin and ordered men to take the city citadel, known as the Tower of David. Word reached Daimbert of Godfrey's death via other sources, and he quickly learned that the Tower of David was taken and that Baldwin was en route to claim the throne. Daimbert tried to contact Bohemond to stop the power grab, but Bohemond had been grabbed himself, by the Muslims and was now in prison.

Baldwin reached the Holy City and became the first king of Jerusalem, King Baldwin I. He eagerly made deals with merchants of Venice and Genoa, whose ships provided the force of a substantial navy. He also continued to expand his land holdings. Once he surprised a rich caravan, only to discover that among his prisoners was the beautiful and very pregnant wife of an important sheik. He set up a tent for her, provided her with the most comfortable cushion and carpets, and even provided food, water, attendants and two goats with milk for the baby. When the sheik came and found his wife so provided, he promised an oath of gratitude to Baldwin.

Baldwin defeated a huge invading Egyptian army that outnumbered him 25-1. But he would soon be attacked by a larger force of Arabs and Sudanese troops and was forced to take refuge in a walled town. A lone Arab came to him by night –it turned out to be that befriended Sheik who told him the town would be surrounded by morning. Baldwin saddled his fastest horse and rode to safety that night.

Baldwin returned home to find that his financial coffers were almost empty. He asked Daimbert for a loan, but Daimbert said that the church coffers were virtually empty, too. Word had come to Baldwin that an Italian nobleman had sent a gift of 1000 gold coins to be divided between the hospital, the church and the government. Daimbert pleaded ignorance of the gift, but his old adversary Arnulf knew where the money was hidden. An investigation disclosed that Daimbert had pocketed the entire sum. In fact, he had embezzled 20,000 gold marks. He was deposed.

Baldwin won major victories at Acre, Beirut and Sidon, extending his reign well to the north. Raymond, meanwhile, won Tripoli, extending the Christian holdings. In 1118 Baldwin died of a disease picked up in Egypt. He was succeeded by his cousin Baldwin of Le Bourg, who was crowned King Baldwin II.

Conclusion

In one sense this lecture was completely preliminary to the period noted in *The Da Vinci Code*, but the lecture is necessary to demonstrate the ethos of the period and to explain why an organization like the Knights of the Templar would have been formed, not as a secret archeological society dedicated to bringing down the Church, but as a body whose purpose was to extend the Church's aims in the Holy Land.

Already, one can see that several *Da Vinci Code's* assertions are false. First, Godfrey was not a French king, but a duke and not even the most powerful of the dukes who took part in the Crusades. Second, there is no indication that Godfrey du Bouillon founded any secret organization known as the Priory of Sion. He was completely absorbed with fighting infidels and establishing a Christian government in Jerusalem. Godfrey's participation in the Crusade was not due to a desire to recover secret documents from under Herod's (or Solomon's Temple), but because his religious nature was stirred by the persuasive call of Urban II.

Second, contrary to Langdon's portrayal of him as possessing a great secret that would destroy the Church, Godfrey du Bouillon was committed to the Church's service and willingly acceded to the pope's power, even when colleagues refused to acknowledge the Church's dominion.

Third, Godfrey did not order the Templars to recover the Sangreal documents from beneath the ruins of Solomon's temple. In the first place, there were no ruins of Solomon's Temple in which to dig (more on that next week). Moreover, Godfrey du Bouillon happened to be dead before the Templars were formed.

We have now reached the stage where the Templars are about to be formed. Robert Langdon advances the notion that this group was formed primarily to achieve a great archeological find under the ruins of the destroyed Hebrew Temple. Their real story, full of faith and tragedy, will show this claim to be absurd.

Dr. Wm. Richard Kremer, March 3, 2004, Lecture Two of Six in the Series