

Eberhard of Friuli

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Eberhard (c. 815 – 16 December 866) was the Frankish Duke of Friuli from 846. His name is alternatively spelled **Everard**, **Evrard**, **Erhard**, *Eberhard*, or **Eberard**, or in Latinized fashion *Everardus*, *Eberardus*, or *Eberhardus*. He wrote his own name “Evvrrardus”.^[1] He was an important political, military, and cultural figure in the Carolingian Empire during his lifetime. He kept a large library, commissioned works of Latin literature from Lupus Servatus and Sedulius Scottus, and maintained a correspondence with the noted theologians and church leaders Gottschalk, Rabanus Maurus, and Hincmar.^[1]

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A note on notability

“Saint Evrard, Duke of Frioul and son-in-law of Louis le Débonaire, was one of the principal personages of the Carolingian period. As his name belongs to a great history, our region could, in right name, be re-vindicated as one of his glories. Cysoing, above all, has the right to call itself Saint Evrard’s village. The past of Saint Evrard and of the village of Cysoing are themselves intimately tied such that it is impossible to separate them. One would excuse us for therefore reuniting them.”^[2]

So reads the preface of an ecclesiastic work on Evrard and Cysoing. There was a “flurry” of research and publishing associated with the discovery of Evrard’s body at Cysoing early in the twentieth century—this “flurry” was mostly limited to Lille/Roubaix and within elements of the Church.

Family

He inherited the title of Duke of Friuli from his father Unruoch II. His mother was Engeltrude, possibly a daughter of Beggo of Paris and Alpais.

Evrard was from an illustrious Frankish family.^[3]

Children (with Gisela, daughter of Louis the Pious)

- Eberhard (c. 837 – 840)
- Ingeltrude (837 or 840 – 870), probably married Henry of Franconia
- Unruoch III (c. 840 – 874)
- Bèrenger (c. 840 – 924), King of Italy
- Adélarde (d. 874)
- Rudolf (d. 892)
- Heilwise (d. 860)
- Gisèle (d. 863)
- Judith of Friuli, first married Arnulf I of Bavaria, second married Conrad II of Auxerre

Disputed parentage

Paternity theories

- His father was Unruoch II.^[4]
- “His father was Bèrenger, the son of Count Unroch.”^[2]
- “After other authors, Unroch, the grandfather of Saint Evrard, should have been the Duke of Frioul.”^[2]
- “Alas, some have written that Saint Evrard had for his father Carloman I, the brother of Charlemagne.”^[2]
- “His grandfather was, it is said, the Count *Unroch* who was leaving the court of Charlemagne and signatory to the will of the emperor.”^[2]

Maternity theories

- His mother was Engeltron of Paris, a daughter of Begue, Count of Paris and Aupals.^[4]
- “As for his mother, she was, Buzelin says, the daughter of Didier, king of the Lombards.”^[2]

Education

Saint Evrard lived in the ninth century. He was born under the reign of Charlemagne and died under that of Charles the Bald.

Saint Evrard was elevated to the court of Charlemagne and of Louis the Débonaire. He took his education at the *Palace School* founded by Charlemagne and organized by Alcuin, where he studied from the medieval programs known as the trivium and the quadrivium. There he got a taste of the letters and sciences, at the same time that he developed his famous piety.^[2]

It is without doubt that it was at the *Palace School* that Saint Evrard began to build the rich library of which he enumerates the books with so much care in his will.^{[5][6]}

Warlike exploits and role as mediator under Louis le Débonaire

As soon as his age permitted him to carry arms, Saint Evrard took part in numerous military expeditions.^[7] Named Duke of Frioul and Count or Marquis^[8] de Trévis, in Italy, he defended his country against invasion by the Bulgars and managed to completely drive these new barbarians from the peninsula—825-830.^[2]

He rendered service unto Louis le Débonaire that was still more distinguished. During the tragic years (830-839) where the emperor had suffered at the hand of his son's revolt the most undignified treatment, Count Evrard remained inviolably loyal.^[2]

He exercised his influence in Lothair's sphere (the elder son of the emperor) to bring about a reconciliation between father and son. It is certain that it was on his council in 839, that Lothaire went to *Worms* to implore the pardon of his father.^[9]

Marriage and life at Cysoing

In return for his services, the emperor Louis le Débonaire gave Count Evrard the highest honor possible: the hand of his (acknowledged) daughter, the Princess Gisèle, in marriage.

The Princess Gisèle, a woman of piety and virtue,^[2] was the daughter of Louis le Débonaire and his second wife, the empress Judith.^[9] Among the rich domains the Princess brought with her in her dowry, Count Evrard found the fisc of Cysoing. One gives the name fisc, in this age, to large, rural properties separate from the royal domains; that is, to sorts of farms with a residence for the master and homes for settlers.^[10] The Royal Fisc of Cysoing, situated at the center of the country of Pèvele, was one of the most beautiful in the region. The stay seemed so agreeable to Saint Evrard and the Princess Gisèle that they made it one of their regular residences.^[2] The castle which they inhabited was without doubt the same as that of the lords of Cysoing in following centuries. It found itself part of a magnificent property, surrounded by water, that actually belongs to the family Bigo-Vanderhagen. The farming ditches were marked in the oldest documents.^[11] It is not rash to think these were dug in Saint Evrard's time, or perhaps even earlier.^[2]

Already, in the century before (in 752), the little hamlet established on the royal fisc of Cysoing has been made famous through the martyrdom of Saint Arnoul.^[2] Saint Arnoul, a courageous warrior, who was, it is said, the father of Godefroid, Bishop of Cambrai-Arras, had been attached to the court of a noble lord, his relative. "His virtues and his merits were so radiant that God accorded his prayers more than one miracle during his life. He became even more glorious through his martyrdom."^[2] He was so devoted to his master that he eventually died for him^[12] thus attaining martyrdom.^[2] Saint Arnoul was already honored at Cysoing when Saint Evrard and Princess Gisèle went to take possession of their domain. His relics were conserved there. Cysoing, of this age, has therefore *a church*, or less *a chapel* that was without doubt the same chapel as the royal fisc.^[2]

Saint Evrard, at Cysoing, had a chaplain named Walgaire.^[2] They (Evrard and Gisèle) decided to found a monastery at Cysoing. The project was long and difficult, and was not complete at the time of Evrard's or Gisèle's deaths. The monastery was initially made in honor of Saint Saviour and Mary (mother of Jesus). The religious lived there under canon law in a community with all the rigors of the cloister. Their special function was singing solemnly in the church. They maintained public prayer. Saint Evrard was known to enjoy singing with the choir.^[2] After his later campaigns in the defense of Italy, the remains of Pope Callixtus I were re-interred in the Abbey at Cysoing.^{[1][2]}

Character

Saint Evrard, himself, has organized his home in a way so perfectly that it was more like a monastery than a castle. He was seconded in this task by his pious wife, Gisèle, who dedicated herself to the education of their many children. The poor and ill were sure of finding not only banal security at Cysoing, but also help and protection. The social question of the time, that of serfs, also preoccupied Saint Evrard. He had freed a good number. In their testimony, he expressly refrained from impeding their liberty. He never forgot those who he didn't free, and tried to improve their lots. Though he was a courageous and formidable, he worked all his life for peace. His private virtues were no less remarkable. In his elevated position, he strove to preserve modesty and humility, to avoid splendor and arrogance. His zeal for the glory of God, to spread the Truth, to convert the infidels, was celebrated throughout the Church. Alas, his piety, his taste for ceremonies of worship, his devotion to the saints, his respect for the precious relics was apparent in his every act.^[2]

Pacifier

Saint Evrard's activity was not limited to the royal fisc of Cysoing, as he involved himself freely with matters of other domains and the empire in general. Emperor Louis the Debonaire went to die (840) and the war, a cruel war without mercy, exploded between the Emperor Lothaire and his two brothers, Louis le Germanique and Charles the Bald. Saint Evrard strongly deplored this fighting/battling and fratricide and made all efforts to bring it to an end. After the bloody battle of Fontenay (25 June 841), he left the ambassadorial envoy of Lothaire near that of Lothaire's brothers for peace negotiations. The preparatory conference took place in 842 at Milin, near Châlons in Champagne. It was decided to divide the empire between the three brothers. The negotiators, among which Evrard could be found, were charged with making the partitioning equitable/fair. It was not before August 843 that they presented their report to the three kings at Verdun.^[2]

Wars with the Saracens

The negotiations ended and peace was re-established between the three brothers, Saint Evrard left in haste for Italy. Italy was under threat from "African Saracens". These Saracens^[2] had been named as helpers, in 842, by the Duke of Benevento and they would soon become a threat to regimes throughout the peninsula. They menaced Rome and pillaged it many times. Saint Evrard, in his position as Duke of Friuli, was made a captain/leader of the resistance. The war wore on for several years and ended in 851 with the defeat of the Saracens.

"Evrard has a reputation for being both a courageous soldier and able leader throughout these battles. In the tradition of Charlemagne, Evrard forced the vanquished to convert to Christianity, meritoriously teaching them the Gospel, himself."^[2]

Testament and death

Sometime after this solemnity, Saint Evrard returned to Italy. We find him in 858 among the ambassadors who the emperor Louis le Jeune, son of Lothaire, sent to Ulm, near his uncle Louis le Germanique. After this date, we know nothing more about Saint Evrard until his Testimony, a very interesting/curious/strange document, whose authenticity is certain and in which we are given information on the life of Saint Evrard. This Testimony was made in Italy, at Musiestro Castle, in the county of Trévis, in 867. Evrard and his consort meticulously

recorded not only their lands and possessions within a prepared will, but the identities and relationships of family members and neighboring royals. With the agreement of his spouse, Princess Gisèle, Saint Evrard portioned his goods among his seven children.^[2]

The eldest, *Unroch*, got all properties in Lombardy and Germany. The second, *Bèrenger*, got Annappes with its dependencies less Gruson and the other properties in the Hesbaye and in the Condrost. The third, *Adélarde*, got the lands of Cysoing, Camphin, Gruson and Somain, with charges and respects of all the properties of the Abbey in these regions. The fourth, *Rodolphe*, got Vitry-en-Artois and Mestucha, except for the church at Vitry which was given with the Abbey at Cysoing.^[2]

The three daughters of Saint Evrard, *Ingletrude*, *Judith* and *Heilwich*, got various other domains : Ermen, Marshem, Balghingham, Heliwsheim, Hostrenheim, Luisinga, Wendossa, Engerresteim. Saint Evrard had another daughter who carried the name of Gisèle, her mother. But she was dead at the time of his testimony. The testimony split equally the jewels and ornaments of the saint, the precious objects of his chappel and the books of his library. It is dated 867, the 24th year of the reign of Lothaire's son, Louis le Jeune. Saint Evrard died the same year, 16 December.^[2]

References

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Notes

1. ^{^ a b c} Belgian and Celtic Saints (<http://home.scarlet.be/amdg/sankt/dec16.html>) (**French**)
2. ^{^ a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z} “Saint Evrard : Fondateur de L’Abbaye de Cysoing : Son Culte & Ses Reliques” by Abbott Jules BATAILLE (1902)
3. [^] Sources : *Chevalier*. Répertoires des sources historiques au mot *Eberhard*. *Don Boquet. Rerum gallicarum et francicarum scriptores* T. VII ; *Acta sanctorum* VIeme volume d’Octobre. --*Buzelin* Gallo-Flandria I 102 ; III, 107-109 *usw*
4. ^{^ a b} *The Royal Ancestry Bible Royal Ancestors of 300 Colonial American Families* by Michel L. Call (charts 1986 & 2022) ISBN 1-933194-22-7
5. [^] voir plus loin page 12
6. [^] Translator : “C’est sans doute à l’Ecole du palais que saint Evrard commença à se composer cette riche bibliothèque dont il énumère les livres avec tant de soin dans son testament.”
7. [^] *Les Sires de Cysoing* par Thierry Leuridan, p. 14
8. [^] *Les Sires de Cysoing* par Thierry Leuridan, p. 14 -- *Rerum gallicarum et francicarum scriptores usw*
9. ^{^ a b} *Les Sires de Cysoing* par Thierry Leuridan
10. [^] *Les sires de Cysoing* par Thierry Leuridan p.11
11. [^] Rapports de la baronnie de Cysoing 1392, 1455, 1595. Archives départementales. Etat général 81, 82, 88.
12. [^] *Acta sanctorum* II p. 971. *Cartul. de Cys.* p. 768, 905, 914, 919.

External links

- Catholic.org (http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=5959) (English)
- www.amdg.be (<http://home.scarlet.be/amdg/sankt/dec16.html>) (French)
- Medieval Lands Project on Eberhard, Duke of the March of Friulia (<http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/NORTHERN%20ITALY%20900-1100.htm#EberhardDukeFriuliadied866>)

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