

# Arnulf of Metz

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**Saint Arnulf of Metz** (c. 582 – 640) was a Frankish bishop of Metz and advisor to the Merovingian court of Austrasia, who retired to the Abbey of Remiremont. In French he is also known as **Arnoul** or **Arnoulf**; in English he is also known as **Arnold**. He is claimed to be a direct descendant of Flavius Afranius Syagrius, being a rare case for descent from antiquity.

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## Genealogy

Shortly after 800, most likely in Metz, a brief genealogy of the Carolingians was compiled, modelled in style after the genealogy of Jesus in the New Testament. According to this source, Arnulf's father was a certain Arnoald, who in turn was the son of a *nobilissimus* Ansbertus and Blithilt (or Blithilde), an alleged and otherwise unattested daughter of Chlothar I. This claim of royal Merovingian descent is not confirmed by the contemporary reference in the *Vita Sancti Arnulfi*.

The *Vita*, written shortly after the saint's death, states that he was of Frankish ancestry, from "sufficiently elevated and noble parentage, and very rich in worldly goods",<sup>[1]</sup> without making any claims to royal blood. However, under Salic Law, no children of Blithilde would be recognized as legitimate heirs to the dynasty. Therefore, the connection may or may not have been noted in relevant documentation.

The *Commemoratio Genealogiae Domni Karoli Glorissimi Imperatoris* written originally in the early 9th century states that Arnulf of Metz was the son of predecessor Arnoaldus of Metz, himself a son of Ansbertus and thus the Ferreoli of the Midi. J. Depoin in "Grand Figures Monacales Du Temps Merovingiens. St Arnoul de Metz, Etudes de Critique Historique" *Revue Mabillon* 21, (1921) observed that chronologically and for other reasons - Arnulf was identified as a Frank in contemporary documents whereas Arnoald was identified by Paul the Deacon as a Roman *ex nobilia senatorum familia orto*- this construction was incorrect and proposed an alternative to the effect that Arnulf's father was Bodegisel, based in significant part on the *Vita Gundolphi*. David Humiston Kelley then

**Saint Arnulf of Metz**



<b>Born</b>	c. 582 AD Lay-Saint-Christophe
<b>Died</b>	640 AD near Remiremont
<b>Venerated in</b>	Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church
<b>Feast</b>	July 18
<b>Attributes</b>	portrayed with a rake in his hand
<b>Patronage</b>	Brewers

proposed that Arnoaldus was likely an ancestor of the Carolingians through a daughter Itta, wife of Pepin of Landen. Christian Settapani carefully revisited and expanded upon the work of Depoin and Kelley. He concurred in Arnulf's descent from Bodegisel instead of Arnoald, and that there was a connection between the Ripuarian Frankish royal house and the Carolingians but argued (without dismissing the possibility of Itta's being Arnoald's daughter) that there was a connection through Arnulf's wife, Doda who he posited as a daughter of Arnoald. Kelly considered Settapani's proposed connection between the Carolingians and Arnoald and regarded it as probable.

## Life

Arnulf was born to an important Frankish family near Nancy in Lorraine around 582.<sup>[2]</sup> The family owned vast domains between the Mosel and Meuse rivers.<sup>[3]</sup> As an adolescent, he was called to the Merovingian court of king Theudebert II (595–612) of Austrasia<sup>[4]</sup> where he was educated by Gondulf of Provence.<sup>[2]</sup> Arnulf was later sent to serve as *dux* at the Schelde.

Arnulf gave distinguished service at the Austrasian court under Theudebert II. He distinguished himself both as a military commander and in the civil administration; at one time he had under his care six distinct provinces.<sup>[4]</sup> Arnulf was married ca 596 to a noblewoman whom later sources give the name of Dode or Doda, (born ca 584). Chlodulf of Metz was their oldest son, but more important is his second son Ansegisel, who married Begga daughter of Pepin I, Pippin of Landen. Arnulf is thus the male-line grandfather of Pepin of Herstal, great-grandfather of Charles Martel and 3rd great grandfather of Charlemagne. After his wife took the veil as a nun in a convent at Treves, Arnulf saw it as a sign of God and became a priest and bishop afterwards.<sup>[5]</sup>

The rule of Austrasia came into the hands of Brunhilda, the grandmother of Theudebert, who ruled also in Burgundy in the name of her great-grandchildren. In 613 Arnulf joined his politics with Pippin of Landen and led the opposition of Frankish nobles against Queen Brunhilda. The revolt led to her overthrow, torture, and eventual execution, and the subsequent reunification of Frankish lands under Chlothachar II.

He and his friend Romaricus, likewise an officer of the court, planned to make a pilgrimage to the Abbey of Lérins.<sup>[4]</sup> Chlothachar, who appreciated Arnulf's administrative skills, offered him the vacant see of Metz, the capital of the Autrasian kingdom. Arnulf continued to serve the king's steward and courtier.<sup>[3]</sup>

Chlothachar later made his son Dagobert I king of Austrasia, which he ruled with the help of his adviser Arnulf. Pippin of Landen, became the Mayor of the Palace. In 624 Pippin and Arnulf encouraged Dagobert in the murder of Chrodoald, an important leader of the Frankish Agilolfings family.

During his career he was attracted to religious life, and he retired to become a monk. He retired around 628 to a hermitage at a mountain site in his domains in the Vosges. His friend Romaric, whose parents were killed by Brunhilda, had preceded him to the mountains around 613, and together with Amatus had already established Remiremont Abbey there. After the death of Chlothachar in 629, Arnulf settled near Habendum, where he died some time between 643 and 647. He was buried at Remiremont.<sup>[3]</sup>

Arnulf was canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. In iconography he is portrayed with a rake in his hand.

## Legends

There are three legends associated with Arnulf:

### The Legend of the Ring

Arnulf was tormented by the violence that surrounded him and feared that he had played a role in the wars and murders that plagued the ruling families. Obsessed by these sins, Arnulf went to a bridge over the Moselle river. There he took off his bishop's ring and threw it into the river, praying to God to give him a sign of absolution by returning the ring to him. Many penitent years later, a fisherman brought to the bishop's kitchen a fish in the stomach of which was found the bishop's ring. Arnulf repaid the sign of God by immediately retiring as bishop and becoming a hermit for the remainder of his life.

## The Legend of the Fire

At the moment Arnulf resigned as bishop, a fire broke out in the cellars of the royal palace and threatened to spread throughout the city of Metz. Arnulf, full of courage and feeling unity with the townspeople, stood before the fire and said, "If God wants me to be consumed, I am in His hands." He then made the sign of the cross at which point the fire immediately receded.

## The Legend of the Beer Mug

It was July 642 and very hot when the parishioners of Metz went to Remiremont to recover the remains of their former bishop. They had little to drink and the terrain was inhospitable. At the point when the exhausted procession was about to leave Champigneulle, one of the parishioners, Duc Notto, prayed "By his powerful intercession the Blessed Arnold will bring us what we lack." Immediately the small remnant of beer at the bottom of a pot multiplied in such amounts that the pilgrims' thirst was quenched and they had enough to enjoy the next evening when they arrived in Metz.

## See also

- The Pippinids, who traced their descent from St. Arnulf.
- Descent from antiquity
- Tonantius Ferreolus (prefect)

## Notes

1. *Vita Arnulfi* c. 1, MG. SS. rer. Merov. 2, p. 432.
2. Monks of Ramsgate. "Arnoul – Bishop". *Book of Saints*, 1921 (<http://catholicsaints.info/book-of-saints-arnoul-bishop/>)
3. Riche, Pierre. *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=Tcyj7bCmFL0C&pg=PA16&dq=arnulf+of+metz&hl=en&sa=X&ei=C2nzVLWRLMKMyASFj4BA&ved=0CDEQ6AEwBDgU#v=onepage&q=arnulf%20of%20metz&f=false>) ISBN 9780812213423
4. Schaefer, Francis. "St. Arnulf of Metz." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 18 Jul. 2014 (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01752b.htm>)
5. Jean-Christophe Imbert, Geniphone.com: *Lectio Divina*; 18 July

## References

- Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, edited, revised and supplemented by Thurston and Attwater. Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland.
- Christian Settiani – *La Préhistoire des Capétiens*, Première Partie.
- *Saint ARNOUL – ancêtre de Charlemagne et des Européens*, edited by Imp. Louis Hellenbrand. Le Comité d'Historicité Européene de la Lorraine, Metz, France, 1989.

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