Chapter 2

THE MEANING OF THE TERMS "BROTHER" AND "BROTHERHOOD" IN EARLY MEDIEVAL SOURCES

Biological Brotherhood

Legal systems in early medieval Europe generally agreed about the criteria according to which two individuals were regarded as siblings. In both the Roman vulgar law, which survived as the personal law of the indigenous population in vast areas of Europe, from Italy to Spain, and in customary laws of peoples that created the barbarian kingdoms in territories which once had belonged to the Roman Empire (*leges barbarorum*), the deciding factor was the existence of a biological bond between individuals, i.e. having at least one parent in common. The patrilineal organization of the early medieval family, in which the father wielded power over the children he acknowledged, children who inherited the property determining their position as well as the dominant patrilocality meant that of greater importance in terms of legal and social consequences was the relation between brothers who had the same father.

The terminology, too, seems to be clear: in Latin sources a brother is referred to as *frater*, with the word sometimes being accompanied by an additional term indicating the closeness of the brothers (full brothers, stepbrothers). The situation becomes more complicated when we try to define this relation in more precise terms. Legal sources contain no reflection on who should be called brother and what, in the ethical and moral dimensions, the bond between brothers was. A definition is possible only by indicating the rights and obligations which brothers had.

An additional difficulty is caused by the fact that normative texts, like early medieval codes of customary laws, were written down in Latin, so the terminology used in them was perforce derived from Roman law. Redactors of these texts were forced to translate concepts from the language of a given ethnic group into categories of a language which had at its disposal an incomparably larger corpus of legal terms—even if this was no longer the sophisticated language of the jurists of the classical period. A question arises at this point as to how the form of the laws recorded on parchment between the fifth/sixth and ninth centuries was influenced by contacts between societies adopting them and Roman culture, including Roman legal culture. In other words, to what extent legal institutions of these societies had become Romanized before the laws were written down, and to what extent traces of Roman legal terminology are a consequence of the fact that the scribe was forced to translate various phenomena from the sphere of oral transmission into the language of writing? It is impossible to provide an unequivocal answer to these questions; it is, however, relevant to point to the differences and similarities between norms belonging to the various legal orders.

In the Roman tradition the bond between brothers was considered to be the closest, unbreakable bond existing irrespective of other factors. Texts by ancient authors written over centuries contain the figure of the brother as the "other self," an

approach substantiated by the established traditional (erroneous) etymology of the word *frater* (*fere alter*).[1] In his treatise *On Brotherly Love* (*De fraterno amore*), Plutarch of Chaeronea compared brothers to symmetrical members of one body.[2] This unity of the body translated into a similarity of the spirit, in the sense of shared goals and the duty of mutual support. *Pietas fraterna* became an ideal to which other forms of affection between people of the same sex (friendship, homosexual love) were compared. As a consequence of the belief in the role of common origin, a distinction was made between full and adopted brothers. Although an adopted son was equal in legal terms to biological sons (both had an equal share in the inheritance), in the ethical dimension his relationship with his brothers could never have had the same weight as the bond between brothers from the same father (*fratres consanguinei*).[3]

Such an approach to brotherhood found its confirmation in the Roman legal system. In the classic Roman order of intestate inheritance, based on agnation, both biological and adopted brothers were treated as lawful heirs, regardless of the status of the mother. This also applied to stepbrothers having the same father. Stepbrothers with the same mother but different fathers (*fratres uterini*) were excluded from the order of inheritance. This also affected the nature of the social bond between brothers. It was only Justinian who in his *Novellae* introduced a different division of siblings that was to be decisive in inheritance, namely a division into full brothers (*fratres germani*) and stepbrothers (with *fratres consanguinei* and *fratres uterini* being granted equal rights). In addition, sisters of the deceased were also given equal inheritance rights. At the beginning of the Middle Ages in Western Europe, the impact of Justinian's codification, in which the natural cognate principle was introduced, was—for obvious reasons—marginal.[4] Consequently, what proved more durable was the influence of the classic family model, based on the dominant position of the father (*pater familias*), and thus also agnation. This had far-reaching consequences consisting, first of all, of full brothers excluding stepbrothers from inheritance, and also of siblings with the same mother but different fathers not recognizing their mutual inheritance rights.

The early medieval Roman vulgarized law contained the general principle of equality of all brothers with the same father and the same legal status (free men).[5] This state of affairs was reflected in the terminology used with regard to kinship: in the male line a distinction was made between brothers and brothers patruel (*fratres* and *fratres patrueles*), who were descended from a father's brother;[6] full brothers and stepbrothers

1 Bannon, *The Brothers of Romulus*, 64.

2 Plutarch, *On Brotherly Love*, chap. 2, pp. 249–53.

3 Bannon, *The Brothers of Romulus*, passim.

4 On the separate development trajectory of the post-classical Roman law in the West, see the fundamental study by Levy, *West Roman Vulgar Law*.

5 *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, in *Leges Visigothorum*; int. 2, p. 136; title 8, 3, p. 332; *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, in *Leges Burgundionum*, title 10, 8, pp. 134–35.

6 *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, in *Leges Burgundionum*, title 10, 8, pp. 134–35.

of the same father (*fratres germani* and *fratres consanguinei*) were also distinguished,[7] but there was no separate term to denote brothers who had the same mother but different fathers. These principles shaped the relations between children in families of the descendants of Romans and Gallo-Romans, for whom Roman law continued to be the personal law. Obviously, equality before the law in access to patrimony did not exclude some natural hierarchization among agnate siblings, stemming, for example, from age differences (especially when an elder brother took care of his younger brother). What was also acknowledged were social and moral obligations stemming from kinship in the female line, i.e. in the case of siblings the bond existed between the offspring of one mother but different fathers. It was also accepted to bequeath property to this group of stepbrothers by means of a will.

In the *leges barbarorum* the term *frater* refers to both full brothers and stepbrothers, without any distinction made between them. Despite the distance in time separating the various codes of barbarian laws (sixth to ninth centuries) as well as geographical distance, they do not differ much in this respect. They do not feature a term that would encompass brothers as a group and define relations between them—in other words, these was no abstract notion of siblinghood or brotherhood. The only example of the use of the term *fraternitas* to refer to moral obligations between brothers can be found in a provision of the *Leges Alamannorum*, which is an adaptation of the fratricide norm of canon law.[8]

It should be noted that the *leges* lack separate terms to make a distinction between full brothers and stepbrothers as well as between stepbrothers with the same mother or the same father. We can only assume, from indirect evidence, that the term *frater* generally referred to the full brothers or brothers with the same father. In the vast majority of cases the laws featuring the term "brother" concerned the rules of inheritance from the father's or brothers' obligations within the family group, in which the male line was given a privileged status.[9] In documentary sources, too, we are dealing primarily with brothers having the same father, which is not particularly surprising given the fact that most of these charters deal with inheritance and other property matters. However, those documentary sources that make it possible to determine unequivocally that the siblings mentioned in them had the same mother indicate that in this case the term used was *frater* or *soror*, but

7 *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, in *Leges Burgundionum,* title 10, 8, pp. 134–35.

8 *Leges Alamannorum*, chap. 40, pp. 99–100.

9 *Lex Salica*, chap. 93, pp. 163–64; *Lex Ribuaria*, title 57, p. 105. In the Lombards' laws concerning the care of women belonging to the family we are dealing with characteristic usage: the woman's father and brother are listed as her closest relatives, with full custodial rights; in this case there is no doubt that the brother was of the same father, *Edictum Rothari*, in *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, e.g. chap. 181, p. 50; chap. 184, p. 52; chap. 191, p. 54; chap. 192, pp. 54–56; chap. 196, p. 56; chap. 186, p. 52 contains an additional confirmation: those listed as the woman's potential legal guardians are, in the following order: her father, brother and paternal uncle, cf. *Liutprandi leges*, in *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, chap. 12, p. 134; chap. 119, p. 188. The privileged position of the male line does not mean, however, that the family organization was strictly patrilineal; for criticism of theories assuming the existence of a unilineal system of kinship in Germanic society see Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure.*

there was no separate term distinguishing this type of kinship. Yet cases in which we can identify stepbrothers or stepsisters with the same mother are not numerous.[10]

Leges and royal edicts promulgated after Christianity had become firmly rooted in early medieval societies made a distinction primarily between brothers from a formal marital relationship (from one or successive, initially probably also concurrent, marriages) and natural progeny acknowledged by the father. In customary law natural progeny was treated as a separate group within the family, with narrower but strictly defined inheritance and custodial rights (unlike in Roman law, which excluded such children from the group of legal heirs). For example, in the 643 Lombard code of laws of King Rothari both *filii legitimi* and *filii naturales* were mentioned as two categories—separate but with specific rights (share in the inheritance, mutual obligations concerning care, bloody revenge and assistance).[11] Significantly, however, the term ***fratres*** *naturales* or an analogous phrase is nowhere to be found, which is important information about how the family structure was thought about: what was significant for those writing down the customary norm was the bond between the father and the children with varying status, as the existence of the bond was crucial when determining the rights of the various categories of progeny and establishing the hierarchy and power relations between them. The horizontal relation between stepbrothers or stepsisters was of secondary importance, for its was a consequence of their relationship with their father.

It is difficult to say to what extent the *leges* and later royal legislation dealing with natural progeny relied on the influence of Roman vulgar law.[12] The terminology used in the sources seems to confirm this influence (for example, the already-mentioned distinction between *filii naturales* and *filii legitimi* in the Lombards' law came from the language of Roman law, in which *filii naturales* were children from a lasting and recognized concubinage or from the relationship between a master and his slave[13]). We should bear in mind, however, that we are dealing here with the problem of translation into legal Latin—a register of Latin more or less successfully used by the authors of the codes—of a legal practice and custom hitherto transmitted orally. It would, therefore, be unwise to treat the terminology both as evidence of the decisive influence of the Roman legal tradition or as just a neutral medium used to express in writing a German legacy untouched by external influences.

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10 Such identification is possible, especially when the position of the mother was strong and she had a significant impact on the status of the children, for example, as in the case of Bertha of Tuscany (d. 925), illegitimate daughter of Lothar II and Waldrada, and mother of at least six children from two marriages to Theobald of Arles and Adalbert of Tuscany, Gandino, "Aspirare al regno: Berta di Toscana."

11 *Edictum Rothari*, in *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, chap. 154–62, pp. 42–44.

12 Faulkner, *Law and Authority*, 222ff.

13 Van de Wiel, "Les différentes formes de cohabitation," 335–36, 344ff.; on the meaning of the term *naturalis* in Roman law see Niziołek, "Meaning of the Phrase liberi naturales." A definition drawing on Roman law is also given by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies* (*Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum*, lib. 9, chap. 5, 19): "Naturales autem dicuntur ingenuarum concubinarum filii, quos sola natura genuit, non honestas coniugii."

The question of origins is in any case not a crucial question given the interpenetration of the Roman tradition and Germanic legal customs in the letter and practice of the law in the early Middle Ages. Any attempt to separate them and interpret them separately will not contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of socio-cultural phenomena of the period and may even lead to artificial divisions in places where they did not exist. The practice recorded in narrative sources—although referring to the social elite—points to a decisive influence of the act of acknowledging fatherhood and not of the status of the relationship in which the child was born. This is confirmed by the Merovingian tradition, described by Gregory of Tours and Fredegar, as well as by the history of the Carolingians and the brilliant career of Charles Martel as the most characteristic example of the phenomenon.[14] Thus, given that polygyny was accepted in fact, especially in ruling families,[15] the relations between brothers with the same father were for a long time not defined according to the simple rule of dividing them into legitimate and illegitimate.

With the spread of the Christian model of a strictly monogamous marriage, progeny born out of wedlock or in parallel relationships became gradually delegitimized. As having been conceived in sin, illegitimate brothers lost their inheritance rights that had been guaranteed by customary law, and their situation depended solely on the will of their father (and after his death on the will of their brothers). The process was accompanied by a change in value judgements applied to children depending on the legal status of the relationship in which they were born. This was manifested in the language of the sources, for example, when the neutral term *filii naturales/fratres naturales* was replaced with the term *filii illegitimi/fratres illegitimi* or even *illiciti* (*inleciti*).[16] Illegitimate birth began to be stigmatized and individuals with such a status lost their customary rights.[17] We will return to this problem later.

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14 Wood, "Deconstructing the Merovingian Family"; McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, 66–93.

15 Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*; Esmyol, *Geliebte oder Ehefrau?* and, with an attempt to clarify the phenomenon in Merovingian kingdoms, Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines*, esp. 102–8.

16 *Leges Liutprandi*, no. 105, p. 180: the term *inlecitus* is applied to a child born *ante tempo*, which in this case may have meant born in a relationship that did not have all the formal features of a marriage (concubinage?); such an interpretation is suggested by the arguments of the legislator forbidding the recognition of such children as heirs, as everyone who wanted to marry should take a lawful wife ("omnes homo, qui vult, accipiat oxorem legetimam, nam non inlecitas contraat nuptias"). It should be noted, however, that the choice of a term to apply to an illegitimate child depended on the intention of the writer: for example, in the mid-ninth century the biographer of Louis the Pious used the term *frater naturalis* (Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, 302) to refer to his stepbrother Pippin the Hunchback, while Louis the Pious's other stepbrother born out of wedlock, Drogo, Archbishop of Metz appears in the source without any term specifying his origin and are described as *frater suus)*, like Louis's full brothers; conf. the terms used to denote Drogo and Hugh (Abbot of St. Quentin and St. Bertin, full brother of Drogo) in the Louis the Pious's diplomas, MGH DD Karolinorum 2/2, no. 356, pp. 886–87; no. 360, p. 898; no. 379, p. 947; no. 394, p. 976; no. 396, p. 981; no. 405, pp. 997–98.

17 For more on the transformations in the legal status of children born in extramarital relationships in the Middle Ages, with a discussion of the debate surrounding the question in German historiography, see Willoweit, "Von der natürlichen Kindschaft zur Illegitimität"; McDougall, *Royal Bastards.*

Yet it should be noted at this point that the process of evolution and absorption by early medieval societies of the precepts of ecclesiastical law dealing with marriage was a long one, that it came up against resistance, and that its speed varied in the various regions of the Carolingian Empire, depending on the advancement of Christianization of the local communities, the determination of ecclesiastical and secular authorities, the strength of local customs, and many other factors. As a result, children born at the same time in relationships with a seemingly similar legal status could be regarded as fully legitimate offspring in one place and illegitimate in another; children regarded as illegitimate (natural) could be regarded in one community (or even just one social group) as being without any rights, while in another they could enjoy some customary rights, for example relating to inheritance. The royal and ecclesiastical legislations, seemingly harmonizing the legal situation, were only one part of the legal legacy regulating the practices of social life in the vast Carolingian realms.

As we read legal and documentary sources, we have to deal with the problem of the laconic nature of these sources: it is not always possible to determine whether the word *frater*, used with regard to an individual, refers to a brother or a cousin. In the case of a cousin the difference was marked by adding the term *consobrinus* or *patruelis*. This was, for example, the term applied to Louis II (d. 875), son of Lothar I, by Carloman (d. 880), son of Louis the German, in charters for Italian receivers.[18] It is likely, however, that such a distinction was not always made, a circumstance which inevitably resulted in people who were more distantly related being counted among brothers. On the other hand, such a tendency to use the same term to denote close male relatives (at least up to the second degree) is also significant. It suggests that the term "brother" was used to refer to a category of closely related individuals (especially in the male line) and not just to one specific bond stemming from the fact of having the same father. This practice is well documented anthropologically for various cultures and is confirmed by the results of research conducted by linguists.[19] It is impossible, however, to verify the hypothesis on the basis of the early medieval material.

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Authors of early medieval encyclopaedias divided biological siblings according to natural criteria based on birth—the relationship between the parents. Among others, Isidore of Seville and after him Hrabanus Maurus, in *De universo*, distinguished brothers born of one father and described as *fratres*, because they came from the same fruit (*ex eodem fructu*), i.e. the same semen (*ex eodem semine*). Brothers with the same mother and the same father were referred to as *germani*. Isidore derived the term from the word *genitrix*, opposing the view (correct from the point of view of linguistics) of those who saw its etymology in the work *germen* (family, tribe, germ). The third category comprised brothers with the same mother but different fathers, called

18 MGH DD regum Germinae ex stirpe Karolinorum 1, no. 5, pp. 291–92; no. 6, pp. 292–93.

19 On the origin and evolution of the term *frater* from a linguistic perspective see Daniels, "Hansel und Gretel."

uterini, coming from one womb (*uterus*).[20] It is worth noting at this point that early medieval texts lack a precise term to denote twins; the most common phrase used in such cases is *uno partu genitus/geniti*. In any case, references to twins are extremely rare in that period.[21] As we can see, medieval etymologies emphasize the carnal aspect as constituting and defining the bond existing between biological siblings. The bond emerges from the sexual act and is based on the earthly kinship of blood, irrespective of the inclination of the spirit.

Yet the most important distinction in the theological thought of the early Middle Ages was made between biological brotherhood, described as carnal (*fraternitas carnalis*) and spiritual brotherhood (*fraternitas spiritualis*).[22] Owing to its connection to the sinful body, the former was presented as a form of relation incomparably inferior to the bonds of spiritual brotherhood. Biological brotherhood made people similar to each other, but it did not give rise to an important spiritual bond between them. As the body was weak, the relations between brothers could not achieve perfection unless they became bonds of Christian love. Under this doctrine, it was only brotherhood in Christ, going beyond and above all earthly bonds and limitations, that made it possible to achieve true spiritual unity.

The term *frater carnalis* also appeared in early medieval documentary sources, for example those dealing with property matters. Occasionally, more complex phrases would emerge: for example, in a charter from the St. Gallen archives the donors were described as

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20 *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum*, lib. 9, chap. 6; Rabanus Maurus, *De universo libri viginti duo*, chap. 4, col. 190: "Fratres dicti eo quod sint ex eodem fructu, id est, ex eodem nati semine. Germani vero de eadem genitrice manantes, non (ut multi dicunt) de eodem germine, qui tantum fratres vocantur. Ergo fratres ex eodem fructu, germani ex eadem genitrice manantes. Uterini vocati, quod sint ex diversis patribus et utero uno editi: nam uterus tantum mulieris est." The term *fratres uterini* appears in the sources from the period rarely; an example of its use, from the turn of the ninth century, can be found in *Liudgeri Vita Gregorii*, 74; there is a questionable reading in *Agnelli qui et Andreas Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 366 (one of the manuscripts contains the phrase *uterini germani*, which could suggest that the original meaning of the two terms was being blurred).

21 It is known that Louis the Pious had a twin brother, Lothar, who died in infancy. In *Deeds of the Bishops of Metz* Paul the Deacon referred to the twin brother, using the term *uno partu est genitus* (*Pauli Warnefridi Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, 265), which we also encounter in the *History of the Lombards* (*Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 54); when writing about the birth of Louis and Lothar, the Astronomer used the phrase "Hildegarda binam edidisset prolem" (Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, 288). Like Paul the Deacon, Agnellus in his *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* described a multiple birth as "in uno partu, ex uno ventre parvulos sua peperit mater" (*Agnelli qui et Andreas Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 378). The interesting problem of the perception of twins in the Middle Ages requires a separate study, which, however, goes beyond the chronological scope of the present book.

22 On the juxtaposition of the terms *caro* and *spiritus* in the source terminology relating to kinship, see Guerrau-Jalabert, "La désignation des relations," 73ff.; Guerreau-Jalabert, "Flesh and Blood," 68ff.

secundum carnem germani.[23] It is interesting primarily because it confirms the use of the language we know from scholarly compendia or theological works in what could be called everyday situations. At the same time it should be noted that such complex descriptions of brothers were rare. In a vast majority of cases the scribes of charters use a general term of *frater* or a more precise term referring to full brothers—*frater germanus* or just *germanus.* In this respect the present observations do not diverge from the conclusions formulated by Anita Guerreau-Jalabert. In her wide-ranging research into the terminology relating to kinship and the significance of the references to the kinship of flesh and blood in descriptions of family ties, the French scholar notes that references to the biological (literally carnal) fraternal bond were an exception rather than a rule.[24]

The contexts in which terms like *frater carnalis* appear in diplomatic sources also indicate that the terms were not associated with any value judgements; they were used as technical terms stressing the existence of biological bonds between brothers. Nevertheless, the very appearance in charters of a terminology based on a dualistic perception of the fraternal bond (body-spirit) points to one of the ways in which such a concept may have entered the collective imagination of society, also beyond the intellectual elites.

The Christian Metaphor of Brotherhood

Early medieval writers use the term "brother" in two main meanings: to describe either a bond of kinship between the closest relatives in the collateral line or metaphorically to describe persons linked by a spiritual bond. This ideological dichotomy, built on the basis of the Gospels and the teachings of St. Paul, is of crucial significance in the description and interpretation of fraternal relations in the life of society. The metaphorical use in Christian writings of the term "brother" with reference to a non-relative is by no means a culturally unique phenomenon.[25] It is based on a shared conviction concerning the positive values of the relations between brothers. A blood bond implies (or, at least, it should imply) a sense of community, a willingness to cooperate, and a strong, positive emotional bond. The Greek *philadelphia*, the Roman *pietas* praised by Plutarch, and the *fraterna caritas* are defined equally as virtues characteristic of virtuous men. Conflict, rivalry, and hatred between brothers stand in opposition to these fundamental values and provoke strongly negative reactions of the authors of the sources. However, in the ancient tradition the dark side of fraternal relations invariably accompanies its bright aspect—just as it was put under a cloud by Romulus's crime.[26]

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23 UstG1, no. 146, p. 138.

24 Guerreau-Jalabert, "Flesh and Blood," 67.

25 It should be noted that the use of relations between siblings as a model for other social relations occurs in various cultures studied by anthropologists, see Alber, Coe, and Thelen, eds., *The Anthropology of Sibling Relations*, 14–17.

26 For more one the Roman concept of brotherhood and its ideological foundations, see Bannon's study, *The Brothers of Romulus*; Armstrong, " 'Bonds of Brothers.' "

From the very beginning of Christianity the idea of brotherhood as a fundamental natural form of bonds between people—in addition to parenthood—became an element of the description of the community of the faithful. Both St. Peter and St. Paul liked to use the brotherhood metaphor to refer to relations between Christians. In Christian tradition the use of the metaphor is justified by the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew (12:46–50), where he points to his disciples as his real brothers, preferring spiritual kinship in God to blood ties. This mystical bond of kinship, arising at the moment of baptism, unites Christians not only with one another, but also with Christ as the only begotten and firstborn Son of God. In this sense, spiritual *fraternitas* becomes a gift from God and, consequently, its violation denotes a loss of grace and constitutes a threat to the mystical union of the Church as a community of brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. In the sixth and seventh centuries, and then also in the Carolingian period, theologians spent much time considering the nature of this spiritual kinship with Christ, also in the context of the polemic over the nature of Christ. A discussion of the various threads in the theological debate over the nature of the relationship between Christians and Jesus Christ, which took place in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, goes beyond the scope of the present study.[27] At this point I will limit myself to a brief presentation of the results of research into the concept of Christian *fraternitas*.[28]

St. Paul did not create a coherent theological interpretation of Christian brotherhood, despite the fact that the metaphor often appeared in his texts. This brotherhood is understood in terms of the Greek *philadelphia*, i.e. a relationship based on equality, love, trust, and assistance (1 Thess. 4:9–12; Rom. 12:9–13). Paul's texts became a point of reference for further interpretations of the notion of Christian brotherhood, but it should be noted that Paul himself did not provide an unequivocal explanation of the concept. In Paul's language, metaphorical references to concepts relating to family organization and family life were used to describe an ideal model of Christian community, primarily in its eschatological dimension. However, as Reidar Aasgaard argues in his study, attributing to Paul the authorship of the concept of the Christian community as family of God (*familia Dei*) or brotherhood with Christ himself established through baptism, is an interpretation that goes too far.[29] These ideas would only be develop later by St. Paul's successors and commentators on his writings, who interpreted the words of St. Peter in a similar vein as well (1 Pet. 2:17; 5:9).

The doctrine of Christian brotherhood as we know it from the writings of early medieval theologians evolved gradually for centuries under the influence of the teachings of the Church Fathers. In the first centuries of Christianity the notion of spiritual brotherhood

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27 A detailed analysis of the matter with reference to the first few centuries of Christianity can be found in Michel Dujarier's writings: *L'Église-Fraternité*, pt. 1, and more recently *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2 vols.

28 For more details see e.g. Paszkowska, *Fraternitas*.

29 Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!"* 137ff. On the role of the brotherhood metaphor in Paul, see also, a slightly different interpretation than Aasgaard's: Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*.

(*fraternitas*) encompassed all those who were baptized, regardless of their gender and status; the entire community of the Church of Christ was described as a fraternal community. For St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) spiritual brotherhood was the essence of the Church, which was a community of the Spirit.[30] Tertullian (d. 240) expanded the concept of baptism as the moment when the spiritual bond of brotherhood between Jesus and a human being was formed, and through Christ also between all the faithful.[31] In the third and fourth centuries, Tertullian's and Cyprian of Carthage's way of understanding the essence of the spiritual brotherhood in the community of the Church spread throughout Christendom. The idea was developed by St. Augustine, for whom one who through the Holy Spirit received the grace of baptism, and through baptism became a child of God, also became part of the holy fraternal community (*societas sanctae fraternitatis*).[32] This adoption (*adoptio*), taking place upon baptism, also meant establishing a mystical fraternal bond with Jesus Christ, and through Christ being allowed to co-inherit the Kingdom of God. This special bond, based on charity (*caritas*), was the essence of the Church.[33]

St. Augustine's interpretation was of key importance to thinkers in the following centuries. Several centuries later, the Venerable Bede (d. 735) expressed the notion of the brotherhood of all Christians as the foundation of the Church in the allegorical interpretation of the Temple of Solomon.[34] Bede compared the floor, the base of the temple, to the humble of heart united through the brotherhood in Christ with God the Father.[35]

While St. Paul and thinkers of the early centuries of Christianity referred to the bond between biological brothers and sisters as a model for describing the ideal of the relationship between Christians in a way that was clear to the faithful, in later centuries the spiritual brotherhood of Christians became increasingly juxtaposed with biological brotherhood as a form of relationship that was far more perfect. The evolution of Christian ideas of the relation between kinship of the body and kinship of the spirit was associated first of all with ascetic tendencies which started to grow among Christians more or less from the third century after Christ. The Fathers of the Christian Church spoke, often radically, against the earthly family ties that encumbered the faithful in their search for a path to God. Theological discussion about the values of earthly bonds between

30 On the concept of *fraternitas* according to St. Cyprian, see Pietrusiak, "Kościół jako fraternitas."

31 Tertullianus, "De baptismo," chap. 20; Tertullianus, "Apologeticum," chap. 39.

32 Augustinus Hipponensis, *De sermone Domini in monte*, lib. 1, 73, 74; Dujarier, *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2:611–13.

33 Dujarier, *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2:606–58.

34 Beda Venerabilis, "De templo libri II," lib. 1, chap. 1, 173–74: "Namque tornaturae quae iuncturis tabularum apponebantur ut unum ex omnibus fieret tabulatum ipsa sunt officia caritatis quibus ad inuicem fraternitas sancta copulatur atque in unam Christi domum toto terrarum orbe componitur."

35 Beda Venerabilis, "De templo libri II," lib. 1, chap. 1, 185: "Diximus autem supra quod pauimenti aequalitas humilem concordiam designaret sanctae fraternitatis ubi cum sint Iudaei et gentes barbari et Scythae liberi et serui nobiles et ignobiles cuncti se in Christo esse fratres uniuersi eundem se habere patrem qui est in caelis gloriantur, neque enim de concordissima humilitate supernorum ciuium dubitare cuiquam fas est."

relatives stemmed from different interpretations of the words of Jesus, who demanded a renunciation of the family as a condition for true participation in the community of the faithful. The controversy surrounded primarily three fragments from the Gospels: Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37 and Matthew 12:46–49. Luke's text in particular worried the exegetes, because it seemed to contradict the fundamental precepts of God's law: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[36] The conflict between loyalty to one's biological family and the duty to commit entirely and unconditionally to God moved the minds of the greatest thinkers of early Christianity, from Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367) and John Chrysostom (d. 407) to Augustine. Historians have paid much attention to an analysis of the polemics surrounding the interpretations of fragments of Scripture dealing with the family and to the resulting attempts to reconcile the Christian ideal and social reality.[37]

Despite the controversy surrounding the interpretation of the various Gospel fragments, Scripture became the basis for juxtaposing family ties and the spiritual bond with God, superior to family ties in every respect. Even if language and language-related systems of ideas about the biological family as a structure that introduced order into the life of society were used to describe the relations between Christians, members of this Christian family by definition were asked to renounce earthly and bodily ties between themselves. The paradox of the perception of the fraternal relation, a paradox that accompanied Christian communities over the centuries, was to a large extent the result of this juxtaposition, dating back to the beginnings of Christianity. On the one hand, the concept of brotherhood became from the very beginning a fundamental point of reference in the definition of the relationship between members of the community; and on the other this concept of brotherhood was separated in a non-negotiable way from the blood ties that were constitutive of it. In other words, while the fraternal bond (and, more broadly, family bond), viewed in terms of the Roman *pietas*, was seen in a positive light, its biological, carnal aspect was criticized and, in extreme cases, rejected.

An important role in the construction of ideas concerning the dualistic nature of the fraternal relationship was played by a hierarchical distinction, specified by St. Jerome, between the forms of carnal and spiritual brotherhood. In his treatise *Against Helvidius, On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, St. Jerome distinguishes four biblical types of brotherhood: derived from nature, that is having the same parent (like Jacob and Esau, Andrew and Peter, James and John or the Twelve Patriarchs); from being from one people (like the Jews calling themselves brothers); being from one family (*de paternitate*, *de cognatione*, *de familia*—in this sense Abraham and Lot

36 All Biblical quotations in English after the New King James Version, www.biblegateway.com, unless noted otherwise.

37 How much historians differ in the interpretations of these topics is evidenced by, for example, a comparison of the views of the following scholars: Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, esp. chap. 7; Jacobs, " 'Let Him Guard Pietas' "; Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*; for more on the subject, see also Moxnes, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families*.

are called brothers); and finally the most perfect form of brotherhood, that deriving from affection (*affectus*). This, in turn, emerges as a spiritual bond or affection (*affectus spiritualis*) uniting all baptized in Christ, but also as a bond uniting all people (*affectus communis*) as descendants of Adam.[38] The opposition between biological and spiritual brotherhood became established in the early Middle Ages under the influence of Augustine and Jerome. Brotherhood of Christ or in Christ (*fraternitas Christi*) was consistently juxtaposed with brotherhood of blood (*fraternitas sanguinis*): on this opposition was based the image of the family and, more broadly, of society. The definition proposed by Jerome was taken over and developed by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies*;[39] in the ninth century it found its way into one of early medieval encyclopaedic works, in Hrabanus Maurus's *De universo*[40] and then in later compilations.

It should be noted at this point that attempts to define a system of ideas about social ties on the basis of a semantic analysis of various concepts used by early medieval authors require caution. An example of the interpretative problems to be tackled can be the term *germanitas.* As we have seen, the word *germanus*, derived from the noun *germen* used by Isidore, was unequivocally linked to physical kinship. The term *germanitas*, derived from *germen*/*germanus* was used by Jerome and then Isidore and Hrabanus to describe a relationship, the essence of which was common origin not in a narrow genealogical sense, but in the sense of common origin of all people created by God (as Hrabanus

38 Hieronymus Stridonensis, *De perpetua virginitate B. Mariae*, cols. 193–216, chap. 14–15, see Dujarier, *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2:717–20. The four-part, hierarchical order of fraternal relations formulated by Jerome was cited by canon law experts and theologians in the late-eighth-century dispute surrounding the teachings of the advocates of adoptionism, MGH LL Concilia 2/1, 1, no. 19, p. 147 (a. 794, council of Cividale del Friuli).

39 *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum*, lib. 9, chap. 6.

40 Rabanus Maurus, *De universo libri viginti duo*, chap. 4, col. 190: "Quatuor autem modis in Scripturis divinis fratres dici constat: natura, gente, cognatione, affectu. Natura, ut Esau et Jacob, Andreas et Petrus, Jacobus et Joannes. Gente, ut omnes Judaei fratres inter se vocantur. Unde dicit in Deuteronomio: Si autem emeris fratrem tuum, qui est Hebraeus. Et Apostolus: Optabam, inquit, ego anathema esse a Christo pro fratribus meis, qui sunt cognati mei secundum carnem, qui sunt Israelitae. Porro cognatione fratres vocantur, qui sunt de una familia, id est, patria, quas Latini paternitates interpretantur, cum ex una radice multa generis turba diffunditur. Et in Genesi dixit Abraham ad Lot: Non sit rixa inter me et te, et inter pastores tuos et pastores meos, quia omnes nos fratres sumus. Et certe Lot non erat frater Abrahae: sed filius fratris ejus Aaron. Quarto modo affectu fratres dici, qui in duo scinduntur, spiritale et commune: spiritale, quoniam omnes Christiani fratres vocamur: ut: Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum; in commune, cum et omnes homines ex uno patre nati pari inter nos germanitate conjungimus, Scriptura loquente: Dicite his qui oderunt vos: Fratres nostri vos estis. Germana ita intelligitur, ut germanus eadem genitrice manans. Mystice Christus frater est, de quo in Canticis canticorum dicit: Frater meus et ego illi. Item fratres, Apostoli, sive omnes sancti, ut in psalmo: Narrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis. Et in aliam partem, ut in Job: Fratres mei praeterierunt me sicut torrens. Amici, apostoli vel omnes sancti: ut in Evangelio: Jam non dico vos servos, sed amicos. Et in aliam partem: Amice, quomodo huc intrasti non habens vestem nuptialem? Sodales apostoli, ut in Canticis canticorum: Ne vagari incipiam per greges sodalium tuorum."

Maurus wrote in *De universo*: "cum et omnes homines ex uno patre nati pari inter nos **germanitate** conjungimus," i.e. "as we are all born of one father, we are united in bonds of (full)brotherhood").

However, in many early medieval sources the concept of *germanitas* is used to describe spiritual brotherhood, similarly to the term *fraternitas* (*spiritualis*). Such a synonymous use of the terms *fraternitas* and *germanitas* to define a spiritual bond among Christians can be frequently encountered in the writings of, for example, Ruricius of Limoges (c. 510),[41] Bede,[42] Winfrith-Boniface (d. 754) and Lul (d. 786),[43] and then in Alcuin's correspondence.[44] The words *germanitas* and *fraternitas* are used by these authors as synonyms in salutation formulas and analogous phrases meant directly for the addressees of their works. In addition, Alcuin, when writing to persons to whom he was linked by bonds of friendship (*amicitia*), would sometimes refer to himself as *germanus* to stress the intimate, familial nature of the relationship.[45] The equivocal use of the terms *germanus* and *germanitas* has led to scholarly disputes over the relations between the authors and addressees of correspondence. An excellent example of interpretative differences is a letter written in 837 by Lupus of Ferrières (d. ca. 862) to a person whose name we know only in its abbreviated form of *Reginb*.[46] The terms appearing in the letter and referring to brotherhood (*germanitas* and *pietas fraterna*) have prompted some scholars to regard this *Reginb.* as Lupus's brother or close relative. Their opponents point out that this phraseology does not differ from that of the letters addressed to other individuals with whom Lupus was on familiar terms, although he was not related to them.[47]

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41 For analysis of kinship terminology in Ruricius's letters see Hummer, *Visions of Kinship*, 237–53.

42 Bede, for example, uses the term *germana caritas* with reference to the relationship between monks, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, lib. 2, chap. 1, p. 124.

43 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 1, no. 31, p. 282; no. 70, p. 338; no. 75, p. 346; no. 91, p. 376; no. 92, p. 378.

44 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 2, no. 204, p. 338; no. 284, p. 442; no. 285, p. 443; no. 286, p. 445, where a monastic congregation is described as *germanitatis congregatio*; no. 237, p. 382, Alcuin's letter to Adalhard, Abbot of Corbie: "Numquid non me familia Sancti Petri, te hortante et deprecante, in gremium fraternitatis suae suscepit quasi unum ex illis? Si amico prodesse timuisti, quare non fratri et consocio germanitatis tuae?" Cf. letter by Lupus of Ferrières to *Reginb*.[?], MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 4, no. 6, p. 18, a. 837.

45 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 2, no. 9, p. 34; The unusual nature of the term has been pointed out by Donald Bullough (*Alcuin*, 366–67). Thus Isabelle Réal is wrong when she says categorically that in the early Middle Ages the term *germanus* was used solely to describe blood ties (*Représentations*, 79). For an interesting analysis of terms used by Alcuin in his correspondence, depending on the relationship between the author and the addressees, see Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 166ff.

46 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 4, no. 6, pp. 17–18.

47 Scholars arguing for the existence of kinship between them included Réal, *Représentations*, 89, who followed the French editor of Lupus's letters in this respect; arguments against the thesis: Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 425ff.

Nor is it easy to make a clear distinction between spiritual brotherhood and other forms of social relations referred to in the sources as, for example, friendship (*amicitia*).[48] In any case, a categorical distinction between them turns out to be contrary to the evidence of the sources, which display considerable terminological variability. Scholars studying the problem of social ties point to the similarity between fraternal relations and spiritual friendship, invoking the same values: selfless love, loyalty and mutual assistance.[49]

However, irrespective of which of the terms was applied, the texts share a deep conviction concerning the superiority of a spiritual bond over a bond based only on consanguinity. To describe these relations, authors use the language and terminology referring to the human family, creating a kind of kinship network parallel to the earthly—and thus by definition defective—network. Unlike the case of biological brotherhood, forming spiritual brotherhood requires special moral virtues and mutual acceptance from those who wish to be united by such a bond.

In one of his sermons Maximus of Turin, a contemporary of St. Augustine, explained this dichotomy between brothers of the flesh and brothers of the spirit in the following manner:

> We read in the book known as the *Acts of the Apostles* that under the influence of those men there was great devotion among the folk, and the germs of the Christian people flourished so when the Christian faith had been received that no one defended his home or laid claim to anything that was his own, but they shared everything by the law of brotherhood. Thus those who were joined by religion would also share life; so that where there is one faith, there should also be shared property; where Christ is common to all, property should be common as well. For those pious men considered it unworthy for someone who shared in grace not to be accepted as a sharer in property, so in the brotherhood of charity they possessed all things in common, since brotherhood in Christ is something greater than blood brotherhood. For blood brotherhood refers solely to a likeness of the body, while brotherhood in Christ manifests a oneness of the heart and the soul. For it is written: among the believers there was one heart and one soul. Verily, he is truly a brother who is related not so much by the body as by spiritual concord. He is a true brother, I say, who has the same spirit and desire as his brother; as I have remarked, brotherhood in Christ is better than brotherhood of the flesh. Blood brothers are sometimes each other's enemies, while brothers in Christ are always at peace. The ones divide things common to themselves by rivalry, the others share even what is their

48 On the concept of spiritual friendship in the early Middle Ages, see e.g. Michałowski, "Przyjaźń i dar"; studies from the volume Classen and Sandidge, eds., *Friendship in the Middle Ages*; for an overview see McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; on friendship as an important social bond, its roles in political life, taking into account primarily the situation in the following centuries, see Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta*, and Gilsdorf, *The Favor of Friends*; on the ambiguity of the concept, encompassing relations between equal partners, dependency, political relations between rulers and, finally, spiritual bonds, on the basis of an analysis of sources from the fifth to seventh centuries, see Epp, *Amicitia*; on this phenomenon in the peripheral area of Europe, but with very interesting general conclusions, see Hermanson, *Friendship, Love, and Brotherhood*.

49 Fiske, "Alcuin and Mystical Friendship," 751–75.

> own in joy; the ones often despise their brothers what they possess together, the others frequently receive strangers.[50]

Ninth-century commentators referred directly to the biblical text to justify the superiority of spiritual brotherhood over brotherhood of the flesh. This was the case, for example, of Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865), who, starting from a concept of the unity of Christians as God's children in Christ, wrote in his *Expositio in Matheo*:

> For if being born of one mortal unites us by a bond of such great love, we should be therefore the more cognisant of brotherhood in God the Father and venerate what can be known only spiritually. For how else, if not spiritually, can a rebirth be possible, when the gift of his affection can be comprehended and felt according to the internal human (*secundum interiorem hominem*)? For if with true faith and steadfast hope fatherhood, spread through the Holy Spirit, is venerated and loved, no carnal brotherhood can matter more for anyone, but nobility granted by God and the grace of affiliation are preferred to corruption.[51]

In this passage Paschasius Radbertus referred directly to St. Augustine and indirectly to St. Paul, making spiritual brotherhood a matter of the law of God, naturally liked by the spiritual human (internal human), and contrasting it with carnal brotherhood as a law of sin.

Towards the end of the ninth century Christian of Stavelot in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew stressed that a blood bond, too, could be perfected, provided

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50 Maximus Taurinensis, *Collectio sermonum antiqua*, 17: Legimus in libro qui apostolorum actibus adscribitur, tantam sub memoratis uiris deuotionem plebis fuisse, ita populi christiani floruisse primitiam, ut post acceptam fidem nemo domum propriam sibi defenderet, et nemo suum aliquid uindicaret, sed iure fraternitatis essent illis cuncta conmunia; scilicet ut qui eodem consortio religionis tenebantur, eodem consortio fruerentur et uitae; hoc est ut quibus erat una fides, esset et una substantia; et quibus erat conmunis christus, conmunis esset et sumptus. Nefas enim putabant religiosi uiri eum sibi participem non adsciscere in substantia, qui particeps esset in gratia, atque ideo fraternitate caritatis omnia conmuniter utebantur, nisi quod maior est fraternitas christi quam sanguinis. Sanguinis enim fraternitas similitudinem tantummodo corporis refert, christi autem fraternitas unanimitatem cordis animae que demonstrat, sicut scriptum est: erat autem credentium cor atque anima una. Vere ergo ille frater est, qui non tam corpore quam unanimitate germanus est; uerus, inquam, frater est, cuius idem spiritus et uoluntas in fratre est. Melior igitur est, sicut dixi, christi fraternitas quam sanguinis. Sanguinis fraternitas interdum sibi inimica est, christi autem fraternitas sine intermissione pacifica est; illa inter se communia cum aemulatione diuidit, haec etiam propria cum gratulatione conmunicat; illa in consortio despicit saepe germanum, haec adsumit frequenter alienum" (English translation after *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin*, 42), see Dujarier, *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2:682ff.

51 Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Mattheo*, lib. 4, vv. 609–14: "Si enim carnalis natiuitas ex uno mortalium nos tanti amoris ligat uinculo multiplicius cogitanda est fraternitas ex Deo Patre et ueneranda quam nemo nisi spiritalis potest dinoscere. Alioquin si non spiritaliter renascatur quomodo ualet adprehendere aut sentire affectum secundum interiorem hominem huius amoris? Namque si uera fide et spe certissima haec paternitas ueneraretur et amaretur per Spiritum Sanctum caritate diffusa numquam fraternitas carnis amplius ualeret apud aliquos sed praeferrent nobilitatem ex Deo et gratiam adoptionis corruptioni."

it was subordinated to and united with a spiritual bond.[52] This ideal—removal of the opposition between spiritual brotherhood and blood brotherhood—could be achieved only when brothers, in the love of God, managed to transgress the carnal bond that united them. In this sense holy men—described by early medieval hagiographers—who demonstrated their perfect love towards their biological brothers, did not do it in the name of kinship-based loyalty, but in the name of Christian love or charity (*caritas*).

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Alongside theological reflection on the spiritual bond uniting Christians there emerged another strand of reflection on brotherhood. From more or less the fourth century onwards, the idea of Christian *fraternitas*, encompassing all Christians, began to be accompanied by a more exclusivist concept whereby this spiritual brotherhood united primarily priests and those who renounced earthly pleasures in favour of asceticism. They were apparently to be the most complete embodiment of the idea of the mystical brotherhood of the Church, achieved through baptism in Christ. This idea, making its mark in Eastern monastic circles, in the writings of Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), spread in the West after some delay.[53] In *De coenobiorum institutis* John Cassian (d. ca. 435) describes the monastic community, using the term *corpus fraternitatis*, which brings to mind the functional unity of an organism whose members are united harmoniously by fraternal love.[54] The concept was taken over from John Cassian by the early medieval Western monastic rules, for example, in the seventh-century Italian *Regula cuiusdam patris*, which stemmed from the Irish traditions (of St. Columbanus's circle).[55]

Between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages spiritual brotherhood, as opposed to brotherhood of the flesh, became a defining factor of a group raised above mere mortals owing to their way of life. However, in ninth-century writings both interpretations of the brotherhood of Christians appear side by side: on the one hand we have a belief in fraternal bonds uniting all baptized in Christ, and on the other a belief in special spiritual brotherhood established between people dedicated to God. The understanding of the term *fraternitas* changes depending on the context and the milieu in which a given work originated. For example, when Dhuoda (d. after 843) mentioned brotherhood (*fraternitas*) in her *Liber manualis*, written for her son, she meant the

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52 Christianus Stabulensis, *Expositio super Librum generationis*, chap. 12, p. 266: "Iste qui ei hoc nuntiauit temptando faciebat, ut uideret si terrenis caelestia preponeret et desereret praedicationem propter carnalem cognacionem, sed ipse ostendit quia melior est spiritalis fraternitas quam carnalis. Si uero utraeque simul sunt, duplex bonum est, sicut erat in sancta Maria, quia mater efficitur quis cum aliquis per uerbum eius in Christo renascitur, sicut Paulus dicit: 'per euangelium ego uos genui.' "

53 Dujarier, *L'Église-Fraternité: L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère*, 2:720–28.

54 Iohannes Cassianus, *De institutis coenobiorum*.

55 Diem, "Disputing Columbanus's Heritage."

Christian bond uniting all the faithful, regardless of their status—all-encompassing love making everyone equal in their love for God.[56] On the other hand what emerges from the correspondence of eighth- and ninth-century clerical intellectuals is a belief in the superiority of the fraternal spiritual bond uniting them, a bond helping them to grow in faith. In a letter to Adalhard of Corbie (d. 826), Alcuin explicitly says that this bond is established and then develops thanks to Divine inspiration, becoming a sign of a special grace granted by God only to those who have devoted their whole life to him.[57] Spiritual brotherhood was manifested in a unique way in monastic communities—spiritual families implementing here, on earth, the ideal of the bond that should unite all Christians in this world and beyond. It is no coincidence that the term *frater spiritualis*, used with reference to fellow monks, appears in early monastic rules and then in the ninth century, through Benedict of Aniane among others, and eventually becomes the term defining mutual relations between monks. As brothers making up a family (*congregatio fratrum*) the monks could expand the bond uniting them to include other spiritual families, becoming united with them as brothers. Prayer communities, bringing together entire convents, emerged in the eighth and ninth centuries from the feeling of a spiritual bond transgressing all mundane limits and going beyond time and space.[58] Significantly, descriptions of these relations featured an ever-expanding phraseology, constantly acquiring new senses, derived from the vocabulary traditionally referring to the organization and functioning of kinship groups. When Alcuin as the abbot of Marmoutier announced to the monks of Montolieu his will to become united with them by a fraternal bond of prayer, he drew on a whole set of ideas associated with family life:

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56 Dhuoda, *Manuel*, lib. 3, chap. 10, pp. 178–80: "Nam in subportationem vel vicissitudinis mutationem, dilectionem tam in maioribus quam in minoribus per compassionis fraternitatem omnimodis per cuncta in generi humano ostendit esse tenendam. Haec etenim a pluribus retro, etiam et in sanctis apostolis illorumque similibus capaces, per omnia legimus esse completum. Scriptum est: Non enim erat quisquam egens inter illos, sed erant illis omnia comunia, habentes in Deum cor unum et anima una, compassionis fraternitatem in Christo Iesu inuicem semper tenentes."

57 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 2, no. 9, pp. 34–35, a. 790: "Nec me, etiam in peregrinatione morantem, tantum fratris vel sororis carnalis affectus taeduit, quantum tua spiritalis fraternitas moerore perfundit. Videbar enim mihi ex consolatione eloquii tui, Deo miserante, dignum incipere posse, quod tamen Dei solius perficere est; qui gratia sua tuum inspiravit intellectum ad loquendum et meam incitavit voluntatem ad audiendum. Quia sine illo nihil boni possumus nec velle nec perficere. Ideo semper ad eum toto corde implorandum est 'Misericordia tua preveniat me, misericordia tua subsequatur me'. Haec ideo, frater, tibi scripsi, ut scias, si tamen scire potes, qua te caritate diligo; nam me ipsum fateor edicere non posse—forsan etiam nec tu, qua me diligas—Deus scit, qui hanc infudit cordibus nostris."

58 Among studies focused on an analysis of the social role of these relations, see especially Zettler, "Fraternitas und Verwandtschaft," and Rappmann and Zettler, *Die Reichenauer Mönchsgemeinschaft*.

> We welcome Olomund, your father in Christ and our brother in love, with familial affection, like a full brother from one family, worshipper of one Lord, and servant of one defender. And through him we welcome all of you like our most beloved brothers, imploring you to remember me and my own in your prayers.[59]

The fraternal bond uniting the members of a monastic community went beyond the walls of one monastery, uniting in mutual spiritual love and collective prayer events very distant monastic congregations. In the ninth century this idea was manifested in formalized agreements concluded between convents, the most famous of which is probably the *fraternitas* of the monasteries of St. Gallen and Reichenau from 800. The essence and objective of the agreement was to create a community of prayer (*conventio et unanimitas precum*) encompassing all living and deceased members and providing spiritual support to the brothers nearing the end of their earthly life. The bond was based on infinite spiritual love (*caritas*). As we can read in the book of the confraternity of St. Gall under the year 846, "now and for all times the constant prayers flowing from true love will maintain a strong relationship between these holy places, not for any purpose but for love itself" ("nunc ac deinceps omni tempore series precum superius ex caritate vera compositarum ratam inter haec sanctissima loca teneat conexionem, sed neque finem habeat, nisi caritatem solam").[60] Similar relations of fraternal love were established not only between monastic communities but also between the clergy of the various churches and dioceses, for example during synods and other great events, such as the translations of relics.[61]

It was the exclusivity of monastic communities, built on a conviction that they were an embodiment of the ideal of Christian brotherhood, that was one of the reasons why they were attractive also to the laity. In the ninth century, the desire to become part of a monastic family and derive supernatural benefits from that fact was pursued in monastic confraternities. Such brotherhoods (*confraternitates*), usually affiliated with monasteries and encompassing all their living and deceased members in their prayers of intercession, brought together not only spiritual but also power elites. Membership in these fraternal communities became a privilege, which could be formally granted to all the faithful coming from outside, but the candidates had to meet very strict requirements. The communities became an important element in building social ties going far beyond

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59 MGH Epp. *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 2, no. 272, p. 430: "Patrem vero vestrum Olomundum in Christo, et fratrem nostrum in caritate, familiari pietate accepimus, quasi unius familiae germanum et unius domini cultorem et unius protectoris conservum; et in eo ipso vos omnes recipiens quasi fratres carissimos, deprecans, ut me meosque per eius manus familiariter in sanctas orationes vestras recipere dignemini."

60 *Libri confraternitatum Sancti Galli, Augensis, Fabariensis*, 142.

61 The problem is discussed extensively by Roman Michałowski, "Przyjaźń i dar," 2:30ff.; see also a classic study, Schmid and Oexle, "Voraussetzungen und Wirkung."

purely religious functions.[62] A key role in them was played by commemorative practices, which not only created networks of mutual obligations and links between their secular and clerical members, but also made it possible to preserve the confraternities' "genealogical memory," as it were. At the same time, united by their fraternal bond, various communities and every one of their members provided support to each other in seeking spiritual perfection and in their never-ending struggle against the forces of evil. In the following centuries numerous new fraternities, monastic congregations, and religious movements emerging across Europe would use a concept of brotherhood stemming straight from the theological reflection of the early Middle Ages.

Spiritual Brotherhood Established through Baptism

A separate problem is how to define the nature of the relations between people united by spiritual kinship arising at the moment of baptism. Drawing on the teachings of Tertullian and other Church Fathers on the significance of the sacrament of baptism as a new birth, over the centuries there emerged a doctrine defining the nature of the bond between godparents and their spiritual children as well as between biological and spiritual siblings, with the importance of this relationship growing gradually. Researchers studying the

62 Research into the origin of religious confraternities in the Middle Ages has had a long history: from very theorizing nineteenth-century studies of legal historians, exploring the allegedly ancient Germanic institution of sacred confraternities or role of Roman associations, to studies of the social aspects of the functioning of religious brotherhoods in various regions of Europe. A turning point in the research into the social role of monastic confraternities in the early Middle Ages came with the studies by Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (including their classic article "Societas et Fraternitas"), as well as Schmid, ed., *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, a model study devoted to the confraternity books of the abbey of Fulda and defining the methods and main directions of research into this group of sources and the subject matter in general. Scholars from Freiburg im Breisgau and Münster developed an original model of prosopographical analysis based on sequences of names included in monastic confraternity books (*Gruppensuchprogramm*), although interests of members of this school of research were much broader, from various forms of commemorative practices, through the problem of liturgical commemoration of the dead, to the questions touching upon collective consciousness and ideas of death. For a summary of this research with a bibliography: [J. Wollasch], "Mittelalterforschung in Münster," 380–429; an overview of research topics tackled from the early 1980s can be found in Schmid, and Wollasch, eds., *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert*; a good, concise presentation of the problem is Schmid, "Mönchtum und Verbrüderung," 117–46. Research carried out by the younger generation of German historians, connected to the University of Münster, has focused primarily on analyses of various forms of bonds that were the basis of social groups and referred to the metaphorical formula of brotherhood or related notions (friendship); the beginnings of this strand of research can be found in studies by Otto Gerhard Oexle devoted to the origins of various types of communities drawing on the Christian idea of selfless brotherhood of their members, see e.g. Oexle, "Gilden als soziale Gruppen." Among studies from the 1990s, this time from English language scholarship, I should mention e.g. McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, see also synthetically, but focused on the later period: Eisenbichler, ed., *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*.

topic quickly noted the social consequences of the establishment of such a bond between members of family groups.[63]

In the period between the sixth and the eighth century in the East and in the first half of the eighth century in the West, there emerged a principle in canon law whereby a person's biological children and godchildren were to be treated as siblings, with all the legal consequences of such an approach. The very fact of presenting the child for baptism established a bond between the child's biological parents and godparents, a bond which can also be described as spiritual brotherhood (although the persons may have differed considerably in their position and status). In Western Europe the legal consequences of the existence of spiritual brotherhood established through baptism were defined in greater detail for the first time at the Council of Rome of 721.[64] The clergymen gathered at the Council referred to regulations introduced in the Byzantine Empire at the Council of Constantinople in 692. In practice these included a ban on marriages between people united by such a bond and their closest relatives. The decisions of the Council of Rome quickly became part of royal legislation. As early as in 723, Liutprand, King of the Lombards, included them in his edict and twenty years later they also appeared in Frankish laws.[65] For example, Liutprand condemned the relationship between a godson or goddaughter and a godparent's child and threatened those committing this forbidden act with confiscation of property, as it was not fitting for spiritual siblings (*spirituales germani*) to marry.[66] What is striking in the regulation is the term *germanus*, used to describe the relationship between full brothers and sisters: in this case, however, it was used to stress the closeness between spiritual siblings.

In the ninth century, as a result of the church hierarchy's efforts to impose Christian marital discipline on the broadest possible circles in society, synodal legislation, royal legislation, as well as didactic texts often featured reminders of canons referring to spiritual kinship as an obstacle excluding lawful marriage. In addition, historiographical sources contain information about the use of spiritual kinship as a tool to create a network of personal ties for the purpose of pursuing familial and political strategies. Yet neither group of sources provides detailed information about how the existence of spiritual kinship between individuals influenced their mutual relations and to what extent it determined specific behaviour.

Different Uses of the Brotherhood Metaphor

Apart from the already discussed metaphorical use of the term brotherhood to describe a bond linking unrelated individuals, scholars point to the use of the metaphor to

63 Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship*; Jussen, *Spiritual Kinship as Social Practice*.

64 See canon 4 of the Council of Rome convened in 721 by Pope Gregory II, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 12, col. 263.

65 MGH LL *Capitularia regum Francorum*, 1, no. 11, p. 26.

66 *Leges Liutprandi*, chap. 34, p. 148.

describe also relations which are not directly associated with theological reflection and Christian teaching. It should be noted, however, that such observations with regard to societies of eighth- and ninth-century Western Europe are based on very scant sources. Yet the topic should be discussed, at least perfunctorily, if only because of the debate surrounding them.

In studies conducted in the past, mainly by anthropologists and scholars dealing with cultural studies, much attention was paid to the institution of blood brotherhood, i.e. relationships established between non-related individuals and confirmed by ritual gestures (including the mixing of blood), the objective of which was to create a bond, analogous to the bond of kinship, based on equality, friendship, trust, and collaboration.[67] Historians were inclined to look for relics of this institution also among medieval European societies. Their conclusions were formulated primarily on the basis of examples from Scandinavian sagas, with blood brotherhood being sometimes viewed as one of the institutions characteristic of Germanic societies organized around masculine and military values.[68] Some scholars also interpreted the institution of blood brotherhood as a socially accepted form of same-sex relationships.[69]

In addition to a relation analogous to a fraternal bond, built around and with reference to the warrior ethos, scholars studying medieval societies also point to other forms of voluntary and mutual relationships between men present in Western European culture from Antiquity to the late Middle Ages.[70] In the 1990s a lively discussion ensued about the ceremony—known primarily from medieval Byzantine liturgical sources—of establishing artificial brotherhood by non-related men (*adelphopoiesis*). Taking place in church, in the presence of a priest blessing the newly made brothers, it survived in the practice of the Eastern Church for centuries (from the seventh to the fifteenth century), undergoing many transformations along the way. John Boswell saw this ritual as a form of legitimizing same-sex relationships, as a result of which a relationship analogous to heterosexual marriage was established. Boswell pointed to *adelphopoiesis* as evidence of the acceptance of homosexual relationships in medieval societies; moreover, he even argued that a similar phenomenon could also be found in the world of Western Christianity.[71] In a detailed study, Claudia Rapp analyzed the origins of the brother-making ritual and the social and religious context of its use in the Byzantine world.[72] She proved that *adelphopoiesis* had played vital role as an alternative to the kinship form of horizontal relations between individuals, particularly in the monastic milieu. It was an

67 Evans-Pritchard, "Zande Blood-Brotherhood"; Tegnaeus, *Blood-Brothers*.

68 Hellmuth, *Die germanische Blutsbrüderschaft*; Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 173–74, where the author points to the blood brothers' mutual obligation of revenge.

69 An example of how such an interpretation can be overdone is Neill, *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations*, 122ff.

70 See the proceedings of "Ritual Brotherhood in Ancient and Medieval Europe."

71 Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, 193ff.

72 Rapp, *Brother-Making*, see also Rapp, "Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium."

association of spiritual mutual support which could not be reduced to a formalization of male–male sexual unions.

The discussion provoked by Boswell's controversial theses has led to a mostly critical revision of his findings, but also to a considerable expansion of our knowledge of artificial brotherhood in medieval societies. Elisabeth A. R. Brown studied sources from Western Europe in this respect, pointing to the fact that a metaphorical use of the notion of brotherhood to describe relations between men was common in the high and late Middle Ages, and should be analyzed in various contexts (economic, political, social). As a rule, pacts that established fraternal bonds between men were accompanied by obligations of mutual assistance and loyalty and were characterized by the principle of equality of the parties.[73] Even if there were homosexual relationships behind these bonds, this was not their only or decisive justification. The sources are usually silent about the motivation guiding the parties to such a pact, which prevents us from confirming or definitely excluding the possibility that the relations between men linked by blood brotherhood also involved sexual relationships. Research carried out by Brent D. Shaw has demonstrated that in the social practice of late Antiquity, too, there were some forms of brotherhood as a bond linking non-related individuals, although Roman law explicitly forbade such relationships.[74] In this case, the emperors as legislators were defending the rules of inheritance under Roman law, rules that could be violated by individuals claiming an inheritance on the basis of an informal "fraternal" pact established with the deceased. Although in his analyses Shaw does go beyond the late Empire period, he reaches only as far the sixth century and the writings of Gregory of Tours. The period between the seventh and eleventh centuries remains underexplored with regard to the existence of bonds of artificial brotherhood other than theologically justified bonds of brotherhood linking Christians. This is not particularly surprising, given the fact that there are very few sources that could be a starting point for such analyses and that the sources we do have give rise to a number of doubts concerning their interpretation. These few sources include the late eighth-century charter analyzed by Boswell which is found in the archives of the bishopric of Lucca. The issuer of this charter chose as heir a man who was not his relative, but with whom he had apparently established fraternal bonds. Boswell interpreted this document as evidence of a socially accepted method of providing maintenance to a partner in a same-sex relationship.[75] Significantly, however, the sources mention clergymen who inherited from each other the right to administer a church and celebrate divine service in it. This at least partly explains why the testator's own brother mentioned in one of the charters did not become his heir: as a lay person he could not take over his priestly duties.[76]

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73 Brown, "Ritual Brotherhood in Western Medieval Europe."

74 Shaw, "Ritual Brotherhood in Roman and Post-Roman Societies."

75 Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, 255–57.

76 MemLuc 4, no. 83, pp. 133–34; MemLuc 5/2, no. 161, p. 92; cf. MemLuc 5/2, no. 186, pp. 107–9; no. 187, p. 109

Similarly, there is no evidence confirming the existence of blood brotherhood and brotherhood in arms between men, analogous to the institutions known from Scandinavian practice.[77] Attempts to find traces of such a bond in our period are based on a projection of phenomena present in another place and time on the conditions of the early Middle Ages, a projection justified by a belief in the lasting nature of cultural phenomena. Scholars formulating such theses start from a more or less openly adopted premise whereby the relations based on brotherhood in arms were part of a shared ethos of militant Germanic tribes, an ethos that was weakened by Christianity but never disappeared completely, re-emerging in a new form in the high Middle Ages, which was expressed in courtly poetry and chivalric romances. As the sources are silent, such conclusions, based solely on the historians' deep convictions, are groundless. Obviously, this does not mean that we should exclude the existence of some forms of personal relations close to brotherhood, relations established and perhaps even formalized among warriors. Yet there is no source evidence that would make such a conjecture likely.

Not so long ago Klaus Oschema proposed a different interpretation of the recurring high- and late-medieval motif of blood brotherhood as a form of relationship allegedly typical of societies in which military values were highly regarded.[78] The German scholar demonstrates that the authors of the sources linked blood covenant rituals primarily with societies existing on the margins of Western Christendom. According to Oschema, this motif was used to construct a stereotypical image of the barbarian "other." Sometimes this narrative thread was also used to stress the distance in time separating the author from the legendary, wild past he was describing. In other words, if in sources from the twelfth and the following centuries we come across references to ritual blood covenants among distant peoples (in terms of time or geography), this does not have to mean that the authors of the sources preserved in their memories traces of practices that had indeed existed. It may have been a literary device, subordinated to the logic of the narrative and used to stress the cultural differences between the author/reader and the reality described. Before historians draw conclusions concerning early medieval rituals of fraternal blood covenants documented in late sources, they should ask themselves a question about the intention of the author describing such practices. Oschema is even inclined to question the existence of blood rituals in medieval Europe altogether, believing that references to them in various sources are adaptations of motifs appearing already in ancient descriptions of barbarians. This view could be regarded as too extreme (especially in the case of Scandinavian or Irish sources, as the scholar notes himself), but it cannot be ignored. Oschema's concept provides a partial explanation for the lack of references to blood brotherhood and brotherhood in arms in sources from the period that is of interest to us. Perhaps such an institution did not exist at all—or at least not in the form known from later sources.

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77 Hermanson, *Friendship, Love, and Brotherhood*.

78 Oschema, "Blood-Brothers: A Ritual"; Oschema, "Das Motiv der Blutsbrüderschaft."

The reservations presented above do not change the fact that in early medieval societies various types of relations, similar to fraternal relations, may have been formed spontaneously, for example, when non-related boys grew up together. However, this is an area of everyday life which did not interest the authors of the available sources. For example, early medieval sources provide us with some information about milk brothers, whose closeness was rooted in their earliest childhood and lasted also in their adulthood, even despite the differences in their status. The best known example of a bond established at the breast is the one mentioned by Flodoard of Reims (d. 966) and allegedly linking Louis the Pious and the future archbishop of Reims, Ebbo (d. 851).[79] As Mayke de Jong rightly points out, the milk brotherhood of the emperor and the future archbishop, who had been born a serf, may have been an addition of the historiographer, writing half a century after the events and trying to find an explanation of Ebbo's dizzying career.[80] This is likely, given the fact that both contemporary sources and sources originating shortly after Ebbo's death (usually hostile to the bishop) stress his lowly birth as one of the main reasons of his unworthy conduct, but no source suggests that Ebbo's mother was Louis the Pious's wet nurse.[81] Yet what matters to us is not what really happened, but the fact that Flodoard regarded milk brotherhood as a factor convincingly explaining why Louis had favoured Ebbo. Thus Flodoard confirmed the possibility of the existence of such emotional bonds between children and, at the same time, an awareness of their milieu and of the power and durability of such a relationship.

79 Flodoardus Remensis, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, lib. 2, chap. 19, p. 175: Ebbo is described as Louis the Pious's *collactaneus et conscolasticus.*

80 De Jong, *The Penitential State*, 253.

81 See, e.g., MGH LL Concilia 4:239–40; Theganus, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, 232, 252.