

MODERN MEDIVAL MONASTERIES

Two Modern Dutch Monasteries
compared to
the Benedictine Ideal

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ABSTRACT

In the 19th century the interest in monasteries and monastic life returned, leading to the design of the Abbey of Egmond by architect A.J. Kropholler in 1929 and the design of St. Benedictusberg in Vaals by architect Dom Hans van der Laan.

This research investigates how the architects A.J. Kropholler and Dom Hans van der Laan incorporated the Benedictine Rule into their modern abbeys. Specifically, it examines the historical context of the Dutch abbeys and the development of monastic architecture, drawing on Wolfgang Braunfels' *Monasteries of Western Europe* as a foundation for contextualizing the St. Gall Utopia. Additionally, it explores the design principles and philosophies that influenced the layout and construction of the Dutch abbeys under investigation, through an analysis of the floor plans and layouts of the abbeys, as well as interviews with a current monk or an employee at both Dutch abbeys.

The thesis is structured into four chapters, beginning with an examination of the Benedictine Rule and Utopia of St. Gall, followed by separate analyses of St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond by A.J. Kropholler and the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals by Dom Hans van der Laan. The final chapter compares the two Dutch abbeys with each other and the Utopia of St. Gall. The study is limited by the scope of the two Dutch abbeys chosen for analysis, but it offers insights into how the architects of the abbeys incorporated the Benedictine Rule into their designs, and sheds light on the role of monasteries in modern society.

The spaces for the three main pillars of the Benedictine Rule are integrated in both Dutch Abbeys. However this research shows that the role in society for Monasteries has changed. The essential elements of the St. Gall Utopia can still be recognized in both floor plans, however the size and clustering of several functions changed.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 820 AD, Abbot Gozbert received a plan for the redesign of the Abbey of St. Gall, Switzerland. This plan was not intended to serve as a blueprint for construction, but rather as a guide for implementing the Benedictine Rule in the monastic life (Braunfels, 1993, p. 39). During this period, monasteries served as more than just a place for practicing the Christian faith. They also functioned as schools, mission centres, agricultural concerns, and administrative hubs. (Braunfels, 1993, p. 40).

Despite the periods of great prosperity throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, the Enlightenment and French Revolution caused a significant shift in the fortunes of monasteries (Braunfels, 1993, p. 221). Following a tumultuous period, the appreciation for monasteries resurged in the 19th century, with the monasteries spreading to the Netherlands again. Many of the monasteries in the Netherlands were outdated, destroyed, or abandoned, leading the Benedictines to commission the restoration of the Abbey of Egmond by architect A.J. Kropholler in 1929 (Bergeijk, 2020, p. 241). Additionally, the architect Dom Hans van der Laan was asked to complete the design of St. Benedictusberg in Vaals (Tummers & Tummers-Zuurmond, 2005, p. 15).

Although the Rules of Benedict remained constant, the function of monasteries had undergone transformations within society (Pater Matthieu, personal communication, April 10 2023). Two modern Dutch architects, A.J. Kropholler and Dom Hans van der Laan, were assigned to design two new monasteries. Near the coast in Egmond and one in the hills of Zuid-Limburg.

Therefore, the question arises as to how did the architects A.J. Kropholler and Dom Hans van der Laan incorporate the Benedictine Rule into their modern abbeys? The other questions that have arisen in this research are: How has the Benedictine Rule been historically incorporated into monastic architecture? To what extent did the architects A.J. Kropholler and Dom Hans van der Laan draw inspiration from the Utopia of St. Gall in their design for the abbeys? In what ways do the floor plans of the two Dutch abbeys differ from each other?

To address these questions, a literature review was conducted, exploring the historical context of the Dutch abbeys. Additionally, research was carried out on the architects of the abbeys in order to gain a deeper understanding of their design, style, and philosophy. The literature review aimed to provide an overview of the history of Western monasticism and the development of monastic architecture. In particular, *Monasteries of Western Europe* by Wolfgang Braunfels provided a useful foundation to contextualize the St. Gall Utopia. The research on the Dutch architects Dom Hans van der Laan and A.J. Kropholler provided insight into the specific design principles and philosophies that influenced the layout and construction of the Dutch abbeys under investigation. The St. Gall Utopia as well as the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond and the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals will be analysed. This will be achieved through a comparison of the floor plans and layouts of the abbeys. Finally, interviews with a current monk or an employee at both Dutch abbeys were conducted to gain a better understanding of the contemporary function and daily life within the monasteries.

This is done through using various databases such as Google Scholar and Delpher. Relevant books and articles recommended by my supervisor were also consulted. For the interviews with current users, an interviews with a monk from Vaals and an employee from Egmond were also conducted. The questions asked focused on their daily routines and the role of the monastery in modern society. Their opinions on the design and floor plan of the abbeys is also included. In terms of limitations, this study is limited by the scope of the two Dutch abbeys chosen for analysis, as there are other abbeys and monasteries that could have been included.

The structure of this thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter examines the Benedictine Rule and Utopia of St. Gall. Chapter two analyses St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond by A.J. Kropholler. In chapter three, the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals by Dom Hans van der Laan is analysed. Chapter four compares the two Dutch abbeys with each other and the Utopia of St. Gall.



Figure 01. The St. Adalbert's Abbey, Egmond.



Figure 0.2. The St. Benedictusberg Abbey, Vaals.

CHAPTER 1: THE BENEDICTINE RULE & THE ST. GALL UTOPIA

In order to understand the monastic life and the structure of monasteries, knowledge of the Benedictine Rule and historical context are essential. This chapter briefly explains the origins of monasteries and monks, followed by an overview of the Benedictine order and the Rule of Benedict. This provides a better understanding of the daily routine inside Benedictine monasteries. Finally, the Utopia of St. Gall is discussed. For a long time, this floor plan was seen as the ideal and guideline for building Benedictine monasteries (Braunfels, 1993). The analysis of the St. Gall plan indicates the essential elements for a Benedictine monastery.

1.1. Historical context

Within the Roman Empire, Christianity grew tremendously. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Christianity continued to thrive in the Carolingian Empire, where it was declared the state religion (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023). However, a small group within this community had the urge to withdraw from society. They turned away from secular life and herd behaviour. This group, also known as monks, aimed to regain the purity of heart and the uninterrupted conversation with God. The monks withdrew from society, with some leaving for remote places such as ravines or deserts (Braunfels, 1993). Others united and lived under strict rules in monasteries. Monks are not only found within Christianity, but also in other religions. In the Middle East, present-day Egypt and Syria, the first monks withdrew to the desert (Braunfels, 1993). However, most of these monasteries were destroyed in the seventh century by the Persians and Arabs (Braunfels, 1993).

The Benedictine monastery is the first Latin monastery, following many Greek, Celtic, and Gallic experiments (Braunfels, 1993). The monks live according to the Benedictine Rule. These monasteries are led by a spiritual father, the abbot. The abbot is elected by the monks of the monastery and is responsible for conveying the correct interpretation of the Rule and the bible to the monks (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

1.2. The Benedictine Order & its Rule

In the ninth century, Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, obliged all monks to adopt the Benedictine Rule in order to ensure unity within his realm. This rule had been written around 530 by Benedict of Nursia (Abdij Sint-Benedictusberg, 2017).

The Benedictine Rule provides a structure for the daily life of the monks, based on three tasks: prayer, work, and study. The most important task is prayer, which is conducted at fixed times throughout the day, depending on the season (see Figure 1.1). The day begins with morning prayer, Lauds, at sunrise. Prayer is then conducted around the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours. Evening prayer, Vespers, takes place at sunset. The last prayer of the day is Compline, just before the monks go to bed. A vigil is also held during the night. Finally, the Eucharist is celebrated during Mass and Holy Mass (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

Matins (Vigils)	During the night
Lauds	At sunrise
Mass	
Prime	Around the 1 st hour
Terce & High Mass	Around the 3 rd hour
Sext	Around the 6 th hour
None	Around the 9 th hour
Vespers	At sunset
Compline	Before bed

Figure 11. Timetable of prayers & the High Mass

Thus, a minimum of seven prayer sessions take place during the day, in addition to Mass, Holy Mass, and the vigil (Hof & Visser, 1995/2014). In summer, the days are longer and in winter, they are shorter, which affects the hours allocated for work. In summer, there are more work hours. Work takes place in and around the monastery and can consist of various tasks such as farming, cleaning, food production, and craftsmanship. It serves as a means of self-development in modern monasteries, as well as a way to provide financial support for the monastery (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

The last task is study, which in the Middle Ages mainly consisted of reading and memorization, but nowadays involves acquiring knowledge and self-development. Reading was of great importance for the monasteries as centres of education and knowledge institutions. This was also a reason why the reading culture in Europe emerged from the ninth century (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

In addition to these three main tasks, the monastery also takes on other tasks, such as healthcare, hospitality, and caring for the poor. In the Middle Ages, monasteries had large hospitals and guesthouses, while nowadays they are more limited due to the rise of technology (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

1.3. The St. Gall Utopia

The growth of Christianity and the importance of monasteries to society in the 8th and 9th century led to the establishment of many large monastic institutions, such as the one at St. Gall, (Pater Matthieu, personal communication, April 10 2023). In 816 and 817, there was a debate within the church regarding the strictness of the rules governing monastic life. Around 820, (presumably) Abbot Haito sent a plan for a new abbey of St. Gall to Abbot Gozbert in order to provide a visual interpretation of the Rule for monastic life. Although Abbot Haito believed that this plan was too perfect to ever be realized, it later served as a guide for monastic architecture (Braunfels, 1993).

Reflecting the size and multifaceted roles of monasteries during that era, the plan, as depicted in Figure 1.2., bears greater resemblance to an urban layout rather than a building layout. In the Plan of St. Gall, several zones can be distinguished (Braunfels,

1993, p. 41). The central feature of the plan is the church, which symbolizes the practice of prayer, the first and foremost pillar of the Benedictine Rule. As such, the church occupies a central position, with the other functions of the monastery arranged around it in four zones (Figure 1.3.).

To the south of the church lies the private section of the monastery, which includes the cloister, the refectory, the dormitory (sleeping quarters), and the cellar. Within this area, the rule was strictly and consistently observed, and access was limited to the monks' parlour. This zone is called the *claustrum*, an enclosed monastery inside a monastery (Braunfels, 1993, p. 41).

To balance this the peaceful and quiet zone in the south, a second, public zone has been placed to the north of the church. This area includes the guesthouse with its accompanying kitchen, a school for strangers and laymen, and the abbot's house with its associated functions (Braunfels, 1993, p. 41). As the Benedictines receive their guests as if they were Christ himself, the guest quarters occupy a significant portion of the Plan.

The third zone in the plan comprises the homes and workshops of the craftsmen, as well as the stables for animals.

According to Braunfels (1993), the fourth zone was designated for the sick and the novices. In other words: those no longer or not yet bound to observe the strict life of the Rule. Notably, the St. Gall plan includes several buildings that do not fall within the four designated zones or belong to the church. These buildings comprise the hostel, the gatekeeper's cottage, the lodgings for pilgrims and the poor, and the monks' brewery and bakery (Braunfels, 1993, p. 43).

To conclude, in the Roman Empire, Christianity grew rapidly, and after its fall, the Carolingian Empire declared it the state religion. Some Christians sought to withdraw from society and formed monastic communities to reconnect with God. The Benedictine Order, which follows the Benedictine Rule, was the first Latin monastery, and Louis the Pious made it mandatory for all monks to follow this rule. The rule structures the monks' daily life around three tasks: prayer, work, and study. The monastery also takes on other tasks, such as healthcare and hospitality. The Plan of St. Gall provides a valuable insight into the design and function of monasteries during the 8th and 9th century. The unique layout of the monastery, with a central church and four distinct zones, illustrates the multifaceted roles that monasteries played in society at the time. The plan serves as a visual representation of the Benedictine Rule and its emphasis on prayer, communal living, hospitality, and service to others. The Utopia of St. Gall served as an example of monastic architecture for a long time.

CHAPTER 2: ST. ADALBERT'S ABBEY IN EGMOND

The St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond is a modern Benedictine abbey designed by A.J. Kropholler. The design process is interesting since it had to be redesigned two times. This chapter aims to analyse the floor plan and layout of the St. Adalbert's' Abbey. To begin with, the historical context in which the abbey was constructed will be discussed. Subsequently, the chapter will examine the floor plan and organization of the building. This analysis will focus mainly on the previously mentioned elements: the Utopia of St. Gall and the integration of the three values of the Benedictine rules.

2.1. Context

In 1929, A.J. Kropholler began designing the Egmond Abbey, which had been plundered and destroyed by the Dutch rebel leader de Sonoy during the war against the Spanish army in 1573 (Hof & Visser, 1995/2014). Kropholler departed from modernism and instead opted for large-format bricks, as he believed that concrete, iron, and an excess of glass did not suit Egmond's character (Kropholler, 1950). The use of durable materials with a proven track record was well-received (Zwiers, 1932). The newspaper praised Kropholler's design for its combination of grandeur, simplicity, and naturalness, calling it solid and far from dull (Bergeijk, 2020).

Despite the positive reception, the project encountered many setbacks, with funding being particularly difficult to secure. Kropholler launched fundraising campaigns, wrote articles in newspapers, and sold postcards, but had to adjust his design multiple times (Bergeijk, 2020). Despite the occupation of the priory during World War II, Kropholler persevered. Eventually, it was decided in 1949 to build the church without towers or a

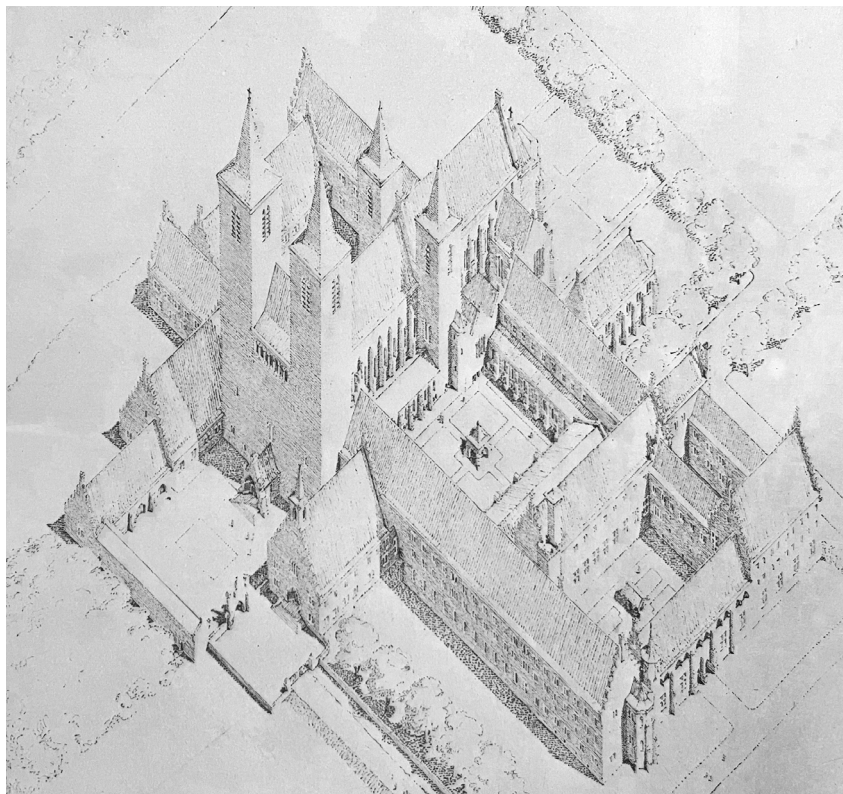


Figure 2.1. Bird's eye view perspective of the 1930 design.

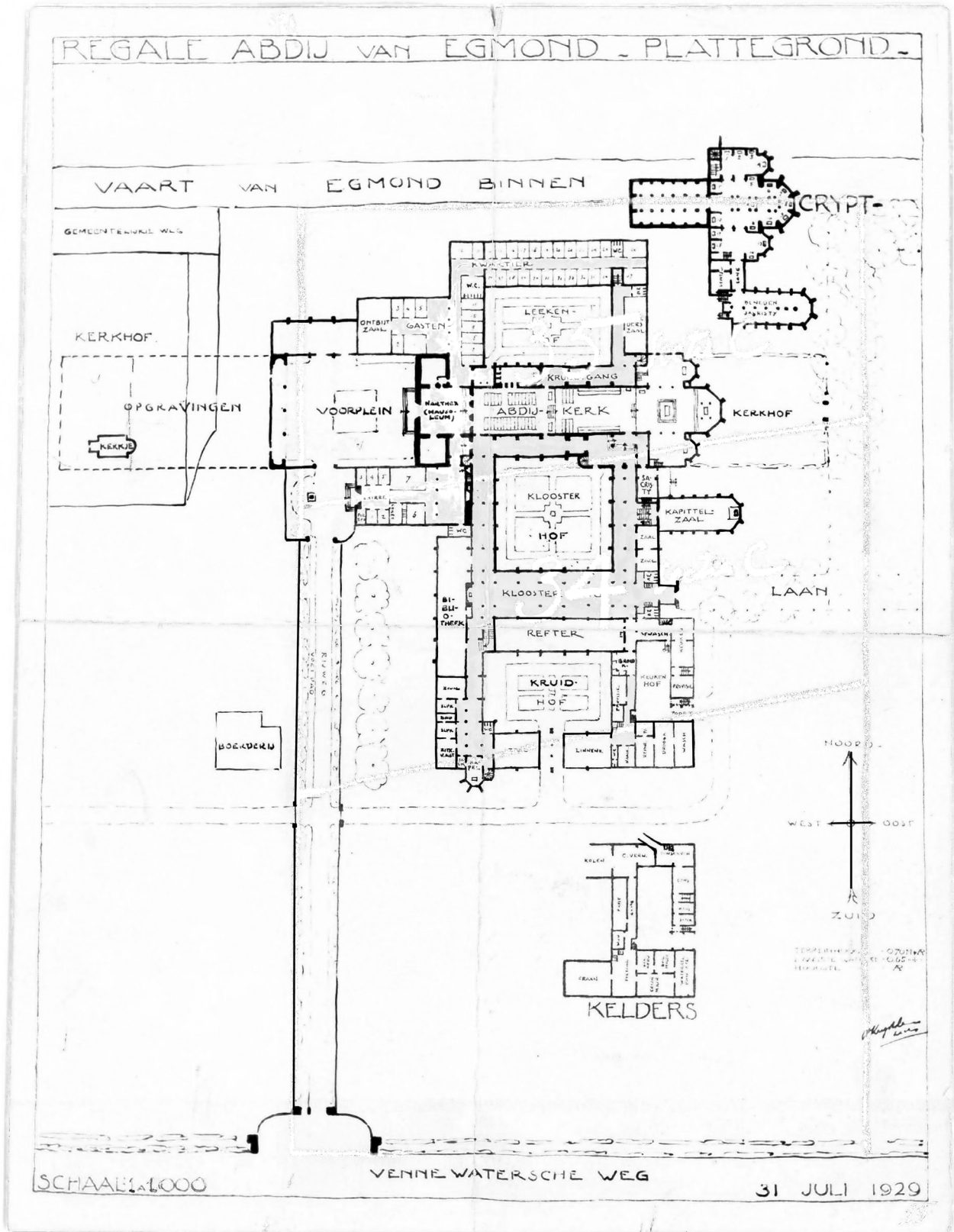


Figure 2.2. Floor plan of the Royal Abbey of Egmond 1930.

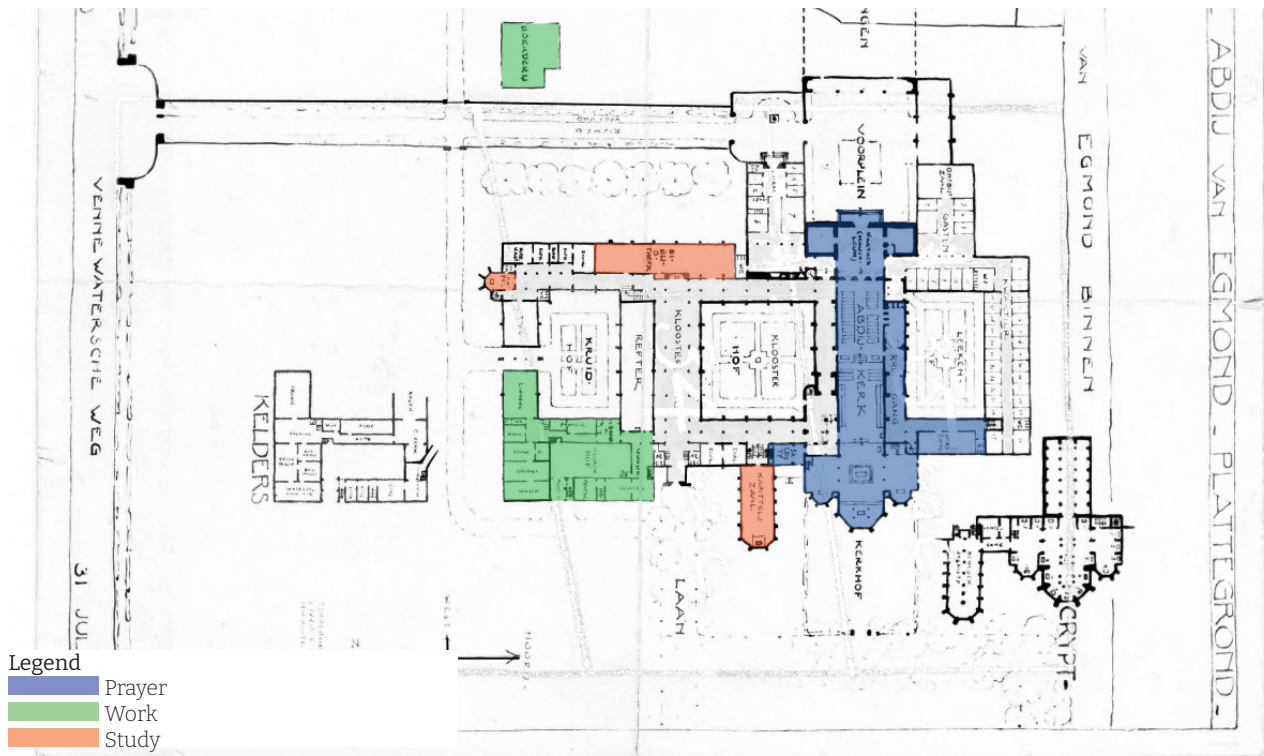


Figure 2.4. 1930 floor plan: The three pillars of the Benedictine Rule highlighted.

by the church. The spaces dedicated to work are located in the southeast of the abbey, with the kitchen and dishwashing area connected to the refectory and cellar, which serves mainly as a storage space. Lastly, the chapter hall, library, and chapel were intended for study, which could involve the literal study of books or personal development.

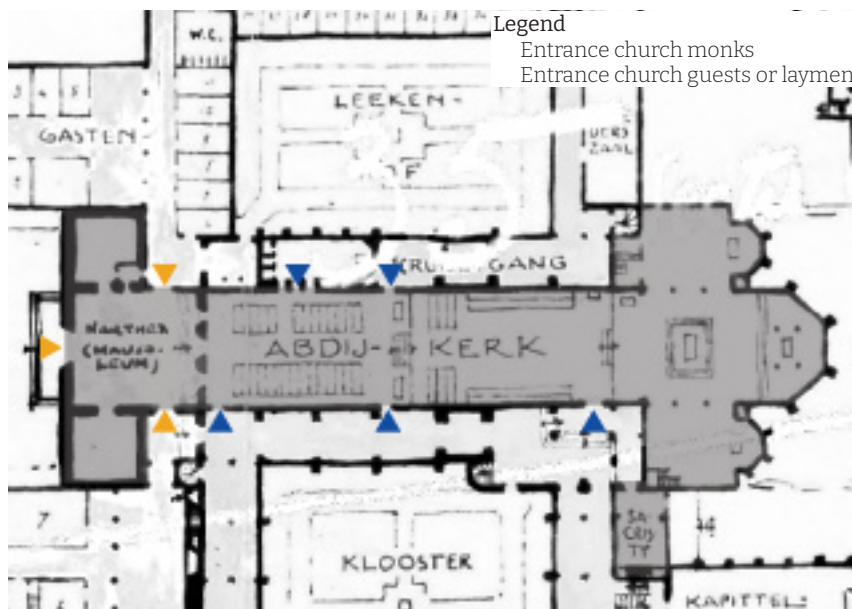


Figure 2.5. 1930 floor plan: Entrances to the church.

As previously shown, Kropholler distinguished between the public and private areas of the abbey. This differentiation was not limited to clustering rooms, but also extended to accessing the church (Zwiers, 1932). Specifically, the monks could enter the church through the cloister galleries, while guests and laypeople were required to enter through the mausoleum (see Figure 2.5).

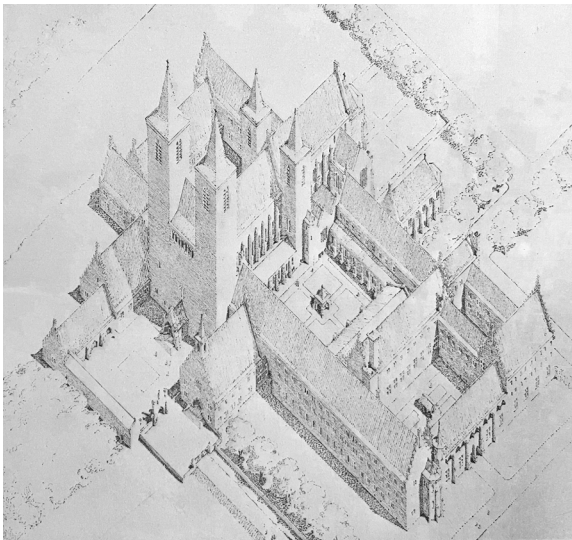


Figure 2.6. Bird's eye view perspective of the 1930 design.



Figure 2.7. Drawing of the provisional building (1934).

The design of the abbey included multiple layers beyond what is visible on the floor plan (Figure 2.2.). The bird's eye view perspective (Figure 2.6.) shows multiple stories and two towers. The missing stories were intended for the abbot's quarters and the infirmary. The design presented in Figure 2.6. is extensive and grand. Construction was projected to take a long time, and for this reason, a provisional building was erected in the southwest corner of the site (Figure 2.7.). This provisional building included a chapel, refectory, chapter hall, and cloister walk.

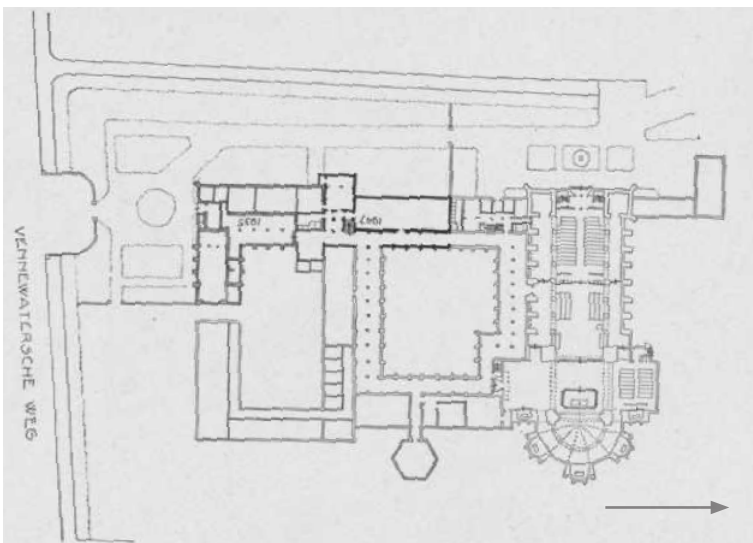


Figure 2.8. Floor plan Abbey of Egmond (1950).

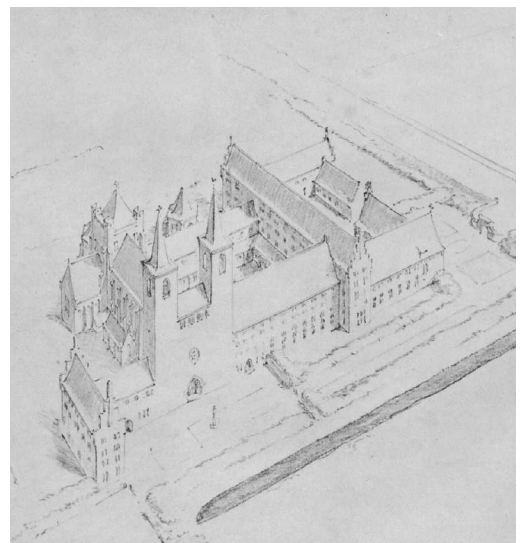


Figure 2.9. Bird's eye view perspective (1950).

2.2.2. The post-war redesigns (1950 & 1955)

In 1945, it was decided that the original plan from 1930 would not be executed due to this economic setback. Instead, a smaller plan was put forth, which included the provisional building from 1935 (Figure 2.7.) the construction of the west wing, featuring the main staircase and a temporary refectory with sleeping cells above, was carried out between 1947 and 1949. Kropholler hoped that the construction of the church could commence in 1950 and, to announce this, he included the floor plan from Figure 2.8. and the image from Figure 2.9. as part of his statement in the *Katholiek Bouwblad* (Kropholler, 1950).

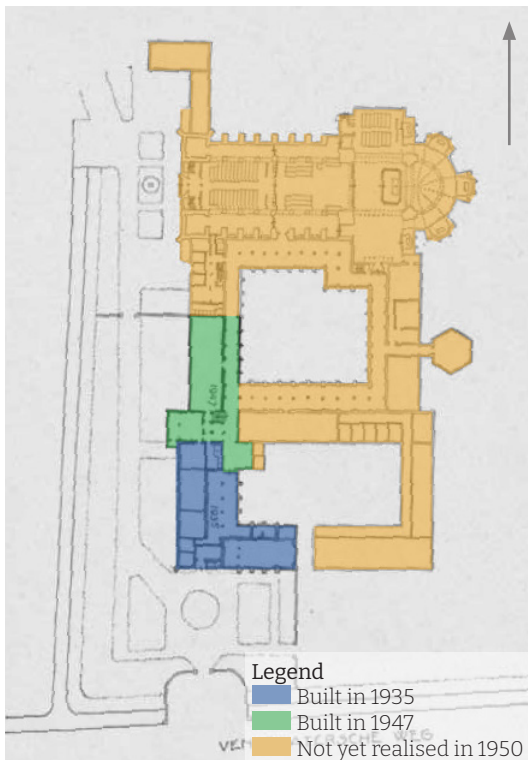


Figure 2.10. Floorplan (1950): Construction years.

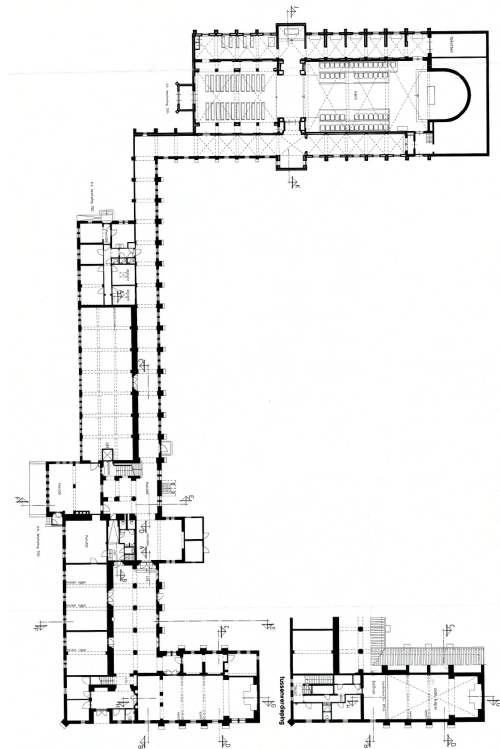


Figure 2.11. Floor plan Abbey of Egmond (1955): Ground floor.

In Figure 2.10., the different construction years are indicated. Figure 2.11. shows the floor plan of the final design of the abbey, which is characterized by the absence of towers or a chancel in the church. Only the nave has been built, and the courtyards in the middle and south have not been realized. The only area added after 1950 is the church. This is understandable since the church is an essential element for prayer in Benedictine monasteries.

The three pillars of the Benedictine Rule (prayer, work & study) are depicted in Figure 2.12., with the work areas having decreased in volume. This is logical considering that

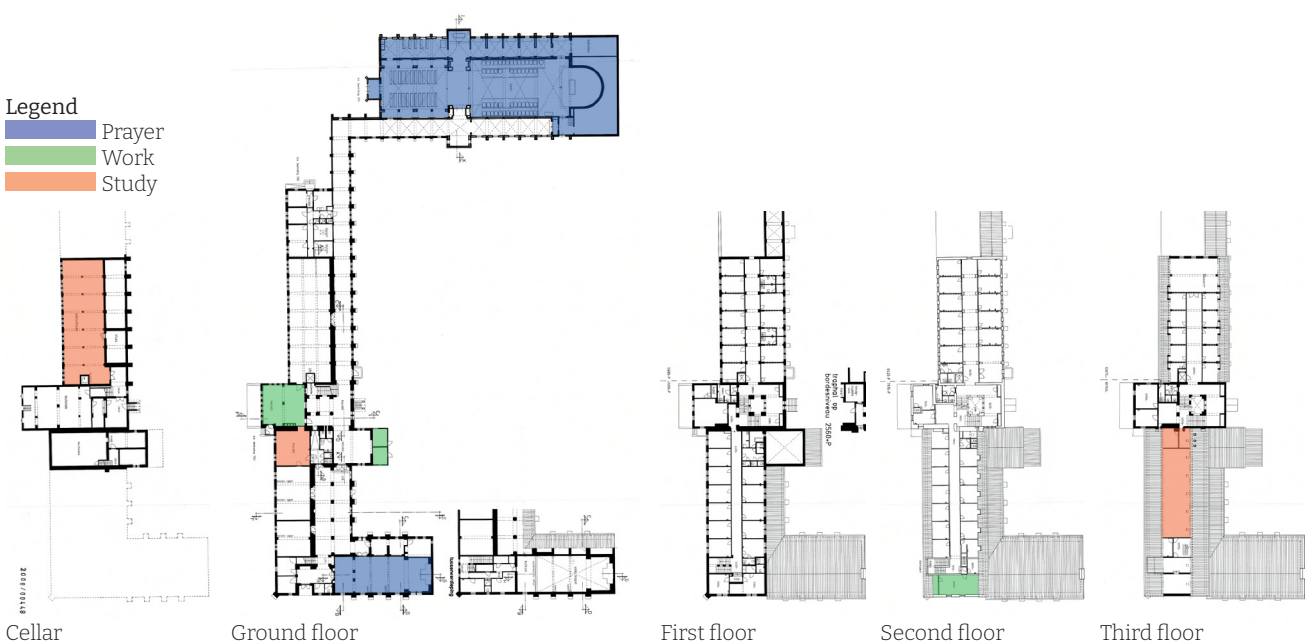


Figure 2.12. Schematic floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond: functions serving the Benedictine pillars highlighted.

this monastery is now only inhabited by ten monks instead of thirty (Verheijen, personal communication, April 14, 2023). Although a clear distinction between public and private areas remains (Figure 2.13.), it has been greatly weakened compared to the 1930 design. The private courtyards disappeared and only the cellar and first floor seem to be exclusively for the monks.

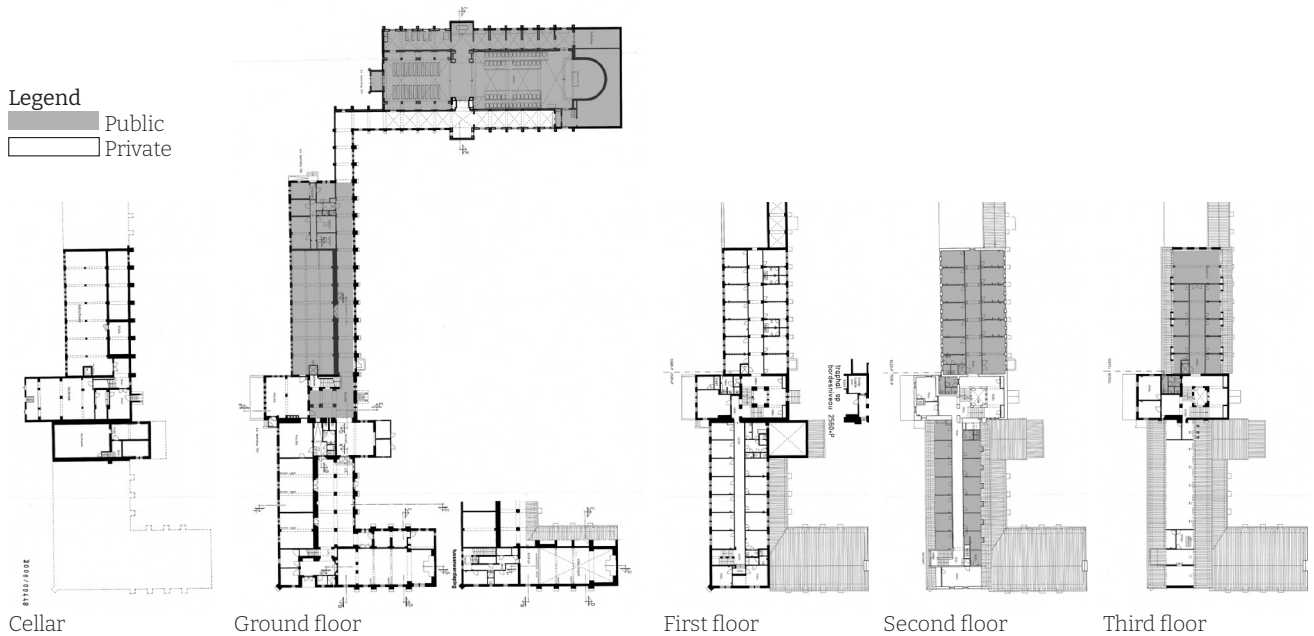


Figure 2.13. Schematic floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond: public & private areas.

Figure 2.14. shows the essential zones of a Benedictine abbey in the floor plans of the Abbey of Egmond. The guestrooms cover a large area. According to Bram Verheijen there are fourteen guest chambers, which is a lot compared to ten monks. The whole cloister is located on the first however what is striking, is the infirmary on the same floor. This goes against the separation of zones according to the Utopia of St. Gall.

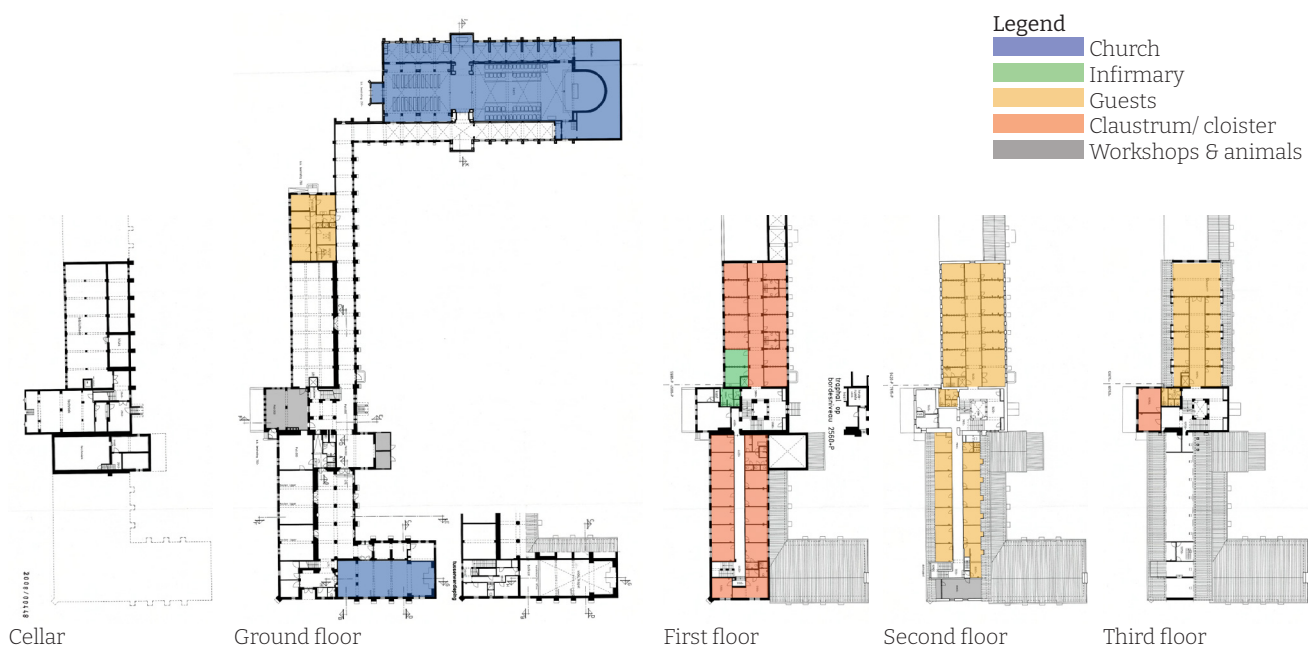


Figure 2.14. Schematic floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond: St. Gall zones.

In conclusion, A.J. Kropholler faced numerous setbacks during the design of St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond. The building was eventually completed in 1955 after being redesigned twice. When analysing the two designs from 1930 and 1950, as well as the final construction, it became evident that there was a noticeable difference in the size of areas designated for various functions within the abbey. Furthermore, over time the boundary between private and public spaces has become increasingly blurred. The infirmary located in the middle of the claustum is an example of Kropholler breaking with the ideal floorplan of St. Gall. Despite the many redesigns, Kropholler's design diverged from modernism, resulting in a solid abbey built with materials whose durability had been proven by experience.

CHAPTER 3: ST. BENEDICTUSBERG ABBEY IN VAALS

One of the most famous monasteries of the Netherlands is the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals. One of the architects of this abbey, Dom Hans van der Laan, was also an architectural theorist and a monk. He spent the last decades of his life in this abbey. This chapter aims to analyse the St. Benedictusberg Abbey. To begin with, the historical context in which the abbey was constructed will be discussed. Subsequently, the chapter will examine the floor plan and organization of the building. This analysis will focus mainly on the previously mentioned elements: the Utopia of St. Gall and the integration of the three values of the Benedictine rules. This abbey consists of two parts by different architects. To analyse the floor plan and the integration of the Benedictine Rule, researching only the part by Van der Laan is not enough. Therefore the analysis will contain both parts. The larger size floor plans of the abbey with description can be found in Appendix B.

3.1. Context

The St. Benedictusberg Abbey is located amidst the hills of Lemiers, Vaals. It comprises two distinct sections, the old and new. The initial construction was designed by German architects Böhm and Weber in the year 1923 (Tummers & Tummers-Zuurmond, 2005). During this period German monks lived in the abbey. When the World War II began, all monks had to serve in the German army. Thirty years passed and the structure remained unfinished and vacant until 1955. Eventually, the Benedictine monks from the Paulus Abbey in Oosterhout decided to relocate to this site. However, they had some concerns about the outdated and overly romantic design of the structure (Tummers & Tummers-Zuurmond, 2005).

Dom Hans van der Laan, a monk from the Benedictine order, was commissioned to oversee the completion of the abbey. He designed the church and several annexes. This resulted in the construction of the crypt in 1961 and the church, along with its atrium, in 1968. Additionally, a guest wing was added to the structure during this period. Van der

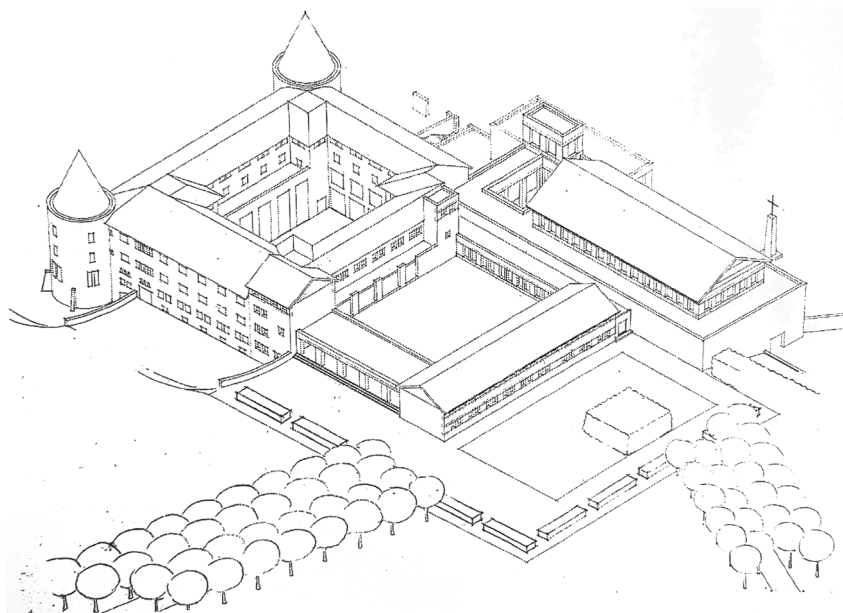


Figure 3.1. Perspective drawing of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey, Vaals

Laan himself later moved to the abbey. In 1986, the abbey was further expanded with the addition of a library and open gallery (Voet, 2019).

3.2. Analysis

Figure 3.2. displays St. Benedictusberg Abbey, situated on a forested hill, with a clear distinction between the parts designed by Böhm & Weber (old) and Van der Laan (new). The two towers on the south side of the monastery are visible from the road, contributing to a fairy tale-like appearance.



Figure 3.2. Picture St. Benedictusberg Abbey.

Figure 3.3. provides a floor plan of the first level of the old part, which connects the ground floor of the new part. Figure 3.4. illustrates the distribution of old and new parts in the floor plan. The old part consists of a courtyard surrounded by four wings, each with four floors (as seen in Figure 3.5). The new consists of several areas, including the guest wing (porch), the atrium, the church above the crypt, the sacristy wing with library, and the open gallery. Most of the functions are located on the ground floor, with the exception of the atelier, which is situated one floor below (in the basement), and the church, which is situated above the crypt.

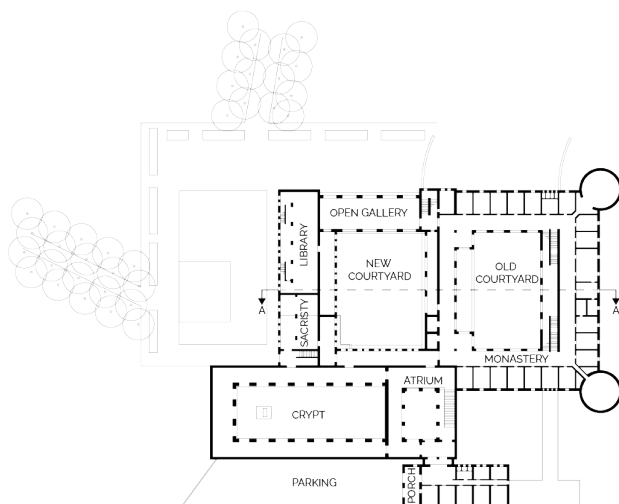


Figure 3.3. Floor plan of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey

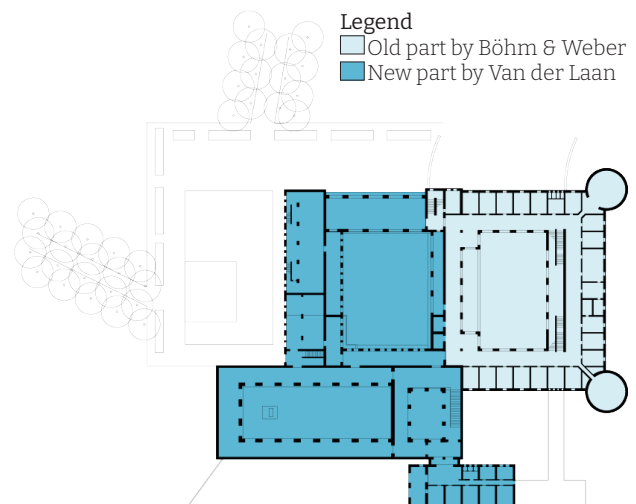


Figure 3.4. Schematic floor plan of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey

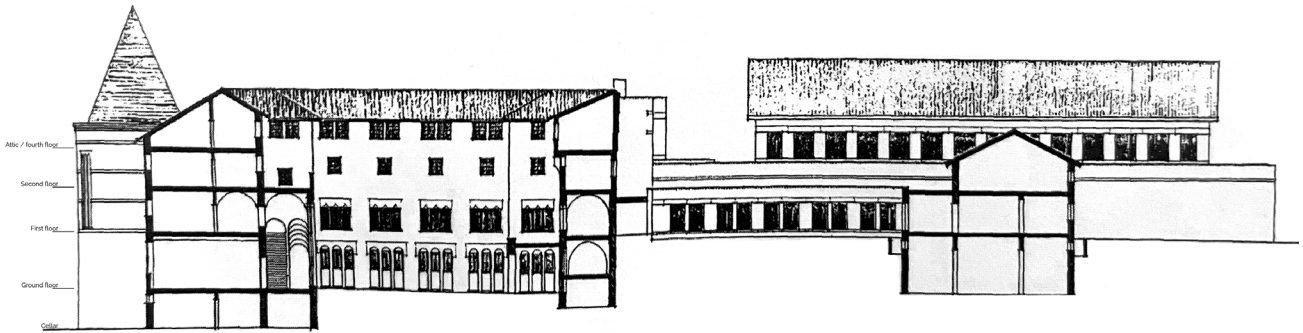


Figure 3.5. St. Benedictusberg Abbey Section A-A

Figure 3.6 highlights that work primarily takes place in the old part of the building, while prayer occurs in the new section. Study activities are conducted in the library on the north side of the building, as well as in the archives and offices with computers in the new building.

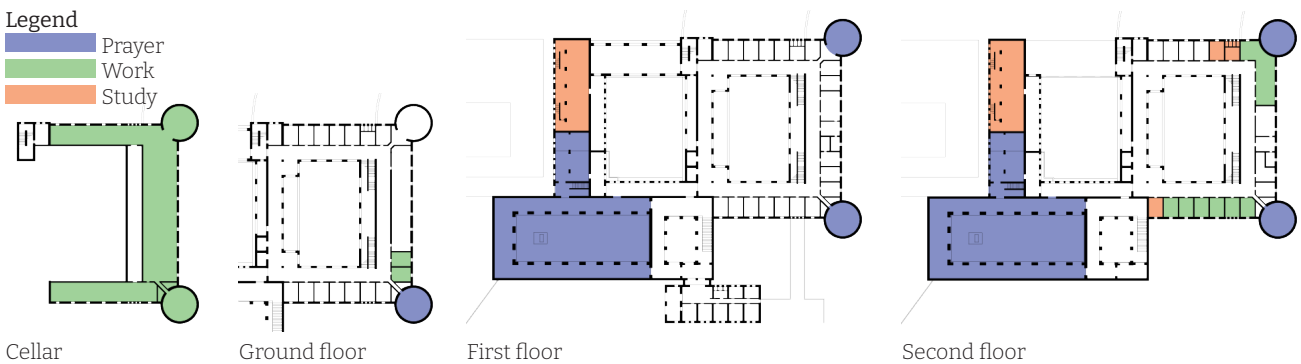


Figure 3.6. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: functions serving the Benedictine pillars highlighted.

The structure creates a strong division between public and private areas (see Figure 3.7). This is reinforced by the church, which is publicly accessible but can only be entered via the guest wing on the west side (see Figure 3.8). Therefore, visitors must always enter the building through the guest wing.

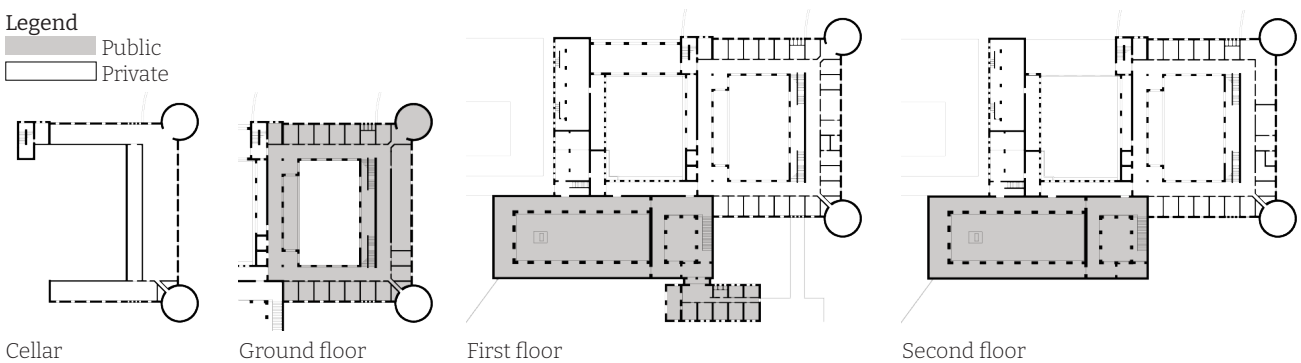


Figure 3.7. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: public & private areas.

Finally, Figure 3.9. depicts the zones of the Utopia of St. Gall. Of note is that the guest rooms on the ground floor are separated from the pilgrim rooms on the second floor. This suggests a distinction is made between laymen and pilgrims.

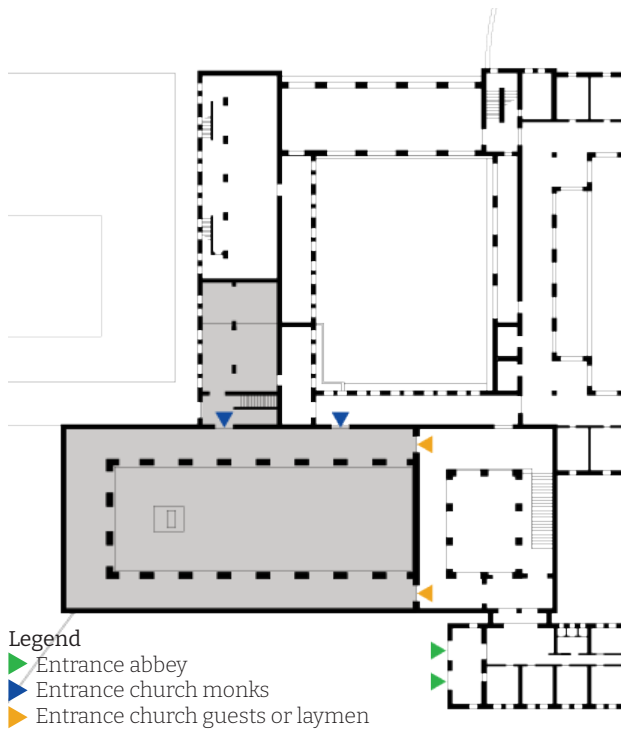


Figure 3.8. Floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey: entrances.

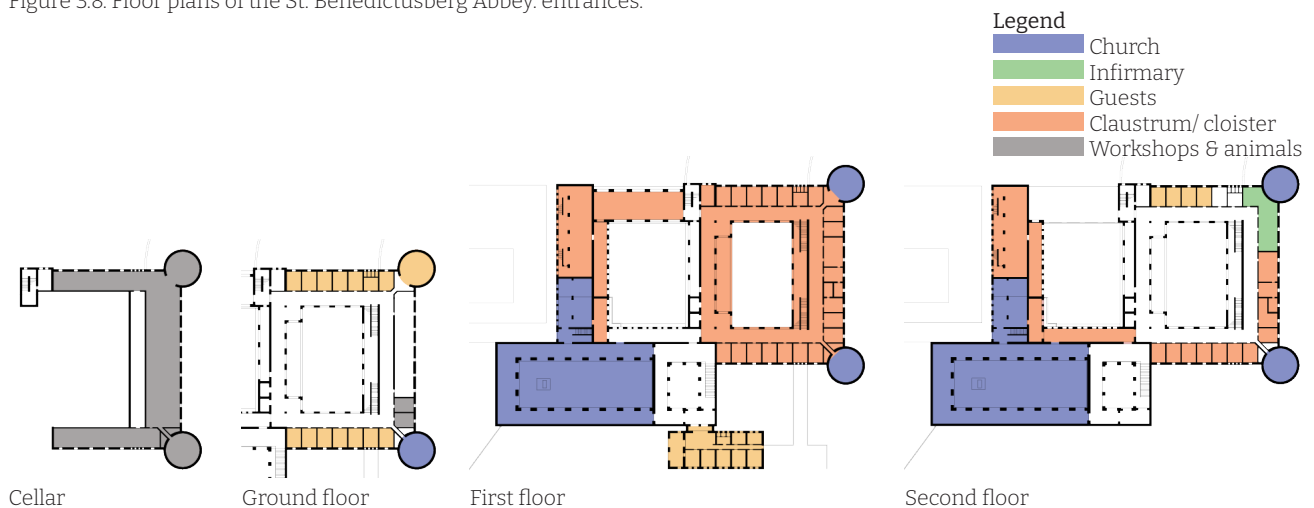


Figure 3.9. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: St. Gall zones.

The St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals, Netherlands is a famous monastery with two distinct parts, the old and new, designed by different architects. The initial construction by German architects was completed in 1923, but remained unfinished and vacant until 1955, when Benedictine monks from the Paulus Abbey decided to relocate there. Dom Hans van der Laan, a monk and architectural theorist, oversaw the completion of the abbey, designing the church and several annexes.

The analysis focuses on the floor plan and organization of the building, with attention to the Utopia of St. Gall and the integration of the three values of the Benedictine rules. The structure of the floor plan creates a clear division between public and private areas, with the church being publicly accessible but only entered through the guest wing. The guest rooms are separated from the pilgrim rooms, suggesting a distinction between laymen and pilgrims.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARISON

Despite the similarities between the two abbeys, there are also many differences. This chapter compares the two Dutch abbeys with each other and with the Utopia of St. Gall. Only the executed designs of the abbeys are discussed, since these designs can be evaluated on their current function. First, the Dutch abbeys are compared according to the layout of their floor plans and especially the clustering of spaces. The distribution of public and private areas is also compared. Subsequently, this answers the question whether this layout and clustering contributes to the structure of the Benedictine Rule. Finally, both abbeys are compared to the Utopia of St. Gall. This shows whether the Utopia of St. Gall still serves as a relevant guideline for designing monasteries.

4.1. The St. Adalbert's Abbey & the St. Benedictusberg Abbey

The previous chapters have shown that the St. Benedictusberg Abbey and the St. Adalbert's Abbey differ in their architectural style, form, and floor plans. Despite these differences, there are also similarities between the two abbeys. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 display the floor plans of both abbeys and highlight the spaces that contribute to the three pillars of the Benedictine Rule. As explained in Chapter 1, these three elements provide structure for the daily lives of Benedictine monks.

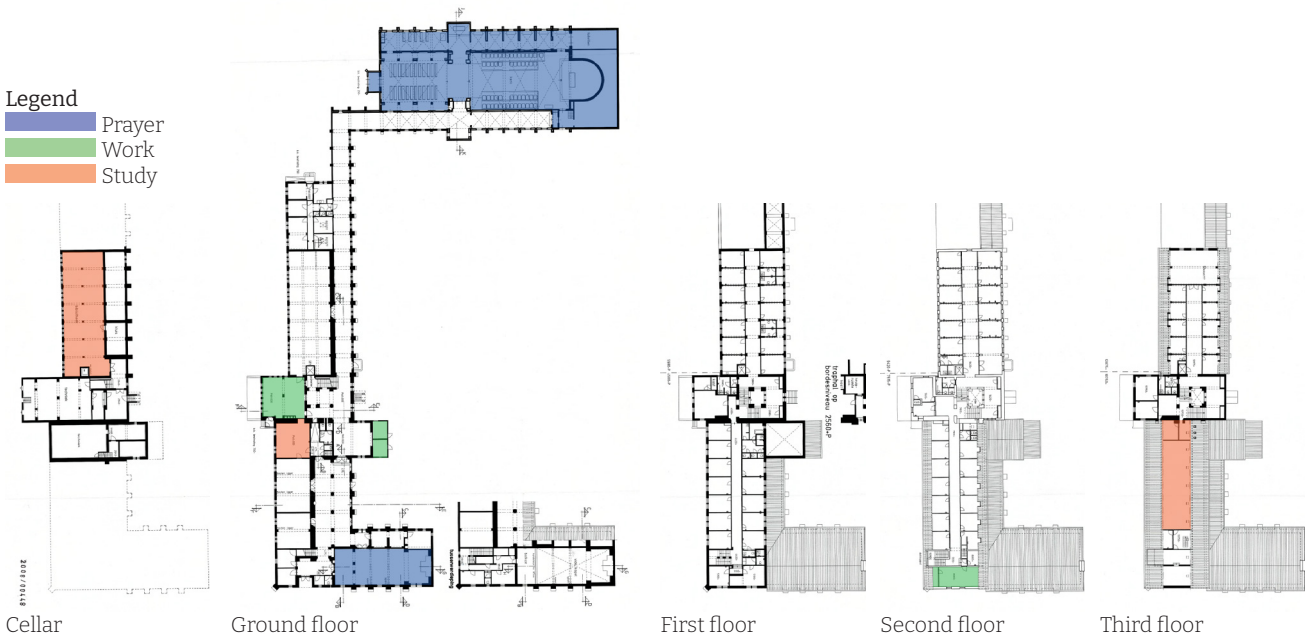


Figure 4.1. Schematic floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond: functions serving the Benedictine pillars highlighted.

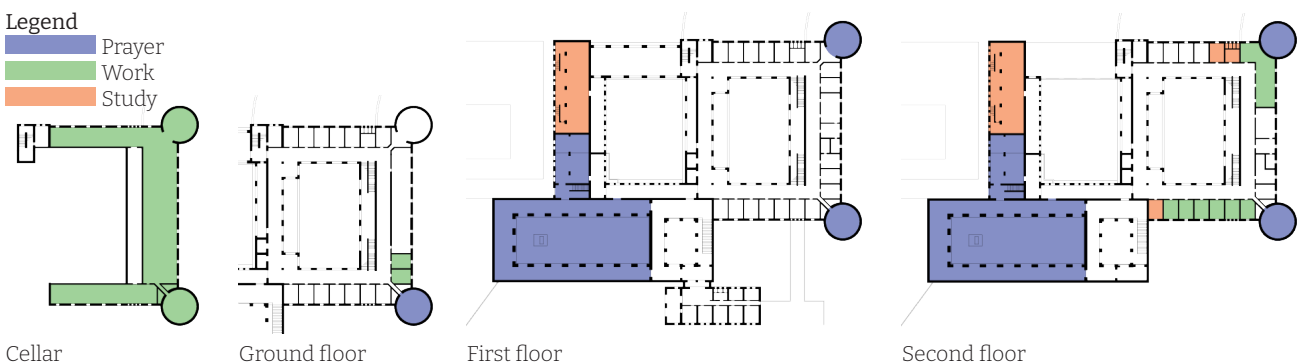


Figure 4.2. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: functions serving the Benedictine pillars highlighted.

All three pillars of the Benedictine Rule can be found in the floor plans. There appears to be more workspace in the St. Benedictusberg Abbey. However, in the St. Adalbert's abbey, these workspaces aren't in the building. This difference can be explained by the type of work carried out by the monks. In Vaals, books are bound, statues are carved and painted (Father Matthieu, personal communication, April 10, 2023). In Egmond, the work is mainly carried out outside the building, such as in the garden, brewery, candle factory, and at the farm (Verheijen, personal communication, April 14, 2023). The location of these workshops is are not drawn in these floorplans.

Both abbeys use the library for study. Also, there are also offices and archives with computers in both abbeys (Pater Matthieu, personal communication, April 10, 2023). For prayer, both abbeys use the church, chapel, or crypt. In the winter, the chapter hall serves as a church in Egmond due to the cold (Verheijen, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

In Figures 4.3 and 4.4, the public and private areas are indicated. The floor plans show a clear differentiation between public and private spaces through the use of different levels. However, a distinction can also be made between the church and the guest quarters. The guest quarters are reserved solely for those staying at the abbeys, while the church is open to everyone (Pater Matthieu, personal communication, April 10 2023).

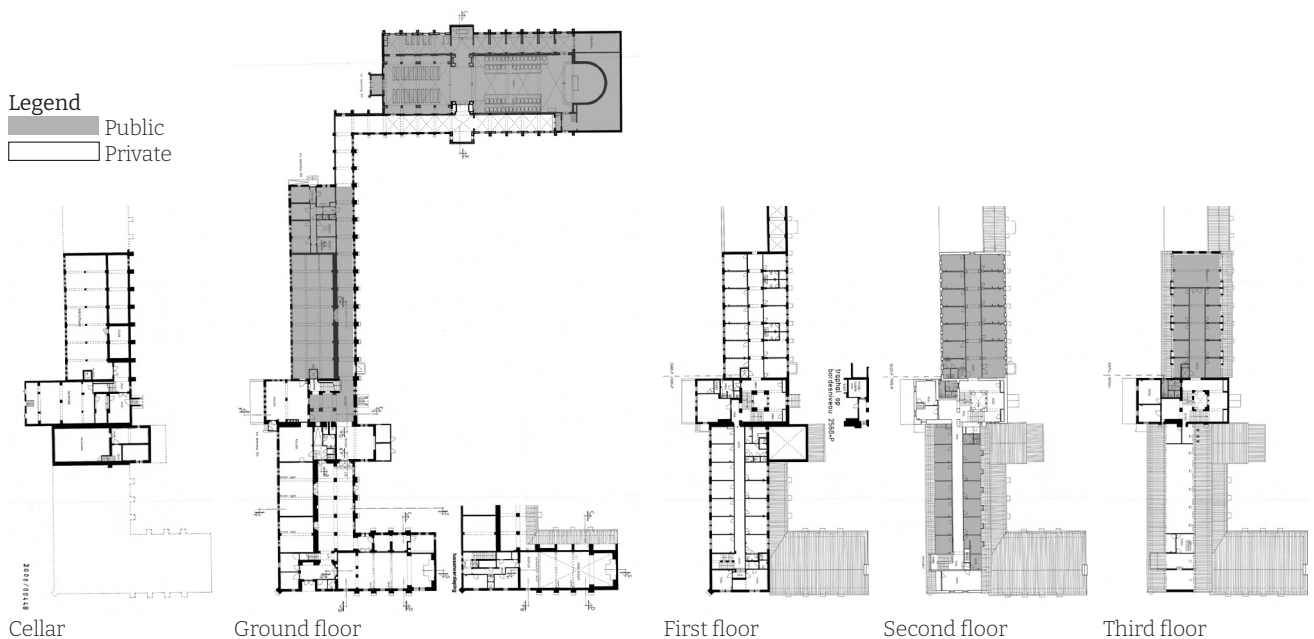


Figure 4.3. Schematic floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond: public & private areas.

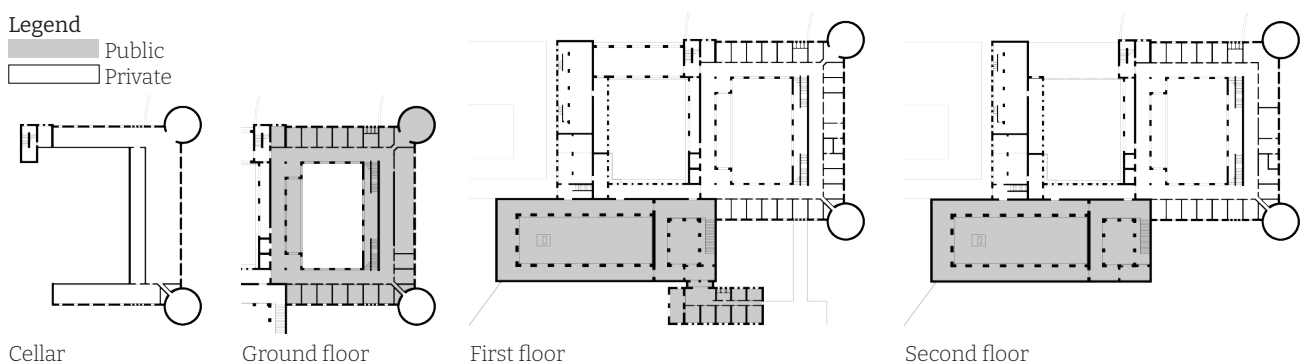


Figure 4.4. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: public & private areas.

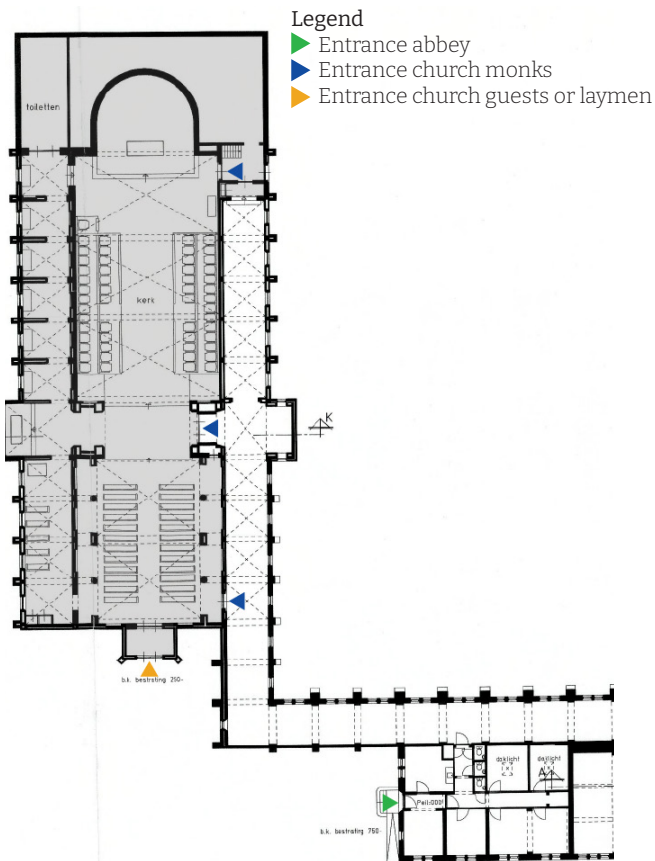


Figure 4.5. Floor plans of the St. Adalbert's Abbey: entrances.

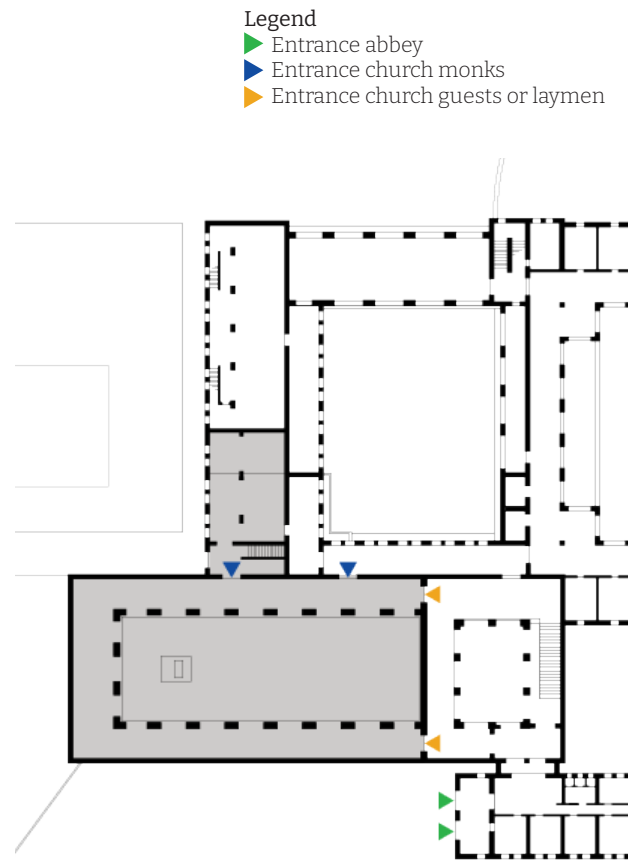


Figure 4.6. Floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey: entrances.

In addition, the entrances to the church and abbey are shown in Figure 4.5. and 4.6. Both churches are, as previously mentioned, open to everyone. In Egmond, the church can be accessed independently. However in Vaals, visitors must enter through the guest wing. Via the atrium they can reach the church. In both cases, there is a separate entrance for the monks to enter the church through the stations of the Cross (Pater Matthieu, personal communication, April 14 2023).

4.2. Elements of the St. Gall Utopia

The St. Gall Utopia has served as a model for the construction of Benedictine monasteries for a long time (Braunfels, 1993). The floor plan of the abbey contributed to the structure that the Benedictine Rule provides for the daily life of the monks. Figures 4.7. and 4.8. show the floor plans of the two Dutch abbeys. The church and the four zones, as described in the St. Gall Utopia, are highlighted. These are the essential elements discussed in Chapter 1.

It is evident that the separation of the essential elements according to the ideal of St. Gall has been better achieved in Vaals than in Egmond. Notably, the infirmary in Egmond is located between the monks' sleeping quarters in the cloister, and its elongated shape does not contribute to separation, whereas the two courtyards in Vaals do. However, in Egmond, the workshops are situated farther from the monastery, which creates space in the layout for other zones. The primary difference between the Utopia of St. Gall and the Dutch abbeys is the placement of the zones relative to each other. In the St. Gall plan, the zones are arranged horizontally, but in the Dutch monasteries, this is achieved vertically, through the use of levels.

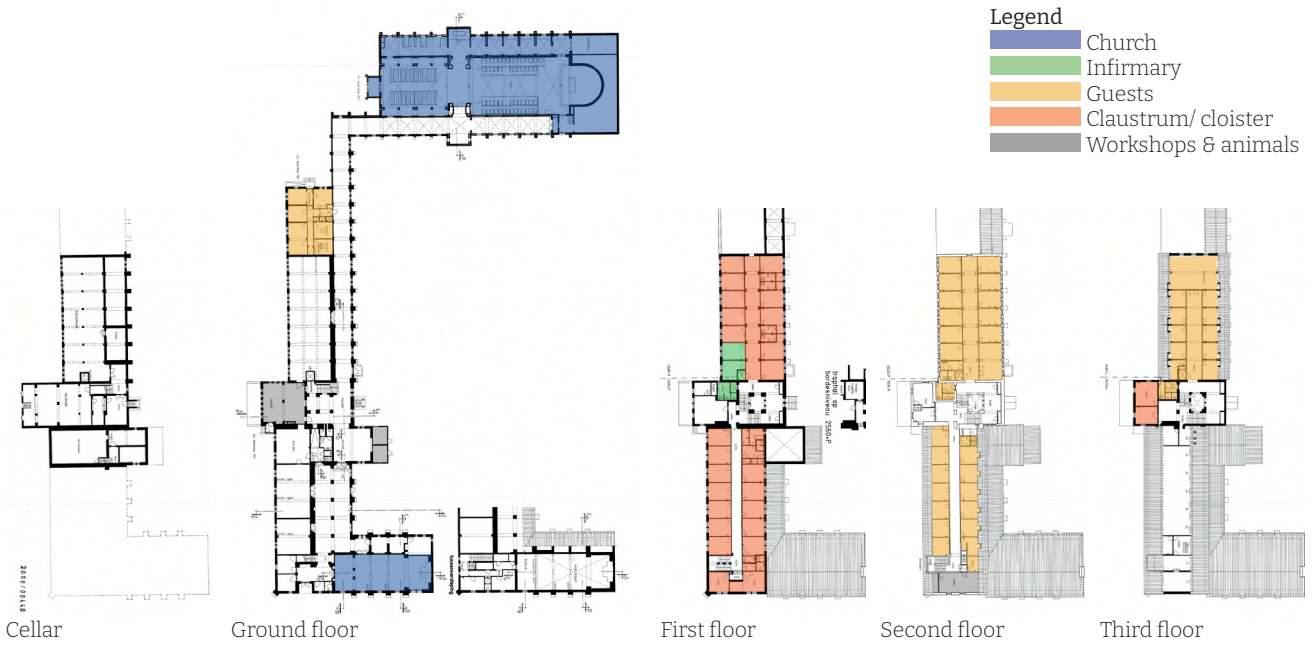


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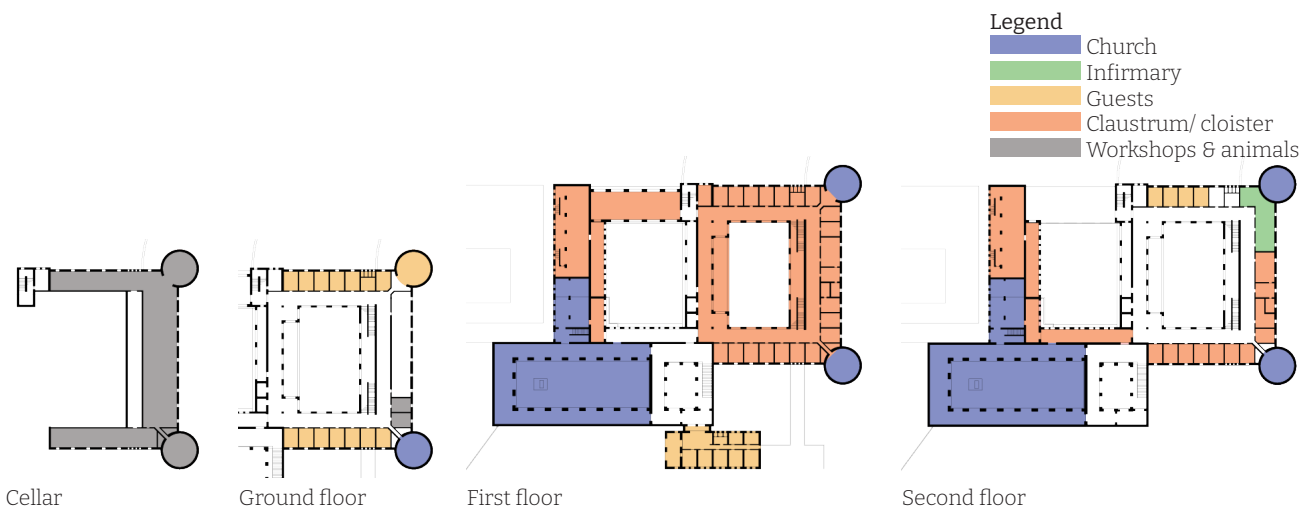


Figure 4.8. Schematic floor plans of the St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals: St. Gall zones.

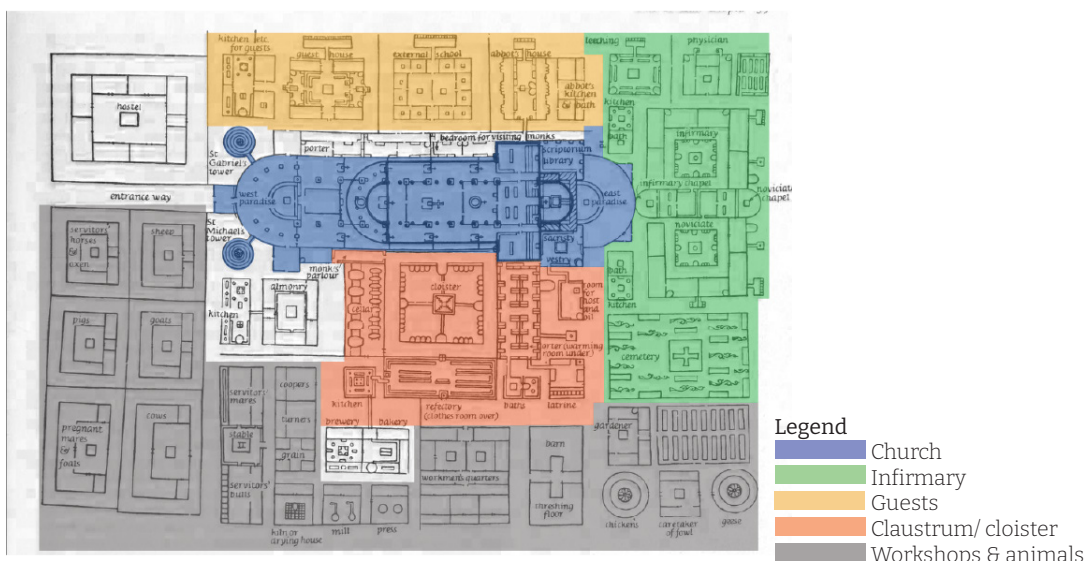


Figure 4.9. The Plan of St. Gall redrawn: The four zones & the church highlighted.

Apart from the church and the four zones, the St. Gall floor plan also featured shelters for the poor and rooms for the pilgrims. The Benedictines consider caring for the poor and receiving pilgrims as necessary. Both the St. Adalbert's Abbey and the St. Benedictusberg Abbey welcome the poor at the guest wing. In Vaals, a special wing provides rooms for pilgrims. In Egmond a couple of guest chambers are reserved for pilgrims.

Despite some resemblances to the St. Gall Utopia, there are still differences. Father Mathieu (personal communication, April 10, 2023) suggests that these differences can be explained by the changing role in society of the Abbeys. In the Middle Ages, the monastery served as an educational centre and a hospital. Nowadays, the Netherlands has excellent schools and modern hospitals. Also, today's monasteries are smaller and have fewer monks. Father Mathieu emphasizes that, although a healthy monastery can be self-sufficient, it always exists in an environment and lives in symbiosis with that environment. The monks strive for self-sufficiency, but this is more challenging in 2023 than in the past (Father Mathieu, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

CONCLUSION

In the 20th century, there was a renewed interest in monasteries in the Netherlands. However, after the 80 Years' War, Enlightenment, and French Revolution, there were few habitable monasteries left in the country. This led to the commissioning of A.J. Kropholler to design a new monastery in Egmond in 1929, and later in 1955, Dom Hans van der Laan was tasked with completing the design of the Böhm & Weber monastery in Vaals. Both of these were Benedictine monasteries.

The Benedictine way of life is characterized by a strict structure, which emphasizes prayer, work, and study. As such, the architecture and layout of the monastery were seen as a means of integrating these rules into the daily routine. The Utopia of St. Gall was considered the ideal layout of a monastery according to the Benedictine Rule. However this ideal was designed in the ninth century, when monasteries had a different role in society. How did the architects A.J. Kropholler and Dom Hans van der Laan incorporate the Benedictine Rule into their modern abbeys? And did the two architects, A.J. Kropholler draw inspiration from the Medieval ideal?

Both St. Adalbert's Abbey in Egmond and St. Benedictusberg Abbey in Vaals have floor plans that include spaces that contribute to the practice of the Benedictine rule. These monasteries still have churches, libraries, and workshops. However, comparing both abbeys to the Utopia of St. Gall reveals differences that can be explained by the changing role of the monastery. In addition, the monasteries in St. Gall's time were very large and wealthy, while the Dutch monasteries are only inhabited by a dozen monks. Both abbeys still receive guests, have workshops, care for the poor, and behave like a cell. However, the size of the infirmaries has decreased, and the monastery is no longer an educational center where one learns to read.

Nevertheless, the monks are aware of these changes and adapt by making changes in the monastery. They embrace technology and incorporate it into their routines. For example, reading can now be done on a computer instead of in the library.

Finally, the abbeys differ from each other, which can be explained by the circumstances in which they were built, as well as their location and style. The Abbey of Vaals is less accessible because of the way the church is entered, while the church in Egmond can be entered directly.

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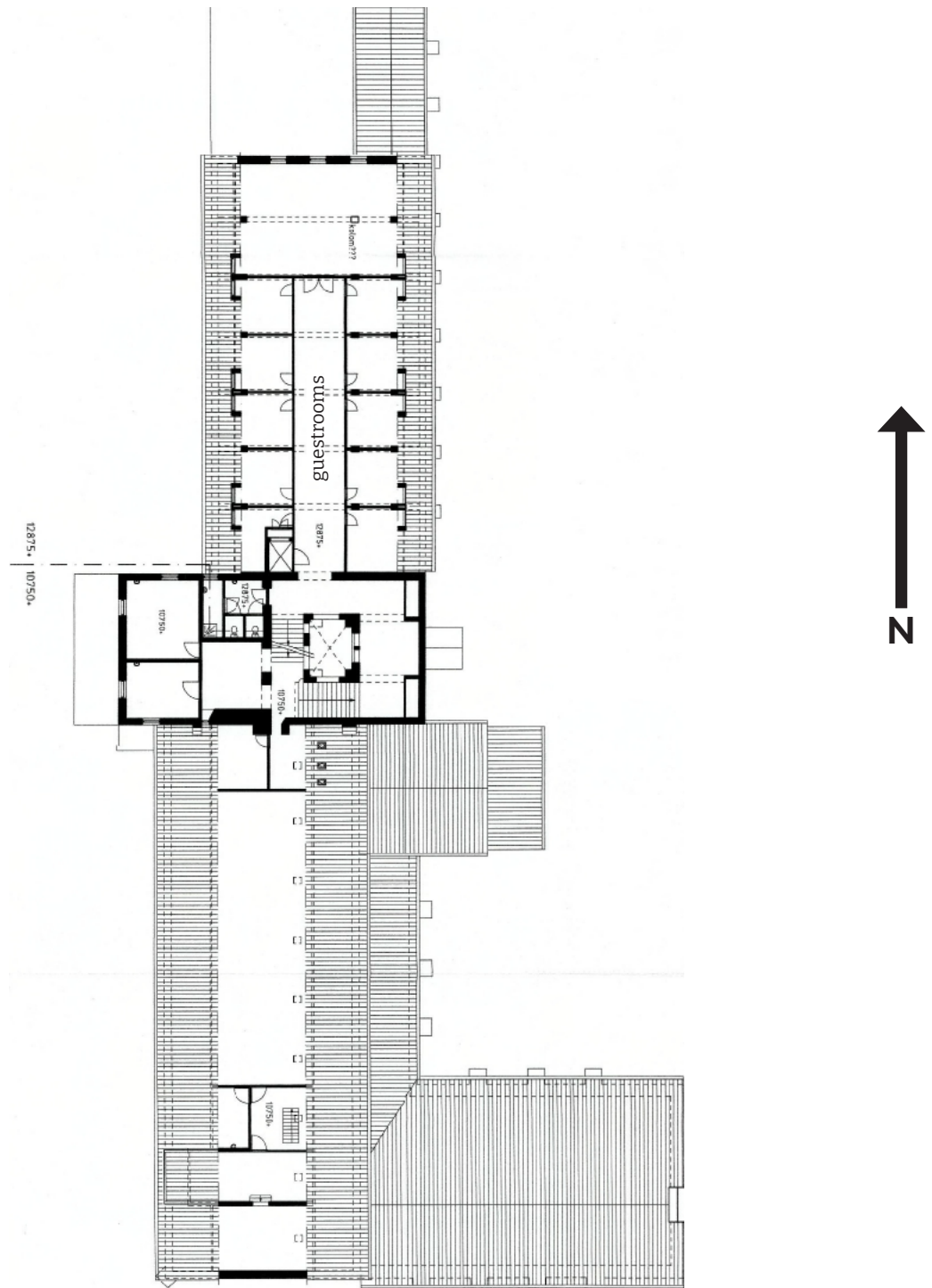
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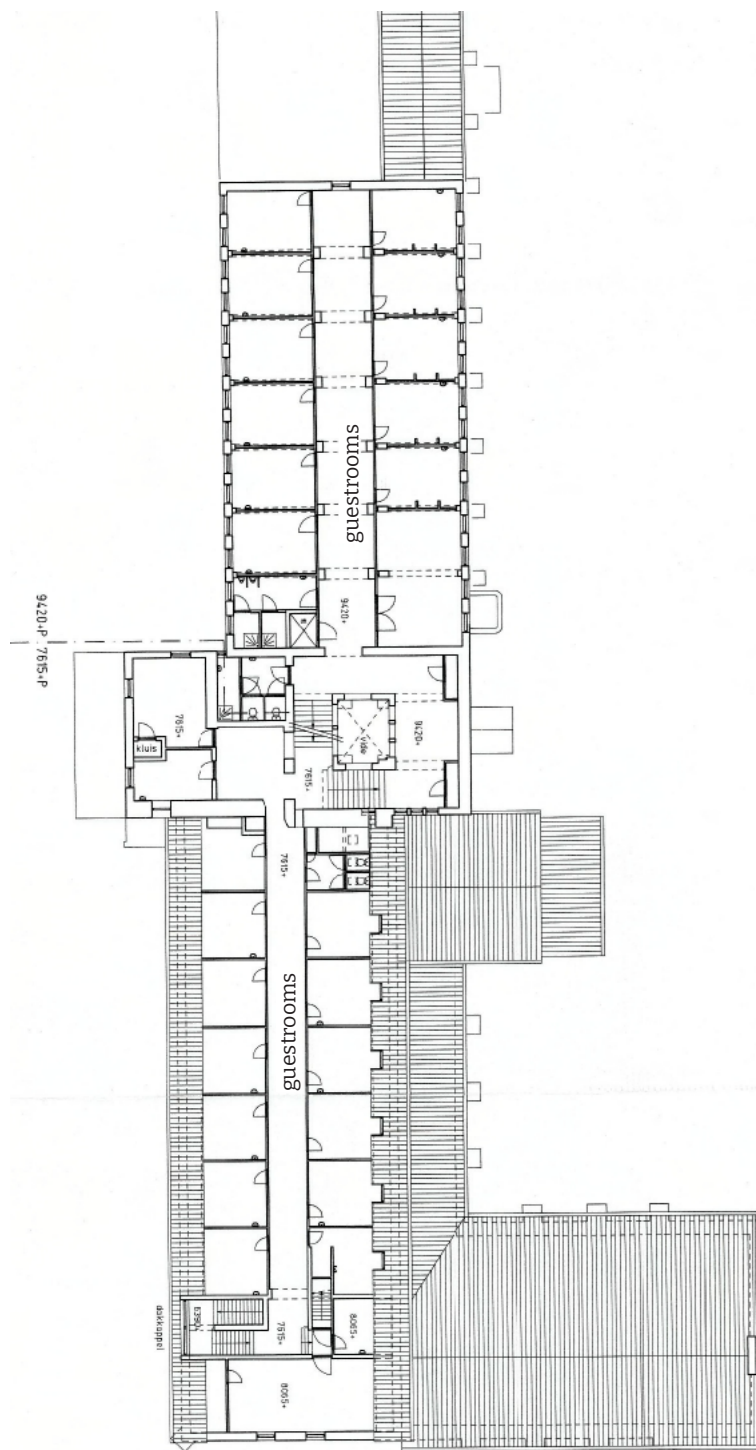
APPENDIX A

FLOOR PLANS ST. ADALBERT'S ABBEY, EGMOND (1955)

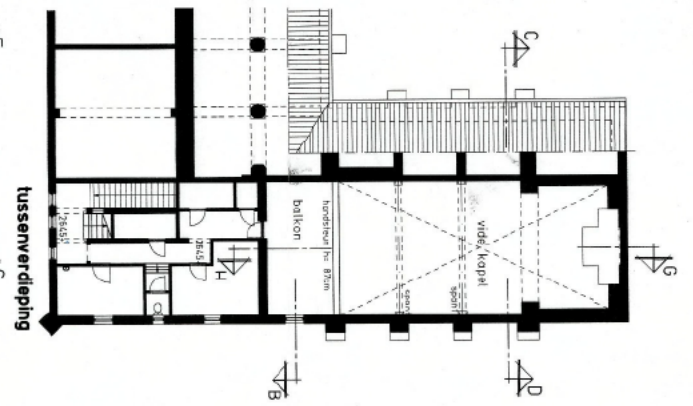
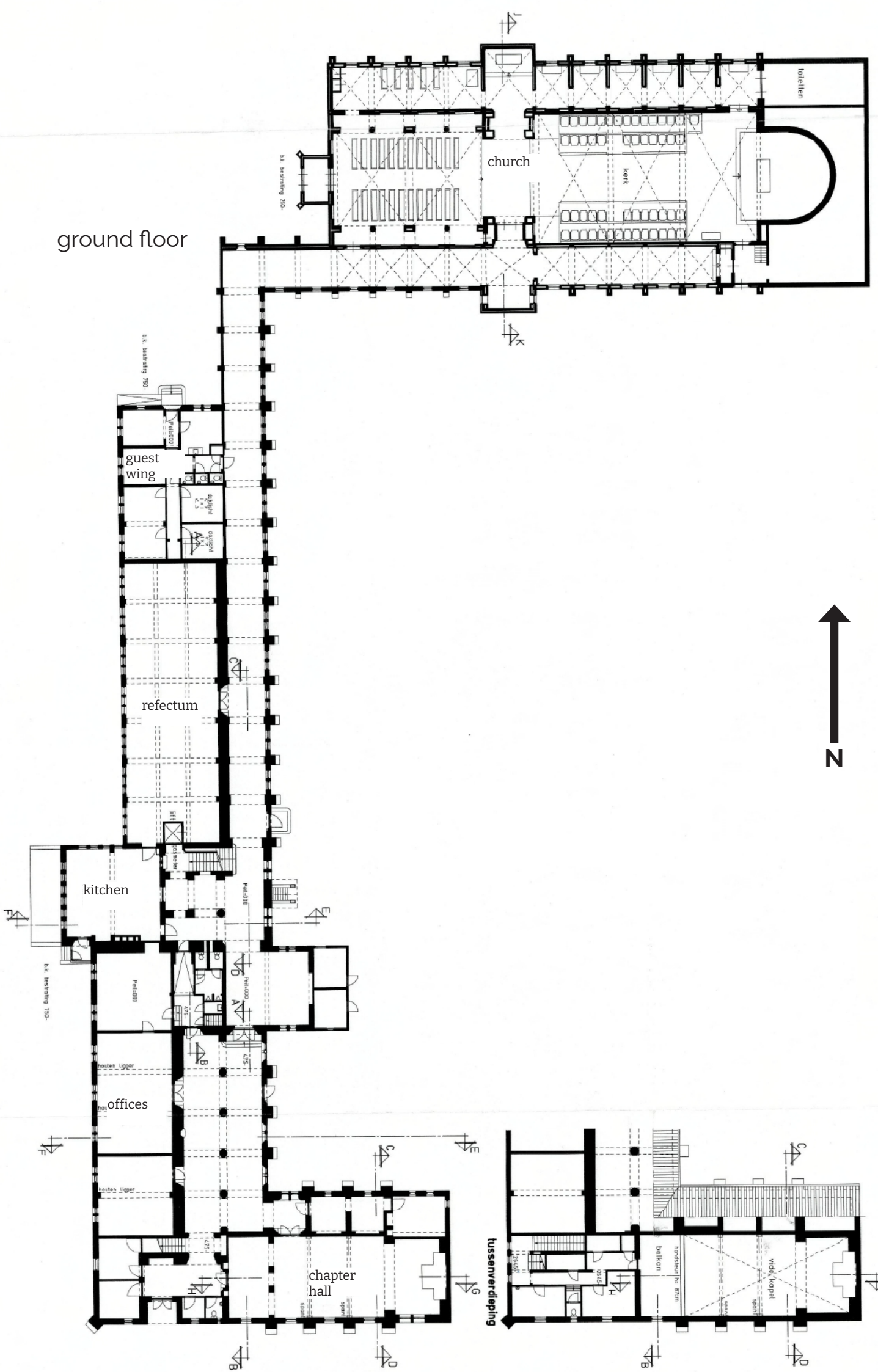
third floor



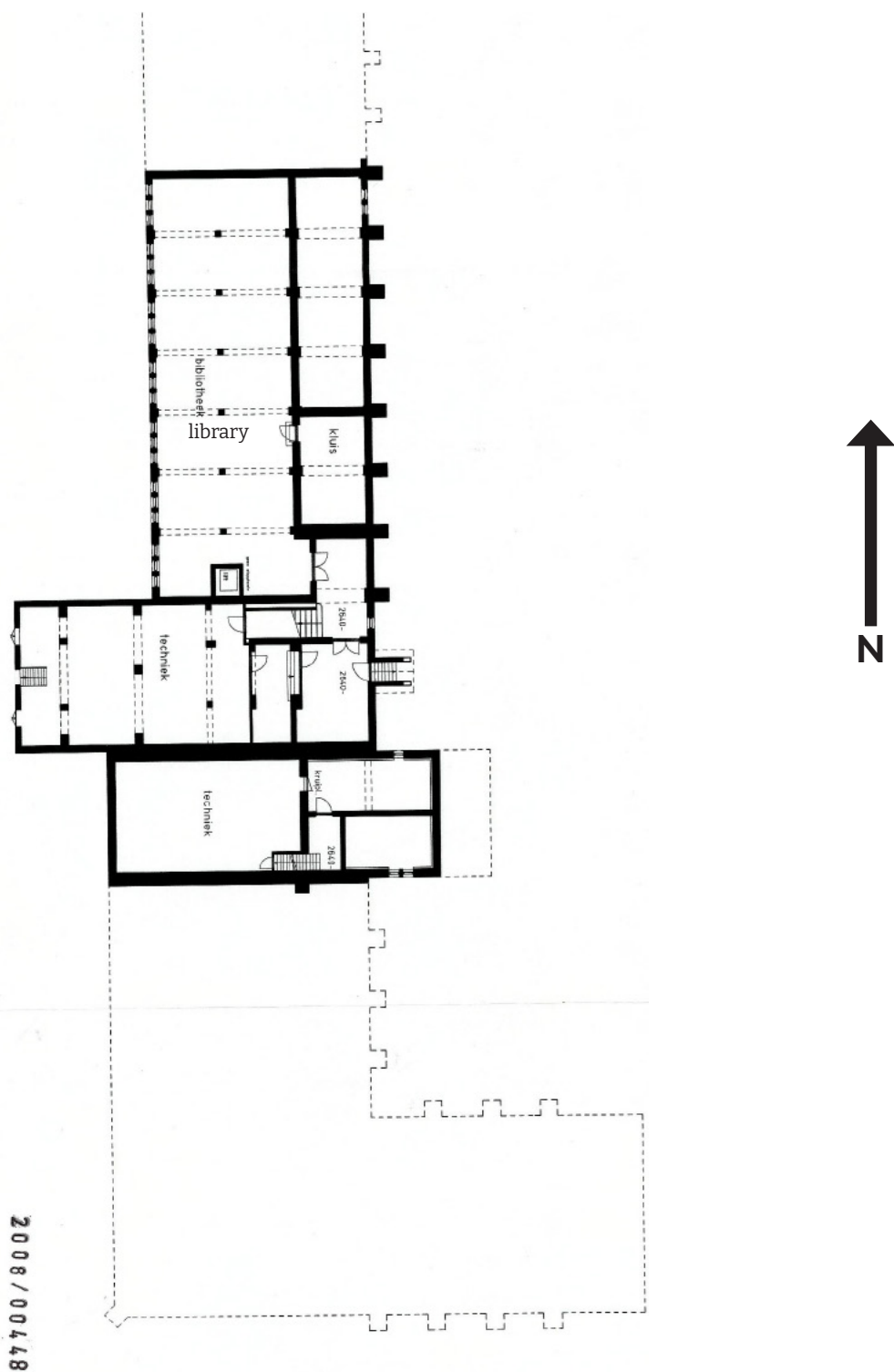
second floor



ground floor



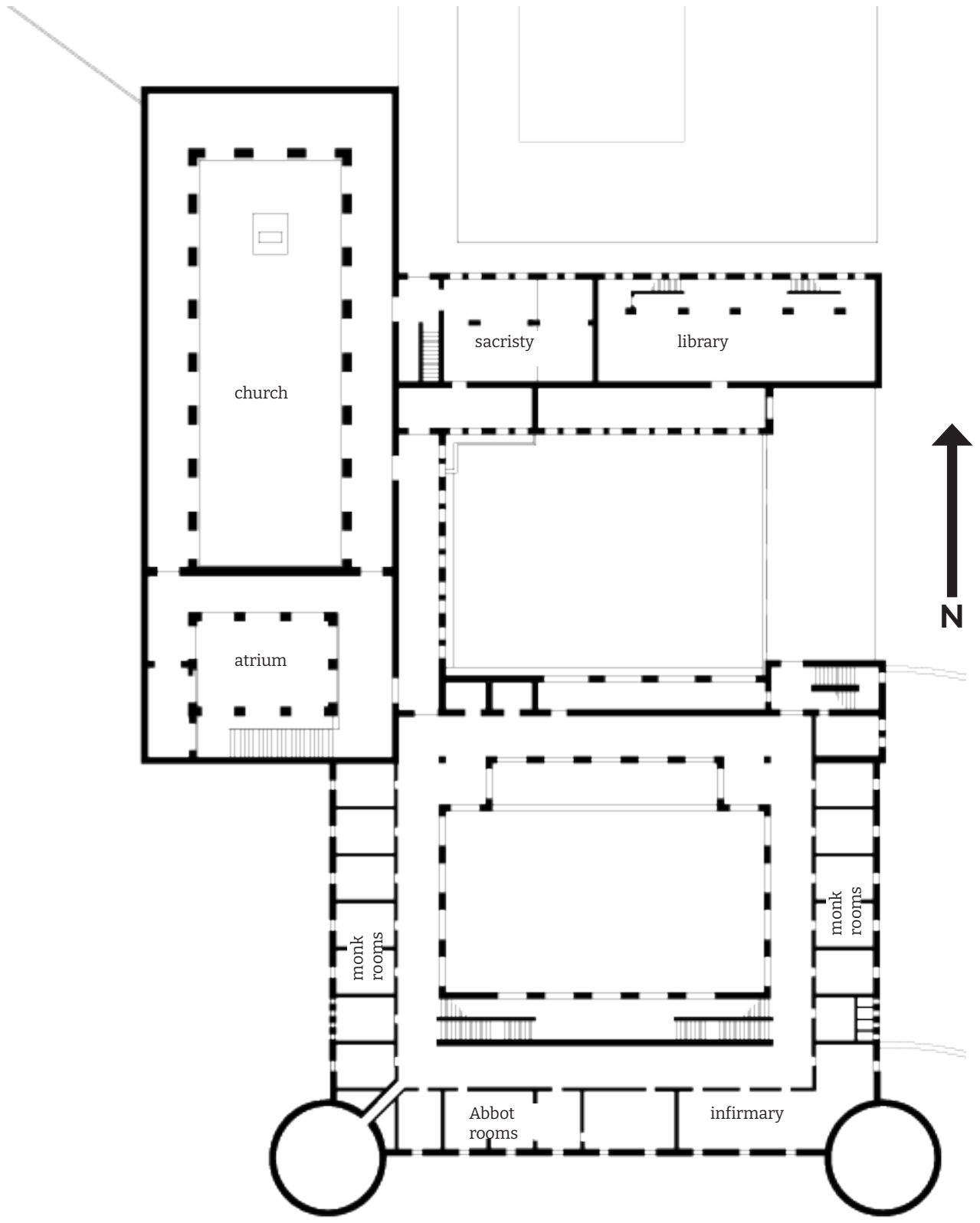
cellar



APPENDIX B

FLOOR PLANS ST. BENEDICTUSBERG ABBEY, VAALS

second floor



first floor

