

Section 9 The Medieval Monastery: The Plan of St. Gall

Topics

- the liturgical and social organization of a medieval monastic community, as expressed in plan
- the graphic representation of three-dimensional forms; the logic of signification
- how a plan may be interpreted as a construction document coding information, an expression of values and beliefs, or as an intellectual tool for study and reflection upon higher purposes

Background

The plan of St. Gall is drawn in red ink on a 30.5 inch x 44 inch sheet of vellum sewn together from five separate pieces. Latin inscriptions in dark brown ink identify the buildings. A dedicatory legend is located to the east, i.e. the top margin above the cemetery/orchard. It reads:

For thee, my sweetest son Gozbertus, have I drawn this brief annotated copy of the layout of the monastic buildings with which you may exercise your ingenuity and recognize my devotion, whereby I trust you do not find me slow to satisfy your wishes. do not imagine that I have undertaken this task supposing you to stand in need of our instruction but rather believe that out of love of God and in the friendly zeal of brotherhood I have depicted this for you alone to scrutinize. Farewell in Christ, always mindful of us. Amen.

The plan of St. Gall is referred to as a copy, *exempla ta*, suggesting that it is a tracing of an original prototype. The circumstances under which the original was produced are unknown. The copy, i.e. the plan of St. Gall, was made in the monastery of Reichenau, possibly by Haito, Bishop of Basel and Abbot of Reichenau. It was presented to Gozbert, Abbot of St. Gall (816-836) who planned to rebuild the entire monastery; only the church was actually constructed (830-836). The prototype probably dates from 817. The St. Gall plan was copied c. 820.

The plan was not made for a specific site. It is an ideal plan incorporating the monastic reforms promulgated at the synods held at Louis the Pious' palace in Aachen in 816 and 817. Those reforms acknowledged in the plan of St. Gall are the inclusion of houses for workmen within the monastic enclave (they previously lived extramurally); the provision of a special dormitory on the side of the church for visiting monks; and the transfer of the school for laymen and secular priests from the cloister which is preserved unique for the monks.

The plan of St. Gall was a statement of policy drawn up on the highest levels of political and ecclesiastical administration and conceived within the framework of a monastic reform movement whose overriding preoccupation was to establish unity (*unitas*) where life had been controlled by disparate traditions (*diversitas*), to put a single rule (*una regula, una consuetudo*) in the place of the mixed tradition (*regula mixta*). [Horn and Born, vol. I, p.52.]

At the end of the 12th century, the blank back side of the plan was used for the inscription of the Life of St. Martin. Having exhausted this space, the scribe erased the building in the northwest corner of the plan in order to complete his text. This building probably was intended to house the vassals and knights in the emperor's retinue. The hagiographical text obscured the importance of the plan until the 17th century when Henricus Canisius (1604) and Jean Mabillon (1704) published the explanatory captions.

Terms

claustrum: the main cloister in the monastery. In classical literature the claustrum was the bolt or bar that locked a door. This idea transfers to "the body as prison of the soul" (Meyvaert).

refectory: the dining room in the monastery. Derived from the Latin *reficere* (to remake or restore), via late Latin *refectorium* (a place one goes to be restored).

enclosure: area where only the professed monks can go-it does not always follow the outside wall of the monastery but is a separate boundary inside it.

monasticism: quest for union with God through prayer, penance, and separation from the world.

monk: a man who makes vows but is not ordained.

order: a category of Catholic *religious institute*, "a society in which members... pronounce public vows... and lead a life of brothers or sisters in common" (Code of Canon Law, 607 §1). One of these categories is monastics, monks or nuns living and working in a monastery and reciting the *opus dei*.

opus dei: "divine office," ceaseless prayer, the canonical hours which provide the main structure for monastic life.

regular clergy: a priest that follows the Rule.

secular clergy: a priest that does not follow the Rule.

lay brother: a monk but not a priest.

conversi: do not take vows but live in the monastery and do the manual labor.

Schedule of a monastic day

(based on the *Regularis Concordia*, a common rule of life to be observed by all monasteries, c. 970)

1:30am Preparation for night office (Nocturns); *trina oratorio* and gradual psalms.

2:00am Nocturns (Latin *nocturnus*: by night)

The first service in the Liturgy of Hours. Prayed at the beginning of the new day between mid-night and daybreak. Includes prayers for the royal family and for the dead.

3:30am Matins (Lauds; Latin *matutinus*: morning) at daybreak.

Chanted or recited in choir at the end of the night, before dawn.

4:00am Change and wash

5:00am Trina Oratorio, Reading

6:00am Prime (Latin *prima*: first), Morrow Mass, Chapter

Consisted of a hymn, three psalms, a Scripture reading, versicles and responses and a concluding prayer.

7:30am Work

8:00am Terce (Latin *tertia*: third), Sung Mass

Celebrated at the third hour of the Liturgy of Hours. Originating from the early practice of commemorating different moments in Christ's Passion at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day.

Terce was associated with the Crucifixion.

9:30am Reading

11:30am Sext (Latin *sext*: sixth)

Prayed at the "sixth hour", roughly around noon. A brief service with little variation in text and song.

12:00pm Dinner

1:00pm Siesta

2:30pm None (Latin *nona hora*: ninth hour), Drink

Marked the ninth hour from dawn. Another brief service with little variation in text and song.

3:00pm Work

5:30pm Supper

6:00pm Vespers (Latin *vespers*: evening star)

Celebrated in the early evening as daylight ended. Included a hymn, two psalms, a canticle, a Scripture reading, a proper responsory, the Magnificat with its antiphon, a litany of intercessory prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and a concluding blessing.

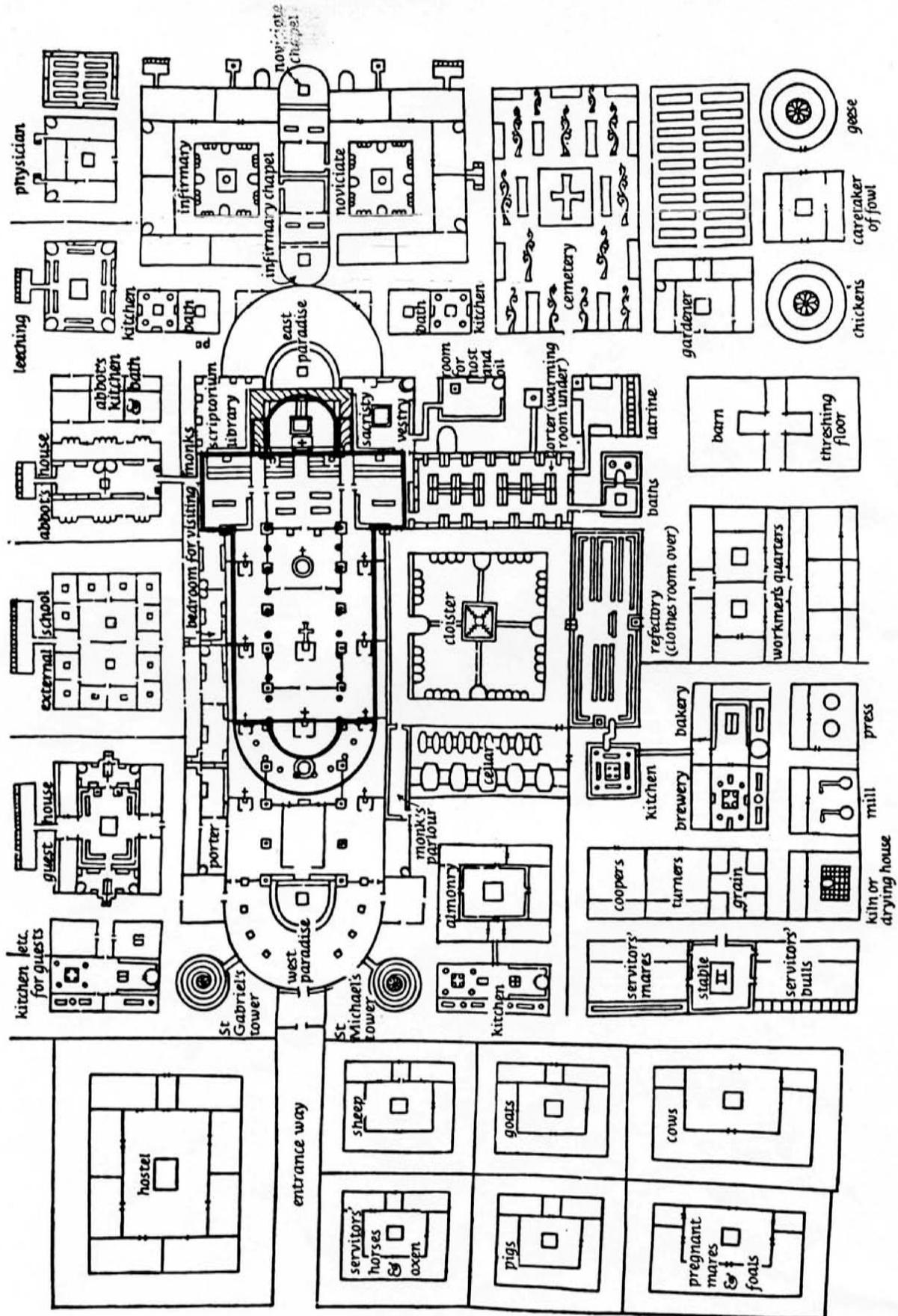
7:30pm Change into night shoes, Collatio

A group method of prayer where a Scripture is read aloud, then each participant tells how the Scripture is speaking to them.

8:00pm Compline (Latin *complere*: to complete)

The night service that signalled the end of the day. Consisted of a short lesson, confession, three psalms and responsory, hymn, canticle and Marian Antiphon.

8:15pm Bed



28 The St Gall plan redrawn, with identifications translated

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