

# Sacred Stewardship—Theological Reflections on Materials Management in the Rule of St. Benedict

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## Abstract

A careful reading of the Rule of St. Benedict (BR) reveals a distinctive integration of materials management and spiritual sanctification that has often been overlooked. Within this framework, the cellarer functions not merely as an administrator but as a dedicated logistician, responsible for overseeing food and material stocks, coordinating production in workshops and farms, and maintaining buildings and infrastructure according to the rhythm of monastic life. By transforming everyday tasks into structured practices imbued with moral and spiritual significance, monastic materials management ensures the autonomy, stability, and resilience of the community. This research paper demonstrates that such practices anticipate principles of contemporary materials management, showing that planning, coordination, foresight, and resource optimization are not only practical necessities but also ethical and pedagogical instruments. The analysis positions BR as an early historical model of integrated organization, in which administrative routines, canonical norms, and spiritual formation mutually reinforce one another. It offers enduring lessons on the interplay between operational efficiency, communal cohesion, and moral formation, illustrating how practical organization can become a medium for both ethical education and spiritual cultivation, with relevance extending beyond monastic contexts.

**Keywords:** Canon law, Community, Logistics, Materials management, Monasticism, Rule of St. Benedict, Spirituality

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## 1. Introduction

The study of the Rule of St. Benedict (BR hereafter) has traditionally emphasized spiritual discipline and ascetic practice, often overlooking the sophisticated management of material resources embedded in monastic life.<sup>1</sup> A detailed examination of the BR reveals that logistical oversight—including inventory control, distribution of products, and maintenance of infrastructure—is far from a purely administrative exercise. These tasks function as a theological praxis, where rational organization serves spiritual ends, cultivating virtues such as prudence, attentiveness, and humility. BR demonstrates that practical administration and moral formation are mutually reinforcing, providing a framework for autonomy, cohesion, and resilience within the monastic community. Contemporary management science argues, recognizes planning, coordination, and control as essential dimensions of organizational activity, extending beyond conventional enterprises into broader social and ethical domains. By situating Benedictine logistics within this philosophical lens, it becomes evident that the BR anticipates modern concerns about sustainability, governance, and ethical responsibility. Monastic management exemplifies a model in which operational efficiency is inseparable from moral cultivation, encouraging reflection on how everyday organizational tasks can mediate both communal welfare and spiritual growth in structured, purposeful ways.

The resonance with the doctrinal tradition of the Church emerges clearly when considering the theology of work and creation developed in modern Catholic thought. John Paul II (1981), in *Laborem Exercens*, presents human labor not merely as an economic necessity but as a participation in God's ongoing creative action, thereby conferring upon work a profound anthropological and moral significance. Labor, in this perspective, contributes to the formation of the human person, shaping responsibility, discipline, and ethical awareness. In continuity

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<sup>1</sup> Materials management encompasses logistical practices designed to guarantee that all raw materials and components required for product manufacturing or project completion are available at the appropriate time and location. Its origins trace back to Fordism, when companies in the United States prioritized avoiding shortages and minimizing waste while sustaining efficient supply chains. In practice, materials management entails anticipating needs, procuring and storing resources systematically, and ensuring timely distribution. Applications extend beyond manufacturing sectors. Hospitals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and even religious communities can implement materials management principles to optimize resource use, prevent disruptions, and maintain operational continuity. A concise overview of these principles is provided in Stephen *et al.* (2022).

with such an approach, Benedict XVI (2005), in *Deus Caritas Est*, underscores that organized activity, even in its most technical or administrative expressions, may serve as a vehicle of charity, provided it remains oriented toward the good of others and guided by ethical intentionality. Practical organization, therefore, cannot be reduced to instrumental rationality alone but must be understood as embedded within a broader moral horizon. Considered from such a perspective, structured forms of material administration reveal an underlying theological anthropology in which work, order, and care for resources participate in a unified movement toward moral coherence and spiritual maturation. Such a perspective invites further consideration of how these principles are concretely enacted within social and organizational contexts.

The anthropological perspective provided by Kirsch (2008) complements the Benedictine framework, emphasizing that the transmission of spiritual or religious values depends upon the practical organization of movement, communication, and material resources. In his study of Pentecostal and prophet-healing movements in southern Africa, Kirsch (2008) illustrates that faith practices are inseparable from materials management, whether through the transport of texts, use of radio broadcasts, or itinerant evangelism. These operations require infrastructures, vehicles, and human intermediaries, creating potential tensions when worldly instruments appear at odds with the intended spiritual message. Such insights resonate with the BR, wherein careful coordination of resources ensures both material sufficiency and ethical fidelity. Framed as a theological hermeneutic of daily labor, emphasizing praxis, ritualized activity, and the sacramental character of work, monastic materials management constitutes a pedagogical medium that shapes novices' behavior, structures daily life, and instills virtues such as obedience, cooperation, and responsibility. Integrating spiritual aims with practical tasks, the BR demonstrates that management practices are formative rather than neutral. Moreover, situating monastic administration within legal and canonical frameworks underscores its normative dimension, ensuring that property, accounts, and food distribution are conducted under disciplined, ethically accountable procedures, which aligns with broader principles highlighted by the philosophy of management science.

Finally, Benedictine materials management operates as an educational and ethical instrument, transforming ordinary labor into structured spiritual practice. Crop planning, food preservation, infrastructure maintenance, and resource allocation are simultaneously practical and moral exercises, creating a rhythm of life that cultivates attentiveness, prudence, and communal solidarity. Monastic logistics teaches resilience and foresight, ensuring that communities remain autonomous, ethically oriented, and operationally effective. This dual function of administrative tasks demonstrates that organization is inseparable from ethical and spiritual cultivation, reflecting an early model of integrated governance. Modern studies in management philosophy, as Nwanegbo-Ben (2015) emphasizes, highlight the necessity of clarifying objectives, planning processes, and coordinating resources to achieve social and organizational goals, principles that find historical precedent in the BR. By approaching Benedictine practices as both operational and moral frameworks, this research note proposes a *theological hermeneutic of materials management*, highlighting the praxis of daily labor and the sacramental dimension of work. Such an approach positions the BR not merely as a spiritual text but as a sophisticated blueprint of administration, pedagogy, and ethical formation, providing enduring lessons on the synergy between materials management, communal well-being, and moral responsibility, with insights relevant to both historical and contemporary organizational contexts.

#### Methodological Box

This research note adopts a historical organization studies perspective, combining interpretive textual analysis with a historically informed reading of the BR as *organizational artifact*. Rather than attempting an exhaustive reconstruction of medieval monastic life, the study examines how the BR conceptualizes governance, logistical coordination, material administration, and spiritual discipline within a unified institutional framework. The analysis is based primarily on close reading of the BR, with particular attention to chapters addressing authority, labor organization, resource allocation, storage, obedience, and the responsibilities of the cellarer. Such passages were systematically cross-referenced with secondary historical, theological, and organizational scholarship in order to contextualize Benedictine practices and identify recurring organizational mechanisms related to coordination, accountability, discipline, and communal stability. The interpretive strategy follows recent developments in historical methods in management and organization studies emphasizing contextualized engagement with normative texts, archives, and institutional systems to produce theoretically informed historical interpretations (Harvey & Maclean, 2023; Heller, 2023). The study also draws on hermeneutic approaches attentive to meaning production, and the performative dimensions of organizational texts (Rowlinson *et al.*, 2023). Similar methodological strategies have been employed by Ahonen (2012) and Gylfe (2025), who analyze monastic rules, spaces, and religious institutions as organizational forms rather than solely as objects of ecclesiastical history. Because the BR primarily articulates an idealized normative order, however, interpretive caution remains necessary, particularly when distinguishing prescriptive intentions from historically variable practices across monastic contexts.

## 2. Organizing Spirituality

Written in 530, the BR articulates a vision of monastic life in which material practices are closely regulated within a framework of communal discipline and spiritual observance (de Vogüé, 1996). Within this textual framework, the cellarer is designated as the monk responsible for the provision and distribution of goods necessary for the daily functioning of the monastery. His responsibilities include the supervision of food supplies, the oversight of storage spaces, the maintenance of tools and buildings, and the organization of tasks related to material upkeep. The BR specifies that the cellarer acts under the authority of the abbot, who retains ultimate responsibility for the governance of the monastic community. Chapter 31 emphasizes the moral expectations attached to this office, stating that goods must be treated “*as if he were caring for the sacred vessels of the altar*” (Benoît de Nursie, 2011 [c. 530], p. 52). The text presents a regulated vision of monastic life in which duties are clearly assigned and daily activities are framed by rules intended to ensure regularity and stability. At the same time, the normative character of the BR suggests that actual monastic practice may have involved variation, adjustment, and practical negotiation in response to material constraints. Clark (2020) underlines that the wide diffusion of the BR across Latin Europe contributed to its status as a foundational monastic text, widely copied and transmitted across different regions and historical contexts. Other monastic rules, by contrast, did not achieve comparable dissemination and gradually fell into disuse. The BR therefore occupies a central position in the documentary tradition of Western monasticism, shaping the description of monastic life through its prescriptive articulation of roles, duties, and material responsibilities within the community.

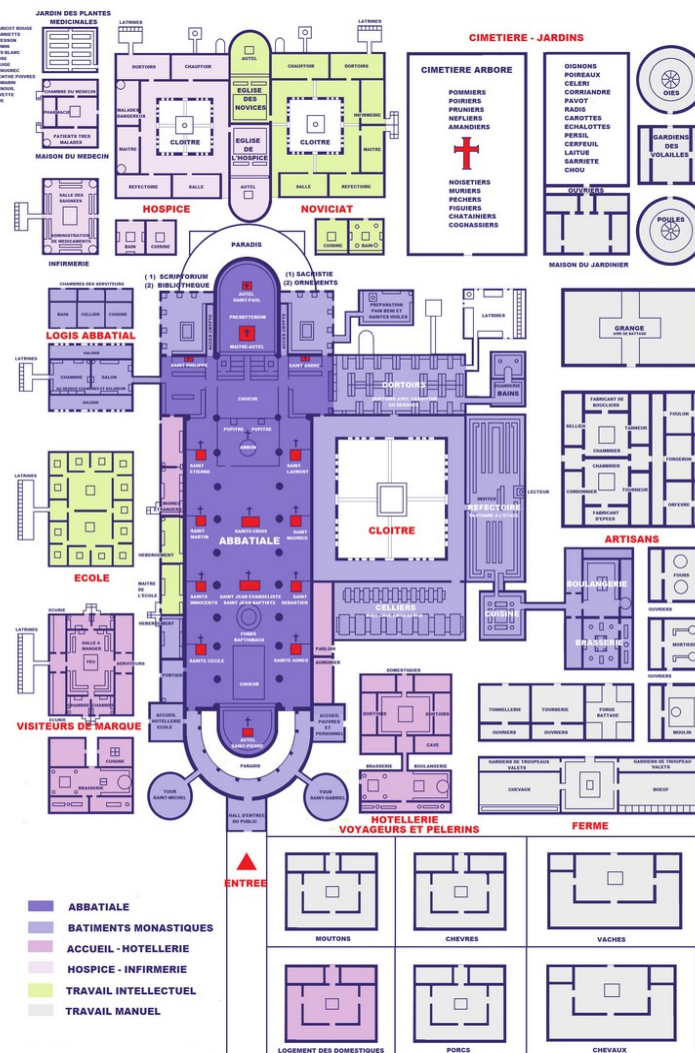
The BR also assigns an important role to the formation of younger monks through participation in daily tasks under supervision. The cellarer, in particular, is involved in the instruction of novices who assist in the handling of goods, the measurement of provisions, the storage of foodstuffs, and the maintenance of material resources within the monastery (Hiebl & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2014). These activities are described in the sources as part of the gradual integration of new members into the monastic community. Through repeated engagement with practical tasks, novices become familiar with the routines of monastic life, including the preparation of food, the organization of stored goods, and the maintenance of essential supplies (Ullman, 1973). The BR presents activities as part of a structured process of monastic formation in which obedience and attentiveness are cultivated through participation in daily labor. The text emphasizes that such tasks are not separate from monastic life but integrated into its regular rhythm, contributing to the stability of the community as a whole. Moonan (1992) highlights that manual work in monastic contexts is consistently described in the sources as part of a broader framework of discipline and observance. Within textual tradition, labor is presented as an element of monastic life that supports both the maintenance of the community and the formation of individual monks. The cellarer appears in this context as a figure responsible not only for overseeing material goods but also for ensuring the transmission of practical knowledge necessary for the continuity of monastic practice across generations.

The organization of material resources within Benedictine monasteries is consistently described in normative and narrative sources as being guided by principles of moderation, restraint, and avoidance of excess (Evangelisti, 2004). The BR, together with related monastic texts, emphasizes that goods should be used strictly in accordance with communal needs, with particular attention devoted to preventing waste, disorder, or unequal distribution within the monastic setting. Within this framework, agricultural production, food preparation, and artisanal labor appear as routine and interdependent dimensions of monastic life, structured according to both seasonal cycles and the liturgical calendar that governs communal time. Documentary evidence further indicates that monasteries did not function as isolated units but maintained exchanges with other religious houses, including the redistribution of surplus goods across institutional networks, thereby embedding monastic communities within wider circuits of material circulation (Bonnerue, 1995). These exchanges, while variable across time and space, reflect the embeddedness of monastic communities within broader regional and ecclesiastical environments rather than autonomous self-sufficiency. Architectural and archaeological sources provide an additional layer of evidence for understanding how such practices were materially organized in space, a dynamic most explicitly illustrated by the Plan of St. Gall (Willis, 1848).

Building directly on a spatial and normative framework, the Plan of St. Gall offers one of the most detailed schematic representations of an ideal Benedictine monastic complex in the high Middle Ages, providing a carefully articulated vision of spatial organization aligned with communal, liturgical, and material requirements (see Figure 1). At the core of this design lies the spiritual nucleus of the abbey, structured around the church, cloister, and immediately adjoining spaces, which together constitute the primary locus of liturgical practice and communal prayer. Surrounding the central area are the principal residential and intellectual buildings of monastic

life, including the dormitory, refectory, and spaces devoted to reading, study, and manuscript production, reflecting the structured alternation between prayer, rest, and intellectual activity characteristic of monastic discipline. Beyond the core areas, the plan extends to spaces dedicated to formation and hospitality, notably the quarters reserved for novices and the guesthouse, thereby illustrating both the process of incorporation into monastic life and the obligation of receiving external visitors. Moving outward from the central enclosure, the scheme allocates distinct zones to material and productive activities, including artisanal workshops such as forge, carpentry, and tannery, as well as facilities for food preparation, including bakery, kitchen, and brewery, together with storage structures such as barns and cellars. Spatial differentiation between productive areas and the liturgical center is consistently maintained, while proximity enables the circulation necessary for daily monastic functioning. In addition, the Plan of St Gall incorporates agricultural zones, livestock areas, and hydraulic infrastructure, reflecting the material requirements of monastic life. Finally, designated spaces for the reception of the poor and pilgrims underscore the embeddedness of charitable obligations within monastic organization. Overall, the Plan of St. Gall articulates a coherent spatial logic in which spiritual practice, material activity, and communal responsibility are distributed within a unified but differentiated architectural framework.

Figure 1. Reconstruction of the Plan of St. Gall



Source: Illustration by Jchancerel, CC BY-SA 4.0 (2017).

### 3. Organizing Authority

Monastic life governed by the BR developed within a broader environment of ecclesiastical norms, customary practices, and legal traditions that shaped the organization of religious communities throughout the early and

high Middle Ages. From the early medieval period onward, monasteries were embedded in overlapping normative contexts that included canon law, regional customs, and privileges granted by ecclesiastical authorities. These frameworks provided guidance for issues such as property holding, internal discipline, communal obligations, and relations with external actors, although their application varied significantly across regions and historical periods. Kieser (1987) observes that medieval monasteries represent early examples of communities structured by written norms that prescribed duties and regulated aspects of collective life. However, such normative frameworks should be understood within their historical context as part of broader ecclesiastical traditions rather than as formalized administrative systems in a modern sense. Canonical and customary rules defined expectations regarding obedience, stability, and the distribution of resources necessary for monastic life. They also contributed to the resolution of conflicts within communities, particularly in situations involving disputes over property, disciplinary infractions, or external pressures such as political instability or economic scarcity. In this sense, monastic communities operated within a dense web of prescriptions that shaped daily life while remaining dependent on local interpretation and adaptation. These normative structures did not eliminate variation in practice but rather provided a framework within which monastic communities organized their internal affairs and maintained continuity over time. The BR itself constitutes one of the most influential of these texts, offering prescriptions that structured the daily life of monastic communities through clearly defined roles, obligations, and routines.

Within this normative environment, the office of the cellarer described in the BR occupies a central place among the regulated responsibilities of monastic officials. Chapters 31 and 33 assign to the cellarer the care of provisions, the supervision of stored goods, and the distribution of necessary resources to members of the community under the authority of the abbot (Benoît de Nursie, 2011 [c. 530], pp. 52–54). The abbot retains ultimate authority over the monastery and is responsible for both spiritual governance and external relations, while the cellarer operates within the sphere of daily material administration. Later canonical compilations, including the *Decretum Gratiani*, incorporate norms concerning property, donations, and ecclesiastical goods, reflecting the gradual development of written legal traditions within the Church (Winroth, 2000). These texts demonstrate how monastic life became increasingly documented through normative writings that defined responsibilities and established procedures for managing communal resources. However, the interpretation and application of these norms varied across different monastic communities and historical contexts. The cellarer is consistently represented in the sources as a figure responsible for ensuring the availability of food, maintaining storage spaces, and organizing the distribution of goods required for daily monastic life. These tasks are presented as part of the regulated functioning of the monastery, embedded within a framework of obedience and communal discipline. The sources emphasize the importance of reliability, attentiveness, and conformity to monastic rules in the execution of these responsibilities. Through these prescriptions, monastic texts define a structured set of roles that contribute to the stability and continuity of communal life, while remaining adaptable to local conditions and practical constraints encountered in different historical settings.

The development of monastic privileges and institutional arrangements in major abbeys illustrates how ecclesiastical norms contributed to structuring religious communities across medieval Europe. The abbey of Cluny, founded in 910, benefited from papal protection that granted a significant degree of autonomy from local episcopal authority,<sup>1</sup> thereby shaping the conditions under which internal governance and external relations were organized (Rennie, 2018). This status also influenced the configuration of its dependent priories and the circulation of resources within an expanding network of affiliated houses, although the concrete modalities of these relations evolved over time and were subject to historical variation. In a different institutional context, the Cistercian order, emerging in the early twelfth century, elaborated its own normative corpus, most notably the *Carta Caritatis*, which defined mechanisms of visitation, correction, and coordination among affiliated monasteries (Newman, 2021). Rather than establishing uniform procedures, these texts articulated principles intended to structure inter-monastic relations while leaving room for adaptation to local conditions. Geographical constraints, economic resources, and social environments significantly shaped the ways in which such prescriptions were implemented in practice. Across these cases, ecclesiastical privileges, canonical writings, and monastic rules functioned as normative instruments through which authority, obligations, and property relations were articulated and negotiated. Their historical significance lies less in uniform application than in their

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<sup>1</sup> Cluny controlled vast agricultural estates and received donations from lords, managed through a network of dependent priories. These priories oversaw the collection, processing, and transfer of products to the mother house. Several contributions compiled by Mazel *et al.* (2013) highlight how the materials management associated with Cluny exemplifies the implementation of a *monastic economy of scale*, in which centralization underpins power, yet imposes an increasingly heavy organizational burden.

capacity to structure a shared vocabulary of governance while allowing for institutional diversity across monastic landscapes in medieval Europe.

Building on these institutional variations, the analysis can be further specified by distinguishing the different normative layers through which monastic organization was articulated over time. While individual abbeys and monastic orders developed distinct arrangements in response to local conditions and ecclesiastical privileges, certain recurrent principles concerning authority, communal obligation, and material administration can nevertheless be identified across contexts. To clarify how these elements interact across historical phases, Table 1 provides a comparative synthesis of the main normative and operational configurations observed from the BR through to later monastic reforms. Rather than proposing a linear evolution or a unified institutional model, this synthesis organizes key features into distinct historical stages in order to highlight both continuity and differentiation in monastic forms of organization. It draws on early Benedictine prescriptions, canonical developments from the ninth to eleventh centuries, as well as reform movements such as Cluny and the Cistercian order, each contributing specific modifications to the articulation of authority and communal regulation. The purpose of this overview is not to suggest conceptual uniformity across these cases, but rather to facilitate comparison of how normative texts, institutional privileges, and administrative practices interacted in different settings. **Table 1 thereby functions as a structured heuristic device that enables systematic comparison of these evolving configurations, without reducing their historical specificity.** Presented in this form, the synthesis allows for a clearer identification of shifts in the distribution of responsibilities, the formalization of oversight, and the evolving relationship between spiritual authority and material organization within monastic communities.

**Table 1.** Integration of Legal Norms and Governance in Benedictine Monasticism

Organizational level	Normative and spiritual framework	Managerial and logistical implications
<i>BR</i> (6th century)	The BR defines the duties of the cellarer, prohibits private ownership, and requires full obedience to the abbot.	It establishes clear responsibilities, regulates flows, and concentrates decision-making under spiritual authority.
<i>Canon law and monastic customs</i> (9th–11th centuries)	Canon law, papal charters, and local customs provide the legal basis for property rights and community governance.	They regulate donations and accounting, prevent mismanagement, and ensure conformity between economic practices and moral discipline.
<i>Reforming abbeys</i> (Cluny, 10th century)	The charters of Cluny guarantee legal independence and confirm papal protection of the abbey's assets.	They enable managerial autonomy, strengthen coordination among dependent houses, and promote the equitable redistribution of resources.
<i>Cistercian model</i> (11th–12th centuries)	The <i>Carta Caritatis</i> and the <i>General Chapters of Cîteaux</i> define the institutional framework for spiritual and material supervision.	They standardize production processes, formalize auditing procedures, and systematize information exchange across the monastic network.

Source: Own elaboration.

#### 4. Discussion

Monastic life in Benedictine communities involved a wide range of daily practices related to the procurement, storage, and distribution of goods necessary for communal survival. These activities are described in narrative, normative, and archaeological sources as being closely linked to the rhythms of monastic life, including prayer, work, and seasonal agricultural cycles. The BR does not provide a technical account of material organization but offers prescriptions concerning the responsibilities of officials such as the cellarer, who is charged with ensuring the availability of food and goods required for the community. Archaeological and architectural evidence, including the Plan of St. Gall, indicates that monastic spaces were arranged into distinct areas dedicated to storage, production, and religious observance (Horn & Born, 1979). The spatial arrangements reflect a differentiation of functions within monastic enclosures, although their exact implementation varied across sites and historical contexts. Techniques such as drying, salting, and storage in granaries are documented in monastic contexts as methods used to preserve food supplies over time. Crop cultivation, artisanal production, and maintenance activities followed seasonal and liturgical rhythms, structuring the temporal organization of monastic life. Rather than constituting a unified technical system, these practices are best understood as a set of coordinated routines embedded within religious observance and communal discipline. The sources consistently

emphasize the importance of stability, regularity, and collective responsibility in maintaining the material conditions of monastic life.

The organization of production and labor in monastic contexts is particularly evident in the case of the Cistercian order, which developed forms of rural settlement and agricultural exploitation in the twelfth century. At Cîteaux and its daughter houses, monastic communities established granges managed by lay brothers, who were responsible for agricultural work such as livestock breeding and cereal cultivation (Hoffman Berman, 2010). These rural establishments were physically separated from the monastic enclosure, reflecting a division between contemplative life and agricultural production. Documentary evidence, including donation charters and administrative records, provides information on land management, harvest levels, and the circulation of goods between granges and central monasteries (Burton & Kerr, 2016). The *General Chapter* of the Cistercian order issued regulations concerning the supervision of daughter houses and the correction of practices deemed inconsistent with monastic norms (Newman, 2021). Archaeological studies further show variation in settlement patterns, agricultural strategies, and resource use, depending on local environmental conditions such as soil quality, water access, and topography (Ferenczi, 2025). These sources indicate that monastic communities adapted their material practices to diverse geographical and ecological contexts. Exchanges of goods between monasteries, as well as redistribution of surplus resources, are documented as part of inter-monastic relations. However, such exchanges should be understood within the framework of ecclesiastical norms and communal obligations rather than as economic transactions in a modern sense. The evidence collectively points to structured forms of agricultural and material organization embedded within monastic life, shaped by both normative prescriptions and environmental constraints.

Some modern scholarship has interpreted monastic organization through analogies with later forms of service and organizational theory. For instance, Lapert-Munos (2020) discusses how certain aspects of monastic practice have been compared with principles later formalized in service management literature, including the concept of *servuction* (Eiglier & Langeard, 1987). However, such interpretations represent retrospective analytical frameworks rather than descriptions found in medieval sources. The BR and related monastic texts do not articulate concepts of standardized service delivery or organizational modeling in a technical sense. Instead, they prescribe behaviors, roles, and routines intended to regulate communal life within a religious framework. Monastic spaces, as described in sources such as the Plan of St. Gall, can be understood as structured environments in which different activities are assigned to specific locations, including prayer, work, and storage. The organization of daughter houses within monastic orders reflects patterns of dependency and affiliation governed by ecclesiastical authority and written norms. Agricultural, artisanal, and domestic activities are described in the sources as integrated into the daily rhythm of monastic life, structured by liturgical time and seasonal cycles (Zettler, 2015). Historiographical debates concerning monastic self-sufficiency highlight that while some texts emphasize ideals of autonomy, documentary evidence shows that exchanges between communities were frequent (Jamroziak, 2011; Devroey, 2020). These practices are best understood through careful reading of sources rather than through direct analogy with modern organizational frameworks.

Material practices in monastic communities were shaped not only by internal prescriptions but also by a range of external constraints, including climatic variability, agricultural uncertainty, and episodic social disruption. Such conditions affected productivity levels, the reliability of harvests, and the capacity of monastic houses to secure sufficient resources for communal life. Sources from monastic archives, together with later historiographical accounts, emphasize the importance of storage practices and redistribution mechanisms in ensuring continuity during periods of scarcity. Within this context, charitable activities such as the provision of food to the poor are frequently documented and consistently framed within religious and moral registers rather than as autonomous economic exchanges (Leclercq, 1982; Constable, 1997). Written instruments, including inventories and account books, functioned primarily as instruments of internal documentation, enabling continuity of knowledge regarding goods, supplies, and obligations across time. At the same time, these records remained embedded within broader monastic routines structured by prayer, labor, and study, which together organized daily life according to liturgical and communal rhythms. Later interpretations, including those examined by Quartier (2020), highlight the persistence of these practices in subsequent religious contexts, particularly through lay participation in monastic spirituality. While modern scholarship sometimes reframes such activities in terms of efficiency or organizational coherence, contemporary sources consistently situate them within theological and communal frameworks. Taken together, the evidence suggests that material practices were inseparable from religious life and were regulated through normative expectations that shaped both behavior and communal order in medieval monastic settings.

A more systematic articulation of monastic material organization can be achieved by distinguishing its functional domains and underlying ethical orientations. To complement the legal and normative perspective outlined in Table 1, Table 2 provides a structured synthesis of the principal areas through which material practices were organized within Benedictine communities. Rather than introducing additional empirical material, this synthesis reorganizes previously discussed evidence into analytically differentiated categories, allowing for a clearer understanding of how production, storage, circulation, and maintenance were embedded within the rhythms of monastic life. Across these domains, material activities were consistently shaped by communal obligations and regulated temporal structures, particularly those associated with the liturgical calendar governing work and observance. Ethical considerations were not external to these processes but constitutive of them, as principles of restraint, prudence, and collective responsibility informed the management of resources at every stage. In this sense, material organization cannot be interpreted solely through functional logics but must also be situated within the moral and spiritual frameworks that structured monastic existence. Table 2 thus operates as a synthetic framework that clarifies the articulation between operational domains and their normative grounding, while avoiding any implication of a formally codified system in the modern sense. By reorganizing these dimensions in comparative form, the table highlights how everyday practices simultaneously fulfilled practical needs, reinforced ethical discipline, and participated in the broader religious ordering of monastic life.

**Table 2.** Functional and Spiritual Dimensions of Benedictine Materials Management

<b>Logistical domains</b>	<b>Material organization and practices</b>	<b>Spiritual and communal purposes</b>
<i>Production and supply</i>	Agricultural and artisanal activities are planned according to the liturgical calendar, integrating fasting periods and feast days to align production with community needs.	The coordination of work and worship reinforces discipline and ensures that labor supports spiritual devotion.
<i>Storage and conservation</i>	Food and raw materials are preserved through drying, salting, and controlled storage in granaries and cellars designed for long-term stability.	The prudent management of reserves secures autonomy and symbolizes moral vigilance and foresight.
<i>Circulation and exchange</i>	Surplus products are distributed to neighboring monasteries or charitable works through structured regional networks.	Flows strengthen inter-monastic solidarity and extend the ethical mission of the community beyond its walls.
<i>Documentation and control</i>	Inventories, ledgers, and registers record production, consumption, and distribution in a continuous process of accountability.	Written records foster transparency and collective memory, transforming economic control into a moral discipline.
<i>Maintenance and sustainability</i>	Buildings and infrastructures are maintained through preventive planning and routine repair to avoid waste and loss.	The preservation of order reflects the monastic ideal of stability and the pursuit of spiritual harmony through care and continuity.

*Source:* Own elaboration.

## 5. Conclusion

The research note presents a novel perspective on BR by emphasizing the profound interconnection between materials management and spiritual life. Reassessing practices often overlooked—such as storage, production, and distribution—reveals their integral function in sustaining both individual sanctification and collective cohesion. Detailed examination of the cellarer’s responsibilities, the planning and coordination of resources, and the normative framework demonstrates that monastic stability relied on a complex equilibrium among material discipline, personal accountability, and communal solidarity. Routine tasks—including cultivation, food preparation, maintenance, and distribution—served as concrete manifestations of ethical and spiritual principles, translating abstract precepts into lived practice. The application of materials management concepts illuminates striking parallels between rationalized operational processes and moral objectives, highlighting that Benedictine communities exemplified early, sophisticated forms of structured governance. Beyond practical necessity, these organizational strategies reinforced daily engagement with spiritual routines, supported embodied participation in communal rituals, and enhanced resilience in the face of scarcity, illness, or environmental unpredictability. By illustrating how operational effectiveness can coexist with moral, social, and theological priorities, the research contributes to contemporary discourse on ethical governance, demonstrating that material practices

were not merely functional tasks but mechanisms for cultivating discipline, sustaining community, and embedding spirituality within the quotidian rhythm of monastic life.

Despite its insights, the analysis is constrained by limitations that demand a more nuanced interpretation. It frequently privileges an idealized and coherent vision of Benedictine life, primarily derived from prescriptive texts, while underrepresenting the practical realities that shaped daily existence, including food shortages, labor fluctuations, interpersonal conflicts, and environmental challenges. Prioritizing exemplary norms risks obscuring discrepancies between the aspirational principles codified in the BR and their implementation across diverse historical and geographic contexts. The adoption of contemporary frameworks such as materials management, systems analysis, and sustainability introduces potential anachronism unless explicitly defined as interpretive instruments rather than empirical realities. General statements regarding the educational or ethical dimension of work require contextualized evidence, drawn from archival records or detailed case studies, to substantiate claims. The reliance on overarching legal frameworks, such as canon law, may overgeneralize, given the specificity and variability of monastic regulations. Comparative references to external monastic contexts, including Cistercian communities, while offering illuminating contrasts, risk diluting the focus on BR and conveying an impression of historical uniformity that underplays localized adaptations and nuanced negotiations between spiritual ideals and material necessities within individual abbeys.

These limitations suggest multiple avenues for further research that could deepen understanding and refine historical interpretation. First, expanding empirical inquiry through archival documentation—including account books, inventories, chronicles, and correspondence—would facilitate precise comparisons between normative ideals and lived practices, especially under conditions of scarcity, conflict, or ecological unpredictability. Second, explicitly framing contemporary theoretical constructs as analytical tools would reduce the risk of anachronism and enhance interdisciplinary dialogue between historical scholarship and management theory. Third, systematic comparison with secular organizational practices could illuminate distinctive features of monastic logistics while identifying points of convergence in resource management, planning, and labor coordination. Fourth, rigorous exploration of internal tensions—between poverty and accumulation, autonomy and dependence, spiritual ideals and material constraints—would produce a more nuanced understanding of how ethical and spiritual principles were negotiated in daily life. Pursuing these strategies promises not only to clarify historical governance, adaptation, and resilience but also to offer lessons for contemporary debates on ethical management, social responsibility, and sustainable organizational practices within complex institutional environments.

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