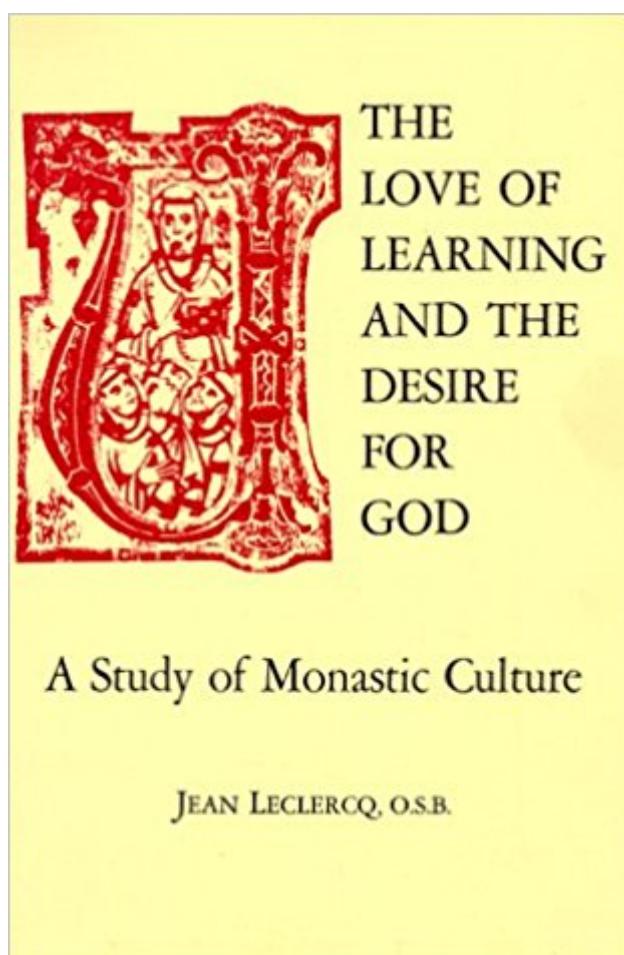


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# The Love Of Learning And The Desire For God: A Study Of Monastic Culture



## Synopsis

The Love of Learning and the Desire for God is composed of a series of lectures given to young monks at the Institute of Monastic Studies at Sant'Anselmo in Rome during the winter of 1955-56.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"One of the most remarkable general studies in this field." (Speculum)

Text: English, French (translation)

Every page opens up new horizons of insight into monastic culture and history.

Dispels the notion that there was a "Dark age" prior to either the first or second medieval renaissances. This essential account of monasticism to the present time shows that pre-Christian literature was kept alive and studied closely in the monasteries as a necessary adjunct to Scriptural learning and interpretation. Most readable.

A classic reader in the subject.

Great book!

This is a classic work by one of the great scholars of the 20th century. every spiritual bookshelf needs a copy

Back in university in the late 1970's, I took a course at the University of Washington titled "The Bible in Early and Medieval Literature and Culture". This book was one of the main textbooks. Thirty years later, I still open Leclercq's work to gain greater insight into the development of monastic culture. Leclercq died in October 1993, but not before leaving us with a treasure trove of writings on monastic life, *lectio divina*, and other subjects. "Love of Learning" is not casual reading, but intended for the serious student of history, especially anyone fascinated by monastic life, and the development of various forms of monasticism. As a Benedictine monk, Leclercq's hero of course is St. Benedict to whom he devotes many pages of insight, especially the development of Benedictine spirituality over the centuries after Benedict. That is where he has been of great help for my studies in the spread of Benedictine spirituality, and the influence of Benedictine culture upon western Europe and contemporary life. It is not by accident that Benedict is consider the Patron Saint of Europe. Through the spread of Benedictine abbeys across the landscape of Europe, from Portugul to Poland, from Sweden to Sicily, Benedictine life touched the lives of millions of Europeans in those centuries often known as "the dark ages", with Benedictine monks bringing literacy, health, agriculture, orchards, vineyards, industry, artistry, preservation of ancient manuscripts including the Bible, calligraphy, liturgy, modesty, humility, and stability to villages, towns and cities across a continent. No small feat! If you are interested in knowing more about Benedictine spirituality, look at these two recently published books on the subject, intended for nonmonastics: *A Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way*; and *The Busy Family's Guide to Spirituality: Practical Lessons for Modern Living From the Monastic Tradition*.

Don't expect this to be a devotional book, but do expect an excellent introduction to monastic culture and its scholarly and contemplative ways. Be prepared to get highlights of important (and some obscure) authors and their approaches. These are done in a way that gives you enough to follow the story, but also sends you to your search engine of choice in a desire to learn more. Be prepared to stumble across Latin and German phrases in the text, but one can get through these mostly by depending on context. It is scholarly, but with a heart for the real desires of monastics, even those living today.

Learning is one of my passions. Over the years I have seen a number of references to Leclercq's

book and then I read it. In the Middle Ages (Eleventh century and beyond) learning happened in two social contexts: monastery and school. Leclercq focuses on the monastery, where the monks learned in order to praise God and live devout lives. To pray they had to be able to read the scriptures and other texts - both Christian and classical. What they read and prayed about prompted them to write their own expositions. The more famous of these are ones by Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm and a few others. In general, the monks had little interest in abstract or conceptual learning; they left this to those teaching at the schools. Overall, Leclercq clearly and thoughtfully describes the learning at the monasteries, which influence later Western thought. The Middle Ages were not as "dark" as we sometimes think they were.

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