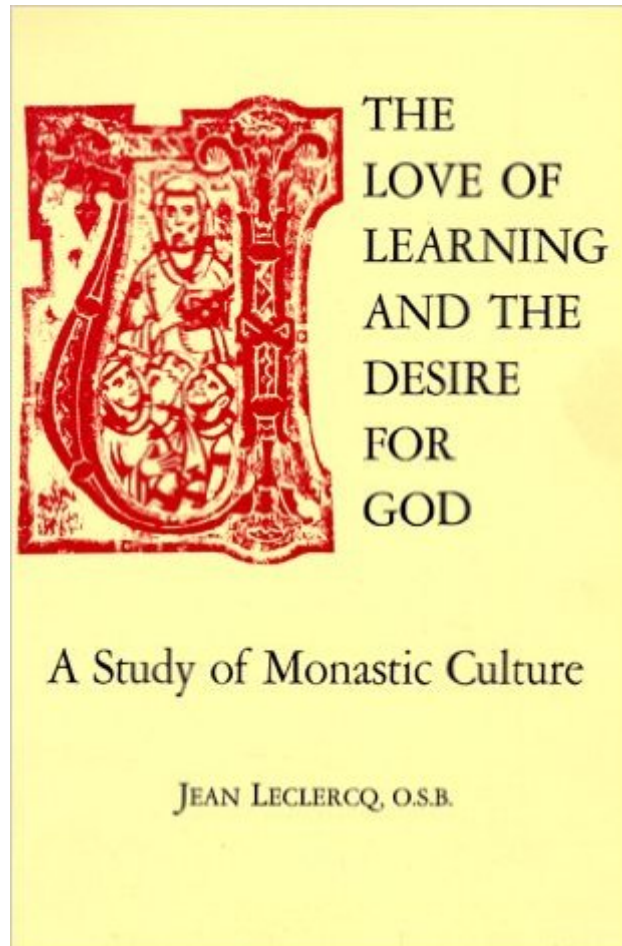


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The Love Of Learning And The Desire For God: A Study Of Monastic Culture



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.

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Customer Reviews

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 considered the Patron Saint of Europe. Through the spread of Benedictine abbeys across the landscape of Europe, from Portugal 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!

"Read the acts of Sts. Anthony, Macarius, Pachomius..., the Egyptian Monks, of those who lived in the Holy Land or in the Thebaid. ...implant in the darkness of the West and in the cold of Gaul the light of the East and the ancient fervor of Egyptian religious life." Jean Leclercq, *Ancient traditional Spirituality*

Latin Monastic Tradition: Two of the most influential in Spirituality as Evagrius Ponticus, and John Cassian who established the first European monasteries according to the Pachomian ideal, and wrote the first Monastic manuals, the institutes and the Conferences. "If Benedict created the institutional frame of Latin monasticism, then Cassian helped define its inner life, its mystical aspirations," wrote Wm. Harmless, *Desert Christians*. The Benedictine rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia (6th century), formed the basis of life in most monastic communities until the twelve century. The schema faded out until St. Bernard of Clairvaux restored it to its original zenith. Among the principal monastic orders that evolved in the Middle Ages were the Carthusians in the eleventh century and the Cistercians in the twelfth; the Mendicant orders, or Friars, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites arose in the 13th century.

Theognosis, *Learning Spirituality*: Theognosis, the knowing of God, has always been a means for a unity in love which transcends all knowledge. This ultimate end is union with God or, partaking in the nature of God, the theosis of church Fathers Irenaeus and Athanasius. The eastern tradition whose masters were Origen, Evagrius, and Dionysius, the pseudo Areopagite, has never made a definite distinction between mysticism and theology; between personal experience of the divine mysteries.

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