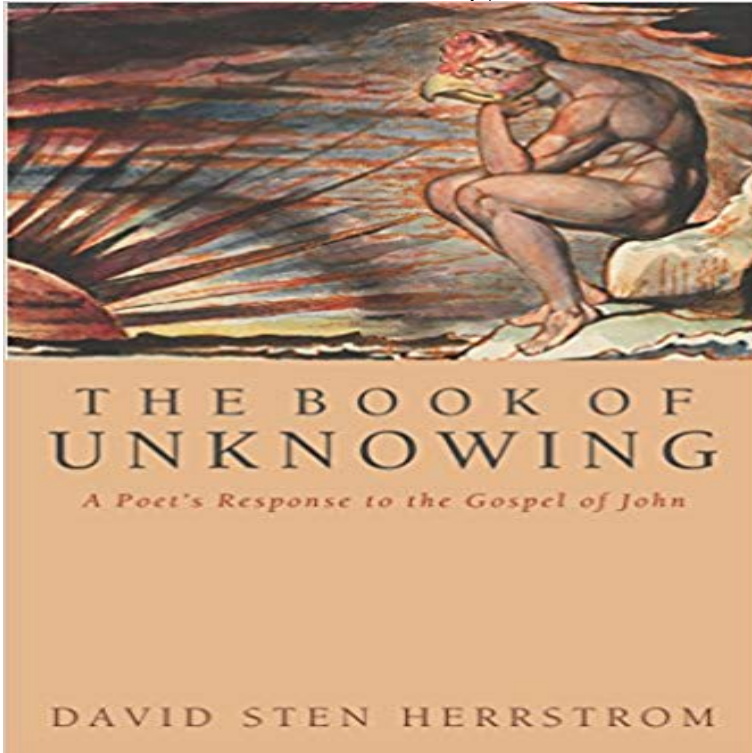


## The Book of Unknowing: A Poets Response to the Gospel of John



The Book of Unknowing meditates on Johns confrontation with the incandescent Jesus, a figure of our desire for immortality. Guiding us through the Gospels coming to grips with Jesus, the poet David Sten Herrstrom prefers sparking the imagination to arguing a thesis, as he explores Johns own obsessions, such as image (light), symbol (water), sign (water to wine), shapeliness (symmetry), loves (Peter, Marys), and above all, words (the Word, the body of Jesus). The result is a heady, literary engagement not afraid of wit and paradox. For anyone who loves literature or whose business is interpretation--ministers and teachers--this book blossoms with fresh revelations about the many voices of Jesus living in the House of the Interpreter and interacting with another interpreter (Nicodemus), as well as about John the interpreter who continually pauses to explain Jesus motives, metaphors, and the meaning of his death. This meditation on Johns Gospel takes the goats leaping approach to the craggy language of John and Jesus rather than the methodical rock climbers. And along the way, to help him find footholds on the how and why of Johns strategies, the author calls on other poets, from William Blake to Emily Dickinson and Miguel de Unamuno. The result: a poets rather than a preachers, theologians, or scholars reading of Johns book, one which crosses the borders of disciplines. Throughout The Book of Unknowing, David Herrstrom is unsettled and exhilarated by the peculiar orneriness and fragrance of Johns book, by its strange particulars that grab him by the throat and call lives into question. As William Blake has said, Exuberance is Beauty, and this is an exuberant book. Reading Johns Gospel through the eyes of Dr. Herrstrom, with all the nerve and verve of his imagination, is startling, vivid, disturbing, and thrilling. Not only does he give readers a poets view,

but also a masterful literary analysis of the Gospel--writers techniques, pointing out the discontinuities, multiple meanings, self-contradictions, puns, paradoxes, and poignant silences, as well as the counter-rhythms of fate and hope. His style is full of energy and very exciting to read. -Virginia R. Mollenkott author of Omnigender and Sensuous Spirituality In this book the poet in David Herrstrom makes contact with the poet who wrote the Gospel of John. The result is a stunning, transformative journey into the depths of the Fourth Gospel. -John Shelby Spong author of Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World David Herrstrom knows what the author of the Gospel of John knows: when the subject is life eternal, its truth is not available to every casual passerby. Rather it engages those willing to converse, hospitable to poetry and parable, clarity and ambiguity, and able to endure tensions and contraries. All five senses must be alert to shifts of times and places. And in the end the story will not end but will be handed over to the reader. -Fred B. Craddock author of Preaching and As One with Authority David Sten Herrstrom is a poet, lecturer, and president of The Jacob Landau Institute (JLI). Author of Jonahs Disappearance (1989) and Appearing by Daylight (1992), he is Adjunct Professor in the Philosophy and Religion Department at Monmouth University.

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