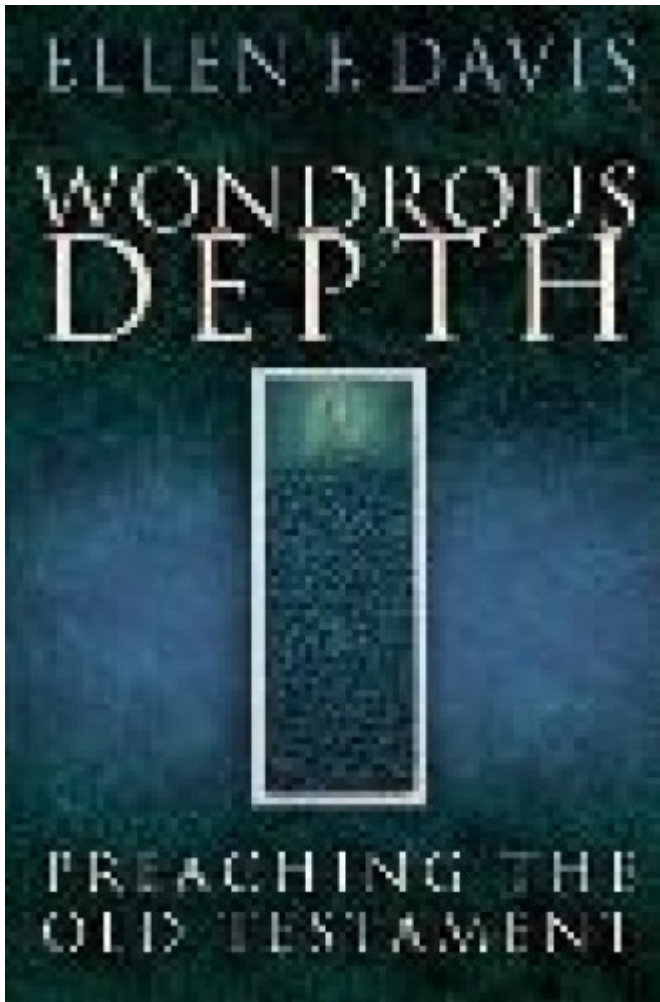


CC recommends

Books in the [December 13, 2005](#) issue

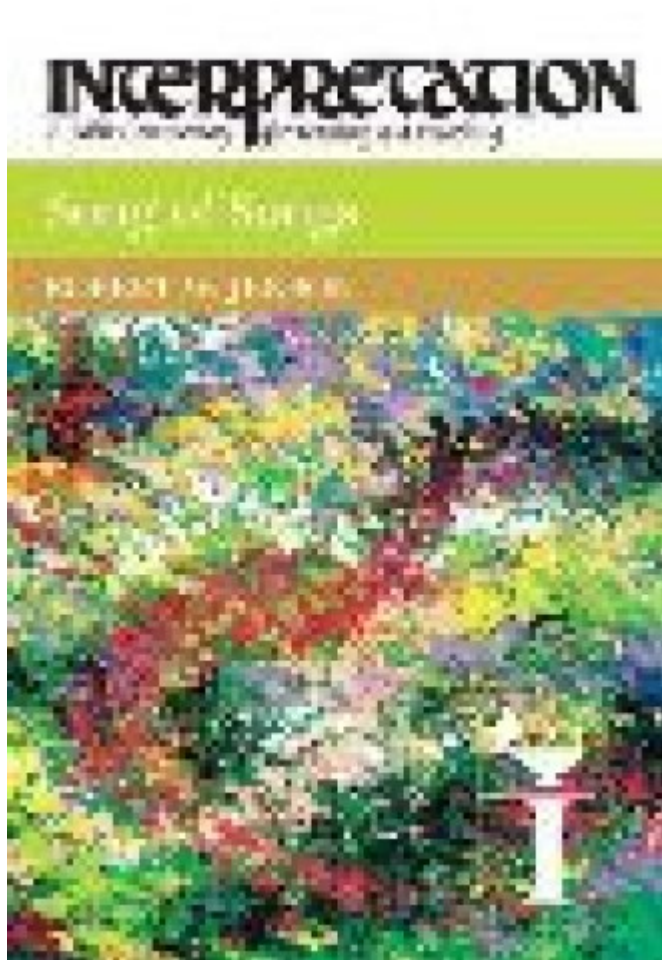
In Review



Wondrous Depth: Preaching the Old Testament

Ellen F. Davis

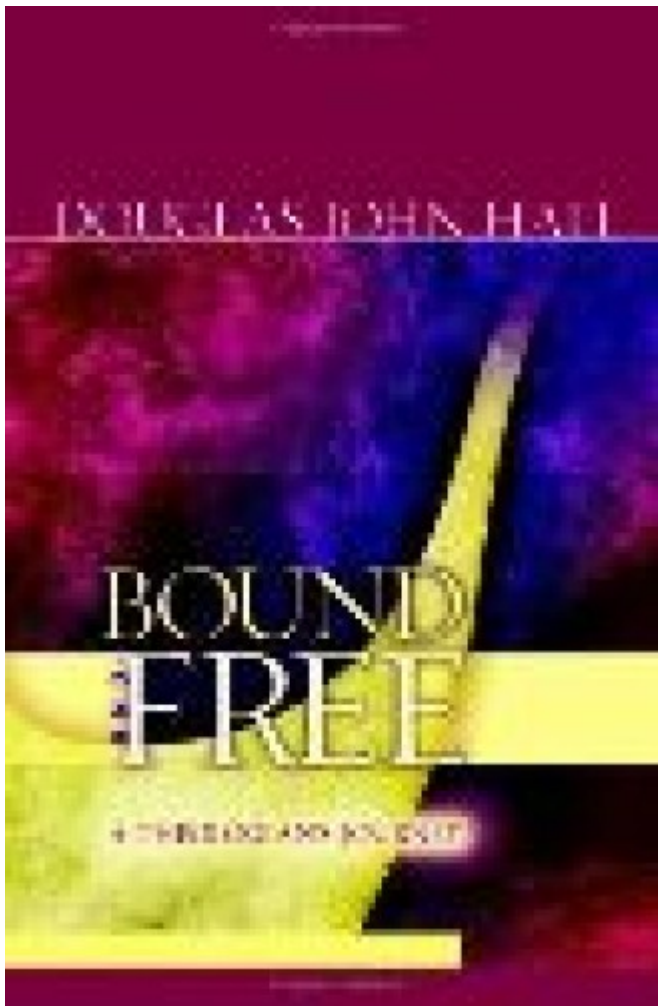
Westminster John Knox



Song of Songs

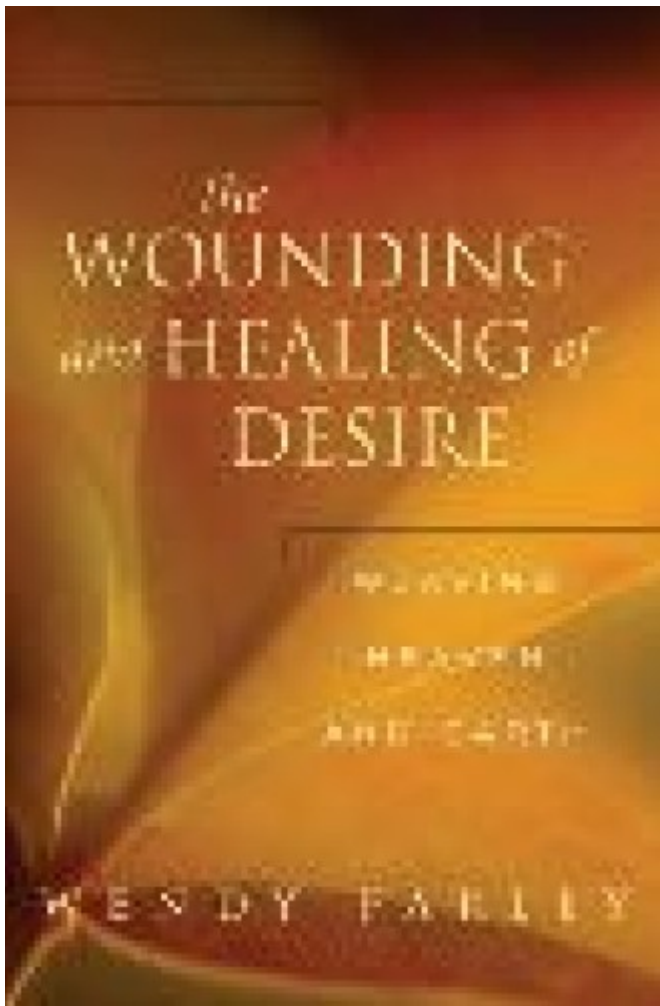
Robert W. Jenson

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Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey

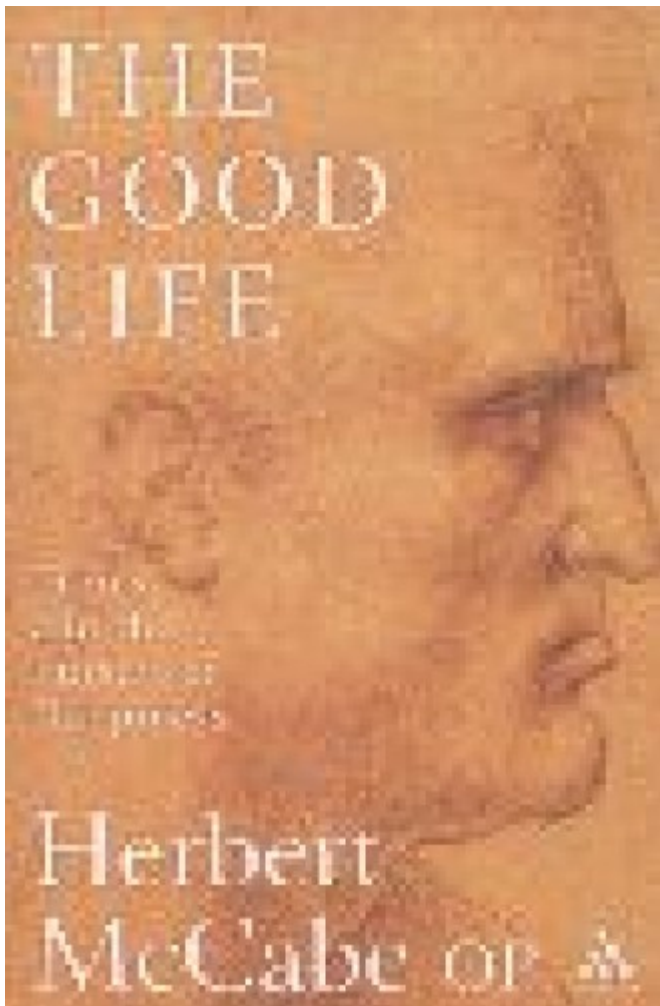
Douglas John Hall
Augsburg Fortress



The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth

Wendy Farley

Westminster John Knox



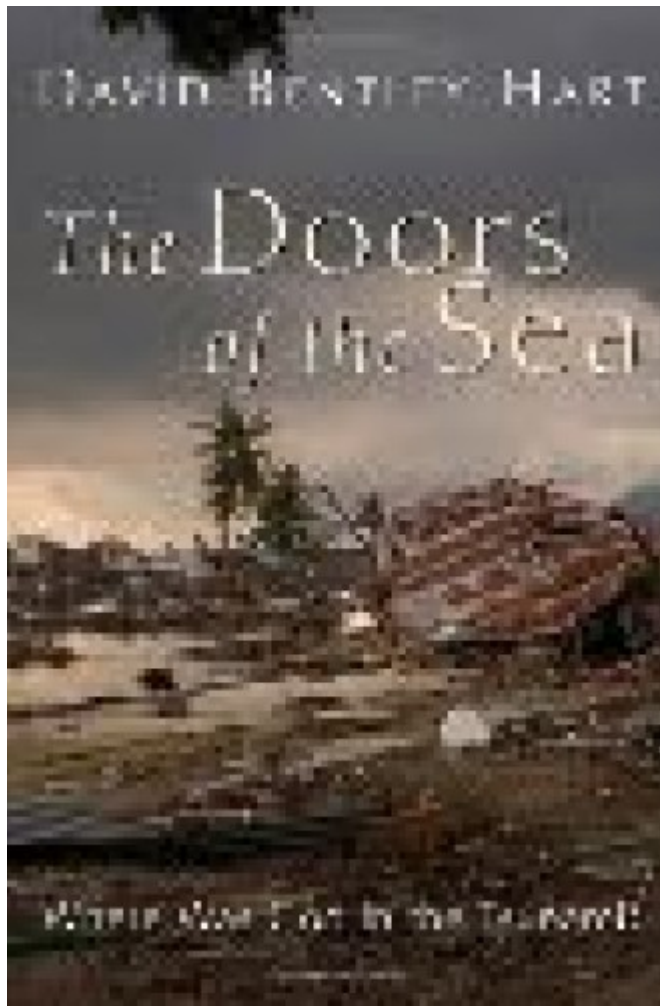
The Good Life

Herbert McCabe
Continuum



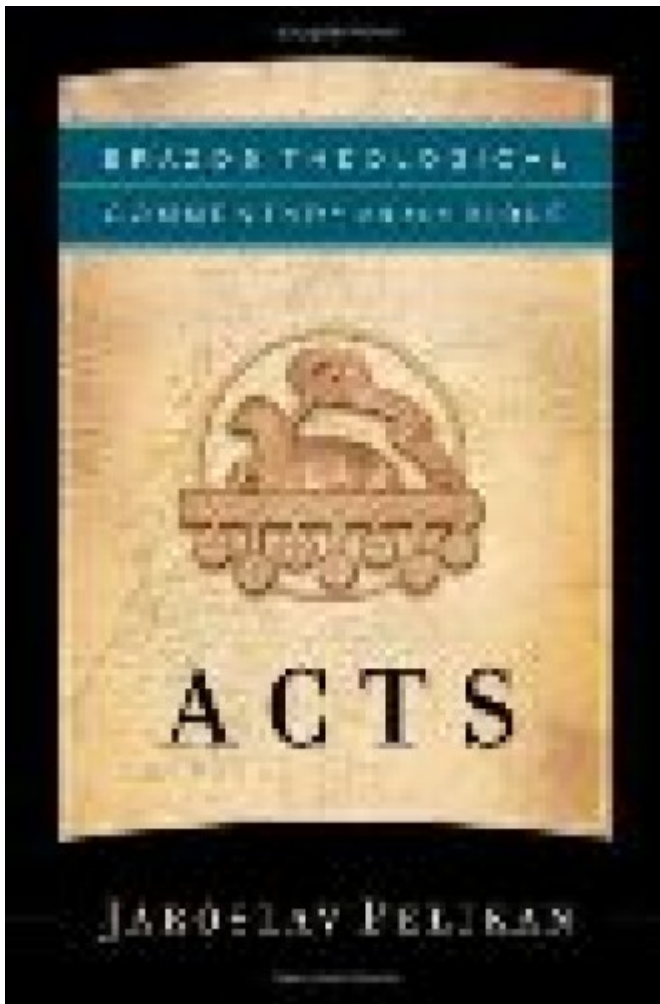
Daring, Trusting Spirit: Bonhoeffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge

John W. de Gruchy
Fortress



The Doors of the Sea: Where Was God in the Tsunami?

David Bentley Hart
Eerdmans



Acts

Jaroslav Pelikan
Brazos

Davis addresses “the gravest scandal” in the church—“the shallow reading of scripture.” Conservatives and liberals alike fail to be genuinely curious about scripture, to peer into its depths for surprising beauty and unexpected meaning, and instead use it to illustrate what they already think. Davis demonstrates an alternative approach as she attends to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Donne and Lancelot Andrewes, and offers examples of her own preaching.

Jenson’s volume is an appropriately masterful conclusion to Westminster’s Interpretation commentary series. One of America’s greatest systematic theologians gives patient attention to a text that he sees as both an expression of two lovers’ affections and an allegorical expression of the mutual desire between God and

Israel. He's convinced that human desire only makes sense as an analogue to the inner-triune desire of God shared with creatures in Israel and Christ.

Hall, a Canadian theologian, has a gift for creative theological synthesis and lucid writing that doesn't get lost in arcane academic verbiage and speaks prophetically to the realities and ambiguities of our cultural context. Hall gives an account of his theological development as a passionate advocate of a theology of the cross that takes seriously the exigencies and ambiguities of life—against all pretentious theologies of glory and triumphalist ecclesiologies.

After last year's tsunami, Hart produced a moving inquiry into the question of evil, one likely to be a classic. He defends the ancient Christian descriptions of evil as nonbeing and of God as immutable, saying that they offer the most theologically coherent and existentially satisfactory account of evil.

Brazos's Theological Commentaries on the Bible, of which this is the first volume, will feature theologians commenting on scripture using ancient Christian sources. The result is a treasure both new and old, more akin to medieval gloss than historical-critical commentary. Yet it is also a resource for preachers, since its format is akin to that of modern commentary. Pelikan, perhaps the greatest living church historian, can't get out of the first chapter of Acts without providing short essays on Christ's postresurrection teaching, the relationship between Israel's and the church's messianic expectation, and Mary as mother of God.

Born in 18 months of disability during which migraines kept the author from reading or writing, this reads like a meditation on the healing of the "interior landscape" of desire. Farley attends not only to standard theological figures like Augustine, Calvin and Schleiermacher, along with contemporary feminists, but also to figures seldom read in Protestant circles, such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Bonaventure. She also draws deeply from the "underground railroad" of women theologians who have been marginalized or excluded in the history of the church. She brings in contemporary folk music (which brought her healing during her illness) and Buddhist thought and practice as well. The result is not a pastiche but an elegantly woven and poignantly written account of the wounding and healing of longing.

This is the third posthumous volume to be gleaned from McCabe's papers. Like all of the Dominican theologian's works, his essays on ethics are concise and illuminating, and they creatively pass on the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas. Living the good

life involves “learning to want some things rather than others, learning to enjoy some things rather than others”; it means “coming to recognize a generous act as praiseworthy just as we come to recognize a particular move in football as excellent.”

Were it not for Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would likely not have cast such a long shadow over the life and thought of the Christian church. Bethge was Bonhoeffer’s student, friend and colleague, and was married to Bonhoeffer’s niece. It was to Bethge that Bonhoeffer wrote many of his famous letters from prison, and it was Bethge who organized them and had them published; he eventually became Bonhoeffer’s biographer. De Gruchy chronicles Bethge’s own development, his friendship with Bonhoeffer, and his postwar work which put the theology of Bonhoeffer on the map.