

ETHICS IN CONVERSATION

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Rev Dr Craig Bartholomew talks with Dr David Beldman about

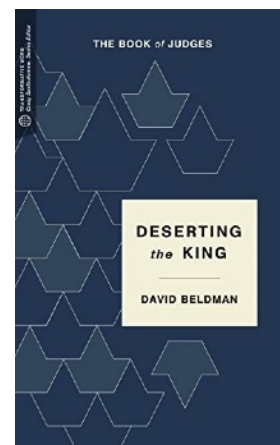
The Book of Judges for Today

CB: You have published three important books on Judges. What are they, which is your favourite and why?

DB: The three books, in order of their publication are:

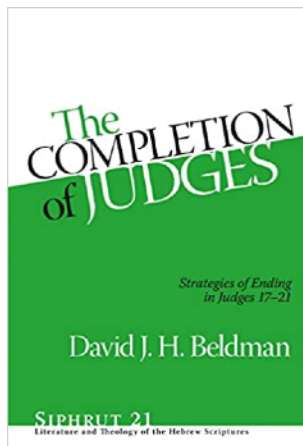
1. *Deserting the King: The Book of Judges* (Lexham Press, 2017). This is a very short (114 pages) and accessible theological introduction to the book of Judges. It answers the questions: "What is the book of Judges?", "How is the book designed?", "What are the book's major themes?", "What is the message of Judges?", "How does the book communicate that message?" and

"How does that message resonate in the 21st century?"



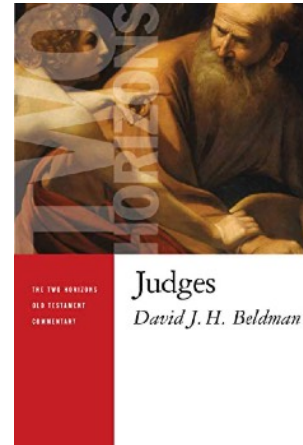
2. *The Completion of Judges: Strategies of Ending in Judges 17-21* (Eisenbrauns, 2017). This book is a revision of my

doctoral dissertation, completed in 2013, and the foundation for all my other work/thinking on Judges. Essentially, it focuses on the final chapters of the book, considering the question: How do these chapters function as the book's ending (and thus backing into the fundamental question of how we understand the book as a whole).



3. *Judges* (Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series; Eerdmans, 2020). This is a commentary on the whole book of Judges and includes a theological introduction to the book, theological section-by-section exegesis, and theological reflection on the book. It feels like quite an achievement to have completed a commentary on the whole book, and this really is the culmination of my

work on Judges.



Choosing which one is my favourite is like choosing a favourite child! But if I had to, I would choose the commentary. It forced me to have a close look at every passage and make some sort of sense of all of them, which was hard but also rich. It also stretched me to reflect theologically on the book in a substantial section at the end — I gained fresh insights in that process. Honourable mention does have to go to *Deserting the King*, however. It is great to be able to hand out copies of this accessible little book to friends and family who wouldn't normally read my more academic work.

CB: As you know Old Testament studies are full of technical work. While we agree that this is important, too often it is not in service of hearing Judges as God's address today. How does your work differ from other work on Judges?

DB: The framing of this question seems to nudge in the direction of the answer. Let me start by expressing that I do not want to claim too much with regard to my work on Judges and I do not want to disparage the myriad of excellent commentaries, monographs, and other publications on the book. I can claim very few genuinely original ideas with regard to the interpretation of Judges – perhaps even just one (my interpretation of the non-linear chronology in the design of Judges and its rhetorical function in the book). I am not a short person but I feel inadequate and dwarfed in comparison to the remarkable work of many giants in the history of the interpretation of Judges (including recent times). Rather, standing on the shoulders of these giants has vouchsafed vistas of the terrain of Judges that are truly expansive!

Confession time: I do not consider myself particularly gifted as a technical scholar, at least not in the technical abilities most associated with modern biblical scholarship (philology, grammar, syntax, and concerns of a historical nature like Semitics studies, ancient Near Eastern history and culture, and so on). This kind of technical scholarship is indispensable, and I have aimed to understand and leverage the work of those who are much more capable than I am in my own work. There are, however, other kinds of technical work. Let me also add that if I rightly understand the reference “technical work”, my

books on Judges range to the extent that they include such technical work. My revised dissertation is by far the most technical, my commentary certainly includes technical points of discussion throughout, and *Deserting the King*, by virtue of its intended (popular) audience, has very little explicit technical work (though I could not have written that book without the focused and detailed work I had completed in my dissertation).

In the various places that I have engaged in detailed technical work, I have endeavoured, as the framing of the question suggests, to leverage the technical for the purpose of hearing and understanding the book of Judges. For example, in *The Completion of Judges*, a whole chapter is devoted to technical theories of narrative and narrative endings, leveraging philosophical hermeneutics, narratology, literary theory, etc. – the aim is to allow the theory to rise to meet the challenges of and illumine the text of Judges. Moreover, commentary introductions (especially in certain series) tend to be very technical but I made the decision to focus the introduction of my commentary deliberately on those aspects of the book’s interpretation that I believe attune our ears to hearing Judges (aspects that are not always typical in introductions) – in fact I use the language of “hearing” to structure those sections: “Hearing Judges in Its Literary Context”, “Hearing

Judges as Hebrew Narrative”, “Hearing Judges in Its Historical Context” and “Hearing Others Hearing Judges”. Again, the aim in those sections is to explore some of the technical aspects of biblical theology, Hebrew narrative poetics, ancient Near Eastern studies, and reception history in service of hearing/ understanding the book of Judges.

Although not all technical work on Judges is altogether helpful in hearing and understanding the message of Judges for today, there are (perhaps many) works that do have this aim. I have tried to be very deliberate in this regard.

CB: What approaches to interpreting Judges have you found most helpful to hear its powerful message?

DB: Broadly speaking, the approach that in recent days goes by the name of theological interpretation of Scripture is most helpful. Theological interpretation is a very broad umbrella, including a diversity of methods and approaches. The very best articulation of this approach which aligns most with my own approach can be found in the 2016 publication *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*.¹ In that book, the key dimensions of biblical interpretation are identified and articulated in short statements (the sum of these statements is the Manifesto proper), and then longer

essays in the book explain each of these dimensions.

Beyond that broad approach, let me single out two more specific approaches that are indispensable for encountering the powerful message of Judges. The first is **biblical theology**. Biblical theology is that discipline that articulates the unity of Scripture on the basis of the Bible’s own terms and categories, and foundational to biblical theology is the overarching narrative of the Bible. This approach is absolutely essential for hearing Judges because readers are sure to misunderstand the book if it is not situated properly as a chapter in the grand story of Scripture. In this regard, Judges is pivotal in the unfolding story of Scripture, situated as it is after the conquest of the land (Joshua) and before the rise of monarchy. All the promises made to the patriarchs have been fulfilled and Israel is (it seems) poised to be that kingdom of priests and holy nation — *distinct from but for the sake of the blessings of the nations* — that God called them to be at Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6). The tragedy of Judges is that they become very much like the nations which is no good for them or the nations they were called to bless.

The second approach that is indispensable for hearing the powerful message of Judges is a **literary approach**. Although Judges aims to tell (some of) the

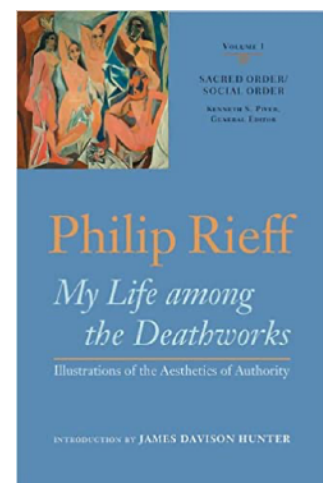
¹ C.G. Bartholomew and H. Thomas (eds.), *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

history of Israel's settlement period, it is brilliantly crafted literature and the history told is history *for a purpose*. It has a beginning or exposition (1:1-3:6), a middle (3:7-16:31) and an end section (17:1-21:25). The two-part exposition (1:1-2:5 and 2:6-3:6) carefully sets the context (an emerging generation that "did not know Yahweh and the work he had done for Israel"; 2:10) and introduces the themes that will characterize the rest of the book. The body of the book is deliberately structured around a cyclical pattern that is not slavishly imposed on the material but includes variation that demonstrates Israel's degeneration over the course of the cycles. The two-part end section tells two specific stories that both begin in an intimate, domestic setting and end with devastating national consequences, all the while demonstrating and capturing the book's summative message: Israel had abandoned Yahweh as king and fostered an "anarchic" society of chaos and misery (i.e., the refrain: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes"). Attention to the literary design of the book and the myriad of literary features is vital for hearing its message. The message of Judges is indeed mediated through the medium of the text.

CB: Are there thinkers and resources that have been especially helpful to you in relating Judges to today?

DB: Yes, far too many to list here in full. Let me highlight two in particular. The American sociologist Philip Rieff has had a profound impact on my understanding of the contemporary significance of Judges (in fact, it was KLC's director Craig Bartholomew who first put me on to the work of Rieff). Rieff (1922-2006) was not a theologian or a biblical scholar but a sociologist and an analyst of Western history and culture; as such, he carefully observed and evaluated the patterns of Western society (and its roots). His profound but simple observation was that up to (but not including) modern times, humanity has always translated some notion of sacred order into a social order.² In other words, conceptions of the gods/God will inevitably shape the various facets of society.

This sacred order/social order dynamic is everywhere evident in the biblical thought-world. It makes sense of the teachings of the



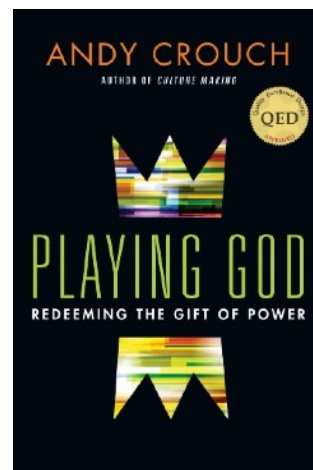
² Philip Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetic Authority* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 2.

Torah (Genesis – Deuteronomy) as God sketches for his people what the contours of private and public life look like when they are oriented toward his sacred order. It also significantly illuminates Judges as we observe Israel shifting allegiance from Yahweh to the Canaanite deities which translates into a distorted and destructive social order. Subsequently, it also resonates deeply with the central teaching of Jesus which is that the kingdom of God/heaven has arrived in him and that this reality should permeate the private and public life of his followers (which is worked out in the teachings of the NT authors for communities to which they wrote)!

Judges, then, provides sobering instruction on the devastating and far-reaching social consequences of God’s people compromising their commitment to the God of Scripture. It stands as a prophetic clarion call for Christians today, not least in the West. To what extent have we abandoned God for the spirits of our age (or blended our Christian commitment with allegiance to the idols of our day) and what are the social ramifications? Rieff himself was profoundly distressed by what he perceived as evidence that the modern West had divorced itself from any notion of a sacred order, evidence he bluntly called “deathworks”. The “deathworks” of the Canaanite worldview are evident on almost

every page of Judges as the Israelites inevitably translated that worldview into an order for society. I fear there is far too much evidence of Christian communities contributing to the “deathworks” of our culture as a result of our compromised witness, rather than the rich “lifeworks” which might emerge out of undivided loyalty to Jesus and his kingdom.

Another thinker that has had an influence on my understanding of the contemporary significance of the teaching of Judges is Andy Crouch. Crouch is a journalist and Christian cultural critic, and he has important things to say on the evolution of institutions and on the power of idolatry. In his book *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* he charts the general pattern of the initiation,



growth and development of institutions.³ All institutions, according to Crouch, arise out of some creational good (i.e., “image-bearing quality”) and all of them in their

inception contain seeds of sin (i.e., patterns of idolatry and injustice). What is more, all institutions experience “failure” or crisis in the

³ Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 195-206.

third generation. The response to failure is paramount. Ideally, institutions weed out the idolatry/injustice and root themselves more consistently in the image-bearing quality and go on to flourish for generations, but that is not the only response to failure. The second option is that the institution succumbs to failure and dies. The third option is worse, and here is where Crouch is extremely insightful. Some institutions refuse to let failure result in death, but by allowing the idolatry/injustice to persist never experience/effect life and flourishing ... the result is that they lose their purpose (or their purpose becomes merely to exist) and they become a zombie institution.

This describes with crystal clarity Israel in the settlement period. As I wrote in my commentary:

Three generations from those foundational, identity-forming events of the exodus from Egypt and the Sinai covenant, God's people are in crisis. They have arrived in the promised land and are emerging as a nation, but the seeds of idolatry and injustice are in full bloom, strangling the image-bearing quality of the covenant people. The response to failure does not result in rooting out idolatry and injustice — in fact the people wrongly diagnose the

problem (i.e., unstable political governance) and consequently propose the wrong solution (i.e., strong, perpetual leadership). We witness a seemingly unending cycle, in which the people of God are not dead, but they are by no means thriving and flourishing. Israel is a zombie nation!⁴



Again, the contemporary implications should be obvious. I hope this is not the case, but Judges may provide Christian communities today with an honest mirror in which to see ourselves reflected back at us. To what extent have the idols of our day compromised our witness, mission, and purpose? Are we functioning, heaven forbid, as zombie institutions? Have our churches become, as Nietzsche's madman gleefully

⁴ Beldman, *Judges*, 2.

supposed, “tombs and sepulchres” of a dead God, “bled to death under our knives!”⁵ Judges should inspire an honest evaluation of our churches and other institutions which should prompt us to weed out the incipient idolatry and root them more deeply in image-bearing quality.

CB: Would you agree that Judges is a major piece of political theology? Explain.

DB: Yes and no. There are a number of hermeneutical landmines here that need to be navigated carefully, and the history of the interpretation of Judges suggests that these have not always been navigated well. I hesitate to say unequivocally that Judges is a major piece of political theology because that would seem to imply that its purpose, its essence, is political — I do not think that is the case. It would be more precise, in this regard, to say that its aim is not *political* but *prophetic* with substantial implications (or as a substantial source) for political theology.

At least three trends in the history of the interpretation of Judges with regard to its political teaching need to be avoided. First, beginning (it appears) with the Protestant Reformation and its antecedents (English and

American Puritans, Scottish Presbyterians and American colonists and revivalists), was a tendency among some interpreters *to draw direct parallels between events in Judges and contemporary political affairs*. The problem is that the interpreters would identify with the supposed heroes of Judges and associate their enemies with the perceived villains of the book. John Milton, for instance, perceived in Samson and Ehud justification for violent action against tyrannical rule and even regicide, and some American Puritans thought the Gideon narrative and the civil war against Benjamin (Judges 20) afforded licence for violence against Royalist Episcopalians, Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians and Native Americans.⁶ The exploitation of Judges by Scottish Covenanters at the Battle of Dunbar illustrates (somewhat comically) the danger of improperly politicizing Judges for one’s own political purposes. The Covenanters dismissed soldiers from their ranks who were insincere in their commitment to the Covenant, taking their cue directly from the narrative in which God reduces the size of Gideon’s army (Judges 7:1-8). To the astonishment of the Covenanters, Cromwell’s army annihilated their reduced forces! Reading Judges

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Madman,” in *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 181.

⁶ On the latter see Matthew P. Rowley’s fascinating dissertation: “Godly Violence: Military Providentialism in the Puritan Atlantic World, 1636-1676,” PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2007. For other examples, see the section “Hearing Others Hearing Judges” in my commentary.

politically in this way has literally cost people their lives (unnecessarily so, in my opinion).

Second, popular in recent scholarship on Judges is ***the view that Judges writ large is a sustained piece of political propaganda***. According to this interpretation, the tribe of Judah (which is generally – although not uniformly – portrayed positively in Judges) symbolically represents David and his dynasty and Benjamin (which is portrayed negatively) represents Saul and his dynasty. Judges, therefore, is regarded as political propaganda in support of the Davidic dynasty over against the claim of Saul and his dynasty. Personally, I am not convinced the evidence supports such a claim, and it is unhelpfully reductionistic by seeing Judges as motivated by purely political interests.

Third, sometimes well-intentioned interpreters (***over***)***emphasize the spiritual instruction of the book at the expense of its political implications***. This tendency has ancient roots (it's certainly evident in pre-modern interpretation) and Evangelical interpreters seem particularly susceptible to it. I suspect this is driven by a kind of dualism that sharply separates the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the mundane. One would think that suppressing the political teaching of Judges requires a great deal of effort given just how central political matters

are to the book (e.g., Israel emerging as a nation and Israel navigating tribal and national interests, the book set deliberately within a leadership vacuum (Judges 1:1), the pattern of judges/deliverers as temporary political leaders ... not to mention the title of the book, which is a political office). As far as it goes, I agree with Daniel Block's statement that Judges is "a prophetic book, not a political tractate",⁷ but it is a modern tendency to separate the religious from the political and according to the biblical thought-world one's notion of the divine orients one in all of private and public life, the political realm included (as Rieff's work so helpfully reminds us).

With the key insight that "religion" provides the orientation for all of life, Judges provides some very interesting teaching with regard to political theology. This insight helps readers of the biblical texts comprehend the full impact of the Sinai covenant in particular and the whole Torah (Genesis – Deuteronomy) in general – namely, to provide instruction for a social order on the basis of Yahweh's sacred order – and the devastating impact of Israel in the settlement period ordering their social life according to the sacred order of Canaanite "religion". The interpretation of Israel's experience in the settlement period that we find in Judges is a negative example – a kind of inoculation – of what social disorder and

⁷ Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (NAC 6. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 57-58.

distortion emerges when society is not fashioned according to the principles and practices of the kingdom of Yahweh.

CB: Why should we attend to Judges today? Are there ethical issues today that Judges can help us with?

DB: Yes, absolutely and for the reasons I have already outlined above. I affirm wholeheartedly KLC's broad definition of ethics as engaging the question "How then shall we live?" And with this definition of ethics, Judges provides endless fodder for ethical instruction.

Typological interpretation might be a helpful concept to introduce here, as I suppose it has been one of the most helpful tools for relating the teaching of Judges to today (in retrospect, I probably should have introduced this in my answer to the earlier question along these lines). Typological interpretation tries to discern how Scripture provides patterns in its portrayal of God, humans, and their calling and way of being in the world. Essentially, the God of Scripture is consistent — his purpose (mission), his relationship to the world/humanity, and so on are the same in the OT, NT and today. Moreover, the essence of what it means to be the people of God in the world is similarly consistent throughout Scripture (and continues through the centuries to today).

Israel was God's treasured possession, called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a calling that inspired a distinctive ethic (Exodus 19:5-6); Peter draws on this ancient calling when he expressed these words to the *Christian* community he was addressing: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9) — again, an identity that called for a distinctive ethic as he makes clear throughout his letter. Of course, there are differences between the people of God in the OT and the people of God in the NT. (Christians in the NT and today are not constituted as a nation in the same way that Israel was in the OT, and there are many historical and cultural differences — i.e., contextual differences — that we ignore at our peril.) However, as we see God's people (and their leaders) in Judges as a "type" of God's people (and their leaders) today, as we see God's way of relating to his people in Judges as a "type" of his relating to his people today, the profound ethical import of the book (the answer to the question "How then shall we live?") emerges in full relief!

Broadly speaking, Judges portrays a distinctly-called people living in the midst of a deeply pagan surrounding culture whose calling had been profoundly compromised by the idols of their day; the result: a society of

chaos and misery. Contemporary readers may be confounded by Israel's propensity for worshipping Canaanite gods when it is so obviously against God's will. We need to be reminded just how natural it would have been according to the cognitive environment of the ancient Near East for a people moving into a new location to determine which local deity governed the security and prosperity of that region. That does not make it okay, but if we are to understand the allure of idolatry (today) we have to grasp the subtle and crafty way it works in particular contexts, and then we can start to discern how our own calling as followers of Jesus has also been compromised in so many ways by the idols of our day. The deep work of "excavating" the thought-world of the ancient Near East and diagnosing properly Israel's propensity for idolatry should be matched by the deep work of excavating our contemporary thought-world and diagnosing properly the idolatry that is thriving in and among Christian communities and is compromising our way of being in the world (our ethics).

Beyond the broad message of Judges inspiring a more consistent Christian ethic, there are a host of more particular ethical instructions that the book provides. Christian pastors might learn from the earlier Gideon just how dangerous it can be to mess with (literally tear down) people's idols, but the later Gideon might warn them of the

danger of tearing down one idol only to replace it with another. Christian leaders of many kinds can gain instruction from the various kinds of leadership, perhaps most importantly that leadership is *for a purpose* and when leadership loses its moorings in this way, it will inevitably devolve into an end in and of itself (i.e., power for power's sake). Jephthah should stand as a sobering reminder of what humans are willing to sacrifice on the altar of selfish ambition. The incident at Gibeah and its aftermath provides ethical instruction on the dangers of tribalism, distorted conflict resolution (where the outcome multiplies the original crime), and so on. The final refrain of the book — "everyone did what was right in his/her own eyes" — which puts an indelible stamp on the whole of Judges could be the motto of our post/late modern times. It seems a truism in our culture that everyone should be able to do what they feel is right (an ethical statement if there ever was one) as long as it does not hurt others. Judges exposes this as a lie, demonstrating the devastating social ramifications of sin.

Judges' potential for ethical instruction is endless and to a large extent untapped.

CB: How does your work help us preach Judges?

DB: It does so primarily by drawing out the message of Judges as a whole. I have worked hard to uncover the “kerygmatic” thrust of the book — that is the foundational message it is designed to communicate. To the extent that I have been successful in that, the overall message should make sense of and drive the interpretation of the individual parts of the book (the raw material for preaching). This, I hope, should control the temptation to exploit passages of Judges (e.g., be like Gideon and throw out your fleece) or to read into passages whatever might be occupying the interests of the preacher in the moment.

My little book, *Deserting the King*, deserves special mention, if I may. Preachers who have set for themselves the ambitious task of preaching through the whole of Judges might find it a helpful roadmap for navigating the terrain of Judges. As I express in that book (p. 4):

Maps are most helpful in places that are unfamiliar to us, but they can also help us find new areas to explore in familiar places. Most important, a map should never be an end in itself. It should always drive us back to the places it represents—

to explore the riches of the terrain itself.

I do not like recommending my own work, but *Deserting the King* might be a helpful place to start for preachers planning to preach on the book. It delights me to hear testimonies of preachers who have found the book to be helpful in just this way. Of course, in my commentary I provide a more comprehensive exploration of every part of the book, and I sincerely hope preachers find that just as helpful.

CB: Do you think one can/ should ever preach the book of Judges in one sermon?

DB: In short, yes, I do. I know in some circles there are strong opinions (and sometimes fierce debates) about what constitutes a legitimate sermon/preaching (e.g., experiential preaching vs. redemptive historical preaching; topical sermons vs. expository sermons). Of course, I am all for thinking deeply about best practice for preaching and discerning the essence of what a sermon is and should do; however, I am not so sure that a one-size-fits-all approach is adequate.

I sense that in most contexts in our day biblical illiteracy has reached epic proportions. If this is true, our context calls for creative thinking on how best to preach and equip the saints through the proclamation of the Word. One could easily devise a sermon

series on Judges that consists of dozens of sermons (21 if one were to preach chapter by chapter). I am not sure the times warrant such an approach to preaching Judges and I would worry what other important instruction from the pulpit might be eclipsed by spending so much focused time/effort on the book. I offer the perspective of someone who does not often preach (so take my opinion for what it's worth) but my hunch is that churches need a multi-pronged approach whereby preachers offer up a variety of sermon/series types, achieving a variety of ends. If done properly, a regular menu of sermons which proclaim the message of individual books of the Bible in one go could be instructive and even nourishing! They could provide a good foundation for a more extensive series of sermons on a book at a future time.

So yes, I think Judges could be effectively preached in one sermon and would recommend that preachers give it a try. That said, a lot could be achieved in a six- or seven-week series on the book.

CB: In addition to your three books, are there other sources you would recommend for a preacher preparing to do a series of sermons on Judges?

DB: Just to clarify, I regard *Deserting the King* and my commentary to be the most helpful of my three books for preachers. (By and large,

the helpful things they might gain from my revised dissertation they will likely find in my other two books.)

For another accessible little exposition of Judges (in the line of *Deserting the King*), Dale Ralph Davis' *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Christian Focus, 2000) is a nice, concise, and entertaining mini-commentary with personal anecdotes and homiletical insights.

Daniel Block's commentary on Judges (and Ruth) in the New American Commentary series (B&H, 1999) is one of the best commentaries on the book — clear and insightful. Block helpfully identified the “canaanization” of Israel as *the* theme of the book. A valuable resource for preachers doing a series through the book.

Lawson Younger's commentary on Judges/Ruth (NIVAC; Zondervan, 2002) is also worth purchasing. The nature of this series is that it is oriented to contemporary application and Younger has some good insights in this regard, as well as sound and helpful exegetical work.

Barry Webb's commentary (NICOT; Eerdmans, 2012) is also worth consulting and comparing with the works of Block and Younger. Webb tends to interpret events in the book more positively than sometimes seems warranted (though this can provide a

helpful counterbalance to overly pessimistic readings) but he is a creative and thoughtful commentator and his commentary is certainly worthwhile for his literary/theological interpretation as well as many examples of contemporary application.

Trent Butler's commentary in the World Biblical Commentary series (Thomas Nelson, 2009), weighing in at over 600 pages, is not for the faint of heart. However, as an advanced and more technical commentary which deals with a vast amount of secondary literature on Judges, it is an incredibly valuable resource. If there is a controversial issue in Judges, he will have discussed it (and probably read everything on it). Furthermore, Butler does careful work, has good sensibilities, and is a trustworthy interpreter of the book.

For something completely different, *Lion's Honey: The Myth* (Canongate Books, 2005), written by an Israeli novelist called David Grossman, is an absolutely fascinating reading of the Samson narratives (Judges 13-16). It is a sort of literary-psychological reading of the Samson narratives that creatively opens up aspects of these narratives that those familiar with Samson can easily overlook. Psychological readings have the danger of reading too much into narratives and their characters, but Grossman is acutely in tune with the minute details of the texts and

has profound insights to offer. The book is easy to read and it is not long. It would be a helpful supplement for sermons on the Samson narratives.