

To return to the current thread: I've been discussing why most scholars are not equipped, trained, or inclined to write books for a general audience, and that took me, naturally, to the field of scholarship in which I myself was principally trained, biblical studies. My ultimate point is going to be a somewhat ironic one, that precisely because my particular interests were in one of the most highly technical, obtuse, mind-numbingly detailed aspects of New Testament studies, this (strangely) made it *more* possible for me to write books for non-specialists. The logic will not be obvious, but I'll explain it.

To get to that I've been talking about the two areas most of my peers and colleagues in my PhD program were principally interested in: (1) the exegesis of the New Testament (the matter of interpreting the texts of the New Testament in order to see what they appear to have meant in their original context - not an easy task, given all the work required for it, including an understanding of the Greek language and grammar, the historical setting of the NT writings in the Roman world, the detailed relationship of various early Christian writings to one another, and lots of other things) and (2) the theology of the New Testament.

The latter topic, I have pointed out, is itself a bit complicated. Some New Testament theologians are interested principally in the relevance and meaning of these texts for the contemporary Christian community and for individual Christian believers today. That is a more strictly theological approach to the task. Other New Testament scholars (or rather, many of the same ones) are interested (either instead or also) in a more descriptive, exegetical task of determining what the theology of each New Testament author - or all the NT authors - actually was, apart from the question of how that might be relevant to the modern situation.

This kind of descriptive theology of the New Testament has historically been done in two ways. The old fashioned way that is still followed by (theologically) very conservative Christians is...

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