As many of you know, I am now working on a scholarly monograph dealing with an aspect of the afterlife, on the heels of having written a “trade” book (that is, for popular audiences) on the topic more broadly. The trade book is coming out in March, and will be called *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife*; I am nearly finished researching the scholarly book — it’ll take another month or two — and then hope to have it written by the late spring. It always takes much longer to write the scholarly than the trade books. Lots of footnotes, among other things! I don’t know what the monograph will be called: for now I’m calling it *Otherworldly Journeys: Katabasis in the Early Christian Tradition*. I doubt if my publisher will let me use “katabasis” in the title, but we’ll see.

About five years ago I reflected on what it meant to write both popular and scholarly books on the same topic. I’ve done it three times before in my career, and five years ago, in three posts, I described how the two books (each time) related to each other. I thought that might be useful to repost, as I’m in the midst of doing it again.

After I wrote and published my PhD dissertation on *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels*, I, well, had no plans of writing a trade book about it! (And I should say, about twice a week I get an email from someone who tells me that they’ve read “all” my books. I’m always tempted to ask how they liked my book on Didymus the Blind!) In fact, at that stage of my career, in my early 30s, I had no plans AT ALL, ever, at any time, to write a trade book. I saw myself as a scholar’s scholar. I worked in a highly technical area of New Testament studies, the most technical area there is – textual criticism. And I worked in a particularly technical area even within that wider technical field, analyzing patristic citations of the New Testament. It was hard enough to explain to people what I was doing, let alone get anyone interested in it. And there was no way to make it accessible, let alone intriguing, to outsiders. It was completely an inside job.

I did see my next book as...

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