

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 244

ETS Conference Interviews, Part 3

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Dr. Gary Yates (GY)

Dr. Sam Lamerson (SL)

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Episode Summary

In this episode we chat with Doug van Dorn, a pastor in the Denver area who authored the Lexham Press handbook on Mike's book, *The Unseen Realm*; Dr. Gary Yates, OT professor at Liberty University, who uses *Unseen Realm* in one of his courses; Jesse Myers, about the publishing philosophy of Lexham Press, and Dr. Sam Lamerson, President and Professor of NT at Knox Theological Seminary.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 244: ETS Conference Interviews, Part 3. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. All right, Mike, two down, many more to come!

MH: [laughing] We still have a lot of work to do! It's been pretty hectic, but I don't know. Maybe we're at about the halfway point. Who knows? We've got a long trail to go yet. SBL can be a little more of a logistic challenge because it's so much bigger, but we've been there before and we'll get it pulled off again. In this episode we have Doug van Dorn. Listeners might be familiar with him because of *Peeranormal*. Doug is a pastor in the area (we're in Denver). He has a church of his own that he started 15 or 16 years ago. He'll be with us. Gary Yates is going to spend some time with us. Gary is an Old Testament professor at Liberty University. I've known him for a number of years. He's the fella that I've alluded to before that uses *Unseen Realm* in a Biblical Theology class. We'll talk about Gary and the ministry of Liberty and some of the things Gary works on. Then we will have Sam Lamerson. Sam is a New Testament prof. We've interviewed him; he'll be familiar to our podcast audience. He actually just got in and stopped by with us to talk about Knox Seminary where he's at and some of the things that he's been working on, as well. Lastly on this episode, we have Jesse Myers. Jesse works with Lexham Press. That's the publication house that produced

Unseen Realm. That's an imprint of Faithlife/Logos Bible Software. They are several years old. They were a couple years old when they decided to tackle *Unseen Realm* and they did a really good job on that. But we want to talk about how Lexham approaches what they do publish and some new things that they have coming out that I think this audience will be interested in.

MH: Welcome back to the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. This is the last day for that event. We'll soon be transitioning to SBL. But we have with us here (still at ETS) Doug vanDorn. That's going to be a name familiar to many of you. Doug is a co-host of Peernormal. He is also a pastor in the area. So Doug, I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself. Tell us about you and your church.

DV: I grew up here in Denver and went to high school here. I moved away to go to college in Minneapolis, Minnesota—to Bethel. Back in the day it was Bethel College. The I came back here, got married, went to Denver Seminary, and ended up starting a church in the beginning of 2002. We're still part of that same church—16, almost 17 years now. And the church has been in four different locations. We still don't own property because it's super-expensive here.

MH: Sure, yeah.

DV: So we are currently in a neighborhood of Boulder called Gunbarrel that's unincorporated.

MH: [laughs] "Gunbarrel!"

DV: Gunbarrel in Boulder, yeah. Nothing could be more beautiful than that.

MH: What's the name of the church?

DV: It's the Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado. Nice long name.

MH: There's nothing weird in there! [laughter] Maybe it doesn't belong in Boulder, I don't know! I visited Boulder before. We had some things to do out here. Just say a little bit about the experience of being in Boulder.

DV: Boulder is very tough soil spiritually. I'll put it that way. We've tried multiple outreaches to the campus and we've had a little success, but not a lot of success. We have a small college group that has come, but we're not in Boulder so they have to kind of take the bus to get here. That's always hard for kids.

MH: You've characterized it as sort of a New-Agey, hippy-ish, pagan-ish... fill in the blank.

DV: Yeah, they actually call Boulder, what is it "Twenty Square Miles Surrounded by Reality." They purchased all this open space around it so nobody can ever build anywhere near them [laughter] and they've got their little socialist utopia that they can have.

MH: Oh, sweet. Maybe you should put that in the title: The Reformed Baptist Socialist Church.

5:00 **DV:** [laughs] You might get more people to come, but I don't know how exciting the people themselves would be!

MH: Yeah, they wouldn't last very long. Wow. Well, Doug is the author of the little handbook that distills the content of *Unseen Realm*. It's set up like a catechism. The inside joke between us was it has 95 questions in it. [laughter]

DV: It didn't originally, but you cropped it down to 95!

MH: It didn't originally, but yeah!

DV: I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me!" [laughter]

MH: We had to do the "95 Theses" thing. So why don't you say a little bit about what your philosophy was in creating that. I still get asked, "How do I teach *Unseen Realm* stuff, *Supernatural* content, to my church?" And I typically say they ought to get the handbook because that distills things into, not really sound bites, but very small statements of different points with verse references. So did that grow out of your attempt or your experience in the past to teach this kind of stuff—that you had to sort of break it down? Or was there a different origin?

DV: It was actually... I would say it was more me trying to teach myself. I didn't come to this independently of you—it was through your work. But I didn't collaborate with you at all on the thing. In fact, I sent it to you just kind of on a whim hoping you might give me a blurb or something, and then you really liked it. But I'm Reformed, so when I became Reformed we started learning about what catechisms are and it wasn't a bad word anymore (which it was growing up). It was just questions and answers—a classical way of teaching people.

MH: Right. That's all that catechism is, yep.

DV: I just really thought there was a need for teaching in that format because it's conducive to teaching little kids and stuff like that—to teach them supernatural stuff. So I went through the book, and then I did some of my own stuff. I had written a book on giants and so there was a lot of that stuff that wasn't as

relevant to what you were doing. But I did that, and I was also teaching a class on Revelation so there were questions in there that weren't really at all related to what you did. So there was a little bit more to it than just having it be a primer. I actually never even thought of it being a primer for that.

MH: Inside the building, we saw it and it was like... That was the reason they said "yes" if I was involved and I tried to pare it down—not to 95. I'll own that—that was my idea! [laughs] But to make it this thing that connects real easily to the book—both in terms of if you have it in hard copy and, of course, software—just links. If you're out there wondering how to distill the content into something digestible—something you could maybe construct a sermon around—or you're in a passage where the content is relevant and you wonder how to express this or that idea... This is the thing you should have. So I still get this question. To me, that's the easiest answer.

DV: In the Reformed community, some of them will teach through the Heidelberg Catechism through the course of the year. So there are 52 questions and it breaks down perfectly for one per week per year. So you could probably do something like that if you wanted to.

MH: Yeah, you could pick a question a week. So this is your first time at ETS, correct?

DV: They were here in Colorado Springs in 2001 or 2002 and I went to the Broadmoor for that, but it's still only the second one.

MH: Okay. So, what's your experience? Have you heard any good papers? Heard any so-so papers? Humdrum papers? It's always this random kind of thing.

DV: I've heard some of all of that. My favorite was probably... I just finished preaching through the Psalms and they were doing a thing... One of my former professors at Bethel (he was at the seminary and I was at the college and he was an adjunct, so he came there) was doing a thing with Tremper Longman on reading the Psalter as a book—so not just a collection of songs.

MH: Who was it?

DV: His name is David Howard.

MH: Yeah, I know David. I was going to say, "Was it David Howard?" He's great.

DV: So they actually... It was funny. I felt like because they're older they were a little bit more chill. They were more conversant, and it wasn't like they were really reading their papers too much. So then contrast that to a couple of... They were good papers early in the morning (I think it was yesterday) talking about liturgy

10:00

and the Lord's Supper and speech act and stuff like this. It was really just kinda... Toe the line and use really, really, really big words.

MH: Throw in some German there—*Gesundheit*.

DV: So it was good content. I mean, it's a theological convention, so...

MH: Were you at the... Gary Habermas had one yesterday late in the day on near-death experiences. Were you in the room for that?

DV: No, I didn't even know he was doing that!

MH: Yeah, it was really crowded. I was in the back and stayed for a while. Our other friend, Greg, was in there. It was more or less... It was kind of a presentation for people here in the evangelical academic orbit that really did not know what this was or why it's even important to think about it. So it was a very basic overview. If you were in the room... Like, I've read Van Lommel's book on NDE's (he's the cardiologist from over in the Netherlands and stuff like that), which is a pretty hefty book. It's good, even though I don't like at least one of his conclusions. But if you had read that kind of stuff, you really didn't learn anything. He mentioned some recent resource books, which I can go to Amazon and get that. So you run into that, too. You think, "Wow, I'm going to hear something new here," but it's actually getting people's feet wet. So that was kinda what that was like.

DV: I was looking for the weirdest things I could find here. I couldn't find hardly anything. I wish I had known about that.

MH: If you want weird, you go to AAR. Then you can cohort with the pagans and the Gnostics.

DV: So I have to tell this story of a near-death experience—not mine. It was a woman that we met from Nepal. I have no idea what to do with this story. It's the weirdest thing. So she was burned over like 85-percent of her body. I think it was her ex-husband that did it to her. She ended up dying. The way she tells the story... This was in Katmandu, so it's not a third-world country. It's kind of second-world or something, but a legitimate hospital. Her body was covered, the family had been called in. They were sitting there arguing over what they were going to do with the burial and stuff. So she was in there dead for four or five hours, and she talks about this near-death experience that she had. I learned about it because we were talking about Watchers and I think I was talking about Jacob's ziggurat. She was intrigued by what I was saying and I ended up showing her a picture of, I think it's the ziggurat at Ur. And as soon as I showed her this, she goes, "That is what I saw! That is what I saw!" Her eyes lit up and she talked about seeing these tall beings that kind of took her up this thing, and then for some reason they brought her back.

MH: Kind of like the vision there with Jacob.

DV: Very similar to that. Very strange.

MH: Wow, that is. That's interesting. That would be hard to forget that! [laughter]

DV: It's hard to forget. I don't know what to do with it, but...

MH: Usually, it's like... Habermas told a funny story in his session about someone who had died and they took the body to the morgue and a doctor came in to, I guess, look at it. A nurse was there prepping the body. And he said the person on the table who was dead but then came back reported these two later on to hospital administration because he said they started doing things that doctors and nurses shouldn't do in hospitals! [laughter] So they actually got caught by the corpse!

DV: Wow!

MH: So he said that's not very scientific, but it's kind of funny! Things like that happen. So yeah... I appreciate the fact that they put that on the schedule. They may have done it because it's Gary Habermas. He's known in Apologetics and usually Historical Jesus stuff. But he does move over. He drifts off into this category a lot. This is not his first go-around with that topic, but it was kind of nice to see. You wouldn't really associate it with an Evangelical Theological Society meeting. So I was glad to see it, but it was pretty basic. And that's what you get. So yeah, thanks for sharing a few minutes with us. I'm glad you heard something that you liked.

DV: Definitely.

MH: Like you said, Dave is good. He's a good presenter. He has interesting material. I didn't know you had him as a professor, though. It was that guy.

DV: Definitely that guy. He didn't remember me—it was 30 years ago. He actually forgot he had taught the class because he was at the seminary, but for some reason the college had him come over and do the class.

MH: They do a lot of that adjuncting relationship with the seminary faculty.

15:00

DV: And I think he moved away from Bethel right after that and went down to like New Orleans, and he's been back at Bethel for many years.

MH: Well, thanks again for visiting us for a few minutes.

DV: Yeah! Thanks for having me on!

MH: Yep.

MH: Well, we're back again at Denver for the Evangelical Theological Society annual meetings. This is the last day, so we have a few more interviews left. We're blessed to have Dr. Gary Yates with us from Liberty University. Gary and I have known each other for probably ten years at least. We do papers maybe in the same sections, we're both Old Testament guys. Nevertheless, I want him to introduce himself to you and then we'll get into some specifics.

GY: I thought maybe we were going to talk about baseball.

MH: No, we had our spring training discussion already! [laughing]

GY: Okay, no baseball. I'm Gary Yates from Liberty University. I teach Old Testament studies. I did my PhD at Dallas Seminary. That's one of the areas that I teach in at Liberty. I teach both residually and online. We have a pretty large online program.

MH: Yeah. What are some of your classes that you teach, either the online or at the campus?

GY: Online, I teach Isaiah and Psalms, and then I teach those classes residually, as well. I've done some Biblical Theology courses. I do some of the Old Testament intro and orientation—just giving big-scale surveys.

MH: You used *Unseen Realm* for something. Was it the Biblical Theology one?

GY: Yeah, we used it for the Biblical Theology class. It prompted a lot of interesting discussions.

MH: Any fistfights? [laughing]

GY: No, no! It was very positive. I've been amazed. I was preaching at a church a couple months ago and the first thing a guy asked me after the service was, "Did ever hear of this guy Heiser and his book *Unseen Realm*?" [laughter] I said, "Amazingly, I know him." But no, the students responded well. I think, first of all, just being exposed to some of the issues with Psalm 82 and Genesis 6. But then to see that in the New Testament in the context of Jesus' ministry or Revelation and there not being a sea in the future and those kinds of things... It was very helpful.

MH: We can go as deep into this or as shallow into this as you like. I don't know if you remember this, but it has stuck with me. Right after the book came out and

apparently right after you had read it, you and I bumped into each other at SBL. I know you're not a prophet or the son of a prophet [laughs]...

GY: Far from it!

MH: But you had this cryptic comment and you said, "You know, someday we're going to come to an ETS meeting and we're going to watch a panel or hear somebody do a paper on whether we should assign authority to the Old Testament's presentation of the unseen world." At the time, I thought, "Really? Would ETS... We're evangelicals." But that has stuck with me. Now that the book has sort of ballooned to be big enough where I can't say "the haters have come out," but you do see some of these whispers of suspicion. Like this guy, "Have you ever heard of this guy...?" I'm starting to hear some of that. Every time I do, it takes my mind back to what you said. So I don't know how you feel about that now.

GY: Yeah. I think what I've seen is that this used to be an issue that would occasionally come up in an Old Testament class, but I hear a much broader range of students that are raising these questions even in Systematic Theology classes. And then at the church level, I had never heard anyone ever ask about the divine council or those kinds of things, and I think it's generated some conversations about that.

MH: I won't name the podcast, but Mark Smith has recently appeared on an evangelical podcast. Smith is the divine council guy over on I guess what we call the secular side. Mark's not an anti-Christian guy—he's a Catholic—but he takes the standard consensus view of this evolutionary trajectory from polytheism to monotheism for biblical writers. Again, I had people send this to me, like, "Why is an evangelical seemingly adopting this trajectory?" It's starting to sort of leak out and these different views are emerging. It always just takes my mind back to that. So I might look at you and say, "That was really prescient!"

20:00 **GY:** It's the first time it's ever happened! [laughter] And I think that's the good thing, is that typically when as a professor if you wanted to introduce this idea, the only sources that you had did present sort of an evolutionary view. I was often a little confused as to how do I do this myself as an evangelical. I think your book has helped even those of us that teach these things to make it easier.

MH: Lord willing. That's the point, really. Now, you told me before we sat down here and got started that you have a new book coming out and it's sort of a companion to something that's already out. So go ahead and let us know about that.

GY: B&H a couple of years ago did *Urban Legends of the New Testament*. My friend and former colleague, David Croteau, dealt with 40 sort of commonly misapplied/misinterpreted New Testament passages. The book did well, and so

they decided they wanted us to do an Old Testament volume. So we did 40 commonly misunderstood Old Testament passages.

MH: It's a great title: *Urban Legends* and whatnot.

GY: I think the hard thing is that we might have stretched the term in a few places. [laughter] Because you don't want the book to be totally about just really wacky things, but there were places where I think "urban legend" referred to commonly held Christian views that I think sometimes are not well thought-out or that have imposed the New Testament on the Old. So I see it very similar to some of the issues that I see you raising on Naked Bible from time to time.

MH: So for listeners, B&H is Broadman and Holman. All you have to do is go up to Amazon: *Urban Legends of the New Testament*. And then, is Old Testament on preorder yet?

GY: No, it's not. It should be out next year sometime.

MH: So get the *Urban Legends* New Testament volume and then look for Gary's Old Testament volume. Before we leave, anything about Liberty that you want people to know? Because I get questions all the time... They knew I was attached to Liberty in distance ed., but I still get questions all the time. "Where can I take a class? Can I go to seminary without quitting my job and moving?" So what's going on there?

GY: I think that's one of the advantages of Liberty is that it's a large online program. It's not just Liberty professors. The course that you developed (Hebrew Exegesis), we're still using. So we have adjuncts from all around the world. We're adding new programs, and I think there are even some doctoral programs down the line that will not require you to come to the campus.

MH: That's a good idea to do the European research model.

GY: That's more what these classes, I think, are moving to—what the program is moving to.

MH: Well, good. Again, we had Mark Futato on previously, and he talked about RTS. We're going to have Sam Lamerson on and he's going to talk about Knox. I just want people to know that you don't have to uproot. Even if it's just as simple as taking a class online and you can get a degree. You can actually do this, even with languages. There are lots of things that are available and they should know about that.

GY: I think students would be surprised at how deeply you can dig into some of these classes. A lot of it's self-starting in some ways. But you can get a good deal out of it.

MH: If you're motivated, yeah.

GY: If you're motivated. It's different from the classroom, but I think it's a good alternative for people that can't do that. We have a large number of military students, so we have students studying all around the world.

MH: I noticed there are a lot of chaplains in the program when I was in it. I will throw a baseball thing in here, okay? Your favorite team is?

GY: Ah [sighs], Baltimore Orioles.

MH: Okay. [laughter]

GY: I don't want to talk about that.

MH: You had a difficult year! [laughs] But I'm thankful because Steve Pierce came over to Boston and was instrumental in my Red Sox winning the World Series.

GY: And he played Minor League baseball in Lynchburg. So I'll throw that in there.

MH: We appreciate the sacrifice! [laughs] Well, thanks for spending some time with us.

GY: Thanks, Mike. I appreciate the chance.

MH: Yep.

25:00

MH: We're back again in Denver at the annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. We have a familiar voice, at least. We've interviewed Sam Lamerson before, but now we've got a little bit of video to go with that. Sam is no stranger to the podcast. We had an episode on the *ponéros* that is still downloaded and listened to. Sam's field is New Testament, but I don't want to introduce him for him because he's a lot more than a New Testament guy. He's got a lot of plates spinning. We're familiar with that. So Sam, why don't you tell people who you are and what you do.

SL: Sure. I'm president and professor of New Testament at Knox Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale. I teach primarily Greek and Exegesis and Hermeneutics—things like that. Online, I teach New Testament, I teach a sort of intro to Greek class using Logos—stuff like that. A lot of what I do, since I'm the president, is go around and

meet people, meet students, meet donors, tell them about the seminary and the great things that are going on. It's a great time.

MH: So what is new at Knox?

SL: There are a lot of things. We have just been approved by ATS (the accreditation body for seminaries).

MH: That's a big deal.

SL: It's a big deal to have our MDiv fully online. So if you've always wanted to get an MDiv and couldn't afford the time to come out or whatever, Knox Seminary at knoxseminary.edu... Our MDiv is fully online and fully accredited by ATS—the highest accreditation body for seminaries in the country. We worked very hard. My colleague worked very hard and I didn't have as much to do with it as I did trying to give him some direction. It's a really big deal and we're excited about that.

MH: I had another friend who was a president of a school at the time, and that can be a life-sucking experience. [laughs] They really put you through the wringer.

SL: It is. There are times when I hate it, and other times when I feel like this is just the greatest thing in the world. When I'm with students or when I'm with donors being able to explain what's going on, it's a wonderful time and I really love it. When I'm grinding it out day after day filling out reports and things like that, it's not quite as exciting.

MH: Yeah. We talked to Mark Futato earlier and Gary Yates earlier. I want people to understand that the ability to get a complete MDiv degree (really a complete degree anywhere—MA, MDiv—but especially MDiv because it's a little longer than a traditional MA)... The ability to do that completely online is a pretty unique thing and it's a very big deal.

SL: And there are very few schools that have that now. Because you're essentially asking ATS for an exception. In general, they don't grant fully-online MDiv degrees, but you can get an exception if you have everything laid out and you've done everything that they asked you to. It takes a lot of time, a lot of work, but we're really, really proud of the degree and proud of the ability to offer it.

MH: I get questions all the time about where to take a class, who does distance ed... In some cases, it's either somebody who's contemplating going into the ministry or somebody already in the ministry that wants to go to seminary and they don't want to leave their church, they don't want to quit their job, they don't want to uproot their family. This option... Hybrid programs are nice and they have some benefits to them, obviously, where you have to commute to the institution a

few times a year for a week at a time. But the ability to not have to do that—that sort of amps up the convenience factor. And if it's ATS accredited, it's not going to be this fly-by-night kind of thing.

SL: Right. There are certainly valuable benefits to being on campus. Nobody would disagree with that. But the problem is that not everybody can go on campus. It's becoming more and more a world where people are educated online.

MH: And they expect it.

SL: Yeah, people expect it.

MH: People who grew up with technology expect it.

SL: There are schools who will say, "We're not having online education." And I say that's fine, but eventually you're going to be a typewriter repairman. You can fight against it all you want and you can use a typewriter all you want, but sooner or later you're going to be the only one in the room using it.

MH: Since I work at Logos, we run into this a lot. The younger a person is... Now that there's so much you can get like in books in digital form, so even the book itself, it's like, "Why would I buy one of those when I can get it on a hand-held?" You grew up with this, where there's instant... You can criticize it and say it's instant gratification and we don't want to cater to that. Okay, I understand that, but when it comes time for a decision to quit everything, it sounds a little goofy, but this has been seminary: "I'm going to quit my ministry at my church to go get a degree to do ministry in a church."

SL: And hope that I can afford it all.

30:00

MH: Right. And hope you can afford it all AND when you get hired, hope that you can pay back loans and things like that. The distance ed. model is a meaningful... certainly an adjustment, and I would say in today's culture it's actually course-correction to make this available.

SL: Every credit student at Knox gets Logos as part of their tuition. We just got the new Logos 8. We love it. The workflows are just wonderful. It's a great tool. With that and with some tools they have on the internet, the need for librarians is really going away. There was an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* a couple of months ago about how many librarians are just losing their jobs because people don't use physical libraries that much anymore.

MH: Yeah, it's information management from a keyboard. It's true. So you mentioned your administrative duties, your teaching duties. What do you do for fun? [laughs] Do you still preach, as well?

SL: I do. I still preach sometimes. Not all the time. I have my Harry Potter socks on, so I've got that going. One of the things that we do is about every couple of months we have this thing for whomever wants to come called "Lunch and Learn." I pick some obscure topic. I've done one on UFO's. I did one at Halloween on the Salem Witch Trials. I did one a couple of months before that on the theology of snake handling. [Mike laughs] It's an interesting thing because you see snake handlers are looked at as this bizarre group of people sociologically, but rarely does anyone take the time to sort of figure out how their theology drives them to do those kinds of things. So it was a really interesting time and the people really liked it.

MH: Well, that's pretty diverse. People in our audience know that Sam's the guy who put himself through seminary as a street performer. You're a magician.

SL: That's right. I show up on re-runs of Nickelodeon every once in a while.

MH: Yep. You've got a lot of these kinds of interests. People who are familiar with me know that I'm into this, and it's real simple. You're trying to get people to think better about a topic or primary sources, and the Bible always gets sucked into these topics. So trying to help people think better about these things and not being dismissive because, depending on what the topic is, they can be really significant components to their entire worldview and even their identity. So you do need to be a little bit more careful and respectful, but at the same time try to get them to think better about Jesus and what the message of the Bible is. There's a huge need for that.

SL: There is. In terms of snake-handling, there was a *National Geographic* that blew up—big, big show—on snake handlers. It was more of a sociological kind of thing. Nobody ever really asked them what about their theology caused them to think that it's the right thing to do to handle snakes. And how come this hasn't occurred anywhere in church history and doesn't occur anywhere out of Appalachia in the United States. I think all of those are really significant questions about the practice of snake handling.

MH: So that series has been pretty popular.

SL: Actually, one of the stars of that series died shortly after the series ended of a snake bite. Then his son took over and he nearly died of a snake bite. He went to the hospital, which many of them won't. He went to the hospital but was very, very close to dying of a snake bite.

MH: Wow. So how many of these lunches have you done?

SL: Probably 25, maybe. We do them every couple of months.

MH: And they're open to the public?

SL: They're open to the public. Anybody can come who wants to. I try to have some straight theological topics, but sometimes I just have some weird stuff just to keep me happy.

MH: And it also will get people into the room who might need to hear... Just the fact that, "Hey, I teach New Testament at a seminary. I'm the president of a seminary and here I am talking about this..." That's going to run quite contrary to the perception of Christians that they bring.

SL: It is. And people will come to that kind of lunch. Some of them don't even go to church. Some of them show up at church every great once in a while. So in many ways, it's a real opportunity to just sort of help them think through these issues of Christianity and popular culture.

MH: Yeah. Well, I'm glad you're doing that. I'm not surprised that it's popular. I'm not surprised that you get good attendance to that and that people are really interested. Thanks for catching up with us this year.

SL: My pleasure. I still remember the old days when it was you and I and a few other people on an email list. [laughter] That was a long time ago!

MH: Yep. So good to hear from you, and glad things are really moving in a good direction at Knox, too.

SL: Blessings on you, and I hope you guys have a wonderful time and that more and more people pick up the podcast and listen to it. It's a wonderful thing.

35:00 **MH:** Thanks.

MH: Welcome back to the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in Denver. Our special guest this time is Jesse Myers of Lexham Press, but you have a person history that our readers and listeners and viewers are not aware of. We've talked to [Rick] Brannan before. Jesse works with Brannan in Lexham Press, and I'm going to let you introduce yourself... what your background is, what your job title is, and then we'll go from there.

JM: Yeah, sure! My name is Jesse. As Mike said, I work with Brannan. He's the publisher and I'm the Associate Publisher of Partnerships and Acquisitions. I've gone through... I think I've had seven job titles at Faithlife in my time! [laughs]

MH: That's not uncommon.

JM: I came originally from Eerdmans—that's where I came from to Logos. I started studying English literature, I did a Masters degree at Providence Theological Seminary. I went and did further graduate work in Moral Theology at Nelson Institute in Ireland. And then I moved to Grand Rapids. My wife's a mathematician. We're Canadians. That's how we got the Green Cards to come. [laughs] They're after mathematicians, and I kind of rode those coat tails. I started working for Eerdmans and then came over to Logos. So I was really hired as a content expert for the packages that go along with the base packages when you buy Logos. So I built the Reformed base packages, and then I continued building the Anglican base packages. But because of my history at Eerdmans (I was a sales manager there), they asked me to do more and more for Lexham. Eventually, it was like, maybe I should be doing this all the time.

MH: Yeah. Take a few hats off.

JM: Yeah, so I started as a Product Manager there and then was Marketing Manager, and then was Associate Publisher of Marketing and Sales, and then I started to do more and more acquisitions and getting more interested in the content side, so that's been my full-time gig now—finding authors and partnerships. This is an important part of what Lexham does—partnerships, as well as just direct-to...

MH: Why don't you distinguish between the relationship between authors and partnerships, just so people know what that is?

JM: Right. So in an author relationship, we speak to an author and we either present them with an idea for a book or they come to us with an idea for a book and we write a contract to do a book. With a partnership, we're usually dealing with an institution or another publisher, putting together a broader partnership that might involve several books or several authors.

MH: Like licensing some of their titles and stuff like that.

JM: That kind of thing, yeah. Or co-publishing, that kind of stuff.

MH: So if somebody asked you, "I'm on the website, I'm looking through books that Lexham has published, or I've got the catalog... How would you describe Lexham's philosophy of acquisition? How would you explain what gets in the catalog, what interests you as far as a book that Lexham might be interested either in licensing or acquiring?"

JM: We publish quite a broad range within the evangelical space. What we're looking for is original, strong content. We don't necessarily always go after the big-name authors. Obviously, we do partner with people who are really well-known—that platform. I think we have a little more ability than some publishers to help people acquire that. We're looking for content that's putting something new

out there or restating something that needs to be said again. We have a few areas that we specialize in. We have really strong language tools. *The Greek Verb Revisited* that came out last year was an important contribution to the field. We have a suite of grammars coming out—a Hebrew grammar and a workbook, two Greek grammars (one that's designed for seminaries that are switching to more of a tool-based digital model and then a traditional grammar that's more of a deductive approach). We have the *Method* series, which talks about the methodologies behind biblical studies. Then we've got a monograph series where again, we're going after original content that's really strong—new contributions to the fields of theology and biblical studies and systematics—historical theology. So we have two monograph series. And then we also publish stuff that serves the church. We have pastoral resources, preaching resources, and we're working on more and more stuff that serves the church as well as the academy.

MH: Ballpark number of how many books Lexham publishes? What's the length of the catalog?

JM: In the area of 50 a year. It varies and depends a little bit. Some of the books are almost like several books in one. Some of the books we do are huge and are very complicated. Other books are just the standard 50,000 words kind of monograph.

40:00

MH: Okay. So what's new in the catalog this year, or something that you want to sort of highlight for our audience. Obviously, *Unseen Realm*... we published that through Lexham Press. But other than my stuff, what would you want to draw people's attention to?

JM: Well, we're really excited about a few books in our catalog this year. One of my favorite books is *The Apostles' Creed* with Ben Meyers. He just goes through the Creed sentence by sentence and clause by clause and reflects very deeply on it. It's written on a level that... My son actually read it and he's 10. But it's also something that I gained a lot out of reading it. So it's written at a level that almost anybody can read it, but with a richness that anybody's going to gain from it.

MH: Is it like a devotional, or is it explanatory, or a little bit of both?

JM: It's a little of both. It's not pure devotional, but it's not like a history of the Apostles' Creed. It's very much in tune with, and he's very knowledgeable of the Church Fathers and the Early Church. So that background is all there, but he's not showing it off. You've had Mark Ward on to talk about *Authorized*, which is a really interesting book.

MH: Yeah, that I think... I would be surprised if that doesn't do pretty well.

JM: It has been doing well.

MH: Even if you're not immersed in the King James-only thing, you've probably heard about it.

JM: Oh, yeah!

MH: So that would not surprise me at all. What else?

JM: Well, another story that ties into this is that we acquired another publisher this year. That was part of the Partnership School. So we were a book company. Jim Weaver is a guy who has worked in publishing for his whole career. When he retired, he just couldn't shake it. So he spent about three years just publishing books on his own. He has this great network of relationships that he built up. So he published a lot of great books, and then he was like of like, "You know what? This one-man show thing is a lot of work." And so he started looking for a partner to help him take over the catalog. When we looked at what he had, he's got Walt Keiser, Andreas Kostenburger—all these great guys and really strong content. Jim didn't have the capacity to market his books very extensively so they weren't on my radar.

MH: So how was the connection made?

JM: He reached out to us. He knew that the kinds of things that we were doing were in sync with his interests. So we went ahead with it. Those books are just now starting to come out under the Lexham brand. There's some really great content in there. Jeffrey Niehaus has a three-volume *Biblical Theology* with incredibly rich content. There's a fella at Biola named Thaddeus Williams, and he has the first volume in what he calls "inductive systematics" called *Reflect*. What he's doing is he's going through people's lives—celebrities and people you know about—and talking about the ways in which they are Christlike and the things about their lives that can help us to grow in Christ. So the book is really about Christ, but it's talking about the way that Christ is reflected in the world. And he's very much a Kuyperian—he's coming from that world view (common grace and that sort of way of thinking about things). There are going to be two more volumes: one about the Spirit and one about the Father. It's an incredibly innovative way of teaching people about Trinitarian theology without even knowing it. They find out at the end, "Oh, wait a minute! Oh, this stuff makes sense!." [laughs]

MH: Yeah. That's quite different. Wow. That sounds like a really important thing to have.

JM: Yeah, so when we found out that he had planned more it, we just signed him up for the rest of the series and we're going to make it all consistent. He started with Jim, but we're going to continue on and make it a continuity with Lexham.

MH: Wow. You know, we haven't talked to Karl Kutz and Rebekah Josberger yet. I don't know what's going on at the tables as far as moving that, but that's another work that I think... You mentioned the Greek... That was a genuine contribution. I actually think for an introductory grammar, this one's going to be, as well.

JM: It's already been picked up by a number of pretty important seminaries and schools. Their approach has been reputed to be the most effective in the country—that their students are coming out a year ahead of everybody else.

45:00

MH: Our program at Wisconsin, the students that came up through Multnomah did draw attention. When I was there, I had Karl as a TA instructor for what the department called "Second Year Hebrew." It wasn't your traditional syntax class. It was Karl's system. [laughs] It actually ended up sort of getting people at the same level and the same page. He was doing that there. It didn't surprise me to run into people who went through the program later that had been to Multnomah and to hear other people in the department say, "They just seemed more prepared than we are. Why is that the case?"

JM: Their approach is... "reading for comprehension" is the phrase that they like to use. They're getting you started really early on with the basic tools to do translation understanding right at the get-go. So rather than building all the foundations and then getting you started, you learn those foundations in an integrated way. It's been really effective. We're really proud of how the book has turned out. Doug Mangum put a ton of work in with Karl and Rebekah getting it really well done. And now the book is in your hands. All those hours of work are there to see.

MH: I remember several years ago talking to them about... I don't even know if it was an intentional meeting or discussion, but finding out they were working on a grammar. It was like, "You need to bring that over here!" So yeah, I haven't followed it through the process so when it came out this year it was like, "This is good stuff. This is long overdue to actually get this in the can." It was good that we got to do it. That's an important work. In our audience, a lot of people are motivated through self-study to either do something with hermeneutics (how do I study the Bible better), but a lot of them want to learn the biblical languages. And so I get asked with some regularity about recommending grammars and things like this. I'm real happy that I can be able to recommend this one. There are other good grammars, obviously, but this one sort of has this invisible track record that those of us who know them and are familiar with Multnomah and the school... there's a history there already, even though it's not visible to the public. So that's really nice.

JM: Yeah, we're really proud of how it's turning out. I think it's going to become a really important tool for a lot of schools.

MH: Yeah. So any prognostications? Can you tell us anything that's in the pipeline? I don't know how much of that kind of stuff can...

JM: I'm trying to think...

MH: We've had a couple people on whose books were either on pre-order or not quite on pre-order.

JM: I've got a few that I can share that are fairly far along. Kevin VanHoozer's got a book called *Hearers and Doers*. It's about basically doing thing theology as a pastor and in the pastorate.

MH: Is this an intentional part of the "pastor as theologian" sort of movement?

JM: It's in that same sort of place. And it's in harmony with some of the things that he's done before, but he's bringing it more to the church. And we're excited. That's going to be a really important volume. That's going to come out next year.

MH: Wow. That's interesting. Again, I'm at the same company but I'm sort of isolated from a lot of the stuff that goes on. I didn't know about a number of these things. So thanks for spending a few minutes with us.

JM: Yeah! I'm happy to chat anytime, Mike.

MH: The website is?

JM: www.lexhampress.com. Check it out.

MH: Please don't just associate *Unseen Realm* with that. There's a lot of other stuff in the catalog that you would enjoy and benefit from, so take a look!

TS: All right, Mike! Four great interviews! It's too bad Sam didn't do any magic tricks. Sometimes he does, sometimes he doesn't.

MH: We have to catch him with the card deck.

TS: Yeah. We talked about some of the conspiracies, though, at the Denver Airport. That's kind of fun—you know, the tunnels and the reptiles that live there.

MH: He has me wondering if I can get to the airport early enough to take a tour now. [laughs]

TS: It's pretty interesting! Maybe we should do a Peeranormal podcast, but I guess there's no peer-reviewed material on that, so I guess never mind. All right, Mike. Well, good stuff. I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.