

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 131

Conference Interviews, Part 4

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Episode Summary

During the recent annual meetings for biblical studies scholars held in San Antonio, Dr. Heiser interviewed a number of scholars about their recent work. In Part 4 of those interviews, we chat with Dr. N. T. Wright (former Bishop of Durham and Canon of Westminster, now New Testament professor at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland), Dr. Brannon Ellis (Publisher for Lexham Press), and Dr. Carmen Imes, who teaches biblical studies at George Fox University.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 131, "Conference Interviews, Part 4." I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you?

MH: Very good... here we are again!

TS: Here we are again with Part 4. We're having a good time, we're getting lots of good interviews, and this show is going to be no exception.

MH: Yeah. This time we have a conversation with N.T. Wright. Audience members might know him as Tom Wright. N.T. Wright is a very famous biblical scholar and theologian. Very prolific. Just a nice guy, too. So we have the privilege to spend a few minutes with him talking about his most recent book, which is on the atonement. We also got a chance to talk to Brannon Ellis, who heads Lexham Publishing (who published my book, *The Unseen Realm*). We talked to him a little bit about the publishing industry, a little bit on evangelical and Christian publishing, sort of some insider information: what publishers think about and how they do what they do. And then Carmen Imes, who was a doctoral student when I met her a couple of years ago at a regional ETS meeting in the Northwest. I was really intrigued with her work. I went to hear her session at that regional event, and her dissertation was (I'll just preface it this way) something that mixed the concept of imaging (which we talk about a lot on the

podcast) with the concept of bearing the Name. So there we get into the Name Theology that we talk about, too. So her dissertation actually finds an intersection between those two things. Since our audience knows what those things mean conceptually and why they're important for biblical theology, I really wanted to get her on the show to talk about her work. So I think it will be another good one.

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MH: Well, we're honored at SBL to have with us N.T. Wright. He's not going to be a stranger to most of our audience, but I will ask you to give a little bit of a self-introduction for those who don't know who you are. So if you could do that, that would be great.

NTW: My name is Tom Wright. "N.T.," but Tom for short. I'm professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews. I've shuttled to and fro between church jobs and academic jobs all my adult life, and I've tried to combine them. At the moment I'm full-on with the Academy doing a lot of supervision of PhD students and trying to write about Jesus and Paul in their own contexts, as I've been doing on and off for quite a long time now.

MH: On the way over here I mentioned to Dr. Wright that he is our kind of guest because he's one of a short list of scholars who intentionally do things for the non-specialist. How did that happen?

NTW: I think it actually began because I have a very articulate wife and four very articulate children, none of whom are theologians. All I would have to do would be to mention some word like "Christology" or "hermeneutics" or something at lunch table and they'd say, "Dad, you know we don't talk that language. Say what you mean!" And so from quite an early stage of my life, I've been pushed back onto the back foot and told, "Let's just make this clear." But then, also, as a preacher (and I've been a preacher for 45 years), when you look out at a congregation and realize these people just don't have the linguistic equipment that a trained scholar does, it's a very good discipline to try to translate it down. C.S. Lewis said something that I read when I was quite young and struck me as a major point. He said that theologians ought to have to pass an exam to translate a work of academic theology into the vernacular. Because if you can't do that, you either don't understand it or you don't believe it. I felt that as a rebuke. So for me it's a challenge: Can I say this in words that my seven-year-old grandson can understand? Because if I can't, I need to think a bit harder.

MH: That's really good! Do you remember where he wrote that?

NTW: I have no idea.

MH: I was going to say that I'd like to read that! (laughing)

NTW: One of his miscellaneous essays. Whenever I had a Lewis quote that I didn't know, I used to write to Walter Hooper (who was Lewis' secretary) and you get a letter back by return post telling you the exact page in the exact book, but I don't know if Walter Hooper is still alive.

MH: Wow. Well, we do want to talk about your latest book. Could you just tell people the title? And the first question, I guess, since the word "revolution" is in the title, we could start there. What do you mean by "The Revolution?"

5:00

NTW: Good question! I didn't start intending to have that title. It's *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion*. I started out wanting to say that in order to have a full biblical theology of atonement, you need stuff about the incarnation, stuff about the Kingdom of God, stuff about the cross, obviously—but also resurrection and ascension in the Spirit for a full theology of atonement. However, the New Testament writers continually tell us that something actually happened when Jesus died and sort of focus in on that. We know the other stuff is important and it all ties up, but what exactly had changed by the evening of the first Good Friday? So I decided to try to focus in on that, inevitably from Paul and the Gospels. I would love to have included the Letter to the Hebrews in there, as well, but I realized at a certain stage that that would mean the book was at least 100 pages longer and it was already getting longer than I had meant it to be. So it is basically a Jesus and Paul study.

And I've found that again and again, guess what? Most people who write about the meaning of the cross hardly deal with the four Gospels at all, which is bizarre because they're the ones that tell the story! But it's been so endemic in Western culture that there's a big hiatus between Jesus preaching the Kingdom and Jesus going to his death. So people that talk about Jesus' death assume that all that Kingdom stuff is just back story and don't really tie it up. And I was determined to try and get past that, which generates what in the trade we call a "*Christus Victor*" theme, which is that on the cross Jesus won the victory over the powers, which is what Paul says in Colossians 2 and is what Jesus himself says in John 12 and John 15 and 16 and so on. But then the question is, those who have done *Christus Victor* (who have said that's the meaning of the cross) have then tended to push to one side other meanings, like representation, substitution, moral example, etc. And I was determined not to do that because that's there, too. So I'm trying to find out how all that stuff fits together in the mind of Jesus himself and his first followers. And the real focus, then, is on Passover—that Jesus chose Passover as the moment to do what had to be done, knowing that Passover (which is the victory over the enslaving power and the freeing of God's people) will be the real meaning of what he's doing. But then to see how the strands from Scripture all come in alongside that. Sorry... I could go on about this all day, as you know!

MH: I've often wondered why people sort of land on one view of the atonement. It's always seemed unnecessary to me. It seems counterintuitive for some of the reasons you're saying. But you're, of course, going to get push-back. That's nothing new for you. But along with that, we've talked about what needs to be corrected—and that is, "Don't land in any one place." It's a multivalent thing so let's treat it for what it is.

NTW: When I was wrestling with how to put all the things I was thinking into some sort of a coherent form, the breakthrough for me was realizing that what I'm doing was a critique of the Western tradition. I say "Western" because the Eastern churches don't usually do atonement theology like we've done ever since Ansel. But I've got a tripartite analysis of where we went wrong. The Western churches, as a whole, have Platonized eschatology, by which I mean that they have imagined that the ultimate goal is for the soul to go to heaven (which is a Platonic vision, not a Christian one). You get it in Plutarch in the first century, not in Paul.

But as a result of that, if the soul is to be pure and go to heaven, then that frames the question about who we are—the anthropological question—in a moralistic fashion, as though *the* main question is, "Have I behaved myself or not, and if I haven't, what's going to happen? Or if that means God has got to kill me, for whatever reason (sounds rather stringent, but there we are), isn't that fortunate Somebody else got killed so now it's all right?" Now, many, many people—not least young people—hear the story put like that and they think that is absolute rubbish, and it's unpleasant rubbish, as well

But then, the third thing is: Because we've Platonized our eschatology and moralized our anthropology (this is talking trade language rather than street-level language) we have paganized our Soteriology. We have lapsed, without realizing it, into something that was well-known in the ancient world: namely, the idea of an angry God, an innocent victim, and people somehow being able to get on with their lives because the innocent victim has got in the way. And people hear that story and they think that's what the New Testament is teaching! So some people just reject it, and other people say, "No, we have to cling to this because this is the Gospel and bad things will happen if we don't say it." And I say, "No, these are parodies." They are not exactly wrong, but they are parodies of the truth. When we put the proper eschatology of the New Heavens and New Earth together with the proper human vocation to be image-bearers together with the actual meaning of the cross as the victory over the powers, this releases humans--not to go to heaven but to be the royal priesthood in the new world. So in a sense it's a large intellectual history kind of thing, but it's really, really important to understand why we've got where we've got in order, then, to let the Bible have its full impact.

10:00

MH: Any one of those things in isolation, when you strip them out of the bigger context... You used the word "parody." Somebody might prefer the word

"caricature," but that's kind of what the result is. I think people can see that, because if you strip anything out of its bigger picture, it's very easy then to turn it into that. How would you take what you just said... What would you do with "reconciliation language" in Paul?

NTW: Reconciliation language is central to Paul. I argued in my big book on Paul two or three years ago that when it all comes down to it, Paul describes himself as a "minister of reconciliation." And that is reconciliation between God and humans and reconciliation between humans and humans, as you see in—say—the letter to Philemon. So reconciliation is one central way of focusing in on a complete story. The danger with all this stuff is that we take abstract terms and forget that these are shorthand references to a narrative, and the narrative is about God and his human creatures *and* the role of these human creatures in God's world. Because it's not just God and humans, it's humans that are made for a task in the world, and if they're out of sync with God... Reconciliation is necessary because humans are idolaters, and idolatry is the real problem. When you worship that which is not God, your humanness deconstructs and the stuff you do deconstructs other people's humanness, as well, in this or that way. That's a long fancy way of saying a short word, which is *sin*. But the trouble is if we say "sin" in the contemporary context, people just hear, "Oh, there's a big rule there and you just broke it."

MH: Right, right... it's rule-breaking.

NTW: Instead of actually understanding. Yeah, that would come in, but actually it's more structural than that. If you worship idols, you won't be a proper human. Now here's the thing: If you're worshiping idols, you're turning away from the Living God and giving your allegiance to developing a relationship with the powers. And so reconciliation involves breaking the grip of the powers so that we can be in proper relation to God, not just so that God and we can be friends, but as in Revelation 5, we are rescued in order to be the royal priesthood.

MH: Yeah, we spend a lot of time on this podcast because my... People who listen to the Naked Bible Podcast are going to hear a lot of things in what you just said that we talk about a lot of the time. Like defining God's plan as restoring Eden. In other words, it includes this individual element. But again, that's one point in a whole matrix of ideas. So if you're going to land on this one point or you're going to pull that one point out, you're going to miss all this other stuff, and then it's easy to sort of just go off on a tangent in something. Imaging is a huge idea. As a Semitist, I look at Genesis 1:26 and I have these grammar spasms in my own work where, "Look this is the *bet asentia*. This is the *bet* of identity. Think of "the image" as a verb. It's 'imaging.' It's not a quality." And there's all sorts of grammatical reasons that's so, there's all sorts of ethical and theological reasons that you don't want it to be a quality. It's a status, a representation. And that carries through...

NTW: I would say it's a vocation.

MH: Yep.

NTW: And that's why, when I look at Reformed Theology (and, in a sense, I am a Reformed theologian... the Anglican tradition has a lot of that in it and that's where I am), the danger with that is that they use the language of the Covenant of Works, which actually has some very good meanings as well, but it gets translated down into what I call the "works contract." That actually the whole thing is about God giving a command, us breaking it, and then that having to be resolved. And I want to say, "No, God gave humans a vocation, and the vocation is a dynamic, living thing." Imaging—exactly. And presumably you would agree, as well, that Genesis 1 is basically temple language. It's the construction of the heaven/earth creation.

MH: Yeah, I think that needs to be taken seriously. Most of my work (or a lot of my work) is in Israelite cosmology, so I know what's going on there. It really is important. I would go... I don't know if you're familiar with Divine Council kind of stuff from the Old Testament side. So when you talk about things like that, these are deliberate metaphors. It's "family." It's not a coincidence that we have New Testament language about "adoption, sons, children, daughters," all this kind of thing. But it's also, if you want to call it "enterprise"—a family business. So Eden is where heaven meets earth. Humanity is supposed to be a part of the divine family. We're on that trajectory and it's all one big thing.

15:00

NTW: Yes, yes... And particularly, if Eden is a temple, a heaven/earth reality, then I've often watched lights go on when I've said this in a lecture. That if you're building a temple in the ancient world, the final thing you put in is the image of the god, so the worshipers know who the god is and the god has power...

MH: And it's made alive.

NTW: Absolutely, absolutely! And so that's why Israel doesn't have images, because human beings are the image. And that's an extraordinary point. I think most of the theology I grew up with has not even BEGUN to take that on board!

MH: It's not on their radar.

NTW: But then, when you say, "That's what God fractured and bashed up in the Fall," (whatever that means), then the New Testament is saying not, "Oh dear, we're out of sync with God so he's going to punish us, but fortunately we're reconciled so we're friends again now," that's only one truncated part of the larger narrative. For me, I go back again and again to 1 Corinthians 15:3, where Paul says the Messiah "died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures and was buried and rose again in accordance with the Scriptures," and my critique is that the Western tradition has said, "The Messiah died for our sins in accordance

with our narrative of sin and salvation, and by the way we've got a few biblical footnotes we can back that up with" instead of actually taking the biblical narrative seriously.

MH: It's really interesting. In 1 Corinthians 15, it's well-known that we have this *anistemi* language, *anastasis*, and there are other words that describe resurrection and what-not, but that seems to be the focus because of the noun. You go to Psalm 82 at the end of the Psalm, where the Psalmist wants the Lord to rise up and take back the nations of the earth. The "rise up" there is *anistemi*. You actually have Septuagint hints at this theme that the resurrection is connected with the defeat of the gods.

NTW: That's very good, and I wish I had made more of that, although that is about resurrection. I don't think I pulled that out on my book on resurrection...

MH: It happens in a couple other places, too, in the Septuagint, and Paul tracks on it.

NTW: I mean, the one that I have often been fascinated by is 2 Samuel 7, where God says through the prophet, Nathan, to David: "I will raise up your seed after you." Now the Hebrew is *wa haqimoti et zara* (if that's how you pronounce it... my Hebrew pronunciation is not very good). But the Septuagint is *kai anastaso to sperma sou*. As far as I know, nobody prior to Paul or the early Christians thought that that meant "I will resurrect your seed." But when that happens, they look back and say, "*gasp* Oh my goodness—there it is!"

MH: My view (and again, listeners are going to be familiar with this), I think Messianic prophecy was deliberately cryptic...

NTW: Yeah, yeah

MH: ... Because I take what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 pretty seriously— that had the rulers of this world known, they never would have done this dumb thing.

NTW: Yes, yes... that's good.

MH: But it was meant to only be reassembled in this blown-up matrix in hindsight. That's when you get things like that. Boom, there it is.

NTW: Exactly. And this is, of course, what Richard Hayes is talking about in his stuff on the Gospels—reading backwards. Which is such an interesting thing. But it's important—and I've tried to bring this out in this book... For a Christian theologian, you start with Jesus and you look back. But, of course, when you do that, what you see looking back into the world of Israel and Judaism is to see a story coming forwards to meet you—only the story in its bits and pieces doesn't

yet know that this is where it's going. In fact, it's very twisted and disjointed. I was saying to some people the other day that if you look at Psalms 105 and 106, one is saying, "Yeah, God has done this and isn't this great, etc." and the other saying, "Yeah, we've messed up again and again. We blew it..." So it's like they're living between Psalm 105 and 106, and it isn't a triumphalist narrative. Nor is it a totally defeatist narrative. But it's a very, very puzzling narrative. It is, however, a narrative which is going somewhere. It's only when you get Jesus that then the early Christians realize, "This is where it was going all along and we hadn't seen it!"

MH: Yeah. Well, I have two questions. I know you're pressed for time. That's just the nature of what SBL is.

I want to go back to this thing we call the Fall. In the book (and you mentioned it here), the relationship of sin with idolatry... So for Adam, how was Adam an idolater? How does that paradigmatic approach apply to him?

20:00

NTW: I think that's what Paul is answering in Romans 1:18ff, where there are lots and lots of allusions (as many people have shown) to Genesis 3, and where he basically says we worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator. In other words, he's taking his orders from one of the creatures in the Garden (i.e., the serpent), rather than from God. I've toyed with (and you as a Semitist are no better than me) that the meaning of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil... Is this actually the temple and the Torah? What is it? But the idea of snatching at the knowledge of good and evil, it seems to me, is precisely the middle mistake of the three I was talking about: of moralizing anthropology, as though this is the only thing that matters is the knowledge of good and evil. We're going to elevate that. In a sense, I think Western theology has done exactly what Adam did for various... But going back to idolatry, I think that the world is full of what we can loosely call "powers, forces, etc." and it looks as though in the story Adam and Eve are listening to a voice which is coming from the world, which is a powerful voice, which is saying, "Hey, here's a shortcut to something rather good."

MH: In the Semitics world, guys like John Walton pointed this out before, but the reader is going to know when they read or hear the story that this is a little bit more than a normal member of the animal kingdom because it talks. So there's already this sense of divinity. If Eden, again, is where God lives, and where God lives—that's where business is done, that's where the cosmos is ruled from, this is the Council Headquarters (so to speak), then it takes on this flavor of Eve being influenced by lesser created beings. And there's sort of an exchange of... There's an element of autonomy in there, too (I wouldn't throw that out)... But, again, preferring the words of a lesser one as opposed to the Supreme God who actually told them what to do, told them the Covenant. So I think that's helpful, too.

NTW: I like that! I like that.

MH: Last question. This goes into the area of your experience with lay people, but in light of this whole... We have these big highfaluting discussions about the atonement. So how would you explain to a child, "What did Jesus do and what do I have to believe about what Jesus did?"

NTW: It's a funny thing. There are some things, like music, which are their own explanation and which, if you try to explain them... Rather like tasting notes on a brilliant wine actually, there's just a bunch of funny metaphors. And really, the thing to do is drink it, sip it. And with the cross, I think for little people, there is something about the power of a story which grabs them. This is autobiographical. I go back to the age of 6, 7, 8, something like that, and I have no idea how much I understood. I just knew something about Jesus dying and something about God loving me, and that did it. And in a sense, that's quite enough. You don't need more. For reasons that we don't fully comprehend (but I've got a little idea about that), the cross as a symbol carries for millions of people the power of the meaning deeper than any theory. As a sort of moderately rationalistic modern Westerner, that's rather offensive, but actually I do believe in the power of symbols. I think part of that, part of what Paul is saying in Romans 3:21-26 (it's not normally drawn out) is that if we've been idolaters and everything has happened bad from there, then one of the things that the cross does is give us a focus for true worship and being drawn to the cross with Jesus as the true image-bearer. "No one has ever seen God but the only begotten son has made him known"—he has *exegesato*, "exegeted him." There's a sense that something deep within even a small person can look at that and just have a sense there is truth here, there is beauty here, there is love here, and I'm signing on. We'll sort out the theory later.

MH: Right, right. Well, thank you for spending a few minutes with us!

NTW: Thank you! My pleasure.

MH: I know my audience is going to really enjoy it. This is what we try to do.

NTW: Greetings to one and all.

MH: Thank you.

MH: Well, we're back at SBL, and we have with us Brannon Ellis. Brannon is the... well, I'll let you give your job title. But we're going to talk a little bit about

Lexham Press, and evangelical publishing. Brannon is affiliated with that and he'll give you his job title. Also include a little bit of your own academic background and some of your experience.

25:00

BE: Thanks, Mike. I'm Brannon. I am the publisher for Lexham Press, which is an insider publisher industry way of saying you're the guy in charge of the press. My own background is coming from seminary in Southern California. I went to Westminster Seminary. After that I went to do my PhD in Aberdeen, Scotland. After the PhD, I finished up my book, that was kind of a revision of my dissertation, with Oxford (while I was frantically looking for a job).

MH: (laughing) This is a familiar story to lots of people!

BE: It was 2010. So I cleaned up after home disasters (house fires and what-not) by day and revised my book by night. I was finally able to get a job at InterVarsity Press. They needed a project editor for the Reformation Commentary Series (that they're still producing), as well as an academic editor for a variety of other projects. So I was there for two years. I didn't know it at the time, but I found out later that I was head-hunted to help build Lexham Press into a proper publishing house. So Lexham started several years ago with the idea of doing in-house projects that would benefit the Logos Bible Software platform and other asset-creation within the broader company at Faithlife. We did that for a while and it worked out really well. Eventually, a few insightful people got together and said, "Hey, what would it look like if we not only partnered with a lot of other fine publishing institutions, but what if we took advantage of the opportunities that we uniquely have and said we were going to also do evangelical publishing from where we are?"

So the publishing industry is moving quickly. There's lots of interest in building direct channels. There's lots of interest in coming up with new ways to be cross-format and not have everything default to a print process or any other sort of process that's considered normative. "Let's see if we can serve authors and help audiences in the best ways possible." So the industry is moving that way. In many ways, Faithlife (and Logos in particular) have sort of lived there for a couple of decades now. So what does it look like for us to not stop partnering with other publishers and doing awesome things with them, but to also join that conversation? To look at what it would look like for us to be in that industry? And so I and some other folks were brought on (with some publishing industry experience) at the same time about two and a half or three years ago to start to flesh out and mature that vision for an innovative evangelical publishing house that does things from where we are.

MH: So what are the kinds of things that Lexham is interested in... targets, if you will. If you get people that send you manuscripts, what are the kinds of things that sort of draw attention?

30:00

BE: Our model is what I call a "dual internal and external focus." Internal, by which I mean the platform that our broader company maintains and is building, the heart of which is Logos Bible Software. But it's broader than that. That internal focus is different from the external focus, which is Amazon, print distribution, retail... those sorts of markets. The way the model we're pursuing works is that the internal and external focus is not a speaking out of both sides of our mouths, sort of diffusing our efforts and running in two directions at once. It's taking both sides as necessary in order to do each one well. So let me give you an example. If we stopped doing the external focus and said, "You know what? There are several hundred thousand active users within Logos Bible Software alone, so let's just serve that audience. Let's just build things that are only directed toward that internal audience." Well one of the things we would lose is the ability to have compelling new authors and fresh voices and content that isn't constantly in danger of being an echo chamber. It would be more like an off-brand sort of the Equate or the Kirkland Signature version of publishing. And yet, if we say, "Okay, we want to be a legitimate, credible publishing house, so let's focus entirely externally." Now we're playing "me, too." We're playing catch-up. We're echoing people who have been doing this really well, really clever people...

MH: For a long time!

BE: Yeah, for many decades. That historical model is also a very high overhead/low margins sort of game on the business side. And so both internal and external (we feel) have to be held together in order for us to really try to do something fresh and new here. So the way that plays out in our acquisitions and the kinds of projects that we try to take on... We have to simultaneously think about, "What would make this digital platform more awesome? What would those projects look like when part of what I would call a 'crystallization' of a certain format or a certain instance of that broader project—what does that look like in the world outside the platform? What does it look like in between print covers? What does it look like in an XML container inside an e-pub?"

MH: Like Kindle or something, yeah. A lot of people don't really think consciously about publishers, period. And even within the Christian orbit they're not necessarily thinking about or cognizant of the differences. So just random sampling here... Here we are at SBL. I can't remember how many booths there are, different publishers that are here, but do publishers sort of... I don't want to say "market themselves," but they represent different philosophies on what they are trying to produce for, let's just restrict it to Christianity—to the Christian market. So give us an idea of where certain publishers kind of fall. You don't have to give names, but points of orientation, and then where Lexham is trying to sort of situate itself.

BE: I think you're absolutely right about most readers not caring about who the publisher is. I remember a story from one of the IVP academic editors that I worked with back there who had showed up at a well-known professor's office

and was talking to them about, "Oh, what projects are you working on?" and "Oh, IVP might be interested in that!" And the professor's response was, "Oh, I didn't know IVP was in the academic space." And while he was sitting talking to this professor, behind him on his shelves he had picked out at least a dozen IVP Academic titles that this person owned! (laughter)

MH: It never registered.

35:00

BE: Never registered with him that IVP did that, because even among professors (who are often really sensitive to who the publisher is because it ties in with things like tenure and credibility of your own work and your peers' work), even then it's not always an important factor. Certainly with a more general audience, the publisher is not high on your list of what you pay attention to. You pay attention to who the author is, you pay attention to what the topic is, and even how good the cover is. That's statistically speaking, a higher priority in a buying or reading situation than who the publisher is. There are some exceptions. One of them is being a publisher with a very strong denominational or confessional stance. So if your banner of truth or (to a slightly lesser extent at Crossway) someone that you have a strong confessional or denominational allegiance to as a publisher, you will tend to have an audience that says, "Okay, because I know that they're consistent in their publishing program and I agree with what their publishing program is, then I'm more likely to buy books in the future from that particular publisher."

MH: Right.

BE: Most evangelical publishers don't go that direction. So you think IVP, Baker, Zondervan, Eerdmans... they're trying to serve a broader evangelical audience. That's where we also stand. Our parameters are what I would call "classical evangelical," so the Evangelical Christian Publisher's Association statement of faith and the Apostles Creed. In that sort of context, what's ironic about our setting is that that's itself narrower than the Logos platform, where we've historically had these. Because in a platform like that, what you want is all of the good work that you need to know in order to be a responsible scholar or responsible pastor when you're preaching, it doesn't matter what tradition it's from, if it's good stuff you want it to be in your library whether you agree with it or not.

MH: Define for listeners, what is an "academic publisher," and is it different from what we might think of as a "scholarly publisher?" One of the things I harp on a lot when it's appropriate, often in interviews but occasionally on the podcast, is the importance (and a lot of my blog, actually), the importance of peer-review, but also that you have some sort of vetting process even within a publishing house. There's journals, there are some publishers who really take the time to think about who are we publishing and what is the content. So talk a little bit about that and why that's important.

BE: So it's probably not the sexiest thing to most book creators, but I would take this again back to... Part of the answer is a publisher's business model. You know, this is one of those kind of hidden things that affect everything. A big part of the traditional business model for a scholarly publisher—you think of say, a university press would be the quintessential example of this—is that their financial viability when it comes to academic publishing largely depends on a network of a certain number of libraries around the world that have decided that they will purchase (usually at a pretty significant cost) every new monograph that, let's say, Cambridge or Oxford comes out with. So my book, for example... I was pleased as punch to publish with Oxford. I never thought at the time, "Oh yeah, it's going to be \$130." And I was thinking, "Who's going to buy this?" I can go on WorldCat and say there are 200 universities and colleges and seminaries around the world that are listed in every major inhabited continent that have my book in their collection because they have a standing subscription with OUP. They're paying almost full price for that. And so the editorial investment, the cover design— everything is covered by selling those 200 units.

MH: All the library purchases, yeah.

BE: And so the fact that no individuals can afford my book is not really part of the business model, so I have to go and then kind of plead with them to bring it out with a paperback.

MH: (laughing) It comes with a loan application in the back!

BE: Yeah! They're not trying to be nasty, of course. It's just so built into the model. One of the plus sides to that model is that they can step back from market forces to a certain extent and say, "We're putting this out because it's excellent scholarship, even if we think that maybe nobody will buy it outside of a few specialists." Now to switch gears to more academic publishing. In a broader sense, when you're not dealing with that model, when you're dealing with evangelical publishers (or non-evangelical Christian publishers who happen to publish academic content), you're dealing with the same model as general content in terms of having to find a market that's sufficient to sustain whatever it costs you to make this thing. It's just an entirely different market.

MH: You can't assume what the other model can assume. You have to go out and shake the bushes and find people who are going to buy this and give them a reason to buy it, i.e., marketing.

Well, do we want to talk about what Lexham currently has coming out in the next year or so, or maybe right about now, because this is a big time of the year for Lexham. Mention a few titles that people might be interested in, just to sort of put them on the radar for the audience.

40:00

BE: I'm pleased as punch with... Like I said, we started trying to do this in earnest about 3 years ago, and I often get impatient with, "Oh, this is taking so long!" or "Why isn't this ready yet?" and then I look back over what we've done for the past three years and it's a whirlwind of growth and expansion. It's encouraging to me. To be able to do the sorts of things we've done in the past three years is just a remarkable testament to the quality of the people on our team and also the latent opportunity that was there. We took a little spark and put it to the floor and it turned out that it was covered in tinder and it just... took off. Some of the things that I'm most excited about are just wrapping up this translation that we did of Geerhardus Vos's *Reformed Dogmatics*. It's five volumes. It was originally delivered in Dutch and it was never translated until we took it on. It sold really well. The Reformed crowd, in particular, has really loved having this. It's unique and distinctive and useful. But one of the things I like most about it is that the fact that we were able to take on the project at all is only possible because of this dual internal/external focus.

MH: Translation is not cheap.

45:00

BE: Right. In the exhibit hall there are stacks of five volumes of lovely dust-jacketed hardbacks. Before we ever designed or put out those hardbacks, that project (despite its high translation cost) was in the black. So everything about what we're doing in print right now is in the freedom of being able to treat it, roughly, like gravy. Because the project was fully funded—and then some—through interest in the digital platform. So I love that as an example of the model working really well. Another project that we have right now that I'm really pleased about is this 12-volume set of Abraham Kuyper's *Public Theology* that we're working with Acton Institute to create. One of the reasons I'm excited about that is the Kuyper Renaissance that has been promised for the last 20 years or so can't happen if there's hardly any Kuyper in English. I mean, what are you going to do, have a renaissance based on his *Lectures in Calvinism*, and maybe (if you can find it) his book on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There's been hardly anything in English. The Luther Renaissance, the Calvin Renaissance—any of these things that you're talking about that have happened in the last hundred years—only happened after a significant portion of that figure's writings were put into English. So I'm excited about looking forward to that and to finally bringing this really important figure into English—specifically as someone who tried as hard as he could for himself and for other people to think "Christianly" about all areas of life. Culturally, socially... there's so much of a need for that. I think it's an increasing need. So I'm really excited about that. And then a second reason I'm excited about that is because it's a partnership—it's a win-win partnership with the Acton Institute, that we could do more together than we could have done on our own. This project wouldn't have worked if one of us wouldn't have said "yes" to the other for these things. And for whatever reason in the Lord's Providence, we've had lots of these opportunities—way more than you'd typically expect in the way publishing usually worked in the past few years.

I have another project, the *Faithlife Study Bible* with Zondervan... These mutual "wins" with outside partners—I love that kind of thing. I'm naturally collaborative in that way, but the fact that we can do something that's not competition but that's... Some people call it "co-opetition." These are your competitors, but you're working together and you're both winning. The last thing I would mention is a series of New Testament commentaries that we're doing with Grant Osborne. He just retired after teaching for 40 years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he has decided that he wants his life work—as long as the Lord gives him breath—to be putting out commentaries through the New Testament for working pastors and invested lay people, to just go verse by verse through the books of the New Testament and not get caught in the scholarly weeds, but also not discount those scholarly weeds. It's his job to go through that.

MH: It's his job to assess what's valuable, yeah.

BE: So the volume on Colossians and Philemon, the volume on Revelation are already out, and there are several more coming really soon. But they're turning out so well. I'm really pleased. So those are the things that are in process now. There are a lot of other things I'm excited about that we've done recently. We just did our financial reporting for the third quarter of the year, and I didn't talk to you about this before, but we discovered that *The Unseen Realm* (your book) is our best-performing book of this past year by far.

MH: Oh, good! Sweet! (laughs)

BE: So that's good news for both of us. There's a lot we've done that I'm excited about and there's a lot we're currently doing that I'm excited about, too.

MH: Well, great! Thanks for spending some time with us. Publishing is a big part of this conference so I wanted to include something about that. Because I always salivate... I have my little pilgrimage of which booths I hit right away and where to lurk on the last day when they're giving the deep discounts afterwards. (laughing)

BE: Strategic positioning.

MH: You have to wrestle people at the tables! But a lot of these publishers, they rarely give discounts or meaningful discounts, except for here. So even the higher-end ones will sort of... You can bleed them a little bit because they'll make up for it on volume and they know that and they show up. It's a big deal. There's just a lot here. If you're interested in biblical studies and you're close to one of these things, you could come over just for the book tables and you'd do pretty well. Thanks for sharing some time with us.

BE: Yeah, I appreciate it, Mike! I'm excited about this, I think both scholarship and publishing need each other. It seems so obvious, but it's often overlooked. I think the fact that it's such a disruptive time in the academy with tuition and with

higher ed.—especially seminaries—often struggling. And then it's such a disruptive time in the publishing industry, as well. We could either all lament and...

MH: Communal lament. (laughing)

50:00

BE: ...and hide in caves waiting for the rocks to fall on us, or we can take it as an opportunity to really deeply re-think how it is that we do what we do, and how we are called to be faithful as academics and as publishers in this challenging but opportunity-filled time. I'm enjoying it.

MH: Well, great. Thank you.

BE: Thanks, Mike.

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MH: We're back at SBL. We have with us Carmen Imes. I met Carmen at a regional ETS meeting. I've actually blogged about her work way, way back (two years ago). Her dissertation topic is going to include some things that are familiar to this audience. But before we get into that we're going to have her introduce herself. So Carmen, thanks for being with us.

CI: Thanks for having me! My family and I live in Oregon. We're in Oregon City right now, near family, which is nice. I'm teaching adjunct at George Fox University, as well as Multnomah University. I'm working on publishing my dissertation and starting other projects.

MH: What do they have you teaching?

CI: Right now I'm teaching Exodus and Psalms (two elective classes) and an online version of the Prophets.

MH: Do you get to do any language teaching at all? Have you broken into that?

CI: Not yet.

MH: That's good. So you have two electives. Do you teach any of the sort of, grunt work classes—the required ones?

CI: I will in the spring be teaching History and Theology of Christianity, which is no pressure. All of Church history and all of theology in one class.

MH: (laughing) One class and one semester, right?

CI: Right.

MH: What could be easier? Well, let's get into your dissertation. My audience is going to be familiar with concepts like imaging and the Name Theology, and what really intrigued me about your presentation two years ago and your dissertation work is you connect those two things. So give us the basic overview of what you were doing and again, this hopefully will be out in some kind of printed form at some point, but for now we're going to have to just stick with the interview format here. Feel free to get into a little bit of the nuts and bolts. You don't have to hold back too much, so tell us about it.

CI: My dissertation was on the command not to take the Lord's name in vain, which is how most of us read it in English. I was exploring the possibility of not reading it as speech-related. In the history of interpretation, most scholars have assumed that this command has something to do with speech. It's either prohibiting false oaths or mispronunciation of the name, or the use of God's name in magic or in cursing. There's all sorts of speech-related possibilities. I read the command as an injunction not to bear Yahweh's name in vain—so not to misrepresent him among the nations. So it's as though Yahweh put his name on his people to claim them as his own, and then he says to them, "You shall not claim to belong to me and go out and live like the pagans."

MH: Yeah, and that's not contrived, because the Hebrew terminology is *ns*—"to lift up or bear" and that's actually the terminology there.

CI: Right. The closest passage in the book of Exodus to this command that uses *ns* with *shem* (the word "name") is in the high priestly garments. When the high priestly garments are described, he is actually bearing the names of the 12 tribes on the jewels on his breast piece and on the jewels on his shoulder pieces. And it says, "You shall wear these, and so you shall bear the names of the sons of Israel for a memorial before me in the tabernacle." So there's a concrete example there of what it would look like to bear a name. They each have a share in his ministry by having their names all on his person. He represents them before Yahweh, and so we are supposed to represent Yahweh before the nations. And then, of course, the high priest also has the medallion on his forehead that says "wholly belonging to Yahweh" on it.

MH: Right. So you get the other side of the coin there.

CI: The other side of the coin. He is in his person sort of visually representing what the vocation is of the nation as a whole—to represent Yahweh.

MH: Well, talk about how you understand that representation in some biblical terms. And of course, you can tie that in to how you would do some application of it to your students, or in this case our audience. But the whole idea of

representing... I guess we could say to combine the two, "representing the name." So talk about that a little bit.

CI: It's amazing once you catch onto this idea of bearing the name and see how pervasive it is throughout the Hebrew Bible. I did a read of the whole Bible—actually the New Testament, too—the entire canon, looking for this concept, and it came up in almost every book. And there's familiar passages like 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, then I will hear them and hear from heaven and heal their land." And we sort of ramble our way through that without stopping to ask, "What does it mean to be called by his name?" This is evidence of that theme that Israel has been stamped—verbally branded—with Yahweh's name, and therefore that implies a certain closeness of relationship, a covenantal connection with Yahweh that plays out in their prayer life, in their relationships with surrounding nations. In Deuteronomy, it says repeatedly that "the nations will see that my name has been called on you or proclaimed over you, and they will fear you." So there's a sense in which at first for Israel, bearing the name is not like a missionary going out and telling, but it's a "look and see." The nations are watching Israel to find out what Yahweh is like—what sort of deity he is. They're watching how he protects his people. And so Israel is basically in P.R. for Yahweh there. They're the ones that everybody's watching.

MH: So do you think that has something to do with whole concept of "you shall be a kingdom of priests?"

CI: Yes, I do. Because I think as a nation they're mediating between the nations and Yahweh, and so the priest becomes that concrete visual representation of what the entire nation is supposed to be doing vocationally.

MH: Throughout their lives, then, obviously the priests can't be in all places at all times in all the nations, so it's really up to Israelites to mime that.

CI: Right.

MH: So he becomes their template.

CI: Right. And then when it's not done well, the nations get the wrong impression about Yahweh. So you get passages like Ezekiel 36, where repeatedly the problem is that they've gone out into the nations and profaned the name wherever they went. They profaned the name by having it said of them, "Well, these were Yahweh's people and yet they've gone out of the land, which implies that Yahweh is impotent and can't protect them."

MH: That's good. Let's bring the New Testament into this a little bit. So give us a few examples of where the "bearing the name"... Representation, of course, is

going to be the concept of imaging. Again, my audience is real familiar with that because of my book (*The Unseen Realm*). Plus, we talk about it a lot.

CI: Great.

MH: So give us a few New Testament examples where you see what you were seeing in the Old Testament sort of bleed into the New Testament.

CI: One of my favorite examples to start with would be the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be thy name." Jesus is implying that the name has somehow been "unhallowed," that it's been profaned, which is (as I mentioned) what we see in Ezekiel through the exile. By praying "hallowed be thy name," Jesus is committing himself to restoring the sanctity of Yahweh's name by bearing it well. So he hints at that. I don't think it's, "May your name (sort of abstractly) be hallowed," but "through my life your name comes into its proper reverence and proper reputation."

MH: Do your job. (laughs)

CI: Right! And then we see when the apostle Paul has his vision on the road to Damascus. Ananias is told to pray for him so that he can receive his sight, and he's like, "Lord, don't you know this guy? He's been killing Christians." And the Lord says to Ananias, "I have shown him how much he must suffer for my name, and I've chosen Paul to bear my name before Gentiles and kings." So there we have a very explicit "he's bearing my name."

MH: That is pretty overt there.

CI: Bearing the name of Jesus, yeah. And then my favorite is when you get to the book of Revelation and John's visions of the New Heavens and New Earth include a concrete visualization of the name that's been branded on everyone's forehead. You either have the Mark of the Beast or you're wearing his name and the name of his Father on your forehead. And so this thing that has been an invisible tattoo throughout history—"Where is your allegiance? Who are you in covenant with?"—is now becoming obvious and physical in John's vision.

1:00:00

MH: Yeah, that's good. You're either bearing the Mark of the Beast or you're bearing the Name. It's one or the other. The Lord's Prayer thing, to go back to that for a moment... The idea of the name having an "unhallowed status." We've done a couple episodes on eschatology, very broadly, and the whole Second Temple concept, and I think it's a New Testament concept. Even in Jesus' day, Israel was still in exile and they had that creeping consciousness of this. You go back to the Old Testament and you have these passages about cleaning up the exile, or kind of closing the door on it including all the tribes. And of course there were only two tribes and vestiges of a couple others here and there. So they're still in exile, which would of course mean (going back to the Old Testament) that

Yahweh's name is still sort of in a degraded status. That makes a lot of sense in that context.

CI: And when Yahweh says, "I'm going to bring you back to the land," it's not because "I feel so bad for you poor folks in exile." And it's not because "you've repented and you're so good now that you've earned your right to return to the land." It's because "unless I bring you back to the land, people are going to continue to think that I'm impotent." And so it's for the sake of his own name that he brings them back.

MH: Yeah. You use the word "pervasive." Once you start talking about this, you realize that you really can't go many places in the Bible and not see this. There's going to be something about it that is in play. Lastly here, how about the passage where those who name the name of Christ, you know, depart from iniquity. Can you say something about that a little bit?

CI: Yeah, I think this reminds me of a Jewish text that I came across. I think it was a fourth century text, where the rabbis are saying, "You cannot put on *tefillin* and then go out and sin, because that's taking the name in vain. That's bearing the name in vain. And they use the same phraseology as the Command. If you're going to name the name of Christ—if you're going to associate yourself with him—then you can't go out and live as though that makes no difference. So my reading of what I call the "name command" is much broader than how it's traditionally been read. It's not about watching your mouth. It's about watching your mouth and your whole life. Everything we do is representing God. We're being watched in so many ways, and the way we live our life, then, is a reflection of his character and who he is to the nations.

MH: For those in the audience who might not know, the *tefillin* there (that word just mentioned) refers to, literally, wearing Scripture around the forehead, and so on. There you have the forehead imagery again. So yeah, if you're going to do that, you can't just walk around with this and do whatever it is you want.

CI: Yes. It's kind of fascinating, as I was researching the *teffilin*, to discover that Jews actually will wrap the leather thong around their arm in a certain shape, and there's Hebrew letters written, so that wearing it actually spells God's name. They're spelling *Shaddai*, rather than Yahweh. They see it as a physical wearing of the name, which is a concretization of the command and what it represents.

MH: And that's interesting in and of itself, because you wrap your arms, you've got the head gear... that goes with the phylacteries and the tefillin and all this stuff. And they're not just sort of doing it because, "Well, we've gotta do something here. Other religions do stuff, so let's just do..." It's not random. It actually has this... it's a concretization of this Old Testament idea. And that really is interesting if they're taking so much care to... And if you look closely you can see this spelled out and things like that.

Well, lastly, before we wrap up here, when do you think this is going to be available? I know you were talking about two versions: a dissertation version and something that's more for a general audience.

1:05:00

CI: I hope to know that soon. My dissertation is under review right now, so if it's accepted (I'll find out tomorrow if it's accepted or not) for publication in a particular series. If it is, then I would think within two years we'd see it in print. These things are kind of slow. (laughs) And as far as a popular version, I'm still working on the right way to package it, but I met with a publisher yesterday that seemed very interested. So I'll start working on that right away, and I would think, again, within two years it should be out.

MH: Now you do a lot of blogging, so we want to make sure to mention your site. But do you blog at all on this, or do you do something else?

CI: I have avoided blogging on this. I was advised not to while I was writing the dissertation. Now that it's defended and that's all good, I probably could. So you can watch for that.

MH: It's good marketing for it, right? (laughs)

CI: Right. Obviously, I'll want to get this out there. I've been wanting to, but I wanted to do it in the right time.

MH: So what's your blog?

CI: My blog is carmenjoyimes.blogspot.com

MH: Well, great! Thanks for spending a few minutes with us.

CI: You bet. Thanks for having me!

MH: Hopefully your conversations here with the publishers will go well and they'll actually do their job in a timely manner. (laughter)

CI: I hope so, too. Thanks for having me.

MH: Thank you.

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TS: All right, Mike! Well, three more awesome interviews. I would describe N.T. Wright as "charming." (laughter) Honestly, that was my first time I've ever met him, and the word that comes to mind is charming.

MH: And he's a humble guy, too. What you heard was genuine. I've interacted with him a couple of times. Once years ago when he was sort of just becoming famous, I ran into him accidentally here at this conference. He had trouble with his laptop and I was able to solve his problem. (laughs) So what you see and what you hear is what you get. So, yeah, I'd agree. That was a good interview.

TS: Absolutely. Okay, Mike. Well, be looking for Part 5 pretty soon.

MH: Who'd a thunk?

TS: And also our live Q&A, that's coming up, so we're looking forward to that as well. That's going to be tonight.

MH: Lord willing, we'll get some good questions, and I'll be able to throw together a few good answers, too! (laughs)

TS: All right, well good deal. Just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.