

Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies

Post-graduates in Focus Series

An interview with **Irene Barbotti** who began the Ph.D. programme in 2022.¹

Irene, sincere thanks for participating in this series.

My pleasure.

Would you mind telling us about your background and the path you took to a Ph.D. in biblical studies?

I was born in Milan, Italy. After a high school oriented in Classics, I did my BA and my MA in Philosophy, at the University of Milan, spending the second year of my BA at *Université de la Sorbonne – Paris IV*, in France as an Erasmus student. During my last year of my BA, I was involved in a research program focusing on the New Testament and Early Christianity, which sparked my interest in this field of study, and which I carried out during my MA, firstly focusing on 1 Corinthians and lately on the relation between the gospels of Matthew and Luke and the Q-source, which now represent the core of my research work.

Why did you choose to come to TCD for your Ph.D.?

After my MA graduation, I was hoping to carry on my research in an inspiring academic environment and become a part of a research community. From this perspective, the existence of the *Trinity Centre of Biblical Studies* certainly drove my attention to the option of applying at Trinity. Moreover, Prof. Ben Wold, who became my supervisor, has been extremely supportive since our first email exchange, showing his interest in my research project and strengthening it with his feedback: this certainly played a pivotal role in my choice of Trinity in front of other options. Finally, the financial side cannot be ignored: being the recipient of the 1252 scholarship enabled me to become a Ph.D. candidate at Trinity, otherwise, it would not have been possible.

Would you mind sharing a little about the topic of your Ph.D. thesis?

My Ph.D. thesis consists of a comparative analysis between the parallel collections of opposite “beatitudes” and “woes” attested by the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Adopting the Two Documents Hypothesis, which theorizes the existence of the source “Q” to explain the literary parallels between Matthew and Luke, my research explores the possibility of an original correlation of these collections of sayings in Q. Moving from the application of a historical-critical approach, my research has a threefold goal: 1. it aims to deepen the complementary value of the sets of beatitudes and woes attested by Matthew and Luke; 2. it attempts to reconstruct the hypothetical collection in Q that may have originated these sets of sayings, rooting it in the cultural framework of the

¹ This is the ninth in a series of interviews with Ph.D. students, and recent graduates, who are members of the Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies.

Second Temple Jewish literature; and 3. it investigates the peculiar use of the collections of beatitudes and woes in the narratological structures of these two gospels.

What are some of the highlights of your time at TCD?

One of the first highlights to be mentioned is my interactions with my supervisor, Prof. Ben Wold: this is a crucial aspect in the life of every Ph.D. candidate, and I feel fortunate in having him as a guide in this journey. Having a supportive supervisor in every step of this research, who gives attention to ones' well-being as a person is crucial to success. I have really benefitted from opportunities to develop some teaching experience, which I loved and represented a highlight itself! Moreover, I consider my participation in the TCBS to be an extremely positive aspect of my experience at Trinity, both because of the thought-provoking discussions with the invited guests and because of the sense of community its participants communicate, also helping me to build productive relations with my pairs. Finally, the Trinity campus is a beautiful and inspirational environment, full of history, which represents the ideal place to be settled in during these years of study and research.

Do you have any advice for prospective Ph.D. students?

After having completed my first year as a Ph.D. candidate, a suggestion I could give to a prospective student is to invest part of your energies in the construction of a positive working (and, possibly, also human) relationship with the people in this new environment. This is essential with your supervisors because you will spend your next years working with them, but also with your Ph.D. pairs. These latter will not only significantly help you in the development of your research but, in sharing your same experience, they could also give you moral support when you will need it on this not-always-easy path.

Moreover, I think it is important not only to define clear goals for your research work but also to keep in mind the reasons that drove you to the choice of starting a Ph.D. because they will help you in the hardest moments of your research activity. Finally, the Ph.D. life has (like everything, of course) pros and cons, but it is surely quite different from the "standard" full-time worker's life: this flexibility can be an advantage, but it is essential to find your balance in the organization of your time and to identify places that represent a comfortable environment for you to express your potential in the best way.

Thank you, Irene, we really appreciate you taking the time to respond to our questions.

Thank you for having involved me in the *Post-graduates in Focus Series*.