

# Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies

Post-graduates in Focus Series

An interview with **Kyle Young** who began the Ph.D. programme in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Kyle, sincere thanks for participating in this series.

My pleasure. Sorry for taking so long to participate!

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

Certainly. I was born and raised in southwest Virginia, in and around Roanoke (i.e., think Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah Valley, Appalachian Trail). If you ask one of my seven siblings whether they thought I'd be doing a Ph.D., they'll answer unequivocally: no. Besides Virginia, my studies have taken me to grad school in the broader regions of Philadelphia and Vancouver. I'm now living with my family in northern Alberta, Canada.

It was my Christian faith that took me in this direction – I'll say God providentially led me on this path, since you're asking me. My interest in biblical studies grew out of questions I had about the Bible (content, transmission, translation, canon, etc.) and a desire to teach it better; I'm also an ordained minister. Think what you want about it, there's no more influential book in history than the Bible, however it's been interpreted and applied.

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

For me, choosing TCD required many specific factors to be met (see my answer to the final question below). At the top of the list were (1) faculty expertise and personability; (2) finances (I received the 1252 studentship); (3) school reputation; and (4) a distance option.

I also greatly appreciate our history at TCD. From James Ussher to John Nelson Darby and more, you're influenced by us, know it or not. The campus buildings actually aren't as old as they look but the place is still marvellous and dreamy. We have "the really old library," the Book of Kells, and even the MS which led to the KJV having the trinitarian addition in 1 John 5:7 (not to mention the Chester Beatty Library down the road, with the oldest copies of Greek Daniel and Pauline letters, etc.). But I digress.

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

Wise question, qualifying it by "a little." Generically, I'm comparing some Greek and Aramaic Bible translations of the Old Testament (aka Hebrew Bible, Tanakh), dating

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

from the third century BC to third century AD, to chart better their development and potential relationships. As I have more on my [PhD Research in Focus](#) page and [ORCID](#), I'll refer readers to those webpages.

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

I love discovery and learning, period. So it's been a special privilege getting to throw myself into a challenge that someone else hasn't addressed.

I love working with my supervisor, David Shepherd, and the rest of the participants in the TCBS.

I love handling old manuscripts at TCD or Chester Beatty and viewing historical sites (pubs too, yes, yes).

Our family lived in Israel for four months in summer 2022 through Bar-Ilan University's PhD Sandwich Scholarship; the opportunity to go to Israel was a dream come true, and it wouldn't have come about unless TCD allowed me to go off-books (stop the clock) for six months. While I spent a lot of time researching and accessing libraries for my PhD, we also spent a lot of time travelling Israel and Palestine to understand better the world of so much Scripture. (Many thanks to the generous Dr. Leeor Gottlieb, my sponsoring supervisor, and Tantur Ecumenical Institute, who provided my family a hospitable place to live.)

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

Yes, I do. My advice is based on advice I received when I was inquiring into doctoral work, plus my own experience.

1. If you can learn about what you're interested in or pursue your goals without a PhD, strongly consider not going in this direction. (If you're in the Minority World, there are many free and legal educational resources, though I appreciate that's not the case everywhere.)
2. If you have a spouse and/or kids, make sure they're fully onboard with you spending more time on your thesis than with them the next few years. (Thank God, my wife is totally supportive. The kids have known nothing other than dad as a doctoral student, as all three have been born [or are about to be born] in the last three years! As one professor of mine once said, "My family is my hobby!")
3. Don't do it unless your current faculty are supportive. (Multiple teachers made a point of telling me I should go this route, even when I wasn't soliciting their opinion. If that doesn't happen in your case, make sure you can get honest feedback from people marking your papers who've been there, done that. They'd be writing your references anyhow.)
4. Network to connect with a good supervisor, who's both an expert in a specific area and cares about you (brilliance in academia doesn't entail personability or a willingness to invest personally; I've heard horror stories but never lived one). If someone else can introduce you, ask for an introduction. If not, send a thoughtful email expressing your interest and why you're interested in the supervisor's research. Supervisors are real people, if they're potential supervisors. And if you're really

serious, ask former or current students of the supervisor about how the relationship worked. (Two such conversations steered me away from other possibilities I was considering. Sorry to say it, but I was looking at other places until a former supervisor of mine said I needed to work with David Shepherd. I'm glad he did!)

5. If you have the luxury of no other commitments beyond your studies, invest fully in all that Trinity and its partners (through Erasmus+ programs, etc.) have to offer. If you don't have that luxury, don't automatically discount a PhD.
6. Come to terms with the shortage of academic positions in biblical studies. If you want a faculty position, you'd better be top-notch and well connected. (Or be prepared to go to remote locations, go AltED, etc.)
7. Expect to revise your thesis along the way, or better yet start with a great question. (Read William Badke's *Research Strategies* now before you waste time!)
8. Doing a PhD is expensive. To my knowledge, most faculty members in biblical studies departments aren't millionaires, presuming they've landed a dream job. If you can't get funding via a scholarship, studentship, etc., make sure you can pay your bills (through whatever legal venue) without taking on debt.
9. Come to love Zotero, even before you start your dissertation! (You might as well start while working on your Research Proposal, if you've not started yet. I guess there's also EndNotes, but I don't know so much about that.)
10. Grow in discipline and eliminate as many social media platforms as possible. (A large part of the reason I can digest the amount of things on my plate is because we don't have a TV, and I don't even have data on my phone or WiFi at the house...)
11. Come to TCD!

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