**Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies**

Post-graduates in Focus

An interview with **Ivan Petrovski** who began the Ph.D. programme on a part-time basis in 2023.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Ivan, we really appreciate your participation in this series.

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

I was born and raised in Bor, a small mining town in eastern Serbia. I was first introduced to the Bible in my early teenage years and was fascinated by its message, especially as conveyed through stories. The biblical stories of Abraham, Joseph, David, and Daniel (to name a few) made a strong impression on me and would later inspire me to pursue a Ph.D. During my teenage years, my appetite for biblical knowledge kept growing, and since I had many questions about the Bible, after my secondary school, I decided to study theology. Following my BA (2008), I worked for six years as a minister in Montenegro, and after that, I did my MA (2016) with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK. After completing my MA, I continued to serve as a pastor, first in Serbia and then in Ireland starting in September 2019.

Since completing my Master's, I've always wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at a prestigious university, but, for various reasons, I never had the opportunity until last year (2023). My interest in tackling difficult questions and my desire to deepen my understanding of the Bible have kept this dream alive for many years. Ultimately, witnessing the transformative power of its message in others' lives—and experiencing it myself—has motivated me to dedicate the next six years to my Ph.D. studies, as I am studying part-time while working full-time as an ordained minister.

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

Prior to starting my Ph.D., several factors needed to align for me to choose Trinity College Dublin: 1) faculty expertise; 2) the school’s reputation; 3) finances (I am sponsored by my church organization); 4) excellent library resources; and 5) the availability of a part-time option.

One of my primary concerns was to have a supervisor who would guide me in my research and support my exploration of specific questions I already had in mind. I am truly blessed to have Dr. David Shepherd as my supervisor, who has been incredibly supportive since our first email exchange. His knowledge and expertise in the field, along with his particular interest in the books of Samuel (see his recently published book),[[2]](#footnote-2) were among the main reasons I chose to study at Trinity.

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

My thesis examines the roles of speech and silence in relation to plot and characterization in the book of Samuel. Although much has been said about the importance of speech in the Old Testament, relatively little attention has been given to the concept of silence in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the book of Samuel. This study aims to explore how representations of speech and silence contribute to the characterization and plot development in Samuel. My hypothesis is that divine speeches and silence have a substantial impact on characterization and plot progression in the book of Samuel.

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

So far, the highlight of my time at Trinity has been my supervisory meetings with Dr. David Shepherd and the discussions we have about questions related to my topic. These meetings have greatly helped me refine my writing and enhance my critical thinking skills. I also enjoy the research seminars, where we, as Ph.D. students, can listen to leading biblical scholars and have the opportunity to ask questions. Finally, interacting with other Ph.D. students has also been a wonderful experience.

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

From my perspective, balancing work (especially pastoral ministry), family (I have a wife and two small children), and studies can sometimes be a daunting task. However, if you have a genuine passion for your topic and a clear goal of pursuing a Ph.D., I would encourage you to take this path. Setting aside a dedicated block of time each day (especially if you are studying part-time) and following your schedule strictly—intentionally removing all distractions—is key to successfully completing your project. Finally, having your family’s support is crucial during your academic journey. I am truly blessed to have this, and quality time with them provides me with additional motivation to continue and complete my research.

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

1. This is the thirteenth in a series of interviews with Ph.D. students and recent graduates of the Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Shepherd, *King David, Innocent Blood, and Bloodguilt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)