

Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies

Post-graduates in Focus Series

An interview with Alun Thomas who began the Ph.D. programme in 2015.¹

Alun, sincere thanks for participating in this series.

Would you mind telling us about how you became interested in biblical studies?

I would say that there were a number of factors which led to my interest in biblical studies and my desire to pursue doctoral research in this field. During my undergraduate degree in Theology, I was impressed at the variety of disciplines that we were encouraged to investigate such as philosophy, history, ethics as well as biblical studies. Growing up in a bilingual environment, I suppose I have always been intrigued by problems of translation. How exactly do you say something in another language? How much do you 'lose' or 'capture' when switching from one language to another? Of course, these questions are especially pertinent to the study of the Bible and Bible translation today. And so having the opportunity to develop skills and linguistic abilities in order to engage with the Bible in the original languages had a real appeal and has proven to be an immensely rewarding experience. The more you dig the more there is to discover!

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

TCD has a strong faculty in biblical studies whose members possess a broad range of specializations and interests. It was a real privilege for me to work under the guidance of Dr David Shepherd who is a leading authority on the Aramaic text I was conducting my research on.

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

My thesis is in the field of ancient biblical translations. Specifically, I compared aspects of the translation technique of the earliest known Jewish-Greek and Jewish-Aramaic translations of the book of Job. Using methods and categories developed in the field of translation studies I was able to show ways in which the Qumran Aramaic and Old Greek versions of Job compare and contrast with one another.

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

From giving papers at academic conferences to attending summer schools, I've been amazed at how many opportunities I've had to travel during my research. I've visited many places such as South Africa, Austria, Germany as well as attending events in the UK. TCD has a really nice campus, and it's been a pleasure to use the libraries here during my stay. The Trinity biblical studies seminar is also a very good way to get to know other colleagues in the faculty as well as visiting scholars.

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

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

Take time to carefully think about which areas of research you are really interested in. You'll be spending a lot of time on the topic you've chosen! It's worth approaching a number of different possible doctoral advisers and being open to certain avenues of research which they may suggest. It really is worth spending as much time at the beginning of your research to read as widely as possible in order to find your 'gap' in scholarship which will in turn become your original contribution to academia.

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