

Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies

Post-graduates in Focus Series

An interview with Danny Daley who completed his Ph.D. programme in the School of Religion, Trinity College Dublin in 2019.¹

Danny, sincere thanks for participating in this series.

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

Initially, I became interested in Biblical Studies due to an active faith life. I started down the path of academic study simply to pursue a knowledge of biblical texts at a deeper level. While earning my Bachelor of Arts, I realized that a considerable amount of what most lay people believe about the teachings and contexts of biblical literature is either culturally conditioned or based on older assumptions not entirely supported by recent evidence. The deeper I went towards finding answers to my questions, the more committed I became to continuing my academic path. A lot of my interest is based on a desire to cultivate my own thought-life.

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

To be honest, I initially chose TCD because I have always had a fascination with Ireland. Many of my ancestors are from Ireland, so when I was young, I had a longing to visit. After earning two master's degrees in Scotland, I applied to quite a few Ph.D. programs, and I had a lot of options. I would not have gone to TCD based on my desire to live in Ireland alone. I was offered places at a lot of good schools and wanted to make a wise decision for my family and my career. My conversations with Ben Wold at TCD were extremely fruitful, and I really enjoyed my visit to Dublin and saw it as a great place to continue to raise my family for a few years. TCD offered a top 100 school, an encouraging adviser, and an excellent city, so my wife and I made the decision to move to Dublin. We were in Dublin between 2015-2019 and we loved nearly everything about our time there.

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

My PhD was focused on "inheritance" terms in ancient Jewish literature, including the Hebrew Bible, many non-biblical Second Temple documents, and the Gospel of Matthew. Inheritance was an important theological concept in these sources, but scholars have spent very little time on it. I realized that inheritance had a lot to do with identity and inclusion in communities; if a person was an "heir" of God's gifts, they would logically be included among God's people, but the heirs of God's gifts are not always described in the ways we might assume or expect. I realized that, in scholarly study of Matthew's Gospel, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles is one of the most important debates of the past few decades. I wondered if research on inheritance (who stands to inherit from God) might shed some light on the nature of the communities in view in Matthew; who is included, and how? Inheritance terms in Matthew's Gospel, and how they relate

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

to the use of inheritance terms in other Jewish sources, was so helpful towards answering these questions, that I am now a bit shocked that no one had really pursued this question before.

Everyone in the Centre was delighted to hear the good news that your thesis has been accepted for publication, would you mind sharing about this exciting development?

I appreciate that. My thesis was accepted for publication with Baylor University Press and will release in time for SBL in the fall of 2021. In the summer of 2019, I met with Cade Jarrell at Baylor, while at a conference in Rome, and we had a great conversation about biblical studies, publishing philosophy, and other things besides, so entering into a relationship with Baylor was an easy choice. We're in early discussions regarding a few other ideas.

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

I think the greatest ongoing highlight of my time at TCD was my working relationship with my adviser, Ben Wold. I have heard many nightmare stories about the relationship between candidate and adviser, but our relationship was always fruitful and smooth. I had the opportunity to do some teaching and give a few papers, which were important experiences for my career development. I came to TCD with my wife and three children, and TCD always welcomed my family and made it easy for us to feel that we had a home in Dublin. We also made use of our time well throughout the country, visiting 30 of the island's 32 counties, so Ireland was a very good home for us.

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

I believe that there are four important things to consider when choosing a Ph.D. program: the school, the program, the adviser, and the city in which you'll live. Prioritize which of these things matter to you most, and don't let others tell you what your priorities should be. Because I had a family, the quality of city life was important to me. Once you begin your studies, you need to find a balance between believing in your own ideas and taking the advice of your adviser and other qualified students or scholars who see your work. If you always take everyone's advice, you'll cripple your confidence in your own judgment. However, if you never take any advice, you'll become arrogant and make lots of mistakes. If you have a good adviser, she or he wants to see you succeed, so taking their advice most of the time is wise. However, it's your project, so you need to believe in what you're doing. Be confident and remain humble.

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