



# The Monsignor Swayne Bequest at Maynooth University Library

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## Abstract

Monsignor Sean Swayne died in 1996 and his collection of 100 pre-1850 books was bequeathed to the Russell Library.

His bequest, many items of which were printed in Dublin in the 18th and 19th centuries, consist of mainly devotional and liturgical material - but also features various books on architecture and the arts. This article will examine some of the highlights of the collection while identifying features of the history of bookmaking and documenting the social history discovered upon resource description. Cataloguing of this important collection of rare books was completed in March 2018 <sup>1</sup> The collection is available for consultation in the Russell Library.

**Keywords:** *Rare Books; Special Collections; Book History; Monsignor Sean Swayne; Maynooth University*

<sup>1</sup> This is part of the Russell Library Cataloguing Project which is managed by Barbara McCormack, Special Collections Librarian.

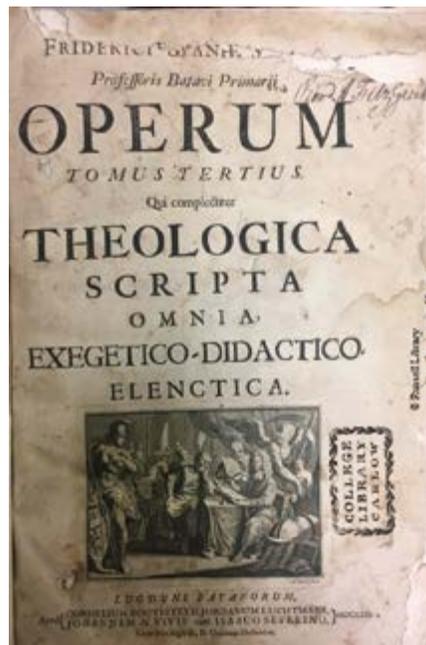
## Introduction

Monsignor Seán Swayne, an internationally renowned liturgist, was the first director of the Irish Institute of Pastoral Liturgy (IPL) at St Patrick's College, Carlow, and was chairman of the Irish Episcopal Commission for the Liturgy and parish priest of Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny. Following studies in Paris, he was appointed to the faculty at St Patrick's College, from where he helped to found the IPL (*Irish Times*, 1996). The institute has attracted students from all over the world to take part in its one year programme.

Monsignor Swayne collected a number of significant and often rare books related to his discipline which will be of interest to international scholars and researchers. In 1989 Father Swayne was appointed Monsignor in recognition of his lifelong promotion of the arts, liturgy and architecture. He died in May 1996. His bequest to the Russell Library, Maynooth included 100 books printed before 1850.

## The Swayne Bequest

The collection is primarily devotional and liturgical, with many of the books showing evidence of usage and regular handling. A number of the books belonged previously to Mgr. Swayne's uncle, Peadar Mac Suibhne of Kildare<sup>2</sup>. Cataloguing of the collection was completed in March 2018 and what follows is a cross-section of examples illustrating the significance of this collection to



international scholars and researchers. The presence of fine bindings, bookplates, original ties and decorated paper were noted. One item printed in Paris in 1789 possesses an armorial bookplate: 'Certavi Et Vice' = 'I've Fought and Won'.

The collection features a beautiful copy of *Missale Romanum, ex decreto sacro-sancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum* printed in Lyon by Bernet in 1782 (SW 105). This is one of the most aesthetically pleasing objects in the Swayne bequest and features an elaborate frontispiece of Christ on the Cross, musical notations and delicate original silk ties with tassels.

The silk bookmark is of particular note as according to George Hartong(n.d.), it is a perfect specimen of the most sought after silk trends coming from France during this printing period and the British silk industry would later follow suit.

## Bookmarks before 1830

Hartong has written a detailed account, available online, of the production of bookmarks printed before 1830 which helps give a sense of the history of the object in hand. A reader has always needed something to mark the place, where he ceased reading. That happened already in the early Middle Ages: an Irish monk, Coloman of Elo, ordered a fly, who always was running on the pages of his book during the reading, to sit down on the last line he had read, until he would resume his reading. And the fly obeyed!

Coventry was the most prolific city for producing silk and silk ribbons in the 18th century. British silk weavers of the 18th century were ready to receive new ideas from France and to provide the ribbons which fashion dictated, and for a century, between about 1765 and 1857, silk was the dominant industry of the period. (British History Online)

After the collapse of the Coventry silk market, one of the new ideas was to make silk bookmarks using the Jacquard-weaving machine. Thomas Stevens

2 Fr. Mac Suibhne was Rector of Knockbeg College with many publications to his name. A native of County Carlow and a veteran worker on local history, he was, for 29 years, a staff member of St. Mary's College, Knockbeg, where he taught students of Kildare and Leighlin. He says of Monsignor Swayne, written in *The Nationalist*, April 9th 1982: "Knockbeg for me was Fr. Swayne... He was an educator with a highly personal system... The lingua franca was the lingua Gadelica. Beneath a serious mien there was a fountain of good humour ready to break out. His rotund, soutane-encompassed figure seemed to be everywhere and appeared at moments of embarrassment for the rule-breaker. Rules were an important part of life" (Ireland Genealogy Projects 2001).



of Coventry became the main manufacturer of these silk bookmarks, with texts and designs for all seasons and occasions. Since 1862 Stevens used about 900 different designs, thousands of bookmarks were made until the devastation of the factory in World War II. These bookmarks are much sought after these days, and in England and the USA, there are special societies of Stevengraph-collectors. Stevengraphs are the woven silk scenic pictures and portraits, made by Stevens from 1879 onwards.

Hartong also documents other examples of similar tasselled silk bookmarks include: a fringed silk bookmark presented to Queen Elizabeth I in 1584 by Christopher Barker who had acquired a very profitable patent as Queen's Printer in 1577 which gave him the sole right to print the *Bible*, the *Book of Common Prayer* and all proclamations. The British and Foreign Bible Society owns a bookmark with plaited silk cords, silver knots and silk tassels which appears to have been made for use in a bible of 1642. One of the largest research collections at Maynooth University Library is the Hibernian Bible Society (HBS) collection, which contains over 2,000 bibles in more than 600 languages. In 1986 the HBS bible collection was permanently deposited in the Russell Library.

### A brief history of Ragged Schools

Our copy of the *Book of Common Prayer, New Testament and Psalter (SW 14)* is lacking a title-page but was printed between 1671 and 1674 and features a provenance inscription from the '*Ragged School of Silver Street, Reading*'. 'Ragged' schools were charitable organisations that aimed to provide free education to poor and

destitute children in 19th-century Britain, often providing free food, clothing, lodging and other home missionary services for those too poor to pay (Lee, 2014).

Often they were established in poor working -class districts with high population density, and established either by an individual philanthropist or by a religious mission. Lee (2014) highlights that they would even teach poor mothers how to clothe and bring up their offspring, to teach fathers their duties to their families and children their duty to their parents, to teach above all things that true wisdom is true religion and true religion supreme love to God. The hardship faced by these children, and the religious and economic illiteracy the Ragged Schools attempted to stem, would in turn inspire the child-like figures of Want and Ignorance that clung to the Ghost of Christmas Future in Dickens's 1843 novella *A Christmas Carol*. The scenes of squalor that Dicken's came face to face with also inspired *Oliver Twist* (1838).

The poor condition of the copy in the Russell Library is a testament to the dedicated study of the children from these 'Ragged' Schools.

### Collection Highlights

One of the most impressive books in the collection is our earlier edition of the *Missale Romanum, ex decreto sacro-sancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum* printed in Lyon in 1747 (SW 97). According to the inscription on the title-page, the former owner was Abraham Lockett Ford (b Newry, 3 April 1853- d Ardee 16 April 1945) who was an Irish Anglican clergyman.

Ford was educated at the Royal Institution School,



Liverpool and Trinity College, Oxford. He was ordained deacon in 1876 and priest in 1878. He was an Assistant Master at his old school, then Curate at Dundalk. He was Rector of Camlough ( 1878 to 1893) and Ardee. He was Rural Dean of Athirdee (1900 – 1925) and moved to Drogheda until 1934. Ford became Archdeacon of Armagh in 1934; and held the post until his death. He was additionally Chaplain to the last four Lords Lieutenant of Ireland (Wikipedia 2018). This item is in near perfect condition bound in blind-tooled calf leather with a stamped spine and gilt border, five raised bands and original ties and marbled end-boards.

The treasure *Souvenirs, impressions, pensées et paysages, pendant un voyage en Orient* (SW 71) by Alphonse de Lamartine printed in London in 1838 is a particularly interesting book on descriptions and travels of the Middle East in

the nineteenth century. It features a frontispiece map of Syria in black and white prepared by prominent French cartographer and engraver, Jean Baptiste Pierre Tardieu in 1835.

The Swayne bequest also features a little book entitled the *Lyrical poems of Dante Alighieri* printed in 1845. The frontispiece portrait features replica of Dante's death mask. The introduction also includes "On the amatory language of the early Italian poets": p. viii-xviii.

Other particular highlights of the collection include a copy of the first two books of The Pentateuch of Books of Moses in the Irish character copied from the original manuscripts with care by Thaddeus Connellan printed in London, 1822 (SW 39). This particular copy has handwritten glosses on the endpapers detailing the reasons for publication by an admirer of the author.

Part of this reads:

**"Reader you are to know that Thad[d]eus Connellan is the author of this work and that it was he who founded and adjusted the type in order to instruct his fellow countrymen and enable them to read and understand their native toung[u]e..."**

Finally, a tome of some rarity is *The Lives of the most eminent saints of the oriental deserts* printed in Dublin in 1834 (SW 5). What makes this book particularly interesting is the marginalia on the endpapers detailing the social history of its former owner:

**"It strikes me that the whole of us ought to go to first Mass at Chapel and come home as quick as we could together. What think you?"**

**"It is better for me not to see the old man and come home after first Mass. I believe he will not be in town, should he be, we will let you know"**

**"What has he to do with me in that case? It is you. I only want to know if the retreat will continue..."**

"If the retreat will not be over, will not speak to any one only in [confession?]. Act on that as your Director will order or recommend"

The Swayne donation is a monument to the scriptures, to fine typography, and to exquisite bookmaking and will enhance existing research and enable new discoveries to be made in the areas of Book History, Liturgical Studies and the Publishing History in Dublin in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Further details are available via the Maynooth University Library online catalogue. The collection is available for consultation in the Russell Library.

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