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**The Historic Collections of Lambeth Palace Library**

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I would like to begin by thanking Gresham College for its very kind invitation to deliver this lecture and also to thank all of you for choosing this event rather than the competing attraction of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s austerity plans for the next year.

My talk this evening might have been subtitled “A Tale of Two Libraries” because I will be discussing the collections and early growth of two ecclesiastical libraries, Lambeth Palace Library and Sion College Library, both founded in the seventeenth century, whose development has run in parallel for much of their history, but also offers some sharp points of contrast. I should say, I am also very pleased that a number of members of Sion College, including the President, are here this evening.

First of all, by way of orientation, Lambeth Palace Library, which you see before you, nowadays lies within a quadrilateral formed by the Underground Stations of Westminster, Waterloo, Lambeth North and Vauxhall, all about ten minutes’ walk away, but in the seventeenth century, as Hollar’s mid-century view makes plain, although surrounded by fields, gardens and Lambeth marsh, it was in many respects on the main line. You can see here the busy traffic on the river. Just going off the edge is the horse-ferry, running over to Westminster. Lambeth Marsh, over here, and here are the main buildings of the Palace itself, with the Great Hall and the Chapel behind, and the Cloister, which I will show to you in a minute, is just down behind the roof of the Great Hall.

You can see the way the river spreads out before the building of the Embankment or any bridges at all on this stretch of river. The first was Westminster Bridge in the mid-eighteenth century, and London Bridge of course is way over here.

Lambeth House, as it was then generally known, was the Archbishop’s manor house in the capital, both secluded from, but also easily connected by boat to the centre of Government: the Royal Court, Parliament, and the law at Westminster and Whitehall, straight across the river. For this reason, Lambeth has been the main residence of Archbishops of Canterbury continuously since the thirteenth century, apart from the interregnum years of the 1640s and 1650s, and, from the Middle Ages until the second half of the seventeenth century, many Archbishops combined their position in the Church with important offices of state.

The consequence of this is that the collections of Lambeth Palace Library reflect every aspect of the interaction between Church and State, not solely the Archbishops’ ecclesiastical and spiritual responsibilities, but also their wide range of secular interests, as law-makers, patrons, property owners, and members of a ruling elite.

Now, the Library itself owes its foundation to this man, Archbishop Richard Bancroft, born in 1544, died in 1610. Bancroft made provision in his will to transform what had previously been regarded as the personal property of individual Archbishops into a library with institutional continuity. Bancroft bequeathed his own remarkable collection of some 5,500 printed books and about 500 manuscripts to the Archbishops of Canterbury, successively, forever, and at this time, this was a library which was described as being in his study, over the Cloister, which I pointed out a minute ago.

Bancroft was very much a servant of the state as well as a religious figure. His biographer, in the Dictionary of National Biography, describes him as “a dogged ecclesiastical bloodhound”. What Bancroft was hoping to do by establishing a library, by leaving his own collection of books for the use of his successors, was to establish a library which could be used as an intellectual arsenal in his successors’ doctrinal and controversial wars, wars, at this point in the early seventeenth century, which were being waged on two fronts, both against the Roman Catholic Church, the counter-Reformation church, and against those Protestants who were pressing for more extreme, or more far-reaching they would probably say, changes to Church organisation and discipline.

Libraries were one means by which the Church of England attempted to consolidate its position in the middle ground, and it is no coincidence that, only a few years earlier, Sir Thomas Bodley had re-founded the University Library in Oxford, with the same purpose of helping to educate and create a Protestant clergy which could take on the Catholic Church in wars over the meaning of scripture, over ecclesiastical tradition and authority, and so on.

Now, Bancroft was by no means the first Archbishop of Canterbury to own a significant personal library. His predecessors, Thomas Cranmer and John Whitgift, had both owned large numbers of books.

By far, the most important collection had been formed by Matthew Parker, who was Elizabeth I’s Archbishop of Canterbury. He was Archbishop from 1559 to 1575, and is widely regarded as the architect of the Elizabethan Church settlement.

Parker had been ideally placed to take advantage of the collecting opportunities offered by the dissolution of monastic libraries. In Parker’s time, Lambeth Palace enjoyed a golden age as a centre for medieval manuscripts and those interested in studying them.

Here, you see one of the outcomes of Parker’s collecting. It is a history of the British Church, which was printed in 1572, possibly within the grounds of Lambeth Palace itself. It is sometimes said to be the earliest privately-printed book, although I think that is pretty debatable, but you will see that this copy is heavily annotated by Parker himself, and it is a copy full of authorial additions and corrections.

Now, what Parker was trying to do when he collected medieval manuscripts was not solely to preserve them for the future. He had another much less disinterested reason for wanting to create a library of this sort, and that was that he wanted to try to fabricate, I suppose, or “establish” a pedigree for the Church of England which was really as independent as he could make it of the Church of Rome. He wanted to create and establish a tradition that the Anglo Saxon Church in particular had existed in a golden age before contamination by Rome, and that this therefore provided a basis for the current authority of the Church of England and of Archbishops of Canterbury, as heads of the national church.

In Parker’s time, with this wonderful library at Lambeth, Lambeth Palace enjoyed a golden age as a centre for medieval manuscripts and for those interested in studying them. All of this came to an abrupt end at Parker’s death in 1575, when, following in the well-established tradition of the Middle Ages, most of his manuscripts went to his Cambridge College, Corpus Christi College Cambridge.

Bancroft knew Lambeth during Parker’s time, and it may be that there was a lingering sense of what Lambeth had already lost lying behind Bancroft’s interest in preserving his library for posterity.

We come on to look at a few of the manuscripts that are still at Lambeth, and starting with a Parker manuscript. This is a wonderful manuscript. It is our earliest illuminated manuscript, dating from the late-ninth century. This shows the opening of St Matthew’s Gospel from the Mac Durnan Gospels, which are a masterpiece of insular book production. They were written in Ireland, or possibly in Iona, in the late-ninth century, and by the tenth century, this manuscript was already being used as a diplomatic gift, and it is documented as having been given in the tenth century by a King of Wessex, Athelstan, to Christ Church Canterbury, the monastery at Canterbury, from which Archbishop Parker released it. This gives you some idea of the quality of Parker’s collection. You can see, incidentally, his red chalk annotation up there…

Parker also brought to Lambeth a circle of scholars, people like John Stow and John Foxe, and a circle of scribes and illuminators and book-binders.

This next item which I wanted to show you is a printed book, printed in 1569, but following really a manuscript tradition, it is a Protestant Book of Hours, made for Elizabeth I, or made for use in Elizabeth I’s reign, but this particular copy was intended for presentation to the Queen, and the reason I wanted to show it to you particularly was that this colouring, crimson and green and blue, is typical of the scriptorium which Matthew Parker established at Lambeth.

I mentioned that Bancroft’s library contained about 5,500 volumes. Within that 5,500 volumes where a number of printed books which had belonged to his predecessor, John Whitgift, who was Archbishop from 1583 to 1604, and Whitgift’s collection, or the fate of Whitgift’s collection, marks a turning point in the way in which Archbishops’ libraries were being treated in this period. I mentioned that Parker’s collection went to Cambridge. Well, Whitgift’s manuscript collection went to Trinity College Cambridge, but his printed books stayed with his successor, Richard Bancroft, at Lambeth, and therefore included in Bancroft’s will as part of the foundation of Lambeth Palace Library.

The books today still have the Archbishops’ arms on them, and these are Bancroft’s arms…

I will show you one or two more. They all take a rather similar form, that is to say that, on the left hand side as you look at it, there is the Pallium of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the generic arms of the Archbishops of Canterbury, and on the right hand side is a coat of arms which corresponds to the personal coat of arms of the individual Archbishop.

These are the arms of Richard Bancroft himself, and the next slide shows the arms of his successor, George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1611 to 1633. Abbot was a great friend of Bancroft. He was one of Bancroft’s executors. It was really Abbot’s forcefulness and determination that ensured that what at this time was a relatively original idea, the idea of establishing an institutional library for Archbishops, that that idea stuck and took root, and in order to do that, Abbot enlisted the help of Francis Bacon, who was Lord Chancellor, and of James I himself in trying to make sure that Bancroft’s will was observed, that no books were alienated, that nobody laid claim to them, and that proper precautions were put into effect to make sure that the library stayed at Lambeth. When Abbot himself died, he left his own library to the fledgling Lambeth Palace Library, which was another 2,000 books and another 50 or so manuscripts.

The fourth major personal library that we still have at Lambeth Palace Library, major personal library of a seventeenth century Archbishop, is denoted by this coat of arms. These are the arms of Gilbert Sheldon, who was Archbishop from 1663 to 1677, after the Restoration.

Now, I have already alluded to Matthew Parker’s activities in terms of identifying and preserving and capturing medieval monastic manuscripts, and a great many of the treasures of Lambeth Palace Library have come there in exactly the same way, through either Archbishop Bancroft or Archbishop Abbot.

This is a page from the great Lambeth Bible. It is a bible from the middle of the twentieth century. It is enormous. It would fit with great difficulty on this lectern in fact. It was intended for reading to monks in the refectory while they are having their meal, and, as you can see, it is beautifully illuminated. Which monastery it was actually made for originally is still something of a mystery. We think it comes from a monastery in Kent but we are not quite sure which one, and it arrived at Lambeth in 1610, or arrived within Lambeth Palace Library in 1610 as part of the foundation bequest. This particular page shows the Tree of Jesse and prophesies the coming of Christ.

This is another of our greatest manuscripts. This is a page from the so-called Lambeth Apocalypse. It is a manuscript from the middle of the thirteenth century, which was a period when there was great interest in the end of the world. People were becoming increasingly convinced, in the mid-thirteenth century, that the world was about to end, and this seems to have spawned a great many apocalypse manuscripts around that, around the same period at this particular one. This is interesting because it was made for a secular female patron, Eleanor de Quincy, who was Countess of Winchester, and this too came to us through the bequest of Archbishop Bancroft.

Then, just to give you a sense of a later manuscript in the collections at Lambeth, this is a manuscript that is an account of a pilgrimage of the soul. It is a work by an author Guillaume de Deguileville, which I have to look up because I can never quite say it, Guillaume de Deguileville, and what I particularly like about this manuscript, this is the author portrait because this pilgrimage of the soul is an account of a dream, and so, instead of a traditional author portrait in a manuscript where you see the author sitting at his desk surrounded by the accoutrements of writing and scholarship, which you do indeed see here in the back of the room, because this is a dream, here is the author dreaming his book. This is a manuscript which is indicative of a different type of source for the early collections at Lambeth because this is a manuscript with a royal provenance. It was made for presentation to John, Duke of Bedford, who was Regent of France, and the brother of Henry V, and that too arrived in Bancroft’s library.

Another manuscript with a royal provenance is this Book of Hours, made in London in about 1420, which has been personalised for King Richard III. There are prayers in it specific to Richard III, and it was in his tent at the Battle of Bosworth Field, from which he, as you will remember, did not survive, and it later on came into the possession of Lady Margaret Beaufort, who was the mother of Henry VII. This too came via either Archbishop Bancroft or Archbishop Abbot to Lambeth.

Well, what was Bancroft doing with royal books – how did this work? Shortly after Bancroft’s death, the then Royal Librarian, who was a man called Patrick Young, wrote a letter in which he claimed, rather plaintively, that some 500 books had been borrowed from the Old Royal Library by Archbishop Bancroft and that they had not been returned, and not only had they not been returned, but he gathered that Archbishop Bancroft had had them rebound with his arms stamped on the covers! Now, history does not actually relate what Abbot or others at Lambeth thought of this letter. There is absolutely no evidence that they took any notice of it. I think, in this context, it is important to understand the way in which a library like the Old Royal Library, or indeed the library like the library at Lambeth, was really being regarded at that period. Bancroft, as I say, thought of himself as much as a state servant as a servant of the church, and the Old Royal Library, like the Archbishops’ Library at Lambeth, was really seen as a repository out of which material could be quarried which would help in the controversial wars and activities of that period, so that is what Bancroft was doing, I think, borrowing books from the Old Royal Library. The Old Royal Library itself, I might say, was not entirely innocent perhaps.

This is a book that only came to Lambeth in 1938, as a gift of the American millionaire J.P. Morgan. It has had a rather chequered history. Across the top, the title page, you will see the signature, or at least the scribal signature of Thomas of Canterbury, that is Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the book itself, you may have noticed by now, is a remarkable book. It is a copy of Henry VIII’s answer to Martin Luther, the reply to Luther, the attack on Luther, which won Henry VIII the papal title “Defender of the Faith”, so this is Henry’s Archbishop’s copy of his most famous book, “In Defence of the Roman Catholic Church”. Cranmer’s library was itself dispersed in various ways in the course of the sixteenth century, and a large part of it, in fact, ended up in the libraries, first, of John Lord Lumley, as you see from the bottom of the title page, then Henry Prince of Wales, and from Henry Prince of Wales, the Old Royal Library, but this is not one of the books that Bancroft was able to rescue because it was not actually in the Old Royal Library at the time of Bancroft’s death.

On the other hand, this book, which is a book by a man called Thomas Abel, who was chaplain to Queen Catherine of Aragon, this book is one of the books from the Old Royal Library, which is now at Lambeth Palace Library. It is a book which discusses the matter of divorce, the King’s great matter, and it is clearly a topical and controversial subject at the time. This particular copy is of great interest because the annotations on it are in the hand of King Henry VIII, and if one looks through it, one can see Henry VIII trying to construct his own case, probing this argument for the weak points, underlining, making marginal comments along the lines of “This is complete rubbish” or “This here is a logical error which I can exploit”, and after the British Library, which is itself the modern successor to the Old Royal Library, Lambeth Palace Library has the largest collection surviving of books from the library of King Henry VIII.

Now, Bancroft’s library is surprisingly miscellaneous, or at least it is surprisingly wide-ranging. Like the libraries of many of the Archbishops that have come together to form Lambeth Palace Library, it is not solely a theological collection, and nor is it a collection solely devoted to questions of state, high politics, diplomacy and so on.

This is a first quarto edition of Henry IV Part Two, which is bound into the volume you see here. What makes this particular copy interesting is that it, along with the other items that are bound together in that volume, is signed by its publisher, Andrew Wise – you will see the imprint at the foot of the title page, “Printed by VS for Andrew Wise and William Aspley”. So, this is a copy that Andrew Wise took across St Paul’s Churchyard to give or leave for Richard Bancroft while he was Bishop of London in 1600. He was Bishop of London before he became Archbishop of Canterbury, and as Bishop of London, one of his responsibilities was in relation to control of the press, and the Bishop of London and his chaplains would licence books to be printed in London. As I say, this volume contains a whole series of about five or six pamphlets, each signed by different booksellers, and it seems to me that this volume is a volume of pieces intended to show Bancroft that different literary works had been published, as he had indicated they could be, in the form that was permitted, but it is particularly nice to have a first edition of Henry IV Part Two, possibly the first copy off the press, or the first copy, a pre-publication copy, taken by the bookseller himself to the Bishop of London.

I want to move on a little bit now and say a word or two about what happened to Lambeth in the course of the Civil War. As you will know, following the English Civil War, Archbishops were abolished, temporarily. Their property was confiscated, and, in the case of Lambeth Palace Library, very fortunately, through the intervention of John Selden, it was decided that, rather than sell the Library off, in the way that happened to the most of the property of the Archbishops – Lambeth Palace itself, for example, the buildings of Lambeth Palace were sold off in the 1640s. The same fate did not happen to the Library. The Library was sent to Cambridge instead, in 1648, and when it arrived in Cambridge, it was approximately eight or nine times the size of the existing Cambridge University Library, so that gives you a clear sense, I think, of the relative importance of this collection of Archbishops’ libraries by the 1640s. It stayed in Cambridge for about fifteen years, was lovingly catalogues, re-catalogued, and Cambridge got quite used to having it and were very reluctant to give it back in 1664, when the King and the Archbishops had come back, but back it came. There are still one or two strays, in fact, in Cambridge, but back it came. So, the Library survived the Civil War relatively intact, which was very fortunate, and it also escaped the Great Fire of 1666.

In the later seventeenth century, under Archbishop Sancroft, much work was done on reorganising the manuscript collections and beginning to catalogue them, and it is about that time really that one gets beginning of a sense that people were coming to use the Library, but the records of readership for Lambeth Palace Library are pretty fragmentary, to be honest. John Evelyn wrote, in 1687, that the Library “…ebbs and flows like the Thames running by it, at every Prelate’s succession or translation,” and that, I think, does give a very strong sense that, for all that Bancroft had stipulated in his will that it was to be there continuously, it still had the feel of a personal library in the late-seventeenth century.

People did come to see books, and this is one example… This is a curiosity. It is a copy of the works of King Charles the Martyr, printed in 1662, which was on-board an English ship when it was seized by the Portuguese Navy and brought to Lisbon. While it was in Lisbon, the book was censored by the Portuguese Inquisition, and various passages, including parts of the title page, which you can just see, various attempts were made to cross out those parts of it that were thought to be blasphemous or heretical.

While it was in Lisbon, it then came into the hands of an English clergyman who was there who brought it back to Lambeth in 1678, where, as I say, it became quite a curiosity, and in 1700, Samuel Pepys wrote to then Librarian, Edmund Gibson, asking to borrow it. Well, I am pleased to say that Gibson wrote back telling Pepys that he could not borrow it but that he could come and see it, and there then followed a short correspondence, in which Pepys said that he would like to come and see it but he was worried that the Library, in October 1700, was going to be too cold for him, and Edmund Gibson wrote back saying that he would make a private room available for Pepys to consult this and make sure there was a good fire in the room.

This view gives you an idea of the Library in the very early nineteenth century. It is still occupying the space above the Cloister, where Bancroft’s original Library was, but it reflects a whole century of growth in the eighteenth century, significant additions by Archbishops Tenison, in the early-eighteenth century, and Secker, in the middle of the eighteenth century, both of books and manuscripts.

And, in 1829, the Library moved on the site. In the 1820s, the Palace itself was remodelled. The architect Edward Blore created a dining room, with all mod-cons, for future Archbishops, at which point the seventeenth century Banqueting Hall became redundant. It was too draughty and too cold for a modern Archbishop’s dinner, and at that point, it became the Library.

Here you see it in about 1886, at which point the Library was open for about five days a week. You can see the library assistant staggering under the weight of some of the heavy folios which are still stored in that Hall, folios, very large books of mostly patristic scholarship and biblical commentary. There were more books in the Hall then than in fact there are now. The Library has spread out in the meantime all over the Palace buildings. But, for much of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, this was the Library room. This was where readers came, and this was where all the activity happened.

Then, in 1941, this happened: the bomb destroyed one end of the roof and created complete chaos in the Library, and that really was a defining moment in the history of Lambeth Palace Library. It was a period, that period in the late-1940s, a period of great austerity, to use George Osborne’s favourite word, and it was a period when this Library could very easily have gone under completely, but thanks to very determined work by the librarians, thanks to the support of the Pilgrim Trust, the support of the Church Commissioners, latterly, it did no such thing, and in fact, the decision was made that, very far from going under, Lambeth Palace Library should expand.

Since the War, it is really as an archive that Lambeth Palace Library has become well-known. We have the official papers and correspondence of the Archbishops of Canterbury, in a continuous series from the 1860s onwards, but we have also, increasingly, acquired the papers of many other figures connected with the national role of the Church of England, ranging from Gladstone’s Diaries to the papers of George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, friend of T.S. Eliot, and opponent of the wartime bombing of German cities. There are also extensive series of legal papers, such as the records of the Court of Arches, which was an ecclesiastical court that tried cases relating to morals, marriage, inheritance, and church discipline. There are many organisational archives, such as the archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, archives which document eighteenth century missionary activity overseas, or the papers of the Incorporated Church Building Society, which is an important source for historians of church architecture.

If it is principally as an archive that we are mostly now used, the most important accession of these post-War years is the library which I am going to come on to talk about now. Sion College Library, which I have already mentioned, came to Lambeth in the mid-1990s when it closed. All the pre-1850 books, some 35,000, together with the manuscripts and pamphlets collections, brought to Lambeth a distinctive and complementary collection, complementing the books and manuscripts of the individual Archbishops. Whereas Lambeth Palace Library has revolved around the office of the Archbishop, Sion College Library had its roots in the Protestant merchants and the clergy of the City of London. Its benefactors, we will see in a moment, included people like Samuel Pepys, numerous members of the Stationers’ Company, and its scope was broadened greatly by the legal deposit privilege, which it enjoyed from 1710 until the 1830s.

Here is Sion College Library - this is the second of my two libraries – in around 1884, in its old buildings on London Wall. There are some 62,000 volumes at that point. It is shortly before it moved to purpose-built buildings on the Victoria Embankment, which are the buildings that then closed in the 1990s.

I want to focus for the rest of this talk on Sion College Library, partly because I think it makes a rather interesting counterpoint to the story of Lambeth Palace Library, but also because it seemed thoroughly appropriate, given that we are now sitting a mere stone’s throw away from its original site, that we should think about it this evening.

Here you see the original site of Sion College Library. This is the Church of St Giles Cripplegate, the church now in the centre of the Barbican, where John Milton is buried, and here you see London Wall running along here.

I am not sure that I would actually very warmly recommend it to you, but if you were to go out of the Museum of London and turn left, along a concrete walkway which is called St Alfege Highway, within just a minute or two, you will find yourself looking down into St Alfege Churchyard, which was laid out as a garden in 1872. The church itself was demolished in the 1920s, and you will see St Alfege Church just there and the Churchyard just over here, on the map. If you go along that walkway, you are then very close to the original site of Sion College, which I am afraid to say is currently occupied by derelict buildings belonging to the Corporation of London.

How very different it was in the 1670s. This is the post-Fire reconstruction of Sion College, reconstructed on the original site, and here you see a long building, with a big window at one end, on an upper storey. That was where the Library was. Down below, for a time anyway, were almshouses.

Sion College was founded from the will of Thomas White, who was vicar of St Dunstan’s in the West in Fleet Street, and died a wealthy man in 1624. There were disputes over Thomas White’s will, and it was not really until 1630 that Sion College itself was properly established.

You see here the very early benefactors’ book of Sion College Library. You will see the page is dated 1630. The earliest traces of the Library really date from 1628. What I want to draw your attention to is the very wide range of occupations of citizens of London as represented in this benefactors’ book: everyone from salters, professional people, such as doctors and attorneys, surgeons, members of city livery companies, haberdashers, a great many stationers, a great many city clergy, and so the list goes on.

Sion College Library, from the beginning, represented a community of people, and that community is shown well by this book, now in Lambeth Palace Library. This is a very rare book indeed. It is a Babylonian Talmud. It is a collection of ancient Rabbinic texts, printed in Venice by Daniel Bomberg, between 1526 and 1548, in twelve volumes, and subsequently, the Inquisition attempted to suppress this work, so it is currently very rare indeed. But this was part of the original chained library in Sion College, and the first volume contains this lengthy inscription recording the fact that the money to purchase it, from a London bookseller who had imported these volumes, the money to purchase it had been contributed by eighteen parishioners of the Church of St John the Evangelist, Watling Street, and it had been collected together by the vicar, George Walker, for presentation in 1629 to Sion College Library.

Sion College Library, from very early on, made a particular point of collecting works in scholarly and exotic languages, and that collection, which is now at Lambeth, is very strong to this day.

This is a Book of Hours printed in Moscow in 1565, still in its sixteenth century muscovite binding and complete with an inscription by a man called Thomas Lindt, dated 1568, recording that he had bought this volume on a trading visit to Moscow.

Sion College Library is also very strong incunabula – that is books printed in the fifteenth century and early printed books.

This is a very fine piece of printing by a famous early-sixteenth century London printer called Wynkyn de Worde, printed in 1519. It is the work entitled “The Orchard of Sion”. Sion, this Sion, is no particular relation to Sion College, but both allude in fact to Zion or Sion, that is to say Jerusalem, and it is about a mystical vision of Catherine of Siena, who you see over on the right of the picture, and people you see escaping to heaven from the demons who are down below.

It is interesting to bear in mind the parallel development of Lambeth and Sion College Library. By 1650, when, as I have just explained, Lambeth Palace Library was in Cambridge, Sion College Library was publishing its own catalogue, and one cannot really exaggerate the importance of this. The only significant library that had a printed catalogue of its main printed book collections, apart from Sion College, was the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which was a larger and more important collection, but this catalogue demonstrates, essentially, Sion College’s pretensions as the only reference library in London in this period. It was compiled by a man called John Spencer, and this copy, which is among the library records of Sion College, includes additions made in Spencer’s hand to the catalogue between publication date in 1650 and around 1665 or 1666, and you can actually see – well, at least if your sight’s very good, you may be able to see that one of the additions on this page is dated 1665. The printed catalogue includes 6,500 titles and about another thousand had been added by 1666.

In the front of this volume is a lengthy note in the hand of a man called Lazarus Seaman, who was the President of Sion College in 1651, recording the rules by which the governors of the College ensured that the books stayed where they were and were carefully handled. Lazarus Seaman, I think, is a very interesting figure. He is a good example of the interregnum effervescence of scholarship around Puritan book culture. His own library, which was sold after his death in 1676, was a remarkable library, and was also remarkable for being the very first library in England to be sold by auction with a printed catalogue, a copy of which survives as part of the Sion collection.

In 1652, Sion College had printed rules. As you can see here, readers are required to behave quietly and modestly, not to disturb their fellow readers by walking around or chatting, but it says, firmly, to get on in silence with their studies. They must not put their elbows on the books, it says, and they must keep their papers firmly on the desk. They must return the books – this is still a chained library – they must return the books without tangling up the chains. Finally, they should leave promptly when the bell sounds so, not that much has changed, I suppose.

In the case of Sion College, we do have good records of readers. This, again, is from the 1650s, and again shows the international quality to the scholarly readers in Sion College in this period. You will see, among the readers recorded here, the name Samuel Mather, later an independent minister in Dublin, who had emigrated to New England in the 1630s, which is why, when he arrived at Sion College Library, he already had an MA from Harvard. On the other side, you will see a man described as coming from Danzig, or Gdansk as it now is. So, Zion College had already, within a very short space of time, made a mark for itself in the international Republic of Letters.

It continued to attract gifts. This is a remarkable manuscript, now at Lambeth. It is a breviary, made for use in the diocese of York, which preserves medieval musical notation.

Here is the section of the Sion College benefactors’ book which describes its donation to the Library in 1655 by a man called Simeon Ashe, a Puritan preacher.

Sion College was much less fortunate in the Fire. You may just be able to see, this is a different copy of the same catalogue - at the foot of the page, the words [“nunc sic nunc olim”] – “Not now as it once was”. The Sion College Library lost about a third or so of its books and manuscripts in the Great Fire, and after that Fire, another process of bequests, bequests of money and bequests of books, helped to fill the library again.

The post-Restoration labels are printed labels for substantial bequests that were made at the very end of the seventeenth century from George, Earl of Berkeley, and a physician called John Lawson.

Sion College’s importance as a scholarly library was further underlined by the production in 1724 of a second printed catalogue, recording the major donations that had taken place to try to repair the damage of the Fire. This was a catalogue made by a man called William Reading, who was librarian of the College from 1708 until 1744, an it is interesting to note from the proposals that the appeal for subscribers for this catalogue was in part an appeal via the College on behalf of its librarian, who they explained they had not paid very much, and it is also interesting to note from these proposals, which in fact I think are otherwise unrecorded, that one of the reasons for producing a new catalogue in 1724 was the sense that the dissenters were breathing down the neck of the Church of England clergy. There is a reference, you see, here, in this manuscript note, to the fact that the dissenters are themselves planning a library in the City of London.

If we go back to the map for a moment, where the dissenting library ended up was actually in Red Cross Street. You have got Sion College down here and Dr Williams’ Library, which was founded in the late-1720s, was indeed breathing down the neck of Sion College Library.

Well, I will not say more about that catalogue, the 1724 William Reading catalogue, but it is a very remarkable thing. It had a system of classification which was based on a very sophisticated French system and was much admired in the scholarly world in England. There was nothing else like it in the scholarly world in England in the early-eighteenth century, and it also took pains to record the names of all the benefactors and all the donors of books, which is of course of great interest nowadays to scholars interested in reconstructing libraries, but, at the time, was intended I think to encourage others to do the same.

I mentioned already that the importance of Sion College Library was recognised in fact in 1710 by its inclusion in an Act of Parliament, called the Act for the Encouragement of Learning, sometimes called the Copyright Act, which, among other things, made provision for legal deposit of a copy of every book registered at Stationers’ Hall with nine libraries, five of them in Scotland, and the other ones being Royal Library, still largely closed to people, Sion College Library, and the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge.

So, Sion College, in this period, is really a library of national importance, and the copyright privilege which it enjoyed, the legal deposit privilege which it enjoyed from 1710 until the 1830s, enabled the Library collections to become much more diverse and particularly strong in travel, history and literature.

I will show you very quickly three slides of a travel book from the Library. It is a book about the eruptions of Vesuvius, written by Sir William Hamilton and published in Naples in 1776-1779, and it is, as you see, a beautifully coloured and illustrated copy showing Vesuvius erupting.

Well, that is a suitably apocalyptic note to note that the twentieth century has not treated Sion College Library at all well. There were sales in response to financial crises in the 1930s, in the 1960s, and in the 1970s. The Library also suffered from the Blitz, it suffered from flooding, burst water mains, overflow of the Thames, and finally, in the mid-1990s, a further financial crisis meant that the Library closed. The College was forced to sell the buildings on the Victoria Embankment. Although the College’s own activities moved to other premises, where they still flourish, the books were not included in that move. It is very fortunate that the books were not sold. They were, very sensibly, transferred to other public institutions. The post-1850 books went to King’s College London, which was already a very strong theological collection. The administrative records went to Guild Hall and are now held by London Metropolitan Archives. Some 35,000 printed books, together with the manuscripts and the pamphlet collections, came to Lambeth.

In terms of collections, these, as I hope I have shown you, were an excellent match, and they complement, in a very interesting way, the holdings of the Lambeth Palace Library. Rather less fortunately, these major accessions arrived without any dowry in the form of money for cataloguing or conservation. At Lambeth, we have been steadily adding Sion books to our online catalogue, and adding them also to various internationally recognised union collections, union catalogues. We are also working to conserve the collection, with the support of a small, but very welcome, annual grant from Sion College itself.

Sion College Library does need benefactors now as much as it did in the seventeenth century, and I will just conclude by saying that, if you are interested in finding out more, outside this hall, you will find information leaflets about both libraries that I have spoken about this evening, as well as details of how to join the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library, who have been supporting some of our efforts to catalogue and conserve the Sion College collection.

Anyone interested in pursuing research on either the Lambeth or Sion collections would also be very welcome in our reading room, and further information is available on the Library’s website. That is the benefactors’ book, incidentally, of Sion College Library, and that’s the Lambeth Palace Library website, on which you will find online catalogues to most of our printed books, with the exception of much of the Sion collection, which is where the work remains to be done, and also the manuscript collections.

So, in making this material available nowadays, I think Lambeth Palace Library has come a very long way since 1610, and is making material available in ways which Archbishop Richard Bancroft would never have dreamt of.

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