

## Courts and History

### THE VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVES:

### THE CENTRAL ARCHIVE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Niccolò Del Re

*The fourth in a series of articles examining how and why courts preserve, destroy and edit their archives.*

WHEN THE POPES TOOK UP RESIDENCE at the Lateran Palace (*Episcopium Lateranense*, the *Patriarchium* of the following centuries, so called under the influence of the language of the Byzantine Chancellery) after the peace of Constantine (313), it is logical to assume that part of the Lateran was set aside for the storage and preservation of all the deeds and documents which pertained to the government and administration of the Church of Rome. Among the early material which must have arrived here would have been documents about the martyrs—victims of the persecutions against the Christians—which Pope Anterus (235–36) had ordered to be collected and preserved. Thereby he had sacrificed his own life, as he was killed because *gesta martyrum diligenter a notariis exquisivit et in ecclesia recondit*, according to the report handed down in the *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus one can venture to place the beginnings of an official archive of the Roman Church as early as the middle of the third century. Julius I (335–52) ordered that all the deeds regarding donations and bequests made to the Roman Church, the records of martyrs, the acts of the Synods, and the proceedings of the Councils, should be collected and preserved. This was the *Chartarium* or *Scrinium Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae*, which was referred to by St Jerome in his *Epistula adversus Rufinum presbyterum Aquileiensem* in 401,<sup>2</sup> and by some papal biographies in the *Liber Pontificalis*, from Pope Celestine I (422–32) to Pope Nicholas I (the Great) (858–67).

Until about forty years ago it was commonly held that Pope Damasus (366–84) was the founder of another pontifical archive in the Basilica of St Lorenzo near the theatre of Pompey, which Damasus either built or rebuilt. This was based on a reading of the fifth verse of one of his epigrams: 'Archivis, fateor, volui nova condere tecta'.<sup>3</sup> An unfounded attribution, refuted by modern scholarship, read as *archivis* (or *archibis* in other texts) what was *arcis hic*, according to the corrected reading of Vittorio Peri,<sup>4</sup> or *arcibus his*, according to the alter-

1 *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92) I, pp. lxxv–lxxvi, xcvi–xcvii, 145, 147.

2 J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols. (1844–65), XXIII, 493.

3 *Epigrammata Damasiana*, recensuit et adnotavit, A. Ferrua (Aids to the study of early Christianity, published by the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, II) (Città del Vaticano, 1942), pp. 210–12, no. 57.

4 See V. Peri, 'Gli incosistenti archivi pontifici di San Lorenzo in Damaso', in *Rendiconti della R. Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, XLI (1968–69), 191–204, where the author concludes with the statement: 'The correct reading does not in fact allow verse LVII to be considered as a dedicatory epigram of the Pontifical archives nor as sufficient evidence for an otherwise unknown and improbable transfer of the *scrinium sanctum* of Julius I from the Lateran to San Lorenzo in Damaso.' (p. 204).

native restitution proposed by Giuseppe Scalia.<sup>5</sup> Then the word *arx* assumes a significance specific to the church and refers particularly to the construction of the basilica of St Lorenzo by Damasus, the church being later named, after him, St Lorenzo in Damaso.

The *scrinium lateranense* was used for conservation of the documents that today would be called current; its existence is attested to in formula LXXXII of the *Liber diurnus Romanorum Pontificum*, where a decree is mentioned which 'in archivo dominae nostrae sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, scilicet in sacro Lateranensi scrinio, pro futurorum temporum cautela recondi fecimus'. A more secure arrangement for the most important documents of vital interest for the Church was also provided: this was in the Confession of St Peter's itself, where the *professiones fidei* of the bishops and the acts of the Synods were jealously guarded. Here too Constantine I (705-15) deposited the *cautio* lent to the Roman Church by Felix, archbishop of Ravenna, and other precious documents, including, for example, those of Pepin the Short and Charlemagne.

Despite the care and vigilance accorded to their conservation, all these precious documents have unfortunately been dispersed or destroyed, for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the perishable nature of papyrus, the material then mainly used for writing. Of the most ancient material, a few letters of Leo I (440-61) and Gregory I (590-604) are all that have come down to us. To these can be added a summary of the text of the donation written by Pepin, made in the reign of Stephen II (or III, 752-7), and contained in the *Liber Pontificalis* (I, 498). A third archive arose around 1083, according to the chronicler Deusdedit, on the slopes of the Palatine near the Arch of Titus, where documents relating to the administration of the property of the Apostolic See and registers of revenues and expenditure were collected. This archival headquarters was the so-called 'Turris chartularia', a name which, however, seems to derive (not) from the fact (as most people believe) that it contained Papal archives but from its proximity to that building, situated on the Palatine, where they really were held.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately very little has been preserved, mainly because all the archival material from before the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216) was transferred from the curia to other cities (Viterbo, Anagni, Orvieto, Perugia, Avignon) connected with the papacy. What survives includes Reg. Vat. I, which contains hand-written copies of letters by John VIII (872-82) in the last six years of his pontificate. These letters were transcribed, not at Montecassino, as was held until recently, but, as the most recent scholarship has shown, in Rome during the second half of the eleventh century, specifically in the Benedictine monastery of S. Maria in Pallara, on the Palatine, a dependency of Montecassino which is no longer in

existence. The original Reg. Vat. 2, containing the letters of Gregory VII (1073-85), also survives. These two surviving volumes are the opening volumes of a series of 2,042 files of papal letters, called *Vaticana* to distinguish them from other files.

The creation of new departments, which held it to be more useful to keep the documentation relating to their activities within their own offices, resulted in a multiplication of archives. At a certain point one begins to note the need for a reunification of the different archival material in the Vatican itself, which Nicholas III had made the permanent residence of the pope in 1278. A great part of the diplomatic correspondence, for example, was collected in the wardrobe or robing-room (*vestiarium Sanctae Ecclesiae Romanae*), while other material was accumulated elsewhere, in the *Cancellaria*, in the *Camera Apostolica*, and in the *Penitenzieria*; unfortunately, these latter archival deposits suffered colossal damage at the hands of the Tyrolean *lands knechts (lansquenets)* who were fighting with the Imperial forces during the sack of Rome in May 1527. That a large number of files and documents were destroyed is attested to by the *Instructions to Cardinal Farnese*, sent to Charles V by Clement VII, in which one reads: 'All the documents having fallen into the hands of these soldiers...'<sup>7</sup>

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, in view of the precariousness of the times and the need for greater security, Sixtus IV (1471-84) thought it more prudent to transfer the most precious documents of the Roman Church, 'those documents that is [says Pastor] which concern the rights and the possessions of the Holy See, into the fortress of Castel Sant'Angelo'.<sup>8</sup> It thus became the new pontifical archive, which the Della Rovere Pope is for this reason held to have founded.<sup>9</sup>

The first proposal, however, for setting up a central pontifical archive concerning the universal church, the Holy See, and the papacy, in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, with the specific purpose of providing more secure and controlled conservation of the material hitherto dispersed in various places and offices, came from Pius IV. He did not mean just the material in Rome, but also whatever could be found elsewhere, as is clear from the tenor of papal brief *Cum Nos nuper* of 28 September 1565, with which the pope imposed on all ecclesiastical superiors, secular and regular, the necessity to allow any documents to be transcribed which were explicitly requested by persons duly authorised by Cardinal Marcantonio da Mula (Amulio).

The process of collection was continued by Pius V (1566-72) and by Gregory XIII (1572-85), who managed to bring to the Vatican the pontifical documents still remaining in Avignon, Liège (deeds relating to the pontificate of Hadrian VI (1522-23) had been carried here by a secretary of the Flemish pope), and Anagni. The greatest contribution however, was made by Clement VIII, who, in 1593, provided for the re-organisation of the deposits in Castel Sant'Angelo (*Archivium Apostolicum Sedis nuncupandum in Arce S. Angeli*), where all the diplomatic

5 See G. Scalia, 'Gli "archivi" di papa Damaso e le biblioteche di papa Ilario', *Studi medievali*, 3, ser. 18 (1977), which concludes in its turn by saying: 'No more archive, therefore, and all the wealth of convoluted deductions and implications which have dealt with it, the mistake appears to me to be definitively clear and the question can be considered closed. Instead, with the fall of "Archibus" and the restoration proposed by me (and previously by Perù), the inscription acquires a clear meaning: it seems to me, for the reconstruction of the ancient architectural development of San Lorenzo in Damaso (part of the extract).

6 T. Ashby, *La fin della torre cartularia*, Roma, 6 (1928), p. 97.

7 L. von Pastor, *Storia dei papi dalla fine del medio evo*, Ital. transl. by Angelo Mercati, 16 vols. (Rome, 1908-34), IV, 2, pp. 270, 282.

8 See von Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, IV, 2, p. 626.

9 P. Fabre, 'Notes sur les archives du Château Saint-Angé', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 13 (1897), pp. 3-49.

floor of the archive, and have vaults and walls decorated with frescoes representing donations to the Church by kings and emperors from Constantine the Great to Charles IV of Luxembourg.

A specific foundation deed for the new archive was never enacted, and so the brief *Cum nuper* of 31 January 1612 is held to be such. With this, Paul V provided for the move of the codices and documents, and at the same time assigned the direction of the new body to Baldassarre Ansidei, who was already appointed to the Library, and who thus assumed the double responsibility. This therefore meant that 'initially the new Vatican Archive was not thought of as an autonomous institution, but as an identifiable part of the Library and part of this complex. For this reason a solemn deed of foundation was not necessary', Vittorio Peri writes, who also gives 23 July 1630, as the date of the institution of the Archives as we know them today.<sup>13</sup> This was the date of the brief by which Urban VIII separated the responsibility and functions of the chief custodian (afterwards called prefect, as today) of the Library from those of the prefect of the Archive. Felice Contelori's renunciation of his direction of the Library that year thus initiated the separate series of prefects of the Vatican Archives which has been continuous ever since. The Vatican Archives were also given the title 'secret' at that time, as it was the private archive of the sovereign pontiff, and therefore not available for public consultation.

Under Urban VIII the Vatican Archive became an autonomous body, completely independent of the Library, and it continued to expand, in terms both of the physical space it occupied and the documentary heritage it contained. There was a continuous accession of material deposited regularly by the various curial dicasteries, among which particular mention should be made of the secretariat of state, where the diplomatic correspondence of the Holy See from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries was collected and filed according to legations and permanent nunciatures established in European countries.<sup>14</sup>

Further enriched in 1783 by the pontifical archives which had remained in Avignon, consisting mainly of files of letters called the *Avignon letters*, and in 1798 by the archive from Castel Sant'Angelo, the Vatican Secret Archives unfortunately suffered severe damage in 1810 as a consequence of being transferred to Paris by order of Napoleon I.<sup>15</sup> He intended to put all the historical archives of the European states which he had conquered into the Hotel de Soubise, then as now seat of the French national archive. Yet further serious damage and loss unfortunately took place in 1815, during the operation to recover the archives, clumsily conducted by Count Giulio Ginnsi da Imola. He was sent to the French capital by the papal government and charged with ensuring the return to Rome of the

13 Peri, 'Progetti e rimonstranze', p. 208.

14 A detailed description of the enrichment of the Vatican Archives and the organisation of the material which flowed into it between the seventh and seventeenth centuries has been provided by Lajos Pásztor, 'Per la storia dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano nei secoli XVII–XVIII. Eredità Passioneti, Carte Favoriti-Casoni, Archivio dei cardinali Bernardino e Fabrizio Spada', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 91 (1968), pp. 157–249.

15 J. Mauzaize, 'Le Transfert des Archives Vaticanes à Paris sous le Premier Empire', *Bulletin de l'Association des Archivistes de l'Église de France*, 8 (1977), pp. 3–14.

correspondence existing in the private office (the *Segreteria segreta*) was taken. The work of restructuring the various rooms was directed by Baldassarre Tellarini from Lugo di Romagna.<sup>10</sup> He furnished the *sala rotonda* above the keep with strong wooden cupboards, built specially according to a system agreed upon in advance, to hold all the archival material in the Castel Sant'Angelo. By this time this material had been accumulating there for more than a century, and was to remain there, continually augmented until May 1798, when it was transferred en masse to the Vatican Archives as a precautionary measure following the French occupation of Rome. Thereby the diplomatic archive lost its autonomy, but always survived as a separate collection.

The commitment displayed by various sixteenth-century popes to setting up a central archive for the Church within the Vatican found its culmination in the work carried out under Paul V (1605–21), who regarded it as a matter of urgency 'after a distressing visit to the depository for pontifical documents in Castel Sant'Angelo, where he found them prey to rats and submerged in dust'.<sup>11</sup> Even so, he had to overcome considerable difficulties and obstacles, not the least of which was a reluctance on the part of some sections of the Roman curia, each maintaining that it was more convenient and useful to keep their archives in their respective offices.

The will of the pontificate finally prevailed, thanks to an efficient co-adjutor Cardinal Bartolomeo Cesi (who had already been a valued collaborator of Clement VIII in his similar plan). After only a few years a plan for the construction of a new Vatican archive began to take shape in what was to be its early base, three rooms adjacent to the great Salone Sistina of the Vatican Apostolic Library. This was the place to which, from 1611 onwards, a great quantity of material coming from the Library itself (the files of pontifical letters remaining in the so-called *Bibliotheca segreta* set up by Sixtus IV), from the Camera Apostolica, from Castel Sant'Angelo (diplomatic correspondence), and from the papal wardrobe began to be sent. This can be seen from the inventory compiled in 1615 by Michele Longo, now kept among the manuscripts of the Vatican Library (Cod. Vat. Lat. 10247), which constitutes the principal source for the early history of the Vatican Secret Archives.<sup>12</sup> These rooms, then the residence of the Cardinal Librarian, today form the first

10 E. Carusi, 'Per l'Archivio di Castel S. Angelo. Noticina di cronaca del 22 settembre 1592', *Archivio della R. Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 47 (1924), pp. 321–5. A. Sr. Tellarini declares himself executor of the work done in the Archives of Castel Sant'Angelo on a slip of paper written in his own hand and inserted between two shelves in one of the cupboards; it was discovered accidentally in 1799 by Mons. Gaetano Marini, then prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, who was charged with proceeding with the dismantling of the *Archivum Arcis* and its transfer into the Vatican. This sheet was inserted into a codex which finally ended in the Vatican Library, where it figures among the Latin Vatican factitious codices as number 11854 (f. 61), which have been dealt with and published by E. Carusi.

11 V. Peri, 'Progetti e rimonstranze: documenti per la storia dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano dall'erezione alla metà del XVIII secolo', *Archivum historicum pontificiae*, 19 (1981), p. 205.

12 The first part of Longo's inventory, which is very useful for following the succession of deposits of material in the central archive between 1611 and 1614, was published by Francesco Gasparolo, 'Costituzione dell'Archivio Vaticano e suo primo indice sotto il pontificato di Paolo V. Manoscritto inedito di Michele Longo', *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto*, 8 (1887), pp. 3–64. The second part remains unpublished.

surviving material from the Vatican Archives held in Paris. Mons. Marino Marini was, however, sent again to France in 1817 by the cardinal secretary of state, Ercole Consalvi, to take over from Count Ginnsasi, who with unspeakable thoughtlessness had disposed of the *registri* ('registers') of the bulls of the Dataria Archive, 'not treating them as was due to them', as Mons. Marini refers to it in the *Appendix* he added almost ten years later to his *Memorie storiche*.<sup>16</sup> He adds, 'It fell to me to have to claim more than seven hundred volumes from the workshops of the delicatessens and pork-butchers'. Much later, the famous librarian of the Paris National Library, Léopold-Victor Delisle, also had occasion to judge the work of Ginnsasi severely. In his long recension on the *Memorie storiche* of Marini, published in the *Journal des Savants* (July–August 1892), he states that 'he [Ginnsasi] carried out the task which had been entrusted to him so poorly that, to make his task easier and to save expense, he sold entire runs of documents by weight'; he adds that throughout the nineteenth century documents from the Vatican Archives which had escaped the further searches of Mons. Marini continued to appear from time to time. Delisle himself acquired some for the Bibliothèque Nationale, where today one can find a most interesting file of the Holy Office, dating from the end of the sixteenth century, preserved in the Latin collection, number 8994.<sup>17</sup>

Between 1835 and 1836, when Mons. Marino Marini was prefect, having succeeded his uncle Gaetano Marini (who died in Paris in 1815) in this post, the archives of the Chancery of the Nunciature in Venice were added to the Vatican Archives. These comprised more than 3,000 volumes and files and a great quantity of documents from various dependent convents of religious congregations suppressed by Clement IX in 1668 (Canons of St George in Alga, Jeronimians, 'Gesuali'), whose goods had been alienated to finance war against the Turks.

As a result of this continued influx of documents, both singly and in bound volumes, further extensions of space became necessary. This was obtained first by adding the three floors of the Torre dei Venti (or della Meridiana) to the early nucleus. Then by constructing a gallery, over two hundred metres long, which extended along the whole of the west side of the Belvedere Cortile, above the Map

Gallery (Galleria delle Carte Geografiche) of the Vatican museums. Later still, the rooms on the ground floor of the Cortile della Biblioteca were added. Finally we reach modern times with the cession, in 1930, of space until then occupied by the Vatican Art Gallery and, in 1980, the excavation of a new extension dug out under the Cortile della Pigna. This, extending over an area of 4,500 square metres, was added to the already imposing complex, providing an additional 31,000 cubic metres of space, and 50,000 metres of shelf space, to be added to the 25,000 metres already existing on the ground level and on the upper floor of the old attics.

If we owe the institution of the central archive of the Church, which now holds such an abundance of documentary material of value for historical research, to Paul V in 1612, then we must ascribe the merit of having authorised free access to scholars, despite strong opposition and technical difficulties, to Leo XIII in 1880.<sup>18</sup> However, 'in reality the Archives of the Holy See, opened in 1880, were never completely closed to historical research from the date when historiography turned, after Baronius, to research in the Vatican sources: in the eighteenth century the copying of entire pontifical files, then particularly sought after, was allowed without reservation. It is enough to recall La Porte du Theil, who carried copies of almost twenty thousand documents to Paris.'<sup>19</sup>

With their opening by the Pecci Pope (Leo XIII), the Vatican Archives continued, and will always continue, to be called 'secret' simply out of respect for tradition. They have now become a centre for historical research of world importance partly because of the antiquity of the documents and partly because of their universal character.<sup>20</sup> This latter aspect has given rise to the foundation, in Rome, of various national institutes for historical research, beginning with the *Oesterreichische Historische Institut*, in 1881, which, however, had had a predecessor in the *Ecole Française de Rome*, founded in 1874, followed by the *Preussische*, later *Deutsche Historische Institut* and the *Historische Institut der Görresgesellschaft* in 1888, the Dutch Institute in 1903, the Belgian in 1904, and many others, all still active and functioning.<sup>21</sup>

After the opening of the Archives, another cultural benefit of the pontificate of Leo XIII was the institution in the same year, 1884, of the School of Palaeography, Diplomatic and Archival Studies (the study of the form and presentation of medieval documents), the present *Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica*. It had the double purpose of promoting and strengthening the serious study of history

<sup>18</sup> Even though not expressed in a specific document emanating for this purpose, 1880 is considered the true year (and not 1881, as one often reads) of the opening of the Vatican Archives; this is in fact the year indicated in the inscription on the plaque put up in the study hall under the bust of the pontiff: LEO XIII PONT. MAX./HISTORIAE STUDIIS CONSULENS/TABULARII ARCANAE RECLUSIT/ANNO MDCCCLXXX.

<sup>19</sup> G. Battelli, 'L'istituzione della Scuola di Paleografia presso l'Archivio Vaticano e l'insegnamento di Isidoro Carini', in *Cento anni di cammino. Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica (1884-1984)*, ed. Terzo Natalini (Città del Vaticano, 1986), p. 48. These are the acts for the exhibition on the centenary of the School with documentation relating to its history.

<sup>20</sup> See O. Chadwick, *Catholicism and History. The Opening of the Vatican Archives*, *The Herbert Henry Henson Lectures in the University of Oxford* (Cambridge, 1978); G. Martina, 'L'apertura dell'Archivio Vaticano: il significato di un centenario', *Archivum historicum pontificium*, 19 (1981), pp. 239-307.

<sup>21</sup> R. Elze, 'Gli Istituti storici stranieri in Italia', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, C (1977), pp. 81-91.

<sup>16</sup> M. Marini, 'Memorie storiche dell'occupazione e restituzione degli Archivi della Santa Sede e del riacquisto de' Codici e del Museo Numismatico del Vaticano...', *Regestum Clementis Papae V ex Vaticanis Archivis SS.D.N. Leonis XIII P.M. iussu et munificentia nunc primum editum*.... I (Rome, 1884), p. cclxxii. One can calculate the extent of the loss suffered by the Vatican Archives as a good third of the entire documentary heritage previously held. This followed from accidents during transportation, both going and returning, and resulting from the foolish behaviour displayed not only by Count Ginnsasi, but also by Mons. Marino Marini himself, who, by his own explicit confession, had with great thoughtlessness sold numerous volumes of the papers of the Holy Office as so much wastepaper, first rendering them practically illegible, because of the delicacy of their contents. See also M. Giusti, 'Materiale documentario degli archivi papali rimasto nell'Archivio nazionale di Parigi dopo il loro ritorno a Roma negli anni 1814-1817', *Römische Kurie, Kirchliche Finanzen, Vatikanisches Archiv. Studien zu Ehren von Hermann Hoberg* (Rome, 1979), pp. 263-74.

<sup>17</sup> Thirteen Pontifical files ended up in Ireland, where they can be found in Trinity College, Dublin. See T. K. Asbot, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College* (Dublin, 1900), pp. 241ff. In 1953 the Irish government sent microfilm copies of these volumes as a gift to the Vatican Archives, as well as another nineteen volumes of judgements of the Holy Office (from the years 1564 to 1659) and thirty-nine volumes of Inquisition proceedings in various Italian cities, according to the information given in the annual publication *L'Attività della Santa Sede nel 1953* (Città del Vaticano, 1954), p. 334.

as regards the Pontificate and the Church, and of training young priests in the knowledge and use of those documents to which they are referred, as was explicitly stated in article one of the relevant *Ordinamenti* emanating in virtue of the *motuproprio fin dal principio* of 1 May of that year, and, at the same time, in the *Regolamento organico e disciplinare per gli Uffici dell'Archivio Segreto Pontificio*.<sup>22</sup> Reorganised in 1968 and given a new statute which was approved by Paul VI on 21 May 1976, the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatic and Archival Studies, which is considered to be at the level of a university department (article one), was opened to clerical and lay scholars of both sexes who were suitably qualified. The teaching includes courses in Latin and Greek palaeography and courses in general and pontifical diplomatic, given in alternate years and combined with the teaching of codices, medieval chronology and the history of archives. A diploma in Palaeography and Archival Studies is issued by the School.

Following the 1968 reorganisation of the School of Palaeography, Diplomatic and Archival Studies, of which it had been part, the course on the theory and practice of archival work, instituted in 1923 by Pius XI, was separated; it extends over a year, and includes lessons in general and special archive organisation, with reference to ecclesiastical archives, accompanied by individual and group practical experience, with the final award of a diploma.

To make historical research easier for the scholars who continued to arrive in the study-rooms in ever-increasing numbers to consult the archives, the work of organizing and cataloguing the historical and documentary material was intensified. It was agreed that the archive sources of the various dicasteries of the Roman curia, and other archives of interest to those studying the history of the Church and of the papacy, also be centralized. In this way, in 1892 under the pontificate of Leo XIII the archive of the Dataria Apostolica (Lateran files and files of petitions), until then remaining in the Lateran, was transferred to the Vatican. Following this came at different times, the Lateran briefs and the archives (in whole or in part) of some of the Roman congregations—those called today the Congregations for Bishops, for Clergy, for the Causes of Saints, for the Discipline of the Sacraments. The archives of some other bodies, such as the Secretariat for Briefs, the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, and those of the Apostolic Nunciatures accredited to various European countries, followed. Finally, little by little arrived the private archives of various Roman patrician families (Borghese, Buoncompagni, Del Bufalo, Della Valle, Rospigliosi, etc.) which had had particular ties with the Holy See. After the great reforms under Paul VI of the Roman curia in 1967, and of the pontifical household in 1968, during which the Apostolic Dataria, the Apostolic Chancellery, the Chancellery of Apostolic Briefs, and two units of pontifical guards, the *Guardia Nobile di Sua Santità*, and the *Guardia Palatina d'Onore*, were suppressed, the archives of all these offices were also deposited in the Vatican Archives.

It is impossible to offer a general survey of all the Vatican Archives. Therefore I will give a short review of at least the most important sources, beginning with the pontifical files, that is to say, the series of volumes in which were transcribed

22. S. Pagano, 'La Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica', in *Formazione e aggiornamento di archivisti e bibliotecari: problemi e prospettive*, ed. A. Pratesi (Rome, 1992), pp. 103–12.

for historical record, for the use of the office itself, all the official letters of the popes and their *bulls*,<sup>23</sup> so called because the originals, sent to individual recipients, carried, unlike other types of papal letters, a seal of lead (*bullata*). There are documents of this type in the *Cancellaria Apostolica* from the sixth century onward, beginning with one of Agapitus I (535–6), which is the oldest pontifical lead seal known, but of which, however, only the design survives. The oldest bull to have survived as an original, which shows the good shepherd on the face and the name of the pope of the reverse, can be traced back to the pontificate of Deusdedit (or Adeodatus) I (615–18).<sup>24</sup>

The oldest and most important collection in these volumes is that of the *Registri Vaticani*, to which can be added the related series of *Registri Avignonesi* and the later *Registri Lateranensi*: their names refer to the place where the files of each series were kept, and not to that where they were issued.<sup>25</sup> The *Registri Vaticani* are a complex of 2,020 volumes (2,042 to be precise because several are duplicated) which—leaving aside the first two, with letters of John VIII and Gregory VII respectively, of which we have already spoken—run more or less regularly from the reign of Innocent III (1198–1216) to that of Pius V (1566–72). They do not, however, come from a single archival source, in that the contents derive from the activities of various offices such as the *Cancellaria*, the *Camera Apostolica*, and the *Segreteria Domestica*, later called the *Segreteria Apostolica*. These files are undoubtedly of the greatest importance, not only for the history of the Church, but for the history of all Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, especially for those periods in which other collections of papal documents are missing.

The *Registri Avignonesi* series, in 349 volumes and four more of appendices, contains the letters of the popes who had established their residence in Avignon, hence the name. They run from John XXII (1316–34) to Gregory XI (1371–8) and include the anti-popes Clement VII (1378–94) and Benedict XIII (1394–1423). Many letters contained in these files are crossed out because they are copied in better form in parchment volumes in the *Registri Vaticani*.

The *Registri Lateranensi* series began in 1389 with Boniface IX, and extends to the pontificate of Leo XIII (1879–1903). The files of this series were originally kept in the Vatican in various locations around the Cortile di S. Damaso, and were taken away by the French in 1810. They are called *Lateranensi* because they were deposited in the Lateran Palace when they were brought back to Rome in 1817. They consist of 2,470 units, but, unfortunately, only a little over half of the documents which existed before the transfer to Paris survive. All are on paper and in the same format, and the letters are grouped by subject. The *Registri Lateranensi* are certainly the most homogeneous series among the papal files, as everything derives from a single office, the *Cancellaria Apostolica*. It can also be considered the continuation of the

23. M. Giusti, *Studi su registri di bolle papali* (Città del Vaticano, 1968).

24. P. Rabikaukas, 'De significacione verborum "bullā", "breve"', *Periodica di re morali, canonica liturgica*, 55 (1966), pp. 85–92.

25. M. Giusti, 'I Registri Vaticani e le loro provenienze originarie', in *Miscellanea archivistica Angelo Mercati* (Città del Vaticano, 1952), pp. 383–459.



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Avignon files. An anomaly among them is represented by file 186 which contains papal bulls from the Council of Constanz (August 1415–April 1416).

Another series of notable importance is constituted by the file of petitions (*Registri delle Suppliche*), composing 7,365 volumes of large format in a uniform hand, which confirm the conservative spirit of the Church through the centuries. They run from the pontificate of Clement VI (1342–52) to the end of the last century and all come from the *Dataria Apostolica*, as do the 852 volumes of Lateran Briefs (*Brevi Lateranensi*), which run from 1490 to 1800; around 30,000 minutes from 1523 to 1599 and 166 volumes of proceedings from 1622 to 1800.

Of similar importance are a further thousand volumes, dating from before the sixteenth century, which come from the *Camera Apostolica*. Among these the 504 volumes of the *Collectoriae* are of great interest for economic history, place-names, and the development of European dioceses during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They contain 565 volumes of *Introuitus et Exitus* from 1279 to 1524, ninety-one volumes of *Obligaciones et Solutiones* from 1295 to 1555, 253 volumes of *Diversa Cameralia* and 222 volumes of *Indulgentiae*. Apropos of the *Archivio Camerale* it must be remembered that the most recent part of this archive is to be found in the Italian State Archives in Rome, where it went after 1870.<sup>26</sup>

The documentation contained in the *Fondata Concistoriale*, which dates from the fifteenth century onward, is also of particular interest. The archives of the College of Cardinals are part of this, and it also includes special series for the conclaves and the Consistory Congregation (today the Congregation for Bishops). Among the other archives of dicasteries of the Roman curia are those of all the congregations still active and functioning today, even if their names have been changed, such as that of the Council (now the Congregation for Clergy), the Councils of Rites (today the Congregation for the Causes of Saints) and of the Sacraments. There are also the archives of numerous Congregations which have been suppressed, such as the Congregation for Avignon, the Congregation for Boundaries, and the Congregations for Holy Advice, Good Government, Discipline of Religious Orders, Ecclesiastical Immunity, Indulgences and Relics, Religious Status, etc., as well as the archives of the Apostolic Palaces, of the tribunals of the Roman Rota and of the *Segnatura di Giustizia*.

The material kept in the archives of the secretary of state provides another outstanding contribution to modern and contemporary history. Files from the sixteenth century to the Napoleonic era were kept according to the rank of the individual recipients (cardinals, bishops, other prelates, nobility, military, private citizens) and according to nunciature and legation, while all the documentation from 1815 onwards is classified according to the original rubric. Furthermore, the documentary material of the secretariat of state is continually expanding as a result of the transfer from time to time of the archives of individual nunciatures into the Vatican Archives. The Prisoners of War files, relating to the First World War, and the files of the Information Office (set up during the Second World War to obtain news about what had happened to the many soldiers and civilians who

had disappeared, and to relay this information to interested parties) are also kept with the files of the secretary of state. Abundant archive material also comes from other secretariats, among which is that of *Briefs* with 5,660 volumes, embracing the period 1566–1846, that of *Briefs to Princes* with 252 volumes extending from 1560 to 1836; and those of the two other secretariats, the *Secretariat of the Latin Letters* and the *Secretariat of Memorials*.<sup>27</sup>

Further contributions to the documentary wealth of the Vatican Archives are the various special deposits, such as the acts of the two great councils, the *Council of Trent* (1545–63) and the *First Vatican Council* (1870), and also the personal archives of popes, such as, most notably, Paul V, Clement XI and Pius XI. In addition, there are many deposits distinguished by the names of their respective owners in the past, or by people by whom the files were begun, such as Benincasa, Bolognetti, Borghese (5 series), Carpegna, Confalonieri, Cybo, Favoriti-Casoni, Garampi, Ottoboni, Pio, Santini (contained among another ten volumes of files of Roman notaries). There is also the *Spada Collection*, with 418 volumes of documents relating mainly to the Roman republic of 1849. In this group the important collection of heterogeneous material known as *Miscellanea*, set up in the seventeenth century and added to thereafter, can be included. It consists of manuscript volumes from various sources, all of great interest for the history of the Church: for example the *Liber diurnus Romanorum Pontificum* (Arm. XI, t. 19), in which all the formula adopted by the pontifical *Cancellaria* between the sixth and the ninth centuries are listed, and the *Liber censuum Ecclesiae Romanae*, the registers in which lists were kept of all the tributes paid to the Church of Rome from lands and churches as *censuales* of the Apostolic See.

Another important collection of parchments and paper, in sheets and in bound volumes, is the so-called *Diplomatic Archive*, among which the *Instrumenta miscellanea* are found. It brings together around 8,000 original documents dating from the ninth century onwards, more than 3,000 parchments and a further almost 17,000 parchments from the ninth century onwards. They come from convents and monasteries in Veneto and Tuscany which had been suppressed, and were previously held in the archive of the Chancellery of the Nuncio to Venice.

Known again today by its earlier denomination of *Archivum Arcis* (A.A.) is the archive of Castel Sant'Angelo. This is a collection of about 8,500 documents, many of which are of great historical importance and interest, such as the *Privilegium Othonis* of 962, the royal diploma by which Otto I, on the occasion of his coronation as emperor by Pope John XII, confirmed all the territorial concessions previously made to the Church. There are also sixty-nine imperial and royal diplomas endorsed with gold seals, from that of Frederick I (Barbarossa) of 1164, to that of Charles VII of Sicily of 1739. Notable among these is the seal of Philip II of Spain (1555) which weighs around 820 grams. There are further diplomas with containers of silver gilt, such as that of the first consul of 1803, which together

27 L. Pásztor, 'Per la storia degli archivi della Curia Romana nell'epoca moderna: gli archivi delle Segreterie dei Brevi ai principi e delle Lettere Latine', *Römische Kurie, kirchliche Finanzen, Vatikanisches Archiv: Studien zu Ehren von Hermann Hoberg*, ed. Erwin Gatz, 2 vols. (Rome, 1979), II, pp. 659–86.

26 See M. G. Pastura Ruggiero, *La Reverenda Camera Apostolica e i suoi archivi (secoli XV–XVIII)*, (Rome, 1984).

constitute the most important collection of their type.<sup>28</sup> Many other documents preserved in the archives of the Castel Sant'Angelo are particularly interesting. Among them is the request for the annulment of the first marriage of Henry VIII, sent by the English parliament to Clement VII in 1530, with eighty-five signatures and wax seals; two letters written on silk sent to Innocent X in 1644 by the Chinese Empress Helena, who had become a Catholic; the ratification of the abdication of Queen Christina of Sweden in 1654, with the signatures of the Swedish members of the Riksdag and 307 wax seals; and the concordat concluded between Bonaparte and Pius VII in 1801, which assured religious peace in France.

A general idea of what the Vatican Archives can offer interested scholars can be gained by consulting the descriptive guide by Karl August Fink, *Das Vatikanische Archiv. Einführung in die Bestände und ihre Erforschung* (2nd ed., Rome, 1951), which deals exhaustively with individual deposits. There is also a new revised and enlarged edition, edited by Germano Gualdo, of the *Sussidi per la consultazione dell'Archivio Vaticano* (Città del Vaticano, 1989). This in turn forms volume seventeen of the *Collectanea Archivi Vaticani*, the collection of Archive publications, begun in 1968 and destined to include technical essays by the qualified personnel in the Archives. It has now reached volume forty-seven (in preparation).

In his *motuproprio* of 1 May 1884, Leo XIII defined the nature and the functions of the Vatican Archives very clearly, and these were reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II in his constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 28 June 1988.<sup>29</sup> In this, article 187 provides that among the collegiate institutions of the Holy See is the Vatican Secret Archives, in which are kept the documents relating to the government of the church, in the first place to be at the disposal of the Holy See and the Curia in the carrying out of their work, and then, on the basis of pontifical concession, to be sources for research, including non-religious research, for all scholars of history who wish to learn about those regions which in past centuries were closely tied with the life of the church. This clearly shows that the Archives perform a double service, for the Holy See in particular, and for scholarship in general.

The Vatican Secret Archive is represented at meetings of many international learned institutions, such as *International Round Table of Archives*, the *Guide to Sources for the History of Nations*, the *International Committee for the Study of Seals*. It also organises, on its own premises, exhibitions of documents to mark particular events, such as the Tenth International Congress of Archives held in Rome in 1955; the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council in 1964–5; the Thirteenth-Fourteenth Sessions of the World Conference of the F.A.O. on agrarian reform and on rural life, in 1966 and in 1967; the Third International Congress of Diplomatic held in Rome in 1971; the Holy Year in 1975; the centenary of the opening of the Archives to scholars in 1981 and the centenary of the institution of the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatic and Archival Studies in 1985.

The governance of the Vatican Archives is entrusted by the pope to a member of the College of Cardinals, who holds the title of archivist of the Holy Roman

<sup>28</sup> See P. Sella, *Le Bolle d'oro dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano* (Città del Vaticano, 1934); A. Martini, *I sigilli d'oro dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano* (Milan, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, LXXX (1988), pp. 841–912.

Church.<sup>30</sup> He is directly responsible to the pope for the running of the institute and the conservation of all the archive material, which he delegates, in turn, to the custody of the prefect of the Archives, a post in his gift, who is responsible for the practical management of the institute and is assisted by a vice-prefect. They see to the running of the various services and are responsible for the personnel (archivists and assistants of various ranks, etc.). A well-appointed photographic studio for the preparation of microfilm and photocopies is also available.

All qualified scholars are admitted to the Vatican Archives without distinction or discrimination of nationality or religion. A written application must be made, in which the subject of research must be stated precisely, and accompanied by a letter of recommendation from an academic institution or a well-known individual. At the time of admission, each person is provided with an 'index of deposits and the means for description and research', which lists the various collections of documents possessed by the Archive in alphabetical order, showing exactly where to find those open to public consultation. All scholars are required to provide the Archives with a copy of any published work which uses documentary material from the Archives.

The entrance to the Archives is in the Cortile del Belvedere, which is reached by entering the Vatican City through St Anne's Gate and presenting there a reader's card bearing the photograph and signature of the holder, and the official stamp of the Archive. The study rooms are open every normal working day from 16 September to 15 July.

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*Niccolò Del Re has been director of the Vatican School of Library Science and professor at the University of Cassino. He has published a number of articles on the history of Italian law and Canon law. His recent publications are Mondo Vaticano (Citta del Vaticano, 1995; German translation, Augsburg, 1998) and La Curia Romana, 4th ed. (Citta del Vaticano, 1998). He is a Fellow of Società Romana di Storia Patria and of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani.*

<sup>30</sup> The title of archivist of the Holy Roman Church is quite recent, appearing for the first time in 1879, when Leo XIII nominated Cardinal Giuseppe Hergenröther 'Praeses Vaticanæ Tabularii sive Archivista Apostolicae Sedis'. The title, however, was not used after the cardinal's death (1890) for any other member of the College of Cardinals until 1917, when Benedict XV appointed Cardinal Aidano Gasquet to be archivist of the Holy See, a title which after 1919 he held together with that of librarian of the Holy Roman Church; the two titles have remained together ever since, and today there is a cardinal librarian and archivist of the Holy Roman Church.