

The Vatican Secret Archives

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The Vatican Secret Archives, recognized as the most notable and most important archives in the world, are distinguished by the abundance and variety of their collections (mostly constituting complete and independent unities) which have gradually been added from the seventeenth century onward when the institution was established to become the central archives of the Church. A large part of their contents long predate the beginning of the Archives, in many cases by several centuries during which time material was handled in different ways, often complicated and not always clear. Even more than the time element, the geographical extent of these Archives makes them complex. Unlike other collections, they have a universal character, for they are the archives of the Catholic Church.

Although now in great part open for consultation by students, the Archives have kept the official title of "Secret", a title formerly given to sovereigns' archives which were considered as private and only to be used for purposes of State or of government, apart from the rare occasions when access permission was given to scholars. Even after being opened for consultation, the Vatican Archives cannot be called public. The Pope not only owns them but retains their management and direction, and it is only by his concession that students are admitted (*Regulations of the Vatican Archives*, arts. 1 and 2).

To understand their nature and their purpose better, we may recall that archives are an organized collection of documents emanating from or received by a corporate body in the course of its activities. Unlike libraries, which are purely cultural institutes, archives have functional and administrative purposes in the service of the bodies for which they were formed. This remains true even if the documents have entered the sphere of history and acquired a cultural interest of the highest order, as is the case with the Vatican Archives. It has been correctly said that archives are principally for the use of those who govern. The Vatican Secret Archives are in fact intended to contain all the acts and documents concerning the government of the universal Church (Motu Proprio of Leo XIII of 1 May 1884) and "are, in the first place and principally, for the use of the Roman Pontiff and his Curia, that is, the Holy See"

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(*Regulations of the Vatican Archives*, art. 1). They thus form an organic and permanent part of the life of the Church. In virtue of this service, the Vatican Archives are not limited to the preservation of the documentary heritage that they contain. They also provide the Holy Father and his collaborators with the qualified assistance of the archive officials whenever required.

It is obvious that not all the documents of the Holy See are immediately placed in the central archives. What goes into them—apart from what is sent to them by the Holy Father—is the older part of the documentation for which there is no longer room in the individual archives of the departments of the Roman Curia (the Secretariat of State, Sacred Congregations, Tribunals, Offices, etc.) or of the Representations of the Holy See in the various countries. For particular reasons, or because they do not yet lack space, the following bodies do not send documents regularly but only from time to time: the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, the Sacred Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Eastern Churches, for the Evangelization of Peoples (“*de Propaganda Fide*”), for Catholic Education, the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, the Pontifical Masters of Ceremonies, and, obviously, the departments recently established by the Holy See. The Secret Archives have not as yet received any great part of the historical archives of the Sacred Congregations for the Clergy, or of the former Congregation of Rites. They contain, however, as accessory material, the archives of certain aristocratic families and various other collections. With the continual arrival of fresh material the Archives have grown enormously and continue to do so.

Although the history of the present Vatican Archives goes back only to their institution, the history of the archives of the Church goes back to a far more distant past. In a certain sense it can be said that the latter began with the Church herself. In fact, from apostolic times Christians saw the utility and necessity of preserving records of the work of evangelization and other activities of the Church; oral tradition was clearly insufficient for the purpose. For that reason the Roman Pontiffs kept, together with the Sacred Scriptures and doctrinal texts, the letters they received and copies of those they sent, the acts of synods, acts of the martyrs, and the documents concerning the government of the Christian community in Rome, spiritual and charitable work. But of the documentation accumulated at Rome up to the end of the Third century very little has survived (what exists has come down to us from libraries outside Rome), especially as a result of the persecution by Diocletian who in 303, according to Eusebius of Caesarea, then living, ordered the destruction of the Church’s writings. With the peace given to the Church by Constantine in 313 it became possible to set up in the *domus Faustae* at the Lateran a centre of co-ordination of the Church in Rome, the head of Christendom, and consequently to build up a collection of writings. These were kept in the *scrinium* or *Chartarium Romanae Ecclesiae*, referred to by Saint Jerome when he wrote against Rufinus of Aquileia at the beginning of the fifth century, and in the letters of the Popes from Innocent I (401-417) onwards. The *Liber Pontificalis* (quite reliable in this case) also mentions many documents placed in the archives of the Roman Church from Celestine I (422-432) to Nicholas I (858-867).

The opinion held at one time and based on an incorrect interpretation of an epigraph of Pope Damasus (366-384), namely that in the fourth century the

papal archives were at the basilica of San Lorenzo in Damaso, is no longer accepted. On the other hand it is certain that the *scrinium* was at the Lateran at least in the middle of the seventh century (and possibly earlier), for the Council of Rome against the Monothelites in 649 made use of material from its records and various codices (extracts from the *primicerius* Theophylact) containing many works by Eastern and Western Fathers and also by heretics. The presence of such writings among the documents in the *scrinium* shows that at the time there was no clear distinction between archives and libraries, and this remained true for a long time afterward. In addition to letters received and the copies of letters and other acts of the Popes referred to above, more and more literary, theological and liturgical collections were kept here, partly so that copies could be sent to new Christian communities or to others who asked for them. This papal archive-library was accessible to students, numbers of whom drew upon it at various times for the compilation of canonical collections. All this, added to the preparation of papal documents, required a considerable number of officials. These included the *notarii et scriniarii*, headed by the *primicerius notariorum*, later replaced by the *bibliothecarius* (not to be understood in the modern sense) or *cancellarius*.

The fact that these archives were at that time at the Lateran is also attested to by formula LXXXII of the *Liber Diurnus Romanorum Pontificum*, which speaks of a decree which "in arcivo dominae nostrae sanctae Romanae ecclesiae, scilicet in sacro Lateranensi scrinio, pro futurorum temporum cautela recondi fecimus". Important papers were, however, also kept in other safe places, such as the Confession in the Basilica of Saint Peter's (where for example the professions of faith of bishops were deposited and kept) and the former Byzantine *chartularium* juxta Palladium, that is, near the arch of Titus on the Palatine, where toward the end of the eleventh century the Cardinal Deusdedit found material for his *Collectio Canonum*. But until the beginning of the thirteenth century the papal archives seem to have remained at the Lateran.

Unfortunately, the valuable documentary material prior to Innocent III (1198-1216) has been almost completely lost. There are several reasons for this. First, the fragility of the papyrus which until the eleventh century was ordinarily used in the papal Chancery for documents and registers; secondly, the troubled reigns of many Popes who were obliged more than once to change residence, taking their archives with them to the inevitable damage of the latter. Yet the chief cause was political turbulence and rebellion, war (for example, the sack of Rome by Robert Guiscard in 1084), popular risings and the struggles between factions which constantly disturbed the City. Few documents survived, but among them are two collections of the letters of Popes Saint Leo the Great (440-461) and Saint Gregory the Great (590-604), which have come down to us through other channels. Besides the above-mentioned *Liber Diurnus*, the Vatican Archives possess the diploma of the Emperor Otto I (962), written in gold on purple parchment, a volume of letters of Pope John VIII (872-882) for the last six years of his reign, copied out in the eleventh century in the script of Benevento (*Reg. Vat. 1*), the original register (*Reg. Vat. 2*) of the letters of Pope Saint Gregory VII (1073-1085), the Concordat of Worms between Pope Calixtus II and the Emperor Henry V (1122), three letters written in gold on purple parchment from Eastern emperors, two from

John II Comnenus to Calixtus II and Honorius II (1124 and 1126) and one from Manuel I Comnenus to Eugenius III (1146), a diploma with a gold seal of Frederick Barbarossa (1164) and one of Henry VI (1195). Pope Honorius III (1216-1227) was able to use for his letters the registers of several of his predecessors from Urban II (1088-1099) to Alexander III (1159-1181), but these registers too have disappeared.

With Innocent III a more fortunate period begins for the papal archives. The Popes of the thirteenth century increasingly tended to live at the Vatican because it was better defended, and Innocent III began to make it the centre of curial life, building residences there for the Chancellor and the Chamberlain (today called the Camerlengo). The transfer from the Lateran to the Vatican of the two principal offices, the Chancery and the Apostolic Camera, naturally resulted in the transfer of the archives also.

In the new location the documents had better protection, though losses were not unknown. With Innocent III begins the regular series of registers of letters of the Popes, preserved in the Vatican Archives (now under the heading *Registra Vaticana*) together with many acts and diplomas dating back to that time. In the abundant collection which from the thirteenth century onward was called the "treasure of the Pope and of the Roman Church", we find, together with small bags of gold and silver coins and precious objects of different kinds, documents on parchment, the Chancery registers and numerous books. The archives therefore formed a part of the treasury which the Popes took with them when they had to be away from Rome. These removals were only too numerous during the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth. The archives went with Innocent IV to the Council of Lyons in 1245; later on we find them with the Pope and the Curia at Viterbo, and then with Boniface VIII (1294-1303) at Anagni. In 1304 they followed Benedict XI to Perugia, where ten years later they were split up, one part—the smaller—going to Carpentras in France and the rest to Assisi, where it was kept in the sacristy of the church of San Francesco. Between 1339 and 1342 it went from there to Avignon, where the Popes had already been in residence for some time.

With the return of the Pope and the Curia to Rome (1377), the history of the papal archives entered upon a dramatic period on account of the Great Western Schism. A few months after the election in Rome of Urban VI (1378-1389), the dissident cardinals elected Clement VII (1378-1394) at Fondi, and in June 1379 the latter took possession of the Palace at Avignon. The archives were still there and there they remained for a long time, being enlarged by the addition of the documents produced by the curia of the anti-pope Clement and his successor Benedict XIII (1394-1423). Meanwhile, in Italy new papal archives were being formed from the documents of Urban VI and his successors, Boniface IX (1389-1404), Innocent VII (1404-1406) and Gregory XII (1406-1415). Another archive came into existence at Pisa with the election of the anti-pope Alexander V (1409-1410), who was succeeded by John XXIII (1410-1415), elected at Bologna. Three "obediences", therefore, the Roman at Rome, the Avignonese and the Pisan, with three sets of archives, which Popes and anti-popes took with them when they were obliged to move.

When the Schism came to an end with the election of Martin V (1417-1431) during the Council of Constance, the records compiled during the Schism and

afterwards were gradually rearranged and unified. However, the great mass of papal archives was still at Avignon, and was transferred to Rome in different stages from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. While the various offices and tribunals of the Roman Curia resumed their normal functions, each building up its own archives, the oldest registers of papal letters were, on account of their particular importance, placed by Sixtus IV, the founder of the Vatican Library, in that part of it known as the Secret Library. The same Pope placed other documents of great value, such as the diplomas of sovereigns and the privileges of the Roman Church, in the fortress of Castel Sant'Angelo. The wisdom of these precautions was clearly proved especially in 1527 when the Sack of Rome left the books and documents in the Secret Library and in Castel Sant'Angelo untouched, whereas those kept elsewhere were badly damaged and in many cases destroyed. Even after Sixtus IV the Popes continued to deposit documents in Castel Sant'Angelo. In 1593 Clement VIII (1592-1605) announced in Consistory that he intended to collect there all the documentary material scattered in many different places. Although he was not able to promulgate the Bull prepared for this purpose, he had the merit of organizing a general collection of archives and of appointing an archivist to take charge of it. However, the collection at Castel Sant'Angelo, abundant and valuable though it was, could not be considered as the real central archives of the Holy See, or even strictly speaking as an archive in the modern sense. It was rather what might be called a *trésor des chartes*. And the need for central archives was being increasingly felt, not only for the better preservation of the documents, but also to make them more easily available for the defence of the rights of the Church, for the treatment of ecclesiastical and political affairs and the government of the Papal States, and for giving Catholic historians easier access to documentary sources. Pius IV (1559-1565), Saint Pius V (1566-1572), Gregory XIII (1572-1585), Sextus V (1585-1590) and—as mentioned above—Clement VIII showed great zeal for the recovery of documents, and in fact collected a great many; but the satisfaction of carrying out their intentions and founding a central Archives of the Church was to go to Paul V, the Roman Camillo Borghese (1605-1621).

The difficulties which Paul V had to face were neither few nor slight; they included the fact that not all the departments of the Roman Curia were in favour of such concentration, preferring to keep all their documents in their own archives. However, with the effective help of Cardinal Bartolomeo Cesi, Paul V succeeded in overcoming all obstacles, and a few years after the beginning of his reign he was able to start the great enterprise.

In the absence of a document of foundation of the new archives, their "birth certificate" is considered to be the Brief of 1 January 1612 whereby Paul V appointed Baldassare Ansidei archivist and in which he mentions the transfer of documents to the new centre. But even before that Brief, two chirographs of the same Pope, dated respectively 1611 and 1612, treat of similar transfers. It is clear that such an institution would require a number of years for its preparation and its first installation. Three rooms next to the Sistine Hall in the Vatican Library were selected as the seat of the new archives. They were formerly used as the residence of the Cardinal Librarian and now form the first floor of the Archives. The original wooden book-cases are still in use, while on the walls above there is a series of frescoes depicting donations, trib-

utes and the like, made to the Church by sovereigns from Constantine to Charles IV of Luxembourg. During the year 1614, the documentary material which formed the first nucleus of the Archives was arranged in these bookcases. The following year Michele Lonigo, who played a very important part in the organization of the new institution, compiled its first inventory (*Vat. Lat. 10247*). This he introduced with a historical section entitled *Erectio novi archivi Bibliothecae Vaticanae*. It was published in 1887 by Francesco Gasparolo. Lonigo tells us that the first nucleus came from the Vatican Library, the Papal Wardrobe, Castel Sant'Angelo, and, for the greater part, from the archives of the Apostolic Camera.

The process by which the new archives moved toward complete autonomy was rather slow. Not until the reign of Urban VIII (1623-1644) were the Library and the Archives given two separate governing officials. This was done by a Brief of 23 July 1630: Felice Contelori, who until that date had been in charge of both, was given the prefecture of the Archives alone (he was officially named Prefect by a Brief of 28 August 1635) and the Archives thus became administratively independent of the Library and began a life of their own. Given the purposes for which they were established, the Archives could not but grow unceasingly, by the increase of materials already in their possession and by the bringing of material from the archives of other offices of the Holy See. It would take too long to enumerate all the additions received under Urban VIII and his successors, but mention should be made of the placing in the Archives of the collection of diplomatic letters of the Holy See, begun by Urban VIII and continued by Alexander VII (1655-1667), who had them arranged in the new rooms on the second floor which were granted for this purpose by a Brief of 22 March 1660. The wooden bookcases are still in use. This material, with its subsequent additions, formed the archives of the Secretariat of State until the time of Napoleon.

Even a brief but adequate account is not possible here of all the work done on the Archives by the various Prefects and their assistants, who include Felice Contelori mentioned above, Giovanni Bissaiga, the brothers Giacomo Antonio and Pietro Donnino De Pretis and Filippo Ronconi. Nevertheless, two general inventories (*Indici* 124 and 133) must be mentioned: the first was drawn up by Bissaiga (1672) and the second by Pietro Donnino De Pretis (1727-1730). A comparison of the second with the first shows that in the interval the whole of the Secret Archives underwent a radical rearrangement, which remains substantially the same today. The great Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi, Prefect from 1751 to 1772, is especially famous for the gigantic card index bearing his name and continually in use.

By 1783, the last part of the papal archives remaining in Avignon was brought to the Vatican Archives. In July 1798 the Archives of Castel Sant'Angelo, which since 1759 had been under the same Prefect as the Vatican Archives, were transferred there for greater safety, after the revolutionary disturbances and the French occupation of Rome at the end of the eighteenth century. By order of Napoleon I, the Vatican Archives and other archives of the Roman Curia were transferred in 1810 to Paris and deposited in the Palais Soubise, where it was his intention to collect all the important historical archives of the nations he had conquered. After his fall, the papal archives re-

turned to Rome in the period of 1815-1817, but not without damage and loss. Many volumes are still in the French capital and elsewhere. The Prefect Gaetano Marini, who had accompanied the archives to Paris, died there in 1815, and it was his nephew Marino Marini who completed the work of restitution. During his prefecture, in 1835 and 1836, the Archives were enriched by a large collection, the archives of the Chancery of the Nunciature at Venice, together with many thousands of documents from Venetian, Lombard and Tuscan religious houses dependent on certain religious Congregations suppressed by Clement IX in 1668 in order to finance the war against the Turks with their funds. In 1855 Marino Marini was succeeded by the famous Oratorian Augustin Theiner.

With Leo XIII (1878-1903) a new era opens in the history of the Vatican Archives. Realising their great importance, Pope Leo from the beginning of his reign increased their prestige. He decided, for example, that its Prefect should be a cardinal, in the person of the historian Joseph Hergenroether. Above all, Pope Leo won universal applause by the historic decision taken in 1880 to open its doors to students. In the room which was first allotted to their use a tablet is still to be seen under the bust of the Pope with the inscription: *Leo XIII Pont. Max.—Historiae studiis consulens—Tabularii arcana reclusit—Anno MDCCCLXXX*. By a Motu Proprio of 1 May 1884 he founded the School of Palaeography and Diplomatics attached to the Archives, and issued regulations for both Archives and School. In 1892 the Leonine Library of printed works was opened in the Reference Hall and reading room of the Vatican Library, for the use also of the officials and students in the Archives.

As a result of the opening of the Archives, an abundance of fresh material from different places and archives was added during the pontificates of Leo XIII and his successor Saint Pius X (1903-1914). This material included the Lateran Registers, the Registers of Lateran Briefs and Petitions, and the Borghese collection. The reason of the transfer was to facilitate consultation by students. After the First World War, there was another abundant influx as a result of the increased work of the Holy See and the consequent multiplication of official documents. Little by little the Vatican Archives received, in whole or in part, the archives of various institutions: the Sacred Congregations of Bishops and Regulars, of the Council, of Rites, the Sacred Apostolic Palaces, the First Vatican Council, the Representations of the Holy See in different European countries the archives of a number of patrician families and some minor collections. The addition of all this material from the pontificate of Leo XIII onward necessitated extensions at various times of the premises of the Archives, which came to include the historic Torre dei Venti or della Meridiana. In 1929, Pius XI (1922-1939) presented the Archives with a more suitable reading room for students. Within four years he had thousands of metres of metal shelving installed in the rooms on the west side of the Belvedere formerly occupied by the Vatican Picture Gallery and by him given to the Archives. At that time the prestige of the Archives and of the Holy See was worthily upheld by such men as the Prefect Monsignor Angelo Mercati, his brother Giovanni (who in 1936 became Cardinal Archivist of the Holy Roman Church), the Vice-Prefect Monsignor Pietro Guidi and other excellent collaborators. After the Second World War Pius XII (1939-1958) had thousands of metres of metal shelving installed in the attic which ran for some two hundred

metres above the Gallery of Maps in the Vatican Museum. The spacious attics of the Palace of Innocent VIII near Bramante's staircase were similarly equipped and given to the Archives, though they are quite separate. In the last year of his pontificate, Pius XII also decided to have a new apartment built for the Prefect, communicating with the Archives. It was completed under his successor.

John XXIII (1958-1963) made it possible to set up a well equipped photographic darkroom and a laboratory for the binding and restoration of books, and to prepare a number of rooms for displays and for work. He also assigned spacious new rooms below the old ones and had an independent entrance made in the Belvedere Courtyard. This entrance was inaugurated by Paul VI on 13 November 1964. In 1968 Paul VI decided to have the School of Palaeography, Diplomatics and the study of Archives removed to new quarters, and this was done in 1970. He also had the new rooms fitted with metal cupboards.

It might have been supposed that the enormous increase of space in recent decades would suffice to meet the needs of the Archives for a long time—some indeed thought for hundreds of years. This has not proved to be the case, however, and at present the rooms occupied by the Archives are filled to capacity. Quantities of documents have come in, especially in recent years, from the Sacred Congregations, Tribunals and Offices, several times from the Secretariat of State, and the entire archives of offices or institutes recently closed by the Holy See, such as the Papal Chancery, the Datary, the Chancery of Papal Briefs, the Noble Guard, the Palatine Guard, and so forth. Not long ago it was decided to bring together into the Vatican Archives the oldest parts of the archives of the Papal Representations in all the countries of the world, whereas previously this was done only for archives of the Representations in European countries; most of these papers have now been sent in. In 1968 there was begun a collection of publications entitled *Collectanea Archivi Vaticani* intended particularly for publications by members of the staff of the Archives.

The first place amongst the most important contents of the Vatican Archives belongs to the registers of the Popes' official letters, containing authentic copies of the originals. These letters are divided mainly into Bulls and Briefs, visibly distinguished—though there are other differences—by the fact that a Bull has a metal seal, usually of lead, and the Brief a seal of wax. Among the series of registers of Bulls, the most ancient and the most important is that of the *Vatican Registers*, which opens with two random volumes already mentioned, those of John VIII and Saint Gregory VII. The Register then goes fairly regularly from Innocent III to Saint Pius V (1198-1572), ending with some later volumes of different kinds. It is considered to be the best source for European history of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Next to its 2,020 volumes (with some numbers repeated) stands the parallel series of the *Avignon Registers*, with 349 volumes plus four of appendices, containing Bulls of the Popes and the anti-popes who resided at Avignon, together with documents concerning the Apostolic Camera. The series begins with a volume which is not a register of Bulls, from the reign of Clement V (1305), and continues for more than a century from John XXII to the last years of Benedict XIII. Many of these Registers were transcribed in parchment volumes which are now among the Vatican Registers. The latest in date is the series of *Lateran Registers*,

which goes from Boniface IX (1389) to Leo XIII, almost to the end of the nineteenth century. Although its transfer to Paris caused the loss of nearly half its registers, it is still, with its 2,467 volumes (and some numbers repeated), the largest series of registers of Bulls.

Far more numerous are the registers and collections of minutes and copies of Briefs from the fifteenth century on, which are to be found in *Arm.* XXXIX-XLV (together with a collection of original briefs in *Arm.* XXXVIII), *Lateran Briefs*, *Secretariat of Briefs*, (continued from the year 1908 in the *Chancery of Apostolic Briefs* and containing also many registers of Bulls), *Letters to Princes* (this last collection also contains a large number of letters parallel to those in the collection *Litterae Latinae*). All these collections of Bulls and Briefs and other papal letters (similar documents are also found in other sections of the Vatican Archives) amount to many thousands of volumes, and therefore countless letters. The favours contained in the papal letters had very frequently been obtained in response to petitions; for the years 1342-1899 these last are transcribed in the series of Registers of Petitions, consisting of about 7,400 large volumes which can be linked with the collection of original petitions. Although the Apostolic Camera shared with the Apostolic Chancery and the Papal Secretaries in the preparation, dispatch and registration of papal letters, the principal functions of the first mentioned were administrative, financial and even judicial. Its great importance is matched by its archives, the contents of which range from the thirteenth century onward and are found in the series *Introitus et Exitus*, *Collectoriae*, *Obligaciones et Solutiones*, in *Arm.* XXIX-XXX, XXXIII-XXXIV and other collections in the Vatican Archives. A good part of the material, for more recent times, is now in the State Archives of Rome. Of great importance is the documentation, from the fifteenth century on, contained in the *Fondo Concistoriale*, of which the archives of the *Sacred Consistorial Congregation* and of the *Sacred College of Cardinals*, with the special series of the *Conclaves*, all form part. Among the archives or parts of archives of the other departments and offices of the Roman Curia, likewise from the sixteenth century, mention should be made of those of the Sacred Congregations of *Bishops and Regulars*, of the *Council*, of *Rites*, of the *Sacraments*, of the *Tribunals of the Sacred Roman Rota* and to a lesser extent of the *Signatura* and those of the *Datary* and the *Sacred Apostolic Palaces*.

It is unnecessary to mention the value to recent and contemporary history of the archives of the Secretariat of State. In the older part, from the sixteenth century to the Napoleonic era, the correspondence is classified according to Nunciatures and Legations and according to the dignity of the persons concerned (Cardinals, Bishops, Princes and Titled Persons, Individuals, Soldiers). The modern collection, beginning in 1814, follows from 1816 onward a new classification arranged according to subject matter. This mass of documents covering a very wide field of religious, political, diplomatic and administrative affairs, is supplemented by the archives of the *Nunciatures* which have been sent to the Vatican Archives more or less recently. Linked with the archives of the Secretariat of State are the *Prisoners of War* collection and the archives of the *Information Office*, relating respectively to the First and Second World Wars. Together with a great deal of other documentation, they bear shining

witness to all the Holy See's efforts to obtain and transmit information concerning the fate of both soldiers and civilians during the two wars. Of collections built up outside the specific sphere of the Roman Curia, the *Council of Trent* and the *First Vatican Council* and the *Fondo* and *Archive of Pius IX*, collected at the Pope's own wish and rich in his personal letters and those of sovereigns and other illustrious persons are notable. Among the many other special collections and additional archives, often having the character of collections, mention might be made of those named after their previous owners or those who started them. They include: *Albani*, *Bolognetti*, *Borghese*, *Carpegna*, *Confalonieri*, *Garampi*, *Pio*, *Santini*, and the *Spada Collection*. Others come from certain Roman patrician families: *Boncompagni*, *Borghese*, *Della Valle-Del Bufalo*, *Patrizi-Montoro*, *Rospigliosi*, and *Ruspoli*. There are also the archives of some Roman *Confraternities*.

In some collections material of different kinds, often copies, has been put together according to subject or place (*Arm. XXXI* and ff.). Among these, the most noteworthy is the *Miscellanea*, occupying fifteen cupboards. It was compiled in the seventeenth century and subsequently increased. Its abundant material is extremely varied; among its rarities are the *Liber Diurnus Romanorum Pontificum*, the *Liber Censuum Romanae Ecclesiae* for the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, and part of the court proceedings of the trial of Galileo Galilei (1633). The so-called *Diplomatic Archives* do not consist, as they usually do elsewhere, of a single chronological series of documents, but of a number of different collections varying in size, importance and origin, of mixed materials (parchment, paper, dossiers, volumes, and so on). The *Instrumenta Miscellanea*, about 8,000 documents, covers a period of more than a thousand years, beginning in the ninth century. Other smaller collections amounting to some 3,000 documents are quite overshadowed by the 17,000 of the *Fondo Veneto* mentioned above.

A very notable part of the Diplomatic Archives in the Vatican Archives is formed by the almost 8,500 documents originally at Castel Sant'Angelo, which keep the original title (*Archivum Arcis - A.A.*) and the markings according to bookcases (*Arm. I-XVIII* and *Arm. B, C, D, E, F*). This collection covers a thousand years, and is rightly considered the most valuable of the collections of Vatican documents, containing as it does privileges, diplomas and letters from sovereigns, solemn acts of Popes, international treaties, and, in general, writings of special historical importance. Among them the famous collection of gold seals is the richest in the world. The documents with gold seals number sixty-nine, and range from that of Frederick I Barbarossa (1164) to that of Charles VII, King of Sicily (1739). There are also nine with silver seals in the form of a box, dating from 1664 to 1803. Other relics from Castel Sant'Angelo (besides those already mentioned, namely, the diploma of Otto I, the Concordat of Worms and the three letters in the form of a scroll from the Comnenus Emperors) are letters written to Popes by sovereigns of various Eastern countries in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, the Decree of Union of the Greek and Latin Churches, issued by the Council of Florence (1439); the appeal of the peers of England to Clement VII to obtain the annulment of the first marriage of Henry VIII (1530), with eighty-five signatures and wax seals; a letter to Innocent X (1650) written on silk, from the Chinese Empress Helena who had become a Christian; the ratification of Queen Christina of Sweden's abdi-

cation (1654), with the signatures and 306 wax seals of the members of the Swedish Parliament.

The Vatican Archives not only serve the needs of the Holy See, but play a very important part in the service of culture. Even before they were opened to students, special permission to consult them was given to various people, especially in the nineteenth century. As a result of the decision to open them, in 1880, they have become a scientific institution and the most important world-centre of historical research, thanks to their practically inexhaustible wealth and their uniquely universal character. From 1880 onward learned men, some very famous, have come from every part of the world to consult them. The numbers continually increase, as does the number of those requesting documentary information by correspondence. Moreover since the Archives were opened, many national institutes and other cultural bodies have been founded in Rome for the purpose of finding ample documentation on the ecclesiastical and civil history of their countries, and of their institutions. Countless publications and studies have been based on the treasures in this immense mine, and it is safe to say that the opening of no other archives has been of such advantage to the historical-sciences.* The Bibliography of the Vatican Archives, four volumes of which have so far appeared, gives a remarkable account of the use made of these sources for historical writings.

The directors and staff of the Archives offer generous help to students, both individually and by preparing inventories and other aids to research, to be added to the great collection of Indexes. It is permitted to consult documents up to the death of Pius IX (7 February 1878). The Vatican Archives are not only a centre of information but also of training, especially by the Schools connected with them: the School of Palaeography and Diplomatics, which offers a two-year course; and the School for Archivists, with a course lasting one year. In addition, the Archives participate in their own way in the activities of the Church and contemporary culture. During the last twenty years, exhibitions of documents have been organized on the occasion of events of a religious, cultural or social character. In 1955 it was for the Tenth International Congress on Archives, held in Rome; in 1964-65 for the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council; in 1966 and 1967 for the thirteenth and fourteenth Sessions of the World Conference of FAO on agrarian reform and rural life; in 1970 on the oldest dioceses of Argentina; in 1971 for the Third International Congress on Diplomatics held in Rome, and in 1975 for Holy Year. The Archives are also represented on international institutions such as the "Table Ronde Internationale des Archives", the "Guida delle fonti per la storia delle Nazioni" and the "Comitato Internazionale di Sigillografia". For the management of the Archives, the Pope avails himself of the advice and work of the Cardinal Archivist of the Holy Roman Church, who presides over them. The Prefect has the care and day-to-day management of the Archives and ordinarily represents them (*Regulations*, Arts 3, 4 and 31) assisted by the Vice-Prefect. Specialized scientific work is done by the Archivists and Writers; a Secretary-Bursar and a staff of assistants of different grades and specializations carry

* For a commentary on the opening of the Vatican Archives, see Leonard Boyle's review of Owen Chadwick's work *Catholicism and History* in the reviews section of this issue of *Archivaria*.

out the various other duties. The personnel has considerably increased in recent years, and the unceasing development of the Archives will demand further increases as time goes on.

The Vatican Archives, while striving to keep abreast of new developments in the science of archives and to be of assistance to scholars, are principally concerned with becoming an ever better-adapted instrument for the service of the Holy See in every sphere, including the pastoral and the ecumenical, since they are the Archives of the Pastor of the universal Church.

Résumé

Cet article fut d'abord publié comme chapitre d'un livre en 1976. Il contient un bref historique de la richesse des archives secrètes du Vatican —les plus vieilles du monde. L'auteur en précise l'importance et démontre de quelle façon le Vatican a ouvert ses archives au public depuis 1880.