

The American Catholic Archival Tradition*

By HENRY J. BROWNE

*The Catholic University of America
Washington, D. C.*

THIS may be a somewhat presumptuous topic and for that reason, perhaps, it should be given a certain justification. A great deal remains to be said about American Catholic institutional and diocesan archives, but the most obvious facts have already been briefly but adequately presented by the recently deceased and much lamented Thomas F. O'Connor in his survey of 1946 called "Catholic Archives of the United States."¹ Since that time there could be added to his picture of important archival depositories little more than those of the Diocese of Richmond, the National Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington, D. C., and the Catholic University of America. It may be said parenthetically that the coming of age of the first of the three depositories mentioned involved the thrilling discovery of the papers of Denis J. O'Connell who during the 1880's and 1890's was the very active spokesman in Rome for the American hierarchy. This most significant find for American Catholic historiography in our generation took place in July 1946, when the Reverend John Tracy Ellis tracked down two trunks in the old diocesan chancery building in Richmond. Apart from items such as these, there would be nothing new to add to the general archival scene described four years ago by Mr. O'Connor. But if there is nothing new, perhaps there is more of the old that might be revealed about American Catholic archives.

How did our predecessors think about their records? To attempt to find a pattern is, of course, a risky business, especially when the coverage of evidence is limited mostly to materials from the eastern United States. Hence the remarks made here can only be tentative although, it may be hoped, justifiable.

There are found in the Catholic past of the United States symp-

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¹ *Catholic Historical Review*, XXXI (January, 1946), 414-430.

toms of a two-branched archival tradition — not always distinctly seen or distinguished — to which Catholics of our generation have fallen heir. These may be described as the twin traditions of “archives for the historian” and “archives for the administrator.” The former has been stronger in practice, the latter in theory. Men and their ways have shaped the first, and canon law and its prescriptions the second, for even in the destruction of records American Catholics have acknowledged the archival text of primacy, “No documents, no history.”

The Catholic historian of the last century seems to have considered even official records subject to his will. James Roosevelt Bayley is an example of one who came into and retained private possession of notebooks, letters, and even manuscript notes of people as varied as John Connolly, first resident Bishop of New York, and Simon Gabriel Bruté, professor at Mount Saint Mary's College and later first Bishop of Vincennes. The fate of the papers of the pious Bruté at the stage when they came into the hands of Archbishop John Hughes of New York, who wanted to write a life of his old and beloved professor, is thus described by Bayley:

The papers of the late Bp Brute were far from being complete when they came into the Archbishop's hands; they had evidently been examined by some one who had taken from them many important papers, especially those of an historical nature. When they first arrived here I examined them myself, in the hope of finding important information upon certain matters to which I had turned my attention — and discovered nothing worth preserving, tho' during his whole life he had employed more or less time in making researches connected with the History of the Catholic religion in this part of the world.²

It was somewhat more understandable that Bayley should have held on to some manuscript records of his aunt, Mother Elizabeth Bayley Seton, the foundress of the American Sisters of Charity. In another instance, an observant priest in Bedford, Pennsylvania, had a similar story of the historian's self-interest becoming predominant where there were no ties of blood relationship. It was concerned with the records of the achievements of Prince Dimitri Gallitzin, the Russian nobleman convert who had labored as a priest in western Pennsylvania from 1799 to 1840. He wrote:

² New York Archdiocesan Archives (hereafter, NYAA), Hughes Papers, Bayley to Jas. H. Causten, Jr., New York, June 9, 1852, copy. For a further description of the fate of these papers see Sister Mary Salesia Godecker, *Simon Bruté de Rémur, First Bishop of Vincennes* (St. Meinrad, 1931), pp. xviii-xix. See also Bayley's *A Brief Sketch of the Catholic Church on the Island of New York* (New York, 1853), and his *Memoirs of the Right Reverend Simon Wm. Gabriel Bruté, D.D.* (New York, 1860), *passim*.

Unfortunately a German priest, named Lemke [*sic*] carried off from Loretto the numerous documents, letters &c of the Rev. Gallitzin but I have received a promise from our Bishop to demand those important papers from this priest who wishes to make capital out of them by publishing what he calls a German life of him. These papers properly belong to the Diocesan archives, and must be restored.³

Obviously the unbroken custody which England's Hilary Jenkinson would consider an essential element for documents to retain their archival quality has not bothered some who have practiced in a less professional way the crafts of history. Nor is the practice dead. A diocesan history being written from records transferred to a rural rectory some distance from the see city, ecclesiastical biographies drawn from archival sources which for some score years have been in private hands, the diary of a pioneer bishop retained by an individual relative — such prove that the practice is still very much alive. Yet who will say that along with this archival evil there will not come, as in the past, some historical good?

Although by this mid-twentieth century the maturing of the organizational life of the Church in the United States has reached impressive proportions, there is reason to fear that from the point of view of archives we still suffer from the growing pains of the so-called "brick and mortar" age. In former conditions, which should now be outgrown in most parts of the country, the stark necessities of ecclesiastical life as well as the fears and foibles of churchmen militated against the well being of "archives for the historian." A hundred years ago the rapidly expanding Catholic communities left little records, in some cases, perhaps, for the simple reason that the lives of the poor seldom leave documents. The Reverend Mr. Bayley, for instance, had to tear himself away from his historical researches one day to go as Bishop Hughes' secretary to Roundout, New York, to examine the accounts of the lay trustees who were involved in a church building squabble. The pastor of the parish in question was in time informed of the honesty of the trustees by Hughes with this descriptive addition on their record keeping:

They have been kept as such accounts are usually kept in matters of Catholic Church building, so far as the history of building churches, as yours was con-

³ NYAA, John R. G. Hassard Papers, Thomas Heyden to Hassard, Bedford, April 10, 1866. Henry Peter Lemcke, O.S.B., published this work in 1861 and it was translated later by Joseph C. Plumpe, *Life and Work of Prince Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin* (New York, 1940). Gallitzin's papers were lost. See Lawrence F. Flick, "Preservation of Catholic Documents," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, XXVI (June, 1915), 107.

structed, has come under my notice. Pencil orders, paying in the streets, at the quarry, around the foundation, is the usual practice in such cases, and is not calculated to bring out a set of books in that regular form which is usual among men who are in the habit of saying, "Call at my office before three o'clock and I will give you a check for your money."⁴

Later as archbishop, Hughes himself seemed to show at least a momentary appreciation for the future historian and in general he did leave sufficient papers to warrant a reasonable mead of gratitude. As he began work on the new St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1858, he appointed three men including the historian, John Gilmary Shea, to constitute what rings familiarly in the American archivist's ear today, namely, a "Bureau of Records."⁵ Nothing seems to have come of the idea, however, and in his own personal habits Hughes was given to poor and uneven record-keeping and to arbitrary destruction of papers.⁶ In this, to be sure, he has found company throughout the course of American Catholic history in those who sought to frustrate history and who, in turn, often only distorted their own figures or those of their associates in the eyes of posterity. One of Hughes' most active, interesting, and belligerent priests, Thomas Farrell, thus suffered as a result of the operation of human fears. A brilliant canon lawyer of that day in the United States, Richard L. Burtzell, recorded the fate of Farrell's papers at the hands of more than ordinarily well trained clergymen: "Drs McGlynn, McSweeney and I went to F. Farrell's room to destroy all private papers that could revive old unpleasant events of F. Farrell's life. We found many such documents."⁷ Every locality in the country could probably relate from the past and even point out in the present similar stories of those who cry, "scripta manent," "the written word remains," with a real phobia of the future.

Less destructive, no doubt, of archival integrity and historical accuracy were the foibles of the Catholic collectors. Over the years some investigators have made neat clippings of signatures in the Baltimore Cathedral Archives, but here are the words of an avid collector of sixty years ago, whose destructive possibilities are found most vividly in his own description of his zeal. He wrote to the archbishop's secretary in New York:

If in the archives of yr Diocese you have any autograph letters of Dr Carroll

⁴ NYAA, Hughes Papers, Hughes to Thomas Martin, O.S.D., New York, April 12, 1850, copy.

⁵ Peter Guilday, *John Gilmary Shea* (New York, 1926), pp. 66-67.

⁶ John R. G. Hassard, *Life of the Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D.* (New York, 1866), pp. 334-335.

⁷ NYAA, Burtzell Diary, 1880, July 24.

& Dr Neale, 1st & 2nd Bps of Baltimore, I would be pleased to exchange letters of early Bps of other sees for one each of John Carroll *Abp.* & Leonard Neale *Abp.* I have the former signed when he was vicar of the U.S. & coadjutor] &c. Of all the other sees in the U.S. I have the complete line in all their titles. Needing only the above mentioned two. I have illustrated & supplemented the collection with portraits & prints of cathedrals, cards of invitation to consecration, &c. I beg your valuable aid in obtaining the desired two letters, as I am anxious to have the whole collection mounted & inlaid to the size of 12 x 14 for binding in volumes of one Ec[clesiastical] Prov[ince] each. My collection includes all Abbots, Vic[ars] Ap[ostolic] Pref[ects] Ap[ostolic], Adm[inistrators] Ap[ostolic], Coad[jutor] Bps, Abps, & Cardls, in the U.S. with many Adms (sede vacante). Any letter short or long bearing the signature as *Abp* will answer my purpose.⁸

It must be admitted that the most efficient collector of them all, Professor James Farnham Edwards of the University of Notre Dame, was interested in the content of documents. This layman had a dream of a "Catholic Archives of America," and in pursuing it during the last two decades of the century he did much to save from total loss and certainly to make accessible to scholars the most important series of early diocesan records of New Orleans, Cincinnati, and Detroit.⁹ Again, Edwards was a prominent personality in the "archives for the historian" tradition, which probably had its forebears in the European practice of "historical archives," but which neglected the ecclesiastical precedents which, since the sixteenth century especially, had been emphasizing the obligation of the individual bishops for their official records. In the last century the best expression of the canonical viewpoint was to be found in Pope Benedict XIII's constitution, *Maxima vigilantia*, addressed to the Italian diocesan and religious superiors on June 14, 1727.¹⁰ This instruction, however, did not constitute a part of the legislation for the whole Church.

There has existed, then, a real breach between the tradition that would have made American ecclesiastical archives only hunting grounds for historians and the more complete concept that they are first the tools of administration, even if not so frequently used in

⁸ NYAA, Corrigan Papers, Francis X. Reuss to Charles E. McDonnell, Philadelphia, April 14, 1888. This collection, without the elaborate mounting, is in the possession of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia and housed at St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook.

⁹ O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 423; Paul J. Foik, C.S.C., "Catholic Archives of America," *Catholic Historical Review*, I (April, 1915), 63-64.

¹⁰ *Bullarium diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum romanorum pontificum* (Taurinensis Editio, 1871) XXII, 560-567. On its importance see Henry L. Hoffmann, "De influxu Concilii Tridentini in archiva ecclesiastica," *Apollinaris* (Romae, 1947), pp. 257-263.

this sense as they are as auxiliaries of history. The administrative emphasis which seems in a way so modern and particularly American is, however, the only one that will be found in canonical stipulations on archives up to and including the modern codification of canon law in 1918.¹¹

This gap between the historical and administrative aspects of archives seems to have been bridged by one man in the American Church, namely, Michael A. Corrigan, who became Bishop of Newark in 1873, Coadjutor Archbishop of New York in 1880, and its ordinary from 1885 to 1902. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that in his friendship with James Roosevelt Bayley he came under an influence that is apparently a typically Rooseveltian one in favor of history and its sources. Bayley in 1872 became Archbishop of Baltimore, and before he had been in his see six months he enjoyed a week's visit from Corrigan, who was then president and professor at Seton Hall College. The visitor recorded part of their discussion to this effect, "The Abp has an idea of gathering together lest they be lost the fragments of early Cath. Hist. of U.S. scattered through the cup-boards & crannies in Balt.; [I] urged him to do so." If Bayley was primarily the historian, Corrigan was instinctively the archivist. The archbishop wrote within a month of finding another nest of old letters and he advised his friend that if he should visit him again he would "have plenty of work for leisure moments & see also some curious things." Among the items turned up by Bayley was a "Journal" which one of his predecessors, Francis P. Kenrick, had kept as Bishop of Philadelphia. While he sent this back to the archives of the diocese of its origin, he thought nothing of shipping at the same time manuscript materials as far as Michigan to a priest who was writing the life of an early missionary. Before the year 1873 was out, whether prompted from leisure or a desire to see "curious things," and despite the fact that he had meanwhile been consecrated Bishop of Newark, Corrigan spent a week at the Baltimore archiepiscopal residence during which he earned the overly enthusiastic note of Bayley, "He has arranged almost all the letters in the Archives of the Diocese." Even on shorter trips of a few days Corrigan seems to have relaxed by arranging the letters and manuscripts of the premier see of the country.¹² Following this same line of interest, Corrigan, as Archbishop

¹¹ See William Francis Louis, *Diocesan Archives* (Washington, 1941), a study of the canon law on the subject divided into an historical synopsis and commentary.

¹² Sister M. Hildegard Yeager, C.S.C., *The Life of James Roosevelt Bayley, First Bishop of Newark and Eighth Archbishop of Baltimore, 1814-1877* (Washington, 1947), pp. 355, 368, 403, and NYAA, Bayley to Corrigan, Baltimore, January 11, 1873.

of New York, later encouraged the work of the United States Catholic Historical Society, which was established in 1887 with the lament, "In too many cases old papers have been regarded as good only to burn or sell for waste paper," and with the resolve to "preserve all these rapidly disappearing evidences of what God wrought by our ancestors and our fathers in the faith."¹³ His own comparatively neat and integrally preserved collection and his known contribution to systematizing the records of Baltimore earned him a eulogy which remains unique for an American bishop, namely, "Theologian, legist, rubricist, he was also an archivist."¹⁴ Archbishop Corrigan's conservatism has not always shown up too well in the history of the problems of the American Church in the late nineteenth century, but the historians will doubtlessly be grateful that in the matter of records he was, so to speak, radically conservative.

It can be readily surmised that it was through Corrigan's recognized superior acquaintance with Church law in general as well as his own personal leanings that the best American expression of the administrative tradition concerning official records was formulated. Earlier canons had hardly touched the problem. As early as 1810, when the American bishops held their first meeting, the obligation of keeping registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials was legislated. Considering the overall picture, it would seem that it is in this regard, the spiritual bookkeeping, that the American Catholic regard for records has been at its best. As time went on the insistence on keeping a book of parochial properties as well as such safeguards as the bishops having to deposit a copy of their wills with the metropolitans of their provinces emphasized the purely administrative side of ecclesiastical record keeping.¹⁵ While in Newark Corrigan legislated in 1878 for the maintaining of a "Church Record," a book which from his description was to be an historical diary kept by each pastor of the life of his parish.¹⁶ Strangely enough, however, it was not until September 1883, at the Fourth Provincial Council of New York that archives were the subject of legislation and then in decrees that were also drafted by Coadjutor-Archbishop Corrigan. One of them stands out as the first and, even

¹³ "Introductory," *United States Catholic Historical Magazine*, I (January, 1887),

I.

¹⁴ John A. Mooney, "A Biographical Sketch," *Memorial of the Most Reverend Michael Augustine Corrigan, D.D.* (New York, 1902), p. 25.

¹⁵ *Concilia provincialis Baltimore habita* (Baltimore, 1851), p. 26; *Concilii plenarii Baltimorensis II acta et decreta* (Baltimore, 1868), pp. 113, 115.

¹⁶ *Statuta diocesis Novarcensis* (New York, 1878), p. 97.

up to the present, probably the best canonical statement of the nature and purpose of diocesan archives made in the American Church. It reads:

Since on account of the loss of documents and instruments there frequently arises disputes and litigations, we wish that in each diocese an episcopal archives be set up in which there be carefully guarded the processes of cases and judgments, and all acts pertaining to the ecclesiastical forum, and any acts of the chancery, instruments and testimonial letters; matrimonial dispensations; the ordinations of clerics and priests, their affiliations and excommunications; the erections and divisions of missions or quasi-parishes; the nominations, transfers and removals of rectors, administrators and assistants; the titles, acquisitions and alienations of ecclesiastical properties; likewise the privileges and indulgences which shall have been granted to the diocese itself, the cathedral church or to others—in a word, whatever shall be judged to be certainly worthy of remembrance.¹⁷

The same council specified for the bishops of the Province of New York that the records of their official visitation trips should be put in their archives as well as all recorded deeds of property. Subject to such episcopal inspection in each parish, besides the regular books directly affecting the care of souls, there was to be in the "archives of the mission" other registers in which would be noted whatever related to the origin of the mission and the church, its progress, its possessions, and its income and expenses. It was bishop-administrators who added:

Among those things recorded there should be whatever pertains to the rectory, cemetery, and schools and whatever should be known by a newly arrived rector or administrator in order to be able to take up and continue the governance of the mission, without danger of detriment to the church, or of litigation with the heirs of his predecessor or finally of suspicion being cast on the prudence or honesty of anyone.¹⁸

In addition to these records the parochial archives were to contain "all documents and official instruments, whether diocesan or civil which have been received or prepared in the spiritual or temporal administration of the mission."

In those New York decrees lay the expression of the American Catholic tradition of "archives for the administrator" which was succinctly expressed for the first time on a national scale in the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. After referring to Pope Benedict XIII's *Maxima vigilantia* on the traditional anxiety

¹⁷ *Acta et decreta concilii provincialis Neo-Eboracensis IV* (New York, 1886), pp. 69-70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

of the Holy See for safeguarding the records whence, as it was said, "faith and truth can be transmitted for the remembrance of our successors," the bishops at Baltimore added their own mind on the matter in the form of the following decree:

We wish therefore that each bishop erect in a safe and convenient place a diocesan archives or tabulary, in which the instruments and writings which are concerned with the diocesan business both temporal and spiritual might be guarded, having been aptly arranged and diligently made secure according to the mind of Benedict XIII and the norm established by the Sacred Congregation of the Council. The care of the archives should be entrusted to the chancellor whose sedulous labor will be of great value in conducting the business of the diocese accurately and promptly.¹⁹

Likewise they used almost the same words as the earlier provincial council of New York in telling American pastors what their local archives should contain. Yet the Third Plenary Council added something of its own on the keeping of parochial archives. It advised that the books and documents be kept in an "arca ferrea" or safe.²⁰ The omnipresence in the United States of the parish safe, although it almost universally contains only the essential record books, is evidence that the council was more successful when it said merely, "We advise," concerning the pastor's safe than it was when it declared more strongly, "We wish," concerning official diocesan depositories. The non-existence of parochial archives, however, apart from the required registers is probably the worst area of neglect in the past and present of the American Catholic picture. Examine, for example, the many listings of church records made by the WPA Historical Records Survey in the late 1930's and early 1940's and you will not find a dozen single items such as were called for by the council of 1884 and later by the Code of Canon Law mentioned as being in a parochial "arca ferrea." In this regard synodal legislation is being used by some bishops to promulgate and interpret the general law in the areas of their particular dioceses, and this should bring about some improvement.

Even on the diocesan level it would be unreal to believe that the decrees of the national council meant immediate reform. In 1886, to cite one case, when Martin I. J. Griffin of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia first went to Baltimore to do historical digging in the archdiocesan archives, he found there, at the very scene of the council, that the papers were "in bundles in book closets" in Cardinal Gibbons' house. These records by 1907

¹⁹ *Acta et decreta concilii plenarii Baltimorensis tertii* (Baltimore, 1886), p. 155.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

were in cases in one of the priests' rooms, and as Griffin put it, "daily in danger of fire from the kitchen." Probably spurred on by the Baltimore conflagration of February 1904, which came uncomfortably close to his North Charles Street residence, as well as by the Philadelphia enthusiast, Cardinal Gibbons hired a young man whom Griffin's society had sent there to work as a copyist. Thus J. Frederic Welty was responsible for bringing together and arranging further the documents which are truly as they were described then, "the foundation of United States Catholic History." Gibbons, moreover, arranged for the safer, if hardly more convenient, housing of the literary effects of his predecessors near the crypt at the rear of the cathedral containing their mortal remains. Griffin and Welty were aware that the reconstruction of the files was only a preparatory phase of the archival task, and Griffin thereupon began an unsuccessful campaign to get the then financially shaky Catholic University of America interested in having an index card calendar of the documents prepared which would, of course, be of service in the historical research done at the institution. This pioneer preserver spoke thus to the University's rector, Monsignor Denis J. O'Connell:

You don't know the value of the archives at the Cardinal's or you would not hesitate or be satisfied at finding that the Cardinal has taken the work in hand. . . . He had them arranged in files and I have all these years been culling and picking and printing and gathering — yet it is a mighty big work. I have all the time been concerned as to the safety of the papers: got at our Society about them, talked to His Eminence and had discoveries of many more documents made. Just now is the precise time to have the work done of finding out what is in the papers, who they are from, the names of persons and papers in them: the very man is at hand to do the work.

Of course I am an enthusiast — a crank about such things but it is well there are such chaps to spur on men like you to do needed work.²¹

The "needed work" was done only about twenty years later. At that time the calendar of Gibbons' own papers was made down to 1904 by another layman, George W. White, and the other documents indexed more sketchily. An occasional priest resident in the Baltimore cathedral rectory during the years that followed gave some little attention to what has been called traditionally, if less accurately, the Baltimore Cathedral Archives. Under Archbishop

²¹ Archives of the Catholic University of America, Records of the Rector's Office, Griffin to Denis O'Connell, Philadelphia, November 11, 1907; also September 19, 23, 25, 1907; October 1, 28, 1907; November 6, 14, 28, 1907; January 4, 1908; also J. Frederic Welty to O'Connell, Emmitsburg, January 8, 1908. See Allen S. Will, *Life of Cardinal Gibbons II* (New York, 1922), 742.

Michael J. Curley these records were housed in a new vault off the chancery office and the Reverend Paul Love was officially appointed their custodian on a part-time basis in 1948.²² One feels safe in concluding from this picture of the development in what is historically the parent see of the United States, and which has now undoubtedly the outstanding diocesan archives, that the situation elsewhere was no happier.

This brief case history of Baltimore indicates again a blend of archival traditions with the flavor of the historical one being predominant. Despite the legislation, to get real action it took the historical interest of a Bayley or a Gibbons who had been prodded by Griffin. Thus it has been the lot of the American Church, despite its own legislation which has no mention of history, to fall heir to the notion that archives contain *old* papers and, hence, they are treasure chests in which only historians and antiquarians are really interested. If ecclesiastical superiors are interested, it is most often because they see the cultural, historical, and at times even real or imagined apologetic importance in written records of the past. This idea it would appear has been fostered, too, by the fact that at least in diocesan archives during the period of the nineteenth century no distinction was made between official and personal papers, so that there is some justification in looking upon them as having little to do with the accumulated administrative experience of the diocese. This is very unlike the archives of the French Canadian Archdiocese of Quebec wherein are not found gossipy letters but numerous registers and other evidences of the careful keeping of only official documents over a long period of time. It is but occasionally in the United States, such as when an old deed, or details of parish lines, or an agreement between an ordinary's predecessor and a religious institute is frantically sought, that the administrative aspect of archives is brought home to the chancery office.

The traditions of American Catholic institutional archives, and particularly those of religious communities and educational establishments, remain in good measure family secrets. Presently other Catholic groups, for example, the youthful Theological Society and the Catholic Press Association, have expressed interest in making a proper beginning with regard to records and archives. The papers of some organizations that have passed from the scene, such as the Militia of Christ for Social Service, which was active in the second decade of the century, have been saved by their transfer to

²² John Tracy Ellis, "A Guide to the Baltimore Cathedral Archives," *Catholic Historical Review*, XXXII (October, 1946), 344.

a library. In this case it was to the German Roman Catholic Central-Verein in St. Louis. In the matter, however, of a well-known Catholic adult education project of a generation ago, the records are reportedly still in a broom closet. Community and school depositories in general have been better served and utilized than that. Although they are private in nature and, in a sense, private in organization, nonetheless, their custodians have usually proven cooperative with serious historical researchers. One still occasionally hears stories of laundry basket containers and superannuated or physically decrepit watchdog guardians of the gates of silence, but on the other hand the consistent stream of trainees, who have come from such institutions to Washington every summer to learn of modern archival techniques during the past five years from Dr. Ernst Posner, is a sign of hopeful change. The Catholic librarians' organization meeting in Washington, D. C., last spring undertook as one of their discussions the question of "Archives, our Rich Relations." Knowing how "rich relations" are cultivated, American Catholic archivists may take this as an indication not only of a growing interest but also of the fact that they need to begin early to shape and promulgate their traditions in Catholic circles. The enquiring administrators of Catholic colleges at the Catholic University of America Workshop last June, it is hoped, may likewise be an indication of an archives concern even in very young establishments. In this regard special mention should be made of the archival set-up of the Dominican Sisters at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, who not only pioneered in introducing up-to-date methods but also made their experience available to others in the *Illinois Libraries* back in 1944.²⁸

It is true of Catholic institutional as well as of diocesan archives in the United States, even where they already have a somewhat effective existence, that this process of modernization is their greatest need. Particularly the bureaucracies of large American sees should learn from government and business to solve their archives problem of the future by a consideration of their records management problem of the present. An awareness of the American Catholic tradition should point up the fact that although the historian, lay and clerical, has too often made church archives look like his private preserve, American conciliar law and after it the universal law of the Church has emphasized their administrative function. From the combined pressure of these two attitudes there has re-

²⁸ Sister M. Paschala, O.P., "Preluding History," *Illinois Libraries*, XXVI (June, 1944), 238-244.

sulted a spotty but not, it may be said, so totally black a record of carelessness as would justify the description given recently of pre-1918 diocesan depositories as "generally frightfully bare."²⁴ Continued propaganda is assuredly necessary not only for the cause of the mere preservation of records — in the spirit of our predecessor "cranks" — but in this age for a better understanding of what archives are and for a harmonization of the ancient Catholic tradition and modern American practice. To this end the historians might becomingly make the self-denying admission that the archivists whom they have for the most part begotten are meant to be more than the servants of the servants of historical truth. The time has come when they will have to see them rather in their capacity as custodians of the official memory of ecclesiastical institutions for in a wider administrative sense they are the servants of the servants of God.

²⁴ Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., "Catholic Archives and Their Preservation," *Catholic Library Practice* (Portland, 1950), p. 92. See also John Tracy Ellis, "Can We Have a History of the Church in the United States?", *The Catholic University Bulletin*, XII (March, 1945), 2-3, F. G. Holweck, "The Historical Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis," *St. Louis Catholic Historical Review*, I (October, 1918), 24-25, and the present writer's "Essay on Sources" in *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (Washington, 1949), p. 380 for some of the dark spots. The revelation within the last two years that the papers of Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul (1884-1918) were never destroyed and are being used by the Reverend James H. Moynihan of Minneapolis in the preparation of a biography has considerably brightened the picture. Similarly, and even more recently, a substantial amount of the papers of Bishop John L. Spalding of Peoria (1877-1908), long thought lost or destroyed, has been discovered.