

## CURIAL HUMANISM SEEN THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE PAPAL LIBRARY

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The multifaceted historical perception of Italian humanism, especially with regard to the Quattrocento, that has evolved in the last several years makes it necessary to define humanism's diverse identities as articulated in the main cultural centers of Italy, such as Milan, Venice, Padua, and Naples.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, it is also necessary to attempt to define the characteristics of humanistic culture that developed at the papal court and to evaluate its ever evolving nature because of the particular personalities of some of the popes (Nicholas V, Pius II, Paul II, and Sixtus IV, for example) but, above all, because of the unique socio-cultural composition of the Roman court, which was made up of laymen, clerics, and intellectuals from different regions of Italy and Europe. These individuals were simultaneously called upon to address issues that were both religious and secular.

The Roman court was unquestionably atypical with respect to other courts. This uniqueness was due to its mingling of the spiritual with the temporal, to its having to assert itself *vis-à-vis* the city of Rome and the Papal States as well as all of Christendom, to its being strongly rooted in the social reality of Italy, and to its international composition even though the papal court, contrary to popular belief, was composed primarily of Italians; between 1471 and 1527 around 60% of the court personnel were Italian. The Roman court and the papal Curia (I should note, however, that the Curia constituted only part of the Roman court) were at this time *the* court par excellence. This court has been appropriately defined as a *universal aristocracy* because it developed out of the need for a solid, political rapport between the papal court and the entire political reality of Italy and Europe, a rapport that presupposed a highly defined system of relationships that could deal successfully with the power structures of other institutions. As such, during the Quattrocento and the first decades of the Cinquecento, Rome was, as far as Italy was concerned, the center

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<sup>1</sup> Francesco Tateo, "Geografia della cultura letteraria," in *Le Italie del tardo Medioevo*, ed. Sergio Gensini (Pisa, 1990), pp. 257-73.

of complex and delicate political games that found a point of reference in the Curia itself.

The Roman court served as the eyes and ears through which one saw and heard everything that happened in the world and through which one tried to intervene on behalf of the interests of Rome, using as effectively as possible one's connections with the cosmopolitan personnel, who staffed the curial offices, in a dialectic relationship with other components present in the city—courtiers, curial officials, the municipal workforce, and the *forenses*, all of whom had diverse interests to defend, depending upon their origins, personal histories, cultural backgrounds and professional interests. The city was the place of debate, the court of mediation and the judgment hall of decisions.

In this essay, I will define curial humanism by using as a yardstick the history and contents of the papal library, which today we commonly call the Vatican Library. I believe this is a valid approach even though the differences between the library of those days and that of today are significant. The papal library in the Middle Ages was only partially a court library; nevertheless, it reflected quite clearly the cultural interests of the Curia, in all of its manifold, socio-political dimensions. It was simultaneously a religious library and a library of state, a library of government and of humanistic culture, a library for display and the personal library of the pope. This multi-faceted nature of the papal library was accentuated from the moment it was opened to the scholarly community and acquired officials to administer it in 1475; in fact, in the decades following this opening, the role of the papal library, far from being simplified, became even more diversified in conformity with the cultural orientations of the ruling popes.

### *Tradition and Innovation in the Papal Library*

Tradition and innovation characterized the history of the medieval church. Oral and written traditions were the bedrocks of Christianity; consequently, preoccupation with oral and written instruction was a constant of the Christian hierarchy, and it was the Christian hierarchy that was entrusted with the teaching of the *verbo* and the texts that transmitted it. Tradition and innovation, then, intermingled continuously in both the oral and written facets of church culture. Indeed, this *modus operandi* was continued in Rome, during the Quattrocento, when there emerged a new interest in the library as a consequence of the fascination with the revival of antiquity (a fascination that always had a political slant), with the rediscovery of the

classics and with their being proposed as models. This, in turn, generated a rediscovery and a reconsideration of medieval libraries and also led to the founding of new book centers both private and public. The period that separates Cencio dei Rustici's invective in 1416 against those who had destroyed or were destroying great libraries<sup>2</sup> and the opening of the Vatican Library to the public in 1475 is minimal in a temporal sense but enormous in an ideological and cultural sense. The change in the status of the library that occurred in this period was not due solely to the curial officials or to the will of the pope. To assume so would be reductive. Rather, it was the result of numerous, socially diverse prerogatives.<sup>3</sup>

That the papal library (be it private or public) was not the expression of a single person but of an entire society is attested to, for example, by the *laudatio* written by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger in honor of Cardinal Giordano Orsini. This *laudatio* is replete with the standard cultural attributes but has, as one of its central themes, Orsini's search for books in far-off places. Orsini's book hunting, according to Lapo, was accomplished at the expense of dangerous, costly trips that he took even in his old age. With these searches, Lapo goes on to note, Orsini ushered in a new manuscript tradition, introduced previously unknown authors, and gathered in Rome enough books for several cities "so that scholars, without labor and without cost, could enjoy them."<sup>4</sup> This same notion was reiterated by Orsini himself in his will: "*ut in urbe Romana multiplicentur, quantum fieri poterit, viri letterati et scientifici.*"<sup>5</sup> But if it is true that the

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Bertalot, "Cincius Romanus und seine Briefe," in *Quelle und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 21 (1929–1930), 209–55; I am citing from its reprint in idem, *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, ed. Paul O. Kristeller, 2 (Rome, 1975), pp. 144–47; see also Massimo Miglio, "Materiali e ipotesi per una ricerca," in *Scrittura, biblioteche e stampa a Roma nel Quattrocento. Aspetti e problemi*, eds. C. Bianca et al. (Vatican City, 1980), pp. 15–31, repr. in M. Miglio, *Scritture, scrittori e storia*, 2 vols. (Manziana, 1993), 2:19–32.

<sup>3</sup> Giuseppe Lombardi, "Inventari di biblioteche romane del Quattrocento: un panorama," in idem, *Saggi* (Rome, 2003), pp. 337–61; and see also idem, "Son qui più libri che 'n tucto passato,' Aspetti del libro a corte nella Roma del Quattrocento," in *ibid.*, pp. 143–58.

<sup>4</sup> "Tu enim comparandorum librorum gratia, affectus etate, longissima itinera et difficillima, ad remotissimas regiones magnis sumptibus, labore, periculo suscepisti. Tu veteres permultos doctissimos viros, inventis eorum operibus quae ante ignorabantur ab oblivione hominum et silentio vendicasti. Nam ut notos et vulgatos praeteream, qui permulti sunt abs te latinis hominibus restituti, complurimos in lucem protulisti nobis, quorum ne nomina quidem noveramus. Itaque tot iam solus libros, ut audio, in omni genere doctrine in tuam urbem undique contulisti, qui plurimis civitatibus ad legendum sufficerent, ut illis homines discendi cupidi sine labore, sine sumptu, sine molestia uterentur." Cited in Giuseppe Lombardi, "La biblioteca di Giordano Orsini (c. 1360–1438)," in idem, *Saggi*, p. 34 n. 28. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

culture of the papal court was always more complex than was reflected by the papal library, it is also true that the papal library reflected prevalent cultural trends of the various papacies.

*The Papal Library at Avignon*

To prove this point, I will give a history of the papal library beginning in the middle of the Trecento, when, as we know, the papal court was at Avignon and when the papal library was restructured following the complicated move from Rome.<sup>6</sup> The first inventory of the newly reconstituted papal library (dispersed in various locations throughout the papal residence), which was compiled in 1369 in anticipation of the papal court's return to Rome, listed more than 2000 volumes: bibles, writings of the Church Fathers, juridical works above all canonical, works of theology, collections of sermons, a few manuscripts of Aristotle, a few chronicles and a few medical texts, some works of rhetoric. Virtually all the works were in Latin.<sup>7</sup> There was no significant presence of classical works (about 30 manuscripts), even though some Avignon popes, such as John XXII, had distinguished themselves by acquiring classical manuscripts of authors such as Vegetius, Seneca, and Pliny, the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, and even though Gregory XI tried to acquire the works of Cicero and Pompeius Trogus, and, at the death of Petrarch, asked to have the works of the poet copied.<sup>8</sup> These were all significant choices that underlined the importance that the papal court gave to law, rhetoric, oratory and the Latin language.

Only in the period of the Schism and with the pontificate of Benedict XIII, the library of Avignon first, and that of Peñíscola later, revealed a strong presence of classical works, and it became involved with the great humanistic movement. But even in these circumstances, as was often the case with the papal library, it was difficult to distinguish between the personal library of the pope and that of the court.

The exceptionally learned Pedro de Luna assembled a prominent group of humanists at Avignon and Peñíscola that included Jean Muret, Galeotto da

<sup>6</sup> M.-H. Jullien de Pommerol and Jacques Monfrin, *La Bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et à Peñíscola pendant le Grand Schisme d'Occident et sa dispersion. Inventaires et concordances*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Franz Ehrle, *Historia bibliothecae Romanorum pontificum tum Bonifatianae tum Avenionensis*, 1 (Rome, 1890), pp. 284–432; Jullien de Pommerol and Monfrin, *La Bibliothèque pontificale*, pp. 4–8.

<sup>8</sup> Jullien de Pommerol and Monfrin, *La Bibliothèque pontificale*, pp. 78–79.

Pietramala, and Nicolas of Clemanges, all of whom were associated with highly progressive cultural circles. Upon being elevated to the papacy, Benedict XIII reorganized the library, which acquired a strong humanistic character in the ten years or so in which Nicolas of Clemanges was papal secretary (1397–1408). While organizing the library of Benedict XIII, Nicolas of Clemanges subscribed to the standards set by Francesco Petrarch. In fact, Petrarchan norms guided his search for and attainment of rare and old manuscripts, the transcription of classical Latin works, and the acquisition of texts produced by the new culture. Thus the library acquired many works of Cicero (20 manuscripts), a good selection of ancient philosophers and rhetoricians (a lot of Seneca, 38 manuscripts; but also Aristotle), a sufficient collection of historians (above all Sallust and Livy), and a vast collection of Latin and Greek poets (above all Ovid and Homer's *Iliad* in Latin translation), a handful of grammarians in multiple copies (7 manuscripts of Priscian and 2 each of Martianus Capella and Servius), an excellent collection of scientific authors (among these the hard-to-find Hyginus and Frontinus), in addition to a series of rich miscellanies. But what distinguished the library above all and attested to the cultural criteria that guided its formation was the presence of twenty manuscripts with the works of Petrarch, five with those of Boccaccio, and one each with the works of Dante and Coluccio Salutati.

The presence of works by classical and modern authors also demonstrates the intimate collaboration that evolved between Benedict XIII and his secretary, a collaboration that led to the formation of a library exceptional for its age and for the overall unfavorable conditions it faced.<sup>9</sup> This collection of books was made possible by the cultural sensibility of the pope, as clearly expressed in his will. In it, even while affirming his own orthodoxy, he attests to living in a cultural reality different from that of preceding times. He upholds the prominence of jurisprudence, but at the same time, he recognizes the importance of other disciplines; he underscores the value of Christian tradition, and he identifies the four stages of Christian catechesis: teaching, preaching, writing, and commenting:

Having acquired superficially during my youth a rudimentary knowledge of letters, I have been instructed, as much as was possible, given my paltry intellect, in the science of jurisprudence by Catholic teachers; neither the learning received from these teachers, nor the in-depth knowledge of disciplines unrelated to jurisprudence, nor the arrogance of recent discoveries, nor intellectual boldness have caused me to introduce new dogmas, especially

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 80–87.

in the area of faith, or to speculate on unknown phantasms, being very occupied with jurisprudence. In later years as an adult in the schools and outside the schools... teaching, preaching, writing, and commenting as well as disputing, discussing, and debating, although in a coarse and unrefined fashion, I have always been considered a Catholic of Christian sentiments, and no one has ever heard a contrary opinion of me up to today: *usque ad moderna tempora*.<sup>10</sup>

The reference to modern times (*moderna tempora*) is used by Benedict XIII as a chronological referent rather than an allusion to a new age. In fact, his will demonstrates the relevance of teaching in the Christian world; it recalls the importance of oral teaching and of religious instruction through the diverse stages of teaching, preaching, writing, and exegesis in one's cultural formation; it attests to the correlation between papal culture and the papal libraries, and it explains why there was always a preponderance of works of theology and law in these libraries. These works were, of course, very valuable during a period of strong unrest, such as that of the Schism, but they were equally valuable in other periods in the life of the church.

Almost in the same years, Innocent VII (1404–1406), a pope who favored Rome as the seat of the papal court, was mindful of the importance of the court's relationship with men of letters. He thus tried to reorganize the Roman Curia and gather around him some of the best humanists of the period.<sup>11</sup> He organized a series of public competitions to determine which candidates would be qualified for the position of apostolic secretary. A winner of one of these contests was Leonardo Bruni who, having been named by the pope as the judge in one of the subsequent competitions, mocked the cultural ambiance in Rome and the Latin of some of the candidates and pointed out that the single most important criterion in determining

<sup>10</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 87: "Ego qui loquor... vix primis litterarum rudimentis in infantia superficialiter cognitis, inter catholicos preceptores juxta capacitatem rudiis ingenii aliquantulum fui juris scientia informatus, ex quorum preceptorum doctrina vel exterarum artium exquisita noticia aut novarum inventionum arogantia seu curiose presumptionis audacia nulla verisimiliter fuit occasio, maxime circa fidem, nova introducendi domata aut ignota fantasmata speculandi, utpote satis in juris scientia occupatus, qui post etatem provectiorem in scolis et extra, quamvis minus sufficienter, legendo, predicando, scrivendo et allegando, etiam disputando, ... conferendo et altercando licet insufficienter et rude, semper tamen catholice fui reputatus in fide christiana sentire, nec contrarium de me usque ad moderna tempora auditum." Cfr. Sebastián Puyg y Puyg, *Episcopologio Barcinonense. Pedro de Luna, último papa de Aviñón...* (Barcelona, 1920), p. 537.

<sup>11</sup> Amedeo De Vincentiis, "Innocenzo VII," in *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, 2 (Rome, 2000), pp. 581–84; Massimo Miglio, *Materiali e ipotesi*, pp. 15–31; Germano Gualdo, "Umanesimo e segretari apostolici all'inizio del Quattrocento. Alcuni casi esemplari," in *Cancellaria e cultura nel Medio Evo*, ed. G. Gualdo (Vatican City, 1990), pp. 309–10.

the choice of an apostolic secretary should be his ability to imitate the ancients: “*vestigia auctoritatesque antiquorum*.”<sup>12</sup>

*Moderna tempora. The Papal Library in Rome*

It was to Leonardo Bruni himself that the pope entrusted the task of writing the bull for the reestablishment of the *Studium Urbis* and for the institution of a chair in Greek (1406). The bull, as formulated by Bruni, reaffirms the utility and dignity of humanistic studies, retraces the cultural tradition of Rome, recalls that both civil and canonical law were born in this city, and links learning to the knowledge of truth and Christian orthodoxy. Moreover, and this is the most important aspect of the bull, Innocent VII reintroduces knowledge of Greek in the humanistic canon of the Curia:

Since the study of literature and the knowledge of the arts, besides being of great and obvious use in both public and private spheres, offer prestige and dignity to those cities where they flourish, and they are linked to the peace and tranquility that we all fervently desire, we have decreed to bring back to Rome during our pontificate, with the help of God, these studies long discontinued, and sustain them with every effort possible, *so that man can know truth through learning* and obey God and the law.<sup>13</sup>

The real truth was that of the Catholic Church, which was mediated, according to a very ancient tradition, by a selective cultural process that adapted itself continuously to the most innovative intellectual forces. Unfortunately the pontificate of Innocent VII was too brief to have a significant influence on the cultural life of the Roman papal court, which was still constrained by the serious problems caused by the Schism and by a precarious municipal situation that forced the pope to flee Rome.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Miglio, *Materiali e ipotesi*, pp. 22–23; cfr. Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. L. Mehus (Florence, 1741), pp. 24–25.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Miglio, *Materiali e ipotesi*, p. 23 n. 12, emphasis mine. “Cum itaque litterarum studia et bonarum artium doctrinae preter summam ac manifestissimam utilitatem quam privatim atque publice afferunt maximum ornamentum ac dignitatem illis civitatibus et locis in quibus ipsa vigent premere videantur, et cum pace et tranquillitate cuius nos esse cupidissimos profitemur maxime sint coniuncta, decrevimus deo autore huiusmodi studia, per longissima spatia hactenus intermissa in hoc tempore pontificatus nostri ad hanc Urbem reducere, et omni fomento ea rursus suscitare, ut homines per eruditionem, veritatem rerum agnoscant, et deo atque legibus parere adiscano...” The bull is edited in Gordon Griffiths, “Leonardo Bruni and the Restoration of the University of Rome (1406),” *Renaissance Quarterly* 26 (1973), 1–10.

The image of the court of this period projected by the very protagonists of this sudden and exceptional cultural revival (a humanistic coterie of a sort) was colored too much by literary references, Virgilian and Petrarchan, to correspond to reality. This was so even though the humanists present at the papal court at this time (Leonardo Bruni, Francesco da Fiano, Antonio Loschi, Cencio Rustici, Pier Paolo Vergerio, and Bartolomeo da Montepulciano) enjoyed total prominence and were all in some way linked to the teaching of Petrarch. Indeed, they were all so well known that they need no identification. What this shows us is that, whether the pope resided in Avignon or in Rome, rigid categorizing about the nature of the papal court tells us little and institutions, economics and politics exercised less of an influence on the cultural processes of the court than did the *élites*, even though the latter consisted of relatively few people.

#### *A New Humanistic Canon*

Only a few decades after the papacy of Innocent VII, it was possible for Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger to write a treatise, *De curiae commodis* (1438), in Rome where the memory of the Schism was still palpable, in which he argues that the Curia was superior to Athens; it was a new Academy that spread its teachings throughout the world.<sup>14</sup> Following a rigid humanistic canon, Lapo excludes theologians, jurists, doctors, mathematicians and astronomers from his treatise, but he acknowledges some of the best humanists this new culture had to offer.

Cencio Rustici, Poggio Bracciolini, Biondo Flavio, Cristoforo Garatone, Giovanni Aurispa, Andrea Fiocchi, Rinuccio da Castiglione, Leon Battista Alberti, the humanists acknowledged by Lapo, introduced and articulated humanism's cultural trends within the papal court. They treated or fostered historical and philological research, antiquarianism, the theorizing regarding individual autonomy, knowledge of ancient texts both Greek and Latin, the importance of Greek literature, the acquisition of new textual traditions, the respect for the ancient remains, the cult of the classical world, and the need for private libraries. All of these scholarly practices and modes of thinking were eventually imposed on the entire world by the humanists.

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<sup>14</sup> The text has been recently re-edited with an English translation and ample commentary by Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia. Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999).

They became integral parts of the culture at large, a way of life for the scholarly community of the time.

Once again the culture of the papal court was being formulated in the curial offices, especially in the circles of the pontifical writers and the papal secretaries. Once again, as it had been in centuries past, the prose of these individuals, evidenced through the bulls and documents they compiled, came to be seen all over Europe as a model of literary style and often also of graphic style. Their works, which enjoyed special circulation, established the norms and the subject matter for the new humanistic culture. Moreover, the humanists of the court served as the focal points of a dense network of epistolary correspondences, above all in Italy, but also in France, Spain, England, Germany, and beyond. Their epistles spread outside the Curia the culture that was being formulated daily inside the papal court, with all its diversity and divergences, and at times with ideological contradictions.<sup>15</sup>

The papal secretaries were the fountain head of this huge wave of cultural diffusion that was spread throughout Europe. They were the most intimate collaborators of the pope, and it was their task to express the will of the pope in official documents by editing the drafts of the letters of the Curia. They assumed a particularly delicate role during the era of the Schism. They had to be bishops and notaries. They had to have a solid preparation in theology, law, history and literature. They had to know what was going on in the contemporary world. At times they were also entrusted with governmental missions within the papal state.<sup>16</sup> The papal secretaries of Eugene IV (1431–1447), besides the above-mentioned Bracciolini, Biondo, Vegio, Aurispa, and Fiocchi, included also Niccolò Perotti, George of Trebizond, and Pier Candido Decembrio. During the pontificate of Nicholas V (1447–1455), Orazio Romano, Pietro da Noceto, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Giovanni Tortelli, and Lorenzo Valla were nominated to be papal secretaries. Each revealed in his own work a different intellectual range and cultural slant, a different political and religious ideology, and a different historical and literary consciousness, but all of them had humanistic culture as their common denominator. Given this diversity among the humanists, we need to define at any one time the contents of humanism in order to avoid formulae that risk becoming useless generalizations. Even though a strong humanistic spirit characterized the papal court of Eugene IV, we

<sup>15</sup> Both aspects remain totally unexplored.

<sup>16</sup> Much work still needs to be done on the papal secretaries, especially regarding their cultural role; useful suggestions and observations are found in Peter Partner, *The Pope's Men. The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1990).

cannot speak of a curial humanism at that time as we can with regard to the second half of the Quattrocento.

### *The Humanist Popes*

The second half of the Quattrocento saw the rise to the papal throne of cardinals who had been humanists in their own right; consequently, historians were able to evaluate these popes' pontificates through the prism of their own culture. This was especially true for Nicholas V (Tommaso Parentucelli),<sup>17</sup> but also for Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini).<sup>18</sup> In the papal biographies written by the humanists by the middle of the Quattrocento, the cultural commitment of the pope acquires exceptional importance, substituting other traditional aspects of the pontiff.

In reading the biography of Tommaso Parentucelli and his *curriculum studiorum* and in comparing them with the biographies and *curricula* of other contemporary figures, even those in the Curia, one does not see a significant difference between them. Of course, one must be cognizant of the fact that here we are speaking of the cultural experiences of a small minority and that in the case of Parentucelli the sources were purposefully concordant, their objective being to convey the sense of wonder of a person who, in the space of a year, became first bishop, then cardinal and finally pope. Nonetheless, it is striking that for the first time, in the Quattrocento, a religious figure with an exceptionally multifaceted personality was elected pope and that he was admired by all because of his humanistic qualities.

It is true that Nicholas V was unquestionably a humanist, a student of the *humanae litterae*, but it is also true that, given our awareness of the cultural diversity of the Quattrocento, the term humanist is insufficient to define a cultured figure of that time. It is likewise evident that the culture of Parentucelli played an important role in the operation of his government and that his humanistic canon did not coincide with the criteria that Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger outlined in his *Dialogus de Curiae commodis* (1438). Whereas the latter excluded theology, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, music, civil and canon law from his *Dialogus*, Nicholas V, according to his biographers, embraced every one of these disciplines.

<sup>17</sup> Massimo Miglio, "Niccolò V," in *Enciclopedia dei papi*, 2 (Rome, 2000), pp. 644–58; idem, "La storiografia su Niccolò V," in *Papato, Stati regionali e Lunigiana nell'età di Niccolò V*, ed. Eliana M. Vecchi (La Spezia, 2004), pp. 21–32.

<sup>18</sup> Marco Pellegrini, "Pio II," in *Enciclopedia dei papi*, 2 (Rome, 2000), pp. 663–85.

Thus, Nicholas V applied humanistic philology even to the history of the papacy; he equated the writings of the Church Fathers with Latin and Greek classics; and he included patristic and scholastic texts, works of Greek and Arabic philosophy, mathematics, and more still in the *canone bibliografico* he composed for Cosimo dei Medici, concluding by privileging history: “Et quicquid ad historiam pertinet arbitror apponendum.”<sup>19</sup>

After the death of Nicholas V, there was an inventory of the manuscripts found in his *cubiculum* (bedroom). The inventory revealed many books of history, all of which dealt with ancient history. If, as historians commonly believe, the manuscripts in the *cubiculum* constituted the personal library of the pope, it is noteworthy that among the works the pope had read most frequently, and, as was his habit, had annotated and glossed until almost the last day of his life,<sup>20</sup> there were various copies of Livy, Suetonius, and Thucydides, Diodorus Siculus and Appian of Alexandria, the *Cosmography* of Ptolemy, Vegetius and Frontinus, Sallust and Valerius Maximus, Xenophon and Justin, together with the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian, the *Opera* of Virgil, many texts of Cicero, and works of Statius and Claudianus, Seneca and Aulus Gellius, Macrobius and Lactantius, Silius Italicus and Terence, Apuleius and Horace, and Homer and Columella. Interestingly enough, among the works connected to the history of the church, there was only a translation of Eusebius’ *De preparatione evangelica* and the *Divinae institutiones* of Lactantius.<sup>21</sup>

The biographers of Nicholas V convey the image of a humanist pope endowed with exceptional oratorical skills, a protector of the humanists, a scrupulous researcher of manuscripts, a theologian, the restorer of the papal library, and a rebuildier of the city of Rome. This last attribute was a time-honored motif, present already in the *Liber pontificalis*. Thus in his funeral oration for Nicholas V, Cardinal Jean Jouffroy gives the image of a pontiff on his death bed with books under his pillow, evoking yet another classical motif that, not long after, would appear in Roman commemorative

<sup>19</sup> Maria Grazia Blasio, Cinzia Lelj, and Giuseppina Roselli, “Un contributo alla lettura del canone bibliografico di Tommaso Parentucelli,” in *Le chiavi della memoria. Miscellanea in occasione del I centenario della Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia Diplomatica e Archivistica*, ed. Association of Ex-Students (Vatican City, 1984), pp. 125–65 at 155.

<sup>20</sup> Massimiliano Albanese, *Gli storici classici nella biblioteca latina di Niccolò V* (Rome, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Manfredi, *I codici latini di Niccolò V. Edizione degli inventari e identificazione dei manoscritti* (Vatican City, 1994), pp. 505–14; see also Laura Onofri, “Sacralità, immaginazione e proposte politiche. La vita di Niccolò V di Giannozzo Manetti,” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 28 (1979), 45–47.

statuary. Indeed, he was surrounded by books, being a second Apollo, as persuasive as Orpheus, more versatile than Mercury, more munificent than Ptolemy, who had made philosophy, history and the Church Fathers common knowledge to all.<sup>22</sup> As if to compensate for the loss brought about by the traumatizing fall of Constantinople to the Turks, he assembled a complete collection of works on Greek culture, all of them in the Greek language. In much the same vein, Giannozzo Manetti asserts that the last five years of the pontificate of Nicholas V were characterized by intense cultural progress, the like of which had not been seen since Carolingian times. Manetti describes painstakingly Nicholas' commitment to the library. He considers the work carried out by the copyists, the texts researched, the new works written at the suggestion of Nicholas, and the translations into Latin of the Greek works of the Church Fathers that had hitherto not been translated.<sup>23</sup> In later years, Nicholas V's friend Vespasiano da Bisticci, using the biography of Manetti and enriching it with personal remembrances, wrote the most detailed account of Nicholas' dedication and contribution to the papal library. To convey effectively the greatness of Parentucelli and his predilection for John Chrysostom, he cited St. Thomas.<sup>24</sup> Michele Canensi, like other biographers, underscored Nicholas' negotiations with the Greeks at the Council of Florence, but he also alluded to the pope's commitment to the search for manuscripts and to his having them transcribed as well as to his having subsidized men of culture, among whom he acknowledged Giovanni Tortelli, Gaspare da Verona and Maffeo Vegio. Above all, however, he emphasized his eloquence (*rerum caelestium iocundissima sermocinatio*), which he considered to be Nicholas V's trademark.<sup>25</sup>

Nicholas' commitment to the reconstruction of the library was extraordinary and closely connected to his cultural interests. Using the enormous revenues of the Jubilee of 1450, he hired translators to render Greek works

<sup>22</sup> "...qui peculiarium librorum supra sexcenta volumina per orbem colligens in lucem retulit, qui Aristotelis, Platonis, Theofrasti, Ptholomei philosophiam, qui Tuthididis, Herodoti, Appiani, Diodori Siculi, Pollibii certe illustres sed prius incognitas nobis historias fecit esse communes; hic Crisostomi, Basilii, Nazanseni, Eusebii manna celeste, ut Jeronimus loquitur, nobis advexit." Laura Onofri, "Sicut fremitus leonis ita et regis ira." Temi neoplatonici e culto solare nell'orazione funebre per Nicolò V di Jean Jouffroy," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 32 (1982), 1–28 at 25–26; see also for corrections and integration of the text, Hermann Goldbrunner, "Quemcumque elegerit Dominus, ipse santus erit." Zur Leichenrede des Jean Jouffroy auf Nikolaus V," *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Bibliotheken und Archiven* 64 (1984), 385–96.

<sup>23</sup> Giannozzo Manetti, *De vita ac gestis Nicolai quinti summi pontificis*, ed. and trans. Anna Modigliani (Rome, 2005), pp. 55–67.

<sup>24</sup> Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. (Florence, 170–176), 1:65–69.

<sup>25</sup> Massimo Miglio, *Storiografia pontificia del Quattrocento* (Bologna, 1975), p. 219.

into Latin, he got humanists to provide effective editions of classical texts, and he had them transcribe and buy manuscripts. The Greek translators included Giovanni Tortelli, Giovanni Aurispa, Francesco Filelfo, Giorgio di Trebizond, Gregorio e Lilio Tifernate, Guarino Veronese, Lampugnino Biraghi, Niccolò Perotti, Pier Candido Decembrio, Poggio Bracciolini, Rinuccio Aretino, Theodore Gaza and Lorenzo Valla. Nicholas put Giovanni Tortelli in charge of this enterprise, and in a few years, especially after the Jubilee, he had gathered 1200 Greek and Latin manuscripts, some of exceptional importance, that encompassed all sectors of humanistic culture.<sup>26</sup> But, if we were to compare the Avignon library of Pedro de Luna with its exceptional holdings of twenty manuscripts of Francesco Petrararch with that of Nicholas V, we would note that Nicholas' had only four manuscripts of Petrararch, which contained, significantly enough, the *De gestis Cesaris*, the *De remediis utriusque fortune* in 2 copies, the *Invectivae contra medicum*, the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, the *Contra invidios*, the *Invectivae contra quondam magni status hominem* in a single volume, dated 1405.<sup>27</sup>

Although the formal opening of the library to the public did not take place until the papacy of Sixtus IV in 1475 with his bull *Ad decorem* and with the institutionalization of book-lending implemented by Bartolomeo Platina,<sup>28</sup> the motives that led to such a public opening are already noticeable in Nicholas' over-all scheme of the papal library. In fact, as we learn from a brief addressed to Enoch d'Ascoli (edited by Poggio Bracciolini), Nicholas aimed at a wide diffusion of knowledge:

We decreed a long time ago, and we do this with great care for the common good of all scholars, so that we can have a papal library of Latin and Greek manuscripts, equal to the dignity of the pope and the Apostolic See, and already, among the texts that have been found, we are beginning to have a majority of the writers of each genre.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Massimo Miglio, "Niccolò V umanista di Cristo," in *Umanesimo e Padri della Chiesa. Manoscritti e incunaboli di testi patristici da Francesco Petrarca al primo Cinquecento*, ed. Sebastiano Gentile (Rome, 1997), pp. 77–84; Concetta Bianca, "Il pontificato di Niccolò V e i Padri della Chiesa," in *ibid.*, pp. 85–92; Giuseppe Lombardi, "Libri e istituzioni a Roma: diffusione e organizzazione," *Roma del Rinascimento*, ed. Antonio Pinelli (Rome, 2001), repr. in Lombardi, *Saggi*, pp. 367–69.

<sup>27</sup> Manfredi, *I codici*, (ad indicem: *Petrarca Franciscus*).

<sup>28</sup> Platina was also a librarian and a papal biographer to whom we owe the humanistic rewriting of the *Liber pontificalis* in his *Liber de vita Christi ac omnium pontificum*. On this see, José Ruysschaert, "Sixte IV, fondateur de la bibliothèque Vaticane, 15 juin 1475," *Archivum historiae pontificiae* 7 (1969), 513–24; see also Luciano Gargan, "Gli umanisti e la biblioteca pubblica," in *Le biblioteche nel mondo antico e medievale*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo (Rome, 2004<sup>7</sup>), pp. 163–186.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Eugene Müntz and Paul Fabre, *La Bibliothèque du Vatican au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après*

Dissemination of knowledge was, of course, a characteristic of humanism. However, the desire for the dissemination of knowledge had been evident in preceding centuries during the best periods of the papal library.

Once more, then, innovation was linked to a longstanding tradition. As the papal librarian, Giovanni Andrea Bussi, notes in the preface (a preface dedicated to Paul II) in the first volume with which he began his collaboration with the Roman proto-printers:

We know that the Church of Rome, adhering to ancient custom, has always been preoccupied with finding books, it has gathered and preserved them, entrusting them to librarians, especially the sacred texts, the most useful to know because they contain divine knowledge, so that they could be consulted for every need... and the most illustrious popes always dedicated their attention to gathering books from everywhere, above all books treating the Catholic tradition, in order to embellish their residences.<sup>30</sup>

Nicholas V's brief to Enoch and perhaps some of Bussi's ideas are echoed in the bull of Sixtus IV, which concluded the long, medieval history of the papal library, a library whose goal had always been utility (*utilitas*) and convenience (*commudum*), even though in the Middle Ages "utility" and "convenience" did not have the same meaning they acquired during the humanistic era. Sixtus IV's bull states:

For the dignity of the militant Church, for the growth of the Catholic faith, for the utility and honor of the learned and literati, the Roman pontiff, fervent supporter of the liberal arts, in order to induce men of culture to acquire with greater ease the highest level of the human condition and so that, having acquired it, they can spread it among others, motivates them with paternal exhortations, attracts them with gifts, helps them with benefits, prepares the

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*des documents inédits: contributions pour servir à l'histoire de l'humanisme* (Paris, 1887), pp. 47–48: "Iamdiu decrevimus atque ad id omni studio operam damus ut pro communi doctorum virorum comodo habeamus librorum omnium tum latinorum tum graecorum bibliothecam condecens pontificis et sedis apostolice dignitati, et tam ex iis qui reperiuntur omnis generis scriptorum maiorem partem habemus."

<sup>30</sup> Giovanni Andrea Bussi, *Prefazioni alle edizioni di Sweynheym e Pannartz prototipografi romani*, ed. M. Miglio (Milan, 1978), p. 3: "Sacrosantam Romanam Ecclesiam, cuius omnipotens Deus ad temporum nostrorum felicitatem tibi, pater beatissime Paule secundum pontificum misericordissime, sancta dedit gubernacula, hanc habuisse consuetudinem a Patribus accepimus, ut preciosissimam librorum supellectilem diligenter sempre exquireret, diligentius vero congregatam, cura Bibliotecario iniuncta conservaret; sacrorum praesertim voluminum, in quibus ut divinior sapientia ita cognitu utilior continetur ut, si quando necessitas exegisset, ex his archivis deprompta volumina spectarentur... Quicumque in Ecclesia Dei maxime floruerunt impenso studio sempre id egerunt, ut coacervatis undique catholicis precipue voluminibus, sedes suas exornarent."

libraries and appropriate venues, and gathers the scattered volumes in one place for their advantage....<sup>31</sup>

### *The Roman Printing Press*

Between the pontificate of Nicholas V and that of Sixtus IV, a cultural event of great importance occurred, which had notable consequences for the cultural life of the papal court. In 1467 a printing press was established in Rome. Typographers, who up until then had worked in Subiaco (a small town east of Rome), moved their presses to the Eternal City. Complex cultural and economic reasons led to their moving from Subiaco to Rome, namely the availability of libraries that were better stocked and more diverse than those in Subiaco from which to draw works to be printed, the ease in finding editors, and the direct proximity to a larger market. Moreover, in the personnel of the Roman Curia, starting with the editors of their books, they found much good will and philological expertise. At the Roman Curia they also found German clerics with a high enough level of professionalism to transform the printing business into a viable economic enterprise. The typographers created, together with the editors, a type of book that was new but at the same time old, very old, which would quickly become a model for much of Europe.<sup>32</sup>

The introduction of the printing press in Rome happened at a time in which the city, that is to say, in this case, the papal court, having reacquired full cultural and political authority, became a point of reference for all of Western Christendom. This happened for a relatively brief period of time, but it coincided with the most intense years of the Roman publishing industry. The Roman press of the Quattrocento was as diversified as curial humanism was multifarious. The press involved many people who were associated with the papal court: typographers, humanists, academics, princes and lords, members of religious orders and confraternities, merchants and

<sup>31</sup> Ruyschaert, *Sixte IV*, p. 523: "Ad decorem militantis Ecclesie, fidei catholice augmentum, reuditorum quoque ac litterarum studiis insistentium virorum commodum et honorem Romanus Pontifex, commendabilis cuiusque exercitii liberalis adiutor, ut sectatores liberalium artium eo facilius ad tam precesum humane conditionis fastigium acquirendum, acquisitum vero in alios diffundendum inducat, paternis eo hortatur monitis, muneribus allicit, beneficiis iuvat, bibliothecas et loca eis accomodata preparat et sparsa librorum volumina ad ipsorum profectum in unum reducit, prout in Domino conspicit salubriter expedire."

<sup>32</sup> Massimo Miglio and Orietta Verdi, eds. *Gutenberg e Roma. Le origini della stampa nella città dei papi (1467-1477)* (Naples, 1997).

lawyers. Even in the Roman publishing industry, innovation and tradition co-existed. In fact, the Roman press revealed an emphasis on the revival of the culture of antiquity as well as a need for the recovery and re-appropriation of medieval traditions. The emphasis on the revival of antiquity and the reconsideration of medieval traditions coupled with issues raised by curial humanism, which was by now fully developed, gave rise to the awareness of living in a diverse age and in a new society. Indeed, the conceptualization of the Middle Ages, the *media tempestas* (the term was coined by Giovanni Andrea Bussi who was papal librarian and was the one who edited a large part of the editions of the Roman proto-typographers), took place in Rome in those same years and found in the Roman press its formalization and the vehicle for its diffusion.<sup>33</sup> The acknowledgement of a Middle Ages marks the final moment of a cultural evolution that had brought to the forefront the idea of a contrast between the modern and the medieval (the *moderna tempora* vs. the *media tempestas*). However, the recognition of the new did not result in the abandonment of the old.

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<sup>33</sup> Giovanni Andrea Bussi, *Prefazioni*, p. 17 and see also pp. xxiii–xxv.