CHAPTER 3

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

After Elizabeth Bayley married into the Seton mercantile family, her relations with her public-spirited father continued as close as before. When Dr. Bayley traveled away from New York, he corresponded with his daughter and complained on occasion, “Never was I more vexed or disappointed than this evening. Why did you not write by the post?”¹ He confided in her his fatigue and ennui in Newark. “Work, ache, cards, loss of money, sick of Pandora’s box,” were phrases he used to voice his dissatisfaction with his own life.² But the summers Elizabeth spent on Long Island found him cheerfully running out in his boat to see her and receive “the most cheerful welcome in the world.”³

There is no way of conclusively defining the dislocation of family relations which seemed to have existed between Dr. Richard Bayley and his second wife, but the veiled references to these relations suggest that the quick-tempered surgeon at this period had forbidden Elizabeth to effect any reconciliation. This rift was pointed up by the return of Eliza Craig Sadler from Europe and the subsequent marriage of William Craig⁴ to Emma Bayley, Elizabeth’s half-sister.⁴ Elizabeth found the joy in Sad’s return diluted by the difficulty the family feud presented. She explained to Julia Scott:

My Intercourse⁵ with Mrs. Sadler—will be so much mixed with vexation, and our difference will be a source of so much mortification to her, that I can never visit her without expecting to meet those I do not wish to meet, and would rather now wish to avoid what was once so great a pleasure.⁵

Dr. Bayley commented on his own situation with the light remark:

I love to think on the oddity of my life. What words afford the most inconsolable affliction to another person, that which would afford aching heart to most people, seem to me as a matter of amusement. Dear heady temper go on. Hail to the period when I shall be at rest.⁶

¹ It is possible that both William and Samuel Craig were brothers of Eliza Sadler, but final proof is lacking. “Emma” was Charlotte Amelia Bayley, oldest daughter of Charlotte Amelia Barclay Bayley and Dr. Richard Bayley. The marriage took place on 19 June 1799 and the bridal couple spent their honeymoon at the Sadler summer home on Long Island.

⁵ Intercourse was the term commonly used in during the nineteenth century for social or business interactions between persons or groups.
But Elizabeth knew her father better than to be deceived by his flippancy and she confided her concern to Julia:

My Father, in addition to his former uneasiness, has new sources of distress which make me tremble. Two of my brothers have already shown the most unquestionable marks of unsteady dispositions—We cannot Wonder—but this is a sacred subject, and appears to have affected him above all other Evils.7

Elizabeth was determined to ease her father’s burden in some way or other. “You are a philosopher,” she consoled him. “Treasure up the blessed spirit.”8 She sent him inspirational poems, and praised his work. When the lack of appreciation for his efforts depressed the health officer, Elizabeth wrote:

If the prayers of a good quiet little Female are supposed to be of any avail, it [your health] will be long continued to you, with the hope that the visual rays of our fellow citizens will in time be brightened by your labors, and their attention awakened by the voice of truth and conscience.9

She relayed to Dr. Bayley the compliment of a French physician who found her father’s article on yellow fever in the Monitor “the best thing written on the subject.”10 She tried to arrange the family Christmas so that Dr. Bayley could spend it with his two oldest daughters and their children, and 25 December 1799, found the Posts and Setons together, and the doughty doctor entangled amid the sticky hands of his little grandchildren.11

After 1797, the state capital was removed to Albany, New York, and Dr. Bayley journeyed northward each winter to present the business of the health department to the legislature. Here he mingled with Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, and other men of “superior sense” and “great brilliancy of wit.” He told Elizabeth, “I esteem it a high good fortune to be on a footing of communication, of feeling, and sentiment with them.”12 He enjoyed lodging with them at the lieutenant-governor’s at Watervliet.13

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6 The “brothers” were probably Elizabeth Seton’s half-brothers, Richard and Andrew Barclay Bayley. Neither man lived long nor achieved any success while alive. Richard Bayley, Jr. was born on 7 August 1781. Sometime between 1799 and 1803 he was briefly associated with the Filicchi counting house in Leghorn, probably through William Seton’s intercession. By 1805 he had lost $10,000 of his mother’s money in abortive mercantile pursuits. He married Catherine White on 26 October 1812, and was killed three years later in a horse and carriage accident on 29 May 1815. Very little is known of Andrew Barclay Bayley except that he was once engaged to Harriet Seton, pursued a mercantile career in Jamaica and the West Indies, and died there prior to 8 December 1811, on which date Mary Bayley Post announced his death to Elizabeth Seton.
He wrote satirical descriptions of the flirtations at the capital, told whose portrait was receiving the most attention, and commented on the current theatrical offerings. But more often his thoughts were in New York, and he begged his “Lady Bet” not to miss a post for Albany. He wanted news of his grandchildren, and he admonished Elizabeth “that a sound mind in a sound body ought to be your motto for educating your children.” His opinion was much more colored by his age than by any vein of prophecy, for he added, “Look up and urge forward your claims to preeminence; your children are to give you immortality. This is neither the world nor the age for you to enjoy it in.”

Dr. Bayley felt closer to his second daughter than to any other person living. It was to Elizabeth that he opened his heart fully and tried to explain himself. He wrote:

Shall we be compelled to assign or connect motives to every action of our lives? To every impulse of mind? To every expression of a heart that feels? I hope not, for surely in such a case, I should be deprived of many little pleasures that a more cautious temper never feels. Calculations, intentions, cautions are all entitled to their place [but] to be always calculating, always cautious, to be always influenced by intentions are motives never to be applied to me.

In trying to form some estimate of Elizabeth Seton’s personality it is well to recall now and then this side of her father’s character. There is a kind of personality which tolerates no opposition to what it deems the natural expression of its own impulses. Often this temperament views it pyrotechnics as rather amazing, even unfortunate, but certainly never unjustified. When the same tendency toward temper in a child is reinforced by the example of a beloved parent, the force of this personality trait can be considerable. It is not at all surprising, then, to find that in the mature Elizabeth Seton a deep-rooted tendency to imprudent self-expression sometimes won the battle over her will to self-control. She herself never lost consciousness of the fact that a hot temper was one of her sources of temptation. The serenity she displayed in later life was no gauge of the battles she had to fight. Her meekness and humility were hard-won.

As the Seton fortunes declined, Dr. Bayley became more concerned about the welfare of his favorite household. In March 1799, Elizabeth had told Julia “My Father has obtained permission from the Legislature to perform all the plans he has contemplated on Staten Island. He is building a hospital and dwelling house.” By the following spring the house was sufficiently completed to suggest to Bayley that he could offer it as a summer
haven to his harassed daughter. Elizabeth in 1800 was expecting her fourth child and the doctor wanted no repetition of the crisis Richard’s arrival had created. Late in May, Dr. Bayley went on ahead to Staten Island, taking with him young Anna Maria, Will, and Dick. Elizabeth was to follow in June, accompanied by Rebecca Seton, who had recently returned from the south. And so it was that on 1 July 1800, William Magee Seton announced to Julia Scott:

I have the pleasure to inform you that on Saturday last at dawn of day your little friend presented us with another daughter, if possible more lovely than the first, but as you are acquainted with my sentiments with respect to what is mine, I will forbear all description at present and let you judge for yourself—I left her and her mother yesterday at the Health Establishment where they cannot but thrive and indeed Eliza was never better.

Although it was originally intended that the Setons would be on the island only a month, Dr. Bayley was so delighted with his new family life that he confessed “the habit of being a Christian and in some degree domesticated was not to be dispensed with after four weeks’ enjoyment.” The decision was, then, that the Setons should remain all summer. For her part, Elizabeth asked no more. William Magee could get over at least four days a week; and Dr. Bayley seldom left the house except to visit the vessels in quarantine. The house itself was very comfortable and had an upper balcony which commanded “a view fifty miles beyond the hook.”

The new baby was one of those contented infants who slept serenely, and Elizabeth’s recovery was amazingly rapid. In no time at all the house rang with the merriment of supper parties when Emma Bayley Craig and Eliza Sadler brought their husbands to view the new arrival. When the Seton ship, the Liberties, put into port, so great was the rejoicing that for three days running Elizabeth poured bowls of tea for the arrivals, until, as she confessed to Rebecca, her arm ached. She shrugged off the rumored criticism of other branches of the Bayley family at her presence on Staten Island and wrote spiritedly to Eliza Sadler:

My Father cannot do more than he does to prove his regret for the past...

Father is more than busy, and has many vexations, but he says he “can never rest in this world and it may as well be one thing as another” [is] the melancholy truth, and all that
can be done is to soothe—cruel would be the person who ever wished to deprive me of that power—but we must hope there is no such being.\textsuperscript{25}

Elizabeth stayed on until October was nearly over. It was a reluctant family that returned to Stone Street on 25 October 1800. Dr. Bayley wrote the following day:

I learned from Bayley\textsuperscript{d} last night at 8 o’clock all the little iotas of your passage to New York, that Miss Cate\textsuperscript{e} [sic] became torpid on her leaving Staten Island and continued in that state until she made her appearance at Stone Street. A smart sensible child exhibiting at so early an age such forebodings of future character. My friend Dick shall be received with open arms whenever he will pay grandpa a visit—all whining excepted.\textsuperscript{26}

Less than a month later the fond grandfather was one of the five sponsors\textsuperscript{f} at baby Catherine Charlton’s\textsuperscript{g} baptism, where the precocious child, mistaking the minister for her grandfather because of his spectacles, laughed “so drolly” at him when he threw the cold water on her that her mother could scarcely keep a straight face.\textsuperscript{27}

The winter passed rather quickly. Dr. Bayley went once more to the capital, while a strong southerly wind at the end of February brought numerous arrivals to the Quarantine where the health officer’s assistant was kept busy. Rebecca Seton went to help her sister, Eliza Seton Maitland, and Elizabeth’s little circle lost “its key.”\textsuperscript{28} After Bec’s departure, Elizabeth’s daily routine became, perforce, rather inflexible. The “general tenor” was to rise early; by ten o’clock lessons were begun, and Cecilia Seton led the others in grammar, reading, and sewing. The boys learned to say their little pieces, name the states, and recite the commandments. Evenings found William Magee and Dr. Bayley, when the latter was in town, busy with their cribbage while Elizabeth took her turn at the piano. These were the last days at Stone Street, but life went on in the accustomed monotony

\textsuperscript{a} “Bayley” was Joseph Bayley, a young doctor, who assisted Dr. Richard Bayley at the quarantine station. He was not directly related to the older man.

\textsuperscript{b} Dr. Bayley spelled his granddaughter’s name as Cate although Mrs. Seton initially called the child as Kate.

\textsuperscript{c} The five sponsors were Julia Scott, Mary Bayley Post, Catherine Dupleix, who sent “an elegant christening suit” from Ireland, Dr. Richard Bayley, and one of the Curson family. The minister was Dr. Abraham Beach, an assistant at Trinity Church who became pastor in 1811 when Dr. Benjamin Moore was made inactive by paralysis.

\textsuperscript{d} Catherine Charlton (Josephine) Seton (28 June 1800–3 April 1891) was named after her maternal grandmother. Her mother first refers to her as Josephine in a note dated March 1809. Josephine was probably her confirmation name although her mother also sometimes referred to her affectionately as Jos, Kit, Kitty. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in Manhattan at age forty-six and engaged in prison ministry until her death. She is buried in Section 4-2-D of Calvary Cemetery, Woodside, New York.
of minor events. The arrival of the Minerva in March brought, among other things, “four pineapples and a dolphin cheese” for Dr. Bayley. April was passed in hourly anticipation of Dué’s arrival from Ireland. In no time at all the second departure for Staten Island was under way.

The arrival on Staten Island that June was a joyous affair, and gave no warning of the tragic event which lay ahead. The welcome the Setons received was “such as dispelled all the gloom of my heart.” Elizabeth was in such high elation that the simple gift of fine garden strawberries from a neighbor seemed more than she could bear. The house looked so neat; the birds, the garden, the sunshine were so cheerful. By six o’clock of the day they arrived all the bedsteads were up and the beds made. “How the heart did melt before Him the giver of all.” Across the water Elizabeth could discern their new residence on the Battery, with the street doors and dining room windows tightly shut. Meanwhile Anna Maria and the boys were knee deep in the clover beyond the yard, while baby Kate “tata’d” all over the house which the summer before had seen her birth.

June went by in a succession of fine days. Company came and went; Emma Bayley Craig ferried over with friends and kept the house awake until twelve. Wright Post brought Dr. Miller to dine on black fish and chicken pie. Rebecca Seton spent several days on the island while William Magee Seton traveled to Baltimore. On clear days the household would breakfast in haste and board a well-provisioned schooner to go to Sandy Hook for a picnic. Only two things marred the perfection of Elizabeth’s June: that Julia Scott reached New York but not Staten Island, and that William Magee was only infrequently with his family.

William Magee Seton had gone to Baltimore early in June for reasons of health and business combined. His grandfather, Richard Curson, was anxious to have the Setons settle in Baltimore, but William Magee refused to commit himself. The rumors of Seton-Maitland affairs in England caused him great uneasiness, particularly since aspersions were beginning to be made in regard to Seton’s reliability. “I hope no blame can be attached to Filicchi or myself,” he wrote Elizabeth. While he was south William Magee went on to Alexandria, Virginia, to visit his brother, Jack, and he reported of his trip through the capital, “We were all delighted with Washington and the buildings really excel anything I had an idea of. They are more numerous

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8 Dué was Catherine Dupleix, wife of a naval captain, George Dupleix. Mrs. Dupleix is also called “Doux” in some of the Seton correspondence.
9 Sandy Hook, is a spit of land on the northern New Jersey shore at the outer reach of New York harbor. The lighthouse there, built in 1764, is the oldest in the United States.
10 John (Jack) Curson Seton was by then married to Miss Mary Wise and lived in Alexandria, Virginia. Henry Seton, another brother who was in the Navy, was also one of the family party to visit Washington that June.
than could be expected but you see nothing in the streets but cows and pigs. It is a journey from one house to another.”35 He was quite content to return to New York in July.

Elizabeth enjoyed the long days spent with her children. They had discovered a beautiful rock out behind the cornfield, and Elizabeth found it a peaceful spot for reading.

They made a charming rustic scene, the dark-haired mother bending over her letters, the baby Kate sleeping in her lap, the others playing at “tea” with little shells gathered from along the shore. Elizabeth was unconsciously storing up strength for the ordeal to come. Mornings before her father rose, Elizabeth would take Kate to the porch where she paced slowly up and down, breathing deeply the mild morning air, soothed by the presence of the little child in her arms. “Precious companion,” she mused; “here is at least one Peaceful spotless Soul, who never offends—how earnest is my prayer that it may continue so far as Human nature will allow.”36 One late afternoon she took Anna Maria to the attic of the little house “to experience the awe of a solemn thought greatly heightened by viewing the heavens in open space without an intervening object.” Elizabeth wanted her daughter to sense the vastness yet closeness of her Creator, to understand that when she made promises to be good these promises were made before God Who knew all she said and did. When Elizabeth looked down into the serious little face, rosy in the sunset glow, her heart was filled with love and compassion, and she thought, “poor little Puss, she is very sensible [for her age] but she will have many hard struggles.”37

Her own spiritual experiences were virtually undirected that summer. Sometimes the sight of St. Paul’s steeple in the distance filled Elizabeth with longing to be back in New York at church with Rebecca, listening to the young assistant, Rev. John Henry Hobart, whose fervor was beginning to attract her so much. One Sunday she wrote Rebecca:

Dear Sister, I am a prisoner, too—with all this wide and beautiful creation before me the restless soul longs to enjoy its liberty and rest beyond its bound. When the Father calls His child how readily He will be obeyed.38

She sought relief for her yearning in her best-loved remedy, her Bible. Meditating over its phrases she turned to journaling by writing down her own reflections, as had been her custom in New York.

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1 Rev. John Henry Hobart, (1775-1830), came as curate to Trinity Church, New York, in December 1800 and was Elizabeth Seton’s spiritual director until 1805. Hobart bitterly opposed her conversion to Roman Catholicism. Although he was an ordained minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church, usually he was referred to as “Mr.” according to nineteenth-century custom until his appointment as assistant bishop in 1811.
“Blessed are they that mourn” elicited from Elizabeth the reflection:

These divine assurances soothe and encourage the Christian’s disturbed and dejected mind, and insensibly diffuse a holy composure. The tint may be solemn and even melancholy, but it is mild and grateful. The tumult of his soul has subsided, and he is possessed by complacency, hope and love. If a sense of this undeserved kindness fills his eyes with tears, they are tears of reconciliation and joy, while a generous ardour springing up within him sends him forth to his worldly labors “fervent in spirit” resolving through Divine Grace to be henceforth more diligent and exemplary in living to the Glory of God. And longing meanwhile for that blessed time when “being freed from the bondage of corruption” he shall be enabled to render to his Heavenly Benefactor more pure and acceptable service.39 Her ability to apply her theories was tested almost immediately.

The yellow fever came early that summer. By the middle of June young Joseph Bayley had a hundred patients on Staten Island to visit and provide for. The health establishment had to be hurriedly enlarged. There were already ten large tents in use and “other buildings filling up as fast as a half dozen carpenters, boatmen, and all hands” could work, spurred on as they were by Dr. Bayley. Bayley’s house was re-enclosed by a fence which worried the children until they were promised a back gate to the hills, and then their spirits lifted. Immigrants were pouring in by boat loads and Elizabeth was intrigued by their practice of assembling on the grass to kneel and pray in thanksgiving.40 By the middle of July the younger doctor was sick himself, and the burden on the elder Bayley pressed more heavily. The building went on night and day, but the migrants continued to arrive. On one day alone a small vessel disgorged between four and five hundred people, many of whom had never seen the light of day since they entered the vessel, and a hundred of whom were sick on arrival. Little infants died the moment they were brought into the fresh air, many of them dying of starvation even at their mother’s breast.41

To all these sufferers Dr. Bayley was as a father. The rising sun found him already about his work some two or three hours. Except for an occasional moment of rest by the side of Elizabeth’s piano, his labors were
unceasing. Elizabeth wrote Sad a note asking her to try to find a cook for the quarantine and promised that if the cook liked Elizabeth for a mistress she could go home to State Street with her in the fall.\textsuperscript{42} The horror of the scene pressed upon Elizabeth and nights found her unable to sleep. From her window, wherever she looked, she saw lights from the tents pitched in the yard of the convalescent house, from the large one made to adjoin the “Dead House.” She was filled with a kind of guilt that her own child Kit was so amply nourished while those others lay dying.\textsuperscript{43}

The weekly visits of her husband were often mixed with frustration. William Magee was tired from his work in the hot city, worried over his failure to solve the financial tangle of the Seton affairs, and weakened by consumption. At best, a weekend cannot repair the ravages of separation, and Elizabeth found “this strange way of living-meeting but once a week, and then wearied and out of spirits” as difficult as he. When he said she would have to stay on Staten Island until October she was not overjoyed but accepted his ultimatum. As she put it to Rebecca, “Father says I shall go as soon as I please [after] September 15\textsuperscript{th}, but Willy’s please must be \textit{my} please.”\textsuperscript{44}

Fortunately, William Magee was not regularly so disgruntled, and often his visits offered a real relief to the misery of the scene. On the occasions when the expected arrival of a ship revived his hopes for business recovery, his elation spread through the family. The afternoon would pass with William Magee striding the sea wall, his spyglass in hand, followed by the small train of admirers, as happy a day for Elizabeth “as a mortal ought to have.”\textsuperscript{45}

In August the second great trial of Elizabeth’s courage came. On the eleventh day of the month Dr. Bayley came in from his early morning rounds, quite sick. He had been out since daylight, and no one was surprised when he took his tea in silence. Elizabeth felt the first alarm when, a little later, she saw him sitting in the blazing sun on the wharf, his head in his hands. She hurriedly sent out an umbrella for shade, and when she saw his look of bewilderment and distress, she burst into tears. By the time the doctor was put to bed he was delirious. Plainly, he had the fever. Joseph Bayley, his friend and assistant, was sufficiently recovered to attend him, but neither opium nor any other remedy brought relief to the older man.\textsuperscript{46}

The children, Anna Maria and Willy, were sent away to Mary Post’s until Dr. Bayley should improve. Dr. Post sat up with his father-in-law,
and brought Dr. Tillary\textsuperscript{1} from town to stay until there should be a change. Elizabeth, of course, was scarcely away from his side, except to nurse the baby. He seemed to gain some small relief from her presence, and held convulsively to her arm. The respected “blister” was tried again, but brought no relief. He could keep nothing on his stomach. The thoughts of his poor immigrants preyed upon his mind and he would call out in his delirium, “Cover me warm; I have covered many! Poor little children—I would cover you more, but it can’t always be as you wish.” He seemed to realize that his fever was fatal and gave his keys to Elizabeth; and on the third day he told her he felt the hand of God was in it all. Mary came over and sat with Elizabeth as the end drew near. Sunday, 16 August, it was obvious, would tell the story. As Elizabeth let her thoughts drift back to the previous Sunday it seemed as if a nightmare must have enveloped her, for just a week ago her father had been well and sitting at the dining room window engrossed in the activity of the ships and pilots in the harbor. Just a week ago he had played with little Kit, feeding her with a spoon from his glass of drink. Was it only last Sunday she had played while he sang with gusto his favorite German hymns and “The Soldier’s Adieu”? The only way she could bear it at all was to repeat over and over, “Thy will be done.” If such suffering could be, and not be God’s will—but the thought was insupportable.\textsuperscript{47}

On Monday Dr. Bayley suffered extreme pain; then toward the middle of the afternoon the pain seemed to leave him. He turned toward Elizabeth, put his hand in hers, and died. How Elizabeth got through the days which followed can only be imagined. It was planned to bury Dr. Bayley in the Richmond Town churchyard of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church on Staten Island, and for a while complications developed over the refusal of the parish to allow his body to be carried through the island. A grave was dug near the house of the health establishment; but suddenly the solution occurred; the body could be taken by a barge to Richmond Town. And so Dr. Bayley went to his final repose by boat, accompanied by Joseph Bayley and Darby, the faithful boatman. Two wagons full of friends and relatives went by land to witness the service which Dr. Richard Channing Moore performed. Elizabeth and the children left Staten Island as fast as they could the following week. Joseph Bayley, who regarded Dr. Bayley as a father whose fostering hand had laid the foundation of his career, took care of the things left undone, sent back the Setons’ little bird, and arranged for the transfer of their other effects. Elizabeth wrote a letter of appreciation to Dr. Moore in which she concluded:

\textsuperscript{1} Probably Dr. James Tillary, a Scotsman, who came to New York at the time of the Revolution and was a colleague of Dr. Bayley.
The only remaining wish I have is that a small space may be reserved on each side of him for his two eldest children.\textsuperscript{48} This request is not the impulse of unrestrained sorrow but of a heart that knows where its home is to be, and feels the greatest consolation in the hope that it may be permitted to repose by its dear parent.\textsuperscript{48}

The house Elizabeth was to inhabit from the time of her father’s death until the voyage to Italy began, “Number 8 State Street,” was on the Battery. It was next to a three story brick building occupied by Joseph Corré, who operated the famous Columbia Garden south of the corner lot at State and Pearl.\textsuperscript{n} Corré had recently obtained permission to make a gate in the Battery fence just opposite Columbia Garden and here he offered concerts, as well as ice cream, to the public on their evening walks along the Battery.\textsuperscript{49} For fifty cents his patrons received ice cream, punch or wine, cake, and vocalists besides. The younger Setons probably were not allowed these evening pleasures but they enjoyed their new location nevertheless. Elizabeth’s note to Rebecca ran,

My own Rebecca would rejoice to see our cheerful countenances at the Nor’wester...Kit is calling Mamma as loud as she can hallow and Anna, Will, and Dick [are] on the Battery, only inside the Gate.\textsuperscript{50}

Soon the cares and interest of family and friends once more began to press upon Elizabeth. Mrs. Sadler was depressed by family illness and needed comfort. Eliza Seton Maitland had sent her infant and its wet nurse to Elizabeth for the winter; Cecilia Seton, who had been at school for the summer term, was returning to continue her lessons under Elizabeth’s supervision. James Maitland, husband of Eliza Seton Maitland, was “put

\textsuperscript{48} It is interesting to speculate as to why only the children of the first marriage were to lie by his side when the will of Dr. Bayley, probated 26 August 1800, left all his property to his second wife, her heirs, “and assigns.” There is no solution in the historical evidence. However, it is erroneous to conclude that Bayley “disinherited” Elizabeth Seton and Mary Post. The will was an old one drawn up in December 1788, just prior to a voyage to England. Elizabeth was at the time only fourteen, and Mary was a few years older. It was quite proper and logical for the will to read as it did, under those circumstances. The failure of Dr. Bayley to make a new will is probably due to many reasons, chief among which could have been his temperament. We know from his own words that caution was not a virtue he admired. He probably did not expect to die at the age of fifty-six. There can be no doubt, from archival evidence, of the children closest to him prior to his death; these were the daughters of his first wife, Catherine Charlton.

\textsuperscript{n} No. 8 State Street in 1793 was sold under foreclosure to a James Watson. It was probably a single house. Nos. 9-11 were the property of Carey Ludlow [there was no No. 10] and from 1797 Corré occupied No. 9. On 14 May 1798, he had secured permission to open the gate in the Battery fence. It seems probable that the Setons never owned 8 State Street.
in limits” in January and this left Eliza and her five children to the worry of William Magee Seton, who was forced to supply them from his own storeroom “as no other part of the family [would] keep them from starving—or even in fire wood.” The Widows’ Society was to need much of her time, since Elizabeth was the treasurer of the group and encountered the traditional difficulties in getting money. As she told Julia, she rose early and retired late, but “everybody has their Pride of some sort, I cannot deny that this is mine.” Her constant inspiration that winter was a new-found friend.

In February 1802, Elizabeth sent a letter to Julia Scott by John Henry Hobart which contained the following introduction:

There are various kinds of attachments in this world, some of affection, without the soothing confidence of trust and esteem united—some of esteem for virtues which we can neither approach nor assimilate to our own natures, and some—the unbounded veneration, affection, esteem and the tribute of “the Heart Sincere”—The bearer of this letter possesses in full the reality of the last description in my heart—and, in fact, I can give no stronger proof of the affection and esteem I bear you than in expressing to you what I believe another would pervert or ridicule—

The soother and comforter of the troubled soul is a kind of friend not often met with—the convincing, pious, and singular turn of mind, and argument possessed by this most amiable being, has made him, without his even having the least consciousness that he is so, the friend most my friend in this world, and one of those who after my Adored Creator I expect to receive the largest share of happiness from in the next.

At the time Hobart carried this letter to Philadelphia he was twenty-six years old and had been ordained scarcely a year in the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He had come to Trinity Parish as an assistant in December 1800, from Hempstead, Long Island. Trinity, at that time, had one rector and three assistants; Dr. Benjamin Moore was rector, and Abraham Beach and Cave Jones acted as assistants with Hobart. Elizabeth Seton’s maternal uncle, Dr. John Charlton, was the senior warden of Trinity when Hobart was called to serve on 8 September 1800, at a salary of $500 a year. Hobart had received almost simultaneously an invitation from St. Mark’s.

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*Cave Jones came to Trinity four months after John Henry Hobart. It was under his leadership that opposition to Hobart’s appointment as bishop in 1811 came to a head. Hobart was made assistant bishop in 1811, diocesan bishop and rector in 1816. He died 12 September 1830, while visiting Auburn, New York.*
the Bowery church, but he accepted Trinity’s offer as more desirable. That his decision was a wise one is clear from his subsequent career. A decade later he was made assistant bishop, and by the time of his death he had reached the height of power and prestige in the church of his profession.55

His appearance in the pulpits of Trinity, St. Paul’s, and St. George’s was the sensation of the day. Elizabeth Seton was only one of the many parishioners to fall under the spell of his oratory. Hobart’s personal appearance was responsible for very little of his appeal, since in size he was rather short, his head seemed too large for his body, and his nearsighted eyes were perpetually behind his thick spectacles. But what he missed in “the glance of the eye” he more than atoned for in voice and delivery. In a day when deliberate and sepulchral tones were used to deliver speeches from sheets of notes, Hobart’s rapid, flexible voice uttering sentiments which seemed to spring from strongest conviction and which were apparently extemporaneously expounded could only amaze his listeners. Although the less fiery ministers criticized his method on the grounds of good taste, many a bored pew holder was roused to new attention by this first introduction to the evangelical kind of preaching which was to sweep all the branches of Protestantism in the early nineteenth century. As one of his admirers said of him:

He appeared in the pulpit as a father anxious for the eternal happiness of his children—a man of God preparing them for Christian warfare—a herald from the other world, standing between the living and the dead, between heaven and earth entreating perishing sinners in the most tender accents, not to reject the message of reconciliation which the Son of the living God so graciously offered for their acceptance.56

Certainly to the feminine part of the congregation the new young minister epitomized Christian manhood. His young bride of less than a year was the daughter of the famous cleric Dr. Thomas Bradbury Chandler who had been well known in New Jersey religious circles. Mary Goodin Chandler gave birth to a daughter, Jane, on 8 March 1801, and continued thereafter to mother the increasing Hobart family. When Hobart stopped at Julia Scott’s in Philadelphia that February 1802, he was on a mission of love and consolation. His sister was seriously ill in Frankfort, Pennsylvania, and his mother was failing rapidly. In August when he called on Elizabeth Seton he told her “about his mother and sister, and that he had brought home her
son to educate him as his own.” Mr. Hobart himself never was physically robust and it is from this nephew’s account that Hobart’s biographer learned that the young minister sometimes fainted at family prayers.

The great devotion between Mr. Hobart and his mother offered a fine example to his congregation. The months of 1802-1803 found him increasingly concerned over her health. One Sunday when Elizabeth was disappointed to see Cave Jones in Henry Hobart’s place. She asked him, after the service was over, if they “had lost Mr. Hobart—Poor man, was the reply, he has been attending his Mother whom Dr. [Benjamin] Rush has given over and suffers a great deal of fatigue and distress on her account.” Reporting the incident to Rebecca, Elizabeth added, “He was summoned to her the Monday after our Sunday [Sacrament Sunday]—Well might I see him heated, wearied and covered with dust.”

When Hobart’s mother died, the same year that his second daughter was born, the two events only served to endear him more to his ardent admirers, and Wright Post, who attended the young Mrs. Hobart, refused to accept any remuneration from the harassed husband. John Henry Hobart was surely a man to inspire admiration and arouse sympathy. It was not surprising that once Elizabeth Seton came under his influence her interest in religion should grow rapidly. Mr. Hobart, in turn, was deeply impressed with the piety of Elizabeth and her sister-in-law, Rebecca Seton.

The absorption of Elizabeth in spiritual concerns was very noticeable during the spring of 1802. She kept a kind of journal of her meditations, parts of which have long been available to the public. Here we find the entry of the fourth Sunday in May, which begins:

This blessed day—Sunday 23rd May 1802—my Soul was first sensibly convinced of the blessing and practicability of an entire surrender of itself and all its faculties to God.

The entry for the following Wednesday contains this added passage:

Is it nothing to sleep serene under his Guardian Wing—to awake to the brightness of the glorious sun with renewed strength and renewed

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8 This was the eldest son of Rebecca Hobart Smith.
9 Rebecca Smith Hobart was born 6 February 1803. It was this child who grew up to marry Levi Silliman Ives, and became a Catholic in later life. Joseph B. Code, Letters of Mother Seton to Julia Scott, 151, gives the name as Rebecca Seton Hobart and adds that Elizabeth Seton was the child’s godmother. The name Rebecca Smith Hobart is the way it appears in the Correspondence of John Henry Hobart list of children given in volume I.
10 This passage was not in print until the corpus of the Seton papers was published as Elizabeth Bayley Seton Collected Writings.
blessings—to be blessed with the power of instant communion with the Father of our Spirits the sense of His Presence, the influences of His Love—to be assured of that love is enough to tie us faithfully to Him and while we have fidelity to Him all the surrounding cares and contradictions of this Life are but cords of mercy to bind us faster to Him who will hereafter make even their remembrances to vanish in the reality of our external felicity.64

Thursday, Ascension Day, witnessed the following entry, which was incorrectly given in previously published versions:

Oh that my soul might go up with my blessed Lord—that it might be where He is also—Thy Will be done—my time is in Thy Hands—but O my Savior, while the pilgrimage of this life must still go on to fulfill Thy Gracious Purpose, let the spirit of my mind follow Thee to Thy mansions of glory—to Thee alone it belongs, receive it in mercy, perfect it in truth, and preserve it unspotted from the world. “Heaven cannot separate Thee from thy children, nor can earth detain them from Thee.” Raise us up by a life of faith with Thee.65

Elizabeth’s preoccupation with her journal caused a temporary falling off in her letters to Julia Scott. When she finally sat down the evening of 19 August to renew the former exchange, she was destined not to finish the letter she began. William Magee’s addition the following day explained the reason:

Thus far, my very amiable little Friend, did our dear Eliza write last night at 11 o’clock & this morning. At twelve I have the satisfaction to tell you she was safely delivered of a girl.... The mother is as well as she usually is on such occasions, better than could be expected for we had neither Doctor nor anything of the kind, till a quarter of an hour after the young Lady made her appearance.66

The birth of Rebecca Mary Seton8 came quite close to the anniversary of Dr. Bayley’s death. Just three days before, in a note to Rebecca, Elizabeth had written in sorrowful recollection, “Dear, dear Rebecca, the 17th August last year about this time 3 o’clock in the afternoon—never mind someone will be thinking of us in a few years.”67

The new baby helped to fill the void left by the death of Elizabeth’s father. To a household accustomed to the presence of a small baby, the arrival

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8 Rebecca Mary Seton (20 August 1802–3 November 1816), was named after her maternal aunt who was Elizabeth Seton’s “soul sister.” She died at age fourteen and is buried in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, the original graveyard at Emmitsburg.
of a new one is salutary as well as pleasure-giving. The former “baby” of the family becomes a person in her own right, while all the children softened, however imperceptibly, by the helplessness of the new arrival, in their respective degrees are made more mature and responsible. For Elizabeth the birth of Rebecca was an added incentive to increase personal sanctity. Her journal note for 12 September recorded:

Three weeks and two days after the birth of my Rebecca [I] renewed my covenant that I would strive with myself and use every endeavor to serve my dear Redeemer and to give myself wholly unto Him.68

Even before Rebecca was born Elizabeth had made her plans for the “christening,” and this event took place on Wednesday, St. Michael’s Day, 1802. The entry made by the young mother that day was a long joyous tribute of praise to “Him who has obtained for His servant these inestimable privileges—to enter into a covenant with Him—to commune with his spirit—to receive the blessings of our reconciled Father.”69 The baptism of Rebecca served to increase Elizabeth’s fears for the soul of her poor servant, Mammy Huler, who had now been ailing for more than a year. She arranged to have Mr. Linn’ come at eleven o’clock one Sunday to perform the ceremony and she herself remained, the Saturday before, by Mammy’s side saying the sick prayers and instructing her for the next day’s baptism.70

On 16 November 1802, Elizabeth wrote to Julia, “Our Mammy [Huler] is gone—O if you could have witnessed in her the comforts and consolations of a humble soul seeking a refuge of a Redeemer, you would teach your children that to know and love Him is the ONLY GOOD—She was literally ‘born anew’—and died without a struggle or groan—as a child composed to rest in the arms of its Parent—sure of an awakening secure.”71

Elizabeth’s capacity for love and solicitude for her friends now seemed to increase as her cares and responsibilities at home redoubled. In the same letter carrying news of Mammy Huler’s death, Elizabeth tried to explain to Julia that her devotion to the life of the spirit in no way detracted from her attachment to her friends.

No, dear Julia—religion does not limit the powers of the affections, for our Blessed Savior Sanctifies and approves in us all the endearing ties and connections of our existence, but Religion alone can bind that cord over which neither

1 Possibly Mr. Linn was Rev. William Linn (1752-1833), a Presbyterian minister who joined the Dutch Reformed Church in 1787.
circumstances, time, or death, can have no power—Death on the contrary perfect[s] that union which the cares, chances or sorrows of life may have interrupted by opening the scene where all the promises, hopes, and consolations we have received from our Redeemer will have their triumphant accomplishment.\textsuperscript{72}

If the birth of her fifth child brought Elizabeth happiness, how much more was the change in William Magee to increase that joy. From scattered clues found in notes to Rebecca it is evident that William Magee did not, in the beginning, share his wife’s fervor for churchgoing or for Mr. Hobart. He liked to beg off with the excuse that because of business he was “too much troubled.” He would drive her to the church door, but leave her to attend alone or with Rebecca. When the weather grew bad Elizabeth had to write Rebecca,

> My spirits are heavy—Willy says so much about my going tomorrow and that we shall not without a carriage—that it is madness, the streets almost impassable, etc...You must not lose if I must—You had better go to Mrs. Bogert’s pew as she has since pressed me to come there.\textsuperscript{73}

On 15 August shortly before baby Rebecca was born, Elizabeth had been alone at the evening service conducted by her favorite “H. H.,” and her elation, which lasted well into the next day, had been marred only by her husband’s attitude. Her note to Rebecca ran,

> Never could I have thought of such enjoyment in this world—last night was surely a foretaste of the next—nor pain nor weight either soul or body...Our H.H. was at St. Mark’s instead of St. Paul’s [this morning]...Willy regretted very much he did not hear him—regrets are idle things. Oh when every regret will be forgot—and every hope perfected.\textsuperscript{74}

Just when William Magee began to change in his attitude of indifference cannot be accurately determined, except to place the event between the birth of the fifth child and the fall of 1803, when the Setons sailed for Europe. A succession of undated notes to Rebecca carry such expressions as these: “Willy says he will dine at home tomorrow—with a significant smile—I shall be too happy if he means to keep his promise freely and without persuasion from me”\textsuperscript{75} or “I think our Willy will go—he
has not left me five minutes since yesterday’s dinner and has had Nelson in his hands very often—if he does, what a dinner will today’s be for me.”

When he finally did attend, William Magee did not immediately fall under the spell of Hobart’s oratory, as this line to Rebecca Seton indicates. “Mr. Hobart this morning—language cannot express the comfort, the Peace, the Hope—but Willy did not understand, that happy hour is yet to come.” But come it did at last and Elizabeth was able to confide to Mr. Hobart, when he visited the Seton home the Monday following the joyful occasion, that, “The last 24 hours were the happiest I had ever seen or could expect as the most earnest wish of my heart was fulfilled.” To Rebecca she added the following words, “Dear Rebecca, if you had known how sweet last evening was—Willy’s heart seemed to be nearer to me for being nearer to his God.”

The newly strengthened conjugal affection was tested almost at once—for Seton’s health, long known to be precarious, in 1803 declined so steadily and so fast that the friends of the family despaired of his recovery. As a last resort, the Setons determined to try the time-honored remedy of a sea voyage, and they made plans to sail for Italy in the fall of 1803. Elizabeth must have done much of the last-minute arranging of the family affairs and disposal of their furniture, for her husband and children were at Mary Bayley Post’s in August, according to a note addressed to Anna Maria Seton which read, “Do as Mary tells you, and be very kind to her... take good care of dear Papa while he is with you and do all you can to please Him.” Elizabeth had debated the best arrangements to make in regard to the children. She asked Sad’s advice about taking Anna Maria along, and said she thought the child was so young the voyage would “have its use to her in many ways and probably will be strongly remembered by her through life.” The baby, Rebecca, was to stay with Mary and Wright Post. Phoebe, the household servant, went along with the baby to relieve Mrs. Post of the burden of a child so young. It must have wrecked Elizabeth’s heart to leave the smallest of her “darlings,” especially since little Rebecca was ill at Post’s even before the ship sailed. The other three children were left in the charge of William Magee’s sister, Rebecca Seton, who was still at Maitland’s. The elder Seton girls, Elizabeth’s sisters-in-law, went to live with James Seton, their elder half-brother, James was by this time pretty well established as an insurance broker, with offices at 67 Wall Street and

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v That summer the Posts were at Far Rockaway enjoying the seashore on the Rockaway Peninsula in the present New York City borough of Queens.
his residence at 85 Greenwich Street. The Maitlands were probably then located at Jay Street.\textsuperscript{83}

The valuable items of furniture were left with young Mr. Hobart and his wife. We find this passage in a letter from Hobart to the Setons, written after they had sailed:

Your furniture we gladly preserve as memorials of you. I never cast my eye on the escritoire without thinking of its inestimable owner, nor on the piano forte without having my soul in imagination enlivened and soothed by the chants of praise and consolation which it was my delight to hear burst forth from it. The sacred portrait of the Redeemer\textsuperscript{w} recalls to my mind the ardent piety of her who before this endeared memorial poured forth the emotions of holy love and gratitude.\textsuperscript{84}

Just before leaving, Elizabeth paid a last visit to Staten Island and the Quarantine. She walked through the garden, over the wooden wharf, and down to the boat her father had so often sailed. His old friends, Darby and William, who had gone snipe hunting with Dr. Bayley in the old days, took Elizabeth for a last sail around the bay. Joseph Bayley, who was now in charge of the health establishment, welcomed her for an hour’s visit and she went to her father’s room to stand in “the very spot” where she had last seen him alive. Her thoughts were so vivid she felt convinced his spirit was with her.\textsuperscript{85} It was as close as she could return to the roots from which she had sprung. Armed with recollection and a memorandum from Mr. Hobart in regard to reading the psalms she went aboard the \textit{Shepherdess}. True, “the Pangs of Parting Nature would press”; but Elizabeth took courage from her conviction that God “over rules all.”\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{w} \textit{The Redeemer} is an engraving with an inscription printed beneath the image which reads “G. Festolini \textit{Execudit}, W. Miller \textit{Pinxit}, and T. Gaugain \textit{Sculpsit}.” This engraving is preserved in the Archives of the Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, Maryland. According to tradition the picture was a gift from William Magee Seton to his wife.
CHAPTER 3. FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Notes

1 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Newark, 23 January 1795, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:93.

2 Ibid.

3 1.9, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, n.p., 11 August 1796, CW, 1:12.

4 1.47, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 11 June 1799, CW, 1:75.

5 1.37, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 20 January 1799, CW, 1:59. This letter contains the suggestive sentence, “My Father perseveres in his resolution that I shall never admit a reconciliation with Mrs. B.” Ibid.

6 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-9:100.

7 1.41, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 15 March 1799, CW, 1:65; Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 8 December 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:12.


9 1.65, Elizabeth Seton to Richard Bayley, New York, 10 September 1799, CW, 1:96.

10 Ibid.


12 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, 8 February 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:98. The capital of New York was moved in January 1798.

13 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-9:100.

14 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, 8 February 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:98; Ibid., n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-9:100.

15 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, 4 February 1798, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:95.

16 Ibid.

17 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Water Vliet, 8 February 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:98.

18 1.41, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 15 March 1799, CW, 1:65.

19 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Staten Island, 24 May 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:102; Ibid., 5 June 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:103.

20 1.87, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, Staten Island, 1 July 1800, CW, 1:124. The daughter was Catherine Charlton Seton.
21 1.91, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, Staten Island, 26 July 1800, CW, 1:136.
23 1.89, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, Staten Island, 12 July 1800, CW, 1:127.
24 1.93, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Staten Island, 11 August 1800, CW, 1:133-134.
25 1.96, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Staten Island, 27 September 1800, CW, 1:137.
26 Dr. Richard Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, Staten Island, 26 October 1800, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:104.
27 1.99, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 19 November 1800, CW, 1:139.
30 1.119, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Staten Island, n.d. [June 1801], CW, 1:161.
31 1.84, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Staten Island, n.d. [1800], CW, 1:123.
32 1.119, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Staten Island, n.d. [June 1801], CW, 1:161.
34 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 10 June 1801, ASJPH 26-0-2, (12). Copy. The original is in Archives Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey. Hereinafter cited as ASCSE.
35 William Magee Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Alexandria, 18 June 1801, ASJPH 26-0-2, (13). Copy. The original is in AMSV.
36 1.92, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Staten Island, n.d. [1800], CW, 1:133.
37 1.136, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Staten Island, 29 July 1801, CW, 1:181.
38 1.115, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Staten Island, 7 June 1801, CW, 1:156.
42. 1.133, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Staten Island, 20 July 1801, *CW*, 1:175.
44. 1.130, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Tuesday afternoon [1801], *CW*, 1:173.
50. 1.117, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, n.p., n.d. [1801], *CW*, 1:159.
56. Ibid., 190.
58. The strength of this affection is amply evidenced in *The Correspondence of John Henry Hobart* (New York, 1911). Much of the first three volumes is composed of letters from his mother.
1.193, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, New York, n.d., CW, 1:233. Dr. Rush was Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia.

Correspondence of John Henry Hobart, III, 266, Post to Hobart, New York, 8 August 1803.

60 Robert Seton, Memoir, Letters and Journal, I, 83, unfortunately uses the word “infatuation” in describing Elizabeth Seton’s attitude toward Mr. Hobart. Except in the most literal sense of extravagant admiration, the word is not justified. Mme. de Barberey also leaves an erroneous impression when she states, “Une amitié qui remontait aux jours de son enfance unissait Elizabeth à M. Hobart.” See Mme. de Barberey, Elizabeth Seton, 243. Until he came to Trinity at the close of 1800, Elizabeth Seton did not know him. She was in her twenty-seventh year at that time.


63 Ibid., 24.

64 Ibid., 25. Code, in editing A Daily Thought from the Writings of Mother Seton (1929), entry May 26, reprints from Robert Seton’s Memoir, Letters and Journal, I, 85, an entry which telescopes two entirely different entries, and reverses the chronological order, as well. It is this type of editing that makes both Joseph Code and Robert Seton unreliable. See Chapter 12, endnote 103, for another example of a published version of a letter of William Seton to his mother for which the original is no longer available for verification.

65 1.164, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 20 August 1802, CW, 1:210. Charles I. White gives the birth of Rebecca Seton correctly. See White, 37; but other biographers like Seton, Code, Sadlier erroneously state that Rebecca was born on 20 July. On the part of Code this is strange in view of the fact that in Letters to Mrs. Scott he reprints Elizabeth’s part of the letter correctly dated 19 August.


68 8.12, “This day my little Rebecca,” Wednesday, St. Michael’s day, 1802, CW, 3a:26.


70 1.165, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 16 November 1802, CW, 1:213.

71 Ibid., 212.
74 1.162, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, New York, 16 August 1802, CW, 1:208. [See Appendix B. First Communion of Elizabeth Ann Bayley. Ed.] See also 10.4, “Dear Remembrances,” CW, 3a:514. These words suggest that Mrs. Seton was accustomed, herself, to a strict observance of “Sacrament Sunday.”
77 1.102, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, New York, n.d., CW, 1:144.
79 1.170, Elizabeth Seton to Anna Maria Seton, 23 August 1803, CW, 1:218.
81 Wright Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 22 September 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:1.
82 John Henry Hobart to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 November 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B70; Rebecca Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 5 October 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:61.
83 Longworth’s American Almanac, New York Register and City Directory, 1801-1802, 1803-1804. James Maitland appears in only one directory, that of 1801-1802. No Street number is given.
84 John Henry Hobart to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 November 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B70.
86 2.2, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, New York, 3 October 1803, CW, 1:245.
Travelers to Europe in the tumultuous first decade of the nineteenth century went well-armed with credentials and letters of introduction, and the Setons were no exceptions. Two of the papers carried by William Magee Seton in 1803 have been preserved and cast an interesting light upon the past. The first of these bore the signature of Thomas Barclay, the British consul-general of the Eastern States of America, and proclaimed William Magee Seton to be a British subject. Seton’s motives in claiming British citizenship were probably colored by considerations of security in a period when Mediterranean travel was endangered by Napoleonic wars and the ravages of Barbary pirates. The document raises a brief question in regard to Elizabeth Seton’s citizenship, but even more than this, it suggests the cloudy uncertainty which characterized concepts of citizenship in the United States in the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War. There is little doubt that Mother Seton, foundress, was an American citizen; but the culture in which she lived was much less provincial than that which came after her death. The narrower nationalism of the latter nineteenth century was not her milieu.

The second paper of interest was a letter of introduction to Joseph Jaudenes, the intendante of Mallorca, written for the Setons by James Barry. It was this same James Barry who was to befriend Mrs. Seton some years later, after her conversion to Catholicism; in 1803 Elizabeth knew him only as a business friend of her husband. The letter is doubly interesting because it mentions Captain William Bainbridge of the United States frigate Philadelphia. The name of Bainbridge conjures up at once the ghosts of the Barbary pirates and the dread they once inspired in Mediterranean travelers. The tenuous peace established between the Sultan of Morocco and the United States on 12 October 1803, was heard of by the Setons’ friends with some relief, and Henry Hobart wrote, “The papers of this day lead us to expect you have not been in danger from the Pirates of Barbary.”

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* The issues presented by William Magee Seton’s claim to British citizenship are not easily resolved. [See Appendix B. Citizenship of William Magee Seton. Ed.]
* Traditionally, an intendante was the holder of a public administrative office.
* James Barry was a merchant of Washington and Baltimore whose business carried him to New York and Canada. In 1803 he was in New York City or rather on Long Island with his wife and daughters. Bishop John Carroll invited Barry to accompany him to Boston that September but Barry was unable to go.
* [Mulay Slimane (1760–1822), of the Alaouite dynasty, was the Sultan of Morocco from 1792 to 1822. Captain Edward Preble, met with Slimane to resolve violations of the treaty of 1786. Ed.]
as they state the Emperor [sic, Sultan] has ceased hostilities and that our frigates there have adequate protection from the other powers.” The truce of early October was, unfortunately, counterbalanced by the capture on 31 October of the Philadelphia and Captain Bainbridge during the blockade of Tripoli. In the months that followed, the Enterprise captured the Moorish Mastico, quickly renamed her the Intrepid and on 31 January 1804, the Navy Department commissioned the ship. The following month witnessed the epic boarding party led by Stephen Decatur, and the burning of the Philadelphia. It was amid such circumstances that the Seton voyage to Italy was made.

Elizabeth Seton’s thoughts were far from the physical dangers to be faced on the high seas as she boarded the vessel that first day in October; her last days on shore had been too occupied with other concerns. The last-minute letters and farewells had to be completed. A note to Julia Scott, hastily penned just before the signal for going on board was sounded, admitted that “in the view of mortal hopes” Elizabeth knew she could not expect William Magee’s recovery yet, knowing Him Who held the scale, she persisted in her faith in the Leghorn [Livorno] voyage. To young Cecilia Seton, who was following so eagerly the pattern of Rebecca and Elizabeth, Mrs. Seton wrote a note of encouragement, asking the girl to persevere in her habitual observance of “that Heavenly Christian life you have so early begun.”

William Magee Seton’s younger brother, Henry, who was in the navy, planned to accompany the little group as far as the harbor lighthouse, where the pilot would be dropped. Rebecca and Harriet Seton, on shore, brought the children down to the Battery to see the Shepherdess pass, and they waved delightedly until the full import of the ship’s passage struck them, and then they burst into tears. On board, their father was so upset by grief and coughing that neither he nor Elizabeth could enjoy their last glimpse of the children. At ten o’clock on the third day, Henry Seton left them to return to New York, carrying with him the first notes written by Elizabeth on board ship. With Henry disappeared the last tie with shore; the ocean and the voyage lay ahead.

The days at sea passed pleasantly and swiftly. William Magee, contrary to all prediction, seemed to improve with each day. Captain O’Brien was kind, and the stewardess reminded the Setons of their servant back home, so willing was she to please. After the hectic flurry of farewells and

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4 There is no positive identification of O’Brien available. An Edward O’Brien, midshipman, served on the U.S.S. Chesapeake and U.S.S. Adams until 1803 when he entered the merchant service, but neither the name of his ship, nor his rank is given in this latter service. He may or may not have been the captain of the Shepherdess.
the fatigue of preparations, Elizabeth was only too glad to surrender to the monotony and leisure of a life at sea. She had time to enjoy the sunsets and to write her impressions of the moonlight. By the time the vessel passed the Western Isles she was making almost daily entries in a journal for Rebecca.\textsuperscript{10} Anna Maria was a comfort to both parents, partly because she distracted their thoughts from the morbid contemplation of William Magee’s future, but even more because Elizabeth could share her reading with the interested child. Together they studied the Psalms and made earnest resolutions to lead better lives. So intense were Mrs. Seton’s reflections that they carried over to her dreams. One night, just after the ship had sighted the Rock of Gibraltar, she dreamed she was climbing such a dark mountain. When she had nearly reached the summit, spent and shaken, she heard a voice saying, “Never mind, take courage—there is a beautiful green hill on the other side—and on it an angel waits for you.”\textsuperscript{11} On other occasions the storms which beset the ship filled her with terror and a sense of unworthiness, and she prayed on trembling knees, “a helpless child clinging to the Mercy of its tender Father.” Once when a midnight storm came up suddenly, little Anna Maria Seton, upon whose gentle heart the daily readings of the psalmist had left their print, whispered softly, “Come hither all ye weary Souls,” and her mother crept into bed with her and was lost in refreshing sleep.\textsuperscript{12} Two days later the \textit{Shepherdess} put into port, to the ringing of the church bells of Leghorn.

Early in the morning of 19 November 1803, the impatient Setons heard a boat alongside, and Elizabeth flew to the deck to greet her brother, Carleton, who had come out to meet them. Guy Carleton Bayley was Dr. Richard Bayley’s son by his second wife, Amelia Barclay Bayley. Carleton, as he was more often called, was working in the counting house of the Filicchi brothers in Leghorn, the same Filicchis whom William Magee Seton had known from youth.\textsuperscript{f} In her joy at seeing someone from home Elizabeth did not at first perceive Carleton’s reluctance to approach her. It was only when a guard brusquely ordered, “Don’t touch!” that she had a premonition of danger. Her dismay mounted rapidly when she was informed

\textsuperscript{f} Filippo (Philip) Filicchi (1763–1816) and Antonio Filicchi (1764–1847). Philip Filicchi is said to have spent the years 1785-1786 in the United States, at which time he became familiar to George Washington who later made Filicchi the American consul at Leghorn. Filicchi was appointed consul on 10 December 1794, assumed charge at Leghorn on 20 March 1795, and retired from office in November 1798. It is fairly certain Philip Filicchi was in the United States early in 1788. When he returned to Italy later that year he was accompanied by young William Magee Seton. It was during this visit that Seton became friendly with the younger brother, Antonio Filicchi, who was studying law at Rome. In 1789 Philip went again to the United States, and it was probably at this time that he married Mary Cowper of Boston. Late in 1789 the Filicchi house of commerce with its connections in the United States was “publicly established” in Leghorn. Mary Cowper Filicchi came to Italy in 1790, and the following year William Magee Seton again visited Leghorn in October. Seton had every reason to regard both Filicchi brothers as good friends in 1803.
that the *Shepherdess* was from New York, where yellow fever was raging, and because the vessel lacked “a bill of health” it would have to go into quarantine. The welcoming strains of “Hail Columbia,” a tune to which her children at home had so loved to march, proved too much for Elizabeth’s equanimity, and she took refuge in her cabin, sobbing bitterly at the odd chance that made her, who had watched with such pity the arrivals at the Staten Island quarantine, now herself a victim of similar precautions.\(^\text{13}\)

The Leghorn lazaretto, or quarantine, was several miles from the city on a canal. The Setons were rowed out to the dungeon-like building, taking with them only the barest necessities, for someone had assured them mistakenly that the lazaretto was “the very place for the comfort of the sick.” Elizabeth took her books and the small writing “secretary,” but only one change of clothes went because they were promised the rest would be brought on Monday. The curious stares of the boatmen and their loud shouting in a foreign tongue made little Anna Maria tremble. Poor Seton was so weak he could scarcely walk, yet no one offered to assist him for fear of contracting the dread disease. The only bright spot in the whole proceeding was the welcome of Mrs. Philip Filicchi, who had come to the quarantine. True, a fence separated them, but the sound of an American voice, speaking words of consolation and greeting, was a salve to their lacerated feelings. Mary Filicchi was the former Mary Cowper of Boston, and she had made the trip to the lazaretto while she herself was in poor health.\(^\text{8}\) Her action was symbolic of the warm friendship Mrs. Seton was to receive from all the Filicchi family.\(^\text{14}\)

After the brief exchange with Mrs. Filicchi, the Setons were shown the door to “enter, No. 6—up 20 stone steps, a room with high arched ceilings like St. Paul’s—brick floor, naked walls and a jug of water.”\(^\text{15}\)

The desolation of this room has been described too often to warrant a repetition. The sojourn in the lazaretto is vividly described in the journal Elizabeth kept for Rebecca Seton and the feeling of gloomy, damp discomfort which accompanied their isolation is easily recaptured from its pages. Mrs. Seton quite naturally viewed the dreary succession of days as so many postponements of her husband’s chance for recovery. The constant presence of his melancholy face, his shivering frame, the racking cough, and the despairing sobs could only color her impressions with a somber hue. Yet her account contains innumerable notes of attentions and kindnesses received—for example, the captain of the lazaretto who had the warm eggs and wine brought on the arrival of the Setons and the supper sent in by the Filicchi,

\(^{\text{8}}\) Mary Cowper (1760–1821) married Philip Filicchi in Boston. The couple had no children. The name Cowper, pronounced Cooper, sometimes appears as Cooper.

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“with other necessaries.” Two days after their arrival in the quarantine station the captain and guards came in to put up a bed for William Magee, curtains to prevent a draft, and benches to be used by Elizabeth and her daughter. A servant, old Luigi, was sent to serve them during their confinement, and he raced up and down the twenty stairs countless times a day.¹⁶

Some days Luigi brought in stiff little bouquets of jasmine, geraniums, and pinks, and the heavy sweetness of the flowers mingled with the salty air which always pervaded the room. The sound of the pealing church bells from the shore alternated with the roaring of the sea and the counterpoint of that serene pealing and the ominous thunder of the waves seemed to voice the inner intensity of emotion in which spiritual serenity met and mixed with premonitions of on-rushing calamity. In such a mood Elizabeth “forgot prison bolts and sorrow, and would have rejoiced to have sung with Paul and Silas.” On days like these the encouragement given by Dr. Tutilli made them all happy; Elizabeth could borrow Anna Maria’s jumping rope with only half the reason to keep warm.¹⁷

The quick sympathy Elizabeth felt for all suffering caused her to enter actively into the moods of her husband and child. With William Magee she shared the sudden pains and shivered with his cold; with Anna Maria she could cry until her eyes smarted; with them both she was swept with homesickness and longing on the day when all remembered young Willy’s birthday at home. The matins bells which awakened her filled her at first with “most painful regrets and an agony of sorrow, which could not at first find relieve even in prayer.” But Elizabeth’s excesses of emotion were followed by cooler reflections and, the second day in the lazaretto, she wrote, “I came to my senses and reflected that I was offending my only Friend and resource in my misery.”¹⁸ This practice of sublimating sensibility was to be developed to a heroic degree by Mrs. Seton in later life. The journal of the lazaretto shows unmistakable evidences that she was already practicing fortitude in the face of heavy odds. Invariably a passage in her journal which describes the misery of the quarantine is followed by one expressing reflections such as this:

> With God for our portion there is no prison in high walls and bolts—no sorrow in the soul that waits on him, tho’ beset with present cares and gloomy prospects. For this freedom I can never be sufficiently thankful, as in my William’s case, it keeps alive what in his weak state of body would naturally fail. Often when he hears me repeat the Psalms of Triumph in God, and read St. Paul’s faith in Christ, with my whole soul,
it so enlivens his Spirit that he makes them his own—and all our sorrows are turned to joy. Oh well may I love God! Well may my whole soul strive to please Him, for what but the pen of an Angel can ever express what He has done and is constantly doing for me. While I live, while I have my being in time and thro' Eternity, let me sing praises to my God. ¹⁹

The first week in December all her fine hopes for her husband came crashing to the ground. On 5 December, William Magee Seton woke in severe pain and the doctor was summoned immediately. Dr. Tutilli took one brief look at the sick man and told Elizabeth it was a doctor of souls who was needed here. Mrs. Seton spent the day by William Magee’s side, kneeling on a mat by his bed. Carleton Bayley got word that his brother-in-law was dying and he came with the captain to persuade Elizabeth to have someone stay with her, with death so near. Her matter-of-fact “what have I to fear?” silenced them. Her chief sensation was one of gratitude that God was giving her—the strength to face the hour.

When Mr. Thomas Hall, the British chaplain, arrived the next morning he was amazed to find Mr. Seton alive and to all appearances improved. It was only a reprieve, but the weeks which followed were truly “days of grace” for William Magee Seton. From that crisis on, his thoughts turned almost constantly toward heaven. He often said that this was the period of his life, whether he lived or died, that he would consider blessed, “the only time which he has not lost.” ²⁰ He liked to dwell on the inspiring words he had heard from John Henry Hobart’s lips; but he always returned to his wife as his greatest source of inspiration. His serene resignation roused in Elizabeth a fierce protective impulse, and when the “capitano” shrugged his shoulders and pointed toward the sky as if in silent reminder that all was in the hands of God, Elizabeth had the thought, “You need not always point your silent look and finger there—if I thought our condition the Providence of man, instead of the ‘weeping Magdalene’ as you so graciously call me, you would find me willing to tear down your Lazaretto about your ears, if it were possible to carry off my poor prisoner to breathe the air of Heaven in some more seasonable place.” ²¹ As her anger mounted within her, her thoughts continued:

To keep a poor soul who came to your country for his life, thirty days shut up in damp walls, smoke, and wind from all corners blowing even the curtain round his bed, which is only a mattress on boards, and his bones almost through—and now the shadow of death, trembling if he only stands a
few minutes. He is to go to Pisa for his health—this day his prospects are very far from Pisa.  

And then, ashamed of her spirit of rebellion, she prayed,
O my Heavenly Father, I know that these contradictory events are permitted and guided by Thy Wisdom, which only is light. We are in darkness, and must be thankful that our knowledge is not wanted to perfect Thy Work.

William Magee Seton did go to Pisa in the end. For two damp days uncertainty prevailed at the lazaretto while the release of the Setons hung in the balance; but 19 December found the invalid being carried to the waiting coach of the Filicchis. Elizabeth held her breath during the trip downstairs, fearing that this exertion might prove fatal, but once in the carriage her fears were dispelled. The air seemed to revive William Magee and at the end of the fifteen-mile journey his spirits were higher than at any time since the day they first saw Leghorn’s shores. The comfort of the lodgings the Setons found waiting was luxury in contrast to the drab lazaretto they had left behind. William Magee Seton felt, mistakenly, that health was returning; he insisted on daily rides in the carriage. Christmas Eve proved his hopes all vain.

This time there was no further doubt. The unmistakable last stages of the disease could not be misread. Seton sent for Captain O’Brien from the Shepherdess, and solemnly charged him to see that Elizabeth and Anna Maria got back safely to the United States. After that he refused to see anyone except his wife. He seemed anxious to be gone and refused the nourishment his wife pleadingly offered. In his weakness his mind began to wander. He imagined a ticket he had bought for Elizabeth in a London lottery had won the royal prize. He became convinced that a letter from James Seton had arrived, with news that the Setons no longer owed a penny in the world. Elizabeth’s heart ached as she heard him, in tones of childlike gratitude, thank God that he was taken first, “he was not wanted for our support” he need not see his wife and children die. Once he dreamed he saw little baby Rebecca in Heaven, beckoning to him. At the last he reached out with wasted arms to Elizabeth and cried piteously “you promised me you would go, come, come, fly—” At a quarter past seven on the morning of Tuesday, 27 December 1803, he died.

Elizabeth Seton’s belief in her husband’s nearness to heaven was so firm that she interpreted this dream to mean their youngest child, Rebecca, had died in their absence. She had not received the letter of 23 November 1803 from her sister-in-law, telling of the baby’s recovery. Her surprise at seeing the child alive when she returned to New York is noted in Mrs. Seton’s journal for Rebecca Seton and “Dear Remembrances.”

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Scarcely knowing what she did, Mrs. Seton called Anna Maria and told her they must thank God that Papa’s frightful sufferings were over. Together the mother and daughter prayed briefly. Then followed a nightmare of final arrangements. The mistress of the lodging house, fearing tuberculosis as greatly as she feared yellow fever, refused to go near the dead man. Elizabeth wrote Rebecca afterward,

I was obliged with the assistance of a poor woman who had washed for him, to lay him out myself, which added to three nights not laying my head down and two days fasting seemed almost enough. Notwithstanding [I] was forced to ride the fifteen miles to Leghorn with Mrs. Filicchi without even lying down, as my dear William must be carried there to be buried; it is a law that it must be done within the 24 hours. However by putting him in the burying house in the church yard we were allowed to wait ‘till eleven the next day.\(^26\)

The trip Mrs. Filicchi made with Elizabeth was just one more example of her kindness; scarcely able to be up herself, she rode with the bereaved young widow to Leghorn that morning. Carleton Bayley and old Luigi brought William Magee Seton’s remains to Leghorn on the afternoon of the same day.

Elizabeth was too dazed to notice the journey or arrival in Leghorn. Over and over the words kept repeating in her head, “My God, you are my God—and so I am alone in the world with you and my little ones, but you are my Father and doubly theirs.” Mr. Hall came from the British “Factory” or consulate that night to arrange the next day’s service, and said in his bluff British way, “As the tree falls, ma’m, there it lies”; and Mrs. Seton scarcely heard him. But when the old “capitano” of the lazaretto arrived, with black crepe on his hat and genuine sorrow on his wrinkled face, Elizabeth’s heart was really touched.\(^27\)

The Americans and English in Leghorn attended the services which were conducted by Mr. Hall. The death certificate was signed by this same Thomas Hall, the chaplain to the British Factory at Leghorn on 20 January 1804, and was witnessed by the American consul, Thomas Appleton. It stated simply that William Magee Seton “died at Pisa, 27\(^{th}\) December 1803, aged 37 years” and was interred in the English burial ground at Leghorn on the day following.\(^28\) Mrs. Seton now faced the trial of sending the news home to New York. She wrote first to Rebecca and asked her to tell the other Setons, since the pain of writing was such that she could not bear writing each one separately. By the Salem, bound for Boston, she also sent letters
to Mary Bayley Post, Eliza Sadler, Uncle John Charlton, and John Wilkes. When it came to writing Mr. Hobart, her strength failed her, and she asked Rebecca to tell him the tragic story. Elizabeth had written Hobart while still on board the *Shepherdess*, but since the news it contained was quite overshadowed by the later events, she decided not to send it. She expected to be home herself as soon as letters would arrive; she would carry it with her.¹

At this juncture there occurred a minor incident in Mrs. Seton’s life which is little known but which adds something to appreciating her personality. The wife of Captain O’Brien had been indisposed for some time. New Year’s night she was taken suddenly ill and sent to shore for Mrs. Seton. Elizabeth had only the most irritating memories of the woman who had brought on the voyage two children with whooping cough. Not only did the incessant coughing of the two distress William Magee Seton, but quite naturally Anna Maria Seton contracted the disease herself and added to her mother’s problems. This sudden summons to the *Shepherdess*, coming so soon after William Magee’s death was most unwelcome. But feeling was one thing with Mrs. Seton, action quite another. Without waiting for a carriage, she went through mud over her shoetops, was hoisted up to the ship’s deck like a bundle of old clothes, and remained on board all night with the unfortunate woman. Elizabeth wrote Rebecca ruefully, “but these three months has been a hard lesson—pray for me that I may make a good use of it.”²⁹

The energy and courage of the small widow intrigued the Filicchis and their friends, and Mrs. Seton soon found herself “hard pushed by these charitable Romans who wish that so much goodness should be improved by a conversion.”³⁰ Abbé Peter Plunkett, an Irish priest and considered the most able apologist in Leghorn, led the attack. Elizabeth was rather amused at first, having been too recently warned against such appeals by John Henry Hobart, who was confident the “sumptuous and splendid worship” of Italy would not “withdraw your affections from the simple but affecting worship at Trinity Church.”³¹ She wrote Rebecca in a light vein, “they find me so willing to hear their enlightened conversation, that consequently as learned people like to hear themselves best, I have but little to say, and as yet keep friends with all as the best comment on my Profession [of faith]—”³² Her complaisance was soon to be ruffled.

The Filicchis persuaded Mrs. Seton that while the ship was being made ready to sail some time should be devoted to sightseeing. January

¹ Since the printed *Correspondence of Henry Hobart* includes no letters from Mrs. Seton written at any time, it is not possible to state what this letter contained or whether it was ever delivered to Mr. Hobart.
found her and Anna Maria in Florence with the Filicchi women, visiting museums, churches, and other places of interest. Mrs. Seton kept a journal of her impressions of Florence for Rebecca Seton, and it is from this journal that we derive some knowledge of Elizabeth’s first reactions to Catholic worship. The visitors stayed in what was once the famous palace of the Medici, facing the Arno River. From its windows the Setons looked out upon Monte Morelli in the distance. In their room at night the mother and daughter read their Thomas à Kempis, the Psalms, and prayed; but during the day they saw sights which were to arouse even keener interest in things religious. Tuscany in 1804 was styled the Kingdom of Etruria, and it was no longer the mildly contented duchy that Archduke Leopold had once governed. On 1 October 1800, Spain had promised Louisiana to France in exchange for the pledge that a Spanish Bourbon should rule at Florence as King of Etruria. Since 1801 the grand duchy of Tuscany was part and parcel of Napoleon’s Northern Italian system. Louis Bourbon, Duke of Parma, reigned but briefly and at his death his widow, Maria Louisa, assumed the government. It was this daughter of Ferdinand VII who inhabited the palace in 1804.

With Amabilia Filicchi, Elizabeth Seton visited the Church of the Annunciation and there she saw hundreds of people kneeling in the half-gloom while “that kind of soft and distant musick which lifts the mind to a foretaste of heavenly pleasure called up in an instant every dear and tender idea of my Soul,” resulting in such memories that the young widow cried unrestrainedly. It was so long since she had been in the house of her God. The Church of the Santissima Annunziata stood in the Piazza of the same name not far from the statue of Ferdinand di Medici whom Robert Browning was later to immortalize in “The Statue and the Bust.” The church contained faultless frescoes by Andrea del Sarto, and bas-reliefs, and a magnificent crucifix by John of Bologna, of whose work Hawthorne once commented, “I think there has been no better sculptor since the days of Phidias.” But Elizabeth Seton was more concerned with her sorrow and she felt grateful to the preoccupation of those around her, so busy with “their prayers and Rosary that it is very immaterial what a stranger does.” When Amabilia drew the Setons closer to the altar to see the beauty of the ornament and the pictures, Mrs. Seton was amazed at the old men, young men, old women and girls, “all sorts of people kneeling promiscuously about the altar as inattentive to us or any other passengers as if we were not there.” When the women passed into the simple elegance of St. Firenze’s chapel, Elizabeth was struck by the pious composure of the young priest.

7 Amabilia Baragazzi (1773–1853) married Antonio Filicchi. They provided gracious hospitality to the Setons after the death of William Magee at Pisa. They had ten children.
When he unlocked “his little chapel with that composed and equal eye, as if his soul had entered before him,” her heart would willingly have followed.\(^{36}\) The Church of San Lorenzo’s altar evoked in her soul the words of the “Magnificat.” This church, which a half-century later impressed Hawthorne as rather somber and shabby, recalled to the earlier American traveler rather “the ideas of the offerings of David and Solomon to the Lord, when the rich and valuable productions of nature and art were devoted to His holy temple and sanctified to His service.”\(^{37}\)

The daily jaunts were not solely directed toward churches. The tourists visited the queen’s country palace, and twice saw the royal lady herself. Little Anna Maria was disappointed to discover that queens looked like everyone else, except for the number of attendants.\(^{38}\) The Boboli Gardens, adjacent to the queen’s residence, were visited. Here Elizabeth wandered among the bowered walks of box and shrubbery, gazed on the weathered faces of the innumerable statues, avoiding when she could the noisy parties of Florentines whose children rolled happily on the slopes or threw crumbs to the minnows in the pond. She climbed on up to the esplanade and laughingly complained of being “well-exercised in running up the flights of steps in the style of the hanging gardens.” The view from the top was worth the climb, however, and while she rested, and gazed out over the panorama of fir and pine, she reflected that “If the Tuscans are to be judged by their taste they are a happy people for every thing without is very shabby, and within elegant. The exterior of their best buildings are to appearance in a state of ruin.”\(^{39}\) She found it odd that even the best buildings gave the appearance of ruins on the outside; she found nothing to complain of in the wonders they contained.

The art galleries were not ignored. Elizabeth found the bronze statues “beautiful, but being only an American could not look very straight at them.”\(^{40}\) A painting of John the Baptist was much more to her liking. The splendor of the Pitti Palace was quite forgotten in her awe upon discovering the life-sized picture of “The Descent from the Cross” in the church of Sta. Maria Novella. It engaged her whole attention. She was reluctant to leave it, and in the hours that followed she had only to close her eyes to see again “Mary, at the foot of it, [who] expressed well that the iron had entered into her—and the shades of death over her agonized countenance so strongly contrasted the heavenly Peace of the dear Redeemer’s [expression] that it seems as if His Pains had fallen on her.”\(^{41}\) She forgot her disappointment over discovering that the gallery was nowhere nearly so wonderful as William Magee had led her to believe.\(^{42}\) Another morning was spent in the
anatomical museum and cabinet of natural history. The Museum contained a fine collection of almost everything in nature: stones, shells, vegetables, insects, fishes, reptiles, animals, and man. The greatest wonders were the models in wax of all the parts of the human frame. Mrs. Seton’s delicacy made her shrink from some of the displays in the latter, but in the former she saw “the work of the Almighty Hand in every object.” How she wished Dr. Wright Post, her brother-in-law, could see these marvels.

The evenings, as a rule, were spent in seclusion, Elizabeth often thought gratefully of the inspiration which had prompted her to bring her daughter on the voyage. Anna Maria, who was on many occasions to present an enigma to her mother, was on this occasion her greatest confidant and comfort. Together they discussed the wonders of the day, reflected over the spiritual reading habitual to their evenings, and talked of home. Only once did the two leave their rooms at night, and this was occasioned by the urgent persuasion of their friends, that the Setons must hear the celebrated Giacomo Davide at the opera. Elizabeth went heavily veiled, instead of masking as was the custom, and she entered only after the theatre was darkened. Anna Maria was open-mouthed in amazement at the grimaces and trilling of the singers, while poor Elizabeth found not “the least gratification in their quavers.” Only her courtesy and the memory that William Magee had so wanted her to hear this particular man made her try to look pleased. After a half hour of this discomfort she was “relieved from the most unwilling exertion” she had been forced to make in Florence, and the Setons retired to the peace of their lodgings “redoubled delight”, where the joys of Thomas à Kempis seemed “as the joys of heaven in comparison.”

When the Setons returned to Leghorn at the end of January they found Captain O’Brien still unprepared to sail, and they were thus able to enjoy another week or two in Florence. The Leghorn interval, however, provided several opportunities for Elizabeth to become further interested in Catholicism. It was at this time that Philip Filicchi gave her a copy of the spiritual classic Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales which sent her to her knees begging God for light. On Candlemas Day she went to Mass with Amabilia and when she was presented with the idea that God was really present on the altar, she covered her face with her hands, while the tears slipped through her fingers.

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43 Giacomo Davide was the first tenor of his time and is better known as “Davide le Pere.” He had a great vogue in London in 1791 and performed at one of the last Handel festivals there. He returned to Florence in 1802 where he delighted his audiences with his powerful, “well-toned” voice and perfection of execution.
1 White, 100, states that the Setons embarked for America on 3 February 1804, but this seems contradicted by Mrs. Seton’s entry of 2 February which states, “Now we go to Florence...Captain O’Brien is to be ready by our return.” The false start White describes is clearly dated 18 February in the journal. White seems to have based his date on information given by Antonio Filicchi in October 1843.
Filicchi pointed out that there was only one true religion, and that without the right faith we are not acceptable to God. When Elizabeth asked the obvious question, “If there is but one Faith and nobody pleases God without it, where are all the good people who die out of it?” Philip told her gravely, “I don’t know; that depends on what light of faith they had received. But I know where people go who can know the right faith, if they pray for it, and inquire for it, and yet do neither.”

Elizabeth was still incredulous, and wrote Rebecca,

So, dearest Bec, I am laughing with God when I try to be serious and say daily as the good gentleman told me in old Mr. Pope’s words “if I am right, O teach my heart still in the right to stay, if I am wrong, Thy Grace impart to find the better way.” Not that I can think there is a better way than I know—but everyone must be respected in their own.”

Joseph Forsyth’s handbook for tourists visiting Leghorn in the nineteenth century carried a description of a famous church which had been erected “by the piety of sailors to an old picture of the Virgin which had flown from India [sic] through the air and perched on top of this hill for their especial protection.” The hill was Montenero, and the chapel was thought to be the scene of many miraculous cures. The walls, at any rate, were covered with cable ends, crutches, and chains of delivered slaves. No Italian ship sailed past Montenero without saluting the Lady of the hill, Mary of Montenero, Patron of Tuscany. The Filicchis had an added reason for wishing their guests to visit the place, for once, during a political revolution, Philip Filicchi had been sheltered by the monks of the church.

The day Elizabeth Seton attended Mass at this famous chapel another non-Catholic visitor was present in the person of a young Englishman. Thinking he recognized a fellow curiosity-seeker, he turned at the elevation of the Host, and whispered loudly, “This is what they call their Real PRESENCE.” The rude remark in the presence of the prostrate worshipers was in itself enough to offend the sensitive American widow, and deeply distressed she leaned as far away as possible. But the words started a train of thought which soon caused her to shiver with dread. The words of St. Paul came to her, “They discern not the Lord’s Body” and her startled thoughts continued,

How should they eat and drink their very damnation for not discerning it, if indeed it is not there. Yet how should it be there, and how did He breathe my Soul in me, and how and how a hundred other things I know nothing about. I am a Mother so the Mothers thought came also how was my GOD

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\( ^{48} \) Alexander Pope, English essayist and poet (1688–1744).
a little babe in the first stage of his mortal existence in Mary, but I lost these thoughts in my babes at home, which I daily long for more and more, but they wait a fair wind—

And if the wind had been fair, that day at Montenero might have been permanently lost in thoughts of home. But the Setons did not sail the third week in February, as they had planned. True, they said their good byes, they boarded the Shepherdess, they arranged their gifts and property. In the night a violent storm arose, and ramming the vessels against each other in the harbor, wreaked such havoc that the passengers were obliged to go ashore. The full implication of disaster was not realized by Elizabeth until she discovered Anna Maria had a high fever. The doctor summoned to examine the child pronounced it scarlet fever, and he told Mrs. Seton they must give up the voyage or risk Anna Maria’s life. Elizabeth later confessed to Rebecca that she was by this time so anxious to get home that she would have gone anyway, trusting Anna Maria’s life to God’s mercy, but the simple fact was that Captain O’Brien refused to take them. With Anna Maria on board, he would have been refused a bill of health for Barcelona, and a delay in quarantine there would ruin his voyage. Mrs. Seton had to face another delay, with the reflection that “Well the hand of our God is all I must see in the whole—but it pinches to the Soul.” The first part of her remark was true; but her soul was to expand in the months to follow.

The three weeks of Anna Maria’s illness were a severe trial for the girl’s mother. It was not till the end of February that Elizabeth was sure she might not leave two graves behind instead of one. The care and attention of the Filicchis were enough to melt the heart. When Elizabeth herself came down with the fever, and the delay was prolonged another several weeks, she could only marvel at all the kindness she saw about her. The faith which motivated such Christian charity was bound to interest her as her strength returned. She was deeply touched by the rigorous Lenten fasting she saw Amabilia Filicchi practicing. She contrasted this mortification with the ludicrous inconsistency she had perceived in New York on an earlier Ash Wednesday, when after a hearty breakfast of buckwheat cakes she had gone to Trinity Church to pray, “I come to you in fasting, weeping and mourning.” Mr. Hobart had explained her question with the remark that fasting was an “old custom.” Here in Italy she saw people fasting until three o’clock, and offering their weakness as penance for their sins. She liked it very much. Even more, she liked the idea of being able to go to church every day. She wrote Rebecca:
How often you and I used to give the sigh and you would press your arm in mine of a Sunday evening and say no more till next Sunday as we turned from the church door which closed on us (unless a prayer day was given out in the week)—well here they go to church at 4 every morning, if they please—and you know how we were laughed at for running from one church to the other [on] Sacrament Sundays, that we might receive as often as we could, well here people that love God and live a good regular life can go (tho’ many do not do it) yet they can go [to communion] every day.

O my—I don’t know how any body can have any trouble in this world who believe all these dear Souls believe—if I don’t believe it, it shall not be for want of praying—why they must be as happy as the angels almost.54

The procession which carried the Blessed Sacrament through the street, past Mrs. Seton’s window, affected her visibly and she cried to herself, How happy I would be to find God “in the chapel, in the sacrament”; and she asked God to bless her if He were really there. In the heartbreaking loneliness of William Magee’s absence, she found consolation in the Memorare. It seemed as if the mother she had missed all those years were at last a reality and Elizabeth cried herself “to sleep in her heart.”55 When she was taught by Antonio Filicchi to make the sign of the cross she grew cold with the thought of the Cross of Christ upon her and her eager heart was filled with earnest desires to be united to Him Who died upon it.56

Elizabeth Seton and Antonio Filicchi began in Italy a friendship which was to last for the rest of her life. Scarcely had Mrs. Seton left Leghorn for Florence in January 1804 when she received from Antonio a warm letter containing the words:

Your dear William was the early friend of my youth: you are now come in his room. Your soul is even dearer to Antonio, and will be so forever. May the good almighty God enlighten your mind and strengthen your heart to see and follow in religion the surest true way to eternal blessings. I shall call for you in Paradise if it is decreed that the vast plains of the ocean shall be betwixt us. Don’t discontinue meanwhile to pray, to knock at the door. I am confident that our Redeemer will not be deaf to the humble prayers of so dear a creature.57
By April the younger Filicchi and the American widow were better acquainted with each other and the following exchange of notes took place. Antonio wrote his “Dearest Sister,”

Afraid of some reproaches or of a like thing that I might have deserved for my too crazy manners, I have been most agreeably surprised in perusing all over ten times your favorite lines addressed to me in so delicate, so easy, so witty a style, and I hasten to give them my poor reply of acknowledgment and admiration. Believe me, my beloved Sister, that for the purpose of obtaining one of your letters in the week I could cheerfully scribble all the 24 hours of the day.58

Elizabeth wrote her “Most dear A.,”

We often receive blessing from the hand of God and convert them into evils; this has been my fault in respect to the very sincere and uncommon affections I have for you, and I am determined with God’s help no more to abuse the very great favor he bestows on me in giving me your friendship and in future will endeavor to show you how much I value it by doing all I can to contribute to your happiness. On your part, I entreat, you will behave to me with confidence and affection—the more you confide in me the more careful I shall be—trust me and the Angel—59

By this time Antonio Filicchi and his brother Philip had agreed that the Filicchi affairs in America warranted an investigation and that Antonio might combine business and charity by making the voyage at the same time that Mrs. Seton and her daughter returned to the United States. Elizabeth wrote to Rebecca on 5 April 1804 that passage had been taken for New York on the Pyomingo which would sail as soon as the equinox was past. The Pyomingo was a fast vessel, she added, and the season could not be more favorable.60 Antonio would accompany the Setons to New York, and then proceed to Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Canada, to transact the firm’s business. Probably the elder Filicchi had this plan in mind when in answer to Mrs. Seton’s fears for the future he said drily, “My little sister, God the Almighty is laughing at you. He takes care of little birds and makes the lilies grow, and you fear He will not take care of you—I tell you He will take care of you.”61

* Filicchi called the ship Pyomingo in this letter. Elizabeth Seton spelled it “Piamingo” while contemporary newspaper accounts of the ship’s arrival also used “Piamingo” and “Pyomento.” John Blagge was the captain.
The last day in Leghorn began early and bright. The Filicchis rose at four o’clock and took Elizabeth to her last Mass there probably at the nearby church of Sta. Caterina on via Forte S. Pietro where the Filicchi family worshipped. The two-hour warning from the Pyomingo could be heard as they entered the chapel door. Seeing Antonio and Amabilia together at communion made Elizabeth pray that their gift of faith might be hers, and she promised “all in return for such a gift.” The sun was bright upon the balcony of the Filicchi house as the little party set off for the ship. At the health office Carleton Bayley and Philip Filicchi made their farewells and handed over their letters for America. By eight o’clock the three travelers were seated on the quarter deck and the anchor was weighed.62

How firmly attached to Catholicism was Elizabeth Seton, when she left Italy? There are some strong indications that she was ready to become a Catholic before she left. There is the enigmatic entry in “Dear Remembrances” describing the day of departure:

Last Mass at Leghorn at 4 in the morning—lost in the indescribable reverence and impressions kneeling in a little confessional perceived not [that] the ear was waiting for me till the Friar came out to ask Mrs. F. “why I did not begin.”63

It seems hard to believe that Mrs. Seton could have entered the confessional by mistake, after having been more than three months in Italy, and having been so amply instructed by the Filicchis who were anxious that she understand all the aspects of Catholic worship. Her use of the word “confessional” was made in full knowledge of the word’s significance since “Dear Remembrances” was written many years after she was a Catholic. Did she attempt to make a general confession at this time? Is there any significance to her use of the words “this good” to limit the confession she made in New York in March 1805? She wrote Amabilia in regard to her first confession after her conversion, “so delighted now to prepare for this good confession, which bad as I am, I would be ready to make on the housetop, to insure the good absolution I hope for after it.”64

Whatever the answer to the puzzle thus presented, it is rather clear that neither a formal retraction nor profession of faith was made in Italy, if Philip Filicchi is to be believed. After Elizabeth Seton returned to New York and entered the phase of vacillation, she received a letter from the elder

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62 [The confessional remains at an angle by the wall of a circular, side chapel. It is plausible that Mrs. Seton was overcome with emotion and sought privacy there in the obscurity of its shadow while she wept. Ed.]
Filicchi in which he quoted St. Luke in reference to putting the hand to the plough-share and then turning back. He continued:

I fear that an imprudent confidence in your firmness may be placed to my account. Perhaps a secret pride made me trust in the power of my persuasions. The vanity of giving proof to your friends that your change of religion could not be imputed to surprise made me prefer your delaying your action of retraction. I consider myself guilty of all this and can only plead a sort of good intention.65

It is a fact that Elizabeth Seton’s profession of faith in Roman Catholicism was not made until 14 March 1805. It also seems evident that she had given the Filicchis every reason to believe she was intellectually convinced of the validity of the Catholic faith. Was she guilty of deceit? If she was, she deceived herself as well. Here are her words upon setting sail from Leghorn:

My Father and my God—and yet I must always love to retrospect thy wonderful dispensations—to be sent so many thousand miles on so hopeless an errand—to be constantly supported and accompanied by thy consoling mercy, through scenes of trial which nature alone must have sunk under—to be brought to the light of thy truth, notwithstanding every affection of my heart and power of my will was opposed to it—to be succored and cherished by the tenderest friendship, while separated and far from those that I loved—my Father and my God, while I live, let me praise—while I have my being let me serve and adore Thee.66

It was the old story of the immeasurable gulf which lies between an intellectual comprehension which eager apologists have fostered, and the gift of faith which only supernatural power may confer. It is not unusual for great souls to go through a prolonged period of torment between seeing and believing. Elizabeth’s struggle was to begin almost as soon as the Pyomingo weighed anchor; it was to grow in violence after she reached New York; it was to end nearly a year later at St. Peter’s on Barclay Street. The struggle was undoubtedly complicated by the circumstances under which she had been introduced to Catholicism, by the ardor of her temperament, and by the emotional crisis her widowhood induced. One of the most convincing explanations for the duration of Mrs. Seton’s uncertainty lies in the observation John Carroll, (1735–1815), bishop of Baltimore, made to

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65 [John Carroll was the first Catholic bishop in the United States (1789). Carroll was the first bishop (1789–1808) and first archbishop (1808–1815) of Baltimore, the premier see. Ed.]
Antonio Filicchi a short time before Elizabeth entered the Church. Carroll wrote,

The ordinary course of Providence with respect to those who are tried by interior darkness and tribulation, is to subject them to it after their conversion is completed; and it often happens that those trials become highly useful and dispose those who are subjected to them, to disclose with utmost sincerity the entire state of their consciences, all their weaknesses, and even those imperfections of which formerly they made no account. Perhaps in the case of your most esteemed and respected friend, it pleases God to suffer her to experience now, before her union with His Church, those agitations of conscience which will induce her to perform with the greatest care and attention all previous duties, necessary for her adoption into it.67

Whatever the explanation for its duration, the period of “interior darkness and tribulation” which Mrs. Seton endured began on board the ship which carried her home. The voyage was long, lasting fifty-six days, and Elizabeth passed some of the time reading Alban Butler’s Lives of the Primitive Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints.68 For days she could not summon the courage to write in her journal, and when at last she did she noted, “For four days past the trial has been hard—oh Lord, deal not with me in displeasure—let not my enemy triumph.”69 The nature of these preliminary trials and temptations can be guessed from her entry of 21 April which contained this revealing passage:

When a soul whose only hope is in God, whose concern and desires are so limited that it would forsake all human beings, and account the dearest ties of life as foolishness compared with his love—when this soul sincerely desirous of serving and obeying him, is beset by the lowest passions of human nature, and from tears and prayers of earnest penitence can, by apparently the most trivial incitements, pass to the most humiliating compliances to sin—apparently, for until the effects are experienced it would be incredible that the commonest affections and unintentional actions should produce a confusion and disturbance in the mind that is exalted to the love of God, and destroy every impression but momentary gratification—this can only be the work of the enemy of our souls—our souls that have so often prayed to
Him for grace and mercy, and while lamenting our errors and trying to gain mutual strength, have solemnly declared that we would embrace our cross, follow our Leader, and valiantly oppose the enemy of our salvation. Most dear Antonio, a thousand times endeared to me by the struggles of your soul, our Lord is with us—once more the mark is—+ to God.70

The entries which follow read like a rising crescendo of supplication. When the *Pyomingo* was becalmed off the coast of Valencia, and Horatio Nelson’s fleet sent boarding parties from the *Belle Isle* and the *Excellent,* Elizabeth recorded in terror, “Oh, my God, if I should die in the midst of so much sin and so little penitence. How terrible it will be to fall into thy hands!”71 Yet her fear was mixed with love and she added, “my soul must still praise thee for so long sparing the punishment so justly due it, must still adore that infinite mercy that has given me so many means of grace, though my corrupt nature has made so bad a use of them. Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, still be merciful to a miserable sinner.”72

The vehemence of the first trial seems to have subsided as the ship neared American shores. As Elizabeth’s thoughts turned more and more to her children and her former attachments, her confidence returned. Recalling some coral she had watched rising from the ocean’s seething foam, she found herself comparing it to the human soul and she wrote in her journal that when the soul is submerged in an ocean of worldly interests it is ready to yield to temptations.7 As soon as the soul raises itself to God, like the coral, its pale green is transformed to a purer rosy hue by God’s constant and Divine Love. The soul is then ready to view with confidence the overthrow of its baser impulses.73 Her own soul welcomed the brief respite. On 4 June 1804, the *Pyomingo* released its passengers at New York. Very soon Mrs. Seton was to feel the onslaught of fresh attacks; but the voyage, at least, was safely past.

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8 Between 30 March and 1 June 1805, Napoleon had planned to have a naval maneuver led by Villeneuve lure Nelson from the Mediterranean, Cornwallis from Brest, and thus raise the blockade of Brest preparatory to Napoleon’s “destruction” of England. The naval plans miscarried and Nelson was still cruising in the Mediterranean, where he had been for some time, when the *Pyomingo* made motionless by lack of wind 20 October of the same year, Nelson and Collingwood defeated Villeneuve off Cape Trafalgar. Nelson was killed, but Villeneuve was made prisoner and subsequently committed suicide.

9 White does not reprint this part of the journal and, therefore, de Barberey is the closest to the original source. [“The coral in the ocean is a branch of pale green. Take it from its native bed, it becomes firm, bends no more, it is almost a rock. Its tender color is changed to a brilliant red: so, too, we, submerged in the ocean of this world, subjected to the succession of the waves, ready to give up under the stress of each wave and temptation. But as soon as our soul rises, and it breathes toward heaven, the pale green of our island hopes is changed into that pure bright red of divine and constant love. Then we regard the disruptions of nature and the fall of worlds with a constant and unshakeable confidence.” See de Barberey, 97. Ed.]
CHAPTER 4. ITALIAN INTERLUDE

Notes

1 William Magee Seton, Passport, British Consulate, New York City, 28 September 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:64.

2 John Carroll to James Barry, 25 August and 8 September 1803, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore 9-D-3, 9-D-4, located in Associated Archives at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, Baltimore, Maryland. Carroll went to Boston to dedicate the Church of the Holy Cross on 29 September 1803. Hereinafter cited as AAB, AASMSU.

3 James Barry to Senor Don Joseph de Jaudenes, New York, 8 September 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-2-45.

4 John Henry Hobart to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 November 1803, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B70.

5 Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Pirates (Washington, D.C., 1941), III, iii.


7 1.177, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, 1 October 1803, CW, 1:224. Robert Seton, Memoir, Letters and Journal, I, 98, dates this letter 29 September, but the original at Emmitsburg bears the date 1 October.

8 2.1, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, New York, 3 October 1803, CW, 1:243; 1.175, Elizabeth Seton to William Seton, CW, 1:223; 1.176, Elizabeth Seton to Richard Seton, CW, 1:223.


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 16 November 1803, CW, 1:248.

13 2.6, Journal to Rebecca Seton, 19 November 1803, CW, 1:249-250. Elizabeth Seton used the spelling “Carlton,” when referring to her
half-brother.

14 The Seton-Jevons Collection contains one letter written by Filicchi from Philadelphia on 15 December 1785, to Samuel Curson in New York. Regarding Philip Filicchi’s appointment as counselor, see Records of the Department of State in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. See John Carroll to William O’Brien, 10 May 1788, AAB, AASMSU, 9-S-1. See also John Thorpe to John Carroll, 24 February 1789, 13 May 1789, 22 January 1790, 5 October 1791, AAB, AASMSU, 8-J-3, 8-J-6, 8-K-3, 8-L-6.


16 2.7, Journal to Rebecca Seton, 19-20 November 1803, CW, 1:255.

17 Ibid., 256. Dr. Tutilli was a friend of the Filicchis who was sent to attend William Seton. His first name does not appear.

18 Ibid., 254.

19 Ibid., 265.

20 Ibid., 269.

21 Ibid., 270.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 271.

24 Ibid., 278.

25 2.7, Journal to Rebecca Seton, Monday [26 December] entry, CW, 1:274. See 2.8, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Leghorn, 3 January 1804, CW, 1:276-280, contains a full account of Seton’s last hours, See also 2.7, Journal to Rebecca Seton, Monday [26 December 1803], CW, 1:274-276.

26 Ibid, 278. The journal disagrees as to the number of women who assisted, giving them as two.

27 2.11, Journal to Rebecca Seton, 28 January 1803, CW, 1:289.

28 William Magee Seton’s Death and Burial Certificate, Leghorn, 20 January 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:65. William Magee was buried at Leghorn in the English cemetery on via degli Elisi until his remains were transferred to the parish garden of Sta. Elisabetta Seton parish in that city in 2004.

29 2.9, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Leghorn, 6 January 1804, CW, 1:282.

30 2.8, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Leghorn, 3 January 1804, CW, 1:279.

31 John Henry Hobart to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 November 1803,
ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B70.

32 2.8, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, Leghorn, 3 January 1804, CW, 1:276.

33 2.5-2.12, Journal to Rebecca Seton, CW, 1:246-95; Ibid., 296-304. Elizabeth Seton’s journal was kept by Antonio Filicchi as a souvenir of her Italian stay. He made a copy in his own hand for Mrs. Seton. It is this latter copy which is found in ASJPH. See 2.5, Ibid., CW, 2:246, n.1.


35 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks (New York, 1871), 360. Entry, 8 July 1858.

36 2.10, Florence Journal to Rebecca Seton, 8 January 1804, CW, 1:284.

37 Ibid., 285.

38 Ibid., 284.

39 Ibid., 288.

40 Ibid., 285.

41 Ibid., 287.

42 Ibid. Part of the failure of the gallery to live up to Mrs. Seton’s expectations was due to the depredations made by the French during the earlier Napoleonic campaigns.

43 Hawthorne, 303.

44 2.10, Florence Journal to Rebecca Seton, 10 January 1804, CW, 1:287.


46 2.11, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 28 January 1804, CW, 1:290. See Antonio Filicchi to Charles I. White, 20 October 1846, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 2.11, Journal to Rebecca, 10 February 1804, CW, 1:290.

50 The name of this holy place at Montenero is the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace. Robert Seton, Diary for 1919, New York Historical Society, 77. Seton quotes the entire item from Joseph Forsyth and adds that he was “a prejudiced Scotchman.” The painting mentioned, Seton believed [correctly], was of Greek origin and showed the Blessed Virgin seated on a cushion, holding the Infant Jesus on her left, while a bird on a string perched on her right arm. Robert Seton, Memoir, Letters and Journal, I, 143. Cf. Joseph Forsyth’s Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters during an Excursion in Italy in

51 The Congregation of Vallombroso, a branch of the Benedictines.

52 2.11, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, 10 February 1804, CW, 1:291.

53 Ibid., 292.

54 2.14, Journal to Rebecca Seton (continued), CW, 1:297.

55 Ibid., 293.

56 Ibid., 296.

57 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 9 January 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:1.

58 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 6 April 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:3.

59 2.13, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 6 April 1804, CW, 1:295.

60 Antonio Filicchi to Monsignor Joseph Pecci, Leghorn, 17 October 1821, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

61 2.14, Journal to Rebecca Seton (continued), 18 April 1804, CW, 1:298.

62 White, 107. The original journal Mrs. Seton kept of the voyage home is not available. In the 1902 Diary of Robert Seton, now in the possession of the New York Historical Society, Seton states “I gave Madame de Barberey (Rome ’66) a little book all written [sic] Mother Seton’s hand... My aunt Catherine (Catherine Josephine Seton) gave me the book. Mme. de Barberey is dead and the book is, now, God knows where. I remember only that it had some notes of her return voyage from Leghorn to New York after her husband’s death.” (p.90). Since de Barberey gives the excerpts in French, and Code’s English version is a translation of her French, it has been deemed wiser to use White’s version as most probably the nearest to the original. [Some de Barberey papers are now archived at Parrocchia Madre Seton, Piazza Maria Lavagna, 15, Leghorn, Italy. Ed.]


64 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:376.

65 Philip Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 22 October 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:14.


67 John Carroll to Antonio Filicchi, Boston, 13 January 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:38.

68 Antonio Filicchi to Monsignor Joseph Pecci, Leghorn, 17 October 1821, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

69 2.14, Journal to Rebecca Seton (continued), 19 April 1804, CW, 1:300.
Cf. White, 108.

70 Ibid., 301. Cf. White, 109, entry for 21 April 1804.


72 Ibid., 303.

CHAPTER 5

TO OLD SAINT PETER’S

The arrival in New York from Italy on 4 June 1804, was for Elizabeth Seton an occasion of mingled anticipation and dread. She experienced that indescribable poignancy produced by revisiting in sorrow the scenes of former joy. At no time had her husband’s death been so keenly felt as in this moment when Mrs. Seton saw her fatherless children waiting to meet her. Her heart cried out within her, “My God well may I cling to thee for whom have I in Heaven but thee and who upon Earth beside thee, My heart and my flesh fail but thou art the Strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

The joy of holding the children again in her arms was her consolation. Little Rebecca, whom she had feared dead, was her special delight. It was not until the first flurry of greetings was over that Elizabeth noticed the absence of her sister-in-law Rebecca Seton.

Bec, the devoted sister-in-law, was scarcely alive. It seemed as if she had been only waiting for Elizabeth’s return. Now all the things Elizabeth had wanted to discuss with her “soul’s sister” must be told in haste or left unsaid. Bec’s weakness and pain were constant interruptions to the returned traveler’s attempts to point out “the few lines...of the true faith and service of our God,” the eager readings of the Mass together, the urgent desire to share, before it was forever too late, her newly found beliefs. Rebecca in her exhaustion could only repeat, “Your people are my people; your God my God.”

Elizabeth Seton, faced with the prospect of Rebecca’s death, was forcibly reminded of the death-bed consolations she had witnessed in Italy, when the priest “the one you call Father of your Soul attends and watches it in the weakness and trials of parting nature” with the same care a mother lavishes on her child when it first enters the world. It seemed to her that these last trials and temptations were the worst of all, and she endured a kind of inner agony of her own, even while trying to present an outward appearance of reassuring serenity to the dying woman. She was filled with a peculiarly vivid sense of participation in this “last passage” from time to Eternity.

Heaven seemed very near when she prayed with Rebecca that their “tender and faithful love” for each other might be perfected hereafter.

Rebecca Seton’s last moments were recounted by Mrs. Seton to John Wilkes in the words:
You will have heard before this of the departure of our dear Angel. She suffered extremely for about an hour, on Friday night so much, that we thought all was over, but [she] recovered her senses again and became perfectly composed and seemed free from pain. On Sunday she was delighted with the beauty of the morning, and pointed to the clouds that were brightening with the rising Sun and said—‘Ah, my Sister, that this might be my day of rest—shut the windows and I will sleep.’ I raised her head to make it easier, and immediately without the least strain she gave her last sigh.6

Elizabeth Seton thus lost the faithful sharer of many years of pleasure and pain.7 Her heart was heavy as she reflected on her losses:

The home of plenty and comfort—the Society of Sisters united by prayer and divine affections—the evening hymns, the daily lectures [readings], the sunset contemplations, the Service of Holy Days together, the kiss of Peace, the widows’ visits—all—all—gone—forever! And is Poverty and Sorrow the only exchange? Poverty and sorrow! Well, with God’s blessing, you, too, shall be changed into dearest friends.8

The most immediate task Mrs. Seton faced after Rebecca’s death was that of finding a small house for her family. Less than a week later she wrote to John Wilkes:

Your brother Charles...was quite pleased with my little house and my darlings whom he found eating their bread and milk with a very good appetite, but I observed that he was really so affected at the tolling of bells for the death of poor Hamilton that he could scarcely command himself—how much you will be distressed at this melancholy event—the circumstances of which are really too bad to think of.9

The “melancholy event” had shocked all New York. Only the fortnight previous Aaron Burr had challenged Alexander Hamilton to the now famous rendezvous. Shortly after dawn, on the Wednesday following Rebecca Seton’s death, some boats crossed over to the opposite shore of Weehawken, New Jersey, carrying the principals and their retinues. Burr and Hamilton exchanged shots but Burr’s was fatally accurate. Burr returned to New York to pretend to read in his library while Hamilton’s inert form was carried back by horrified friends. All that day and the morning of the next
the city waited for news. At 2 o’clock on Thursday afternoon Hamilton died. It was the tolling of the bells that day which so disturbed Charles Wilkes and Mrs. Seton.

Charles Wilkes, like the elder William Seton before him, had been closely associated with Alexander Hamilton as a result of Charles’ position as cashier of the Bank of New York. With the officers of all the banks of the city, Wilkes marched the long funeral procession Saturday as it passed through Pearl Street, Whitehall, along Bowling Green, and up Broadway to Trinity Church. The obsequies were as elaborate as they had been for Washington in the procession of 31 December 1799. There were the riderless horse, the lawyers in deep mourning, the students and teachers from Columbia wearing cap and gown and paying tribute to a distinguished alumnus. James Seton’s brother-in-law, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, was one of the pall-bearers. If Dr. Richard Bayley had been alive he might have marched with Wright Post as the cortege went solemnly past the doorways filled with weeping women, while above on the housetops curious spectators leaned over to watch Hamilton’s last journey through New York.10

The small house which the Setons occupied the summer after Elizabeth’s return from Italy was supported by John Wilkes, Wright Post, and Elizabeth’s prosperous godmother, Sarah Clarke Startin. These three agreed to maintain the household for at least a year because baby Rebecca was still too young to allow Mrs. Seton to undertake any enterprise herself.11 John Wilkes felt an obligation to assist Mrs. Seton because she was the widow of his patron’s son. He did not forget that the elder Seton had taken both John and Charles Wilkes into his home when they had first come to America from England. John’s wife had been a Seton, and he had only the kindest memories of Elizabeth’s aid and sympathy at the time of Mary Seton Wilkes’ death. His generosity to the young widow was quite natural. Dr. Wright Post felt equally interested, in part because Elizabeth was his wife’s only full sister, but perhaps even more because of his gratitude to the late Dr. Richard Bayley, their father. The friendship of Post was one of the things upon which Elizabeth Seton could rely throughout her life. Julia Scott in Philadelphia had invited Elizabeth to come there to live, but the latter preferred her own home, even though it be less luxurious. July found her quite content with the “neat house about half a mile from town where we occupy the upper story and will let the lower floor as soon as I can find a tenant.”9 When Julia came herself that summer to see how the small New

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9 [Sarah Clarke Startin (1750–1802) was the widow of Charles Clarke. Ed.]
10 This may have been the house on North Moore Street listed as Widow Seton’s residence in 1805. The directory for 1804 does not list Mrs. Seton at all. North Moore Street ran eastward from Greenwich Street in Manhattan and was north of Duane and Jay Streets.
York ménage was prospering she tried to persuade her friend to let Anna Maria return with her to Philadelphia. But Elizabeth proved adamant; she wanted her family all together and explained that she believed they would be better off without “the pretensions and indulgences” which ruined so many.\textsuperscript{12}

Although Mrs. Seton was holding her ground in regard to a united family circle, she was in other ways succumbing to the pressure put upon her by relatives and friends despite the exposition of the Catholic faith which Philip Filicchi had given her.\textsuperscript{6} Antonio Filicchi, who had hoped to see her safely in the Roman Catholic Church before he left for Boston, became increasingly uneasy as he watched her compromising the beliefs she seemed to have held when they left Leghorn. Instead of writing for advice from Bishop John Carroll as the Filicchi brothers had suggested, Elizabeth allowed her friends to dissuade her on the grounds that further inquiry was unnecessary. Antonio wrote bluntly that he failed to understand how her “priests who call loud for investigation, who do not acknowledge any authority above the private reason of any human being,” should persuade her as her sacred duty to decline examination. If worldly considerations of security were influencing her, he added, she had his repeated assurances that both he and his brother would assist her. “It grieves me profoundly,” he said, “to keep your anxiety so awakened, but according to my sacred principles and my most solid affection how can I spare you?”\textsuperscript{13}

If Antonio Filicchi was concerned about Mrs. Seton’s convictions, so was her pastor and friend of longer standing, John Henry Hobart. When Elizabeth was leaving Leghorn Philip Filicchi had given her a concise statement of the Catholic Church’s claims based upon the profession of faith issued by Pope Pius IV in 1564.\textsuperscript{14} Mrs. Seton had used this to justify to Hobart her interest in Catholicism. Hobart’s remarks on the document caused uncertainty to modify Mrs. Seton’s views since, as she confessed to Amabilia Filicchi, whatever her pastor said to her had the weight of her partiality for him as well as the respect she could scarcely accord anyone else.\textsuperscript{15} Hobart told her:

> When I see a person whose sincere and ardent piety I have always thought worthy of imitation in danger of connecting herself with a communion which my sober judgment tells me is a corrupt and sinful communion, I cannot be otherwise than deeply affected...If it should appear that you have forsaken the religion of your forefathers, not from prejudices

\textsuperscript{6} When Elizabeth was leaving Leghorn, Italy, in April 1804, Philip Filicchi gave her a manuscript to assist her in understanding the beliefs of the Catholic Church. It is based on the profession of faith issued by Pope Pius IV in 1564.
of education, not for want of better information, but in opposition to light and knowledge which few have enjoyed, my soul anxiously inquires, what answer will you make to your Almighty Judge?16

The argument of Hobart, made in the full sincerity of the young minister’s concern for his parishioner, was insidious. To one of Elizabeth Seton’s inclinations, who was vividly aware of God’s blessings throughout her life, the implication that she might be guilty of willfulness and ingratitude was painful. The specious argument based upon the virtue of her friends who found their salvation within the Protestant Episcopal communion also served to confuse her. It is sometimes easier for the hardened sinner to leave his state of unbelief for the joys of faith than for the good Protestant who sees his friends, whom he judges more virtuous than himself, finding peace in the fold of their fathers. Elizabeth Seton, in her humility, could not doubt the goodness of Hobart, of Rebecca Seton, of Eliza Sadler, and of her other Anglican friends. Even though she felt it simplistic to claim that “wherever a child is born, and wherever its parents placed it, there it will find truth,”17 she explained to Amabilia that she felt as if she were:

living all my days in the thought that all and everybody would be saved who meant well, it grieves my very soul to see that Protestants as well as your (as I thought, hard and severe principles) see the thing so differently.18

When Filicchi, on the recommendation of Rev. Matthew O’Brien, gave Elizabeth a book on England’s Conversion,19 it was offset by Hobart’s recommendation of Dissertations on the Prophecies (1754-1758), by Thomas Newton, bishop of Bristol.20 As his time in New York grew short and Antonio saw his friend’s confusion increasing, he decided to appeal to Bishop Carroll himself. On 26 July 1804, he began a letter to the Bishop of Baltimore explaining his interest in Mrs. Seton, relating Hobart’s observations on the Church’s claims, and begging Carroll for “an invincible direct reply.” He enclosed a letter from his brother introducing Antonio to the bishop,21 and intended forwarding one from Mrs. Seton with Hobart’s remarks on Catholicism. But before the letter could be sent, Filicchi received notes from both Elizabeth and the minister telling the Italian they had decided not to enter into further controversy. Filicchi had to add a postscript explaining this volte face and he concluded urgently:

Notwithstanding whatever I could be able to say to her she appears decided in maintaining her former communion and was but with great difficulty prevailed upon to wait the result
of my present application to you. I must beg you with all my soul to hasten to come to my relief.  

When Filicchi failed to receive an immediate response from Baltimore he wrote again two weeks later, stressing the subject’s vital importance involving as it did “the eternal salvation of six souls,” the children’s as well as the mother’s. “From your instructions,” he pleaded, “must depend the tranquillity of my conscience in regard to the conduct to pursue in such an important and delicate affair.” He concluded that he was already due in Boston but he would wait one more week for a reply from Carroll.

This second appeal was successful and on 20 August 1804, John Carroll penned his first letter relating to the career of Elizabeth Seton. When Filicchi received the long-awaited advice he took it at once to Mrs. Seton and departed for Boston. The importance of Carroll’s letter can be surmised from the young widow’s comments to Antonio Filicchi:

The Bishop’s letter has been held to my heart on my knees beseeching God to enlighten me to see the truth, unmixed with doubts and hesitations—I read the promises given to St. Peter and the 6th Chap. [of] John every day and then ask God [if] can I offend him by believing those express words... God will not forsake me, Antonio, I know he will unite me to his flock.

Antonio Filicchi kept Bishop Carroll informed of Elizabeth Seton’s difficulties by letters of his own and enclosures of some written by her. He thanked Carroll for his first intervention, and said, “Sensible of my incapacity, particularly in a foreign language, I suggested to her to address you herself with her doubts and questions. Your wise and holy instructions in such a delicate and interesting case, direct or through me, are certainly the only adequate ones.” Once again, however, Elizabeth was reluctant to address the bishop herself and the brief encouragement she took from his advice in August was soon enough counteracted by the warnings of her friends that her interest in Catholicism was only temptation. John Carroll did not write again for several months because he was ill that fall, and by the time he recovered he expected to see Antonio Filicchi in person. The task of directing Elizabeth’s faltering steps during that autumn remained solely Antonio’s. It is from their correspondence that the story of Elizabeth Seton’s struggle can be reconstructed.

Almost as soon as Antonio left for Boston, Elizabeth began her letters. Even before she knew his address she started jotting down her thoughts for
him and watching for the arrival of James Seton’s sedan chair, hoping for a letter from Boston.4 “This you may think childish,” she admitted to him, “but remember you have not a female heart, and mine is most truly and fondly attached to you, as you have [had] proved when I have been most contradictory and troublesome to you.”29 She laid bare her indecision with the words:

Hideous objects will present themselves which disturb my soul and unsettle my faith, and tho’ God is so gracious as to give me the fullest assurance that thro’ the Name of Jesus my prayers shall finally be answered, yet there seems now a cloud before my way that keeps me always asking Him which is the right path— 30

Antonio Filicchi refused to become discouraged. In his first letter after his arrival, he said,

I want to know every thought, everything of you. Your worthy soul is mine; I shall call for it everywhere, from whomsoever. Help me with your prayers. I trust a good deal in them. God must bless you in this and in the other world, and I believe He blesses me for your sake.31

It is interesting to note the confidence Antonio had from the outset in the ultimate success of his efforts. It is equally worthy of note that he possessed from the beginning an unusual trust in the efficacy of Elizabeth’s prayers. Throughout the sixteen years of their friendship, fourteen of which were spent with an ocean between them, the letters of Filicchi reiterated this refrain of gratitude for her intercession. One of his last letters to Elizabeth Seton declared:

To your prayers, I doubt not, I owe the uninterrupted prosperity of all my concerns in this world, and I am confident that, when you will be in Heaven, you will not let the door be shut against your own true brother and friend, who so fortunately contributed to open it for you.

The warmth of his devotion had never cooled from its early ardor and the letter concluded:

In spite of my stubborn silence, you are constantly in my mind, you have my warmest wishes. I love, I esteem, I

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4 Sedan chairs were a common method of conveyance in New York City. Mrs. Seton received mail sent through the public channels in care of James Seton. Most people preferred to send letters by travelers because of the element of safety and to avoid the excessive postage charges the recipient paid. See Souvay, pp. 230-7; Mother Seton Guild Bulletin, XXVII (November, 1948), 3.
venerate you. I boast of your benevolence towards me, and for you I shall always be ready to fight men and devils.  

Certainly that winter of 1804-1805 he seemed literally called upon to fight “men and devils” on behalf of his New York protégée. As the days grew shorter and the weather colder, Elizabeth Seton’s uncertainty grew greater. When she stayed away from church services at Trinity or its chapels, as Antonio had advised, she was chided by Wright Post. Her brother-in-law, who was subsidizing part of her household, was less heated in his criticism than some of her other attackers, but his indirect approach through comments on the “errors and imperfections” of practicing Catholics in New York was not designed to produce peace of mind. Meanwhile, Mr. Hobart was losing patience with his recalcitrant member, and his call on 7 September was accompanied by charges against the Catholic Church of corrupting the “primitive doctrine.” Elizabeth sensed the futility of bringing Bishop Carroll’s letter into the discussion, and “the visit was short and painful on both sides.”  

Mrs. Seton was not unmoved by these calls, however, and she allowed herself to yield on the arguments of propriety and peace. Another Sunday found her at St. Paul’s Chapel where, as she later wrote Amabilia Filicchi, “I got in a side pew which turned my face toward the Catholic Church in the next street, and found myself twenty times speaking to the Blessed Sacrament there instead of looking at the naked altar where I was, or minding the routine of prayers.”  

This kind of equivocation could only produce a multitude of other mazes. Mrs. Seton said she “smiled” at Hobart’s question, “How can you believe there are as many gods as there are millions of altars and tens of millions of blessed hosts all over the world?” Yet she wrote Antonio Filicchi of her difficulty in believing that she should be “satisfied with his Bread and believe the cup, which he equally commanded unnecessary.”  

From bewilderment in regard to the Blessed Sacrament her mind darted to the subject of the Blessed Virgin. To Amabilia she wrote that if anyone were in heaven surely the Mother of God must be exalted there and that “I beg her with the confidence and tenderness of her child to pity us and guide us to the true faith if we are not in it.”  

To Antonio, on the other hand, she wondered how she could believe “that the Prayers and litanies addressed to the Blessed Lady were acceptable to God, though not commanded in Scripture.”  

In July Mrs. Seton had been chiefly concerned as to whether the Protestant Episcopal Church could be the “true church.” By October she was enmeshed in numberless speculations which only confused her more.
Two very salutary letters from Philip Filicchi and one from Bishop Carroll were written that fall and winter. If they had arrived at this period in Mrs. Seton’s struggle, they might have hastened the outcome. On 17 October the elder Filicchi brother wrote from Leghorn reprovingly:

> Your anxiety is unreasonable, your trouble a temptation. You pray to your Father...and you tremble. You do not know His Goodness. These were not the sentiments which accompany’d the prodigal son nor Mary Magdalen. St. Paul fallen from his horse & called by Him whom he knew not did not trouble himself. He calmly said, “What will you have me do?”

He said Hobart’s arguments presented nothing new. The devil, Filicchi suggested, delights in trouble; it is his element. “He knows he cannot catch fish in clear water.” The letter closed with a stern admonition that she stop haggling over details and answer the question: what is the true Church established by Christ?

How much effect so strong a tone might have had can only be guessed. From his vantage point across the sea Philip Filicchi could speak more bluntly to Mrs. Seton in regard to her vacillation. A few days later he wrote:

> In a spiritual Concern you have followed only worldly prudence, that prudence which the Gospel calls folly. You have acted as if you had thought God was not to be obeyed without the consent & advice of your friends. You have met the predicament you deserve.

In her defense it must be said that Elizabeth felt she was following Antonio’s advice when, on her return to the United States, she entered into the unfortunate discussion with Hobart. But Philip Filicchi was not alone in condemning her subsequent conduct. John Carroll told Antonio his friend ought to consider whether the tears she sheds and the prayers she offers heaven are purely for God’s sake and arise solely from compunction for him & are unmixed with any alloy of worldly respect or inordinate solicitude for the attainment of some worldly purpose.

Continuing his speculation about Mrs. Seton’s difficulties, the Bishop of Baltimore wrote:

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Indeed, when I read the words you copied from her letters, and her letters themselves, I remain convinced of the sincerity of her endeavors to make herself conformable in all things to the Divine Will; but afterwards a fear arises in my mind that God discovers in her some lurking imperfection and defers the final grace of her conversion ‘till her soul be entirely purified of its irregular attachments.\(^\text{42}\)

Like Philip Filicchi, the prelate advocated abandoning further controversy. He advised that Mrs. Seton ask God “to revive in her heart the grace of her baptism” and fortify her resolution to follow the voice of God without reservations. Unfortunately, the Leghorn letters were delayed by the winter weather, and the letter from Baltimore was not sent until the worst of Mrs. Seton’s tormenting doubts were lifting. In the black period of her indecision Elizabeth turned more and more to Antonio at Boston. In September she had written:

Antonio, Antonio, why cannot my poor Soul be satisfied... how can it hesitate—why must it struggle...I am ashamed of my own letters, they are all egotism, but my soul is so entirely engrossed by one subject that it cannot speak with freedom on any other...You know my heart, you know my thoughts, my pains and sorrows, hopes and fears—Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and if I was your brother, Antonio, I would never leave you for one hour—but as it is I try rather to turn every affection to God, well knowing that there alone their utmost exercise cannot be misapplied.\(^\text{43}\)

Antonio had replied consolingly that she should “be easy”; he knew her prayers would prove effective. Certainly he was benefited by them. “Never,” he wrote in his stilted English, “I was so less bad in my life as I think I am now.” He expressed the wish that she could be in Boston to derive the benefits of the Church there.

Oh, my good friend, with what worthy clergymen are here Catholics blessed! Their countenance, their conduct, their doctrine are acknowledged almost with enthusiasm by most Protestants themselves. Every Sunday our church is mostly crowded by them to hear the sermons of our learned & eloquent Cheverus, and some conversations from time to time take place without any murmuring at all.\(^\text{44}\)
But Elizabeth was not in Boston and many months passed before this “learned and eloquent Cheverus” came to her aid. As the old year waned her spirits sank lower. The journal kept for Amabilia bore testimony to the inner turmoil which racked her soul. In November she recorded, “I do not get on, Amabilia, cannot cast the balance for the peace of this poor soul.” She turned from the controversial reading and pored over the Psalms, reread the *Imitation of Christ* and the spiritual advice of St. Francis de Sales. Even when her suffering was the worst, Elizabeth never abandoned the hope that constant prayer would eventually bring surcease. While yet deprived of it, she perceived clearly the nature of faith.

I see FAITH is a gift of God to be diligently sought and earnestly desired and groan to Him for it in silence, since our Saviour says I cannot come to Him unless the Father draw me—so it is. By and by I trust this storm will cease. How painful and often agonizing He only knows who can and will still it in His own good time.45

Meanwhile the Seton children came down with whooping cough and the simultaneous illness of the serving woman kept Elizabeth busy. She lived through November in hourly expectation of Antonio’s return. “My heart,” she explained to him, “has jumped almost out of me every time our street door opened, and trembled so much at the sight of Mr. [John] Wilkes, James Seton or anyone who might inform me of you that I have scarcely been able to speak.”46 But November passed and he did not arrive. When his note arrived on 3 December with news of even further delay Elizabeth’s disappointment was so keen that her own reply was a trifle tart in tone. She hoped his new engagements in Boston would recompense him for the loss of her letters which he claimed he had missed. “The 2 or 3 weeks you purpose still to remain there,” she wrote, “will lengthen to months as easily as those that are past.”47 Then, whether in pique or simple sincerity it is difficult to say, she told him of her decision to take the advice of John Wilkes in regard to her future economic plans. Having held off for two months in vain, hoping to discuss the matter with Antonio, she had finally yielded to circumstances, “pushed by necessity, and compelled by my unprovided condition, and another offering to take the situation unconditionally which I have so long hesitated to accept.”48

The plan which John Wilkes had suggested to Mrs. Seton was one which had its origin in the problem of his motherless sons and the children of his brother Charles. The plan involved Mrs. Seton’s taking as boarders the Wilkes boys and a dozen more from the school conducted by the curate
of St. Mark’s, [Rev. William Harris]. It was expected that the plan would take shape about the first of the year. 49 Whether Wilkes was premature in his suggestion, or whether Elizabeth exaggerated the urgency of the project to Antonio, the plan did not actually materialize for another year.

The letter Elizabeth received from Boston on 13 December explained that the initiation of a lawsuit in Philip Filicchi’s interests was the cause for Antonio’s delay, and Antonio’s complaints of having received no word from her filled Elizabeth with mingled joy and shame at her impatience. She sat down at once to reply:

Certainly I was obliged to make the dear sign [of the Cross] to help me keep my good resolution of trying to be indifferent—
I should wish earnestly, my most dear Brother, never to think of you with tenderness but when calling on Almighty God to bless you, then often indeed my heart overflows. 50

Then she poured out all the doubts and fears of the past months. It was not interest in temporal concerns which really distressed her, she admitted, but rather “the horror of neglecting to hear His voice, if indeed he has spoken to me through you.” 51 She told how the Scriptures which had once brought her joy served now only to confuse her. The Sabbath, which a year ago had been her week’s reward, had now become a torment of fear whether she went to the right church. How could she determine which friends were guides to truth or tempters? She wrote:

You can easily conceive that as the view of my sins always rises against me as the veil between my soul and the truth, that I earnestly desire that God will keep me from all created beings that by a broken and contrite heart I may find Mercy through my Redeemer. 52

In trying to remove this “veil” forcibly, Elizabeth had begun to fast rigorously and her small frame soon became little more than a skeleton. When Eliza Sadler saw her friend’s ravaged figure she was distressed and she remarked to Elizabeth it seemed to her the Seton lot held enough penance without seeking more among the Catholics. Elizabeth explained that she hoped that the more she suffered here the more she might be spared in the next world. Sad rejoined dryly that it seemed a comfortable enough doctrine; she wished she could believe it. 53 But Elizabeth would not be dissuaded.

A heavy snow fell over the city and the roads became impassable. Not even Mary Bayley Post could get through to see her sister. The children
had to be diverted and Elizabeth tried to devise special games to keep up their spirits. Together they lived over the Bible stories of David, Daniel, and Judith, and the white world of New York vanished in the re-created days of heroic valor. In the evening the mother played spirited tunes on the piano for the children’s hilarious dancing before she gathered them close to the fire to say their prayers. Anna Maria, who still relived the trip to Italy, begged to have the “Ave Maria” included, and even little Bec tried to join in with her sweet high lisping voice. Sometimes the neighbor children pleaded to join in the play and prayers. It was after the children were all safe in bed that their mother’s fears returned, and in the midnight hours the tears rolled down her cheeks while she stared through the darkness with such intensity she sometimes almost expected “to see His finger writing on the wall,” for her relief.54

In January a kind of crisis was reached. New Year’s Day passed with its traditional visits from friends. John Wilkes stopped in to announce that the plan for boarding the schoolboys would be delayed until at least May. Mrs. Seton’s half-brother, Richard Bayley, in New York for a few weeks, called to pick up any messages for Italy, and to get Antonio’s address in Boston, before returning to Leghorn. After the social exchanges were over, Elizabeth Seton, wishing to read something appropriate to the season, took down a volume of Bourdaloue and turned to the sermon on the Epiphany. When she came to the words of the wise man, “Where is He who is born king of the Jews,” the whole painful question as to the one true church was immediately before her. “The inference that when we no longer discern the Star of Faith we must seek it where only it is to be found, with the depositors of His Word” seemed to her too plain to be ignored. In desperation she decided that once and for all the issue must be resolved. She tried to reach Rev. Matthew O’Brien, whom she mistakenly believed to be the only Catholic priest in New York City. Besides Matthew O’Brien there were Rev. William Vincent O’Brien, O.P., the pastor, Rev. John Byrne and a “Mr. Vrennay” in New York in January 1805.55 Failing in this attempt, she “looked straight up to God and told him, since I cannot see the way to please you, whom alone I wish to please, everything is indifferent to me and until you do show me the way you mean me to walk in I will trudge on the path you suffered me to be born in.” Leaving the children home with the serving

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1 At this time the distinction between a layman and a clergyman was not as clearly delineated as it became later. Generally diocesan or secular priests were called “Rev.” or simply “Mr.” About the middle of the nineteenth-century, only priests belonging to a religious order would be addressed as “Father.” Cf. Thomas W. Spalding, C.F.X., The Premier See (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 58. Elizabeth Seton and the early Sisters of Charity usually followed the convention of their time but not always.
woman she went defiantly off to St. George’s, one of Trinity’s two chapels in 1805. It did not achieve a separate status until 1811.\textsuperscript{56}

In keeping with her tendency never to do things halfheartedly, Elizabeth Seton had chosen a “Sacrament Sunday” for her return to the church of her family; the ordeal she experienced that day nearly turned her mind. When she bowed her head to receive the bishop’s absolution, which was given “publickly & universally to all in the church,” she found she had not the least faith in its efficacy. She remembered only too well that the books Mr. Hobart had recommended did not claim or even admit any apostolic loosening from sins. Nevertheless, trembling to communion she went, “half-dead with the inward struggle.” When she heard the words, “The Body and blood of Christ,” she was undone. Afterward the “bold excesses” of the morning could not be banished from her mind. On her arrival home she seized the daily exercise book Abbé Plunkett had provided in Italy, and she turned to the “Prayers after Communion.” But finding each prayer “addressed to our dear Saviour as really present” she was filled with renewed horror at the morning’s mockery, and became “half-crazy.”\textsuperscript{57} For the first time she could not bear the children near her, nor could she say the blessing for their dinner. Her record reads:

> Oh, my God, that day—but it finished calmly at last, abandoning all to God, and a renewed confidence in the Blessed Virgin...I WILL GO PEACEABLY & FIRMLY TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, for if Faith is so important to our Salvation, I will seek it where true Faith first began, seek it among those who received it from GOD HIMSELF—the controversies on it I am quite incapable of deciding, and as the strictest Protestant allows salvation to a good Catholic, to the Catholics I will go, and try to be a good one. May God accept my intention and pity me.\textsuperscript{58}

This decision was made about 16 January 1805. Several years later Mrs. Seton recalled the moment: “Precisely this time that the Divine Light of Faith, which I so long resisted forced its way[in]to [my soul]—an overwhelming power which made me to see and taste its infinite sweetness.”\textsuperscript{59}

Elizabeth waited for Antonio’s return in February before taking the final step toward Roman Catholicism. In that month temptation made its last feeble effort to dissuade her. Matthew O’Brien, the priest Mrs. Seton met through Filicchi, wrote to Bishop Carroll on 19 February 1805,
Mrs. Morris\(^8\) has become a Catholic without any further solicitation and is performing the Stations of the Jubilee with astonishing edification. There are two more ladies converted. Mrs. Seaton [sic] is yet in the scale. Mr. Filicchi is here and has good hopes, and presents you his respects.\(^6^0\)

Mr. Filicchi’s “good hopes” were soon to be realized. A lesser man might have lost patience after a year of fruitless efforts on behalf of Mrs. Seton, but not Antonio Filicchi. Elizabeth had written him in January, “You speak so highly of the Catholic Priests in Boston perhaps it would be best you should give a short history of your dear Sister to the one you esteem most— as I may one day find the benefit of your doing so.”\(^6^1\) The day was now at hand. While O’Brien was writing to Carroll, Antonio and Elizabeth both addressed themselves to Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus (1768–1836) of Boston. Filicchi said:

Mrs. [Seton] I am in full hopes, will be finally a good Roman Catholic with her 5 children. Considering Bishop Carroll too much occupied I have suggested her to have recourse to you in her scruples & anxieties, for instruction, comfort, advice, and she is actually writing to you. You will have [as] it becomes you, the merit of determining & perfecting the work.\(^6^2\)

A few days after receiving Filicchi’s petition, Cheverus replied and enclosed a lengthy letter for Mrs. Seton. The Boston priest told Mrs. Seton that she had heard enough argument on both sides, and that while she was “never for a moment a strong protestant,” she was often, as she said, a good Catholic. Cheverus continued:

I believe you are always a good Catholic. The doubts which arise in your mind do not destroy your faith, they only disturb your mind. Who in this life, my dear Madam, is perfectly free from such troubles? “We see as through a glass in an obscure manner,” we stand like Israelites at the foot of the holy mountain, but in spite of dark clouds and the noise of thunder, we perceive some rays of the glory of the Lord and we hear His divine voice. I would therefore advise your joining the Catholic Church as soon as possible, and when doubts arise, say only: “I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief.”\(^6^3\)

\(^8\) Mrs. Morris may have been the wife of Andrew Morris, the first Catholic office-holder in New York City. There is no way of identifying the other converts to Catholicism in 1805.
When Antonio received the letters from Boston, he “ran immediately to deliver the enclosed” to Elizabeth. The advice of Cheverus was exactly what she required. “She accepted of it as a distinguished blessing from God; she prayed, she meditated on it.”

Since Ash Wednesday she had been going to Mass at St. Peter’s Catholic Church, Barclay Street, and finally on 14 March 1805, in the presence of Antonio and Rev. Matthew O’Brien, she made “the requisite profession of faith in the Roman Catholic Church.”

If ever there were serious questions as to the chronology of this period of Elizabeth Seton’s life none need now remain. It is quite clear that she began going to St. Peter’s Church on Ash Wednesday, 27 February 1805. In regard to this visit Mrs. Seton wrote, “It was a day they received Ashes, the beginning of Lent and [a] drole but most venerable Irish priest... talked of Death so familiarly that he delighted and revived me.” In reply to her sister’s question later, “Tell me candidly if you go to our church or not,” Elizabeth Seton replied, “Since the first day of Lent I have been to St. Peter’s.” There is no doubt at all that Mrs. Seton knew the liturgical calendar of the Church sufficiently to know when Lent began.

Felicchi’s letter to Cheverus stated clearly that Mrs. Seton had been at St. Peter’s “several days” previous to her formal abjuration, which took place on 14 March. In a grateful letter to Father Cheverus Mrs. Seton wrote, “My Soul has offered all its hesitations and reluctancies a Sacrifice with the blessed sacrifice on the Altar, on the 14th of March, and the next day was admitted to the true Church of Jesus Christ.” Antonio’s letter to Boston on 16 March said, “She went the day before yesterday morning to make her profession of faith.” A copy of the Following of Christ which Elizabeth gave Antonio bore the inscription, “to commemorate the happy day he presented her to the Church of God, the 14th March 1805.” In “Dear Remembrances,” written years later, Mrs. Seton recorded, “14th March 1805 it [her soul] entered the Ark of St. Peter with its beloved ones.” In a letter to Antonio Filicchi written the year following the important step, Mrs. Seton referred to “the 14th (the day in which your idea must necessarily be connected with my very prayers and thankfulness to God).” The actual event of the day was described in the journal for Amabilia Filicchi:

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1 Seton wrote on the reverse of the Cheverus letter, “Bishop Cheverus first answer to an earnest entreaty for his advice— Entered the church immediately afterward—14th March one year after returning from Leghorn.”

1 Long before she became a Catholic Mrs. Seton was accustomed to dating her journal entries, “Wednesday, St. Michael’s,” “Ascension Day,” or “Nov. 1 All Saints.” Her reading of the Bourdaloue sermon on the Epiphany “to enjoy a good sermon of the season” bears testimony to her interest in the liturgical cycle. Note has already been made of her observance of Ash Wednesday as an Episcopalian.
After all were gone I was called to the little room next [to] the Altar and there PROFESSED to believe what the Council of Trent believes and teaches, laughing with my heart to my Saviour, who saw that I knew not what the Church of God believed, only that it believed what the church of God declared to be its belief, and consequently is now my belief—for as to going a walking any more about what all the different people believe, I cannot, being quite tired out.71

The gift of Catholic faith which Elizabeth Seton received in 1805 was not accompanied by any profound theological insight or immediate comprehension. Not long before her death in the Maryland mountains, after years of practical Catholic living, she still felt her heart “tremble and faint before Him here in His little sacristy, close to His Tabernacle,” while she asked, “How am I here?” She wrote to Rev. Simon Bruté, her friend and confessor, from the depths of her humility:

I tell you a secret hidden almost from my own soul it is so delicate, that my hatred of opposition, troublesome inquiries, etc. brought me in the Church more than conviction—how often I argued to my fearful uncertain heart at all events Catholics must be as safe as any other religion, they say none are safe but themselves—perhaps it is true. If not, at all events I shall be as safe with them as any other. It is the way of Suffering and the Cross for me that is another point of Security—I shall be rid, too, of all the endless salutations of Trinity Church and the dissipated dress and—among strangers unknown, and if indeed (as I have most reason to believe) the Blessed Sacrament is my Jesus, the daily sacrifice, the opening, the pained and suffering heart to a guide and friend—My God pity me—I was in the Church many times before I dared look at the Sacred Host at the elevation, so daunted by their cry of idolatry. There ...you read what I would have carried to the grave, only I wish you to know well. . .the impossibility for a poor Protestant to see our Meaning without being led step by step and the Veil lifted little by little.72

What Elizabeth Seton missed in intellectual comprehension she made up for in love. When the questions of her pupils in later life were beyond her, her solution was to “pour out the soul to God in answer, hoping He will put the right words in my mouth.” Speaking of an occasion when a
young lady came to her in confusion over the matter of salvation outside the Church, Mother Seton said:

My vacant brains were never busy enough about that to mind even what I have read of it, except to Adore and skip up to the scene where all will be revealed—she stared when I told her gravely they were mysteries of love, as much as when I assured her I was only an Adorer too, of the Mystery of the Church the only Ark in the world, and all the heathens, savages, sects, etc. were only in my heart for prayer, but never in my brain for what became of them, or to trouble my Faith in His wisdom and mercy, the Father most tender, Father of all, my immense God, I His alone.73

The church in which Mrs. Seton made her profession of faith in 1805 was, at that time, the only Catholic church in New York City, St. Peter’s of Barclay Street. It had only officially opened its doors on 4 November 1786, when Elizabeth Bayley was twelve years old. “Amidst a brilliant assemblage,” assisted by the chaplains of the French and Spanish legations, Andrew Nugent, O.F.M.Cap., had celebrated the solemn high Mass.74 The following year John Carroll, then prefect apostolic, had appointed Rev. William O’Brien, O.P., pastor.75 In the early years of his incumbency O’Brien had worked valiantly to promote the interests of his infant parish. For two years he traveled in Cuba and Mexico collecting money and religious objects for New York.76 In the years following his return in November 1792, Father O’Brien had struggled against the attacks of yellow fever which threatened his immigrant congregation. Dr. Bayley, Elizabeth’s father, had commended the priest as the only clergyman to remain in the city during the worst of the epidemics.76 By the time, however, that Dr. Bayley’s daughter was ready to begin her life as a member of St. Peter’s parish William Vincent O’Brien was no longer active. The eminent Dr. John Charlton, Elizabeth’s maternal uncle, had once warned O’Brien that he might become a martyr to rheumatism, and violent attacks of this malady seem to have discouraged the Dominican from active parish duties.77

The clerical duties by 1805 had devolved principally upon Rev. Matthew O’Brien, often referred to as “the young Dr.,” who had come to New York from Albany sometime before 1802. The two O’Brien’s were not

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1 Rev. William Vincent O’Brien, a Dominican priest, is believed to have come to the United States about 1786, and was a Preacher General in his order. Before coming to St. Peter’s he served in and around Philadelphia.

2 One of these objects was the painting of the Crucifixion by José Maria Vallejo, a Mexican artist. The first day Mrs. Seton visited St. Peter’s she wrote, “How that heart died away, as it were, in silence before that little tabernacle and the great crucifixion above it.” See 3.31, Journal for Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:375.
related. The younger O’Brien was assisted by an old French priest and the Irish John Byrne. “Mr. Vrennay,” the Frenchman, was in New York during Mrs. Seton’s first year in the Church; John Byrne was in New York until she left for Baltimore. The latter priest lived with Matthew O’Brien on Elm Street but the two men were not always on the best of terms. Byrne was frequently away on trips to Georgetown, Baltimore, and Albany, and once threatened to go to Baltimore permanently. The older O’Brien thought highly of Byrne, however, and at the time Bishop Carroll planned to replace William O’Brien by a more active pastor, the invalid wrote, “As for the Rev. good Mr. Byrne, he is very well calculated for this city...No clergyman you could send would answer so well.” After Rev. Louis Sibourd became pastor of St. Peter’s in the summer of 1807, the pious Frenchman and Byrne became good friends and lived together. When Sibourd became discouraged with conditions within his congregation in 1808, he too recommended that John Byrne be left with the pastoral charges. Elizabeth Seton came to respect and admire Father Byrne and she was filled with “great delight” when “our dear Father Burns” appeared again on the altar after one of his periodic trips.

Of all the factual details surrounding Elizabeth Seton’s conversion the most interesting one must still remain in question. Final certainty in regard to her baptism is not possible. White believed that Mrs. Seton was baptized conditionally; while Rev. Charles Souvay, C.M., after careful examination of existing evidence, concluded that “the probability of her being baptized is hardly more than a possibility.” There is no record of her baptism, conditional or otherwise at St. Peter’s. This indicates that either her baptism in the Episcopal church was regarded as valid, or that no records were kept of conditional baptisms. Bishop Carroll accepted the validity of Episcopal baptisms as he indicated in his letter advising Mrs. Seton to “revive in her heart the grace of baptism” two months before her conversion. Jean Cheverus of Boston held the same view in regard to the Episcopalian sacrament when he wrote to Mrs. Seton in regard to Cecilia Seton’s baptism, six months before Cecilia became a convert to Catholicism:

Your beloved sister has been made by baptism a member of the Church. Willful error, I have reason to think, has never separated her from that sacred body. Her singular innocence of mind and ardent piety have also, very likely, preserved her from offending God in any grievous manner, and I hope that in consequence even if she cannot receive the Sacraments
[of Penance and Holy Eucharist] she will be a member of the triumphant church in heaven.\textsuperscript{89}

In addition to the weight of these opinions of Carroll and Cheverus, there is the complete lack of reference to any baptism ceremony in the accounts kept by Mrs. Seton of this momentous period in her life. She describes with high emotion and vivid detail her first visit of Ash Wednesday, her profession of faith of the 14\textsuperscript{th} of March, her first general confession, and her first communion; yet no phrase or sentence suggests anything resembling baptism.\textsuperscript{1} Mrs. Seton herself wrote on a page of a Following of Christ, “Was I not signed with the cross of salvation in Baptism?”\textsuperscript{90} The weight of evidence bears out the Souvay contention that the possibility of a Catholic baptism in 1805 is very slight.\textsuperscript{91}

The culmination of Elizabeth Seton’s step that March of 1805 was the reception of the sacraments. Contrary to the usual trepidation which accompanies an adult convert’s first confession, Elizabeth’s joy at the resolution of her conflict was so great that she was “ready to make [it] on the house top to insure the GOOD ABOSOLUTION.” She found Matthew O’Brien most kind and she felt nothing but incredible relief at “the words of unloosing” after her thirty years of bondage. From that day until the feast of the Annunciation, she counted the hours. Mornings as she trudged through the deep snow, or picked her way warily over the ice formed from yesterday’s thaw, she seemed to hear only the words, “Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood you can have no part with ME”— she saw only the bright cross on St. Peter’s steeple.\textsuperscript{92}

Elizabeth never forgot the night before that first communion. She could describe it as vividly in “Dear Remembrances” as she did in the contemporary journal for Amabilia. As she waited through the darkness for dawn to appear she was torn between the fear and humility of wondering if she were properly prepared, and “transports of confidence and hope” that flooded her when she contemplated God’s goodness and love. The long walk to town, counting the steps as she neared Barclay Street, the overwhelming conviction of utter unworthiness as she entered the door, all culminated in that “moment when He would enter the poor, poor little dwelling so all His own.”

\textsuperscript{1} Although there is no record of her baptism in the Protestant Episcopal Church, there is no question that Elizabeth Bayley was baptized. A list of regular communicants at Trinity Church from 1800 to 1816 contains her name, and a “Communicant” was a validly baptized person who received communion at least three times a year. The absence of any records before 1776 at Trinity Church is due to the fire which destroyed the church in that year. Search made at Staten Island, and other places which might have revealed proof of infant baptism, has proved fruitless.
And when He did—the first thought, I remember, was let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, for it seemed to me my King had come to take His throne, and instead of the humble tender welcome I had expected to give Him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness.93

The two miles of the return home were scarcely noted as she sped back to carry to her children “the first kiss and blessing,” wrapt up as she was in the joy of bringing “such a Master to our little dwelling.” 94

Bishop Carroll received the happy news of Mrs. Seton’s conversion from Antonio Filicchi that May when the Italian merchant wrote:

Your learned remarks & advices have not been in vain. You will certainly thank God & rejoice in the happy intelligence that at last Mrs. W. M. Seton is numbered in your flock with her five children, and proves an edifying example of piety & zeal.95

The gratitude Elizabeth Seton felt toward Antonio Filicchi knew no bounds. “You have led me,” she wrote him in Philadelphia, “to a happiness which admits of no description, and daily even hourly increases my soul’s peace—and really supplies strength and resolution superior to anything I could have conceived possible in so frail a being.” 96 Mrs. Seton was indebted to both the Filicchi brothers. Where Philip’s lucid theology had pointed the way, Antonio’s unfailing zeal had urged her lagging steps. But there are times in the soul’s progress when logic falls short and love makes up the balance, and so it was to Antonio that Elizabeth wrote, “I shall not go to the Altar in spirit or in reality without remembering my most dear brother.”97
CHAPTER 5. TO OLD SAINT PETER’S

Notes

1 3.1, Elizabeth Seton to Rebecca Seton, CW, 1:308.


3 Ibid., 518. Ruth 1:16.

4 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, July 1804, CW, 1:367. This journal was kept for Amabilia Baragazzi Filicchi, the wife of Antonio Filicchi, and covers the period from Mrs. Seton’s return to New York until her first communion, 25 March 1805.

5 3.1, Journal to Rebecca Seton (continued), 8 July 1804, CW, 1:310.

6 3.4, Draft of Elizabeth Seton to John Wilkes, [July 1804], CW, 1:312. This fragmentary letter gives internal evidence of having been written from New York to John Wilkes on 13 July 1804.

7 3.5, Rebecca Seton, sister-in-law to Elizabeth Seton, died 8 July 1804, CW, 1:313; C. I. White gives the date as 18 July, based probably on the first entry of Mrs. Seton’s journal for Amabilia Filicchi; 3.1, but Mrs. Seton wrote to Julia Scott on 15 July saying, “My soul’s sister departed for the happier world this day [a] week [ago],” CW, 1:313. 3.5, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, CW, 1:313. The last entry in the journal for Rebecca is dated 8 July, and begins, “This is my Rebecca’s birthday in heaven.”

8 3.1, Journal to Rebecca Seton (continued), 4 June 1804, CW, 1:308.

9 3.4, Draft of Elizabeth Seton to John Wilkes, New York, 13 July 1804, CW, 1:311. John Wilkes was in Albany, New York, at this time.


11 3.5, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 15 July 1804, CW, 1:313.


13 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 26 July 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:4.

14 A-8.27, Philip Filicchi’s Exposition of the Catholic Faith for Elizabeth Seton, CW, 3b:585-616. Although Elizabeth’s grandson Robert Seton questioned the authorship of the document, internal evidence indicates it was written by Philip Filicchi. In a note Bishop John Carroll wrote to Antonio Filicchi 9 September 1804, he said: “I now
return you the valuable manuscript of your highly respected brother, and entertain an humble reliance that so much zeal united with so much knowledge, will finally produce its desired effect.” (White, 521.) In addition, an 20 October 1846, letter of Antonio Filicchi to Charles White states that Philip Filicchi provided a manuscript for Elizabeth which argued the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, AMSJ A 111 094. Apparently Annabelle Melville did not see the Filicchi letter to Charles White. Based on her research, Annabelle Melville had cited Robert Seton who said that this statement was drawn up by Joseph Pecci, later provost of the cathedral and bishop of his native place Gubbio. He believed that Filicchi simply turned it into English for Mrs. Seton. See Seton, *Memoirs, Letters and Journal*, I, 151-186. This may explain Antonio’s letter to Pecci after Mrs. Seton’s death in which Antonio Filicchi told Pecci that Mrs. Seton “non cessera mai di venerare e amare il Veneratissimo e Amatissimo suo Amico e Padrone Monsignor Proposto Giuse Pecci per omnia secula seculorum.” (Mrs. Seton “never stopped venerating and loving her Very Venerable and Most Loved friend and patron Monsignor Proposto Giuseppe Pecci forever and ever.”) See Antonio Filicchi to Monsignor Pecci, Leghorn, 17 October 1821, and 23 October 1821, 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ. The document in question may also be found in Seton’s *Memoir, Letters and Journal*, I, 151-186; C. I. White, *The Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton*, 521-51.

18 Ibid., 369.
21 Philip Filicchi to John Carroll, Leghorn, 30 March 1804, AAB, AASMSU, 3-S-7.
22 Antonio Filicchi to John Carroll, New York, 26 July 1804, ASJPH 26-
Antonio Filicchi wrote that he intended showing Hobart’s arguments to Matthew O’Brien that evening but there is no evidence of O’Brien’s reply. Philip Filicchi, however, replied to Hobart’s position in a letter to Mrs. Seton dated 17 October 1804. Mrs. Seton’s letter to Carroll may be found in White, 125-126 and 3.6, CW, 1:315.

23 Antonio Filicchi to John Carroll, New York, 13 August 1804, ASJPH 26-0-2, (10). Copy. The original is in AAB, AASMSU.

24 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, 20 August 1804. This letter is not available. Charles I. White was unable to discover it in 1842-1843 after a careful search. Two hundred years later the letter is still missing. Its contents can only be approximated from the references made in Filicchi’s letter to John Carroll, 4 October 1804, and Mrs. Seton’s letter to Filicchi, 30 August 1804.


26 Antonio Filicchi to John Carroll, Boston, 4 October 1804, ASJPH 26-0-2, (10). Copy. The original is in AAB, AASMSU.

27 3.9, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 27 September [1804], CW, 1:323.

28 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 7 November 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:15. Carroll wrote to Mrs. Joanna Barry on 29 October, saying “To me it seems that my sickness was reported more serious than was justifiable by its symptoms, tho’ Dr. Brown as I understand considered it as dangerous.” Carroll to Barry, 29 October 1804, UNDA.

29 3.7, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 30 August 1804, CW, 1:318.

30 Ibid.

31 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 7 September 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:7.

32 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 8 March 1819, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:48.

33 3.7, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 8 September 1804, CW, 1:319.

34 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:370. St. Paul’s Chapel was at the corner Broadway Avenue and Vesey Street.

35 Ibid. 3.8, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 19 September 1804, CW, 1:321.

36 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:369.
37 3.8, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 19 September 1804, *CW*, 1:322.
38 Philip Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 17 October 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:13.
39 Ibid.
40 Philip Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 22 October 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:14.
41 John Carroll to Antonio Filicchi, Boston, 13 January 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:38.
42 Ibid.
43 3.9, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 27 September [1804], *CW*, 1:325. This was probably one of the letters forwarded to Bishop Carroll since, with another dated 19 September 1804, it is to be found in the Emmitsburg archives rather than in the Filicchi family collection. The Archdiocese of Baltimore Archives list of Seton-Carroll Correspondence gives these two dates but the actual collection of Seton letters at Baltimore contains no letters of these dates.
44 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 8 October 1804, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:11. Jean Cheverus became the first bishop of Boston six years later.
47 Ibid., 330.
48 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 339.
54 Ibid., *CW*, 1:371.
55 Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, New York, 7 January 1805 AAB, AASMSU, 5-V-2; 19 February 1805, AAB, AASMSU, 5-V-4.
57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., CW, 1:374.

59 5.14, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, Baltimore, 16 January 1809, CW, 2:46.

60 Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, New York, 19 February 1805, AAB, AASMSU, 5-V-4.

61 3.18, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 24 January 1805, CW, 1:342.

62 Antonio Filicchi to Rev. Jean Cheverus, New York, 19 February 1805, ASJPH 26-0-2, (10). Copy. The original is in AAB, AASMSU. This copy was made from a letter (probably a duplicate) in the handwriting of Antonio Filicchi preserved in the family archives in Leghorn, Italy. Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, The History of the Archdiocese of Boston, I, 610, Note 55 states incorrectly that the original of this letter is in AMSJ. There is no record preserved of Mrs. Seton’s letter to Jean Cheverus other than the indirect knowledge suggested in Cheverus’ reply.

63 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 4 March 1805, AMSV. The complete text of this letter is reproduced in Maria Dodge, S.C., Mother Elizabeth Boyle first Superioress of the Sisters of Charity, Mount St. Vincent, New York (New York, 1893), 26.

64 Antonio Filicchi to Rev. Jean Cheverus, New York, 16 March 1805, ASJPH 26-0-2, (10). Copy. The original is in AAB, AASMSU.

65 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:375.

66 3.23, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 15 April 1805, CW, 1:352.


68 Antonio Filicchi to Charles I. White, Leghorn, 20 October 1846, ASJPH 26-0-1 (2). Copy. The original is in ASCSE.


71 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:375.


73 7.66, Elizabeth Seton to Simon Bruté, Emmitsburg, 26 December 1817, CW, 2:454.

74 Leo R. Ryan, Old St. Peter’s (New York, 1935), 52.

75 Ibid., 63.

members to yellow fever. See ibid., 31 May 1813, AAB, AASMSU, 5-U-12.


78 Ryan, 76. Peter Guilday in his Life and Times of John Carroll, II, 631, stated that the two O’Briens were brothers and members of the same order. Ryan cites a letter from Victor F. O’Daniel, O.P., to prove Matthew O’Brien was not a Dominican. The Archdiocese of Baltimore Archives bear testimony to the fact that the men were not brothers. See William O’Brien to John Carroll, 9 June 1804, AAB, AASMSU, 5-U-10; Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, 24 February 1806, 5-T-5.

79 Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, New York, 19 February 1804, AAB, AASMSU, 5-V-4. Matthew O’Brien wrote, “Rev. W. O’Brien continues still incapable of appearing abroad. ...Mr. Vrennay has resolved to remain here some time and officiates as usual.” No identification of Vrennay is available.

80 Vrennay seems to have gone from New York to St. Thomas Island. Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, 24 February 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 5-T-6.

81 Matthew O’Brien to John Carroll, New York, 7 January 1805, 8 January 1805, AAB, AASMSU, 5-V-2, 5-V-3.


85 4.37, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, 31 May [1807], CW, 1:440. Mrs. Seton was never a good speller. Byrne’s name was spelled in many ways by others as well. [For a woman of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, she was quite literate. Ed.] Noah Webster published his first dictionary, A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language in 1806. Later he compiled a more comprehensive dictionary, An American Dictionary of the English Language (1828) which contributed to the standardization of spelling in the United States.

86 White, 169, note.

87 Charles L. Souvay, C.M., “Questions About Mother Seton’s Conversion,”
Catholic Historical Review, V (July-October, 1919), 237.

88 John Carroll to Antonio Filicchi, Boston, 13 January 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:38.

89 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 28 January 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:4.

90 This copy of the Following of Christ is preserved at ASCSH.


92 3.31, Journal for Amabilia Filicchi, entry of March 20th, CW, 1:376. The phrasing of the scriptural admonition is Mrs. Seton’s own.

93 Ibid., 377.


95 Antonio Filicchi to John Carroll, Philadelphia, 27 May 1805, AAB, AASMSU, 3-S-5.

96 3.22, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 6 April 1805, CW, 1:349.

97 3.21, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 31 March 1805, CW, 1:348.
In the brief review of her life called “Dear Remembrances,” Elizabeth Seton passes over the three years which lay between her conversion and her departure from New York, with the words, “Most painful remembrances now—yet grateful for the order of our Grace, so evident through All.”¹ Those two threads of pain and grace run quite plainly through the period’s pattern. If the year preceding her conversion was the severest test of Mrs. Seton’s interior forces, the three years following extended into a period of exterior trial. Elizabeth Seton’s profession of faith brought radical changes, not only in her spiritual life, but in the social changes of friendships and family relations, as well as in the economic aspects of her life.

Perhaps no Old Testament type so nearly foreshadows the convert to Catholicism as that of Ruth amid the alien corn.² The words of Rebecca Seton on her deathbed, repeating the pledge of Ruth, sound almost prophetic in their relation to Elizabeth Seton. Those whom blood and time have joined, faith seems to put asunder. Even in those cases where the widening of the breach is most imperceptibly accomplished, the convert is ultimately a citizen of a new state which precludes a return to his former soil. When, as in the case of Mrs. Seton, the change is made from the respectable majority to the disreputable minority, from a well-knit, prosperous, and literate citizenry to an impoverished assortment of alien immigrants, the expatriation is only rendered the more absolute.

The congregation of St. Peter’s Church, New York City, in the first decade of the nineteenth century consisted chiefly of Irish, French, and German immigrants. The New York state constitution adopted at the close of the Revolution, although leaving intact the article on religious liberty, by including Jay’s naturalization clause had “effectively deprived immigrant Catholics of every opportunity to rise in the social and political world of New York.”² When Mrs. Seton became a Catholic, New York City had only one Catholic office-holder, Andrew Morris, who had been chosen Assistant Alderman of the First Ward in 1802 and who held office until 1806.³ The year following the beginning of Mrs. Seton’s adherence to Catholicism,

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¹ [John Keats uses the phrase “amid the alien corn” in his poem “Ode to a Nightingale,” which refers to the biblical story of Ruth. The widowed Ruth loyally followed her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem where Ruth became a gleaner in the fields. (Ruth 1:16)]

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³
Francis Cooper made his momentous refusal to take the oath required by the naturalization provisions, and the Catholics of New York presented their petition to the state legislature. The opposition, led by William Van Ness, and Abraham Van Vechter, indulged in the lowest scurrility and bitterest invective. But the Cooper forces won out, and Francis Cooper took his seat on 7 February in the New York State Assembly.

Catholics generally were regarded as a “public nuisance” and “the off-scourings of the people.” Mrs. Seton’s friends had pointed to the shabbiness and squalor of the immigrant standard of living in their efforts to deter her. Before St. Peter’s building was completed, it was inadequate to contain comfortably the rapidly increasing “dirty, filthy, red-faced” immigrant congregation, and the church was described by non-Catholics as “a horrid place of spits and pushing.” Mrs. Seton, recalling her impressions of St. Peter’s Church, in later years confessed, “Alas—I found it all that indeed...”

Rev. Matthew O’Brien had written to his bishop in 1801 that an additional chapel was needed for the section of the city where the poor thronged. The services were sometimes complicated by the heckling of non-Catholics, and Elizabeth Seton who had once held that “where taste is a natural quality of the disposition, nothing can eradicate it but sorrow and Indifference to the world,” was to write Antonio Filicchi, “it requires indeed a superior mind to all externals to find real enjoyment here...I am forced to keep my eyes always on my Book, even when not using it.”

Within two years of the time of Mrs. Seton’s first entrance to the Barclay Street church, she was writing to Antonio Filicchi that “a mob on Christmas Eve assembled to pull down our Church or set fire to it—but were dispersed with only the death of a constable and the wounds of several others—they say it is high time the cross was pulled down, but the Mayor has issued a proclamation to check the evil.” Elizabeth Seton was referring to the Highbinder’s riot which began the evening of Thursday, 24 December 1806, and continued until Christmas night. Some fifty men had gathered in front of the church on Christmas Eve, intending to disrupt the ceremonies.

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8 Andrew Morris and John Byrne signed as chairman and secretary respectively. The New York State Constitution of 1777 required applicants for naturalization to renounce their allegiance to all foreign rulers, “ecclesiastical” as well as civil. This oath obtained until it was superseded by federal regulations in 1790. A similar oath required of state officials prevailed, however, until the Cooper petition of 1806.
9 Matthew O’Brien complained of a Jewish woman who came to St. Peter’s in an outlandish costume and “insults our ceremonies by her irreverent conduct.”
10 The part of the letter mentioning the Highbinder’s Riot was written at a later date. Mrs. Seton frequently adhered to the customary practice of the day that the writing of a letter often extend over a period of weeks since most people preferred to await the “occasion” of some traveler’s carrying it in person to assure safe delivery.
Andrew Morris, a trustee of St. Peter’s, as well as a member of the city council, persuaded the mob to disband once; but they returned and kept up a commotion well into the night. The indignant Irish met the next day to defend their church and the riot which ensued resulted in the death of the constable mentioned. Only the arrival of Mayor Dewitt Clinton terminated the imbroglio. When the news of the riot reached Boston, Cheverus wrote Mrs. Seton. “I heard with concern of the disturbance which took place on Christmas Day. We had here the happiness to celebrate in peace.”

The immediate reactions of Elizabeth Seton’s friends and relatives to her new affiliation varied in degree, but were, for the most part, rather moderate at first. John Henry Hobart was quite cool on the occasion of his last visit to her home the April after her conversion. From that time on, he felt it his duty to warn the widow’s friends against “the falsity and danger of her principles.” Mrs. Seton told him that “if he thought it his duty he must act in conformity to it, as I on my part should do it to the full extent of my power.” It was a painful conversation and marked the end of any real understanding between the two; but Elizabeth wrote to Antonio, “We must keep the divine precept of doing as we would be done by, and consider how much reason Mr. H. has for being embittered on this occasion.”

Catherine Dupleix and Eliza Sadler showed no outward change in their warm friendship. When Mrs. Dupleix listened to the “kind ladies [who] shed tears for poor deluded Mrs. Seton,” she told them bluntly that if there were anything in the world that could give any consolation to so distressed a creature, she for one was very happy. Antonio Filicchi took Dué’s support as a hopeful sign that some day she too might become a Catholic, saying, “I hope your good friend, Mrs. Dupleix will not reject the best reward you can offer her for her cordial friendship.” Mrs. Dupleix did become a Catholic, but the conversion took place after Mrs. Seton was in Emmitsburg. Antonio was pleased also that Mrs. John Livingstone was kind to Elizabeth. The interest of Mrs. Livingstone was perhaps more tinged with curiosity than sympathy. When she and a companion called on Mrs. Seton, she remarked that “generally a connection with a Deist was not feared, while a Roman Catholic was thought of with horror.” The ladies were particularly eager to learn if it were true that repeating sixty or eighty prayers gained full forgiveness of sins. When Mrs. Seton appealed to their reason they retreated and begged that the subject of religion should not be mentioned among them, “as transient conversations seldom, seldom have good effects.”
Julia Scott, Mrs. Startin, and John Wilkes continued to befriend Elizabeth and to contribute to her support. Wilkes did make some “sharp yet gentle reproaches” for Elizabeth’s imprudence in offending her wealthy, maternal uncle, John Charlton, and other friends upon whom she might later be forced to depend, but otherwise he remained interested in her welfare and was ready to advise her when she sought his opinion. Elizabeth’s godmother, Sarah Startin, was very kind during June and July when Elizabeth was ill and little Kate had inflammatory fever. She plied Elizabeth with “candle and old wine” daily, in an effort to restore her strength. Julia Scott never changed; while Elizabeth lived, Julia never ceased to love her and to contribute generously to her welfare.

Elizabeth’s own family acted very well. Guy Carleton Bayley wrote from Leghorn:

I will say nothing to you about your change of faith, as you must know what you do. I can only assure you that it will not diminish in the least the sincere affection I have always had for you and yours: what troubles me most is that I fear it will serve for a cloak to those who could not otherwise have refused them to withdraw those little assistances which your own present situation necessarily requires...Rest assured however that if ever fickle fortune should place me in a situation to assist you, nothing would afford me more pleasure.

Mary Bayley Post, Elizabeth’s own sister, came to the rescue in August 1805, when Mrs. Seton’s financial affairs had reached a crisis by taking the whole family to live with the Posts. The addition of six extra people to any household is no small problem, and the Wright Posts must have suffered a serious disruption of their summer routine when the Setons moved in with them at Greenwich.

Emma Bayley Craig did not live long enough to be concerned over her half-sister’s new religion. She died on 22 July 1805, leaving a little son, Henry, who did not long survive her. Mrs. Bayley, Elizabeth’s stepmother, oddly enough seems to have lost her mysterious coldness toward the young widow. Elizabeth wrote Julia Scott that ever since her return from Italy, the older woman had shown her “every mark of Peace and reconciliation, which also gives me the double enjoyment of the confidence and affection of the girls, Helen and Mary.” When Mrs. Bayley became seriously ill in August

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* Bayley was only nineteen years old at the time and was scarcely in a position to assist anyone financially. He later had a son, James Roosevelt Bayley, who became a Catholic convert.
1805, Mrs. Seton was called to attend her. All misunderstandings of the past were forgotten and the new convert’s only emotion was one of sorrow that “these poor souls die without Sacraments, without prayers, left in their last moments to the conflicts of parting Nature without the divine consolations which our Almighty God has so mercifully provided for us.”

The most pressing problem facing Mrs. Seton in the months following her conversion was the solution of her economic difficulties. Writing to Antonio Filicchi in April, she reported that the Wilkes plan, “so long agitated,” was given up for the time, and as a result Mrs. Seton was “plagued for a House.” As an alternative she was considering the proposal of Mr. Patrick White, “an English gentleman of very respectable character and a compleat scholar,” that Mrs. Seton join him and his wife in opening a school, an English Seminary. White was in reduced circumstances, and had recently failed in a similar undertaking in Albany. It was planned to take girls at first and, perhaps, boys later. Elizabeth was to assist the Whites in return for the education of her children and a small financial remuneration, and even though the latter would be trifling, she felt that at least she would be doing something toward the support of her family. Antonio advised her to consult O’Brien and Cheverus or even “your Mr. Wilkes” before committing herself to any long-term arrangement.

Almost as soon as the White plan was contemplated, rumor had it that Mrs. Seton was working with two other Catholics to spread the principles of her new religion. John Henry Hobart reproached the men who had vouched for the Whites, and warned everyone of the dangerous consequences of such a school. Dúe and Sad, out of patience with such foolishness, called upon Hobart to remonstrate. The Whites, they assured him, were Protestants, and Mrs. Seton was only interested in securing bread for her children. Hobart accepted the correction and tried to make amends by promising to use his influence for the school. But the damage was done. Wright Post and John Wilkes gave only grudging consent to the plan, while others less reasonable indulged in wild speculations as to Mrs. Seton’s intentions. Rev. Matthew O’Brien authorized Mrs. Seton to say “conscientiously that her principles and duties in this case were separate,” and to the rude questions directed

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1 Charlotte Amelia Bayley died on 1 September 1805, at 48 Greenwich Street, two doors from John Henry Hobart’s residence. Her will, proved on 21 November 1805, left all her property to her own seven children. Neither Elizabeth Bayley Seton nor Mary Bayley Post inherited from their step-mother. At the time the will was made, Emma Bayley Craig was still alive and her husband, William Craig, was named one of the executors, as well as guardian of the youngest girls, Mary and Helen Bayley. See Appendix A. Bayley-Seton Genealogy.

2 A private residential school for young ladies with an educational program comparable to a men’s college or boarding school. Ed.

3 Mrs. Seton was to receive one-third of the profits which the school produced.
toward her, Elizabeth answered as calmly as she could that she did not consider herself a “teacher of Souls” and certainly would never subject herself to the charge of “returning ingratitude for the confidence reposed” in her.\textsuperscript{33} In spite of the discouraging reception the plan received, Elizabeth went ahead with energy and the middle of May saw her moving to another house, one large enough to contain her family and serve as a school as well. To her delight the house was within one block of St. Peter’s, “the greatest luxury this World can afford.”\textsuperscript{34} By the end of May, a few girls were already in her charge, and Mr. White went up the Hudson to bring his family from Albany.\textsuperscript{i} The plan was doomed from the beginning. Religious prejudice, combined with a lack of business acumen on the part of the enterprisers, led to its early failure.\textsuperscript{j} When Antonio Filicchi stopped in New York on his way from Philadelphia to Canada in July, he found his friend very comfortably situated, and the Whites very friendly. But only “three scholars” were added to the nine Seton and White Children.\textsuperscript{35} Scarcely had Filicchi left New York when he received news from Mrs. Seton that the Whites were unable to pay their share of the next quarter’s rent. To prevent the landlord from seizing the furniture, Dr. Post hurried his sister-in-law and her children out to the Post summer household in Greenwich.\textsuperscript{36} The Setons left the city just as the yellow fever epidemic of 1805 was taking on alarming proportions.\textsuperscript{k}

The failure of the White scheme brought a renewed interest of both Wilkes and Filicchi in Mrs. Seton’s financial affairs. While in Montreal, Antonio conceived the plan of having the Seton boys enter the seminary there, with the possibility of Mrs. Seton working in some capacity as a teacher in the environs. The thought of going to Canada did not appeal to Elizabeth Seton when she first received the suggestion, and Antonio wrote, “do not be frightened about the idea of the Canada Seminary. I am not in any engagement. The idea you know was suggested by Mr. Tisserant.”\textsuperscript{l} Mrs. Seton was much more attracted by the revival of John Wilkes’ old plan for the boardinghouse for boys. It was not at all certain that the Episcopalian Clergyman, Mr. William Harris, would be willing to be associated with a Catholic, nor that parents would consent to have their children live under

\textsuperscript{i} [The acceptance of these pupils may be the source of the erroneous conclusion that Elizabeth herself operated a school in New York. Ed.]

\textsuperscript{j} This short-lived project is the only historical basis for the numerous references to schools conducted by Mrs. Seton in New York City. At most it lasted two months, consisted of three pupils. [Mr. and Mrs. Patrick White employed Mrs. Seton as a teacher but the Whites who had initiated the enterprise were responsible for its management. Ed.]

\textsuperscript{k} When Antonio Filicchi reached Albany in September 1805, he was “thunderstruck at the report of the prevailing fever at New York,” and went directly from Albany to Boston to evade the epidemic. See Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Albany, 16 September 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:24.

\textsuperscript{l} Rev. Jean S. Tisserant was a French priest, a friend of Jean Cheverus in Boston; he subsequently became a friend of Mrs. Seton’s. Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 22 October 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:27.
Mrs. Seton’s supervision; but John and Charles Wilkes were still inclined to place their own sons in her charge. Elizabeth Seton was very anxious not to remain with the Posts any longer than was necessary, and she wished to put an end to the well-meant but sometimes ridiculous proposals for her future. As she told Antonio:

Some proposals have been made me of keeping a Tea store—or China Shop—or small school for little children (too young, I suppose, to be taught the Hail Mary). In short, Tonino, they know not what to do with me, but God does—and when His blessed time is come, we shall know, and in the meantime He makes His poorest, feeblest creature strong.37

The temporary solution of the widow’s difficulties was the execution of the Wilkes plan. Early in November the Setons left the Post home to move to “a pleasant dwelling two miles from the city,” and Elizabeth wrote Julia Scott that she expected twelve or fourteen boys “to Board, Wash, and mend for” before the month was out. Elizabeth’s happiness being under her own roof again was only exceeded by joy in being able to do something for her “darlings.” She could now use the money Julia sent for Anna Maria Seton to provide the child with dancing lessons. Their home38 was near enough to Aunt Farquhar’s so that Anna Maria could take lessons along with her cousins.

Meanwhile Elizabeth Seton was beginning to have serious worries over the education of her sons, Richard and William, who were eight and ten years old respectively. In the days when John Henry Hobart was her ideal of Christian manhood, Elizabeth had hoped that young William might follow in Hobart’s steps and become a “preacher.”39 After she became a Catholic, she was eager to have her sons receive seminary training, if not to encourage a vocation to the priesthood at least to strengthen their faith. Since the girls could be kept close by her side, Mrs. Seton did not have such great fears for their spiritual welfare; but the boys were another matter. While they were staying at the Posts, Elizabeth had written Antonio urgently:

Now, dearest Tonino, prove your true love to me by exerting your utmost power in getting my poor boys to Baltimore, if it is possible. If you could now see the situation they are in here, only your love for souls, independent of any personal

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37 One of the sons of John Wilkes was the Charles Wilkes who later gained fame for his part in the Trent Affair during the American Civil War.
38 Rev. William Harris also lived in Stuyvesant Lane, the Bowery. “Aunt Farquhar” was Elizabeth Curson Farquhar, William Magee Seton’s aunt, the sister of the elder Seton’s two Curson wives. See Appendix A. Bayley-Seton Genealogy.
interest for me, would induce you to pity them in the ridicule they are forced to hear of our holy religion and the mockery at the Church and ministers, besides their minds being poisoned with bad principles of every kind which I cannot always check or control.40

Antonio Filicchi had already promised to pay for the boys’ education, and he had said that when they were old enough they might replace Richard and Carleton Bayley in the Filicchi counting house at Leghorn.41 After his Canadian trip, in the summer of 1805, Filicchi was anxious to see the Seton boys go to Montreal. On 8 October he had written:

At Montreal there is an eminent College and Seminary which will prove preferable by far to that of Baltimore. I tried to obtain a place there and I have been promised a categorical answer...in a few weeks. Meanwhile let Mr. Tisserant write to Baltimore as he intended. It will not interfere in the choice of the best.42

The reply from Canada came by way of a letter from Jean Cheverus in Boston, who said, “Unhappily they give no hope of the immediate admission of your dear children. Mr. F. will try in Baltimore or in Georgetown and I think he will succeed. His recommendations alone will have great weight.”43

Loath as he was to abandon the Montreal idea, Mr. Filicchi decided to investigate the rival excellence of the Georgetown and Baltimore schools on his trip south. By April 1806 he had visited Bishop Carroll in Baltimore and talked to him about Mrs. Seton and her children. Writing to his friend James Barry, in New York, the bishop said:

In concert with Bishop [Leonard] Neale, I provided means for the reception and education of her two sons at Georgetown for at least two years and trusted that in time Providence would open other resources. Mr. F. after expressing suitable acknowledgment seems rather disposed at present to advise

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40 The College of Montreal was founded by the Sulpician, M. Curatteau de la Blaiserie, in 1763. The Sisters of the Congregation were established two years later under the auspices of Saint Sulpice. It was probably this latter group which attracted Mrs. Seton’s attention later when she made a request of Father Matignon to which Father Cheverus replied: “Dr. Matignon sends his best respects and desires me to tell you, he does not know how to procure the Rules of the Nunneries in Canada. Dr. Dubourg was to converse with you about another project which I should prefer, hoping it would do better for your family, and being sure it could be very conducive to the progress of Religion in this country [United States]. It has been no doubt a real satisfaction to you to get acquainted and converse with the worthy, pious and learned Dr. Dubourg” See Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 21 January 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1-7. See The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1911), X, 548.
their mother to send them to Montreal, but nothing will be
determined before his return to your city.44

Antonio himself wrote on 18 April 1806 that he had visited the schools
and had all the information necessary to her decision, but he reiterated, “My
preference is decidedly for Montreal both for the better education of your
boys and your own dreams for your future old age.”45

Meanwhile Georgetown made a bid for the Seton boys in the form of
a letter written by a lay instructor, Mr. Thomas Kelly, to Mrs. Seton. Kelly
was not reluctant to point out in full detail the disadvantages of the Sulpician
school in Baltimore as contrasted with the superiority of Georgetown’s
claims. Baltimore, he wrote, was “divided into two houses, the Seminary
for those intended for the Church, and the College, for those who are not.”
The seminary, composed as it was of adults, practiced a rule of life much
too rigorous for the Seton boys to follow. The college was composed of 130
boys more than half of whom were Protestants who would be prone to laugh
at and to ridicule any boys preparing for the Church. Mr. Kelly generously
conceded that “Mr. Dubourg’s intention in educating Protestants and other
boys is undoubtedly very good,” but Georgetown, he felt sure, was much
more suited to Mrs. Seton’s needs.

This college [Georgetown] is intended for the use of
the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, founded by St. Ignatius,
acknowledged, I believe, by the whole Catholic world, to be
the best and most perfect order that has been established, yet
those educated here are left at their own option, to choose the
order, or to live [as] secular priests. There are no Protestant
boys or boys of other denominations here...As for the Bishop
[Neale] who is president and his Brother vice-president...the
real piety of which they are possessed necessarily must, as it
does, inspire those who are intrusted to their care.46

Mrs. Seton’s choice was Georgetown in the end.9 Her reasons, given
in detail in a letter to Antonio Filicchi, again in Philadelphia, included the
Kelly letter, Bishop Carroll’s views which he had expressed to the Barrys,
Mr. Tisserant’s preference, and the fact that her new friends, the Barrys, had
connections in Washington. After advancing all the arguments in favor of
the Jesuit school,9 she concluded, “You only can be the proper Judge of what

9 It would appear that Mrs. Seton intended her sons to receive an education compatible with the priestly
evocation since she sent her sons to Georgetown after receiving Kelly’s letter.
9 Filicchi’s opinion of the Seton boys seems to reflect on their preparation for school. In October of the
preceding year he had advised Mrs. Seton, “Your boys ought to prepare themselves to appear well-bred,
to know how to read and write well at least. I know you will spare no pains for it.” Antonio Filicchi to
Elizabeth Seton, 8 October 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10-28.
is right.”

On the receipt of this letter, Antonio replied immediately that the boys could certainly be safely placed in Georgetown for the time. He was perfectly content to act simply as cashier, leaving the details to Carroll, Tisserant, or Barry. Bishop Neale was willing to reduce all his demands to $250.00; Bishop Carroll would pay one hundred a year for two years. But, Antonio wrote, “The preference that we now conclude to give Georgetown does not exclude Montreal for the future, when I trust your boys will be more prepared and more susceptible of a more refined education.”

After receiving Filicchi’s approval the mother lost no time in sending her boys to Georgetown. Within a week’s time, William and Richard Seton, accompanied by Mr. Barry, appeared on Antonio’s doorstep in Philadelphia, bearing notes for their patron and for Julia Scott. “I am in danger of becoming an idolater,” their mother had written to Antonio, “and always shall consider you as my good angel.” She had already written Mr. Kelly to procure for the boys what was “indispensably necessary,” and had notified Bishops Carroll and Neale, “a task you may be sure performed with a trembling hand.” She knew, she added, that Antonio would be “among the ‘highest stars in glory’” for his unceasing efforts in her behalf. Antonio Filicchi wrote back on 16 May 1806:

My good sister, I admire your expediency and am only happy of your happiness. Your boys have proceeded this morning on their journey, and you may be sure that our Bishop Neale and Mr. Kelly will have for them all the requisite attention. It has certainly been very kind of Mr. Barry to accept the task of escorting them to Georgetown. His recommendations cannot fail to be useful.

While these economic and maternal concerns were engaging Mrs. Seton’s energies, her spiritual life was also progressing. Her earliest months within the Church were influenced by Rev. Matthew O’Brien, and Elizabeth wrote to Antonio that “the counsels and excellent directions of O.B....strengthen me and being sometimes enforced by commands give me a determination to my actions which is now indispensable.” Under the younger O’Brien, Mrs. Seton was learning to examine her conscience, to avoid the pitfalls of scruples, and to make good confessions. At first she hesitated about going when she had little or nothing to say. Although she was very conscious of “the cloud of imperfections surrounding every moment” of her life, she was so grateful to be free of “those things which have a name” that only her dread of temptation made her overcome her reluctance. Her own early difficulties with confession made Elizabeth Seton
better able to guide the young people under her care in later life. Writing to Ellen Wiseman in 1820, when this former pupil was in the midst of the worldly life of Philadelphia, Mother Seton urged:

Wake up your Faith. You know our Lord never meant us to mind who we go to, if they do but take us to Him, and the longer you stay back you will know the harder it is for you to go forward; and at last what does it end in dearest, to go through double, triple pain and examens, which will not be pains of grace and merit, but of your weakness and want of courage in delaying.52

Matthew O’Brien also advised Mrs. Seton to join the Society of the Holy Sacrament and told her he believed its rules would “aid in the Attainment of the much desired perfection.” At this time, Mrs. Seton was “admitted” to Communion once a week.53

The hasty removal of the Setons to Greenwich in the summer of 1805 placed Elizabeth in a difficult situation. Living in a non-Catholic household is difficult enough for any new convert and Mrs. Seton’s position was not ameliorated by her financial dependence at the time upon her sister’s family. The desired Friday and Saturday abstinence was a source of embarrassment because Mary Post could secure fish only with great difficulty and expense, and Elizabeth’s “bread and water spirit” was reluctant to necessitate Mary’s rather obvious efforts. Friday and Saturday were both days of abstinence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Prayerbooks of that day explained “The Church orders us to abstain from meat Fridays and Saturdays...Friday because our Saviour suffered death, Saturday to honor the memory of the Blessed Virgin.”54 Commenting on her difficulties at the Post’s, Mrs. Seton wrote to Antonio Filicchi, “I am a poor creature. Before I was in the Blessed Ark I could fast all day on Friday; now can hardly wait from one meal to another without faintness!”55 When Mrs. Seton consulted Father O’Brien, he reassured her, “In cases like yours the Bishop announces discretionary powers to the spirit of the Church which wills that neither strangers nor enemies shall have cause to criticize or blame her.”56 Even without the complications of menus, the Bayley sisters were by disposition prone to disagreement. When Elizabeth confided her grievances to her old friend, Eliza Sadler, Sad wrote reprovingly,

7 It is indicative of Mrs. Seton’s character that she preserved this reproof and several years later referred to it in these words, “A little note of yours struck my eye the other day among papers of value and contains such advice, so worded and peculiarly expressed that reading it over in silence it seemed to me I was kneeling to our Rev. Friend, and actually listening to his voice of Peace and Reconciliation.” 4.50, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, New York, 28 August 1807, CW, 1:462.
Do your Sister and her husband really desire your remaining with them? Of this I think there can be little doubt, however some inequalities of temper may seem to contradict it. Were this not the case, I am inclined to rely upon the good judgment of [Mr.] Post that he would put an end to such domestic inquietudes.\textsuperscript{57}

Mrs. Sadler went on to advise Elizabeth to accept her trials as her cross. She asked if Mary Post was ever any different or any happier, and concluded, “I am inclined to believe that you may be an instrument in God’s hand to do her much good.”

Mrs. Sadler’s advice was similar to that of another of Mrs. Seton’s friends, Rev. Jean S. Tisserant. He was one of those French emigré priests who briefly crossed the pages of American church history. A refugee from the Diocese of Bourges, he first fled to England in 1792, and appeared six years later in Wethersfield, Connecticut. He worked for a time in Connecticut, making frequent trips to Boston where he became friendly with both Matignon and Cheverus.\textsuperscript{58} It was through Jean Cheverus that Mrs. Seton met Tisserant. Passing through New York City on his way to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in June 1805 the priest carried a letter of introduction which recommended him to Mrs. Seton as “both learned and pious” and of pleasing conversation.\textsuperscript{59} Mrs. Seton seems to have possessed an affinity for French clergy, and Tisserant became almost at once a close friend and spiritual adviser. From this first meeting until Tisserant sailed for Europe a year later, the French emigré and the American convert remained in constant communication with each other.\textsuperscript{60} Until Rev. Michael Hurley, O.S.A. came to be admired so enthusiastically, Father Tisserant probably exerted the greatest influence upon Mrs. Seton’s spiritual affairs. It was Tisserant whom Mrs. Seton asked to be her sponsor at confirmation in May 1806.\textsuperscript{6}

When Tisserant heard of Mrs. Seton’s worries over fasting and abstinence while she lived at the Posts, he told her that circumstances, “ties of sanguinity and friendship, dictates of charity,” and economic considerations indicated that she should remain at her sister’s for the time being; but her assumption that religious duty required her to perform the impossible was unjustified. The letter of the law required communing once a year; a dispensation could be secured in regard to the fast and abstinence regulations; even assisting at Mass could be omitted where grave reason existed. He could understand her zeal, her reluctance to abandon the practices

\textsuperscript{6} When Tisserant was prevented by circumstances beyond his control from being present, Michael Hurley acted as proxy.
so beneficial to her spiritual life, but he believed she should consider these trials as sent by God.61

As time went by and the Setons moved once more to their own home, Mrs. Seton continued to receive the consolation of Tisserant’s advice. In December he wrote of his happiness in her improved situation but he reminded her that piety continually requires sacrifices, and that her task was to learn to make these sacrifices in a spirit of resignation.62 He took a deep interest in the progress of Cecilia Seton toward Catholicism.63 When Elizabeth was distressed at being unable to begin Lent with attendance at church, Tisserant wrote consolingly that even at home in the midst of her “little parish” of boys she could spend days of sacrifice and mortification. “Remember what you have to do as a mother, and in the employment you have undertaken,” he admonished. He disapproved of her tendency to dwell on past faults and recommended concentrating on present performance, “particularly to perform the works of penance prescribed at this holy time.”64 As Lent progressed and Elizabeth’s health declined, Tisserant reminded her that “a bodily suffering is an admonition to the Christian to indulge in these sentiments” which are related to her death. Nevertheless she must avoid indulging in her tendency toward melancholy, and avoid any excess of austerities which would prevent the fulfillment of her duties.65

In the brief year that Tisserant guided the eager convert’s progress, he became sensible of her special charm as well as of her ardent piety. He shared her peculiar phrases, writing clumsily, “embracer les chers darlings” of her children; he became fond of her best friends, Mrs. Sadler and Mrs. Dupleix, and always sent regards to them in his letters. His hope of sailing to Europe in the company of her “brother,” Antonio Filicchi, was not realized, but he left urgent appeals that Antonio meet him in London. April decided Tisserant’s departure in the near future. He paid a last visit to Boston and to his dear friends, Cheverus and Matignon. He wrote enthusiastically of the 500 Communions at Easter there, and of the six adult converts who were baptized on Holy Thursday.66 In the confusion of last minute traveling in Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey, Tisserant failed to receive Elizabeth’s letter in regard to her confirmation and he wrote in chagrin on 28 May 1806, “I have learned...that Monsignor the Bishop has been there [New York] several days and gave Confirmation on Monday. I leave you to judge what regret I feel.” His disappointment was, he wrote, overshadowed by the joy he felt in her own pleasure.

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1 Lent began on 19 February 1806; Easter Sunday fell on April 6.
You have received graces which will confirm your faith, fortify your courage to sustain the martyrdom to which you have dedicated yourself, render fruitful the apostolate attached to your conversion and to your example. With these graces you have received those of consolation, indeed the Spirit of the Consoler himself, who I hope will make you more and more sensible of His Divine and Benign Influence. If only I could have been present when you received this precious sacrament which imprinted on you the character of a soldier of Jesus Christ; rendered you more and more capable of marching under His standards.67

Tisserant’s departure for London, on 9 June 1806, deprived Elizabeth Seton of one of the most trusted friends of her first year in the Catholic Church. Although she continued to hope for his return to the United States for many years afterward, his letter from London, dated 27 August 1806, seems to have been her last direct contact with him.68 From time to time Jean Cheverus of Boston relayed news of Tisserant and his hopes of returning,69 but as the Napoleonic wars in Europe progressed these hopes dimmed. As late as 9 January 1810 Mrs. Seton wrote to Sad in New York:

Our Revd. Mr. Tisserant is not yet returned but still expected, the death of a sister in Germany has delayed him...we have reason to hope Mr. Tisserant will be our chaplain when he returns.70

Just what basis there was for Mrs. Seton’s hope is not revealed, but that Cheverus knew of it is clear from his letter to her of the same month, which stated:

He [Tisserant] knew and rejoiced at your consecration to God. He speaks in stronger terms about his return to the U.S., than ever he did before. However I doubt still whether we shall have the happiness to see him. Should he return, you will, I am afraid, have the preference, and we shall lose him and be obliged to applaud his choice.71

But Tisserant never came to Emmitsburg as chaplain or in any other capacity. The last news of him was the letter from Cheverus telling that the French priest was well and in England in January 1816. In the spring he was to go to France, and “had given up every hope of visiting us again.”72

While Tisserant was exerting an influence at closer range in 1805-1806, both John Carroll and Jean Cheverus were maintaining their interest
in Mrs. Seton from their more remote locations in Baltimore and Boston. One of Elizabeth’s first acts after her conversion was to write to Cheverus in gratitude for the part he had played, and to beg him to continue to advise her. Cheverus quickly sent her a prayer book with the wish, “May you, like the Blessed Virgin and the other holy women who were with the apostles, be filled with the Holy Ghost.” It was Cheverus who advised her to meet attacks on her religion with short, clear answers, and when discussion grew too heated to remain mute, since “silence is the best answer to scoffers.” When Mrs. Seton indulged in some flattering remarks to him Cheverus sternly reproved her, writing, “I must ask as a favor that you will never again write to me anything that has been said in my praise, but pray for me that I may be always sincerely humble.” This imagined rebuff produced a brief “tempest in a teapot.” Mrs. Seton felt Cheverus was angry with her, and wrote an apology to Boston. Cheverus felt distressed that his humility had been misunderstood and he wrote Tisserant:

She owes me no excuse, but unfortunately knowing very well that vanity is not dead in me, I begged her not to repeat to me praises made by those I love and respect. It is a temptation too delicate and to which I do not wish to be exposed. Thank you for having told her that I have no anger against her. If some words of mine made her believe it, I beg her pardon... My sentiments in her regard are not anger but esteem and respectful friendship.

To the lady herself in New York Cheverus sent a peace offering of five volumes of Massillon’s sermons for Advent and Lent, and with them the apology:

I am sorry if my letter made you suppose for a minute that I was angry with you. Never have I had any other sentiments towards you but those of the most sincere respect and friendship and with those I do and always shall remain.

Although Cheverus was not destined to see his sensitive friend for several years to come, Bishop Carroll was to see Mrs. Seton much
sooner. John Carroll was pleased when his friends James and Joanna Barry became acquainted with Elizabeth Seton and he wrote Mrs. Barry of “Mrs. Seton whose situation and sacrifices have interested me so much in her favor.” When Elizabeth heard of Carroll’s kind interest she told Antonio humbly, “Oh, if he knew what is known to you, how different would be his impressions!” She studied the picture the Barrys had of the bishop and tried to imagine what it would be like to meet him. When Carroll arrived in New York in May and gave Mrs. Seton a week of instruction and direction, her joy knew no bounds. She was confirmed by him on 25 May 1806 taking the name of Mary, which added to Ann and Elizabeth presented “the three most endearing ideas in the world.”

John Carroll, like others before him, was not impervious to the radiant charm which Mrs. Seton possessed and the elderly bishop and the convert became warm friends. He was delighted with her little girls and always inquired after them in his letters, requesting their prayers, and offering his services as a parent in God. After his return to Baltimore he intervened to untangle the financial transactions in regard to the Seton boys at Georgetown. When James Barry wrote him protesting an error made by Bishop Neale, Carroll replied:

My brother Bishop had brought the entire charge for the two boys against you as paymaster instead of deducting my contribution to their education, which he ought to have done, having received my instructions...When I go to Georgetown I shall examine this affair and if you have overpaid the sum

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1 In the fall of 1805 the Barrys had been at the Narrows, Long Island, when their daughter Mary was taken seriously ill. They took her to New York where she died on 17 November 1805. The Barrys remained in New York until James Barry’s death in January 1808. They were relative strangers in New York society when Mrs. Seton met them.

2 John Carroll thereafter addressed his letters to her as “Mrs. M. E. A. Seton.”

3 The difficulty over the financial arrangements also included a misunderstanding over the “requisite articles” the Seton boys were expected to provide. In lieu of bed linen, school books, etc., each student was to pay a $10 entrance fee. In addition, the Seton boys were charged $30 for “suits of uniform which they should have had along.” The Georgetown ledger, 1803-1813, gives a full account of the Seton accounts from their entrance, 20 May 1806, to withdrawal, 22 June 1808. Carroll’s payment of $200 is recorded on the first bill to James Barry, “Bishop Carroll has paid $200 to the college for his part of the sum which will arise & be due for the two amiable sons of Mrs. Seton in the course of two years.” See bill to James Barry, 20 May 1806, UNDA. The Georgetown ledger lists a Carroll payment $150 under the date of 23 February 1807. AGU, Ledger 105. James Barry, who handled Mrs. Seton’s negotiations at the entrance of her sons, was a hot-tempered man and he became highly incensed at what he believed injustice from Bishop Neale. He wrote to Carroll, “The letter I wrote you of the Setons and Mr. Neale would speak for itself, and its intent was so intended. Yes, I repeat what I once took the liberty to say to you, that if Mr. N. did not leave the College, the College must leave him.” 1 August 1806, AAB, AASMSU, I-L-1. Carroll’s letter to Barry on 19 September enclosed an answer “taken from the Bishop (Neale’s) mouth,” adding that Neale was no longer president of the College, Neale having resigned the week before to be replaced by Mr. Molyneux. If the resignation bore any relation to the Seton affairs, Bishop Carroll did not state it.
for which Mr. Filicchi became responsible it shall be returned
to go to the credit of subsequent payments.\textsuperscript{83}

While the Setons remained at Georgetown. Bishop Carroll continued
his interest in the boys and wrote their mother encouraging reports of
them.

Mrs. Seton’s natural wit elicited from the dignified bishop a heavier
humor and his letters contained such passages as the following apology for
his style:

It [his letter] has been written amidst continued interruptions,
one of which arose from a drunken woman finding access
to my study and another from a drunken sailor, who was
informed by inspiration or revelation, that all his excesses...have been forgiven...without any penitential works on his
side...The same spirit which assured him of his conversion
and forgiveness has ordered him to write and publish a book
highly important to the United States. When it comes from
the press you will allow me to send you a copy.\textsuperscript{84}

Part of Elizabeth Seton’s charm lay in a happy combination of
traits which, while bringing to the surface in others their latent capacity for
lightheartedness, still reminded them of her steady desire to grow in virtue
and humility. It can scarcely be coincidence that all of her friends felt that
these reproofs, spoken or written, were the things she saved and treasured.
Bishop Carroll could turn from his satire on the serenity of a bishop’s study
to a serious warning against pride in the same letter.

Whatever I learn of you, increases my solicitude, respect,
and admiration. But attribute no merit to yourself on this
account...it is beneath the dignity of a Christian, who has
ever meditated on the folly, as well as the criminality of
pride, to glory in that which belongs not to him. \textsuperscript{85}
CHAPTER 6. NO RESTING PLACE

Notes

5 Michael Hurley to John Carroll, New York, n.d., AAB, AASMSU, 4-G12.
6 3.31, Journal to Amabilia Filicchi, CW, 1:373.
8 Ryan, 77.
10 1.91, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, Staten Island, 26 July 1800, CW, 1:132.
11 3.22, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 6 April 1805, CW, 1:350.
13 The American Register, 27 December 1806, reprinted in Researches, XVI (1899), 149-150.
14 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 21 January 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:7.
15 3.26, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 30 April 1805, CW, 1:358.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid. See 3.23, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 15 April 1805, CW, 1:352.
18 Ibid.
19 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 21 May 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:22.
20 3.30, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 1 June 1805, CW, 1:366.
21 3.23, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 15 April 1805, CW, 1:352.
Guy Carleton Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 12 September 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:95. For a full account of Guy Carleton Bayley and his branch of the Bayley family, see Sister M. Hildegarde Yeager, C.S.C., *The Life of James Roosevelt Bayley, First Bishop of Newark and Eighth Archbishop of Baltimore, 1814-1877* (Washington, 1947). See also Appendix A. Bayley-Seton Genealogy.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 28 August 1805, CW, 1:381; Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 28 August 1805, CW, 1:383.

“Record of the Bayley Family in America,” UNDA. A typed, un-paginated manuscript compiled by Robert Seton; Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 26 December 1805, CW, 1:399.

Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 28 August 1805, CW, 1:384.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 9 September 1805, CW, 1:385. See *Historical Records and Studies*, XXII (1932), 97-98 for a copy of this will.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 30 April 1805, CW, 1:359.

Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 6 May 1805, CW, 1:360.

Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 3 May 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:21.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 6 May 1805, CW, 1:362. Mme. de Barberey, *Elizabeth Seton*, 6th edition (Paris, 1906), 339, states, “M. et Mme. White étaient bons Catholiques tous les deux.” Code’s adaptation of de Barberey repeats this error. Mrs. Seton wrote Filicchi that it was rumored that the Whites were Catholics but that Mrs. Sadler and Mrs. Dupleix specifically corrected that impression “and explained that Mr. and Mrs. W. were Protestants.”

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 17 May 1805, CW, 1:366.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 10 July 1805, CW, 1:380.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 28 August 1805, CW, 1:382.

38 This house was probably the one Mrs. Seton described as “Stuyvesant’s Lane, Bowery, near St. Mark’s Church, two white houses joined left hand.” 4.11, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 20 November 1805, CW, 1:395; 4.60, Seton to Scott, CW, 1:489. See New York City Directory, 1806-1807.


40 4.5, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 2 October 1805, CW, 1:387.


42 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 8 October 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:28.

43 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 30 November 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:3. Filicchi’s high opinion of Montreal was shared by both Jean Cheverus and Francis A. Matignon, the pastor of Holy Cross, Boston. When differences arose between the American seminaries at Georgetown and Baltimore, Matignon sent his Boston candidates for the priesthood to Montreal. See Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese of Boston (New York, 1944), I, 601.

44 John Carroll to James Barry, Baltimore, 6 April 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 9-C-6; Researches, XXV (1908), 56.

45 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 18 April 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:29.

46 Thomas Kelly to Elizabeth Seton, Georgetown, 8 April 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:54.

47 4.15, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 28 April 1806, CW, 1:404.

48 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 2 May 1806, ASJPH 26-0-2, (6b), 24. Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

49 4.17, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 12 May 1806, CW, 1:406.

50 Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 16 May 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:30.

51 3.25, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 22 April 1805, CW, 1:356.

52 7.250, Elizabeth Seton to Ellen Wiseman, Emmitsburg, 1 May 1820, CW, 2:656.

53 3.30, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 1 June 1805, CW, 1:365.

Ibid., 390.

Matthew O’Brien to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 11 October 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-7:71.

Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B1.

Sexton-Lord-Harrington, I, 548.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 1 June 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:2.

Jean Tisserant’s letters, written in French, though lengthy and difficult to read, are preserved in excellent condition at Emmitsburg. ASJPH 1-3-3-1, #20-29. Unfortunately none of Mrs. Seton’s to him are available.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 6 September 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:20.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 15 December 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:21.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 29 January 1806, UNDA.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 9 March 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:22.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 15 March 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:23; Ibid., 31 March 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:24.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 22 April 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:25.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 28 May 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:26.

Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, Elizabeth Town, 27 August 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:29.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 8 June 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:8; Ibid., 12 May 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:9; Ibid., 13 April 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:10; Ibid., 24 January 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:11; Ibid., 20 January 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:14; Ibid., 25 June 1816, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:15.


Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 24 January 1820, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:11.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 25 June 1816, ASJPH
1-3-3-1:15.

73 3.20, Elizabeth Seton to Jean Cheverus, CW, 1:347. The letter is a rough draft of the one sent to Cheverus, and bears no date. It may have been written on 2 April 1805.

74 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, 1 June 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:2.

75 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 30 November 1805, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:3.

76 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 28 January 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:4.

77 Jean Tisserant to Elizabeth Seton, 9 March 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:22.

78 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 3 April 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:5. See The Catholic Encyclopedia, X, 34.

79 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 3 February 1808, UNDA.


82 4.19, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 28 May 1806, CW, 1:408.

83 John Carroll to James Barry, Baltimore, 21 July 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 9-C-7. See 19 September 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 9-D-1.

84 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 May 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:39.

85 Ibid.