Amabilia and Antonio Filicchi

Elizabeth Seton, from a copy of a 1796 engraving by Charles Fevret de Saint-Mémin (Courtesy, St. Joseph's Provincial House Archives)
House appointed in the Protestant burying ground —
Oh oh oh what a day — close his eyes lay him out ride a journey be obliged to see a dozen people in my room till night — and at night crowded with the whole sense of my situation — Oh my Father and my G.
PART III

Spiritual Conflict and Conversion 1804-1805

1804

In Part III Elizabeth makes frequent reference to her deceased husband, William, and to her children, Anna Maria (Anna), William, Richard (Dick), Catherine (Kit), and Rebecca. She refers to her sister and brother-in-law, Mary (Sister) and Wright Post (Brother Post), and to her sisters-in-law Harriet and Cecilia Seton.

Among her friends she often refers to Antonio Filicchi (Brother, Mr. F., Tonio, Tonierlinno) and his wife, Amabilia; to relatives of Julia Scott: her children, Maria and John, her siblings, Charlotte Sitgreaves Cox (Sister) and Samuel Sitgreaves (Brother), and her niece Hitty; and to clergymen: Bishop John Carroll (the Bishop), Rev. John Henry Hobart (Mr. H.), and Rev. Matthew O’Brien (O.B.). In addition she speaks of John Murray and Sons (Murrey), the Filicchis’ business agent in New York.

3.1 Journal to Rebecca Seton continued

4th June 1804

Do I hold my dear ones again in my bosom—has God restored all my Treasure—even the little soul I have so long contemplated an

3.1 AMSV N/P 110: M, II, 12

1Returning from Europe, Elizabeth had just been reunited with her children after being separated from them for seven months.

2Baby Rebecca about whom Elizabeth had been dreaming and feared dead
angel in heaven—Nature cries out they are Fatherless—while God himself replies I am the Father of the Fatherless and the helper of the helpless—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”—

My soul’s Sister came not out to meet me, she too had been journeying fast to her heavenly home and her spirit now seemed only to wait the consoling love and tenderness of her beloved Sister to accompany it in its passage to eternity—to meet her who had been the dear Companion of all the pains—and all the comforts—of Songs of Praise and notes of sorrow, the dear faithful tender friend of my Soul through every varied scene of many years of trial—gone—only the Shadow remaining—and that in a few days must pass away—

The Home of plenty and of comfort—the Society of Sisters united by prayer and divine affections—the Evening hymns, the daily lectures, the sunset contemplations, the Service of holy days, the Kiss of Peace, the widows visits—all—all—gone—forever—and is Poverty and Sorrow the only exchange My Husband—my Sisters—my Home—my comforts—Poverty and sorrow—well with God’s blessing you too shall be changed into dearest friends—to the world you show your outward garments but thro’ them you discover to my Soul the palm of victory the triumph of Faith and the sweet footsteps of my Redeemer leading direct to his Kingdom—then let me gently meet you, be received in your bosom and be daily conducted by your counsels thro’ the remainder of the destined Journey. I know that many Divine graces accompany your path and change the stings of penance for the ease of conscience and the solitude of the desert for the Society of Angels—the angels of God accompanied the faithful when the light of his truth only dawned in the World—and now, that the day spring from on high has visited and exalted our nature to a union with the Divine will these beneficent beings be less associated or delighted to

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1Ps. 73:25-26
2Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth’s sister-in-law
3Elizabeth herself
dwell with the Soul that is panting for heavenly joys, and longing to
join in their eternal Allelujahs—Oh no I will imagine them always sur-
rounding me and in every moment I am free will sing with them Holy
Holy Holy Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth is full of thy glory.—
Sunday morning [July 8]

This is my Rebecca's Birthday in heaven⁶—No more watching
now my darling Sister—No more agonizing sufferings—the hourly
prayers interrupted by pains and tears are now exchanged for the eternal Hallelujah. the blessed angels who have so often witnessed our feeble efforts, now teach your Soul the Songs of Zion.—dear dear
Soul we shall no more watch the setting sun on our knees, and sigh our
soul to the Sun of Righteousness, for he has receiv'd you to his ever-
lasting light—no more sing praises gazing on the moon—for you
have awakened to eternal day—that dear voice that soothed the wid-
ows heart, admonished the forgetful Soul, inspired the love of God,
and only uttered sounds of love and Peace to all shall now be heard no
more among us, but the reward of those who lead others to Righteous-
ness now crowns his promise who has said “they shall shine as the stars forever”⁷—

The dawning day was unusually clear, and as the clouds receiv'd the brightness of the rising sun Rebecca's Soul seemed to be aroused
from the slumbers of approaching death which had gradually com-
posed her during the night, and pointing to a glowing cloud opposite her window, she said with a cheerful smile dear Sister if this glimpse of glory is so delightful, what must be in the presence of our God—

While the sun arose we said our usual prayers, the Tedium, the fifty
first psalm,⁸ and part of the Communion Service “with Angels with
Archangels and all the Company of Heaven we praise thee”—She
said “this is the dear day of rest, suppose Sister it should be my blessed Sabbath, Oh how you disappointed me last Evening when you told me
my pulse was stronger—but he is faithful that promises that I may

⁶Rebecca died July 8, 1804.
⁷Dan. 12:3
⁸The Te Deum is a traditional prayer of praise attributed to St. Ambrose. Psalm 51, known as the Miserere, is a traditional prayer of repentance.
well say." we then talked a little of our tender and faithful love for each other and earnestly prayed that this dear affection begun in Christ Jesus on earth might be perfected through him in Heaven—"and now dear Sister all is ready shut the window and lay my head easy that I may Sleep." (these were her express words) I said my love I dare not move you without some assistance, "why not" she repeated "all is ready" (she knew that I feared the consequence of moving her) at this moment Aunt F\(^7\) entered the room and she was so desirous of being moved that I raised her head and drew her towards me—Nature gave its last sigh—she was gone in five minutes without a groan—

He who searches the heart and knows the spring of each secret affection—He only knows what I lost at that moment.—but her unspeakable gain silences Natures voice and the Soul presses forward towards the mark and prize of her high calling in Christ Jesus.

3.2 To Antonio Filicchi

[n.d.]

My dearest Antonio

I cannot resist the desire of hearing from you since I cannot see you—and was so unhappy as to lose you in the crowd this Morning dear dear Brother why did you not look for me as I did for you if it had been only in exercise of your usual Charity knowing how much I should be disappointed at returning home without your Fraternal Benediction—

If you are too lazy to write me a line send me a word of kindness by Mary\(^1\) and she shall make you her best curtsey—tell her also when you

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9 Elizabeth Curson Farquhar, William Magee Seton's aunt
3.2 AMSJ A111 019
1 Possibly Mary Gillen Hoffman Seton, Elizabeth's sister-in-law
go, and do do love your poor Sister if not for her sake and for the love she bears you, yet for His Sake whose law is love.

Yours forever E A S
Morn[ing]

3.3 To Antonio Filicchi

Saturday afternoon 1804

How happy I shall be dear Antonio if you are not gone—my woman has been sick I could not send before—a few lines from Carlton’ inclosing a short letter from Mrs. Filicchi mentions a little box of Elixer for children, which I wrote for soon after my return, therefore the hats cannot be for me and you had better leave them with Murrey till called for—

May His Blessing which is above every blessing be with you and protect you thro’ every danger—Mrs. F[ilicchi]s letter may amuse you and I send it hoping you are not gone—

Your Sister

3.4 Draft to John Wilkes

[July 1804]

My dear friend

Your brother Charles gave me yesterday the unwelcome intelligence that you have been detained at Albany and suffered very much—perhaps of knowing that you were [unclear]—he was so kind

3.3 AMSJ A 111 020
3.4 ASIPH 1-3-3-3-3:39

1Guy Carleton Bayley, Elizabeth’s half-brother, was working at the Filicchi firm in Leghorn.
as to pass an hour with me for which jaunt [unclear] he thinks <line crossed out>—He was quite pleased with my little House¹ 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 the Bells for the death of poor Hamilton² that he could scarcely command himself [written over] <feelings>—how much you will be distressed at this melancholy event—the circumstances of which are really too bad to think of—Patience in this world is the constant lesson—

You will have heard before this of the departure of our dear Angel¹—She suffered extremely for about an hour, on Friday night so much, that we thought all was over, but recovered her senses again became perfectly composed 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—[my] dearest companion is gone, but I must be satisfied that she does not share my fate which she would certainly have done had she lived—with a grateful soul I thank God and you that my life is as comfortable as it is, but cannot be so selfish as to wish her to partake with me the many cares that must necessarily attend it¹—

¹John Wilkes, Dr. Wright Post, and Mrs. Sarah Startin, Elizabeth's godmother, had rented a house for the Setons on a temporary basis. This may have been the house on North Moore Street listed in the 1805 City Directory as Widow Seton's residence. North Moore Street was north of Duane and Jay Streets, running eastward from Greenwich Street.

²Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804), secretary of the treasury during George Washington's presidential administration, was a neighbor of the Setons. He died July 12, 1804, after being fatally injured in a duel with Aaron Burr on July 11 and is buried in Trinity churchyard.

³Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth's sister-in-law

⁴Written at the bottom of the page horizontally: "1st To rise as early as the season"; in another hand: "some time in July 1804."
My dearest Julia

The tenderness and affection of your expressions brought many quick and bitter tears from my very heart—I find so many changes and reverses in my singular fate that I did not look for your kindness or value your friendship as I ought accustomed to find every one occupied in their own concerns I thought Julia is enjoying and pursuing, and I will not remind her there is a being so burthened with sorrow as I am—My Seton has left his five darlings and myself wholly dependent on the Bounty of those individuals who have loved and respected him = happily for us both entirely unconscious of the desparate state of his affairs he died quite happy in the idea that we would have a sufficiency when his books were brought up—but on the contrary there is even a great deficiency, and if John Wilkes did not continue a faithful friend to us I should see my dear ones in a state of absolute poverty—but my Brother Post and Mrs. [Sarah] Startin unite with him in our maintenance for this year as my Rebecca is so young, after which if I live I am to pursue some personal exertion towards it myself—

I am so happy amongst all my difficulties to meet with a small neat house about a half mile from town where we occupy the upper room and will let the lower floor as soon as I can find a tenant—we eat milk morning and evening and chocolate for dinner, always with a thankful heart and a good appetite—my dearest companion and friend,—my Souls Sister² departed for the happier world this day week, and with her is gone all my interest in the connections of this life—it appears to me Julia that a cave or a desert would best satisfy my Natural desire. but God has given me a great deal to do, and I have always, and hope always, to prefer his Will to every wish of my own. he has been most gracious to me in returning me all my dear ones in health, and

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3.5 ASJPH 1-3-3-6:53

¹Accounts and financial status of Seton, Maitland and Company which was in bankruptcy
²Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth's sister-in-law
providing a roof to cover us—most gracious in giving both to my hus-
band and sister3 that Peace in their last hours which assures me they 
are free from all sufferings and inheriting his promises—most gra-
cious in raising my Soul above all the changing events of my mortal 
existance—Why then you will say my friend do you declare you are 
burthened with sorrow—next week I will write you Why—

I anticipate your first question to me my dear Julia, can you not 
share with me your portion?4 can you not add to the contributions of 
those friends who support me?—in answer to these questions which I 
am sure of from you, I assure you that for the present there is no neces-
sity, I spend much less than even those friends imagine, and delight in 
the opportunity of bringing up my children without those pretentions 
and indulgences that ruin so many.

Your idea of my making you a visit you will readily see is impracti-
cable—h[ow mu]ch I wish to see your dear children and yourself I 
cannot express, but I put that among the many other wishes that I set 
aside as not to be gratified, for your coming to me at this Season can-
not be right—The Father of Blessings bless you my love remember 
me to Charlotte—Hitty and Maria and be assured of my sincere and 
grateful affection

3Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth’s sister-in-law
4Julia invited Elizabeth to come to Philadelphia to live, and in July when she visited New York, 
she tried to persuade Elizabeth to let Anna Maria return with her to Philadelphia.
3.6 To Bishop John Carroll

[26 July 1804]

Reverend Sir

The inclosed letter from Mr. [Antonio] Filicchi will acquaint you with the motive which leads me to take the liberty of addressing you—He has indeed most kindly befriended me in endeavoring to enlighten and instruct my mind—the first impression I received from him that I was in error and in a church founded on error startled my soul and decided me to make every enquiry on the subject—the books he put into my hands gave me an entire conviction that the Protestant Episcopal Church was founded only on the principles and passions of Luther, and consequently that it was separated from the Church founded by Our Lord and his Apostles, and its ministers without a regular succession from them—shocked at the idea of being so far from the truth a determination of quitting their communion and uniting myself with yours became the earnest desire of my soul which accustomed to rely supremely on Divine Grace was easily satisfied on those points of difference and peculiarity in your Church when it was persuaded that it was the true one—under these impressions it remained until my arrival in New York—It was my friend Filicchi’s wish, and a respect due to those Pastors and friends from whom I had

3.6 AAB 7N2

1John Carroll (1735-1815) was a native of Maryland, educated in Europe, and joined the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). He returned to Maryland in 1773 when the Jesuits were suppressed. He was later named the first Catholic bishop in the United States (1789) and the first archbishop of Baltimore (1811-1815). Bishop Carroll first met Elizabeth Seton when he administered the sacrament of Confirmation to her May 25, 1806, at St. Peter’s Church on Barclay Street in New York. Elizabeth looked to Carroll as her spiritual father and he became her confidant. She turned to him for advice, support, and direction during the beginning years of the Sisters of Charity. Carroll surrendered his immediate superintendence of the new community to the Sulpician Fathers in 1809. In 1812 Carroll, as ecclesiastical superior, approved a modified version of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity for use by the community, then called the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s.

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is a religious order founded by St. Ignatius Loyola in Spain in 1540. French, Spanish, and English Jesuits came to the New World with the explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first Jesuits came to Maryland in 1634, and during the colonial period English Jesuits bore the major pastoral responsibility for Catholics in British territory on the east coast of North America.
received my first principles and affections to state my objections to their Communion—but I assure you that in the believe of those first objects I mentioned (that they proceeded from Luther and were without a regular succession from Christ and his Apostles) I felt my Soul so determined, that it appeared a wicked insincerity to give them any hope of changing me—when to my great astonishment they give me the most positive testimony that I have been deceived in those points—

—You will naturally observe to me that I must have expected an opposition where parties are opposed—certainly, and had the opposition rested on Transubstantiation or any point of faith be assured that my Faith would not have stopped at any point that your church has yet proposed to me—but in the decided testimonies that are given me by the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church that they are a True Church I acknowledge that the foundation of my Catholick principles is destroyed and I cannot see the necessity for my making a change—It is necessary to inform you that I have felt my situation the most awful manner and as the Mother and Sole parent of five children have certainly pleaded with God earnestly and I may strictly say incessantly as it has been the only and supreme desire of my Soul to know the Truth—I know that I have besides the natural errors of a Corrupt nature added many Sins to the account he has with me—indeed often in the struggles of my Soul I should have thought myself deservedly forsaken by him had I dared to impeach his mercy to one who desires above all things to please him and has the greatest sorrow for having offended him—indeed all other sorrow is Joy to me, and in the many severe trials he has been pleased to send me I have feared nothing but the fear of losing his favor.

—With the Sincerity with which I lay my heart before him I must declare to you that <the motive of my> I feel my mind decided in its original Sentiments respecting my Religion

—Mr. A. Filicchi who has accompanied me to America has requested me to make this Statement to you—and I have promised him to defer every further step until you will favour me with an answer—and must intreat you to consider that my present divided situation from every Communion is almost more than I can bear, and that it
will be an act of the greatest charity to forward your sentiments as soon as your leisure will permit—I am with very great respect

Your [unclear]

3.7 To Antonio Filicchi

30th August 1804

This day compleats one week since my most dear Brother left me—which week I have passed without seeing any one but little Cecilia and Harriet for a few minutes—I have thought of you incessantly, indeed I cannot think of my Soul without remembering you—and as certainly the greatest part of my days and nights are occupied in solicitude and watching over that poor soul consequently you are the constant companion of my thoughts and prayers—when I began the Litany of Jesus this afternoon the plural number put it in my mind to say it for you also, and praying heartily for you made me resolve to write to my dear Brother altho’ it appeared to me that you did not encourage the idea of writing to you often—

The Bishops 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 chapter John’ every day and then ask God can I offend him by believing those

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2 Antonio Filicchi, writing to Bishop Carroll, July 26, 1804, explained this enclosure in the following P.S.: “Mrs. Seton had written to you, but her Bishop [Benjamin Moore] has prevailed on her not to enter into any more discussion I enclose to you the original minuta of the letter that she had prepared for you as a history of the circumstances. As 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 with the proper direction and answer.

“I had just written so far, when the two addressed notes are brought to me, one from Mrs. Seton, the other from Mr. Hobart. I am bound in honor to comply with the request of Mrs. Seton: and at a loss what better to do, I have left with Rev. M[atthew] O’Bryan the manuscripts in question, who has promised me that he will be able for this same evening to have them perused and answered. Pray, console me with your direction.” (AAB 352)

3.7 AMSJ A 111 021

1 The Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus was found in Catholic prayer books from the sixteenth century on.

express words— I read my dear St Francis, and ask if it is possible that I shall dare to think differently from him or seek heaven any other way. I have read your England’s Reformation and find its evidence too conclusive to admit of any reply—God will not forsake me Antonio, I know that he will unite me to his flock, and altho’ now my Faith is unsettled I am assured that he will not disappoint my hope which is fixed on his own word that he will not despise the humble contrite heart which would esteem all losses in this world as greatest gain if it can only be so happy as to please him—

2nd September—

I begin now wishfully to watch for J[ames] Seton’s chair, every evening hoping that he will bring me a letter from you—this you may think childish dear Antonio but remember you have not a female heart, and mine is most truely and fondly attached to you, as you have proved when I have been most contradictory and troublesome to you—fearing too much not to possess your invaluable affection—

I was willing to embrace an excuse for not going to town last Sunday in compliance with your advice—and my Brother Post came to visit me—Our conversation turned accidently on the subject that engrosses my Soul, and led me to an explanation with him very interesting and I believe surprising to him as I fixed my argument on literal words rather than human fancy—his cool and quiet Judgment could not follow the flight of my Faith, but was so candid as to admit that if before God I believed the Doctrine of the Church to be true, the errors or imperfection of its members could not Justify a separation from its communion—

But still these hidious 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 prayer

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3St. Francis de Sales’ Introduction to the Devout Life (1609)
4Robert Manning’s England’s Conversion and Reformation Compared, a Catholic work of apologetics, first appeared in Antwerp in 1725.
5James Seton was Elizabeth’s brother-in-law and a partner in Seton, Maitland and Company. Sedan chairs were a common method of conveyance in New York City. Elizabeth 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.
shall finally be answered yet there seems now a cloud before my way that keeps me always asking him which is the right path—indeed my Brother when the remembrance of my impurities and unholiness before God strikes my memory with their fullest conviction I only wonder how we can expect from him so great a favor as the light of his truth until the sorrow and penance of my remaining life shall invite his pitying mercy to grant it—remember to pray for me—

8th September—

day after day passes without one line from you but I trust in God that you are safe and only defer writing from multiplied engagements and the pleasure of new acquaintances—This is the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and I have tried to sanctify it begging God to look in my Soul and see how gladly I would kiss her feet because she was his Mother and joyfully show every expression of reverence that even my Antonio would desire if I could do it with that freedom of Soul which flowed from the knowledge of his Will—

Mr. Hobart was here yesterday for the first time since your absence and was so entirely out of all patience that it was in vain to show the letter. He says "the Church was corrupt, we have returned to the Primative doctrine and what more would you have when you act according to your best judgment"—I tell him that would be enough for this world but I fear in the next to meet another question. his visit was short and painful on both sides—God direct me for I see it is in vain to look for help from any but him—

12th September—

Your much wished for letter of 7th Instance is arrived and I have thanked God with my whole soul that you are safe—I can find but one fault in your letter which is that a whole side of it is blank—you meet with that hospitality in Boston which my jealous heart would have desired you should have received from all to whom I belong—if you should meet with General Knox, his wife or daughter they were kind friends to me before my connection with Seton—take care of the

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6 Antonio Filicchi was travelling in the United States on business.
7 Probably General Henry Knox, a Revolutionary War general and secretary of war in George Washington’s first cabinet.
Thermometer I charge you—my prayers for you are most ardent on that point—

Three of my children have the whooping cough and as I watch them the greater part of the night my prayers are often repeated—but Oh Antonio when will my poor Soul be worthy to be heard, and make its direct applications with that liberty of spirit which the light of truth alone can give to it. I repeat to you pray for me it will benefit us both—and when you wish to add a cordial drop of sweetness to my cup write some of the thoughts of your Soul to your dear Sister who loves you with most true and unceasing affection—

EAS

3.8 To Antonio Filicchi

September 19 [1804]

My most dear Brother

The 13th Inst[ance] I sent a letter for you to the Post office and hope you have not only received it but that there is now another from your dear hand on the way in reply to it—you say you must know all my concerns interior and exterior—as for the latter they are easily related—I have seen no one since I wrote you but my Philadelphia friend Mrs. [Julia] Scott whose tenderness to me is unremitted—Mrs. [Eliza] Sadler who cannot enter into the spirit of our cause, and Captain Blagg who came to offer his services if I had any commands in Leghorn or Paris. Mr. H[obart] and all the other Misters have left me to my contemplations or rather to my "best judgment" I suppose—but, I rather hope to God—so much for exterior to which I only add I am very well tho’ quite oppressed with fatigue occasioned by my poor little childrens Whooping cough.

3.8 AAB 7N3

1Elizabeth’s growing interest in Catholicism
2Captain of the ship on which Elizabeth returned to New York
In order to disclose to you the interior I must speak to you as to God—to him I say—when shall my darkness be made light—for really it would seem that the Evil Spirit has taken his place so near my Soul that nothing good can enter in it without being mixed with his Suggestions—In the life of St. Augustin⁵ I read that “where he is most active and obstacles seem greatest in the Divine Service there we have reason to conclude that Success will be most glorious.”—the hope of this glorious Success is all my comfort for indeed my spirit is sometimes so severly tried it is ready to sink—This morning I fell on my face before God (remember I tell you all) and appealed to him as my righteous Judge if hardness of heart, or unwillingness to be taught, or any human reasons stood between me and the truth—if I would not rejoice to cast my Sorrows on the Bosom of the Blessed Mary—to intreat the Influence of all his Blessed Saints and angels, to pray for precious Souls even more than for myself, and account myself happy in dying for his Sacred Truth if once my soul could know it was pleasing him—I remembered how much these exercises had comforted and delighted me at Leghorn and recalled all the reasons which had there convinced me of their truth, and immediately a cloud of doubts and replies raised a contest in this poor Soul and I could only again cry out for mercy to a sinner and implore his Pity who is the source of life light and truth to enlighten my eyes that I sleep not in death—that death of sin and error which with every power of my Soul I endeavor to escape—

after reading the life of St. Mary Magdalen⁴ I thought “Come my Soul let us turn from all these Suggestions of one side or the other and quietly resolve to go to that church which has at least the multitude of the wise and good on its side, and began to consider the first steps I must take—the first step is it not to declare I believe all that is taught by the council of Trent,⁵ and if I said that, would not the Searcher of hearts know my falsehood and insincerity—could you say that you would be satisfied with his Bread and believe the cup, which he

⁵St. Augustine of Hippo, a fourth century Christian apologist and writer (354-430)

⁴Possibly St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi (1566-1607), a Florentine Carmelite and mystic

⁵The Council of Trent (1545-63) was a major church council which clarified Catholic doctrine and teaching.
equally commanded unnecessary—could you believe that the Prayers and Litanies addressed to our Blessed Lady were acceptable to God tho' not commanded in Scripture, etc. etc. by all which I find and you my Antonio will be out of Patience to find that the tradition of the Church has not the true weight of authority in my mind—do not be angry—pity me—remember the mixtures of truth and error which have been pressed upon my Soul—and rather pray for me than reproach me—for indeed I make every endeavor to think as you wish me to, and it is only the most obstinate resistance of my mind that prevents my immediately doing also as you wish me to, and all I can do is to renew my promise that I will pray incessantly and strive to wash out with tears and penance the Sins which I fear oppose my way to God—again I repeat pray for me—

22nd September—

Your most flattering and kind letter of the 15th September is safe in my possession, I read it over and over and smile to think that the heart of Man knows itself so little—but God knows it, and it is enough—you will recieve mine of the 12th September I hope before your jaunt to Portland—and it will reassure you of the constancy of that affection on which you so justly rely—that affection my dearest Tonierlinno which notwithstanding all my doubts and fears, I must yet hope will be perfected in Paradise—I tremble at the thought of your Brothers' next letter and yet very much wish to have one both from him and your lovely Amabilia—as to your letters they are so free from mistakes and so perfectly well expressed that I shall imagine you have found some kind Directress to supply the deficiency of her you left behind you—She may be more happy in many respects and worthier of so distinguished a favor, but certainly can never excell in truth or affection—and when you return must yield her claim to a more ancient pretention—

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6The Council of Trent affirmed the authority of tradition along with scripture.
7Portland, Maine
8Filippo Filicchi
I reiterate your Solemn Benediction from the bottom of my Soul and pray earnestly that “Almighty God” may bless and preserve my dear Brother—and restore [him] safe to his own true friend and Sister

EAS.

3.9 To Antonio Filicchi

September 27 [1804]

Most dear friend and Brother

It is necessary to lay the restraint of Discretion on my pen while I thank you for your letter of the 20th which though but two hours ago received has been already read over many times—the pen is restrained, but the heart which is before God blesses and adores him in unbounded thanksgiving for such a friend—Your goodness to me he only can reward—

to answer you fully now would not be proper in any way, especially as you see my poor Soul is still more unsettled and perplexed from day to day, not from any failure in its prayers or intreaties to God which are rather redoubled than neglected, but like a Bird struggling in a net it cannot escape its fears and tremblings—

This afternoon after dismissing the children to play, I went to my knees in my little closet to consider what I should do, and how my sacred duty would direct—Should I again read those Books I first received from Mr. H[obart] my heart revolted, for I know there are all the black accusations and the Sum of them too sensibly torment my Soul—should I again go over those of the Cathlick Doct[rine] though every page I read is familiar to me and my memory represents in rotation the different instructions and replies?—Since your absence I have read the book your Brother first gave me and the one you also gave, with the most careful attention—not only with attention but always with Prayer—and now must look up to that as my only refuge,
Prayer at all times, in all places—really Antonio my most dear Brother to whom I can speak every secret of my Soul, I have and do pray so much that it seems every thought is Prayer, and when I awake from my short sleeps my mind seems to have been praying—and the poor eyes are really almost blind with incessant tears—for can I pray for such a favor without a beating heart and torrents of tears—My children say “poor Mamma,” continually and really are better than they were that they may not add to my Sorrow—Yet sweet are these tears, and sweet are the Sorrows, great is my comfort, that though the Almighty source of Light does not visit me with his blessed light, yet he does not leave me Contented and insensible to my darkness—

29th

This day has been a feast day to the children and a holiday from school that I might give the greatest portion of the hours to God—you would have been pleased to hear their questions about St. Michael and how eagerly they listened to the history of the good offices done to us by the Blessed angels, and of St. Michael driving Lucifer out of heaven etc. They always wait on their knees after prayers till I bless them each with the Sign of the Cross and I look up to God with a humble hope that he will not forsake us—

I could tell you many things my Brother but must wait for the much wished for hour when we shall be seated with our big book at the table—I could cry out now as my poor Seton used to Antonio Antonio, but call back the thought and my Soul cries out Jesus Jesus—there it finds rest, and heavenly Peace, and is hushed by that dear Sound as my little Babe is quieted by my Cradle song—The Jesus Psalter in the little Book you gave me is my favorite office because it so often repeats that name—and when thought goes to you Antonio and imagines you in the promiscuous company you must meet, without any solid gratification—fatigued by your excursions, wandering in your fancy etc. etc. etc. etc. Oh how I pray that the Holy Spirit may not leave you, and that your dear Angel may even pinch you at the hour of Prayers rather than suffer you to neglect them.

1An angel mentioned in the Christian scriptures whose feast is celebrated September 29
2The Bible
You charge me not to neglect the lives of the Saints—which I could not if I would, for they interest me so much, that the little time I can catch for reading is all given to them, indeed they are a relaxation to my mind, for they lessen all my troubles and make them as nothing by comparison—when I read that St. Augustin[e] was long in a fluctuating state of mind between error and truth, I say to myself, be Patient, God will bring you Home at last—and as for the lessons of self denial and Poverty If St. Francis De Sales¹ and the Life of our dear Master had not before pointed out to me the many virtues and graces that accompany them I should even wish for them to be like those dear dear Saints in any respect—Antonio Antonio why cannot my poor Soul be satisfied that your religion is now the same that theirs then was—how can it hesitate—why must it struggle—the Almighty only can decide

—do my Brother tell me something about yourself you certainly must know how grateful even the smallest particular is to an absent friend always anxious for your happiness and welfare—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—day after day passes and I see no one, indeed I can say with perfect truth at all times I prefer my Solitude to the company of any human being except that of my most dear A. 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 and most ardent hopes can never be disappointed—

The idea you suggested to me of writing to Bishop Carroll was suggested by a good or an evil angel immediately after your departure—the Protestants say I am in a state of temptation, you must naturally think the same—the Almighty is my defence in either case, not from any claim of mine, but thro' the name of Jesus Christ—Is it

¹Elizabeth was reading Introduction to the Devout Life.
²Cf. 1 Sam. 18:1.
possible I can do wrong in writing to him sanctioned by your direction—at least I will have a letter prepared by the time you come—

your EAS.
30th September

3.10 To Antonio Filicchi

9th October 1804

Five days are passed my dearest Brother since the usual period of receiving your letters, which have not exceeded the interval of nine days—but I am quite sure there is one on the way for me or perhaps in the Pocket of some forgetful gentleman, sometimes I think Antonio himself is on the way and begin to watch the door expecting the welcome visit, dear dear friend how my heart will rejoice in that hour—if God pleases, if you are preserved from sickness and other accidents which my anxious and busy imagination so often presents—

11th October

I have your letter of the 8th Instance before me—you must not know that I placed it in my Bosom until I had given thanks and said my Prayers before it was opened—and judge of my disappointment when only a few lines rewarded my anxious anticipations—however at the foot of my cross I found consolation and kissing it over and over I repeated and repeat, There only I am never disappointed—but if my letters interest you as much as your flattering encomiums express I will delight in continuing them as a means of giving pleasure to my dear Brother and endeavouring to prove as much as is possible that affection which is inexpressible—

This is the first time since our correspondance by letter commenced that the pen goes heavily. I have nothing new—the poor Soul goes through nearly the same exercises day by day always drifting on the Ocean without any perceptable approach to its haven of rest but
supported by its hope in God that he will not leave it to perish—a letter but not a very satisfactory one is prepared for our Bishop C[arroll]
your application will I hope prevent the necessity of addressing it—of this however my dear A. shall judge—

The secret bias of my heart was clearly discovered to me last Saturday whilst I passed half an hour with the sick man who is a Catholick for whom you gave me the ten dollars—the pleasure of consoling him and conversing with the poor honest family he lives with recompensed the trouble of my walk ten fold, and when he prayed for me and for my dear Brother it seemed to me sure that his prayers would be heard—also passing the Roman Church I stope and read the tombstones lifting up my heart to God for pity, appealing to him as my judge how joyfully I would enter there and kiss the steps of his Altar—every day to visit my Saviour there and pour out my Soul before him is the supreme desire—but Oh Antonio my most dear Brother should I ever dare to bring there a doubtful distracted mind, a confusion of fears and hesitations, trembling before God, in anguish and terror least it should offend him who only it desires to please—in the sure confidence of your mind you must smile at your poor Sisters expressions as the effusions of a heated imagination—but Oh my Soul is at stake—and the dear ones of my Soul must partake my error in going or staying—far different is my situation from those who are uninstructed—but my hard case is to have a head turned with instruction without the light in my Soul to direct it where to rest—Still there is only one remedy the constant prayer “Show me the way I shall walk in, I give up my Soul to Thee” and with the poor Sinner in the Gospel “Lord what would thou have me to do”—

The friends once so much interested on this subject seem to have given me up to God also for I see them no more—Mr. H[obart] sent some messages about a lame foot and I am very happy to be excused from unavailing conversations—

17th October When you write to Leghorn remember me most affectionately to your best Beloved1—I believe I must not write until I

1Ps. 32:8
2Matt. 19:16
3Amabilia Filicchi
hear from them—how often, indeed almost continually my thoughts wander there realizing my room under your roof, the appearance of every object from the window and the smile of the little darling Pat on his tip toe asking questions of his Signora Seton—sometimes too I am obliged to make the sign of the cross and look to God for Pity. The happiest hour I can now anticipate in this world is that in which I shall hear that you are again in that dear place in the arms of the still dearer objects it contains—

I trust you will not suffer from the severity of our winter—the storms have already begun and the wind blows my candle while I write—however they have no other effect than reminding me more forcible of my journey’s end and pointing every wish and sigh to that Eternal Spring where storms cannot reach—can it be Antonio that God will let me perish, will he ever say that dreadful word—GO—to me? certainly in the operation of his Justice that must be my wretched doom, but that Justice is always tempered with Mercy or where should I be now—often I think the barren fig tree is spared yet one year more—this may be the last part of that Year, and yet how barren of all fruit it is—often the thought presses so strong upon me—to be banished from him—to hear no sounds but blasphemy—that would be infinite torment without the devouring flame—what would become of me if he did not see my heart and know all its struggles and desires—He sees it, and sees there also the constant prayer for your Soul as earnestly offered as for my own—

Your own friend and Sister EAS

3.11 To Antonio Filicchi

Thursday Evening 16th November 1804

Your letter of 7th Instance is this moment received, and has been read twice, I never drempt of repr[o]aching you Antonio though a

4Patrizio Filicchi, Antonio and Amabilia’s son
3.11 AMSJ A 111 023
month and two weeks are past since I had your few lines of 7th October. My heart has jumped almost out of me every time our street door opened, and trembled so much at the sight of Mr. [John] Wilkes, J[ames] Seton¹ or any one who might inform me of you that I have scarcely been able to speak—however all this is an excess of folly that deserves the just punishment it receives and I ought only to thank God that by depriving me of confidence in any human affection he draws my Soul more near to its only center of rest—

3rd December — These were my Sentiments my Brother when I received your letter of last month, nor are they changed by the few lines delivered to me this Evening since the above period my woman has had a severe illness and I have had all the work to do—of making fires, preparing food, and nursing her, added to my usual occupations which fatigue has been attended with violent cold on my breast with pains etc.—yet I have written to you and had sealed the letter ready for the Post—but considering with my own heart, its errors, its wanderings and still added sorrows which all call to it with an irresistible force to give itself to God alone, I ask why then deliver it, or even lend it to the uncertain influences of human affections, why allow it to look for Antonio to be made happy by his attentions or disturbed by his neglects—when those moments spent in writing to or thinking of my Brother are given to my J[esus] He never disappoints me but repays every instant with hours of sweet Peace and unfailing contentment—and the tenderest interest you ever can bestow on me is only a stream of which he is the fountain—

This on my part—on yours, the multiplicity of business, laziness of temper diffidence of disposition, inconvenience in writing English with other Etcetera’s, are an all sufficient acknowledgement however delicately expressed, that writing to your Sister must be a sacrifice which her affection for you would rather dispense with than constrain² you to perform. I hope your new Engagements in Boston will supply to you fully the loss of my letters in instructing you in our language as

¹Elizabeth’s brother-in-law
²Constrain is underlined twice
doubtless the 2 or 3 weeks you purpose still to remain there will lengthen to months as easily as those that are past—

Immediately on Mr. Wilkes return to New York he proposed a plan to me for my future maintainance which by every possible evasion I have withheld my consent to having for two months past expected your return here, and been anxiously desirous of not accepting any terms without the consent of him who next to God my heart owns to be its sole controller; but pushed by necessity, and compelled by my un­ provided condition and another offering to take the situation uncondi­tionally which I have so long hesitated to accept, I have yielded to circumstances I could not avoid and engaged to take the charge of 20 Boys as Boarders in a house a little further out of town near their school—the Establishment is to commence the beginning of the year—I believe it is certain and will yield to me some independ­ ence—My heart feels so really bowed down that I cannot either fear or hope on the subject, but pray and fast, and try to keep both Eye and Soul fixed on God ready to meet his Will. Oh how eagerly they both stretch out to gain his blessed favour always in life and in Death

your own most Affectionate Sister

3.12 Draft in French to an Unidentified Woman

20th November 1804

Ma chere ami Mamma

Mon coeur vous a ecrit bien des Lettres depuis notre separation—ce separation qui a ete suivi de tout des malheurs, exquis, nous avons partagé vos peines. Mon Wm. a donné bien dis Soupiers pour la

3This plan involved Elizabeth taking as boarders the children of John Wilkes and his brother, Charles, as well as a dozen more from the school conducted by Rev. William Harris, the curate of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in the Bowery. Although Elizabeth seemed pressed to make a decision, this plan did not materialize for another year.

3.12 ASJPH 1-3-3-4:57

1Written at the top in another hand: “Sur Sa Conversion” [Upon Her Conversion]
sort de votre chère mari et les suite funist qui vous avez prouvé tout au moment qu’elle a senti ses souffrances dans les siens, et bien j’ai sente les vôtres chère mamma et aussi, bien des circonstance amers que j’espere en Dieu ne peut jamais vous toucherez.

—Je ne sais pas se l’adversite a la même effet pour vous—pour moi, il me semble que en perdant mon Pere, mon Mari et Rebecca tout et fini—je regard mes petites Enfans comme des tresors cest vrai, mais avec peur de fixer meme lesperance de bonheur sur des objects qui change si vite et a qui l’existence est si incertain—certainment cest pour qui un Mere pouvait bien si soutenir sous des pains and d’eau ils sont toute dans une santé parfait bien bonne et carressant et parlant a chaque jour de leur cher Papa et l’heureuse moment que dont nous recevoir

vous avez bien Jugé qui notre bien faisoit ami ma donez tout les secours possible, et il a fait un arrangement pour moi que peut me donez quelque independance si le bon dieu me conserve ma Santé pour un vie si fatigant cest de recevoir ces garcon[s] celle de son frere et encore un douzain, pour la compensation necessaire pour la maintenance de ma famille. —l’establishment sera près de leurs Ecolle, et je crois que ce sera un vie aussi doux qui je peut esperé dans mes circonstances—

Si Mr. Wilkes n’avez pas puis tant d’interest dans ma situation j’avais quitté mon payie presque au meme moment de mon retour en consequences de froideur que j’ai eprouvé de mes amis en general au cause de mes sentiments Catholic. Je ne sais pas Mamma si vous avez remarqué la force de la religion dans ma disposition quand nous etions ensemble, certainment les evenments dupuis ce temps la a bien augmenté cette affection—et ce n’est pas necessaire de vous donez un excuse pour etant Catholic surtout chez des catholic—il me gel[gl]net l’ame et la coeur si bien que si ce n’était pas pour mes devoirs a mes Enfans j’avais retiré dans une couvent au moment qui a fini la vie de mon mari—mais en arrivent ici la clergé ma fait un attack sur la question en parlant de l’antichrist, l’idolatries et un torrant d’objections qui en meme temp quils[?] ne pouvet pas me changez les opinions que j’avais adopté; ma assa[y?] effrayé pour me tenir dans un hesitation, et me voila dans les mains de Dieu prient nuit et jour pour
My heart has written you many letters since our separation—that separation followed by so many painful misfortunes; we have shared your sorrows. My William sighed a great deal over the fate of your dear husband and its dreadful aftermath for you, which you experience especially at the time he experienced his sufferings in his own.

EAS.

November 20, 1804

[My dear friend Mamma,]

²Annabelle Melville names the addressee in this letter as “Olive.”
Ah well, I have experienced yours, dear Mamma, and also many bitter circumstances which I hope in God will never touch you.

I do not know if adversity has the same effect on you. As for me, I think that, losing my Father, my husband and Rebecca all is finished. True, I look upon my little children as treasures, but with the fear of even placing the hope of happiness on objects that change so quickly and whose existence is so uncertain. Certainly, that is enough to make a mother go on bread and water. They are all in perfect health, good, and affectionate and speaking every day of their Papa and the happy moment when we will be reunited.

You have judged correctly that our benevolent friend\(^3\) has given me all possible help and has made arrangements for me which allow me some independence. If God preserves my health for such a fatiguing life, it is to receive these boys of his brother’s and another twelve or so, as the settlement necessary for the maintenance of my family. The establishment will be near their school, and I think it will be a life as easy as I can hope for in my circumstances. If Mr. Wilkes had not taken such an interest in my situation, I would have left my country at almost the very moment of my return, because of the coldness I experienced from my friends in general because of my Catholic sentiments. I don’t know, Mamma, if you noticed the strength of religion in my disposition when we were together, certainly subsequent events have greatly increased this ardor—and it is not necessary to give you an excuse for being Catholic, especially with Catholics.

It has won me over, heart and soul, so much so that, were it not for my duties to my children, I would have gone into a convent\(^4\) as soon as my husband died. But, when I arrived here, the clergy attacked me on the question, speaking of the antichrist, idolatry, and a torrent of objections, which, even though they could not make me change the opinions I had adopted, frightened me enough at the same time to cause me some hesitation. So, here I am in the hands of God, praying night and day for the friend who alone can guide me straight. I am instructing my children in this religion as best I can, without taking the decisive

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\(^3\)John Wilkes

\(^4\)It was common practice for widows to board in convents as a sheltered setting.
step. My entire soul desires this and I find my greatest consolation in placing myself in imagination in their churches.

Pray for me, dear friend. Is it possible that I have written you in so much detail—in a manner you can scarcely understand—This is the first letter I have ever written in French, the only excuse I can offer for all the mistakes, and this difficulty in making myself understood is the only reason you have not received any letters from me on every boat since your departure.

Oh! how happy I would be to know everything about you—you yourself, your dear children, our William Seton, the little angel Harriet, Henrique, Aglai, Adele—subjects that will always be dear to me . . . Often I hum the little air “come tender love” and “Holy Mary.” Then the tears begin to fall very quickly on my needle at the almost unbearable remembrance.

My brothers and sisters are all well, here and there like lambs without a master. Mrs. [Eliza] Sadler speaks of you with very sincere interest. I saw our friend Chenot today for the first time since my return, but he gave me the handshake of our former friendship.

Dear friend, I love you with all my heart.

EAS.

3.13 To Julia Scott

28th November 1804

My dear Julia

You have had time to arrive at Home, to be married,¹ according to the report of the World, and to have fulfilled all the etceteras etceteras, and yet I do not hear from you—is it true that you are so seriously engaged, or have you been reading my memorandums and concluded that any intercourse with the mad Enthusiast is loss of time—I have

³.13 ASJPH 1-3-3-6:54

¹Julia Scott visited Elizabeth in September, but she never remarried.
been constantly busy with my Darlings mending up and turning winter clothes—they have in turn all been sick too from the change of weather added to their whooping cough—the old Mammy too has been sick—in short dear I have been one of Job's Sisters—and from all appearances must long look to his example = Well, I am satisfied = to sow in tears if I may reap in joy, and when all the wintry storms of time are past we shall enjoy the delights of an Eternal Spring—in the mean time I should wish to know if you are alive, how your Domestic affairs (in which you interested me very much) go on. Something about you all, but more than all a little of your dear interior self would be most acceptable as your Soul is most dear to me dear Julia—in that only can I hope to perpetuate my affection for you as in all exteriors we are and must continue to be wholly Separated—There is nothing new in my prospects since your departure except a suggestion of Mr. Wilkes that in order to avoid the boarding School plan I might recieve Boarders from one curate of St. Marks who has ten or twelve scholars, and lives in the vicinity of the city—which would produce at least a part of the necessary means to make the ends of this year meet with my manner of living—Filocchi has not returned from Boston—his letters are full of extravagancies—very much the reverse of the above ideas—such as my heart would grasp at, but Reason must not listen to = God Almighty will I trust direct it—my mind is but little occupied with the Subject, so much I confide in his pitying Mercy——

Your and Maria's visits to me last summer appears like a vision.—little Kit often speaks of Aunt Scott and Anna sighs so pitifully at the mention of your name that my heart involuntarily answers hers, and though fully convinced in every point of view of the value of your affectionate kindness to her, Nature will sometimes prove her power and I shrink from the promise which reason and gratitude has sealed = she is a singular child and requires so many amendments in her disposition and habits that I fear she will call the whole force of your affection for me in exercise—but do not think of it, God will bless your

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2Cf. Job 1:4 and Job 42:11.
3Cf. Ps. 126:5.
4St. Mark's Episcopal Church in the Bowery
kind intentions to a Fatherless child—and however rough or unhinged
my mind may be, my Soul must be attached to you tenfold forever—
Remember me to your children and Mother—and affectionately
to Charlotte and Brother Sam

Your EAS

3.14 To Julia Scott

13th December 1804

Your letter my dearest Julia should have been answered immedi-
ately, and would have been, if I could have commanded the time for
writing as readily as my heart dictated, but in this as in many other in-
stances it must trust to your goodness whilst it is fully sensible how lit-
tle it deserves the tenderness of your Friendship.—your gift of love† to
my dear ones will I fear be expended in wood and Bread for us all, for
with even pinching Economy those two articles must be very
heavy—but all goes infinitely better than I could have expected and
while my health is so much mended, that blessing supplies the place of
many—Yet dear if you could see your friend turn out at day light in the
coldest mornings, make fire, dress and comb, wash and scold the little
ones, fill the kettle, prepare breakfast, sweep, make beds, and the et-
cetera work, nurse the old woman, keep the school, make ready din-
nner, supper and put to bed again, you will say could she go through it,
all the while looking up too—and this I am always liable to as my poor
old woman is subject to complaints which has confined her in bed for
a week together during the severest weather—You will say where are
all the friends, but must consider every one has their own occupations
and pursuits and often for ten and twelve day[s] I see no one—My Ital-
ian friend‡ has been detained in Boston but doubtless will soon be on
his way to your city and of course introduced to you—

*Susanna Deshon Sitgreaves
3.14 ASJPH 1-3-6:55
†Julia regularly sent Elizabeth financial contributions for the family.
‡Antonio Filicchi
Your visionary scheme of love and kindness like many other sweet imaginations will do to dream of—while I am in this part of the world, where my Sister is, there I must be—Julia Julia dear Julia do not forget my question, and when you imagine the voice let it be animated by love, intreaty, supplication for Oh when I think of you in that point of view, I could fasten you in my Bosom and drag you, compel you, and when sure of your consent fly with you to the feet of our Saviour and Judge—yes Judge he must and will be, and then though I should be eager to share my Oil with you I shall find there is only enough for my own little lamp—dear dear dear friend consider, and when you consider resolve, and then quickly go to him, tell Him you are in want of every thing—beg for the new heart, the right spirit, and that He will teach you to do the thing that pleases Him—

Well, there are fine Preachers in this life—but my dearest if you possessed a little glass thro which you could discern the finest country and one you tenderly loved neglected to look thro it and would perhaps forget the way, you would be ready even to pain them rather than let them wait till the clouds and storms gathered round and the road should be either hidden or lost—and if you take your darlings astray too take care Miss Julia—you say write—I will indeed when I can, even though it should be a scrawl like this as fast as the pen can drive = there is nothing more done in the new arrangement but I believe it will certainly take place—how I wish John Wilkes and yourself had been cut out for each other—but perhaps you have already chained the Bachelor—you said you were not afraid in the main point. write to me, tell me—send my papers, and be assured of the tenderest affection of

your EAS.

\footnote{Cf. Matthew 25: 1-9.}
3.15 To Antonio Filicchi

13th December 1804

I had just taken my little secretary on my lap and was reading one of your most kind letters when the most kind one of the 6th December was brought to me—and certainly I was obliged to make the dear sign¹ to help me in 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 and exhausts the sighs and tears of affection which at all other times are most carefully repressed—and so far from feeling less interest for you or less value for your Affection it has never so earnestly so anxiously prayed for you as during the few weeks past in which it has been pained by your neglect—

Antonio, you ought indeed to pity me for at times the sense of my real situation presses so strong upon my mind that it almost overpowers me—not the care or interest of my temporal concerns, for those thro' Gods pitying mercy do not in the least affect or trouble me; but the horror of neglecting to hear His voice, if he has indeed spoken to me through you, or of resisting him if all these warnings and declarations on the other side are truth—the Scriptures once my delight and comfort are now the continual sources of my pain, every page I open confounds my poor Soul, I fall on my knees and blinded with tears cry out to God to teach me—

Twelve months ago when six days were past,² I joyful looked to the dear Sabbath as a full reward for whatever sorrow or care I had passed through in the week—Now I look fearfully at the setting sun dreading least a fine morning should leave me without excuse for going to church—and when I pass over the street that leads to your church my heart struggles and prays O teach me teach me where to go—indeed before I leave home I pray always for forgiveness, if indeed I pass by

¹The sign of the cross
²This time the previous year the Setons had been quarantined in the Lazaretto at Leghorn scarcely one week.
where He dwells, and light and grace to know his Will—When in church how often my Soul is called back from the little chappel in Santa Catharina's where beside your Amabilia I see the Priest you used to say said the long Mass every feature and action is before me I hear the Bell and see the cup elevated and my Spirit lays in the Dust before God—

If your Church is Antichrist your Worship Idolitrous my soul shares the crime, though my will would resist it, for O my Brother, if you could know the shocking and awful objects presented to my mind in opposition to your church, you would say it is impossible except a voice from Heaven directed, that I ever could become a member of it. truely I say with David Save me Lord for the waters go over my Soul I am in the deep mire where no ground is—and you can easily concieve that as the view of my sins always rise against me as the vail between my soul and the Truth that I most 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—also when some hours of consolation come I think hard as the trial is yet it is sweet—I never knew till now what prayer is—never thought of fasting—though now it is more a habit than eating, never knew how to give up all, and send my spirit to mount calvary nor how to console and delight it in the Society of Angels—Patience says my soul He will not let you and your little ones perish and if yet your life is given in the conflict at the last he will nail all to his cross and recieve you to his mercy—

this letter you will easily see is only to unburthen my heart to its dearest Friend—how much that heart desires that you may be Blessed can only be known to Him who sees it—you say nothing of yourself, I say all—and say sincerely that until you mentioned the Law suit' detaining you in Boston, I thought that something else did—May God preserve your Soul and Body—

Your own friend and Sister EAS.

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3A local church in Leghorn frequented by the Filicchis
4Cf. Ps. 69, a cry of anguish and great distress.
5Antonio instituted a lawsuit on behalf of his brother Filippo.
3.16 To Antonio Filicchi

2nd January 1805

I wrote you my dear Brother 13th December a full sheet of paper, but as it was one of those pictures of my troubled heart you have so often recieved the letter remains in my Secretary, and now wish only to remind you of your Sister and to reassure you of often repeated sentiments of truest affection. Will you not return? October, November, December and January began, I have been watching and still watch for the footsteps of the only one I can welcome with my heart within my doors—this must sound shocking to you, but think only of a part of the contradictions to that heart, and you who know its most secret thoughts will not wonder if it desires to dwell in a cave or desert. but no more of this, it must go back to its lesson of “Thy will be done.”

Mr. [John] Wilkes made me the New Year visit this Morning and says the plan I mentioned to you in my last letter will not be put in operation until May; Who knows by that time God may take me Home and I shall escape from all these struggles—I do not offer New Year wishes to my Brother, for every day every hour my Soul sends up its purest most fervent wishes for the Blessing of your Soul and Body, but for your Soul as for my Own.

do not think because I say nothing of my soul that it is less active or desirous to know the truth, its desires though less impatient as submitted to the source of truth, were never more ardent constant and incessently in action then they are now. I think if I had the treasures of the World at my command I would give them as dust for one hours conversation with Bishop C[arroll] or one of his character—

Bayley¹ has returned, and is going in a few weeks again—he intends writing to you that you may prepare your commands—

Your own Sister most truely most affectionately EAS.

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¹Richard Bayley, Elizabeth’s half-brother, was working for the Filicchi firm in Leghorn. He was in New York for a few weeks and called on Elizabeth to pick up messages for Italy.
My dear Filicchi,

I find from Antonios letters you expect to hear from me, tho’ from your not answering my first letter I concluded you were too much dissatisfied with me and that I had entirely forfeited your Friendship. This could not be the case if you knew the pitiable situation to which my poor Soul has been reduced, finding no satisfaction in any thing, or any consolation but in tears and prayers. but after being left intirely to myself and little children, my friends dispersed in the country for the Summer season, the clergy tired of my stupid comprehension, and Antonio wearied with my Scruples and doubts took his departure to Boston; I gave myself up to God and Prayer encouraging myself with the Hope that my unrighteousness would be no more remembered at the foot of the Cross, and that sincere and unremitted asking would be answered in Gods own time. This author and that author on the Prophecies was read again and again; the texts they refered to read on my knees with constant tears, but not with much conviction. They had told me from the beginning, that my strong belief in your Doctrine must be a temptation, and as I know the old gentleman would naturally trouble a heart so eagerly seeking the Will of God I resolved to double the only weapons against him, humility, Prayer, and fasting, and found my mind gradually settle in Confidence in Christ and the infinite treasures of his Mercy. for some months I have stood between the two ways looking steadily upwards but fearing to proceed, never crossing the street that led to your Church without lifting up my heart for mercy and often in the Protestant Church finding my Soul at Mass in Leghorn. this was my exact situation when the New year commenced, and without any other intention than to enjoy a good sermon.
on the season, I took down a volume of Bourdaloue who speaking of the wise Mens enquiry "where is he who is born King of the Jews," draws 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. Therefore once more I resolved after heartily committing my Cause to God again to read those books on the catholick faith which had at first won me to it and in consequence of so doing would certainly with a helping hand give my Seal to it. I have endeavoured to see Mr. O'Brien but been disappointed, have written to Bishop Caroll, but his Silence to Antonios letters makes me hesitate in sending mine.—yet even under these strong impressions I could not make any decision in my own Soul without asking some questions for its relief and comfort; when Antonio returns (if he ever returns here) we will try to do so; if not, I am sure that God will help me by some other means—you know it would be wicked to doubt, (tho' I am so utterly unworthy) that thro' Jesus I shall receive this dearest favour having already received so many.

3.18 To Antonio Filicchi

24th January 1805

The first emotion I felt on reading your letter my dearest Brother was joy and thankfulness that you were not travelling in this severe weather, the children crowded round me as they always do when a letter comes from you with the repeated question "when will he come Mamma," and I was obliged to pretend that you had sent a message of love to each of them; indeed every one wonders at your stay, and think

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4Rev. Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704) was a French Catholic spiritual writer whose collected sermons delivered in Paris fill dozens of volumes.
5Matt. 2:2
6Rev. Matthew O'Brien came to New York from Albany sometime before 1802. Elizabeth mistakenly believed he was the only Catholic priest in New York. He eventually was the priest who received her profession of faith as a Roman Catholic at St. Peter's Church, Barclay Street, in lower Manhattan March 14, 1805.

3.18 AMSJ A 111 026
that now I am safe, tho' I always speak explicitly whenever questioned as to the state of my Soul and certainly must have some eloquence on the subject from the effect produced—

but oh my Brother religion here has a sandy foundation indeed, and the best instructed minds on other Subjects know little of that which should be their all. God be merciful—I may as well tell you as I have so long thought it, I could not help imagining that some extravagance such as that which "once bound you to your sister," influenced your stay in Boston—do not say it was ungenerous as the source of these imaginations you must most easily discern; but your word is sufficient—

you speak most highly of the catholic Priests of Boston¹ 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, for it is plain that if the gracious God should bless me so as really to unite me to your communion tho' I might persevere thro' every obstacle myself, I could never separate my children from the influence of my connections, and must try every way for the best. This like everything else is in the hands of God.

The Bishop of Meaux² has written some address to Protestants and observations on the Apoc[aly]ps[e]³ which I desire much to see. I tell you as you may perhaps bring it with you.—Is it possible that you can excuse yourself to me on the score of diffidence and ignorance of our language—this is indeed so like the language of a stranger to a stranger, and throws me at so great a distance from your affection that I should wish to burn every letter of yours containing those expressions—you surely could neither feel nor express them to one you really love—but no more on that

¹Rev. Francis A. Matignon (1753-1818) was an emigré from France and doctor of the Sorbonne (1785) who arrived in Baltimore in 1792. While serving in Boston, he was a trusted advisor and friend of Elizabeth Seton.

²Rev. John Cheverus (1768-1836), another emigré from France, became the first bishop of Boston in 1808. He befriended and advised Elizabeth Seton after her conversion. After resigning as bishop of Boston, Cheverus became the archbishop of Bordeaux (1826-1836) and was named cardinal shortly before his death.

³James Bosquet (1627-1704). Filippo Filicchi recommended his History of the Variation of Protestant Churches to Elizabeth.

³The Book of Revelation
subject—your Boston weeks I find very long, but certainly they must one day have an end—Wherever you are you have the sincere affection and most ardent prayers of your

EAS.

3.19 To Julia Scott

March 5th 1805

My dearest Julia

It is almost incredible that your most affectionate letter has been six weeks in my possession unanswered—the love and tenderness it expresses brought me to my knees I ask God with tears of joy and thankfulness have I indeed such a friend, indeed Julia it has made me saucy for my mind often involuntarily turns to some pleasures which before I should not have had a thought of accomplishing—not exactly those you wished for me, for it seems I must fulfil the engagement with Mr. [John] Wilkes, but I think in consequence of your generosity and love I may procure a person who will rid me of the dreaded burthen of patching and darning and that I may be able to give a large portion of my time to my Anna in communicating to her what I know of Music and French which is as much and perhaps more than she would attain in another situation, for I am persuaded and have experienced that in those acquirements which require so much patience and application, a Mother is by far the most desirable preceptress at least I have an earnest wish to make the experiment with her and think I can trust to my sense of duty to her and to you who will afford me the means for a regular attention on my part—therefore dearest friend let your three hundred be 150 dollars which will amply pay the woman and supply Anna with cloathing.

I have run the gauntlet, and persuaded Filicchi that this is not the time for my entering into his fascinating schemes—tho' I do not see
my duty to my dear ones in a clear view either way. I could go almost mad at the view of the conduct of every friend I have here except yourself. It would really seem that in their estimation I am a child not to be trusted with its daily bread least it should waste it—but never mind all will come right one of these days, and you know penance is the purifier of the Soul, therefore I drive every thought away and meet it all with the smile of content, which however often conceals the sharp thorn in the heart—a thorn I can give you no name for; I should be sorry to think it pride or disappointment for I can have no claim on any one except what God opens their hearts to do for me—Peace peace rebellious Nature—how much worse do you deserve=

—Your assurance of dear Brothers [Samuel] interest in me and my affairs brought Home many a remembrance of time past, I can see him, speak to him, read his heart, and would throw myself upon his pity and affection securely and with out reserve as if I was still his little B[etty] Bayley. but that too must be hushed, and I must jog on the allotted path thro’ all its windings and weariness till it brings me Home where all tears shall be wiped away and sorrow and sighing be heard no more¹—in the mean while dearest, courage, LOOK UP.—

—Is your dear little heart still filled with contradictions - or has the Birth of the new darling been propitious²—how I should like to witness your every day scene without your knowing it, dearest Julia I fear it would present a picture less free from care than even my own, yet your Maria must be a precious blessing to you, and I hope will be the friend of your heart and your comfort—My Anna is almost an angel to me.

Antonio Filicchi will present this to you—You will find him very much the gentleman—but too diffident a character to engage acceptance on first acquaintance tho I am sure you will give him credit for the excellent qualities I have found in him and for my sake show him your affable side as his curiosity is really excited with respect to you.

—dear dear dear Julia what will you think of my not writing you—tho indeed if you knew the daily domestic scene you would

¹Cf. Rev. 21:4
²Possibly the child of Julia’s niece, Hitty Cox Markow, who was married the previous year
soon forgive—the old Mammy half her time sick her Daughter lain-in<sup>3</sup> in my house with many other Etceteras—yet do not think this a picture of my Soul—it is as quiet as your tenderest Affection could wish it—and with its tenderest affections prays for the Peace of yours and that the same sheltering Wing may at length recieve us both—united forever.

Your EAS.
March 25th

3.20 Draft to Rev. John Cheverus<sup>1</sup>

[After March 25, 1805]

Dear and Reverend Sir,

My joyful heart offers you the tribute of its lively gratitude for your kind and charitable interest in its sorrows when it was oppressed with doubts and fears; and hastens after completion of its happiness to in­form you that thro’ the boundless Mercy of God and aided by your very satisfactory council,<sup>2</sup> my Soul has offered all its hesitations and reluctances a Sacrifice with the blessed Sacrifice of the Altar on the 14th March<sup>3</sup> and the next day was admitted to the true Church of Jesus Christ with a mind grateful and satisfied as that of a poor shipwrecked mariner on being restored to his Home.

I should immediately have made a communication so pleasing to you, but have been necessarily very much engaged in collecting all the powers of my soul for recieving the pledge of eternal happiness with which it has been blessed on the happy day of the Annunciation,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>A term for childbirth

<sup>2</sup>This is the only extant example of many letters Elizabeth Seton wrote to Rev. John Cheverus. The actual letter she sent in 1805 was apparently destroyed along with all the correspondence Cheverus had received during his years in America as a priest and later the bishop of Boston when he was shipwrecked off the French coast in 1823.

<sup>1</sup>This is the only extant example of many letters Elizabeth Seton wrote to Rev. John Cheverus. The actual letter she sent in 1805 was apparently destroyed along with all the correspondence Cheverus had received during his years in America as a priest and later the bishop of Boston when he was shipwrecked off the French coast in 1823.

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth and Rev. John Cheverus had been corresponding.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth made her profession of faith in the Catholic church March 14, 1805.

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth made her First Communion in the Catholic church March 25, 1805, the feast of the Annunciation.
when it seemed indeed to be admitted to a new life and that Peace which passes all understanding—with David I now say “Thou hast saved my Soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling,” and certainly desire most earnestly to “walk before him in the land of the living” esteeming my privilege so great and what he has done for me so beyond my most lively hopes that I can scarcely realize my own blessedness—you dear Sir could never experience but may picture to yourself a poor burthened creature weighed down with sins and sorrows receiving an immediate transition to life liberty and rest. Oh pray for me that I may be faithful and persevere to the end. and I would beg of you advice and council how to preserve my inestimable blessings—

true there are many good books, but directions personally addressed from a revered source most forcibly impress—for instance many years I have preferred those Chapters you appoint in St. John—but from your direction make it a rule to read them constantly. the Book you mentioned “the following of Christ” has been my consolation thro’ the severest struggles of my life and indeed one of my first convictions of the truth arose from reflecting on the account a Protestant writer gives of Kempis as having been remarkable for his study and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and fervent zeal in the service of God—I remember falling on my knees and with many tears enquired of God, if He who knows his Scriptures so well and so ardently loved him could have been mistaken in the true faith, also in reading the life of St. Francis de Sales I felt a perfect willingness to follow him and could not but pray that my soul might have its portion with his on the great day—the Sermons of Bourdaloue have also greatly helped to convince and enlighten me, for many months past

5Ps. 116
6The Following of Christ by Thomas à Kempis is a classic on Christian spirituality.
7A seventeenth century bishop and writer
8Elizabeth was using the published sermons of Rev. Louis Bourdaloue as a text. It is also known that Rev. John Cherverus provided her with the Roman Catholic Manual, or Collection of Prayers, Anthems, Hymns, etc. (Boston, 1803) which he had had printed. This book is now in the University of Notre Dame Archives but the title page is missing. In addition he sent her a book of sermons by Jean Baptiste Massillon. Massillon was rated with Bossuet and Bourdaloue as one of the great French writers of sermons. The first printed edition appeared posthumously in 1745. It is not possible to determine which edition Cherverus sent Elizabeth.
one of them are always included in my daily devotions—these books and some others Filicchi who has been, and is, the true friend of my Soul has provided me with—if he did not encourage me I do not know how I should dare to press so long a letter on your time so fully and sacredly occupied—pardon me in consideration of the relief it gives my heart to express itself to one who understands it whilst it earnestly prays that you may long be the instrument of Gods Glory and the happiness of his creatures—Most respectfully and affectionately,

EAS.

3.21 To Antonio Filicchi

[March 31, 1805]

My dearest Brother.

I cannot recollect Mrs. [Julia] Scotts direction but Mr. Cox her Brother-in-law is very much known, and she lives nearly opposite to him.* With my whole soul I pray to God to direct you in all your ways and shall not go to the Altar in spirit or in reality without remembering my most dear Brother.

ever Yours most Sincerely EAS.

*I think in Second street.

3.21 AMSJ A 111 027

1Written on the outside in another hand: “31 March 1805”

2Address

3James Cox was married to Charlotte Sitgreaves Cox, Julia's sister.
By this time I trust my dear Brother the fatigues of your Journey are over, and hope that the dearest and most active principle of your Soul will soon be directed where it will meet a grateful welcome—Not knowing your direction,¹ I wait to receive it from you, and in the meantime would say to you that every day I am more assured of the truth of your assertion that the exclusive right of real friend and Brother is solely yours. that you have led me to a happiness which admits of no description, and daily even hourly increases my souls Peace, and really supplies strength and resolution superior to any thing I could have conceived possible in so frail a Being—

The so long agitated plan is given up,² and in consequence I am plagued for a House, wearied with consultations about what would be best for me etc, and certainly the painful ideas suggested by my present circumstances would weigh down my spirits if they were not supported and so fully occupied by interior consolations—in the midst of all the different conversations of the good ladies and my Brother P[ost] my heart is free of all concern, redoubles its prayers, prepares for its dear Master,³ and this morning after a half hours consolatory communication with O.B[rien], received Him happy, grateful, joyful, and most truly Blessed. do not think you was forgotten in that hour dearest Antonio, no aspirations of my Soul are more ardent than those it forms for your true happiness, indeed how can it be otherways when every enjoyment of my own reminds me of what I owe to you.

9th April—

Perhaps you expect to hear from your sister, and naturally must go to the Post office for Murrey’s letters, therefore this may take its

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¹Address
²John Wilkes' plan for her to take in boarders
³Reception of Holy Communion
chance and will at least prove to you that I would not omit doing any
thing that might give you even the least pleasure—

I have made acquaintance with your Mr. Morris, who enquired
very kindly of you—he invited me with my children to his seat in
church—My Boys are mad with Joy at going where they can see the
cross at St Peter; William is always begging to be a little Priest
(meaning the little Boys who serve at the Altar) he says “I would
rather be one Mamma than the richest greatest man in the whole
world,” indeed I had so much pleasure in seeing them sign themselves
and kneel so devoutly that it compensated the pain of seeing your seat
vacant. I hope my dear Antonio your heart will fully share the bless­
ings of this week, so as even to exclude from your thoughts the greater
enjoyment you might receive by being in Boston though I assure you
mine often involuntarily turns to your interesting description of [Rev.
John] Chevrous and his manner of Instruction, for it requires indeed a
mind superior to all externals to find its real enjoyment here. a
Stranger has assisted the last week, but certainly is not any acquisition
in that respect, I am forced to keep my eyes always on my Book, even
when not using it—never mind these things are but secondary as your
dear eloquence has taught me, but it is my weakness to be too much in­
fluenced by them, yet my grateful Soul acknowledges that its dear
Master has given me as I think the most perfect happiness it can enjoy
on Earth and more and more it feels its joy and glory in the exchange it
has made—dear dear Antonio May God bless you, bless you, bless you
for the part you have done in it.—

4Andrew Morris, a wealthy chandler, was among the founders of St. Peter’s, the first Catholic
parish in New York City. The first Catholic office-holder in New York City, he was assistant
alderman of the First Ward from 1802 to 1806.

5It was customary to pay rent for the use of pews in church.

6St. Peter’s Church on Barclay Street, established in 1785, is the oldest Catholic church in New
York. It was built on land purchased from Trinity Episcopal Church at the corner of Church and
Barclay Streets. This first Catholic parish was organized soon after New York’s Anti-Priest Law of
1700 was repealed in 1784. According to this law, any Catholic priest entering New York had been
subject to arrest and life in prison. Catholics had been prohibited from voting, holding public office,
or serving on juries.

Elizabeth Seton was received into the Roman Catholic church at St. Peter’s March 14, 1805, by
Rev. Matthew O’Brien.
Have you seen my friend—does your patience bear the trial it must receive from those merchants—how often it pains me that you must think of my Seton with so much vexation—if I had a world to pay you with you know it would be all yours—

Do at least send me your blessing if you cannot afford another word, you know that may be given without the trouble of painting. Most truely, really, sincerely, simply without exaggeration, I am yours, all that is mine to give Your Sister Friend Servant

EAS

3.23 To Antonio Filicchi

15th April [1805]

My dearest Tonino.

In the morning I wish for sunset hoping for what it may bring, but all in vain, a fortnight is past and I have not even the happiness of knowing if you are safe arrived in Philadelphia—Patience—thought flies on to the approaching time when I shall see you no more, and hear once or twice only in twelve months—Nature cannot stop at the Recollection, and the desiring soul flies even beyond to the sweet garden of Paradise where you first promised to call for your dear Sister, and where she shall enjoy your beloved society forever.

I hear you say how much you have been engaged and vexed with your troublesome business, you have had many letters to prepare for Leghorn—strangers are pressing and inviting you—Confession, Communion all have engaged your time and attention—

You would be pleased to know how happy I have been last week, and how even more and more I am satisfied with my Director.¹ Saturday last I had a very painful conversation (certainly for the last time)

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³Julia Scott

3.23 AMSJ A 111 029

¹Rev. Matthew O'Brien
with Mr. H[obart], but was repaid fully and a thousand times on Sunday morning by my dear Master at Communion, and my Faith if possible more strengthened and decided than if it had not been attacked. My Mrs. [Catherine] Duplex goes on very fast—every day some one of the kind ladies sheds tears to her for the poor deluded Mrs. Seton, and she always tells them how happy she is that anything in this world can comfort and console me—

Whoever speaks to me I tell them instantly with a cold decided countenance that the time of reasoning and opinions is past, nor can I be so ungrateful to God after the powerful conviction he has so graciously given me, as to speak one moment on the subject as it would certainly offend Him—

I have taken part of a very neat House, about half way to town near Greenwich Street\(^2\)—for £ 50. the one I am in is 80—thirty pounds will buy winter cloths, and what is best of all, I shall be able to go every morning before breakfast to visit my Master—

19 April—

Really now I am seriously uneasy about you and if tomorrow brings no news from you will write Mrs. [Julia] Scott to enquire about you—for tho’ you said you would not write yet if it had been in your power you would have sent at least your direction. Often my heart cries out to God for you and if I did not commit you wholly to him I should be very unhappy. O.B[rien] has twice asked me about you—John Wilkes has made me some sharp yet gentle reproaches for my “imprudence in offending my uncle\(^4\) and other friends”—he said nothing of my religion but that he knew the “Evidences of the Christian religion were all on that side” and my sentiments made no difference to him—Sister says “tell me candidly if you go to our church or not” I answered, since the first day of Lent I have been to St. Peters—

But why do I say these things to you when it is uncertain that you will even recieve this letter—very well Antonio I fear your charity has passed New York and gone on to Boston—but I shall be satisfied with

\(^2\)The city directory gives her address as North Moore Street.
\(^3\)She moved within walking distance of St. Peter’s Church.
\(^4\)Dr. John Charlton, the brother of Elizabeth’s mother
every thing if you are only well—I am your true your own your most affectionate Sister

EAS.

3.24 To Amabilia Filicchi

April 15 1805

My very dear Friend

You must have long ago expected a reply to your last letter of ______ but this is the first opportunity your Antonio has pointed out, and he says the only direct one there has been for some months, indeed dear Amabilia your upright and happy Soul can never imagine the struggles and distresses of mine since I left you, or you would not wonder if I avoided writing or speaking on the source of its unhappiness, and certainly it was not easy to write to one as dear to me as you are without expressing it.

—but all now is past, the heavy cloud has given place to the sun shine of Peace, and my soul is as free and contented as it has been burdened and afflicted, for God has been so gracious to me as to remove every obstacle in my mind to the true Faith and given me strength to meet the difficulties and temptations I am externally tried with—You may suppose my happiness in being once more permitted to kneel at his Altar, and to enjoy those foretastes of Heaven he has provided for us on Earth. now every thing is easy, Poverty, suffering, displeasure of my friends all lead me to Him, and only fit my heart more eagerly to approach its only good. How your dear charitable heart so often lifted to God in Prayer for me will rejoice, I know that it will with those also of Gubbio\(^1\) who have so tenderly kept a poor stranger in remembrance If I could make them understand me I would thank them most affectionately and beg them still to brighten their

\(^1\)City in Italy where the Filicchi family had relatives, two of whom were nuns.
crown and pray that the one their prayers have helped to gain for me may not be lost—

Your Antonio is now in Philadelphia. Oh how you would be pleased to see him so well, so handsome, so delighted with your sweet picture as scarcely to permit any one to hold it in their hands—and certainly the expression of it is just such as you would have wished tender and sorrowful as if lamenting your separation—he feels it so, and speaks as tenderly to it as if you were present—he also talks of his Patrick as if he had seen him but yesterday of his dancing and shaking himself so drolly and all his little lovely ways—for me I always see my Georgino with his dear arms stretched out to me, and sweet inviting smiles—Oh if ever I should hold him to my heart again how happy I should be, but that happiness with every other wish and desire must all be referred to Paradise for here in all human probability they will not be accomplished.

Yet I must often think of you all, of the dear girls and of you dear Amabilia and all the unmeritted kindness I have received from you—God only can reward you.

Well we may bless Him for keeping your Antonio free from the danger of the Fever in both countries and his health here is so perfect that not withstanding the severity of the winter he has not had even a headach, as no doubt he has told you for he speaks of it as a most gracious Providence. Oh with what a thankful soul I shall adore that Providence if he is only restored safe and well to you. He will tell you that he took the figs and one basket of the raisins you so kindly sent to me, as he wished them for a friend and one basket was abundance for my Darlings, I boil them in rice for them and it makes an excellent dinner—You speak with so much ceremony about sending them my dear friend that surely I ought to have made many Apologies for so great a liberty as I took with you when I sent you some things so trifling—but let not such language be known between us—God sees my heart to you and knows it loves you most sincerely, and respects

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2Patrizio and Georgino were the Filicchis' sons whom Elizabeth had known while she was in Italy.
your virtues more then ever I can express—If ever it is in my power most gladly will I prove it to you.

How much I thank your Brother Gaspero for his kind recollections, and beg you will return them for me as also to the dear Rosina and all your family—Antonio knows how often I have wished to transport some fine Apples to Dr. Tutilli his kindness I must always remember with the most lively gratitude and beg you to offer him my affectionate compliments—

Is Sibald and Belfour still of your party, will you remember me to them, and kiss your Darlings for me a thousand times little Ann is much improved—she always speaks with delight of Leghorn, and of your dear girls as if she was with them only yesterday. When Antonio showed her your picture she was in a rapture and said afterwards, Oh Mamma how I wish to hold it in my hands and kiss it.

dear dear Amabilia may Almighty God bless you do remember me particularly to Mr. Hall

your E A Seton

3.25 To Antonio Filicchi

22nd April 1805

My dear dear Brother

Your most welcome letter arrived this Evening I set the Piano wide open and let the children dance till they were tired— You are to be sure a counsellor of the first order and open your cause as a Plaintiff, when I thought opening your letter let me see Antonio’s Defence—but you men when once convinced of you[r] consequence are saucy mortals

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3Gaspero Baragazzi, Amabilia’s brother
4The Italian physician who attended William Magee Seton in the Lazaretto
5Rev. Thomas Hall was the British chaplain who attended William Seton on his deathbed in Italy and conducted his funeral services. Hall lived on the first floor of the building where the Filicchis had the second and where Elizabeth occupied the third floor during her stay in Leghorn.

3.25 AMSJ A 111 031
that is well known—three weeks to day since you left your Sister without any direction to you, in a state of utter uncertainty if your neck was broke or not, or if perhaps you had not stole a march on me and gone to the Northward instead of to the Southward, and then you very modestly commence an accusation, in answer to a letter containing a most humble and earnest address to your charity and compassion—but never mind I shall learn by experience what to expect from so Philosophic a Spirit, and leave you to your Apathy while I shall uniformly follow the suggestions of my duty and affection—Yet if I thought it is his general character—but so well knowing your ardor where you are really interested, absolutely my Patience is tried—

Tonino, Tonino—how I long to meet you in your state of perfection, where I shall receive the transfusion of your affections without your exertions—but to be done trifling—let me tell you that one reason why you have not heard from me oftener is that from circumstances of particular impressions on my mind I have been obliged to watch it so carefully and keep so near the fountain head that I have been three times to communion since you left me—not to influence my Faith, but to keep Peace in my Soul, which without this heavenly resource would be agitated and discomposed by the frequent assaults which in my immediate situation are naturally made on my feelings—

the counsel and excellent directions of O.B[rien] also, if even I was sensible of them before, strengthen me, and being sometimes enforced by command give a determination to my actions which is now indispensable—early the same morning you say you were happy, I was also—making only the Acts of Faith, etc—sometimes I am really afraid to go to Him having so little or nothing to say—for tho’ there is a cloud of imperfection surrounding every moment of my life yet for those things that have a name my soul would be too happy in being so free from them if it did not dread the hour of temptation, knowing too well its frailty to even hope such a state should last—Yet even in that case, thro’ Christ Who strengthens we can do all things.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) The Eucharist and the Roman Catholic church

\(^2\) Rev. Matthew O’Brien

\(^3\) Cf. Phil. 4:13.
pray for me, my Brother, pray for me—you little know how much I pray for you, so much that if the command was not added to the inclination I should ask my soul how it dared—I now look every day for an answer from your [Rev. John] Chevrous—as my letter went in the post office the day you left N[ew] York—My letters for Leghorn are gone to Murrey not waiting your information when the ship would sail—
23rd.

In reading again your letter I smile to myself and say do not be flattered by Antonio’s commendation—remember he paints and colours as a thing of course—but O.B[rien]. did not exaggerate in his opinion of you this morning—he said you were an “upright excellent character,” and other things that made your little Sisters heart dance with pleasure, for so I would have every one think of you he also spoke of Philippo [Filicchi] as a miracle, but I would only allow he was your superior as a Merchant and that only in his department—This was in the Vestry room where he invited me to give me a Book of his Sermons—I cannot express to you how kind Mr. [Andrew] Morris is to me—he also always inquires of you very particularly—

I have passed thro’ a fire today in the number of people I accidentally encountered—every one smiled some with affection, some with civility—and when I get alone again I recollect with delight how “gently He clears my way” and say with Blessed David “Tho’ I walk thro’ the Valley and Shadow of Death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” I am pleased that my dear little friend Mrs. [Julia] Scott is attentive to you and thank God with every power of my soul for the favourable prospect in your business— dear dear Brother may he Bless you in all things, and reward your generous soul for the kindness with which you have, and do comfort mine—His three fold Peace be yours, as I am yours

EAS.

4Ps. 23:4
3.26 To Antonio Filicchi

30th April 1805

Your dear Sister has been doing Penance this week past, cheerfully tho', and with a sweet hope that it will be accepted—my woman has been again sick these five days and I have been deprived of the dear morning visit to my Master¹—on Sunday I was so weak as not to be able to walk to town with my other fatigues, but sent the children, and they were all called in the Vestry room, and many kind Enquiries made about Mamma—tomorrow at 7 o'clock I hope to go and really long for it as a child to see its Mother.

And how are you my Brother? do you meet any Elegant Friends in Philadelphia, any Pupils for the Italian language, any Sirens—God preserve you—I pray that your good angel may have no cause to turn from you, and that you may be faithful to all his admonitions—perhaps your [Rev. John] Chevrous is preparing some kind instructions for me, and I impatiently wait to hear from him—Shall I enclose his letter if he writes or only tell you the particulars?—

My old friend Mr. H[obart] thinks it is his duty to warn all my friends here of the falsity and danger of my principles, and of the necessity of avoiding every communication with me on the subject—I told him if he thought it his duty he must act in conformity to it, as I on my part should do mine to the extent of my power—knowing that “God can bring to nothing the wisdom of the World.” however 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—

Wednesday 1st May

The desired happiness was granted and my soul really comforted—but could not have all as O.B[rien] is absent, and the French Priest³ too much engaged—afterwards took coffee with Mrs.

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¹ Attendance at morning Mass
² 1 Cor. 3:19
³ Rev. Mr. Vrennay, a French Catholic priest, was in New York in early 1805.
[Catherine] Duplex who has suggested an idea of which I wish your opinion—A Mr. [Patrick] White an English gentleman of very respectable character and a compleat scholar but in reduced circumstances is endeavouring to establish a school for young Ladies, and perhaps Boys also, in which his wife will assist—He has seen my children and is interested for us—he has offered to teach them, and receive me as an assistant in his school in case it succeeds, of which there is every prospect as he is well recommended and a school such as he proposes is very much wanted—I should have a good prospect for the education of my boys—quiet my conscience by doing something if every so trifling towards our maintenance—and my Anna would receive more instruction than I can give her,—but as in taking Medicine for a Disease I should willingly take it looking up to God for its success, so my mind receives this proposal very quietly tho’ certainly desirous that it might be accomplished, particularly if it has your approbation—if you can prevail with yourself do exercise your charity in communicating your sentiments.

dear dear Antonio why must I speak to you in a manner so little conformed to the feelings of my heart—but you know yourself drew the line, and the kindness and sweetness of affection must be veiled—from the searcher of hearts it cannot, and it delights me to consider that he also sees its sincerity, simplicity and holiness—Is it possible to retrospect the past, realize the present and meditate the heavenly Hope set before us, without freely and firmly yielding every power of my Soul to perform his Blessed Will and devoting every affection in gratitude and love for such unmerited Mercy—Pray Pray that your dear Sister may attain the heavenly Grace of Perseverance—as my Whole Soul begs it for you—

EAS

tell me if you hear from your sweet Amabilia?—
3.27 To Julia Scott

6th May 1805

dear dearest Julia—

My Heart has turned to you many many times though my pen so seldom, for it seems sometimes as if there is a spell upon my writing—When I received Filicchi’s first letter expressing your kind attention to him, while I blessed you for it in my Soul I thought another week shall not pass without repeating to my friend at least that I am her own Betty B[ayley] in affection, for fondly as I loved you then it could not be a comparison with the love of my Soul for you now which would give a part of itself, to make you a part of itself—there you dear mad creature is Logic for you the explanation of which is that I would ever wish you at any Expence I could make the purchase to be a partaker in my Fanatasism, Enthusasism, any thing You may please to call it, to call you back from your delusions and point your views to your next existance before you are called to it. so it is. you think I am in delusion , I know you are in delusion . I ask you “Julia where are you going.” you are uncertain, you must either laugh or weep you cannot reflect on the subject or pause on it without a sigh—dear dear little Soul—Oh that it could see the things that belong to its Peace—

—Write to you once in two months and then only to scold Patience, dearest, I must let thought take its way at least to you—O how many thoughts crowded on me when I met poor [Colonel Aquila] Giles the other day, forlorn, dejected, shabby, and so changed from what he was— not changed in his kind heart however, for it seemed to feel a convulsion on seeing me and many a reproach for not having done so before. —they tell me his fortune is embarrased and he has a miserable life—Father of Mercies, so goes this World—Let me tell you that in the hope of bettering my Property (that is my children) I have entered into an engagement with an English gentleman\(^1\) and his wife (who have failed in their schemes in the interior of our country) to

\(^1\)Patrick White
assist them in an English Seminary they are now establishing and which has a prospect of Eminent success—my profits are to be a third of whatever this plan produces and includes the Education of my Children—as I shall have no responsibility or trouble in organizing the plan, I could certainly find no situation more easy—especially as you are to pay the woman I shall employ to mend and to darn2 and when I have a leisure hour it will be for my self—

My friends relatives etc who have been uniformly cool and composed in relation to all my concerns, are not less so in this instance, but as I shall take care to be distinct in all circumstances of contracts and agreements I cannot if the worst should happen be more their dependant than I am now—especially as I have so great a desire if only to taste a bit of bread of my own earning if it might be so—but in this I repeat the daily Prayer “thy will be done”—

How is Charlotte and Brother S[amuel] does your dear Maria continue so good and amiable, is your domestic Economy the same—is your Health better—how is the Bachelor3—what are you going to do this Summer—my heart would rejoice if your jaunt should be this way. in every way and All ways God Bless you, His Peace be with you, as is the sincere affection of Your E.A.S.

My Darlings are quite well—Anna always speaks of you sweetly, affectionately, “My Aunt Scott.” Cate says “she is mine too.” Rebecca is a cherub. but my saucy Boys almost Master me—

3.28 To Antonio Filicchi

6 May 1805

Dear dear Brother,

How kind you were in complying so immediately with my request, my heart thanks you for this as well as the many many proofs you give

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2 This is a reference to a previous letter (3.19) in which Elizabeth talks about wanting to “procure a person who will rid me of the dreaded burden of patching and darning” in order to devote more time to teaching music and French to her daughter Anna Maria Seton.

3 Possibly the man who was courting Julia

3.28 AMSJ A 111 033
and have given of your interest and pity for your poor little Sister—certainly you would be amused if you could know the events of the last two or three days in my history—

As soon as the report was circulated that there was a school intended of the description I mentioned to you, it was immediately added according to the usual custom of our generous world, that this Mr. and Mrs. [Patrick] White were Roman Catholicks and that Mrs. Seton joined herself in their plan to advance the principles of her new Religion. Poor Mr. Hobart in the warmth of his Zeal flew to the Clergyman who had given the certificate of Mr. Whites abilities to reproach him for his imprudence and told every one who mentioned the subject of the dangerous consequences of the intended establishment—My Mrs. Eliza Sadler and Catherine Duplex finding that the scheme was likely to fail through, waited on the clergymen and explained that Mr. and Mrs. W. were Protestants and Mrs. Setons only intention was to obtain Bread for her children and to be at Peace with all the world instead of making discord between Parents and children—Mr. Hobart was so very kind as to say after this explanation that he would use his influence for the school—

Mr. Post and Mr. John Wilkes give their cool assent—and I am satisfied that my situation cannot be worse than to be a dependent on such Philosophic Spirits. When I consulted O'Brien he promised his interest, and authorized me to say conscientiously that my principles and duties in this instance were separate, except the former were called for—so it is my Brother—Patience—if it succeeds I bless God, if he does not succeed I bless God, because then it will be right that it should not succeed.—

Mrs. John Livingston enquired very much about you, lamented that she had not known that you had returned to New York—hoped that she would not be gone again to the country before your return to Philadelphia etc. etc., and behaves to me really with the tenderness of a Sister—

Nothing yet from Rev. John Chevrous—perhaps he is collecting some good advices for me—I wish we could know if the new Pupil

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1 A former neighbor and associate of Elizabeth
2 Elizabeth herself
makes any progress towards the calendar—but that he would only tell to you.

I fear dear Brother if you must have recourse to the law that you have flattered me in your hopes of the issue of your business—Well my Soul prays with all its power that God may bless you in it—and most happy I shall be if you do indeed succeed—

—9th May

I have written my little Mrs. [Julia] Scott and thanked her for her attention to you—dear dear Antonio that has been the hardest pinch on my feelings of all I have yet encountered, the little, indeed the total want of attention to you on the part of those I call my friends, but if they had been such according to my ideas, they would have thought no care no kindness sufficient towards one who had been so much to me—but there is another scene of things—Where the Friend, the Protector, the Consoler of the Widow and the Fatherless, will recieve according to what they have done and these luke warm Souls find that they have been asleep—Where my most dear Brother will be rewarded as my heart desires and beyond even what its most fervent imagination can concieve—

Tomorrow will be my happy day so much distraction in mind and occupation in temporals must be counterbalanced or the poor little Soul is disturbed by every Shadow, but when its powers are stretched to that exalted object all others are but passing clouds in the Horizon which may for a moment obscure the glorious lustre of the Sun, while it goes on its course above them undiviating, in the will of its Master—May He bless you—and bless us with the final Blessing of his Children—is the first wish of the Soul of Your own Sister

EAS
3.29 To Antonio Filicchi

New York Sunday Evening 17 May 1805

My dearest Antonio

Judging your Heart by my own you will be pleased that I enclose you [Rev. John] Cheverous letter which I beg you will keep as Gold untill we meet again—I cannot part with it without reading it many times—and while my soul is lifted in thankfulness and joy for its privilege of asking and receiving advice and being numbered among the friends of so exalted a Being as your Cheverous its sensibilities are increased and every power brought in action in the remembrance that it is to my Brother, Protector, Friend, Benefactor that I owe this, among the numberless favours it has pleased God to bestow on me thro' you—Well may I pray for you—but He alone can recompense you.

Are you nearly disengaged from your Business—and thinking of your return to New York—You will find your little Sister in possession of part of a neat and comfortable House in which also the intended school will be kept and the fatigue of walking will be spared—also it is within one street of my dear church' which is the greatest luxury this World can afford me as I shall be enabled every morning to sanctify the rest of the day—O. B[rien] and Mr. [Andrew] Morris spoil me, their kindness and attention is more than I can express—If you see my dear little friend2 tell her I have received her letter with a grateful Heart, and will write her very soon—have you no news from Home I long again for letters—could you spare time to tell your Sister you are well—it would be considered as a very great favour—and also consider that having no letters from you, you must excuse the Egotism of mine—and the shortness of this apply to the true

1St. Peter’s Catholic Church on Barclay Street
2Julia Scott
cause, moving, hurry etc. and the wish that you should be possessed of the enclosed as soon as possible—Your own most affectionate Sister

EAS.

3.30 To Antonio Filicchi

Saturday 1st June 1805

My most dear Brother has I hope exercised his much charity to his Sister and not condemned her for the omission of her weekly communica­tion—I have received your kind letter and am very greatful for its contents tho' my Heart must ask for your dear Amabilia. Your ac­count of the children delights me particularly the idea of Georgino's loveliness pleases me as if I was indeed his Parent—if ever I should have the happiness of holding him to my heart again it would experience one of the sweetest pleasures I can hope for in this life—

May God bless all you do, and the angel of his presence accompany you in all your purposed Journeys, and restore you at last to the happy heart which claims you for its own—Yet my prayers go far beyond even that desired felicity and anticipate the period when time and place shall be no barrier to dear affections and your little Sister too may claim her share in the participation of your happiness, and enjoy the blessing of being one of your inseparable companions forever—

did not the dear letter delight you—besides the kindness that related it to me—the communication to you was no doubt food enough for the day on which you recieved it—O. B[rien] continues my kind friend and purposes to introduce me tomorrow to the Society of the Holy Sacrament which he recommends I should be associated with as it embraces many rules that may aid in the attainment of the much de­sired perfection at least as near an approach to it as my frail nature will admit of—he admits me every Sunday Morning to communion and there tomorrow my Soul will particularly plead for yours that it may

3.30 AMSJ A 111 035

Georgino Filicchi
recieve the Spirit of Grace and Holiness—dear dear Antonio open your heart to Him, seek his blessed presence now that He may dwell in you eternally—

I long very much for your return here—you will scarcely find my Establishment begun—altho’ I have receiv’d some young Ladies last week in my immediate care untill the return of Mr. White who has gone to Albany for his family—

Mrs. Livingston and Miss Ludlow² made me a very kind visit yesterday. I found one object of it was to ascertain if I had really resolved on not interfering in the religious principles of those committed to my charge—I told them plainly that if I had not taken the advice of my Director on the subject, and felt that I was not to be considered a “teacher of Souls” I would not for any consideration have subjected myself to the necessity of returning ingratitude for the confidence reposed in me—she said that generally a connection with even a Deist was not feared while with a Roman Catholick it was thought of with horror—I told her it was a curious contradiction in principles which allowed every Sect that could obtain a name to be right and in the way of Salvation—she believed the heart only was required by God—I believed the heart must be given, but if other conditions were required too, the Master certainly has a right to exact them—they mentioned some nonsense from Miss Lynch that sixty or eighty Prayers repeated obtained her the full forgiveness of all her sins—I appealed to their reason, and they begged that the subject might not be mentioned between us—as transient conversations seldom seldom have good effect—

My Brother my dear Brother pray for me that God will carry me through these briars and thorns to His kingdom of rest and Peace—May He bless you forever—Your Own Sister—

EAS.

²Mrs. John Livingston and Miss Ludlow, who formerly had been neighbors of the Setons
3.31 Journal to Amabilia Filicchi

19th July 1804

Here I am dearest Amabilia—released from the anxious watchful care of my beloved Rebecca—her most lovely Soul departed yesterday morning—and with it—but not to stop on all that, which at last is all in order since it is the will of our God, I will tell you what I know you have at heart to know, that the impressions of your example and the different scenes I passed through in Leghorn are far from being effaced from my mind, which indeed could not even in the most Painful moments of attendance on my beloved Rebecca help the strong comparison of a sick and dying bed in your happy Country where the poor sufferer is soothed and strengthened at once by every help of religion, where the one you call Father of your Soul attends and watches it in the weakness and trials of parting nature, with the same care you and I watch our little infants body in its first struggles and wants on its entrance into life—

dearest Rebecca how many looks of silent distress have we exchanged about the last passage, this exchange of time for Eternity—to be sure her uncommon piety and innocence and sweet confidence in God are my full consolation but I mean to say that a departing soul has so many trials and temptations that for my part I go through a sort of agony never to be described, even while to keep up their hope and courage, I appear to them most cheerful—oh my—forgive these melancholy words they were here before I knew it—your day and mine will come too—if we are but ready!—

The children all asleep—this my time of many thoughts—I had a most affectionate note from Mr. H[obart] today asking me how I could ever think of leaving the church in which I was baptized—but though whatever he says to me has the weight of my partiality for him, as well as the respect it seems to me I could scarcely have for any one else, yet that question made me smile for it is like saying that wherever

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3.31 ASJPH 1-3-3-10:3a

1Rebecca Seton, Elizabeth’s sister-in-law
a child is born, and wherever its parents placed it there it will find the truth, and he does not hear the drole invitations made me every day since I am in my little new home and old friends come to see me—for it has already happened that one of the most excellent women I ever knew who is of the Church of Scotland finding me unsettled about the great object of a true Faith said to me “Oh do dear Soul come and hear our J. Mason and I am sure you will Join us”—a little after came one I loved for the purest and most innocent manners of the Society of Quakers, (to which I have been always attached) she coaxed me too with artless persuasion, Betsy I tell thee thee had best come with us.—and my Faithful old friend Mrs. T of the Annabaptist meeting says with tears in her eyes Oh could you be regenerated, could you know our experiences and enjoy with us our heavenly banquet, and my good mammy Mary the Methodist groans and contemplates, as she calls it, over my soul, so mislead, because I have yet no convictions.—

But oh my Father and my God all that will not do for me—Your word is truth, and without contradiction wherever it is, one Faith, one hope, one baptism I look for, wherever it is and I often think my sins, my miseries hide the light, yet I will cling and hold to my God to the last gasp begging for that light and never change until I find it.

August 28th

long Since I wrote you the little word, for there is a sad weariness now over life I never before was tired with—my lovely Children round their writing table or round our evening fire make me forget a little this unworthy dejection which rises I believe from continual application of mind to these multiplied books brought for my instruction, above all Newton’s Prophecies—Your poor friend though is not so easily troubled as to the facts it dwells on, because it may or may

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2 The Presbyterian church
3 Rev. John Mason was pastor of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in New York. He was unsurpassed in his power as a preacher and held important civic posts including provost of Columbia College.
4 Thomas Newton first published his Dissertations on the Prophecies in 1754-1758. Rev. John Henry Hobart recommended that Elizabeth read the work.
not be, but living all my days in the thought that all and every body 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, since this book so Valued by them, send[s] all followers of the Pope to the bottomless pit etc. and it appears by the account made of them from the Apostles time that a greater part of the world must be already there at that rate—

Oh my the Worshipper of images and the Man of Sin are different enough from the beloved souls I knew in Leghorn to ease my mind in that point, since I so well knew what you worshipped my Amabilia, but yet so painful and sorrowful an impression is left on my heart, it is all clouded and troubled, so I say the Penitential Psalms if not with the Spirit of the royal prophet at least with his tears, which truly mix with the food and water the couch of your poor friend, yet with such Confidence in God that it seems to me he never was so truly my Father and my all at any moment of my life—

Anna coaxes me when we are at our evening prayers to say Hail Mary and all say oh do Ma teach it to us, even little Bec tries to lisp it though she can scarcely speak; and I ask my Saviour why should we not say it, if anyone is in heaven his Mother must be there, are the Angels then, who are so often represented as being so interested for us on earth, more compassionate or more exalted than she is—oh no no, Mary our Mother that cannot be, so 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, and if we are, to obtain peace for my poor Soul, that I may be a good Mother to my poor darlings—for I know if God should leave me to myself after all my sins he would be justified, and since I read these books my head is quite bewildered about the few that are saved, so I kiss her picture you gave me, and beg her to be a Mother to us.

September—

I have Just now the kindest letter from your Antonio—he is still in Boston and would not have been well pleased to see me in St. Pauls Church⁵ to day, but peace and persuasion about proprieties etc. over

⁵St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel
prevailed—Yet I got in a side pew which turned my face towards 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. tears plenty, and sighs as silent and deep as when I first entered your blessed Church of Annunciation in Florence all turning to the one only desire to see the way most pleasing to my God, whichever that way is—Mr. H[obart] says how can you believe that there are as many gods as there are millions of altars and tens of millions of blessed hosts all over the world—again I can but smile at his earnest words, for the whole of my Cogitations about it are reduced to one thought is it GOD who does it, the same God who fed so many thousands with the little barley loaves and little fishes, multiplying them of course in the hands which distributed them? the thought stops not a moment to me, I look straight at my GOD and see that nothing is so very hard to believe in it, since it is He who does it—

Years ago I read in some old book when you say a thing is a miracle and you do not understand it, you say nothing against the Mystery itself, but only acknowledge your limited knowledge and comprehension which does not understand a thousand things you must yet own to be true—and so often it comes in my head if the religion which gives to the world, (at least to so great a part of it) the heavenly consolations attached to the belief of the Presence of God in the blessed Sacrament, to be the food of the poor wanderers in the desert of this world as well as the manna was the support of the Israelites through the Wilderness to their Canaan, if this religion says your poor friend is the work and contrivance of men and priests as they say, then God seems not as earnest for our happiness as these contrivers, nor to love us, though the children of Redemption and bought with the precious blood of his dear son, as much as he did the children of the old law since he leaves our churches with nothing but naked walls and our altars unadorned
with either the Ark\textsuperscript{10} which his presence filled, or any of the precious pledges of his care of us which he gave to those of old—

they tell me I must worship him now in spirit and truth, but my poor spirit very often goes to sleep, or roves about like an idler for want of something to fix its attention, and for the truth dearest Amabilia I think I feel more true Union of heart and soul with him over a picture of the Crucifixion I found years ago in my Fathers port folio than in the—but what I was going to say would be folly, for truth does not depend on the people around us or the place we are in, I can only say I do long and desire to worship our God in Truth, and if I had never met you Catholics, and yet should have read the books Mr. H[obart] has brought me, they would have in themselves brought a thousand uncertainties and doubts in my mind—and these soften my heart so much before God in the certainty how much he must pity me, knowing as he does the sole and whole bent of my Soul is to please him only, and get close to him in this life and the next, that in the midnight hour believe me I often look up at the walls through the tears and distress that overpowers me, expecting rather to see his finger writing on the wall\textsuperscript{11} for my relieve than that he will forsake or abandon so poor a creature—

November 1st—All Saints

I do not get on Amabilia—cannot cast the balance for the peace of this Poor Soul but it suffers plenty and the body too. I say daily with great confidence of being one day heard the 119\textsuperscript{th} Psalm,\textsuperscript{12} never weary of repeating it and reading Kempis\textsuperscript{13} who by the by was a Catholic writer, and in our Protestant preface says "wonderfully versed in the knowledge of the holy scriptures" and I read much too of St. F[rancis] de Sales\textsuperscript{14} so earnest for bringing all to the bosom of the Catholic Church and I say to myself will I ever know better how to please God than they did, and down I kneel to pour my tears to them and beg them to obtain faith for me—then I see FAITH is a gift of God

\textsuperscript{10}Cf. Exodus 25: 8; 40:34.
\textsuperscript{11}Cf. Dan. 5:5
\textsuperscript{12}In contemporary Catholic bibles Ps. 120
\textsuperscript{13}Author of the Imitation of Christ
\textsuperscript{14}Author of many works including Introduction to the Devout Life (1609) and Treatise on the Love of God (1616).
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—

Mrs. [Eliza] S[adler] my long tried friend observed to me this morn[ing] I had penance enough without seeking it among Catholies—true but we bear all the pain without the merit. Yet I do try sincerely to turn all mine for account of my Soul—I was telling her I hoped the more I suffered in this life the more I hoped to be spared in the next as I believed God would accept my pains in attonement for my sins—she said indeed that was very comfortable Doctrine she wished she could believe it. indeed it is all my comfort dearest Amabilia—worn out now to a skeleton almost Death may over take me in my struggle—but God himself must finish it.

January 1805

Many a long day since I wrote you dear friend for this perpetual routine of life with my sweet darlings says the same thing every day for the exterior, except that our old servant has had a long sickness and I have had the comfort to nurse her night and day as well as do her work of all kinds for the snow has been almost impassably high and even my precious Sister P[ost] could not get to see us. You would not say we were not happy for the love with which it is all Seasoned can only be enjoyed by those who could experience our reverse, but we never give it a sigh, I play the piano all the Evening for them and they dance or we get close round the fire and I live over with them all the scenes of David, Daniel or Judith etc. till we forget the present entirely—the neighbours children too beset us to hear our stories and sing our hymns and say prayers with us—dear dearest Amabilia God will at last deliver—

now I read with an agonizing heart the Epiphany Sermon of Bourdalou—alas where is my star—I have tried so many ways to see the Dr. O[Brien] who they say is the only Catholic priest in New York

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15 The next six lines are blacked out and unreadable.
16 From the Scriptures
where they say Catholicks are the offscourings of the people, somebody said their congregation [is] "a public Nuisance" but that troubles not me, the congregation of a city, may be very shabby yet very pleasing to God, or very bad people among them yet cannot hurt the Faith as I take it, and should the priest himself deserve no more respect than is here allowed him, his ministry of the sacraments would be the same to me if dearest friend I ever shall receive them, I seek but God and his church and expect to find my peace in them not in the people.

Would you believe Amabilia in a desperation of Heart I went last Sunday to St. Georges Church, the wants and necessities of my Soul were so pressing that I looked straight up to God, and I told him since I cannot see the way to please you, whom alone I wish to please, every thing is indifferent to me, and until you do show me the way you mean me to walk in I will trudge on in the path you suffered me to be born in, and go even to the Very sacrament where I once used to find you—So away I went my old mammy happy to take care of the children for me once more till I came back—but if I left the house a Protestant I returned to it a Catholick I think since I determined to go no more to the Protestants, being much more troubled than ever I thought I could be while I remembered GOD IS MY GOD—but so it was that the bowing of my heart before the Bishop to recieve his Absolution which is given publickly and universally to all in the church I had not the least faith in his Prayer, and looked for an Apostolic loosing from my sins, which by the books Mr. H[obart] had given me to read I find they do not claim or admit—

then trembling to communion half dead with the inward struggle, when they said the Body and blood of Christ—Oh Amabilia—no words for my trial—and I remember in my old Prayer book of former edition when I was a child it was not as now, said to be Spiritually taken and reciev'd,—however to get thoughts away I took the daily exercise of good Abbe Plunket to read the prayers after COMMU-

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17The scriptural allusion to the Epiphany star refers to Matthew 2:2. Elizabeth was reading one of the sermons of Bourdaloue.
18St. George Church is a daughter church of Trinity, located at Second Avenue and 14th Street, near Stuyvesant Square.
19Episcopal bishop, Rev. Benjamin Moore
NION, but finding every word addressed to our dear Saviour as really present and conversing with it, I became half crazy, and for the first time could not bear the sweet caresses of the darlings or bless their little dinner—O my God that day—but it finished calmly at last abandoning all to God, and a renewed confidence in the blessed Virgin whose mild and peaceful love reproached my bold excesses, and reminded me to fix my heart above with better hopes—

Now they tell me take care I am a Mother, and my children I must answer for in Judgment, whatever Faith I lead them to—that being so, and I so unconscious, for I little thought 'till told by Mr. H[obart] that their Faith could be so full of consequence to them or me, I WILL GO PEACEABLY and FIRMLY TO THE CATHOLICK CHURCH—for if Faith is so important to our Salvation I will seek it where true Faith first begun, seek it among those who recieved 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 Catholicks I will go, and try to be a good one, may God accept my intention and pity me—as to supposing the word of our Lord has failed, and that he suffered his first foundation to be built on by Antichrist, I cannot stop on that without stopping on every other Word of our Lord and being tempted to be no Christian at all, for if the first church became Antichrist, and the second holds her rights from it, then I should be afraid both might be Antichrist, and I make my way to the bottomless pit by following either—

Come then my little ones we will go to Judgment together, and present our Lord his own words, and if he says You fools I did not mean that, we will say since you said you would be always even to the end of ages with this church you built with your blood, if you ever left it, it is your Word which mis led us, therefore please to pardon Your poor fools for your own Words sake—

I am between laughing and crying all the while Amabilia—Yet not frightened for on God himself I pin my Faith—and wait only the coming of your Antonio whom I look for next week from Boston to go

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21Abbé Peter Plunkett, an Irish priest and apologist whom Elizabeth met in Leghorn
Valliantly and boldly to the Standard of the Catholics and trust all to
God—it is his Affair NOW

[February 27th 1805 Ash Wednesday]22

A day of days for me Amabilia I have been—where—to the
Church of St. Peter with a CROSS on the top instead of a weather-
cock—that is mischevious, but I mean I have been to what is called
here among so many churches the Catholic church—when I turned
the corner of the street it is in, here my God I go said I, heart all to
you—entering it, how that heart died away as it were in silence before
the little tabernacle and the great Crucifixion over it23—Ah My God
here let me rest said I—and down the head on the bosom and the knees
on the bench—if I could have thought of any thing but God there was
enough I suppose to have astonished a stranger by the hurrying over
one another of this offscoured congregation, but as I came only to visit
his Majesty I knew not what it meant till afterwards—that it was a day
they recieve Ashes the beginning of Lent and drole but most Venera-
ble Irish priest24 who seems just come there talked of Death so famil-
 iarly that he delighted and revived me—

[March 14th 1805]

After all were gone I was called to the little room next the Altar and
there PROFESSED to believe what the Council of Trent25 believes
and teaches, laughing with my heart to my Saviour, who saw that I
knew not what the Council of Trent 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. and I came up
light at heart and cool of head the first time these many long months.

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22Elizabeth telescoped her account. The following events took place February 27, March 14, and
March 20, but she listed all under March 25.

23The large painting of the Crucifixion is by the Mexican artist José María Vallejo. Rev. William
O’Brien, the pastor of St. Peter’s, had studied in Bologna, and one of his fellow students eventually
rose to an archbishopric in Mexico. In 1789 Rev. O’Brien traveled to Mexico, seeking assistance for
his church. He brought back nearly $6000 and several paintings for the completion and adornment
of St. Peter’s. It is likely that the Vallejo Crucifixion was one of these paintings.

24Rev. John Byrne

25The Council of Trent was a sixteenth century council of the Catholic church.
but not without begging our Lord to wrap my heart deep in that opened side so well described in the beautiful Crucifixion, or lock it up in his little tabernacle where I shall now rest forever—Oh Amabilia the endearments of this day with the Children and the play of the heart with God while keeping up their little farces with them—Anna suspects—I anticipate her delight when I take her next Sunday—

So delighted now to prepare for this GOOD CONFESSION\textsuperscript{26} which bad as I am I would be ready to make on the house top to insure the GOOD ABSOLUTION I hope for after it—and then to set out a new life—a new existance itself. no great difficulty for me to be ready for it for truly my life has been well called over in bitterness of Soul these months of Sorrow past.

[March 20th 1805]

IT IS DONE—easy enough— the kindest most respectable confessor is this Mr. O[‘Brien] with the compassion and yet firmness in this work of Mercy which I would have expected from our Lord himself—our Lord himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part of this Venerable Sacrament—for Oh Amabilia—how awful those words of unloosing after a 30 years bondage—I felt as if my chains fell, as those of St. Peter at the touch of the divine messenger\textsuperscript{27}—

My God what new scenes for my Soul—ANNUNCIATION DAY\textsuperscript{28} I shall be made one with him who said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you can have no part with ME—

I count the days and hours—yet a few more of hope and expectation and then—how bright the Sun these morning walks of preparation—deep snow, or smooth ice, all to me the same I see nothing but the little bright cross on St. Peters steeple—the children are wild with their pleasure of going with me in their turn.

25 March

At last Amabilia—at last—GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS—Now let all go its round—I HAVE RECIEVED HIM \textsuperscript{29}—the awful

\textsuperscript{26}The sacrament of Reconciliation
\textsuperscript{27}Cf. Acts 7.
\textsuperscript{28}On March 25 the Roman Catholic church celebrates the feast recounted in Luke 1:35.
\textsuperscript{29}Roman Catholics believe that the body and blood of Jesus Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist and received by the faithful in Holy Communion under the form of bread and wine.
impressions of the evening before, fears of not having done all to prepare, and yet even then transports of confidence and hope in his GOODNESS—

MY GOD—to the last breath of life will I not remember this night of watching for morning dawn—the fearful beating heart so pressing to be gone—the long walk to town, but every step counted nearer that street—then nearer that tabernacle, then nearer the moment he would enter the poor little dwelling so all his own—

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 that the deliverer was come, and my defence and shield and strength and Salvation made mine for this World and the next—

now then all the excesses of my heart found their play and it danced with more fervour—no must not say that, but perhaps almost with as much as the royal Prophets before his Ark, for I was far richer than he and more honoured than he ever could be—now the point is for the fruits—so far, truly I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by him who came with so much Majesty to take possession of this little poor Kingdom—

[April 14]

—an Easter COMMUNION now—in my green pastures amidst the refreshing waters for which I thirsted truly—but you would not believe how the Holy Week puzzled me unless at the time of the Divine Sacrifice so commanding, and yet already so familiar for all my wants and necessities—that speaks for itself, and I am All at home in it, but the other hours of the office having no book to explain or lead I was quite at a loss, but made it up with that only thought, My God is here, he sees me, every sigh and desire is before him, and so I would close my eyes and say the dear litany of JESUS or some of the psalms, and most that lovely hymn to the Blessed Sacrament "FAITH for all defects sup-

30 Possibly a reference to Ps. 82
31 Cf. Ps. 23:2.
32 A traditional Catholic hymn for benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Tantum Ergo.
plies, and SENSE is lost in MYSTERY—here the Faithful rest secure, while God can Vouch and Faith insure”—but you would sometimes enjoy through mischief, if you could just know the foolish things that pass my brain after so much Wonderful Knowledge—as I have been taking in it about idol worshipping etc. etc. even in the sacred Moments of the elevation my heart will say half serious dare I worship you—Adored Saviour—but he has proved well enough to me there, what he is—and I can say with even more transports than St. Thomas MY LORD and MY GOD—truly it is a greater Mystery how Souls for whom he had done such incomprehensible things should shut themselves out by incredulity from his best of all Gifts, this Divine Sacrifice and Holy Eucharist, refusing to believe in [the] spiritual and heavenly order of things, that WORD which spake and created the Whole Natural Order, recreating through succession of ages for the body, and yet he cannot be believed to recreate for the soul—I see more mystery in this blindness of redeemed souls than in any of the mysteries proposed in his Church—with what grateful and unspeakable joy and reverence I adore the daily renewed virtue of THAT WORD by which we possess him in our blessed MASS, and Communion—but all that is but Words since Faith is from God and I must but humble myself and adore—

Your A[ntonio]—goes now for England and will soon be with you I trust—Much he says of my bringing all the children to you[r] Gubbio to find peace and abundance, but I have a long life of Sins to expiate and since I hope always to find the morning MASS in America, it matters little what can happen through the few successive days I may have to live for my health is pitiful—yet we will see—perhaps our Lord will pity my little ones—and at all events, happen now what will I rest with GOD—the tabernacle and Communion—so now I can pass the Valley of Death itself.

Antonio will tell you all our little affairs—Pray for your own

EAS.

34Flicchi relatives lived in the Italian city of Gubbio.
35 Cf. Ps. 23:4.
St. Paul’s Episcopal Chapel

St. Peter’s Catholic Church, circa 1831
Crucifixion scene by Vallejo, St. Peter’s Church

Archbishop John Carroll, by Gilbert Stuart
(Courtesy, Georgetown University)

Bishop John Cheverus
(Courtesy, St. Joseph’s Provincial House Archives)