

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE  
REFLECTIONS ON GREAT AMERICAN CATHOLICS: PART II  
THE DAWN OF A FREE AND BRAVE PEOPLE:  
CHARLES CARROLL AND SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

I. Charles Carrol of Carrolton was a model of an heroic businessman, who was active in commerce, but also willing to risk his great wealth to promote the cause of the American Revolution.

A. Charles Carroll was from a prominent Irish family, which had gone by the name O'Carroll. Even under the Protestant Edward VI, Teige O'Carroll had been made a baron in the mid-sixteenth century. However, the family were out of favor with James I and then joined a rebellion against Charles I; and so the two monarchs seized most of their land in 1615 and then 1641. However, the Carrols still played a role in government.

B. When the Carrols moved to Maryland, it was a colony that respected religious liberty, but that situation soon changed.

1. The grandfather of the American revolutionary, also called Charles Carroll (the Settler) was appointed Attorney General of Maryland by the Catholic King James II in 1688.
2. Maryland had been established by the Catholic George Calvert, whom King James I had appointed as Lord Baltimore in Ireland. For that brief time, King James I was more favorable to Catholics because he wanted to marry the French Princess Henrietta Maria, which he eventually did. However, because the situation of Catholics in England and Ireland was precarious, Lord Baltimore wanted to establish a new colony in the Americas that would defend religious liberty. King James I was favorable to him and permitted him to establish this new colony.
3. The new colony was first meant for Newfoundland and was to be called Avalon, after the legendary site of Camelot. However, opposition from the Puritan Massachusetts government led to its relocation in modern day Maryland, which was named after now Queen Marietta. Charles Calvert never got to the colony, but his son Cecil Calvert would become Lord Baltimore and the first governor of this colony.
4. At first, Maryland respected the rights of all Christian faiths, and had clergy of many Christian denominations. When the English Civil War that would bring

Oliver Cromwell to control, broke out in 1642, Protestant forces from Virginia briefly seized the colony, but they were beaten back.

5. However, tensions between Catholics and Protestants were increasing during the mid-seventeenth century, with the majority of the people Protestant, but Lord Baltimore and the majority of the legislature Catholic, allowing all Christian faiths to be practiced, but suspected of plotting otherwise.
  6. When the so-called Glorious Revolution overthrew the Catholic King James II and brought William and Mary to the throne in 1688, the British government now put the Protestants in charge, deprived Charles Carroll the Settler of his office, and prevented Lord Baltimore from governing the colony. The Fifth Lord Baltimore then became Anglican and thus even less inclined to use his influence on the side of the Catholics. The Maryland legislature made the Anglican Church the official state Church, and imposed many disabilities on Catholics, including prohibitions on Catholics holding public office.
- C. Charles Carroll was deprived again of the office of Attorney General. He had, however, been a good businessman. And he married a rich widow and then a young woman named Mary Darmail, who also brought him a considerable dowry. With trade and banking, he built up an enormous fortune and owned almost 50,000 acres by the time of his death in 1720.
- D. His son Charles Carroll of Annapolis was a firm Catholic and very good at business, although also perhaps too eager to acquire wealth. By lending and investing in land and iron manufacturing, he became one of the richest people in the American colonies.
- E. In 1737, Charles Carroll of Carrollton was born of Charles Carroll of Annapolis and Elizabeth Brookes, who were not yet legally married, although they later would be. Because Catholic schooling was forbidden, he secretly attended a Jesuit academy called St. Omers. During the next year, he attended a college (as the term was then) of St. Omer in Flanders for years. His second cousin John Carroll, who would become America's first bishop, attended this school with him. Six years later, Charles completed his education at the College of Louis the Great in Paris and then studied law in London, where he set up a law practice.
- F. He returned to stay in America in 1765, where he managed the family estate in Carrollton, thus giving him his full name Charles Carroll of Carrollton. His mother died in the same year. In that same year, Britain also imposed the Stamp Act, which

cause great resentment and rebellion. Charles Carrol immediately began writing to English friends that the act was both unjust and a substantial weight on trade and dealings between England and the colonies. He also understood the danger to liberty that creating all of the officials needed to enforce the tax would be.

- Even before this time, Charles was already writing about the future of an independent America.

G. Charles Carroll was both good at business and relatively simple in his lifestyle. With his business acumen and simple lifestyle, he presided over an even greater growth in his family's fortunes. However, he did not display his wealth to the public, noting that Americans were not impressed with great shows of wealth, but rather with industriousness.

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H. Charles Carroll married Rachel Cooke in 1766, but she died 6 months later. He then became engaged to Mary Darnel a few years later.

I. In 1766, the Stamp Act issue was resolved, and things were going well for awhile. But then, starting in 1767, a series of taxes called the Townshend duties became a major issue. Furthermore, in 1770, Robert Eden, the royal governor of Maryland imposed more taxes on the colonists, not only without the legislature's consent, but in the face of a contrary vote of 31-3.

J. Charles Carroll wrote four articles for the Maryland Gazette, in which he argued against these taxes on the grounds of natural law, the English constitution and practical considerations. In these articles, he coined the principle "no taxation without representation."

K. These essays gained him great fame as an advocate of the rights of the colonists. In 1774, he was elected as one of the 7 representatives from Anne County to the provincial assembly in Annapolis. Up to this point, Catholics were barred from public office in Maryland. But, to enable him to represent the colony, the legislature removed this prohibition.

L. Charles Carroll supported the independence movement at the state Convention in 1775 and 1776. However, the majority of delegates were against it, and the Convention for the time being forbade its representatives the Second Continental Congress from voting for independence. But, due in large part to his efforts, the Maryland Convention allowed, on June 28, its delegates to vote for independence.

- Charles Carroll was a member of a commission that tried to get support in Canada, an ultimately unsuccessful attempt.

M. Charles Carroll then became an official member of the Maryland delegation to the Second Continental Congress on July 18. In this capacity, he signed the Declaration of Independence on August 2. This act put both himself and his great fortune at great risk.

- At the time, he was the wealthiest American colonist, with an estate valued at \$2 million.

N. During the Revolutionary War, he served the war effort, but also the cause of justice and religious liberty.

1. During the War, he, being Catholic and a loyal American, was helpful in securing the trust of the French for supporting the American Revolution, as well as reducing prejudice against the French on the part of Americans.

2. Later in 1776, he received an appointment to the commission assigned with the task of drawing up Maryland's new constitution.

3. He resigned from the Continental Congress in 1778 to join the Maryland Senate. As a member of the Maryland Senate, he supported the Revolution, but also the property rights of loyalists against proposals for confiscation, an effort he continued after the war.

O. After the Revolutionary War, he was active in supporting the establishment of a just rule of law in the new nation.

1. In 1783, he became President of the Maryland state Senate and, in this role, advocated adoption of the new constitution in 1787 and 1788. He had been actually elected to represent Maryland at the Constitutional Convention, but he could not attend because he was president of the Senate.

2. He was then elected to the first United States Senate by the Maryland legislature, and in that capacity helped draft the Bill of Rights.

3. After George Washington was elected President, he and several Catholic leaders wrote to him, asking for assurances of religious liberty in the new republic and the support for efforts to establish religious liberty in states that had not done so. On March 15, 1790, George Washington gave this assurance that he supported the equal protection of laws for all people regardless of religion.

4. When it became forbidden to hold both federal and state office in 1792, he chose to stay in the Maryland Senate. However, when Washington was thinking about not running for reelection in 1792, there was a brief effort to draft Charles Carroll, and Alexander Hamilton.
5. After 1800, Charles Carroll retired from public life, although he was still involved in commenting on affairs of state. Thus, for example, he opposed the entry into the War of 1812, partially out of a desire for peace and partially because the British were fighting Napoleon Bonaparte, who was oppressing the Catholic Church. He also opposed the rapid expansion of the money supply, arguing that it would decrease the stability of the currency and the trust in government.
6. He did own slaves, as most wealthy Americans did. He considered slavery to be a great evil, but did not know how to get rid of it, except the hope that, with the prohibition on the importation of slaves in 1808, it would die out. In 1830, he became president of the American Colonization Society, which involved attempts to find a place in Africa for freed slaves to go.

P. Late in life, Charles Carroll became an honored elder statesman in the young republic.

1. In 1826, during a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence by most of the Congress (August 2), Charles Carroll wrote that he thanked God, “for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ our Lord, He has conferred on my beloved country upon her emancipation, and upon myself.” And he recommended reverence of the Declaration of Independence for future generations, saying that it was “the best earthly inheritance their ancestors could bequeath to them; and pray that the civil and religious liberties they have secured to my country be perpetuated to the remotest posterity and extended to the whole family of man.” At that time, he received a number of visitors, who commented on his remarkable vigor, even in his nineties, including long horseback riding and daily swimming, even in cold water.
2. In 1828, construction began on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, the first commercially chartered railroad in the United States. At the owners’ request, the 91 year old Charles Carroll did the groundbreaking, fittingly on July 4 of that year. He thus represented the transition from the new republic to a nation that would rapidly into an economic dynamo.

3. When Alexis de Tocqueville was drafting what would become the classic Democracy in America, he visited Charles Carroll in 1831, who was then the only surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. De Tocqueville remarked that that brand of intelligent, but also populist, statesmen who could be fully intellectual and yet still thrive in a democracy was dying out.

Q. In the life of Charles Carroll, we thus see a man who, by intellect and dedication pursued the principles of liberty and overcame prejudice. We see someone who believed in principles of democracy, but was also willing to take an unpopular stance, as with the defense of loyalists. We see someone who was very good at business, but also was willing to put his great wealth at risk for the higher cause. The last of the founding fathers, he was also an inspiration for the future.

II. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton demonstrated quiet perseverance in the face of illness, poverty and discrimination to form the first Catholic schools in America and the first religious order founded in the new nation.

A. Born in 1774 and raised by a devout Anglican family in New York City, Elizabeth Bayley became an intelligent and devout young woman.

1. Elizabeth was born on August 28, 1774 to Dr. Richard and Catherine Bayley, who were both well educated. Richard was the Chief Health Officer in New York City and a college teacher. Catherine was the daughter of the Anglican, and then Episcopalian, priest of St. Andrew Church on Stanton Island.
2. Her mother died when Elizabeth was 3; and her younger sister Catherine also died. Dr. Bayley was then left with two daughters, but soon married Charlotte Barclay, who was active in the Episcopalian Church. They had five children, and at first things seemed to go well, with Charlotte keeping all of the children active in the church.
3. However, Richard and Charlotte eventually separated, and Elizabeth saw little of her step mother, which was a trial to her.
4. Elizabeth received a good education, and was talented at music and poetry. She was also already drawn to prayer and read the Bible often. She was apparently very charming, gracious and humorous.

B. Her brief married life was at first promising and joyous, but soon afflicted with financial decline and the death of her husband.

1. In 1794, at the age of 20, she married William Seton, a merchant and the son of a merchant, who was also called William. William Jr. and his brother James were very active in the international trade business of the father. In

1788, while on a business trip, he met Filippo Fellichi, a prominent Italian businessman, with whom they would develop an active trade and a good friendship.

2. Elizabeth was very active in the Episcopalian Church, with Rev. John Hobart, the pastor of Trinity Church in New York, and later Episcopalian bishop,, as her spiritual director. And she formed a close friendship with her sister-in-law Rebecca Ann Seton. Together they engaged in many charitable works and formed the Society for the Relief of Widows with Small Children in 1797. They were often called the Protestant Daughters of Charity, after the order founded by St. Louise de Merrilac and St. Vincent de Paul in France in the eighteenth century.
  3. He couple had five children between 1795 and 1802: Anna Marie, William, Richard, Catherine and Rebecca.
  4. The father-in-law William died in 1798 and William the younger began to run the business. The couple took the seven younger children of the elder William Seton, aged seven to seventeen, under their care.
  5. However, due to the increasing conflict between Britain and France, and due to the raids from pirates based in Tripoli, the business declined and the family filed for bankruptcy in 1801, losing their home. They moved for a time into Dr. Richard Bayley's home. However, he also died and that put greater stress on the family.
  6. William had long suffered from tuberculosis. However, the bad times made it much worse; and doctors recommended a trip to Italy. And so they travelled to Italy with their oldest child Anna Maria, while the other children stayed with in laws. They probably paid for trip from the sale of silver plates and artwork that Elizabeth had inherited.
  7. When they arrived in Italy, William was quarantined because of a yellow fever scare. They finally got free, but William died two week later on December 27, 1803. The family received housing and assistance from the Fellichi family in Italy.
- C. Reverence for the Eucharist and veneration of Mary by the Fellichis brought Elizabeth to the Catholic faith, in spite of great opposition.

1. While they were in Italy, the family of Antonio and Amabella Fellich showed them great kindness and financial support. They did not directly try to persuade her to convert. However, their great devotion to the Eucharist made her feel Christ's presence in the Eucharist, a teaching that was not in her form of Anglicanism. They also had a great veneration for Mary, and Elizabeth was also attracted to that devotion. Her own mother had died when she was young. And, like St. John Paul II 120 years later, she understood that Mary is the model of all mothers. At her request, the Fellichis began to give her instruction in the faith.
  2. She then returned to the United States in June of 1804. But, while she was reunited with her children, there was also sorrow, as Rebecca Seton died in July of that year.
  3. She soon told her family about her intention to enter the Catholic Church. They strenuously opposed this idea, and threatened to cut her off from support. Rev. Hobart engaged in great efforts to dissuade her. One of the Fellichis, Antonio, however, who had travelled to the United States for business, argued for the Catholic faith. Rebecca died in July of 1804.
  4. She persevered and entered the Church on Ash Wednesday, March 14, 1805, receiving Confirmation from Bishop Carroll the next year. Sadly, her family did cut her off from help, and her worldly prospects were greatly diminished.
- D. To support the family, Elizabeth Ann Seton turned to teaching, and after great opposition, succeeded in establishing the first Catholic elementary school in America.
1. She first tried to teach at an academy for boys run by the Protestant schoolmaster Patrick White in the suburb of New York. However, that school faltered. She then tried to run a boarding school connected to the Episcopalian St. Mark school in New York. However, when her sister-in-law Cecelia converted to Catholicism, parents and supporters were worried that their children might become Catholic as well and so withdrew their help.
  2. She considered moving to Canada, where she could practice the faith freely. However, at the suggestion of Abbe Louis Dubourg, the president of Saint Mary's College in Baltimore, she started a school there, near St. Mary Seminary, which Abbe Dubourg was also founding. She went there with her three daughters Cecelia and another relative Harriet Seton. Four other young women joined them. Her sons had been attending Georgetown College but

now joined them at St. Mary College during this time. The situation was better but anti-Catholic prejudice continued in that city.

3. In 1809, they moved to Emmitsburg, Maryland and founded Saint Joseph Academy and Free School for Catholic girls near Mount St. Mary College, which had just been founded. A seminarian and Catholic convert at Mount St. Mary Seminary gave them a substantial donation and enabled them to purchase a nearby house and land for the school. The house, however, was very basic and they had to expand upon it, mostly with their own labor, to make the place suitable for them and the students. As the name implies, the school was meant to be available for all girls of any economic condition.
- E. Despite the difficulties, the school in Emmitsburg, the school was a great success, and Elizabeth Ann Seton formed the Sisters of Charity, the first Catholic order established in the United States.
1. The community taught with such fervor and devotion that many wealthy people sent their children there. There were 18 sisters by 1813; and poignantly, Elizabeth's daughter Anna made vows while dying of tuberculosis. And Elizabeth's sister-in-law Henrietta Seton, entered the Catholic Church in 1809, just before her death.
  2. She and three other sisters took private temporary vows before Bishop John Carroll in 1809. In 1811, the community adopted a rule of life that was based upon the rule of the Daughters of Charity, an order that had been established by St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul in the seventeenth century that especially emphasized care for the poor and orphans. In 1812, the rule was approved by Bishop Carroll and then received Vatican approval. And thus, the Order, now called the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, officially began. The initial intention was to merge with the Daughters of Charity, but the Napoleonic Wars prevented doing so at that time. Later on the order would establish connections with the Daughters of Charity, and some of the houses in America take that name.
  3. The religious community likewise flourished even during her lifetime, establishing twenty communities for orphanages, hospitals and schools by her death in 1821. Despite the fact that she was raising children, she was consistently elected and re-elected superior until her death. She also found time to write textbooks and translate mystical writings from French, as well as compose many letters.

- F. Mother Seton died of tuberculosis at the mother house on January 4, 1821, at the age of 46. Her last words were, “Be daughters of the Church.” Blessed Pope Paul VI canonized her on September 14, 1975, on the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. At the canonization Mass, he said, “Elizabeth Ann Seton is a saint. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is an American. All of us say this with special joy, and with the intention of honoring the land and the nation from which she sprang forth as the first flower in the calendar of the saints. Elizabeth Ann Seton was wholly American! Rejoice for your glorious daughter. Be proud of her. And know how to preserve her fruitful heritage.”
- G. St. Elizabeth demonstrated the American traits of courage in standing up for one’s beliefs, perseverance in the midst of trials, confidence that barriers can be overcome, and the goal of universal education.
1. She faced discrimination and could have left the country for more favorable lands, such as Canada or Italy. But she loved this land and wanted to bring the blessings of God and the Church here.
  2. With great determination, she faced extraordinary difficulties and overcame them. She had a deep trust in God, but also a dedication to hard work and a practical sense of how to run a school.
  3. She was one of the pioneers of the value of universal education, and understood the importance of developing the mind for the faith and society. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries Charlemagne also proposed universal education, but he could never put a plan into effect to accomplish this end. This widow and mother achieved what the Emperor could not.