

ABSTRACT

THE CATHOLIC WITNESS DURING MEMPHIS YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMICS OF THE 1870s: A DESCRIPTION AND VINDICATION

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In the 1870s, several yellow fever epidemics struck Memphis causing a calamity that shook the entire United States. The yellow fever epidemics in Memphis were some of the deadliest and most terrifying events of American urban history, killing more people than the Chicago Fire, San Francisco earthquake, and the Johnstown flood combined. A disaster for both the city and the region with implications for medical history, social history, and economic history, the yellow fever epidemics are of interest from a variety of historical perspectives and serve as a locus of research for a variety of disciplines. This project will examine historical narratives that describe the ways in which Catholic religious groups in Memphis responded to this crisis, and it will seek to discern how the underreported Catholic narrative of epidemics contributes something distinctive to Memphis history.

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THE 1870s: A DESCRIPTION AND VINDICATION

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First, I dedicate this work to all the Catholic priests, Sisters, and Brothers who gave their lives during the Memphis yellow fever epidemics.

Secondly, I dedicate it to Mom and Dad.

O Lord God, Who hast said by Thy apostle James: Is any man sick among you? Let him call in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

-The Rite of Extreme Unction

INTRODUCTION

In the 1870s, several yellow fever epidemics struck Memphis causing a calamity that shook the entire United States. The yellow fever epidemics in Memphis were some of the deadliest and most terrifying events of American urban history, killing more people than the Chicago Fire, San Francisco earthquake, and the Johnstown flood combined. The yellow fever begins with mild, difficult to diagnose symptoms: a fever and body aches which sometimes end in 48 hours. However, after this period, symptoms either disappear or worsen dramatically progressing into a high fever, cold yellowed skin, internal hemorrhaging, and vomiting. Finally, bloodshot eyes and black vomit signal the fatal progression of the virus. Patients would often be found with blood dripping out of their mouth, ears, and nose. The name, yellow fever, comes from the appearance of jaundiced skin of patients near death¹.

A disaster for both the city and the region with implications for medical history, social history, and economic history, the yellow fever epidemics are of interest from a variety of historical perspectives and serve as a locus of research for a variety of disciplines. This project will examine historical narratives that describe the ways in which Catholic religious groups in Memphis responded to this crisis, and it will seek to discern how the Catholic narrative of the yellow fever contributes something distinctive and important to Memphis history. Subsequent memorialization of the yellow fever “heroes” will also be important in examining how the Catholic, largely immigrant community contributed to the public memory of Memphis in the face of these disasters.

¹ Khaled J. Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

The number of deaths and the dramatic response of Catholic religious reveal that the fever significantly impacted the Catholic population, and further, that the impact of this event on the Catholic population has been underreported both historically and in contemporary Memphis memory.

This paper will examine historic public accounts of the yellow fever, exploring the ways in which these sources reveal the public perception of the Catholic community, their (mis)understanding of Catholic religious rituals, and the relative neglect of Catholic figures in the prominent historical accounts . Next, I will focus on the unique role of the Catholic priest in administering the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

I will rely on Fr. D.A. Quinn's *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*, and Fr. J.A. Kelly's diaries and letters to discern the experience of the Catholic priest in these epidemics. However, I will also look at the role of religious sisters, who had no formal duty to remain throughout the fevers but remained in and flocked to Memphis. To examine the place of religious sisters in the epidemics, I rely on documents from the St. Cecilia Archives and Leo Kalmer's 1929 compilation *Stronger Than Death*. Finally, I will examine the place of these stories in the public memory of Memphis as found in cemeteries and popular books to demonstrate the ways in which the prevalent historical record of the epidemics overlooks the significant impact of the epidemics on the Catholic community and relegates the story of the heroic Catholic religious involved as a specifically Catholic memory rather than a memory shared by the entire city.

The catastrophic events of the yellow fever epidemics mark an important turning point in Memphis history with respect to its immigrant community and ethnic composition. Before the fever, Memphis prospered from 1840 up to the Civil War, and its

population doubled every few years.² Many East Coast planters and German and Irish immigrants migrated to Memphis because of its financial potential. The population increased from 8,841 in 1850 to 40,226 in 1870.³ In 1860, over a third of the population of Memphis was born outside the United States, the highest foreign-born percentage ever for the city; 4,100 of these were Irish and 1,500 were German.⁴ While certainly not all of these European immigrants were Catholic, the vast majority, especially the Irish and the Germans, brought along with them their Catholic faith. These immigrants quickly established religious roots in Memphis through various churches and religious societies: the Irish St. Peter's Church, which celebrated its first Mass in 1839, was the city's first Catholic church, followed by the German Church St. Mary's in 1852. By the 1870s, four Catholic parishes served the Catholic population: St. Peter's Parish, St. Patrick's Church, St. Mary's Church, which under the Franciscans served the German Catholics, and St. Brigid's Church, which served the Irish in North Memphis. St. Peter's Parish erected a prominent Neo-Gothic church building in 1859, the only antebellum church in Memphis designed by an out-of-town architect, Patrick Keeley; this fact points to a noteworthy representation of Catholics in the city⁵. The Dominican priest Joseph Augustine Kelly writes of St. Peter's Church in his diary: "It seems to me that Memphis is, beyond a doubt, the finest place the [Dominican] order possesses in this country, and presents the best opening for future success. Once I did not think so, but I am convinced of it now

² Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

³ Capers.

⁴ Sterling Tracy, "The Immigrant Population of Memphis," *The West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*. *West Tennessee Historical Society* 4 (1950): 72–82.

⁵ Benjamin Priddy Jr., "Old Churches of Memphis" 29 (1975): 139.

from the ocular demonstration”⁶ (Figure 2). Capers claims that Memphis in the nineteenth century resembled Chicago more than any Southern city for its diverse immigrant community and significant Catholic presence.⁷ Memphis emerged relatively unscathed from the ravages of the Civil War as the city surrendered to the Union early in an offshore naval battle, and most Irish people benefited from this early surrender to the Union as they, the vast majority in Memphis, never supported secession.⁸ Memphis, in relation to the rest of the South, prospered post-war, making it an attractive location for immigrants—until, that is, the decimation of the Yellow Fever.⁹

The Memphis which emerged after the economic, social, and cultural destruction of the fever had a new character and personality. It no longer attracted hopeful immigrants or Western-minded adventurers but evolved into a hub for the war-torn planters of Mississippi and Arkansas, forging a largely white, Protestant culture.¹⁰ Memphis historian Gerald Capers says of the city, “It can be suggested with some justification that Atlanta owes its present position more to the work of the ‘*Aedes aegypti*’ in Memphis than to any other cause.”¹¹ The fever killed many of the poor, Catholic immigrants who remained in the city during the epidemics, and the fear of its return and

⁶ Joseph Augustine Kelly, “The Diary of Joseph Augustine Kelly” (1885 -1864), Providence College Dominican Archive.

⁷ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

⁸ Joe Brady, “The Irish Community in Antebellum Memphis.”

⁹ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

¹⁰ Capers.

¹¹ Capers. *Aedes Aegypti* is the species of mosquito vector that carries the yellow fever virus.

the national coverage of the calamity discouraged immigrants from returning to Memphis.

The memory of this horrific disease struck fear into the hearts of Memphians as sporadic episodes of the yellow fever had broken out throughout the 19th century. Yellow fever threatened many coastal towns such as New Orleans and Philadelphia, but it did not often travel as far inland as Memphis, TN. Poe's short story, written in 1842, the *Masque of the Red Death*, vividly portrays the terror of the yellow fever as a masked figure descending upon and striking dead a party of decadent revelers.¹² Thus, when Mrs. Bionda, the Italian owner of a snack shop along the river, died from yellow fever, panic erupted. Within two days, 65 new cases of the yellow fever emerged, and in a week several hundred people had died. These cases caused a mass exodus from the city. In August of 1878, within ten days, 30,000 people left Memphis on steamboats, carriages, and trains. The city which previously boasted a population of 50,000, rivaling Atlanta and St. Louis in size, was reduced to 19,600 people.¹³ Shortly after this mass exodus, armed guards established a "shotgun quarantine" barring anyone from entering or leaving the city [See figure 1]. The nearby town of Jackson refused to let any Memphians enter, and the residents of surrounding towns destroyed every animal which came from Memphis. Of the 19,600 people who remained in the city during the 1878 epidemic, 17,600 were infected with the fever (89-90%).¹⁴ The people who remained in the disease-ridden city

¹² Edgar Allan Poe, *The Masque of The Red Death: The Classic by the Master of Terror with Soundtrack and Animated Illustrations* (Area51 Publishing, 2013).

¹³ John McLeod Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever. :The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, in Memphis, Tenn.* (Memphis, Tenn. :, 1879), 116.

¹⁴ Keating, 55

were the poor who lacked the means to relocate: African Americans and immigrants comprised the majority of those who remained¹⁵. Memphis became a ghost town silent except for the echo of the wagons along quiet streets accompanied by the lonely cry “Bring out your dead, bring out your dead!”¹⁶ Chaos descended upon the city with rampant looting of abandoned businesses and homes.¹⁷

The following letter was published in the *Freeman's Journal* by Dr. J.G. Orr to describe the state of Memphis to those in New York.

If you could take a tour through the place and see—here a huge pile of rudely constructed coffins, a large number of wagons, each filled with a dozen of them containing dead bodies, hearses driven at a breakneck speed; and a mother lately widowed lying in a bed that no hand save her own has touched since the hour she was stricken down, and upon her five little girls huddled together in one room.¹⁸

This horrific situation became an occasion for sensational journalism while the newspaper staff of the *Memphis Daily Appeal* were picked off one by one until only the editor, J.M. Keating and his printer remained to issue a daily paper. The daily news was important for disseminating news to those who stayed in the city to care for the sick and dying. *The Memphis Daily Appeal* on Sept 20 published this letter:

Deaths to date, 2,250; number of sick, about 3,000; average deaths, 60 percent of the sick. We are feeding 10,000 persons, sick and destitute, in

¹⁵ Jessica Wells, “The Suffering South: 1878 Yellow Fever Narratives and Post-Reconstruction Southern Identity,” n.d., 314.

¹⁶ Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*. 120

¹⁷ Gerald M. Capers, *The Biography of a River Town: Memphis, Its Heroic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939).

¹⁸ “Memphis Scourge,” *New York Freeman's Journal*, September 28, 1878.

camps in the city. Fifteen volunteer physicians have died, twenty others are ill. We are praying for frost, it is our only hope.¹⁹

Although they did not know why, Memphians knew that frost would bring about an end to the spread of the fever.²⁰ When the frost finally did come in the 1873 epidemic, over 5,000 people had died, and many of the 12,000 people who fled never came back to Memphis(1873). The German population, once large enough to merit its own church and school, fled to St. Louis, and it never returned to its former size.²¹

The Yellow Fever, radiating out from the first infection on Front Street, spread through the “Pinch District”: a ghetto of Irish immigrants located between the Gayoso Bayou and the Wolf River; it was known for its stench and general lack of cleanliness and was so named for the “pinch-gut” appearance of its emaciated residents²². Besides “The Pinch,” the Yellow Fever hit hardest the other low area by the river: Happy Hollow. As Memphis lacked a central sewage system at the time of the yellow fever epidemics, privies were merely dumped into the river and the waste sometimes pooled in the shallows near Happy Hollow and The Pinch. Because the low areas had poor drainage and sanitation, when the Gayoso Bayou flooded, mud covered their streets and became the perfect breeding ground for the *Aedes Egypti*.²³ The immigrant communities living in

¹⁹ “Death Toll,” *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, September 20, 1878.

²⁰ Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley’s Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878*. Yellow Fever is spread via a mosquito vector, the frost kills the mosquitos.

²¹ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

²² D. A. Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis: Or Reminiscences of the Yellow Fever Epidemics That Afflicted the City of Memphis during the Autumn Months of 1873, 1878 and 1879, to Which Is Added: A Graphic Description of Missionary Life in Eastern Arkansas* (EL Freeman & son, state printers, 1887), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015020565985>. 20 A.

²³ Joe Brady, “The Irish Community in Antebellum Memphis,” *West Tennessee Historical Society Paper* 40 (1986): 24–44.

these ghettos, largely Irish Catholics, comprised a great number of the deaths caused by the yellow fever. Chickasaw Row and Front Row in North Memphis near the river were lined with crowded boarding houses. The first epidemic occurred in 1873 and the second, more fatal epidemic occurred in 1878. In the 1873 epidemic, nearly 2,000 people died, and it was reported that in this first epidemic nearly half or 800 of the 2,000 deaths were parishioners at St. Brigid's Catholic Church.²⁴ ²⁵ The names of the dead were listed on a plaque at St. Brigid's Church, and the entire church wore mourning clothes the Sunday after the fever abated.²⁶ Of the total 5,150 deaths in the 1878 epidemic, the compiled records of Calvary Catholic cemetery records 1,287 buried Catholics from the months of the 1878 epidemic, but this figure is low. Rev. D.A. Quinn estimates that 2,000 were Catholic, of which 43 were male and female religious. Certainly, the Catholic community of Memphis suffered significant losses due to the fever. Speaking of the declining numbers of Catholics in Memphis following the fever, Quinn writes: "Catholicity in Memphis has not yet recovered from the shock of the late Epidemics. Up to the year '78 there were always three Priests attending at St. Patrick's, and two at St. Bridget's Churches. At present, there is but one Priest at St. Patrick's and one at St. Bridget's."²⁷ Due to enormous debt and economic stagnation in the epidemics, Memphis, once a

²⁴ Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*.

²⁵ D. A. Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis: Or Reminiscences of the Yellow Fever Epidemics That Afflicted the City of Memphis during the Autumn Months of 1873, 1878 and 1879, to Which Is Added: A Graphic Description of Missionary Life in Eastern Arkansas* (EL Freeman & son, state printers, 1887).

²⁶ Quinn.

²⁷ Quinn. 146.

prosperous city rivaling Atlanta, lost its charter and was reduced to a taxing district for twelve years.

The Yellow Fever impacted the nation as documented by national newspapers such as *Harper's Weekly* and the Catholic correspondence journal, *The New York Freeman's Journal*. The latter describes Fr. Walsh's refugee camp, Camp Father Matthew, and the contributions of \$2900 provided to repay the debts Fr. Walsh had incurred in his establishment of the camp.²⁸ The newspaper lists the contributions of parishes and individuals across the entire country: New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Texas and Michigan.²⁹ It published numerous appeals for aid accompanied by harrowing stories of the dead. The *Freeman's Journal* along with the personal ledger of Fr. J.A. Kelly reveal the immense monetary contributions of other Catholics across the states to those stricken by yellow fever.³⁰

Given this monumental national and local impact of the fever, this paper will focus in on a specific community, the Roman Catholic community of laity and especially the male and female religious who risked death by staying in the infected city and attending to the sick and dying.

²⁸ "The Yellow Fever," *New York Freeman's Journal*, November 9, 1878.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Joseph Augustine Kelly, "The Diary of Joseph Augustine Kelly."

CHAPTER ONE

Historic Narratives and the Priesthood

Both Protestants and Catholics memorialized religious figures who served during the yellow fever epidemics. Stories immediately following the epidemics describe and celebrate the specific heroic deeds of these figures. However, the Protestant and Catholic memories remain distinct in separate newspapers, separate books, and separate cemeteries. Newspapers often recount the interactions of Protestants and Catholics toward each other as contemptuous, revealing a clear disconnect between the two communities.

Many yellow fever accounts reveal tensions between Protestants and Catholics. The 1870s yellow fever epidemics stand in the midst of tensions between the ‘Manifest Destiny’ dream to Americanize and Protestantize the continent and the rapid influx of immigration, most from northern and western Europe. Across the nation, religiously charged nativist rhetoric arose in reaction to the large numbers of immigrants³¹. Emblematic of nineteenth-century anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment are the cartoons of Thomas Nast, which often depict Catholics as loyal to the pope over the United States, which presents Catholicism as antithetical to American liberty, and which caricature Irish Americans³². In response to these sometimes violent nativist movements, many Catholic immigrant communities strove to distinguish themselves as groups set apart from the Protestant masses of America. Memphis, Tennessee was no exception to the national

³¹ James J. Hennessey, *American Catholics : A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States*, 1981.

³² John Bonner et al., *Harper’s Weekly [Electronic Resource]: Journal of Civilization*. (Norfolk, Va.: HarpWeek, LLC, 1997). See Figure 3

trend, and the yellow fever epidemics brought Protestants and Catholics into conflict regarding religious rituals for the sick and dying as well as subsequent memorialization of heroes.

The yellow fever spawned a flurry of accounts as the city came to present the epidemics as a defining moment in its history. A variety of personal diaries, newspaper articles, and historical chronicles arose in the years following the epidemics documenting the events according to the perspective or experience of the author. The primary popular resource for the history of the yellow fever remains J.M. Keating's *A History of the Yellow Fever: The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, in Memphis, Tenn.*. Published in 1879, its aim is to provide an objective account of the yellow fever by compiling data from public records. Keating includes the lists of the dead from local cemeteries and from the medical association The Howard Society. Alongside these records, he offers his own analysis of event and stories while arguing for the necessity of sanitary reform to prevent another epidemic. As the editor of the *Memphis Appeal*, he provides a journalistic take on many of the stories from the epidemic. Less than ten years later, the Irish-born Catholic priest, Rev. Quinn responded to what he saw as a gross misrepresentation of the Catholic community in Keating's history by publishing his own account, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis: Or Reminiscences of the Yellow Fever Epidemics*. Although Keating's history does not entirely fail to mention the Catholic presence in the epidemic, according to Quinn Keating fails to provide an adequate account of the magnitude of the contribution of Catholic relief. Thus, Quinn provides his own 'revisionist' history of the epidemic in which he memorializes certain "martyr-heroes and heroines". Later, the Franciscan priest Leo Kalmer expands upon Quinn's *Heroes and Heroines* in his short work *Stronger Than*

Death to provide a more ‘historical’ account based on personal interviews with survivors and on public records. Kalmer systematically describes the work of the religious orders who served during the epidemics by listing their names and recounting their deeds.

Different newspapers also detailed the yellow fever crisis. *The New York Freeman’s Journal* relates stories of the epidemics that emphasize the national impact of the yellow fever. A newspaper founded by Irish immigrants and based in New York, the paper existed primarily for a Catholic audience as a correspondence journal to provide news of the various Irish immigrant communities across the United States, alongside national and world news from a Catholic perspective. Grisly stories of the yellow fever epidemics appear side by side with stories about Victor Emmanuel conquering Italy and briefings on the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. The newspaper published numerous letters of people in Memphis describing the state of the city, listing the names of the dead, and pleading for money. On the other hand, Memphis-based newspapers such as *The Daily Avalanche* and *Memphis Daily Appeal* consistently printed coverage of the epidemic as it unfolded. Keating’s *History of the Yellow Fever* compiles many of his own newspaper articles for *The Daily Appeal* written during the crisis. Further testifying to the national impact of epidemics, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* published five etchings of the harrowing situation of Memphis and those who heroically stayed to serve the poor and sick.³³

Alongside these public sources, private diaries and letters provide a valuable window into the more intimate and personal struggles of those involved. The published

³³ See Appendix 1 Figure 1

diary of Episcopal Bishop Charles Quintard reveals the position of a bishop caring for his people from afar by coordinating aid in the city³⁴. The unpublished diary of Fr. Joseph Kelly O.P., alongside his collection of his letters, disclose an array of pastoral and administrative roles that the Catholic priest took up for his community.³⁵ Alternatively, the diary of Rev. Henry Sieck reveals the dire situation of a Lutheran minister caught amid conflicting duties to his earthly family and his spiritual flock.³⁶ I will rely on these sources to supplement the intentionally dramatic descriptions printed in newspapers; these private journals, not intended for publication, offer an unvarnished impression of the times.

Keating aims to compile the data of listed dead, doctors, nurses, and other aid providers he had collected for his newspaper throughout the years of epidemic, and his *History of the Yellow Fever* combines mundane information and dramatic story-telling to create an official narrative for the city while also presenting Memphis as a worthy case for federal funding.³⁷ Keating introduces his history with a quotation from the Anglican churchman and poet, Jeremy Taylor: “God is pleased with no music below so much as the thanksgiving of relieved widows, of supported orphans, of rejoicing, and comforted,

³⁴ Charles Quintard, *A Yellow Fever Journal: Bishop Charles T. Quintard's Account 1878*, ed. Annie Armour (The University of the South, 2011).

³⁵ Joseph Augustine Kelly, “The Diary of Joseph Augustine Kelly.”

³⁶ Henry Sieck, “The Diary of Reverend Henry Sieck,” trans. Nora Huber Riedel (1878), Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, Memphis Room.

³⁷ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*. Capers presents the desperate pleas for aid from the Department of Sanitation, which were eventually realized as Memphis became one of the first cities in the Southern states with a proper sewage system.

and thankful persons.”³⁸ With this quotation, Keating prepares his account as a sort of thanksgiving for the survival of those were spared from death. Aiming to secure financial aid for the rehabilitation of the city, Keating spares no detail in describing the horrors which befell Memphis, and he prefaces his book with a litany of “Heartfelt Thanks” which begins with a thanks to the then President of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes, followed by a thanks to the Governor of the State of Tennessee³⁹. Interestingly, Keating concludes his list with a twenty-third ‘thanks’ dedicated to the “martyred dead” of Memphis, whom he says shall “go down in the annals of our city, honored, revered, and blessed.”⁴⁰ Keating wishes to present all the dead as martyrs for the city of Memphis. The image he presents also serves as a case for aid to the city from the federal government to jumpstart sanitary reform. He speculates on the potential causes of yellow fever and presents a list of factors considered to be favorable to the propagation of the “yellow fever germ.”⁴¹ He describes the sanitary conditions of the city, which he believes contributed to the propagation of the fever. No sewage system existed, and the city merely depended on the rain to take the contents of the privies into the river, which instead drifted into the Happy Hollow neighborhood and collected in large pools. His dramatization of the stench and filthiness of Memphis paints the city as a desperate case for federal funding.

Keating presents himself as an unbiased historian, but he is first and foremost an experienced newspaperman who chooses material that will best reach his intended

³⁸ John McLeod Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever. :The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, in Memphis, Tenn.*. (Memphis, Tenn., 1879), pg i .

³⁹ Keating. v

⁴⁰ Keating. vi

⁴¹ Keating. 25

audience. Keating claims that his account is objective in that “All cause of jealousy, complaint, or offence has been studiously avoided, while nothing has been omitted that was deemed essential to the truth of history”⁴². Although the city and later historians would seem to agree (Keating’s *A History of the Yellow Fever* is referenced most in the public memory of the city and in the works of historians such as Gerald Capers,⁴³ John Ellis,⁴⁴ and Khaled Bloom.⁴⁵), more recent scholarship has called into question Keating’s comprehensive impartiality. Wells, in *The Suffering South: 1878 Yellow Fever Narratives and Post-Reconstruction Southern Identity*, critiques the reliance of historians only on Keating on the grounds that he fails to provide a complete picture of the city, neglecting to write about the African American experience or the female experience. “For the most part,” she writes, “the heroes selected for veneration were upper and middle-class white Southern men of the relief and medical organizations.”⁴⁶ While Keating intends to write a truthful account of history, the incidents which he includes and does not include reveal his intent to memorialize certain figures that align well with his own presentation of the city.

In the mass exodus from Memphis following the initial outbreak of the fever, religious figures, along with charitable organizations such as the Howards, stood among the few individuals who voluntarily remained. Keating estimates that the city of Memphis

⁴² Keating. Viii

⁴³ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

⁴⁴ Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley’s Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878*.

⁴⁵ John H. Ellis, “Disease and the Destiny of a City: The 1878 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Memphis,” *West Tennessee Historical Society Paper* 28 (1974): 75–89.

⁴⁶ Wells, “The Suffering South: 1878 Yellow Fever Narratives and Post-Reconstruction Southern Identity.” 276

initially bore a population of 40,000 persons which, following the exodus, was reduced to 10,000 inhabitants in the autumn of 1878—and of these, 7,000 were afflicted with the fever⁴⁷. This estimate is somewhat uniform across contemporary accounts such as Gerald Capers and Khaled Bloom's *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878*.⁴⁸ Gerald Capers' *The Biography of a River Town: Memphis, Its Heroic Age*, considered by many to be the seminal account of Memphis history, describes Memphis as a burgeoning metropolis in the 1860s and 1870s that attracted a variety of immigrants. However, Capers blames the yellow fever epidemics for both the loss of the city's ethnic diversity and the loss of its economic prominence. Capers' analysis includes public health data as well as reported reactions to immigration in the late 19th century⁴⁹. The city later imposed a strict quarantine, and surrounding cities refused any Memphians or animals from Memphis to gain entry⁵⁰. Those who remained were colorful individuals who had desperate reasons to stay. Keating enjoys describing the stories of those desperate people who remained such as Annie Cook who, he reports, kept a "noted demi-monde" but discharged all her ladies at the onset of yellow fever in order to fill her elegant house with patients.⁵¹ The former woman of "ill-repute" comes to be memorialized by Keating as a great martyr and saint. "If there was any virtue in the faith of the woman who but touched the garment of the Divine Redeemer," Keating opines,

⁴⁷ Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*. 80

⁴⁸ Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878*.

⁴⁹ Capers, *The Biography of a River Town*.

⁵⁰ Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878*. Even animals or produce coming from Memphis was either burned or sent back to its source.

⁵¹ Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*. 150

“surely the sins of this woman would have forgiven her”.⁵² Annie Cook was a figure Keating was proud to extol as a woman transformed by the terrors of the fever.

However, some of the stories that Keating recounts are historically dubious, such as that of the St. Patrick’s Church sexton who claimed that a man encoffined and shrouded sat up during the funeral and angrily asked the priest “What are you doing?”⁵³. Keating’s history contains nearly fifty pages of such stories dramatizing the terror of the state of Memphis. In describing the desperate need for nurses, Keating declares that it “brought upon us the scum of the nation”, and he notes that the majority of nurses came to Memphis with the motive of “fatten[ing] their purses”⁵⁴ Keating dwells on these horrific stories, which become increasingly fantastic. He describes the misfortune of one patient by saying that it “took four [nurses] to kill her; the first one stole her clothing and ran away; the second got drunk and neglected her; the third took sick and died; and the fourth, getting drunk, fell over on her bed with a wine bottle held high in one hand, dancing like an Indian in her intoxication.”⁵⁵ With these stories, Keating both depicts Memphis as a place of terror and chaos and shows the abandonment of the Memphians to negligent caretakers.

Keating’s annals are filled with lengthy passages of dramatic deaths and surprising heroes, but they make only fleeting references to Catholic priests, clergy, and religious, a lacuna that Reverend Quinn was later keen to critique. But Keating does note

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. 130

⁵⁴ Ibid. 162

⁵⁵ Ibid. 163

the disparity in the number of clergymen who remained to serve from various denomination: there was one Presbyterian, one Baptist, and near thirty Catholic (of whom fifteen died). He writes the Protestant ministers “left their communities to die like dogs, without consolation or hope”⁵⁶ Despite the large number of deaths, none of the priests have a story told about them; they are merely listed with their church. In his description of the Catholic priests, Keating writes: “The Catholic priesthood, for zeal, for self-denial, and self-sacrifice stand unrivaled. The long roll of their dead attests to this fact and challenges the admiration of all men, be their faith and nationality what it may.”⁵⁷ Keating reluctantly defends the contribution of the Catholic clergy as an undeniable numerically significant contribution.

Keating highlights the contrast of Catholic and Protestant ministers in their differing responses to the epidemic. The vast number of Catholic clergy who remained did so to administer Extreme Unction to the sick and dying, a sacrament essential for preparing Catholics for death. However, this activity seemed folly to those who were not Catholic and even a hindrance to medical treatment. Keating expresses this confusion as he quotes the Rev. C.K. Marshall of Vicksburg:

He said—and the writer knows many influential and intelligent persons who agree with him—that ‘were it not for the doctrine of extreme unction, deemed so essential by Catholics, the presence of clergymen and Sisters of Charity in the sickroom, I would hardly permit....Can five minutes of religious services over a poor fellow covered with blisters, chocked with black vomit, and barely able to tell his nurse what he wants, probably not that, renovate a moral nature steeped in unbelief and sin for fifty years,

⁵⁶ Ibid. 124

⁵⁷ Keating. 188

blanch the blackness of a purely wicked life to snowy whiteness, and fit for angelic associates?’⁵⁸

Keating continues the Reverend’s testimony: “The ignorance of the dark ages still hangs in gloomy folds around us.”⁵⁹ For Marshall, a Protestant clergyman, the sacramental work of the priests had little spiritual efficacy, hindered the work of medical providers, and possibly hastened the death of the sick. Keating reinforces the Reverend’s opinion by the statement that “many influential and intelligent persons agree with him”.⁶⁰ The doctrine of Extreme Unction stands as a significant point of misunderstanding between Protestant and Catholic communities as Protestant ministers largely considered their role in the epidemic as expendable, but Catholic priests believed themselves to be bound by duty to administer sacraments as channels of invisible grace to the dying. In his popular apologetics book, *Faith of our Fathers*, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore writes:⁶¹

Extreme Unction is a Sacrament in which the sick, by being anointed with holy oil, and by the prayers of the priests receive spiritual succor, and even corporeal strength when it is conducive to their salvation... a spiritual medicine which diminishes the terrors of death, comforts the dying Christian, fortifies the soul in its final struggle, and purifies it for its passage from time to eternity, should be gratefully and eagerly availed of, especially when prescribed by an inspired Physician.⁶²

While Catholic priests were bound by duty, especially in a time of great mortality, to remain and administer the sacraments, other Christian leaders did not think that a minister

⁵⁸ Keating. 125

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*. 237. In an appendix to *Heroes and Heroines*, Quinn notes *Faith of our Fathers* as an essential work the missionary priest ought to carry in his portmanteau. “a number of catechisms, polemic tracts, and a sufficient number of controversial works, such as the Faith of our Fathers.”

⁶² James Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 12th. (London, England: John Murphy & Co, 1879).

held any significant role in ameliorating suffering, a belief that contributed to the mass exodus of clergymen from Memphis. The diary of Lutheran pastor Rev. Henry Sieck provides an instance of this controversial question: whether a pastor ought to remain or flee. An exchange between Rev. Sieck and his acquaintances was recorded in his diary as follows:

Dr. Boecher was also at the house and argued the contrary--that preachers and doctors should NOT leave at this time. To which Dr. Hewing replied: "I am leaving tonight with my family, to save them, and Mr. Sieck should do this same. Why should he stay? He can't do anything!" Indignantly Dr. Boecher retorted: "Why, he can talk to the sick and give them consolation." Dr. Hewing's reply was: "Oh sure, consolation! Give a man consolation while he is already unconscious with yellow fever! Mr. Sieck, you HAVE to go!"⁶³

Rev. Sieck eventually left Memphis with his wife traveling across the Mississippi River to Arkansas, and he remained in Arkansas for the remainder of the epidemics. Rev. Sieck serves as one example of the reaction that was common among the Protestant clergymen during the yellow fever epidemic. No binding spiritual duty existed for most Protestant pastors, and thus, many fled for their own safety and for that of their family. Keating comments on the persistence of the Catholic clergy in remaining, stating:

This great mortality among priests is not to be wondered at, when it is taken into consideration that every dying Catholic needs his priest; that the priest has to sit and kneel beside the bed of the plague-stricken patient, and, whilst hearing the confession of years of sin, to lean over the patient, inhaling his poisonous breath; and he has very often to draw out, from beside his person, the hands that are stiffing in death, in order to anoint them with the holy oils of the dying. Thus, humanly speaking, it was almost impossible for a priest on duty here to have escaped the plague.⁶⁴

⁶³ Henry Sieck, "The Diary of Reverend Henry Sieck" (1878), Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, Memphis Room.

⁶⁴ Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*. 396

The administration of the sacrament of Extreme Unction often placed priests in a perilous position, as the ritual involves anointing with holy oil the eyes, ears, mouth, hand, and feet with holy oil and is often prefaced by a last confession.⁶⁵ Although yellow fever spreads through a mosquito vector and not person-to-person contact, this mode of transmission was not known at the time, and so every person drawing close to a yellow fever patient believed he was risking his life. The actions of the Catholic priests in remaining and faithfully attending to the sick reveal their priority to aid the spiritual health of others over their own physical health.

While Keating describes and praises the contribution of the Catholic priests in the epidemic, he refrains from memorializing or exalting any individual figures and instead presents their actions as mere obedience to duty and therefore not as admirable. This sentiment aligns with the popular contention that Catholics, due to their supposed blind obedience to the pope, were un-American and opposed to liberty. (One of the cartoons of Thomas Nast, whom we mentioned earlier, depicts a Catholic priest leashed to the pope, with Uncle Sam offering to cut the chain⁶⁶). The accounts of Keating and Rev. Sieck reveal a distinction between a Protestant pastor and a Catholic priest rooted in the obligation of the priest to physically provide sacraments; thus, the priest, even if he could offer no consoling words to those certainly bound to die, could bring the sacraments as real channels of invisible grace.

⁶⁵ “Sancta Missa - Rituale Romanum (Roman Ritual) - Rite for Anointing of the Sick,” accessed March 26, 2020, <https://sanctamissa.org/en/resources/books-1962/rituale-romanum/33-the-sacrament-of-the-anointing-of-the-sick-rite.html>.

⁶⁶ John Bonner et al., *Harper's Weekly [Electronic Resource]: Journal of Civilization*. (Norfolk, Va.: HarpWeek, LLC, 1997). See Figure 3

Revered Quinn, an Irish immigrant and secular Catholic priest, wrote *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis* in 1887 as a response to what he saw as misrepresentations in Keating's *History of the Yellow Fever*. Like Keating, Quinn sets up his narrative as an impartial objective account of the fever, but he wrote for a largely Catholic audience in order to inspire them with stories of heroism depicting the obstacles faced by Catholic ministers of the sick. Quinn mirrors the structure of Keating's *History of the Yellow Fever* as he begins by describing a colorful picture of pre-epidemic Memphis in its economic prosperity and its poor sanitation infrastructure. To illustrate the deplorable sanitary conditions of Memphis, he recounts a dramatic story of a man going to deliver cotton to a warehouse downtown, but on the unpaved dirt roads in the city, his entire carriage sank into the mud and was only found a week later⁶⁷. The organization of Quinn's book suggests that he intended to provide an alternative to Keating's account for the Catholic community and to remember important figures that were forgotten by Keating, but he also draws liberally from Keating's general history of the yellow fever. Quinn testifies to his attempt to write honestly and lucidly:

I declare I have had no other motive save that of recording the unvarnished truth. As I have never held pretensions to extraordinary zeal in the exercise of my "calling", I simply state that I only did my duty for the time, and that were any other Priest of the diocese in my place, he would have done as well—perhaps a great deal better .As I have insinuated, the facts I relate are known to at least fifteen thousand people in Memphis and throughout the state of Tennessee⁶⁸

Quinn repeatedly stresses the large number of Catholic clergy who contributed to and died in the yellow fever aid efforts. At the start of his monograph, he records the

⁶⁷ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*. 24.

⁶⁸ Quinn. 219

names of the Catholic religious who succumbed to yellow fever while serving in Memphis during the epidemics. He lists twenty-four Catholic priests who died and names fifteen Catholic nuns who died along with thirty-five other sisters whose names he does not provide. Quinn describes how in the fever of 1873 he anointed one hundred sick people a day as the boarding houses on Front and Market street were often crammed full of people. He says that due to time, he had to anoint ten persons in one room with a single repetition of the ritual form⁶⁹. Quinn estimates that at the height of the fever in September of 1878, the anointing of the sick came down to three priests (Father Kelly, Father Aloysius, and Father Walsh), as all the other priests had died or were stricken with the fever. Quinn describes how the remaining priests would alternate between serving during the day and during the night, visiting nearly three hundred people a day. Quinn notes: “After this very judicious division of day and night work, I think New England clergymen need not complain of being overburdened with sick ‘calls’”⁷⁰ Quinn dramatically describes large numbers of sick, poor, immigrants remaining in The Pinch and Happy Hollow neighborhoods were faithfully attended to by the remaining priests. Quinn’s account further reveals the centrality of Extreme Unction to the persistence of the priests in staying to serve.

Quinn argues that the Catholic community was significantly harmed by the fever, and to buttress his position he locates the primary regions in the fever’s grip as North Memphis, that is, the Pinch District. Quinn draws out the ways in which the city of Memphis treated the Catholic community unjustly during the yellow fever epidemics,

⁶⁹ Quinn.

⁷⁰ Quinn. 218

claiming that a plot of forty acres purchased by the bishop for a Catholic cemetery in 1866 for \$40,000 would only be valued at \$4,000⁷¹. Although he does not provide any sources for his land value estimates, he claims the unpaid portion of the land was still demanded of the diocese after the ravages of the fever. When the diocese was unable to procure the money, he states that a “rude fence” was raised across the property that had been used to bury many of the “martyr priests” who died during the yellow fever⁷². Quinn laments this “desecration” of their graves as another wrong suffered by Catholics.

The bulk of Quinn’s book features the tales of individual priests in the terrifying time of the fever, and through these stories he aims to remedy the deficits of Keating’s account and provide a rousing story of heroism for the Catholic community. Rev. Quinn quotes from Cicero’s *De Officiis* exalting the priests as models to be emulated. “To each of those clergymen who died in the full vigor of youth and manhood we may aptly apply the words of Cicero: ‘Nemo parum diu vixit, qui virtutis perfectae perfecto functus est munere’”⁷³ Quinn proudly recounts the story of Father Walsh, who returned to Memphis from a visit to his family in Ireland upon hearing of the resurgence of the fever. He describes in detail Fr. Walsh’s aid camp outside the city, “Camp Father Matthew”, organized by strict rules and a no alcohol policy, which provided a refuge from the city for about 400 persons, out of which only 10 died⁷⁴. Father William Walsh, the assistant priest at St. Patrick’s church, the very Sunday after the first death, established Camp

⁷¹ Quinn. 8

⁷² Quinn. 8

⁷³ Quinn. 58 “No one has lived too short a life who has fully discharged their duties with a perfect character.” Trans. Melinda Nielsen

⁷⁴ Quinn. 141

Father Matthew as a refugee camp outside the city. Father Walsh solicited aid from the various charitable societies including the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America and the Irish Benevolent Union. The 200 acres on which the camp was established had a fresh spring running through it. The camp was guarded to prevent anyone from leaving or coming by five armed guards. A small chapel was erected on the grounds from which Father Walsh said Mass every morning before leaving to attend sick calls in the city, and a rosary and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament were offered every evening after Father Walsh had returned. The camp functioned as a makeshift town with a commissary, a kitchen, a dining hall, a schoolhouse (run by the Josephite sisters), and the sleeping tents arranged in streets.⁷⁵ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Paper* also remembers Camp Father Matthew in an etching that depicts the closing of the camp on October 31 along with an etching of the Mass of Thanksgiving outside the little chapel.⁷⁶ Quinn highlights Camp Father Matthew as a successful and organized effort of Father Walsh to organize and protect his flock for which he received aid and admiration from across the country. The organization of the camp points to the organization of the Catholic community as an enclosed community, defined by a common faith and marked by shared daily rituals.

Quinn fills many pages with long anecdotes about the priests who stayed, anxious that they are remembered. To further emphasize the heroism of those who stayed, Quinn depicts Memphis as a city of death. He notes that on a single day, he attended twenty-one sick calls at a single boarding house in the Pinch District.⁷⁷ So many people died in the

⁷⁵ Quinn. 144

⁷⁶ Frank Leslie. See Figure 9.

⁷⁷ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*. 66

area that their deaths came to be anticipated. One lady, while in Mass, heard her name accidentally prayed for among the list of the dead.⁷⁸ Incidents such as these, which only fueled the general sense of panic, vividly illustrate the atmosphere of the time.

A great part of Quinn's account highlights the obstacles faced by Catholics, priests and lay people in an epidemic surrounded by people who misunderstood and were sometimes hostile to their 'foreign' rituals. Quinn describes the difficulties of visiting the dying at Waltham Infirmary writing that "The nurse (generally a non-Catholic) had no idea of what was necessary for the decent administration of the last Sacraments."⁷⁹ Quinn says the nurses often refused to leave the room while the priest listened to the patient's last confession, a policy that required the priest to draw close while the sickly, dying penitent attempted to whisper in his ear. The Last Rites that the Catholic priests dutifully administered during the epidemics included a final confession, Viaticum (last Eucharist), and Extreme Unction. Quinn describes some of the difficulties faced by priests such as he attempting to administer these rites to the mortally sick. While walking down Front Street, a man came up to him pleading on behalf of his wife, begging him to come inside the house, saying that "Father Cary had refused to give her the Sacrament as she was continually retching." The husband assured Father Quinn ensured that the lady could cease vomiting for a period of time, and so he gave her the desired Viaticum.⁸⁰ Black vomit often occurred in the final stage of the sickness creating a difficult situation for

⁷⁸ Ibid. 197.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 87 The Rite of Extreme Unction required on the part of the recipient, if able, a crucifix, a vial of holy water, candles, and a small slice of lemon prepared for the priest to clean his hands following the anointing.

⁸⁰ Quinn. 89

Catholics desiring to receive the Viaticum before death. Quinn says those instances in which the patient vomited following reception of the Eucharist were “very embarrassing, because the Priest had to collect the half dissolved particles from the lifeless tongue or basin in which they were deposited, and put them into a separate Pix, to prevent infection. Some Priests consumed these particles during Mass the following morning.”⁸¹ In a dramatic way, this behavior of the priests, especially while administering the sacrament of Extreme Unction, reveals the privileging of the spiritual health of their flock over their own physical health.

While some newspapers shamed the Protestant ministers for fleeing the city, Quinn uses this point not to point out the cowardice of non-Catholic ministers but to highlight a distinction in the requirements of office between Protestant pastors and Catholic priests.⁸²

What more could those ministers do in case they remained? They had no necessary Sacraments they could administer at the hour of death. They could only visit or nurse the sick. But is a minister, with or without a wife and family, obliged to risk human life for the sake of merely vesting or nursing a minister of his flock? The city supplied plenty of nurses. Before or after an epidemic, a Protestant minister is not bound ex-officio, to visit all his patients, or even to give all members funeral rites. I deny, according to Protestant tenets, that a soul is endangered by their non-fulfillment. A minister, then, who neglects to visit a sick member, or fails to preform “funeral rites”, is not to be regarded as letting him “die like a dog.” But a Priest has no plea, like a Minister, to abandon his flock. Each member regards him as a spiritual Father. His presence is required to regenerate in Baptism, forgive him his sins, nourish him during life, and when death comes, to be there, to hand him over to his Creator. If the reception of the Sacraments is necessary during life, Catholic faith teaches they are indispensable (extremely necessary) at the hour of death. The Minister can say at any time “I can do no more for this member of my flock.” The

⁸¹ Ibid. 89.

⁸² Keating, *A History of the Yellow Fever*. 124 “left their communities to die like dogs, without consolation or hope”

Priest can never say this while there is a living breath in the good or the ungodly.⁸³

This passage illuminates the great disparity, previously noted by Keating, in response between the Catholic priests and Protestant ministers. The Catholic priest has a duty deriving from the office of priesthood itself to administer the Last Rites of confession, Holy Communion, and Extreme Unction to the dying person. This passage further points to the indispensability of the person of the priest to provide Sacraments in a time of great suffering and physical illness. While Quinn's words point to the supreme importance of spiritual health, the spiritual medicine these priests aimed to apply was one which required a physical presence and proximity.

Several of Quinn's stories reveal a sort of religious battle underway during the epidemic. Quinn recounts an incident in which two Irish orphans had been sent to live out in the country with distant relatives who were Protestant. Quinn tried to visit the children and bring them under the care of the Catholic sisters but failed when the farmer threatened him, saying that "any son of an Irishman that would try to take those children would first receive the contents of a murderous shot-gun."⁸⁴ Another time, Quinn came into a squabble with an Episcopal minister over the funeral and burial rights of a man who had received Extreme Unction from Quinn but who had attended an Episcopal Church. After a back and forth Quinn recalls:

He answered me by a very insulting remark, after which I thrust him down the front door steps and recalled my first promise allowing his remains to

⁸³ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*. 188-189

⁸⁴ Quinn. 70

be carried to Elmwood. Cursing me, he ran immediate for the Chief of Police office. I, also, dispatched an emissary to the Chief of Police.”⁸⁵

The act of burying the dead, while not a Sacrament, was vital to priests as a corporal work of mercy and because of the importance of burying a person in blessed or hallowed ground. The central cemetery in Memphis, Elmwood, was established in 1852 and built in the popular, Victorian style of rural cemeteries, a distance from the city and laid out like a garden with an array of beautiful trees and wide walkways.⁸⁶ In contrast, the Catholic cemetery, Calvary, was little more than a field, but it had been blessed by a Catholic priest. Quinn here presents the work of the priests as a literal battle for souls, living and dead.

Keating, Quinn, and several newspapers emphasize that the Catholic priest is required by duty to stay with the sick (even in a time of great death such as the yellow fever), but the priests were also known to go beyond the demands of their office in administering the Sacraments; moreover these religious men often took up the more general task of helping the dying order their affairs . Father Quinn recounts visiting the house of two Irish girls from his parish. He came to give Last Rites to the older sister, and while he was there, he found the younger one also coming down with the fever. The older sister asked Fr. Quinn to record her last testament: money set aside for Masses to be said for the soul of herself and her sister, her chain and locket to be given to one of her friends and a gold ring given to another friend with the instructions, “Tell her to wear it and pray for me.” She then asked the Father to place her rosary in her hands and her prayer book at

⁸⁵ Quinn. 112

⁸⁶ “History,” accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.elmwoodcemetery.org/history>.

the head of her coffin⁸⁷. The priestly office placed these men in close proximity to the dying, creating an occasion for them to step in where all other members of the community had failed. While attending to the spiritual needs of their sick flock, the priests also attended to their physical, human needs, and assumed basic paternal duties.

The personal diary and letters of the Dominican Father Joseph Augustine Kelly are a valuable and, until now, underutilized witness of one priest's heroic actions.⁸⁸ As the pastor of St. Peter Church (located on Adams Avenue near the epicenter of the epidemics), Father Kelly took on with zeal an array of pastoral and administrative roles. Every priest alongside Fr. Kelly at St. Peter's parish fell to the fever, and in the face of this great mortality, many Dominican priests of his province volunteered to come to the site of the plague and serve the sick and dying Memphians. The *Freeman's Journal* recounts the devotion of priests coming to serve Memphis.

It was hoped that the Dominican Order would not sustain any more losses, as two of its priests had lately died of the fever—but God's holy will be done. Rev. P. J. Scannell, O.S.D., hearing that the two priests had died and that Father Kelly O.S.D., needed assistance, nobly volunteered to go to Memphis to minister to the dying. It is scarcely two weeks since he left Louisville, Ky., in the time of life (only 30 years old), and to-day he is wearing the crown of martyrdom.⁸⁹

A total of seven Dominican priests would perish in the epidemics.

Father Kelly had served in Memphis during the less fatal epidemic of 1873, and he stayed to serve during the 1878 epidemic. As someone who survived the epidemics in the past, and due to his past positions as President of St. Joseph's college, Provincial of

⁸⁷ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*.

⁸⁸ Joseph Augustine Kelly, "The Diary of Joseph Augustine Kelly."

⁸⁹ "The Death-Roll in Memphis, Tennessee," *New York Freeman's Journal*, September 7, 1878, Providence College Dominican Archive.

the Dominican Order, and Diocesan administrator Fr. Kelly assumed a position of authority in the city. He sent many letters to the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Catholic Appeal*, and other newspapers throughout the United States asking for donations to "Poor Memphis".⁹⁰ Fr. Kelly then organized these donations writing replies and publishing accounts to various newspapers. One handwritten note from Warsaw to Father Kelly states: "Wath is to mader with Father Walsh, Brigit's Church I sent the Boll down and git no answer. Please gif me a lille answer. Respectfully yours, Caspar Hartmann."⁹¹(Figure 4). By the time this letter had arrived in Memphis, Father Walsh had died. It appears that upon the death of other priests in the city, some bills were merely forwarded to Fr. Kelly as a responsible administrator and one of the last able-bodied priests alive.

Father Kelly assumed care of the orphans during the perilous time. Upon the declaration of the epidemic in 1878, Fr. Kelly immediately traveled down the street to St. Peter's orphanage to account for the orphans. The sisters of St. Dominic, originally in Memphis to teach at the girl's school, St. Agnes, helped care for the sick and orphans. Two sisters went about the streets daily to gather up the orphans whose parents were taken by the yellow fever. Widely known under the title of "the father of the Orphans of Memphis", Kelly had purchased the twenty-three acres of land for the Saint Peter's orphanage, and continually visited and cared for the orphans. Numerous telegrams account for Father Kelly's careful attention to the orphans. He took charge of the everyday needs of the orphanage, making appeals to newspapers across the country to fund the supplies needed for the children. At the onset of the 1878 yellow fever epidemic,

⁹⁰ "Poor Memphis," September 21, 1878, Providence College Dominican Archive.

⁹¹ Caspar Hartmann, "Caspar Hartmann Letter," June 13, 1879, Providence College Dominican Archive.

Father Kelly sent the orphans to safety in Nashville under the care of Bishop Feehan. A telegram from the Bishop to Fr. Kelly concerning the orphans reads: “ Let them bring no luggage but the clothing they wear, we will provide everything.”⁹² Due to Fr. Kelly’s efforts to preserve the orphans, only one out of ninety-six orphans died during the yellow fever.

The letters of Fr. Kelly, preserved at the Providence College Dominican archives, were often published in the *Freeman’s Journal*. One letter, from September 6, 1878, records what it calls “a touching correspondence” from one of Fr. Kelly’s telegram exchanges with the Mother Superior in Columbus, Ohio. It reads:

September 6th 1878: Dear Mother: We are of no service here any longer. Can you receive us into your community and thus secure us from death: Tonight our Superioress and two others are dying. May we come? Telegraph your reply to Father Kelly

Sept. 9th: Father Kelly—Send Sisters at our expense to Sister Anthony, in Cincinnati, for Twenty days. Sister Mary Agnes

Sept 11: It is too late now. We have no sisters to send. Rev. J.A. Kelly⁹³

Father Kelly visited the Dominican sisters at St. Agnes and La Salette, saying Mass for them, and helping to manage the business affairs of the sisters. Although priestly duty obliged Fr. Kelly to remain in Memphis, his attention to administrative matters and to the orphans reveals a pastoral attendance to the most basic needs of his parishioners.

While Kelly kept a detailed diary of his life, during the periods of the epidemics, his words were sparse, as his days were filled with sick calls and his nights filled with writing telegrams requesting aid for the poor Memphians. The diary reveals more of his

⁹² Patrick Feehan, “Nashville,” August 1878, Providence College Dominican Archive.

⁹³ “A Touching Correspondence,” *New York Freeman’s Journal*, September 15, 1878.

character than specific deeds he undertook. At the end of 1878 Fr. Kelly remembers the year by writing:

The end of the year draws near. It has been an eventful one. We had the yellow fever scourge in the worst shape ever known here. I buried four priests from St. Peter's and as in 1873 was again left to do the work of half a dozen. I have been spared; why I know not; I hope it is for some wise and good purpose.⁹⁴

Kelly survived these epidemics and continued to serve as a leader in Catholic Church in Tennessee.

The Dominican sister, Mother Walsh also testified to the heroic work of Fr. Kelly:

In the midst of sickness and death Very Rev. Father Kelly was left alone at St. Peter's. The fell disease had carried off one after another all his assistants. In the prime of life Fathers Cary, Sheehy and O'Brien, exposing themselves to all dangers and working with the heroism of martyrs, yielded up their lives for love of their Divine Master. Dozens of Dominican Fathers offered themselves to fill the places of those who had fought the good fight. Father Kelly begged his superiors saying "it is almost certain death for a stranger to come into this stricken city. I will work while I am able to stand. When I fall, let some one come to take my place."⁹⁵ Among those priests who stayed, Fr. Kelly was remembered as a leader as a persistent and devoted father to his flock.

⁹⁴ Joseph Augustine Kelly, "The Diary of Joseph Augustine Kelly."

⁹⁵ Mother Frances Walsh, O.P., "A Short Sketch of the Growth and Development of Saint Cecilia Congregation" (Nashville, n.p 2001).

CHAPTER TWO

The Sisters

The Catholic priests remained in great numbers, bound by duty to administer the necessary Sacraments to the many dying Catholics, but duty alone does not account for the response of the Catholic religious sisters, who in numbers upwards of forty, came freely to serve the sick.⁹⁶ Many of them had no specialized skills to contribute as they came from teaching orders, yet these sisters remained in the city or migrated to it in order to do whatever they could to help the afflicted. On a cover of Frank Leslie's *Illustrated News*, a Sister of Charity brings food and medicine to a dying patient, illustrating one of the key ways that the women religious served (Figure 5).

Fr. Quinn records several stories about nuns and sisters, including “the fever-proof” little band of St. Joseph Heroines . The sisters had returned to their convent in St. Louis after a failed attempt to start a school in Memphis (due to the economic recession in the South at the time, they could not attract a sufficient number of students). When they heard of the epidemic, six of them immediately volunteered to return to Memphis.

Quinn writes:

I naturally supposed there would be considerable reluctance on the part of those who were to be sent to Memphis—then regarded everywhere as a certain grave-depot. Would you believe? Double the number of requisites cheerfully volunteered... Few ladies of the world could go to a ball or

⁹⁶ Leo Kalmer O.F.M, *Stronger Than Death: Heroic Sacrifices of Catholic Preists and Religious during the Yellow Fever Epidemics at Memphis in 1873, 1878, 1879* (Quincy College, Quincy, Illinois: n.p., 1929).

marriage feast with more breathless enthusiasm than these saintly creatures went to face death.⁹⁷

In this passage, Quinn venerates these women for their supernatural charity and willingness to totally give their lives away.

Quinn responds to and critiques certain aspects of the narrative as presented by Keating and the city. He comically contrasts the merit of the nurse “Mattie”, who was remembered as a great hero for the city with a large public memorial in Elmwood cemetery (Figure 6), with the unsung feats of Catholic women religious. Quinn states that Mattie

was immortalized –idolized—by the citizens of Memphis for nursing about five sick families... There was then many a Catholic Nun who concealed under a black veil as pretty a face as ever Miss Steveson sponged or powdered, who nursed not merely five, but more than one hundred and five families, and yet there is not as much as a cedar plank to mark her “remains”.⁹⁸

Quinn notes how the religious sisters who came from across the country to serve received little or no recognition from the citizens of Memphis, but he qualifies this in saying that the religious will receive their eternal reward. He goes on to encourage Memphis Catholics to remember and revere the martyrs of the yellow fever, conceding that although the city may not recognize the heroic acts of the religious, the Catholics of Memphis surely must show them this respect.

The publication of Leo Kalmer, *Stronger Than Death*, published in 1929, aims to supplement the accounts of Keating and Quinn by systematically recounting each of the religious orders who served in the fever. Kalmer aims to make the effusive praise and

⁹⁷ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*. 182-183

⁹⁸ Quinn. 209 Quinn misspells her name, it should be ‘Stephenson’.

dramatic stories of Fr. Quinn more credible by reviewing more records to qualify and correct the names and numbers of those Catholic religious who stayed and died.⁹⁹ Kalmer shares the aim of Quinn to inspire readers with the great acts of charity exhibited, but he bolsters the quality of his work through diligent footnotes citing his sources from records of the Dominicans' St. Agnes Academy, the Franciscan sisters of St. Anthony's Hospital, and personal interviews with surviving members from the Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet (St. Louis) and the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate (Joliet, IL). Kalmer finds Quinn's *Heroes and Heroines* to be lacking in that he fails to describe the works of the specific religious communities and instead relates anecdotes about specific people¹⁰⁰. His book was published in a serial format for the *Franciscan Herald* in 1928 and he thus aims to make the story of the yellow fever better known in the Catholic community.

Kalmer's *Stronger Than Death* lists the names of the various religious communities who served in the epidemics of 1878 as a way to provide a stronger testament to the Catholic presence during the fever. He totals the deaths of these religious as eight 'secular' or diocesan priests, eight Dominican priests, six Franciscan friars, and at least twenty-three religious sisters. Kalmer names the religious orders as follows. The Sisters of St. Mary of the third order of St. Francis sent eight nuns from their house in St. Louis, four of whom died. The Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate had six nuns teaching at St. Mary's and St. Bridget's schools, two of whom died. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet sent six nuns from St. Louis, and somewhat miraculously, none of

⁹⁹ Leo Kalmer O.F.M, *Stronger Than Death: Heroic Sacrifices of Catholic Preists and Religious during the Yellow Fever Epidemics at Memphis in 1873, 1878, 1879.*

¹⁰⁰ Leo Kalmer O.F.M.

these sisters died. The Sisters of St. Francis, Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, sent four nuns from St. Louis. The Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg sent an unknown number. The Good Shepherd nuns had a convent in Memphis since 1875; during the epidemics, one nun, mother Alphonsa died. The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia sent two, one of whom died. The Dominican Sisters of St. Agnes in Memphis (originally from St. Catherine in KY) had at least thirteen sisters who died. The Franciscan Fathers of St. Mary's Church in Memphis had four men die in the fever of 1878 and two priests die in the other smaller epidemics. The Christain Brothers of Memphis served but none died in the epidemics. Many of those religious who died came voluntarily from other cities¹⁰¹. The accounts of Keating and Quinn focus on priests and their perception, but Kalmer also details the actions of the religious sisters who, although they were not obliged to do so, volunteered to come to Memphis or stayed when given the option to leave. To give but one example, Rev. Mother Agatha, the superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph, wrote at once to Memphis, telling the three sisters that if they feared the fever, they might leave Memphis and come to St Louis. All replied that they had no fear and remained in the stricken city.¹⁰² Among other things, Kalmer's history points to a more significant Catholic presence in the city than hitherto acknowledged as well as the significant number of Catholic women religious.

Nearly all these sisters were from teaching, not nursing orders, yet when their schools closed in the wake of the epidemic, these sisters went about the city providing food, money, medicines and comfort to the sick and collecting off the streets the children

¹⁰¹ Leo Kalmer O.F.M.

¹⁰² Ibid 22

who had been orphaned.¹⁰³ For example, La Salette, a school of the Dominican sisters, was converted into a hospital during the epidemics.¹⁰⁴ Kalmer emphasizes especially the works of the religious sisters as done out of mere charity.

Mother Frances Walsh O.P., the foundress of the St. Cecilia Dominicans in Nashville, chronicles the experience of two sisters from Nashville who volunteered to serve in Memphis. In 1873 Nashville suffered from an outbreak of cholera, and several of the sisters left the bounds of the convent to serve the sick together with The Robinson Society, “their only desire being to alleviate the suffering that was to be seen everywhere around them.”¹⁰⁵ Upon hearing of the Memphis yellow fever epidemic, Sister Mary Joseph immediately requested permission to go there. Sister Mary Joseph and Sister Frances took the train to Memphis and served with the Dominican sisters at La Salette by bringing food and medicines to those in need. Sister Mary Joseph came down with the yellow fever and died in Memphis. Mother Frances Walsh recalls her final days:

The scourge did its fatal work and on the ninth day of her illness she passed to the spouse of her soul, to Him whom she had chosen in early youth and served so faithfully to the end. Her perfect life as a religious and her sacrifices on behalf of Christ’s dear ones justifies the hope that her place among the Blessed is high up among the virgins who follow the Lamb.¹⁰⁶

Serving the sick and orphans brought Sr. Mary Joseph to an early, unnecessary, and painful death, with Mother Frances expressing the hope that her earthly sacrifices will

¹⁰³ Leo Kalmer O.F.M.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Mother Frances Walsh, O.P., “A Short Sketch of the Growth and Development of Saint Cecilia Congregation.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

merit an eternal reward. Sister Frances, on the other hand, returned to Nashville only to be “shunned as a Leper” and quarantined for fourteen days after returning from a plague-ridden city. The Sisters, in a similar situation to the priests, without a family to care for, freely gave their lives to care for those suffering in Memphis.

In a letter to Rev. Flanigan, Sister Mary Victorine writes on behalf of Sister Cecilia, who entered the Dominican community at fourteen and survived two yellow fever epidemics. Sister Cecilia, who served at the orphanage the Dominican sisters administered, testified that no orphans in their care died owing to “the daily rosary and procession to the shrine of our Blessed Mother”.¹⁰⁷ However, more than twenty Dominican sisters contracted the yellow fever during the epidemics as a result of their efforts to provide aid and comfort for the dying as well as food and shelter to those who were left destitute by the fever.

¹⁰⁷ Sister Mary Victorine, “St. Agnes Letter,” July 23, 1940, St. Cecilia Dominican Archive.

CHAPTER THREE

Public Memory

Numerically, Catholic religious represented a significant presence in the yellow fever epidemics. The exact number of Catholic sisters who served is not known, but seven communities of religious sisters served suffering at least fifty deaths.¹⁰⁸ At least three male religious communities served along with a great number of diocesan priests. The immigrant communities of Happy Hollow and The Pinch lived at the epicenter of the epidemic and suffered substantial losses to their communities.¹⁰⁹

The Episcopal Nuns and priests of the Community at St. Mary's have been, rightly, the subject of significant attention in historical and public memorialization. *The Yellow Fever Journal of Bishop Charles T. Quintard* highlights the heroic deeds of the four sisters and one priest who gave their lives in the fever. The book highlights touching letters between the Bishop in Sewanee and his flock in Memphis. Molly Crosby's popular and compelling narrative, *The American Plague*, places Sisters Constance and Thecla at a central position in the narrative of the fever. In describing the location of the infected district, Crosby says "Deep within these neighborhoods stood the Memphis Courthouse, Calvary Church, Grace Church, a synagogue, City Hall, and an elaborately expensive

¹⁰⁸ Quinn, *Heroes and Heroines of Memphis*.

¹⁰⁹ Kennedy, Sheridan Wright, "The 1878 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Memphis, Tennessee: An Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS) Approach - ProQuest," accessed November 3, 2019, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/902873253/?pq-origsite=primo>.

prison.”¹¹⁰ The passage fails to mention any of the three Catholic churches which stand in the infected area, and the church she focuses on in her description, St. Mary’s Cathedral, was not even in an infected district. The books notes that “Those of St. Mary’s [Episcopal Cathedral] have become known as the Martyrs of Memphis.”¹¹¹ Although Quinn, Kalmer, and others remember the Catholic priests and nuns as the martyrs of Memphis, Crosby records a different story, perhaps reflecting the disparity between the public, Memphian memory of the yellow fever and the distinct memory of the Catholic community. A fine memorial, recently updated in 2011, remembers the four nuns with a cruciform burial arrangement in a prominent place in Elmwood cemetery (Figure 7). Similarly, Charles Carroll Parsons, the priest of St. Mary’s Church, is remembered with a large cemetery cross (Figure 9). The Episcopal Church remembers the four nuns yearly with their feast day on September 9th in the Episcopal calendar. This prayer beautifully memorializes the sisters:

We give thee thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the Heroic witness of Constance and her companions, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and the dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death. Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ.¹¹²

Undoubtably, the letters of the sisters evidence true heroism, and the memorials to these sisters rightly remember their selfless acts of charity in a perilous time; but amid the veneration of these four sisters, the service of the Roman Catholic religious is often

¹¹⁰ Molly Caldwell Crosby, *The American Plague: The Untold Story of Yellow Fever, the Epidemic That Shaped Our History* (Penguin, 2007).

¹¹¹ Crosby. 83.

¹¹² “Constance and Her Companions,” St. Mary's Cathedral, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://www.stmarysmemphis.org/about/history/bishop-oteys-paten/>.

forgotten in contemporary memorialization of the epidemics. The Catholic religious are remembered in Calvary cemetery, a Catholic cemetery that lacks the funding or attention of the illustrious Elmwood cemetery. The religious sisters in Calvary cemetery do not have individual graves since the sisters were hastily buried in plots of land behind the convent or school. A simple cross, engraved with the sister's names, was erected on May 18, 1930 by the Knights of Columbus (Figure 8).

In contrast to the published diary of Bishop Charles T. Quintard (the Episcopal Bishop who coordinated aid from Sewanee during the fever), the diary of Fr. J.A. Kelly and his numerous letters remain unpublished and housed far from Memphis at the Providence College Archives in Providence, R.I. Fr. Kelly drew significant admiration for his levelheaded heroism and kind attention to the sick and orphaned in Memphis. Coverage of his Requiem Mass in *The Scimitar* testifies to the outpouring of devotion at his death. Nearly fifty orphans from St. Peter's asylum attended the service, placing flowers on his casket. The Mass was celebrated by Father Aloysius, a Franciscan, and was assisted by Father William Walsh, a Dominican, along with Father Xavier, a secular diocesan priest.¹¹³

The Rev. Victor O'Daniel, a Dominican and archivist of St. Joseph Province, was especially devoted to preserving the memory of Father Kelly, and in the early twentieth century he collected the remaining letters of Fr. Kelly along with memories written by those who knew him.¹¹⁴ Below is an excerpt from a letter by Joseph Dutton, who was

¹¹³ The Scimitar August 12, 1885

¹¹⁴ V. F. O'Daniel, *The Dominican Province of Saint Joseph, Historico-Biographical Studies* (New York City, N.Y., 1942), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89077019842>.

received into the Church by Fr. Kelly and went on to serve lepers on the island of Molokai with Saint Damien de Veuster. Dutton is writing to Sister Mary Pius in response to a newspaper clipping about Fr. Kelly's funeral. "Of all his noble traits and virtues, and they were many, which adorned the life of Father Kelly, the most beautiful one was his great love for God's helpless little ones."¹¹⁵ Sister Josephine Beck, a Dominican sister, writes a moving account of Kelly's life, describing his fervent zeal for souls:¹¹⁶

As a priest, his nobility of character was manifested in every duty of his high calling, reflecting the sentiment "a priest forever". His enduring patience, even under sever trials, was most remarkable. His punctuality in the smallest duty of a religious and a priest never flagged even to the day he was stricken with his last sickness.

Fr. Kelly garnered significant devotion in the years following his death, but this admiration was largely confined to the Catholic community. Fr. O'Daniel collected many letters of appreciation describing memories of Fr. Kelly, but these appreciations were collected and housed at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington D.C., away from the site of occurrence.

In Keating's history, the Catholic response is conspicuous by its absence; Quinn's *Heroes and Heroines* which provides a confessional account of the Catholic contribution amid the calamities, is an attempt to correct this lacuna. Yet as we saw in chapter one of this thesis, there remained a significant disconnect and a hostility between the two communities as the Catholic faithful attempted to forge or maintain a distinct identity.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Dutton, "Joseph Dutton Letter," August 13, 1914, Providence College Dominican Archive.

¹¹⁶ Sr. Josephine Beck, "Fr. Kelly Appreciations," June 4, 1918, Providence College Dominican Archive.

In one chapter of his book, Kalmer draws from records in the Dominican archives at St Peter's in order to correct a story told in several local newspapers of "a notorious apostate lecturer, Slattery" and his visits to Memphis for a lecture series. Slattery was a spokesperson for the American Protective Association, an anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish organization. Slattery gave lecture tours around the country speaking on the evils of the Catholic Church such as the tyrannical practices of Catholic nunneries. As the story goes, Mayor Williams, a non-Catholic gives Slattery a tour of Memphis, and upon passing the Catholic church, he tells Slattery:

those noble angels of God gave their lives for the people of Memphis. One of them, Sister Barbara of the Order of St. Joseph, rests there, who brought my daughter through the scourge. And—if any man ever dares to utter a word against any one of them, I shall feel in conscience bound to horse-whip him out of the city¹¹⁷.

The story continues with the Mayor escorting Slattery to the train station and out of town. Kalmer notes that the story would have been nice if it were true, but then he proceeds to document the numerous evidences of its falsehood. He cites that immediately when this story was published in the newspaper, Slattery published a response in an "anti-Catholic" newspaper denying it and recalling witnesses who had been present at his lecture, which was defended by armed guards. This episode reveals the hope of the Catholic community for a more prominent public recognition of the Catholic religious' acts of charity for the city amid the open hostility toward Catholics.

Although the Catholic community has sought greater public recognition of the heroism of their priests and religious sisters, the memory of these priests and sisters

¹¹⁷ Leo Kalmer O.F.M. 17

unfortunately remains confined to distinct Catholic groups. The Catholic community in contemporary Memphis represents only a small percentage of Christians in Memphis, but during the yellow fever epidemics, it occupied a much larger portion of the population; moreover the Catholics were among those primarily impacted due to the poverty of the immigrant population and the geographic spread of the infection. However, the Memphis created by the epidemics was one in which Irish and German immigrant communities no longer represented a recognizable part of the Memphis population, and thus, their story of the fever was forgotten.

Through this thesis, I aim to highlight the understudied, yet monumental impact the yellow fever had on Catholic community of Memphis. To define a community by a religious belief is not inappropriate for this era since the religious identity of these people defined their patterns of life and death; the patterns of feast days, novenas, and parish picnics often formed the primary expressions of communal fellowship for these people. Many of the men and women, as revealed by their stories, reveal that they would have defined themselves first as a Catholic. Further, the great numbers of religious men and women who came to volunteer for the city came motivated by charity and a desire to garner an otherworldly reward. While many sources were unable to fit within the bounds of this paper, it acts as an attempt to recognize the lack of recognition and scholarship and compile some of the major sources documenting the impact of the yellow fever epidemic on the Memphis Catholic community.

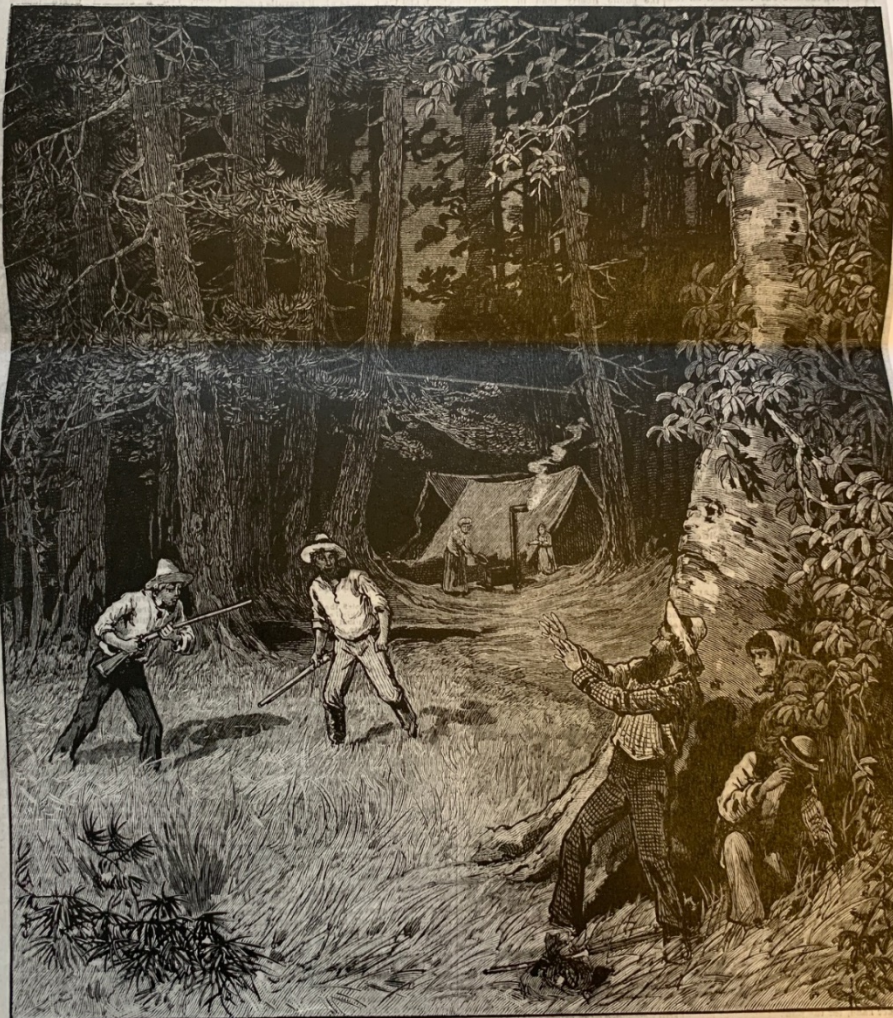
APPENDIX

FRANK LESLIE'S
ILLUSTRATED
NEWSPAPER

No. 1,247—Vol. XLVIII.]

NEW YORK, AUGUST 23, 1879.

[PRICE 10 CENTS. 11 WOODS, 113 N. 3RD ST., N. Y.]



TENNESSEE.—ARREST OF YELLOW-FEVER REFUGEES BY THE SAFETY-PATROL OF MEMPHIS.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.—SEE PAGE 411.

Figure 1: Frank Leslie's Illustrated, Shotgun Quarantine

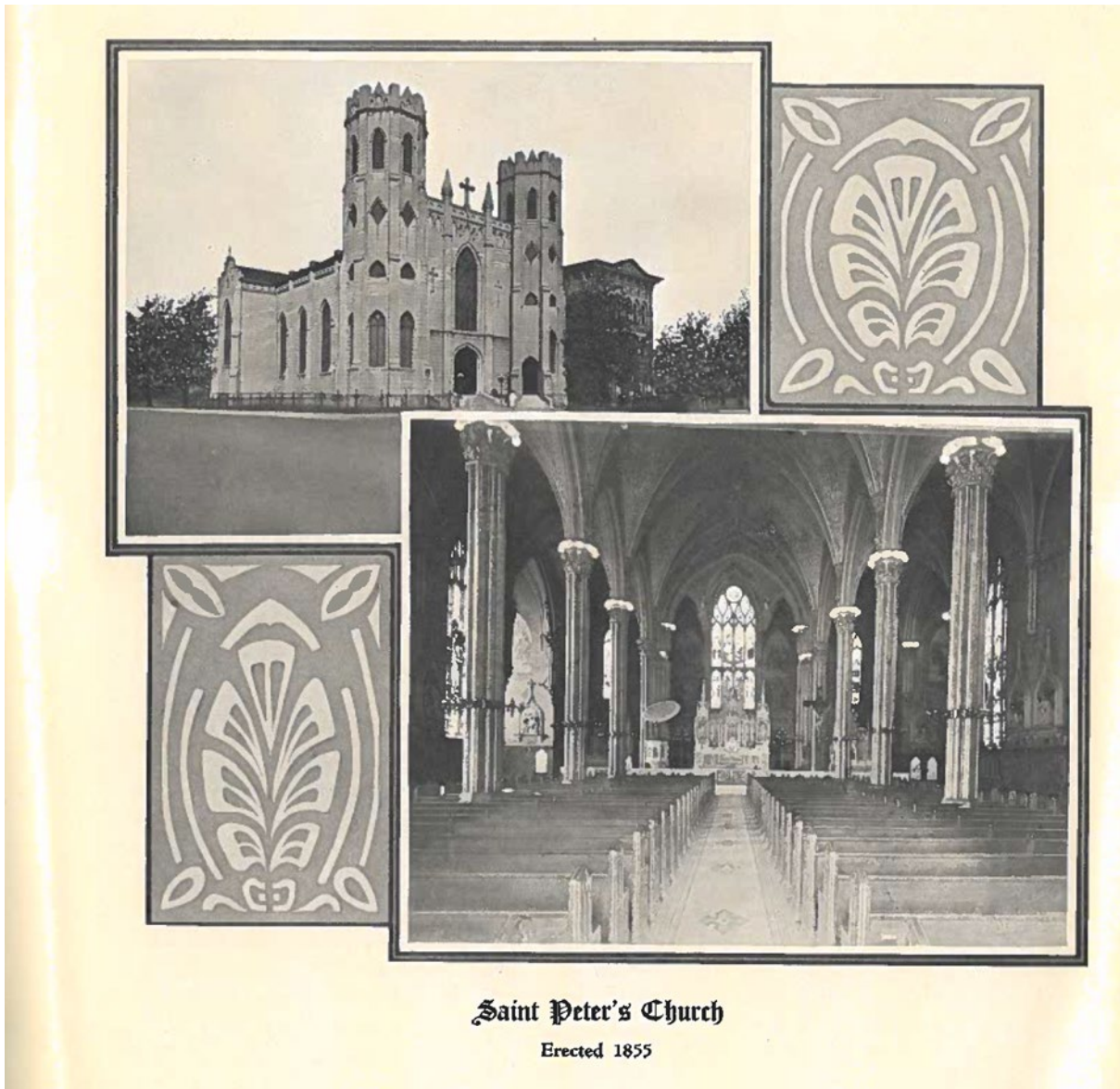


Figure 2 : St. Peter Catholic Church, Memphis



Figure 3: Harper's Weekly, Uncle Sam and the Pope

Warsaw the 13 Juny 1879

Dear Sir father Kelly

I ships do day 44 Gall. Altar
wine on your address, I hope
dat he will arived You
in good Condition.

The Bill is 26 dollar for thij Lent
for wine and 11 dollar 25 Cent the Beer
together 278. 65 Cent.

Pl ease pay it in P. M. Order the
Bank charg et tu moich.

Wath is to mader with Father
Walsh Bridger Church I sent the
Bill down 2 and git no answer
so I sent the Bill to St Patricks
Church to Father Doyle whitout
answer, please gif mij a litle
answer. Respectvoll Yours
Caspar Hartmann.

Figure 4: Caspar Hartmann Letter

ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER

No. 1,251—Vol. XLIX.]

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 20, 1879.

[PRICE 10 CENTS. IN YEARS,
IF TAKEN IN ADVANCE.]



TENNESSEE.—MEMPHIS UNDER QUARANTINE RULE.—SISTERS OF CHARITY ADMINISTERING TO SICK AND DYING VICTIMS OF YELLOW FEVER.
FROM SKETCHES BY MOISE.—SEE PAGE 45.

Figure 5: Frank Leslie's Illustrated, Sisters of Charity



Figure 6: Elmwood Cemetery, Mattie Stephenson memorial



Figure 7: Elmwood Cemetery, Sisters of St. Mary's Episcopal Memorial



Figure 8: Calvary Cemetery, Roman Catholic Sisters Memorial



Figure 9: Elmwood Cemetery, Memorial to Rev. Parsons



SISTERS OF CHARITY AND REFUGEES PREPARING TO BREAK CAMP AT THE CLOSE OF THE EPIDEMIC.



CENTENNIAL MEDAL AWARDED TO BERGNER & ENGEL.—OVERSE.



THE THANKSGIVING MASS AT "THE A. K."

TENNESSEE.—THE FATHER MATHEW YELLOW-FEVER CAMP, NEAR MEMPHIS, DURING THE EPIDEMIC.



CENTENNIAL MEDAL AWARDED TO BERGNER & ENGEL.—REVERSE.

Figure 10: Frank Leslie's Illustrated, Camp Father Matthew



Figure 11: Calvary Cemetery, Priest mound

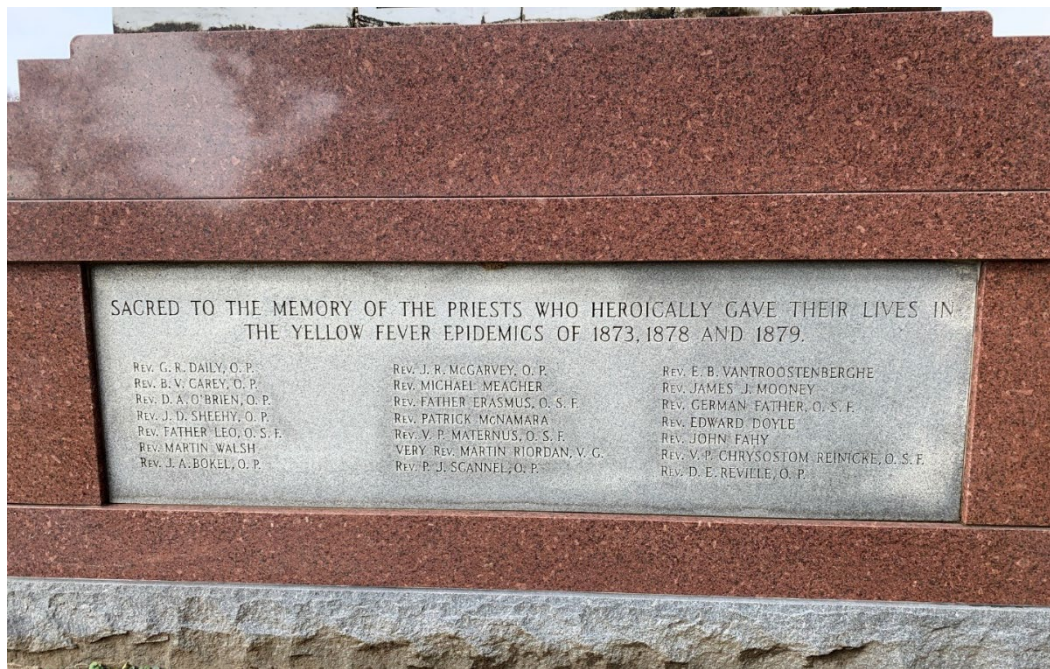


Figure 12: Calvary Cemetery, Priest Mound detail

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER

No. 1,199—Vol. XLVII.]

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 21, 1878.

[Price, 10 CENTS.]



CITIZENS PASSING FROM THE STRICKEN DISTRICTS INTO IUKA, MISS.



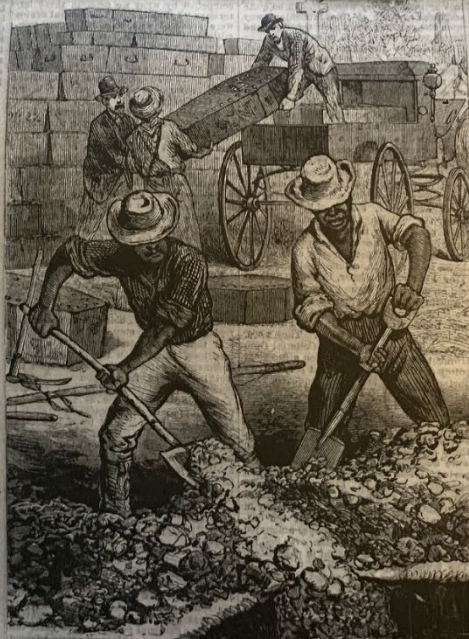
HUNGRY CITIZENS SEEKING FOOD AT THE COMMISSARY DEPOT, MEMPHIS.



MIKMAN ATTEMPTING TO PASS A BARRICADE IN NEW ORLEANS.



TWO FAITHFUL MESSENGERS.



VICTIMS OF THE FEVER AWAITING BURIAL AT ELMWOOD CEMETERY, MEMPHIS.



HOWARD OFFENS FINDING THE DEAD BODIES OF MOTHER AND CHILD.



A TENT SCENE AT CAMP JOE WILLIAMS, MEMPHIS.

THE YELLOW FEVER SCOURGE.—INCIDENTS OF THE TERRIBLE VISITATION AT NEW ORLEANS, MEMPHIS AND ELSEWHERE.—SEE PAGE 39.

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Figure 13: Frank Leslie's Illustrated, The Yellow Fever Scourge

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- ed. And trans. Nora Huber Riedel, excerpts from August 14- October 30, 1878
-Accessible through scans made by Eliza Sims July 2019 Yellow Fever Clippings
-author: various authors from Newspaper accounts of the epidemic
-Accessible through scans made by Eliza Sims July 2019
- St. Cecilia Congregation Archives Nashville, TN
Mother Frances Walsh memoir and letters
- Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies Providence, RI
The Diary of Fr. Joseph Kelly O.P.
-Author: Fr. Joseph Kelly, pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church
-unpublished, extant volumes Jan 1864 to May 1885, original volumes at Providence College, transcription with footnotes by John Vidmar O.P. 2015
File: St. Peter Church
-Author: various, Fr. Kelly, Bishop Fehan, Gaspar Hartman, Brother Dutton, Sister Hyacintha
-includes many letters sent to Fr. Kelly concerning administrative duties and private correspondence during the epidemics
- scanned copies made by Eliza Sims January 2019
-The letters provide information about the various bills, accounts, and aid societies of the St. Peter Church during the epidemics. Also, some letters provide ‘appreciations’ or letters memorializing the work of Fr. Kelly.

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- dates referenced 1873-1889, available online at <https://memphislibrary.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/>

Memphis Daily Appeal

- Author, various, ed. John Keating,
- dates referenced 1873-1880, available online with scans at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/>

The New York Freeman's Journal

- Author: various, includes many published letters describing the yellow fever from people in Memphis e.g. Fr. Kelly, Barney Hughes
- 1873-1880
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