

Faith of Our Fathers: Religious Artifacts from the *SS Republic* (1865)

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Odyssey Marine Exploration's survey and excavation of the shipwreck of the steamer *SS Republic* between October 2003 and February 2005 identified the remains of a single crate transporting a consignment of approximately 96 religious objects. The contents included porcelain and glass candlesticks, and porcelain holy water fonts and figurines decorated with New Testament motifs of the crucified Jesus, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

These wares are most closely comparable to products manufactured in provincial porcelain centers in France, such as Limoges and Vierzon, and by the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company in America. Of various merchants dealing in American and imported Gallic wares in the mid-1860s, the Benziger Brothers and most notably the Haviland Brothers of New York emerge as strong candidates for the objects' distribution to the South. Now in Odyssey's permanent collection, and being exhibited in traveling exhibitions, these sacred objects represent an interesting contrast to the mass utilitarian cargo stowed in the *Republic's* hull, and speak volumes about the rise of Catholicism and piety at a time when the realities of the American Civil War were hitting home.

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1. The Religious Artifacts' Wreck Context

The *SS Republic* was a sidewheel steamer traveling from New York to New Orleans with a composite commercial and monetary cargo when she foundered during a hurricane on 25 October 1865. Her wreck was discovered in 2003 by Odyssey Marine Exploration at a depth of around 500m in the Atlantic Ocean, approximately 150km off Georgia on the southeastern coast of the United States. Surveys and excavations recorded, recovered and conserved 65,818 artifacts, 51,404 of which were gold and largely silver coins (Bowers, 2009). These assemblages have produced a unique picture of daily life in post-Civil War America, unparalleled in scale and diversity from any other known wreck of a steamship (Cunningham Dobson *et al.* 2009; Cunningham Dobson and Gerth, 2009), at a time when New Orleans was still in the throes of economic depression.

During the production of a high-resolution photomosaic of the *Republic* wreck site, one discrete area defined by the presence of green and white glass and figural ceramics stood out in terms of archaeological uniqueness. The context consisted of a cluster of Christian-themed religious artifacts, completely exposed (except for a light coating of sediment) on the upper surface of the wreckage, forward of the starboard paddle wheel on an athwartships line with the remains of the base of the smoke stack (midships in the north of Area B). By its position within the geometry of the

wreck, it must originally have been stowed not far below deck against the starboard side of the hull on a line near the forward end of the engine room.

The deterioration of the wreck caused the hull to break open along the line of the keel on the starboard side, resulting in half of the hull detaching and falling outward to the north. As a consequence, the overhead vertical view of the crate context displayed in the photomosaic reveals the inboard sides of surviving cargo crates. Despite the disintegration of the original shipping container, the religious artifacts were located in a well-defined rectangular area measuring approximately 75 x 50cm. The artifact cluster was bounded on each side by intact wooden crates and a large unidentified mass of concreted iron aft. The forward end was flanked by a cluster of stoneware bottles and small wooden boxes, beyond which lay stacks of rectangular glass panes. The intact ceiling planking beneath the religious artifacts would have actually been outboard of the crate in the original orientation. Finally, the outboard edge of the artifact cluster was defined by the decayed remnants of the uppermost edge of the starboard hull consisting of degraded ceiling planking, frames, and exterior hull planking.

No trace of packing materials was visible amongst the religious artifacts, and the uppermost sides of the crate were completely disintegrated. Badly preserved wooden remnants of the lower shipping container verified that all of the artifacts had been stowed in a single crate. It is highly



Fig. 1. A consignment of glass and porcelain religious figurines and candlesticks forward of the starboard paddle wheel, and towards the bows, on the wreck of the SS Republic. Its wooden shipping crate is completely decomposed other than the edges of the base.



Fig. 2. The religious objects were stacked horizontally with alternating bases and tops/sockets to maximize space and tight packing. The context is adjoined by glass window panes set on their edges.



Fig. 3. The 75 x 50cm crate of religious objects before excavation; total depth of deposit 50cm.



Fig. 4. The religious objects in situ alongside an unidentified iron concretion in the background.

| Artifact Type | Medium | Final Nos. |
|--|-------------|---|
| Crucifix Candlesticks | Green glass | 18 Intact/ 7 Fragments – 22 Total |
| Crucifix Candlesticks | White glass | 8 Intact/ 6 Fragments – 12 Total |
| St. Joseph Candlesticks | Porcelain | 14 |
| Virgin Mary & Child Candlesticks | Porcelain | 13 |
| Virgin Mary Figurines | Porcelain | 4 |
| Virgin Mary in Alcove Holy Water Fonts | Porcelain | 3 |
| Standing Angel Figurines | Porcelain | |
| Kneeling Angel Figurines | Porcelain | 17 |
| Standing Angel Holy Water Fonts | Porcelain | |
| Crucifix Holy Water Fonts | Porcelain | 11 |

Table 1. The different forms and numbers of religious artifacts on the SS Republic.

improbable that glass and porcelain objects would have been packaged without some form of padding; the original material was almost certainly organic in nature and has disintegrated or simply been swept away by powerful bottom currents. The religious artifacts would probably have been packed in straw, similar to the stowage system utilized on the *Arabia*, a wooden river steamboat wrecked along the Missouri River on 5 September 1856 and heavily loaded with 222 tons of cargo destined for frontier merchants (Hawley, 1995: 22).

The *in situ* configuration of the religious artifacts visible on the surface of the wreck site before excavation consisted of at least three principal sub-clusters:

1. Candlesticks in the form of molded crucifixes, produced in both green and white glass.
2. Candlesticks in the form of standing human figures made of porcelain.
3. Small porcelain holy water fonts intended for hanging on a flat surface such as a wall.

Excavation revealed an even greater variety of artifacts in a total of four storage layers.

2. Recovery

Recovery of the religious artifacts was undertaken using an advanced Remotely-Operated Vehicle (ROV) nicknamed Zeus. The left manipulator arm was fitted with a rubber bellows-type device called a 'limpet', which applies suction through a connection to the ROV venturi system. This tool facilitates the delicate lifting of objects without any risk of crushing or scratching (Figs. 7-8, 10-11). The limpet can also blow a jet of water with varying force, which is useful for dusting marine sediments away from partially buried objects prior to photography or recovery without disturbing their contexts.

The religious artifacts were found in a relatively tight concentration, suggesting little post-depositional disturbance. Some 96 finds were picked up by the ROV and placed in plastic buckets for transport to a 'fourplex', a large metal lifting basket with multiple divisions for the separation of archaeological materials according to context, which was then recovered to the surface work platform (Table 1). The 96 individual religious objects recovered from the wreck of the *Republic* must be considered a minimum number. Additional objects from this context may potentially have been washed away during the natural deterioration of the wreck.¹

3. Packing Structure

Although the religious artifacts' cluster had been subjected to natural disturbance, resulting in the disintegration of the unsupported shipping crate and causing the contents to spill downward and outward, it was still possible to discern aspects of the original packing arrangement in four layers. The depth of the context measured approximately 50cm in total.

In the upper level the figural porcelain candlesticks were stacked in rows on their sides, with their bases and candle sockets alternating in order to ensure tight packing. Adjacent to the figural candlesticks, but clearly placed separately from them, the white and green glass crucifix candlesticks were similarly set on their sides, with bases and candle sockets alternating (Figs. 2-3). At the aft end of the cluster to the east lay an extensive intrusive iron concretion (Fig. 1). Its relocation exposed additional white glass crucifix candlesticks beneath it, confirming that these artifacts were packed the length of the inboard (southern) half of the crate.

With the removal of the uppermost crucifix and figural candlesticks, a second layer of artifacts was identified. The crucifix candlesticks continued, perceivably packed in a single row running from east to west along the length of the inboard (southern) half of the crate, with the green examples to the west end and the white ones to the east. Excavations proved that the inboard half of the crate had been completely packed with crucifix candlesticks. The west quadrant of the outboard half of the crate contained flat-backed holy water fonts intended for hanging. These bear a crucifix design molded onto the surface and a basin at the bottom to serve as a reservoir. Again, they were packed in an alternating orientation with bases alternately inboard and outboard.

A third layer of religious icons – Virgin Mary figurines – commenced below the figural candlesticks. They are distinguishable from the bases of the figural candlesticks by being hollow instead of solid and by displaying a tiny hole in the centers.

With the removal of the Virgin Mary figurines and the remaining figural candlesticks, a fourth and final layer of artifacts was identified (Fig. 9). This deposit consisted of typologically mixed religious artifacts: holy water fonts in the shape of an alcove containing a standing figure of the Virgin Mary; very small fonts in the shape of a standing angel with a basin at its feet; figurines of kneeling angels on rectangular bases; kneeling angels on circular bases; and standing angels on circular bases. The angels appeared to have become intermixed with the lower figural candlesticks, mainly in the easternmost end of the crate.

After all of these artifacts were recovered, the almost completely deteriorated outer edges of the shipping crate

were exposed, alongside a scatter of white and brown porcelain buttons that had migrated downward during the excavation (Fig. 12). This juxtaposition suggests that these may also have been transported inside the crate, perhaps in a sealed envelope or carton. Further excavation at this point revealed the ceiling planking of the *Republic's* hull. No wood from the shipping crate's base was present.

Of all of the religious artifacts encountered, only the angels and the crucifix candlesticks (and of the latter, only those from the lowest layers) displayed any damage. This took the form of candlestick sockets that had snapped along seams where separate pieces had been joined together during manufacture and at the hexagonal bases, both natural stress points. In several cases amongst the angels, the wings – another natural weak point – had broken off.

4. Catalogue & Description

The *Republic* religious objects collection can be sub-divided into three functional divisions: candlesticks, figurines, and holy water fonts. While the cruciform candlesticks are glass products, all of the other candlesticks and figurines are hard paste porcelain. Of these examples, all are glazed with the exception of two types, the standing angel and kneeling angel on a rectangular base, which are both unglazed 'bisque' wares. The latter angel type represents the only objects among the group that bear traces of paint or gilt. The others are all undecorated white wares. Within the above three divisions, the artifacts can be further catalogued into ten distinct classes, as follows:

i. Green Glass Crucifix Candlestick (Fig. 13)

22 examples, H. 24.8cm to 25.0cm. For the latter, H. of base 2.9cm, W. of base 10.3cm, H. of candle socket 4.4cm, W. of candle holder 2.2cm, W. of candle holder and rim 5.4cm.

The candlesticks were produced in two sections, a top and bottom piece inter-connected by a joining wafer. The height variation only results from the globule of molten glass used to join the upper and lower sections of the candlestick during the manufacturing process. In addition, the vertices of the hexagonal candle socket bases are not always lined up with those of the hexagonal bases. Within this product line it is recognized that "variations in height were produced by the thickness of the wafer of glass joining the parts" (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 386).

In both the green and white glass crucifix candlesticks (see catalogue entry 2 below), the body of the object takes the form of a three-dimensional crucified and emaciated



Fig. 5. ROV Zeus excavating figural porcelain candlesticks and green and white glass crucifix candlesticks in the top layer of the crate.



Fig. 6. Alternating bases and sockets of the porcelain figural candlesticks.

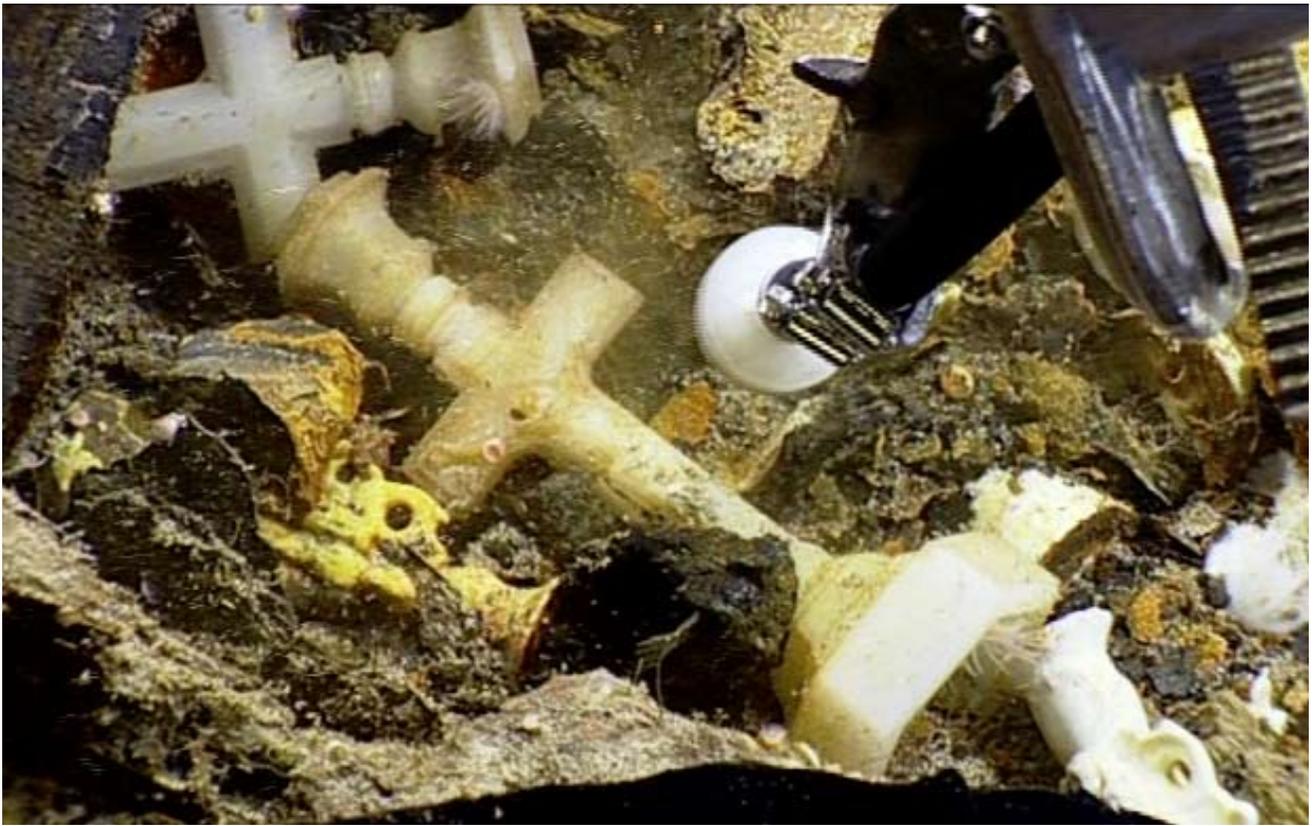


Fig. 7. ROV Zeus prepares to recover a glass crucifix candlestick using its limpet suction pad.

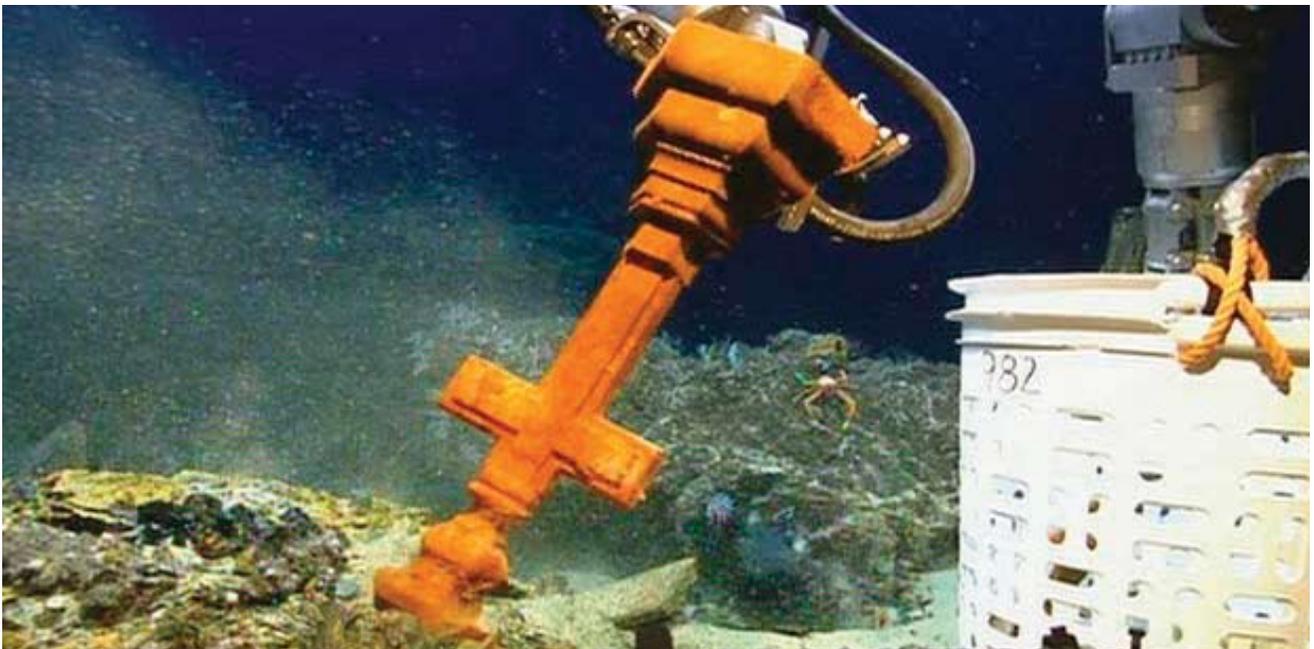


Fig. 8. Recovering a white glass crucifix candlestick to an excavation basket using Zeus' limpet suction pad. The candlestick's reddish stain may have been caused by contact with iron materials on the seabed.



Fig. 9. Excavation of the fourth and lowest layer of the religious artifacts revealed mixed religious artifacts, including porcelain holy water fonts in the shape of an alcove containing a figure of the Virgin Mary.



Fig. 10. Recovering a porcelain Virgin Mary figurine using Zeus' limpet suction pad.



Fig. 11. A glazed porcelain kneeling angel figurine from the lowest level of the crate being delicately recovered on Zeus' limpet suction pad.



Fig. 12. White and brown porcelain buttons in the base of the crate.

Christ, with a slanted Latin inscription reading 'INRI' set on a banner affixed to a Latin-style cross above his head, which is inclined onto the right shoulder. The Gospel According to John (19:19-20) describes Pontius Pilate writing an inscription, which read "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. In Western art only the Latin version is generally depicted, abbreviated to 'INRI' (*Jesus Nazarenius Rex Iudaeorum*). The figure also wears the crown of thorns, an act of mockery inflicted by Roman soldiers on the 'king of the Jews' in a malicious and deliberately humiliating imitation of their own emperor's festive crown of roses (Ferguson, 1961: 38).

The crown of thorns became a widely venerated item after King Louis IX brought what was believed to be this relic to France in the mid-13th century. The king received the relic from Baldwin II, the Latin Emperor of Constantinople, in 1238. It was then revered in a chapel that King Louis had built. The appearance of the crown of thorns in art post-dates this historical episode (pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, September 2009; Hall, 2008: 85).

Jesus is modestly clad in a twisted wrap of cloth about the hips. Four nail heads are visible, one through each wrist and one through each foot.² The feet are laid side by side on a crude footrest attached to the cross. No wound is visible on either the left or right side of the figure. Such iconography has prevailed in Western art since this emaciated Christ form, head fallen on the shoulder, and later wearing the crown of thorns, evolved in the 11th century (Hall, 2008: 84). During the Renaissance and beyond, artists depicted the crucified Christ with his head usually tilted toward the right shoulder in keeping with John 19:30, where the Apostle explained that at the moment of death Christ bowed down his head (Ferguson, 1961: 150; Webber, 1992: 97).

ii. White Glass Crucifix Candlestick (Fig. 14)

12 examples, H. approximately 25.1cm; H. of base 2.9cm, W. of base 10.3cm, H. of candle socket 4.3cm, W. of candle holder 2.2cm, W. of candle holder and rim 5.3cm.

These objects, typologically identical to the translucent green glass crucifix candlesticks above, were crafted in an opaque white glass with a hollow, hexagonal base and top, which serves as the socket for securing the candle. The figural body of the candlestick assumes the form of the crucified Christ, with the inscription 'INRI' above the head. The body of the candlestick appears to display lines from a two-piece mold, and is joined to the candle socket (which bears no obvious mold marks) by an asymmetrical globule of glass applied by hand.

iii. Porcelain St. Joseph Candlestick (Fig. 15)

Six examples of a large-sized male figure, H. 20.5cm, W. of base 7.4cm, inner diameter of handle apertures 1.2cm, H. of candle holder 4.4cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.8cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 5.3cm.

Six examples of a medium-sized male figure, H. 17.4cm, W. of base 6.2cm, inner diameter of handle apertures 1.1cm, H. of candle holder 4.2cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.2cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 4.5cm.

Two examples of a small-sized male figure, H. 15.4cm, W. of base 5.3cm, inner diameter of handle apertures 0.9cm, H. of candle holder 3.5cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.0cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 4.1cm.

These objects made of hard paste porcelain (pers. comm. Pat Halfpenny, July 2009) are often referred to in contemporary mid-19th century literature as 'bisque' or 'biscuit ware', hollow, with a glaze, and white in color. They bear no traces of gilt or paint. The majority of the *Republic* examples display chips and cracks. The main body consists of the figure of a standing male, identified as St. Joseph, holding in the left hand what appears to be a hammer or mallet and a lily flower in the right, a symbol of chastity and one of St. Joseph's sacred attributes. The object in the left hand may alternatively represent a book, which in religious art symbolizes both learning and authorship (Ferguson, 1961: 33-4, 127; Hall, 2008: 183, 198-9). Unfortunately, the detail on these candlesticks is unclear, perhaps the result of the plaster molds in which they were cast losing definition with repeated use. Porcelain factories producing less expensive wares possibly used worn molds longer than higher-end operations (pers. comm. Robert Doares, September 2009).

The figure very probably represents 'St. Joseph the Worker', who is commonly depicted with a hammer or mallet or some other instrument of work, notably a squaring tool, saw or plane. The devotion to St. Joseph under this title apparently grew in the 19th century with the advent of the Industrial Revolution (pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, September 2009).

The St. Joseph figure has a moustache, a short beard and wears a long undergarment belted at the waist with a long cord. Over this he is clad in a long robe, open at the front. The feet appear to be bare. These candlesticks exhibit what seem to be join marks from a two-piece mold, although the candle socket appears to have been attached separately.

Initially depicted in paintings as an elderly man with a white beard, the devotion to St. Joseph grew stronger around the 13th century. Following the support of St.

Teresa of Avila (amongst other), the cult of St. Joseph began to blossom in the 15th and 16th centuries when he appeared in art as a younger man, though still mature (Ferguson, 1961: 33-4, 127; Hall, 2008: 183, 198-9; pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, September 2009).

iv. Porcelain Virgin Mary with Child Candlestick (Fig. 16)

Six examples of large-sized figure, H. 20.8cm, H. of base 1.1cm, W. of base 7.5cm, interior Diam. of handles 1.1cm, H. of candle holder 4.9cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.8cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 5.4cm.

Four examples medium-sized, H. 17.6cm, H. of base 1.0cm, W. of base 6.2cm, interior Diam. of handles 1.0cm, H. of candle holder 3.9cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.2cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 4.4cm.

Three examples of small size, H. 15.6cm, H. of base 1.0cm, W. of base 5.4cm, interior Diam. of handles 0.8cm, H. of candle holder 3.6cm, inside W. of candle socket 2.0cm, W. of candle socket plus exterior rim 3.9cm.

These objects, typologically identical to the St. Joseph figurines other than in the main subject matter, are of hard paste porcelain, hollow, with a glaze, and white in color. No traces of gilt or paint. Cracks are common across the body. The main body consists of the figure of a standing Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ in the crook of her left arm, the right hand apparently supporting one of the baby's feet. She is dressed in a long flowing robe that covers her head over a second garment belted at the waist. She stands on what may be a half-sphere. Possible join lines from a two-piece mold are present on the main section, and the candle socket appears to have been attached separately.

The iconography of the 'Madonna', the Virgin Mary as the mother of Jesus Christ, dates back as early as AD 431, when the Council of Ephesus encouraged the diffusion of this image as demonstrative of Mary's status as the mother figure of the Christian Church in official doctrine (Hall, 2008: 333-4). Following apparitions of the Madonna in France between the mid-late 1830s and late 1850s, her popularity in art intensified enormously (see under catalogue entry 6 below).

v. Porcelain Figurine of the Virgin Mary (Fig. 17)

Four examples, H. 20.2cm, W. 8.2 x 3.8cm, H. of base 5.0cm, W. of base 7.5cm.

These objects are of hard paste porcelain, hollow, with a glaze, and white in color. They bear no traces of

gilt or paint. The figurine takes the form of the Virgin Mary standing, arms outstretched, in three examples with a crown of 12 stars or flowers, which probably represent both the Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Twelve Apostles (pers comm. Father William Kuchinsky, April 2009). The Virgin Mary wears a long, flowing robe that covers her head beneath the floral circle over another long garment belted at the waist. She stands on a half-sphere composed of a five-footed pedestal base with a depiction of the sun in the center, which was probably inspired by Sister Catherine Labouré's visions of Our Lady in Paris in 1830 in which the Virgin wore a white silk robe with arms outstretched in a stance that typically symbolized the Immaculate Conception. Mary apparently informed Sister Labouré that the globe on which she stood "represents the whole world, and France in particular, and everyone in it" (Perry and Echeverría, 1989: 93). Mary's face and eyes are slightly downcast and her head gently tilted to the left. There are no obvious mold lines and the base was probably attached separately.

The figure of the Virgin Mary standing alone 'in glory' symbolizes her unique status as the personification of the Mother Church. Mystical documents of the 12th and 13th centuries often referred to her as the Queen of Heaven, *Regina Coeli*. She is also the maiden of the Immaculate Conception, a popular theme from the 17th century onwards through Jesuit inspiration (Hall, 2008: 334). The term refers to Mary's conception by divine intervention and reflects a doctrine that states that in order to serve as a suitable vehicle for Christ's arrival on Earth, it was necessary for her to be sinless. Thus, she was conceived of as free of Original Sin and was predestined to beget the redemption of man from the sin of Eve. The Immaculate Conception became an article of faith in 1854 under the authority of Pope Pius IX (Ferguson, 1961: 72; Hall, 2008: 335-3).

The dozen stars above Mary's head may represent both the Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Twelve Apostles. In the *Art of Painting* of 1649, the Spanish painter and author Francisco Pacheco formalized the rules for this stylistic form, writing that the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception should be depicted "as a young woman of twelve or thirteen years, dressed in a white robe and blue cloak, her hands folded on her breast or a meeting in prayer; the moon to be a crescent (the antique symbol of chastity), horns downward; round her waist the Franciscan girdle with its three knots." This representation, occasionally with some changes, is the most recognizable artistic rendition of the subject. For the inspiration behind the popularity of the Virgin Mary in mainstream religious art, see catalogue entry 6 below.

vi. Porcelain Holy Water Font in Form of Virgin Mary in Flowered Alcove (Fig. 18)

Three examples, H. 14.7cm, H. of water font 2.4cm, W. of base 6.1cm, W. of base plus water font 5.0cm, H. of recessed alcove 10.4cm, W. of recessed alcove 6.0cm, H. of Mary figure 5.3cm, Diam. of flowers 1.7cm.

This is a holy water font, with the standing figure of the Virgin Mary in the guise of our Lady of Grace, adorned in a head scarf and with open arms. The figure stands in a flower-framed alcove surmounted by a cross. The base is hollow and there are no apparent mold join lines. The clay may have been pressed into an open mold and the base, figure and flowers attached separately.

The Virgin Mary's head is covered by a scarf or hood and she wears a flowing garment belted at the waist and what appears to be a cloak fastened at a single point on the central upper chest. She stands in a flower-framed alcove topped with a cross; four five-petalled blossoms flank the alcove, two on each side, with a single, larger four-petalled flower centered at the top of the alcove. Interestingly, the flower centers are the same for both the four- and five-petal versions, and resemble the flowers/stars that form the crown of the standing Virgin statue depicted on the Virgin Mary figurines above, suggesting manufacture by the same artist or in the same workshop. The base of the sculpture appears to be a reservoir for holy water.

From the end of the medieval period and into the early Renaissance, the Mother and Child were sometimes represented in art in a rose arbor or in front of a trellis-fence of roses forming an enclosed area. Since the earliest years of Christianity, the rose has been steeped in symbolic meaning. The red blossom represents the blood of the martyr, while the white blossom symbolizes purity, particularly that of the Virgin Mary, who is sometimes referred to as the 'rose without thorns', a result of the tradition that she was untouched by the effects of original sin. The representation of the garden finds its origin in the Song of Solomon (4:12), with the 'enclosed garden' now symbolizing Mary's virginity or Immaculate Conception (Ferguson, 1961: 37, 42; Hall, 2008: 340).

The four five-petalled blossoms on the *Republic* religious artifacts also resemble the flower of the strawberry, an emblem of perfect righteousness. When depicted in the company of other flowers and fruits, it can stand for "the good works of the righteous or the fruits of the spirit" (Ferguson, 1961: 38, 40). In keeping with this concept, the Virgin Mary has been depicted in a gown emblazoned with bunches of strawberries.

Representative of humility, violets are yet another flower associated with the Virgin Mary, who St. Bernard described as the "violet of humility". These flowers are sometimes illustrated in parallel with the strawberry to symbolize that humility is a characteristic of the truly spiritual (Ferguson, 1961: 38, 40). The most common depiction of the rose as a symbol of the Virgin is the heraldic or mystic rose (Weber, 1992: 177, 179), however, which the examples on the *Republic* artifacts most strongly resemble.

Of greater symbolic importance, however, for the interpretation of the *Republic's* Virgin Mary holy water fonts and her form on candlesticks and as figurines is the iconographic association of the Blessed Virgin as our Our Lady of Grace and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. This image derived from the Marian apparitions, which took place in Paris between July and December 1830, when 24 year-old Sister Catherine Labouré, a young novice of the Daughters of Charity, perceived visions of the Blessed Mary (pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, August and September 2009; Lindsey, 2000: 78, 81; Perry and Echeverría, 1988: 92-3). Our Lady is said to have appeared before Catherine between these months, and on 27 November charged her with the task of striking a medal in her honor. All who wore the medal would receive grace in abundance (Lindsey, 2000: 82; Perry and Echeverría, 1988: 93).

The wearing of the medal, minted in 1832, became immensely popular and soon became known as the Miraculous Medal by virtue of the large number of cures associated with it (pers. comm. Father Kuchinsky, August 2009; Carrol, 1992: 168; Lindsey, 2000: 82; Perry and Echeverría, 1988: 94). The original title of the medal as the 'Medal of the Immaculate Conception', and its widespread popularity, are said to have paved the way for the belief in the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception, which became official Catholic dogma in 1854 (McDannell, 1995: 135).

The shrine or grotto in which the figure of the Virgin Mary stands, and its association with holy water, however, is also indicative of a symbolic connection with the Shrine of our Lady of Lourdes, which developed around the visions of the Virgin Mary that occurred in 1858 in the grotto of Massabielle near Lourdes in southern France. On 11 February of that year, a woman in white appeared before Bernadette Soubirous, a young and illiterate peasant girl who had been gathering firewood near her home in the Pyrenees mountains. At this time, and in subsequent apparitions, the lady asked for prayers, penance and the conversion of sinners. She also requested that a chapel be built on the site of the vision and that the girl wash and drink from a fountain in the grotto. No fountain existed at the time, but on 25 February when Bernadette dug at

the ground designated by the apparition, a spring began to flow. The following day the first healing miracle occurred when a quarryman with an injured right eye regained his sight after bathing in the muddy spring water. Following her initial vision in February until 16 July 1858, the young girl had 17 spiritual visitations (McDannell, 1995: 133-4).

Only on 25 March, during the sixteenth apparition, did the Blessed Virgin reveal herself as the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception (McDannell, 1995: 134; pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, August 2009). Mary appeared standing with her hands held out and palms open towards the ground, in a pose captured in the image depicted on the Miraculous Medal and also consistent with the portrayal of the small figurine housed in the shrine of Lourdes (Carroll, 1992: 163). The image of Mary on the Miraculous Medal pre-dated and perhaps – as has been argued in some instances – inspired Bernadette Soubirous' apparitions at Lourdes (Carroll, 1992: 168). The generic flowers adorning the *Republic* religious artifacts' small porcelain shrine or grotto may be symbolic of the rose bush above which Our Lady stood when she presented herself as the Immaculate Conception.

While Bernadette's visions stopped as quickly as they had begun, an increasing number of pilgrims traveled to Lourdes to visit the young girl and the site of her apparitions. By 1862, Church authorities deemed the visions worthy of the concern of the faithful and sanctioned the cult of the Immaculate Conception at the Lourdes grotto (McDannell, 1995: 134-5). Further, while the purity of the Virgin had a long tradition in Western Christianity, the 'official' Catholic dogma that Mary was conceived without stain of original sin, was still relatively new, having been promulgated in the modern era just four years prior in 1854. Hence, the vision of our Lady of Lourdes in 1858 helped to popularize this new Catholic doctrine (McDannell, 1998: 135). In fact, as early as October 1858, less than two months after news of the apparition had widely circulated throughout France, Catholic papers in both New Orleans and New York published accounts of the events at Lourdes, which became the most important apparition site of the 19th century (McGreevy, 2003: 27-28).

Significantly, Our Lady of Lourdes is typically depicted in art with her hands before her in prayer at chest level, most probably portraying the moment she revealed herself to Bernadette. With her arms down she is recorded as having raised her eyes to heaven, folding her hands over her breast and saying "I am the Immaculate Conception" (pers. comm. Father William Kuchinsky, September 2009). Yet in the *Republic* holy water fonts her arms are held wide open, possibly signifying that this artistic style represents

an early form of expressing the apparitions at Lourdes. More probably, however, the *Republic* style portrays the earlier apparition of Our Lady of Grace experienced by St. Catherine Labouré in 1830. Yet, in this context the Virgin Mary is depicted in a decorative grotto associated with holy water, a setting which is suggestive of the famous events that occurred decades later at Lourdes.

vii. Unglazed Porcelain Standing Adoring Angel Figurine (Fig. 19)

Two examples examined, H. 10.7cm, H. of base 1.6cm, W. of base 4.1cm.

The angel, of indeterminate sex, stands on a circular base, left foot bent and hands clasped at the level of the chin and with wings outstretched. It wears a short tunic with a sash around the waist and is barefoot. In artifact R-04-01737-CR one hand is broken off, a wing is chipped and the ceramic body cracked.

The eroded base of standing angel R-04-01737-CR is decorated with what appears to be a person lying on his or her right side, knees slightly drawn up. Alongside is what seems to be a fish. If correct, the fish has obvious meaning as a major symbol of the Christian Church.

An amorphous mass of material extends from the top of the base behind the legs of the angel and up to the lower hem of the tunic: its main purpose was evidently to reinforce the figurine at a weak cast point. The method of manufacture is unclear, although it was probably cast in several pieces. Molding in pieces, whether tableware (i.e. handles of cups) or figural objects, is a normal part of porcelain production. The separate pieces are then adhered together with liquid porcelain slip, after which any evidence of the connection is brushed away. Today, even Royal Doulton figurines, while appearing smooth and crafted of a single, continuous piece, are made by molding heads and arms separately and then attaching them to the main body – a process that is not apparent visually in the end product.

There are several practical reasons for manufacturing in separate pieces, not least the ability to stack together more efficiently in a single kiln heads, arms and wings of similar size and shape. These thinner, more fragile figurine parts are more liable to slump or crack in the kiln, so it would have been far less costly and time consuming if an unattached wing cracked during firing than if a complete figurine cracked, which would have entailed discarding the entire piece (pers. comm. Robert Doares, September 2009). As in the case of the small kneeling angels and angel font described below, these standing angel figurines

were quite possibly designed as tokens or prizes for young Catholic students who performed their lessons well. This practice was customary in 19th-century Catholic schools and plausibly evolved from an earlier tradition (pers. comm. Barbara Perry, September 2009).

viii. Unglazed Porcelain Kneeling Adoring Angel Figurine (Fig. 20)

Five examples examined, H. 6.2cm, H. of base 1.1cm, W. of base 3.2cm.

On four examples an angel of indeterminate sex kneels on a rectangular base that stylistically appears to represent a pillow or cushion. The angel's hands are clasped together next to the lips, with wings outstretched, but to a lesser extent than the standing angels. The angel rests on both knees, wearing a long robe that covers the feet. The base bears traces of what appear to be bright red and black pigment – black at the four corners and the remainder colored red on the base and overlap on bottom edge of R-04-01738-CR-001. R-04-01738-CR-003 also displays a brown spot on the top back of the wing and another on the bottom back of the drapery. R-04-01739-CR features two spots of brown/black pigment on the back of the hair. This may be the sole remnant of widespread paint, which has otherwise entirely been eroded away by the marine environment. The method of manufacture is unknown, although it was probably cast in several pieces that were later joined. Broken and chipped wings and cracked bodies are common.

One example of a second sub-type of kneeling angel, in this instance glazed, was recovered from the wreck site, reposing on an oval base. This angel has shoulder-length hair, perceptibly longer than on the other angel figurines, and so assumes a more feminine appearance. The angel is seated on both knees, wearing a long robe that leaves the soles of the feet exposed. The hands are clasped out in front of the body at chest level and the wings are tightly folded back. There are no traces of gilt or pigment.

ix. Porcelain Standing Adoring Angel in the Form of a Holy Water Font (Fig. 21)

Five examples examined, H 7.1cm, W. 2.5cm, H. of figure base 0.9cm, W. of figure base 2.4cm, H. of water font base 1.1cm, W. of water font base 1.8cm, W. of water font mouth 3.6cm.

This angel, of indeterminate sex, stands on a small, irregularly-shaped rectangular base to the front of which is attached a small water font, possibly in the shape of a

shell. The hands are clasped together against the chest, with wings outstretched vertically. The angel wears a short, unbelted tunic, covered by a long robe that is open at the front. The feet are bare. No traces of gilt or pigment. The method of manufacture is unknown, although the wings and font were probably cast separately from the main body, to which they were later joined.

x. Porcelain Crucifix Holy Water Font (Fig. 22)

Six large examples examined, H. 20.9cm, H. of button base 1.1cm, H. of water font 5.3cm, W. of water font 9.0cm, exterior Diam. of suspension hole 4.5cm.

Four small examples examined, H. 18.4cm, H. of button base 1.0cm, H. of water font 4.7cm, W. of water font 7.5cm, exterior Diam. of suspension hole 3.8cm. Cracks and chips on bodies and bases of both sizes common.

These artifacts were probably intended for hanging on a wall. Each features a crucified Christ on a Cross of Lorraine with an obliquely slanted banner above the head reading 'INRI' (see above). The figure, head reclining toward the right shoulder and with a piece of cloth wrapped around the hips, is flanked by two schematic kneeling angels, each down on one knee on opposite sides of the base of the cross, with hands clasped before the face. The wings are outstretched and the figures appear to be wearing long, flowing robes. A 3.3cm (inner) diameter ring is present at the top of the piece for suspension. The back of the object is flat, with visible brush/smoothing marks on the reverse. It was probably made by pressing a sheet of clay into an open mold, then attaching the font at the bottom and the Christ figure as separate pieces.

In the above categories 7-10, the *Republic's* religious artifacts illustrate the theme of angels. The Old and New Testament 'angel' was a messenger or bringer of tidings. The 5th-century treatise *De Hierarchia Celesti* classified the various ranks of angels into nine categories or choirs. These, in turn, were grouped into three hierarchies:

- A. First Hierarchy or Counsellors: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones. The members of this group encircle God in everlasting adoration; the Seraphim are representatives of Divine Love, the Cherubim of Divine Wisdom, and the Thrones of Divine Justice.
- B. Second Hierarchy or Governors: Dominations, Virtues, Powers. These have authority over the elements and stars.
- C. Third Hierarchy or Messengers: Princedoms/Principalities, Archangels, Angels. The Princedoms are the guardians of earth kingdoms, the Archangels are

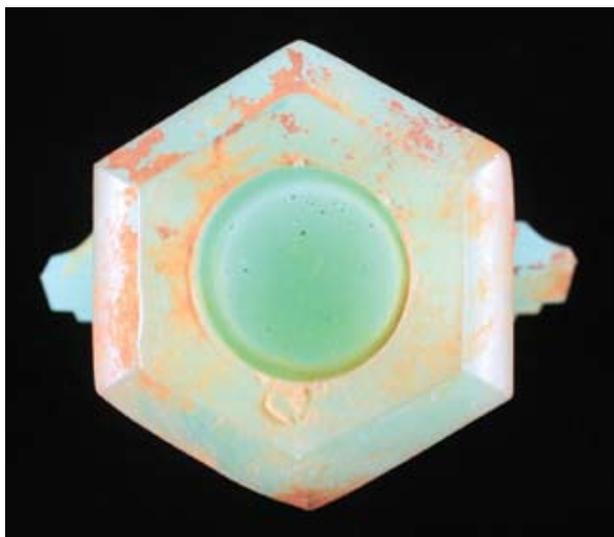


Fig. 13. A green glass crucifix candlestick from the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company; Republic Shipwreck, H. 24.8cm.

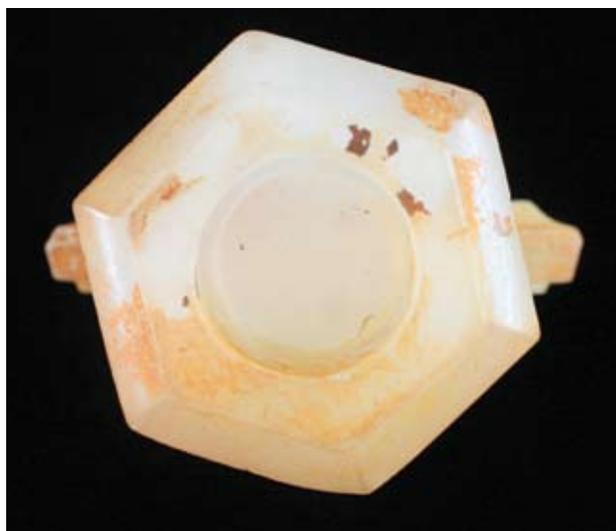


Fig. 14. A white glass crucifix candlestick from the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company; Republic Shipwreck, H. 25.1cm.

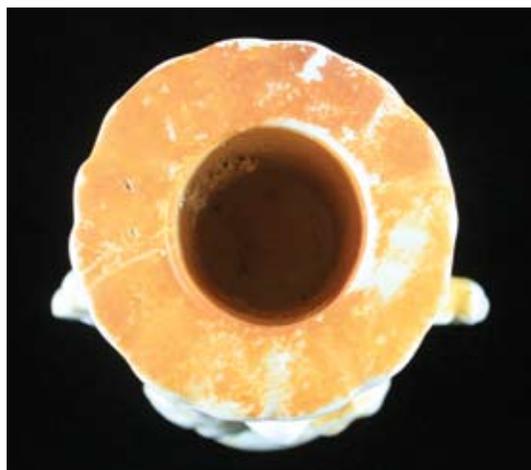


Fig. 15. A porcelain candlestick with a figural representation of St. Joseph; H. 20.5cm.



Fig. 16. A porcelain candlestick with a figural representation of the Virgin Mary with child; H. 20.8cm.



Fig. 17. A porcelain figurine of the Virgin Mary; H.20.2cm.



Fig. 18. A porcelain holy water font in the form of the Virgin Mary in a flowered alcove; H. 14.7cm.



Fig. 19. An unglazed porcelain standing angel figurine; H. 10.7cm.



Fig. 20. An unglazed porcelain kneeling angel figurine; H. 6.2cm.



Fig. 21. A porcelain standing angel in the form of a holy water font; H. 7.1cm.



Fig. 22. A porcelain crucifix holy water font; H. 20.9cm.

heaven's warriors, and the angels are protectors of the innocent and just. Both angels and archangels are messengers of God to humans.

The angel and archangel as messengers are of greatest interest to the interpretation of the *Republic* religious artifacts. Usually shown with wings (representative of a divine mission), they are sexless, though generally appear in feminine form. In terms of age, they are adolescent or younger, usually wearing loosely draped garments (Ferguson, 1961: 46; Hall, 2008:18).

5. The *Republic* Religious Wares: Origins

Relatively modest and cheap religious goods such as those transported in the *Republic's* crate of religious artifacts are rarely discussed in works of minor ecclesiastical art. As a consequence, determining their place of manufacture is far from simple. Opinions about the origins differ relatively widely. Consultant Jill-Karen Yakubik identified the white ceramic candlestick figurines as mass-manufactured porcelain of German or French manufacture, possibly products made by David Haviland in Limoges, France (pers. comm., January 2007). However, Christine L. Krosel, Director of Archival Research for the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland (pers. comm., January 2007), has observed that the artifacts resemble low-cost commodities sold by the Benziger Brothers, a major supplier of such objects during the 19th century who had a branch in New York City when the *Republic* took on cargo prior to its final voyage. From early on in the research, Barbara Perry, former Curator of Decorative Arts for the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, also suggested that the porcelains were possibly of French origin.

While a definitive origin can be proposed for the glass crucifix candlesticks, the issue of the place of manufacture and subsequent sphere of distribution of the porcelain figurines and candlesticks is far more complicated. The production of such religious objects was extremely competitive, and comparable examples were sold in America by various 19th-century dealers, many of whom were Catholic publishers and booksellers, as well as manufacturers and importers of religious articles. Among the earliest were notably P.J. Kenedy & Sons, whose Baltimore company relocated to New York City in 1838, Benziger Brothers, and Fr. Pustet and Company. Others probably also included the Haviland family, Charles Ahrenfeldt and John Vogt, all of whom focused largely on the manufacture and import of French porcelain.

Competition was fierce. In 1874, for instance, the popularity of Benziger's products resulted in the compa-

ny issuing a notice to advise customers that another firm was closely imitating its catalogue (Zalesch, 1999: 1, 25), presumably a caution against the inadvertent purchase of less impressive copies. Advertisements placed in *Sadlier's Catholic Almanac* for 1865 further reflect the widespread force of market currents in these products.

The suggestion by some ceramic scholars that these wares may actually be of Bohemian origin is unlikely. The product lines of Czechoslovakia included figurines that are patently far livelier and impressive works of art and which lacked religious themes until the early 1850s (cf. *Porcelánová Manufaktura Royal Dux Bohemia, A.S. 150 Let Ve Sluzbách Krehkosti a Krasny*, R-Studio, 2003: 6, 8, 10, 12, 18). Bohemian biscuit figurines of the Madonna with Christ and John the Baptist (from Slavkov, c. 1850), allegorical-themed colored biscuit statuettes of 'Fire', 'Water', 'Wind' and 'Soil' from the 'Four Elements' cycle (from Klasterec, c. 1856), and white glazed porcelain 'statues' of the Apostle Philip and John the Evangelist (from Loket, c. 1850), are all far more natural and expressive than the *Republic* figurines (Poche, 1955: pls. 30, 46-7, 92-3). Even though more commercially conscious products were designed following the cold reception of Loket's wares at the German Industrial Exhibition in Berlin in 1844, Bohemian figurines never lost their vitality inspired by early 18th-century Meissen models and life-size marble statues by Rusconi, Legros and others crafted for the Roman Basilica in the Lateran, Rome (Poche, 1955: 50-1).

The identification of the probable place of manufacture, subsequent distributors and the context of demand for the figurines on the wreck of the *Republic* reveal a specific set of religious, economic and social conditions linking Europe with the New World.

6. Glass Crucifix Candlesticks & the Boston & Sandwich Glass Company

Crucifix candlesticks such as those conspicuous in the crate on the *Republic* probably represent the single largest category of sacred-themed figural candlesticks produced in the 19th century. Just about every major American glass company offered at least one form from c. 1840 until the latter part of the century. Research has identified approximately 31 different varieties, very probably an incomplete sampling of the total number of manufactured forms that were produced in a variety of colors, heights and decorations (Felt, 1999: 66; pers. comm. Jane Spillman, April 2005).

The problem of attributing a given pattern to a particular manufacturer is complex. The pressed glass industry

was constantly in flux, with companies opening, closing, changing locations and being absorbed. Such conglomerations frequently transferred current mold styles between member factories. In addition, blank pieces were sold to other companies for surface decoration and marketed as the decorators' own products (Edwards and Carwile, 2005: 5). Moreover, it appears that no single manufacturing concern owned exclusive rights to any given design, so imitation was rife to the degree that even plant workers were incapable of distinguishing between sources (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 385).

Developed since the late 1820s, the pressing machine had introduced a revolution in glassware manufacture that facilitated the production of less expensive tableware to cater to an expanding market. In a brief span of time, vast quantities of pressed glass were accessible in sparkling new forms. Mass production lowered manufacturing costs and consequently retail prices, vastly expanding the market for products, especially for lamps and candlesticks (Edwards and Carwile, 2005: 4; McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 332, 377-8). During the period 1820-40, around 100 glass factories were in operation across America (Watkins, 1950: 52, 83).

The glass crucifix candlesticks from the *Republic* are clear examples of the post-1821 pressed glass manufacturing process. In essence, to produce such wares molten glass was poured into a multi-part metal mold (brass was preferred, but iron was also suitable), after which a metal piston or plunger was driven into its opening, pushing the glass into all the crevices and spaces in the mold (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 336).

The majority of pressed glass candlesticks produced in the period spanning 1827-35, known as the 'first design group', are attributable to the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company. Candlesticks made during this period evidently required "as much hand labor as finer wares" owing to their use of "free-blown, pattern-molded, and manipulated parts" (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 381).

During the so-called 'second period' of design (1835-60), candlestick styles became heavy and rather simple by comparison. They relied on basic patterns, but with a more widespread selection of colors. In addition, variety in design was achieved by the technique of molding the top and bottom pieces individually, then connecting them with a wafer of glass (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 381-2). The Boston and Sandwich Glass Company was known to have pressed hexagonal candlesticks in two or three parts, which were united by such molten glass wafers (Watkins, 1950: 80, 83). Two types of pattern for the candle sockets were common, the 'petal' and the 'hexagonal', both of which had extensions forming the upper part of the candlestick shaft. Illustrations of these forms display a clear resemblance to

the sockets on the *Republic* crucifix candlesticks (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 9, 20, 30, 37, pls. 197, 199, 200).

It is not known with certainty when molds for making pressed glass candlesticks in a single piece first developed – both the 1850s and 1860s are possible, as exemplified by New England candlesticks, whose mold marks run uninterrupted from the socket to the base (pers. comm. Dorothy Hogan-Schofield, July 2009). Whatever the truth, the *Republic* examples did not exploit this technology. Crucifix candlesticks molded in two parts, such as the *Republic* examples, have been conclusively attributed to the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company based on multi-colored fragments found in excavations conducted at Sandwich, but which are undated. These candlesticks featured a fluted hexagonal socket, a hexagonal base and occurred in two sizes and a range of colors. Crucially, the smaller Crucifix candlesticks bore a narrow relief band bearing the letters 'INRI' at the top of the cross. These attributes are considered to be "exclusively Sandwich" (McKearin and McKearin, 1948: 384, 385).

The earliest American examples of crucifix candlesticks are believed to have been produced by two Massachusetts firms, the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company and its competitor, the New England Glass Company, both of which manufactured at least three similar styles between them, a fact that complicates accurate attributions. Two of the styles were widely copied by additional glass companies with only slight differences (Felt, 1999: 66-7).

However, all of the crucifix candlesticks excavated from the site of the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company exhibit a unique manufacturing feature (Barlow and Kaiser, 1983: 61): the pieces were all cast in separate two-piece iron molds, the socket and base then fused together by a glass wafer or merese at the top of the standard while the glass was still hot (pers. comm. Jane Spillman, April 2005). While the New England Glass Company pressed similar crucifixes, their candlesticks were molded in one piece as opposed to two, and the first rise of the base of the candlestick was often set higher (1.5-2.5in compared with 1.25-1.5in) than that of the Boston and Sandwich candlestick base (Barlow and Kaiser, 1983: 61).

The crucifix candlesticks recovered from the *Republic*, in both white and green glass, clearly incorporate the distinctive wafer nestled between the standard and socket, thus attributing their production definitively to the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company, which produced these candlesticks in great numbers from 1840 to 1880, typically selling them in pairs of 8-12in height (pers. comm. Jane Spillman, April 2005; pers. comm. Dorothy Hogan-Schofield, July 2009; pers. comm. Kirk Nelson, July 2009; Barlow and Kaiser, 1983: 61). Founded in 1825, the company was one

of the first glass firms to utilize the press for the mass production of glass and was one of the leading manufacturers of pressed glass prior to the American Civil War (pers. comm. Dorothy Hogan-Schofield, July 2009).

It is apparent from the number of crucifix candlestick fragments excavated at the site of the former glassworks that their manufacture ranked among the top of the production line, where the many Catholics employed by the company exercised influence on the firm's products, including the manufacture of figural crucifix candlesticks (Barlow and Kaiser, 1983: 61). A strong commercial connection also existed between the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company and New York City, where since 1859 the company had a showroom and agent, Jacob J. Nichols. By at least 1877, and perhaps earlier, the showroom floor was located on Barclay Street, the center of the city's trade in religious articles and from where goods were sold to the public, as well as to glass and crockery dealers (pers. comm. Dorothy Hogan-Schofield, July 2009).

7. The Benziger Brothers

Due to the unparalleled availability of catalogues of religious objects sold by the Benziger Brothers in America, these merchants serve as a useful point of embarkation for assessing the history of the *Republic's* religious figurines. Benziger Brothers was founded in the village of Einsiedeln, Switzerland, in 1792, when the founder, Joseph Charles Benziger, opened a small concern dealing in religious objects. The Napoleonic invasion, however, drove him from his Swiss home and wrecked his business. Upon his return in 1800 from sheltering in Feldkirch, Austria, he started business anew as a bookseller.

In 1833, Joseph was succeeded by his sons, Charles and Nicholas, in a firm christened Charles and Nicholas Benziger Brothers. Two years later they added the lithographic reproduction (including hand coloring) of religious pictures to the publishing concern. Both brothers retired in 1860, leaving the firm in the hands of their six sons, the third generation to run the company. Further initiatives under their leadership included the addition of more progressive printing techniques. The line of publications expanded to include *Alte und Neue Welt*, an illustrated German Catholic magazine, several illustrated family books of devout reading, school and prayer books, and a *Bible History* printed in an impressive 12 languages. During the period 1880 to 1895 a fourth generation of Benziger's rose to man the helm, at which point the firm's name was changed to Benziger and Company (*Benziger Brothers*, 1912: 6-7).

The year 1853 witnessed a stark expansion with a branch of the company established in New York. A second branch



Fig. 23. Daily life in the Benziger Company's 19th-century factory in New York, as represented in a contemporary brochure.

opened in Cincinnati in 1860, a third in St. Louis in 1875 and a fourth in Chicago in 1887 (*Benziger Brothers*, 1912: 7; Zalesch, 1999: 2). By 1894 the Benzigers monopolized the manufacture of most church goods sold in America at its new Brooklyn factory, where they expanded to produce large gas and electric fixtures, altar rails and pulpits. Paintings and sculptures continued to be imported, however.

In 1999, Saul Zalesch published the results of a content analysis of Benziger's American trade catalogues, seven of which have been archived at the Library of Congress. They cover the years 1873 to 1888, unfortunately post-dating the artifacts on the *Republic*. Nevertheless, they serve as an intriguing point of possible product comparison. In 1873, Benzigers produced a complete descriptive and illustrated catalogue of church goods available in America. Extensive lines of both paintings and sculpture were available; the company was evidently already well established in both markets. Zalesch (1999: 3) noted that over the period covered by the catalogues, the artistic products offered by Benziger "changed steadily, though not radically". This conservatism suggests that even though the first catalogues were printed some eight years after the *Republic*

sank, they might still reflect stock available *c.* 1865.

One significant socio-cultural pattern promoted by the Benziger Company was a serious effort to provide inexpensive religious paintings by maintaining fixed low prices for the smallest sizes. This meant that even the poorest Catholics could afford to hang these images in their homes. Where figurines were concerned, a similar pricing trend is more difficult to verify. Such items were more expensive and product lines changed often (Zalesch, 1999: 4-5). In addition, the cheapest examples – the bisque or biscuit ware – were only offered in the 1874 catalogue, where they were priced in just a single general catalogue entry. Still, the prices charged for the smallest sacred figurines in the 1874 *Catalogue of Religious Articles* were nevertheless relatively low and reflect the company's desire to make them widely available even to the lowest-income homes.

The 'biscuit statues', as they are called in the catalogue (or 'bisque'), were the least expensive figurines carried by Benziger. This term is given to a clay body fired without glaze. Most potters bisque-fire at low temperature to facilitate handling and glaze at a considerably higher temperature to make the body more durable. Some artists fire the body high and low to extract brighter-colored glazes (Peterson, 2002: 141).

Three subjects dominated the Benziger product line: the Virgin Mary with the Christ child; the Immaculate Conception; and St. Joseph, each of which was available in an impressive 14 sizes (Zalesch, 1999: 5). The smallest, at 2.5in high, was priced at only 4 cents, making these sacred figures accessible to even the poorest Catholics. According to Zalesch (1999: 5), the prices of the smaller figures were "artificially inexpensive" in comparison to the larger versions, whose price increased four-fold for the 5-inch version. Another example was a 7-inch Our Lady of Lourdes figurine that sold for 46 cents, while the 8-inch version cost 84 cents.

Interestingly, the sculptural wares occupied more pages in the Benziger catalogues than any other class of goods because 'statuary' was the most common type of decoration in both churches of the Roman Catholic faith and the home chapels of more prosperous worshippers. According to Zalesch (1999: 15), "Only within the Roman Catholic community do we find less affluent people in the 1870s and 1880s with a genuine affection, even reverence, for what was essentially 'high art' statuary."

A. Sale Items from the 1874 Benziger Inventory

An examination of the 1874 Benziger catalogue, the closest in date to the *Republic's* final voyage, reveals categories

and items that possibly correspond to the religious artifacts recovered from the *Republic*, although comparisons are distinctly hampered by a lack of illustrations.

i. Holy Water Fonts

This category includes a number of listings that may correspond to the four types of holy water fonts among the *Republic's* religious artifacts. These include the adoring angel, the 'alcove Virgin' and the two sizes of the flat, wall-hung font representing the crucifixion. The catalogue lists examples of "plain china," "pewter", "china, gilt and ornamented", "biscuit, white", "glass" and "real bronze". The *Republic* examples would most likely conform to the plain china, white biscuit or gilt and ornamented china categories (although some surface treatments may have worn off or deteriorated during prolonged immersion underwater).

The comparative examples from the catalogue include No. 31: plain china, crucifixion, large, \$2.25; No. 32: plain china, crucifixion, small, \$1.50. No dimensions are given in the catalogue, but two different sizes employing this motif were recovered from the wreck of the *Republic* and may explain the difference in the above pricing; No. 54: gilt and ornamented china, Blessed Virgin in Chapel, \$5.70. The catalogue does not specify whether these are to be hung or are free standing, but three entries at the end of this category are described as "To stand, china, gilt, and ornamented", one of which, No. 56, is described as "Chapel" and priced at \$5.70. No listing corresponds to the adoring standing angel font.

ii. "Biscuit Statues"

Zalesch (1999: 17) emphasizes that "only a few subjects were available in biscuit", which was evidently relatively rare. Interestingly, the biscuit/bisque figurine subjects presented in the Benziger catalogues include "Immaculate Conception, Virgin with child, or St. Joseph" in 14 different sizes and ranging in price from \$0.04 for the smallest to \$4.95 for the largest. However, the only example directly corresponding to those recovered from the *Republic* is the Virgin Mary style (possibly catalogued by the Benzigers as Immaculate Conception), which, at 8in in height, corresponds to item No. 407, priced \$0.57. Four of these figurine types were recovered from the *Republic*, three with a crown of flowers or stars and one without, all of the same approximate height.

It is tempting to place the candlesticks of St. Joseph holding a lily and the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child in this category in keeping with the Benziger theme of "Immaculate Conception, Virgin with child, or St. Joseph" as its most popular biscuit offerings. However, the

Benziger 'statues' cited in its catalogue are not designed to hold candles; candlesticks are listed under a separate heading. Thus, it must be inferred that they regarded 'statues' and 'candlesticks' as two distinctly different items with different functions. And in their sizes of 6in, 7in and 8in, only item No. 407 is a direct typological match at a height of 8in. The closest parallels for the 6in and 7in figures are items No. 405 and 406 at 5.25in and 7.25in respectively, selling for \$0.24 and \$0.50.

B. Glass Crucifix Pattern Candlesticks

The Benziger Brothers almost certainly bought and sold glass candlesticks manufactured by the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company and their competitors. In the Benziger listings for candlesticks, there are no figural examples. Only one style, No. 104, "Glass Candlesticks, Crucifix Pattern", was available in "Plain or White Glass" at 10in or 11.5in in height and priced at \$4.90 and \$6.90 per dozen, respectively.

The *Republic* religious artifacts do include examples in both green and white glass of 25cm height (9¾in), which are close to the dimensions of the Benziger entry. This is the only entry in the categories corresponding to the *Republic* religious artifacts that is accompanied by an illustration. However, with their four-tiered base and molded 'INRI' inscription above the head of the Christ figure, the *Republic* examples do not match the Benziger illustration with its six-tiered base and absence of the 'INRI' placard.

C. Small Colored Benziger 'Munich Statues'

The class of goods known as 'Munich statues' in the sale items from the 1874 Benziger catalogue are believed to have undoubtedly been the original line of 'sculpture' carried by the Benziger company because they are highly visible in the pre-1879 catalogues (Zalesch, 1999: 16). The catalogues describe Munich stations of the Cross as "figures painted in natural colors", which suggests that these products were painted with flesh tones and rich colors for clothing.

This category is listed in the 1874 Benziger catalogue and includes No. 516, "Adoring Angel, kneeling", at 6in high and priced at \$3.35. No. 517, "Adoring Angel, standing" is 8in and priced at \$3.10. Aside from apparent iron oxide staining, the kneeling angels on rectangular bases recovered from the *Republic* appear to bear traces of red and black pigmentation on their bases. At 10.7cm (4in) and 6.2cm (2½in) in height, both the standing and kneeling angels from the wreck were much smaller than those

listed in the Benziger catalogue. This smaller category has no listing.

Since the *Republic* departed from New York, where the Benzigers had established their first American branch in 1853, it is logical to propose that the crate of religious artifacts on the ship originated in this city. While there are indeed general similarities between the *Republic* collection and the Benziger products, the evidence is far from conclusive in confirming these merchants as distributors. Nevertheless, the Benziger catalogue examined dates from 1874, nine years after the *Republic* sank, and thus may represent a change in product lines available since the time when the New Orleans order was placed.

The earliest catalogue examined by Zalesch (1999) is labeled Number 21. If accessible, a catalogue dated closer to 1865 might reveal more merchandise with closer similarities to the *Republic*. When the ship sank, Benziger's New York operation had been active for 12 years. Even if the Benzigers had a hand in the *Republic*'s shipment, however, they were merely the end cog in a far more geographically wide wheel of import and distribution. Further research points to a European source and separate probable importer and wholesaler for the *Republic*'s porcelain figurines and porcelain candlesticks.

8. The Haviland Companies & the French Porcelain Trade

The subject matter of the Virgin Mary amongst the *Republic*'s porcelain figurines and candlesticks is very probably associated with apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Paris between July and December 1830 and at Lourdes in 1858. On the back of these revelations, a vibrant trade in religious goods, known as 'L'Art Saint-Sulpice', sprung up in France, where a small neighborhood in Paris had become famous for producing and marketing some of the material culture of mid-19th century Catholicism: holy water fonts, medals, statues, crucifixes and other objects essential to the many Catholic devotees across Europe and the United States (Laderman and Léon, 2003: 427; McDannell, 1995: 168).

By 1862 over 120 Parisian firms marketed mass-produced religious goods manufactured on site or in factories outside the city for the rapid spread of religious orders promoting new devotions. These varied 'objects of religion' were largely used in church decoration and domestic worship (McDannell, 1995: 168, 170). In tandem with these events, many 19th-century provincial porcelain manufacturers maintained decorating studios, sales offices and showrooms in Paris, from where merchants could readily acquire porcelain wares for further retail (pers. comm. Robert Doares, September 2009).

Throughout the early 19th century, merchants of New York and Philadelphia had supplied French porcelain to a relatively small and select American clientele, while the bulk of their trade consisted of reasonably priced English earthenware. All this changed in the early 1840s when New York's David Haviland, an importer of British Staffordshire china, traveled to Limoges in France and started to focus on the import of French porcelain into the United States on a huge scale (Wood and Doares, 2005: 24; pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009). Until recently, the story of Haviland's immigration to France and his transformation of the French porcelain industry has remained largely unexplored by ceramic scholars (pers. comm. Robert Doares, September 2009).

Haviland launched his business by purchasing French wares from Charles Pillivuyt of Vierzon and various factories around Limoges, but subsequently monopolized the market by becoming a licensed manufacturer of porcelain. The foundations of his factory were built in Limoges between 1853 and 1865. After 1870 his company evolved into the largest porcelain manufactory in France (Wood and Doares, 2005: 24-25).

Pre-Civil War porcelain imports into New York clearly reflect the transformative role played by the Haviland family in the French porcelain trade as David Haviland supplied his merchant brothers in New York and their customers in the American South with Limoges porcelains, ultimately becoming the leading purveyors of these wares (Wood and Doares, 2005: 24). Customs records document that in 1841 1,400 packages of French porcelain abruptly appeared in New York, for the first time outstripping the approximately 1,250 packages of imported English china. Several members of the New York Haviland family swiftly joined this French commercial revolution over the next years. By 1853, 8,594 packages of French china were reaching New York each year, compared to an ever-declining 374 packages of English wares. Two years later the Havilands were responsible for more than 50% of French porcelain exports to New York (Doares and Wood, 2007: 8).

The center of their commercial empire was near (and after 1865 located on) Barclay Street, fittingly home to St. Peter's, the first Catholic Church in New York (pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009; *New York Times*, 20 August 1916). Barclay Street developed into the heart of the city's trade in religious goods (McDannell, 1995: 170; Williams, 1991: 191). From the establishment of William Higgins' Catholic publishing and religious goods business there in 1817 and the arrival of Sadliers in 1860, followed by others such as the German firm Fr. Pustat & Co in 1865, and P.J. Kenedy and Sons in 1873, Barclay Street was a nest of bustling merchants and a ready-made wholesale market

(Healey, 1951: 34-5; Laderman and Léon, 2003: 427; McDannell, 1995: 170).

In 1852, D.G. and D. Haviland were based at 47 John Street, New York. From 1854, Haviland, Petini & Co started trading French imports in Manhattan. In 1857, Underhill, Haviland & Co. operated from 22 Vesey Street, while Haviland, Merritt & Co. were at 500 Broadway in 1863, and Haviland, Merritt & Co at 30 Barclay Street by 1868 (pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009).

Downtown Manhattan's Barclay Street district in effect became a Catholic cultural icon through establishments' sales of mass-produced Catholic-inspired goods that would later be known as 'Barclay Street Art', a derogatory term for books, statuary and other religious objects that were considered cheap and pretentiously pious (Laderman and Léon, 2003: 247; McDannell, 1995: 170). Yet, its booming presence symbolized American Catholicism's thriving culture.

In addition to supplying numerous downtown Manhattan-based china dealerships, the Haviland family also sold wholesale to other American porcelain traders. Advertisements from the pre-war period publicized auctions of French china imported by Haviland, which was purchased by other companies and then retailed further (pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009; Wood and Doares, 2005: 24;). This is an extremely plausible route by which the Benziger Brothers obtained their products.

The American South, in particular, was a notable major market for the Havilands' porcelain trade prior to the Civil War. The brothers of David Haviland, who had been engaged in the importation of pharmaceuticals and chemicals before he went to France, helped him exploit their well-established business connections in Charleston, South Carolina, Augusta, Georgia and Mobile, Alabama, in the two decades before the Civil War. In fact, the Southern trade was so important to the Haviland porcelain enterprise that it went bust in 1863 after the region's vital clientele was no longer accessible during the Civil War. That year the New York offices of Haviland Brothers and Company declared bankruptcy. In 1864, however, the French concern restructured under David Haviland's son Charles Edward as Haviland and Company, which flourished into the 20th century (pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009; Wood and Doares, 2005: 25).

Without comprehensive records, we are unlikely to determine with certainty what porcelains the various Haviland companies were buying or manufacturing in France and from which manufacturers in the 1845-65 period, before they were in full porcelain production themselves. Yet the deeply embedded role played by the Haviland companies in the French porcelain import trade during the 1860s strongly suggests they could have

certainly had a hand in the import, wholesale and/or distribution of the *Republic's* religious porcelains (pers. comm. Robert Doares, July 2009).

Documentary sources at Limoges are devoid of references to the production of religious objects before the sale of a crucifix by Baignol at la Seynie around 1790. Only after 1832, however, did biscuit-ware 'statues' of the Virgin Mary emerge following the inspiration of her appearance at Paris and later at Lourdes. After events at Lourdes, veneration of the Virgin Mary crossed to the United States through the import and distribution of Lourdes water and the dissemination of replica grottos, which not only served as material reminders of the power and influence of Mary but became an important element in Catholic devotional life in America (McDannell, 1998: 133).

The French revolution of 1848 served a *coup de grâce* that put many porcelain factories in Limoges out of business. In this sense the Limoges imports found on the wreck of the *Republic* may relate to a school of production dating between 1849 and 1865. In this period, and up to c. 1900, church sculpture was manufactured in myriad small factories across Limoges, including, as a random minor sample (D'Albis and Romanet, 1980: 100, 104, 112, 117, 122, 198):

- A factory of Michel Nivet, founded April 1826 at 15 rue de Paris. Two kilns and 116 workers. Wares were unstamped.
- A Factory of Ruaad, 1829-69. In 1844 the company had two kilns and 200 workers. Wares were unstamped.
- Henri Ardant & Cie., 1858-78. 6 de la rue Cruveihier. Specialized in biscuit ware and wares marked 'HA & C'.
- The House of François Pouyat, 1837-1912. Jean Pouyat established a modest factory at La place des Carmes in 1837. By 1844, his company operated two kilns and employed 128 people. Products were marked 'JP' with an 'L' below, 'L France' or 'J. Pouyat'.

While precise attribution to regions and factories is impeded by the absence of identifying factory marks on most mid-century French porcelain, the Virgin Mary figurines from the wreck of the *Republic*, however, display identical stylistic traits to examples that have been attributed to Limoges, including the same five-footed base drapery and belted form (D'Albis and Romanet, 1980: 197). The sole difference is in the treatment of the heads of the *Republic* examples, which are tilted to the left, while those on the Limoges 'statues' look modestly downward.

While the Havilands maintained an overwhelming presence in the Limoges porcelain trade, market competition thrived, in particular with Charles Ahrenfeldt, who

exploited the chaos which his competitors experienced during the Civil War years. Ahrenfeldt had established himself at Limoges as an exporter in 1859, and his operations were geared almost exclusively towards US customers. His company exported all kinds of merchandise from wine to 'bimbeloterie' and retained an extensive web of agents and correspondents in Berlin, Zurich, London, New York, San Francisco, Melbourne and Paris (D'Albis and Romanet, 1980: 164).

The commercial competition of Ahrenfeldt was apparently acute. In a letter of December 1866, Charles Edward Haviland complained of "des énormes bêtises que nous avons commises et des avantages que les autres prennent sur nous. Vogt, Charles Field [Haviland] et Ahrenfeldt prennent plus de commissions que jamais et chacun d'eux plus que nous... ils achètent tous ce qu'ils peuvent dans les fabriques" (D'Albis and Romanet, 1980: 164).³ Haviland did not appreciate being beaten to freshly fired goods by his competitors, particularly his cousin, Charles Field Haviland, who had acquired through marriage one of the largest porcelain factories in Limoges, and by the upstart Charles Ahrenfeldt. The year the *Republic* sank was a transitional one for Charles Edward Haviland, who continued to import other factories' products while struggling to launch into full whiteware production himself.

9. Conclusion: Religion & the Great Babylon of the South

The origin of the SS *Republic's* religious artifacts and the mechanism of their distribution to New Orleans can be reconstructed with a fair degree of probability. The figurines and candlesticks of porcelain were imported from Limoges on the back of France's status as the heartland of apparitions of the Virgin Mary. Long-distance trade enabled American customers to feel closer to the Madonna and thus ultimately to God. Very possibly shipped by members of the Haviland family, they would have been stored alongside Bibles, holy water from Lourdes and glass crucifix candlesticks manufactured by the Boston and Sandwich Glass Factory on warehouse shelves in or near Barclay Street in New York. But what was the religious and social context behind their final voyage to New Orleans?

At the simplest level, the increased demand for religious goods was stimulated by the growth in personal piety endorsed by the Catholic institutional hierarchy in conjunction with the Victorian protocol of filling the American home with material objects that nurtured Christian beliefs and doctrine. These practices evolved out of the centuries-old European Catholic tradition of the

'holy corner' set aside in private homes for personal prayer. The small size of the *Republic* religious artifacts, exemplified by the highly limited capacity of the holy water font basins, suited domestic rather than church use. Another relevant factor was the expansion of the Catholic parochial school system and its growing need for books and objects to support catechism lessons for American Catholic immigrant children (Primiano, 1991: 191).

Yet if the demand for the *Republic's* humble crate of objects represents a microcosm of mainstream religious trends, then more profound currents of demand may be proposed, including the rise of Catholicism through Irish immigration and the impact of war. New Orleans offered a perfect market of oppressed, down-trodden and god-fearing people. Between 1820 and 1860 over 550,000 immigrants arrived in the Crescent City, the second leading port of entry in the United States during the antebellum period following New York (Niehaus, 1965: 25).⁴

By 1850 the majority of New Orleans' white population was foreign-born. Irish Catholics, in particular, comprised more than half the city's population (Miller, 1999: 29, 36). While nearly 54,000 Germans had entered the port between 1820 and 1850, with a further 126,000 arriving in the next five years, most did not linger long in the city but continued on to the Midwest cities of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and further west to California. The German immigrants that remained in New Orleans in 1860 comprised about one-tenth of the city's population. New Orleans was also home to over 10,000 largely Catholic, French-born residents who mainly left France between 1840 and 1860 during the political disturbances preceding the Second *Republic* in 1848 and the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon in 1852 (Parrillo, 2008: 87). The appetite of the French for religious wares from their homeland is obvious.

By contrast, Irish immigrants who sailed with the cotton trade via Liverpool typically remained in New Orleans primarily because their funds afforded no passage further. The majority came after 1830 and consisted mainly of peasant Catholics who arrived in the pre-famine years or escaped Ireland's devastating potato blights of the 1840s. The city retained proud links with home: two years after the Irish famine of summer 1845, the Irish Relief Committee in New Orleans solicited \$50,000 for the starving back home (Niehaus, 1965: 35-6, 132).

Living conditions for new migrants were often deplorable, typified by open sewers in the streets and poor sanitation systems that contaminated drinking wells (Niehaus, 1965: 33; Parrillo, 2008: 86). The Irish were forced to compete for work with slaves and free blacks at the bottom of the food chain. Many ended up in dangerous, low-paying manual jobs such as the building of roads, levees and

railroads, laboring on the docks and in the warehouses, and digging ditches and canals (Miller, 1999: 30).

Disease and death among the Irish population was rampant in a city periodically swept by malaria, cholera, and yellow fever epidemics. The mortality rate was especially high for Irish canal workers.⁵ According to an 1833 report, 600 laborers died annually of 'the fever'. Other accounts estimated that seven out of 10 Irish working men succumbed to tropical disease. As the wave of immigration crested mid-century, the poor Irish arrivals were held responsible as both the importers of the scourge and as the source of the city's extended epidemics.

The spread of cholera was equally threatening to the Irish worker, peaking with 6,000 deaths during a three-week span in autumn 1832, followed by subsequent outbreaks in the succeeding antebellum decades. Nearly every Irish 'ditcher' was also exposed to malaria, easily spread by infective anopheles mosquitoes breeding in New Orleans' low-lying, swampy terrain. The virus frequently left its victim debilitated for years and in no condition to support his family (Niehaus, 1965: 31-2).

Despite the myriad difficulties encountered, as a whole the Irish survived this turbulent period and started to ascend the social and economic ladder (Niehaus, 1965: 58). By 1850, the Irish in New Orleans numbered around 25,000 people amidst an overall population of about 50,000 Catholics, and had become a dominant element in the city's Catholic Church, its most important institution. The Irish exerted a powerful voice in Church affairs and, significantly, in the Church's institutional expansion across the city (Miller, 1999: 37; Niehaus, 1965: 98, 110).

Around 1833 the Irish community obtained a city charter to buy land for the development of a profound new religious urban infrastructure, including orphanages, free parochial schools, hospitals, parish missions and confraternities ministering to a growing and diverse Catholic population. Devotional activities were encouraged through the dissemination of religious books, catechisms and devotional tools and aids, including holy cards, beads, statuary and other objects much like the *Republic's* cargo of religious-themed porcelain figurines and candlesticks (Miller, 1999: 32, 37; Niehaus, 1965: 98, 110-11). As the largest and most visible Catholic group, Irish Catholics increasingly defined American Catholicism by the mid-1850s.

Juxtaposed with the sacred Catholicism was the profoundly profane. The New Orleans of 1865 was a city that the faithful considered to be in desperate need of salvation. On reaching New Orleans in 1836, James Davidson, a young Virginian lawyer touring the Deep South, observed that "I am now in this great Southern Babylon – the mighty receptacle of wealth, depravity and

misery.” Unlike any other city in America, New Orleans tolerated prostitution as a bastion of commercial sexuality, which crossed the color line. Three months after Civil War ended in July 1865, the city leaders passed ordinance 6302 OS to establish behavioural requirements for “public prostitutes and women notoriously abandoned in lewdness” (Long, 2004: 2-4). It is not impossible that the *Republic’s* crate of religious objects was intended to serve as an aid to missionary work combating the great Southern Babylon.

Even without these varied contexts, each of which could explain the demand for the *Republic’s* religious objects, the widespread spiritual stirrings caused by war and death were without doubt the most significant catalyst for the growth in faith during the American Civil War. At the basest level religion provided comfort for the families of the 620,000 dead and led to changes in ideas of heaven from a rather distant and strange place to a home to which the boys would return. In the ten years following the war, 94 books on heaven were published, compared to fewer than one book a year before the war (Paludan, 1998: 30-1).

When it became clear that the hostilities would not be brief, the army was fed a steady print diet of evangelical sermons as explanations of the Confederate cause. In 1863 the Church published five new papers: *The Soldier’s Friend; Army and Navy Messenger; The Soldiers’ Visitor; The Soldier’s Paper;* and *the Army and Navy Herald*. As the Reverend Stiles wrote in ‘Fruits of the Revival in the Army’ in *The Soldier’s Visitor* of September 1863:

“The simplest way to convert a nation is to convert its army. Fire all the young men of great people with the spirit of Christianity, and now disband them and send them home to make all the laws, fill all the offices, control all the families, and inspirit all the churches of the land – and what... could prevent that whole nation from being carried over bodily to the Lord’s side.”

It has been argued that the Church took advantage of the psychological trauma of soldiers’ daily encounters with death to proclaim the gospel of peace, happiness and hope. By December 1864 an estimated 140,000 soldiers in the Confederate army had converted to Christ (Berends, 1998: 132, 135, 137, 146). With the Catholic population in the war numbering 200,000 men, of which 145,000 were Irish, this increasingly vocal group of Americans also saw the war as a way to advance Irish nationalism by linking it with the defence of the American republic (Miller, 1998: 265, 273).

The same trauma of reality and uncertainty hit home hard, where Confederate women too found justification

and consolation in God. They organized regular prayer groups in towns and villages across the South because, as a young New Orleans mother recorded, “If it was not for religion that keep me up, I would kill myself” (Faust, 1998: 251, 253).

In the absence of specific documentary evidence, the psychology underlying the commercial demand for the modest crate of religious objects shipped and lost on the SS *Republic* eludes us. However, of all cities of all ages across America, the great Southern Babylon of New Orleans perhaps needed all the divine inspiration and help it could get in the dark days at the very end of the American Civil War. Limoges in France, the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company and the Haviland brothers emerge as the most likely protagonists to have profited from this new market.

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Notes

1. Discrepancy exists between the number of objects recorded as recovered during the excavation of the *Republic* and catalogued post-conservation. The authors prefer to use the original numbers as viewed *in situ* and during recovery through DVD-based research.
2. Excavations in Jerusalem in 1968 discovered the bones of a crucified 24-28 year-old male in a 1st century AD burial cave, including a right heel-bone with an 11.5cm-long iron nail hammered through it (Gibson, 2009: 110). This evidence suggests that in some cases Roman soldiers seem to have used the heel bone to secure the crucified person in place and to prevent premature falling out of position.
3. Tr.: “the great mistakes which we have committed and the advantages that the others make over us. Vogt, Charles Field [Haviland] and Ahrenfeldt take more commissions than ever and each of them more than us ... they buy everything that they can in the factories.”
4. See: *The Cabildo, Antebellum Louisiana: Immigration* (Louisiana State Museum): <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/cabildo/cab1.htm>.
5. Supra Note 4.

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