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1. This essay is the result of several conversations I have been fortunate to have participated in over the last year. I am grateful to Sally Promey and the Sensory Cultures of Religion Group at Yale University, Janet Hoskins and the Department of Anthropology at USC, and Michelle Molina of Northwestern University. Each invitation provided the opportunity for stimulating conversations on the topic of religion and materiality. UC Riverside graduate students in my seminar on material religion in the Department of Religious Studies in the spring of 2012 also aided my thinking on this topic. Professor Linda Barnes of Boston University responded to a paper I presented on the agency of objects at the AAR in 2011. The invitation to begin thinking about "evidence" along these lines first came from Kelly Baker. Jalane Schmidt read and provided helpful comments on an early draft.

2. For a comprehensive treatment of this incident see ch. 6, "The Gentle Devotions of a Rebellious People," in *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix*.

3. Here I disagree with Michael Taussig, who defines the fetish as "an animated entity that can dominate persons" (Tausig 1980, 25, as cited by Pels 1998).

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## Historical Cookbooks in the Study of American Religion

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### Introduction

The nineteenth century was a period in which Protestant Christians "prayed to a usually friendly God, believed that the Bible was literally true, and [were] oriented strongly toward home and family" ("Victorianism" 2000). It was also a time in which Protestant visions of a Victorian America emphasized the role of wife and mother in the shaping of one's moral character, something that happened first in the home. Of these Protestant groups, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians had the highest number of adherents, and it was these denominations that helped to establish the ideals toward which Victorian women were expected to aspire.<sup>1</sup>

It was also during this period that women began to outnumber men in Protestant church attendance. This was in part due to shifting labor patterns, as men

became more distanced from the home and family life following the Industrial Revolution (1820–1870). As husbands' and fathers' demanding work schedules required their presence at the mill, mine, and factory, wives and mothers were expected to take on domestic duties that were once shared by the sexes. As Colleen McDannell notes in *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900*, the gender divide was further emphasized by the "liberal theology [of] the nineteenth century combin[ing] with the cult of domesticity to create" what scholars like Ann Douglas have called "the feminization of American culture" (McDannell 1986, 18).

The implications for the rise of feminine religious power during this era are not to be ignored. As women became more influential than ever in the home and in family life, their presence became more pronounced in social arenas. Post-Civil War Amer-

ica saw an increase in women's public roles with the advent of social activism through movements like those for suffrage and temperance. As women fought for the freedom to voice their public opinion with the right to vote as equal United States citizens, one finds that female social movements demonstrate the ways in which Victorian women gained power by employing their deep religious ideals.

Despite these advances, however, women's primary responsibilities remained within the home. Because the women of this period are so closely associated with their domestic roles, it is through female-authored domestic texts from this period that one can gain a better understanding of the daily lives of Victorian American women. Beyond diaries and journals, women's cookbooks, in particular women's church community cookbooks, serve as an additional source for intimate domestic information from the period. While magazines, newspapers, and novels were authored by women in the nineteenth century, their cookbooks offer rare and more detailed glimpses into their domestic lives and practices. It is through these texts that we come to see the many ways in which the faith of Protestant Christian women intersected with nearly every aspect of their lives.

In this analysis of charitable cookbooks (or "charities" as culinary historian Janice Bluestein Longone calls them) the books—as gendered texts written by women for women—contain far more than instructions for meal preparation (Longone 1997, 18). While there has been considerable scholarship produced about female domesticity and Christian practice during the nineteenth century in America, there has been less written about using cookbooks as primary historical documents to study the relationship between the two. In part this lack of attention is perhaps because "charities" from the nineteenth century were used in the daily kitchen work of many women, and the sources that have survived this usage are scarce. As a result I have found that little work has been done on the textuality of the books. This is especially my task here, as I attempt to identify the various ways in which the "charities" can be read to identify and analyze the connections between Victorian women, their food practices, and their domestic and religious lives.

I have organized this study into the following categories for the ways in which the cookbooks can be read beyond directions for baking bread or concocting home remedies for colds and stain removal. I read

these additional sources as *paratexts*, or materials that go beyond the intended purpose of the books. This includes period artwork and advertisements, life and religious recipes, and additional materials (prefaces, other religiously inspired contributions, stains on the books) specific to the communities writing them. In all of these alternative approaches to charitable cookbook reading I am interested in extracting the ways in which the texts are demonstrative of nineteenth-century female religious life, and of period social roles and expectations for women. This broad reading is also intended to reveal the many facets of textuality that this literary genre encompasses.<sup>2</sup>

## Women and Literature in Victorian America

Before discussing the cookbooks specifically, it is important to briefly address nineteenth-century women's relationships to literature. In Kate Flint's *The Woman Reader: 1837–1914*, the author asserts that prevalent images depicting nineteenth-century female readership reveal a number of things about who was reading and what kind of literature they had access to. According to Flint, images of Victorian women typically depict female reading as a "leisure activity," and that a "formal education" is implied (Flint 1993, 10). From this one can also note that education, whether at home or in a school, was undertaken to prepare women for their work in the home as mothers. While Flint's study is primarily focused on the reading habits of British women during this period, one finds similar trends in America. Victorian American women were also expected to be their children's first teachers. The Victorian home was the "nursery of both patriotism and piety," as it was in the home that children first learned about faith and society (McDannell 1986, 164). The lessons that one learned at home shaped future generations, and as a result the future of the country.

Victorian women were not only the consumers of texts, but were also involved in their production as authors. Women during this period wrote novels, school books, religious texts, domestic manuals, and magazine articles. While female literature was often received well by other women, it was for the most part regarded by men as being less serious and less relevant than male produced literature from the same period.<sup>3</sup> One realizes the considerable contribution of women to nineteenth-century literature, however, when one considers that Britain and America alone

produced such writers as the Brontë sisters, Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, Mary Shelley, and the Beecher sisters during this brief period of time. Margaret Fuller and Catharine Beecher (one of the three Beechers), also at the forefront of early feminist literature during the era, were not only “domestic theorists,” but vocal “proponents for the higher education of women” (Tonkovich 1997, xiii).

Domestic literature was a genre more widely available to women writers, and it is this type of female writing for which we have examples from the period. From guides for running a household to manuals for childrearing to cookbooks, women produced texts for other women as aids for marriage and motherhood. The home and in particular the kitchen became channels through which women could act out their superior domestic authority, exercising their influence in an otherwise male-controlled world. Domestic duties, including cooking, became for women work that they were able to control, often when they controlled little else (McFeely 2000, 1). It is for this reason that cookbooks from the period are so valuable to historians as primary texts. They offer readers an intimate window into the daily lives and struggles of Victorian women.

### Reading Cookbooks as Historical Documents

One of the biggest challenges that scholars of cookbook literature face today is that cookbooks are typically associated with domestic rather than academic study. Domestic work and texts have historically been viewed as commonplace, and therefore not worthy of careful scholarly exegesis. Only in recent years have scholars come to “accept that any number of texts, institutions, and events can be ‘interpreted’ ” as histories (Bower 1997, 6). Similar to other period writings, cookbooks have begun to be read as primary documents for contemporaneous information.

Although there are many examples of church community cookbooks that have been published from the nineteenth century through the present day, I have found that the best cookbooks for historical inquiry are those from the American Victorian period. This is in part because charitable cookbooks are themselves largely an invention of the nineteenth century. “Charities” had become an “integral” part of the American publishing business by the 1860s, and found resurgence after the Civil War with ladies’ organizations seeking to raise funds for the “victims

of the war—orphans, widows, the wounded, veterans” (Longone 1997, 18). These early examples of the genre are highly useful representations of the period from which they come and the individuals who compiled them. While modern charitable cookbooks are produced from generic templates and are relatively uniform in structure, the composition of the early texts widely varies between communities, and contains far more detailed information about the daily lives of the contributing authors.

As a result, when reading the nineteenth-century texts one is struck by their value as period sources. These texts bring to light historical, industrial, social and domestic norms, offering information about foodways, ethnic and class diets, religious life, and advice from seasoned homemakers to younger generations of aspiring moral matriarchs. It is especially through the supplementary passages in nineteenth-century “charities” that one finds a vast wealth of information about Protestant Christian women and their domestic lives.

### Paratexts

When analyzing the structure of any historical piece of writing one often encounters some form of *paratext*, or additional written material included in the document that falls outside of the central body of information in the text. As Gérard Genette argues in his *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997), paratexts serve as thresholds of information between the reader and the main body of the text. The additional material can include anything: the book’s cover, the formatting of the book, or the citations in the text. In the case of the nineteenth-century cookbooks that I have researched, this also includes period artwork and advertisements, recipes for living a religious life, and additional materials (prefaces, other religiously inspired contributions, stains on the books) specific to the communities writing them.

As “thresholds” paratexts perform a liminal function in texts, providing a space in which the reader is exposed to new layers of meaning and interpretation not otherwise apparent in the main body of the text. While much of Genette’s interpretation of paratexts lies outside of the boundaries of my analysis of nineteenth-century cookbooks, it is his basic premise of paratexts as thresholds for reading that I employ here.



## Artwork and Advertising

Although the advent of color photography has made enticing photos of food in modern cookbooks a tool for marketing, charitable cookbooks of the past contain few images, if any at all. This is in part because the cost of including images, photographic or otherwise, exceeded that of merely printing text. Because these books were produced with the intention of raising funds for charitable aid of some kind, images are most likely not included in an effort to curb printing expenses in order to yield the highest possible profit.

Despite sparse illustrations, the limited artwork in Victorian charitable cookbooks has a story to tell. While “charity” cookbook covers will periodically include an illustration of some kind, these depictions are very rare, and most texts have a plain, dark-colored cover, with simple lettering, and occasionally a small ornamentation of a flower or other delicate decoration.



(Figure 1) Due to the success of the earlier *Pilgrim Cook Book No. 1* this second volume was published. The image on the front of the text depicts a seventeenth-century woman on her way to church, illustrating the nineteenth-century Protestant revival of Puritan ideals.

2, written by the Ladies of the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Lansing, Michigan (1901) (Figure 1).

The cover of this particular book is religiously inspired, featuring an image of a warmly cloaked, pre-

sumably seventeenth-century woman, holding her Bible as she walks through the snow to a small log church building in a clearing. This cover evokes an almost nostalgic vision of the fashion and centrality of worship in the past. The image of the pilgrim, a symbol of America’s Puritan roots, was a popular one in the artwork of the nineteenth century, and is in this case a clever nod to the Pilgrim Congregational Church, as the woman in the image makes her snowy pilgrimage to worship.

Most of the images that one encounters inside of the cookbooks are in the context of advertisements. Cookbooks from this earlier period sometimes contain few advertisements, while others contain many. These ads are particularly valuable as sources for additional historical information, as they use images to promote their products to a specific client. Because the majority of “charities” were being published for fundraising purposes, it only made sense for the ladies compiling the texts to ask for advertisers to make contributions to their volumes in exchange for advertisement space. Donations from advertisers would undoubtedly have helped to significantly offset printing costs, so that more of the funds raised by the sale of the cookbooks could go to the worthy causes that the ladies were supporting. At first glance these ads may not seem significant, but on closer inspection they are often the most valuable source of historical information in the books.

As Alan Grubb notes in his study of cookbooks from the American Victorian South, “for historians, particularly social historians...nineteenth-century cookery and household books may actually be [the] *most valuable* [of] period sources, for they represent a kind of ‘populist’ literature” (Grubb 1991, 159). This “populist literature” is not restricted to the recipes in the books, but extends into the books’ paratexts, and is particularly apparent in the books’ advertisements. These ads usually fall into one of two categories: advertisements depicting an actual image of the Victorian feminine ideal, and advertisements that use language to describe this ideal.

In the first instance, advertisements remind their readers that one’s appearance in the Victorian period was an outward expression of one’s inward moral character. Catherine Beecher and others warned that though a woman should be “in haste to be in fashion,” it was crucial that she not “go to the extremes” (Beecher 1856, 154). This is depicted in an advertisement from the *Tried and Approved Recipes* cookbook

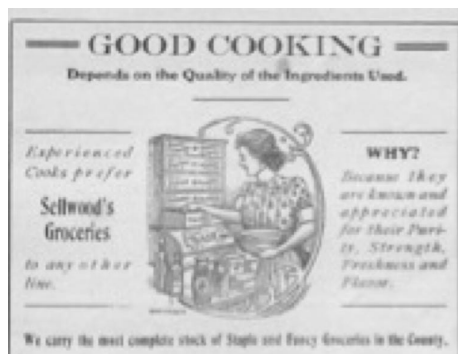
by the Epworth League of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Barnesville, Ohio (*Tried and Approved Recipes* 1907, 1) (Figure 2). In this image one finds the idealized Victorian female: hair tidy and swept up, clothing neat and feminine, accessorized by a cross around her neck as an outward sign of her Christian faith. This image serves as historical evidence of the Victorian woman's responsibility to not only have a moral, becoming inner self, but also a matching exterior to serve as an example for others.



(Figure 2) *Charity* cookbook marketing presented readers with illustrations of the physical embodiment of a well-kept, stylish, Christian woman.

also a matching exterior to serve as an example for others.

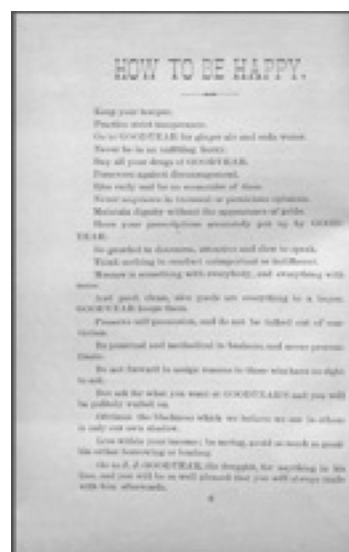
The second category of advertisements, those that depict feminine ideals without the use of personified images, typically apply moral attributes to the goods that they are marketing. An example of this type of ad can be found in the *Superior Cook Book* compiled by the Ladies of Grace Church in Ishpeming, Michigan (*Superior Cook Book* 1905, 115) (Figure 3). This advertisement suggests that the company's products are known not only for their "Freshness and Flavor," but for their "Purity" and "Strength"—two basic Victorian feminine attributes in an era when women were expected to be models of virtue. In this example, desired moral and culinary characteristics are assigned to commodity goods in an effort to market to a moral, Christian, female audience.



(Figure 3) This advertisement for a grocery markets goods known for their "Purity" and "Strength," qualities that were also desirable traits for Victorian women.

Other advertisements in this second category use language to market their businesses in a way that could appeal to a woman's desire to meet the expectations of Victorian society. For instance, in an advertisement for a druggist, one finds a list of ways in which a Victorian American woman could

achieve happiness (Figure 4). This list includes keeping one's temper, "practicing temperance," never being in an "unfitting hurry," and remembering that "ofttimes the blackness which we believe we see in others is only our own shadow" (*The Jubilee Cook Book* 1887, 6). The advice in this particular advertisement is aimed toward the cultivation of a patient and prudent female character. Between lines of sound advice, the advertisement intersperses the name of the company: "buy all of your drugs" at GOODYEAR's and come to GOODYEAR's "and you will be politely waited on," again merging marketing and morality.



(Figure 4) Advertisements like this one synthesized marketing and morality.

This second category of advertisements also includes ads that use explicitly Christian imagery or language to appeal to potential customers. In this case one can turn again to the *The Pilgrim Cook Book* in which an advertisement for a department store depicts a stout Victorian gentleman in a top hat and waistcoat, reminding readers that "Eve was the first maid...though the male representatives of the genus homo have always claimed that Adam was the first made" (*The Pilgrim Cook Book* 1901, 14) (Figure 5). In this advertisement the reference of feminine deference to masculine authority in Genesis is cleverly applied to nineteenth-century gender labor divisions. The advertisements in the texts come to synthesize Victorian womanhood, Christian practice, and domesticity.

The information in both of these categories extends far beyond the main body of recipes in these texts, offering a historical context for Victorian female virtuosity. While there has been considerable effort



(Figure 5) Advertisements like this one appealed to the religiously-minded consumer.

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by historians who study this era to break down stereotypes about the Victorian female character, when reading cookbooks from the period these generalizations about white, Protestant, middle-class Victorian women are upheld by the very populations that historians have been trying to defend. Having read the cookbooks beyond their recipes for food, I argue that the texts reveal that Victorian female stereotypes and feminist interpretations of Victorian femininity are not mutually exclusive ways for defining Victorian women's lives.

Having studied this period in American history more extensively, I agree with feminist historian Barbara Welter's assessment that nineteenth-century women were not always the mythically depicted, petite white women whose "obligation" it was to "uphold the pillars of the temple with [their] frail white hand[s]" (Welter 1966, 152). Nor do I fully agree with Frances B. Cogan's assertion that there was an unnamed counter-ideal for "real women" of the Victorian period that appealed to a larger number of women faced with the many challenges of the day (Cogan 1989, 4). Instead, my research has shown that in white, Protestant, middle-class communities of women, these ideals were very much intertwined. While there was an actual and not merely imagined, moral feminine ideal for docile, composed women, the charitable cookbooks reveal that these attributes were just that—*ideals*.

Community cookbooks are useful in this analysis because they are gendered texts. Through these works, "women were not only readers and writers, [but] they became authors" (Theophano 2003, 188). Though their voices were not always heard in other public forums, the women from this era strove to share their expertise and ideas with each other through the venues that were available to them, including domestic texts. These groups of cookbook compilers came to form textual communities inside of their religious communities; groups of women who shared their advice on the home and family, and who shared their gender ideals with one another.

While nineteenth-century "charities" present an idealized Victorian female in their advertisements, one must keep in mind that this was most likely a social expectation, and perhaps more interestingly, that the ads in these books were typically contributed by male business owners. One can argue then that the female ideal presented in these advertisements was constructed by Victorian men. When one reads para-

texts from the cookbooks, one finds a sympathetic female awareness of the challenges of Victorian womanhood, as well as a unique view of gender relations during the period.

### Life and Religious Recipes

Despite the many comforts that an increasingly secure middle-class existence afforded many Protestant Victorian women in the nineteenth-century, everyday life was still beset by many challenges. Religious practice and belief was particularly significant in a time in which child mortality rates were still relatively high in the United States. While all members of a family would undoubtedly be affected by the untimely death of another family member, women in particular were touched by this grief. Wives and mothers assuredly lived in constant worry, as "the lives of Nineteenth century women were threatened first by the diseases of [their own] childhood, then by...childbearing" (Green 1983, 166). With infant mortality rates especially high, even after childbirth a mother's fears would often have been realized in the reality of pain, sickness, and the sadness of death.

Beyond these more solemn and severe concerns, Victorian women also bore the burden of running an efficient household. As feminist scholar Elizabeth Langland observes in her analysis of the Victorian novel, "the wife, the presiding hearth angel of the Victorian social myth, sat at the center of the family, acting as moral guide and teacher" (Langland 1992, 290). This fictive feminine ideal was in fact not entirely mythical, as it was the Victorian mother's duty to teach her children how to live a moral life, and to live her own life as an example to her family. With her many responsibilities there is no doubt that this was not always a simple task.

Another paratext of the "charities," what I have come to call "life recipes," acknowledges the challenges that Victorian women undoubtedly faced in their roles as moral matriarchs. When conducting my research on Victorian charitable cookbooks one of the most intriguing things that I encountered was the inclusion of recipes for life. These recipes are most often interspersed with the food recipes in the books, and share their traditional recipe format. Many of these "recipes" include advice for marital equilibrium, containing instructions for such things as "How to Preserve a Husband"—the intended outcome of which is a happy marriage (*The Ludington Cook Book* 1891, 136).



In the many steps of this “recipe” one finds suggestions for how to select the best “ingredients”: “not...too young, and take only such varieties as have been reared in a good, moral atmosphere,” as well as how to prepare “poor varieties” should one find her choice unsatisfactory. Preparation instructions suggest that a wife needs only to “garnish” her spouse “with patience, well sweetened with smiles,” should things in the marriage go sour. Similarly, one finds “recipes” for things like “Marriage Cake” and “A Happy Day” in the “charities” from this period. These recipes include “ingredients” that are Victorian values such as faithfulness, patience, industry, purity, cheerfulness, and common sense. When all of these are mixed together, the result is “domestic happiness” and a “well-spent day” (*Twentieth Century Cook Book* 1913, 24).

One also encounters life recipes that offer warnings against unbecoming behavior. For instance, a “recipe” for “Misery Sauce” calls for a pound of envy and a quart of tears, while a “Recipe for Quarreling” instructs a woman to first “take a root of sassafras and steep it in a pint of water,” then to “put it in a bottle and when [her] husband comes in to quarrel, [to] fill her mouth with it and hold it until he goes away” (*Twentieth Century Cook Book* 1913, 149). While these “recipes” are amusing and witty, it is important to remain aware of the practical advice that women shared with one another through them. In all of these “life recipes,” the emphasis is for women as wives and mothers to maintain their composure despite the challenges that they face in their female roles. These additional recipes, as paratexts, also remind us as historians of the nineteenth century that Victorian women were thought of as morally superior to their male counterparts, and were supposed to serve as examples to their husbands, as well as their children.

In addition to recipes for life, one also encounters recipes that are religiously inspired. Some even take scripture-like formats. One of the most popular from this period, which has persisted in church community cookbooks to this day, is that for “Bible” or “Scripture” cake. A recipe that is present in many religious cookbooks from this period, “Scripture Cake” becomes at once a recipe for food and a Bible lesson. This recipe usually takes one of two forms. In the first, the recipe is written out: 1 cupful of butter...Judges 5:25, 3 ½ cups of flour...I Kings 4:22, and so on (*Twentieth Century Cook Book* 1913, 25). In the

second, the baker is expected to have a much more cultivated awareness of biblical texts, and is simply instructed to use 1 cup of Judges 5:25, 3 ½ cups of I Kings 4:22, and so forth (*New Crumbs of Comfort* 1906, 86). In both recipes the purpose of the format is two-fold: to prepare a cake while also using the time for scripture study. In a Protestant denominational culture in which the Bible was central to one’s Christian practice and religious understanding, this recipe for Scripture Cake was both clever and practical.

In all of these non-traditional recipes, one finds references to the many expectations for nineteenth-century female domestic and religious life. While the recipes for food in these texts can tell us quite a bit about the types of food that were being produced and eaten during this period, the historical context of the recipes would not be as apparent without the non-traditional recipe paratexts. It is these additional sources which form Genette’s “threshold” between the nineteenth-century recipe contributors and their twenty-first century audience.

### Additional Paratexts

When reading community cookbooks as historical documents, they serve as “maps of the social and cultural worlds” from which they come (Theophano 2003, 13). It is important to note here that not all nineteenth-century “charities” contain all, or in some cases, any of the paratexts that I have identified here. I argue, however, that a sufficient enough number of cookbooks contain paratexts, making the additional sources crucial to one’s reading of “charities.” In addition to the artwork, advertisements, life and religious “recipes” in the cookbooks, the texts contain further paratexts that can be analyzed. Paratexts include preface material, additional forms of religious guidance, and even stains on the books. Each of these additional paratexts serves as a further “threshold” between the main body of recipes in the texts and the women who wrote them. Through these additions one learns even more about the close connection between women and their religious and domestic lives during this era.

Some of the “charities” have prefaces explaining the intentions of the compilers in creating their texts. These passages include statements regarding the book’s content, suggesting that the recipes within are tried and true. The texts are also “poised between generations and between members of fami-

lies and faith communities" (Theophano 2003, 187). As testament to the value of the books as advice from older generations to younger ones some texts are dedicated "to all of the housewives...throughout the land who are aiming at greater perfection in the art of cooking" (*Twentieth Century Cook Book* 1913, 7). In other introductions the books are marketed to "housekeepers old and young, experienced and inexperienced," suggesting that domestic knowledge is not merely defined by age (*The Jubilee Cook Book* 1887, 18). These dedications are used both to appeal to potential buyers, and to present the women producing and purchasing the texts as one, usually local, textual community of authors and readers.

Other "charities" include biblically inspired additions. An example of such an addition, the "Commandments that Rule Housekeepers," echoes the biblical Ten Commandments. These instructions for housekeepers catalog Victorian feminine ideals similar to those found in the "life recipes" discussed above. These include things like making sure that the household is maintained in a way "so that the comfort, health, and well being of every member shall be insured," seeing to it "that every part of the home is kept clean always, because dirt is degrading and brutalizing and leads to disease and crime," and "do[ing] everything by example, by influence, by encouragement, and by sympathy, to make those who dwell under the roof good and virtuous" (*Twentieth Century Cook Book* 1913, 3). All of these were to be strived for with a cheerful and willing heart, as it was believed that "a clean and pleasant home [would create] a place for the inculcation of proper middle-class values" (Green 1983, 59). As additional paratexts, passages such as the "Commandments that Rule Housekeepers" serve as further examples of the ways in which religious and domestic life were inextricably linked for nineteenth-century middle-class Protestant women.

I must emphasize here that the ideals being espoused in these books, through their texts and paratexts, were not merely the invention of the individual women creating them, but were very much the product of a wide variety of influences on women during this period. From *Godey's* magazine to the more formal domestic volumes by sisters Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, expectations for Victorian female decorum permeated literature by women for women, suggesting that the majority of middle-class Victorian women endeavored toward "patterns

of normative domesticity" (Tonkovich 1997, 173).

Even the stains in the "charities" can be "read" for information about the people who owned them. As domestic texts, cookbooks are used on a regular basis, and they show it. Their pages creased, their corners worn, with missing covers and handwritten additions, the "charities" reveal their histories through their condition. In one favorite example of this, I came across a cookbook in my research that ended with a recipe for homemade wine. The entire page that the recipe was on and the back cover of the book were visibly stained purple, presumably from the previous owner's attempts to make the recipe. While these sorts of paratexts require a little imagination and speculation on the part of the reader, the wine stain connected the person making the wine with their cookbook, and as a result with me reading the recipe as many as a hundred years later.

## Conclusions

The nineteenth century was a period in which women were beginning to enter the public sphere in a number of ways. From the temperance and female suffrage movements, to the increased power and presence of women in Protestant Christian churches, women's voices were emerging in forums outside of the home. Despite these advances, middle-class women of the period continued to be restricted in many ways to the domestic realm. Even lower-class women who entered the workforce typically were employed as domestic laborers. It seemed as though women could not be separated from the domestic sphere and the work involved in maintaining it.

One of the ways in which women asserted their opinions and gained power during this era was through writing. From magazine articles, to religious and educational materials, to novels, and domestic manuals, women made their voices heard through the literature that they produced. Domestic texts such as cookbooks were particularly popular platforms for women to share not only their recipes for food, but their advice on Victorian female life. This is especially apparent in charitable cookbooks published by church community ladies' organizations in the nineteenth century. In these texts one finds a considerable wealth of information about the ways in which women's domestic and religious lives intersected during this religiously and culturally tumultuous period in American history between the Civil



War and the First World War.

In the "charities" from this period one encounters a variety of paratexts or additional writings, which serve as "thresholds" for further historical interpretation. These paratexts produce liminal states between writing and readership in which the historical context and world of the cookbook compilers becomes increasingly apparent to the modern-day historian. Through artwork and advertisements, recipes for religion and for life, preface materials, familiar religious references, and even the stains on the books, the gap between nineteenth-century writer and twenty-first century reader grows increasingly smaller as the many facets of the cookbooks emerge.

It is also through these paratexts that one fully realizes the nineteenth-century Protestant Christian emphasis on living a moral and virtuous life. As wives and mothers, women were expected and encouraged to strive for a feminine ideal that would allow them to live as examples for their families and communities. While striving for moral perfection was undoubtedly a challenge in a time in which one most likely did not always feel cheerful or charitable, patient or forgiving, women's domestic texts served as constant reminders of the ideal attributes of a model matriarch. Although the Victorian social myth began to fade into the past as the twentieth century progressed and saw the successes of the female temperance and suffragist causes, the texts that women produced during this era of great change remain. These texts serve as reminders of the ways in which women approached their domestic and social worlds, as wives, as mothers, as readers, and as writers.

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### Notes

1. While there are certainly similarities between the British and American Victorian periods, they are not the same. The British Victorian period is defined by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901). The years of the American Victorian period are not fixed and are interpreted by historians as falling during different time frames depending upon different contexts. In this paper I define the Ameri-

can Victorian period as the time between the end of the United States Civil War (1865) and the beginning of the First World War (1914). The cookbooks that I refer to in this paper were published between 1881 and 1913.

2. The cookbooks that I use as case studies in this paper come from "Feeding America: The Historic Cookbook Project of Michigan State University" and the Peacock-Harper Culinary Collection at Virginia Polytechnic and State University. These collections are among the most comprehensive found in North America and are available as scanned files through the libraries' websites, allowing for easy accessibility and printing. The texts were written by Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, and Congregationalist communities.

3. In an 1855 letter to his publisher, Nathaniel Hawthorne complained about the "damned mob of scribbling women," fearing that he "should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash" (Frederick 1975, 231).

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## Hardcore Scholarship and High School Cliques

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It has been well over a decade now since I had my first job interviews at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting. At that time I was a graduate student writing my dissertation, which would later become my first book, *Making the American Religious Fringe: Exotics, Subversives, and Journalists, 1955-1993*. My sources for it consisted of a plethora of articles from a variety of mass market magazines and religious periodicals. My questions were twofold: how did these print media variously (and sometimes quite similarly) represent "religion" and "religions" and why? What eventually emerged from these questions was a study that 1) provided a genealogy of terms such as "fringe," "sectarian," "cultic," and "mainstream," and also 2) proposed a Bourdieu-inspired analysis of what I called a "journalistic habitus" that fomented coverage in the largest periodicals, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U. S. News and World Report* (McCloud 2004). I prepared for my three interviews by imagining the kinds of questions that might be asked, such as "tell us about your dissertation," "tell us how you would teach our \_\_\_ course," and "tell us about your post-dissertation research plans." One of my interviews with a large public institution con-

sisted of precisely those sorts of questions. But the other two were not quite what I expected and not something I had planned for.

My second interview was with a small and very wealthy private college. It began with one of the interviewers asking why I thought that my dissertation had "anything to do with religious studies." I answered that one trajectory in the academic study of religion that fascinated me involved the study of categories and boundaries. My project was interested in how journalists defined—and in effect constituted—religion and allowed me to consider what kinds of cultural work such categories as "mainstream" and "fringe" did. Upon hearing this, a second man at our table of four said something under his breath about how that "seems more journalistic." The remaining few minutes of the interview consisted of the first professor telling me that my study failed to focus on any single "denomination" (his term) and thus it suggested that I was "a dabbler in a lot of things but a master of nothing." I smiled and remained quiet, wondering if they had scheduled me into their day just so they could chide me (because they certainly had no interest in interviewing me). My third and