Bread of Heaven: Food and Material Culture in the Churches of Christ in Victoria

A thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree
Master of Arts

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations iv

Abstract vi

Chapters

Introduction 1

1. Setting the Table

The development of Lord’s Supper theology and practice in Churches of Christ 5

Setting the table for afternoon tea: women’s ministry in and out of the kitchen 16

2. Women’s Recipe Books and their Interpretation 20

3. Material Culture and the Churches of Christ 32

First Known Communion Cup 40

Remember Me – Hawthorn’s Chalices 47

Communion Travel Set 67

Harvest Thanksgiving Photographs 75

4. Recipe Books at Bayswater 85

5. Concluding Reflection 103

Appendix 108

Bibliography 109
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mooroolbark Church of Christ members, 1903</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of the South Melbourne Sower Band holding jonquils, 1903</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelist’s chart, c. 1920s</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Church of Christ, South Australia, 1948</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Known Communion Cup to be Used by Our Brethren in Victoria, c.1860</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair of chalices from Hawthorn Church of Christ, c.1870</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion travel set, c. 1930-60</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Bayswater Church of Christ, late 1950s</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Tumby Bay Church of Christ, S.A., 1957</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display detail at Bayswater Church of Christ, 1960</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Kingaroy Church of Christ, 1940s</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Bayswater Church of Christ, 1968</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Bayswater Church of Christ, 1970s</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, 1970s or early 80s</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, early 80s</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, 1985</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, mid-1980s</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, early 80s</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest display at Oakleigh Church of Christ, 1982-3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-painted cover for <em>Favourite Recipes</em></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page of <em>Favourite Recipes</em></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Recipes</em>, 1971</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Family Favourites</em></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page of <em>Morning Christian Women’s Fellowship Recipes</em></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recipes for Life, 1990

Brunswick Church of Christ men and communion vessels, 1903
ABSTRACT

In Churches of Christ in Victoria the liturgical foods of bread and (non-alcoholic) wine are the central focus of each worship service, which is often followed with a cup of tea and a slice. Harvest Thanksgiving festivals have tied working lives to the spiritual. Providing food to the needy or raising money through selling cakes, pies and lamingtons have formed the backbone of women’s ministry through social service. Recipe books have been produced for fundraising purposes, evolving out of the shared experience of eating and the food preparation undertaken by women cooking for the annual calendar of church dinners and picnics. It is indeed a food-rich religious world.

This thesis explores the material evidence of several artefacts and non-literary print documents for the insight they offer into the life of the worshipping community that produced them. For Churches of Christ in Victoria and Australia, this will be the first study on material culture and the first historical discussion of food in liturgy and the non-sacral calendar of cooking and eating, in the everyday religious life of lay and ordained. In the context of a religious movement suspicious of imagery and artifice, the limits and exceptions to those prohibitions will be considered through close reading of Harvest Thanksgiving photographs and other visual resources. Developments in the practice and interpretation of the Lord’s Supper, traditionally understood as purely memorial, will be explored through the material evidence of artefacts and the movement’s theological and liturgical resources. In the light of the sacramental theology of remembrance, comparison will be drawn between communion and the ritual and memorial aspects of women’s cooking as revealed in the artefacts that remain – cookbooks. Through careful reading of artefacts this paper will explore the central weekly sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the understandings of Harvest Thanksgiving and the tradition of women’s church cookery and demonstrate that within this religious movement, which knows itself best in the breaking of bread, all food is ritual food.
INTRODUCTION

In Churches of Christ in Victoria food matters. The bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper have traditionally been partaken of at every Sunday worship service, morning and night. Communion has most often been celebrated at the centre point of the service. The Lord’s Table has occupied the centre of the platform. Issues of the ordinance’s interpretation, most especially the bread and wine’s existence as a reminder of the Last Supper, stripped of mysticism and complexity under primitivist ideals, have been a central focus of Churches of Christ’s printing and publishing. Churches of Christ were known through the products of their presses for the frequency with which they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Indeed, its importance was such it infiltrated the language they used to describe attending church: rather than say they went to church, Churches of Christ pioneers said they gathered weekly “for the breaking of bread”.

Many congregations have counted their first meeting to ‘break the bread’ as the point at which they became a church community. The movement’s origins as a whole are often traced to the 1809 publication of Thomas Campbell’s founding document, Declaration and Address, which states that “the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one”. That essential unity, or one-ness, was materially symbolised for Campbell in the sharing of communion beyond the bounds of Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterianism in which he had been ordained. It was his inclusive approach to the administration of communion that led to the Declaration and Address being written and to Campbell’s leaving the Presbyterian church and the gradual formation of Churches of Christ. In 1909, a century after the document’s publication, the movement celebrated its centenary with a ‘Great Communion’ held in Pittsburgh. Another ‘Great Communion’ is planned for October 4th 2009, the Lord’s Supper having maintained its importance

Participation in the Lord’s Supper has long represented an individual’s active membership in the Church of Christ. But membership in the church, symbolised in liturgical food, has also been experienced through social food: a busy, tasty, weekly cycle of afternoon teas, suppers, and meetings with refreshments. And the centrality of food did not end there. Annual Thanksgiving services celebrated God’s bountiful harvest as the people brought their produce into the worship space. Providing food to the needy or raising money through selling cakes, pies and lamingtons has formed the backbone of women’s church social service. The non-sacral liturgical calendar of Sunday School picnics, church dinners and shared meals between families has tied people together. This calendar of food events, sacral and non-sacral, has been governed by tradition and observed in light of the values of the religious movement. While social food culture has been a mainstay of many denominations, in Churches of Christ the Lord’s Supper is raised in frequency yet pared back theologically, inviting the observation that social food, tacitly or explicitly invested with the significance of an inclusive hospitality and ministry through service, is comparable in function and greater in participation and frequency than the holy ordinance. In effect, the overlapping of understandings about belonging, hospitality and service between liturgical and social food in Churches of Christ makes all church food ritual food. It makes all food, bread and wine, casserole and cake, part of the ministry of the Churches of Christ. The ritual and religious value of both liturgical and church social food is explored, for the first time, in this thesis.

The rich life of social and liturgical food is evidenced in the material objects which have surrounded its consumption. Material culture is a valuable source of historical insight even in the Churches of Christ tradition which has been suspicious of worldliness; clinging theologically to purity and reason while its weekly practices revolved around the bodily experience of food. Every church has a Lord’s Table and a kitchen, and before kitchens became commonplace churches had coppers. Recipe books have been produced by the women and, depending on the community’s financial status, the food has been served with ‘odds and ends’ collections of crockery and cutlery or with matching tableware.

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4 http://greatcommunion.org/about.htm (accessed 6th January 2009)
settings. Lord’s Supper has involved bread, wine, silverware, timber and cloth; earthly substance for a heavenly purpose. There are photographs of Sunday School picnics, stalls selling jam and cakes, and Harvest Thanksgiving displays. There are communion vessels, altar furniture, women’s ‘whitework’ communion cloths, craftwork banners depicting the bread and wine and there is the food itself. All these material objects can be ‘read’ to tell the story of people’s engagement in their religious world.

Among the wealth of material artefacts associated with food in Churches of Christ, I have chosen three groups of objects representing diverse facets of the tradition for closer examination: communion vessels, Harvest Thanksgiving photographs and fundraising recipe books. The communion vessels are from the small collection preserved in the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s National Archive. From among these I have chosen to study a cup, a pair of cups and a communion travel set. Analysis of their material origins, form, function and value will inform understanding of social and theological developments in the church around Lord’s Supper. The recipe books are from the Bayswater Church of Christ in Victoria and are analysed in the light of other Churches of Christ’s recipe books as well as with regard to local church history and broader culinary trends for what they can tell about the church and the people who produced them and used them over many decades. Linking the liturgical food of the Lord’s Supper and the social food of recipe books is discussion around a collection of Harvest Thanksgiving photographs from private collections. They occupy a peculiar place in the history of Churches of Christ, being both sacred and profane, liturgical and social. The study of these three groups of artefacts will demonstrate that material objects are an immensely valuable resource for church history which can be ‘read’ alongside other historiographical sources. The examination of food artefacts will demonstrate that food is central to the life of Churches of Christ in theology and practice and that all food has religious significance and, as such, is materially essential to the spiritual ministry of the church.

In order to provide theological and scholarly context to the study of food artefacts, the following chapters will describe the development of Lord’s Supper theology and practice in Churches of Christ and the role of cooking in women’s ministry and social service. In order to situate the discussion of Churches of Christ recipe books, a broader discussion of
academic literature around cookbooks will explore the varied approaches to reading these non-literary texts. Finally, the method and value of material culture studies will be outlined along with discussion of its historiographical absence in Australian Churches of Christ. After setting the scene, the thesis will move on to examine each of the artefacts in turn, exploring them as material objects essential to the spiritual world of Churches of Christ in Victoria.
CHAPTER 1:
SETTING THE TABLE

The development of Lord’s Supper theology and practice
in Churches of Christ

Earliest influences: Churches of Christ’s ecclesial forbears and their distinctive food practices

There is a display cabinet in the old Kail Kirk, Dundee, Scotland, exhibiting a tureen and a spoon for serving soup. They belonged to the Glasite church which celebrated the Lord’s Supper weekly and followed their service with a supper of kail broth. The intention of this small Scottish church was to put the ‘supper’ back in the ‘Lord’s Supper’ or, more properly, to reinstitute in a culturally meaningful way the New Testament practice of the agape meal which is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:20 as being interwoven with the Eucharistic bread and wine. And while first-century Palestinians may not have partaken of kail broth made with cabbage and barley, a small group of eighteenth-century Scots did – every Sunday. Their weekly practice of Lord’s Supper led by elders heralded that of Churches of Christ a century later.

The Glasite church was named for its founder John Glas (1695-1773), but they initially called themselves a ‘Church of Christ’. There is a lineage between this early Church of Christ and the modern denomination, Churches of Christ. The ecclesial inheritance follows the zigzag line of many splinter groups, especially Scotch Baptist and independent churches; such is the nature of sectarianism. The theological inheritance from Glasites to

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5 The Kail Kirk was once a meeting place of the Glasite church but is now the hall at St Andrews. ‘The Story of John Pastor Glas’ at Hyperlink: [http://www.standrewschurch.btinternet.co.uk/John_Pastor_Glas.htm](http://www.standrewschurch.btinternet.co.uk/John_Pastor_Glas.htm) (accessed Oct 20, 2008).

6 They are also known as ‘Sandemanians’ after Robert Sandeman, Glas’s successor and son-in-law. The sign outside the church in Dundee reads ‘Glasite Church’. Hyperlink: [http://www.standrewschurch.btinternet.co.uk/John_Pastor_Glas.htm](http://www.standrewschurch.btinternet.co.uk/John_Pastor_Glas.htm) (accessed Oct 20, 2008)

7 The strict discipline maintained within the Glasite church and the demand for unanimity in decision-making kept the group small. It also led to many people leaving and to the church’s eventual demise in the 1920s. Among those who joined and left the group in the 1760s was
Churches of Christ comes in part through the shared thinking passed between leaders of these groups and in part is not inheritance at all, but co-existence in a religious world and its influences. They held in common: a philosophy of Reason; the desire to restore New Testament church practices (and do away with practices based only on church tradition); and a desire for independence, and for the separation of church and state.

As the Glasite ‘Church of Christ’ and early British Churches of Christ shared much in thinking and practice, a brief comparison of their theology and ecclesiology offers a window into eighteenth-century Restorationism especially as it involves Lord’s Supper. Excluding kail broth served from the historic tureen, which remained peculiar to the Glasites, there are a number of similarities with early Churches of Christ. Highly important to and distinctive of both groups was the weekly observation of the Lord’s Supper: it was much more prominent and frequent than in other Reformed churches at the time. The Lord’s Supper was administered only in the presence of an elder and admission was subject to the elders’ approval (although in Churches of Christ this practice changed over time and became subject to membership or to individual conscience). Local congregations were autonomous and led by elders in a pastoral rather than priestly ecclesiology. Clerical titles were not used. Scripture was believed to be the ultimate authority, rather than tradition or church hierarchy. Separation of church and state was the reason for the Glasites’ coming into being and was a ‘given’ in other independent-minded Restorationist churches. Baptism was understood to be for the remission of sins (although the Glasites baptised children and Churches of Christ defined themselves as believer baptists only). Along with a central focus on Lord’s Supper, the Glasites and

Archibald McLean. He, along with former independent minister Robert Carmichael who had read the writings of John Glas, founded the Scotch Baptist church in 1765. In turn, some early Scotch Baptists left their fledgling denomination to form congregations of ‘Churches of Christ’ in Britain (which organised to meet together for the first time in 1841) and in colonial Australia (for example, in Adelaide in 1847). It should be noted that the Glasite-Scotch Baptist inheritance was just one parent of modern Churches of Christ. Independent congregations, such as those meeting at Dungannon and Auchtermuchty around 1809-1810 and who called themselves ‘Church of Christ’, came to align themselves with the denomination early in its history also. See Graeme Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptist: A History of Churches of Christ in Australia* (Melbourne: Vital Publications, 1979), 41 and Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A short history of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1980), 18.

Further differences include Glasite practices of foot-washing, ministry to the poor by deacons and deconesses or ‘ministering widows’, the singing of psalms only and without instrumental accompaniment, and strict (or stricter) church discipline.
Churches of Christ both demonstrated an earnest literalism and the desire to ‘restore’ New Testament ways, out of which their preoccupation with Lord’s Supper grew. Liturgical food was central to the tradition in which Churches of Christ stood before they came into being as a distinct entity and this can be seen in the preservation of artefacts belonging to the movement’s ecclesial predecessor.

‘Breaking the Loaf’: Alexander Campbell articulates Churches of Christ’s position on Lord’s Supper

Restoring New Testament ways was the life work of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), one of the founders of Churches of Christ (along with his father, Thomas Campbell (1763-1854)). He believed unity was essential for the integrity of the church, which was highly fractured at the time, and held that discarding human religious innovations in favour of restored New Testament principles was the only way of achieving it. His writings, published in both Britain and North America in the early 1800s, were indeed the unifying link which saw Churches of Christ establish and form into a movement, albeit with disparate strands. Alexander Campbell published widely, constantly, prolifically. After a time, he purchased his own printing press. His writings were distributed in colonial Australia, initially in British journals. Though not immune to disagreement from his independent-minded fellow churchmen, he was immensely influential in the Churches of Christ. His was an articulate and powerful central voice with which to argue or agree. An examination of his writings on the practice of the Lord’s Supper, which is so central to the denomination, provides an opportunity to contrast a variety of early thoughts and practices surrounding this central focus of Churches of Christ.

9 Alexander Campbell’s path was indeed set by that of his father Thomas, who was a Presbyterian minister of Roman Catholic and Anglican background and Huguenot ancestry. Hatred of religious division drove Thomas’ theology and action. He initially attempted to overcome divisions in the fractured Presbyterian church in Ireland (they lived near Armagh in what is now Northern Ireland) and then, after migrating for reasons of health, in West Virginia. After failed attempts to unite groups within the Presbyterian Church and with other communions they came to establish their own church, with reluctance and some irony given that unity was their goal, in the early 1800s. Joining with other like-minded congregations, the Churches of Christ flourished in frontier Kentucky, Tennessee and other mid-west states. Like the British Churches of Christ, they were autonomous congregations united in their readership of the writings of Alexander Campbell.
Terminology

As a Restorationist, Campbell turned to Scripture for his model in re-imagining the Lord’s Supper and, in line with his preference for ‘Bible words’ rather than those of the church or theology, he argued that the ordinance not be called ‘Lord’s Supper’ at all. The term was imprecise, he claimed. He referred to 1 Corinthians 11:20 which distinguishes between supper and the breaking of bread and drinking of wine. John Glas, with his kail broth suppers, might have agreed. More scriptural to call the ordinance ‘Breaking the Loaf’, argued Campbell:

As the calling of Bible things by Bible names is an important item in the present reformation, we may here take the occasion to remark, that both "the Sacrament" and "the Eucharist" are of human origin. It is also called the communion or "the communion of the saints;" but this might indicate that it is exclusively the communion of saints; and, therefore, it is more consistent to denominate it literally ‘the breaking of the loaf’.10

The distinction which Campbell made illustrates his general approach to Restorationism: plain-speaking, reasonable, inclusive in spirit. Here, however, is the first opportunity to contrast Campbell’s thoughts with practices in Churches of Christ. While the term ‘breaking the loaf’ (or bread) was used and indeed persists in occasional use, most churches reverted to the ‘Lord’s Supper’ during the nineteenth century and many call it ‘communion’ today. (In line with common Churches of Christ practice, I will refer to the ordinance as the denomination observes it: Lord’s Supper or communion.) Indeed Campbell was not entirely consistent in terminology either. He called it ‘the supper’ sometimes too:

But much depends upon the manner of celebrating the supper. The simplicity of the Christian institution runs through every part of it. The well bred Christian is

like the well bred gentleman—his manners are graceful, easy, artless, and simple … in all the ceremonies of the table.¹¹

Campbell went on to conclude his writing on ‘Breaking the Loaf’ by giving a detailed description, but not a prescription, for a worship service. He noted the solemnity, simplicity and spirit of the ordinance, insisting that without the right spirit the entire meaning is undercut.¹² Importantly, the Lord’s Table is central to the worship service he described, both in terms of significance and its being in the middle of proceedings.

After sorting out the terminology, there were other more contentious issues to be considered around Eucharistic practice: frequency, access and theology. Campbell answered all three issues in a single sentence:

All Christians are members of the house or family of God, are called and constituted a holy and a royal priesthood, and may, therefore bless God for the Lord’s Table, its loaf, and cup—approach it without fear and partake of it with joy as often as they please, in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Saviour.¹³

Access

The Lord’s Table was open to all Christians, according to Campbell. This sounds like ‘open communion’. Indeed other prominent leaders in nineteenth-century Churches of Christ, such as the American Warren Barton Stone, practiced exactly that, giving the bread and the wine to anyone who privately considered themselves Christian. But to Campbell’s mind, private consideration was not enough to define the Christian. A person had to be baptised by immersion. This strict definition of who was a Christian stood in the way of the gracious openness of table which he otherwise desired. ‘Open communion’

¹² This view is entirely consistent with Campbell’s understanding of the church’s need for unity in order to maintain the integrity of its message to the world.
undermined the “apostolic injunction of immersion”\textsuperscript{14} So, when pressed on the issue, he did not invite the unimmersed to the communion table. He did, however, partake of communion alongside the unimmersed.\textsuperscript{15}

‘Neither invite nor debar’ has been a catch-cry in Churches of Christ when it comes to admission to the Lord’s Table. But practice has varied. In nineteenth-century Britain, ‘open communion’ was loudly and widely denounced.\textsuperscript{16} Leaders there were so concerned by talk of open communion in North America that they designated their chairman in 1859, Gilbert Y. Tickle, to write to Campbell personally and ask what was going on across the Atlantic. Campbell replied, saying, “We have no such custom” and that “we do not, on any such occasions, known to me, ‘invite’ or ‘debar’, in the usual currency of these words, any one unbaptized to participate with us”.\textsuperscript{17} The vehemence of British opposition to the practice may have had local factors, as David Thompson noted.\textsuperscript{18} The English Baptist’s practice of open communion may have been influential in Churches of Christ’s (and Scotch Baptist’s) opposition as they sought to define themselves as a separate movement. Early Australian practice followed the strict British model, readership of the British Millennial Harbinger being widespread. Over time, congregations made their own decisions about access. The minutes of the Montrose Church of Christ record that that congregation decided as late as October 1916 “by 17 votes to 2 that the matter be left entirely to the brother who presides.” Increasingly the decision to partake or not became one of individual conscience (with or without instruction on the privileges of believer baptism from the person presiding over the table at the time).

The material presence and placement of the communion table has an impact on the issue of access. In Victoria, and elsewhere in Australia and the world, Churches of Christ placed their table at the top of the centre aisle, on the platform directly in front of the baptistery. Thus a visual connection was made between the acts and sacraments of believer baptism

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] Thompson, Let Sects and Parties Fall, 77.
\item[17] Cited in Thompson, Let Sects and Parties Fall, 76-77.
\item[18] Thompson, Let Sects and Parties Fall, 76-77.
\end{footnotes}
and communion. Individual lay persons presiding over communion may have chosen to invite Christians to partake according to their own consciences, yet the baptistery stood behind them in the centre front of the church, a silent reminder and unmistakable link between the two sacraments.

Campbell stated that any Christian, or baptised believer, may preside over the communion table. According to cultural practice, the privilege was (and is still in some congregations) given to baptised adult men rather than baptised women and young people barely in their teens. More strictly, and in the nineteenth century especially, it was a privilege reserved for elders who governed the churches. This practice has relaxed over the last century with reference to the ‘priesthood of all believers’ where all baptised persons are considered to be ministers. More recently, members of Australian Churches of Christ were reminded of their shared entitlement to serve, while noting that some were more able to perform the task well than others. It is a matter of practicality then. Stirling wisely admits, beyond theology or formal ecclesiology, lay-presidency has always been at the whim of the person drawing up the roster.

Frequency

Campbell stated that the bread and the wine may be taken anywhere and at anytime. Such frequency, celebrating the Lord’s Supper at every worship service, is a distinguishing feature of the tradition. Campbell noted that partaking “as often as they please” is an “approved precedent” but that “Apostolic example is justly esteemed of equal authority with an apostolic precept”. In practice, despite multiple opportunities, many people did not (and do not today) partake more than once each Sunday. But once each Sunday is considerably more frequent than comparable traditions which observe communion

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monthly, quarterly or annually. The frequency with which Lord’s Supper is observed in Churches of Christ points to its importance in the denomination.

It is significant to note that while Campbell’s theology of Lord’s Supper is quite similar to that of Swiss Reformer Zwingli (1484-1531), frequency sets the two apart: Zwingli observed the ordinance quarterly. Despite the fact that this was four times more than Roman Catholicism required believers to receive at the time, Zwingli’s theology of symbolic commemoration only saw him accused of reducing the ordinance in importance. In contrast, Churches of Christ’s commemorative approach and much increased frequency raised its importance. Despite theological similarities, Campbell’s exploration of the issue did not explicitly reference Zwingli, going back instead to scriptural sources. However, the two belong in the same tradition of ‘memorialism’.

In Melbourne, the Austral Printing and Publishing Company, advocated weekly communion as the only scriptural practice, producing numerous tracts to propagate the message to converts and members alike. *The Lord’s Table* (early twentieth century, no date or author) is presented as a dialogue between an “Inquirer” and a “Christian” who explains the scriptural basis for the seemingly too frequent weekly practise of communion. *Words to New Converts* by Ferdinand Pittman also advises weekly communion and reminds those who feel unworthy that they should still partake. *The Christian Walk* by S. Russell Baker agrees. While these tracts address themselves to converts, outlining the denominational stance on numerous points, many more tracts speak about the identity of Churches of Christ and their peculiar stance on communion: *What the Churches of Christ Believe* by J.F. Floyd; *Why I Am Identified with the Religious People known as Disciples of Christ* by F.D. Power; *Why I Belong to the Churches of Christ* by A.R. Main; *The Churches of Christ* by H.E. Knott. (All are undated.) There are many others. All outline the weekly nature of the ordinance and its scriptural origin as distinctive and central to the identity of Churches of Christ. Their existence, and their preservation, point to the importance of liturgical food within the tradition and the value ascribed to such material evidences.

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Theology

The clarifying power of words has been central to the practice of Lord’s Supper. While Protestant churches since the Reformation have emphasised the spoken, written and printed word above the “visual ritual” of the Mass, Churches of Christ brought the clarifying power of words into the mystery of the Mass and cleansed it of ‘superstition’. With the elements rendered mere ‘emblems’ or reminders, the power of the Lord’s Supper lay in the weekly recitation of the words of institution. Campbell was adamant that the practice was an act of remembrance only. In this, he is in line with Zwingli who argued against the real (bodily) presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. Campbell’s studies in Glasgow and exposure to the Scottish School of Common Sense and its philosophy of rationalist ‘common sense realism’ may have had some influence in the matter. The strict memorialism of early Churches of Christ sacramental theology effectively stripped the ritual bare, leaving only memory and food.

However, Churches of Christ theology around Eucharist, despite its literal, rational and Restorationist intentions, is nebulous. While Campbell’s preference for remembrance only was pervasive and was the majority understanding in the nineteenth-century, it was not exclusively practiced. Especially as lay people presided at the Lord’s Table, a variety of theologies were (and are still) heard in the churches. There were also other writers and thinkers in the denomination in the United States who argued at length with Campbell about the nature of the Lord’s Supper. Robert Milligan (1814-1875) and his contemporary Robert Richardson (who had been an Anglican) maintained there was a mystical dimension in communion. Influenced by the Anglicanism of the time, they tended strongly toward the notion of Lord’s Supper as ‘spiritual nourishment’.

In Britain in the twentieth-century there was a decided shift toward Eucharistic presence (along with a change in vocabulary: ‘sacrament’ rather than ‘ordinance’) led by William Robinson (1888-1963). He argued that the Lord’s Supper was not merely commemorative

28 Stookey, Eucharist: Christ’s Feast with the Church, 82.
or an aid to memory but a time of spiritual engagement with God. He insisted, in the Restorationist model, that there was no magic involved, stating that Christ was not literally present in the material of the bread and the wine. However, he claimed that Christ became mystically real in the act of partaking.30 His ideas, he believed, were not a departure from Restoration ideals but a natural development of existing thoughts within the movement. He was certainly influential around the world in Churches of Christ.

Australian theology developed under the influence of nineteenth century American and British leaders, finding its own path in the twentieth century. In 1980 Victorian Churches of Christ theologian E. Lyall Williams (1906-1994) wrote:

While we speak of the bread and wine as symbols we regard them as more than symbols. In theological parlance the Supper, like baptism, is a means of grace. That is, God’s blessing is mediated to us through our worship in the partaking of the bread and the wine. Through the Supper we are built into Christ.31

Of course, like Campbell more than a century before, his articulate and educated opinion was not defining for the average member. As Blowers and Lambert state,

One of the difficulties of describing observances of The Lord’s Supper ... is that [the denomination’s] growth into millions of congregants, combined with a persistent individualism and spirit of independence, have generated a variety of communal practices among them.32

It has often been said that there are almost as many opinions as communicants. While memorialism has endured as a sacramental theology, the denomination’s determined lack of ecclesial and doctrinal controls, its preference for primitivism over systematic theology and its deliberately naïve approach to worship have allowed room for many other ideas to be absorbed into the liturgy.

31 Williams, Churches of Christ: An Interpretation, 72.
Summary

The importance of the Lord’s Supper in Victorian (and Australian) Churches of Christ has not diminished over time. It remains an integral part of each worship service. The table remains largely the domain of lay people. The sacrament remains one of remembrance. But the experience and understanding of the sacrament have developed, outgrowing the reach of the various founders’ careful considerations. Aspects of practice around access and theology and, therefore, terminology have all changed. Beyond all idealism, and there has been much earnest idealism, a pragmatism and adaptability has characterised the denomination’s approach to Lord’s Supper. Such pragmatism is evident in their willingness to look beyond tradition, even if it is their own distinctive tradition, and integrate other ideas. This survey of the developments in Churches of Christ’s sacramental food tradition sets the scene for later analysis of communion vessels, the material objects essential to the religious practice.

While Churches of Christ’s understandings of Lord’s Supper are well documented there is not the same rich historiography around women’s cooking which formed an integral part of their ministry in the church. Though the denomination has claimed to be a lay movement, lay ministry and especially women’s service-oriented ministry has been given significantly less attention from church historians. There has been, until now, nothing written about recipe books in the denomination – in consideration of this historiographical absence wider scholarship on cookbooks will be examined. There has also been little analysis of Churches of Christ’s women’s auxiliaries and their relationship with women’s ministry of the Word which developed during the mid-twentieth century. In light of this, the following chapters aim to weave analysis through some historiographical holes and, in doing so, set the scene for the analysis of recipe books as important food artefacts.
Setting the Table for Afternoon Tea:

Women’s ministry in and out of the kitchen

Ministry from the kitchen: liturgical baking, important conferences, fundraising and women’s meetings

The bread of the Lord’s Table was perhaps the first product of women’s kitchens to be tasted ceremonially among colonial Churches of Christ. The honour of this task usually fell to the lady in whose house the church gathered: “Many churches had their origin in the homes of these devout sisters. Bread and wine were set out on a spotless cloth and a small gathering adoringly remembered their Lord in his sacrificial death”.

Though women did not often preside over the table until the mid-twentieth century, they prepared the table, stitched its cloth and baked its bread, and in doing so undertook essential ministry in the defining weekly ritual.

From the beginning of women’s auxiliaries, cooking was understood as women’s ministry.

In April 1886, on the Saturday afternoon of the Churches of Christ’s Victorian Conference in Melbourne, the first general meeting of the Sisters was held (other states following Victoria’s lead in years to come). The Sisters’ Auxiliary President, Mrs Antoinette Kensel Thurgood, presided as the group announced their intention to support the work of Conference and enlist the involvement of every woman, as the ‘priesthood of all believers’ demands. Two significant resolutions were passed shaping the work of the century to come – fundraising and catering. The first resolution was the ‘Penny Mission Fund’ which would support the Church Aid and Missionary work. The second resolution determined to provide dinner and tea for the delegates attending the 1887 Conference. And so the work began. Meal planning got underway immediately – meat was to be cooked at home, potatoes at the church, a thousand meals to be served. While the women generously

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funded the catering for some years, the numbers grew so large that in the 1890s a charge had to be levied: nine pence for dinner and sixpence for tea.  

The Catering Committee’s work extended over the decades to provide meals for all manner of church special events, their prodigious effort listed in Conference reports, but only their efforts at men’s Conference meetings are eulogised in Churches of Christ historiography. Historian H.R. Taylor wrote that “Appetites for spiritual food and solid teaching were as keen as the desire for the rich cakes and dainties of the tea table”. Mrs Burns’ perspective is more revealing. She recalled the positive effects on brotherliness which the women’s cooking had at Conference meetings:

At our annual [C]hurches of Christ conferences, warm and spirited debate may be in progress, when a halt is sounded for bodily refreshments. Following the gracious example of our Master at the Galilean lakeside to his disciples, the sisters are calling, “Come and dine!” What a transformation in a few minutes! With the efficient and smiling sisters waiting on them the menfolk become jovial and happy, and when appetites are satisfied, they listen encouragingly to addresses...

Through cooking and serving food, the women ministered to body and (perhaps unbeknownst to the ‘menfolk’) to mind.

Women’s kitchen ministry was not limited to communion bread and special events. It was a part of every women’s meeting. A 1940s or 50s brochure outlining procedure for women’s meetings instructs that after formalities (women’s meetings had a gravity and structure which enabled them to be taken seriously in the church as a valid lay ministry)

35 According to the Victorian 1958 Conference Handbook and Directory, the Catering Committee provided for twenty-two events in the year preceding, including girls’ and boys’ clubs dinners, missionary rally suppers and meals at Conference which together cost a total of £429. This probably represents something like the peak of activity for the Catering Committee as totals are similar through the 1960s, but begin to fall away after that time.
twenty minutes are to be allowed for “Appropriate Closing and Supper”. Along with general meetings, such brochures led to a high degree of uniformity around the country in terms of the style and content of meetings. Most groups had annual picnics, camps and anniversaries involving meals, as well as the weekly suppers and local catering enterprises. They sold cakes and jams for fundraising, and recipe books. Food was central to women’s ministry from the earliest times. From the bread of the Lord’s Table to catering meals for a thousand and suppers at the local church, the kitchen was essential to the functioning of the church.

**Women’s ministry of the Word and its historiographical displacement of ministry from the kitchen**

Aside from the passing glory of food served in public meetings, the denomination’s history has few other mentions of social food. This apparent gap in material food studies and Churches of Christ historiography may be due in part to contemporary women’s attempt to escape the catering-ladies tag. Women have served *some* Churches of Christ as ministers, elders and missionaries for many decades. They have had an increasing voice in the ‘important’ matters. Consequently, and understandably given their gains, they have more recently resisted focusing on the stereotypically female and marginal activity of cooking at the expense of their participation in the denominationally important field of ‘words’.38 There are a few articles published by women in the 1970s about their role in the church and a couple of essays on women in ministry. Otherwise women’s history largely remains unwritten.

Women’s ministry of the Word in Churches of Christ developed outside the bounds of church policy, such as it existed. This was due in part to Churches of Christ’s deliberate lack of ecclesial structure, which has at once enabled the ‘second sex’ to step forward without bureaucratic or hierarchical impediment but has also allowed pockets of conservatism to work against their ministry. While church congregations made their decisions about women’s roles individually (regarding their eligibility as elders, deacons

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38 Of course it is difficult to find evidence establishing the reasons behind historiographical absences, though lack of a collection policy by the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s National Archive would have to be a factor.
and ministers of the Word), the broader theological and organisational impact of these decisions went uncontemplated and the forces of individual personalities and intellects were inadvertently influential. The result of these ecclesial peculiarities is that women’s role in Churches of Christ, beyond that of cook and seamstress, has long been contested between place and over time as one of a number of signifiers regarding congregations’ positions on the theological spectrum within the denomination.
Absence and potential

There are no previous historical studies on recipe books in Churches of Christ and so I turn to scholarly literature around Methodist, Mormon, Presbyterian and other community recipe books. Cookbooks have become an acknowledged source of historical inquiry in recent years, as the traditional definition of narrative has broadened to allow previously unexpected sources (such as non-literary documents) to shed light on the past. A survey of literature dealing specifically with cookbooks finds they are useful in uncovering and illustrating values desired and lived, and in constructing biographies of individuals and communities. Through disciplines such as history, folklore studies, English and linguistics, scholars find they can read the language, content and materiality of community recipe books for evidence of what mattered to the women who wrote them. The following survey of writings explores the possibilities and limits of recipe books as a resource as well as pointing to areas warranting further consideration in the study of Churches of Christ recipe books.

Considering cookbooks’ potential as historical resources, it is worth asking why they have not been extensively studied in the past. Anne L. Bower’s introductory chapter to the selected essays, Recipes for Reading, summarises past problems with the reading of such texts. Firstly, cookbooks have been seen as unworthy of serious study or perceived to be in the realm of ‘common knowledge’ rather than academia, problems largely overcome by post-modernism’s broadened definition of narrative. Secondly, recipes are often seen as formulaic and revealing little (though Cotter, Romines and McDougall ably demonstrate otherwise). Thirdly, interdisciplinary requirements have been deterrents to study as have earlier feminists’ hesitance to align themselves with a field of study which is so ‘essentially’ female, a point made by Susan Leonardi in her early (1989) “Recipes for

Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie”. 40 We might add a fourth reason peculiar to church cookbooks: their lack of rhetoric and theological argument has diminished their value in the minds of historians more accustomed to the field of debate. Similar problems have impacted on the study of material culture generally, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Cookbooks as biographical narrative

Biography is a field of writing dominated by the stories of men, perhaps culminating in the ‘Great Man Theory’ where one man’s life is seen as so profoundly important it becomes a key to the times in which he lived. 41 Certainly in Churches of Christ’s largely apologetical historiography there are numerous studies of great men and their great deeds, their great influences on the church. 42 For women, the story has been different. Their lives have most often been told differently, partially or incidentally, and without the heroism of ‘grand narrative’. Even the genre of ordination biographies which has brought some heroines to light in other denominations is less relevant to this church with its less celebrated clerical view of ministry (and then there is the commercial reality that ministers in Churches of Christ are employed directly by church congregations and so ordained women may choose to downplay the politics of their situation to achieve and maintain employment). All of this amounts to the fact that only a handful of women in Churches of Christ have more than a page of history devoted to them. So it is that, within and without the church, cookbooks as a legitimate form of female discourse in line with gender expectations provided rare opportunity for women to depict their lives. Here they had

opportunity to demonstrate their values or their skills through the food they chose, thus also expressing something of themselves as persons.

Mormon women’s authorship of their stories has similarities with Churches of Christ experience. In Marion Bishop’s article, “Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture”\(^{43}\), she argues that, in the context of Mormon church community cookbooks, women ‘author’ their own memories while they fulfil cultural expectations of domesticity and thrift important to the Mormon community. She considers the importance of women’s authoring recipe books in a religious society where men have authority and authorship over the Word. In this setting cookbooks provide women with a legitimate written format in which their skills and their very existence are valued and acknowledged. Churches of Christ’s similar emphasis on the authority of the preached Word (and female participation in auxiliaries) provides an obvious point of similarity.

Many scholars have used cookbooks as a source of women’s biography, employing both literary and historical approaches. Indeed it has been useful here to consider biography in three ways – cookbooks as biographical narrative, the practice of autobiography through food itself and biography through the attaching of names to recipes. Sections addressing these latter two issues will follow. But first, the matter of writing biography through cookbooks deserves attention.

Analysis of the patterns in community compilation cookbooks’ use of the narrative elements of setting, plot and character forms the basis of Anne L. Bower’s reading in “Cooking Up Stories: Narrative Elements in Community Cookbooks”\(^{44}\). Setting, she identifies, includes period and culture, the kitchens of contributors and the home of the organisation publishing the book, all of which are often readily identifiable from the information in the cookbook. Plot is a rarely explicit subtext in most cookbooks, Bower argues, in which heroines take charge of how their lives are constructed, writing


themselves and their communities as they want them to be. Among the typical plots she identifies the one most applicable to church cookbooks is the “separate yet integrated” plot, one that establishes boundaries through adherence to dietary codes or social mores but simultaneously conforms to wider food fashions. Another plot, which she calls “moral or religious triumph”, also applies to church cookbooks. It reinforces the idea of woman as the “moral centre of the home”. In a church setting the moral centre could be demonstrated through all those pithy sayings scattered over the pages of community cookbooks: bible verses chosen for their message of forbearance and charity, poems about good mothers and happy children.

Bower finds that, compared with setting and plot, character is difficult to discern. This is because individual identity is often subsumed by that of the community and individuals need to fit into that communal character in order for their recipes to be included in the communal book. Working within the discipline of literary analysis she does not look to further historical resources which may reveal the level of an individual’s belonging in the community of cooks, though intent is frequently conflicted and difficult to establish even with the resources of oral history, questionnaires and minutes of meetings. Bower does not explore the possibility that some women may contribute recipes in line with community expectation despite their personal desire to change or escape the domestic situation. The requirement to author the self in line with the community narrative may not therefore be an empowering opportunity to give voice to experience, but potential evidence of the disempowering force of gender expectations. Character, in Bower’s analysis, is problematic and necessarily communal. This points to the nature of women’s biography as both communal and partial.

Folklorist, Janet Theophano, in her book, Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote, confirms the communal aspect of women’s biography. She finds that cookbooks, whether written by individuals or as collective compilations, were the product of community recipe sharing, arising out of a group’s identity and past. Theophano views the individuality of an author, expressed in the form of marginalia and

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45 Janet Theophano, Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).
within the formula of recipe writing, against the backdrop of community identity and therefore always in the context of community acceptance and non-acceptance. Cookbooks must therefore read biography in the context of the individual as group member, expressing not necessarily herself as she would have it, but herself as she believes the group identity warrants.

One potential site for distinguishing individual identity within the formula of recipe writing is the orientation clause. Linguist, Colleen Cotter’s “Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community”\(^{46}\) examines the use of orientation clauses in recipe compilations, those inscriptions under the title that say things like ‘This pie is lower in calories than...’ or ‘Lovely meal for a warm day’. The almost complete absence of such clauses in the books produced by the Bayswater Church of Christ may point to an unwillingness to ‘author’ or distinguish (or exclude) one’s self from the inclusiveness of the community through the cookbook language. A survey of many other Churches of Christ recipe books finds few exceptions to this pattern.\(^{47}\)

**Biography through food: the self as cake or casserole in community**

Including particular recipes and foods is a significant means by which the self can be portrayed in cookbooks. Desiring to be seen as a practical down-to-earth type one might submit a lentil casserole to be published. Or perhaps lemon chiffon cake more accurately reflects a particular person’s desired perception in the community. This points to the idea that biography can be constructed through food - but this idea must be treated with some caution. While food can say a lot about a person or community, it can reflect desire rather than reality, and it is never the whole story.


\(^{47}\) Exceptions include Parkdale Church of Christ’s ‘Wallex’ who finishes the instructions to those cooking ‘First World War Biscuit’ with the impassioned warning, “DO NOT BURN” and Red Cliff Church of Christ’s ‘KC’ who notes in brackets beside her ‘Golden Fruit Slice’, “Prize Recipe” – distinguishing it from all others.
Food can reveal a community’s self-perception. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in her article “The Moral Sublime: The Temple Emmanuel Fair and Its Cookbook, Denver, 1888”, discusses the contents of the temple’s recipe book. She argues that the transgression of Jewish dietary laws reveals the religious group’s understanding of themselves in their cultural context. She also notes the preponderance of desserts, stating that recently improved stove technology and the introduction of baking powder facilitated and encouraged such “show pieces”. Referring to “show pieces”, she could have gone further and suggested that something more basic to human psychology (such as showing off one’s “show pieces”) as the driving factor in their over-representation. Cakes and desserts are still the mainstay of many community cookbooks, persisting well beyond the novelty of baking powder and stoves. They certainly dominate Churches of Christ recipe books, and suggest a life of endless afternoon tea.

Cookbooks reflect desire, not diet. Beverley Kingston argues, in “When did we Teach our Girls to Cook?”, that women have been too harshly judged by historians with an eye for taste and nutrition. Historians often called the food women prepared too dainty, too unhealthy, too ‘convenient’ – but perhaps assumed that the cookbook contents accurately reflected diet. Attempting to find out what people really did eat, Ann Romines, in the article, “Growing Up with the Methodist Cookbooks”, examines the patterns of use reflected in food stains on the pages. Through this she tries to recover the food values - pretensions and actual fare – in the pages. The material evidence of recipe books is thus vital in their use as sources for history.

Cookbooks tell us about “social attitudes towards food and cooking methods”. In a community context they tell us about contributors’ perceptions of community expectations. Issues of inclusion and exclusion in a small church community can resonate

51 Kingston, “When did we Teach our Girls to Cook?” 90.
through the contribution of recipes. According to Kingston, wealth, class and education have always been the most important factors in diet. Women's food preparation is illustrative of their standing according to these measures of social status. She goes on to warn that many historians overlook the importance of thrift or economy in food preparation and of education for cooking. They are indeed values shared by Churches of Christ with their low-Protestant notions of frugal sufficiency. We might add to this religion and region as factors influencing diet: an important consideration in the rural church context of the following study.

**Biography through the attaching of names to recipes: whose cake was it really?**

The naming of recipes after the women in a community is significant in establishing identity. Titles such as 'Ruby’s Sponge Cake', famed at the Boronia Church of Christ, can signify the perpetuation of an alternative female ancestry based not only on mother-daughter inheritance but on friendship lines. There the inheritance is not strictly economic but one of skills, knowledge and status.

Naming is vital to community cookbooks as it enables oral history to co-exist within the community alongside the written text, ensuring memory which would not be perpetuated by text alone. This points also to the value of oral history interviews (which form a significant part of the research for my study) in more fully understanding the line and shape of women's communities as documented in community cookbooks.

**The scholar and the text**

Alongside biography, scholars have also considered their own subjectivity and relationship with the cookbooks they study. The binary of objective/subjective is addressed by numerous scholars, many feeling the need to own up to some affection for the recipe books they are studying. Literary scholars writing about recipe books seem less at ease with the idea of subjectivity than do some historians of religion – interesting, given literature’s association with fiction and history’s with ‘the real’. The position of the scholar

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52 Bishop, “Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture,” 89-104.
in relation to the text is also considered in passing by a scholar who views herself as both inside and outside the Mormon community. Marion Bishop was raised a Mormon and as such is an ‘insider’. Yet as a scholar attempting to be objective in her writing she is an ‘outsider’. Likewise, Ann Romines, in “Growing Up with the Methodist Cookbooks”, reflects on her own relationship with the community as it was when she first contributed a recipe to a cookbook and as she writes in a scholarly (and potentially distancing) way about the community that nurtured her. Anne L. Bower also discusses the necessity for scholars of recipe books to be willing to engage with the text, and risk being accused of subjectively reading into the text, as a reason for hesitation on the part of academics.

Robert A. Orsi has also examined the “affective and experiential” nature of history research. Working in the field of American Catholic experience he considers the relationship between the scholar and the subject of their study, the tensions between ‘objective’ distance and the revelation of identification. He writes,

The consequences of all this for our work is that unless we recognise first the elemental fascination and power of religious goings-on and then all the things we want to do with them – share them, control them, mute their power over us and our memories – our writing about religion will become an exercise in boundary-making.

Indeed he says that scholars’ failure to address these personal matters has resulted in much dry and taxonomic history writing, writing that is so cautious and sterile that it neither engages with the subject or the reader.

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54 Romines, “Growing Up with the Methodist Cookbooks,” 75-88.
57 Robert A. Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 161. The earlier discussion of boundary-making was in the context of defining denominations comparatively. However, here Orsi refers primarily to erecting boundaries between the self and the subject.
Significantly for my study within Churches of Christ, Orsi addresses the dilemmas of fieldwork in one’s own denomination, where difference between scholar and subject is never clear. “We cannot use and respect the difference between us because we cannot establish it securely”, he writes. But rather than using this as a reason to avoid study he argues that such “intersubjectivity” should encourage a “clear and chastening awareness” of the dialectics at work. Writing as a denominational historian, I suspect clarity is optimistic. In my own case I was raised (and learnt to cook using recipe books from my Bayswater aunts) in Churches of Christ tradition but have remained outside it as an adult. I have also found that the application of academic discipline to the study of a naïve primitivist tradition necessarily functions to create further distance and limit my easy engagement within the tradition. Rather like Orsi, I am aware of both my connection and difference.

The currency of recipe writing

The language of the recipe, the list of ingredients and instruction, seems simple and formulaic yet is used as a type of currency within the recipe writing community. Elizabeth McDougall, in her article “Voices, Stories, and Recipes in Selected Canadian Community Cookbooks”, argues that the recipe author speaks through the text, using the formula of ingredients and instruction with (or without) strict measurements to ‘control’ (or not control) the cooking. In this way, the author may maintain authorship (or not) even when the reader brings their own creativity to the text. Indeed, perhaps if the author keeps the recipe instructions to a minimum, the words are not enough to produce the meal but require the author’s know-how in addition to the text. McDougall argues that, through the recipe formula, the author’s importance is elevated in the text and potentially in the community (assuming the recipe is sufficiently desirable), thus questioning the post-modern assertion that the author is ‘dead’. There is social currency in recipe writing.

58 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, 162.
59 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, 171.
The brevity and formulaic quality of the recipe demonstrates an assumption that readers are insiders who understand the jargon – and share the currency, according to Colleen Cotter. Explanation beyond the narrow confines of the recipe ‘recipe’ would be condescending and exclusionary. She acknowledges the role of the reader in contributing to the narrative elements through marginalia, once again highlighting the importance of the material object in the study of recipe books. Ann Romines likewise sees the language of recipes not as impassive and formulaic but as a specialised argot which validates the cooking credentials of those who use it and which is so strong and certain that it can subsume the individuality of cooks. This gives cause for reflection on the complicated motives and relationships of a community.

Recipes also have currency as items of exchange. McDougall argues that recipes are never truly new but always adaptations from a “female cultural heritage” and as such are, ultimately, “unauthorized, belonging to the community”. Theophano takes a very different viewpoint, one informed by study of material culture and their social context. She examines cookbooks which have been compiled through appropriation of others’ recipes, resulting from decidedly unequal relationships within a community of women. She notes that “giving someone a recipe for cornbread does not require an equal exchange; it may be a token of affection, even of intimacy, but it is not necessarily evidence or indication of a symmetrical relationship”. When exchange goes on between the wealthy and their servants or their poorer neighbours it is frequently an unequal transaction and social boundaries remain in place. Recipes exist as a currency of exchange, just or otherwise, within female communities.

Belonging to the church

The study of group demarcations and prescriptions for behaviour as expressed in cookbooks is of great importance to the historical study of texts which grow out of

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64 McDougall, “Voices, Stories, and Recipes,” 117.
65 Theophano, Eat My Words, 38-41.
66 Theophano, Eat My Words, 41.
communal experience. The question of inclusion and exclusion is of particular importance in the context of the Churches of Christ denomination where a theology of radical inclusiveness (epitomised in the ‘open’ communion table) exists uneasily beside unofficial but widely practiced firm community boundaries (evidenced in the existence of levels of membership, and their associated privileges, offered by churches).

One instructive example of reading a religious community cookbook in its historical context and seeking to understand the community and its values is Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s article, “The Moral Sublime: The Temple Emmanuel Fair and Its Cookbook, Denver, 1888”. She describes both the cookbook prepared by the Denver synagogue and the elaborate fair for which it was produced. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett goes on to ask why fairs declined but cookbooks increased, citing a number of reasons contemporary women give for producing cookbooks: wanting to include new members and draw them into fellowship, exchange of culinary knowledge, eagerness to give something of oneself to the community. Inclusion and exclusion are recurrent themes in cookbooks prepared by groups.

Theophano mentions a Presbyterian cookbook produced in 1873, in which she illustrates its demarcation of religious boundaries via discussion of the cookbook’s recipe for beans and pork and its accompanying denigration of the Jewish custom of not eating pork. Food is a significant social and religious marker, central to the understanding of how religious groups function and what they value.

Another scholar looking at Presbyterian recipe books is Alice Ross. In “Ella Smith’s Unfinished Community Cookbook: A Social History of Women and Work in Smithtown, New York, 1884-1922”, she identifies the paradox of public and private as the most significant hurdle in the ‘Unfinished’ cookbook. Presbyterians (and others in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) assumed that women’s duties were of the private sphere, but to produce a recipe book women frequently had to enter the public

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sphere, engaging advertisers, printers and sales distributors. Secondly, Presbyterian values of “plainness over sensuality”\textsuperscript{69} and of religion over other activities may have provided resistance to a cookbook project. Thirdly, it is possible that other cookbook publications in neighbouring churches and secular women’s groups had a negative impact on Ella Smith’s project. Considerations such as these may be made in any study of community cookbooks. The second and third factors quite likely impacted on Churches of Christ recipe books at times. However, the issue of women having to enter the public sphere in order to produce recipe books was most often avoided in Churches of Christ. They rarely engaged printers, favouring church office photocopiers. And they rarely tainted their publications with commercial advertisements, even from the businesses of church members. The values of the church necessarily affected the material production of books.

\textbf{Summary}

Community cookbooks are objects worthy of study. They communicate the cultural history, particularity and social and religious values of communities of women. The writing and exchange of recipes and culinary knowledge is a form of currency within the community. The books are evidence of public participation despite women’s supposed belonging in the private sphere. Considering women’s traditionally limited access to more status-bearing forms of discourse, cookbooks are significant forms of self-expression. Most significantly, they allow scholars to read the stories of women who might otherwise be silent and assert the community importance of the food they cooked.

\textsuperscript{69} Ross, “Ella Smith’s Unfinished Community Cookbook,” 170.
CHAPTER 3:
MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Material culture is a growing academic field explored by historians, sociologists, folklorists and archaeologists. It allows non-written artefacts and non-literary documents to be placed in religious and cultural context in order to provide insight into the worshipping community (just as doctrines, leaders and theologians are studied in their historical situatedness). Examination of artefacts’ place, purpose, theological and physical origins, use and value (both tacit and expressed) especially as that changes over time offers the historian an important avenue through which to explore the past. In their very materiality the sensual world of artefacts gives opportunity to achieve a “more nuanced understanding of the relationship between body and mind; word and image”.70 It is indeed the interaction between the people and the objects which is the source of revelation.

Despite material culture’s potential, few historians of the Protestant church have delved into it. Although centuries of archaeologists have examined ancient artefacts for their relevance to biblical and early church history, the study of objects and non-literary documents remains a neglected field in Protestant history. Is this absence to do with theology, with the enduring spirit/matter dichotomy? Why has interest in artefacts been largely limited to the early church? Is it something to do with the century-long search for the ‘Historical Jesus’, whose material reality has mattered so much to researchers and biblical scholars? Have scholars’ own ascetic traditions and preference for studying the world of leaders and thinkers blinded them to the very physical world of the faithful masses? Material culture historian, Colleen McDannell, identifies three inter-related reasons why materiality has been overlooked as a potent source in church history.71 The first is Christianity’s language of dichotomy, of good over evil, spirit over matter. The second is the traditional association of matter with the ‘lesser’ religious world of women and children: a notion derived from the first dichotomy. The third reason is

70 Colleen McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 9.
71 McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America, 4-15.
Protestantism’s preoccupation with words, derived from a dualism which favours reason and language over feeling and touching. I will explore these reasons with particular reference to Churches of Christ in Australia.

In the light of the movement’s relationship with material culture I will then go on to examine four groups of material objects. The first is a historically significant communion cup, the first known to have been used in Victoria. The second is a pair of nineteenth century chalices which bear engravings resonant of that time in the church’s ecclesial and theological development. The third is a communion travel set from the mid-twentieth century, the type used most often by ministers when visiting isolated members of the congregation. The fourth is a group of photographs of Harvest Thanksgiving displays taken by the proud members who created them. Each object has a story to tell; a story informed by discussion of Churches of Christ’s ambivalence toward materiality.

**Religion’s language of dichotomy: spirit over matter**

In the minds of Churches of Christ’s pioneers the world was clearly divided between good and evil, sacred and profane, spirit and matter. Their world was a series of battlegrounds: reason fighting superstition, purity defending itself from sin, plain-speaking rising against false pretension. Numerous Churches of Christ historians have described the denomination’s difficult relationship with the world⁷².

However, the battleground the denominational historians describe is one of human activity. It is artifice and artefacts and the sensuality of the human body which are denied. Nature is often tacitly exempt. After all, Churches of Christ grew up in the nineteenth century, surrounded by Romantic notions of the glories of Nature. Their popular fiction and hymnody⁷³ reflect this, as does the churches’ holiday enjoyment of the beach and the

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⁷³ For example: many hymns sing of the glory of Creation; novels such as T.H. Scambler’s *Constant Stars* (Melbourne: Book Depot, 1946) and Marjorie Buckingham’s *They Shall Be Mine* (London: Oliphants, 1954), 26-27, and *Strait is the Gate* (London: Oliphants, 1956), 174-75, assert Nature as a source of comfort and sanctuary. Scambler was a minister and Principal of the Federal College of
bush. Their love of flowers in vases by the baptistery is evidence too. In the 1903 book, *Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia*, in which every church and congregation in the country were photographed it seems that the beauty of flowers was irresistible even to the apparently austere turn-of-the-century Churches of Christ brethren. Here and there, among the dark portraits, a woman holds a little posy or a bunch of violets. Some wear flowers in their hats. Many of the girls from South Melbourne’s Sower Band clasp a single stalk of jonquils. A number of men have simple flowers in their lapels: daphne, daisies, roses, gardenia, lily-of-the-valley and geraniums. Fragrant pickings from a Victorian garden. With few exceptions they are not carefully arranged buttonholes representing fashion, status and wealth. They are merely pretty and sweet-smelling, evidence of delight in the material world. More surprisingly, among the faithful’s portraits there are dogs. In photos taken at Mooroolbark and Mildura a family’s pet has made its way into view. The spiritual world has sensuality within it, upsetting the battleground of opposites. This realisation demands a redefinition of battlefronts. Spiritually minded religion has genuine material aspects: some happily included, such as Nature, and some merely necessary, such as articles of human making. Material objects, whether natural or artificial, communicate moral and religious expression between users in a language beyond words. Though often overlooked in the past, it is a language which can be read by historians.

**Iconophobia and its exceptions**

Religious imagery is almost completely absent from Churches of Christ’s literature and buildings. After all, graven images are warned against in the Scriptures and “idolatry and the distraction of sensuality” have long been the focus of persistent Protestant iconoclasm. But, significantly for the study of Harvest Thanksgiving displays and the engraving of communion vessels, there are exceptions.

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the Bible whose novel was published after his death. Marjorie Buckingham became a minister some decades after her career as a novelist.

Above: Mooroolbark (now Montrose) Church of Christ members stand outside their chapel. The unadorned weatherboard building exemplifies the denominational aversion to display and the lack of wealth among its members. The presence of the dog suggests a people at home in the material world of God’s creation.

Below: Children of the South Melbourne Sower Band holding jonquils for the camera – and demonstrating an aesthetic which found beauty in nature without regard for formal arrangement or human intervention.


Those considered not yet spiritually fully formed were excepted from the denominational prohibition on icons. In early Sunday School publications pictures were used. Such pictures served an educational purpose. They were, importantly, subordinate to the text and a necessary visual aid for the not yet literate. Allowances were made for children’s
immaturity, for their inability to think in the abstract without concrete or figurative aid. The ‘unsaved’ were given similar exemption and travelling evangelists carried ‘charts’ with them in order to better communicate with the unsaved. Painted on canvas, these diagrams ‘proving’ the Bible’s truth, these flow-charts for the path to heaven or hell, were suspended by ropes in halls and in trees wherever the preacher held audience with the masses.

An evangelist’s chart suspended on a timber frame and leant against a hedge. It belonged to Ernest Hinrichsen, Churches of Christ’s most prolific early-mid twentieth-century ‘tent missioner’. The chart ‘proves’ how Churches of Christ originated in the New Testament period, how other churches and religions were introduced later and how Churches of Christ’s dual message of primitivism and unity to the churches would soon result in a ‘restoration’ of New Testament ideals.
(Source: Photo donated to Churches of Christ Theological College by V. Caudle.)

Within the walls of Churches of Christ chapels only sacred words were allowed. Stained glass, where it was used, was rarely pictorial. Portraits of the Lord’s Supper might have

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76 Interestingly, among some Christians this ‘practical’ iconography was as damning as any other. It was reported that when the evangelist Stephen Cheek went to Toowoomba he “was permitted to speak [to] the Baptist Church, or a part of it, for a season, but had to dispense with his favorite diagram, which was stigmatised as the ‘Golden Calf’”. It is difficult to know whether the Baptists maintained a harder line on the use of graven images generally or merely had trouble tolerating the intrusion of this Churches of Christ preacher. See Maston, ed., Jubilee Pictorial History, 103.
been permitted to hang in a Sunday School room, but not in a chapel. Even crosses were not commonly used in earlier periods. Only words were permitted - and so biblical texts were painted across Churches of Christ baptisteries.\textsuperscript{77} “We love Him because He first loved us”, it said in ‘olde English’ lettering at Williamstown Church of Christ in South Australia. But the ‘olde English’ lettering refers beyond the content of its words to a weighty and authoritative tradition, a Protestant heritage of King James bibles. More commonly churches displayed verses as if they were painted scrolls, ribbons of papyrus twisting across the baptistery. The stylised lettering betrayed the forbidding of icons, for in its presentation as a scroll, the scroll itself was the icon. Just as bibles were often photographed in the hands of the faithful to show the piety of the holder, so the presence of painted scrolls, regardless of the content of the writing, conveyed that the congregation were pious people in touch with the ancient wisdom of the scriptures. Art historian, David Morgan, says, “This dialectic of world-making conducted as visual piety, does not end in childhood, but develops into the narratives of adults”.\textsuperscript{78} Painted scrolls which claim to be about the words alone, merely disguise humanity’s over-riding visual impulse and deny their particular aesthetic sense, an aesthetic they share with the denomination’s hymns, preaching, liturgy and architecture.\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{WilliamstownChurch.jpg}
\caption{Williamstown Church of Christ, South Australia, 1948. The foliage in the ceiling support and on the platform is there only for Harvest Thanksgiving. The chapel would normally be unadorned but for the scripture verse. (Source: Photo supplied by Arthur Titter, minister at Williamstown, 1948.)}
\end{figure}

Churches of Christ’s iconophobia, like that of many other Protestant churches, responds to an equal or greater human urge to create images. Though only marginally sanctioned in the past, the world of pictures brought the

\begin{itemize}
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\item \textsuperscript{77} Seasoltz, \textit{A Sense of the Sacred}, 202. Churches of Christ fit into a pattern of Protestant architecture and interiors. However, while large churches in other denominations may have added gilt to their biblical inscriptions and crystals to their gas chandeliers (as Seasoltz describes), Churches of Christ generally did not, their more basic interiors being both financial and ethical/aesthetic decisions.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Morgan, \textit{Visual Piety}, 202.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Saliers, “Liturgical Aesthetics,” 188.
\end{itemize}
unsaved – the children and the masses - into the church. The historical discipline of bringing of non-written objects into dialogue with the written brings those on the edges of the church into dialogue with its leaders, editors and ministers. The inclusion of the visual culture of churches in the study of church history thus allows for more thorough and complex understandings.

**Saving Words: Churches of Christ’s Historiography**

“A religion of *feeling* is a leaky and lazy religion, because it requires neither reading nor investigation of the word of God”. Feeling and tradition, two alternate sources of authority observed in other churches, were to not to be trusted. Resting in the Puritan ideas of a “Christianity understood in moral terms, stripped of theological mysteries and dubious images”, the bias toward the ‘Word’ in Churches of Christ increased under the influences of late-eighteenth century Lockean notions of reason and tolerance and the Scottish School of Common Sense. Reading and investigating the scriptures led to the denominationally distinctive practices of Churches of Christ.

In practice, words have dominated worship services, church government, evangelism and historiography in Churches of Christ. The words of the preacher and of invitation to the Lord’s Supper are integral to worship. Salvation is realised through verbal acknowledgement of Christ as saviour (with baptism by immersion to follow). Church government has been carried on through meetings and conferences, full of argument and debate. Likewise, journals and magazines are dominated by debate over the implementation of the Word. As early as 1909, Disciples of Christ historian W.T. Moore observed that Churches of Christ “do not have bishops, they have editors”. Publishing and printing was vital to the church and the establishment of a centralised publishing house – Austral Printing and Publishing Company - was a great boon to the struggling denomination. The many histories produced by Austral and its successor, Vital, share the

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81 In this respect, Churches of Christ fit within the broad history of English Protestantism. John Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America: The Colonial Period through the Nineteenth Century* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 14.
82 Cited in Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 17. The Disciples of Christ is one of the names used by the churches begun by Campbell and Stone in the U.S.A.
denominational bias toward the study of rhetoric as it appeared in published polemic and preaching. Artefacts and images used by historians in the past have been merely illustrative, not read as sources in themselves. The visual past has indeed been ‘overlooked’ – with the stunning exception of Maston’s 1903 Jubilee Pictorial History which gave almost equal space to narrative account and photograph, a newly accessible technology at the time. Maston died a few years after his magnum opus was published. Subsequent church histories, lacking Maston’s appreciation of the powers of photography for the work of history or merely the budget to produce them, use few if any images. To the reader it would appear that appearance did not matter at all.

Despite the prominence of words in church practice, government and publication, the material culture had a great part in the lay experience of religious identity. Interestingly, for the lay person reading (and writing) Churches of Christ history the literature is largely divided between personal biographies of those men who preached and wrote about the ‘Word’ and uplifting tales of church buildings. Unavoidably, even in a denomination determinedly focused on the authority of the Bible and weekly practice of the Lord’s Supper, the history that local people write about their local church is all the physical stuff. It is the fundraising and the club activities and who ministered there (with little emphasis on what they preached, though perhaps some mention of how many souls they saved). For most people, the church, the Body of Christ, is a mostly bodily experience - and bodies need sustaining. By examining food artefacts I hope to demonstrate how material objects are given meaning in the lives of the faithful through their use, even in a church suspicious of worldly matter.

In a denomination more intent on words, material culture is an area of history which has been barely touched to date, even as lay histories narrate the stories of physical entities such as buildings and auxiliaries. Material culture has been relegated as the lesser in the spirit/matter divide, though Nature (and perhaps the earth’s produce) appears to have been granted exemption. It has been overlooked because of its association with graven images, even though imagery has been used by teachers, evangelists and arguably in chapel decoration. The exceptions point to the value of material culture and its great
potential for the study of church life, allowing a more nuanced understanding between the alleged opposites of spirit and matter.

The study of food artefacts which follows is significant and original as it brings theological and ecclesial understanding to bear on food artefacts which have been so central to Churches of Christ’s ritual life yet overlooked to date. It will take into account the tradition of Lord’s Supper articulated by Churches of Christ theologians, historians and composers, the contested arenas of kitchen and pulpit in women’s ministry, the growing scholarship around the study of recipe books, and the methods of material culture historians who place artefacts in context to gain insight into the communities that produced, used and valued them.

For Churches of Christ in Victoria and Australia, this will be the first study on material culture and the first historical discussion of food in liturgy and the non-sacral calendar of cooking and eating, in the everyday religious life of lay and ordained. Through careful reading of artefacts it will explore the central weekly sacrament of Lord’s Supper, the understandings of Harvest Thanksgiving and the tradition of women’s church cookery and demonstrate that within this religious movement, which knows itself best in the breaking of bread, that all food is ritual food.

First Known Communion Cup

The first communion in Victorian Churches of Christ took place in a tent: “We have commenced meeting together for the purpose of remembering our dear Lord, and showing forth His death, at the tent of Brother Ingram, at Prahran.”83 Brother Picton wrote home to the British Millennial Harbinger in February 1854, reporting on the establishment of the tiny ‘house’ church. His letter is all excitement and hope, delighting in the arrival of more Churches of Christ brethren from Britain. “God grant that this may be the first dawn of a great and flourishing church”, he wrote.84 Brother Picton was one of nine men and

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84 H.G. Picton, Letter to the Editor, British Millennial Harbinger (July 1854): 322.
women who met together in a makeshift home in Melbourne’s canvas town during the
gold rush. Newly arrived in the colony, most, if not all, had been members of the British
religious movement. They brought with them the ecclesial practices of their home
churches, their prime purpose being to share the Lord’s Supper. They needed no
evangelist with them to preach the Word. They were a lay movement who met for
‘mutual exhortation’ and the Lord’s Supper. Brother Picton recalled their first
communion: “Our minds were naturally carried back to the time when we were in our
native land, sitting with our dear brethren around the table there”. For the little group,
celebrating the Lord’s Supper brought not only spiritual comfort in a foreign land but
sweet memories of home. They were reminded of family and friends with whom they had
shared communion, even as they endured the heat and dust of Melbourne’s summer
under canvas. However, despite the centrality of communion to the proceedings in the
tent in Prahran, there is no description of the vessels they used. We do not know if one of
their number brought from England or Glasgow a chalice or silver cup, or if they
improvised with household crockery - just as they improvised with shelter.

Perhaps the communion cup used in the tent at Prahran has found its way to the
Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s National Archive. There, in the
cupboard below the shelves of nineteenth-century journals is a cardboard box which once
held bananas. Inside that is a roughly hewn timber case with a little lid and latch and,
screwed to the base of the case, is a silver chalice of some significance. According to the
accompanying record of provenance it is “The First Known Communion Cup to be Used
by Our Brethren in Victoria”. The plainly titled ‘communion cup’ has been stored in such
circumstances for decades. It is at once too valuable to dispense with, too unhygienic to
use in this age of individual cups, and too dissonant to display. Emblematic of
Churches of Christ’s uneasy relationship with relics it remains unseen. Yet it might also
signify Churches of Christ’s origins in Victoria, beginning as they did with the celebration
of the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps. Unfortunately the chalice’s record of provenance is not
detailed enough to say whether it was the communion cup used in Prahran in 1853. We
know only that the denomination’s Victorian Secretary of Conference, John Proctor who

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joined Prahran in 1861, used it in 1867. When the chalice was recognised as significant and preserved in 1940 (though it didn’t arrive at the Archive until 1977), certainty of its use prior to 1867 had passed from living memory and from history too.87

The practice and theology of Lord’s Supper in the nineteenth century

In its day the cup would have held the central place in the church’s ritual. In 1866, a year before the ‘First Known Communion Cup’ can be traced with certainty, the American evangelist Thomas Jefferson Gore observed a British church service and noted the prominence given to Lord’s Supper. As a colony of Britain and with British members constituting the colonies churches, the practice was the same in Prahran.

By no means do they have preaching on Lord’s day mornings. The morning meetings are for the purpose of attending to the Lord’s Supper, and for mutual instruction and edification. […] It is certainly nearer the ancient practice than ours. It exalts the importance of the Lord’s Supper, and brings out, to a very great extent, the talent of the Church. At night the Gospel is preached to the world.88

The ‘First Known Communion Cup to be Used by our Brethren in Victoria’ began its life in a primitivist setting such as this. Over the decades it witnessed a shift in the style and purpose of meetings: Lord’s Supper yielding a little of its importance to preaching. It also saw a major theological shift: from pure memorialism to the incorporation of other sacramental theologies such as spiritual nourishment and communion. With its origins (in Victorian usage at least) in or before the 1860s it would have originally been spoken of as ‘the cup of remembrance’. By the 1940s, when it was recognised as historic and put away for future generations to puzzle over, spiritual communion may have been mentioned as it was passed among the gathered members.

During its lifetime the cup was also rivalled as a source of spiritual sustenance by the social food gatherings of the Prahran Church of Christ, especially as they joined with their

87 Indeed the cup’s whereabouts between 1940 (when Reg Enniss became its caretaker) and 1977 when it was donated to the Archives are unclear also.
88 Thompson, Let Sects and Parties Fall, 80.
friends at the Melbourne (Swanston Street) church. These were reported with evident pride in their growing tradition in 1903:

The first united tea meeting was held in Bro. Shaw’s store in Elizabeth-street, Melbourne; and the first picnic at the Bluff, which has been continued year after year ever since, was held on Christmas day, 1857. There were 103 brethren present.89

Such significant social and theological developments around such an unassuming vessel.

The First Known Communion Cup, small and simple in its elegance, is pictured inside its protective wooden case in the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society Archive. The metal plate securing the cup in place obscures the cup’s foot, appearance being accorded little value in the cup’s preservation – and concealment. (Source: Photo by the author.)

The cup is completely unadorned and stands only ten and half centimetres tall, the size of a large modern mug. In the shape of a fluted cup rather than a goblet, it has a diameter of eight and a half centimetres at its flared lip. No maker’s mark is visible due its having been screwed into a protective timber case, although it is certainly either silver or electro-plated nickel-silver. The timber case is interesting in itself. It is painted tan brown on the outside but, in spite of its valuable contents, is unlined and unpainted on the inside. It is

almost big enough to hold two cups. It was probably not built for its important present purpose (though it is tantalising to think what might have been the original purpose, given that the case is, in turn, stored in a carton which once held bananas). Whatever its previous life, it serves its function of protecting the cup from scratches, bumps and view. The cup’s value, in terms of silverware and heritage, is effectively concealed from both would-be thieves and (worse, in the minds of Churches of Christ traditionalists) would-be worshippers of relics. Material culture remains problematic, and yet revealing, in Churches of Christ where matter has been treated with suspicion.

Concealing and revealing

Concealing and its counterpart, revealing, have long been part of the theology and ritual associated with the Lord’s Table in Churches of Christ. Theologically, the sacrament, as it was articulated in the nineteenth century, was stripped bare. The cup was for remembrance only and any mystery was removed through clarifying words. At the time of this cup, revealing was all, though within an extremely limited scope of theological understanding.

In practice, concealing added to the experience of the Lord’s Supper. The table was laid with a white cloth and set with the bread and the wine. Then the elements in their vessels were covered with a second cloth which was also white, representing purity and thus already introducing an element of symbolism into a ritual apparently stripped of meaning beyond remembrance. When colonial worship meetings took place in tents and other makeshift venues, the cloths may have served to protect the elements from insects and other contaminants. They may do so today. But this purpose is only half the story: the practice of concealing the elements before the waiting congregation was not merely sensible. It was not in keeping with the denominational modesty and lack of superstition around material objects. Instead, it was at once reverential and dramatic. Covering in this way was an act of respect toward the elements, the supposedly merely representational bread and wine which, theologically-speaking, deserved no more respect than any other material object. In their concealment they were literally set apart from the rest of the physical world. By concealing the elements and speaking about them with reverence, their presence (in their absence, unseen as they are beneath the white cloth) was
magnified. The moment of their ritual unveiling was anticipated. The congregation hushed. And, with a flourish, the cloth was removed. The objects were revealed. It was theatre, of a sort.

The notion of theatre is at odds with quiet plain-spoken revelation, theologically. But it adds gravitas to the ritual. To what extent did the ritual of concealment and revelation contribute to the shift in theology toward more transcendent understandings? How much influence did the lay experience of watching and participating in communion have in reintroducing mystical ideas which Campbell had so fastidiously stripped away? It has almost certainly been a factor, albeit unrecognised.

**From tree-stump preaching to professional evangelists**

There are at least three other ways in which theatre and mystery have been imported back into Churches of Christ’s bare liturgical primitivism. Firstly many members new to the denomination brought shadows of their previous churches’ beliefs with them when they came, beliefs and practices which were often more mystical and imaginatively rich. Secondly, bare memorialism’s limitations, emotionally and theologically, perhaps left people searching for more engaging and nuanced interpretations. Certainly, the late-nineteenth century introduction of sacramental understandings beyond mere remembrance gave creative scope to hymn writers and theologians which in turn granted license to preachers and those presiding at the Lord’s Table. It allowed them to shift the focus from the memory of the cross to the feeling of the follower. No longer only re-enacting Jesus’ instruction, “Do this in memory of me”, communion could be about the ‘me’ of the person in the pew and their relationship to their Lord. As the ‘First Known Communion Cup’ neared its retirement an individualistic pietism was allowed to develop around communion, a reflection of a broader religious sentimentalism but also as a response to late-nineteenth-century evangelism aimed at the hearts of sinners: the third method by which theatre and mystery rose in Churches of Christ practice.

Prior to 1866 preachers generally overlooked the hearts (or sentimentalism) of sinners in favour of appeals to the mind. Among these lay evangelists was H.G. Picton of Prahran

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90 There was opposition to this too as discussed in Blowers and Lambert, “The Lord’s Supper”, 495.
Church of Christ. He met with little success. When the ‘First Known Communion Cup’ was first used exhortation played but a small role in worship. It was not the preserve of trained speakers but was undertaken ‘mutually’; that is, the men of the congregation took it in turns (and sometimes vied) to address the assembly on passages of Scripture. Much more importantly, the elders, the “talent of the Church”, also took it in turns to preside and often sermonise at the Lord’s Table as they served the bread and wine. However, in an effort to gain converts they took their often poorly developed preaching skills to the streets. H.G Picton first preached “the Gospel in its primitive purity with its terms of salvation” from the “stump of a tree to the inhabitants of a few huts in the vicinity of Chapel-street”.  

Even as it was reported forty years later, the legalistic mindset, with its terms and conditions, resonates. Picton later hired a “small room in Chapel-street” for the purpose, but found progress slow – indeed it is reported that on one occasion his only audience was a trio of “stately goats” whose entrance might have added an element of theatre, albeit absurdist, missing from the oratory. Like other British lay preachers in the fledgling movement, Picton’s style was probably dry and reasoning.

Churches of Christ’s American preachers were quite different. They were trained public speakers and they understood how to appeal to emotion as well as mind. Henry S. Earl represented the best of both worlds for the four hundred individuals of the Victorian Churches of Christ. An Englishman, he had studied in the United States at Bethany (located on Alexander Campbell’s property) and arrived in Melbourne in 1864. After a year at Lygon Street Church of Christ he had added two hundred more to their number. Crowds of between one and two thousand flocked to hear him speak. All the churches, Prahran included, benefited from the energy, clarity and vigour preachers such as Henry S. Earl and those who followed brought to the movement. Their emotionally warm style

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93 Chapman, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, 62.
94 Indeed Thomas Jefferson Gore was the first American evangelist to visit and stay as a professional minister to a congregation over a long period. After many decades in colonial Australia, leadership by and among the eldership declined while preachers, initially from American churches but increasingly local, rose in prominence (though preaching has never been the exclusive preserve of the paid minister).
of evangelism swayed crowds. Their sermons had tension and drama. Churches held Sunday night Gospel services where preachers roused with hortatory oration and singing crescendoed as altar calls were made. The people responded and went forth to be baptised by immersion – a spectacle often undertaken at public beaches, in rivers and in purpose-built tanks, the preachers wearing white gowns and special ‘baptismal trousers’ purchased by mail-order. Inevitably some of the drama of the Gospel sermons and of baptism found its way to the Lord’s Supper, through the quiet but expectant concealment of the elements. By the time the ‘First Known Communion Cup’ was retired from use, reason’s dry dominance had faded. Developments in theology and in theatre demanded emotional involvement with the physical experience of communion.

The ‘First Known Communion Cup’ passed through significant theological developments in sacramental theology and practise as well as in the weight given to preaching and the encroachment of emotion on a dryly reasoned tradition. As an artefact, in its simplicity, the cup materially represents the theological and ecclesial simplicity of the people who drank from it. It quietly asserts the Lord’s Supper as the reason for coming together and serves as a reminder of Churches of Christ’s humble origins in Victoria – the tent, the tree-stump, three stately goats and the glowing fire of evangelism to come.

Remember Me

In contrast to the simplicity and austerity of the ‘First Known Communion Cup’, the pair of matching chalices used at Hawthorn Church of Christ is beautifully ornate. Possibly

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96 The Austral Printing and Publishing Company ran a small trade in baptismal trousers, advertising in their Australian Christian (March 27, 1902): 156. “Baptismal Trousers. We now have in stock baptismal trousers from the GOODYEAR RUBBER CO. of New York. These trousers are made of the best material, and have solid rubber boots with leg running down to foot, presenting a very neat appearance. With proper use they will last for twenty years. We have them with the following sized boots: - Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 10. Price £4/10/-; carriage paid to any part of Australasia, £4/15/-.”
dating only two or three decades after Churches of Christ’s beginnings in Victoria (the church at Hawthorn having begun in 1873), the two silver goblets are larger, more decorative and denominationally branded. They are not the modest communion cups of a “small inward-looking”\textsuperscript{97} sect but of a church growing in confidence and aware of its position in the colony’s religious landscape. Measuring eighteen centimetres high and eight centimetres in diameter, the goblets are covered in engraving, the most striking of which being the words on the sides of each of the cups.

**The cups’ church identity**

On one side of the cups they are engraved with the words, “Hawthorn Church of Christ”. Such self-conscious denominational branding seems a world away from the gathering in the Prahran tent only twenty years earlier. It suggests a congregation certain of its identity and place within the movement. Unlike many Churches of Christ in the 1800s, the congregation at Hawthorn did not originate outside the movement. It was not originally a Baptist church as the congregation at Newstead in Victoria had been before the arrival of travelling evangelist Stephen Cheek\textsuperscript{98} who persuaded the entire congregation to switch denominations, nor a German Baptist Church as the congregation at Zillmere in Queensland had been before the same evangelist visited.\textsuperscript{99} Nor was it a church such as Wedderburn which had come across the *British Millennial Harbinger* and, being so persuaded by its argument, established themselves as a Church of Christ. Nor was it a former independent Christian Church as was Kersbrook in South Australia.\textsuperscript{100} All these churches, and many like them, may have had lingering attachments to other religious causes. But the church at Hawthorn could have no doubt about its identity and purpose. It was composed of “a few brethren and sisters living in Hawthorn, Kew, and surrounding districts, feeling the inconvenience of going into Melbourne on the Lord’s Day for worship, [who] met and resolved to assemble together in Hawthorn”.\textsuperscript{101} They were denominationally aligned before their establishment as the Hawthorn Church of Christ. They were also conscious of the movement’s desire for expansion. From just one church in

\textsuperscript{97} Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 10.
\textsuperscript{98} Maston, ed., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 270.
\textsuperscript{99} Maston, ed., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 122.
\textsuperscript{100} Lori McDonald, “Formation of the Kersbrook Church of Christ,” in *Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s Historical Digest* 144 (Aug 2004): 1-4.
\textsuperscript{101} Maston, ed., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 281.
1853 the movement had expanded to seventeen small churches by 1864. Two years after Hawthorn was established the total membership among Victorian Churches of Christ was counted at one thousand five hundred adult baptised believers (and many children too).

Pair of chalices from the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society Archive. The left one is turned to show the engraving ‘Remember Me’. The right shows ‘Church of Christ Hawthorn’. (Source: Photo by the author.)

The pair of cups was most likely purchased sometime after the congregation’s establishment, though well before 1910-1930 by which time most churches had moved to individual glasses. As numbers increased the symbolic single cup became insufficient for such a large group of people, and rather than buying another single cup to augment what they already had, the eldership bought a matching pair: a purchase indicative of some financial resources and aesthetic sensibility. Hawthorn’s congregation grew rapidly. In 1888 the congregation was significant enough to attract the services of one of the most prominent evangelists in the country, Brother David Amos Ewers, who added sixty of those souls to the fold during his three years in the pulpit.\textsuperscript{102} Raised in South Australia and having left school at the age of nine to be apprenticed to a wheelwright, D.A. Ewers

\textsuperscript{102} Maston, ed., Jubilee Pictorial History, 282.
became one of the most influential evangelists, publishers and churchmen of his era. He came to the faith through baptism by that same emotionally engaging English-American evangelist who had made all the difference in Melbourne and Prahran, Henry S. Earl.

The cups’ use in maintaining purity

On the other side of each of Hawthorn’s cups it says “Remember Me” in capital letters. The words are simple and bold. They serve as a reminder to the theologically adventurous or the newly converted (whose numbers had begun to grow in the last two decades of the nineteenth century) of the church’s much argued scriptural position on Lord’s Supper. The presence of “Remember Me” on the cup from which the members drank signified a church sure of its sacramental position, and willing to defend it. Partaking from these vessels was, beyond faithful observance of the ordinance, an act of doctrinal agreement and a pledge of allegiance to the cause. The material object here intersects and engages with the theological debate of its era.

Throughout Christendom, the cup has long symbolised inclusion and exclusion. In Churches of Christ, not only did this apply to issues of orthodoxy but to the social controls exerted through the practice of ‘withdrawing’ which was observed until the late 1890s. Acknowledging the difficulties churches encountered in “maintaining the purity of church fellowship”, the writer ‘YZ’ appealed to 1 Corinthians 5:1, saying, “Those classes of sinners who are called brethren and are fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, extortioners” are to be subject to the discipline of the church elders. “We are commanded in the eleventh verse not to eat with them; so it is manifest, we must conclude, that those guilty of such sins, and known to us as guilty, are to be deemed by us excluded from the church, else how could we refuse to eat with them.” We can assume by D.A. Ewers’ publication of this article in his journal, that he agreed with the sentiments. The

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103 Ewers rose to become a preacher, writer, publisher of the *Australian Christian Pioneer* and editorial contributor to its successor the *Australian Christian* eventually becoming an even greater influence than his mentor. He was also valued across the country for his skills as a leader, serving variously as President or Vice-President of the State Conferences of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia before his death in 1915.

104 Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 88-89.

105 *Australian Christian Pioneer* (Apr 1, 1879): 207. The writer ‘YZ’ is unknown but was perhaps the editor himself - D.A. Ewers, minister at Hawthorn.
‘Remember Me’ cups were used as powerful tools for control, identifying who was in and who was out of the worshipping community.

Theology in song and among the people

In the light of Hawthorn’s, and Churches of Christ’s, position on Lord’s Supper having been confidently engraved on the cups, it is fascinating to speculate about the accompanying liturgy chosen and sung by the congregation over the years. Records do not exist to show us what hymns were sung each week as the faithful gathered but, considering the congregation’s denominational orthodoxy, it is likely they were chosen from Churches of Christ sources. As will be demonstrated, those sources covered a wide range of sacramental positions, not all of them consonant with the bare memorialism of the founders – and the cups.

Even while Churches of Christ eschewed the supposed pretensions of liturgy and theology in favour of plain biblical speaking, the hymnal had enormous effect as people drank in theology through song. Indeed, such was the value of the *Hymn Book* among congregations, it was sometimes presented to newly baptised members, in place of the more traditional gift of a New Testament.\(^{106}\) Hymnals thus exist as evidence of unofficial liturgy demonstrating religious understanding even as the official denominational position was articulated differently. The lyrics reveal theology as it was heard in the pews. The music aided theological ‘absorption’ (as it was hummed during the week as people went about their working lives), and exists as an expression of the tradition’s aesthetic.

A range of hymnals were produced for Australian Churches of Christ, derived from British and American Churches of Christ sources as well as other denominations. The books have in common a larger than usual proportion of Lord’s Supper hymns, indicating the centrality of the ritual.\(^{107}\) They also repeat a great number of hymns between editions


\(^{107}\) For example, Australian Churches of Christ’s 1957 hymnal dedicated one in fifteen hymns to communion. In their 1974 hymnal it was one in fourteen. The 1933 (1946 reprint) *English Hymnal* for use in the Anglican Church had only one in eighteen hymns, and the popular *Sacred Songs and Solos 1200 edition* by Ira Sankey had only one in one hundred and thirty-three, though with greatly
pointing to a slow rate of change and generational sharing in the sentiments expressed. In 1887 *Psalms and Hymns* was published in Melbourne. The hymns were largely sourced from the American branch’s *Christian Hymn Book* (1864) and the British hymnal. Alongside Churches of Christ’s own compositions, they include hymns by Watts, Wesley, Newton, Bonar and Doddridge. But no music was provided. In its place was direction to a range of tunes in other hymnals, with instruction to repeat, alter or omit lines to make the words fit - pity the organist.\(^{108}\) The use of tunes, and of hymns and psalms, was subject to the preferences of musicians, congregations and their elders. Indeed it was reported that the chanted Psalms were favoured in Victoria but not in Western Australia,\(^{109}\) demonstrating variable acceptance of liturgical practices in the congregations (though chants disappeared altogether before the mid-twentieth century). In 1931 another hymnal was produced, and again in 1957 and 1974 (before Churches of Christ joined in the inter-denominational *Together in Song* in 1999).

Not until 1976, just three years before Hawthorn Church of Christ closed for lack of members, were tunes fixed firmly to hymns. Hawthorn thus existed in a period in which music was always interchangeable and subject to the preferences of individuals. While we cannot know those preferences, when popular practice informed the assignment of lyrics to music in 1976, those tunes in the Lord’s Supper section were predominantly joyful and hopeful. They are almost all in bright major keys and move along at a steady walking pace, almost never slow or mournful. Staid, anthemic or lyrical, they are, on the whole, suited to an andante tempo: the majority would be played at less than MM 100=per beat and none faster than MM 112=per beat (though other sections in the *Hymn Book*, such as “Aspiration and Consecration”, range over generally faster tempi.) Such was the happy spirit in which the Lord’s Table was approached in mid-twentieth century Australian Churches of Christ.

\(^{108}\) Frank J. Funston, “Notes on our Hymnals”, *The Digest of the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society* 19 (May 1967): 4. Funston notes that some churches did not own organs or were doctrinally opposed to instrumental music in the nineteenth century under the influence of the American *a capella* movement within Churches of Christ.

However, with few exceptions, Churches of Christ were musically undistinguished. Their hymn tunes are almost all derived from elsewhere, be it other hymnals or popular music, and they were consequently criticised for being both bland and uncultured. The situation was dramatised in T.H. Scambler’s 1941 serialised novella. Margaret, the Presbyterian heroine of the story complains to John, her Churches of Christ soon-to-be fiancé, about his denomination’s unrefined liturgy:

“I find it hard to get into the spirit of worship in your services. I don’t like those rollicking tunes you sing, and I was appalled to hear the tune ‘Drink to me Only with Thine Eyes’ sung to words of elevated spiritual meaning”.

“I quite agree with you there,” he said. “I think we have improved the tone of our worship in the hymns since I came [as Churches of Christ minister to the town]… But one has to move quietly in these things, or we should have a revolt.”

Threat of revolt neatly explains the musical culture of the lay movement, and their disjunction with the preferences of some clergy.

With laymen planning and leading worship services, their musical tastes inevitably dominated. To some extent these were simply the tastes of the tradesmen, shopkeepers and labourers to whom Churches of Christ most appealed throughout the twentieth century. Churches of Christ’s adoption of popular tunes and well-known hymns at once reflects wider Protestant practice and asserts the acceptability of the ‘art’ of words (in contrast to its denial of the ‘art’ of architecture and iconography). The acceptance of substitution of tunes in three successive hymnbooks speaks of the tradition’s disregard for the formalities of ‘liturgy’ and, though it seems a contradiction, congregations’ and lay leaders’ willingness to engage creatively with that liturgy.


111 Calvin, for instance, insisted on the use of psalms only but set them to modern French dance tunes. Saliers, “Liturgical Aesthetics”, 188.

112 English Protestantism’s ease with poetry and literature but not the visual arts is examined in John Dillenberger, The Visual Arts and Christianity in America, 14.
Liturgy of contested lyrics

Words were tacitly considered more contentious than music, and more powerful too as the lack of controls around tunes attests. It comes as no surprise then that, despite a generally low level of education among members and some undistinguished musical preferences, lyrics were examined and contested.

Despite Churches of Christ’s apparently firm stand on Lord’s Supper as remembrance, theological variation in song is evident from early times. Prolific British hymn writer, Gilbert Y. Tickle died in 1888, just as he published (with David King, editor of the influential Churches of Christ journal, British Millennial Harbinger) a hymnal for use in British Churches of Christ. Tickle (1818-1888) was a powerful individual in a church which, without institutional hierarchy, could be swayed by personality. He had been the head of the movement in Britain, taking up the year-long position as President of the Conference of Churches of Christ in Britain numerous times in the years between 1859 and 1880 and, in that capacity, had written to Alexander Campbell questioning him on access to the Lord’s Table. On examination of the content of Tickle’s hymns, he obviously also disagreed with Campbell over the theology of Lord’s Supper as commemoration. Just two verses from Tickle’s “Another week with all its cares hath flown” illustrate a variety of theological positions:

Jesus, our great High Priest, our Sacrifice! /Our Passover! rich Gift of love divine! /
With Thee we would into the Holiest rise, /Communing with Thee in the bread and the wine.

O what a feast ineffable is this! /Thy table spread with more than angel’s food! /

Tickle’s lyrics consistently speak of spiritual nourishment, atonement, the bread and wine as a pledge for divine promises and Lord’s Supper as communion with God.\footnote{Gilbert Y. Tickle, “Another week with all its cares hath flown” in (Australian) Churches of Christ Hymn Book, ed. Robert Lyall, et al. (Melbourne: Austral Printing and Publishing Company, 1957), hymn no. 231.}
introduction of this last idea into British Churches of Christ is usually attributed to William Robinson; though he was born the year the hymnal was published and perhaps raised singing it. Such hymns as Tickle’s were sung by generations of Australians.

A range of theological viewpoints are found in the church’s hymns, resulting in some apparent inconsistency\(^{115}\), but there is evidence of thoughtful negotiation. In the 1957 *Churches of Christ Hymn Book* there are lyrics by writers of various religious backgrounds and a range of theological understanding. William Robinson’s preference for spiritual nourishment via the bread and the wine features in a third of the Lord’s Supper hymns. However, Campbell’s interpretation of strict commemoration dominates: twenty-six of the fifty-two hymns sing of remembrance. It is carefully balanced: that exactly half the hymns in 1957 mention the theme of commemoration is unlikely to be a coincidence. When the 1974 edition was published a third of hymns were removed or replaced yet the proportion of commemoration lyrics remained the same.\(^{116}\) The men on the hymn selection committee were not all theologically educated but would certainly have been aware of the contention over Lord’s Supper theology. Their need to balance the hymn selection so precisely speaks of ongoing tension over interpretation in the denomination.

Interestingly between 1957 and 1974 the proportion of hymns dealing with the union of the people through the Lord’s Supper increased, reflecting the denomination’s attempt “to overcome the individualistic pietism that has often characterised observance of the Supper”.\(^{117}\) There might also have been some attempt to quell disagreement and focus instead on commonality. Communion with God is another popular theme: in many churches the rite is now known as ‘communion’. The Lord’s Supper as a sign of the new covenant also features in a number of hymns. It is interesting to note that in 1957, and again in 1974 after amendments were made, there were quite a number of hymns


\(^{115}\) Judith Raftery describes this inconsistency as, “a telling expression of the intentionally undeveloped nature of the movement’s theology and doctrine and its consequent ability to absorb a variety of influences”. J. Raftery, “Jesus in Twentieth Century Evangelical Hymnody” (unpublished thesis, Flinders University, 2007).

\(^{116}\) In fact just over half, or 21 of 41 hymns in the 1975, book focussed on commemoration.

\(^{117}\) Blowers and Lambert, “The Lord’s Supper”, 495.
focussing on visions of the passion, often including atonement theory. Their use would seem to suggest a theology of the Eucharist as atoning sacrifice, more resonant with Catholicism than low church Protestantism. This idea was not articulated by Churches of Christ theologians (as far as I have been able to discover) and would have been anathema to Campbell, so why are these hymns in the Lord’s Supper section? Not all the lyric inclusions display evidence of careful thought. Perhaps the passion hymns’ placement reflected the churches’ habit of singing them at that time in worship services. Perhaps practice sometimes washes over theological argument, and seeps in unseen. It has certainly been unseen by many historians who, reflecting their tradition’s suspicion of liturgy, bypassed the hymnal and looked only to the preachers for evidence of theological development.

Despite evidence of careful negotiation over sacramental theology in the Australian Churches of Christ’s hymn books, musical practice has often pre-empted or made diffuse the denomination’s doctrinal articulation. While the ‘Remember Me’ position of Hawthorn’s communion chalices was initially dominant, before the nineteenth century was out numerous other interpretations came to be expressed in the liturgical resource of the official hymnal. These hymns may even have been sung by those who drank from Hawthorn’s cups.

**The cups’ moral content**

Along with the words, ‘Hawthorn Church of Christ’ and ‘Remember Me’, Hawthorn’s communion chalices are engraved extensively with vine leaves, symbolic of the cups’ contents. Yet the cups at Hawthorn would almost certainly never have contained real wine. Anti-liquor campaigning grew up alongside Churches of Christ, rising in the early 1800s to political prominence in the last few decades of that century. (Temperance did not completely take hold until the 1870s in Australian Churches of Christ, so there remains the possibility that Prahran’s cup contained wine at some point early in its life: an unusual distinction in a teetotalling tradition.) Food prohibitions, such as those surrounding pork

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118 In 1976, when Churches of Christ revised their hymn book some of the apparent misplacements of hymns were corrected and moved to more appropriate sections. But other passion hymns remained in the Lord’s Supper section.
in Judaism and meat in Seventh-Day Adventism, have long functioned to identify and draw boundaries around religious groups. In Churches of Christ the taboo around alcohol drew people together forming the centre of the movement’s moral and social campaigning. Alcohol, or the prohibition on it, was thus yet another food central to the tradition’s social and spiritual life.

In many Churches of Christ, the work of Temperance fitted neatly alongside the work of saving souls. It did however raise an apparent contradiction between the movement’s insistence on biblical literalism around Lord’s Supper and their moral insistence on the non-use of wine. A solution was found at first in unfermented grape juice. As the Restorationist’s literalism in using wine disappeared under the moral weight of wowserism (amid much argument about whether the biblical wine was really fermented or not\textsuperscript{119}), the acceptable range of substances grew. Blackcurrant cordial became quite popular: it tasted pleasant, was the right sort of colour and had a long shelf life. Many congregations have made do with less convincing non-alcoholic substitutes.\textsuperscript{120}

The issue of whether or not communion wine should be alcoholic must have been resolved rather early on. The issue does not present extensively in colonial Churches of Christ journals (which are extant from the 1870s), though there is much column space dedicated to the Temperance cause. At the 1869 Annual Conference of British Churches of Christ elders were encouraged to replace wine with grape juice\textsuperscript{121} and it is likely that this practice was followed in the colonies given that their literature was very widely read here at the time. It is interesting to note that most of the controversy surrounding alcohol in the British churches centered on ‘discipline’ or access to the Lord’s Table rather than debate over the interpretation of wine use in biblical text. In Britain and colonial Australia the issue was again one of who to exclude, drunkards and sellers of intoxicating liquor forming just one more group who might be denied access to communion in the sect. In


\textsuperscript{120} The substitution of the material substance of the elements seemed to raise few theological problems for Churches of Christ. Indeed Alexander Campbell did not write on the matter. However Temperance did not herald the beginning of substitutions: see Paul Gibson, “Eucharistic Food – May We Substitute?” \textit{Worship} Vol. 76:5 (Sept 2002). As well as discussing the history of substitution and its theological considerations, Gibson takes time in his article to criticise the Australian practice of using blackcurrant Ribena.

\textsuperscript{121} Thompson, \textit{Let Sects and Parties Fall}, 74.
this way food is central to church ritual and social life and to establishing its boundaries through admission to and denial of participation.

In Australian Churches of Christ not only were drunkards shunned and alcohol condemned, the word ‘wine’ was avoided too. In anti-alcohol campaigning, morally loaded terms such as ‘the demon drink’ were used alongside ‘strong drink’ and ‘liquor’ which were in broad popular use in the 1800s. While the latter two terms have faded from the mainstream, they have persisted in anti-alcohol settings and acquired negative overtones. Avoiding reference to ‘wine’ neatly avoided confusing the sacramental representation of Christ’s blood with morally corrupt alcohol. The issues of Temperance and sacrament could be separated linguistically. When speaking of Lords’ Supper, ‘wine’ was replaced with ‘the cup’. While the sacramental bread was never called ‘the plate’, ‘the cup’ was used as a metonym for the wine. Following New Testament tradition, the vessel stood in linguistic place of its contents, which were once innocent (indeed the innocence of the blood sacrifice is integral to the narrative of atonement) but had become, in the light of Temperance, potentially contentious. Necessarily some of the narrative power of the now questionably innocent wine/blood was sacrificed to the cause of anti-alcohol campaigning.

Beyond wine’s linguistic and material substitutes lay issues which struck at the heart of Restorationist ideals. Problematically, for literally-minded Restorationists, church practice clashed with theology. There is an inherent contradiction in the non-use of alcoholic wine by a denomination which claims that the primitive or ‘ancient order’ of New Testament practice is the only authentic model for the contemporary church: Jesus drank wine at the Last Supper and miraculously produced wine from water at Cana yet many nineteenth century primitivist churches would not touch alcohol. But was this wine as we know it? Daniel Sack describes the convoluted work of biblical interpretation by nineteenth-century American Evangelicals that enabled primitivists to reconcile their church practice with their social agenda. There was the ‘two-wine’ theory, based on linguistic analysis, which put forward that “the wine praised by the psalmist and blessed by Christ, was non-alcoholic; the other, cursed by the psalmist and warned of by Paul, was alcoholic.”

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122 For example, Australian Christian Pioneer (June 1, 1879): 253.
123 Daniel Sack, Whitebread Protestants, 16.
There was also linguistic study of the Last Supper (involving the terms ‘the cup’ and ‘the fruit of the vine’) which gave further support to those already convinced that alcohol should not be used in Lord’s Supper. Then there was the argument that Jesus wouldn’t have consumed alcohol, regardless of how his drinks are described in the Bible, because alcohol is evil. However illogical or hermeneutically corrupted these positions appear, they “gave Temperance-minded evangelicals biblical warrants for using non-alcoholic wine as authentic practice.” 124

Churches of Christ were not immune from attempts to align theology and practice. In 1957 minister at Berri Church of Christ, Jack Manallack, wrote “Come and Have a Drink?” In it he argued that

We cannot refute… Jesus Christ drank intoxicating liquor. But please qualify that statement on every occasion with a reference to the unfortified wine of Palestine and also the absolute discipline and self-control exercised on every occasion by our Lord. 125

So the wine Jesus consumed wasn’t quite as dangerous as that sold in Australian hotels: a lesser evil perhaps. Manallack’s refusal to deny that Jesus drank alcohol actually caused considerable concern in the church. In 1958, the Christian Women’s Fellowship Temperance Committee reported to the annual Victorian-Tasmanian Conference that his message had led to “one or two young preachers [using] this as a basis for talks advocating moderation.” 126 In the 1950s Churches of Christ, still heavily imbued with their Temperance heritage, the idea of moderation could not be seriously considered.

Manallack went on to pose the question, should we be guided by Jesus’ practice or his principles? He argued that because Jesus was a Jew “we are not expected to follow his practice” 127 (a statement which must have rung a few alarm bells for believer baptists whose central practice was based on the gospel example of Jesus’ baptism) but that “the principles presented by Jesus Christ and his Church call for nothing less than total

124 Daniel Sack, Whitebread Protestants, 17.
127 Manallack, “Come and Have a Drink?”: 4.
abstinence.” The low alcoholic content argument was reiterated by minister Arthur Pigdon, twenty years later and less controversially, in his 1977 essay “Shall I Drink Socially?: A decision every young person must make.” Times had changed. Both writers place great weight on the biblical injunction not to lead a brother to sin, emphasising social responsibility and harm of alcohol abuse.

Fifteen years later again, Churches of Christ New Testament scholar Ron W. Graham argued that Restorationism is necessarily selective and incomplete as a result of our differing historical and cultural settings. We do not use a communal cup, we do not use alcohol and we do not take it while reposing on our elbows. He wrote:

> Whether to use wine or unfermented grape juice in the celebration of the Supper is a question that historically has been answered by us in terms of positions espoused by one or another of the nineteenth century’s Temperance movements, rather than by New Testament precept and precedent.

Graham maintained that perceptions of truth are always “existential, contextual and relative” and that the principle of Restoration should not be lost amid contention over smaller matters like alcohol. After more than a hundred years of the Temperance movement the problem inherent in desiring both abstinence and New Testament practice remained, but the motivations were finally acknowledged.

**Publishing for the cause**

For the most part, questions of biblical interpretation and alcohol faded into the background as churches got on with the practice of non-alcoholic Lord’s Supper, consistent with their participation in the Temperance movement. As early as 1902 the Austral Printing and Publishing Company was advertising:

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128 Manallack, “Come and Have a Drink?”; 5.
Unfermented Wine: The Pure Juice of the Grape. Free from Alcohol. ... We always keep a good stock on hand. ... For the use of the Lord’s Table, or Dietetic and Medicinal use, this wine is unsurpassed.132

Supplies were available from Austral’s own offices (as were baptismal trousers), the publishing company diversifying as need and opportunity presented. The Austral Printing and Publishing Company, through its publication of tracts, Sunday School materials, ‘bible literature’, histories and, in the twentieth century, the only national journal of Churches of Christ had immense influence throughout the movement in Australia. As a commercial printer it refused to produce advertising for alcohol, reinforcing the cause and raising its own reputation among the congregations. If Austral advertised and distributed unfermented wine it was high recommendation indeed.

Before the *Australian Christian* came into being there were a number of other journals which also carried Temperance messages. A regular column by local minister Charles L. Thurgood appeared in D.A. Ewers’ *Australian Christian Pioneer* in the 1880s providing news on the Churches of Christ Temperance Department activities. *Australian Christian Pioneer* also reprinted propaganda generated by churches in America who were likewise vigorously involved in the campaign for banning alcohol.133 Thurgood’s Temperance Department was one of the earliest official committees to form within the Churches of Christ Conference. The dynamic young Antoinette K. Thurgood, Charles’ American wife whom he met while studying for the ministry in Kentucky, listed news of the church women’s Temperance work in the *Australian Christian Standard* each week also. The women’s work sounds, if anything, rather busier than the men’s. Each week there are reports on Temperance meetings, Christian Endeavour (a social and educational meeting

132 *Australian Christian* (Jan 9, 1902): 48. For the primitivist Churches of Christ, Paul’s advice to Timothy to take some wine for his ailments (1 Tim 5:23) would have been similarly problematic. Wine, whether used for medicinal, ‘dietetic’ or liturgical purposes, was equally suspect. However, medicinal use of wine and spirits was widespread at the time: 3350 gallons of alcoholic drinks were prescribed by Melbourne Hospital in 1882 alone, and prescription use would have been far outweighed by self-medication. See Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia* (Blackburn: Penguin, 1975), 356.

for young adults) and Band of Hope (which sought to educate children against liquor and encourage them to sign ‘the pledge’ of abstinence) amid many other activities.

Temperance campaigning even extended to the Sunday School columns of the *Australian Christian*. The lesson for use around the country on March 23, 1902, says, “The Bible again and again warns us of the evils of strong drink, and it is well that occasionally the children in our Sunday Schools are taught from the Temperance passages”. The writer Thomas Hagger refers to “the Temperance passages”, as if there was a canon within the canon known to those churches active in the Temperance movement.

Many decades later, in the 1970s and 80s, another flurry of anti-alcohol literature was published by Churches of Christ. A debate between a local minister and an advertising executive employed by the liquor industry appeared in the *Pamphlet Club* (which was available for subscription from the Federal Literature Department of the Churches of Christ in Australia). The issue of “Alcohol Education for Learner Drivers” took up another edition of the *Pamphlet Club*, argued entirely on social rather than religious grounds: an interesting development in the once other-worldly Churches of Christ. Most recently, speeches by ‘personalities’ were reprinted and distributed by the *Pamphlet Club*: Miss Adelle McKenzie, ‘Temperance Queen of Australia, 1985’ argued against the social evil of drink and other drugs, as did actor turned politician, Terry Norris. Both appeal to emotion, citing examples of the destructive powers of alcohol, road accident statistics and alcohol’s effects on otherwise healthy families. It was a rhetorical strategy increasingly used in Churches of Christ as they were influenced by the charismatic movement. This historical discontinuity with Churches of Christ’s past is further demonstrated in the title chosen for both speeches: “Temperance or Abstinence? – A Question for Christians.”

The speakers fail to appreciate the historic situation: for Churches of Christ people, and

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134 Historical inquiry continually presents anomalies: Churches of Christ seem overwhelmingly opposed to alcohol yet in the 1870s the children at the Bairnsdale Church of Christ met for Sunday School in a “hop kiln”. There is no immediately obvious explanation for this. Maston, ed., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 291.
many others in the Temperance movement, Temperance always meant abstinence in practical terms.

In case there had been any doubt, in 1900 the denomination’s Victorian Temperance and Social Questions Committee clarified the situation with a name change, becoming the Churches of Christ Anti-Liquor and Social Questions Committee, for while there may be uncertainty on many issues of social concern, there was none regarding the evils of alcohol. Likewise, Mrs R. Burns reported in 1946 that the women of Churches of Christ “are uncompromising advocates of total abstinence.” In the nineteenth century through to the Second World War, Local Option (in which people voted as to whether liquor licences could operate in their town) and other measures to limit the availability and consumption of alcohol were supported by many churches but it was often felt to be merely an achievable half measure. Hawthorn Churches of Christ minister, D.A. Ewers, who was described as “an uncompromising foe of the drink traffic” summed it up in an 1888 editorial:

While professedly advocating Local Option, all Temperance reformers desired prohibition in their hearts, and were wrong in openly contending for one thing while really desiring another. ... It is urged that while prohibition is right it would not be wise to contend for it at present, but to say it is right appears to us equivalent to an acknowledgement that it is wise, for wisdom and righteousness must not be divorced.

There could be no doubt; compromise did not come easily to Churches of Christ.

Participating for change

While British Churches of Christ debated with those who sought to participate in Temperance societies - it meant joining purposes and action with unbelievers - Churches of Christ in Australia threw themselves in wholeheartedly. The denomination’s puritan

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138 Chapman, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, 117.
142 Thompson, Let Sects and Parties Fall, 73-76.
tendencies, expressed in writings against the sins of alcohol, gambling, sexual impurity, theatre and dancing, meant that participation in the Temperance movement was quite a natural fit despite their being otherwise generally averse to political participation. The women were loyal supporters of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and in 1918 a Churches of Christ minister won second prize in the ‘Prohibition Hymn Competition’. “Prohibition in Australia”, announced the advertising flyer featuring the second prize hymn, “will be hastened by the introduction and use of the Australian Prohibition Songster … to be published about middle of August”. The author of the hymn, T.H. Scambler, later became Principal of the Federal College of the Bible. He wrote, “The call of God resounding thrills on the morning air / Arise and save my people from drink’s despotic power”. Though prohibition was never achieved in Australia, Scambler’s hymn proved so popular it was adapted for more general use (with the change from “drink’s” to “sin’s” despotic power).

Further evidence of Churches of Christ involvement in the Temperance movement can be seen in the number of positions held. When the Australasian Temperance Conference was formed in 1914 both the president and vice-president were Churches of Christ members and one of the speeches was given by a Churches of Christ minister, J.E. Thomas. In 1922 a significant number of the employees of the Commonwealth Prohibition League were Churches of Christ members, as was the president of the Temperance Society. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) was at least as well supported. The names of Churches of Christ are recorded in the W.C.T.U.’s history book *Sixty Years of

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143 There are always exceptions: numerous men did become involved in politics in the days when Churches of Christ were quite puritan. See Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 19.
147 Australian Christian (1914), 228.
Citizenship: Mrs Antoinette Thurgood welcomed delegates to the 1889 Convention and a number of members are listed among the Union’s patrons and life members. Participation in the W.C.T.U. came to mean more than anti-liquor activities. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union was a campaigner for changes in legislation to better protect women and children. As their political engagement grew, the push for women’s right to vote naturally followed, and a number in the W.C.T.U. were also leaders in the movement for women’s suffrage. Through all this Christian women found themselves challenging accepted notions of what it was to be a Christian woman, especially as churches’ support of suffrage varied between denominations, towns and even congregations. The role of the Christian wife and mother was no longer assumed to be entirely domestic, but only by some in the church. Their campaigns saw them move from the private to the public sphere, becoming agents for social change, and using a lot more than prayer to achieve it. Piety’s status as a solely interior state was contested. Mrs Burns wrote that women in Churches of Christ began seriously to study public questions, in order that they might use the suffrage intelligently and seek thereby to advance righteous causes. This led to their making their voices heard more plainly in matters of church government, as well as on urgent moral issues affecting the community generally… It may be fairly

150 McCorkindale, Pioneer Pathways, 134-135. Among the prominent and wealthy donors such as Sir William Angliss, were Doncaster Church of Christ members Mr and Mrs J.J. Tully. A number of Church of Christ names appear in the history listed as ‘pioneers’ or ‘life members’.
152 For example, Miss Vida Goldstein was involved in the Women’s Suffrage League and W.C.T.U. Bessie Harrison Lee also led the fight for women’s votes and was president of the Richmond branch of the W.C.T.U. Marilyn Lake, Getting Equal, 32, 44, 49.
said that our sisters have been well to the fore in exercising their political rights, and in doing so not for party ends, but for the moral well-being of the public.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, not only did the sisters exercise their political rights for moral or religious purpose, they used their religious meeting to campaign for political rights. Mrs Burns does not mention this, nor do other church histories. It was not reported in the “Our Sisters’ Page” section of the *Australian Christian Standard*, though the women’s ‘page’ sometimes went on for several pages. Perhaps such activities were never official or intended to be part of Churches of Christ women’s public history. But the evidence below strongly suggests that the campaign for suffrage took place in the context of sisters’ meetings.

In 1891 the Women’s Suffrage Petition was presented to the parliament of Victoria. Most of the thirty thousand signatures appear to have been gathered by women going from house to house down the streets of city and town. However, a collection of Churches of Christ women’s names from various suburbs of Melbourne appear consecutively on page 348 of the petition, and again another group on page 487.¹⁵⁵ Among those grouped together on page 348 is Emily G. Ewers who would have partaken each week from the ‘Remember Me’ communion cups. She was described in 1916 as “almost as well known to the brotherhood as [her husband D.A. Ewers] was [and] a true helper and sharer of his labours.”¹⁵⁶ Priscilla Ludbrook is also there. She later became President of the Victorian Sisters’ Conference and was the mother of F.M. Ludbrook who headed the Churches of Christ Foreign Missions Department. Alongside are the signatures of members of the Somerville and Pittman families, both of which were prominent in education and evangelism and in the development of social ministry (highly compatible with the struggle for suffrage) through the Pittman’s establishment of a ‘Rescue Home’ for girls. On page 487 is Hilda Ludbrook, Elizabeth Pittman and J. and J.E. Huntsman of Malvern Church of

¹⁵⁴ Burns, “A Pioneering Partnership,” 174. The mention of ‘party ends’ is not merely an attempt to keep the discussion neutral, but reflects some early feminists’ contention that they should remain apart from the party system as it was this system that perpetuated women’s disadvantage, and that political neutrality would provide opportunity to lobby all parties without accusation of bias. Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal*, 139-63.


Christ (J. and ‘E.’ Huntsman were Sunday School teachers in the early 1900s at Malvern Church of Christ and Sister B. Huntsman was President of the Sisters’ Conference in the 1890s). It is reasonable to conclude that one of their number took the petition to a fellowship meetings of sisters, perhaps even to the church, and encouraged other to sign. Numerous individual church members signed also, including women in the families of ministers and office bearers.

“Protestants not only changed society through the Temperance movement; the movement also changed them,”157 writes American Disciples historian Glenn Zuber. The same was true in Australia. Through initial involvement in the Temperance movement, women were radicalised and, some years later, enfranchised. Likewise, men began by serving on Temperance Committees with largely negative agendas but these developed and grew into positive-minded social issues committees, eventually leading to the establishment of institutionalised care and benevolent works.158 Through participation in Temperance Churches of Christ gradually awoke to a world of social involvement.

Hawthorn’s pair of chalices speaks of a food prohibition now largely lapsed within the tradition but, during their lifetime, the stance against alcohol was essential to the church’s understanding of itself as a moral entity. Likewise, their ‘Remember Me’ theology speaks of a single-minded sacramental identity which has long since faded as other ideas were absorbed into the liturgy. As material objects they articulate the firm and certain identity of a confident and growing church, for which food was central and defining, both Lord’s Supper in its presence and alcohol in its absence.

**Communion Travel Set**

The last of the four artefacts in this study of communion vessels is a black leather-bound communion travel set. It has four little glasses, a small glass bottle with a silver lid, a shiny silver plate and a tiny round silver container. Inside the container there is matzos biscuit, though its preservation was perhaps unintentional. Daintily presented, like a

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158 Chapman, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, 87.
miniature spiritual picnic set, this communion travel set served to bring communion to those isolated from the church through distance or ill health. It is about the usual size for such a set, measuring eighteen by fourteen centimetres, and dates from the mid-twentieth century, judging by the case’s wear and styling, though no record of provenance accompanies it to confirm. With neither record of provenance nor engraving it is impossible to know where this communion travel set journeyed and with whom. Yet it is typical of mass-produced travel sets and suggestive of the importance of the Lord’s Supper and its increasing practice by ordained ministers of the church.

The little glasses in the communion set are the same as those individual glasses introduced in worship services in the early and mid twentieth-century to avoid the spread of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera and diphtheria. Many churches sought to maintain the sense of unity gained from drinking from the one vessel by asking the people to hold their glasses until all were served in their seats. They then recited Jesus’ words of institution and asked the congregation to drink together at the same time as the organist play quietly from the Lord’s Supper section of the hymnal. But practices varied and a chalice is sometimes used in occasional modern services for its symbolic value.

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159 Interestingly some strains within the U.S. Disciples Churches of Christ have returned to a single cup, practing intinction (dipping bread in the one cup). Blowers and Lambert, “The Lord’s Supper”, 491.
Unleavened bread

Though the little travel set container has probably only ever held matzos biscuits, the church celebrated communion with baked loaves until the early-mid twentieth century, the practice taking some time to change over completely without the accompanying threat of epidemic. In earlier days communion plates would have earlier held a single loaf which was broken by the layperson presiding at the Lord’s Table and shared. The plate was passed, with the aid of attendants, along one pew and then the next as each person broke a piece and partook seated in silence. When everyone was served the plate would have been returned to the table in duly dignified fashion. But this description overlooks where the ritual began. The ritual began early in the morning in the kitchen, the bread having been “baked lovingly by women of the church.” At this time, when women were not permitted to preside at the Lord’s Table, their ministry in the kitchen overlapped with the ministry of the sacraments. What must it have been like for the woman to see the bread she kneaded, along with the other loaves baked for the family, given such honour within the worshipping community?

Later it was thought that matzos biscuit more closely resembled the unleavened bread of Palestine used during Passover, and it kept well too. In most churches the matzos is passed around, already broken into fragments on a plate. Some people take a fragment from the plate; many others break a smaller fragment for their use so that the matzo is again and again broken as it is passed along the pew. The shift to matzos is more historically accurate perhaps. Certainly it is consistent with the movement’s primitivist endeavours. But it represents a separation between women’s cooking ministry and the ministry of the Word.

There is remarkably little scholarly writing around women’s practice of baking of sacramental bread. Perhaps this absence reflects women’s absence from church liturgy in the period in which they baked the bread. Perhaps it reflects Churches of Christ’s ‘commonsense’ attitude to the ‘elements’ (not a term they employed), regarding the bread as nothing special except in its evocation of memory of the Last Supper. Perhaps it is yet

160 Stirling, Churches of Christ, 16.
161 Stirling, Churches of Christ, 16.
more evidence of the movement’s disdain for the material aids to faith. It is certainly an area which warrants further exploration given the centrality of the Lord’s Supper to the experience of being in Churches of Christ.

Tools of the trade

Along with a bible, a communion travel set is one of the tools of trade required for Churches of Christ ministry. Most ministers own their own travel set. In the early 1990s graduates of the Churches of Christ Theological College were given a set at ordination, lovingly and expertly hand-crafted from timber by a local member of the denomination. More often ministers have purchased their own or been provided with one by the local church. With the exception of those received as ordination gifts, communion travel sets are regarded in a utilitarian way by the ministers who use them. When ministers retire their travel sets are typically sold or given away to be used again. Perhaps that is why there are only two examples in the national archive when there have been many hundreds of men and women ordained over the years. Churches of Christ ministers frequently protest (more so than lay people who openly value mother’s bible or father’s hymnbook) that they are not sentimental about material items. Some instead claim to be proudly true to Churches of Christ’s tradition of not valuing heritage! In any case, the travel set is very much a tool for ministry.

Whether or not ministers obtain a sense of their professional identity in their possession and use of communion travel sets, the artefacts are now most often signifiers of ordained ministry. While the communion table remains the usual preserve of laypeople, taking communion to isolated members has more often been the duty of the minister (though certainly elders have been responsible for this ministry too). In the same way, pastoral care was once the exclusive preserve of the eldership. But, with the employment of preachers in pastoral roles, a visit from the minister came to be tacitly understood as more significant than that of an elder. The communion travel set in this study would most likely have been carried by an ordained minister of the church as he visited members too unwell to attend on Sundays.

Despite all claims to be a lay movement, a priesthood of all believers, during the twentieth century pragmatic clericalism came to be the order of the day. As people grew in literacy
and cultural awareness toward the end of the 1800s the demand for more capable, more professional speakers grew. Though lay preachers continued to serve, a professional class grew. D.A. Ewers publicised positions of employment for evangelists in the *Australian Christian Pioneer* and in 1896 issued a list of preachers engaged in paid ministry of the Word. Evangelists increasingly held marriage licences and in 1893 a meeting for preachers was also held in Melbourne. In 1909 the evangelist G.B. Moysey described Churches of Christ as “uncompromisingly opposed to clericalism and priestcraft of every kind” and, as late as 1946 (after ordination had been introduced as a practice in some states) A.W. Stephenson stated that “there is no division into classes: no clergy and laity.” However in 1959 H.R. Taylor acknowledged the minister as “leader” of the church. While some resisted and decried the growing ecclesiasticism, no one could stop it.

**Advice for the plain man**

Clerical guidance extended from the communion travel set to the church’s communion table through the publication of communion manuals. Even though lay people continue to preside, increasing attempts were made throughout the twentieth century to direct their words and actions. As the clergy directed the lay people in their ‘mutual’ ministry the hierarchy was consolidated.

Communion manuals are perhaps a natural corollary to the priesthood of all believers, that doctrine observed in Churches of Christ by which all might preside at the Lord’s Table - given sufficient “ability and character.” The proviso, “ability and character”, was provided by Alexander Russell Main, the denomination’s most prominent churchman of the early twentieth century. He was principal of the Federal College of the Bible (1911-1938), editor of the national periodical, *Australian Christian* (1914-1941), and spokesman for the denomination on inter-church matters. In effect, it meant he directed the ministry and the laity – everybody in the church – on matters spiritual, social and practical and

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162 Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 96-97.
represented their position to the world. A.R. Main was a quietly powerful individual. He was also known not to suffer fools, so the advice that the priesthood of all believers be tempered by prudence comes as no surprise. Communion manuals effectively reinforced this prudence by providing a reminder to character and an aid to ability.

With laymen leading the congregation doctrinal expression varied. Sometimes this was merely due to a lack of education or intellect: more often the case in small congregations where numbers of men available for the task were limited (and women often considered unfit until later in the twentieth century) and so the less able were given opportunity they might not have had in a larger church. The dignity of the ordinance varied also, with the varying characters of those who presided over the table. Communion talks were also often accused of being overly long or irrelevant, some of those presiding choosing to speak at great length and on a range of topics not necessarily related to the Last Supper. Indeed, because of the drawn out speeches delivered over the Lord’s Table, the denomination was sometimes known as ‘the church with two sermons’ – another reason to provide brief Communion talk content which could be read straight from a book and a pointer to the way in which Churches of Christ differed from comparable Protestant traditions in its metaphorical elevation of the Lord’s Table.

Communion manuals filled a simple need for education in a non-professional ministry. In place of training for ordination they provided guidance on procedure and numerous examples of suitably dignified and thoughtful meditations. They were produced in response to lay requests for assistance. This explanation for publication is provided in manuals and periodical advice columns from the time the value of expertise was recognised. \(^{167}\) As evangelists began to be paid and education for ministry established\(^ {168}\) there opened a divide between the uneducated and educated which consolidated in time to a divide between lay and ordained. Yet the laity held on to the central ritual of the

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\(^{167}\) For example, *Australian Christian Pioneer* (June 1, 1879): 248-9.

\(^{168}\) The Churches of Christ’s Federal College of the Bible was opened in 1907, though it had a number of short-lived predecessors. From the time of the American evangelists’ arrival to the opening of the local college, and beyond, many young men traveled to Disciples/Churches of Christ colleges in the U.S.A.
Lord’s Supper within the church (if not its observance in pastoral visitation, represented in the communion travel set) and continued to preside at the Lord’s Table.

Doctrinal variation addressed in communion manuals was also at times due to the denominational background of the person presiding. In the early and mid-twentieth century the church grew rapidly with converts principally sourced from other churches. New members were baptised and schooled in the views of Churches of Christ, but theology travelled with the people, crossing denominational lines and blurring the particularity of the cause. Communion manuals sought to shore up the boundaries of denominationalism. They preserved identity and purity of message. As such, they were the natural preserve of the denomination’s publishing house, Austral. Almost all the communion manuals preserved in the Archives were produced by Austral or its descendent Vital, soliciting the services of leading ministers and educators as writers.

As Churches of Christ grew across the nation, more people needed to be educated in the movement’s distinctive theology of communion. The denominational position on the Lord’s Supper was argued in tracts and pamphlets for distribution to new members. Their intended purpose is revealed in their modest materiality. They were produced most often as text only and printed in blue ink on poor quality paper folded to 10 by 16 cm. If production ran to more than a few pages a thin cover was provided with two staples. They were not designed to last. Indeed the copies which have lasted and are held in the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society’s National Archive are frequently in sets of ten or twenty, left undistributed since production in the early decades of the twentieth century. A few survived as single copies, the owner’s name neatly printed and treasured for decades in a box or between the leaves of a devotional book. Communion manuals contain some of the same material – the reiteration of the message of scriptural weekly communion – but in a format designed to be used over time. Typically they contain numerous short devotions suitable to be read at the Lord’s Table. Importantly they do not proscribe use, but gently suggest.

By 1981 the hesitation to give direct instruction to the laity on their Lord’s Table ministry was all but gone. *Come Bless the Lord: Morning Worship Resources No 3, 1981* is spiral bound
with a glossy brown and orange cover dominated by the graphic outline of a chalice – a very 1970s styling. The editor is Ken Clinton; a minister who lectured at the College of the Bible in Old Testament, his presence ensuring both clerical and academic weight was attached to the little book. Like past communion manuals it provides readings and devotions and advice on spiritual mindfulness. However, in a departure from previous communion manuals, it also includes precise instruction on when and how which readings should be used. As such, it represents a departure from the older practice of lay ministry where a lay man (and it was in most cases a man) presided over communion using whatever resources he thought appropriate. In 1981 the layperson was asked to read from a set text. In an era of increasing professionalisation of ministry, creative control has been wrested from the laity. Chapter author and minister of a large suburban church, Ted Keating, explains the reasoning:

No longer do we drag down the resource book the night before and hope for the best. We have been commissioned with the responsibility of leading other minds closer to God, in the act of Communion. God help us to take it seriously – and God help the Minister and team to ‘put it all together’.

The language of (capital M) ‘Minister’ and ‘team’ reflected a significant shift in Churches of Christ. By the 1980s the church was no longer led by elders but by a professional minister and his team, the players on his side. At this time ministers began being employed in specialist roles. Youth, singles, families, retirees: all could have their own particular paid ministers where once a lay person’s amateur efforts sufficed. Only a generation before a lay person’s ministry represented the ideals of Restoration. But with the pragmatic changes in Churches of Christ’s ecclesiology, the ideals of Restoration, those reasons for the movement’s coming into being, were no longer proclaimed. By the 1980s the idealistic lay movement had been tempered by prudence, and then overcome by professionalisation.


170 Keating, “Putting It All Together”, 13.
Significantly, ordained ministers’ rise to dominance within the congregation coincided with his (and it was usually ‘his’ in this period) increasing participation in Lord’s Supper. Through the publication of communion manuals and the distribution of Lord’s Supper via the communion travel set, ordained ministers gradually came to hold greater authority than the eldership within congregations (at least within the minds of the congregation if not within the closed room of the church council meetings). Their displacement of the power of elders through ordained involvement in the central ritual of Lord’s Supper was vital in the development of pragmatic clericalism.

The communion travel set, with its individual glasses and unexpectedly preserved matzos point to Churches of Christ’s contemporary compromise with its Restorationist ambitions. The matzos is more authentic within the literalism of the primitivist tradition than a loaf baked in the kitchen of a Sister, yet it no longer literally represents the staple diet of the culture in which it exists nor embraces the hospitality of the women’s ministry through cooking. At the same time the individual glasses represent a step away from Restorationism in favour of modern understandings of hygiene, a move made quickly in the midst of epidemic without significant regret expressed for the symbolism of communality that passed with it. And, as the tradition moved simultaneously and with apparent ease toward and away from its primitivist origins, via matzos and individual glasses, it continued to struggle over the biblical use of alcoholic wine (though here the issue was not whether the modern church should drink wine, but as to whether Jesus did). In the same way, elders ceded to the practical appeal of ministers, despite scriptural warrants, over the service of Lord’s Supper. Restorationism has many complexities and inconsistencies even its proclaimed simplicity, most especially around its observance of the rituals of liturgical food.

Harvest Thanksgiving Photographs

Resting awkwardly between liturgical and social food, between Churches of Christ’s mistrust of the material world and the everyday necessary sensuality of food, are photographs of crosses made from cauliflowers. Between iconophobia and kitsch lie
snapshots of the sun, moon and stars made from citrus and parsnips. A tree shaped from potatoes announces “God’s Time for Growth”. A heart of oranges proclaims “God’s Good Gifts”. Sugarcane towers above the pulpit. Red Delicious apples are carefully arranged into a cross. Granny Smiths are combined with potatoes and oranges to form the logo used for the state of Victoria’s sesquicentenary. An entire apple tree is cut from the earth and brought, laden with fruit, into the chapel. How were the denominational prohibitions on display, materiality and excess so extravagantly overcome? How was the divide between the sacred and profane so colourfully rearranged?

For decades Churches of Christ congregations celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving with an annual autumn service.\textsuperscript{171} The members of the church brought produce along from their farms and gardens and pantries. On the Friday and Saturday they placed the food at the front of the chapel, exhibiting it on tables. Some churches went further and arranged the food into artful displays, using fruits and vegetables to create striking images. The people returned on Sunday morning and thanked God for the bountiful harvest. They sang hymns such as “Great God of Wonders”\textsuperscript{172} and “Come Ye Thankful People, Come”\textsuperscript{173} and “For the Beauty of the Earth.”\textsuperscript{174} Choirs performed. Prayers were offered. And photographs were taken and treasured. These photos offer a glimpse into a rich and peculiar world of food and display, which is at once consonant and dissonant with Churches of Christ’s professed and assumed theological stances.

The laity’s liturgical food

There is very little evidence extant around Harvest Thanksgiving. It was so ordinary, so theologically insignificant and uncontentious, so denominationally indistinct, as to rate little or no mention in the church’s journals and history books. Perhaps it was not the province of the preachers and editors who published, but that of the people in the pews. Perhaps Harvest Thanksgiving fully belonged to them and, as such, escaped the judgement and critical eye of the theologically trained; those who might have winced at

\textsuperscript{171} The earliest photographs I have found date from the 1940s though the practice was not new then.\textsuperscript{172} Order of service, Berwick Church of Christ, 31\textsuperscript{st} March 1974.\textsuperscript{173} Order of service, Bayswater Church of Christ, 28\textsuperscript{th} March 1965.\textsuperscript{174} Order of service, Bayswater Church of Christ, (n.d) 1967.
the fruity creation of once condemned graven images. Looking now, from a distance in time and culture, it is hard not to wonder how making a cross from cauliflowers did not seem utterly profane to a people steeped in Churches of Christ tradition. But evidently it sat comfortably with the people. Their photographs prove this.

Above: Bayswater Church of Christ, late 1950s. Much of the fruit was packed on the orchards in ‘flats’, a wooden case measuring approximately 50 x 75cm and having two layers of fruit which was used for market at the time. At the church the flats were balanced on temporary frames and further fruit was added to ‘finish’ the display and conceal joins. The men and women assembling such displays were fruitpackers during the week, well-practised in their ‘art’ of presenting produce to look its best for buyers in the market. Such professionally produced exhibits demonstrated the extent to which Harvest Thanksgiving displays were integrated into the working (and artistic) lives of the worshippers in this rural community. (Source: Bayswater Church of Christ.)

Above left: Detail from display of apples and pears at Bayswater Church of Christ, 1960. Featuring prominently are Red Delicious, Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples and brown Bartlett and green Williams pears, all of which were grown on the members’ orchards at the time. (Source: Photo by Norma Clinton.)

Above right: Tumby Bay Church of Christ, S.A., 1957. In contrast to the abundance and fruitpacking professionalism of Bayswater, Tumby Bay’s Harvest Thanksgiving appears a more modest and amateur affair. In an area not known for its agriculture, the produce appears more home-grown. The photography also suggests less pride in the ‘art’ of Harvest Thanksgiving – though the photo has been carefully retained for fifty years by the minister at the time. (Source: Photo by Arthur Titter.)
At top: Kingaroy Church of Christ, Qld., 1940s, with A.B. Clark in the pulpit which on this day was placed in front of the baptistery. The produce in the display reflects the region’s agriculture: sugarcane, pumpkins, pineapples and flowers interspersed with jars of home-made preserves and other garden vegetables. Below the permanent painted scroll (“Worship Him in the Beauty of Holiness”) is a temporary sign reading “Harvest Thanksgiving” which was probably used annually. (Source: Scanned image belonging to Harvey Clark.)

Lower left: Bayswater Church of Christ, 1968. With the skills of an art teacher added to the congregation, lettering and rural objects such as baskets and cartwheels were added to the display. (Source: Photo, design and lettering by Norma Clinton.)

Lower right: Along with fruit packed in cases as they would have presented for market, an entire tree was displayed at Bayswater Church of Christ in the early 1970s. The mixed colours of the apples suggest the fruit was wired into place. Considering the long-term financial value of such a young tree, it was almost certainly one cut from an orchard for commercial reasons (eg. a superceded variety) but at a time to coincide with Harvest Thanksgiving. (Source: Photo by Norma Clinton.)
Upper left: Oakleigh Church of Christ, 1970-80s. At Oakleigh Harvest Thanksgiving displays were designed with a theme each year. Missions were the focus in this unknown year, Australian Churches of Christ missions (represented by the apple cross) to New Hebrides and Papua New Guinea (the apple and orange targets). The displays were built by a local cabinet-maker and a woodwork/graphic design teacher and filled with home-grown and commercially donated produce. The lettering was made using coloured card, pasted onto a white board which was re-used each year. Those who assisted putting the display together were proudly photographed in their Sunday suits. (Source: Photo by John Masterton.)

Upper right: The denomination’s expansion into surrounding suburbs was another year’s theme at Oakleigh in the early 1980s. The tree made from potatoes branches out to the five churches which Oakleigh helped ‘plant’. (Source: Photo by John Masterton.)

Lower left: Oakleigh Church of Christ, 1985. The writing under “Thou Crownest the Years with Goodness” reads “150 Years Growing Together”. It refers to the state of Victoria’s 150th anniversary, the central design depicting the logo used by the state in publicising civic events. Mixing civic celebrations with Harvest Thanksgiving was a long way from the separation of church and state insisted upon by the movement’s pioneers. (Source: Photo by John Masterton.)

Lower right: Oakleigh Church of Christ, mid-1980s. While similar in design to the 1985 display with its use of oranges in the centre and cauliflowers and cabbage to define the edges, the message “God’s Good Gifts” represents a return to a more conventional Harvest Thanksgiving theme. (Source: Photo by John Masterton.)
Above left: A cauliflower cross, the citrus sun and moon and a parsnip star at Oakleigh Church of Christ in the early 1980s. The local fruiterer and his daughter who helped the church source produce for the display were photographed with the display on the Saturday before Harvest Thanksgiving. (Source: Photo and design by John Masterton.)

Above right: Oakleigh Church of Christ, c.1982-3. The produce was increasingly displayed in the boxes in which it was donated and a range of packaged foods were added. The stylised map of Australia was made from plywood by a graphic design teacher in the congregation who had used the design at school – a practical choice. (Source: Photo and design by John Masterton.)

Harvest Thanksgiving photography was never official. It was spontaneous, a personal response stemming from pride in their congregation’s creation or in a person’s own artistry as many photographs which have been maintained were taken by the makers of displays. Sometimes a photo even includes the display’s designer or supplier of fruit, looking slightly chuffed as they stand beside their work. The photos were rarely published or displayed but were kept by individuals in their family albums alongside other photos taken at church: weddings, social nights, celebratory cakes, the extra large gathering of people at church anniversaries (and even the sanctity of baptism which has occasionally been disturbed by relatives with cameras in later years). Just as Harvest Thanksgiving displays belonged not to the preachers but to the laity, the photographs do not belong to the church or its public record but to individuals. They are privately treasured reminders of temporary artworks.

Sanctifying art in a world-denying tradition

Perhaps it was the temporary nature of the art that allowed its intrusion into the sacred space of the church, otherwise undefiled with images. A once annual exception for what was, after all, God’s providence. Indeed it would seem ungrateful to disallow the practice
and, besides, other denominations, such as the similarly-minded Methodists, seemed to embrace it wholeheartedly. In this way the art of Harvest Thanksgiving belongs not to Churches of Christ but to interdenominational Christian laity, though its incongruity with Churches of Christ ideals remains.

The fact that the displays were largely sourced from Nature also aided their acceptance in the sacred liturgy, Nature (though material) having been given a Romantic exemption from the denomination’s world-denying stance. Flower arrangements were a weekly presence in churches and often comprised part of the Harvest displays. The extension of this to include fruit and vegetables perhaps seemed ‘only natural’.

The food’s destination as charity certainly helped sanctify its brief transformation. Autumn must have been a time of plenty in the kitchens of Churches of Christ’s aged care and children’s homes and College of the Bible, as that is where most of the Harvest Thanksgiving food was sent after it had served its symbolic purpose. A newspaper article on Oakleigh Church of Christ’s display in the 1960s reports that “On Monday night the display was dismantled and the goods distributed to the Christian Guest Home, Emmaus Rest Home, Will H. Clay Nursing Home, College of the Bible, and the Burwood Boys’ Home.”175 If the food would not keep for the journey to Melbourne it was sometimes auctioned among the members of the congregation, individuals bidding generously for the cause, and the cash donated instead. The social service aspect of the art aided its acceptance as liturgical food, as food had a long tradition within the movement as an integral part of social service and ministry.

Art may be the wrong word to describe the vegetable creations. Though the displays must be categorised as visual art, their creators may have thought of them as crafted instead. Craft has much longer been accepted in Churches of Christ. In this sense the denomination sits within a long English Protestant aesthetic heritage in which painting and sculpture have been less prized than the art of literature, of words. Dillenberger

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175 Unfortunately the newspaper clipping has been preserved without noting the date or where it was published, though it is most likely a local newspaper.
argues that England’s culture produced Shakespeare but no one to rival Michelangelo and that for English Protestantism the visual arts “had fallen outside the framework of both religion and society except for portraiture.” There was, however, a tradition of appreciation of ‘decorative arts’ which was seen in both the habit of seventeenth-century English travellers to Europe bringing home such items as porcelain and jewellery and in the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts Movement.

Churches of Christ, however, with their unusually well-developed “suspicion of the visual imagination,” did not venture even this far into the world of art. Their aesthetic, if it can be argued they had one at all, was characterised by usefulness, virtue, simple representational images (such as crosses) and the presence of words. Indeed Christian sayings and Scriptural references ‘saved’ images. Words clarified the meaning of pictures and rescued them from the suspicion of mystery and superstition. Churches of Christ’s aesthetic was perhaps encapsulated in Kingaroy’s chapel. In the 1940s it was bare but for a painted scroll above the baptistery with the words “Worship Him in the Beauty of Holiness.” It reflected an aesthetic of piety above appearances, one which used holy words and instructed holy action to sanctify.

Harvest Thanksgiving displays used words to clarify (or de-mystify) their images too. When the people of Oakleigh Church of Christ cut out cardboard letters and pasted them onto a white board to read, “Fields are White Unto Harvest”, they justified their visual art with a literary and Scriptural context. Bayswater Church of Christ’s 1968 Harvest Thanksgiving called on the authority of Scripture too - and on a work ethic which was beyond any criticism art might suffer. The banner read, “…show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”

The usefulness and the workmanship of craft are part of its acceptability to Churches of Christ. The denomination’s membership has traditionally drawn heavily from labouring and artisan classes where the skills of the hand were valued. There was also the

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176 Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America*, 16.
177 Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America*, 20.
178 Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America*, 12.
179 Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America*, 11.
undeniable scriptural imprimatur of Dorcas. Women’s work in the church has traditionally been divided between cooking and sewing and at the start of the twentieth century many Churches of Christ had ‘Dorcas Workers’ who met to stitch and sew clothing for the needy. The work was practical rather than decorative, though the women may well have stitched samplers with verses from scripture as they practised their skills. For many women craft has been their ministry, and as women have increasingly left the private sphere and ventured into the public, so too has their craft. Toward the end of the twentieth-century, embroidered and appliquéd banners bearing images of rainbows and candles, people and crosses, found their way into chapels. Today they often hang from the pulpit. It is as unthinkable a prospect as a woman in the pulpit a century earlier.

**Lack of food in an era of abundance**

The rise in women’s decorative craft filled a visual void left by the rapidly diminishing Harvest Thanksgiving. The display of food had been very important to the people and Harvest Thanksgiving photographs served to remind them how plentiful the displays of yesteryear had been, even in times which were materially poorer. In the late 1960s and 70s breakfast cereals and other products from supermarket shelves were employed to boost displays. But they were difficult to use artistically. More often than not they languished at the bottom or the edge of the designs, while the cauliflowers and carrots maintained centre stage. And they were not really the product of the people, harvested from their paddocks and yards. Vegemite, Kellogg’s Corn Flakes and John Bull Oats lacked the connection and meaning, the sense of blessings from God’s abundant earth that home-grown produce had. There was a sense too that this produce belonged to corporations and not to God. Symbolically it was weaker. Besides, real vegetables looked so much better. Realising this, some churches in the 1980s, such as the suburban Oakleigh Church of Christ, approached retail fruiterers to donate vegetables for display. Once again, the produce was not truly the congregations’, but at least it looked good. The liturgical tradition of Harvest Thanksgiving was too valuable to give up for want of home-grown food.

By increasing the amount of product from supermarket shelves and recruiting the local fruiterer (more likely Greek Orthodox than Churches of Christ) to boost the amount of
produce, congregations attempted to maintain Harvest Thanksgiving’s place in the sacral calendar. Acknowledging urban society’s increasing dissociation from food sources, churches began giving thanks for other things. By 1974, even before the town was completely absorbed into Melbourne’s suburbs, Berwick Church of Christ had re-named their service ‘Thanksgiving for the Harvest and our Daily Work’, offering prayers for policemen, students, retirees and factory workers as well as farmers and their produce. Apart from a few country churches which maintain the practice (the tiny Hamilton Church of Christ diligently delivers their produce and their photographs to the Churches of Christ Theological College each year), most have either adapted the service to include ‘talents’ or dropped it altogether.

Conclusion

Harvest Thanksgiving photographs, found in private family albums, remain an important, if perplexing, food artefact in the material history of Churches of Christ. They were ‘art’ in a church which denied the presence of icons in their chapels. The food itself crossed boundaries from the material world of the paddock and into the sacred world of the chapel, then back into the material world again, blessed with charitable purpose. Harvest Thanksgiving was the people’s celebration. Without intellectual interference from church leaders its earthy artistry breached the spirit/matter divide and allowed people to integrate their daily physical work with their religious lives. This liturgical food, like the Lord’s Supper had been in earlier times, belonged to the people. By crossing repeatedly over the boundaries of sacred and profane, liturgical and charitable, the food of the Harvest Thanksgiving demonstrates that all food within the church, no matter how profane it appears, is ritual food.
CHAPTER 4:

RECIPE BOOKS AT BAYSWATER

“Ordinary, simple recipes.” That is how Jean Adkins describes the meals in the five recipe books produced by her beloved Bayswater Church of Christ. She is now the longest-serving member at Bayswater, having joined as a young wife and mother, new to the area, in 1951. She contributed to three of the five recipe books and uses them regularly.

Personally, I think the old fashioned meals are better than the ones you go out and buy. For instance, I did something out of this book last week for Eunice and Ruth when they came. Usually I do a chicken recipe and I wanted something different. And remember Porcupine Meat Balls? Well you don’t often have them, and you’ve got no idea how enjoyable they were.  

For Mrs Adkins, cooking an old and familiar recipe brings back memories of both church dinners and family meals - the taste, texture and smell of the food they ate, the experience of community among worshippers. She takes time to recall who contributed the recipe to the book, a friend no longer at the church but remembered each time her recipe is used. Produced as fundraisers by the Christian Women’s Fellowship and the Tennis Club, the books feature economical dishes in family-sized servings. Simplicity, familiarity and economy are the values inherent in these recipes. Their appeal as familiar food strengthens with every use, they outlast food fads and they embody memory. Mrs Adkins tells of her late friends in terms of what they cooked –

You think about pavlovas, they came in and everyone loved them, I loved them. But you can’t go past a trifle, fruit salad or a sponge. They were the thing we had more of years ago, sponges and trifles and fruit salads. I can remember that now, it makes

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180 Cited in Kerrie Handasyde, “Recipe Books at Bayswater”, Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society Digest 152 (2006). I have used citations from material I have written and published under the auspices of the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society. These citations are therefore outside the restrictions on research and reporting imposed by the ethical guidelines committee and are in the public domain.
me think with teas at the church, it was always Thel Finger, Shirley Martin, always known for their sponges.  

Mrs Adkins’ reminiscences illustrate how the recipes in the books produced by her friends have been valued over the decades. The cookbooks she contributed to in her church and used in her kitchen form the written and public evidence of women’s social lives, their understanding of themselves and their participation in the church. In churches where authority is placed in ‘the Word’, it is often assumed that men will be the public speakers, the authors and interpreters of words. Cookbooks provided a rare opportunity for women to become authors, to write something of their life experience (albeit in the brief formula of a recipe), and to see their names printed in a book. They are so strongly a woman’s domain that even in cases where conflicted oral evidence allows that it might have been the man of the house who really did the sponge making, the cake itself was identified publicly as his wife’s.

Cookbooks are one of the few groups of artefacts we have which evidence the enormous role food plays in church life. Through examining the recipe books at the Bayswater Church of Christ it is possible to see how they and the food in them were valued, giving a glimpse of the ethos of the place, a kind of guide to the church’s identity and spirit through what they chose to cook and eat. Owing to the fact that the recipe books are from the one community over a period of only thirty years, I have not treated them as artefacts representing different developments in history. Rather I have read them as a group of non-literary documents which, when taken together and in comparison with other Churches of Christ and mainstream cookbooks, illustrate a congregation’s understanding of their ministry from the kitchen.

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181 Cited in Handasyde, “Recipe Books at Bayswater”.
182 Following discussion with a number of former members of the Bayswater Church of Christ, one member revealed quietly that Thel Finger’s husband was the sponge cake cooking expert in that household.
Five books at Bayswater

At Bayswater there were five volumes produced over thirty years between 1962 and 1990, two by the tennis club and three by the ladies of the Christian Women’s Fellowship. The original recipe book was produced in 1962 by the ladies of the Christian Women’s Fellowship with the possible aim of raising funds for the new church kitchen built just before that time, though none of the contributors still living were certain when asked. The fundraising purpose is not only absent from the memories of contributors and users but there is no written record of the recipe book’s production in the minutes of meetings and no extant church newsletters advertising their sale or purpose. This suggests a certain modesty about money among the women, despite the fact that many were competent bookkeepers in family businesses. It also points to the fundraising purpose being secondary to the communal. Fundraising’s low priority is reinforced by the absence of sponsors’ advertisements in all five books produced at the church. It should be noted, however, that in this period many Churches of Christ congregations would not take money from the unimmersed (those not baptised as adult believers) to contribute to chapel building and maintenance funds, which was the fundraising purpose of many books, so commercial sponsors may never have been a consideration. For whatever reasons, recipe books were sold largely among the members as gifts for friends and relations.

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183 Churches of Christ congregations operate autonomously and as a result there has always been a diversity of practice. In earlier times some churches and tent missions advertised “No Collection” on signs inviting people to join them and others were reported to return the unsolicited donations to the hands of the unimmersed.

184 Chapel finance was often the goal of cookbook fundraising. Overseas and Aboriginal Missions were supported within the churches by more regular and reliable fundraising events and often accepted money from all-comers. The reticence to use secular funds for the church buildings originated in an ideal of purity and separation from the world. In time the emphasis on purity weakened but the practice remained, later justified by the church’s unwillingness to ask the surrounding community to support their group’s building, a cause they viewed as unworthy in comparison with the feeding and educating of children on mission stations.

185 An exception to this rule was Oakleigh Church of Christ’s Christian Women’s Fellowship which produced a book in the 1960s using both a printer and business advertisements. Indeed it went so far as to dedicate a page to their recommendation: “We solicit for them a share of your patronage”. Oakleigh Church of Christ C.W.F. Cookery Book: Over 200 Tested Recipes (Oakleigh Church of Christ Christian Women’s Fellowship, n.d.).
The 1962 book is very basic. It is constructed from quattro paper cut in half and stapled together with a blank brown cardboard cover. An option existed for a coloured cover: on request, school art teacher, Mrs Norma Clinton, painted them individually to a template she had designed along with a title, *Favourite Recipes*. There are plenty of recipes, a few of Mrs Clinton’s line-drawings, but no index, no contents page, no date of production. All of this was assumed to be self-explanatory and reflects the non-commercial outlook. In common with other compilation recipe books of the period it orders the dishes somewhat randomly, certainly not in the order a meal would be served. It opens with pudding. There follows “Savoury Foods” which includes six recipes for casserole or stew, fried rice (an adventurous inclusion for the time) and three for meats moulded to a sausage shape and boiled in a “floured cloth”, a food fashion now well out of favour but described there with a brevity that assumes all would be practised in the method. Then there are three sections dedicated to baked goods followed by “Miscellaneous” which includes non-alcoholic drinks, confectionary, relish and (mysteriously uncategorisable) pavlova. Lastly, on page forty-four, there are housekeeping hints.

However, an artefact used over and over as this recipe book has been, bears more witness to its value than mere description of its original and intended contents. The copy loaned to me by Mrs Jean Adkins wears much of the ingredients it instructs the cook to use. Every page has splodges. The cover has been repaired with sticky tape, which has long since lost its adhesion, and the back third of the book has come unstapled. There are minor spot burns producing discolouration and holes in the pages, ring marks from cups or jugs and a division equation biro-ed on the front cover in lieu of scrap paper. No bad reflection on the cook, rather this particular book has been used and used and bears testament to its value. Just as food has been central to the liturgical and social life of the Church of Christ, this book has sat at the centre of a kitchen as the source of innumerable meals with all the bodily and spiritual sustenance that implies.

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186 The 1962 date here is deduced from the inclusion of recipes by the wife of the minister engaged at the church in the early 60s and from one woman’s recollection that she assisted with the book’s production just after the birth of her baby.
The second book produced by the Bayswater Church of Christ came only nine years after the first. It was produced by the same group and included a very large number of the same recipes as the original. It is different in that it has a printed cover, a contents page and a little devotional material. All of this suggests perhaps it was an expansion (at twelve pages longer) and an improvement on the errors and omissions of the first - I am told a few of the original book’s recipes are not quite right. It might have been produced as a fundraiser for the church’s centenary year though neither the contributors nor the minutes book recall the specifics. Interestingly, its only savoury section is titled “Casseroles”, popular fare as well as a transportable offering for church friends in need. There is devotional material in the 1971 book, a new addition. It consists of a prayer for users of the book, the poem “A Kitchen Prayer” and a popular prose piece on what to plant in the garden: “Five rows of Peas: Presence, Promptness, Purity, Perseverance, Prayer”, neatly summing up the requirements for church ladies’ meetings.

The third recipe book is called *Family Favourites Including Food for Thought: Tested Recipes for Enjoyment*, the first with a distinct title. It was produced by the Bayswater Church of Christ Tennis Club, spiral bound with a patriotic green cover and gold pages - Australia’s sporting colours for the local tennis club. It is quite a different book from the first two, though it incorporates recipes used in 1971, perhaps owing to an overlap between C.W.F. and Tennis Club members. Once again it starts with “Dessert”, then “Pudding”, but unlike the others there is more than one savoury section. Indeed there are sections for vegetarian, savoury, salad, fish, meat, drinks and soup. Hints for cooking and housekeeping are scattered throughout and a popular mock-recipe for ‘happy children’ is at the back of the book. In preparing to lend me her copy of this book Mrs Adkins removed dozens of loose papers, handwritten recipes or those cut from magazines. That the book was repository for collected additional recipes suggests its frequent presence on her kitchen benchtop.

The fourth book was produced by the Morning Christian Women’s Fellowship, the C.W.F. having divided into evening and morning groups in the 1980s. It was a much smaller effort, just thirty-two pages and is interspersed everywhere with devotional poems, prose and scripture, most of it domestic. Significantly it has an explicitly communal purpose:
“As you use this little book, you will be reminded of a contributing friend. Pause a moment to thank God for her life and to bring her to the Lord in prayer, remembering her needs and those of her loved ones.” Compared to the membership of the tennis club and of C.W.F. in the 1960s, the Morning C.W.F. group was relatively elderly. As women who came of age before women’s liberation, their focus on piety reflects their age at least in part. The dedication and devotional inclusions also reflected intended readership – this was largely a members-only cookbook with little intention of sale to outsiders.

The last book was produced by the Tennis Club in 1990 and, like their earlier effort, is spiral bound and has a title. It is called Recipes for Life, suggesting both religion and health. Fittingly, it features a colour-printed photo of a very healthy looking meal on the cover and, having been printed on a computer, looks so much more professional than the others. The biro alterations made to every copy (it is a pinch of salt, not four ounces!) and the mixture of imperial and metric measurements used belie the otherwise commercial quality presentation. There are devotional sayings and handy hints throughout, a page of contents, an index, and even some food related jokes. A few of the recipes derive from earlier books, but once again the Tennis Club book seems to feature more varied and nutritious foods than the C.W.F. books, perhaps because of the sporting connection as well as later trends in healthy eating. These five cookbooks define themselves both as part of the broader culture (in healthy eating) and apart from it (in religious verse).
Top left: Recipes, 1971. In the absence of an index, page numbers have been noted on the cover by the previous owner. (Source: Scanned image of book belonging to author.)

Top right: Family Favourites. Although the lettering on the cover is typed rather than hand-written, a patterned arrangement of lowercase ‘m’ has been used for the title. (Source: Scanned image of book belonging to Jean Adkins.)

Lower left: First page of Morning Christian Women’s Fellowship book. A recipe for Choc Biscuits has been written jotted in and the author, C.W.F. member Una Hills, acknowledged in line with the printed advice “As you use this little book, you will be reminded of a contributing friend”. (Scanned image of book belonging to Jean Adkins.)

Lower right: Recipes for Life, 1990, with its colour photo cover of unknown origin. (Source: Scanned image of book belonging to Geraldine Handasyde.)
The Bayswater Church of Christ community

Bayswater district was ‘settled’ in 1857 and it was in 1871 that “Gospel meetings were commenced, and for two years the little band met in a bark hut.”\(^{187}\) The bark hut was also used by the local Lutherans and Anglicans, a kind of co-operation born out of necessity. Two years later meetings moved to the Peck (then Pach) family home. Then in 1898 a chapel was built by Brother Thomas Clements and son and the church was “received into the Union”\(^{188}\) of Churches of Christ. German names such as Pach and Schultz (who were the first converts) were common in Bayswater. Indeed the area was locally known as ‘German Town’ for a period, many of the pioneers being “German emigrants who fled from their homeland because of religious persecution”.\(^{189}\) In the newly formed Bayswater Church of Christ they were most likely a conservative, world-avoiding influence. Furthermore the local fruitgrowing industry, which was dominant until the 1970s when the suburban sprawl took over, ensured families stayed in the district for generation and intermarried giving more stability to the tight-knit church. Tree fruits are a long-term investment, producing crops over decades and tying a family to a place. Churches of Christ’s congregational autonomy allowed ministers to be selected to suit the locals’ theology further consolidating Bayswater as a conservative but orthodox and stable church.

The recipe books grew out of a close-knit and socially engaged congregation. In the 1960s and 70s the people at Bayswater did not just meet on Sundays for worship. They met midweek for bible studies and prayer meetings. The women came together for Christian Women’s Fellowship where they prayed, listened to speakers and shared a weekly meal. The young people had Sunday School, youth group, girls and boys clubs for devotional and social activities. There was a tennis club and church dinners and picnics. On top of this, a large majority of the members were neighbours, relations or worked with each other on the district’s orchards. Food was a part of their working lives, their home lives and their religious lives. These aspects came together in the production of recipe books which integrated produce, family meals and religious identity.

\(^{188}\) Maston, ed., Jubilee Pictorial History, 271.
Food was a part of most gatherings. Sometimes it was just a cuppa and a biscuit, sometimes a meal. Mrs Adkins describes preparing lunch at the church in the 1960s:

We had soup on Sunday and for youth club suppers. We started off with a shank and made a big pot. Or neck, 'cause you’d need two shanks, [but] a neck made a stronger pot of soup than a shank. And we’d take that, and different ones would bring a tin of soup. And according to the number you needed you’d add a tin of vegetable or tomato soup and some water and it would grow. Yes, that’s how we did things. And all bring electric frying pans for preparing food for luncheon and men’s breakfasts.190

It sounds so simple and homely, not a big production even when catering for a crowd. But simple and homely could be dressed up. Mrs Adkins recalls entering the chapel for the very first time in the early 1950s. The tables were laid for C.W.F. Eastern District Conference.

It looked like a wedding reception, [when] we walked into the church, the little church at Stud Road. Beautiful white cloths, nice cutlery and it was all set with flowers of course, and there was windows along, you know in those little old-fashioned churches, and there’d be a bowl of flowers in each of the windows. These are my memories of how beautiful they were. And there’d be a proper dinner, a two-course meal. And it was all done by the women.191

Hospitality, and food, made a big impact on the people.

‘In Memory of Me’

Not all the church meals were held at the church. People met at each other’s houses too and this resulted in considerable informal exchange of recipes going on before the

190 Cited in Handasyde, “Recipe Books at Bayswater.”
191 Cited in Handasyde, “Recipe Books at Bayswater.”
publication of fundraising books. A bond established between friends and relatives is
given concrete expression in the enduring ‘gift’ of a recipe, a generous sharing of one’s
specialties, even of one’s secrets. As the women’s lives revolved around the daily routine
of food preparation, sharing recipes was a sharing of one’s self.

Publication of recipes in community cookbooks allowed recipes to pass from one cook to
another along a lineage of friendship and of mutual belonging in the church. Through
printing and use of cookbooks ownership of recipes passed from individuals to the
church, and then travelled further through networks of friends and family or with the
cooks themselves. When Norma Handasyde moved from Bayswater Church of Christ to
The Patch Church of Christ, sometime between the publication of Bayswater’s 1971 book
and The Patch’s Favourite Recipes, she took her recipe for Simplicity Chocolate Cake with
her. It appears in both books and was, by anecdotal account, a recipe for which she was
well known. However she also took from Bayswater’s 1971 book Mrs Jones’ recipe for
Veal, Bacon and Pineapple Casserole and Edith Handasyde’s recipe for Quick Steam
Pudding. They each appear attributed to her. We can only wonder what route all the
other recipes have taken, through whose kitchens they have passed, in order to arrive
where we find them.

Naming and owning of recipes matters. A name at the bottom of a recipe signifies the
giver’s participation in the community, their place in the women’s non-monetary
economy. A comparison with compilations produced by newspapers and magazines
points to the value of church cookbooks as evidence of women’s relationships. The Spare
Corner recipe books were printed by The Leader newspaper and, later, The Age, featuring
recipes sourced from the letters page in the newspaper. Copies were cheaply produced
and widely distributed. They frequently had pen names attached; for instance, initials, or
pseudonyms (the unpronounceable ‘Gnonednad’ was presumably writing from
Dandenong). Unlike the church or community produced books, the recipe authors were
anonymous apart from any persona they may have developed through repeated
contribution. The objective of the Spare Corner publishers was primarily commercial.

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192 The Spare Corner Cookery Book (Melbourne: David Syme and Company, n.d.) and The Leader Spare
Corner Book: A Unique Collection of Home and Household hints and Kitchen Recipes Part VII (Melbourne:
There was money to be made by selling recipes and by boosting newspaper sales through cultivating further allegiance. While the preamble to the 1935 *Spare Corner* counts as an aim “the opportunity of enjoying friendships that would otherwise not come their way”, in reality such friendships were anonymous. Reflecting this anonymity, attributions disappeared by the time *The Age* reprinted the “best recipes from the last of the Spare Corner Books” in the early 1960s.

In stark contrast, the recipes in the church cookbooks were attributed to individuals well known to the community of cooks. Church dinners, meals shared family friends and delivered to those who were unwell meant that many people tasted the recipes directly from the kitchen of the author. Given this, preparing the recipe attributed to Mrs King or any other member could not have helped but bring her to mind. Even in those church cookbooks, such as Parkdale Church of Christ’s *Favorite Recipes* which used some pseudonyms, and Red Cliffs Church of Christ’s *Recipes* which used the ladies’ initials, the congregation knew the contributors’ identities. Indeed the ‘secret knowledge’ may have been a further aid to the sense of belonging. Recipes with names attached ‘embody’ memory of particular people.

The women at Bayswater report that the source of the recipe matters to them. It means something that it was their mother’s or their friend’s. They make a connection to these people through the ritual of preparing their food, evoking the words repeated each week around the communion table, ‘this do in remembrance of me’. In this way there is clear connection between liturgical food and that enjoyed with friends and family. All food, in the context of these church cookbooks, is ritual food as it is prepared ‘in memory’.

**Recipes for a simple life**

While the church recipe books differ from commercial compilations in terms of the bond they generated and expressed, they were similar in food style. The values of economy, simplicity and lack of ostentation are shared by books such as the *Spare Corner* and Bayswater Church cookbooks. They all used a relatively narrow range of produce and spices but lots of tinned food for ease of preparation and storage. There is little emphasis
on decoration in either the recipes or the presentation of the books. Recipes are titled for their simplicity or speed of preparation: “Hasty Pudding”, “Easy Quiche”. Others are named for their economy: “Economical Plum Pudding”, “Eggless Chocolate Cake”. Economy was a preoccupation for women of all creeds in the mid twentieth-century, an era of ‘A penny saved is a penny earned’. Added to this was the self-reliance valued among members of the Bayswater church and district. Debt was to be avoided. The congregation at Bayswater met for thirty years in their church hall before building a chapel at the present site. Economic independence and a certain pragmatism about worldly things (a chapel can be counted as worldly in such a world-denying denomination) rated well above outward appearances. As artefacts the cookbooks produced at Bayswater Church of Christ materially reflect the values of the worshipping community: their modest aesthetic and sense of frugal sufficiency.

But what of regional fare? Bayswater in the 1960s and early seventies was still a fruitgrowing area. Apples and pears, stonefruit, berries and vegies were all local and abundant. Indeed, many church members lived on horticultural properties and would have had ready access to large amounts of ‘seconds grade’ fruit and veg that might otherwise have gone to waste. However, a quick comparison of recipe ingredients suggests regional speciality was of no concern. A survey of apples as an ingredient in cakes and desserts shows that, in the years Bayswater was dominated by apple orchards, their use of apple in recipes is not higher than in commercial cookbooks. Nor is it higher than in later church cookbooks produced after the suburban sprawl sent all the orchards but one under the bulldozer. This is not to suggest that church members didn’t eat a lot of apples. In all likelihood apples were probably considered so ubiquitous that to include them in recipe books bound for other apple growers would have been all too mundane.

**Ingredients to be included**

While local produce was all too ordinary, exotic tinned tropical pineapple seems immensely popular. While it doesn’t appear in the 1962 book, it is used in one out of five savoury dishes in 1971, and averages one in nine in following books. In commercial books
produced in the sixties and seventies (such as the Women’s Weekly Cookbook\textsuperscript{193} or 500 Recipes for Casserole Dishes\textsuperscript{194}) pineapple is used in closer to one in a hundred savoury recipes. The statistics on condensed soup are similar. It appears a strange diet, though in this case it almost certainly not a proportional indication of what the congregation ate. Recipes were offered for compilation based on a known preference for pineapple as experienced at group meetings. The recipes, in this context, are a gesture of hospitality and the desire to belong. They intersect with the hopes and fears of the group, with the possibilities for inclusion and exclusion. Again drawing comparison with the food of the Lord’s Supper, social food proved a powerful tool for the establishment of boundaries in the religious group.

The Parkdale Church of Christ’s Favorite Recipes was produced sometime in the 1960s before decimal currency was introduced – it was sold for 2.6d a copy.\textsuperscript{195} More than a quarter of its recipes for “Cakes and Biscuits” involved dried fruit, a popular ingredient throughout the twentieth century. It was even included as an optional ingredient in a Cinnamon Sponge. Such a preference might be understandable as a matter of local pride in Sunraysia: indeed Red Cliffs’ Recipes requires dried fruit in nearly a third of its baking. Used at Parkdale, dried fruit more likely reflects hospitality, as pineapple did at Bayswater. It was also, of course, a healthy and handy ingredient with a long shelf life. There is a strong streak of pragmatism running through women’s ministry of the kitchen, just as there is through Churches of Christ’s theological and ecclesial development as demonstrated earlier.

Tinned pineapple and condensed soup, which feature so prominently in Bayswater’s 1971 cookbook, store well. Tinned soup is an easy replacement for stock and tomato paste, with both a long shelf-life and a dual purpose to justify its place in the pantry. Mrs Adkins explains, “Older women keep the things in their cupboards, all the essentials to quickly bake drop scones, or bake a cake or something. I could live quite easily shopping thoroughly once a fortnight. Always I’ve got a supply of tins, like soup.”\textsuperscript{196} The recipes in

\textsuperscript{194} Catherine Kirkpatrick, 500 Recipes: Casserole Dishes (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965).
\textsuperscript{195} Favorite Recipes (Ladies of the Church of Christ at Parkdale, n.d.).
\textsuperscript{196} Cited in Handasyde, “Recipe Books at Bayswater.”
all of the church cookbooks suggest the need for ease of preparation by busy mothers and for infrequent shopping by older widows. Their cookbooks are dominated by ingredients with extended shelf-lives which could be thrown together when visitors pop in – another pointer to the closeness and hospitality of the community.

The ethos of hospitality is reflected in the recipe books’ inclusiveness. By examining the range of contributors, cookbook contents and repetitions and comparing those with commercial productions, it is possible to observe that the community practiced an inclusiveness in their cookbooks consistent with the denomination’s (somewhat contested) theology of ‘open’ communion. There are contributions not only by the women who organised the tennis club cookbooks but by their husbands and sons. Though it would be unlikely males were regarded as culinary peers, their contributions were clearly accepted and encouraged. Some recipes are repeated several times between the various volumes; twenty-four cake recipes are duplicated between the first two books and the ever popular Porcupine Meat Balls makes it into three editions. Parkdale’s book (which also included Porcupine Meat Balls) likewise ran multiple recipes for Banana Cake, White Christmas, Pumpkin Cake and Kisses as well as numerous chocolate cakes and fruit cakes. Repetition was no barrier to inclusion. Submissions were clearly not rejected on the grounds that they had been done before and almost everyone buying Bayswater’s newest recipe book would likely already own the previous one. In this way the recipe books are not merely useful material objects, mere aids to service. Despite the church’s iconophobic tradition the recipe books functioned as powerful symbols of the church’s inclusive values expressed in unlikely fashion - via the repetition of apparently non-sacred food.

Inclusiveness extends to the range of cooking abilities accepted in the recipes contributed by the women of the Bayswater church. For example, a few pages beyond the Delicate Lemon Cake and the Meringue and Passionfruit Pie there are recipes for some less sophisticated concoctions – there is tinned tuna and tinned spaghetti arranged in layers and topped with mashed potato, or tinned condensed soup of any kind mixed with tuna and curry powder to be heated through and served on toast. It certainly was not a culinary competition; it was an expression of inclusiveness regardless of skill. Compare these values with those in the recipe compilations resulting from the Women’s Weekly 1969
Bake-Off. There the competitively judged instructions are detailed and extensive, accompanied by colour photographs. The number of ingredients required for each recipe is much greater, reflecting a complexity almost completely absent in the church books - and there is alcohol.

Cook books as holy books

Food prohibitions separate religious groups from society and each other, and for Churches of Christ the prohibition was on alcohol. Churches of Christ women were loyal supporters of total abstinence from alcohol, not merely Temperance, though they participated enthusiastically in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.). In 1946 it was reported that, since suffrage, women in Churches of Christ had used the vote responsibly as they had campaigned against liquor, as if this was suffrage’s highest purpose. One imagines that the Victorian Sisters who had covertly signed the 1891 Suffrage Petition may have hoped for more. Yet at Bayswater, as in many other places, female civic duty remained its entirely moral purpose, preserving the family from the evils of the world. Ventures into the public sphere were to be in an effort to preserve the private sphere, a woman’s ‘natural place’. Bayswater Church of Christ paid a membership fee and also donated to the Victorian Local Option Alliance in 1938–40. Speakers from the W.C.T.U. visited Bayswater as late as 1987, well after soft-drinks became widely available in shops, to give a ‘fruit drink demonstration’ to the C.W.F. group. Despite this strictly observed stance, *Family Favourites* produced by the Tennis Club, includes two recipes for ginger beer requiring fermentation! Occasionally exceptions to the rule are so startling and so at odds with the character of the whole, there is no immediate explanation.

As well as being (almost) untainted by alcohol, devotional material marks out church cookbooks, as more than merely functional. It sets apart not only the books but the act of cooking - through pious thought chores become not mere duty but holy calling. The inclusion of specifically religious material became more frequent in Bayswater’s cookbooks as time went on, perhaps reflecting an increasing need to differentiate their recipe books from the increasingly wide range of secular cookbooks available. The

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increased use of devotional material in the 1980s is probably not evidence of increasing piety or availability of material, but a matter of identity.

The devotional content was largely sourced from church and C.W.F. newsletters and minor publications, including cookbooks, produced by women’s auxiliaries and friendship groups. Among the recipe books frequently used by the Bayswater women were those produced by other Churches of Christ, and other local denominations. A lot of the poems and prayers included in these books ‘did the rounds’ of the churches just like the recipes did, as comparison between the different churches’ books proves. Nonetheless, the inclusion (and exclusion) of religious verses in the books produced by the women at Bayswater Church of Christ expresses the included women’s tacit agreement on their understanding of womankind’s role in living the faith.

The inclusion of the poem-prayer, “A Kitchen Prayer” signifies more than a choice based on its apt title given that Churches of Christ were at the time training a growing group of women for ordination as ministers. Around this time there were many publications in the denomination which called for a change from women’s roles as “second-class citizens,” “the caterers, the money raisers, the rag sorters.” The cookbook’s opening page poem-prayer decidedly puts women in the church in the kitchen:

Lord of all pots and pans and things, since I’ve no time to be
A saint by doing lovely things or watching late with Thee
Or dreaming in the dawn light or storming Heaven’s gates,
Make me a saint by washing up the plates.

There is a merger here not between sainthood and the religious life, but between

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198 See appendix.
201 Recipes (Bayswater Church of Christ Christian Women’s Fellowship, 1971). Frontis page.
sainthood and uncomplaining housework. Without direct reference to the rise in women’s ordination to ministry of the Word, the 1971 recipe book reasserts the firm ties between the kitchen and women’s ministry via food which has been the locus of women’s participation in the priesthood of all believers since the nineteenth century.

“The Kitchen Prayer” appears on the front page of the 1971 cookbook and is the first piece of devotional material used by the Bayswater church cookbooks. It is a widely known prayer and almost as widely attributed, variously said to have been composed by Brother Lawrence (a sixteenth-century Catholic lay brother), Cecily Hallack (a mid twentieth-century biographer of Catholic saints), or by a servant girl in nineteenth century London. Authorship, however disputed, was of no importance to the compilers of the 1971 cookbook. They do not attribute it at all. Rather, it stands on its own without explanation or question, speaking for ‘everywoman’ as it requests the Lord “make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates”. In effect it makes the cookbook holy literature, the chores divine vocation. Through the simple inclusion of this poem-prayer in the recipe book the boundaries between sacred and profane are scrambled. The incarnate God has entered the carnal world of food and housework. Indeed, Jesus’ example of feeding the people by the sea or in the Upper Room is cited as justification for the holiness of every woman’s chores. Spiritual affirmation or further restraint on modern impulses to women’s liberation, “A Kitchen Prayer” strongly infers that cooking and cleaning is woman’s way to a religious life. Piety matters.

Conclusion

Five well-used and faded recipe books can show us a lot about a place and its people and connect us to an international discussion about the place of food in the life of believers. As history resources cookbooks intersect with oral sources and the cooking community’s cultural and religious context to provide insight into the lives and beliefs of women. They are not only valuable in connecting women’s experience to broader social history, but they also speak in so many ways of the nuances of connection and disconnection, inclusion and exclusion within and around the church. They are an immensely valuable resource in the church where there have been few avenues for women to express their values in writing.
Recipe books exist as evidence of women’s work, their many fundraising efforts, even though the monies raised and items purchased are forgotten. They connect the women whose recipes feature to the broader tradition of women’s hospitality and catering in the church and beyond. Used within the worshipping community by those who remember, the recipes embody friends and family in the re-creation of the food once shared. Through recipe titles, ingredients and varied ‘tastefulness’ they signify the values shared among the women – simplicity, economy, sobriety, hospitality. Decades later they continue to provide a reservoir of trusted ideas for when friends drop by unexpectedly, so long as there are a few tins in the pantry. Most definitively the recipe books function as holy books, giving sanction to the users’ domestic duties and group activities and defining the women as religious in an increasingly secular world. Church community cookbooks, such as those from the Bayswater Church of Christ, are vital sources of revelation found nowhere else – the assertion of humble housework as religious vocation, the feminine economy of gracious exchange and how tinned pineapple can lead to a sense of belonging.
CHAPTER 5:  
CONCLUDING REFLECTION

In the years leading up to 1903 when Aaron Burr Maston published his magnum opus, *Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia*, every church and its people were photographed. Thousands of faces stare out from the pages: Churches of Christ’s innumerable saved souls lost to the passing of time. Sometimes the people look direct to camera. Sometimes their gazes fix on something beyond the frame, on something we cannot see or know. Their expressions suggest confidence and sobriety, puzzlement or wariness, or modest composure. Just a few break their Victorian poses with a half smile as they sit and stand in their carefully arranged casual rows. Whether the photographs were taken outside the church or in a studio painted with trees and ancient columns, the women have come dressed in their Sunday best. The men wear suits if they have them, though not everyone did. These are working-class people on the whole: skilled labourers, farmers, miners and domestic workers, with a few teachers, clerks and shop-keepers among them. But it is hard to tell from the photographs. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that many are pictured beside their meeting-places, it would be hard to tell they were religious. There are few outward signs. Churches of Christ did not value display and had no need of icons. They valued a simple, reasoned faith. Indeed the Word of God, clasped open or closed on their laps, is the one symbol of piety they recognised - and sanctioned by inclusion in their portraits.

When the people of the Brunswick Church of Christ attended the studio for their portraits, they brought an especially significant visual prop along, something which identified them not only as religious but indicated the peculiar bias of their faith: their communion vessels. But in the portrait there is no bread there to be broken. The communion plate is empty, and the chalices and ewer probably are too. The vessels are arranged not on the Lord’s Table but on a small occasional table draped with a fringed

202 Chapman, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, 89.
203 We know it is a studio and not their local church as the backdrop matches that used in photographs of other Melbourne congregations. Maston, ed., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 211.
cloth. It does not matter. This is not a photograph of the holy ordinance of communion. It is a portrait of six men and their ethereal, almost sacred vessels.

Brunswick Church of Christ men and their communion vessels which they have brought to the studio as symbols of their faith. (Source: A.B. Maston, Jubilee Pictorial History (Melbourne: Austral, 1903), 211.)

What value are empty wineskins? With what meaning can they be refilled? Despite Churches of Christ’s traditional disregard for the material artefacts necessary for the practice of their food-rich faith, those artefacts which remain after the bread and wine, cakes and casseroles have been consumed reveal understandings we could not gain through other avenues.

Women’s preparation of food in the church is so poorly reported historiographically we might be misled into thinking it consisted of an annual afternoon tea or supper provided for men’s meetings. But there was so much more. It was highly organised and ritualised, patterned with food events and with menus and practices of preparation repeated around the calendar. It was also strongly imbued with a certainty about its bodily and spiritual role in the church’s ministry. Indeed women’s ministry through cooking was so well established (and sanctified through traditional gender roles) that it inhibited the
acceptance of women’s participation in the ministry of the Word. Despite the proto-feminism of the founders of women’s ministry and the important finances their labours produced (through the sale of recipe books, catering and other means), many church women stayed in the kitchen even as the esteem of their ministry lessened and other women cleaved to the more denominationally respected ministry of the Word. Recipe books tell this contradictory story as no other source can. They also reveal the hospitality and involvement of countless women, most of whom never rate a mention in the church’s other publications, and tell of their lineage of friendship, knowledge and religious self-understanding.

The simplicity of the ‘First Known Communion Cup’ embodies the values and practices of that earliest era in the church’s Victorian history, when its people gathered only to ‘break bread’. Its concealment in a cupboard reveals all too much about Churches of Christ’s ambivalence toward the relics of its past, even suggesting a lingering superstition about the power of such material objects, or the people’s susceptibility to this ‘undesirable’ way of thinking. Yet its preservation recognised the importance of the object for the tradition’s sense of self – as a movement founded with the ‘breaking of bread’. It is a story untold elsewhere.

The Hawthorn ‘Remember Me’ chalices step unexpectedly into denominational debate. In an aesthetic tradition dominated by the art of words (and suspicious of graven images), they are engraved with denominationally distinctive, but liturgically contested, phrases. Their vine leaves reference a world of rhetoric around Temperance which lead to social campaigning by Hawthorn members (among others) and the gradual development of welfare networks within the church. Private piety and public faith in action intersected through both moral concerns over the contents of the cup and the individual’s visible participation in the ordinance of communion. Hawthorn’s pair of engraved chalices addresses all these matters of the faith’s interpretation in theology, liturgy and social action, along with the centrality of Lord’s Supper to the practice of the faith, in their very materiality.
The communion travel set’s providence is unknown and leaves unanswered the questions, where it travelled and with whom. It is reasonable to assume, in the light of the twentieth century church’s growing clericalism, the answer was increasingly ‘with the ordained minister’. Even when communion was dispensed to isolated members by elders, as tradition had it, the words spoken over the cup and bread were increasingly those of ordained ministers through the guidance of communion manuals. Just as the travel set was accompanied by a minister’s words in daily worship, in its interpretation as a piece of material history it is (in a tradition dominated by words in liturgy, church government, theological debate and historiography) necessarily read alongside other texts. Yet its presence brings to the texts a visual and tactile engagement with their ideas, allowing a complexity of understanding not otherwise possible.

Photographs, as material culture, add another layer of interpretation in-between original artefacts and the liturgical and theological words surrounding them. They do not portray ‘true’ memory, but are, literally, snap-shots of the past: partial, selective, prone to loss of meaning through poor preservation or the failure to articulate in words what is contained within them. Harvest Thanksgiving photographs are thus in-between the food and our interpretation of it - just as the food they depict is in-between liturgical, social and charitable foods. Yet, for all this in-between-ness, the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival was a food practice so central to the laity’s sacral calendar that it was maintained years after backyard subsistence and small-acre farming passed. Beyond that, photographs of the displays were treasured as further proof of the people’s meaningful engagement in another of their food-based rituals.

Food has always been essential to Churches of Christ. It has occupied the centre through the denominationally distinctive weekly practice of Lord’s Supper. It has patrolled the boundaries through denying access to communion and community suppers (whether via official ‘discipline’ in the nineteenth century or the subtler workings of congregational relationships in later years). The Lord’s Supper, though initially stripped of mysticism and complexity, has incorporated multiple interpretations which rest uneasily with the persistent primitivist simplicity of ‘remember me’. At the same time, women’s ministry of cooking has been promulgated through recipe books explicitly asking that when the
women come to cook they should ‘remember me’ who penned the recipe. Comparison between the liturgical food of the Lord’s Supper and the apparently social food of women’s cooking is furthered by consideration of surrounding understandings and practices. Social food has been invested with both tacit and explicit expression of its value in the church’s hospitality and ministry of the Gospel to the world through social service. Social food has been consumed more often than the Lord’s Supper, despite the ordinance’s comparative frequency. Access to social food is popularly understood as open though, in reality, it is subject to an individual’s sense of community and moderated by how much they feel they belong. Similarly, access to the Lord’s Table remains contested or at least a matter of conscience, recognising that the possibility of exclusion and non-belonging always exists.

Liturgical and social food occupy the same categories in the Churches of Christ, each embodying overlapping understandings of community identity, hospitality and service. The ministry of the Churches of Christ is conveyed in the food served in church and in the wider gatherings: bread and wine, casserole and cake, are each ritualised and are each expressive of realities beyond themselves. The women of the denomination have known in their practice, if not in their theology, that all food is ritual food. Material culture reveals, in ways no other sources can, that in Churches of Christ in Victoria, food has always mattered.
The **Kitchen Prayer** (author unknown/disputed)

Lord of all pots and pans and things, since I've no time to be  
A saint by doing lovely things or watching late with Thee  
Or dreaming in the dawn light or storming Heaven’s gates,  
Make me a saint by washing up the plates.

Although I must have Martha’s hands, I have a Mary mind  
And when I black the boots and shoes Thy sandals Lord I find.  
I think of how they trod the earth, what time I scrub the floor  
Accept this meditation Lord, I haven’t time for more.

Warm all the kitchen with Thy love, and light it with thy peace.  
Forgive me all my worrying and make my grumbling cease.  
Thou who didst love to give men food, in room or by the sea  
Accept this service that I do, I do it unto Thee.
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