"Miraculous Bread … Miraculous Wine": Eucharistic Motifs in the Fantasies of C.S. Lewis

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Abstract
Lewis's use of food symbolism, and particularly Eucharistic symbolism, in his fantasy novels.

Additional Keywords
Drinking in C.S. Lewis; Eating and feasting in C.S. Lewis; Eucharist in C.S. Lewis; Food—Religious aspects; Food in literature; Lewis, C.S.—Attitude toward Eucharist; Lewis, C.S. Chronicles of Narnia; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy (Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength); Lewis, C.S. Till We Have Faces

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Anything which renders to a certain extent the intangible tangible is certainly not useless and not a sin.

Albert Lewis, 6 May 1883

INTRODUCTION

In her remarkable study of formal behaviour at the dinner table, Margaret Visser states that the Eucharist "is undoubtedly the most significance-charged dinner ritual ever devised." (Visser 1992: 36) "In this ritual," she says, "Christ, who for believers is both God and human, enters not only into the minds but the bodies of the congregation; the people present at the table eat God. No animals and no new death is needed, no bridges required; God enters directly. The Eucharist is the ritual perpetuation of the incarna­tional relationship with humankind that God initiated through Christ." (Ibid.) In the eleven fantasy novels of C.S. Lewis, his use of Eucharistic motifs in particular, and of symbolic food in general, unfolds as the reader moves from the Ransom trilogy to the seven Chronicles of Narnia, to the single tale of Gnome.

The interplanetary trilogy begins with scattered allu­sions to the Eucharist in Out of the Silent Planet, proceeds to paradisal parallels in Perelandra, and culminates in the complex indications of good and evil— from the salvational picnic to the banquet from hell in Belbury, to the explicit repast of the Pendragon at St. Anne's, who only takes bread and wine— in That Hideous Strength.

The rich vocabulary of allusions developed in the tri­logy recurs in the Narnian Chronicles, with Eucharistic imagery expressed in a variety of fairy tale forms, especially in the first four novels. In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, the self-sacrifice of Aslan sets forth the fundamental paradigm of which all Eucharists are in some way an embodiment. Prince Caspian reiterates the sacrifice motif with its reference to the Stone Table, but reaches its climax, in terms of Eucharistic symbolism, in the revels of Bacchus with its miraculous wine. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, with its Magician who, like Ransom, takes only bread and wine, also includes the motifs of Aslan’s Table and the Breakfast of the Lamb. In The Silver Chair, the water of life and the propriety of eating body and blood are explored. In The Horse and His Boy, the contrast between sensuality and simplicity— certainly an issue in terms of religious practice— is sharply drawn. In The Magician’s Nephew, the idea of salvational fruit— the apple of life— emerges as a major motif, as Digory visits the newmade Garden of Narnia, plucks a silver apple, and takes it to his mother, who is healed. Finally, in The Last Battle, the incapacity of the unbeliever to recognize the sacred in the ordinary— food and wine perceived as “hay” and “dirty water”— is presented, and there is a glimpse in Aslan’s Country of the miraculous apple tree.

Standing alone, Till We Have Faces presents imagery of body and blood, bread and wine, in the context of religious worship, traced to its origins. At the climax of this last novel, Lewis turns again to the meaning of a sacrament as “the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (as the Book of Common Prayer has it), when Psyche attempts to offer her sister divine food and sacred drink, and Orual blindly rejects this gift of life, refusing to ask, as she is later to say, “for an apple from the tree that fruited the day the world was made.” All Lewis’s novels are ecatastrophic, however, and in the end, Orual meets, face to face, the God who has accepted Psyche’s sacrifice. For the author of these eleven novels, it is this God whom the Christian meets in the Bread and the Wine.

OBJECTIVE EFFICACY

Most scholars attempting to discern what C.S. Lewis taught and believed about Holy Communion have resorted to the short list of statements he made about it in his letters, diaries, biographical books, and apologetic writings. A review of the majority of these is interesting and informative, but by no means conclusive. Nevertheless, any study of his teachings on this subject must begin by examining his recorded remarks.

Lewis did not particularly care for formal dinners. Several touching early comments of his upon food and drink indicate his pleasure in simple repasts; on 27 May 1922, he wrote in his diary that he, his house companion Mrs. Moore, and her daughter Maureen had eaten a “Supper of boiled eggs, plums and cream in the garden. We all deci­ded that it was the only meal for this weather;” (Lewis 1991: 42) and on 29 June 1922, he recorded that “at supper I drank cowslip wine for the very first time in my life. It is a real wine, green in colour, bittersweet, as warming as good sherry.” (Lewis 1991: 59)

A decade later, on 17 January 1932, he wrote to his brother Warren about his approach to the Eucharist: “I see (or think I see) ... a sense in which all wine is the blood of God—or all matter, even, the body of God, that I stumble at the apparently special sense in which this is claimed for the Host when consecrated. George MacDonald observes that the good man should aim at reaching the state of mind
in which all meals are sacraments. Now that is the sort of thing I understand." At the end of his life, Lewis expressed a similar openness regarding the role of the Eucharistic elements: "I do not know and can't imagine what the disciples understood Our Lord to mean when, His body still unbroken and His blood unshed, He handed them the bread and wine, saying they were His body and blood." (Lewis 1963: 132)

Between 1942 and 1964 he wrote from time to time regarding the Eucharist, but all his comments have this same import— that he finds it impossible to say precisely what the Eucharist is, does, and signifies, but that it is essential to the Christian life. Part of this reticence— I do not believe he found the matter incomprehensible— probably comes from the wide range of Eucharistic practice and style characteristic of Anglicanism. Lewis made Screwtape gloat that "The real fun is working up hatred between those who say 'Mass' and those who say 'holy communion' when neither party could possibly state the difference between, say, Hooker's doctrine and Thomas Aquinas', in any form which would hold water for five minutes," (Lewis 1942 [1954]: 84) and made him add that without the ceaseless labour of himself and his fellow demons, "the variety of usage within the Church of England might have become a positive hotbed of charity and humility." (Lewis 1943 [1954]: 85)

In 1947, Lewis published his most explicit meditation on the Eucharist. "Miraculous wine will intoxicate," he wrote; "miraculous bread will be digested. The divine art of miracle is not an art of suspending the pattern to which events conform but of folding new events into that pattern." (Lewis 1947 [1960]: 72) In talking about bread and wine, which are the two elements of the Eucharist, he discusses what he calls "Mystagogical meditation" (Lewis 1947 [1960]: 163, his emphasis), stating that "The earliest of these was the conversion of water into wine at the wedding at Cana. This miracle proclaims that the God of all divinity; "Here, at the feeding of the five thousand, is He whom we have ignorantly worshipped: the real Corn-King who will die once and rise at Jerusalem during the office of Pontius Pilate." (Ibid.)

Both Cana and the Feeding of the Five Thousand are used in Christian as symbolic prefigurations of Holy Communion; I shall refer below to Bacchus, whose appearance in Prince Caspian is a significant element in the thesis I am attempting to pursue. The argument in these passages was extremely close to the heart of Lewis; he had been converted (that is, literally, turned back) to the religion of his father and mother through his renewed understanding that these ancient myths— of Bacchus and the Corn-King— were in fact prefigurations of Christ.

Lewis continued to address this theme. In "Transposition," he says that "Put in its most general terms, our problem is that of the obvious continuity between things which, it is claimed, are spiritual; the reappearance in what professes to be our supernatural life of all the same old elements which make up our natural life and (it would seem) of no others." (Lewis 1949: 11)

He told a correspondent in 1950 that "The only rite which we know to have been initiated by Our Lord Himself is the Holy Communion ('Do this in remembrance of me'. 'If ye do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.') This is an order and must be obeyed." (Lewis 1966: 224) About a decade after making this absolute affirmation, he wrote in A Grief Observed that "Tomorrow morning a priest will give me a little, round, thin, cold, tasteless wafer. Is it a disadvantage— is it not in some ways an advantage—that it can't pretend the least resemblance to that with which it unites me?" (Lewis 1961: 51)

The posthumously published Letters to Malcolm, from which I have already quoted, contains Lewis’s longest series of meditations upon the Eucharist, albeit disguised in a fictitious voice. We need not, for instance, believe that he is quite precise when he says "You may ask me why I’ve never written anything about the Holy Communion. For the very simple reason that I am not good enough at Theology." (Lewis 1964: 131) In this book, in fact, he makes the statement upon which, taking Janine Goffar as my guide, I base my argument in this essay: "Actually my ideas about the sacrament would probably be called ‘magical’ by a good many modern theologians." (Lewis 1964: 134) Readers who wonder what “magic” means in this context can recall that he explained, "I should define magic in this sense as ‘objective efficacy which cannot be further analysed.” (Ibid.)

Where analysis is impossible, imagination— the use of imagery and symbolism— comes to the rescue. What defies reason becomes comprehensible in art, as in religious practice. To “take” and “eat” is to understand, at a level far deeper and hence more lasting and more profound than
any form of ratiocination. Therefore, an examination of the eleven fantasy novels of C.S. Lewis may well yield still more information about his understanding of the Eucharist than is available in his letters or apologetic works. My analysis will include not only positive but negative symbols, not only, that is, the Mass, but the anti-Mass. Further, I will consider not only the elements of the Eucharist — bread and wine — in particular, but food in general, as it figures in the fantasies.

It seems to me clear that the matter of the Holy Communion — including the literal sense of “matter” as physical material — lies at the heart of Lewis’s understanding of reality, as it must for any member of a liturgy-centred branch of Christianity. His teaching on the Eucharist is an exact presentation of one of his most important and least mentioned doctrines, the sacrality of the physical Creation. He says in one place that all ground is holy and every bush a Burning Bush, and in another place that aside from the Blessed Sacrament, our neighbour is the holiest object ever presented to our gaze. These were not by him hyperbolic statements but declarations of fact. To Lewis, the physical act of eating food that is concrete and actual is as important as the spiritual act of eating food that is sacred, and vice versa. When Christ says “This is my Body,” Lewis takes Him to mean it, and to mean it in both the above senses.

**BREAD AND WINE**

The use of Eucharistic symbolism begins with a bang in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), with a dystopic parody of the Eucharistic elements. The despicable Devine describes Weston (who will in the second novel of the trilogy become possessed by the Devil) in these terms: “You know. The great physicist. Has Einstein on toast and drinks a pint of Schrödinger’s blood for breakfast.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 14) The body of Einstein is presented on toasted bread, and the blood of Schrödinger provides the wine, in this infernal parody. Most mentions of food in the early phase of this novel, as Devine and Weston take the kidnapped Ransom from Earth to Mars, suggest disgust and malaise. When his captors have eaten, Ransom sees “cigars, oyster-shells and empty champagne-bottles jostled with tins of condensed milk and opened sardine-tins, with cheap crockery, broken bread, and teacups full of tea and cigarette-ends.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 16-17) The “jostled” wine and the “broken bread”— both, surely, Eucharistic references — are cast aside here among the remnants of a perfectly agreeable picnic, presented as garbage.

During the trip to Mars food and drink become obstacles: “All he [Ransom] ever remembered of his first meal in the space-ship was the tyranny of heat and light,” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 32) and “Food was snatched as best they could, and drinking presented great difficulties.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 43) Readers sixty years later will note, from observing the flight of American, Canadian, and Russian astronauts, that Lewis has not exaggerated the inconveniences, including cramped space and unpleasant food, that apply to this form of travel.

Soon after arriving on Mars, Ransom escapes his captors and the mood changes from infernal to paradisal, as he meets his first Martian, or, as we learn to call it, Malacandrian, a Hross, who offers him a cup; “Whatever had been added to the water was plainly alcoholic; he had never enjoyed a drink so much.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 63) This combination of water, and, as it were, wine, constitutes Ransom’s first communion with a Malacandrian. After a series of adventures among the three intelligent life forms of Malacandra, he reaches Meldilorn, the island of the eldils, where he is to meet the Oyarsa of Malacandra, a being for whom “Light is instead of blood.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 135) When Ransom meets this extraordinary being (whether a planetary divinity or an archangel is intended is never completely clarified) he explains that he has been sent as a human sacrifice by men who “think the eldil drinks blood.” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 137) This combination of sacrifice and the drinking of blood resonates with Eucharistic symbolism, where “This is my Body” and “This is my Blood” are applied to bread and wine.

The conclusion of the novel, in which the three space travellers, now bound for Earth, endure “the agony of thirst,” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 167) contains an allusion to the utterance of Christ on the Cross: “I thirst.” (John 19:38) Ransom in particular thirsts “for grass and meat and beer and tea and the human voice,” like a dead person remembering the joys of life. (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 168) When, finally, he lands safely and alive, he enters a pub, and asks for his favourite Tellurian (earthly) drink: “a pint of bitter, please,” (Lewis 1938 [1969]: 169) and is finally able to assuage his thirst.

In these passages, food and drink are presented as the daily pleasures of both Earth (Tellus) and Mars (Malacandra); the sacramental import of these natural and lawful pleasures will appear again and again in the fantasies that follow this beginning.

The second novel of the interplanetary trilogy, *Perelandra*, begins this characteristic inclusion of food references when Lewis, after struggling through demonic assault on his way to meet Ransom, finds a note telling him that there are “Eatables in [the] larder.” (Lewis 1943 [1951]: 15) Ransom, as promised, returns to Earth from a second trip, this time to Venus (Perelandra). “I somehow don’t feel like bacon or eggs,” he tells Lewis, and asks, “No fruit? ... Bread or something?” On this feminine planet he has lost his taste for meat, and prefers fruit and grain. As his experiences are described, we learn that “To say that [the smells in the forest] ... made him feel hungry and thirsty would be misleading; almost, they created a new kind of hunger and thirst, a longing that seemed to flow over the body into the soul and which was a heaven to feel.” (Lewis 1943 [1951]: 46) Hunger and thirst, satisfied in the Eucharist by sacramental bread and wine, are in fact held to feed soul and
body, and as these motifs end Out of the Silent Planet, so here they introduce Perelandra.

The association of food and Paradise, a female Paradise not unrelated to the joys provided by the womb and the nursing breast, are emphasized in this novel about the feminine planet, Venus. On Perelandra, Ransom encounters “great globes of yellow fruit,” (Ibid.) and finds that “It was like the discovery of a totally new genus of pleasures, ... out of all reckoning, beyond all covenant.” (Lewis 1943 [1957]: 46-47) The word “covenant” is defined “In biblical translations and allusions,” according to The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, as “an engagement entered into by God with a person, nation, etc.,” specifically, in Christian terms, as “the engagement with God that is entered into by believers at their baptism.” In the passage from Perelandra, the fruit-globes shower the naked (as are all newborns) Ransom with a new form of baptism not only cleansing but delicious to drink, welcoming him into a new covenant which is “beyond all covenant.”

Bread as well as drink is provided on Perelandra: Ransom picks “oval green berries” (Lewis 1943 [1951]: 54) of which the “flesh was dryish and bread-like,” (Lewis 1943 [1951]: 55) offering “the specific pleasures of plain food—the delight of munching and being nourished.” (Ibid.) Readers of Lewis’ letters, diaries, and biographical works will recall that to call food "plain" is to pronounce it good.

At last, after a paradisal period during which he meets the Green Lady, the Eve of Perelandra, he encounters his old adversary, Dr. Weston. His interest is in the local animals, particularly the hapless Perelandrian frogs, whom he enjoys torturing and killing. As prefigured by this very pronounced difference in taste, the central portion of the book consists of a battle to the death between the two men, or rather, by the man, Ransom, and the Un-Man, Weston, who has invited Satan to inhabit his body. The survivor, Ransom, is afterwards fed by “a grape-like fruit” (the sort of fruit, one may imagine, from which Eucharistic wine would be made) for an incalculable time. Healed as well as nourished, he recovers.

The third novel of this trilogy, That Hideous Strength, takes place on Earth (Thulcandra). Here the Eucharistic references and parallels become more numerous. Daily meals, picnics, bread and wine, an evil banquet and a good dinner (in both the moral and the aesthetic sense) become major and recurring symbols.

On the very first page of That Hideous Strength, we read of “breakfast ... lunch and tea” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 1) in the context of Jane Studdock’s housewifely life. This dailiness is, in Lewis’s view, a positive good, and Jane is, albeit reluctantly, the heroine of the novel. When we read later that “During lunch Dr. Dimble talked about the Arthurian legend,” we rightly sense the same aura of goodness about him. Chapter Two, significantly titled “Dinner with the Sub-Warden,” is a harbinger of evil to come. It begins with “James Busby ... Lord Feverstone and Mark ... all drinking sherry with Curry,” at Bracton College where Mark is employed. Lord Feverstone is the egregious Devine of Out of the Silent Planet; as Weston died in Perelandra, so Feverstone / Devine will die in That Hideous Strength. The dinner progresses successfully (in its own terms): “The good wine was beginning to do its good office,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 30) the narrator Lewis says, ironically, in an allusion to the remark of the diners at Cana: “Thou hast kept the good wine till now,” (John 2:10) and adds of Busby that “wine and candlelight loosened his tongue.”

When Mark is, in fact, enticed from his college to Belbury, partly as a result of the above dinner, he goes to lunch feeling vulnerable and insecure, not certain what he will find at this Edwardian mansion which houses the diabolically-sponsored NICE. “Although the food and drinks were excellent, it was a relief to him when people began getting up from table.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 54) People who dine at Belbury do not enjoy themselves. At dinner with Fairy Hardcastle, the head of the NICE Secret Police, Mark’s meal is spoiled by her “disagreeable” stories and “esoteric” inside information about police life. The word “esoteric” has a double meaning here, including references not only to what is hidden in general, but in the occult sense of forbidden knowledge. William Hingist, the good scientist, goes from this table to his death, a guest betrayed, in a clear allusion to Jesus, who went from the Last Supper to betrayal by his fellow diner Judas.

The gradual descent of Mark is recorded in a series of references to meals; “It [a report he has been assigned to write] took them the rest of the day, so that Cosser and he came in to dinner late and without dressing. This gave Mark a most agreeable sensation. And he enjoyed the meal too.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 91) Next day he visits a village slated for destruction by the NICE, and in “The Two Bells,” a country pub, he sees “Two labourers ... sitting with earthenware mugs at their elbows, munching very thick sandwiches,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 93) as is only right and proper. Mark’s companion finds this scene undesirable and unsanitary, but Mark (not yet lost) thinks “it had its pleasant side.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 94) So far, his participation in the Belbury regime consists of boyish rebellion (against dressing for dinner) and a commendable incapacity to disapprove of humble food.

Returning the narrative to the little college, Lewis reports, “That evening the fellows of Bracton sat in Common Room over their wine and dessert.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 96) The college, like the country town, is slated for extinction; outside, the NICE’s heavy machinery destroys the adjacent woodland. Among the diners are Curry and Feverstone; as the latter “was pouring himself another glass of wine,” the “famous east window” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 100) of the room is struck by a machine and destroyed. The light from the east is the rising sun, a major symbol of Christ.
Mark, meanwhile, is still at Belbury, unaware that his former place of employment is being destroyed. All unknowing, he “ate his breakfast by artificial light” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 112)—everything at Belbury aims toward artificiality—and takes “a second cup of tea,” (Ibid.) just as Feverstone had taken another glass of wine. Attentive readers will remark the allusion here to the wonderfruit on Perelandra where one drink was enough.

At the same time, Camilla and Arthur Denniston, another couple who, like Jane and Mark, have been associated with Bracton College (Arthur had failed to get the job that was won by Mark), attempt to recruit Jane to the Company at St. Anne’s Manor, the novel’s opposite to Belbury. They do this in the context of a picnic, one of several picnics which, as I have argued elsewhere, “are figures of the Eucharist.” (Patterson 1984: 25) I would associate the picnics in this novel with the Seder, the meal prescribed by God which featured (and features) unleavened bread because the Israelites came “out of the land of Egypt in haste” (Exodus 12:8) and with the wilderness situation in which God fed the travelling Israelites with manna, “bread from heaven.” (Exodus 16:4)

This particularly significant picnic scene finds Camilla, Arthur, and Jane “in a sort of little grassy bay with a fir thicket on one side and a group of beeches on the other”—a setting of the kind Lewis most loved and praised—and “there was some unstrapping of baskets, and then sandwiches and a little flask of sherry.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 125) This is a picnic at which the food consists of bread and wine, the exact elements of the Eucharist.

We get a glimpse of the Bracton College chapel (where the Eucharist would have been celebrated) on the occasion of the murdered Hingist’s funeral. Outside, fog presses everywhere and the noise of heavy machinery persists. Morning Prayer to Evening Prayer to the funeral service.

In an Anglican chapel, all ceremonies from Holy Communion to the Eucharist would have been celebrated) on the occasion of the murdered Hingist’s funeral. Outside, fog presses everywhere and the noise of heavy machinery persists. Morning Prayer to Evening Prayer to the funeral service, all ceremonies from Holy Communion to the Eucharist. At the same time, Camilla and Arthur Denniston, another couple who, like Jane and Mark, have been associated with Bracton College (Arthur had failed to get the job that was won by Mark), attempt to recruit Jane to the Company at St. Anne’s Manor, the novel’s opposite to Belbury. They do this in the context of a picnic, one of several picnics which, as I have argued elsewhere, “are figures of the Eucharist.” (Patterson 1984: 25) I would associate the picnics in this novel with the Seder, the meal prescribed by God which featured (and features) unleavened bread because the Israelites came “out of the land of Egypt in haste” (Exodus 12:8) and with the wilderness situation in which God fed the travelling Israelites with manna, “bread from heaven.” (Exodus 16:4)

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We get a glimpse of the Bracton College chapel (where the Eucharist would have been celebrated) on the occasion of the murdered Hingist’s funeral. Outside, fog presses everywhere and the noise of heavy machinery persists. Inside the chapel the candles burned with straight flames, each flame the centre of a globe of greasy luminosity, and cast almost no light.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 139) In an Anglican chapel, all ceremonies from Holy Communion to Morning Prayer to Evening Prayer to the funeral service, are accompanied by lighted candles, signifying in yet another way (by the natural substance of bees’ wax) the presence of God. Here, in these circumstances, this light is very dim. Again, the coffin enters as “an island of appalling flowers drifting indistinctly through the fog.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 140) Flowers, like candles, are generally present at Anglican religious services including the Eucharist. At this funeral, such flowers, usually intended as symbols of life, become “appalling.” In this diminished setting, we hear that “Feverstone... had been able to be present.” (Ibid.)

Mark finally crosses the boundary into illegality in “the library,” where “Never had the fire seemed to burn more brightly nor the smell of drinks to be more attractive.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 143) The word “seemed” in the sense of falseness is operative here, for in this context he learns that the NICE has created its own riots, and he allows himself to be persuaded to write false press releases to deal with the matter. Miss Hardcastle closes her persuasions thus: “Time for one more drink and you and I’d better go upstairs and begin. We’ll get them to give us devilled bones and coffee at three.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 145) Again, this false behaviour will take place after “one more drink,” which, as we have seen, signals danger.

The reference to “devilled” food here, an intentional one, I am sure, has caused some puzzlement among North American readers. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary explains that in British usage, one sense of “devil” is “a highly seasoned, peppery dish of broiled or fried meat; peppery season for meat,” and, again, “to coat with peppery condiments.” Margaret Fulton, another British source, describes it as “a hot, spicy mixture used to coat food for grilling.” (Fulton 1985: 373) The term “devilled bones” thus refers to the British equivalent or parallel to the North American dish, barbecued ribs, which are indeed bones.

This meal, shared with a murderess, offers a perfect anti-Mass. The body will be comprised of highly seasoned bones, and the blood will be replaced by coffee, drunk, one has no doubt, without sugar or cream.

Lewis says of Mark in this bizarre context that “all the while the child inside him whispered how splendid and how triumphantly grown up it was to be sitting like this, so full of alcohol and yet not drunk,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 150) anticipating what is actually a perfectly innocent (although perhaps not perfectly digestible) repast of spiced meat and black coffee. It is the company he is keeping, and the task at which he is engaged that are the signs of his corruption, not really the food— to which his attention has deliberately been turned—or even the hour, though people will do at three in the morning what they might not do at three in the afternoon. Lewis’s point is that Mark is seduced by the chance to be included in a small and select group, and that the idea of being an insider will make people do things they otherwise would not.

It is at this point of crisis that Jane “sees” the corpse of Merlin in his tomb, and pictures “someone divinely young, ... all golden and strong and warm coming with a mighty earth-shaking tread down into that black place.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 152) This passage evokes the Descent into Hell (now more weakly called the “descent to the dead”) as well as the Raising of Lazarus, and shows in visionary terms—Jane is a visionary—the awakening of Merlin from his long enchanted sleep, the turning point of the plot of That Hideous Strength, since it is Merlin who will overthrow the NICE.

Afterwards, as Jane travels by train she moves toward the light, to “a little green sun-lit island looking down on a sea of white fog” which marks a sacred centre—St. Anne’s Manor—which cannot be overcome by the diabolical fog. Another sacred centre is also revealed to her: “the wooded hills above Snowdon where she had picnicked with the
Dennistons.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 154) When Jane arrives at St. Anne’s, she is served tea (as opposed to coffee) and then ushered into the presence of the Pendragon, the Director of the Company of St. Anne’s, who is Ransom, returned from Perelandra. She meets him, and sees “the gold hair and the gold beard of the wounded man.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 159)

In their meeting, the symbolism of the Holy Communion becomes explicit:

Mrs. Maggs presently returned with a tray, bearing a glass, a small flagon of red wine, and a roll of bread. She set it down on a table at the Director’s side and left the room.

“You see,” said the Director, “I live like the King in Curdie. It is a surprisingly pleasant diet.” With these words he broke the bread and poured himself out a glass of wine.

(Lewis 1945 [1946]: 167)

These actions are precisely those of a priest. They are based in part upon George MacDonald’s fantasy, *The Princess and Curdie*: “with eager hands she broke a great piece from the loaf, and poured out a full glass of wine.” This food is intended to save the aged King, who has been secretly poisoned; “Every now and then he asked for a piece of bread and a little wine, and every time he ate and drank he slept, and every time he woke he seemed better than the last time.” (MacDonald 1883 [1990]: 285) The wounded Ransom is also, presumably, aided by this Eucharistic repast as he lies disabled by a bite to his heel inflicted by Weston on Perelandra.

There is here, in both MacDonald and Lewis, an allusion to the story of Melchizedek in the Bible: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God;” (Genesis 14:18) also alluded to in *Psalms* 110:4, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” a figure echoed and reinterpreted in *Hebrews* 7:2 as “King of Salem, which is, King of Peace,” and repeated in *Hebrews* 5:21 as “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

On her way home from this life-changing experience of encounter with one enacting the role of the King of Salem, Jane, or rather, in her meditations upon herself, “This fourth and supreme Jane was simply in a state of joy.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]:171) For Lewis, “joy” was a word of the most profound significance and there is some reason to suggest that Jane is modelled (along with Mark) upon aspects of himself. As Jane, who like Lewis had homely tastes, “rejoiced in her hunger and thirst and decided that she would make herself buttered toast for tea—a great deal of buttered toast” (Ibid.) she echoes a notion which was no joke for Lewis—“God never meant” humankind “to be a purely spiritual creature. This is why He uses material things like bread and wine [or toast and tea] to put new life into us. We may think this rather crude ... God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it.” (Lewis 1956: 50)

What Jane actually meets on her way home, however, is Fairy Hardcastle, who submits her to torture. Set free, she is rescued by a man and a woman in a car, and her wish for tea and toast is in the end rewarded by a second salvation picnic. They “made her sit in the car and gave her brandy and after that sandwiches,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 180) and returned to “the Manor at St. Anne’s.” When Jane awakens there next morning, she is given breakfast, and asks for “the Curdie books, please,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 185), presumably to look up the Director’s allusion regarding his diet of bread and wine. After a full day of rest and recovery from her ordeal, she is offered “a nice cup of tea,” and, somewhat recovered (one may think that Lewis underestimated the lastingness of the effects of being tortured, however superficial the wounds may be) she joins the household in the kitchen where the women and men take turns preparing meals.

Mark, meanwhile, “sat down to lunch that day in good spirits,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 192) and, in the afternoon, “while he was having tea, Fairy Hardcastle came and leaned over the back of his chair.” Later, Mark “was late for breakfast, but that made little difference for he could not eat. He drank several cups of black coffee” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 213) instead, which in this symbolic structure is clearly an ominous sign. Later still, the evil Deputy Director of the NICE calls for him: “I would not have kept you from your breakfast unless I felt that in your own interests you should be placed in full possession of the facts at the earliest moment,” he says, ominously. (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 236-237) In a bracketing structure, he informs Mark that he is to be blackmailed into forcing his wife Jane to come to Belbury, and concludes the interview by saying, “You must be hungry for your breakfast ... don’t let me delay you.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 245)

The result of this terrible interview is that Mark actually walks away from Belbury; as he makes his escape he encounters a pub (an event prefigured in his visit to the doomed pub): “He thought about his wife Jane, and sometimes about bacon and eggs, and fried fish, and dark, fragrant streams of coffee pouring into large cups ..., he went in and had some bread and cheese.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 247) Clearly, this repast, including coffee, is a symbol of goodness. When he goes home, he finds that Jane is not there. This is made clear by his discovery that “The bread in the cupboard was stale. There was a jug full of milk, but the milk had thickened and would not pour.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 250) This image of stagnation and loss embodies precisely the precarious nature of Mark’s and Jane’s relationship at that moment, despite the fact that at the pub he had thought of her hopefully, along with bacon and eggs. Lewis reminds us here of Mark’s need, both psychological and physical, for Jane, a need that in the end, literally, on the last page, will be his salvation.

Distressed, he goes to Dr. Dimble, who, not surprisingly, will not reveal Jane’s whereabouts. Rejected, Mark
stumbles away in the rain, and is arrested for “the murder of William Hingest,” an act of which the reader knows he is not guilty. Returned to St. Anne’s, Dr. Dimble reports Mark’s approach; again, food images reinforce this location as good: “There were signs that everyone else had had an early supper,” and he too is given something to “eat and drink.” Every occupant of St. Anne’s feeds well, according to need and desire; even the resident bear, Mr. Bultitude, can feast: “The bear is kept in the house and given apples and golden syrup till it’s near bursting.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 306) the gardener complains.

Meanwhile, back at the NICE, a tramp has been mistaken for Merlin, and invited to dine; he “devoted his attention entirely to cold beef, chicken, pickles, cheese and butter,” along with “a second pint of beer.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 312) His choice of foods, resembling those of a very good pub meal, marks this man as blameless, as indeed he is. Merlin, on the other hand, has made his way to St. Anne’s Manor. Most of the household are put into a magical sleep including those who had been engaged in the kitchen, the women, on this particular day, as it happens. Ransom directs that they be awakened and welcome this guest: “Ask them to bring him up refreshments. A bottle of stout ... [and] a nice cup of tea.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 358) a sure sign that all shall be well. And, as the prisoners, animals and human, of the NICE are released, Ivy feeds her husband Tom, at last a free man, and reports that “I gave him cold pie and the pickles ... and the end of the cheese and a bottle of stout ... [and] a nice cup of tea.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 457) By this time we know that such a meal, simple and good, is for Lewis a figure for that most holy and frugal meal of all, which, though it consists of a thin wafer and a sip of wine, prefigures a place at the table of the Lamb in Paradise.

In enormous contrast to this innocent and prolonged “sort of continual picnic the two shared,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 387) is the high point of horror in That Hideous Strength, the Chapter entitled “Banquet at Belbury,” which presents a true anti-Communion, during which no communication of an intelligible sort takes place, as the doom of Babel falls upon the denizens of the NICE. The people who come to eat at the banquet are themselves eaten by wild animals (who had been caged in order to undergo vivisection). Their bodies and blood mix with the food and wine of an entirely unholy communion, a banquet in hell like the one which concludes The Screwtape Letters as the demons devour both the damned souls and their unsuccessful tempters.

The Banquet at Belbury is a scene presenting the reverse of communion, where no communication takes place. A similar set of motifs appeared in the 1960s in the film Cool Hand Luke, where Luke, the holy fool played by Paul Newman, who eats eggs (life) to excess and sings about his “plastic Jesus,” is finally killed. The comment of the prison camp guard from hell (the unforgettable Strother Martin) is this: “What we have here is a failure to communicate.” Luke is, in this film, an alter Christus, an innocent person who suffers and dies. The people at Belbury’s banquet who die are not innocent, though, in the context of Mercy, death does not always lead to damnation. The scene of these bloodied tables and their ruined plenty may be based upon the Odyssey, where Odysseus kills his wife’s suitors as they are being entertained in his house, “spilling all the vittles on the ground—meat and bread in a mess,” (Homer 1937 [1960]: 229) so that the victims “fell sprawling over a table; vittles and cup went scattering over the floor.” (Homer 1937 [1960]: 330)

From this scene of destruction, Mark is saved by Merlin, who sends him to Jane and St. Anne’s with a clap on the back that he is to remember for the rest of his life. On the road in daylight he is offered a ride by a lorry-driver (a trucker in North American parlance) and, dropped off at “a little country hotel,” which as we know by now is a good place, he eats “a capital breakfast,” and later, “a boiled egg with his tea.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 429)

As the novel draws to its close we note that “Dinner was over at St. Anne’s and they sat at their wine in a circle about the dining room fire,” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 439) a sure sign that all shall be well. And, as the prisoners, animals and human, of the NICE are released, Ivy feeds her husband Tom, at last a free man, and reports that “I gave him cold pie and the pickles ... and the end of the cheese and a bottle of stout ... [and] a nice cup of tea.” (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 457) By this time we know that such a meal, simple and good, is for Lewis a figure for that most holy and frugal meal of all, which, though it consists of a thin wafer and a sip of wine, prefigures a place at the table of the Lamb in Paradise.

THE BREAKFAST OF THE LAMB

In considering the Narnian Chronicles, Doris T. Myers says that “the Breakfast of the Lamb [is] the analogue of communion.” (Myers 1984: 153) She regards “Aslan’s Table on Ramandu’s island” as “quite different” from “the homely, almost routine attitude associated with communion” among Anglicans. “The meal is a simple breakfast,” she says, “a meeting with Aslan, not ‘a remembrance of him’ nor ‘a re-enactment of Christ’s death,’ but a meeting with the resurrected Christ.” (Ibid.) The interpretation of a scene in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952) to be discussed in that context below, clearly reinforces my thesis that all or at least many of Lewis’s homely meals in his fantasies are meetings with the Creator in the Creation.

The first significant meeting in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (1950), which is the first of the seven Chronicles of Narnia, finds Lucy, the seeress of the Chronicles (as Jane is the seeress in That Hideous Strength) having tea with Mr. Tumnus the faun, the first person she meets in Narnia. “And it really was a wonderful tea. There was a nice
brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast and honey, and then a sugar-topped cake.” This tea, with its emphasis on boiled eggs (as in the supper of “boiled eggs, plums and cream” Lewis ate in 1922), sardines and other good things on toast (in a eucatastrophic reversal of the dystopic “Einstein on toast” imagined by Devine on Malacandra, and the discarded “opened sardine tins” of the Malacandran picnic) clearly meets with Lewis’s approval.

In great contrast to eggs, sardines, toast, butter, honey, and cake, when Edmund meets his first person in Narnia, she is, unfortunately for him, not a Narnian, but the White Queen. She gives him an evil drink, not tea, but “a jewelled cup full of something that steamed ... very sweet and foamy and creamy, and it warmed him right down to his toes.” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 22-28) and evil food, “a round box, tied with green silk ribbon, which opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish delight. Each piece was sweet and light to the very centre,” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 28) This food proves to be addictive, and makes Edward a slave of the White Witch.

The Pevensie children, whom the now corrupted Edmund has rejoined, find their way to the house of Mr. And Mrs. Beaver, where Edmund slips away, after hearing news of Aslan, and the other children and the Beavers prepare to make their escape; Mrs. Beaver, wise creature, takes along “a packet of tea, ... sugar, ... and two or three loaves” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 81) in order to insure a minimal tea, including bread, the basic necessities of life in British terms. As they hide in a cave during their flight, they are provided by Father Christmas, who has more business being in Narnia than does the White Witch, with a splendid tea, “a large tray containing five cups and saucers, a bowl of lump sugar, a jug of cream, and a great big teapot all sizzling and piping hot.” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 88) Mrs. Beaver’s tea supplies are useless in a cave in the snow, since she has brought nothing with which to make a fire; the tea provided by Father Christmas is, as it should be, miraculous. In very sad contrast to all this bounty, all that the now-captive Edmund gets is “an iron bowl with some water in it and an iron plate ... with a hunk of dry bread on it.” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 90) the traditional punishment food of western culture, in stark contrast not only with the marvellous tea of Father Christmas but with the seductive and enslaving food by which the witch entrapped him.

Soon after, the witch, (with the wretched Edmund in tow) encounters another group who have had the benefit of Father Christmas’s bounty. This is the Merry Party of small Narnians. “Edmund couldn’t quite see what they were eating, but it smelled lovely and there seemed to be decorations of holly and he wasn’t at all sure that he didn’t see something like a plum pudding.” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 93) There is drink as well as food, of course: “the Fox ... had just risen to its feet, holding a glass in its right paw.” (Ibid.) When the fox attempts to “drink [her] ... Majesty’s health,” she turns them all to stone, including the “stone table on which there were stone plates and a stone plum pudding.” (Lewis 1950) [1955]: 94)

The motif of the stone table is to recur; Aslan, in order to save the betrayer Edmund, is sacrificed on a Stone Table. Brian Horne has said of this episode that “Lewis ... avoided the adherence to any theory of the Atonement ... but the death of Aslan ... is a straight substitution.” (Horne 1995: 155) Walter Hooper agrees that the Table of Stone is indeed “the Narnian equivalent of Calvary.” (Hooper 1996: 413) and that Aslan ... offers his life for Edmund’s.” (Hooper 1996: 411) Lewis, on the other hand, seems to have stood as far away from specificity on Eucharistic doctrine in his fiction as he did in his apologetics: “I did not say to myself ‘Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia’: I said ‘Let us suppose that there was a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as He became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen.’” (Lewis, 1985: 44-45) In the case of Aslan’s death, then, we cannot identify Lewis’s understanding of the theory of the Atonement, let alone of the precise role, structure, and meaning of the Eucharist. On the other hand, the striking combination of miracle and homeliness is conveyed with unforgettable numinosity and poignancy.

In Prince Caspian (1951) Lewis continues his references to food, beginning with “the sandwiches mother gave us for the journey,” (Lewis 1951: 4) in a reiteration of the “unleavened bread” (Exodus 12:18) eaten “in haste”— a motif characteristic of the Seder— “Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread ... for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste.” (Deuteronomy 16:3) Paul specifically refers to this motif when he says in 1 Corinthians 5:8, “Let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” While the sandwiches were not made of unleavened bread per se, they were certainly eaten in the circumstances of a “journey,” like the similar meals eaten in a car or a lorry in That Hideous Strength.

Trapped temporarily on an island in Narnia, the children “had to content themselves with raw apples,” (Lewis 1951: 13) perhaps a delicate reference to the biblical phrase, “Comfort me with apples”. (Song of Songs 2:5) Apples will continue to play a major role in the later Chronicles. Edmund, now redeemed, longs for “a good thick slice of bread and margarine,” (Ibid.) a desire that contains a touch of World War II austerity, at least for those who remember the period; readers should recall that The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe begins when the Pevensie children come to the house where they find the Wardrobe during World War II, having been sent away from an area more likely to suffer air-raids.

As they explore the place to which they have returned on this second visit to Narnia, they discover a treasure trove, where Lucy finds “the magical cordial which would heal almost every wound and every illness,” which had
been presented to her by Father Christmas along with the tea, discussed above. Since it heals rather than enslaves, it is the positive counterpart of the negative drink the witch gave to Edmund in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

In company with a Narnian Dwarf, the children eat "fresh pavenders ... [roasted] in the embers" of a campfire. (Lewis 1951: 31) Pavenders are a species of fish, and are enjoyed here along with apples and water. This meal of fish prefigures the "Breakfast of the Lamb," which has its roots in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader and is based upon John 21:9, but it can also be seen as an allusion to those "miracles of fertility" discussed by Lewis in Miracles, which included not only bread and wine, but fish: specifically the feeding of the multitude, mentioned in all four gospels, which combined bread and fish, and in the miraculous draft of fishes in Luke and John.

Now, we read of Aslan's How, described as "a perfect maze" built of "stones" with "strange decorations and snaky patterns—pictures in which the form of a Lion was repeated," (Lewis 1951: 75) which suggest a sort of Narnian tumultus on the order of New Grange or some other site that Lewis may have seen or known. "In the centre was the Stone itself, a stone table, split right down the centre." (Lewis 1951: 78) This table, however, is not to be the site of a Eucharistic event; quite the contrary. That role falls to the Stone itself, a compass point, a measuring sign, a reference point, a reference direction.

A procession of dancers arrives; "One was a youth, dressed only in a fawn-skin, with vine leaves wreathed in his curly hair. His face would have been almost too pretty for a boy's, had he not looked so extremely wild." (Lewis 1951: 131) And, "There were a lot of girls with him, as wild as he." This is the very Dionysus who, in The Bacchae, meets Pentheus's soldiers:

> Laughing, he told us to come on, bind him, lead him away. (Euripides 1968: 20)

Pentheus, suicidally, taunts the god:

> ... bodily you are not bad looking, stranger, in a seductive way ...
> Those locks of yours are long, for lack of sport, cascading along your cheek, full of enticement. (Ibid.)

Pentheus pays with his life for a sight of the Dionysian revels; in Prince Caspian we are able to read of them and live. Lewis wrote of "Euripides' picture of Dionysus [in The Bacchae]," as "something Mediterranean and volcanic ... perhaps unconsciously connected with my own hatred of public school orthodoxies and conventions," in Surprised by Joy (Lewis 1955: 111).

As Bacchus begins his revels in Prince Caspian, Lucy sees "a bunch of grapes," and soon "Everyone began eating, and ... you have never tasted such grapes. Really good grapes, firm and tight on the outside, but bursting into cool sweetness." (Lewis 1951: 132) Here, surely, is both the literal and figurative source of the wine in the Holy Communion, in terms of Lewis's symbolic intentions. This is the very "miraculous wine" to which Lewis refers in Miracles (1947), the wine offered by the One who is "the reality behind—Bacchus."

Later, after mentions of marching rations—"hard cheese, an onion, and a mug of water," instead of "venison pastries" or "buttered eggs and hot coffee," (Lewis 1951: 145) available in the ruler "Miraz's tent" (Lewis 1951: 151) we hear again, and finally, of Bacchus, who gives to Caspian's old nurse the revivifying wine, "the richest wine, red as red-currant jelly, smooth as oil, strong as beef, warming as tea, cool as dew." (Lewis 1951: 170)

The novel moves toward its conclusion with a banquet, rhapsodically described in the same terms: "roasted meat, ... wheaten cakes and oat cakes, honey and many-coloured sugars and cream as thick as porridge and as smooth as still water, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, pears, grapes, strawberries," and finally, "the wines; dark, thick ones like syrups of mulberry juice, and clear red ones like red jellies liquefied, and yellow wines and green wines," (Lewis 1951: 177) all mandated and permitted, in this ecstatic catalogue.

A last delightful touch reminds us that life emerges from the Earth: at this universal banquet, "the Trees were going to eat earth ... They began with a rich brown loam that looked almost exactly like chocolate;" then, "an earth of the kind you see in Somerset, which is almost pink ... lighter and sweeter," followed by "a chalky soil" and "delicate confections of the finest gravels powdered with choice silver sand." Finally, along with "very little wine" (one thinks of the endless libations of wine poured upon the Earth in ancient Greece, or perhaps of Paul's advice to "use a little wine" in I Timothy 5:23) "they quenched their thirst with deep draughts of mingled dew and rain," surely the very water of life. (Lewis 1951: 177-178) If all ground is holy ground, then all food is holy food.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952) begins its catalogue of foods with a list of provisions aboard the Dawn Treader, in keeping with the imagery of food eaten on the way, for this beautiful ship is setting off on a voyage of exploration that will take them to the uttermost East. Listed are "sacks of flour, casks of water and beer, barrels of pork, jars of honey, skin bottles of wine, apples, nuts, cheeses, biscuits, turnips, sides of bacon, ... hams, strings of onions." (Lewis 1952: 22) Also aboard is Lucy's cordial; "a drop from her flask" (Lewis 1952: 22) cures the seasickness of Eustace, the boy villain of this Chronicle, as Edmund was of the first.

The keg of water taken aboard the Dawn Treader is a necessity; one cannot drink seawater. Thus, one of Eustace's significant offences is to sneak drinks of what truly becomes the water of life when the supply is rationed during a long passage between widely separated islands. Finding landfall at last, the selfish Eustace finds himself turned into a dragon; this time, even Lucy's magic cordial cannot
heal him. At this moment of despair, accompanied by repentance, Aslan un-dragons Eustace by means of water;

"I knew it was a well because you could see the water bubbling up from the bottom of it, and it was a lot bigger than most wells—like a big, round bath with marble steps going down into it ... (Lewis 1952: 88)

In fact this passage exactly describes the baptismal fonts of certain churches in Rome built after the legalisation of Christianity; this is the water of life.

Lucy too will have an adventure, as she visits the house of the Magician, where she will attempt to enhance her divinely given gifts as a seer by using a magic spell instead. The voyagers land upon the island of the Dufflepuds (a race of beings miraculously changed into monopods), and are served a banquet of "mushroom soup and boiled chicken and hot boiled ham and gooseberries, red currants, curds, cream, milk, and mead," (Lewis 1952: 121) a list of foods relished in the English countryside, but not, in post-war England, nearly so readily available. The meaning is simple and straightforward; this is good food, well-chosen.

However, during a meal served by the Magician himself, while Lucy is given "an omelette, piping hot, cold lamb and green peas, a strawberry ice, lemon-squash to drink ... and a cup of chocolate," (Lewis 1952: 136) we are told that "the Magician himself drank only wine and ate only bread." (Ibid.) This, in the context of the food eaten by Ransom as the Director of the Company at St. Anne's in That Hideous Strength, as well as by the Old King in The Princess and Curdie, causes us to ask if this Magician is not, in fact, a sort of priest-king, after the order of Melchizedek.

The most significant table in this novel, which presages its climax, is "a long table laid with a crimson cloth," (Lewis 1952: 161) "There were turkeys and goose and peacocks, there were bears' heads and sides of venison, there were pies shaped like ships in full sail or like dragons and elephants, there were ice puddings and bright lobsters and gleaming salmon, there were nuts and grapes, pineapples and peaches, pomegranates and melons and tomatoes," and "the smell of the fruit and the wine blew towards them like a promise of all happiness." (Ibid.)

Reepicheep, the valiant mouse, alone is bold enough to eat and drink at this idealized Medieval banquet:

"Sire," he said to Caspian, "Of your courtesy fill me my cup with wine from the flagon; it is too big for me to lift. I drink to the lady." (Lewis 1952: 169)

It is significant that of all the bounty available, Reepicheep selects only the wine, and that in order to engage in a courteous act. This lady is the Star's daughter, whom Caspian will later marry.

"Why is it called Aslan's Table?" Lucy asks, and receives the answer (she, unlike the various characters in the Arthurian cycle, knows that she should ask): the lady answers, "for those who come so far." (Lewis 1952: 169-170). The phrase "set here at his bidding" does encourage an Eucharistic interpretation, as does the statement that this food is "eaten, and renewed every day," (Ibid.) but again we have a suggestion of some other intention or at least some note of contrast between this banquet scene for exhausted travellers, and what Lucy, always the visionary, alone sees: "one bird fly to the old man with something in its beak that looked like a little fruit, unless it was a little live coal, which it might have been, for it was too bright to look at, and the bird laid it in the old man's mouth." (Lewis 1952: 173) There is a strong suggestion here of the saviour "having a live coal in his hand" who lays it upon the lips of the prophet in Isaiah 6:6.

Doris T. Myers says that "critics mistakenly consider the Narnian analog of communion to be the feast at Aslan's Table on Ramandu's Island. Despite the many details that suggest communion ... the mood is simply wrong." (Myers 1984: 153) Why? Because, she argues, Lewis talks about Holy Communion from his own experience as an Anglican: "The feelings aroused by the episode are quite different from the ones Anglicans associate with communion ... The discomfort of having to eat fancy, 'evening' food at breakfast, and the absence of Aslan himself from the meal ... suggest feelings quite opposed to the homely, almost routine attitude associated with communion." (Ibid.) There may be a way to reconcile this apparent conflict through a comparison of festival Eucharists such as Christmas and Easter, and early or daily services. I shall explore this solution in the conclusion of this paper, below.

In any event, the birds from the Sun consume the feast, leaving "the table picked clean and empty" (Lewis 1952: 174); the fruit is a "fire-berry from the valleys of the Sun" which makes the old man grow daily younger. It is, then, a fruit of life, like the apples which become important in the last two novels of this cycle.

After this encounter, the ship races Eastward, eventually reaching waters so "strong" that nobody will "need to eat anything now." (Lewis 1952: 193) The water, now "Sweet" and hence drinkable, is clearly the "water of life."

The book ends with the sight of "a Lamb," reminiscent of Jesus's resurrection appearance in John 21: "Then they noticed for the first time that there was a fire lit on the grass and fish roasting on it. They sat down and ate the fish, hungry now for the first time for many days. And it was the most delicious food they had ever tasted." (Lewis 1952: 208) Aside from the theme of miraculous fish, discussed above, and the presence of what was a very long-used symbol, the fish, as a figure for Christ, as well, of course, as the lamb as a symbol of the Lamb of God, again, Christ, there is here the essential requirement set forth by Doris T. Myers for a true Anglican communion: the presence of Je-
The theme of the water of life, emphasized in several places in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, recurs in *The Silver Chair* (1953), as Jill, also in Aslan’s country, feels an overwhelming thirst but dares not approach “the stream, bright as glass, running across the turf,” (Lewis 1953: 15) because Aslan, a great lion, is lying in front of it. This stream is almost certainly based upon the stream in *At the Back of the North Wind* by George MacDonald, which rung over the grass in the land at the back of the North Wind. Finally, told that “There is no other stream,” she drinks, and finds that “It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted.” (Lewis 1953: 17) The symbolism is of the stream that runs through Paradise, and the motif of water that flows over the grass is distinctive to MacDonald’s version, though he derived the stream itself, as he says, from *The Divine Comedy*. This stream is the water of life, the living water that Jesus promises in *John* 4:10-11 and that flows in Revelation 21:16 and 22:1.

The concept of the water of life plays a role in Holy Communion whenever wine is used. Eucharistic wine is customarily mixed with water, and hence the act of combining blessed water with wine before the Eucharistic formula, “This is my blood,” is pronounced over it. This practice derives from the ancient Mediterranean custom of mixing water with wine, but it is also based on biblical symbolism; when the Roman soldier thrust his spear into the side of Jesus, both water and blood came forth. (*John* 19:34) This motif is sometimes used to express the role of baptism (in water) as well as of Holy Communion (water and wine), but in both cases the Eucharist is implicit because in liturgical churches the Eucharist is available only to those who are baptized.

The concept of water as associated with the afterlife is presented again as a reversal when Jill is told the story of Prince Rilian’s mother’s death. The mother had been the Star’s daughter who married Prince Caspian: “Where a fountain flowed freshly out of the earth ... there they dismounted and ate and drank and were merry;” (Lewis 1953: 46) as she rests, she is stung to death by “a great serpent.” (Lewis 1953: 47)

A water-related food is introduced when Eustace and Jill eat eels in the house of Puddleglum, who lives in a marsh; the eels here are not symbols of disgust, because the eel, whether smoked or fresh, is regarded as a delicacy in Britain. “When the meal came it was delicious and the children had two large helpings each,” followed by “tea, in tins,” and, on the next day, by the party setting out with “a large bit of bacon ... the remains of the eels, [and] some biscuit,” (Lewis 1953: 64) reiterating Lewis’s long theme of food associated with travel, indeed, as most of these sequences eventuate, of pilgrimage.

The main explicit vegetarians in the Narnian Chronicles are Eustace’s parents, whose other beliefs involve the wearing of certain prescribed underwear, but the complex issue of humans eating the Body of Christ, is raised as the children visit Harfang, the Castle of the Giants. Here, they are welcomed as guests, as Jill announces her party’s arrival: “The Lady of the Green Kirtle ... has sent us two Southern Children and this Marsh-Wiggle ... to your Autumn feast.” (Lewis 1953: 88)

Next day, the children discover the truth; first, they learn that they are being fed upon something more than venison: “So we’ve been eating a Talking Stag.” (Lewis 1953: 109) On realizing this, they “felt as you would feel if you found you had eaten a baby.” (Ibid.) Soon after, they find “an open book.” (Lewis 1953: 111) This proves to be a “cookery book,” (Lewis 1953: 112) and it contains recipes for preparing two foods. The first is MAN. This elegant little biped has long been valued as a delicacy. It forms a traditional part of the Autumn Feast, and is served between the fish and the joint. Each Man -- (Ibid.)

The next entry is a recipe for “MARSH-WIGGLE.” (Ibid.) This discovery is followed by the escape of the prospective entrées.

Their escape takes them to Underland, where they discover Prince Rilian in captivity. Here, too, diet plays a role: “When the meal (which was pigeon pie, cold ham, salad, and cakes) was brought,” (Lewis 1953: 133) the prince tells them that he suffers daily periods of delusion during which he must be bound to a silver chair for his own safety. Actually he is deluded all the time except for these periods. His false revelations are punctuated by references to food, as he addresses each of his guests (rescuers) in turn: “Honest Frog-foot, your cup is empty. Suffer me to refill it;” and “Sir, be pleased to take another breast of pigeon, I entreat you,” and finally, “Little lady, eat one of these honey cakes, which are brought for me from some barbarous land in the far south of the world.” (Lewis 1953: 133-134) The association of the empty cup with the personage whose native habitat is a marsh; of the pigeon, a form of game, with the boy, whose parents are vegetarians, and the association of the honey cakes, symbolic of Aphrodite, with the girl, are not perhaps, entirely accidental.

This poisonous hospitality comes to an end as Rilian is bound in the Silver Chair; he knows himself, and begs to be released. Because he invokes the Name of Aslan, he is freed, because Aslan has decreed that anyone asking for anything in his name is to be aided. The Queen of Underland proves to be that very serpent who has killed Prince Rilian’s mother and has made him her captive and dupe. In a reversal of all these terrible ironies, the Name of Aslan sets him free. Managing to kill the Green Witch in her serpent form (a different matter, one assumes, from killing
In one wonderful moment, the sad gnomes who have also been captives there, though, for them, they have been forced to go upwards to their slavery, unlike the Prince, who had been forced to go downwards, make their escape too, leaping joyously down into the Land of Bism ("abyss") where Golg, a gnome, tells the children and the Marshwiggle that "There I'll pick you bunches of rubies that you can eat and squeeze you a cup full of diamond juice." (Lewis 1953: 176-177) Bism is not Hell, in an endearing bit of directional correctness.

At last the three travellers emerge from the Narnian underworld into the delights of a dance performed by Narnians with snowballs— "The Great Snow Dance." Afterwards they enjoy a supper of "sausages ... real meaty, spiccy ones, fat and burst and just the tiniest bit burnt," made, one presumes, from non-talking pigs. "And great mugs of frothy chocolate, and roast potatoes and roast chestnuts, and baked apples with raisins stuck in where the cores had been, and ices just to freshen you up." (Lewis 1953: 195-196) Next day they dine on "scrambled eggs and toast," (Lewis 1953: 197) and learn that a Centaur (who as half human and half horse has a more complex set of needs than most) dines on "porridge and pavenders and kidneys and bacon and omelette and cold ham and toast and marrow and coffee and beer" as well as "grazing for an hour or so and finishing up with a hot mash, some oats and a bag of sugar." (Lewis 1953: 198) The sense of food as being specific, appropriate, and licit, in accordance with a rule of behaviour, is very strongly present in this novel, which deals with reversals of identity and position as a major theme.

The Horse and His Boy (1954), which follows the Caspian-related sequence, turns the narrative back to the period of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, describing events which follow Aslan's resurrection. Escaping from captivity with the horse Bree as his companion, Shasta breakfasts upon "a meat pasty, ... a lump of dried figs and another lump of green cheese [and] a little flask of wine." (Lewis 1954: 16) When he first encounters Narnians, in the great city of the Calormenes, "he was given iced sherbet in a golden cup to drink" (Lewis 1954: 51) by Tumnus, who reappears in the novel and continues his role as an amiable host.

The main symbolism of food in this novel concerns discernment of the customary diet. Most of the Calormene foods resemble Near Eastern diet, and we meet many well-remembered Narnian repasts. The major theme is one of contrast, not between evil and good, but between exotic and familiar, at least from the British point of view. Of course British cuisine included food from throughout the British Empire, not only in Lewis's Edwardian childhood, but even today, when it is if anything more varied. The contrast is embodied in Calormene food, the food of a culture that is to be distinguished from the food of Narnia, which Lewis always expressed in terms of his personal tastes.

Edward W. Said describes, in his significant study, Orientalism, the breadth of the Western concept of the so-called Orient as "a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Asshur, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Nineveh, Prester John, ... monsters, devils, heroes, terrors, pleasures, desires," and lists the writers "between the middle ages and the eighteenth century" who drew upon these themes: "Ariosto, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and the authors of the Chanson de Roland and the Poema del Cid." (Said 1978 [1994]: 63) Lewis sets the Calormene world in the South of his imaginary world, with Narnia in the North, but the East/West contrasts of Said, in terms of its allusions and its literary sources, are clearly those upon which Lewis drew.

We read about a Calormene meal that contained "lobsters, and salad, and snipe stuffed with almonds and trifles, and a complicated dish made of chicken-livers and rice and nuts, and ... cool melons and gooseberry fools and mulberry fools ... [and] the sort of wine that is called 'white' though it is really yellow." (Lewis 1954: 61) The operative word here is "complicated," as we have seen, simple, homely food is what Lewis prefers and values. It may even be that we should read, for the word "complicated," the word "worldly," and for the word "simple," the word "monastic." Exemplifying Calormene's lure, Shasta, while escaping from Tashbaan, the great city of the Calormenes, climbs a garden wall and steals "three oranges, a melon, a fig or two, and a pomegranate." (Lewis 1954: 75)

Finally and safely escaped to Narnia (across the great desert), Shasta and his companion Aravis, and their associated horses, meet the Hermit of the Southern Marsh, and Aravis is given "goat's milk." (Lewis 1954: 124) Shasta, having left her to safety and healing, presses on, encountering Aslan on his way. Then, fully in Narnia, he meets the native Narnians, a stag, a rabbit, and a Dwarf, who feed him, "and immediately, mixed with a sizzling sound, there came to Shasta a simply delightful smell. It was one he had never smelled in his life before, but I hope you have. It was, in fact, the smell of bacon and eggs and mushrooms all frying in a pan," (Lewis 1954: 146) Lewis rhapsodizes, combining the elements of "simple" and "delightful" in a perfect encapsulation of my thesis. Furthermore, "here's porridge—and here's a jug of cream—and here's a spoon," and finally, "the coffee pot and the hot milk and the toast." (Ibid.) In other words, food like the food at home, the food of one's happiest memories of childhood. Narnia, after all, is Lewis's picture of Paradise.

This theme becomes explicit in The Magician's Nephew, (1955) when the apple, the symbol, despite the fact that it
does not appear in the Genesis depiction of Paradise. Polly and Digory, who like Lewis are children of Edwardian England, have repaired to "the cave," their private hidey-hole in the attic, for "a few apples" and "a quiet bottle of ginger beer." (Lewis 1955: 6) In extreme contrast to this, Uncle Andrew "grasped in his wardrobe for a bottle and a wine-glass" and poured himself "some nasty, grown-up drink" which is, obviously, not wine. (Lewis 1955: 66)

In relation to this contrast between youth and being "grown-up," "A lady called with some grapes for Digory's mother," but finds the situation too dire for earthly comfort; "I am afraid it would need fruit from the land of youth to help her now." The central mechanism of the plot is set in place with this sentence; Digory will, at the climax of the novel, bring back fruit from the land of youth, Narnia, absolutely new-made, in the first hours of its creation.

Uncle Andrew, on the other hand, asks for "a second glass of brandy." (Lewis 1955: 79) As we have seen, asking for a second helping of a specific pleasure or gift is a sign of spiritual imperfection or weakness in Lewis's symbolic system.

After the Creation of Narnia by Aslan, Digory asks the divine Lion, "please will you give me some magic fruit of this country to make Mother well?" (Lewis 1955: 120) Aslan sends him to "the Western wild" and bids him to "Pluck an apple from that tree and bring it to me." The apple is so important to the theme of The Magician's Nephew that only one other food makes a significant, if brief, appearance: "toffees," which form a sort of waybread or manna for the children as they make the trip to the West; after its remains are thrown away, it is found growing, by the divine energy of the creation situation, into a tree from the supernaturally fertile earth, giving forth toffee-like fruits, a delicate example of Lewis's concept of miracle.

Finally, in the central scene of the novel, Digory sees a tree full of "great silver apples." (Lewis 1955: 141) "'Take of my fruit for others,' said Digory to himself. 'Well, that's what I'm going to do. It means I mustn't eat any myself, I suppose.'" (Lewis 1955: 141) Before discussing the outcome of this event, I will explore the meaning of the apple in this context. The word "apple" is very obviously based on the word actually used in the King James Bible as well as in the biblical tradition that the fruit of Eden was an apple. (Root 1980: 7-8) Its cultivation was known from Anatolia to Egypt, Greece, Etruria, and Rome between 6500 BC and AD 23-24. In Greek mythology we read of the "golden apples of the Hesperides ... given to Hera as a wedding present when she married Zeus;" (Root 1980: 9) another apple, the apple of discord, caused the Trojan War when Paris judged between the three goddesses and chose Aphrodite; at least, "apple" is the word used in European tradition. (Root 1980: 10) Both these stories associate the apple with loss and probably contributed to the extrabiblical tradition that the fruit of Eden was an apple.

In The Magician's Nephew, however, the apple is good (when used with permission), especially for healing; this aspect of apple tradition derives, most directly for Lewis, perhaps, from the story of Avalon in Le Morte D'Arthur, the Island of Apples, to which King Arthur was taken, by barge, after having returned his sword Excalibur to the water: "even fast by the bank hove a little barge with many fair ladies in it." (Malory 1969: 517 [Book XXI, Chapter 5]) These ladies take the King away "into the Vale of Avalon to heal me of my grievous wound," says Arthur. According to many interpreters, the word "Avalon" or "Avalon" means "Isle of apples."

According to The Arthurian Encyclopedia, Geoffrey of Monmouth's "apple' etymology is probably right, the apple being paradisal or magical fruit like those of the Hesperides, or of Celtic otherworld regions portrayed elsewhere." (Lacy 1986: 33) The point is that whatever the actual historical documents may or may not say, the apple in The Magician's Nephew carries these symbolic references.

When Satan, in Milton's Paradise Lost, makes his long flight to Eden— "That spot to which I point is Paradise," Phyllis Tribble says of this scene: "The serpent and the woman discuss theology." (Tribble 1978: 109) Unfortunately Eve loses the argument, accepts the serpent's interpretation, and indeed gains the promised knowledge of good and evil, along with her husband Adam; clearly, arguing about theology is not always a good thing.

The Genesis narrative is certainly one of the intended allusions in The Magician's Nephew, where Digory has already broken a rule by ringing the bell in the land of Cham and hence awakened the Witch Jadis, who has followed the children into Narnia. We must, in asking what Lewis actually does with this symbolic structure, consider the full resonance and range of "apple" (not simply and biblically, "fruit") as a concept, because this range is implicit in the word "apple" and is, as I think, fully invoked.

Waverly Root says that the apple is a member of Rosaceae, "which includes the queen of all flowers, the rose, and the king of all fruits, the apple." (Root 1980: 7) This is, clearly, the language Lewis is speaking in The Magician's Nephew. Many, many fruits have been called apples, from the akee to the tomato; apples are said to have originated in southeastern Europe or southwestern Asia; they were already in use in Europe (Switzerland) during the Neolithic. As a tree acclimatized to winter, the apple is widely adaptable. (Root 1980: 7-8) Its cultivation was known from Anatolia to Egypt, Greece, Etruria, and Rome between 6500 BC and AD 23-24. In Greek mythology we read of the "golden apples of the Hesperides ... given to Hera as a wedding present when she married Zeus;" (Root 1980: 9) another apple, the apple of discord, caused the Trojan War when Paris judged between the three goddesses and chose Aphrodite; at least, "apple" is the word used in European tradition. (Root 1980: 10) Both these stories associate the apple with loss and probably contributed to the extrabiblical tradition that the fruit of Eden was an apple.

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When Satan, in Milton's Paradise Lost, makes his long flight to Eden— "That spot to which I point is Paradise,"
Perhaps Lewis’s intentions to associate the apples of Narnia with goodness are expressed by calling them “great silver apples” instead of golden apples. All this is implicit as, fulfilling the command of Aslan, Digory “picked an apple, and put it in the breast pocket of his Norfolk jacket. But he couldn’t help looking at it and smelling it ...” (Lewis 1955: 141-142)

Upon inhaling its fragrance, “a terrible thirst and hunger came over him,” (Lewis 1955: 142) recalling Jill’s thirst in The Silver Chair. Then he sees the witch, who, like Milton’s Satan, is an unwanted guest in his garden: “She was just throwing away the core of an apple which she had eaten. The juice was darker than you would expect and had made a horrid stain around her mouth.” (Ibid.) Defiantly, she tells Digory that “It is the apple of youth, the apple of life,” (Lewis 1955: 144) and commands that he use his “magic” to return to earth to give it to his Mother immediately. She then suggests they leave his companion Polly behind into the bargain. Aided by Polly, he escapes, resisting the temptation as he had not been able to do in Charn.

Returning to Aslan, he says, “I’ve brought you the apple you wanted, sir.” (Lewis 1955: 148) “Well done”; said Aslan,” giving him the reply the Master gave in the Parable of the Servants. (Matthew 25:21; Luke 19:17) Then, because this very young servant has “hungered and thirsted and wept” for it, as Jesus hungered in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2; Luke 24:2), cried from the cross, “I thirst,” (John 19:28) and wept over the death of Lazarus (John 11:35), Digory is told to “Sow the seed of the Tree that is to be the protector of Narnia;” (Lewis 1955: 149) he obeys and the tree soon springs up.

At last, Aslan tells him “Go, Pluck an apple from the Tree,” and sends him home to his dying mother:

The brightness of the Apple threw strange lights on the ceiling ... And the smell of the Apple of Youth was as if there was a window in that room that opened on Heaven.” (Lewis 1955: 162)

Taking this luminous and fragrant “Apple” in his hand, “He peeled it and cut it up and gave it to her piece by piece.” (Ibid.) And she is healed.

Later, he buries “the core of the Apple in the back garden,” (Lewis 1955: 162) where it grows and bears “apples more beautiful than any others in England, though not fully magical.” (Lewis 1955: 166) The wood of this tree is later used to make the wardrobe through which the Pevensie children first enter Narnia in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. This motif reminds one that Lewis and his brother Warren solemnly buried their childhood toys in the backyard of their Belfast home after their father’s death; perhaps these beloved items, too, came up again in Aslan’s country.

What has the life-giving Apple of Narnia to do with the Eucharist? It is the Narnian equivalent of that salvational food, which gives life abundant and everlasting, a substance that is both food (apples eaten whole, or cut up piece by piece) and drink (the juice of the apple, whether fresh or fermented). It is the food of knowledge which, wrongly taken, brings death, but rightly taken brings forth wisdom and life. Who is known in this food? Aslan/Christ, the divine Head of the Seder who feeds every comer to His table as well as every traveller through the wilderness; the divine Gardener, who greets Mary of Magdala after He has arisen from the dead; the One whose body and blood are the food and drink of Life.

A very different mood pertains in The Last Battle (1956), as the ape, Shift, who has pulled a lionskin from Caldron Pool, sends the donkey Puzzle to get “oranges and bananas.” (Lewis 1956: 7) reminding one of the oranges Shasta stole from a garden in Tashbaan, as well as the usual tastes of our anthropoid relatives. Meanwhile, the last king of Narnia orders “a bowl of wine” from the Centaur Roonwit, (Lewis 1956: 14) suggesting—at the very least—a more kingly form of nourishment. Then, after the King is captured, the Mice bring him “a little wooden cup,” again, of wine. (Lewis 1956: 36) He is also provided with cheese, oatcakes, and fresh butter, all proper Narnian food, as we have already seen. While he waits, still bound but now refreshed, the “Friends of Narnia”— at home on Earth— have “just finished their meal,” which has included wine. (Lewis 1956: 42) The reiteration of “wine” in the context of Naria’s King and his Kingdom’s friends suggests the binding together of the Narnian and Earthly communities in one communion.

The theme of food for travel also reappears, as the King, having called upon the Friends of Narnia, finds them coming from England to Narnia. Eustace Scrubb brings with him “two hard-boiled egg sandwiches, and two cheese sandwiches and two with some kind of paste in them.” (Lewis 1956: 47) Assembled, the rescuers share “hard biscuit” (like the food eaten on a ship, as in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader) which they eat after boiling it into “a kind of porridge.” (Lewis 1956: 53) Later, having been rescued by these Friends, the King finds himself among the Dwarfs, who serve him “a capital stew,” (Lewis 1956: 74) presumably containing the meat of a non-talking form of game.

There is war in Narnia, and the last King of Narnia, along with many of his subjects and the Friends, at last enters a stable set up for the false Aslan concocted by the Ape Shift. Like the stable of Bethlehem, this turns out to be set on the outskirts of Heaven, and as the children look about,
they see that “Not far away from them rose a grove of
trees, thickly leaved, but under every leaf there peeped out
the gold or faint yellow or purple or glowing red of fruits
such as no one has seen in our world.” (Lewis 1956: 128) In
Narnia, only one such tree is documented, but in Heaven,
yy they grow in groves, in forests, perhaps in galaxies.

Aslan, coming to rescue the last inhabitants of Narnia,
creates a feast for the Dwarfs: “pies and tongues and pi­
gewes and trifle and ice,” like the food on Aslan’s table,
suggesting that there need be no more sojourning in the
wilderness, “... a goblet of good wine,” (Lewis 1956: 138)
having saved the best wine until now. But these un­
grateful guests think they are eating “hay,” “old turnip,”
and “raw cabbage leaf,” and are drinking “dirty water.”
(Lewis 1956: 139) As with the meal first mentioned in Out
of the Silent Planet, to them this good food is garbage. The
motif itself has been borrowed by Lewis from George Mac­
Donald’s masterpiece, The Princess and the Goblin, where
Curdie cannot see Irene’s divine Grandmother, and in­
stead sees only “musty straw, and a withered apple, and a
ray of sunlight coming through a hole in the middle of the
roof.” (MacDonald 1872 [1990])

Finally, truly in Heaven, of which Narnia proves to be,
like Earth, the outskirts, the children see a tree “whose
leaves looked like silver and their fruit like gold.” (Lewis
1956: 166) here, surely, is that tree we have already met in
The Magician’s Nephew, the tree of which Aslan may truly
say, “I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of
the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7)

HONEY CAKES AND RED WINE
Lewis’s final fantasy novel, Till We Have Faces (1956),
stands by itself. It contains explicit references to ritual sac­
rifice and ritual meals, in a plot set in a minor kingdom in
ancient times— Gnome, where the goddess Ungit is wor­
shiped.7 The contrast between bread and wine and other
foods is set forth by Batta, the nurse of the heroine and fu­
ture Queen of Glome, Orual: “You’ll have hard cheese in­
stead of honey cakes then and skim milk instead of red
wine,” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 5) she says, in anticipation of
the King’s remarriage.

In describing the worship of Ungit, Orual mentions
“pigeon’s blood ... sacrificed men .... burnt fat ... wine and
stale incense” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 11) in a passage which
includes allusions to the worship of Canaan, of the Temple
of Israel, and, with its wine and talk of sacrifice, includes
prefigurations of Christian worship. “Honey cakes,” ap­
propriately for a Eucharistic motif, as offerings, reappear
(Lewis 1956 [1957]: 33) as they will throughout the novel;
the use of honey in what is otherwise a cake made of water
and flour, reminds us that Ungit is a goddess like Apher­
dote, to whom honey was sacred. Wine, too, recurs, but of­
ten only as it must in a novel set east of the Mediterranea­
nal. Orual finds her father, the King of Glome, “holding a cup
of wine to my lips,” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 57) after he has
beaten her into unconsciousness. In this context, a “beef­
steak” is recommended “for your face” (Lewis 1956 [1957]:
62) Even so, animal flesh is also explicitly sacrificed. Items
mentioned as “food for the gods,” prove to be “slaugh­
tered offerings.” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 79)

When, at the climax of the book, Orual finds her sister
Psyche, who has been lost through sacrifice, Psyche (hav­
ing survived the process) gives Orual “the little cool, dark
berries of the Mountain, in a green leaf,” (Lewis 1956
[1957]: 104) as if they were noble and lordly food; at least,
this is what Orual says; she is writing the book and records
events from her own perspective. Again, with the words,
“After the banquet, the wine,” Psyche gives Orual water to
drink, asking afterwards, “Have you ever tasted a nobler
wine?” (Ibid.) Orual, of course, sees only water in her cup.
Of all the Eucharistic motifs in all the novels, this may be
the most potent and most poignant, when an unbeliever
sees only “a little round, thin, cold, tasteless wafer” (Lewis
1961: 51) with a sip of watered wine of some lesser vintage,
and does not recognize in them the Body and Blood of
Christ. “You mean you saw no cup?” Psyche asks,
Curdie in The Princess and the Goblin, and the dwarfs in The
Last Battle, Orual refuses to be taken in.

As the novel draws to its close, the Eucharistic elements
become more and more explicit and intense. A contrast is
drawn between revisionist efforts to make the Glomish
state religion accord with “one of those small peaceful
gods who are content with flowers and fruit for sacrifice”
(Lewis 1956 [1957]: 240) in contrast to the “pouring of wine
and pouring of blood” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 269) to Ungit,
who, as a black stone, has “a face such as you might see in a
loaf” (Lewis 1956 [1957]: 270)— a phrase used specifically,
I think, to remind the reader of bread.

Finally, in what, after the clearly expressed imagery of
The Magician’s Nephew, may be the most resonant image in
the whole of Till We Have Faces, Orual cries out: “to expect
further utterance [from the gods] is like asking for an apple
from a tree that fruited the day the world was made.”
(Lewis 1956 [1957]: 280) With this profound symbol, which
both begins and ends the Bible, and which Lewis has
placed in the last two books of the Narnian Chronicles, de­
scribing both the beginning (The Magician’s Nephew) and
the end (The Last Battle) of Narnia, we come to the heart of
the matter. We can, Lewis is saying, ask for that apple; and
the answer will be “yes”. It is the apple both of Knowledge
and of Life, a food which, like the Holy Communion ele­
ments of bread and wine, will give, both physically and
supernaturally, symbolically and in all reality, life abun­
dant and life everlasting. Thus, at the very least, is what
Lewis is trying to tell us.

Whether or not this is true—and we are free to see the
berries instead of bread, and springwater instead of wine
(or bread instead of God’s Body and wine instead of God’s
Blood)— this is what Lewis not only believed and taught,
but, throughout his life after his return to Christianity,
lived. If what he says in his books is true, he is living it still.
CONCLUSION

The symbolic structure of Eucharistic symbolism, and the symbolism of food and drink, and of eating and drinking derived from it, as embedded in all the eleven fantasy novels of C.S. Lewis can be categorized in the following way.

There are two interlocking patterns. One is the symbol of the fruit of the tree of the beginning (Genesis) and the end (Revelation) of creation, which bracket the Bible. The other is the Eucharistic pattern, which is presented in four forms: 1) food eaten on the way, which may be called the Exodus situation; 2) food eaten while waiting, which may be called the Melchizedek situation; 3) food eaten in celebration, reiterating the Christmas and Easter cycles reflected in the weekly Sunday celebrations, which may be called the Aslan’s Table situation; and 4) food eaten in order to meet Jesus, found in all of the above Eucharistic paradigms, which may be called the Breakfast of the Lamb situation.

All six of these patterns— the bracketing fruit trees of Genesis and Revelation, and the four aspects of the Eucharist symbolically suggested in the Narnian Chronicles, are interwoven in various ways in the full sequence of the eleven novels, as follows:

I. The Food of the Beginning: the Genesis situation

The two great trees of Eden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, described in Genesis, are echoed in the great tree of silver apples at the centre of the mountaintop garden which grows in the newly created Narnia. Such a tree is always the same tree, whether at beginning or end (Eden is Paradise, and Paradise is Heaven) because the first and last things occur outside of time. This is why the edenic apple of Narnia is able to heal Digory’s dying mother as well as grow into a tree which will be present after the end of Narnia, where it reappears in Aslan’s Country.

II. The Food of the End: the Revelation situation

In The Last Battle, there is “a smooth green hill” surmounted by green walls; “above the wall rose the branches of trees, whose leaves were like silver and their fruits like gold.” (Lewis 1956: 166) This phrase closely resembles the account in Revelation of the tree of life, “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations.” (Revelation 22:2) As noted above, Orual, in the final novel, Till We Have Faces, refers to this tree, which is a tree not only of beginning and end, but of eternity.

III. The Exodus situation

The four Eucharistic situations contained within the bracketing situation created by the great symbolic apple trees all refer to food. In the Exodus situation, the symbolism is that of travel, of the unleavened bread prepared in haste as the Exodus begins; of the manna eaten in the wilderness; of the Seder which celebrates these events, of the Last Supper where Jesus breaks the bread and says, “This is my body,” and lifts the cup and says, “This is my blood.” The many meals eaten in haste in the Ransom trilogy embody this theme; eating and drinking in a situation of interplanetary travel in Out of the Silent Planet, the marvelous food which nourishes and revives Ransom in Perelandra, and the many picnics, fortuitous and fortunate (along with their diabolical opposites) in That Hideous Strength. Again, as the Narnian Chronicles open, with, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and many times through the seven novels of the series, a situation of food taken for a journey arises, as with Mrs. Beaver’s quick preparations, or of food miraculously provided, as in the perfect high tea given by Father Christmas. As God provides manna in the wilderness, so Bacchus provides wine in Narnia in Prince Caspian; this is the image of human life, as a journey from birth to death, and to what may lie beyond.

Finally, in Till We Have Faces, the central crisis of the novel occurs when Psyche offers her sister Orual the hospitality of food and drink— bread and wine— and Orual rejects it as berries and springwater. Perhaps the most touching aspect of this crucial moment is that, after all, fresh berries and pure water are themselves profound miracles; as Lewis says, all ground is holy, and every bush a burning bush.

IV. The Melchizedek Situation

Food eaten while waiting presents the point of view of the stationary person, suggesting the stability of position promised in the vows of the various Benedictine orders, and reflected in the situation of the anchorite, such as Julian of Norwich, whose cell was enclosed in the walls of a church. “Melchizedek, King of Salem,” we read in Genesis 14:18, “brought forth bread and wine” as Abram (not yet Abraham) passed through his country while returning from battle. Lewis writes in That Hideous Strength, that Ransom, after having been wounded in battle against the Un-man in Perelandra, eats only bread and wine; and of the Magician in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader who “drank only wine and ate only bread.” (Lewis 1952: 36) These epermed motifs of bread and wine as the sacred food of the solitary, or indeed, of the Company whose leader dines alone like the King in Curdie, is probably associated, in Lewis’s personal life, with the Eucharist as a “private communion,” that is, communion given to an isolated person, often in a case of injury or illness. In a passage from one of his letters which has, I think, sometimes been misunderstood, he wrote, “yes, private communions (I shared many during Joy’s last days) are extraordinarily moving. I am in danger of preferring them to those in church.” (Lewis 1967: 112)

The last sentence in that comment has suggested to some that Lewis disliked church communion because he disliked hymns, or for some other personal reason, but in this letter he writes as one who is himself an invalid, to a frequently invalided correspondent, about his invalided wife. Private communion is taken to the homes or hospitals where the communicated person is confined. It is cer-
tarily true that the experience of private communion is extraordinarily powerful, as the elements come directly into one's hospital room or home, like the descending planetary powers in That Hideous Strength, but most of those who have had this experience would gladly return to church for communion as soon as possible afterwards.

V. Aslan's Table; the Festival situation

All three categories of Lewis's fantasy novels—trilogy, chronicles, and Till We Have Faces, contain ceremonial banquets where the food is elaborate and the manners are formal. Although the Last Supper, and the Seder upon which it is modelled, centre upon the Bread and the Wine, there is more to the Seder than matzoh and bitter herbs and wine; a splendid array of additional dishes, all ritually free of leaven, are offered and enjoyed. The Eucharist, on this model, is not always simple and monastic. Indeed, the Eucharist is intended to assuage, Lewis seems to suggest in Perelandra, "a new kind of hunger and thirst," and to give "a totally new genus of pleasures." And as the trilogy ends, a moment of supreme satisfaction is expressed, just before Ransom's return to Perelandra, when "Dinner was over at St. Anne's." (Lewis 1945 [1946]: 439) In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Father Christmas presents a Christmas feast to the members of the Merry Party. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Aslan's table suggests an elaborate Easter feast. During the yearly round of Festival communions there are two that, in actual practice, are central focii: Christmas and Easter, which celebrate respectively the birth of Christ and His Resurrection.

These examples of the banquet or festival situation, the form of elaborate ceremony associated with Aslan's Table, occurs throughout the Caspian cycle of the Narnian chronicles. In Prince Caspian, we read of "wheaten cakes," "nectarines, pomegranates, pears, grapes, strawberries, raspberries," fare that accords with the Medieval custom of "a last course of fruit ... and other small delicacies, [which] ... would appear to have been part of the normal routine." (Hiett and Butler 1976: xi-xii) In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader we encounter Aslan's Table itself: "a long table laid with a crimson cloth," (Lewis 1952: 161) which seems to offer "a promise of all happiness," (Ibid.) of the sort experienced by "courtly folk" in the middle ages, who enjoyed "a fortnight of intermittent feasting, and to enjoy the colourful, scented delights of [courtly] ... cuisine," during the Christmas season. (Black 1992: 112) The Silver Chair offers two dystopic and ironic feasts, the "autumn feast" where the giants had expected to offer children and marshwiggle as part of the repast, and the food served by Rilian while suffering his magically-imposed delusions. But it also contains the delightful and true feast of the land of Bism, whose blameless gnomes eat rubies and drink diamonds.

In medieval thought, "supernatural food," as Aslan's Table must be said to be, "good is associated with divine eating. God sups with the righteous, and miraculously feeds the devoted. [What happens] ... in the Christian sacrament allows the consuming of Godliness. The altar—mensa domini—the Lord's Table—is Table for God's feast," Madeleine P. Cosman says. (Cosman 1976: 113) "Medieval food and ceremony could be most artful expressions of God's plenty," she adds, "because food potentially was expression of a human being's ... most holy nature." (Cosman 1976: 123) Those who have enjoyed the elaborate ceremonialism of the Anglican festival Eucharist associated with Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, will recognize the combination of celebration and fulfillment in these joyous banquets of the spirit, these festive participations in the bounty of Aslan's Table.

VI. The Breakfast of the Lamb: The Encounter situation

Perhaps the most poignant Eucharistic reference of all is the Breakfast of the Lamb, with its imagery of the Resurrection appearance of Jesus by the shores of Galilee, as mentioned in John 21:13, with its hint of the Loaves and Fishes: "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise."

In the first half of the church year, which begins in early December with Advent, and continues through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, to Easter, concluding in Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the mood alternates between solemn and joyous. During an equally long sequence from Trinity Sunday to the Sunday Next Before Advent (Christ the King), six months of consistent encounter with Jesus occur, containing neither the highs nor lows of the first half, but instead a simple, regular, supportive, nourishing encounter. For this half of the year, the Breakfast of the Lamb, based on the post-resurrection encounter with the risen Christ, who tells Peter to "Feed my sheep," a form of marching orders like the ones Aslan is inclined to give to the children and other characters he encounters, is an exact image.

In the various anti-communions of the eleven novels, nobody truly meets, nobody celebrates, nobody communicates, nobody gives, and nobody receives; nobody heals, nobody waits in patience, nobody is recognized, nobody obeys, nobody worships, nobody provides, and nobody shares. In the many symbolic Eucharists of Lewis's fantasies, from first to last, in traveling, in waiting, in celebrating, and in meeting, the relationship of Creator and created is made manifest, again, and again, and again, as it will be, according to Matthew 27:20, and as C.S. Lewis believed, even unto the end of the world.

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Notes
3. I have discussed the symbolism of this tea in "The Artist's Statement on This Month's Cover," The Lamp-Post (December 1994); Vol. 18, No. 4.


5. I have discussed this stream in my essay "'Half Like a Serpent'; The Green Witch in The Silver Chair," (Patterson 1984: 46).

6. In point of fact, the word "fruit" first appears in Genesis 1:11—"and God said, Let the earth bring forth...the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind." The Tanakh renders this as "fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it."


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13. The MereLewis List archive may be accessed on-line at http://members.aol.com/dwalmheim/merelewism.htm. In this same post, Gresham goes on to express his opinion that "collaboration" is, in his opinion, too strong a word. He readily affirms that his mother was very involved in all stages of the project.
16. Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper (C. S. Lewis: A Biography) are among those scholars who believe that working with Joy Davidman on Smoke on the Mountain served an impetus for Lewis's work on the Psalms.