

The Word Made Flesh: Encountering Christ in Bread and Wine
Lecture 2, Wednesday, December 12, 2018, St. James Cathedral, Toronto

“This Heavenly Banquet”

Richard Hooker (1554–1600) on the Eucharist as Participation in Christ

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1. Summary of Hooker’s Career

- 1554 Born near Exeter.
- 1577 Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.
- 1579 Deputy Professor of Hebrew.
- 1584 Marries Joan Churchman. Parish priest at Drayton Beauchamp, Buckinghamshire.
- 1585 Master of the Temple, London.
- 1591 Rector of Boscombe, Wiltshire.
- 1593 Publishes Books 1–4 of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.
- 1595 Rector of Bishopsbourne, Kent (near Canterbury).
- 1597 Publishes Book 5 of the *Laws* (devoted to a defence of the Book of Common Prayer).
- 1600 Dies aged 46. Fair copies of Books 6–8 of the *Laws* stolen and lost or destroyed.
- 1648 Books 6 (incomplete) and 8 of the *Laws* posthumously published from rough drafts.
- 1662 Book 7 of the *Laws* posthumously published.

2. A friend testifies to Hooker’s character after his death

What admirable height of learning and depth of judgment dwelt in the lowly mind of this truly humble man, great in all wise men’s eyes except his own; with what gravity and majesty of speech his tongue and pen uttered heavenly mysteries; whose eyes, in the humility of his heart, were always cast down to the ground: how all things that proceeded from him were breathed as from the spirit of love; as if he, like the bird of the Holy Ghost, the Dove, had wanted gall: let

those that knew him not in his person, judge by these living images of his soul, his writings.

John Spenser (1559–1614), quoted in Izaak Walton, *The Life of Mr. Richard Hooker* (1665), ed. John Keble, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, 7th ed., rev. R. W. Church and F. Paget, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 1:66.

3. The Puritan *Admonition to Parliament* (1571)

We must nedes say as foloweth, that this boke is an unperfected booke, culled & picked out of that popishe dunghil, the Masse booke full of all abhominations.

Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt, ed. W. H. Frere and C. E. Douglas, Church Historical Society 72 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1907), 1–55, at 21.

4. Richard Hooker: Defender of BCP against Puritan Attack

Though for no other cause, yet for this; that posterity may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream, there shall be for men's information extant thus much concerning the present state of the Church of God established amongst us, and their careful endeavour which would have upheld the same. (*Laws* pref.1.1)

5. Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605) praises Book 1 of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*

There is no learning that this man hath not searcht into; nothing too hard for his understanding: this man indeed deserves the name of an author; his books will get reverence by age, for there is in them such seeds of eternity, that if the rest be like this, they shall last till the last fire shall consume all learning.

Walton, *Life of Hooker*, ed. Keble, 1:71

6. A contemporary historian on Hooker's defence of Anglicanism

One feels that if the parliamentary legislation of 1559 had laid down that English clergy were to preach standing on their heads, then Hooker would have found a theological reason for justifying it.

Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 507

7. The Insufficiency of Scripture as the only "Law"

Although the Scripture of God ... be stored with infinite variety of matter in all kinds, although it abound with all sorts of laws, yet the principal intent of Scripture is to deliver the laws of duties supernatural. ... The main drift of the whole New Testament is that which St. John setteth down as the purpose of his own history; "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God, and that in believing ye might have life through his name." The drift of the Old that which the Apostle mentioneth to Timothy, "The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation." So that the general end both of Old and New is one. ... To measure by any one kind of law all the actions of men were to confound the admirable order, wherein God hath disposed all laws, each as in nature, so in degree, distinct from other. (*Laws* 1.14.1, 4, 1.16.7; ed. Keble, 1:267, 270, 285)

8. Puritan objections to the Prayer Book Holy Communion

- a) The words of administration are spoken repeatedly to individuals (“given for *thee*”), whereas Christ spoke in the plural to all the disciples at once (“drink *ye* all of this”). A sermon repeated to each hearer would be ridiculous.
- b) Kneeling to receive communion is superstitious. It would be more agreeable to sit, as the disciples did at the Last Supper.
- c) Communicants are not examined individually to make sure that they are approaching the sacrament with proper faith and repentance.
- d) Communion is even given to “church papists” (those who were Roman Catholic in their convictions, but conformed outwardly to the requirements of the Protestant state). These should be excommunicated until they exhibit “gospel-like behaviour.”
- e) Communion is given even when there are only a few communicants. (In a small congregation, the Prayer Book requires a minimum of three or four, plus the priest.) This breaks unity with our brethren. People should be compelled by law to communicate.
- f) Communion is given to the sick privately in their homes, which is superstitious as suggesting that a deathbed communion is necessary for salvation.

Summarized from *Laws* 5.58.1, ed. Keble, 2:362–63.

9. Sacramental theology depends on Christology

The use of Sacraments is but only in this life, yet so that here they concern a far better life than this, and are for that cause accompanied with “grace which worketh Salvation.” Sacraments are the powerful instruments of God to eternal life. For as our natural life consisteth in the union of the body with the soul; so our life supernatural in the union of the soul with God. And forasmuch as there is no union of God with man without that mean between both which is both, it seemeth requisite that we first consider [1] how God is in Christ, then [2] how Christ is in us, and [3] how the Sacraments do serve to make us partakers of Christ. (*Laws* 5.51.1, ed. Keble 2:220)

10. The eternal personal union of Christ’s divinity and humanity

These natures from the moment of their first combination have been and are for ever inseparable. For even when his soul forsook the tabernacle of his body, his Deity forsook neither body nor soul. If it had, then could we not truly hold either that the person of Christ was buried, or that the person of Christ did raise up itself from the dead. For the body separated from the Word can in no true sense be termed the person of Christ; nor is it true to say that the Son of God in raising up that body did raise up himself, if the body were not both with him and of him even during the time it lay in the sepulchre. (*Laws* 5.52.4; ed. Keble, 2:227)

11. We are in Christ eternally by election and actually by participation

We are ... in God through Christ eternally according to that intent and purpose whereby we were chosen to be made his in this present world before the world itself was made, we are in God through the knowledge which is had of us, and the love which is borne towards us from everlasting. But in God we actually are no longer than only from the time of our actual adoption into the body of his true Church, into the fellowship of his children. For his Church he knoweth and loveth, so that they which are in the Church are thereby known to be in him. Our being in Christ by eternal foreknowledge saveth us not without our actual and real adoption into the fellowship of his saints in this present world. For in him we actually are by our actual

incorporation into that society which hath him for their Head, and doth make together with him one Body, (he and they in that respect having one name,) for which cause, by virtue of this mystical conjunction, we are of him and in him even as though our very flesh and bones should be made continue with his. ... We are therefore adopted sons of God to eternal life by participation of the only-begotten Son of God, whose life is the well-spring and cause of ours. (*Laws* 5.56.7; ed. Keble, 2:249–50)

12. Christ’s “influence” upon us

Christ is whole with the whole Church, and whole with every part of the Church, as touching his Person, which can no way divide itself, or be possessed by degrees and portions. But the participation of Christ importeth, besides the presence of Christ’s Person, and besides the mystical copulation thereof with the parts and members of his whole Church, a true actual influence of grace whereby the life which we live according to godliness is his, and from him we receive those perfections wherein our eternal happiness consisteth. Thus we participate Christ partly by imputation, as when those things which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousness; partly by habitual and real infusion, as when grace is inwardly bestowed while we are on earth, and afterwards more fully both our souls and bodies made like unto his in glory. (*Laws* 5.56.10–11; ed. Keble, 2:253–54)

13. Sacraments are not just “visual aids” to teach the mind

It greatly offendeth, that some, when they labour to shew the use of the holy Sacraments, assign unto them no end but only to teach the mind, by other senses, that which the Word doth teach by hearing. Whereupon, how easily neglect and careless regard of so heavenly mysteries may follow, we see in part by some experience had of those men with whom that opinion is most strong. For where the word of God may be heard, which teacheth with much more expedition and more full explication any thing we have to learn, if all the benefit we reap by sacraments be instruction, they which at all times have opportunity of using the better mean to that purpose, will surely hold the worse in less estimation. And unto infants which are not capable of instruction, who would not think it a mere superfluity that any sacrament is administered, if to administer the sacraments be but to teach receivers what God doth for them? There is of sacraments therefore undoubtedly some other more excellent and heavenly use. (*Laws* 5.57.1; ed. Keble, 2:255)

14. The “force” of sacraments: visible, effective signs of invisible grace

Their chiefest force and virtue consisteth ... in that they are heavenly ceremonies, which God hath sanctified and ordained to be administered in his Church, [1] first, as marks whereby to know when God doth impart the vital or saving grace of Christ unto all that are capable thereof, and [2] secondly as means conditional which God requireth in them unto whom he imparteth grace. For sith God in himself is invisible, and cannot by us be discerned working, therefore when it seemeth good in the eyes of his heavenly wisdom, that men for some special intent and purpose should take notice of his glorious presence, he giveth them some plain and sensible token whereby to know what they cannot see. ... Christ and his Holy Spirit with all their blessed effects, though entering into the soul of man we are not able to apprehend or express how, do notwithstanding give notice of the times when they use to make their access, because it pleaseth Almighty God to communicate by sensible means those blessings which are incomprehensible. (*Laws* 5.57.3, ed. Keble, 2:256–57)

15. Necessary “moral instruments” of salvation

They [the sacraments] contain *in themselves* no vital force or efficacy, they are not physical but *moral instruments* of salvation, duties of service and worship, which unless we perform as the Author of grace requireth, they are unprofitable. For all receive not the grace of God which receive the sacraments of his grace. Neither is it ordinarily his will to bestow the grace of sacraments on any, but by the sacraments. ... This is therefore the necessity of sacraments. That saving grace which Christ originally is or hath for the general good of his whole Church, by sacraments he severally deriveth into every member thereof. Sacraments serve as the instruments of God to that end and purpose, moral instruments, the use whereof is in our hands, the effect in his; for the use we have his express commandment, for the effect his conditional promise: so that without our obedience to the one, there is of the other no apparent assurance, as contrariwise where the signs and sacraments of his grace are not either through contempt unreceived, or received with contempt, we are not to doubt but that they really give what they promise, and are what they signify. For we take not baptism nor the eucharist for bare *resemblances* or memorials of things absent, neither for *naked signs* and testimonies assuring us of grace received before, but (as they are indeed and in verity) for means effectual whereby God when we take the sacraments delivereth into our hands that grace available unto eternal life, which grace the sacraments represent or signify. (*Laws* 5.57.4–5, ed. Keble, 2:257–58)

16. The grace of Communion: continuance and growth of life

The grace which we have by the holy Eucharist doth not begin but continue life. No man therefore receiveth this sacrament before Baptism, because no dead thing is capable of nourishment. That which groweth must of necessity first live. ... As long as the days of our warfare last, during the time that we are both subject to diminution and capable of augmentation in grace, the words of our Lord and Saviour Christ will remain forcible, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” [John 6:53]. Life being therefore proposed unto all men as their end, they which by baptism have laid the foundation and attained the first beginning of a new life have here their nourishment and food prescribed for *continuance of life* in them. Such as will live the life of God must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, because this is a part of that diet which if we want we cannot live. (*Laws* 5.67.1, ed. Keble, 2:348)

17. Communion should not be an occasion of clever controversy

This heavenly food is given for the satisfying of our empty souls, and not for the exercising of our curious and subtle wits. (*Laws* 5.67.4; ed. Keble, 2:351)

18. Communion: a means of participation

If we doubt what those admirable words may import, let him be our teacher for the meaning of Christ to whom Christ was himself a schoolmaster, let our Lord’s Apostle be his interpreter, content we ourselves with his explication, My body, *the communion of my body*, My blood, *the communion of my blood* [1 Cor. 10:16]. Is there any thing more expedite, clear, and easy, than that as Christ is termed our life because through him we obtain life, so the parts of this sacrament are his body and blood for that they are so to us who receiving them receive that by them which they are termed? The bread and cup are his body and blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the *participation* of his body and blood ensueth. For that which produceth any certain effect is not vainly nor improperly said to be that very effect whereunto it

tendeth. Every cause is in the effect which groweth from it. Our souls and bodies quickened to eternal life are effects the cause whereof is the Person of Christ, his body and his blood are the true wellspring out of which this life floweth. So that his body and blood are in that very subject whereunto they minister life not only by effect or operation, even as the influence of the heavens is in plants, beasts, men, and in every thing which they quicken, but also by a far more divine and mystical kind of union, which maketh us one with him even as he and the Father are one. The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament. (*Laws* 5.67.5–6; ed. Keble, 2:352)

19. All controversialists agree about five things in the Holy Communion

It is on all sides plainly confessed:

- a) first that this sacrament is a true and real participation of Christ, who thereby imparteth himself even his whole entire Person *as a mystical Head* unto every soul that receiveth him, and that every such receiver doth thereby incorporate or unite himself unto Christ *as a mystical member of him*, yea of them also whom he acknowledgeth to be his own;
- b) secondly that to whom *the person of Christ* is thus communicated, to them he giveth by the same sacrament the Holy Spirit to sanctify them as it sanctifieth him which is their head;
- c) thirdly that what *merit, force or virtue soever there is in his sacrificed body and blood*, we freely, fully and wholly have it by this sacrament;
- d) fourthly that *the effect thereof in us is a real transmutation of our souls and bodies* from sin to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortality and life;
- e) fifthly that because the sacrament being of itself but a corruptible and earthly creature must needs be thought an unlikely instrument to work so admirable effects in man, we are therefore to rest ourselves altogether upon *the strength of his glorious power* who is able and will bring to pass that the bread and cup which he giveth us shall be truly the thing he promiseth. (*Laws* 5.67.7; ed. Keble, 2:354–55)

20. We know *what* we receive, not *how* we receive it

Let it therefore be sufficient for me presenting myself at the Lord's table to know what there I receive from him, without searching or inquiring of the manner how Christ performeth his promise; let disputes and questions, enemies to piety, abatements of true devotion, and hitherto in this cause but over patiently heard, let them take their rest; let curious and sharpwitted men beat their heads about what questions themselves will, the very letter of the word of Christ giveth plain security that these mysteries do as nails fasten us to his very Cross, that by them we draw out, as touching efficacy, force, and virtue, even the blood of his gored side, in the wounds of our Redeemer we there dip our tongues, we are dyed red both within and without, our hunger is satisfied and our thirst for ever quenched. ... What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ, his promise in witness hereof sufficeth, his word he knoweth which way to accomplish; why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, O my God thou art true, O my Soul thou art happy! (*Laws* 5.67.13; ed. Keble, 2:361–62)

21. The Fathers taught that the bread and wine change so that we may change

Again as evident it is how they teach that Christ is personally there present, yea present whole, albeit a part of Christ be *corporally* absent from thence; that Christ assisting this heavenly

banquet with his personal and true presence doth by his own divine power add to the natural substance thereof supernatural efficacy, which addition to the nature of those consecrated elements changeth them and maketh them that unto us which otherwise they could not be; that to us they are thereby made such instruments as mystically yet truly, invisibly yet really work our communion or fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ as well in that he is man as God, our participation also in the fruit, grace and efficacy of his body and blood, whereupon there ensueth a kind of transubstantiation in us, a true change both of soul and body, an alteration from death to life. In a word it appeareth not that of all the ancient Fathers of the Church any one did ever conceive or imagine other than only a mystical participation of Christ's both body and blood in the sacrament. (*Laws* 5.67.11; ed. Keble, 2:357–58)

22. Communion an individual means of participation in Christ

This life and this resurrection our Lord Jesus Christ is for all men as touching the sufficiency of that he hath done; but that which maketh us partakers thereof is our particular communion with Christ, and this sacrament a principal mean as well to strengthen the bond as to multiply in us the fruits of the same communion; for which cause St. Cyprian termeth it a joyful solemnity of expedite and speedy resurrection; Ignatius a medicine which procureth immortality and preventeth death; Irenæus the nourishment of our bodies to eternal life and their preservative from corruption. (*Laws* 5.68.12; ed. Keble, 2:380)

23. Hooker's reply to specific Puritan objections

a) Individual words of administration.

Our imitation of him consisteth not in tying scrupulously ourselves unto his syllables, but rather in speaking by the heavenly direction of that inspired divine wisdom which teacheth divers ways to one end. ... To do throughout every the like circumstance the same which Christ did in this action were by following his footsteps in that sort to err more from the purpose he aimed at than we now do by not following them with so nice and severe strictness. ... It is true that in sermons we do not use to repeat our sentences severally to every particular hearer, a strange madness it were if we should. ... The reason taken from the use of sacraments in that they are instruments of grace unto every particular man may with good congruity lead the Church to frame accordingly her words in administration of the sacraments. (*Laws* 5.68.2; ed. Keble, 2:364–65)

b) Kneeling.

Our kneeling at Communions is a gesture of piety. If we did there present ourselves but to make some show or dumb resemblance of a spiritual feast, it may be that sitting were the fitter ceremony; but coming as receivers of inestimable grace at the hands of God, what doth better beseem our bodies at that hour than to be sensible witnesses of minds unfeignedly humbled? (*Laws* 5.68.3; ed. Keble, 2:365–66)

c) No individual examination of communicants.

The trial of ourselves before we eat this bread and drink of this cup is by express commandment every man's precise duty. [1 Cor. 11:28: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."] As for the necessity of calling others to account besides ourselves, [the Puritan arguments are silly and weak]; nevertheless the examination of communicants when need requireth, for the profitable use

it may have in such cases, we reject not. (*Laws* 5.68.4; ed. Keble, 2:366–67)

d) *“Popish communicants.”*

The name of a papist is not given unto any man for being a notorious malefactor. ... *Church* is a word which art hath devised thereby to sever and distinguish that society of men which professeth the true religion from the rest which profess it not. ... Many things exclude from the kingdom of God although from the Church they separate not. In the Church there arise sundry grievous storms, by means whereof whole kingdoms and nations professing Christ both have been heretofore and are at this present day divided about Christ. ... “The mystery of piety” saith the Apostle “is without peradventure great, God hath been manifested in the flesh, hath been justified in the Spirit, hath been seen of Angels, hath been preached to nations, hath been believed on in the world, hath been taken up into glory” [1 Tim. 3:16]. The Church is a pillar and foundation of this truth, which no where is known or professed but only within the Church, and they all of the Church that profess it. ... [When “church papists” receive Communion with us,] they give us the strongest pledge of fidelity that man can demand. (*Laws* 5.68.6; ed. Keble, 2:367–73)

e) *Few communicants.*

[Puritans allow only two good reasons for failing to communicate,] namely danger of impairing health and necessary business requiring our presence elsewhere. And may not a third cause, which is *unfitness* at the present time, detain us lawfully back as either of these two? ... If we have committed a fault in not preparing our minds before, shall we therefore aggravate the same with a worse, the crime of unworthy participation? He that abstaineth doth want for the time that grace and comfort which religious communicants have, but he that eateth and drinketh unworthily receiveth death, that which is life to others turneth in him to poison. (*Laws* 5.68.10; ed. Keble, 2:376–77)

f) *Private communion of the sick.*

Now because that Sacrament which at all times we may receive unto this effect is then most acceptable and most fruitful, when any special extraordinary occasion nearly and presently urging kindleth our desires towards it, their severity, who cleave unto that alone which is generally fit to be done and so make all men’s condition alike, may add much affliction to divers troubled and grieved minds. (*Laws* 5.68.12; ed. Keble, 2:380)