



ADOREMUS 2018 Symposium Presentation

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MAJOR DAVID EVANS, SALVATION ARMY

the eucharist as a sign of the church's unity : "one bread, one body" revisited

My life must be Christ's broken bread.

From my earliest years I remember my minister parents preaching and living out what, in their belief, was a sacramental lifestyle.

Indeed, it was the Holiness preaching based on the Wesleyan revival and Holiness movement that was contributory to the birth of what is now The Salvation Army in 1865, and NOW globally working in 130 countries. Growing up in that atmosphere, observing some wonderfully sacrificial people in a variety of my parents churches, at sixteen, I gave my whole life and soul to Jesus Christ.

Up until I was 16, the Salvation Army and its mission statement of 'Heart to God and hand to man' had been my existence, and as a result its sacramental stance for me has had a totally different interpretation. At the time I became a Christian I came into contact with the beautiful service of Communion when TSA celebrated its 100th year in the beautiful Abbey in Bath. The Abbot had invited my church to receive communion and my father to preach, an honour in deed.

When William Booth (TSA's Founder) for pragmatic reasons laid aside Communion in 1883 it was never seen as a once and for all decision, indeed, as late as the late 1990s TSA's Spiritual life Commission once more addressed the recurring issue of communion and it's to their conclusions I wish to refer.

Firstly, it concluded that if sacramental meant specifically the use of certain prescribed observances, then the Salvation Army was indeed non-sacramental. However it goes onto say, "that if St. Augustine's definition of communion as 'a visible sign of an invisible grace', allowed the wider embracing of symbols as 'signs of something sacred' then in that broader sense, the Army is most definitely a Sacramental Movement". And indeed it doesn't deny the value of symbolism in religion.

As an officer in my 35th year of ministry, at no stage have I ever refused an invitation from a brother or sister church when invited to share in communion (in fact I relish it)! TSA encourages its members to participate, to be as Christ directed. The sense of unity expressed in the High Priestly prayer in John 17:21 that we would be one as Christ and His father are one, is never more palpable as in these special moments of Christ's 'Invisible Grace'. However, as One Bread, One Faith has underlined, (and Callum



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referred and Father Dominic stated was a real sense of pain and imperfect Communion) this very act of being one, the Body of Christ, has still have some way to go!

Secondly the commission concluded that Sacrament as they understand it, should be properly reserved exclusively to denote Christ alone as the true mystery of God, (Col.2:2), and the language of holiness and sanctification, rather than sacrament, should be used to express the grace of Christ lived out in our lives as believers. Here, I must stress the focus is upon living a holy life and not purely on a ritual however beautiful meaningful and really moving.

Commissioner Phil Needham, in his book *Community in Mission*, calls Salvationists to Holy living “as the imperative for Christian character and lifestyle”. Differences do occur in SA members, the Spiritual Life Commission states that “the language of sacrament, as with the language of incarnation, is reserved for Christ alone, and is one of the many ways in which his uniqueness is affirmed.

Other Salvationists with an ecumenical heart and John 17:21 as their motivation, want to stress that TSA is not anti-sacramental, going further to suggest that the holy life lived out in the world, is for them the outliving of authentic sacramental life, and for them is not just what some have defined as a use of sacramental observances.

A Salvationist Theologian and Poet, and an erstwhile world leader General Albert Orsborn underlined this teaching in a beautiful song:

“My life must be Christ’s broken bread,
my love His outpoured wine,
A cup o’erfilled, a table spread
beneath His name and sign,
That other souls, refreshed and fed,
may share His life through mine”.

For Salvationists sacramental rites “are seen in a very different light...not as a prescribed occasion, or as the sole source of God’s grace”

The most prolific of Salvation Army Holiness writers and teachers, Samuel Logan Brengle, defined this teaching as ‘Christ in you’ - teaching that the Lord’s Supper should “always point... the Church beyond the celebration, to the living out of what the body broken and blood spilled made possible”: (the recovery of holiness of life and the restoration of fellowship with God and man.)

Thank you for listening and may God Bless His Church.

Major David Evans

National Ecumenical Officer, Salvation Army Major