VIA MEDIA – Third Way People

You may remember that the idea of the via media is not really original to Wesley. It may have some Aristotelian roots but really was more a description of Wesley’s ministry than a prescribed statement or position that he took.  When he rejected the quietism of the Moravians and preached publicly. When he valued the sacraments and preached in the fields. When he embraced an evangelical identity and aligned with a catholic spirit. You get the idea. He was a “both-and” minister not “either-or.”  We are third way people. That does not mean compromised in a muddled accommodation nor transcendent in being above it all. We are truly both:  personal and social, sovereignty and choice, crisis and process, set apart and incarnate, Christ centered and spirit centered.

To help the contemporary church realize that this is the Way of Salvation, let me illustrate this tension between our orthodoxy and missiology. While working with folks who could not seem to capture the understanding of engagement without compromise, I framed the paradigm as “Anchored and Reaching” – again, both-and.  Imagine a bungee cord that you might carry with you to do exercises while traveling. One end is ANCHORED to the doorknob – (our orthodoxy, the Bible, the centrality of Jesus); the other end in the hands of God’s instrument (the church/us) REACHING that bungee into the room thereby strengthening your muscles (our mission).  The result of being BOTH anchored AND reaching is tension in the middle/strain/stress.

Wesleyan Holiness people live in the tension of the middle – the via media. There is where the effect of a strong anchor and a robust mission is most felt. To the doctrinal purist, (the doorknob) this brings fear and represents pressure toward drift. To the missional activist, (the bungee ends) this represents stodgy, irrelevant conservatism. This is exactly the place Wesleyan Holiness people live and thrive. We are BOTH profoundly conservative in our anchored identity AND passionately active in our missional engagement.

Bless you!

Kevin Mannoia