

# ANGLICAN VIA-MEDIA: AN INSTRUMENT FOR THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN CHURCH OF NIGERIA ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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## Abstract

Anglican *via-media* means the middle path in matters between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In essence, it avoids going to the extreme in any matter and at the same time being guided by its basic principles. However, in contemporary times this concept has been misinterpreted to mean compromise and the resultant effect of such interpretation was the election and consecration of an open gay, Gene Robinson as bishop in the Episcopal Church of United States of America in 2003, the legalization of same-sex marriage and ordination of homosexuals in Anglican Church of Canada and the boycott of 2008 Lambeth Conference by the Global South that comprises the conservative Anglicans. In view of this, this work has uncovered historically meaning of this concept, Anglican *via-media* and has clarified that the concept never includes compromise on the authority of the Holy Scripture. At the same time, it has looked at the implications of this misconception on the development of the Anglican Communion in Nigeria. Hence, this work concludes that theologically, Anglican *via-media* never stretch so far to include heresy rather; it upholds the authority of Holy Scripture and is being guided by the 39 Articles of Religion and 1888 Lambeth Quadrilateral. In other words, it recommends that *via-media* can still serve as a veritable tool in solving the present challenges.

## Introduction

The great awakening of the 16<sup>th</sup> century which gave birth to Martin Luther's 95 theses triggered off the reformation spirit which affected the Western Church in its entirety. And since then, the Western Church has never remained the same; rather it has been affected and influenced by different theological thoughts that have brought great changes in her doctrinal formulation, structure and applications to the realities of life. Such changes gave rise to the spirit of Protestantism against Roman Catholicism.

It was in the midst of such circumstances that emerged the Anglican doctrine which came from the interweaving of two main strands of Christian doctrine. The first strand is the Catholic doctrine taught by the established church in England in the early 16th century. The second strand is a range of Protestant Reformed teachings brought to England from neighbouring countries in the same period, notably Calvinism and Lutheranism. This merging together is what is being referred to as the *via-media* in Anglicanism and is seen by Anglican theologians as the bedrock and true identity of the Anglican Communion. However, such union is without problems and challenges which can be seen in contemporary happenings in the Anglican Communion in regard to the interpretation of the necessary doctrines of the Church and that of the principles of *via-media*.

Notwithstanding, Anglican *via-media* as a concept is synonymous with Anglicanism. This is because it is a concept that defines the doctrinal positions of the church in relation to its historic tradition. In application, it rejects extremes of any kind and at the same time upholds the supreme authority of the Holy Scripture. Anglican *via-media* is what made Anglicanism a scriptural church. But in contemporary times this concept has been misinterpreted to mean compromise of the Holy Scripture and the implication of such misconception is the move for the acceptance of

gay priests, bishops and same-sex marriage in the Anglican Communion. The climax was the consecration of an open gay, Gene Robinson as bishop in the Episcopal Church of United States of America, and the legalization of same-sex marriage in the name of Anglican *via-media*. Hence, this work is aimed at investigating the challenges posed by the interpretation of the concept, Anglican *via-media* in the contemporary Anglican Communion and at the same time to clarify the wrong impression that Anglican *via-media* is laid in compromise. The work will employ deconstruction theory cum George Simmel and Coser's conflict theory. Deconstructionism is basically a theory of textual criticism or interpretation that denies there is any single correct meaning or interpretation of a passage or text. It celebrates human autonomy and determines truth by the intellect of man. Deconstruction method in the context of this work is seen as a tool in reconstructing the present realities in the communion in line with the historical principles of *via-media*. These principles include the 1888 Chicago quadrilateral, the doctrine of comprehensiveness in fundamentals and relativism in non-essentials including the resolutions of the 1998 Lambeth conference. However, deconstruction approach may bring about misunderstanding among the various parties involved and perhaps if it does occur George Simmel and Lewis Coser's conflict theory may take care of such misdemeanor. In this sense, Simmel's basic approach can be described as "methodological relationism," because it operates on the principle that everything interacts in some way with everything else.

### **Understanding the Spirit of Via-Media**

*Via-media* as a concept is a Latin phrase meaning "the middle road" and is a philosophical maxim for life which advocates moderation in all thoughts and actions. Historically, it is from early Ancient Greek philosophy, where Aristotle (384–322 BCE) taught moderation, urging his students to follow the middle road between extremes, and the *via-media* was the dominant philosophical precept by which Ancient Roman civilization and society was organized.

However, for Aristotle and the Anglicans who have used the term *via-media*, it refers to the "golden mean" which is recognized as a more adequate expression of truth between the weaknesses of extreme positions. In view of this, McAlhane (2006) explains that among church historians and theologians, the term is readily used to describe the middle way between Protestantism and Catholicism, which many see as embodied in the modern Anglican Communion. While Pollard (1911) observes that "the recent use of the term "middle way" refers to "walking between two extremes, and hospitably and sympathetically listening out in either direction for good ideas," that is, towards the Catholic and Protestant ends of the church" (p.337). The term *via-media* is synonymous with the English Reformation and it is used to describe the theological position of the Church of England.

But it is important to note that Anglican *via-media* is without some criteria as seen in the way in which Thomas Cranmer, the man who is still one of the controversial personalities in the history of the church sees it. On this, McCulloch (1996) comments:

The middle ground which Cranmer sought was the same as Bucer's: an agreement between Wittenberg and Zürich which would provide a united vision of Christian doctrine against the counterfeit being refurbished at the Council of Trent. For him, Catholicism was to be found in the scattered churches of the Reformation, and it was his aim to show forth their unity to prove their Catholicity. (p.617).

In essence, the term *via-media*, therefore, has a dual meaning. The first meaning is Cranmer understands of the term, which however, was more complex. While the second is Newman understands of *via-media* as a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism which perhaps, is the most common understanding of the term in the nineteenth century. In Cranmer's view, what is important is the unity of all the different strands of Protestantism. For Cranmer, the Pope was the Anti-Christ; but notwithstanding, he still sought the universal truth which existed in the Catholic Church. This Catholic truth was evident in the strands of Protestantism existing on the Continent, and Cranmer set out to find the middle ground of truth which existed between the competing Protestant camps. Cranmer's *via-media* was, therefore, a middle way which took into account the historical truths of Christianity and the positions of both Lutheranism and Zwinglianism.

One may ask, is *via-media* a spirit of compromise against the Holy Scripture? Does the concept entails not maintaining a stand in matters of faith and in regard to the dictates of the Scriptural interpretation? In reaction to such misrepresentation, Toom (1983) explains that Anglicanism followed the appeal to scripture, tradition and reason and at the same time committed itself to creative concept and practice of comprehensiveness. For him, comprehensiveness rightly understood is:

Not the acceptance of a ragbag of assorted views and practices. It is not the expression of the principles that theological relativism is escapable or even a good thing that is that each of us does their own thing because there is not one truth to which we ought to be committed. Comprehensiveness is unity in fundamentals with the recognition in secondary matters especially rites and ceremonies that there can be differences of opinion and interpretations. The fundamentals are those found in the catholic creeds and those presupposed in the liturgy. (p.72).

Also, White (2004) states that theologically, the *via-media* never stretched so far as to include heresy of any nature. Also, the "middle way" never implied that Holy Scripture or tradition could be ignored for the sake of diversity and inclusion. In essence, the traditional teaching of the historic church was cemented firmly in the *via-media* of Elizabeth I, and for the orthodox it continues to be a cornerstone of Anglican identity. Hence, to invoke the great tradition of the *via-media* to justify sin is a grave injustice to the dignity and integrity of one of the most brilliant and comprehensive settlements of unity that the Christian Church has ever known because Elizabeth I's quest to include the majority of her subjects in a comprehensive religious unity was not meant to incorporate heresy. Rather, it was a middle ground whereby the majority of Christians who recognized the boundaries of historic tradition and Holy Scripture would be accommodated.

In addition, the concept of *via-media* cannot go contrary to 1888 quadrilateral. On this note, Sydnor (1980) opines that "the Quadrilateral has had a significant impact on Anglican identity since its passage by the Lambeth Conference"(p .80). He maintains that the Resolution came at a time of rapid expansion of the Anglican Communion, primarily in the territories of the British Empire. As such, it provided a basis for a shared ethos, one that became increasingly important as colonial churches influenced by British culture and values, evolved into national ones influenced by local norms. What then is 1888 Lambeth quadrilateral? The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, frequently referred to as the Lambeth Quadrilateral or the Lambeth-Chicago

Quadrilateral, is a four-point articulation of Anglican identity, often cited as encapsulating the fundamentals of the Communion's doctrine and as a reference-point for ecumenical discussion with other Christian denominations. The four points are:

The Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation;

The Creeds (specifically, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), as the sufficient statement of Christian faith;

The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion;

The historic episcopate, locally adapted.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has also been important for ecumenical dialogue and therefore, if holistically adhered to will be a possible tool towards finding a lasting solution to contemporary challenges.

More so, one will observe that although the concept has no place for *magisterium* (that is, no Pope to make decree binding on all, neither does it has a Patriarch like the Eastern Orthodoxy) however, it has instruments of maintaining unity in the communion. *Via-media* has a place for four instruments of unity. These instrument include, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting, the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and if the roles of these instruments are well understood, it will aid to deconstruct the solution to the challenges facing Anglican *via-media* in contemporary times.

### **Anglican Via-media and Same-sex Marriage: A Theological Discourse**

The theological argument on same sex marriage has been on the front banner of the western world in contemporary time. While many see it as compatible with the Christian faith others see it as being incompatible with the scripture. In this way the church has been polarized into groups which today are tearing the Anglican faith apart. On this note, one may ask, is there any theological basis to support same sex marriage in Anglican *via-media* seeing that the Communion is undergoing a fundamental shift contrary to the principles of the founding fathers who looked for a church that will be submitted to the authority of the scriptures, and free from the political and cultural background of any nation or state.

However, since Lambert 1998 the story has never been the same despite the resolution of the conference that upholds the biblical understanding of human sexuality and marriage to be between a man and a woman in lifelong union. The conference also believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage but at the same time 'rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture' (Lambert 1998 resolution 1:10). The Conference in its official report on same sex marriage concludes as follows:

- a. Commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- b. In view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- c. Recognizes that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all

- baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- d. While rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialization and commercialization of sex;
  - e. Cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
  - f. Requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
  - g. Notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.(p.17).

Contrary to the above, what was at stake here was not just an aspect of sexual ethics, but also primary questions of the authority of Scripture and human identity. But rather the Lambeth resolution settling the issue, it simply became the trigger for sustained conflict with the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, a man in an openly homosexual relationship.

For the traditional Anglicans or Orthodox Christians, the authority of the Scripture is at stake while for the Revisionist the Scripture must go with reasoning and human freedom. On this basis, same-sex marriage does not violate the dictates of Anglican *via-media* which is a middle way. One may then ask, where lies the problems? The core problem is a disagreement and misplacing of priority over what constitutes religious truth in the Anglican *via-media* irrespective of the six factors that Anglicans do consider when developing or changing their religious beliefs and policies. In the spirit of Anglican *via-media*, the following factors are of immense importance in developing new beliefs: specific biblical references often literally interpreted, actions of biblical leaders – not really applicable in this case, general biblical themes – justice, fairness and love, church traditions, scientific findings and personal experience.

Therefore, the problem lies in the fact that the conservatives within the denomination tend to stress the factors near the top of the list and conclude that same sex behaviour is among the most serious of sins. While liberals tend to stress the bottom factors, and conclude that the three sexual orientations -- heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality are all morally neutral and therefore, they regard the real sins to be homophobia, and sexual acts which are unsafe, non-consensual, manipulative and without commitment.

In view of the above, Mahoney (n.d) observes that the Episcopalian Anglican Church (ECUSA) is widely divided over their views of homosexuality. He quotes the ECUSA's Presiding Bishop as equating homosexuality with allowing gentiles in the early church, which there was never a time when all members of Israel or of the Christian Church agreed on all major matters. The differences in their opinion seem also to be more geographical and culturally biased. Meanwhile, the Church of England has the view that marriage is something to be held between a man and a woman, but does acknowledge that many members of the congregation may be homosexual.

They accept homosexuals into the church, and work against the fear, discrimination, or condemnation of homosexuals, but will not allow homosexuals to be members of clergy nor will they bless same sex unions.

On this note, Barillas (2013) quotes Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury as warning that legalizing same-sex marriage would present a social problem in the society, not a faith issue. For him, traditional marriage is a cornerstone of society and rather than adding a new and valued institution alongside it for same gender relationships, which he would personally strongly support to strengthen the society, the bill for same-sex weakens what exists and replaces it with a less good option that is neither equal nor effective. He maintains that the concept of marriage as a normative place for procreation is lost; the idea as marriage as covenant is diminished; the family in its normal sense predating the state and allowing it will undoubtedly weakened the society. It is not at heart a faith issue but about the general social good. So with much regret but entire conviction he categorically maintains that he cannot support the Bill for same-sex as it stands. Notwithstanding, the bill has been passed by the parliament thereby receiving Royal Assent on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2013, but with reactions.

Appraisingly, it is important to note that Welby's argument is basically on social stand point rather than on biblically perspectives like Hopko. This undoubtedly showed the degree of indiscrepancies in the way homosexuals are being interpreted. Irrespective of that, one may argue that traditionally, the answer has been that moral values are based in God. So, God is by His very nature perfectly holy and good. He is just, loving, patient, merciful, and generous. In essence, all that is good comes from him and is a reflection of his character. Undoubtedly, this is the Christian understanding of right and wrong. Therefore, if there is no God, then these people are absolutely correct. In the absence of God everything becomes relative. Right and wrong become relative to different cultures and societies. Without God who is to say that one culture's values are better than another? Who is to say who is right and who is wrong? Where do right and wrong come from? Taylor (1985) makes it clearer in the following word:

The idea of moral obligation is clear enough, provided that reference to some lawmaker higher than those of the state is understood. In other words, our moral obligations can be understood as those that are imposed by God. But what if this higher-than-human lawgiver is no longer taken into account? Does the concept of a moral obligation still make sense? ( pp. 83-84)

Also, Taylor (1985) observes thus:

The modern age, more or less repudiating the idea of a divine lawgiver, has nevertheless tried to retain the ideas of moral right and wrong, without noticing that in casting God aside they have also abolished the meaningfulness of right and wrong as well. Thus, even educated persons sometimes declare that such things as war or abortion, or the violation of certain human rights are morally wrong, and they imagine that they have said something true and meaningful. Educated people do not need to be told, however, that questions such as these have never been answered outside of religion.(p.86).

On the other hand, Trammel (2005) holds that neither the extreme liberal view nor the extreme conservative view was right rather the biblical Christ centered which serves as the middle way.

He argues that for the extreme liberal, homosexuals are born as homosexuals. God made them, and therefore any biblical references that seem to prohibit loving homosexual practice are archaic and culturally biased. In their opinion, why would God create a homosexual and then accuse him or her of sinning if they express their love with another homosexual in a monogamous relationship? Homosexuals in loving and faithful relationships are simply demonstrating their love and those who take any other position are homophobic, bigots and hate mongers while the extreme conservative view holds that the practice of homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. For them, homosexuals are not born rather they are made. Nature does not produce homosexual, but rather they are produced by dysfunctional relationships and a corrupt world. Homosexuals are deviates and pervert; hence, they are skilled at using politics and the media, attempting to move homosexuality into the mainstream of society. The truth is that homosexuality is absolutely the worst kind of sin.

In the midst of this confusion, Trammel proposes that there is a third alternative increasingly favored by many evangelical Christians. These Christians reject both extremes and advocate a balanced biblical and Christ-centered viewpoint that does not answer all the questions or solve every ambiguity, but comes closer to authentic Christianity than the two extremes. This third, balanced perspective acknowledges that no one definitively knows whether homosexuals are born or whether they become that way. The jury is still out, with conflicting studies and research, much of which unfortunately seems to be self-serving and subjectively skewed. Therefore, the Bible condemns homosexual practice, along with many other sins, including hatred, pride, envy, jealous and self righteousness. On the one hand, no human has the capability of declaring some of the Bible to be true and accurate, with other portions being myth and opinion. Such “scholarship” attempting to justify homosexual practice is self-serving and abuse of the Bible. In same vein, the Bible does not indicate that homosexuality is the worst of all sins, nor does it give such a ranking to any sin. The gospel of Jesus Christ makes it clear that all are sinners, and that all need Jesus Christ. Above all, the Bible clearly defines Christians as those who have love. Christians are identified by this love that is, God’s love. This love is not a word or concept that humans can subjectively use to justify their behaviour. Love is not expressed through lying, stealing, hating, pride, envy, drunkenness, gluttony or homosexuality. Love is not expressed by condemning others, shouting insults at them from picket lines or ostracizing them. God’s love is not human love; it is his love, and it is by that love Christians are known. Unfortunately, many have taken unbiblical views that are either self-serving and self-justifying on one hand, or judgmental and hateful on the other. Sadly, many Christians have become known as bigots who have no time for homosexuals. All Christians are sinners; Christians have proclivities and weaknesses of all kinds, including homosexuality. Christians who are however, homosexuals, who have homosexual desires, including those who have once been practicing homosexuals will not by definition, practice homosexuality. They will not parade their pride in the practice of homosexuality and insist that the church or society at large accept them in same-sex marriage. This is because marriage is one man and one woman according to the Bible. Therefore, a Christian homosexual will be a celibate homosexual, much as a recovering alcoholic will not drink any alcohol, and they will avoid situations where they may be tempted. Other Christians who happen to have differing weaknesses and sins will reach out to celibate homosexual Christians rather than condemn them. Christians are known by God’s love that lives in mankind through Jesus Christ. Christ lives his life within mankind and reforms man in God’s image

thereby transforming humanity from all human culture, including the culture of religion that often opposes Christ.

Reacting, Russel (n.d) comments that:

Holy scriptures are being used in this current conflict, especially by people who claim to be traditionalists and so-called orthodox Anglicans. For them, homosexuality is wrong because the Bible says its wrong and that is it, goes their pronouncements. They stab their fingers at Leviticus 18, 20, and Romans 1. They are fond of rallying around the “plain truth” of the Scriptures without apparently having any depth of knowledge in the plain truth of over 400 years of Anglican heritage with respect to careful biblical interpretation. (p. 2).

In the Anglican tradition, the Holy Bible is revered as central to God’s self-revelation to the world.

### **Implications to the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion**

The Nigerian church is not left out in the recent challenges facing the interpretation of *via-media*. Although, Anglicanism in Nigeria is more conservative in her biblical interpretation, yet the wind is affecting the ways the church sees some of her doctrines. On this note, Iheanacho (2012) observes that the recent astronomic proliferation of churches has resulted in materialism and commercial ministry; declining spiritual commitment; fraud and criminality; rivalry and confusion and, unhealthy Moslem-Christian relations. And these are identified as teething challenges which Anglican *via-media* in Nigeria must confront to reposition itself to flourish in this part of the world. Responding to the above secularistic challenges facing the Church in Nigeria, Okoh (2013) comments:

The Standing Committee is very much aware of the global challenges of secularism and relativism that are also very present in Nigeria. We know well that the struggle between good and evil will only intensify, but the Church will never surrender to these growing pressures. In particular, we shall overcome the continued terror attack and kidnapping going on against innocent Christians and their churches and Nigerians in general. We shall overcome the widespread corruption across our Nation. We shall overcome the social malaise of unemployment and general poverty in the country. We shall overcome many hiccups in our party politics. We shall overcome the surging assault on biblical marriage from the western world and their allies and we shall overcome the spiritual attacks from the enemy of our souls. Certainly, in all these things, we are more than conquerors. (p. 2).

He went futher to state that the Standing Committee in relation to Anglican *via-media* reaffirms its commitment to the Biblical standard for marriage as between one man and one woman in a monogamous, life long union. The Church calls on all its members to reject the ploy of the revisionists who are trying to replace this biblical standard with their own everchanging creations. We believe that the re-definition of marriage, both in theory and practice to accommodate same-sex marriage is unwarranted. Staying true to the biblical standard will ensure stability in our family units and give a renewed hope to our children.

Elaborating further, Okoh (2012) laments that the Christian Faith is seriously under attack in Nigeria from two directions, from without and from within and that the Church was concerned about the violent expressions of Islam represented by Boko Haram. In some parts of the North, the Christian Faith is endangered specie: Boko Haram is not just against Christians, but has



stated emphatically that it wants the Christian Faith rooted out of the North. This is the idea behind the bombing, shooting, slaughtering and maiming it has been executing. As a result of the violence, many Christians have become intimidated and have to relocate to safer places. Our dioceses in Maiduguri, Damaturu, Kano, Bauchi, Yola, Zaria, Jos, etc are now drastically depopulated. More he went further to explain that the Church is under attack from the threat of African Traditional Religion which is more subtle in presenting paganism as culture and tradition, with many ignorant Christians swallowing it hook, line and sinker; thus, promoting a syncretistic faith.

However, the Church must fight these false teachings and falsehood through teaching the truth of God's word which is the hallmark of *via-media*.

On the issue of homosexuality in relation with the scripture, the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion bishops maintain in their reports from the provinces in 2013 that:

Our argument is that, if homosexuals see themselves as deviants who have gone astray, the Christian spirit would plead for patience and prayers to make room for their repentance. When scripture says something is wrong and some people say that it is right, such people make God a liar. We argue that it is a blatant lie against Almighty God that homosexuality is their God-given urge and inclination. For us, it is better seen as an acquired aberration. (p.4).

In view of this development, the church of Nigeria has included oath against homosexuality as being compulsory for any candidates into the holy orders of deacon, priest and bishop. The oath as found in the order of diaconate ordination service held at Basilica of St. Andrew, Onitsha on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 reads:

I declare before God and his church that I have never been a homosexual/bisexual; and I vow that I will not indulge in the practice of homosexuality/bisexuality; and that if after this oath I am involved, found to be, or profess to be homosexual/bisexual against the teachings of the scriptures as contained in the bible, I bring myself the full wrath of God and subject myself to canonical discipline as enshrined in the constitution of the church of Nigeria Anglican communion, so help me God (p.28).

The implication is that any priest found guilty of being homosexual is bound to be de-licensed in the church of Nigeria. Such decision is based on the fact that Church of Nigeria still believed in the doctrinal foundation of Anglicanism. According to Olaoye (2009) the foundation of Anglicanism is expressed in these words:

The doctrine of the church is grounded in the Holy Scriptures and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and councils of the church as are agreeable to the said scriptures. In particular, such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the ordinal. (p.98).

In reaction to these developments, Imaekhai (2009) quotes the resolution of the Church of Nigeria Standing Committee in 2002 and the Constitutions and Canons of the Church which states:

This Church shall be in full communion with all Anglican churches (Dioceses and Provinces that hold and maintain the Historic Faith doctrine) sacraments and discipline of the one, Catholic and apostolic church as the Lord commanded in his holy word and as the same are received and taught in the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal of 1662 and in the thirty-nine articles of Religion. (p.141).

## Conclusion

The challenges confronting Anglican *via-media* is that of the 21st century church which is characterized with religion without the Holy spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration and heaven without hell. However, the term *via-media* is indeed loaded with implications. While one cannot ignore the position espoused by Newman which has fostered the modern understanding, one cannot also ignore the foundation upon which Newman was building. It was Cramner's shift toward Reformed Theology which determined many theological aspects of Anglican theology. This, of course was tempered by Bucer who sought a middle ground between Lutheranism and Calvinism. Elizabeth's version more closely resembles that espoused by Newman, for she was dealing with Catholic bishops left over from Mary's reign, the returned exiles and a middle position which sought to avoid serving Rome while also avoiding the extreme Genevan pattern.

In final analysis, the current use of the phrase *via-media* seems most appropriate. While Bucer's and Cramner's middle position between two major branches of the Protestant reformation is important, their ecumenical spirit lives on in the position pioneered by Newman and is inherent within the Elizabethan Settlement. Despite the misapplication and challenges, it is important to admit that Anglicanism rejects going to the extreme in any matter of faith while at the same time being guided by fundamentals and comprehensiveness of the quadrilaterals.

Therefore, the possibility of unity in the present Anglican Communion lies in going back to the foundation of the Anglican divines who laid the basis in *via-media* approach and principles for lasting unity in diversity in the Communion. In this respect, Anglicanism is not merely a space in which one can practice being Catholic or being Evangelical. Rather, Anglicanism is Catholic and Evangelical. This is because Anglicanism strives to bridge the two streams, but because the Anglican way in its attempt to be authentic to witness of the early Church, manages to carry along what is most true and authentic about Catholicism and Evangelicalism in the process. It is this comprehension that Anglicans of all stripes need to learn once again and celebrate in order to overcome the present challenges

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