Anglicanism: Catholic Evangelical or Evangelical Catholic?

Essays Ecumenical and Polemical

Homage to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hans Küng, Martin Luther and John Henry Newman



John A. Moses

Anglicanism: Catholic Evangelical or Evangelical Catholic?

John A Moses

Anglicanism: Catholic Evangelical or Evangelical Catholic?

Essays Ecumenical and Polemical

Homage to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hans Küng, Martin Luther and John Henry Newman

John A Moses

ATF THEOLOGY

Adelaide
2019

Text copyright © John A Moses for all papers in this collection. All rights reserved. Except for any fair dealing permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this book may be reproduced by any means without prior permission. Inquiries should be made to the publisher.

Unless noted otherwise, the Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible copyright © 1989, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design: Myf Cadwallader
Layout by Extel Solutions
Text: Minion Pro size 10 &11

ISBN: 978-1-925612-69-1 soft
978-1-925612-70-7 hard
978-1-925612-71-4 epub
978-1-925612-72-1 pdf

Published by:

ATF THEOLOGY

An imprint of the ATF Press Publishing
Group owned by ATF (Australia) Ltd.
PO Box 504
Hindmarsh, SA 5007
ABN 90 116 359 963
www.atfpress.com
Making a lasting impact

Table of Contents

Foreword		vii
Acknowledgments		xi
Preface		xiii
Introduction		xvii
Chapter 1:	The Chaos of Anglicanism: Towards unravelling the Paradox	1
Chapter 2:	Reconciling the Evangelical and Catholic Paradigms within Anglicanism	31
Chapter 3:	How We got the Bible and the Confusing Consequences of How it is Explained	45
Chapter 4:	Isolating the Problem	55
Chapter 5:	The Case for a Renewed Anglicanism	65
Chapter 6:	Anglican Integrity and Christian Unity Re-Visited	79
Chapter 7:	Peter Bennie at All Saints Wickham Terrace, Brisbane and as Editor of the Australian Church Quarterly 1952–1963—an Anglo-Catholic Biography	87
Epilogue:	Striving Together in the Faith of the Gospel	109
Appendix I:	Authority in the Church: An Anglican Perspective by the Most Reverend Dr Keith Rayner	119
Appendix II:	John Henry Newman's Definition of a Gentleman	135

Appendix III: The Characteristics of Evangelicalism in Australia as identified By Dr Stuart Piggin and Robert D Lindner 139
Bibliography 143
Index 151

Foreword

History and theology have often been thought to occupy entirely different realms. The one, it is presumed, is concerned with the realities of historical occurrence, while the other is exercised by the patterns of belief, and myth-structures. Now never let it be said, even for a moment, that I accept this dichotomy! Nonetheless, even were it to be true, there are some things that every good historian, and every honest theologian, share – and they are: a rigorous commitment to truth, a vocation to the never-ending search for answers (and a consequent refusal to accept that the definitive answer has in fact been found!), and thus an almost-instinctive humility in the face of such enquiry.

John Moses—as both historian and theologian-priest—has long-embodied precisely these qualities.

I first encountered John in the late-1990s, when he agreed to be on the examination panel for my doctoral thesis. In the twenty-plus years since then, we have shared conference platforms, in places as far removed as Perth and Rome, examination duties for each other's students, a common calling to priestly ministry in the Catholic-Anglican tradition, and—perhaps most formative of all—a profound respect for the witness of those few, courageous women and men—people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gertrud Staewen, and Karl Barth—who stood against Nazism in the name of Christ and his Church.

It is, of course, all too easy to draw facile parallels between contemporary politics (especially of the variety we dislike), and the past evils of National Socialist totalitarianism. While the discipline of history includes the noting of patterns, and the judicious employment of comparisons, the good historian also knows enough to be wary of too-convenient analogies.

Nevertheless, as South African theologian John de Gruchy has ably demonstrated time and again, the agonized years of the German *Kirchenkampf*—a period of modern Church history in which John Moses has become a recognised expert—do not languish in the badlands of historical irrelevance. While our context is not theirs, nor are our present intra-ecclesial struggles the same as those that tore asunder German Protestantism in the 1930s, there are nonetheless lessons that we can learn, and parallels that can rightly be drawn, between then, and now.

How do we deal with conflict within our Churches? What is the basis of our Christian fellowship? Will we prioritize dogmatic certainty, or a humble acknowledgement of the frailty and fallibility of *all* human God-talk? Will we rush to separate ourselves from those whom we believe are wrong (Bonhoeffer), or be determined that the schism—if it is to happen—must come from 'the other side' (Barth)?

Such were some of the pivotal questions around which the German Church Struggle under Nazism revolved. And in our own way, as John has so tenaciously pointed out, we are asking much the same questions today, not only within Australian Anglicanism, but throughout the global Anglican Communion.

Of course, such questions are not easy to ask, and they are even harder to answer. Precisely because they engage with matters of faith – and thus, of God – they are questions which touch upon the deepest of feelings, and provoke the sharpest of responses. And so we ought not be surprised to see that John addresses himself to these issues with a certain stridency – one might even say, polemicism. But don't be put off! Fine historian that he is, John knows that such stridency was ingredient—even necessary—to the ecclesial debates of the 1930s.

Yet, as a theologically-literate priest—yes, I know that sounds tautologous but, sadly, it isn't! – John also knows that, alongside this need for stridency, and the willingness to ask the tough questions toughly, there is also a need for what Rowan Williams calls the 'unfinishedness' of theological conversation. Taking his cue from people like Karl Barth, Williams recognizes that, precisely in that most difficult task of asking the really hard questions, one must always decline the temptation to 'take God's point of view', as though we alone know in advance what that is.

And that, I think, is why John Moses—though hardly himself a shrinking violet! – not only decries the dogmatic self-assurance of those who believe that they have 'captured' the finality of God's word, but also urges us towards a more generous inclusivism. In stark contrast to those for whom our human God-talk is either an intellectual cul-de-sac, a check-list of propositional morality, or a rigid declaration of orthodoxy—characteristics of Church life that inevitably render it increasingly alien to the rest of the world—John Moses, with all the rigour, and yet also humility, that describes both good historians, and honest theologians, encourages us to embrace instead a vision of God, and of Christian community, that, precisely in its unqualified commitment to Christ alone, is nevertheless, and thereby . . . 'free.'

The Revd Professor Mark Lindsay
Trinity College Theological School
30 August 2019.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must acknowledge those clergy who designate themselves as Bible-believing Christians rather than to identify as Anglicans. I knew that the largest diocese in Australia had been captured by what used to be called a very 'low church party', so whenever I went to Sydney I mostly chose to attend the two great Anglo-Catholic city churches of Christ Church St Laurence, Railway Square and St James, King Street. They were attractive to me because of the scholarship of the clergy and the highly disciplined enactment of the traditional liturgy of the Church. The worship there was spiritually uplifting and culturally enriching because those churches manifested the awe-inspiring tradition of the Church Catholic. Indeed one got to experience the all important *numinous* that religion is meant to awaken in human beings.

The move to Armidale as far as Anglicanism was concerned proved to be an unhappy experience. What I found was the complete opposite of the religion in which I had been brought up. In fact the men in charge of the diocese seemed bent on destroying that tradition by branding it as something diabolical because, in their view, it was not 'Bible-centred'. It was made emphatically clear to me that if I did not submit to at least three propositions that I could not function as a priest in that diocese. These propositions were as follows: 1) I must accept the Bible as God's *inerrant* Word, 2) I may not sanction the practice of ordaining women to the priesthood, and 3) I may not tolerate the presence of homosexuals in church and must withhold the sacraments from them.

I told the then Bishop that I would have to discuss all these issues in some detail. Although I would never claim to be a Biblical scholar

I knew something about the human authorship of the books that constitute the Bible and understood them as cultural products of a variety of peoples over thousands of years. The Bishop responded by instructing the Dean to tell me that my ministry was unacceptable to the Diocese. In a word, I was being forced to commit spiritual-intellectual *hara-kari* if I wished to continue any kind of priestly ministry. Painful as that was at the time I look back on the experience as actually instructive since it illustrated for me that there were many clergy in Australia who inhabit a parallel universe. Our Church is indeed a very fractured one which is a tragedy of immeasurable proportions, especially when one realises that one section of it denies *koinonia* with those of a different Anglican upbringing. This is extremely serious since we are all made whole and one by the salvific actions of Jesus of Nazareth who made a point of inclusively embracing everyone regardless of racial or religious affiliation.

On the positive side I warmly acknowledge the training I received at the hands of the many brothers of St Barnabas in North Queensland and subsequently through my experience of the priests who were on the staff of All Saints Church Wickham Terrace in Brisbane and at St Francis' College, Brisbane during those formative years. More recently the friendship of Brian Abbott of Armidale, a staunchly loyal Anglican, Professor Emeritus Graham Maddox, a magnanimous Methodist also of Armidale, plus my other learned Anglican colleagues in Canberra, Archdeacon Venerable Dr Brian Douglas and Rev' Canon Professor Scott Cowdell has been of inestimable support.

Ecumenically, as well, I wish to acknowledge the kindness and patience as well as the infinite capacity for dialogue of both my former student and Roman Catholic colleague Professor Peter Hempenstall and my learned cousin, Father Dr Gregory Moses.

Finally, I would have accomplished nothing but for the love and devotion of my wife, Professor Dr Ingrid Moses (née Heise) and our two sons, Professor Dirk Moses of the University of Sydney and Mr Rolf Moses CEO of the Queensland Law Society.

John Moses,
Canberra, August 2019.

Author's Preface

The essays assembled here originated as lectures or papers presented at various conferences, seminars and on *ad hoc* occasions to study groups at my parish church, St Paul's Manuka, Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn There I am licensed as an honorary assistant priest. The various texts have been re-worked for publication but the content and intention of each one remains unchanged. Each chapter could almost be read as a distinct entity in itself, but taken together the entirety forms an organic whole.

The themes addressed arose from concerns at various stages of both my theological and historical studies. These began in 1953 at St Francis' College in Brisbane and then at the University of Queensland until 1960. Ideas subsequently began to crystallise after I had been privileged to study for five years at two German universities, namely at Munich (1961–62) and Erlangen (1963–65). There I took courses under professors of intimidating erudition who at the same time manifested a benign humanity towards their curious antipodean student. Australians and New Zealanders at that time in German universities belonged in the category *rara aves*, at least in Modern History. There were always far more British and American post-graduates present. From our venerable professors I learned, among other things, that a historian really had to get old in order to acquire a more balanced perception of the past. Provided one kept abreast of the research, age increased rather than decreased one's ability to arrive at more balanced judgements of the events and personalities one was studying. Life experience was essential, especially for the practice of academic history, and everyone experiences life very differently. That is one of the reasons why there are 'varieties of history' (Fritz Stern).

A major factor in the training of one's historiographical voice—as with singing—is the influence of one's teachers. One is conscious of their pedagogic mediation throughout one's life from the earliest days at school, theological college and university. They were the agents of intellectual-spiritual formation which involves what I like to call 'cultural transfer'. Those mentors implanted life-enhancing values acquired directly or indirectly from the mother country. From them one learned about the essence of humanity, especially the shaping force of the Gospel message, as contained, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5–7). This passage of the New Testament is the yard stick for all *decent* human behaviour, a universal 'Golden Rule'. The Good News of Jesus of Nazareth contains the essential principles for all truly human behaviour. Tragically, however, the internalisation of these principles by individuals and nations remains attenuated. A universal appreciation of the essential meaning of *decency* remains frustratingly out of reach. Nevertheless, the 'Sermon on the Mount' as the New Testament's up-date of the Old Testament's Ten Commandments is the standard of decency among many of the nations throughout the world. The central precept therein is not only should one continue to love one's neighbour as oneself but also one's enemies, regardless of who they are. And this is a seismic shift from the precepts of the Old Testament.

Christianity, then, is a radical call to overcome all prejudice and hatred and embrace the 'other' because everyone stands in a filial relationship to the Creator God, known in the Judaic, Christian and Muslim scriptures as our heavenly father. But the Christian scriptures, the New Testament, extends the obligation both to forgive and love the enemy. And that is the distinguishing characteristic in the process of realising one's humanity, namely the ability to love and forgive indiscriminately. One strives incessantly to realise the fullness of humanity but such effort seems to be destined to be the labour of Sisyphus, as indeed the course of history demonstrates. But perhaps a better metaphor is 'pilgrimage'. The peoples of the world need to be seen as united on a common journey towards the realisation of the fullness of their humanity, and that is the inner meaning of salvation, namely to be made whole.

Finally, perhaps the greatest lesson history can teach is that no ideology, because every system of thought is a human artefact, can lay claim to permanence let alone infallibility. Everything changes so it

is absurd for the champions of any form of fundamentalism, whether political or religious, to assert a prior right to laud it over others as was the case in Nazi Germany or the Soviet-dominated world and prior to that to dictatorial Popery or the biblical fundamentalism of conservative Evangelicals. True Christianity is rather a *way*, certainly not the inflexible *ideology* of a self-appointed cadre of theological bullies.

Introduction

'They seem to think it "positively indecent" to risk error by expressing an opinion'*

Why Christianity?

At the present time, especially If one moves in academic circles, one is bound to encounters the question why would anyone want to be identified as a practising Christian in this day and age? Surely all religions are generally recognised to be obscurantist, and Christianity is a myth that has no relevance to modernity. That sums up what many 'modern' people think. One can agree that if by Christianity is meant the fundamentalist-Evangelical version then it is a particularly blatant form of obscurantism as will be demonstrated. But there is a Christianity as a *normative ethic* that has formed the core of western civilisation and culture for thousands of years despite its misappropriation by blackguard popes, prelates, monarchs and dictators (Paul Collins). The ethical core has survived into the present and where there has been "spiritual wickedness in high places", educated and articulate people, both lay and clerical, hasten to condemn it and remind the world that the ethics of Christianity are the base line or accepted standard for human decency.

* Quoted after Adam Sisman, *An Honorable Englishman: The Life of Hugh Trevor-Roper* (New York: Random House, 2010), 299, citing Roper's views on most of the professors of history at Oxford prior to his own appointment as Regius Professor in 1957.

The price to be paid for the neglect or disparagement of Christianity is extremely high. If it is diminished then humanity is thrown back into a moral anarchy, the outcome of which does not bear contemplating. No other world religion, be it Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, or Bah'ai-ism, measures up to the ethical standard of Christianity which is in essence extremely simple, namely just 'being there for others' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). It is maintained here that the doctrine of undiscriminating good will towards all humanity and responsibility for the preservation of Creation is not matched to a comparable degree in any other religions although they may manifest *in their purest form* a similar respect for the world and its inhabitants of all races.

While this comparison will doubtless be contested, it is maintained here that an objective study of comparative religion will show the Christian ethic to be the most universally compassionate, based as it is on *forgiveness*. Surely the yardstick by which to measure the essential humanity of any faith system is how it treats the 'other', the repentant sinner and outsiders, 'the stranger within your gates'. And the captives. This naturally does not guarantee that all baptised, confirmed and even practising Christians have consistently been unconditionally charitable because both individuals and nations have scandalously violated the Christian ethic in the pursuit of ignoble objectives. Nevertheless the ethic stands. One is called to live by it for the welfare of Creation and all who dwell therein.

Why Anglicanism?

Given the murky circumstances in which the Church of England broke with Rome during the reign of Henry VIII (1536–1547) it is understandable that Anglicanism is easily held up to ridicule by its detractors. For example, it was once quipped that it was the only religion that owed its origin to syphilitic bacteria. This is a macabre allusion to the failed attempts by Henry to sire any male progeny with his first wife the Spanish Catherine of Aragon. In urgent need of a healthy male heir for dynastic reasons, Henry sought to have his marriage with Catherine annulled by the Pope on the grounds that its validity from the outset was always suspect since Catherine had been the wife of his deceased elder brother, Arthur. However, since the Pope, Clement VII (1478–1534) was unwilling or unable to grant