

officers) for not conforming – or being accused of not conforming – to the rigid new sexual purity standards imposed on them”.

The argument is that when the reformers of the 16th century changed the rules to allow the clergy to marry the Church was in effect rejecting the proposition that the clergy needed to be purer in their lives than the laity. In the present day the accepted standards

morality as setting the standard? In light of biblical injunctions (e.g. in 1 Timothy 3) about the standards expected of bishops and deacons would they not have required a higher standard of behaviour for those in leadership positions in the Church? And even though there are clearly debates in the Church about moral standards, can we expect those setting out a code of behaviour for the clergy to adopt

show the world how tough the Church could be by punishing even one of its own bishops with the ultimate penalty. So he received the same punishment as even the most degraded perpetrators of sexual abuse.

Other instances are given of clergy who had been guilty in the past of sexual misdemeanours of various degrees of seriousness to which they had owned up but for

is that it removes the distinction between different degrees of seriousness of sexual sin. One-off failures, or failures in the distant past – which may have been repented of long ago and not repeated – are treated in the same way as much more serious matters. The other problem is that sexual sins are treated in a way quite differently from other kinds of sin, whereas from a Christian perspective there

the Church loses this, it loses its reason for existence.

This is a book that the Church needs to take seriously. In particular all bishops and professional standards committees should read and ponder it deeply.

Bishop Keith Rayner was Archbishop of Melbourne (1990-1999) and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia (1991-1999).

A courageous bishop who stood up for Indigenous Australians

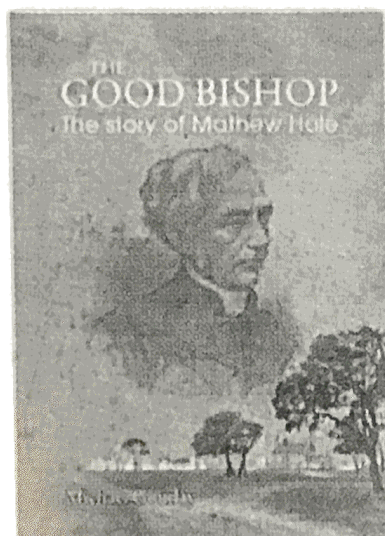
The Good Bishop: the story of Mathew Hale (1811-1895), by Michael Gourlay (Published by the Mathew Hale library Brisbane, 2015 \$34.99)

reviewed by Peter Corney

AS SOMEONE born and bred in Western Australia I was familiar with Hale School. It was one of the three Anglican private schools for boys in Perth in the 1950's during my youth. I attended Guildford Grammar School and we often played Hale in sporting contests. I also had several friends who attended Hale.

But like most boys I had no knowledge or interest in the history of these schools. It wasn't until many years later when I was ordained that I learnt about the significance of Bishop Hale its founder and his outstanding contribution to education, Aboriginal welfare and the Church in the early colonial days of the settlements in Adelaide, Perth and then later in Brisbane.

Like many Australians of my



post WWII vintage we were not very interested in our past, we were focussed on the future and building the nation in the midst of the growing prosperity of the 1950's. We are the poorer for that; just think of the number of historic colonial buildings we tore down to build brand new modern cream brick ones! But it's the failure to develop and hand down accurate and important

historical narratives that I think is the most troubling to me these days because they pass down values and core beliefs that are important to our culture.

“Bishop Hale’s story is important... for a necessary correction to the general public’s understanding of the vital role the Church played in Australia’s European settlement.”

Bishop Hale’s story is important, not just for the Church’s understanding of itself but for a necessary correction to the general public’s understanding of the vital role the Church played in Australia’s European settlement. In the case of Mathew Hale as Archdeacon of Adelaide, then as first Bishop of Perth and then later Brisbane, his contribution to

general education and especially Aboriginal rights and welfare is very important. As an evangelical he was influenced by the life and witness of William Wilberforce

and the British anti-slavery movement. Their principles based on the Bible led them to the conviction that all people were equal, all were created in the image of God and that Christ died for all people, and they applied this view to the Indigenous Australians. Many of the early Anglican leaders in the colony were evangelicals, such as Bishop Perry in Melbourne, and

they also shared these views. In Hale’s case this led him to very practical action to protect and advance Aboriginal welfare.

The popular narrative about the Churches’ role in Aboriginal affairs is generally misinformed. Anyone who takes the trouble to read John Harris’s outstanding history of Australian Aboriginal Missions - *One Blood* will find the true story. Those who read Mathew Hale’s history as well will find a story of someone who had the courage to take a stand for the dignity and welfare of the Indigenous people in a context of often open hostility to them, and those who supported them, by many of the early settlers.

Mathew Hale’s energy, the distances and travel undertaken in the days of uncomfortable and slow transport to distant places, his faithful and Godly commitment to his people and clergy are outstanding. He truly earned his title “The Good Bishop”.

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