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A Scientifically Astute Prelate: Bishop Samuel Tarratt Nevill and the Reception of Evolution in New Zealand in the late 1800s and early 1900s

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Abstract

This paper clarifies Bishop Samuel Tarratt Nevill's role in early debates over evolution in New Zealand. It is well known that Nevill was an important figure, but there is no scholarly consensus regarding his views. In this paper, I argue that Nevill's paleontological training gave him a rare perspective within Antipodean scientific circles. A convinced creationist for much of his life, he publicly embraced an interpretation of evolution only in 1908, after his understanding of science and theology had changed. I emphasise that Nevill's arguments were always sophisticated and that his reputation was high even among his scientific opponents.

Historiographical Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bishop Samuel Tarratt Nevill (1837–1921) was a prominent figure in New Zealand society.[1]

Educated and ordained in England, Nevill immigrated to New Zealand to become bishop of the newly founded Diocese of Dunedin in 1871. He remained in this position for forty-eight years, during which he oversaw the growth of Anglicanism in Otago and Southland and established landmark social services in Dunedin. Owing to his longevity, he served as primate of the Church of the Province of New Zealand from 1904 to 1919, and by the outbreak of the First World War was the senior bishop by consecration in the British Empire.[2]

In addition to being an accomplished brick-and-mortar bishop, Nevill was a noteworthy intellectual. As a theologian, he specialised in Anglo-Catholic understandings of ecclesiology, having published an erudite book on this subject shortly before becoming bishop of Dunedin.[3] He was also very active in scientific circles. In England in the 1860s, he had studied natural science at the University of Cambridge, where he specialised in paleontology, the study of fossils. He also developed a cordial working relationship with Adam Sedgwick, the great Anglican clergyman and geologist.[4] Although Nevill only graduated with a second-class honours degree – the unfortunate result, he claimed, of there having been no paleontological questions in his final exam paper[5] – he was nevertheless one of the few Anglican bishops in his lifetime to boast scientific training.

Shortly after establishing himself in Dunedin, Nevill joined the Otago Institute, the city's premier scientific organisation in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A continuous member from 1873 to 1920,[6] he was elected its president in 1877 and served on its council in 1880 and 1882[7] – remarkable feats considering his substantial diocesan responsibilities. Nevill formed good relationships with leading scientists in New

Zealand, most notably Sir James Hector, who often attended Nevill's church services.[8]

Nevill's intellectual accomplishments even gained international recognition. In 1889, the English Victoria Institute desired an erudite prelate to give a philosophical address at its next meeting. Initially, it had opted for the archbishop of Canterbury, but he cancelled at short notice. The Institute resolved that the young bishop of Dunedin, who was then visiting England, was a worthy replacement.[9] By the time Nevill had become primate, even the Nobel-Prize-winning philosopher Rudolf Eucken was praising Nevill's intellectual acumen.[10]

Controversy Over Nevill's Position on Evolution

Owing to his scientific and theological interests, Nevill played a key role in the reception of evolution in New Zealand. In the years immediately preceding the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, it was popularly assumed throughout the Western world that God had created the cosmos in the manner described in the Book of Genesis. Some, especially in predominantly Roman Catholic countries, were what are now known as Young-Earth Creationists who believed that approximately 6,000 years ago, God created the cosmos and everything inside it in six natural days.[11] In the English-speaking world, variations of Old-Earth Creationism, which suggests that the Genesis narrative took place over a longer timescale, were more common.

Both Young- and Old-Earth Creationists took it for granted that animal and plant species had been created miraculously, that the first human male had been formed from the dust of the earth, and that the first woman had been formed from the side of the first man. Most creationists, then as now, acknowledge the existence of microevolution, the small-scale mutations that can help certain organisms adapt to their environment better. The plethora of modern-day dog breeds is a good example of microevolution in action: they are members of a single species, but their owners have bred them to develop vastly different characteristics. However, creationists deny the possibility of macroevolution, the transmutation of one species into another via the processes of natural and sexual selection, and especially the possibility that macroevolution can explain the origins and complexity of life.

In his first book, Darwin challenged the creationist thesis by suggesting that naturalistic evolution can indeed explain the origins and development of animals and plants. In 1871, Darwin published *The Descent of Man*, which explicitly applied this evolutionary worldview to human beings. Although Darwin was not the first to hypothesise a naturalistic origin for living beings, his books generated a paradigm shift in the study of biology.[12] Across the world, people debated the scientific validity of the new theory and its religious implications. By the first decades of the twentieth century, the evolutionists had gained ascendancy in mainstream scientific circles as well as in many mainstream Protestant denominations.[13] However, there was a significant number of dissident scientists who rejected evolution on scientific grounds as well as conservative Christians who rejected it on religious grounds.

New Zealand was not immune to this trend. Debates raged in both scientific and theological circles. Two incidents that took place in Dunedin in 1876 reflect the depth of the divide. The first was the public outcry directed against the Wesleyan minister Alfred Fitchett, who announced support for theistic evolution and questioned the literal-historical interpretation of Genesis. The controversy culminated in Fitchett's ostracization by the Dunedin Young Men's Christian Association and in Fitchett's resignation from the Wesleyan Methodist ministry. The second was the controversy over the veracity of evolution amid a series of popular lectures by the Otago Institute. The debates, which pitted

leading exponents of Darwinism and creationism against one another, has been dubbed the New Zealand equivalent of the infamous Wilberforce-Huxley debate in 1860 – although the New Zealand debates were conducted in a more conciliatory fashion.[14]

Historians have been charting the reception of evolution in New Zealand for many years. It is now well established that, over time, the evolutionists gained ascendancy in the mainstream scientific community and in mainstream Protestant churches. By the outbreak of the First World War, New Zealand's creationists found themselves on the fringe. However, no historian to date has accurately and systematically described Nevill's changing views on evolution: during the debates of 1876, Nevill was a vocal spokesman for creationism, but by the end of his life he had embraced evolution. He was also the one who, when a creationist, provided refuge to the evolutionist Fitchett by allowing the marooned Methodist to become a priest of the Anglican Diocese of Dunedin.

In 1968, John H. Evans declared in a broad overview of Nevill's theology that he regarded evolution as inherently 'antagonistic to Christianity'.[15] This somewhat shallow view does not acknowledge that Nevill later became a prominent supporter of evolution, let alone explain why. In 1983, G. S. Parsonson presented a paper that identified Nevill as a creationist leader within the Otago Institute in the 1870s.[16] However, once again, an explanation as to why Nevill eventually became an evolutionist is lacking. In 1993, David S. Bell wrote a doctoral thesis that elucidated Nevill's relative openness to evolution, especially after the 1890s.[17] Nevertheless, he neglected to stress Nevill's creationist past and downplayed creationist influences in Nevill's 1891 sermon to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. He also noted, without sufficient qualification, that Nevill was one of Alfred Fitchett's ''many friends'', which risked giving the impression that even in 1876, Nevill was open to evolutionary ideas.[18]

John Stenhouse has offered the most comprehensive analysis to date. In his 1985 doctoral thesis, he asserted that Nevill was open to the idea of evolution in the 1880s and 1890s.[19] In a chapter in the 1999 book *Disseminating Darwinism*, Stenhouse pointed out that Nevill was a leading New Zealand creationist during the 1870s.[20]

These analyses are interesting. However, Stenhouse's treatment of Nevill sometimes lacks nuance and ends up misdating Nevill's acceptance of evolution. He contended that Nevill 'may already have been a partial convert to evolution' even in 1876, which suggests that Nevill's creationist worldview was somewhat fragile.[21] Stenhouse then argued that by the time Nevill published *Sermons on Questions of the Day* in 1884, he was already an evolutionist. Hence his repeated claim that 'By 1884 at the very latest Nevill publicly proclaimed his belief in biological evolution'.[22]

Nevill and the Controversies of 1876

At the outset, I would like to emphasise that source material for this subject is limited. It is impossible to chart Nevill's thoughts on evolution in their entirety for several reasons: 1) his posthumously published autobiography lacks detail; 2) he did not maintain a regular diary; and 3) what journals do exist are travelogues that tell us little about his intellectual worldview. Nevertheless, the broad facts may be ascertained by scrutinising his published writings.

Before analysing Nevill's views, some philosophical context is necessary to help modern readers understand his initial creationist stance. Like many educated Britons in the nineteenth century, Nevill was trained to adopt Francis Bacon's approach to knowledge. Two aspects of Baconianism are relevant to this study. Firstly, Baconianism holds that reason and divine revelation are both authentic purveyors of truth,

but that they represent two realms of knowledge that should be kept separate.[23] Thus, Baconians regard as inappropriate attempts to suppress scientific evidence on theological grounds as well as attempts to use scientific data to alter religious dogma. Secondly, Bacon believed that science ought to proceed empirically, prizing meticulous observations of the natural world over theoretical cogitations.[24]

In the 1870s, Nevill was staunchly Baconian, as indicated by his 1877 presidential address to the Otago Institute. Decrying what he considered the speculative tendencies of pro-evolution members, Nevill argued that excessive theorising had been the 'old error' of Greek thinkers like Aristotle, and that the Baconians had 'corrected' it by means of 'ascertained facts'.[25]

I argue that Nevill opposed evolution both on scientific and theological grounds in this era, but that his Baconianism caused him to stress the former within the Otago Institute. That he had theological objections to evolution is highly probable. Despite occasional overtures to modern biblical exegetes like Ignaz von Döllinger,[26] who were known to downplay the historicity of certain biblical passages, Nevill tended to uphold a literal-historical understanding of what Scripture says about human origins. He did so because, in his mind, the validity of numerous Christian dogmas appeared to rest on a literal-historical reading of Scripture. For example, in his 1894 *Popular Catechism*, Nevill avowed that Adam was a real person, since it is 'the taint' of his original sin that 'actions us to evil'.[27] For much of his life, Nevill talked about the Genesis account of the first humans as if they were literally true.

In his 1870 book on ecclesial history, for example, he seemed to allude to the creation of Adam from the clay of the earth: 'the spiritual Temple has on earth an earthly building, just as the soul of the individual Christian has an earthly tenement of clay'.[28] Although this statement could be a mere description of the body-soul dichotomy, in light of Nevill's anti-evolutionism, the reference to clay suggests that he really did believe in the miraculous account of Adam in Genesis 2. In 1900, he declared that human history was one 'long journey from the Paradise of Eden to the Paradise of God', and that 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'.[29] Again, it is possible that Nevill is speaking allegorically. Nevertheless, his commitment to creationism suggests that he understood these theological truths in a literal-historical manner.

Nevill's Scientific Objections to Evolution in 1876

The key to understanding Nevill's creationist position in the debates of 1876 is to remember that he was a philosophical Baconian and that his scientific speciality was paleontology. When analysing the veracity of evolution, Nevill looked first and foremost to the fossil record. In 1859, Darwin himself had admitted that there was very little fossil evidence for the transmutation of species and that there was 'no satisfactory answer' as to why.[30] Nevill's former teacher at Cambridge, Adam Sedgwick, rejected evolution for this reason: he believed that Darwin had abandoned hard data for a speculative theory.[31] Even in our time, esteemed paleontologists such as Stephen J. Gould have highlighted that 'the poverty of paleontological data' remains an awkward problem for the scientific community.[32]

In light of this testimony, it is unsurprising that Nevill dismissed evolutionary theory in the Otago debates. In late 1876, Robert Gillies, a botanist serving as the president of the Otago Institute, gave the first popular lecture of that year.[33] In a review of Ernst Haeckel's recent history of biology, Gillies complained that the German scientist left many aspects of evolution unexplained, above all the question of the origins of life. Gillies spent so much time on this point that F. W. Hutton, a professional scientist and a fervent Darwinist, sought to reaffirm the truth of

evolution despite Haeckel's inadequate elucidation of it. Hutton contended that evolution was the only viable scientific explanation of biological origins and that 'there was no other that had the slightest scientific evidence in its favour'.[34]

It was at this point that Nevill felt obligated to interject. He remarked that 'he had never heard any argument or read any book which proved descent from a primordial germ or atom, and he did not think that any clearly marked-out passage from one species to the other had been established'.[35] In lieu of a convincing naturalistic explanation of human origins, Nevill proposed creationism as a more prudent one, averring that God created distinct lifeforms by 'superadding to one species some faculty or attributes that the others did not possess'.[36]

A little later, Nevill expanded on his impromptu comments by giving the third popular lecture in the series. It is worth noting that the atmosphere at the Institute that day was one of open discussion and mutual respect. Although President Gillies highlighted that 'many' in the audience might disagree with Nevill, they were 'glad' to be there, not least because Nevill had made the fossil record 'his special [area of] study'.[37] In true Baconian fashion, Nevill proclaimed that he addressed them that day 'as a humble student of physical science' rather than a theologian.[38]

He repeated that 'The geological evidence of descent' necessary to prove evolution 'was confessedly inadequate'.[39] In his mind, evolutionists had committed the chief error of Greek science by formulating a theory based on inadequate evidence and then ignoring or manipulating data that challenged their speculative rubric. On the one hand, there seemed to be no fossil evidence indicating the emergence of 'any new form of living thing since man's advent on the globe, whenever that event took place'.[40] On the other hand, the purported links between certain sub-kingdoms were also speculative, and that one could argue that they ran parallel to one another rather than diverged from a common ancestor.[41]

Nevill proposed creationism as a more cogent explanation of life's origins. Like most scientifically educated creationists, Nevill did not deny microevolution. However, because of the lack of evidence for Darwinism, he argued in favour of 'The direct creation at a point of time of the ancestral well-defined type from which each existing organism was descended'.[42] He then provided examples of complex biological phenomena that he thought are best explained by divine intervention, such as the elegantly designed teeth of elephants.

At this point, one might ask why Nevill, if he were so adamant about creationism, would facilitate the evolutionist Fitchett's entry into his own diocese during this period. The answer lies firstly in the desperate circumstances of the Diocese of Dunedin. Nevill's episcopate was marked by a perpetual dearth of clergy, since the diocese lacked the money to provide proper stipends.[43] One way that Nevill sought to rectify this problem was to ordain clergymen from other denominations who expressed an interest in Anglicanism. In addition, Nevill was a passionate Anglo-Catholic ecumenist who, while dismissive of non-episcopal orders, yearned to bring groups such as the Wesleyan Methodists back into full communion with the Anglican Church.[44] For these reasons, I think it is natural that Nevill would allow Fitchett to become an integral part of the diocese, even though their views on the evolution question differed.

Nevill's Reaffirmation of Creationism in 1877

Stenhouse aptly outlines Nevill's 1876 justifications for creationism and remarks that 'Nevill's dissection of Darwinism had convinced few'.[45] But his inference that Nevill may already have begun to doubt creationism lacks supporting evidence. After all, from a

nineteenth-century paleontological perspective, Nevill's case against Darwinism had merit. Furthermore, despite being in the minority, Nevill's eloquence and scientific credentials ensured his election as president of the Otago Institute the very next year. Had Nevill been growing favourable to evolution, it seems unlikely that he would reaffirm a creationist perspective in his presidential address. Yet, this is precisely what he did.

He began by lamenting his inability, as a busy clergyman, to keep abreast of all modern scientific discoveries. He then justified his becoming president despite this shortcoming by highlighting his firm understanding of Baconian principles. He emphasised the danger of abandoning 'careful observation' for 'fashionable theory'.[46] Taking his point to the extreme, he noted how careful attention to data can even undermine mainstream estimates for 'the duration of man upon the earth'.[47] As a Baconian, Nevill made clear that he was not sneaking a defence of biblical chronology into a scientific address.

Instead, as a trained scientist, he protested against colleagues who hypothesised that the earth was extremely old on the basis of a few carefully selected facts, and then took for granted that all scientific evidence ought to fit into this paradigm. For example, he noted that scientists often calculate the age of human remains under a river deposit by adding up the latter's sediment layers. However, Nevill complained that all too often, they have a preconceived estimate of what the age should be, and then neglect or reinterpret evidence that contradicts this estimate. He concluded by advocating a circumspect approach to science that eschewed the creation of 'systems for system's sake'.[48]

It was a provocative address considering that mainstream science had long since decided that the earth was much older than the Bible suggested and that modern methods for estimating age were deemed reliable. It may also appear perplexing given that Nevill, having absorbed the uniformitarianism of Sedgwick, was certainly not a Young-Earth Creationist. Nevertheless, Nevill's intentions are clear enough: he was indirectly criticising his evolutionist colleagues by showing that even uniformitarian geology, a scientific paradigm with much more evidence to support it than Darwinism, becomes dangerously speculative when dogmatic theorising takes priority over hard data.

Nevill Did Not Endorse Evolution in 1884

From 1877 until 1884, Nevill dropped out of the public debate over evolution. Partly, this absence was the result of his ecclesial duties, which became ever more elaborate as the Diocese of Dunedin expanded. Yet, I argue that Nevill also suffered a loss of confidence. In his presidential address, he had conceded that time constraints prevented him from keeping abreast of all scientific discoveries. This self-consciousness probably got worse after his retirement as president, for no matter how much the other members respected his intellect and rhetoric, he was unable to keep up with the professional scientists.

This sense of insecurity is symbolised by the fact that in 1881, he was obliged to sit in silence on a podium at the University of Otago as Thomas Jeffrey Parker, an aggressive evolutionist lecturer, railed against those who endorsed special creation.[49] His insecurity is also hinted at by the fact that he seems never again to have advocated creationism as a trained paleontologist after 1877 and that after serving on the council in 1882, he never again held a position of prominence in the Otago Institute.

Nevertheless, this silence did not signify an acceptance of evolution. To be sure, Nevill began to re-evaluate his approach to the topic, as is made evident in his 1884 book of sermons. As

previously noted, Stenhouse regards this book as proof that Nevill had become an evolutionist by 1884. I disagree, not least because the single page reference he provides does not mention evolution at all.[50] In fact, this book reveals only that Nevill was approaching the evolution question from a different angle. Preaching to fellow Anglicans in a church environment, Nevill now spoke primarily as a theologian. Treating evolution as the unfortunate product of modern materialistic philosophy, he alluded to it three times within the context of an exposition on the Christian understanding of nature.

The first time, Nevill could not resist pointing out that the scientific status of evolution was questionable and that he only mentioned it because 'certain physical scientists' had rescued the idea from historical oblivion, it 'having been forgotten or neglected since the time of Anaximander, some 2500 years ago'.[51] Nowhere in this passage does Nevill suggest that evolution is true or even probable. Instead, he highlights its dearth of universal support and its ties to ancient Greek thought, which he still considered excessively speculative.

The second time he mentioned evolution, he defended the increasingly unfashionable idea of special creation because the complexity of 'every stricture of every organism' makes a naturalistic origin of life quite dubious.[52] Here, Nevill indirectly endorsed creationism by suggesting that the natural world is too complex to have evolved by means of naturalistic processes. The third and last time Nevill referred to evolution, he spoke hypothetically: 'even if we suppose the whole existing series of animals and plants upon the face of the earth to have arrived at their present condition on some plan of evolution', nevertheless 'the grand result argues foreknowledge and intention on the part of Him who set the whole scheme in operation'.[53] It is an important statement that foreshadows Nevill's eventual endorsement of evolution. However, the hypothetical nature of this comment illustrates that, contrary to Stenhouse's assertions, Nevill was still a creationist in 1884.

Nevill Remains Ambivalent to Evolution in 1891

The next time Nevill discussed evolution in public was in his sermon to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1891. Once again, he spoke primarily as a theologian, for although his audience were scientists, they had assembled in Christchurch Cathedral to hear him discuss the relationship between faith and reason. As Bell points out, it is a sermon of pivotal importance because it highlighted that Nevill's scientific principles were changing.[54] Nevertheless, Bell does not do full justice to Nevill, for he portrays Nevill only as an opponent of materialistic evolution, not as a man still loyal to creationist principles.

Nevill began by reaffirming belief in Baconian induction.[55] However, unlike in his previous addresses, Nevill drew attention to the fact that Bacon had called theology the queen of the sciences, since it studied God, the highest and most venerable subject known to the human mind.[56] On the basis of this principle, Nevill argued that the complete separation of science and theology was as problematic as excessive speculation, since observed data was incomprehensible without some kind of theory to explain its significance. Why he chose to emphasise this point now is unknown. However, comments he made in 1908 (see next section) imply that he was becoming disenchanted with pure empiricism, which he blamed for fuelling the rise of materialistic thinking throughout the West. The best way to combat this trend, he reasoned, was to reassert the value of metaphysics for understanding the world around us.

Despite his movement away from pure empiricism, Nevill remained an anti-evolutionist. He stated that Darwin's theory could be true, and that 'should time substantiate the teachings of evolutionists, the bases of supernatural science

would remain unshaken'.[57] However, he avowed that creationism is more tenable. Indeed, building on his claim that theology and science complement one another, he criticised the notion that because Genesis is not a scientific textbook, it contains no information of interest to science.

Nevill argued that Genesis is a 'most carefully expressed account' of creation by God, a trustworthy authority.[58] He therefore questioned whether the Bible was really unscientific, and whether the mysteries of life 'would not be more fully explained by the simple adoption of that account, than by any hypothesis as yet propounded'.[59] This is especially the case, Nevill averred, because 'the Bible account of the general *order* of creation may be taken to agree with the findings of the geologist and paleontologist, with the demands of the botanist, and the expectation of the student of biology'.[60]

Nevill then impugned the scientific status of evolution. He remarked that it remained an unproven hypothesis, and that he himself 'fail[ed] to see' how naturalistic processes 'could possibly originate anything within the creature which was extraneous to it before'.[61] Indeed, he declared that the idea of 'accidents and freaks of nature' giving 'origin to structural differentiations is to dethrone science and overturn the reign of law'.[62] Nevill concluded, in accordance with his theological emphasis, by pointing out that 'Scripture proclaims man to be the highest and last of God's developments on earth', and that he was unaware of any evidence to demonstrate 'the transformation of any one creature to another since man's appearance on the scene'.[63]

Nevill's *Volte-Face* in 1908

After his 1891 sermon, Nevill made little reference to the evolution controversy until 1908. It is impossible to discern his precise views during this interim, but his previously mentioned comments to the diocesan synod of 1900 suggest that he was still a creationist at the turn of the century. However, in 1908, Nevill gave two lectures at St. Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin, elucidating a new theory of science he had adopted.[64] In 1909, these lectures were published in London under the title of *Spiritual Philosophy*. The book was well received among theologians and theistic philosophers because it argued that a metaphysical understanding of reality was more intellectually satisfying than a materialistic one.[65]

In it, Nevill cast aside Baconianism as a gateway to materialistic thinking. Nevill now drew on Genesis 1:1 – 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (KJV) – to argue that 'the primary' factor of reality 'is spirit … as a complex personality'.[66] In other words, Nevill was arguing that the so-called natural world was in fact thoroughly imbued with the supernatural. He attempted to show that this theistic understanding of reality could solve many apparent conundrums of modern science that materialism had failed to explain.

Evolution was a case in point. In what is undoubtedly the most remarkable *volte-face* of his career, Nevill stopped fighting evolution on scientific and theological grounds, and instead portrayed it as proof of the elegance and truth of the Christian faith. Although one could argue that Nevill's intentions were Machiavellian, that he only seemed to endorse evolution to undercut materialism, it is more likely that Nevill had sincerely reconciled himself to the popular theory. After all, in 1884 and 1891, he had highlighted that even if evolution were true, a theistic interpretation of it would leave the substance of Christian dogma unchanged.

Armed with his new theory of science, Nevill no longer needed to be concerned about the growth of evolutionary ideas. He could now employ theological arguments to transcend paleontological objections to evolution – still

pertinent in the early 1900s – and thereby demonstrate the explanatory power of a theistic perspective.

In this manner, Nevill's previous objections to evolution became valuable assets. Owing to the complexity of the natural world, he noted, 'I am bold to say that the allowance of spiritual direction in the natural world is precisely that which seems still to be required to render the doctrine of evolution … entirely rational and complete'.[67] Perceiving God to be constantly at work in nature, he doubted that evolution could develop solely through naturalistic processes. Thus, Nevill proclaimed that God had supernaturally imbued organic matter with the capacity to harbour life, since inanimate matter could never have done so on its own.[68] He suggested that God had then guided the development of nature beyond microevolutionary changes to be 'so eminently adapted for the service of man', the usefulness of the horse as a means of transport being a case in point.[69] With respect to humanity, Nevill declared that the animal bodies of the primordial Adam and Eve were the product of evolution and that God had miraculously imbued them with souls to become truly human.[70]

Simply put, in 1908 Nevill signalled his movement from an Old-Earth Creationist position to one in line with the modern-day Intelligent Design Movement. Given that he never again seems to have spoken publicly about the subject, it is almost certain that he maintained these views until his death in 1921.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to explain the contradictions in existing historical research regarding Bishop Samuel Tarratt Nevill's role in the reception of evolution in New Zealand. Previous research has been too fragmentary and contradictory, and so has misinterpreted and sometimes even trivialised Nevill's position. I have clarified that Nevill was a creationist throughout the 1870s and that he was far more committed than Stenhouse seems willing to concede. I have shown that despite Stenhouse's claim that Nevill had adopted evolution by 1884, he actually reiterated support for creationism in 1884 and 1891. Between 1891 and 1908, he adopted a new philosophy of science that transformed him into a proponent of evolution via Intelligent Design. However, this *volte-face* does not change the fact that for much of his ecclesial career, Nevill was the pre-eminent creationist authority in Dunedin, and one of the leading creationists in the Antipodes more generally.

I also hope that this paper will have a wider significance. Across the Western world, the relationship between science and faith remains contentious. Religious people, and especially clergy, are often portrayed as the country bumpkins of history, as inquisitors and slothful monastics interfering with the work of scientific pioneers such as Galileo Galilei. In this paper, I have shown that Bishop Nevill was an esteemed member of New Zealand's scientific community and an accomplished theologian. Although his opinions on the evolution question will not find much traction in the New Zealand Church today, he always relied on reason and evidence, and so in no way can be considered a backwoods bigot. His learning, love of truth, and charitableness towards opponents should inspire modern-day Anglicans seeking to engage the wider culture on scientific issues. Even if we do not persuade others of our views, we can still earn their respect in the same way that the anti-evolutionist Nevill earned the respect of convinced Darwinists within the Otago Institute.

[1] For biographical details, see Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *Samuel Tarratt Nevill First Bishop of Dunedin, 1871–1919, Primate of N.Z., 1904–1919, with a Short History of S. Paul's Cathedral*, ed. E. R. Nevill (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers, 1922).

[2] H. T. Purchas, *A History of the English Church in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Simpson & Williams, 1914), 228.

[3] Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *Course of Sermons Bearing on the Constitution and History of the English Church* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1870).

[4] Nevill, *Samuel Tarratt Nevill*, 7–8.

[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] 'Otago Institute,' in *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, 1873*, vol. 6 (Wellington, James Hughes, 1874), 18; 'Otago Institute,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, 1920*, vol. 52 (Wellington: Marcus F. Marks, 1920), 566.

[7] 'Otago Institute,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, 1877*, vol. 10, ed. James Hector (Wellington: Lyon and Blair, 1878), 559; 'Otago Institute,' in *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, 1879*, vol. 12 (Wellington: Lyon and Blair Printers, 1880), 456; 'Otago Institute,' in *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, 1881*, vol. 14 (Wellingon: Lyon and Blair, 1882), 563.

[8] David S. Bell, 'The Impact of Nineteenth Century Science and Biblical Criticism on Expressions of Faith and Theology, with Especial Reference to the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand' (PhD diss., University of Otago, 1993), 196–197.

[9] 'Bishop Nevill on Buddhism,' *Otago Daily Times*, 19 October 1889, 1. Note that all all secular newspapers cited in this paper were accessed via the National Library of New Zealand's Papers Past, and all religious newspapers via the Hocken Library in Dunedin.

[10] 'Prof. Rudolf Eucken and Bishop Nevill,' *Church Envoy*, 1 March 1914, 43.

[11] For a broad overview of the Roman Catholic Church's anti-evolutionist stance in this period, see Michael Chaberek, *Catholicism and Evolution: A History from Darwin to Pope Francis* (Kettering: Angelico Press, 2015), 72–84.

[12] Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 16–17.

[13] Ibid., 15.

[14] John Stenhouse, 'Darwinism in New Zealand, 1859–1900,' in *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, eds. Ronald L. Numbers and John Stenhouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 75.

[15] John H. Evans, *Southern See: The Anglican Diocese of Dunedin, New Zealand* (Dunedin: The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1968), 177.

[16] G. S. Parsonson, 'The Darwinian Debate in Otago, 1876,' in *The History of Science in New Zealand: A conference to be held at Wellington, New Zealand, Sponsored by the* Alexander Turnbull Library *and the* Royal Society of New Zealand, *Saturday 12 February to Monday 14 February 1983* (Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library and the Royal Society of New Zealand, 1983), 17.

[17] Bell, 'The Impact of Nineteenth Century Science and Biblical Criticism,' 159–161.

[18] Ibid., 145.

[19] John Stenhouse, 'The 'Battle' Between Science and Religion over Evolution in Nineteenth Century New Zealand' (PhD diss., Massey University, 1985), 220–221.

[20] Stenhouse, 'Darwinism in New Zealand, 1859–1900,' 73–75, 79.

[21] John Stenhouse, 'The Darwinian Debates in Dunedin,' in *Aspects of Darwin: A New Zealand Celebration*, eds. David Galloway and John Timmins (Dunedin: The Friends of the Knox College Library, 2010), 113. See also John Stenhouse, 'The Rev. Dr James Copland and the Mind of New Zealand 'Fundamentalism,'' *Journal of Religious History* 17, no. 4 (1993): 490; John Stenhouse, 'Darwin's Captain: F. W. Hutton and the Nineteenth-century Darwinian Debates,' *Journal of the History of Biology* 23, no. 3 (1990): 427.

[22] Stenhouse, 'The Darwinian Debates in Dunedin,' 114.

[23] Bell, 'The Impact of Nineteenth Century Science and Biblical Criticism,' 4.
[24] Ibid.
[25] 'Otago Institute,' *Transactions and Proceedings,* vol. 10, 563.
[26] Evans, *Southern See*, 180.
[27] Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *A Popular Catechism on the Church, for the use of Students of Theology, Sunday School Teachers, Candidates for Confirmation, Etc.* (London: J. Masters & Co., 1894), 7.
[28] Nevill, *Course of Sermons*, 8.
[29] *Proceedings of the First Session of the Twelfth Synod of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1900* (Dunedin: J. Wilkie, 1900), 14.
[30] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1st ed. (London: John Murray, 1859), 307.
[31] Letter from Adam Sedgwick to Charles Darwin, 24 December 1859, cited in *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. 2, ed. Francis Darwin (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1911), 43–44.
[32] Stephen J. Gould, *Punctuated Equilibrium* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2007), 3.
[33] 'The Otago Institute,' *Otago Witness*, 9 September 1876, 3.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] 'Otago Institute,' *Otago Daily Times*, 18 October 1876, 3.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] *Proceedings of Second Session [Sic] of the Third Synod of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1874* (Dunedin: Daily Times Office, 1875), 8–11; *Proceedings of the Third Session of the Sixth Synod of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1884* (Dunedin: J. Wilkie, 1886), 65.
[44] *Proceedings of the First Session of the Sixth Synod of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1882* (Dunedin: J. Wilkie, 1882), 10–11.
[45] Stenhouse, *Disseminating Darwinism*, 74.
[46] 'Otago Institute,' *Transactions and Proceedings*, vol. 10, 563.
[47] Ibid., 564.
[48] Ibid., 566.
[49] Rosemary Helen Beatrice Crane, 'Evolution Made Visible: The Worlds of Thomas Jeffrey Parker (1850–1897) the Noted New Zealand Zoologist' (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2015), 34–35.
[50] Stenhouse, 'The Darwinian Debates,' 114.
[51] Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *Sermons on Questions of the Day* (Dunedin: J. Horsburgh, 1884), 17.
[52] Ibid., 29.
[53] Ibid., 30.
[54] Bell, 'The Impact of Nineteenth Century Science and Biblical Criticism,' 160–162.
[55] Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *Sermon Preached Before the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science* (Christchurch: 1891), 1.
[56] Ibid., 2.
[57] Ibid., 3.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 5. Emphasis in original.
[61] Ibid., 7.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

[64] 'Publications Received,' *Otago Daily Times*, 19 June 1909, 7.

[65] For example, see 'Prof. Rudolf Eucken and Bishop Nevill,' *Church Envoy*, 1 March 1914, 43.

[66] Samuel Tarratt Nevill, *Spiritual Philosophy: Two Lectures Delivered on Successive Sunday Afternoons in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Dunedin, N.Z.* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 8–9.

[67] Ibid., 3.

[68] Ibid., 23.

[69] Ibid., 13.

[70] Ibid., 18–19.