



Samuel Tarratt Nevill was born on 13 May 1837 in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England, one of six children of Mary Berrey and her husband, Jonathan Nevill, a hosier. From an early age he desired ordination, but was unable to pursue this until 1858, when he received a legacy

from his grandfather. He attended St Aidan's Theological College, Birkenhead, and for one year only enrolled as an extramural student of Trinity College, Dublin. He was ordained deacon in 1860 and appointed curate of Scarisbrick in the parish of Ormskirk, Lancashire. While there he met Mary Susannah Cook Penny of Heavitree, Devonshire, and married her on 3 July 1862 at Heavitree. She had substantial private means, which was to be of great importance in some of Nevill's schemes.

Nevill was ordained priest in 1861, and matriculated, probably in 1862, for the University of Cambridge. He became a fellow-commoner of Magdalene College, graduating BA with second-class honours in the natural science tripos in 1866 and MA in 1869. He became rector of Shelton, Staffordshire, in the diocese of Lichfield, in 1864. George Selwyn, bishop of New Zealand and from 1868 bishop of Lichfield, offered in early 1870 to suggest Nevill's name for the vacant diocese of Wellington, New Zealand. Nevill demurred, but accepted Selwyn's suggestion that he visit New Zealand, where his wife had brothers living. The Nevills arrived in New Zealand, having travelled overland across the United States, on 13 September 1870.

Nevill attended the General Synod of the Anglican church in Dunedin in February 1871. The Dunedin diocese, newly established in 1869, was still racked by the controversy over its refusal to accept Henry Jenner as its first bishop. Nevill, when approached, indicated that if Dunedin were to nominate him as its first bishop he would accept. He was duly nominated and accepted, and was consecrated on 4 June 1871. In recognition of this he was awarded an honorary DD by Cambridge university in 1872.

The diocese of which Nevill found himself bishop was small and scattered, and chronically short of funds, but now had a bishop who was determined, energetic and visionary. Despite difficulties, the Anglican church in Otago and Southland expanded significantly during his time, from 10 clergy and 14 churches in 1871 to 43 clergy and 75 churches in 1919, and the diocese became well organised. It could not at first afford to build a house for the bishop, and when he built his own the diocese was often in arrears on the agreed rent. Nevill built Bishop's Court in Roslyn, Dunedin (now part of Columba College), and then Bishopsgrove in Leith Valley.

Lack of funds never daunted Nevill. High on his list of priorities was a theological college to produce local clergy. The diocese was very lukewarm about the project, but eventually endorsed it in 1887. While at the Lambeth Conference in 1888 Nevill sought books and money for the college, and on 25 January 1893 Selwyn Theological College was opened as both a theological college and hall of residence for the University of Otago.

Nevill was committed to the church's role in education, and deplored the confining of teaching to such things 'as would prove of advantage in mercantile and materialistic concerns'. Having been impressed with the educational work of the Community of the Sisters of the Church in Kilburn, London, he invited them to found a school in Dunedin. St Hilda's Collegiate School opened on 1 February 1896. It grew rapidly, and until 1904 was the only Anglican school for girls in New Zealand. Nevill was less successful in founding a boys' school, although he made some attempts.

Another of Nevill's concerns was the social work of the church. He established the Brotherhood of St Andrew to support the work of the Reverend V. G. B. King as visitor to the public institutions in the diocese, and in 1902 he set up the Deaconess Institute to manage St Mary's Orphan Home for Girls, which Mary Nevill had begun in 1883 in the grounds of

Bishopsgrove. Nevill did not support the contemporary demand for prohibition, regarding drinking as a matter of personal self-control.

The bishop was determined to have a cathedral, and raised the issue in synod in 1876. The diocese was unenthusiastic. Nevill returned to the subject repeatedly, but the various schemes suggested came to nothing until 1894 when it was finally agreed that St Paul's Church in the Octagon should become the site of the cathedral. A substantial bequest in 1904 from the estate of William Harrop speeded the process of fund raising. Nevill laid the foundation stone of the new cathedral on 8 June 1915, and the building was consecrated on 12 February 1919. Even so, Nevill's grandiose plans were only one-third completed, and then only after wrangles between the parish of St Paul's and the bishop and cathedral chapter.

Samuel Nevill was a man of firm opinions vigorously expressed. He wrote a number of pamphlets, mainly on church matters, engaged in debate on contemporary issues in the letters columns of the local newspapers, and retained his scientific interest through membership of the Otago Institute. His relations with his clergy and others were sometimes strained. He strongly defended the autonomous rights of individual national churches of the Anglican communion, but was also committed to the extension of New Zealand's influence in the Pacific. In this he had little support from his fellow bishops, although the inclusion of the diocese of Polynesia in 1925 as part of the New Zealand Anglican province owes something to him.

On 1 February 1904, already acting primate by virtue of his seniority, Nevill was elected primate of New Zealand. In acknowledgement of this his old college made him an honorary fellow in 1906. In the same year he was created a sub-prelate of the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

Nevill's first wife died on 27 November 1905, and on 25 September 1906, while in England, he married Rosalind Margaret Fynes-Clinton at Blandford, Dorsetshire. Rosalind was his wife's young companion and daughter of the vicar of Waitaki mission district. There were no children from either marriage, but several nieces and nephews were brought up by the Nevills. At the end of 1919, Nevill, now the senior bishop not only of the Anglican church in New Zealand but of the whole Anglican communion, retired. He died at Bishopsgrove on 29 October 1921, and was buried in accordance with his wishes in the churchyard at Warrington, near Dunedin. Rosalind Nevill died on 23 April 1972.

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