

# **The training of men for ministry in the Newcastle Anglican Diocese of Australia from 1847-1860**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In September of 1860, Bishop Frederic Barker, Metropolitan of New South Wales, extended an invitation to Bishop William Tyrrell of Newcastle. Barker suggested that Tyrrell send his ordination candidates to attend the fledgling Moore Theological College, which had been established near Liverpool some four years earlier. Barker commented that, ‘the College may offer its advantages to the other Australian Dioceses without fear of it being overcrowded’.<sup>1</sup>

Barker’s invitation came twelve years into Tyrrell’s episcopate. That Tyrrell did not accept the invitation suggests he was already satisfied with the current system of training candidates in Newcastle. Ruth Teale is one historian among many who views this decision as catastrophic for the training prospects of Newcastle’s ordinands. In refusing to send students to Moore College, she argues that ‘candidates for orders were [instead] inadequately trained as catechists within the [Newcastle] diocese’.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frederic Barker, *A Charge Delivered by Frederic, Bishop of Sydney, and Metropolitan of Australia, at His Primary Metropolitan Visitation of the Dioceses of Tasmania, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Newcastle, in the Year of Our Lord, 1860* (Sydney: Reading and Wellbank, 1860).

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Teale, ‘Tyrrell, William (1807-1879)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1976).

How fair is this assessment? This is the question that this essay will seek to answer by examining the alternative approach to training taken by Tyrrell during the early years of his episcopate. We will look specifically at the period from 1847, when Tyrrell accepted his nomination as bishop of the new diocese of Newcastle, until 1860. But we begin with a brief consideration of William Tyrrell's own training for ministry prior to 1847. This will give some background to the Bishop and will set the scene for our subsequent assessment of how much Tyrrell's approach to training was influenced by his own experience. We will then examine the 1847 voyage of the *Medway*, during which Tyrrell spent an uninterrupted four-month period with seven ordinands and accordingly instituted a training program for them. In these very initial stages of Tyrrell's episcopate, we see his ideals for the training of his ordination candidates. From that, we can then examine the merits of these ideals by looking at what became of the seven ordinands aboard the *Medway*. The final section of this essay will consider the Bishop's plan to recruit and train clergymen from within the colony itself.

Ultimately we will show that Tyrrell's approach, while theoretically legitimate, had significant practical problems that meant that, for the most part, his ordination candidates could not be sufficiently trained. Throughout his episcopate, Tyrrell was committed to a system of placing candidates to live with already ordained clergymen, in order to study under their instruction. We will see that this was only valuable for exceptional candidates who already had a solid education. But for the most part, clergymen simply did not have the capacity to teach all that was required by Tyrrell. Despite the Bishop's unrelenting commitment to this scheme, the conclusion of most others—including his own examining

chaplains—was that it was a not particularly successful way to prepare men for ordained ministry. It this conclusion that this essay will endorse.

### TYRRELL'S OWN TRAINING FOR MINISTRY

Let us begin then by looking at the background of William Tyrrell prior to his episcopate. He was made Deacon in 1832 at the age of twenty-five and licensed to the small country parish of Aylestone. This village near Leicester had a population of around five hundred.<sup>3</sup> Tyrrell seems to have had little, if any, formal theological training, but had undertaken a Bachelor's degree at St John's College, Cambridge. This was the norm for English clergy at the time. At Cambridge, Tyrrell had been expected to excel in mathematics but instead spent the bulk of his time collecting and studying a personal library of theological works, and only did moderately well at his formal studies.<sup>4</sup> Tyrrell appears to have deliberately sought a curacy in Aylestone so that he could follow the recommendation of his advisor, Dr Hook. Hook had advised Tyrrell that a young clergyman ought to spend ten years in a quiet country parish devoted to the reading of theology in order to prepare for ministry in any sphere.<sup>5</sup> Whatever preparation for ministry Tyrrell had managed during his Bachelor's degree, it seems he considered it insufficient and he adhered to Hook's recommendation carefully for the next six years. According to one pupil who lived and studied with Tyrrell during this time, he rose early and retired late in order to keep himself hard at his books while still having time to visit around the parish during the afternoons.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R.G. Boodle, *The Life and Labours of the Right Rev. William Tyrrell, D.D.: First Bishop of Newcastle, New South Wales* (London: Wells Gardner, 1881), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 13.

When the Rector of Aylestone passed away in 1838, Tyrrell took up another curacy position in Burnham, a village on the outskirts of Maidenhead.<sup>7</sup> Tyrrell remained in this new parish for less than one year, and we can only speculate as to why his term there was so short. Perhaps it is significant that Burnham is situated less than 40km from the centre of London. During his Cambridge days, Tyrrell had once walked the 80km from Cambridge to London in a single day and so Tyrrell would likely not have considered 40km a great distance.<sup>8</sup> Thus perhaps he viewed Burnham as too close to the busyness of the capital city. It is likely that it made his daily country rambles far less pleasant, and, significantly, he may also have found that the increased responsibility of this larger parish was not conducive to regular study.

That Tyrrell next took up an appointment as rector of Beaulieu—a quiet, rural parish of around one thousand people—adds weight to this speculation.<sup>9</sup> This appointment suited Tyrrell’s plans to continue in his decade of study and, despite the responsibilities of being rector, Tyrrell continued to devote himself to study. In 1841 he even turned down an invitation by his good friend G.A. Selwyn, then Bishop-elect of New Zealand, to join him as an Archdeacon. Presumably this was because he did not feel himself adequately prepared for such a task—he had yet to complete his decade of reading. The Rev. R.G. Boodle (a contemporary of the Bishop who served under him in Newcastle) reports that throughout his time in Beaulieu, Tyrrell remained steadily at work with his reading.<sup>10</sup> In

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<sup>7</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 7; Rev H. W. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, D.D.* (vol. I; London: William Wells Gardner, 1879), 13–14.

<sup>9</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 21–22.

1846, because of rising parish responsibilities, Tyrrell even gave up his live-in pupils in order to provide more time for personal study.<sup>11</sup>

As to the specifics of what Tyrrell studied during these years, both Boodle and Elkin refer to his personal library of the Early Church Fathers and English Divines.<sup>12</sup> The aforementioned live-in pupil from the Aylestone period commented that Tyrrell would read ‘standard works of theology’.<sup>13</sup> Sadly, more specific detail is rather difficult to ascertain. We could possibly gain some idea by examining titles from the library he left behind, which formed the core of the Morpeth Training College library, and is now catalogued by Newcastle University as ‘The Morpeth Collection’. However, it would prove very difficult to determine which works were definitely from this period and which, even if published prior to 1848, were acquired later. Whatever he studied, these years of private, steady scholarship provided Tyrrell with the theological muscle he needed to engage intelligently and theologically in all manner of situations when he eventually found himself in New South Wales.

The essence of Tyrrell’s self-initiated training strategy was regular, theological reading combined with parish visiting, ideally in the context of living in the home of an older, more experienced mentor. We will see that this model of training would become the basis of his approach to training ordination candidates, even from the earliest days of his episcopate.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately it seems that Tyrrell bettered Dr Hook’s suggested decade of

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<sup>11</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 5; Adolphus Peter Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle: A History of the Diocese of Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia* (Glebe, NSW: Australian Medical Pub. Co., 1955), 137.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 136.

study by four years. Only then did he allow himself to be drawn away from it, in favour of increased ministry responsibilities.

### THE VOYAGE ON THE MEDWAY

In 1847, having just been consecrated as the first Bishop of Newcastle, Tyrrell gathered a party of twenty men and women to accompany him to New South Wales. This group consisted of the Bishop's housekeeper, groom and gardener (who also brought his wife and children), two schoolteachers, two chaplains—H.O. Irwin and R.G. Boodle—and, perhaps most relevantly, seven candidates for ordination in Newcastle. The voyage to New South Wales upon the Medway began on 18th September 1847. The Bishop set his chaplains, his candidates and himself a routine of worship and study to occupy them during this long voyage. This routine provides a useful insight into his philosophy of training men for ministry. According to the account of R.G. Boodle, the daily routine began with Morning Prayer, followed by a general lecture given by the Bishop or one of the chaplains. The party then split up and the Bishop and his chaplains each took two or three of the candidates to his own cabin in order to read (again, frustratingly, there is no indication of what they read). The day ended with Evensong. Boodle's assessment is that the entire party found themselves more steadily at work than at any previous time in their lives.<sup>15</sup>

Drawing on some 'private notes' written by the Bishop, Adolphus Elkin adds to our picture on the Medway routine: the morning lecture was on a passage of the Greek New

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<sup>15</sup> Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 29–35.

Testament, the afternoons and evenings were given over to private reading, and the three clergymen (Tyrrell, Irwin and Boodle) used the evenings to prepare the lectures for the following day. He also notes that the hour for Evensong was set at 10pm due to a request from the passengers because they did not like resuming their games after the solemnity of Evening Prayer.<sup>16</sup>

It seems strange that Boodle gives no indication of the structure of the afternoons or evenings. Perhaps he could not recall how they had been occupied. It could also be that the initial plan was never really followed and so Boodle chose to simply omit this detail in order to spare the Bishop's reputation. The private journal of J.F.R. Whinfield, one of the seven ordination candidates, seems to indicate that, contrary the picture of industrious study painted by Boodle and Elkin, Tyrrell's plans were often interrupted due to seasickness, warm weather, fishing for sharks and other more pressing activities. According to Whinfield, the lectures were not given daily as Boodle's memoir suggests; the second lecture did not occur until 5th October—two and a half weeks into the voyage.<sup>17</sup>

Yet regardless of how successfully or rigorously it was observed, the study pattern established for the voyage at least gives a good indication at least of Tyrrell's ideals for clerical training—namely private reading under the guidance of an experienced clergyman. If he had esteemed other styles of learning, then that would surely have been reflected in Tyrrell's plans aboard the *Medway*. For example, if he felt lectures on

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<sup>16</sup> Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 144.

<sup>17</sup> J.F.R. Whinfield, 'Journal 1847-1857'. Cited in B. R. Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales: The Beginnings and Development of Training Men for Its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Diocese of Newcastle, 1825-1925* (1966), 143–145.

theological subjects were worthwhile, then more time would have been allocated to them. It would have been little trouble for three experienced clergymen to manage more than one lecture per day between them. Instead, this pattern of Morning and Evening Prayer (including lectionary readings), study of the Greek New Testament, supervised reading and private study seems to largely reflect the self-directed reading of theology with which Tyrrell had occupied himself while at Cambridge, Aylestone and Beaulieu. That ordination candidates spent time each day reading with the three ordained clergymen seems quite similar to the set-up Tyrrell had with his live-in pupils during his early years of ministry. Thus we can conclude that in this initial stage of his episcopate, Tyrrell was firmly committed to a scheme that modelled largely on his own training.

### **WHAT BECAME OF THE MEDWAY SEVEN?**

The Medway landed in Port Jackson early in morning of Sunday 16th January 1848. In looking to see what lay ahead for each of the seven candidates on arrival, we will seek to assess how successful these seventeen weeks of training were in preparing the men for ministry in New South Wales.<sup>18</sup>

The two eldest candidates, Benjamin Glennie and Josiah Rodwell, had both previously studied at St Bee's Theological College in Whitehaven, Cumberland, and were both made Deacon by Tyrrell shortly after arriving in Morpeth. Glennie was sent to Brisbane while Rodwell remained in Morpeth under the Bishop's direct supervision. Glennie was active

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<sup>18</sup> The names of these seven men are listed as part of a list of expenses for travelling to NSW, *William Tyrrell Accounts Book*, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Archives, University of Newcastle, archive B6558.



in ministry around Queensland until his death in April 1900.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to his longevity, Rodwell returned to England fewer than three years after his arrival, in May 1851, seemingly due to ill health.<sup>20</sup> Due to their existing theological training, the effect of the Medway routine upon the ministries of these men in NSW is impossible to measure precisely. Indeed, the vastly differing outcomes for these two men, despite the similarity of their training even prior to the Medway, makes it even more difficult to assess the value of Tyrrell's scheme in this instance.

It is similarly hard to fully assess the impact of Tyrrell's training upon the two youngest candidates, Henry Halford Ison and Benjamin Clark Peck. On arrival, they were both entrusted to the principal of the new St James' College at Lyndhurst.<sup>21</sup> At the very least, we can say that the four months of training aboard the Medway had not been sufficient to prepare either man for ordination on arrival. Would some time in formal study change this? Unfortunately we cannot know, for Ison died only six months later and Peck was packed off back to England, having been found to be ill suited to ministry life.<sup>22</sup>

The three remaining candidates were also judged to be underprepared for ordination on arrival and so the Medway strategy was continued, as the men were entrusted to Irwin and Boodle for further theological study. John F.R. Winfield went to Singleton with Irwin, while William Bromfield and Edward Williams went to Muswellbrook with Boodle.

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<sup>19</sup> K. Rayner, 'Glennie, Benjamin (1812–1900)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1972); Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 736.

<sup>20</sup> Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 735.

<sup>21</sup> 'Congratulatory Addresses to the Bishop of Newcastle', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW, January 25, 1848).

<sup>22</sup> Robertson notes that this was for "childish conduct" and "levity". See Paul Struan Robertson, *Proclaiming "Unsearchable Riches": Newcastle and the Minority Evangelical Anglicans, 1788-1900* (Sydney & Leominster: CSAC & Gracewing, 1996), 82.

Sadly Bromfield died in June 1848 after a breakdown.<sup>23</sup> This leaves only two of the original seven candidates to examine for the longer-term effects of this ministry training.

According to the Bishop's archives, the Rev. Edward Williams was sworn in as surrogate for granting episcopal marriage in the Liverpool Plains District in August 1853.<sup>24</sup> There are numerous indications that he was active in the area prior to this.<sup>25</sup> According to the accounts preserved in newspapers, he was involved in various parts of society in Tamworth, was generally well regarded and was missed after his departure when he returned to England in July 1861 with his wife and children.<sup>26</sup> Williams had begun his theological reading under the guidance of Boodle in Muswellbrook early in 1848. There is an indication on a scrap of paper (written by an unidentified hand) that Williams was ordained in March 1850.<sup>27</sup> If correct, it means that Williams remained under the guidance of Boodle for some two years after arriving in New South Wales. This long period of further study, when added to the four months of supposedly focused study begun upon the Medway, is not a strong endorsement of the Medway scheme.

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<sup>23</sup> Whinfield suggests in his diary that this was suicide. Cited in Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 151. Robertson cites a letter from Tyrrell to Broughton that suggests it was because of an addiction to "opium eating". See Robertson, *Proclaiming "Unsearchable Riches": Newcastle and the Minority Evangelical Anglicans, 1788-1900*, 82. See also "Letter from Bishop Tyrrell to S.P.G.", August, 1848. Cited in Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 738.

<sup>24</sup> 'Draft of letter of commission to appoint Rev. Edward Williams as Surrogate', 23.8.1853l, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Archives, University of Newcastle, archive A7762(xiv).

<sup>25</sup> Both Elkin and Davis have noted that A. E. Selwyn was sent to Tamworth to assist Williams early in 1852. Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 167; Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> 'Tamworth', *Empire* (Sydney, NSW, May 6, 1854); 'Hunter River District News. [From Our Correspondents.]', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, September 12, 1855); 'Liverpool Plains (From the Tamworth Examiner)', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, March 14, 1861); 'Parting Gift to the Rev. Edward Williams', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, July 9, 1861).

<sup>27</sup> 'Notes on scrap paper of minister's license dates, and their short letters', 25.11.1850, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Archives, University of Newcastle, archive A7762(xi)

John F.R. Whinfield, by contrast, was made Deacon in September 1848, a short eight months after heading to Singleton with Irwin.<sup>28</sup> Given the difficulties of life in those early days of Australia, it is difficult to imagine that much of this period was devoted to study and I agree with Davis' surmise that his education seems to have been 'slim and perfunctory'.<sup>29</sup> He did, however, go on to have a long and seemingly successful career as an ordained minister. He was appointed to Wollombi early in 1849,<sup>30</sup> and appears to have remained there until he replaced Williams in Tamworth in July 1861.<sup>31</sup> He continued there until his death in December 1879.

From this, it would seem that the preparations undertaken upon the Medway and with Irwin were sufficient. That said, the Singleton Argus, in a brief biography published upon his death, notes that Whinfield was the son of a minister—the Rev. R. Whinfield, vicar of Heanor—and as such was trained beneath his father's roof. There, he developed the 'excellent qualities' that made him so admired.<sup>32</sup> While the biography is somewhat inaccurate regarding dates, this sort of detail is difficult to get wrong. This suggests that the training Whinfield received upon the Medway and with Irwin was not wholly responsible for his longevity and success in ministry. Rather, it is likely that significant theological foundation stones were already well established in Whinfield from a young age, thanks to his father's instruction.

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<sup>28</sup> Whinfield, 'Journal 1847-1857'. Cited in Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 151–152.

<sup>29</sup> Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 152.

<sup>30</sup> Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*, 157.

<sup>31</sup> 'License for Rev. John Fredric Richardson Whinfield to Parish of Tamworth in the District of Liverpool Plains', 11.7.1861, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Archives, University of Newcastle, archive A7763(vii); 'Wollombi', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, July 11, 1861).

<sup>32</sup> 'The Late Rev. J.F.R. Whinfield.', *The Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate* (NSW, December 17, 1879).

Overall, it is clear there were highly mixed outcomes for the ‘Medway seven’ on arrival to the colonies. However, we can see one clear trend in Tyrrell’s strategy: all men who continued study were placed in residence with an experienced clergyman in order to learn with them and from their example. Tyrrell was evidently very committed to this live-in, apprentice style approach that had formed a significant part of his own ministry training.

What is nearly impossible to assess at this stage is whether it was a beneficial scheme. Three of the men who were subsequently ordained had prior training, and only two of the seven lasted longer than a decade in ministry in Australia. Naturally this does not serve as a good endorsement of Tyrrell’s plan for training. But given the hardships of life in the colonies during their early years, it is arguable that no theological training, whatever its shape and format, would have been enough to prepare these men for the life that lay ahead of them. For example, as we have seen, candidate Josiah Rodwell had previously studied at St Bee’s Theological College in Whitehaven—yet despite this more rigorous education, he returned to England fewer than three years after arriving in the colony. Indeed, although Rodwell and Glennie’s background of training was very similar, their respective antipodean ministries had extremely different outcomes. This rather underscores the point that perhaps some men were just more ‘cut out’ for ministry in this challenging environment, regardless of how they were trained. Sadly, the deaths (and potential breakdown prior to this) of Bromfield and Ison may well reflect that reality. The fact that Peck and Williams both returned to England adds weight to the case too.

## CANDIDATES FROM WITHIN THE COLONIES

Accordingly, in the early years of his episcopate, Tyrrell attempted to meet the ever increasing need for clergy from among men already settled in the colonies. Given the high attrition rate among the Medway party, this was surely a sensible decision. Life in the colonies was hard and not everyone was able to survive it; Tyrrell would more likely to have success with men who had already grown accustomed to such a way of life before becoming ministers. By the end of the 1850s, he seems to have had some success in gathering a modest number of recruits: Coles Child, who had studied at Cambridge, John Wallace BA of Durham, Thomas O'Reilly, Alfred Glennie, F.R. Kemp, J.R. Blomfield (who had read for a time at the ill-fated St James' College Lyndhurst), Arthur Selwyn, William White (who was sent to take a degree at Oriel college Oxford), Septimus Hungerford, John Moseley, T.L. Dodd, G.C. Bode, C.W. Newman and W.C Hawkins.<sup>33</sup>

For the purpose of evaluating the success of Tyrrell's scheme to recruit candidates from among the colonial population, we will particularly look at the ministry training of Arthur Selwyn. Selwyn is a suitable subject for such a study, thanks to the collection of letters that have been preserved. The Letters of the Late Dean Selwyn were mostly written to his fiancé, Rose Elizabeth Rusden (the youngest daughter of the Rev. G.K. Rusden).<sup>34</sup> Many of the letters date from the period of his training for ordination (1851 to 1853).

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<sup>33</sup> For this comprehensive list of names I am indebted to Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 175.

<sup>34</sup> Rose and Arthur were eventually married in June 1852. 'Family Notices', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW, July 7, 1852); 'Family Notices', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, July 3, 1852).

Arthur E. Selwyn was born in 1822, the fourth son of the Rev. Townshend Selwyn. He was the cousin of Tyrrell's college friend, G.A. Selwyn, who later became the first Bishop of New Zealand. Significantly, Arthur had been schooled in England, before emigrating to Australia in 1841 and settling in the Namoi region.<sup>35</sup> There he was appointed Magistrate in 1848.<sup>36</sup>

Arthur Selwyn offered himself as a candidate for ordination sometime towards the end of 1850, possibly during the Bishops' Conference in Sydney in October of that year. Following this, he spent a short time with Rev. Boodle in Muswellbrook and there recovered his schoolboy facility with Greek. According to a letter he wrote at the time, he found himself quite amazed at how forceful and interesting the New Testament was in its original 'garb'.<sup>37</sup> Before long, however, the Bishop sent Selwyn to Irwin in Brisbane. According to a letter from the Bishop recorded in Boodle's biography, the Bishop hoped Selwyn would gain much from living and working under the direction of Irwin:

With the certainty that you will find in Mr. Irwin all the direction, and prudence, and example, which you could desire, I commit you to his care with the greatest satisfaction. And I feel assured that you perfectly understand how much your future usefulness and happiness will depend upon the use you may make of this invaluable period of preparation.

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<sup>35</sup> The name Arthur Selwyn appears among a list of those whose claims to land have been recognised 'Crown Lands Beyond the Settled Districts.', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, March 10, 1849).

<sup>36</sup> 'Domestic Intelligence.', *The Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser* (NSW, September 2, 1848); 'New Magistrate', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (NSW, October 11, 1848).

<sup>37</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 9.

That the Lord may confirm you in all your purpose of good, and bless all your exertions, is the prayer of yours very faithfully,

W. Newcastle<sup>38</sup>

Selwyn arrived at Irwin's house on Sunday 11th May 1851. According to a letter written the next day, Irwin put Selwyn to work immediately and had him give the Scripture readings at the evening service.<sup>39</sup> Selwyn gave the readings from a Bible given to him by his beloved Rose. While it seems this was initially done to give Irwin's voice a rest, it quickly became a regular pattern and this indicates that Irwin was serious about giving the young candidate practical experience, in addition to tutoring his study.<sup>40</sup>

In the same letter, Selwyn relates that Irwin, having found his command of Latin to be satisfactory, set him a plan of reading Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, one of the Greek Fathers and one of the Latin Fathers. In addition, they would analyse two or three sermons weekly and read the Greek New Testament together every morning.<sup>41</sup> In a letter written the following week, Selwyn recorded the basic pattern of life he had settled into. His days consisted of breakfast at seven, a chapter of the Greek Testament with Mr Irwin ('...and this, at present, is all I do read with him'), translating and reading on his own 'from some Latin author' until lunch at one. After lunch, a walk and visiting until three, then Selwyn

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<sup>38</sup> Cited in Boodle, *Life and Labours of R.R. William Tyrrell*, 64. Although Boodle did not designate a recipient, Davis assumes that this short note was addressed to A. E. Selwyn. See Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 154.

<sup>39</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*; Brisbane, May 12th 1851; 15-16.

<sup>40</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters* Selwyn makes numerous mentions of reading the Scripture lessons and the great benefit he feels this is. See p. 18, 35-36, 63.

<sup>41</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 16-17.

would ‘go and read Pearson and analyse sermons, etc. till tea time’. After tea he would read the Epistles in Greek to himself until bed—usually around eleven.

This pattern is very similar to Tyrrell’s own study routine while at Aylestone—rising early, working solidly through the morning, doing some exercise and visiting around lunch time, and then more solid study in the afternoon and evening. It also bears a reasonable similarity to the routine set for the Medway voyage. It seems that Irwin modelled his training regime upon the pattern demonstrated by his Bishop.

But by early August the practice of reading the Greek Testament every morning was being somewhat neglected: ‘with Mr I., I do about two or three chapters of Greek Testament in a week, sometimes none at all, for he is very much out’.<sup>42</sup> Despite this, Selwyn continued in his reading and assessment of sermons. On numerous occasions he mentions that he is much taken by the sermons of Jeremy Taylor, a clergyman from the mid-1600s who is remembered for his poetic style of expression, for supporting Bishop William Laud and for serving as chaplain to King Charles I.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, we clearly see the limitations of this apprentice-style traineeship. Selwyn’s teacher was not only his teacher; this comment points to the fact that Irwin also had all the many and varied responsibilities of his parish ministry to prioritise above the training of his student.

And it would not be long before Irwin’s responsibilities would become even greater. From the end of summer, both Irwin and Selwyn were kept busy teaching at the school,

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<sup>42</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 37, 60; Rev. Alexander Gordon, ‘Taylor, Jeremy, D.D. (1613-1667)’, ed by. Sidney Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1898) vol. 55, 422-429.



ultimately because the schoolmaster and mistress proved unmanageable and were relieved of their duties.<sup>44</sup> Early the following year, despite Selwyn's hope of a quick ordination, Tyrrell ordered him to relocate to Tamworth in order to take charge of the school there under the supervision of Williams.<sup>45</sup> To begin with he found this duty almost impossible and that it left him with little energy for any other work. Within a month, however, having got the children into a semblance of order, he began to really like the work and to be proud of the progress of his students.<sup>46</sup>

Over time, the need for schoolteachers began to dominate the training of candidates for ordination. The Bishop seemed convinced that it was a valuable testing ground that prepared them well. While Selwyn eventually enjoyed teaching, I suspect he would disagree with the Bishop's assessment. The demands of caring for small children left him little time or energy for any other work. I agree with Davis that this was an irretrievably wrong method of training men for ministry.<sup>47</sup> It is also a surprising aspect of Tyrrell's training scheme, because Tyrrell himself had so much valued an extended time of focused and undisturbed study during his own theological formation. Indeed, it is likely that he even left his charge in Burnham after only a year in favour of a quieter parish, such was his commitment to having a decade of uninterrupted study. It does seem strange then that he would call upon his own candidates to juggle that intensity of study whilst planning, preparing and delivering school lessons each day.

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<sup>44</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters* Monday July 27th, p.52.

<sup>45</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters* Tamworth, February 25th 1852, p. 112-114.

<sup>46</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 120, 121, 124, 126.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 166.

Selwyn attempted to learn Hebrew alongside his school teaching, but without a tutor he made slow progress.<sup>48</sup> During this time he also mentions reading the Psalms, Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, and Bridges' *The Christian Ministry*.<sup>49</sup> His supervisor, Rev. Williams, had only been ordained for a short time (perhaps just two years) and so was little help. Strangely, despite Selwyn living in Williams' house, the letters mention little interaction between them. We might conclude that, for similar reasons to Irwin, Williams was not actually at home very often. So again we come back to one of the major difficulties with Tyrrell's scheme. Placing candidates for ordination with existing ministers assumes that those ministers have the time and capacity to teach them. But the enormous demands of each minister's charge made this very difficult.

Furthermore, we must note that Selwyn seems to have been an exceptional candidate on a number of counts, with an excellent grasp of Greek and Latin. This is made evident from some comments in Selwyn's early letters. The first letter to Rose from Morton Bay mentioned that Irwin intended to teach him the works of the Greek Fathers, yet in a subsequent letter only a week later, he does not include this in his description of their daily routine. Indeed, the works of the Greek Fathers are never mentioned again in any letter. The most likely explanation for this is that Irwin now considered Selwyn's command of Greek to be sufficient, and study of the Greek Fathers was no longer necessary. For, at the beginning of his second letter to Rose after his first week with Irwin, Selwyn comments that "Mr I. considers me now quite able to pass any examination the Bishop is likely to give me, at least in the Latin and Greek part of the work".<sup>50</sup> This would

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<sup>48</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 132.

<sup>49</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*, 128, 114, 133.

<sup>50</sup> Selwyn, *Selwyn Letters*; Brisbane Tuesday 20th May 1851; p. 18.

have been remarkable progress for the effort of just one week, had Selwyn been starting from scratch. Instead, this comment must surely suggest that Selwyn had already acquired, in his father's house and during his English schooling, many of the skills that Tyrrell expected of his clergy. Rather than learning a great deal from Irwin, it seems that Selwyn was a fairly remarkable candidate who was already proficient in Greek and Latin.

But of course, not all the candidates for ordination were as accomplished and suitable as Selwyn. For example, Tyrrell had quite serious doubts about the suitability of one particular candidate for the 1850 Ordination, a certain F.R. Kemp. During the examination week that led up to the Ordination in September 1850, the Bishop expressed serious doubts in his diary about proceeding with the ordination of Kemp. He gives no detail as to why he is hesitant, yet his reluctance is quite plain.

**Sept 19**—Much anxious thought as to the ordaining, or refusing to ordain, anyone who may seem unfit.

**Sept 20**—Consideration whether one must be rejected. [...] Much thought of Mr. Kemp.

**Sept 21**—Consider about the fitness of one, and his probable rejection [...] Mr. Kemp finally examined and to await consultation with Mr. Irwin. [...] Rev H.O.

Irwin so strongly commended Mr. Kemp for really excellent conduct. Decided to ordain him.<sup>51</sup>

It is clear that the possibility of making a bad decision made Tyrrell very anxious. Kemp eventually proceeded to take his holy orders; but whether this was because he had proved himself suitable or because of his family's wealth and prominence (F.R. Kemp was related to the Kemps of Kempsey) is difficult to ascertain. Certainly he did not distinguish himself when posted to the newly formed parish of Kempsey between 1858 and 1860.<sup>52</sup>

Tyrrell certainly seems to have had high educational expectations for those he would consider worthy to be ordained. Ultimately these high standards, combined with the reality of less well educated local candidates, proved to be the undoing of the Bishop's scheme to use local men as a source of clergy. Tyrrell's scheme was only successful for people like Selwyn who had already enjoyed the benefits of a classical education. For local men who were not privileged in that respect, the Bishop's apprenticeship training scheme was just not enough. Ministers, for the most part, simply did not have the capacity to educate their students to such a standard while also handling all the responsibilities of parish ministry.

So, by the end of the 1850s, the local possibilities had been largely exhausted and Tyrrell was again forced to seek candidates from England. These however did not prove to be any better, for often it was only second or third rate candidates who were willing to come

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<sup>51</sup> These notes come from Bishop Tyrrell's diary, the 19<sup>th</sup> of September to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1850, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Archives, University of Newcastle, archive B6556

<sup>52</sup> Robertson, *Proclaiming "Unsearchable Riches": Newcastle and the Minority Evangelical Anglicans, 1788-1900*, 98.

to Australia, and these men—though they had a classical education—did not always make effective ministers. On top of that, Tyrrell was forced to face again the problem he had encountered initially: many men simply could not handle the reality of life in the colonies.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, it is clear that Bishop Tyrrell favoured an apprentice system of training for ordination that placed a candidate in the household of an experienced clergyman to read the Greek New Testament, to study theology in English, Greek and Latin, to analyse sermons and to gain practical experience by assisting the clergyman in his regular duties. This system seems to have worked quite well for those candidates (like Arthur Selwyn) who already had a classical education and were able to read Greek and Latin. But we have seen that within this system, learning was severely hampered by the limited capacity of the minister-come-tutor, and also by the responsibility of providing primary school education that often fell to the clergyman and his trainee(s).

Tyrrell's scheme was not a bad one, at least theoretically. But to be effective, it required a context in which the candidate(s) and their tutor could be allowed freedom from duties in order to devote themselves to the necessary study. Such a situation almost occurred in 1856 when William Macquarie Cowper decided to vacate his position in Stroud as chaplain to the Australian Agricultural Company. Cowper had been responsible for the education of a number of men who had proceeded to Ordination, such as the vigorous Thomas O'Reilly, and he had three students living with him at the time. Bishop Tyrrell hoped to settle Cowper, his daughters and his three current pupils somewhere near

Morpeth where he could take on ‘educational duties’. But due to various circumstances beyond his control, Tyrrell was unable to realise this hope.<sup>53</sup> The replacement chaplain arrived at Stroud and so Cowper needed to shift. He and his four daughters relocated to Sydney where he was snapped up by Bishop Barker to fill the position of interim Principal of Moore College for around six months. He was then given the immense task of establishing a new parish in Glebe.<sup>54</sup> Had Tyrrell managed to secure the services of Cowper, who shared Tyrrell’s ideals but who could have executed them more effectively, the eventual outcome for the Newcastle Diocese may have been vastly different.

Nevertheless, Tyrrell remained committed to his policy, even warmly commending it in an 1877 report to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel as ‘far better than sending young men to such a college as Moore’s in the Diocese of Sydney’.<sup>55</sup> Not everyone agreed and in 1878 his own examining chaplains, Coles Child and Lovick Tyrrell, wrote him a very stern rebuke because they felt his policies had forced them to approve men for ordination who were:

...of low mental character, and imperfectly trained and acquainted with the principles of our Church. [...] If we are again called upon to examine Candidates for Holy Order, it will be necessary for them to give proof to us that they have a fair knowledge of the Greek Testament and that they are able to yield a better

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<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of the Blomfield controversy and Cowper’s relocation to Sydney, see Robertson, *Proclaiming “Unsearchable Riches”: Newcastle and the Minority Evangelical Anglicans, 1788-1900.*, 92–96.

<sup>54</sup> William Macquarie Cowper, *The Autobiography and Reminiscences of William Macquarie Cowper, Dean of Sydney* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1902), 129–135.

<sup>55</sup> Tyrrell to Bullock, January 18th 1877, SPG Mss FM4/533 Mitchel Library. Cited in Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 230.

“account of their faith”, than the majority of the candidates during the last ten years have been able to do.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, in light of all we have seen and discussed, it is evident that Tyrrell’s training scheme did not, in practice, accomplish all that it so optimistically set out to achieve. It simply did not train men thoroughly for ministry and placed undue burden upon those already ordained.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Having considered Tyrrell’s system for training ordination candidates, what lessons can be learned from it? This is a pertinent question given the situation in which the Diocese of Newcastle currently finds itself. In mid-2014 the University of Newcastle notified the Newcastle Anglican Diocese that the Bachelor of Theology would be rested in 2015 and would likely be cancelled thereafter. This presents the Diocese with the difficult question of how candidates for ordained ministry will be trained in the future.

Of course, this is not an entirely unknown situation. The training of candidates for ordination occurred at St John’s Theological College in Morpeth until it was closed in 2005 and the Newcastle University Bachelor’s degree was created in 2007 to replace this. However, St John’s College, which was relocated from Armidale to Morpeth in 1926, did not begin operating until 1898—some fifty years after establishment of the Diocese and

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<sup>56</sup> Copy of letter titled “Morpeth, September 23rd 1878”, signed by Coles Child and Lovick Tyrrell. Cited in Davis, *The Church of England in New South Wales*, 228–230.

the consecration of Bishop William Tyrrell. It does therefore seem natural to question whether there is a place for Tyrrell's training scheme in today's context.

While Tyrrell's apprentice scheme had its imperfections and limitations, there are aspects of it that may be worth considering for Newcastle's current situation. This suspension of the Bachelor's theological degree, combined with the current trends in Australian tertiary education towards distance and online learning, might provide an opportunity for something akin to Tyrrell's apprentice scheme. Experienced parish clergy, acting as mentors, could assist ordination candidates in their studies, while the candidates could in turn contribute to parish life as a catechist, youth pastor, or some other role.

We are now very familiar with the weaknesses of Tyrrell's approach. Significantly, it placed a large demand upon parish rectors to a point where their tutoring duties were untenable. It ultimately highlights the problem of trying to combine theological education with another job—typically, such a situation does not leave enough time for serious study. So in knowing these limitations, there would therefore need to be clear, agreed upon guidelines set by the Bishop and Diocese for the clergy, parishes and candidates involved, if this were to be applied into the current context. Adequate financial assistance might also need to be provided by the Diocese to assist those parishes and clergy willing to take on a candidate for ministry. Such a scheme might prove attractive to a church looking to grow in ministry and outreach.



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